

Indonesia
Java

Miettinen, Jukka O. Classical Dance and Theatre in South East Asia. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992, p. 75-108.

THE long history of Java, the central island of the Republic of Indonesia, is marked by international maritime contacts. The island is a natural crossroads of the sea routes between East and South Asia, and it has been the melting-pot of cultural influences for thousands of years. This is clearly evident in the island's rich traditions of theatre and dance. The present classical forms of drama and dance were created by the Islamic courts of Central Java over the past two hundred years. They combined old indigenous traditions with mythical story material and classical dance technique from India. Yogyakarta and Surakarta in Central Java and the capital, Jakarta, in the western part of the island are today the main centres of Javanese dance and theatre.

Several early Indianized kingdoms typical of South-East Asia flourished on the islands of Indonesia. The first of these was the Srivijaya maritime empire on the east coast of Sumatra, which controlled trade in the Malacca Straits from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries. Culturally, Srivijaya carried on the heritage of Funan, an early kingdom in mainland South-East Asia. Srivijayan dominance was also felt on the island of Java, where in the eighth and ninth centuries the Mahayana Buddhist Sailendra dynasty and its contemporary, the Hindu Sanjaya dynasty, ruled. Since both competing dynasties flourished in the central parts of the island, this epoch is generally known as the Central Javanese period.

The history of the Central Javanese period is not known in detail, but the fact that the dynasties created some of the finest temples in all South-East Asia clearly reflects the level of their civilization. Around the turn of the eighth century and in the early ninth century the Sailendra rulers built the magnificent ziggurat-like stupa of Borobudur. With its hundreds of Buddha statues and thousands of reliefs, it is one of most important monuments of the Buddhist world. The Sanjaya dynasty began to build South Indian-influenced Hindu temples in the Central Javanese highlands from the eighth century onwards. The most impressive monument of Hindu architecture in Java is Prambanan from the early ninth century—a vast complex of 156 shrines built around eight major temples, with the temple tower of Shiva as its dominating feature.

While the basic concept of both Borobudur and Prambanan is Indian, both monuments have many features of both indigenous and Indian traditions forming a unique synthesis. The rich sculpted reliefs

of the temples are an invaluable source on the history of the period, and especially dance and theatre. At both Borobudur and Prambanan, numerous reliefs with dance themes have been preserved, reflecting strong Indian influences. Most of the reliefs depict the postures of Indian classical dance. Alongside the dancers are bearded figures, who appear to be directing the performance. These have been interpreted as Indian Brahmans invited to the Javanese courts, who, along with other duties, taught Indian dance techniques. The reliefs also reveal many local features of the culture. For example, some dance themes have been interpreted as depicting purely indigenous traditions. In addition, the portrayals of orchestras represent the local traditions of percussion ensembles and their music, known in Java and elsewhere in Indonesia as *gamelan*.

Indianized court culture is not believed to have extended at first beyond the ruling classes. The Hindu deities and the Mahayana Buddhist concept of the Bodhisattva were blended with local animistic beliefs, which marked the beginning of a typically Javanese syncretism combining different religions and beliefs. India was also the source of the central Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, which were adopted along with religion, Sanskrit literature, architecture, and dance technique. As in other South-East Asian countries, the epics were translated into the vernacular and became national classics. They were often narrated to larger audiences using shadow puppets to visualize the stories, which had been the custom in India since ancient times. Shadow theatre or *wayang kulit* is still the most popular form of classical theatre in Java.

For reasons that are still unknown the Central Javanese period came to a sudden end in the early tenth century. The Kingdom of Mataram rose to power, East Java became more prominent, and the ensuing historical phase is known as the East Javanese period. The stupa of Borobudur, Prambanan, and other temples were left in the jungles to bear witness to a period that may be described as the classical, Indian-influenced stage of Javanese history. In the East Javanese period, the immediate influence of India declined, and local elements arose. One of the most significant rulers of the Mataram kingdom was Airlangga (1019–42), who extended Javanese rule even to neighbouring Bali, thus initiating the gradual Javanization of this small island and other areas. The Javanese rulers waged war as far as Vietnam, Cambodia, and even China. Sanskrit texts were still actively translated into Javanese. New story cycles, still popular today, were created, for instance, the famous poem *Arjuna Vivaha* written in honour of King Airlangga's wedding. In religious life, the tantric teachings of India gained influence adding yet another element to the syncretism of Javanese religion.

In 1292–3 Java was briefly invaded by the Mongols, whose aim was to make Java recognize the overlordship of Kublai Khan. After this interlude, the Majapahit dynasty (1293–c.1520) came to power, the last of Java's major Hindu dynasties. The fourteenth century was the heyday of Majapahit rule. Areas of Sumatra and

West Java were conquered, and Bali again came under East Javanese rule. This was an active period of court culture and the arts in East Java. The dance and theatre traditions of this period are not known in any great detail, but shadow theatre and other forms of drama are believed to have been actively performed in the East Javanese courts. Bali, having adopted the East Javanese tradition, is still the home of some of these art forms. The architecture of the East Javanese period clearly differs from the Indian influences of Central Javanese times. The East Javanese temples are ziggurat-like mounds dominated by split gate-towers. The style of the temple reliefs and sculptures also differs from the Indian classical ideals of the Central Javanese period. The East Javanese style is known as the *wayang* style, as the portrayal of human figures is closely related to the stylization of the *wayang kulit* shadow puppets. The figures in the reliefs are usually shown with the face in profile and the shoulders in frontal position just as in the shadow puppets. The costume, crowns, and jewellery also correspond to East Javanese shadow-theatre traditions, which by now had found a new home in Bali. The *wayang* style in its many variations remained the central style of the traditional visual arts in Bali and Java until the twentieth century.

Majapahit power gradually declined in the fifteenth century with the spread of Islam, and Malacca, the first of the South-East Asian sultanates, rose to power in the Malay Peninsula. Islam spread gradually into Java, where Demak, the first Islamic centre, began to break away from Majapahit rule. In 1527, together with its neighbouring towns, it succeeded in crushing the Majapahit dynasty, bringing to an end the Hindu East Javanese period. According to legend, Islam was introduced into Java by nine holy men (*wali*). The most famous of these was Sunan Kali Jogo, who is believed to have spread the teachings of Islam by shadow-theatre performances of the Hindu *Mahabharata*. This legend clearly demonstrates the specific features of Islam in Java. Instead of wiping out earlier beliefs, it assimilated them. This led to a syncretistic religion typical of Java, which combines animism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam and has had a clear effect on the arts, including theatre and dance. As before, the ruler was regarded as divine, and the cult of the god-king and court culture retained many Hindu and Buddhist features of earlier times.

After a period of dynastic warfare, the Mataram dynasty came to power, and Central Java again rose in political influence. One of the most important sultans of this dynasty was Agung (1613-45), whose court in Yogyakarta ruled over the whole of East Java and other regions. Still existing dance forms, such as the slow ceremonial *bedhaya*, and the *serimpi* female dances, as well as many mask and martial dances are known to have been performed in the court of Mataram. In the sixteenth century the island of Java had begun to interest Westerners seeking spices. In 1602 the Dutch established their trading company, the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), which led to a long period of Dutch hegemony on the islands

of Indonesia. In 1619 the town of Batavia was founded at the site of the former village of Jayakarta. This miniature Amsterdam became a major port of trade and the centre of Dutch rule. The British were the main competitors in these areas, and they succeeded in acquiring rule over Java from 1811 to 1816. After Dutch rule had been re-established, the actual colonial period began in 1830, when the Dutch gained control of the whole of Java.

The Mataram dynasty expended its energies in the Javanese Wars of Succession. In 1755 the dynasty split into two, and two capitals Yogyakarta (Yogya) and Surakarta (Solo) were founded only a few dozen kilometres from each other near the ancient Central Javanese temples. In both cities the most important part is the *kraton* (also known as *keraton*), the sultan's palace enclosed by walls and forming a city within a city. The symbolic features of the plan of the *kraton* clearly reflect ancient Hindu and Buddhist cosmology. The outermost parts of the *kraton* were reserved for the army and the court officials and their families. The interior consisted of several open administrative buildings serving various ceremonial functions. The sultan resided in the most protected central part, and, in accordance with old Hindu-Buddhist custom, he was regarded as divine.

In the early nineteenth century the royal families of Yogyakarta and Surakarta again divided, leading to a politically precarious situation where the two capitals were simultaneously ruled by two sultans in each. When full political power was taken over by the Dutch, the ruling families of Java concentrated their energies on refining court etiquette and on developing the arts, especially theatre, dance, and music. This led to a unique renaissance of the arts, in which the classical genres of Central Javanese theatre and dance found their present forms.

The rise of nationalism among Javanese intellectuals in the early twentieth century anticipated a period of political turmoil which was later inflamed by World War II. The Japanese ousted the Dutch and occupied Java from 1942 to 1945. On 17 August 1945, after the end of the Japanese Occupation, Indonesia declared its independence. Yogyakarta was for a short time the temporary capital, and the seat of government was later moved to the Dutch-built city of Batavia, now renamed Jakarta. The Republic of Indonesia was established in 1950 with Dr A. Sukarno as its first elected president.

Java is the centre of the Republic of Indonesia consisting of over 6,000 inhabited islands. It is also the centre of the world's largest Muslim state, with a population of approximately 200 million. Indonesia has innumerable forms and genres of theatre and dance, but the main, classical styles are to be found in Java and Bali. For over a thousand years, *wayang kulit* shadow theatre has been the core of Javanese theatre, influencing the development of other genres. Over the centuries, the various sultanates with their *kraton* have developed their own art forms by adapting and combining ancient Hindu-Buddhist traditions in the spirit of Islam. Java is also the home of various classical forms of *gamelan* and dance styles, of which the

most important ones are the West Javanese style (*Sunda*), the East Javanese style, and the Central Javanese style, whose best-known traditions were refined in the *kraton* of Yogyakarta and Surakarta. The Central Javanese dance style can be described as the most classical dance style of Java. During the period of Indonesian independence the dance style of Java and its theatre traditions have spread to other islands, forming a kind of pan-Indonesian style.

The World of Shadows and Puppets: Wayang

Wayang kulit (*wayang*: literally shadow, sometimes puppet; *kulit*: leather or skin) is still the most popular form of shadow theatre in all Asia. It has been extremely important in the development of Javanese theatre, as most of the other forms of classical theatre have derived their story material, stylization, and many performing techniques directly from it. *Wayang kulit* set the aesthetic standard of Javanese theatre, and partly Balinese theatre as well. The stagecraft and equipment are relatively simple; the *primus motor* being a single puppeteer or *dalang*, manipulating the leather puppets on a simple white screen and acting as a narrator to the accompaniment of a *gamelan* orchestra (Plates 53 and 54). It is, however, an art form of immensely rich and intricate symbolism and philosophical content. Shadow drama gave rise to other forms of puppet theatre, for example, *wayang klitik* with flat wooden puppets and *wayang golek* with three-dimensional rod puppets, which are discussed at the end of this chapter. Although these forms of theatre are highly developed, and *wayang golek* still thrives, they are clearly surpassed by *wayang kulit* in popularity and complexity.

As mentioned in the section on ancient Thai shadow theatre, the origin of the art of shadow theatre in South-East Asia has been the subject of much speculation. There are two theories concerning the roots of Javanese shadow theatre. According to one, it came from India together with the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* epics during the long process of Java's Indianization. The other view maintains that Javanese shadow theatre has ancient indigenous roots. This is often supported by the fact that part of the shadow-theatre repertoire is based on pre-Hindu story cycles, and that all the technical terms of the genre are Javanese and not derived from Sanskrit or other Indian languages. The earliest record confirming the existence of shadow theatre in Central Java dates from AD 907. In the East Javanese period shadow theatre is believed to have been adopted by the Hindu courts of Bali during the long process of its Indianization. The Balinese puppets still bear strong resemblances to the so-called *wayang*-style reliefs in East Javanese temples, which are believed to have shared a common style with the contemporary East Javanese shadow puppets. Present-day Javanese shadow puppets are, in turn, believed to have evolved into their extremely elongated and almost non-figurative style during the period of Muslim rule, thus reflecting Islam's ban on making a human image.

The story or plot of *wayang kulit* as well as other Javanese drama performances is called *lakon*, roughly meaning the course of events or action. The plots are derived from various sources, for example, the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, the Prince Panji cycle, and later Muslim stories. The four oldest cycles, dealing with the ancient history of Java, are collectively named *wayang purwa* (*purwa*: primeval, original, ancient). This includes both pre-Hindu exorcistic material and *lakon* based directly on the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* epics, whose heroes are regarded as the mythical ancestors of the Javanese. Sometimes the *lakon* are faithful to the original texts, but in many cases the epic heroes have been removed from their authentic contexts and have been written into new, purely Javanese, fantasies.

There are several hundred *lakon*. They serve merely as guides to the performances, including lists of scenes and personages, and descriptions of the action in the actual play, which in practice includes a great deal of improvisation not written in the *lakon*. *Lakon* follows a more or less standard structure. The play begins with audience scenes in the palaces of opposing monarchs, where the main conflict is presented. In the ensuing sections, the opponents send messengers to each other until they finally meet in person. Whilst preparing for the battle, the hero will experience many doubts and inner conflicts. The climax is a great battle, which is also a drastic turning-point in the action. Finally, the victorious noble hero presents himself in his full glory at the home palace, and the plays usually have a happy end, the obligatory victory of the right. The themes are highly ethical, and the mood is generally serious, although the whole includes comic scenes with stock clown characters, slapstick, and even topical satire. Javanese theatre thus combines highly noble qualities with earthy comedy and even obscene grotesqueness.

Wayang kulit is to a great degree the art of the narrator. The performance of the *dalang* is the focus of the whole, often 10-hour-long performance, which traditionally begins at 9 p.m. and ends at sunrise. The *dalang* is also responsible for the rituals performed in connection with the play, and he must know by heart the main *lakon*, which are in a way revived with the addition of much improvisation. The *dalang* have traditionally had a priest-like role, and the profession passes on from father to son. Today, *dalang* are also trained in special schools, but they are still highly respected members of their communities, the best *dalang* being famous throughout the island.

The *dalang* thus carries on the ancient oral tradition passing on the main body of classical literature, but at the same time he must be able to improvise and add even the most topical items to the whole. He must also be skilled in recitation, singing, the vocal characterizations of the roles, and the elevated and vulgar levels of the language, along with manipulating the puppets in front of the screen. Moreover, the *dalang* displays expert knowledge of the music so essential to the performance. He leads the *gamelan*, an ensemble of up to thirty musical instruments: gongs, metallophones, xylophones, drums, flutes, zithers, and stringed instruments along

with a chorus of female singers. One set of metallophones carries the recurrent melody, which is elaborated by other metallophones, xylophones, and gong sets, with the drums conducting the rhythm, while another set of metallophones gives the *dalang* his pitch. The *gamelan* accompaniment is indeed an integral part of the performance. Each principal character has his or her own musical theme or leitmotif, and the *gamelan* drastically accentuates the three decisive turning-points of the performance, changing from the rather low-keyed accompaniment of the beginning to an ever higher pitch and faster tempo towards the end.

The *wayang kulit* puppets, skillfully cut and chased in leather, are in themselves works of art following strict iconographic rules (Colour Plate 23; Plate 55). A single performance may require the use of 100–500 puppets, varying from some 20 to 100 centimetres in height. The body of the puppet is usually depicted *en face*, but the face and feet and the extremely long movable arms and hands are in profile. The different characters, as well as their social status and psychological qualities, are marked by the size, colour, and other details of the puppet. There are, for example, fifteen eye shapes,

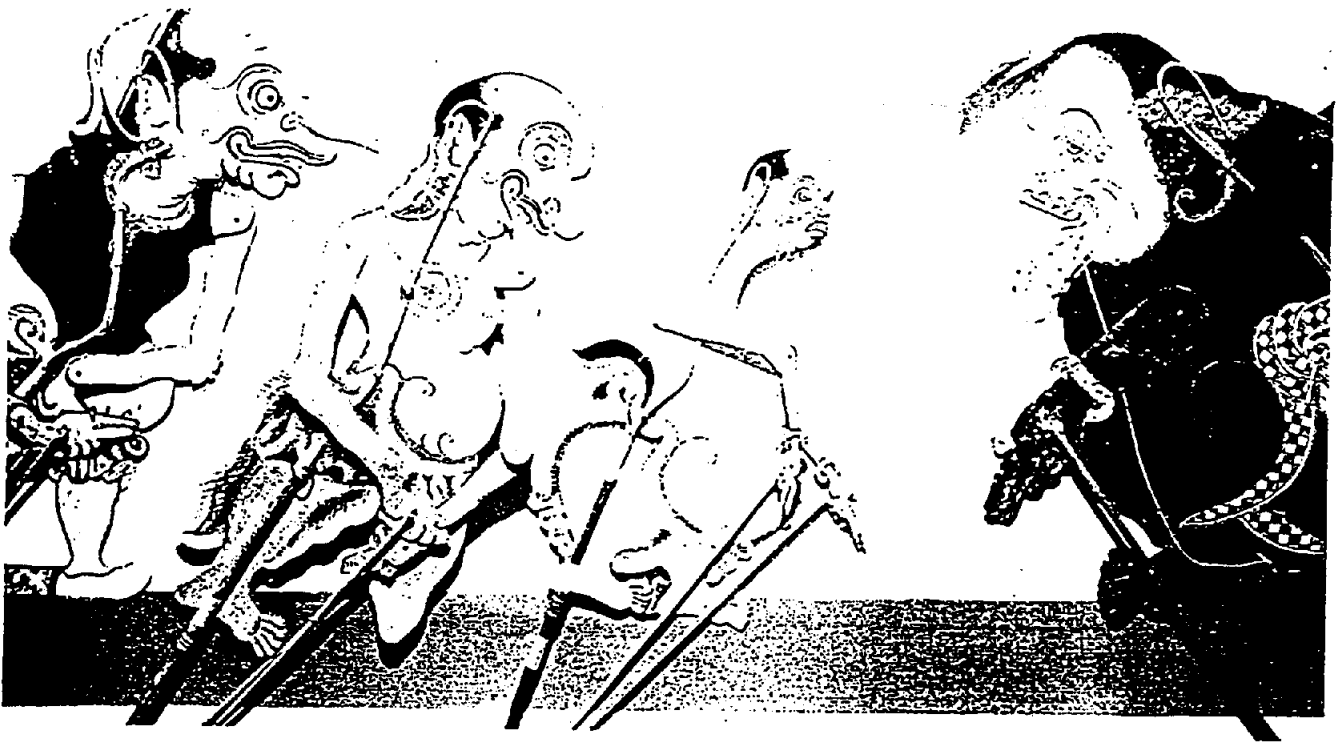
55. Sita and Rama, Central Javanese *wayang kulit* puppets. (Photograph author)



thirteen nose shapes, and eleven mouth shapes, which together with specific costumes, head-dresses, crowns, and jewellery typify the characters. The noble, so-called *alus*, characters are usually small, the strong *gagah* characters are larger, and the demons full of aggressive power are the largest.

Like the genre as a whole, the puppets of *wayang kulit* form an endlessly rich world of their own, a kind of science, which to an ever-increasing degree leads the initiated viewer into the secrets of the 'wayang world'. The noble hero puppet, for example, follows the Javanese hero ideal of utmost beauty. His body must be slender and well-proportioned, his nose long and pointed, and his eyes must be shaped like soy beans. He must also look downwards, a reference to self-control and humility, the greatest virtues of South-East Asian heroes. The stronger characters may look straight ahead, and the more arrogant ones may even look upwards. The noses of the strong characters point upwards, and they have round, bulging eyes. The requirements of the male hero also apply to the royal princesses, whose refinement is taken to the extreme. Colour symbolism gives added detail to the characterization of the puppets, specifying their mood or temporary emotional state. Gold, the dominating colour, indicates dignity and serenity; black is a sign of anger or maturity; red is for tempestuousness; and white is the colour of youth. To make matters more complicated, the principal characters can be presented with several puppets during a single performance, according to situation, mood, or age. For example, Arjuna of the *Mahabharata*, the Javanese hero *par excellence*, has thirteen different puppet shapes.

Some of the puppets are revered as sacred objects, and they can even belong to the sacred court heirlooms called *pusaka*. One of the most sacred puppets of a *wayang kulit* set is, surprisingly, not a noble hero but Semar, the head of the servant clowns or *panakawan* of the ethically good party. Semar is old, fat, short-legged, and flat-nosed. He is far from noble or handsome, but his eyes are those of a wise and kind person. With his soft breasts and round rear, he is regarded as a hermaphrodite, the 'father and mother' of his servant sons, the long-nosed Petruk, the limping Gareng, and the shy Bagong (Plate 56). The servant clowns assist the most noble heroes, and they are permitted to utter the most daring jokes. The mood of a performance usually becomes intensified when they appear on the screen. Semar is basically seen as a god in the guise of a clown, who helps the hero achieve his goal with kindness and humour. The origin of the *panakawan* has led to much speculation. It is maintained that they are old indigenous deities, which have been adapted to later Indianized mythology. This suggestion is supported by, for example, the stylization of the Semar character which differs drastically from the other puppets. On the other hand, clowns play a central part in almost all forms of theatre in South-East Asia. This is also the case in Indian drama where the *sudraka*, a noble-born but lazy Brahman acts as the king's adviser. However, clowns rarely have roles as central as those of Semar and his sons



56. Semar (right) and his sons Petruk, Gareng, and Bagong, the servant clowns or *panakawan* of *wayang kulit*. (Photograph author)

in *wayang kulit* and other classical forms of Javanese theatre.

The *wayang kulit* puppets are opaque, and on the screen they are seen as dark shadows articulated by precise lace-like perforations. The screen is divided in two, the right-hand side being reserved for the good characters, and the left for the evil party. This polarity, however, is not rigid, since both parties include characters with qualities that could belong to the opposing one. At the sides of the 4-metre-long screen the puppets stand in rows with their rods stuck into the soft trunk of a banana tree placed below the screen. When the play begins the *gunungan*, a tapering structure resembling a temple spire, is removed from in front of the screen. The *gunungan* is the symbol of the 'wayang world' and a kind of 'curtain' marking the beginning of the play, changes of scene, and the end. It is also used for special effects such as storms, or even the disruption of the cosmic order. Like all other features of *wayang kulit*, the *gunungan* has many symbolic meanings; it is said to symbolize, for example, the World Mountain, the tree of life, or the cosmic order.

In earlier times it was customary for women and children to watch the play from in front of the screen, while men sat behind it, thus being able to see the orchestra, the *dalang*, and the brightly coloured puppets. This custom is no longer maintained—at least in large-scale public performances—and today the performance can be viewed from both sides of the screen. In its many variants, *wayang kulit* is performed throughout Java on feast days. Performances are regularly staged by the *kraton*, and they are also broadcast frequently.

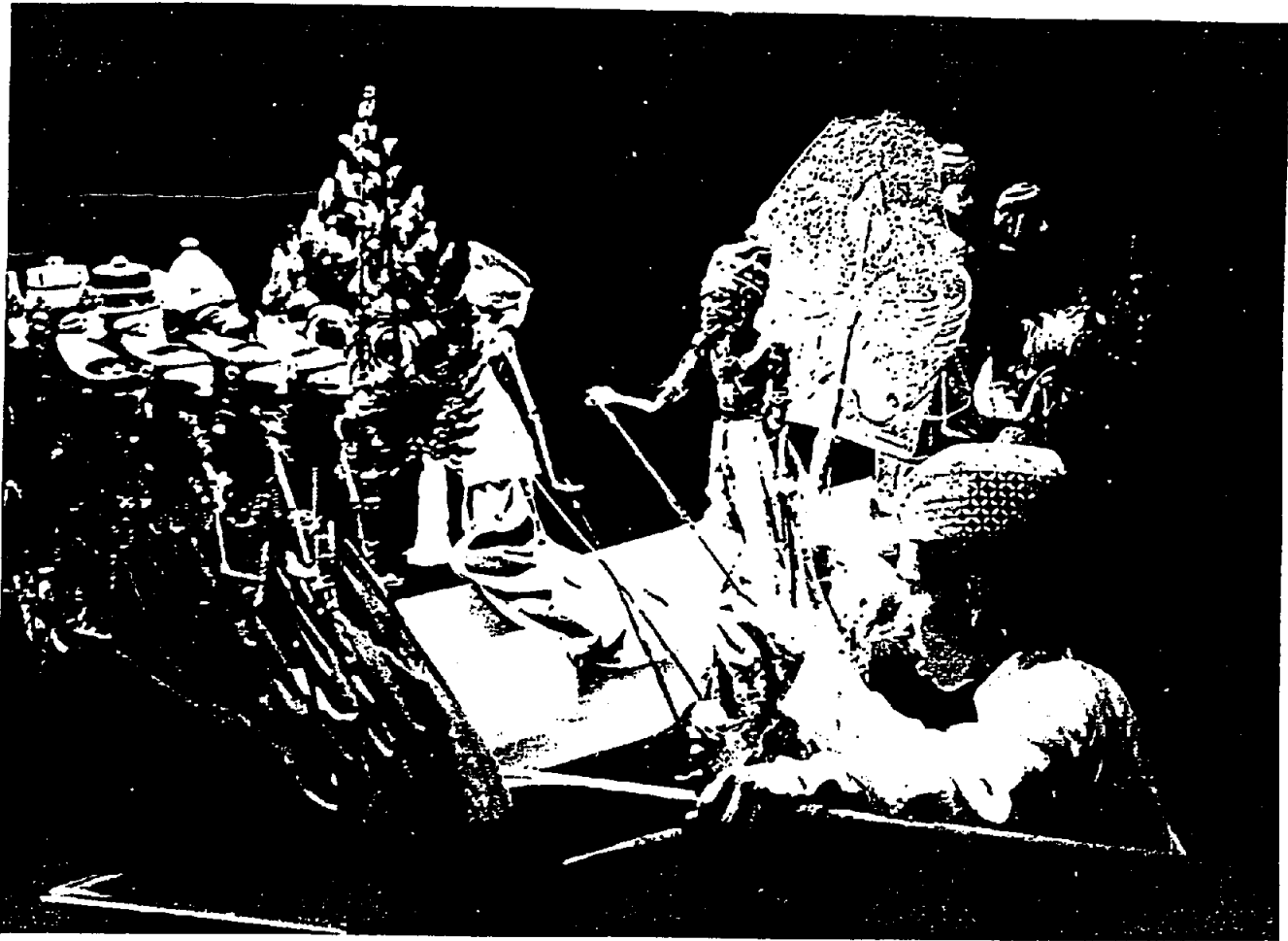
Shadow theatre still has its traditional, deep, and even sacral meaning, and performing and viewing the play can be experienced as a kind of spiritual exercise called *semadi*.

The steady popularity of *wayang kulit* has also made it a platform of various ideologies. It was used to propagate the Islamic faith, and Western missionaries have also spread the message of Christianity with their Western-influenced puppets (Plate 57). In later years the naturalistic puppets of *wayang Pancasila* (*Pancasila*: the doctrine of the spiritual foundations of the Indonesian Republic) presented to the people the history of Indonesian independence (see Plate 13). The Chinese minority of Java have also developed their own shadow puppets, combining Javanese and Chinese features (see Plate 112). There are also many *wayang kulit*-related drama forms, of which the most archaic is *wayang beber*, now practically extinct. In *wayang beber* the *dalang* illustrated the story by opening a painted scroll supported by two poles. Another now rare form is *wayang klitik*, based on the Islamic Damar Wulan story cycle. It is performed without a screen with flat, wooden puppets carved in relief.

Wayang golek is a still-popular form of rod puppetry, which according to tradition was invented by a Javanese Muslim ruler in the late sixteenth century. Its main repertoire is derived from the Menak cycle, dealing with the Muslim hero Amir Hamzah. Local

57. *Wayang kulit* puppets made by order of Christian missionaries. (Photograph author)





58. A *wayang golek* performance.
(Photograph author)

variants of *wayang golek* have evolved in various parts of Java. The tradition is strongest in West Java, where it has been used in performing the stock repertoire of *wayang purwa*, that is, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, local tales, and *The Adventures of Prince Panji*. *Wayang golek* uses a set of 60–70 puppets, which do not always portray specific characters, but stock types, the puppets thus being interchangeable. The heads and arms are carved three-dimensionally in wood, and the lower part of the body is covered by a batik sarong, beneath which the *dalang* operates the rod that makes the puppet's head turn (Plate 58). He uses his other hand to manipulate the rods for the arms and hands. There is no screen, the *dalang*, the orchestra, and the singers all being visible to the audience. Although *wayang golek* is performed in many places, *wayang kulit* is still the most popular form of Javanese puppet theatre. It is the origin of the whole 'wayang family', and has provided the general aesthetics, characterization, and repertoire of Javanese classical theatre as a whole.

Court Dances: Bedhaya and Serimpi

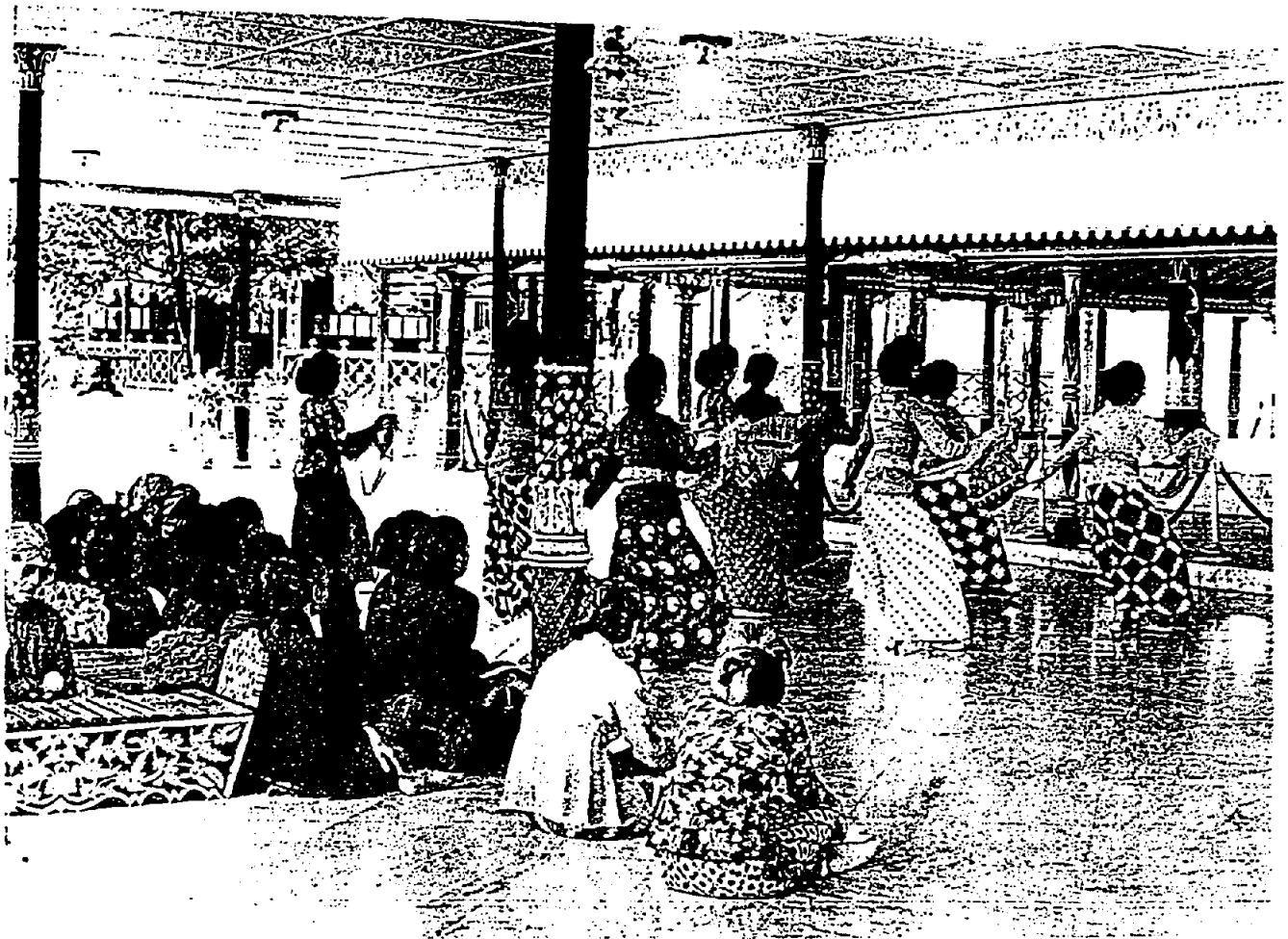
Many ceremonial court dances developed in the *kraton* of Java. The most valued of these are *bedhaya* and *serimpi*. They are both slow, restrained group dances performed by women to the accompaniment

of choral singing and *gamelan* music, and their traditions are especially linked to the *kraton* of Yogyakarta and Surakarta in Central Java. The *bedhaya*, laden with deep symbolic or even religious meaning and usually performed by nine dancers, is along with its many variations the most sacred of all Javanese court dances. Performances and even rehearsals are restricted to certain places and times (Plate 59). It is usually performed at major court festivities, such as coronations or the sultan's birthday.

The oldest existing form is the *bedhaya ketawang*, commemorating the bond between Senapati, the first sultan of Mataram (1584-1601) and the mythical Queen of the Southern Sea. It is still preserved as a *pusaka*, or royal heirloom, in the *kraton* of Surakarta. Along with the three forms of *bedhaya* inherited from the ancient Kingdom of Mataram, there are several other *bedhaya* compositions, most of which were created between the mid-eighteenth century and the middle of the twentieth century. Although the *bedhaya* is basically 'a monopoly of the *kraton*', often created by the sultans themselves, it could also be staged by high officials in its less sacred forms.

The *bedhaya* is an extremely slow and solemn dance. The dancers arrive on the scene in an orderly geometric procession formation carrying the hems of their batik sarongs (Plate 60). Majestic, almost martial, music accompanies them to the scene of the performance,

59. Court dancers rehearsing *bedhaya* in front of the Golden Hall in the *kraton* of Yogyakarta. (Photograph author)

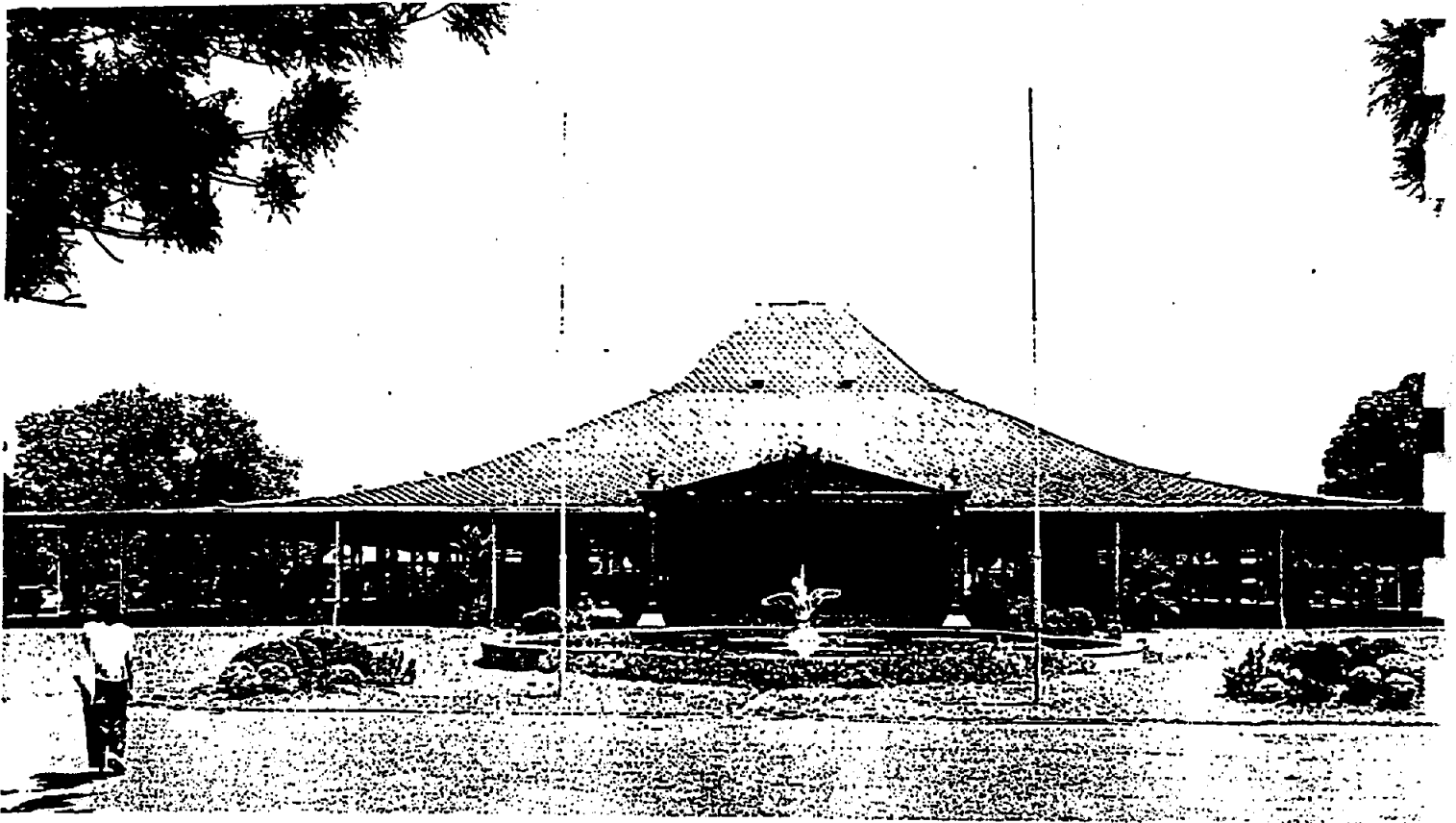




60. Procession of noble *bedhaya* dancers in the *kraton* of Yogyakarta. (Kraton of Yogyakarta)

usually a *pendopo* hall open at the sides—a typical feature of *kraton* architecture (Plate 61). The dancers then kneel down in respect before beginning the actual dance. The footwork is relatively simple, but the grouping of the dancers changes almost unnoticeably, creating ever-newer and increasingly intricate patterns, like pieces on a chessboard. The face is kept strictly expressionless, and the eyes look down, while the dancers undulate to the *gamelan* music in a continuous flow of movement like underwater plants. Indian-derived hand gestures are used, but they no longer have any direct symbolic meaning and have become extremely streamlined and decorative dance gestures. In the basic position, the dancers' knees are bent making the body Z-shaped. This extremely demanding position, sometimes making the dancers collapse and faint, permits, however, flexibility for sharp rises and falls of the body accentuating the otherwise continuous legato-like movement. At times the dancers continue their uninterrupted movement crouching on their knees, and at other times they make sudden, deep asymmetric bends. In the climax the two main dancers separate themselves slightly from the group to begin an extremely stylized battle with their wavy-bladed *keris* (dagger), after which the dancers leave the scene in a procession-like formation similar to their entrance.

The *bedhaya* dancers wear a batik sarong, often decorated with motifs restricted to court use. The upper body is clothed by a tight-fitting dark velvet blouse, and a dance scarf is worn around the



61. The great *pendopo* hall at the Mangkunegaran *kraton* in Surakarta. (Photograph author)

waist. This is skillfully manipulated with the tips of the fingers, the controlled handling being an essential part of the choreography. The dancers wear gilt tiaras with large brightly coloured feathers softly following their movements and delicate bends of the head. The dancers' bodies are painted in a golden hue, and the eye make-up corresponds to the old court traditions. In the various genres of *bedhaya*, the even-tempoed music is performed by *gamelan* ensembles, which in the earliest traditions were rather small. The text sung by the chorus usually has no direct connection with the dance or the stylized battle enacted by the principal dancers, but only sets the general mood of the performance.

The *bedhaya* still has a deep religious meaning to both the performers and the spectators. Its aesthetic principles are linked to a non-verbal, esoteric conception of beauty and strength, and the dancing of *bedhaya* is seen as a kind of yoga or meditation. The nine dancers have been explained as symbolizing the eight cardinal points and the centre of the universe—a conception derived from ancient Indian cosmology. The number of dancers can also be seen as representing the nine human orifices, and the whole composition is thus associated with the structure of the human body. Along with other interpretations, the *bedhaya* can also be regarded as a representation of the struggle between the human mind and desires.

The *serimpi*, sometimes called 'the sister of *bedhaya*', shares its basic aesthetics, dance technique, and costumes with the *bedhaya*, although it is performed by only four female dancers (Colour Plate 24).



62. *Golek* performance at Dalem Pujokusuman, Yogyakarta. (Photograph author)

Serimpi is also of ancient origin, with distinct symbolic connotations. Its four dancers are seen as representing the four universal elements of earth, water, fire, and air, as well as the four cardinal points of the universe. The composition depicts a battle with crises between the four heroines, although the actual plot or story is only alluded to, as if taking place in a distant, mythical past. Notwithstanding its ritual nature, *serimpi* does not have quite the same aura of sacredness as *bedhaya*, and when court dances began to be taught outside the *kraton* in the 1910s, *serimpi* was chosen as the basis of Javanese classical female dance.

There are also forms of solo dance cultivated in the *kraton*, which do not, however, have the same ritual connotations as the above-mentioned female group dances. The most popular one is the *golek*, a solo dance portraying a young girl growing into womanhood (Plate 62). The basic position and technique resemble *bedhaya* and *serimpi*, but the descriptive movements depict the self-beautifying of a maiden. The name *golek* refers to *wayang golek* puppetry, and this dance has its parallel in the *wayang golek* repertoire. The *golek* has traditionally been performed at festive receptions, and at present it has become one of the stock numbers of tourist shows.

Martial dances for male performers also evolved in the *kraton*, the most famous group being the *beksa* of the *kraton* of Yogyakarta. They were originally performed by two groups of soldiers of the royal guard, depicting scenes of warfare with a strong military spirit.

Most of the court dances are traditionally attributed to sultans, and many of the rulers are themselves known to have been skilled dancers. The performers were mostly close relatives of the sultan, or members of the court and the bodyguard. The dances are of a highly aristocratic character (Colour Plate 25), and consequently Central Javanese dancers have usually had an exceptionally high social status. In 1918 the first public dance society was founded, extending the court traditions outside the *kraton*. However, the aristocratic nature of the dances has survived despite these developments. At present, the court traditions are taught and performed by several private dance societies, although the *kraton* of Surakarta and especially Yogyakarta are still the best places to see authentic court performances.

Masked Dances: Topeng

Java is the home of several mask theatre and dance traditions, which are commonly referred to as *wayang topeng* (*wayang*: shadow or puppet; *topeng*: mask). They are believed to have evolved from early shamanistic burial and initiation rites. Mask traditions universally contain shamanistic features, for when an actor puts on a mask he gives up his own identity and embodies the character of the mask, usually a mythical being such as a demon, a supernatural hero, or a god. The earliest known literary reference to *wayang topeng* is from 1058, and mask theatre is believed to have been very popular in the kingdoms of East Java over the following centuries. This led to

the birth of *wayang wwang*, a spectacular form of court theatre, where some of the characters are believed to have worn masks. Two performing traditions of *wayang topeng* developed: the impressive dance-drama of the court, and the village traditions, which still contain ancient shamanistic elements. Throughout the history of *topeng*, the 'major' court traditions and the 'minor' village traditions have been in a constant state of interaction.

Wayang topeng is often based on the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* epics, among other sources, but from a very early stage *The Adventures of Prince Panji* has been the most popular source of its plot material. This cycle was created in East Java during the Majapahit dynasty. Its hero, the handsome Prince Panji, combines features of earlier historical and mythical figures. He became the Javanese ideal hero *par excellence* along with Arjuna of the *Mahabharata* and Prince Rama of the *Ramayana*. By the end of the fourteenth century, the Panji romance spread to Bali and other parts of South-East Asia, where it is known in several versions. One of these is given below.

Prince Panji is distressed over the mysterious disappearance of his bride Candra Kirana on the eve of their wedding. A princess claiming to be Candra Kirana arrives at his palace, but she does not look at all like her. She is in fact a female demon who has fallen in love with Panji. The false bride says she is Candra Kirana who had to change her appearance when she fell into the hands of the goddess of death, and marrying Panji will restore her former looks. Panji orders preparations to be made for the marriage, and he eagerly awaits to see his beloved again in her familiar shape. Meanwhile, the real Candra Kirana has been taken away to a forest, where she complains of her fate until the gods mercifully tell her that she must return to the palace disguised as a man. She follows these orders, but is not able to contact Prince Panji. However, she sends him a message revealing the true character of the false bride. Then she must flee the palace. The horrified Panji has the demon-bride executed and rushes off to find his beloved. The lovers must, however, experience many adventures before being reunited. Panji lives for a while among ascetics and as a servant in palaces, and meets with many joys and dangers. Candra Kirana, disguised as a man, has her own adventures, and finally becomes the king of Bali. The climax is a battle scene, where Panji and Candra Kirana find themselves both on the same battlefield, but do not recognize each other. When the gods told the maiden to dress as a man, they also told her that she will not meet her lover before she has shed his blood in a duel. Now, the maiden, in the guise of the king of Bali, and Prince Panji engage in combat, but they are so even that neither is wounded. Candra Kirana resorts to feminine means and uses her hairpin, and only then is Panji wounded. They recognize each other, and the story has a happy ending.

Full-length *topeng* performances have become extremely rare, but *topeng* dance numbers are still presented. Popular items of

repertoire are the introductory dances of Prince Panji and Princess Candra Kirana, allowing them to display their respective psychological qualities with classical dance patterns. In *topeng* these are usually faster and more expressive than in other forms of Javanese dance-drama. An especially popular number is the so-called *kiprah* dance of the enamoured King Klana (also Klono, Kelana) with his red mask. It most probably evolved from ancient ritual dances, and is known in several versions throughout the island of Java. For example, in the *kraton* of Yogyakarta it survives as the classic *Klana topeng* dance (Colour Plate 26; Plate 63), and on the island of Madura it has its own highly different variants. The dance expresses the yearning of King Klana who has fallen in love with Candra Kirana. He imagines meeting his beloved and enacts with extremely expressive dance movements all the gestures of a vain man in love: he spruces himself up, arranges his hair, dresses in his best clothes, and plans to give a present to the object of his affections who never appears. The dance of King Klana is usually performed in the energetic dance style of a strong male figure, but it also exists in a noble *alus* version, where the character is more refined, though still a desperate lover (Plate 64).

The decreased popularity of mask theatre is usually explained by the spread of Islam. When the Central Javanese Mataram kingdom was divided into two in 1755, it was the *kraton* of Surakarta

63. *Klana topeng* dance at Dalem Pujokusuman, Yogyakarta. (Photograph author)

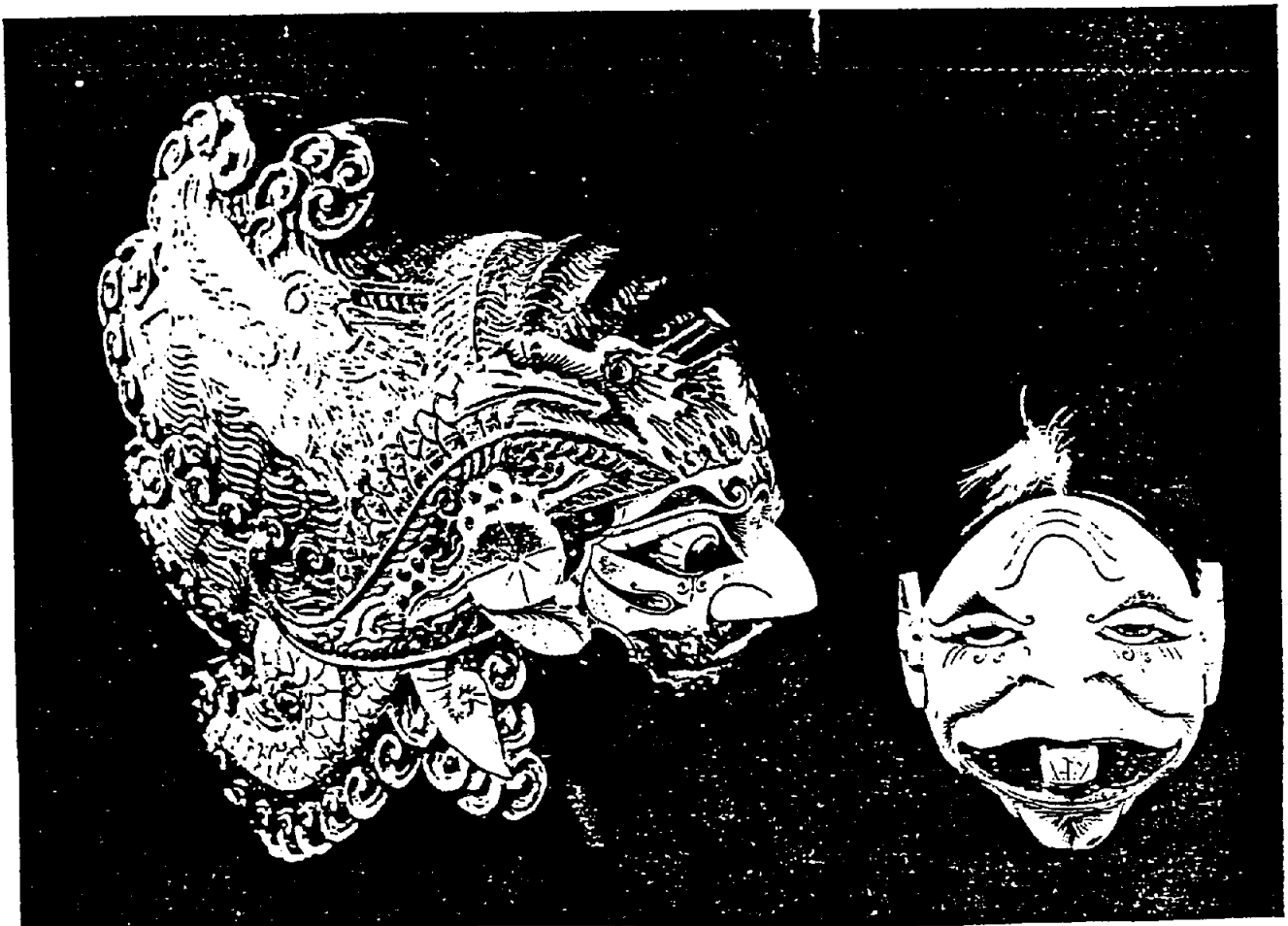
64. *Topeng* dance of a noble *alus* character performed at the *kraton* of Yogyakarta. (Photograph author)



that inherited the ancient *wayang topeng* tradition of Mataram and its old masks. In Yogyakarta, *wayang wong*, which developed in the late eighteenth century, replaced the spectacular mask theatre performances of the court, but the old mask sets are still revered in the *kraton* as royal *pusaka* heirlooms. Today, in the *kraton* of Surakarta and Yogyakarta, *topeng* is performed from time to time, although mostly as solo numbers. In addition to the rarely performed court *topeng*, popular forms of this genre survive and are performed especially in the villages of western Central Java. East Java and the island of Madura have their own mask theatre traditions, but *topeng* mostly thrives in Sunda in West Java, where Cirebon with its small *kraton* has been the traditional centre of *topeng*. Alongside the court performances, the villages around Cirebon still have their own vital mask traditions.

In all parts of Java the *topeng* masks share an aesthetic based on the iconography of the *wayang kulit* puppets. Carved out of wood, they mainly resemble the faces of the three-dimensional *wayang golek* puppets (Plates 65 and 66). Their stylization is almost abstract, and the oval masks of downward tapering form are usually slightly smaller than a human face. The faces of the noble characters are taut, narrowing towards a delicate chin, and the noses are sharply ridged and pointed. The eyes are elongated, and the mouths are small.

65. Heads of Sundanese *wayang golek* puppets resembling *topeng* masks: (left) Garbhakaca, son of Bima; (right) Semar, father of the servant clowns. (Collection of Theatre Museum, Helsinki; photograph Hannu Mannyöksi)



Strong characters, such as King Klana, wear energetic masks with long, upturned noses and wide-open, round eyes. The colour symbolism is the same as in the *wayang golek* puppets: noble characters have white or golden masks, although Prince Panji's mask is usually green. The masks of the strong characters, like King Klana, are usually red. The various local traditions clearly differ in style. In Central Java the masks are almost triangular; the masks of Madura retain their own archaic stylization; and the masks of Cirebon are perhaps the most abstract with almost symbol-like faces. The mask sets and collections on display in the National Museum in Jakarta, the Museum of Yogyakarta, and in many *kraton* museums demonstrate not only the local variations of mask styles but also their excellent artistic level.



66. Sundanese *topeng* masks in the collection of the Mangkunegaran *kraton* in Surakarta. (Photograph author)

Court Dance-drama: Wayang Wong

In its grandeur and extreme stylization, the Javanese *wayang wong* (*wayang*: shadow or puppet; *wong*: man) is undoubtedly one of the world's greatest theatrical traditions. Several forms of large-scale dance-drama are known from the early periods of Javanese history. A literary source from AD 930 refers to the *wayang uwang* dance-drama, a kind of *wayang kulit* performance where the puppets were replaced by human dancers. Its dance style is assumed to have been strongly influenced by India, and the actors were masked or unmasked according to the character portrayed. In the Majapahit kingdom, the court dance-drama was called *raket*. The stories were derived from a contemporary East Javanese story cycle known as *The Adventures of Prince Panji*, and the performances are known to have lasted from evening until noon the next day. The theatrical tradition of Hinduized East Java disappeared or partly changed with the spread of Islam to Java in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was, however, adopted by the Hindu courts of Bali, where it evolved into the *gambuh*, the quintessentially classical style of Balinese dance-drama.

In Java, *wayang topeng* mask theatre remained the most popular form of dance-drama until the eighteenth century. When the kingdom of Mataram in Central Java split in two in 1755 as a result of Dutch domination, the courts of Yogyakarta and Surakarta became rivals—mainly in the field of arts—as the Dutch had considerably curbed the actual political power of the rulers. The court of Surakarta inherited the highly valued *bedhaya* dance and the *topeng* mask theatre from the Mataram kingdom. The Sultan of Yogyakarta, Hamengkubuwana I (1755–92) therefore began to design a new form of theatre as his *pusaka* heirloom. In creating the spectacular *wayang wong* dance-drama, he explicitly strove to revive the dance-drama tradition of the ancient Majapahit dynasty in order to emphasize his role as the true descendant of Majapahit.

Wayang wong has many features in common with the *wayang kulit* shadow theatre. These include a similar overall aesthetic and the same narrative material, mainly from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* (Colour Plate 27; Plate 67); even the movements of the actors clearly imitate puppets. The steps and gestures of the actors are basically 'two-dimensional', designed to move to the left and the right like the movements of puppets on the screen. Like *wayang kulit*, *wayang wong* is accompanied by a large-scale court *gamelan* orchestra.

Wayang wong was closely linked to court ceremonies. Large spectacles were staged, for example, in honour of the sultan's coronation, or for weddings and birthdays. The performances had a deep symbolic meaning, and the hour of the spectacle and its plots were determined by the fact that the Sultan of Yogyakarta was identified with the Hindu god Vishnu. The performance began early in the morning, when the sun—identified with Vishnu—appeared in the sky. The sultan sat on a holy throne, always facing east in the middle



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of the famous Golden Hall under the highest point of its pyramidal roof, symbolizing the axis of the universe. The performance took place on a lower level in a smaller hall annexed to the magnificent Golden Hall, for no one was permitted to stand higher than the divine sultan. The performances, which lasted two days, were grandiose events, and the audience included not only members of the court but invited colonial representatives as well. *Wayang wong* was an exceptionally expensive art form placing heavy demands on the *kraton's* treasury. In some cases, the sultan even had to borrow money from the Dutch in order to be able to arrange these spectacles. The last full-scale court performance was staged in 1939.

In Yogyakarta, all the *wayang wong* actors were originally men, and included members of the royal family, other members of the court, and bodyguards. In Surakarta, Pangeran Adipati Mangkunegaran I, the contemporary and rival of Hamengkubuwana I, the creator of *wayang wong*, also began to compose *wayang wong* plays. This marked the beginning of the Surakartan *wayang wong* tradition of the Mangkunegaran *kraton* (Plate 68). The Yogyakarta and Surakartan styles differ in certain respects. In Surakarta women played female roles from the very beginning, and often noble hero characters as well. With its undulating movements, the Surakartan dance style is more subdued than the Yogyakarta style. There are also differences in costume and in the *gamelan* accompaniment.



68. Noble Prince Panji with his attendants in a *wayang wong* performance at the Mangkunegaran *kraton* in Surakarta. (VIDOC, Department of the Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

The movements of the *wayang wong* dancer-actors are generally fluid and solemn, and recitation is extremely stylized. The main language of the performances is Old Javanese, not the modern language, and the actors recite the lines themselves, while singers sitting among the *gamelan* perform the more demanding vocal parts. The performance is thus an intricately complex whole, where the concept of time and the structure is dictated by the *gamelan*'s soft and elaborate fabric of sound, further elaborated by the recitation, songs, and comments of the chorus. The dancer-actors move slowly, apparently according to their own logic, and from time to time remain frozen, reciting their lines in highly ornamental positions between their elegant dance movements. Because *wayang wong* borrowed the characterization of shadow theatre, the style of dance, costumes, make-up, and vocal technique are all dictated by the stock types portrayed.

The characters fall into three major categories: the female type, the refined male *alus* type, and the strong male *gagah* type. The



69. Sita and her attendant in a typically feminine pose in a *wayang wong* performance at Dalem Pujokusuman, Yogyakarta. (Photograph author)

dancer's physique determines his or her role type. The women must be petite and slender, and they should also have beautiful facial features. The noble male characters must also be slender and delicate, whereas the strong male type should be powerful in both body and appearance. The slow female dance is restrained and graceful, and its movements are directed to a low level covering only a narrow space. The female dancer rarely lifts her feet from the floor, and the basic position is always a *demi-plié* bent slightly forward (Plate 69). The movements of the refined male type are also directed to a rather low level, but the dancers are allowed to lift their feet slightly. Their whole dance technique aims at creating an overall impression of withheld strength, so typical of the South-East Asian hero ideal. The strong male type, on the other hand, moves energetically, standing in a very open leg position and lifting his arms and legs horizontally to create the impression of almost aggressive masculinity (Colour Plate 28; Plate 70; Figure 3). All the role types use four basic hand gestures (Plates 71–74), derived

70. The demon-king Ravana personifying aggressive masculinity in a *wayang leong* performance at Dalem Pujokusuman, Yogyakarta. (Photograph author)

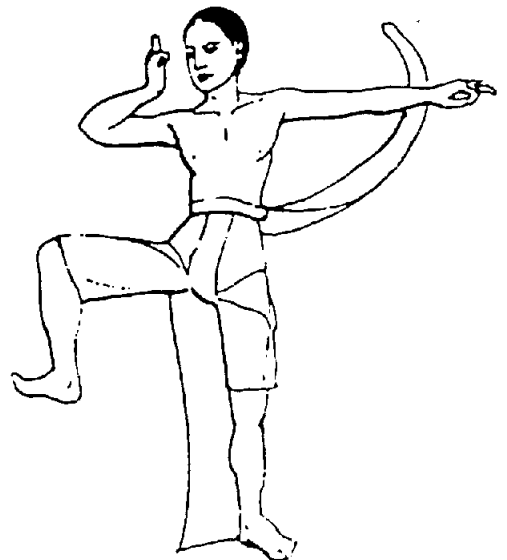
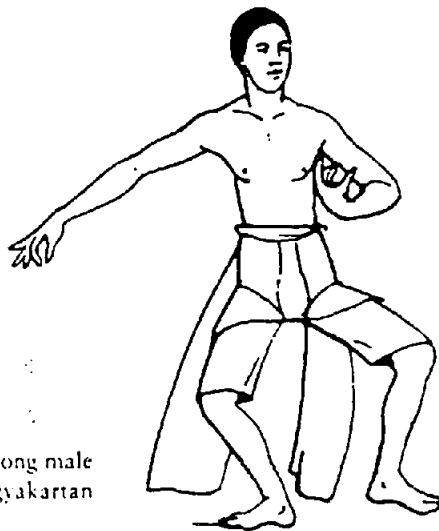
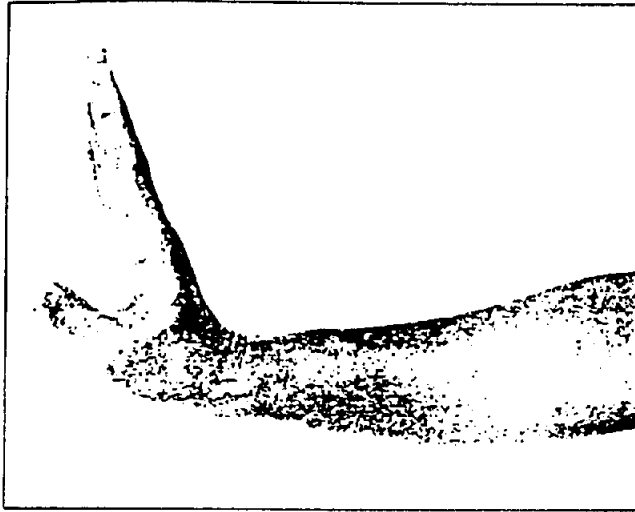
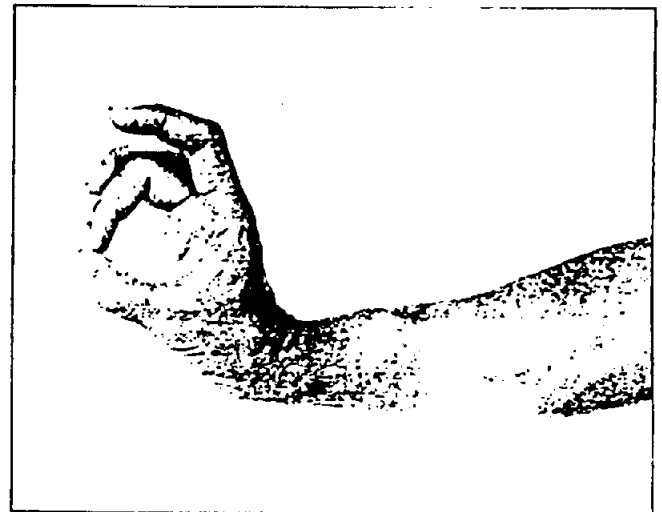


Fig. 3
Four of the basic poses for a strong male character in *wayang leong*, Yogyakarta style. (Paivi Lempien)

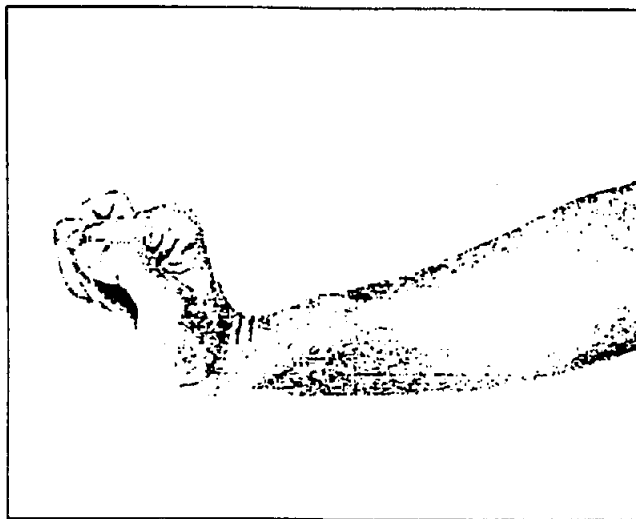
from the shadow puppets. These, in turn, are partly based on the Indian-influenced dance of the Central Javanese period, as shown by preserved reliefs and sculptures. Unlike the Indian *mudra*, the *wayang wong* hand gestures do not have—at least any more—any direct symbolic meaning. They are rather unforced, albeit extremely decorative gestural extensions of the dance movements.



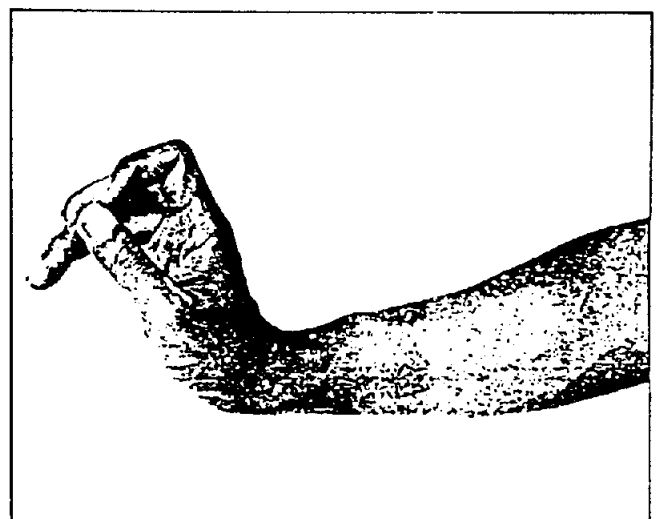
71. First basic hand gesture of *wayang wong*. (Photograph author)



72. Second basic hand gesture of *wayang wong*. (Photograph author)



73. Third basic hand gesture of *wayang wong*. (Photograph author)



74. Fourth basic hand gesture of *wayang wong*. (Photograph author)

The above three major role types are each divided into a number of subtypes (humble, refined, proud, servant, adviser, etc.). There is a total of twenty-one role types, each with its own style of make-up and dress. The leading types have their characteristic movement patterns revealing their psychological qualities. For example, symmetrical movements indicate strength, stability, and above all humility, whereas asymmetry is a sign of proud and powerful energy. The costume includes a brownish-black batik sarong with a tight black velvet bodice for women, while the men dance with bare torsos. Also worn are jewellery and a crown or tiara, skilfully cut and chased in gilt leather, with the model of the head-dress revealing the rank of the character. The overall aesthetics are familiar to *wayang kulit*, and in this century the dance costume and head-dress were made to correspond more closely to those of shadow puppets. Characterization is further emphasized with facial make-up, as masks are worn only by the demon and monkey figures (Plate 75). The slightly stylized make-up is light for the noble male and female roles, and red for the strong and coarse types. The facial make-up of the *panakawan* or servant clowns is usually white (Plate 76). Make-up can be divided into seven basic types, including, for example, various models of painted whiskers and beards for the men. The actors paint their whole body with yellowish *boreh* liquid, giving the skin a soft golden glow.



75. Hanuman wearing a papier mâché mask in a *wayang wong* performance at Dalem Pujokusuman, Yogyakarta. (Photograph author)



76. The white-faced Semar in a wayang wong performance at the kraton of Yogyakarta. (Photograph author)

The traditional *wayang wong* plots or *lakon*, which in the early nineteenth century finally developed into written 'librettos', are mostly based on the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. In Java, these originally Indian epics are regarded as national literature, even to the extent that their heroes are felt to be the mythical ancestors of the Javanese. It is no wonder then that the heroes have, in a way, begun to live their own lives and have given rise to new and purely Javanese stories which no longer have anything to do with the original epic context. For example, the *lakon Rama Nitisa* (The Incarnation of Rama) portrays an incarnation of Prince Rama of the *Ramayana* as the god Krishna of the *Mahabharata*. One of the earliest fantasies of this kind is the *kakawin* court poem, *Arjuna Vivaha*, composed in honour of King Airlangga's wedding in 1035, whose principal hero is the virtuous Arjuna of the *Mahabharata*. Although originally official court poetry lauding the virtues of a ruler celebrating his marriage, it has survived as one of the most beloved and valued *lakon* of *wayang wong*.

In *Arjuna Vivaha*, the heavenly realm of the god Indra is in a state of turmoil. A terrifying demon, who is possessed by his love for the nymph Supraba, becomes enraged when Indra refuses to give the maiden to him. A difficult situation arises, for none of the gods can beat the demon in battle, and it is known that only a heroic mortal can do this. A message arrives at a meeting of the gods, telling the assembly that the heroic Arjuna has retired to a cave to practise asceticism and meditation to prepare himself for battle. Indra decides to test Arjuna's will-power and self-control to find out whether he is able to conquer the demon. He selects the seven most beautiful nymphs and sends them to the cave to tempt Arjuna. The loveliest nymph is Supraba, with whom the demon falls in love. To their dismay, the nymphs must return to Indra's heaven, as the fair Arjuna remained unperturbed; he did not even notice the maidens. Indra decides on another trial to find out if Arjuna's asceticism is meant only for his own salvation, or whether he is interested in the most important task of all—to help the whole of creation. Disguised as an old ascetic, Indra finally makes Arjuna speak. To his pleasure, Indra hears that Arjuna is practising meditation in order to better fulfil his duties as a warrior and to be able to help others. The demons hear of Arjuna's meditation, which makes them concerned. One of the demons transforms himself into an enormous wild boar and begins to topple the mountain where Arjuna is meditating in the cave. Bow in hand, Arjuna steps out of the cave, and at the same moment the god Shiva appears in the guise of a king on a hunting expedition, also ready to shoot the boar. They tense their bows at the same time and their arrows fly into the boar's flesh. They meet their mark simultaneously in exactly the same spot, and miraculously blend into a single arrow. Shiva claims the arrow for himself, which leads to an argument and a fight, but Arjuna manages to throw Shiva down on the ground. When he tries to catch Shiva's foot, it miraculously disappears.

and flowers begin to rain from heaven as Shiva now appears in his divine form. Arjuna kneels in respect, and the god gives him the magic arrow, instructing him in the art of combat (Plate 77). The time is now ripe for the grand battle, and the gods invite Arjuna to visit them to work out a scheme to find out the demon's weak point. Together with the lovely Supraba, Arjuna, now invisible, sets out to meet the demon, who is overjoyed to see the maiden coming voluntarily to him. The lovesick demon approaches the maiden, but Supraba asks him to reveal the secret of his strength as her bridal reward. The foolish demon reveals that his tongue is the only part of his body that can be wounded. The invisible Arjuna causes a commotion, Supraba flees, and the demon realizes his grave error. An enraged army of demons sets out to attack the heavens. One after another, the heavens fall to the invaders, who now approach Indra's realm, the highest heaven of all. Finally, Arjuna engages the demon in a duel and pretends to be wounded. When the demon begins to boast of his victory, Arjuna suddenly shoots his magic arrow into the demon's tongue, thus defeating him. A great celebration is held in Indra's heaven, and Arjuna is crowned King of Heaven for seven days. He is sprinkled with the water of life, and Supraba, together with the six other nymphs, who tempted

77. God Shiva instructs Arjuna in the art of combat, a modernized version of Surakartan-style *Arjuna Wiraba* performed at Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta. (Photograph author)



him in the cave, are given to him as consorts. After the celebration, however, Arjuna asks Indra to let him return to earth to his brothers. Permission is granted and the seven nymphs express their heartache.

The flourishing period of dance and theatre, which began in the *kraton* of Yogyakarta and Surakarta in the mid-eighteenth century, continued throughout the following century. It led to new forms of *wayang wong*-related dance-drama. The best known of these are *langen driya* and *langen mandra wanara*. Around the middle of the nineteenth century Mangkunegoro V from the Mangkunegaran *kraton* in Surakarta created the *langen driya*, based on the adventures of the hero Darmawula, a story cycle dating back to the East Javanese Majapahit dynasty. It is performed by an all-female cast, who—unlike in *wayang wong*—sing all of their lines. *Langen mandra wanara*, also a kind of *wayang wong*-derived 'dance opera', was created in the late nineteenth century by Prince Danuredjo VII of Yogyakarta. Its plot material is based solely on the *Ramayana*, and its name derives from the epic's monkey characters (*wanara*: monkey). The monkeys also lend a special feature to the whole performing technique—*langen mandra wanara* is performed in a crouching position and the movement patterns are characterized by monkey-like movements and gestures. At present, both *langen driya* and *langen mandra wanara* are rarely performed, although the latter experienced a kind of renaissance in the 1980s when a complete performance was recorded by Radio France. The original *wayang wong*, on the other hand, is still performed actively, and it can be truly regarded as the classical dance-drama of Java. It has evolved into new variants in the twentieth century, which has in many ways been a period of drastic change in the traditional performing arts.

The Twentieth Century

Until the beginning of the twentieth century most of Java's traditions of classical dance and theatre had been closely guarded treasures of the courts. Dance was mainly intended for court rituals, and its training was basically a means of educating the aristocracy and the court. The early years of this century brought about a number of changes that have come to be called the 'democratization of dance'. In 1918 the first dance society, Kridha Beka Wirama, was founded in Yogyakarta to teach court dances to all regardless of class. The idea was launched by the son of the Sultan of Yogyakarta, and the teachers included the best dance masters of the *kraton*. This marked the beginning of a still-active custom whereby the court traditions of Yogyakarta are taught in private dance societies to all who are interested, often for only a nominal fee. At present, the societies receive part of their income from performances aimed mainly at tourists. The leading dance societies in Yogyakarta that actively stage performances are the *kraton*-related Dalem Pujokusuman and Dalem Notoprajan associations.

The gradual popularization of *wayang wong* began in Surakarta in the 1890s when a Chinese businessman founded a commercial group adapting the *wayang wong* tradition of the Mankunegaran *kraton*. This new style, generally referred to as *wayang orang*, was aimed at ordinary city audiences. The company, now under the name of Sriwedari, still performs in the amusement park in Surakarta (Colour Plates 29–31). The Bharata Theatre, founded in the 1940s, maintains the Mankunegaran tradition in this modernized form in Jakarta. *Wayang orang* is usually performed on a Western-type proscenium stage with heavy illusionistic backdrops, and an abundance of various stage effects. Commercial *wayang orang* groups are also active in the smaller towns, such as Semarang and Malang.

Despite modernization, *wayang orang* has preserved something of its original stylized dance-drama character. This is not the case with the Central Javanese *ketoprak* (Plate 78) and the East Javanese *ludruk*, which are forms of popular theatre developed around the end of the nineteenth century. Their plots are based not only on the traditional stock stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* but also on historical or modern topics. The performances are accompanied by music and include dance numbers, although the main emphasis is on a less stylized acting resembling Western spoken theatre. On the whole, stagecraft is similar to *wayang orang*, although there is even more of an emphasis on realism and even naturalism. *Ketoprak*

78. *Ketoprak* performed in the Bharata Theatre, Jakarta. (Photograph author)



and *ludruk* are actively performed on temporary stages and in the theatre halls of amusement parks in various parts of Java.

Since the early nineteenth century, theatre has also been a platform of nationalistic ideas, and in the 1940s, when Indonesia was in the process of gaining independence, even *wayang kulit*, the most traditional form of theatre, was used to propagate patriotism and new political ideas. In the field of dance the new, nationalistic theatre organizations followed the model of the European socialist countries in transforming old traditions into new, 'mass-oriented' variants, such as the peasant's dance, the tea-picker's dance, and the dance of the fishermen. These works are clearly linked to the political ideas of their day, and it is no wonder that they have not found their place in the basic repertoire of Javanese dance. Western theatre and dance has begun to interest Indonesians to an increasing degree, and many artists have studied in the West, especially in the United States since the 1960s. This, of course, had an effect on the development of dance and theatre. Modern Western dance and spoken theatre, and their adaptation to local conditions found a ready response especially among university intellectuals.

In the early 1960s *sendratari* (*seni*: drama, *tari*: dance) was developed as yet another spectacular form of *wayang wong*-derived dance-drama (Colour Plate 32; Plate 79). It had none of the patriotic fervour of the 1940s and 1950s, and was mainly intended for both Javanese and foreign tourists. The first *sendratari* performance was staged in 1961 and was especially designed for an outdoor stage

79. Rama, Sita, and the court in a *sendratari* performance in front of the Prambanan temple in Central Java. (Photograph author)



erected in front of the Hindu temple of Prambanan in Central Java with the temple's enormous silhouette as its background. The choice of the theme and venue of this first *sendratari* production is self-evident: the Prambanan temple area is one of Java's main tourist attractions and it is also related to the *Ramayana* through its magnificent series of reliefs. The Prambanan spectacle has come to be known as the 'Ramayana Ballet'. This is indeed an apt name for a genre where the overall dramaturgy with its impressive mass scenes and modern stage techniques is modelled after the practice of Western fairy-tale ballet. The 'Ramayana Festival' is still a yearly event, performed at the time of the full moon from May to October. The scenes and events of the epic are divided into four full-evening performances. *The Abduction of Sita* is presented on the first night, followed by *Hanuman's Mission to Lanka*, *The Conquest of Lanka*, and finally the fall of Ravana and the proof of Sita's marital fidelity.

The *sendratari* of Prambanan turned out to be a success, perhaps partly because of the growing tourist industry focusing on Central Java. It has become an obligatory event for tour groups, and the previous modest stage has been replaced by a luxurious amphitheatre. The 'Ramayana Ballet' served as a model for later *sendratari* productions, which were staged in other parts of Java at sites of tourist interest. While the Prambanan ballet was mostly based on the Central Javanese heritage, the stories and dance styles of later innovations are based on their respective local traditions. Near Surabaya in East Java there is a huge open-air stage with a perfectly conical volcano in the background. It was especially built for a *sendratari* production based on an East Javanese story combining in its presentation East Javanese and Balinese elements. In Cirebon in West Java, the local *sendratari* is staged in front of an ancient stone garden, and its dance style is based on local *topeng* dances. As a kind of Pan-Indonesian state art, the *sendratari* has also been adopted outside Java, for example, in Bali.

The present teaching of dance and drama is organized along Western lines in government-sponsored institutes such as the university-level Institut Seni Indonesia (Indonesian Institute of Arts) in Yogyakarta and in colleges and high schools in various parts of Java. The curriculum includes local traditions as well as Western dance and drama. In Jakarta, the Taman Ismail Marzuki Art Centre is the dominating institute, having played a decisive role in the formation of contemporary Indonesian dance and theatre. The old court traditions live on in the *kraton* of Yogyakarta and Surakarta, within limited resources, and their heritage is also maintained by many private dance societies.