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## THE ARTIST REGISTRY

Tracking itinerant artists before and after Suharto's 1965 coup d'état in the Cirebon region, West Java\*

*This article examines the role of state intervention on itinerant artists in the Cirebon region one year before and after Suharto's 1965 coup d'état (Gestok). Two artist identification cards from Majalengka are central to the study: the first one was inaugurated six months before the coup, the second card anticipated Gestok's first anniversary. Although the registries were launched by two political regimes with disparate agendas, both were issued by the Regency of Majalengka's Education and Culture Department.*

### Introduction

This article examines the role of state intervention on Cirebon-region<sup>1</sup> mask dance (*topeng Cirebon*) troupes, in the year leading up to and following Suharto's 1965 coup d'état, *Gestok*.<sup>2</sup> To interpret the artist registry, we must first understand the political

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<sup>1</sup>Cirebon proper is in the province of West Java, along Java's northwest coast or *pasisir* region. Administratively, the region is currently defined as Badan Kordinasi Wilayah III Cirebon, which includes the regencies (*kabupaten*) of Cirebon, Majalengka, Indramayu, and Kuningan, and the city of Cirebon.

<sup>2</sup>*Gestok* is an acronym for *Gerakan Sabtu Oktober* (1st October Movement), reflecting the actual date of the putsch in which six generals and one army officer were killed. The term was introduced by Sukarno during a cabinet meeting on 9 October 1965, in his (unsuccessful) bid to stop use of the

and religious activities that precipitated the focus on these itinerant artists. A brief account of the form and its practitioners is provided in order to contextualise their significance to both regimes.

*Topeng Cirebon* is an old, rural transvestite mask tradition from Java's northwest coast. Unlike the court-sponsored artists of Yogyakarta and Surakarta, the income of most Cirebonese *dalang* was derived from *sawah* (wet rice) farming and itinerant performing activities. *Dalang topeng* (masked dancers of pedigree) are Muslim and identify their art as an Islamic genre. Although it is considered an Islamic form today, *topeng*'s predominantly Sufist features are blended with older indigenous, shamanistic, and Hindu beliefs.<sup>3</sup> The dancers trace their lineage to the Sufi saint, Sunan Kalijaga, who, legend has it, wandered from village to village creating shows with objects already esteemed on the island – chiefly, masks and puppets. The cost of admission was the profession of faith (*shahadat*). Each dancer, the majority of whom are female, performs behind a series of five masks portraying male characters. Though abstract, the dances are cautionary tales about the choices one makes throughout life. One might, for example, emulate the first character in the pantheon, the refined Panji, or succumb to the greed of the last, Kelana. While *dalang topeng* are not expressly referred to as *dukun* (shaman), they are believed to have curative powers resulting from their Sufi lineage and from

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pejorative acronym initiated by the Suharto regime, *Gestapu* (30th September Movement). The term 'Gestapu' placed the date as 30 September (Setiawan 2003: 99–100). Two theories persist about who initiated the putsch that swiftly led to Suharto's coup. Anderson and McVey, whose research was completed in January 1966 but not published until 1971, point to dissatisfied junior officers as likely behind it. The second theory – and the official version promoted by the Suharto regime – places disgruntled PKI members as its driving force. The second theory has gained currency in recent years, resulting from important new research conducted by Ragna Boden (2007) and John Roosa (2006). Boden, whose information is gathered from newly available Soviet and East German archives, shows that unofficial discussions took place between high-level PKI members and Soviet and East German officials. Roosa contends that the putsch was organised and committed by a small cadre of high-ranking PKI members whose organisational weakness, combined with tactical errors, led to its failure. Both authors place PKI chairman D.N. Aidit as having played an important role in the failed coup. References to the 1965 'coup' in this study refer only to the second event, which propelled Suharto to power.

<sup>3</sup>These characteristics are elegantly synthesised in the mask character of Chinese descent, Aki-Aki (the old man), who stylistically straddles between sage and comic. During the 1960s, he was often called upon to heal the infirm or bless newborns. During *wayang wong* (mask drama) performances, Aki-Aki typically admonishes his son, the clown, Pentul, to refrain from gambling in the *mushala* (an informal place where Muslims worship). This is a modern take on the *Pendawa dadu* scene in the Javanese version of the Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*. In the scene, the *Pendawa* kingdom is lost to the *Kurasawas* as the consequence of gambling. Later, Pentul places Aki-Aki's sarong over his own. Though the meaning of this gesture is lost today, the *bodor* (clown) is engaged in the ritual transmission of the initiatory cloak. In Sufi circles all over the world, this garment is passed from the *shaykh* to his or her *murid* (student) once a certain level of spiritual attainment has been reached. The gesture's meaning is two-fold: first, it indicates that the student is worthy of succession and, second, that succession is *now* being formally initiated. The practice is known by both Sunni and Shi'a mystics as *khirqah* and *kias*, respectively. Both his ethnicity and his healing functions suggest that this character once served a purely shamanistic function. For further reading on Aki-Aki, see Suanda (1983: 138–41; 156–57, fn.51).

performing rigorous ascetic practices, including extensive fasts, meditation, and pilgrimages to holy sites (*ziarah*). That these subaltern, predominantly female heirs to the tradition are invested with such recondite power constitutes a unique representation in Islam.<sup>4</sup>

*Dalang topeng*, *dalang wayang* (puppeteers), *bodor* (clowns), and *nayaga* (the musicians who accompany them) are typically bonded through family lineage and/or marriage. In the 1960s, these troupes were frequently hired as a unit for life-cycle events, with *topeng* performed during the day and *wayang* at night.

While *topeng* is clearly very old, its modern function is indelibly linked with Indonesia's post-independence national identity. By the 1950s, Sukarno was exporting it (and other indigenous art forms) to non-aligned countries as a form of politico-cultural exchange.<sup>5</sup> Tensions between the form's local context and national significance made it ripe for political conflict when the artist registry was launched in March 1965. Those tensions were concretised when, less than one year after Gestok, a second card was issued by Suharto's Operations Command for Security and Order, Kopkamtib. The issuance of two different cards for the same cluster of artists over two critical periods indicates how things unfolded on the ground. More than a relic, each card represents a particular human being with a designated skill, kin and group affiliation, and community membership.

I first learned of the artist registry in 2005, during a scheduled interview with an elderly *dalang topeng*, who has requested anonymity. Greeting me at the door, the *dalang* asked if I wanted to see her artist identification card before we began. I did not know what she was referring to and responded that I only wanted to speak with her about *topeng*. 'Good!' she replied, adding, 'I burned mine years ago!' Her contempt for the card was palpable. It also signalled its importance. From that moment on, I was on a mission to locate the elusive card. I presumed that I would eventually locate a late New Order<sup>6</sup> artist registration card in the possession of a performer. But with each inquiry, the response was a variation on one theme: 'I burned' or 'destroyed' or 'tore mine into little pieces' after Suharto stepped down. Much to my surprise, seven months and countless queries later, a group of cards were located in late 2005. They were being stored in the home of a *pemimpin* (troupe leader) of a *topeng/wayang* troupe. The cards for each troupe member of his company were together. However, these were not the late versions of the cards that I had searched for; rather, they were the original 1965 issue. And with them was a collection of a different kind of registration card issued in 1966 that represented the same troupe members. All of the cards had been stored by the troupe leader in an envelope with his marriage certificate. I asked

<sup>4</sup>Mask use is uncommon in much of the Muslim world due to prohibitions on fashioning idols and imagery. In those societies where mask culture survives, they are chiefly male activities.

<sup>5</sup>Suharto, likewise, regularly sent select *topeng* troupes to Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, and Hong Kong, from the 1970s onwards.

<sup>6</sup>Sukarno's Old Order was replaced with Suharto's New Order whose authoritarian regime had a strong military component. The New Order was chiefly concerned with economic development, sustaining political order, and the bureaucratisation of cultural and political organisations. It kept ordinary Indonesian citizens out of the political process by suppressive means that included illegal elections, political detainment, torture, and genocide. Anti-*Peranakan* Chinese legislation periodically led to violence, while restricting and, in some cases, abolishing their religious, linguistic, and cultural freedom.

why he kept the cards so long. He replied, 'I thought someone might ask to see them one day.'

### Sukarno's vision for the arts

Imperial Japan's effort to create a pan-Asian economy free of western influence required Javanese support of its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere during its occupation of Java (1942–1945). Seeking the most efficacious way to reach those rural Javanese who lacked formal education, the Japanese military employed the 'consultation system', a method similar to one used at home to disseminate ideas through the Japanese press. There, 'unofficial announcements' (*naishi*) were made during the 'polite' briefings (*kondan*), with instructions for 'positive guidance' (*sekkyokuteki ni shido*) (Kasza 1988: 168–93). The Japanese officers utilised oral media, particularly propagandistic film and performing arts, including a form similar to the Javanese court tradition of *wayang beber*<sup>7</sup> called *kamishibai*, in which a story is told in scrolled pictures (Kurasawa 1991: 36). Sukarno well understood the consultation system, having collaborated with the Japanese during their occupation of Java. In 1943, he was named Chairman of the Central Advisory Council of Putera (*Pusat Tenaga Rakjat*, or Center of People's Power), which addressed Javanese concerns. Soon thereafter, he was designated Chief of the head office of the civilian organisation for community services, *Djawa Hookoo Kai*.<sup>8</sup> The consultation system's mixture of positive mobilisation and coercion proved so successful in Java that Sukarno employed it at the village level after the War.

The relationship between culture and national identity, though raging long before Indonesia's independence, was concretised immediately thereafter. One of Sukarno's first acts as president was to establish Indonesia's culture department in 1945 (Lindsey 1995: 658). The 1950 conference on 'National Culture' led to the subsidisation and, with it, the proliferation of arts organisations: among them, the socialist art organisation, Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (Lekra, or People's Cultural League) the same year; the Nationalist Party of Indonesia's (Partai Nasional Indonesia, or PNI) art wing, Lembaga Kebudayaan Nasional (LKN, or National Institute of Culture) in 1959;<sup>9</sup> and several art conservatories (Foulcher 1969: 430, 432; Parani 2003: 78–80). While Lekra never formally declared itself a subsidiary of the communist party,

<sup>7</sup>The earliest known mention of *wayang beber* was in the 15th century. It is rarely performed today except for tourists. The form blends painting and oral recitation, essentially bridging the visual and performing arts. Anderson (1974: 35–6) suggests that *wayang beber*'s decline may be traced to the rise of Islam, civil wars, and colonial aggression.

<sup>8</sup>Sukarno publicly distanced himself from the Japanese near the end of their occupation, when he outlined the five basic principles of the Pancasila: nationalism, humanitarianism, democracy, social welfare, and monotheism (though pluralistic). Sukarno enumerated these as the ideological foundation for a sovereign Indonesia in his landmark speech before the Investigating Committee for the Preparation of Independence (Aziz 1955: 212–5; Kanahale 1967: 78; Sukarno's *pancasila* speech is described in Kahin 1970: 122–7).

<sup>9</sup>LKN was a relative latecomer and incorporated many of the ideas laid out in Sukarno's 1959 Manipol address, in which he delineated the return to Indonesia's 1945 constitution. Under the leadership of Sitor Situmorang, LKN moved ideologically closer to Lekra in 1962, in response to Sukarno's

it nonetheless enjoyed overlapping membership (including PKI Chairman Aidit) with frequent collaborations between the two organisations. LKN, in contrast, was the formally recognised art organ of the PNI.

Sukarno installed martial law in 1957 in an effort to bring stability to the fledgling nation state following a series of crises that included six failed cabinets, regional conflicts in Sulawesi and Sumatra, and Islamic group factions. His Guided Democracy (1957–1965) was based on a village political structure wherein village chiefs (*lurah*) enjoyed expanded powers as ex officio heads of the neighborhood associations, whose direct superior in cultural matters was the Culture Department chief. In Cirebon, the village chief's responsibilities included deflecting rebellions while ensuring registration dues were paid on time, permits processed, and regulations enforced. While villager participation was emphasised, the *lurah's* decision was final. Sukarno referred to these discussions as *musjawarah*, which is derived from Arabic *mushāwara*. In Arabic, *mushāwara* is a generic term for any kind of consultation, but in the Indonesian context it translates as 'friendly' or 'polite consultation' and is often linked with *mufakat* (Arabic: *muwāfaqa*), meaning 'consensus'. Taken together, the terms are conceptualised as democratic representation through consultation that culminates in consensus.

As it is practised in Indonesia, *musjawarah* bears a striking resemblance to the *kondan* model of control. Essentially, it was a reconstitution of the *Tonari Gumi* neighborhood associations installed by the Japanese occupiers throughout Java by 1943 and known locally as *roekoen tetangga* (Benda 1958: 154–5; Niessen 1995: 125–8).<sup>10</sup> Sukarno likely stressed the Arabic term in order to further distance himself from the Japanese empire.

The connective tissue of kinship and group affiliation among *topeng* and *wayang* troupes appealed to Sukarno, who viewed the artist's role in secular terms: as a conduit for merging traditional imagery with national identity. In addition to being a village art, *topeng* combined indigenous dance and music with comedy. One year after the President enjoyed a *topeng* performance in Tangkil, Cirebon, in 1957, he made it part of Indonesia's annual Independence Day celebrations held at the Istana Negara (state palace) in Jakarta. His enthusiasm for *topeng* extended to all of his children, who studied the dance form with arguably the greatest living *dalang topeng* of her generation, Dasih. The troupe, which was organised by the drummer Entang from the village of Bongas in Majalengka, shared meals with Sukarno and his family, performed for family and guests, and even spent the night at the palace.<sup>11</sup>

Sukarno's investment in rural art forms extended beyond domestic policy. He integrated them into the highest level of diplomacy with his *misi kesenian* (art missions). Sundanese arts were exported to China, India, Egypt, Thailand, and the former Soviet bloc. By the late 1950s, the cultural division of the Ministry of Education was subsidising cultural exchanges with fellowships for international performers and approving those awarded to Indonesian artists by foreign sponsors (Parani 2003: 80–1). When these international leaders made state visits, Indonesian national identity was merged with

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formation of Nasakom (*Nasionalisme* [nationalism] – *Agama* [religion] – *Komunisme* [communism]). Nasakom sought to appease the army, Muslim groups, and communists under Guided Democracy.

<sup>10</sup>The *rukun tetangga* (its current spelling) continues in Javanese municipalities today, where they serve as intermediaries between local government and its inhabitants, and also as neighborhood watches.

<sup>11</sup>Retired Cirebon Culture Department official, Ishak Herdjan, confirmed this with Sukarno's daughter Sukmawati in the 1980s. Pers. com., 6 August 2005.

popular entertainment at the state palaces in Jakarta and Bogor, and in Bandung (Ardjo, 1998: 133–43; Arjo, 1989: 171).<sup>12</sup> In addition to Bandung being the cultural centre of West Java, it is the capital of the province. It was in 1955 that 29 non-aligned Asian and African heads of state from previously colonised regions gathered there for the first (and only) Asia-Africa Conference of unity. The conference put Bandung on the world map. It became a destination point in the years that followed for visiting dignitaries.<sup>13</sup> It was at the Governor's Bandung residence that India's first president, Rajendra Prasad, viewed Priangan-style *topeng*<sup>14</sup> (Figure 1). Ho Chi Minh enjoyed an *angklung* performance by Sundanese school children (Figure 2) and the farmer dance, *Tari Tani* (Figure 3), in the ballroom of Bandung's opulent Dutch art deco hotel, Grand Savoy Homann. *Tari Tani* was choreographed by the director of the socialist art organisation, Lekra's dance division, Bandung choreographer, Raden Oni Martasoeta.<sup>15</sup>

Peasant artists were still beholden to the village chief in post-Independence Indonesia, yet the shift from internal to external orientation also offered opportunities to engage with political parties and those organisations linked to them (Kartodirjo 1977: 12). Even so, Central and East Javanese performers were more closely aligned with the government and better organised than their West Javanese colleagues, some of whom had officially sanctioned subgroups.<sup>16</sup> Their contact with PKI and Lekra ideology occurred during Pemuda Rakjat (Youth Congress) meetings and lectures (Brandon 1967: 213–21; Peacock 1968: 41). By contrast, puppeteers of *wayang golek* (rod puppet theatre) in Bandung created Jajasan Padalangan (Foundation for the Art of the *Dalang*) in 1961 to insulate their art from external political forces (Foley 1979: 250–1). It was different for the majority of Cirebon artists, whose contact with communists resulted from PKI outreach, notably when performing at their functions. The PNI, who dominated the Education and Culture Department, was thus invested in both knowing and controlling artists' itineraries, particularly when they performed outside of their sub-district. (*kecamatan*).

The growth of Java's two main political parties may have resulted from Sukarno's subsidisation of cultural organisations, but both organisations recognised the centrality of grassroots performance to village life, for it was in the public sphere that social and political information was disseminated. Most community members, including the regional PKI and PNI officials interviewed for this project, believed *dalang* had achieved a high level of mastery that included shamanic powers and that their sophisticated use of masks could alter the way spectators processed information.<sup>17</sup> These skills made them

<sup>12</sup>Kathy Foley, pers. com., 12 August 2006.

<sup>13</sup>When the Asia-Africa Conference celebrated its 50th anniversary with a global leadership programme in Jakarta (2005), dignitaries from many of the countries represented at the 1955 conference returned to Bandung for two days of cultural programmes commemorating the anniversary.

<sup>14</sup>A Sundanese form of masked dance that was adapted from *topeng* Cirebon.

<sup>15</sup>Enoch Atmadibrata, pers. com., 6 January 2004.

<sup>16</sup>For example, *ketoprak*, a popular comedic theatre form with close ties to the PKI, had founded its All-Indonesian Ketoprak Organization, *Bakosi*, in Yogyakarta in 1957. Members of the Surabaya-based transvestite comedic form *ludruk*, who had even closer PKI ties, formed the association, *Lembaga Ludruk*.

<sup>17</sup>This stood in sharp relief to the attitudes of the Yogyakarta and Surakarta (Solo) courts, where McVey (1986: 39), Sears (1996: 151), and Groenendaal (1985: 36) have argued the puppeteers' aestheticism was valued.



**FIGURE 1** *Tari Topeng Rahwana*. Priangan-style *topeng* performance for Rajendra Prasad (in white, seated behind the table and microphone). The Governor's residence, Bandung, 11 December 1958. Collection of Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia.



**FIGURE 2** Ho Chi Minh (holding *angklung*, rear centre) and Sukarno (in black *peci*) pose with young *angklung* performers. Hotel Savoy Homann, Bandung, 4 March 1959. Collection of Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia.



**FIGURE 3** Performance of *Tari Tani* at Hotel Savoy Homann ballroom. Ho Chi Minh (in white) is seated to the left of Sukarno in the front row, centre. 4 March 1959. Collection of Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia.

highly desirable to the communist and nationalist officials who actively recruited them, even while their motives were different. The PKI elevated the *dalang*'s multiple functions as healer, leader, and one-person propaganda machine (Aidit 1964: 83), whereas the PNI emphasised the *dalang*'s prestige generally, and the culture department's financial gain, specifically. Live performance, as such, proved to be an important battleground between the two parties.

### Aidit's ideological stance on the arts

Sukarno's 1959 Independence Day speech, 'Manifesto Politik' (Manipol), outlined his return to the 1945 constitution and autocratic rule, wherein he was designated president for life. Many intellectuals, including artists, understood that Manipol portended the end of their artistic freedom. Exactly four years later, on 17 August 1963, a group of Indonesian intellectuals drafted their cultural manifesto, 'Manifes Kebudayaan' (*Manifes; Manikebu*), whose core tenet of 'humanistic universalism' was a proactive response to Manipol-USDEK<sup>18</sup> and Lekra. Cultural intellectual Wiratmo Soekito was the architect of the Manifes, whose original signatories include literary critic H.B. Jassin, and writers Goenawan Mohamad, and Soe Hok Djin (Arief Budiman).<sup>19</sup> The

<sup>18</sup>In 1960, the term 'Manipol' was replaced with 'Manipol-USDEK'. The acronym USDEK synthesises Sukarno's nationalist ideology: the return to Indonesia's 1945 constitution, Indonesian Socialism, Guided Democracy, Guided Economics, and Indonesian Identity.

<sup>19</sup>The number of original signatories varies, since different versions of the document appear with the same date. Some names were likely added subsequent to the original vote upon the Manifes' passage on 24 August 1964. Foulcher (1969: 440) and Teeuw (1994, II: 35) cite the following twelve signatories: H.B. Jassin, Trisno Sumardjo, Wiratmo Soekito, Zaini, Bokor Hutasaht, Goenawan



short-lived movement is known today as *Manikebu*, which is widely accepted as an acronym for Manifest Kebudayaan. However, insiders referred to it as '*Manifes*' when it was published. Correspondence between the document's signatories and published accounts of supporters as late as April 1964 bear this out. In contrast, the term '*Manikebu*' was imposed by detractors early on and referred to as such in the communist press. Here, its meaning was unambiguously derogatory: it translates as 'buffalo semen'. Although '*Manikebu*' was eventually appropriated by some of the original signatories, '*Manifes*' was the favoured term at the time of the debate and thus used herein.<sup>20</sup>

The relationship between Aidit and Sukarno was a delicate ecology, with Sukarno approving many of Aidit's projects in exchange for PKI support of the President's anti-western stance. Although Sukarno originally supported the *Manifes* debate, Aidit fiercely opposed it. The *Manifes*-backed All-Indonesia Writers Conference, *Konperensi Karyawan Pengarang se-Indonesia* (KKPSI), was an important counterweight to the Lekra-sponsored Conference of African-Asian Writers, which was scheduled at the same time and raised Aidit's ire. His call for a boycott of KKPSI was endorsed by Sukarno. Nonetheless, General Abdul Haris Nasution (and other key army figures supported it) and the boycott ultimately failed.<sup>21</sup> Less than two months after Aidit wrote an incendiary missive in *Harian Rakjat* (22 March 1964, cited in Foulcher 1969: 443) attacking *Manifes*' refusal to acknowledge Manipol-USDEK, the movement was banned by presidential decree on 8 May 1964.<sup>22</sup> Rather than quashing the debate, the ban ignited a widespread underground movement, which now included performers and their institutions.<sup>23</sup> Even so, *Manifes* would not be revisited.

*Manifes*'s momentum was apparently behind Aidit's research project on the state of the peasant in West Java during the months leading up to the ban, where a greater number of family landholders worked in the service of government cultivation than in East Java and interior Central Java.<sup>24</sup> His foray into the predominantly rural region was a concise strategy to undermine the growing momentum of the better organised elite artists. Twenty-four districts were investigated by Aidit's researchers, which, in addition to Bandung, included Lemahabang, Cirebon; Jatitujuh, Madjalengka<sup>25</sup> (Majalengka); and Haurgeulis and Kandanghaur in Indramayu (Aidit 1964: 7). The

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Mohamad, Bur Rasuanto, Soe Hok Djinn, D. S. Moeljanto, Ras Siregar, Djufri Tanissan, and A. Bastari Asnin. Moeljanto and Ismail (1998: 160) document eight additional signatories to the above list: Hartojo Andangdjaja, Sjahwil, Binsar Sitompul, Taufiq A.G. Ismail, Gerson Poyk, M. Saribi Afri., Poernawan Tjondronagaro, and Boen S. Oemarjati.

<sup>20</sup>Gerson Poyk, pers. com., 8 May 2006.

<sup>21</sup>The Lekra conference never took place. One year later, Nasution would escape assassination during the coup attempt on 1 October 1965. His daughter, Ade Irma Suryani Nasution (1960–1965), was fatally wounded during the attempt.

<sup>22</sup>The President's declaration that *Manifes* was counter-revolutionary, was widely published within 48 hours of the ban. For example, see *Warta Bhakti*, 10 May 1964, 'Presiden larang "Manikebu".'

<sup>23</sup>Letters of support from the H.B. Jassin archive Jakarta, included W.S. Rendra and his company, Bengkel Kerja Warung Theatre (12 February and 26 April 1964); Teater Nasional Indonesia (2 June 1964); and Teater Muslim Indonesia Sumatera Selatan, Eddi Tarmiddi (26 January 1964).

<sup>24</sup>Research was conducted from 2 February to 23 March 1964.

<sup>25</sup>Jatitujuh was the home of the PNI-affiliated Culture chief, Dajim Sutawiria.

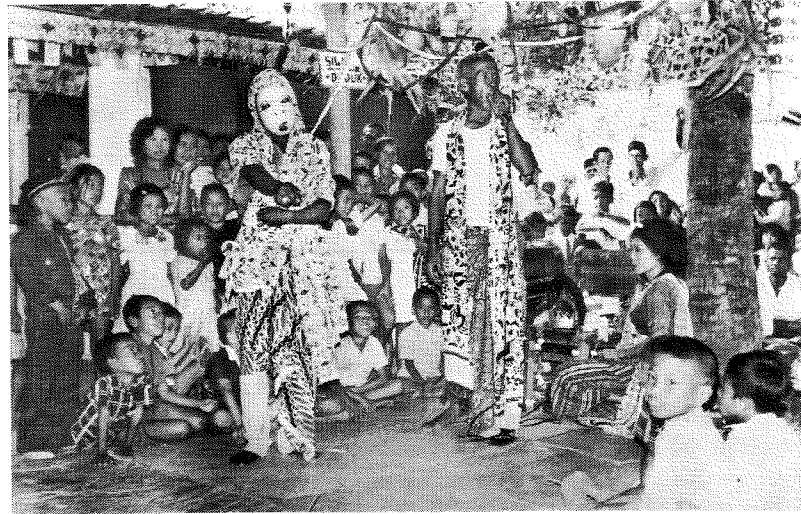
team's findings were published the same year in the slim treatise, *Kaum tani menggajang Setan-Setan Desa (Laporan singkat tentang hasil riset mengenai keadaan kaum tani dan gerakan tani Djawa Barat)* [The peasant class devours the village demons: a brief report regarding the outcome of research concerning the condition of the peasant class and peasant movement in West Java]. Aidit deemed seven types of demons oppressive to peasants in the region: landlords, usurers, people who purchase rice at deflated prices, middlemen, evil traders, rural bandits, and capitalists (Aidit 1964: 26–7).<sup>26</sup> The peasant-as-*dalang* was important to Aidit, who described *topeng*, *wayang*, and comedy as 'very positive' for spreading the revolution at the village level (Aidit 1964: 83). This idea was not far-fetched. The PKI's Indonesian Peasant Front (Barisan Tani Indonesia, BTI), claimed eight million members, accounting for approximately 40% of PKI's total membership (Cribb and Brown 1995: 91). The majority of Cirebon-region BTI members were from Indramayu. With the Manifesto now illegal, propagandistic films and other oral media were initiated to attract more Cirebonese to PKI-aligned organisations. In one article, the prominent, communist-aligned newspaper, *Bintang Timur* (24 May 1964), reported that a cinema in Cirebon, whose mayor was reportedly communist, was showing films that promoted the New Emerging Forces' (NEFO) anti-imperialist ideology.

While the PKI enjoyed spectacular success in attracting local farmers, their influence over *dalang topeng* was negligible. *Topeng* was favoured at PKI functions, even though suspicions ran high between the organisation and the artists. *Dalang topeng* Sujana Arja described his relationship with PKI as frosty.<sup>27</sup> Communists who hired *topeng* troupes to perform at their events were reportedly concerned about a potential link between these artists and members of the recently suppressed separatist Darul Islam and the Islamic Army of Indonesia, known as DI/TII (Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia). They routinely strip-searched the musicians in front of the guests to ensure they were not armed. DI/TII, likewise, had long been suspicious of the frequency with which *dalang* performed at PKI events. Sujana stressed that the reality was quite different: 'Because PKI members sometimes invited us to play, it was assumed we were Party members, when [in truth] we were only *paid* by the communists to dance.' DI/TII's other concern was the mask itself. Dancers were reprimanded for performing with them, which DI/TII viewed as heresy according to Islamic doctrinal injunctions on human representation.

While some puppeteers, clowns, and musicians were overtly political, the majority of *dalang topeng* were disinclined to express political views. The mask, furthermore, is held in place by biting into a piece of leather affixed to its inside, rendering speech

<sup>26</sup>In *Java under the cultivation system*, Robert van Niel contends that in those areas where government cultivation was introduced, village leaders were able to manipulate forced labour to increase personal profits under the cultivation system once the government's requirements were satisfied. The "seven demons" was adopted as a national concern at a PKI meeting held in Klaten, Central Java, in the months leading up to Gestok. This process of radicalisation, which was initially articulated in West Java, was more clearly expressed in East Java, where Barisan Tani Indonesia's (BTI) opposition intensified the conflict. The 'seven devils' theme was not only played out in violent activities, but on the stage of *ludruk* and *wayang* performances. Centre for Village Studies (1990: 130–2); Kartodirdjo (1977); Niel (1992: 72–3, 80).

<sup>27</sup>Sujana Arja, pers. com., 29 June 2005.



**FIGURE 4** Bulus (right) speaks directly to the audience, while another clown (left) performs Tembem. Photographer and date unknown. All possible efforts have been made to locate the copyright holder.

impossible while performing. By comparison, the clowns' *raison d'être* was heuristic and comedic: to critique local and national issues in a humorous way. Several sources describe Bulus from Slangit, Cirebon, as the most politically attuned *bodor* in Cirebon during the period, for which he was repeatedly taken to task (Figure 4). Long after Suharto's New Order (*Orde Baru*, 1966–1998) regime was firmly entrenched, he was subject to frequent interviews, though never detained.<sup>28</sup>

The discrepancy between how *dalang topeng* and *dalang wayang* were treated was partially due to distinctions between the two forms. The storyline was critical to puppeteers, who enjoyed greater license with their art. Even so, they refused to be aligned with any one political party. Puppeteer Abyor Dayagung (1914–1969) of Palimanan, Cirebon, for instance, was overtly political. His storylines were often clustered around communist and nationalist themes. For example, his *wayang* story about *tujuh setan desa* (seven village demons) was adapted from Aidit's treatise (Cohen 1997: 173–4).<sup>29</sup> Abyor's allegiance was tested when the esteemed Sundanese Lekra artist Hendra Gunawan bestowed the title 'Professor' on him. Abyor still refused to join the organisation.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup>During one New Order-era performance, Bulus accused a local supervisor of stealing asphalt earmarked for road construction to line his own pockets. This resulted in his activities being closely monitored. The government was reluctant to allow him to participate in the 1977 Asia Society-sponsored US/Canada tour, *Penca and Topeng Babakan*. They finally agreed he posed no risk after Enoch Atmadibrata, who in addition to being a government employee was the tour organiser, agreed to 'guarantee' him. Enoch Atmadibrata, pers. com., 29 December 2003.

<sup>29</sup>See Ajip Rosidi's (1991) novel based on Abyor's *wayang* play, *Rikmadenda mencari Tuhan*. Matthew Isaac Cohen (1997) devotes chapter 4 of his dissertation to Abyor.

<sup>30</sup>Ajip Rosidi, pers. com., 17 June 2006.

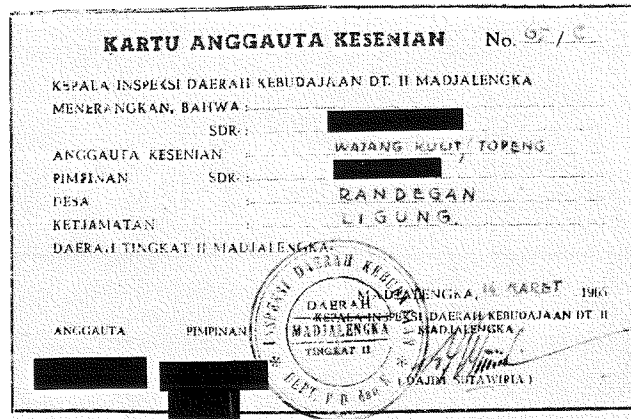


FIGURE 5 *Kartu anggauta kesenian (kartu kuning)*. Photo: Laurie Margot Ross, 2006.

### The launch and administration of the *kartu kuning*

When the first identification card was issued in early 1965, the PNI was vying to preserve its long-held dominance over the better organised, but cash strapped, PKI. Both parties were jockeying to succeed the long-ailing President. Thus, while the commonly held view is that Suharto initiated the artist registry in order to suppress communism and critical thinking, this neither jibes with the date written on the cards nor the circumstances.

The *kartu anggauta kesenian* (art membership card) is referred to by locals as *kartu kuning* (yellow card), or *kartu* (Figure 5).<sup>31</sup> Since the targeted artists did not read, the Majalengka initiative was not mentioned in the local press. Instead, news of the registry travelled through oral channels. The system was designed to bind artists to one *rombongan* (troupe) for tracking purposes. Only the group leaders were in direct contact with local officials, who were either directed to the *lurah*'s home or he paid them a visit. The leaders were instructed to register and purchase identity cards for all members of the troupe at the Culture Department, and to ensure their safekeeping. Since most troupe members were related and living under the same roof or were neighbours, group leaders presumably knew their whereabouts at any given time. Their other responsibilities included paying for all members' cards, fee renewals, applying and paying for performance permits (*ijin pertunjukan*), and reporting changes in membership to the *lurah*. The group leaders' combined responsibilities made them critically important to the registry's success. A second reason the process happened below the media's radar was due to secrecy and infighting among and within organisations.

Without media reporting, we are dependent upon the recall of individuals who lived through this period, while recognising the potential fallibility of experiences that were long stored in memory's archive; memories too dangerous to share – even within families – due to fear of retribution during Suharto's tenure.<sup>32</sup> The lack of

<sup>31</sup>The card is sometimes now referred to as *kartu seniman* (artist card). *Kartu kuning* has since become a generic term for all work-related identity cards in Majalengka.

<sup>32</sup>See Heryanto (2006) for a thoughtful analysis of the sequelae of state terror on morality and resistance in contemporary Indonesia.

documentation did not only affect artists. The chief of Majalengka's Education Department during the 1960s, Idro Sukardi, contends he never heard of the *kartu* prior to our 2006 interview, even though *Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Madjalengka* (Majalengka Department of Education and Culture) is stamped directly on it.<sup>33</sup> Although surviving artists clearly recall receiving their first card, there is little consensus about *when* it was received. Ethnomusicologist Endo Suanda, who performed with a *wayang golek* troupe in Majalengka in 1964, believes he received his card that year.<sup>34</sup> Ajip Rosidi's father, Dajim Sutawiria (1917–1990), was the head of Majalengka's Culture Department when the *kartu* was launched. Rosidi, who was already an accomplished writer and literary critic living in Bandung at the time, speculates the registry was created in 1964, but not enforced until 1965.<sup>35</sup> Virtually all of the other artists interviewed pinpoint the date to Suharto's ascendancy, that is, late 1965 or after.

The card cannot definitively be linked with either PNI or PKI or their affiliate organisations, even though officials from their respective parties held key political posts at the time. Historian Mona Lohanda of the National Archive of Indonesia, argues that had either organisation been affiliated, it would have been printed directly on the card. The absence of identifying marks negates the possibility of such a relationship.<sup>36</sup>

Researching the registry is further complicated by Pemda (the local government)<sup>37</sup> protocol to quickly dispose of records in post-Suharto Indonesia. A retired Culture Department chief, Samsuri,<sup>38</sup> contends that Majalengka's Education and Culture Department's New Order-era archive was destroyed during President Abdurrahman Wahid's (alias Gus Dur) brief tenure (1999–2001).<sup>39</sup> This is when the Education Department became autonomous and the Culture and Tourism sections merged.<sup>40</sup> Wahid declared that his decision to separate the two departments was born of necessity since the swelling Education department needed more space, and Culture and Tourism had more commonality.<sup>41</sup> The most senior employee at Majalengka's Culture and Tourism Department in 2006 contends that department records have been routinely 'removed' every three years since the year 2000.<sup>42</sup> Majalengka's Education Department chief in 2006, Karna Sobahi,<sup>43</sup> further corroborated that Pemda heads were instructed to remove all documents related to their tenure upon retirement. Accordingly, when Engkos, a recent Culture Department chief

<sup>33</sup>Idro Sukardi, interview, 20 June 2006.

<sup>34</sup>Endo Suanda, pers. com., 4 May 2006.

<sup>35</sup>Ajip Rosidi, pers. com., 5 June 2006.

<sup>36</sup>Mona Lohanda, pers. com., 28 February 2006.

<sup>37</sup>Acronym for *Pemerintah Daerah*.

<sup>38</sup>Samsuri was employed in the Culture Department from 1980 to 1995 and was its chief from 1992 until his retirement in 1995.

<sup>39</sup>'After the Education Department [left] in 1998, anything that could not be safely stored was liquidated' (*Likwidasi sesudah Dinas Pendidikan 1998 kalau tidak bisa diamankan, ya, sudah*). Samsuri, interview, 28 June 2006.

<sup>40</sup>Tourism was previously merged with the Postal and Telecommunications division.

<sup>41</sup>Abdurrahman Wahid, interview, 12 July 2006.

<sup>42</sup>Mandatory retirement at age 55 effectively dictates that all Pemda employees connected to 1965–1966 activities retired long ago.

<sup>43</sup>Sobahi currently serves as the Vice Regent (*Wakil Bupati*) of Majalengka.

retired, all evidence of his tenure left with him.<sup>44</sup> In a telephone interview, Engkos' son informed me that upon his father's death in May 2006, his records were deposited with his predecessor, Samsuri. However, Samsuri denies this was the protocol or that Engkos' records are in his possession.<sup>45</sup>

As the above timeline indicates, Wahid's efforts to promote transparency about the events surrounding 1965–1966 were undermined by regional officials who, in attempting to erase their New Order pasts, instructed government officers to destroy all documents through 1998.<sup>46</sup> While eradicating documents was widely reported from all local government divisions, no one disclosed the content of the records. Several people did, however, describe their sense of urgency in eliminating them. Their haste signals the panic in the air about how *Reformasi* (Reformation)<sup>47</sup> would impact local government and its officers.

The notification system followed a very different procedure in the province's capital, where the majority of artists were intellectuals: writers, dancers, visual artists, and actors. They were easier to track because writers' ideas were published, and performances and exhibitions were announced in the press. Bandung's Culture Department thus took a direct approach by mailing registration notices and instructions to individual artists. Enforcement, however, was uneven, with rules more rigidly applied to those artists whose activities the government deemed suspect. For example, Ajip Rosidi, one of the few intellectuals who had not participated in the Manifesto debate, received notification to register with Bandung's Culture division. Though he did not comply, he never received another notice.<sup>48</sup> Another prominent Bandung intellectual who was not active in the debate, choreographer Enoch Atmadibrata, was never informed of the artist registry.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Karna Sobahi, interview, 28 June 2006.

<sup>45</sup>Samsuri, interview, 28 June 2006.

<sup>46</sup>Abdurrahman Wahid was the leader of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU, The Renaissance of Islamic Scholars). NU is believed to have played a major role in the 1965–1966 killings. As the first elected President of Indonesia, Wahid apologised for the killings, proposed a full investigation of the events surrounding them and to lift the ban on PKI. His efforts were met unfavorably by many Muslims and anti-communist groups and soon faded as more pressing issues dominated his presidency. Efforts towards reconciliation within NU have subsequently gathered momentum. See Fealy and McGregor (2010: 37–8; 56–8).

<sup>47</sup>*Reformasi* is the brief period following Suharto's 1998 resignation, which resulted from the Asian financial crisis and the May 1998 Jakarta riots.

<sup>48</sup>Rosidi's views of the Manifesto Kebudayaan are found in Rosidi (1995: 158–240).

<sup>49</sup>Atmadibrata and the Bandung choreographer, Maman Suryaatmadja, were appointed by the mayor of Bandung, Didi Djukardi (1966–1968), to organise the dance academy, Konservatori Tari (KORI), in 1967. Djukardi had known Atmadibrata since junior high school (during the Japanese occupation) and had been a military officer in West Java's Siliwangi division prior to his post as mayor. According to Kroef (1970: 46), Djukardi's tenure as Bandung's mayor was cut short when he was arrested on August 10, 1968, following a sweep of approximately 50 Siliwangi division officers whom Suharto had determined were behind a PKI resurgence. KORI was already running, with Atmadibrata its director at the time of Djukardi's arrest. Atmadibrata, who steered clear of politics in general, was relatively unscathed by the incident. KORI was a forerunner of the state-sponsored Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia, Bandung (ASTI Bandung), which has since been renamed Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia, Bandung (STSI). Enoch Atmadibrata, pers. com., 8 August 2010.

The date of the card's inauguration may be foggy to the Cirebon-area artists, but their interpretation of its purpose is indelibly etched in their minds. Most performers viewed it as a concrete symbol of the government's recognition of their craft, as proof of their individual and collective artistic achievements, and their acceptance into elite (literate) society. The cards' high cost,<sup>50</sup> combined with the emphasis on their safekeeping, reinforced this interpretation.

### 'Reading' the *kartu kuning*

The *kartu* was issued in the final months of Sukarno's autocratic rule by Majalengka's Education and Culture Department (Figure 5). Its physical dimensions, 165.1 mm x 103.2 mm, suggest it was not intended to be carried, but stored.<sup>51</sup> In addition to an identification number in the upper right corner, it included the name of the responsible party for the group, *pimpinan*, the *desa* (home village), *kecamatan* (sub-district), Daerah Tingkat II (regional level), and the *anggota kesenian* (performer's specialisation). Each card is signed and dated in the lower right corner by the department's head inspector, Dajim Sutawiria, together with the Culture and Education Department's official stamp. As previously mentioned, all of the cards were from one troupe. The company was from the village of Randegan in the sub-district of Ligung.<sup>52</sup> Statistical information was filled in by the same Department employee on each card and hand-dated 14 March. The year 1965 is press-printed onto each card.

The directors of Majalengka's Education and Culture Department, Idro Sukardi (born c.1915)<sup>53</sup> (Education) and Dajim Sutawiria (Culture), were prominent PNI members during the early 1960s. Sutawiria's son, Ajip Rosidi, confirmed that Sukardi was his father's mentor and close friend.<sup>54</sup> Sukardi joined the PNI in 1928, making him one of its earliest members and one of the last survivors of Indonesia's early nationalist movement.<sup>55</sup> While Education and Culture were housed under one roof, they remained autonomous.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Annual membership fees were issued at a premium of 10,000 rupiah per registrant during this period of hyperinflation. According to Kartomi (2005: 4), inflation rose to 594% in 1965, while economic growth was reduced from -1.6% to -4%.

When the new card was introduced by the Suharto administration, the cost remained 10,000 rupiah per registrant. There was no need to raise it. The Indonesian currency was so devalued that in December 1965 a new one was created at the rate of 1,000 old rupiah to one new rupiah. The 1965 rupiah rate is according to: GoCurrency.com <<http://www.gocurrency.com/countries/indonesia.htm>>

<sup>51</sup> Artist cards were modified to fit in a wallet by the early 1970s, after which they had to be carried or risk arrest.

<sup>52</sup> Sprawling regencies were impossible for Suharto's military to monitor. Ligung was divided soon after the coup, at which time Randegan was reassigned to Jatitujuh (one of the sub-districts Aidit had researched).

<sup>53</sup> Sukardi retired from the Education division in 1971.

<sup>54</sup> Ajip Rosidi, pers. com., 5 June 2006.

<sup>55</sup> Indonesia's nationalist movement was founded in 1927 and formalised as PNI in 1928.

<sup>56</sup> The Department was subdivided into two categories in the 1960s. *Pendidikan masyarakat* (mass education) covered non-formal education, adult education, and community education. Within this

### Conflicting interpretations of the *kartu kuning*

If the *kartu* was a top-down affair, it must have emanated from Sukarno by way of presidential decree and then sifted down through Perda (regional regulation) with local branches of government exerting their autonomy in its implementation. Thus Sukarno could build local support for his agenda by promoting the art he loved, while monitoring and shaping artists' activities. Many Indonesian politicians and historians accept this view, and its plausibility rests on the fact that many Sukarnoists – both PNI and PKI members – held government posts at the time and were capable of implementing such an order.<sup>57</sup>

The image of the PNI as an elite organisation began unraveling during Guided Democracy. The party was split between two camps: one led by longtime PNI official, Hardi, whose opposition to the PKI had put him at odds with Sukarno since 1957. The other group, which was led by PNI Chairman Ali Sastroamidjojo, was sympathetic to the PKI (Lev 1966: 104). The highest tier of Majalengka's government was aligned with Hardi's faction and strove to maintain its influence against an influx of younger, left-leaning members whose ideology Sukarno favoured (Rocamora 1975: 349–50). A purge of PNI's Central Javanese leadership occurred in May 1965, during which Ali and secretary-general Surachman expelled seven conservative nationalist leaders, including Hardi and Osa Maliki (Lev 1966: 104, 108; Crouch 1988: 201; Rocamora 1975: 341–2).<sup>58</sup> Over the next two months, 150 other party leaders were purged throughout the country, among them, Idro Sukardi (Rocamora 1975: 341–2).

Ajip Rosidi contends that Ligung politics were dominated by the PNI in the early 1960s, whereas Abidin, the former director of Cirebon City's Kantor Kesatuan Bangsa dan Politik, states the opposite. Abidin surmises that many PKI members had already infiltrated the department, concluding that the artist registry was backed by its members as 'a form of solidarity, used to mobilise the peasants'.<sup>59</sup> Tjetje Hidayat Padmadinata, a bold, self-described libertarian and four-time member of Indonesia's House of Representatives (Padmadinata 2006),<sup>60</sup> agrees with Abidin, referring to the card as proof of an uncertain – indeed paranoid – Sukarno regime: 'A last-ditch effort to mobilise the left' and 'proof of Sukarno's crumbling Guided Democracy.'<sup>61</sup>

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category were the following subdivisions: family, youth, girls, and school. Cultural arts were divided into performing arts, literature, and culture. Idro Sukardi, interview, 20 June 2006.

<sup>57</sup>Dajim Sutawiria was an avid Sukarnoist who remained active in the PNI until the Suharto regime forced it to consolidate with other nationalist and non-Islamic parties under the umbrella of PDI (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia) in 1973. Ajip Rosidi, pers. com., 5 June 2006.

<sup>58</sup>The seven leaders were ousted due to their support of outspoken anti-PKI Hadisubeno, the Central Javanese PNI Chairman, who had earlier been condemned. This situation would reverse itself soon after the coup. Ali lost ground because of the army's hostility, while Maliki was later appointed PNI Chairman.

<sup>59</sup>Abidin, interview, 23 March 2006.

<sup>60</sup>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (DPR). Padmadinata was imprisoned five times by Sukarno between 1960 and 1966. Following Suharto's 1965 coup, he represented the province of West Java in the House from 1971–1977, 1987–1992, 1992–1997, and 1999–2004. His first three terms were with the government-sponsored Golkar organisation (Golongan Karya).

<sup>61</sup>Tjetje Hidayat Padmadinata, pers. comm. 21 March 2006.



These conflicting views highlight the ongoing confusion about events on the ground. One perspective is offered by an insider (Ajip Rosidi), who has intimate knowledge of Majalengka's Culture division; another comes from two political leaders (Tjetje and Abidin) whose insights are drawn from the region's political history. While Tjetje and Abidin's view of the artist registry as an internal communist affair is plausible, the PNI was stronger in Java due to its bureaucratic control of the central government and invested in keeping its network lubricated.

This nation-building project evolved into a lucrative, district-level enterprise, making the financial impetus behind the *kartu clear*. In combination with the performance permits already required,<sup>62</sup> the new registry promised a steady stream of cash flowing into the Culture Department in the year leading up to the coup.

### The hunt

When Suharto's military security command, Kopkamtib, was installed on 1 November 1965, it had unrivalled powers to enforce newly imposed sanctions and to hunt down anyone opposing the nascent regime. The military's (TNI, Tentara Nasional Indonesia) access to villagers was simplified by their connection to the *lurah* after Gestok.<sup>63</sup> Although West Javanese citizens were targeted by TNI, violence ran deeper in other parts of Java where the PKI was more entrenched. There, they successfully armed civilians who harboured deep resentments toward the communists to commit mass murder for them. Many of those responsible for the killings were village volunteers and Muslim youth groups, including members of NU's youth wing, Ansor.<sup>64</sup> As Cribb and Brown (1995: 105) have argued, the military, however, was averse to arming civilians in West Java so soon after DI/TII was suppressed.<sup>65</sup> Cirebon's district military command, Korem,<sup>66</sup> was at a strategic disadvantage since the Siliwangi brigade was serving in Sulawesi at the time (Sundhaussen, 1982: 216–17).

<sup>62</sup>The district government issued performance permits after being endorsed by Public Health and Public Works officials and the district police (Brandon: 1967: 230–1).

The protocol at the village level was more relaxed, with the culture department distributing permits to the *lurah*, who hand-delivered them to the *dalang* – the de facto troupe leaders – to be stored.

<sup>63</sup>Robert Wessing asserts that roughly half of all *lurah* in West Java bore some connection to the military after 1965. Military rank, thus, had become part of the criteria for election to the post (Wessing 1987: 167, citing Pluvier 1976: 30, and Hofsteede 1971: 54).

<sup>64</sup>In addition to NU, the modernist Muhammadiyah movement also participated in the killings, particularly in East Java. PNI members are also believed to have been involved. The question remains as to how much of the violence perpetrated by NU was an authentic expression of hostile youth activity and how much of it was pressure applied from the organisation's leaders in response to conflicts over land reform and the 1948 communist uprising in Madiun, East Java. For an analysis of NU's role in the killings, see Fealy and McGregor (2010).

<sup>65</sup>West Java's DI Islam leader, Imam Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosuwirjo, was tried and executed in 1962 and DI rebels were forced to surrender.

<sup>66</sup>The territorial structure of the regional commands is as follows: each Kodam (Komando Daerah Militer) is divided into Korem (Komando Resort Militer), headed by a Colonel and divided into military districts, called Kodim (Komando District Militer), which are led by a lieutenant-colonel.

Thus, rather than sending troops, Korem's commander, Colonel Witono, and available staff paid a visit to a rural PKI branch on the outskirts of Cirebon on 2 October 1965. In an exchange that was taped and broadcast on radio stations in Cirebon and Bandung, PKI members were warned that Aidit's role in the coup was a betrayal to their party. Only a few words proved sufficient for the branch to dissolve immediately. The 'voluntary' dissolution of PKI branches soon spread to all districts in West Java, before snowballing to other regions of Indonesia by 25 October, including the Moluccas and South and Southeast Sulawesi. The armed forces quickly shut down the left-wing press, including *Harian Rakyat* and *Bintang Timur*. Even so, Justus van der Kroef (1970: 37) argues that vigilante PKI guerilla activity continued into early November 1965 in Central and West Java, including in Tasikmalaja, where in addition to kidnapping and killing, several mosques were reportedly desecrated. They went underground when they realised that Sukarno could not protect them as he had done during previous crises. Aidit was captured in Central Java in late November and executed, as were other PKI leaders. Following the PKI's dissolution, communists were purged from all branches of governance (Crouch 1988: 142; Sundhaussen, 1982: 214, 216–17).

Although West Java posed less of an immediate threat to the army due to the PKI's comparatively weak standing there, the Cirebon region was among the first places where killings occurred. The number of slaughtered may never be known due to poor record-keeping, combined with collusion between the regime and the US and Britain, including their news agencies (Hilton 2001 film).<sup>67</sup> Unofficial estimates of those killed in West Java range from 3,000 to 10,000 with approximately half that many from nearby Subang, where plantation workers had forged strong ties with communist trade organisations. Cirebon and Indramayu, where large numbers of plantation workers belonged to communist unions, had the next highest numbers of dead. Vengeful police were behind most of the Indramayu killings, whose victims were chiefly squatters in government-owned teak forests (Sundhaussen 1971: 654; Crouch 1988: 142).<sup>68</sup> Public intimidation (and humiliation) effectively controlled Indramayu artists, where a ban was imposed on *topeng* and *wayang* through 1969. The arrest of a popular Indramayu puppeteer in the middle of a performance in late 1965 is an example of this intimidation. He was detained and repeatedly beaten for 23 additional months in 1969–1970. The incident was provoked by his affair with a woman who reportedly was once married to a PKI member.

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*Koramil* (*Komando Rayon Militer*) is the military sub-district command. The *lurah* serves as the non-commissioned village level Babinsa (*Bintara Pembina Desa*).

<sup>67</sup>*Herald Sun* correspondent, Frank Palmos (1962–1972), *Time* magazine investigative reporter, Don North, who submitted reports to BBC and NBC (1965–1966), and BBC Southeast Asia correspondent, Rolland Challis (1964–1969) all reported on the killings as they unfolded, but those reports were either vastly altered or remained unpublished.

<sup>68</sup>According to Peluso (1994: 101; citing Soepardi 1974, II: 60–2), tensions between local police and former forest labourers-turned-squatters in the Indramayu Forest District reach back to at least 1946, when the Forest Service began returning plantations to their pre-war, colonial-era owners and evicting peasants. Concurrently, 117.5 hectares of forest were levelled by 1,300 villagers and after removing the teak, burned all that remained. The PKI and the People's Democratic Front's attack on teak areas during the Madiun Affair (1948) cemented those hostilities.

Most of the executions in Cirebon were carried out by the army's strategic reserve forces, which were led by Major General Suharto. According to Kodam's Siliwangi division, approximately 150 rebel troops who had fled to Cirebon were 'captured' after Lieutenant-Colonel Untung<sup>69</sup> was apprehended on 4 October 1965 (Komando Daerah Militer VI Siliwangi 1968: 606). Between 13 and 16 October 1965, 211,000 Cirebon-area PKI members renounced their membership. By year's end, 10,000 regional party members had been detained, with two-thirds of PKI-related organisations dissolved by November (Crouch 1988: 142, citing *Angkatan Bersenjata*, 21 October 1965 and 2 November 1965). So while the PKI was weaker in West Java, it was not overlooked by the new regime, which recognised that a different strategy was required there. The issuance of a new kind of registration card to rural artists was one such measure.

### Launch of *tanda kenjataan*

The new artist identity card was issued in Majalengka by Kopkamtib two weeks before Gestok's first anniversary. The card was simply titled *tanda kenjataan* (certificate of proof; Figure 6). It is herein referred to as *tanda*.

It seemed nothing had changed in Majalengka's Education and Culture Department in the aftermath of the unprecedented upheaval. Idro Sukardi and Dajim Sutawiria continued their respective posts and, like the *kartu*, Sutawiria's signature graced the new card. Their continued leadership presumably resulted in the military's confidence that the men posed no threat to Suharto's plans and that their flexibility in adjusting to the new government was an asset. That Sukardi had been purged from the PNI by Ali's faction in the months leading up to the coup, which was known to the military, supports this probability.

If Sukardi and Sutawiria's role in the new administration appeared ambiguous, the detailed information on the new card was not. Press-printed on it was the name and title of its administrative officer: *Dan Dim*<sup>70</sup> u.b. *Ketua KOMEN*<sup>71</sup> *Panjasila Lettu. Moch. Saloe* (Military Regional Command on behalf of the Chairman of the Operational Regiment Command for the Ideology of Pantjasila, First Lieutenant Moch. Saloe). As the local enforcer's title suggests, he was a minor figure. Mochammad Saloe is not cited in any documents connected to the period. Indeed, he is the only person affiliated with the *tanda* whose biography cannot be traced.

The *tanda* was larger than its predecessor, measuring 171.45 mm × 127 mm. The 15 September 1966 date is not handwritten, as was the *kartu*, but press-printed on the card. It is likely, then, that this was both its official and only issue. Like its predecessor, the *tanda* was processed at the Culture Department, but unlike it, the new card's sponsorship was straightforward: Dan Dim. Tjetje Padmadinata argues it was a clearance card awarded to

<sup>69</sup>Untung was allegedly the commander behind the aborted coup. He was captured in Tegal and then tried and sentenced to death by the Special Military Court, Mahmilub (Mahkamah Militer Luar Biasa) and executed in 1967.

<sup>70</sup>Acronym: Komandan Distrik Militer.

<sup>71</sup>Acronym: Komando Operasi Mental. Komen Panjasila is an enigma, with no other known references. It appears to be the intelligence branch of Kodim.

INSPEKSI DAERAH KEBUDAJAAN DT. II MADJALENGKA		No. 263
<b>TANDA KENJATAAN</b>		
POTRET oleh TANDA YANGAN PEMEGANG	Nama :	[REDACTED]
	Umur :	27 th
	Angg. Kesenian :	Wayang Kulit solo macan
	Alamat :	Jl. R. Ramadani
	Kedudukan :	Pesirga
Telah mengikuti MUSJAWARAH KESENIAN I yang diselenggarakan oleh Komando Operasi Mental ( K O M E N ) Pantjasila Dt. II Madjalengka pada tgl. 15 September 1966		
Mengetahui Dan Dim. 0617 Madjalengka u. b. Ketua KOMEN Pantjasila t t d ( Lettu Moch. SALOE )		Madjalengka, 15 September 1966 Kepala Inspeksi Daerah Kebudayaan DT. II Madjalengka ( DAJIM SUTAWIRIA )

FIGURE 6 *Tanda kenjataan* (certificate of proof). Photo: Laurie Margot Ross, 2006.

artists who, in accordance with *musjawarah* (any democratic nuances now muted), were able to convince the military they were not linked to the now illegal PKI.<sup>72</sup>

The genealogy of the *dalang* – once a source of pride – now placed them under suspicion. Through them, artists' whereabouts would be mapped via their troupe affiliations. The *tanda* also concretised an artist's alliance with one group, while simultaneously weakening her or his earning power. This was especially true of musicians and clowns, who performed with other groups on a contingency basis. Those artists unable to prove their 'innocence' and that of their families and friends – regardless of how tangential those contacts may have been – were quickly rounded up, interrogated, and often tortured. A disproportionate number of female artists were forced to take extended, or even permanent, leave from their art, particularly women whose husbands or other family members were allegedly linked with the PKI. Whereas agrarian artists were rounded up at home, elite Bandung artists associated with the PKI/Lekra were 'outed' in the army-controlled press.<sup>73</sup>

Heightened anxieties among local artists followed the *tanda*'s inauguration. Word travelled fast that artists with suspected ties to PKI/Lekra had 'disappeared'. *Dalang* became so marginalised that any affiliation with them was deemed suspect. According to retired Cirebon Culture Department official Ishak Herdjan, in the first few years following Gestok it was equally perilous to hire a *dalang* as it was for one to perform. Both parties risked being reported to Kodim.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup>Tjetje Hidayat Padmadinata, pers. com., 21 March 2006.

<sup>73</sup>A *Pikiran Rakyat* article (13 December 1965), for example, linked Nyi Saini, a dancer from Bandung with the banned Indonesian Women's Movement, Gerwani (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*). The description of her dance as an 'unfragrant flower' (*tari jang tidak wangi: 'bunga harum'*) was a direct reference to *Tarian Harum Bunga* (Dance of the fragrant flower), which the new regime alleged was a joyous, ritualised 'dance', performed by Gerwani women above the mass grave where the generals' bodies were disposed of. Thousands of Gerwani members were killed and the organisation banned after the coup. For analyses of the Gerwani movement, see Wieringa (2002: 301–2); Larasati (2006).

<sup>74</sup>Ishak Herdjan, pers. com., 6 August 2005.

Today, artists do not refer to the *tanda* by its communist-inspired red colour the way the *kartu* was identified as 'yellow'. In fact, no one refers to this card at all. Aside from two elderly troupe leaders, no one remembers it. This is not surprising if we take into account that the majority of performers never saw their *tanda*. Individuals were represented in absentia by the *dalang*/troupe leader during a new kind of 'polite' artist consultation (*musjawarah kesenian*), which bypassed the *lurah* completely. They were held with Dan Dim.

If the *tanda*'s purpose was to identify specific artists and their political allegiances, it was transformed by at least one leader as a mandate to protect his group and family, who were one and the same. James Scott (1985: 28–31) argues that issues which inspire covert resistance (e.g. appropriation of taxes, land, and labour) often involve class struggle, and that while these conditions may escalate to violence, they are more commonly expressed as 'passive noncompliance, subtle sabotage, evasion, and deception'. A parallel may be drawn with tracking peasant artists, for whom non-compliance was more dangerous, more immediate, and more far-reaching. The only protective measure available to them, short of outright revolt, was to give the impression of transparency, while covertly altering details of their lives as this troupe leader did.

Unlike its predecessor, there is nothing opaque about the *tanda*. A box is indicated on the new card for a photograph or the signature of the artist. None of the cards I examined display either one. The performer's age was also required. Age, however, was a vexed issue for many older performers, who were born at home. Birth statistics were rarely recorded. The cards are further riddled with inconsistencies and errors regarding artists' names. Nji Iwig is a case in point. Her *kartu* and *tanda* identify her as 'Nji Iwig' whose specialty is *wayang kulit/topeng*. The title 'Nji,' however, is rarely applied to *dalang*. Typically, it is an honorific for married *pesindhen* (female singers) who accompany the gamelan (Sutton 1984: 127–8). Nji Iwig, in actuality, was not a mask dancer, puppeteer or a singer. She was a very young clown. 'Iwig' was tweaked from the Sundanese word '*riwig*,' a humorous reference to her long, dishevelled hair. It was her *nama lucu* (comic name). She prefers her given name, the one she is known by today. In addition to the confusion about her name and occupation, her age is stated as 20 on the *tanda*, which would make her 65 now. This, too, is in error, as she is approximately a decade younger.

In addition to troupe members' ages, their names and/or positions were altered on all of the cards, in accordance with the troupe leader's hypervigilance to protect their identities. Even the leader's name is registered in variant forms on the 1965 and 1966 cards. Data on one of the *tanda* is so well camouflaged that the leader can no longer identify its rightful owner. Such false compliance and sabotage confirm Scott's assertion that these actions require 'little or no coordination or planning; they often represent a form of individual self-help; and they typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms' (Scott 1985: 29).

The *tanda* paved the way for the local *penilik kebudayaan* (culture patrol) that continues to monitor performances today in modified form. The registry was standardised by the 1970s. Additional responsibilities included rigorous adherence to Islamic prayer, *shalat*, whose strict observance is a formal acknowledgement of the crucial role Muslims played in PKI's eradication (Suanda 1981: 38–9). Ironically, the political Muslims, whom Suharto feared as much as communists, became integrally linked to his rise to power and his durability.

### Conclusion

Whether the aim of the *kartu* was to enrol performers in the proletarian cultural army or to create revenue for local officials, the *tanda* had the purely political function of clearing performers of suspicion. Registration and control are usually viewed entirely as negative, but their meaning was multivalent for the people on the receiving end of both these cards. When the *kartu* was first distributed, its recipients had no reason to be alarmed. Sukarno had positioned their artistry as both central to and emblematic of Indonesia's nationalist identity. Performance was viewed as something of value, although it was in the context of a government that wanted to exploit traditional arts for propagandistic purposes. Given the protracted regulations on performance extending back to colonial Java (Cohen 2006; Haan 1912), issuing an identity card to individual artists was not perceived as particularly oppressive, but as continuous with practices performers already accepted as normal. And indeed, many artists understood the *kartu* to convey a certain cachet for that person. It was only when the *tanda* was launched that artists began to view the registry with apprehension and dread. The combination of state terror and deafening silence killed the creative impulse of many performers.

While the *kartu* seems steeped in nostalgia and a nation identified with cultural traditions, the *tanda* bypasses such meaning completely. It was an unapologetic, unsentimental top-down affair with the singular purpose of establishing the parameters of the new military's role. It was also a harbinger of the New Order's national cultural policies surrounding performance. Tjetje Hidayat Padmadinata said it best: 'The *tanda* is *bukti* (proof) of the first time the military's role was made explicit.'<sup>75</sup> It also ushered in the New Order's version of artist registration by the early 1970s.

In the tradition of its predecessor, the new artist identification card continues to be referred to as the *kartu kuning* (yellow card), although its colour had not been yellow since 1965. From that point forth, those with real or suspected links to the now illegal PKI who bore any relationship to the current cardholder were identified as such on the New Order cards, signalling the permanence of these relationships. But the issuance of the *tanda* also created a false memory, or what Umberto Eco refers to as the 'multiplication of false synonyms'. The *tanda* thus replicates the *kartu*, and its very replication strips it of its intrinsic meaning, 'not by cancellation, but by superimposition; not by absence, but by multiplying presences' (Eco 1988: 260). Taken together, the two cards are portable, living relics of a moment that changed the arc of modern Indonesian history.

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<sup>75</sup>Tjetje Hidayat Padmadinata, pers. com., 21 March 2006.

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