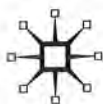


PERFORMANCE, POPULAR
CULTURE, AND PIETY IN
MUSLIM SOUTHEAST ASIA

Edited by
Timothy P. Daniels

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piety movement, Muhammadiyah, have influenced several generations of researchers in the region and beyond. In his afterword, he provides a commentary on all the chapters in the volume drawing upon his extensive research and experiences in the region, and ruminates on the complexities of Islamic piety, performance, and cultural diversity in the contemporary age of globalization.

NOTES

1. State-level *shari'a* courts have jurisdiction over Muslim family matters, such as marriage, divorce, custody, support, and personal morality matters that include penalties for drinking alcoholic beverages, gambling, ingesting substances during the fasting month, and engaging in sexual relations outside of marriage.
2. Scholars affiliated with Sisters in Islam, a Muslim feminist nongovernmental organization in Malaysia, have noted that UMNO and PAS consistently embrace the same “fundamentalist” or “neotraditionalist” perspectives in regard to the rights and obligations of Muslim men and women in matters connected to marriage and divorce (see Norani Othman 2005:5–6).
3. Many social scientists, including structuralists and post-structuralists, have modeled their approaches on studies of human language. Many contemporary linguistic anthropologists, arguing that their predecessors paid too much attention to the ways language is organized, emphasize how language is used to do things in social contexts (see Duranti 1997; Ahearn 2012). F. K. Lehman, a formal linguist and cultural anthropologist, cautions against analyzing linguistic performances without some knowledge of linguistic structures. In order to better understand language as a social *tool*, we must understand how this particular tool is organized.

1

PERFORMING PIETY FROM THE INSIDE OUT: FASHIONING GENDER AND PUBLIC SPACE IN A MASK “TRADITION” FROM JAVA’S NORTHWEST COAST

Laurie Margot Ross

INTRODUCTION

Cirebon, on Java’s northern littoral or *pasisir*, was an important port of transnational exchange in the Indian Ocean region, where Sufi artist guilds devoted to carving and textile industries flourished in the seventeenth century.¹ The historic trade routes that we today call the “silk road” carried not only silk and other goods, but also cultural and religious ideas, of which many were linked to Sufism. In western Java, the two most important nodes of transnational exchange were Cirebon, on the cusp of Central Java, and Banten,² just southeast of Sumatra and the Sunda Strait. Both Cirebon and Banten had mask theater traditions and were home to Java’s two oldest Muslim courts, of which only Cirebon’s remains now. Through these two portals Chinese, Arabs, Persians, Indians, Siamese, Central Asians, and Europeans gained access to the interior. In the early seventeenth century, Batavia (Jakarta) was built between them by the Dutch.³

Sufism appears to be immoderately male—both in terms of its practitioners and its lexicon⁴—yet, as Annemarie Schimmel elegantly argues in *My Soul Is a Woman*, women enjoy full equal rights in the mystical branch of Islam.⁵ Virtually all of the classical works on early Sufism position one woman as its early central figure: Rabi’a al-‘Adawiyya. For Rabi’a, who introduced the absolute love of God⁶

into Sufism in the eighth century, beauty was not of the lateral world; rather, it existed in the interior life of the heart. As Schimmel also notes, women are seldom referred to in the *Qur'an*, yet the important term *nafs* ("soul") is a feminine noun used numerous times in the *Qur'an*. Although its meaning is often pejorative, it also refers to the mother of mankind.⁷

The gender equity that Sufism provides has afforded both female and male pedigreed mask dancers from Java's rural northwest coast equally vibrant spiritual and artistic roles spanning multiple generations. These artists, called *dalang topeng* (*dalang*), trace their lineage to Sunan Kalijaga, one of the nine legendary Sufi saints (*walisongo*), who wandered the countryside performing with masks and puppets as instruments of *dakwah* (proselytization).

Topeng Cirebon is different from the *topeng Malang* described by Onghokham⁸ and Sunardi (chapter 5). While both are inherited forms that enjoyed great popularity before 1965, qualitative differences exist that are constellated around class, gender, and age: most *dalang topeng* are day laborers and predominantly female, while *Malang* troupes are comprised of men and children from well-heeled families. Furthermore, whereas the *Cirebon* practitioners trace their genealogy (*keturunan*) to a Sufi apostle, *Malang* artists view their art as a family business.⁹ Thus, the debate about displays of piety in *topeng Cirebon* pertains chiefly to women, including the importance of concealing those parts of the body considered private, *aurat*.

Even with the thoughtful engagement about piety, the debate about doctrinal injunctions on figurative art hotly contested throughout much of the Islamicate remains off of most Cirebon citizens' radar. This is likely due to the region's idiosyncratic blend of Sunni and Shia mysticism.¹⁰ Shia Muslims have a long tradition of figurative art, including copious depictions of Prophet Muhammad. Moreover, one of Java's most prominent and controversial Muslim figures, Shaykh Siti Jenar,¹¹ is often compared to Junayd al-Baghdadi, both in terms of ideology and fate—both men were accused of extremist Shiism and executed for heresy. Siti Jenar, whose burial site resides on the outskirts of Cirebon, is considered the "eighth *wali*" by some adherents.¹² While most *dalang* are Sunni and trace their lineage to Sunan Kalijaga, some recognize Siti Jenar's disciple, Pangeran Panggung (Prince of the Stage), who met the same fate as his teacher, to be the founder of *topeng*. That those claiming this genealogy are often women signals a sharp contrast with other Islamic masking traditions, notably those of Sumatra and sub-Saharan Africa, where it is chiefly the domain of males.¹³

HISTORICAL CONTOURS

Masking was well established in the pre-Islamic Java,¹⁴ and at least as far back as the sixteenth century women are known to have performed with masks in popular entertainments.¹⁵ There is a lacuna in our knowledge of gendered mask dance in western Java until the mid-nineteenth century, when E. Hardouin's 1855 illustration of a female *dalang topeng/ronggeng*¹⁶ and two clowns appeared in a chapter on itinerant mask performance, *topeng babakan* (mask acts) in *Java Tooneelen uit het Leven Karakterschetsen en Kleederdragten van Java's Bewoners in afbeeldingen naar de natuur geteekend*.¹⁷

Three centuries of Dutch control came to a close when Japanese troops entered Java near Indramayu in 1942 and quickly gained control of the region. Following Japan's defeat at the end of World War II, Dutch attempts to reclaim their hold of the Archipelago led to the Indonesian revolution and its eventual Independence in 1950.

It appears that the debate about visual representation in Islam first entered the *topeng* discourse during the last decade of Sukarno's presidency, when three organizations were vying to succeed him in the late 1950s and early 1960s: Indonesia's communist party, Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI); Indonesia's nationalist party, Partai Nasional Indonesia, and; the separatist Darul Islam and Islamic Army of Indonesia (Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia, or DI/TII) movement, which aimed to establish an Islamic state governed by *shari'a*. Although the peasant-based art form appealed to the PKI and its aligned socialist art organization, Lekra (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat, or People's Cultural League), suspicions ran high between the organization and artists. PKI was reportedly concerned about the artists' potential link with members of DI/TII, who, likewise, were suspicious of the frequency of *topeng* performances at PKI events. According to the late *dalang topeng*, Sujana Arja (d. 2006), who frequently performed for both groups, DI/TII took issue with the mask itself, which they viewed as heresy.¹⁸ Yet, in DI/TII's bid to dominate the region, *topeng* continued to be an important part of members' *hajatan* (life cycle events). The critique of masks lay dormant with the execution of its leaders in west Java by the Sukarno administration in 1962.

Soon after the Suharto's 1965 coup, referred to here as *Gestok*,¹⁹ when he had wrested control of the government from Sukarno and the furor over the massacres quieted, martial law silenced the itinerant dancers. This might have been a permanent state of affairs for *topeng* practitioners were it not for Suharto's wife, Ibu Tien, who took

up the mission of promoting Indonesia's cultural diversity by creating the neocolonial theme park, Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII, Beautiful Indonesia Miniature Garden), on the outskirts of east Jakarta in the mid-1970s. Her conception of TMII was based on both the colonial fairs and, more to the point, her personal observations at the New York World's Fair in 1964.²⁰ TMII showcased Indonesia's rich visual and performing arts, including *topeng Cirebon*. However, its once overt *tasawwuf* (Sufi) nuances were now muted with heavy restrictions placed on the use of public and private space. By removing *topeng* from its natural milieu, a secularized, stripped-down version was created. However, with the first overseas *topeng* tour that soon followed in 1977, *topeng* was back in circulation, albeit now under the watchful eye of the authoritarian Suharto regime.

By the late 1990s, nearly forty years after the Darul Islam movement was suppressed in west Java and with Suharto's days numbered, piety in the public sphere was again ripe for debate and *topeng* involved in the conversation. This time, however, the debate was not merely externally driven, but was organically taking place within *topeng* circles. Perhaps not surprisingly, it is not female *dalang* with pedigree, but young mask dancers without it, who are the most conflicted and rigorous debaters. That the polemic reached rural artists before social media was entrenched at the village level was no doubt influenced by Suharto's tacit (and not so tacit) support of DI/TII's heirs. Its ripples are most clearly felt at the massive, reformist *Pesantren Al-Zaytun* in the village of Mekerjaya in Gantar, Indramayu, which will be examined shortly.²¹

PERFORMING TASAWWUF FROM THE INSIDE OUT

With the destruction of traditional networks of Sufi transmission in Mecca and Medina as a result of the Wahhabi movement in the early nineteenth century, Sufi orders throughout the Islamicate became indigenized; yet Wahhabism became a serious topic of debate in Indonesia only with their second conquest in Mecca in 1924, when Javanese Muslims' beliefs were attacked. Its most significant inroads into Javanese religio-political thought began in the 1970s and are increasingly felt in Cirebon today.²² Increased pressure from the Salafi community over the past few years has prevented performances in the village of Ciliwung, home to the Palimanan style of the late Wentar, Dasih, and Sudji, who were among the most important *dalang topeng* of the twentieth century.

One consequence of the breakdown in transmission of the Sufi orders (*tarekat*)²³ was that the *silsilah*—the spiritual chain of initiation—became blurred, most notably in Southeast Asia and the Balkans.²⁴ Malays began borrowing from and influencing one another and, in so doing, created indigenous practices in which the principles of different *tarekat* were combined. As might be expected, the guiding principles of a given order's eponym were not always in sync,²⁵ particularly pertaining to the devotional act of *dzikir* (Arabic: *dhikr*) for inducing remembrance of God.²⁶ This is no small matter, for the kind of *dzikir* employed is the primary way the orders are differentiated. There are two basic forms: silent (Cirebon Javanese: *sirri*; Arabic: *khafī*)²⁷ and vocal (Cirebon Javanese: *dhohir*; Arabic: *jahri*). The starting point of the silent *dzikir* is the heart (*kalbu*)—the center of one's being. It is performed in solitude, shuns use of the voice, and involves all but minimal motion. Vocal *dzikir*, alternately, starts with the tongue. It frequently leads to body motion and is communal. Proponents of silent *dzikir* argue that theirs requires greater focus and is fully embodied, and that vocal remembrance is too easy to achieve. Hamid Algar contends that the general preference for vocal *dzikir* corresponds to the needs of the masses,

who can emerge from their submersion in the bodily state only by the use of bodily means. A certain transmutation of bodily powers takes place that is frequently described by traditional writers in the language of alchemy, and the *dhikr* comes to serve as a transition or bridge (*bar-zakh*) between the corporeal state and those higher states that lie behind it.²⁸

Tensions between proponents of the vocal and silent *dzikir* are poignantly illustrated in the early nineteenth-century Surakarta mystical court poem attributed to Sultan Pakubuwana V, *Serat Centhini*,²⁹ which describes the fate of the progeny of one of the *walisongo*, Sunan Giri of Giri/Gresik. *Dzikir* is mentioned in the context of a celebration prior to a wedding, in conjunction with Islamic texts, accompanied by tambourines (*terbang*) and Arabic songs. The decisive encounter between masking and mystical Islam is realized when two *dalang* perform the character, Klana, which inspires an ecstatic response in the *santri* (normatively pious Muslims), who begin singing. At one point, the bride's younger brother feels compelled to put down his tambourine and dance Klana, but upon seeing his elder brother he is frightened to do so and resigns himself to playing the tambourine.³⁰ The character, Klana—a madman (see figure 1.1)—has a clear *tasawwuf*

context. The individual who descends into madness (*majnun*) is the equivalent of someone who embarks on the *tarekat* without the benefit of a guide.³¹ Such individuals are perceived as reckless and inviting madness (*gila isim*).

Correspondences between madness and sound and between ecstasy and control so beautifully described in the *Serat Centhini* are echoed in the relationship between the *dalang topeng* and musicians who accompany her. The Sufi order, *Naqshbandiyya*, is the chief proponent of the silent *dzikir*, and while few traces of this *tarekat* are visible in Cirebon today, it can't be denied that their guiding principles exerted a deep, intractable influence in *topeng* culture, as did the *Shattariyya*, a still-prominent *tarekat* in Cirebon *kraton* circles and one of the most indigenized of the orders in the Archipelago. Throughout Java, the two *tarekat* were often combined. The relationship to *dzikir sirri* is clearly articulated in the *dalang's* silence, her voice muted by biting into a piece of leather to secure the mask in place. One might deduce that the *dalang*, whose relationship to God is alternately achieved through rigorous asceticism and bodily motion, would be at odds with the ascetic *Naqshbandiyya*; yet this is not the case. Ecstatic movement (trance) is shunned by the *dalang*, whose rigorous focus on controlled breathing necessary to hold the mask in place is how remembrance is induced while dancing.

The *dalang's* silence is countered by the musicians' distinctive whoops and hollers that distinguish the Cirebon gamelan's soundscape. Their vocal pyrotechnics, not found in any other gamelan culture in Java today, suggest a link to the *Rifa'iyya tarekat* that spread to Cirebon and Banten. These musicians are sometimes referred to as "howling dervishes" in response to their ecstatic utterances during *dzikir* meetings.³² Their howls stand in sharp relief to the *dalang's* utter silence invoked by the beating of her heart. Endo Suanda shares a wonderful anecdote, wherein the late *dalang topeng*, Dasih binti Wentar (d. 1985), described the role of the heart in transmitting emotions between the *dalang* and the spectator: "When you dance, you should feel like *geregeteun*; *geregeteun* here... while she circled her fingers around her heart... so the audience will also be *geregeteun*."³³ Not only is the heart the center of her relationship to the Divine and, in this world, humanity, it also conveys the madness and intense longing that frequently accompanies *tarekat*. The tensions between proponents of the vocal and silent *dzikir* laid out in the *Serat Centhini* and realized in *topeng* suggest that in the case of the latter—keeping in mind that most members of *topeng* troupes were kin—the musicians' hollers and *dalang's* silence were a compromise.

SPATIAL CONSTRUCTS AND THE POLITICIZATION OF ISLAM

Before itinerancy was banned in Indonesia in 1965, *topeng* was a "happening" that played out in the *alun-alun* (village square)—a bubbling geyser of gossip, plotting, political unrest, and rebellion. While this bustle made for exciting social experiences, the performance space is not neutral. Kenyan playwright, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, stresses that it memorializes time in terms of "what has gone before—history—and what could follow—the future."³⁴ It is thus a contested space—a magnet for tensions and conflicts—not only in Java, but also in colonial territories throughout the developing world. Wherever it took place, it expressed tangible and metaphoric contingencies of power and nationhood.³⁵ For performers from the Cirebon region, that space (then and now) oscillates between expansion and contraction: between government promotion and control and between the village square and global spectacles. It is thus as much about the geography traversed as the physical space where neighbors gather to participate in a shared experience. This held true whether they were day laborers traveling to Europe and America to participate in the colonial expositions; curious, privileged travelers from Europe and the United States who came to watch the Natives perform in the "Java Village";³⁶ or members of small itinerant *topeng* ensembles who walked for miles in their heavy costumes, stopping in each *alun-alun*, their instruments and cooking utensils in tow.

If you were a male *dalang*, the performance space is where you changed into your *topeng* attire in full view of the audience, removing your "veil" in the presence of God. Piety, however, dictates that women change in private, entering the public space only in full costume. It is also where the musicians set up their instruments while the *dalang* chewed *sirih*,³⁷ recited mantras, and created a universe of interactions that bridged the performers, spectators (ancestral and living), and God.

The realities of the space and the artists' preparations dictated that live *topeng* performances were both shared and intimate. As open spaces go, this one is unforgiving. The *dalang* must navigate through narrow eye slits carved in the mask in order to avoid obstacles in her path: children clamoring, giggling, and impinging closer and closer upon the *dalang's* finite physical sphere; babies crying; and the musicians who are at times only inches from the dancer. They are almost always outside her visual field, yet her focus remains fixed on her breath and her eyes are fervently on the ground. This interiority,

acutely unique to *topeng*, illustrates another core principle of the *Naqshbandiyya*: maintaining solitude in the public sphere.³⁸ For female practitioners it signals modesty as well, even as all eyes gaze upon her.

When *topeng* was reintroduced to Indonesians and to the world as part of Indonesia's national heritage in accordance with Suharto's fledgling nationalist narrative, the contours of the performance space shifted with it. Military-sponsored identification cards to track artists followed (*tanda kenyataan* or "certificate of proof"), which gradually gave way to artist identification cards (*kartu seniman*), both of which were designed to control the physical space and who utilized it.³⁹ Moreover, in acknowledging the critical role Muslims played in the eradication of the communist party, PKI,⁴⁰ Suharto required performers to rigorously adhere to *shalat* (daily prayers) during scheduled performances. Performances in the evening could begin no earlier than 8 p.m., approximately one hour after evening prayer, *Isa*, and conclude no later than 3:30 a.m., approximately one hour prior to morning prayers, *Subuh*. Breaks from 12:30 to 1 p.m. for noon prayers, *Duhur*, and at 3:30 p.m. for afternoon prayers, *Asar*, had to be observed.⁴¹

The important role anticommunist Muslim organizations played in securing Suharto's place in Indonesian history sheds light on the timing of *topeng's* inauguration at Al-Zaytun. *Topeng* was introduced into their art curriculum in conjunction with the opening of Al-Zaytun's university, *Universitas Al-Zaytun*, on the fortieth anniversary of Gestok. The event unfolded with great fanfare, including a brief appearance by the then-ailing ex-president Suharto, who arrived in time to witness the unveiling of the university's new building that bears his name.⁴²

Al-Zaytun is under the leadership of the Islamist Shaykh Panji Gumilang (alias Abu Toto), whose ties to the violent, underground wing of *Darul Islam*, *Negara Islam Indonesia KW9 Darul Islam*, reach back to 1978.⁴³ A deeper secularization of the mask "tradition" followed, both at the school and in the village from which it came. One is hard-pressed to imagine two more disparate entities coming together than when Panji Gumilang hired a *topeng* troupe from rural Slangit, Cirebon, to teach mask dance to their students and faculty. It was not a static experience. The two young, male village *dalang* were teaching pious female students; hence, their teaching technique and behavior was modified. Discernable shifts in how the form was taught upon their return home followed, including less corrective touching and costume alterations.

Today, *topeng* performances at Al-Zaytun are held in their massive outdoor arena every Friday night following soccer games, which in itself

is a contested space. Once a rich source of teak wood, the sprawling 1,200-hectare campus (approximately 3,000 acres), which was home to an agrarian community that was forcibly displaced in the late 1990s so that the campus could be built, comprises one of the most deforested regions in the district today. The performance space takes on a very different meaning within this Golkar-funded,⁴⁴ religion-based context.

FASHIONING THE *TOPENG* PANTHEON

The *topeng* characters often strike outsiders as "Hinduized," both in name and personality. Yet the primary stories they vibrate to—the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*—have over the centuries not only been Javanized, but also Islamicized. In no place is this more evident than in the characters' dress and temperament. The first character is Panji, whose eggshell-white color is associated with semen, indicating a fertile, potent male. He is also associated with *mutmainah* (calmness, refinement). His movements are concealed behind a rectangular batik *sarung* (*kaen lancar*) that is draped like a long skirt. In the legendary Panji tales known throughout the Malay world and which rival the Indic epics' popularity in Cirebon,⁴⁵ the refined Panji is a Javanese Hindu prince in search of his lost love, Candra Kirana.

Within the frame of *topeng*, Panji is a transitional character that bridges Hindu and Muslim Java. Although his *sarung* is unquestionably pre-Islamic, he is not stuck there. He has converted to Islam, signaled by Panji's movement that corresponds to *adzan* (the call to prayer). Panji is the only character whose *batik* is draped long like a skirt. With the second character, Samba, who is painted white or pink and represents adolescence, the *batik* is folded between the legs and tucked in the waist so that the knickers and legs are visible. The costume remains this way for the remaining three characters. Samba is alternately joyous, light, and coquettish, though narcissistic. Once the mask is donned, the adolescent giggles, gazes at his reflection in his hand as if it were a mirror, prepares betel nut paste (*sirih*), and applies it as makeup. Samba unequivocally represents a seeker, whose movements alternate between confusion and giddiness.

The flirtatious Rummyang is usually painted rose and follows Samba chronologically, although some *dalang* perform it last if time allows. This sequential deviation suggests Rummyang may be a late addition to the *topeng* canon and is used to sanctify the space, suggesting a pre-Islamic Javanese connection to number "five."⁴⁶

The next character, Tumenggung, signifies a warrior—a positive force, though not in possession of Panji's profundity. In the context

of life cycle, Tumenggung represents adulthood, with bold, but controlled movements connoting his stamina and determination. His energy is external and directed toward the audience.⁴⁷ Tumenggung's costume exudes colonial influence: the sacred headdress, called the *sobrah*, is replaced by a visor (*peci*), collar (*kelambi kerah*), and narrow tie (*dasi*). By the 1970s, some *dalang* wore sunglasses during the unmasked part of the dance, a cosmopolitan flourish that also implies deception.⁴⁸ Yet, in previous generations, clear glasses were the norm. Their appearance at a time when prescription eyeglasses were rare in Indonesia suggests the focus was on the Divine and external forces, for example, colonial hegemony. His strong (*gagah*) and precise movements demonstrate the importance of unwavering clarity on the Sufi path.⁴⁹ The final character, the beet-red, lusty, greedy king, Klana (figure 1.1), lacks full control of his faculties. Like those who precede him, Klana is more nuanced than meets the eye. Dwelling beneath his anger is an impulse toward deeper consciousness. And so the cycle begins anew.

The five main characters are male; yet the importance of women is encoded in the second character, the androgynous Samba, whose relationship to the clown-servant Tembem is least understood. Tembem, who is the only clown (*bodor*) character still performed in *topeng Cirebon*, has the additional distinction of being the only female character (although her role must be performed by a man). Her swollen third eye and exaggerated mole define her as homely, yet her "clown" designation confirms she is a friend of God (*wali*). In some versions of the dance, Samba—who is associated with death⁵⁰—nods off, awakens, and nods off again while dancing. His awakened, trance-like state confers the diffused focus of an individual embarking on *tarekat* and, in particular, the Sufi notion that one must "die before dying." When finally revived by Tembem, Samba's movements suggest a bird grooming its feathers.

The tropes of the bird and its disguise are consistent with Sufi allegories: notably, Farid ud-Din Attar's (Persian poet) twelfth-century allegory, *The Conference of the Birds*,⁵¹ wherein a group of birds hold a conference to seek their leader and designate a colorful bird (hoopoe) to lead the way. The birds have as many questions of the hoopoe as excuses for why they should not participate before starting on the pilgrimage. They pass through seven valleys, which represent the different stages of *tarekat*. The story is constellated around the dilemma of those birds that still have not yet fully committed themselves to the journey. It is through the birds' self-doubt, a litany of questions about the journey, the hoopoe's responses, and, ultimately, the "death" of

many of the birds along the way, that lead them to realize that the *shaykh* they sought existed already within them. The story is rooted in two connected ideas: the necessity to destroy the Self and the importance of passionate love. The love Attar celebrates flies in the face of social, sexual, and religious convention, for example, love between a superior and an inferior. This point is clearly portrayed in the clown's loquacious banter and the chief characters' silence, the silence that is grounded both in *topeng*'s gestural lexicon and, as will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, in the *lokcan* cape worn by the *dalang*. The relationship further suggests the character reversals of the Javanese *wayang punakawan* clown characters, who also represent the *wali*.⁵²

THE FACE AND BODY AS A MEDIUM

Anthony Reid's description of the human body as the most important medium of art that particularly transitions into adulthood that incorporates "decoration and artifice, often of a painful kind"⁵³ is central to the *topeng* mask. The aesthetics of illusion is the stuff of intense relational encounters between artist and disciple, performer and audience, and the living and the dead. It is incumbent upon the *dalang* to know her way around her mind and heart and to allow others access to both.

As the first part of most *topeng* characters is performed sans mask, audiences expect the artist's face to be pleasing to watch, regardless of either party's gender. To this end, a yellow facial powder, *bedak kuning*, was often applied to give the face a special glow.⁵⁴ The feminized, often eroticized, human face was thus as studied and critiqued as the characters being portrayed. During the first part of the dance, the spectator had ample time to fantasize about the *dalang*, both as an object of beauty and a potential mate. The most successful performers combined charisma with exceptional talent. Not surprisingly, spectators frequently fell in love with the *dalang* while watching them dance, prompting many a marriage and nearly as many divorces.⁵⁵ When unions between female *dalang* and their nonartist husbands dissolved, the division of property was based on local imams' interpretation of shari'a. Since female *dalang* often married wealthy patrons and entered marital unions with few worldly goods, their soon-to-be ex-husbands reaped the greatest financial benefit. Lacking the financial resources to face the situation, *dalang* typically returned to the home of a family member until they either resurrected their careers or remarried. Usually, the career came first. The reason is twofold. First,

performing is the *dalang*'s *raison d'être* and, second, it was the best opportunity where they were most likely to attract a new mate. In this way, the circulation of performance opportunities and potential partners energized *topeng*, with practitioners cycling between working and nesting.⁵⁶

The other face under discussion is, of course, the mask itself, whose outer dimensions have complex interior counterparts. Just as *sirih* has mystical, aesthetic, and relational values, strategically placing precious stones on the outer face of some masks has its internalized counterpart, with *dalang* inserting precious metals (*susuk*) subcutaneously in the identical location. Whereas the external appearance of stones is overt beautification, placing it beneath the flesh is believed to enhance the *dalang*'s stamina and skill (inner) while attracting someone or something to her, most commonly, an audience or a mate. The increasingly rare appearance of amulets on the inner face of older masks impregnate the mask and its wearer with power, bringing the external world of form (*zahir*) into constant conversation with the internal world of meaning (*batin*). Its external elements are intended for the spectator, while internalized manifestations are for the *dalang* alone.



Figure 1.1 Klana mask made by the maskmaker, Waryo. This mask incorporates three green stones in the crown, black molars, and golden teeth. Photo: Laurie Margot Ross.

Another human aesthetic captured in the outer face of the mask—teeth filing—is one of the most widespread Southeast Asian devices of human body beautification. Although less common today, it is still performed on young girls in parts of Indramayu. Historically, the rationale was to differentiate human beings from feral animals and demons of the spirit world, who also have white teeth, so as not to be mistaken for an evil spirit upon death.⁵⁷ Likewise, leveled teeth convey human beings in *topeng* as opposed to the fanged animal and demonic types portrayed in the dance drama, *wayang wong*.

In addition to the filing of teeth, *sirih* use is also depicted in the mask's iconography in the form of blackened dental molars and lower teeth. When combined with golden upper teeth, the character's charisma and power are accentuated (figure 1.1). *Sirih* was the most common way to transfer dye to the lips before cosmetics became widely available. The ingredients *gambir/apu* in *sirih*, when combined with saliva, reddens the lips, which symbolizes idealized beauty.⁵⁸ While in its earlier context it is believed to have bridged local agricultural and spiritual beliefs, *sirih* enjoyed tremendous staying power long after Islam became the dominant discourse and is still integrated into the ritual preparations of elder *dalang*, who chew it while reciting silent *dzikir* next to the *kotak topeng* (the plain wood chest where the masks are stored). They do so in plain view of the audience. *Sirih*, then, not only had cosmetic properties; it also heightened the *dalang*'s focus. To the attentive observer, it also signaled that the *kotak topeng* served as far more than the home of the masks. It was a portable altar.

Jean Gelman Taylor stresses that modification in costume “is the outward sign of change in religion, government, and availability of trade goods.”⁵⁹ There is no doubt that *topeng* attire has proved highly adaptive to the zeitgeist. During Japan's occupation of Java, Claire Holt noted the substitution of inexpensive Japanese ready-made scarves used by itinerant *wayang wong* troupes in West Java, which she chalked up to the wartime scarcity of hand-drawn batik.⁶⁰ More recently, *dalang* from Losari, Cirebon, on the cusp of Central Java, crossed the border to buy their *sarung*—not because Central Javanese designs were favored over those from Cirebon, but because they were less expensive. While in past generations when full-day performances were the norm in conjunction with ritual events, a single top and a pair of pants were used for all characters. Today, the color of the costume is different for each character; yet, due to Klana being the most oft-requested dance today, most *dalang* wear red costumes, the color associated with him. Furthermore, the old Chinese *mega mendung* (cloud) motif *kaen lancer* that, today, is considered an important aspect of the *topeng* costume is, in fact, a relatively

new addition. Its emergence over the past generation reinforces, somewhat anachronistically, Peranakan Chinese patronage of *topeng* prior to the 1965 massacres, at which time itinerancy and Chinese New Year celebrations were banned. The reasoning behind the recent addition of the *mega mendung* motif, though unclear, suggests the *reformasi*-generation's interest in revisiting the close bond these two communities once enjoyed. Thus, while more recent costume alterations seem out of sync with the past, they are, instead, consistent with it.

EXPRESSED PIETY, CLOTH, AND THE BODY

By all accounts, the tradition of professional improvisational dancers (*ronggeng*) in Java is very old and shares symmetry with India's *devadasi* court dancers (including the shared connotation of court prostitution, often noted by outsiders).⁶¹ While seemingly an odd fit with *topeng*'s masculine energy, the launch of official *ronggeng* schools at Cirebon's royal court (and taxed by Dutch administrators) bridged the two forms.⁶² A warm drink composed of ginger, *air serbat*, was an integral part of the *ronggeng* experience. According to the late prominent Cirebon *kraton* scholar, T. D. Sudjana (died c. 2010), the drink was consumed to heat up the body and ignite passion in the performer and spectator-participant, which included members of the royal court.⁶³ The drink was eventually replaced with alcohol under Dutch hegemony. Since alcohol consumption is prohibited in Islam, female *dalang* who doubled as *ronggeng* were increasingly linked to prostitution by the early twentieth century.

Contemporary definitions notwithstanding, both the *ronggeng* and *dalang*'s alliance is mystical. According to the *Babad Cerbon* (the Chronicles of Cirebon), written by Abdul Kahar, the seventeenth-century *pengulu* (chief mosque official) at the Agung Mosque, *ronggeng* is the performed translation of *marifat* (knowledge). It is the zenith of the *tarekat*, the culmination of the previous three levels: *shari'a*, *tarekat* (the way), and *hakekat* (truth). Each level has its counterpart in the Cirebon performing arts beginning with *wayang* (puppetry) and then progressing to *berokan* (full body mask), and *topeng*, respectively. *Ronggeng* is exalted because it combines the first three stages finally in unveiled form,⁶⁴ replicated in the male *dalang* who undresses in view of his audience.

E. Hardouin's 1851 *topeng babakan* illustration (published posthumously in 1855) shows a *dalang* *topeng* performing *ronggeng*, so noted by the fan in her right hand as well as her gesture. The *sarung* hugs her body from the chest to the ankle, anchored by a silver belt

and obscured by a variety of patterned handkerchiefs that, tucked into the belt, create a skirt effect (figure 1.2). This early presentation suggests that the uncut cloth, so long touted as sacred to the people of Java, was either not as meaningful as the visible parts of the costume, or, in fact, more sacred in its concealment.

The *ronggeng/topeng* combination highlights the important role attractiveness plays in the careers of these dancers. During Japan's occupation of Java (1942–1945), female *dalang*, some of whom were forced to serve as “comfort women,” had more opportunities to be hired by Japanese troops than their male counterparts.⁶⁵ Whenever the sound system failed (which was often), the *dalang* slipped back into her *kebaya* (blouse) and *sarung* and entertained the troops with her *ronggeng* moves.⁶⁶

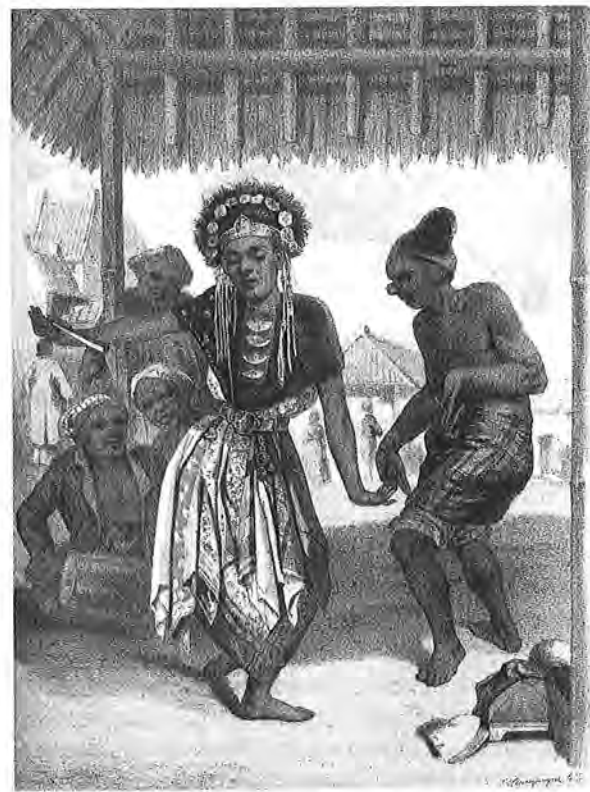


Figure 1.2 *Topeng babakan* performance. Female *dalang* and male *bodur* (clown). From Hardouin et al. *Java Tooneelen uit het Leven Karakterschetsen en Kleederdragten van Java's Bewoners in afbeeldingen naar de natuur geteekend*. 1855.

We cannot point with certainty to a date when pants became a de rigeur part of *topeng* attire, although they were likely standardized following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, when more Muslim Malays performed the haj than ever before.⁶⁷ Pilgrims' contact with the larger Muslim community in Mecca and Medina expanded their worldview, including diverse expressions of Muslim attire, particularly the preference for stitched cloth, in contrast with Java's traditional garments, which were made up of rectangular cloth, notably the *sarung* and *selendang* (shawl).

The material transition from Panji to the second character in the pantheon, Samba, makes this point quite clearly. Panji's sensuously enveloping cloth is cleverly reconfigured to mimic pants, which are draped over knickers for Samba.⁶⁸ This has historical precedent in the traditional dress of Saudi Arabia, wherein both men and women wear loose-fitting pantaloons with a drawstring waist, called *sirwaal*, beneath the *thawb*, an ankle-length shirt.⁶⁹

A matching short-sleeved top that is partially obscured by the silk cape, *lokcan*, has replaced the breast wrap and exposed arms that were hidden in the past. *Lokcan* is a Chinese term for "blue silk," so-named because the silk derived from the province of Shantung had a bluish hue.⁷⁰ Due to the rarity of this particular silk, the term now refers to its Chinese-inspired iconography, notably the phoenix, sea creatures, and other oceanic motifs. Today's *lokcan*, which is often made of silk crepe or imported fine cotton, remains one of the most important possessions of the *dalang*. Those considered most spiritually imbued have been handed down intergenerationally. Those *dalang* who are not on the receiving end of an heirloom *lokcan* seek one of comparable age and condition—the more weathered, the better. Although its meaning is lost today, the *lokcan* likely represents the initiatic cloak (*kbirqa*) that symbolizes the transmission of knowledge and nonmaterial power from the *shaykh* to disciple—a practice known to both Sunni and Shia mystics.⁷¹ Among the Naqshbaniyya, it symbolizes the garment of poverty Gabriel gave to Muhammad during the *Miraj*.⁷² Annemarie Schimmel describes its significance thus:

In investing the *murid* with the patched frock, Sufism has preserved the old symbolism of garments: by donning a garment that has been worn, or even touched, by the blessed hands of a master, the disciple acquires some of the *baraka*, the mystic-magical power of the sheikh.⁷³

The late Cirebon religious scholar and artist, Kandeg, shared a story with Endo Suanda about the character Aki-Aki, who represents an old

priest of Chinese ancestry and embodies the sacred teacher-student relationship and the secret system of knowledge, which sheds considerable light on the important role of the *lokcan* in *topeng* culture. In Kandeg's version, Aki-Aki is unsteady on his feet and leans on the *kotak*. He complains to the musicians that his back aches and requests them to massage him. A musician comes forward and kneads the sore area. The *bodor* subsequently places Aki-Aki's costume over his own (mimicking Aki-Aki's action). Here, as in the Samba/Tembem dyad described earlier, there is a clear role reversal in place wherein the clown serves as the guru/*shaykh*.

Aki-Aki is clearly a transformative figure as indeed are all of the characters in the pantheon to one degree or another. What distinguishes him from the others is his dual role as healer and the healed. For example, he asks a musician to massage his ailing body, just as the *murid* asks a *shaykh* for psychic healing. Moreover, Aki-Aki wins the battle against the protagonist through his now able body (*pencak*). That the *murid* portrays the old (experienced) teacher is consistent with the Samba/Tembem inversion. It is also revelatory for it indicates the implicit interdependence of all mentoring relationships, which are based on reciprocity, mutuality, and emotional sustenance.

The *lokcan* cape's former blue hue further defines it as a *tasawwuf* object of exchange. Similar to it, the Sufi *kbirqa* that is passed from the *shaykh* to *murid* is usually dark blue, which, it has been suggested, is the color of mourning, demonstrating that "the Sufi had separated himself from the world and what is in it."⁷⁴ This makes it not only a physical, but also a spiritually imbued garment. By the late eighteenth century, transferring the cloak indicated the student was both worthy of succession and had, in fact, been formally initiated. That the *lokcan* is stitched at the center and proudly worn—holes and all—further supports a *tasawwuf* interpretation that positions the *dalang*'s lineage and her repudiation of the material world, front and center.

Dasih, with whom I trained with in the late 1970s, gave me her *lokcan* when I completed my studies. She did not explain, nor did I understand, the significance of her gesture at the time, since I not only lacked pedigree, I was an American. Even so, I treasured the tattered cloth that she, her father, and grandfather had worn before her. The reality was that I was her only student who had learned all five *topeng* characters in her family's style (*gaya Palimanan*). It was also unusual for a guru and non-*keturunan* student to share a bedroom: we shared hers for nearly one year. In that tiny space, we faced each other every evening on our respective beds, where I asked her about her life and about the form I was studying. She withheld nothing.

In our bedroom, my ailing guru recited the Divine Names in her heart, while her still nimble fingers counted each bead on her *tasbeih* (rosary). Perhaps I became the custodian of Dasih's sacred heirloom (*pusaka*) cloth because she was unable to bear children and was, thus, chosen to perform the rigorous, ascetic practices expected of one's progeny.⁷⁵ What was once opaque is now transparent: I was initiated, *khirqah* and all.

SOBRAH POWER

Some *dalang* refer to the *sobrah* (headdress) as the “center” or “home.” In past generations there were five styles, one for each of the characters in the *topeng* pantheon. Most important to this discussion is the *sobrah* reserved for Panji, the first and most spiritual character. The name of the *sobrah* designated for him is *tekes Panji*. The etymology of *tekes* is understood to be Javanese, in reference to both the headdress and Panji in Old Javanese literature, with examples in the fourteenth-century Hindu-Buddhist text, *Nāgarakṛtāgama*,⁷⁶ and the fifteenth-century chronicle of the Javanese Majapahit kingdom, *Pararaton*. While both texts are considered to be of pre-Islamic origin, the purpose of the *tekes Panji* (keeping in mind that Muslim traders and merchants were present on the island during this period) suggests it might correspond to the Turkish word *tekke*,⁷⁷ which designates an intimate place of respite and learning for Sufi *shaykhs* and their disciples, a concept related to the Javanese *rumah suluk*.⁷⁸

The *sobrah*'s significance to the *dalang* parallels that of the Muslim turban's significance in designating different *tarekat* in Ottoman lands, which is clearly translated in their tombs of *shaykhs*, mullahs, and other prominent Sufis. There, the three-dimensional carved turban of the deceased's *tarekat* affiliation is signaled by its placement atop a male's tombstone.⁷⁹ While *tarekat* in the Cirebon region do not have specific turbans, I located two twentieth-century headstones at *Astana Gunung Jati* in Cirebon (figure 1.3), whose designs are executed in relief near the head of the stone and synthesize the motif of the turban with the tree of life (*pohon hayat*) iconography common to Cirebon graves. While the Cirebon stones are not three-dimensional turban renderings, they do correspond to Ottoman tombstones that designate important female dervishes, whose designs are also incised near the top of the stone.

Just as turban designs may indicate a particular Sufi order in some regions, the design of the *sobrah* is equally iconic and critical for the smooth performance. Yet, because it is prepared from human hair, it



Figure 1.3 Double-headed tombstone at *Astana Gunung Jati* in Cirebon. Photo: Laurie Margot Ross.

sparks strong reactions in some Muslims, even though animal skin has long been featured in the head coverings worn by Muslims in Turkey and Iran.⁸⁰ There is a gendered component to using hair in the making of the *sobrah*. Because it must be long enough to weave into the frame and cannot be dyed, the pool of candidates from whom it can be taken is limited to young women. In a culture where long hair is prized, persuading women to part with theirs is costly, making the headdress one of the most important financial investments in a *dalang*'s career.

Over the past decade, *dalang* are increasingly commissioning *sobrah* made from black wool yarn. Although the use of wool in this context may be little more than a coincidence since the terms Sufi and Sufism are not part of most *dalang*'s vocabulary, it is important to note that the word *tasawwuf* translates as “Sufism,” which is derived from *suf*, or “wool.” Other possible translations of *suf* are certainly plausible; however, in its Sufi context, it is widely believed to refer to the coarse

woolen robes worn by early Muslim ascetics representing their disregard for worldly goods.⁸¹ Substituting wool for those practitioners may thus be more aligned with economics than mystical attunement: it costs a fraction of the price and is indistinguishable from hair when looked from a distance.

The late *sobrah* maker, Nawi, argued against using wool, stating that human hair was specified by the *wali*. He stressed it “lacks charisma,”⁸² an idea in agreement with Anderson’s claim that charisma assumes political force within mystical and magical cosmologies.⁸³ It is also an exemplar of the Javanist-*tasawwuf* conceptualization of power, with charisma residing fervently at the center and a synthetic expression of the horizontal axis of Islam,⁸⁴ demonstrating that even in her role as conduit, the *dalang* is of this world.

The double-icon third eye, *picisan*, which rests on the *dalang*’s forehead, is referred to by performers as simply *topeng*⁸⁵ (figure 1.4). The two “eyes” are sewn together at the innermost connection point of the *sobrah*: the center. The antiquity of this feature is unknown; however, the Sufi fascination with binaries suggests it is a highly adaptive icon.⁸⁶ Ricklefs describes how binaries are fused in pre-Islamic Java, in his discussion of Pakubuwana II’s *Serat Wulang*:

The left eye is synonymous with Javanese literature and the right eye with Arabic literature. The left eye thus provides an interior perspective on the self, and the right eye an external view of the self. “Both were needed for a complete view of reality, just as one must be both Javanese and Muslim to achieve a full identity.”⁸⁷

Elder *dalang* and musicians understand the *picisan* in similar binaries based on the Javanese word for “eye,” *mripat*, which is believed to be derived from *marifat* that, as previously noted, constitutes the highest level of the Sufi path. “The left eye (*narakah*) symbolizes impoverishment of the soul, while the right eye (*sorgah*) connotes the positive path... We must always remember the good path. There is only one God. *Topeng* [*picisan*] is the state of constant remembrance.”⁸⁸ The late puppeteer Kalim (d. 2009) stressed that the *dalang topeng* is one form of God because of the *picis* and that it is named *topeng* because it has already entered the heart. The genealogy of how one acquires knowledge trumps any other lineage.⁸⁹ Musician Miska Lukmanul Hakim echoes this, stating that it is the equivalent of the mask before it is worn. During the unmasked part of the dance, it provides the context for *ilmu* (spiritual knowledge) and automatically migrates to the heart once the mask is worn.⁹⁰



Figure 1.4 Drawing of Tekes Panji by Kandeg Patmadjawinata. Courtesy of Irawati Durban Ardjo, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia.

Dasih offered a different explanation: “One eye gazes upon Allah, while the other eye is fixed on the earth,”⁹¹ a fine-tuned blending of Islam’s vertical and horizontal axes in the performer/spectator/Divine matrix. She described the *picisan* as *khafi*, a mystical reference to perception and intuition associated with the color of the *sobrah* (black) and the vehicle for understanding the heart (*kalbu*)—the organ of perception.

In addition to the significance of human hair and the *picisan*, several strands dangle from each side of the *sobrah* composed of beads and cotton balls, called *rawis* (figure 1.2). Its symmetry replicates the same dichotomy integral to the Javanese *Weltanschauung* of balance and harmony.⁹² In past generations the beads totaled ninety-nine, one for each of the Divine Names—a *tasbeih* in motion. Though it is

beyond the scope of this chapter, it is nonetheless tantalizing to consider that the *rawis* may have a linguistic correlation with the Arabic word for a reciter or storyteller (the preserver of lost knowledge), *rāwī*. Certainly, its function is similar to the *rawis-as-rosary*.

Not only has the shape of the *sobrah* changed over generations, so, too, have other parts of the costume. Female mask dancers began modifying their costumes as a response to growing concerns about covering *aurat* by the early 2000s. The *jilbab* (head covering) was embraced and along with it, the short-sleeve top (*klambi*) was extended below the wrists, or at least modified by wearing a long-sleeve shirt beneath it; the knickers that fall just below the kneecap were being extended to the ankle; and the feet increasingly covered with socks.⁹³

The City of Cirebon's Department of Culture and Tourism's increased sponsorship of cultural affairs ushered in a contemporary version of *topeng*, called *rampak topeng* (group *topeng*) that features one character from the pantheon (usually Klana) in synchronized form. In order to give it the look of gender symmetry, *dalang* and nonlineage mask dancers⁹⁴ perform side by side. The latter, thus, became de facto *dalang topeng* in a culture that has long distinguished the two.

The *topeng* style put on the national and global map by the late Sujana bin Arja since the first *topeng* tour in 1977 is the dominant style today, asserting the form's masculinity in a culture disproportionately composed of women, who, like their male counterparts, trace their lineage to the *wali* patriarchy. This duality confirms a powerful correlation between female agency and Islam along Java's northwest coast, one that is swiftly distancing itself from mystical praxis and toward normative Islam.

NOTES

1. H. J. de Graaf, *Chinese Muslims in Java in the 15th and 16th Centuries: The Malay Annals of Semarang and Cerbon*. Trans. and comments, G. Pigeaud. Ed. M. C. Ricklefs, *Desawarnana (Nāgarakṛtāgama)* (Melbourne, Australia: Monash Papers of Southeast Asia, No. 12, 1984), 181. Graaf and Pigeaud speculate that the stone reliefs on some Islamic tombstones along the *pasisir* were carved by Chinese Muslim craftsmen. Chinese and Arab traders who supplied cotton and other goods pertaining to textile production also had contact with the coastal Sufi guilds, with many Peranakan Chinese carvers said to be guild members. Harmen C. Veldhuisen, *Batik Belanda, 1840-1940. Dutch Influence in Batik from Java: History and Stories* (Jakarta: Gaya Favorit, 1993), 28; Alit Veldhuisen-Djajasoebrata, *Weavings of Power and Might: The Glory of Java* (Rotterdam: Museum voor Volkenkunde, 1988), 27.

2. Banten was formerly part of the province of West Java. It was established as a separate province in 2000.
3. Bruce W. Carpenter, *Javanese Antique Furniture and Folk Art* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2009), 22; Eng seng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006): 183-187; M. C. Ricklefs, *Mystic Synthesis in Java: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth to the Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Norwalk: East Bridge, 2006), 3.
4. For example, the noun "man" designates any person who strives toward God, without reference to the gender of the individual.
5. Annemarie Schimmel, *My Soul Is a Woman: The Feminine in Islam* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 15.
6. Absolute love is grounded in the *Qur'an*. See *Surah 5*, Verse 54: "Bring forth those whom He loves and who love Him."
7. Schimmel, *My Soul Is a Woman*, 19-21; 69-70.
8. Onghokham, "The Wayang Topèng World of Malang." *Indonesia* 14 (1972).
9. *Ibid.*, 117-120.
10. *Babad Djalasutra: Njarisosaken Lampahanipun Pangeran Panggung Ladjeng Karan Kijai Djalasutra* (Yogyakarta: Sumodidjojo, Mahadewa, 1956); D. A. Rinkes, *Nine Saints of Java* (Kuala Lumpur: MSRI, 1996), 21-22, 42-48. Java is predominantly Sunni; however, there is a marked Shia presence.
11. See, for example, Eric Sasono's description of the film, *Sang Pencerah* in this volume, in which Siti Jenar (Djenar) is blamed for Islam's failings.
12. Rinkes, *Nine Saints of Java*, 29-38.
13. Simon Ottenberg and David A. Binkley, eds. *Playful Performers: African Children's Masquerades* (Edison, NJ: Transaction, 2006); René A. Bravmann, "Gyinna-Gyinna: Making the Djinn Manifest." *African Arts* 10, 3 (1977): 46; Paul Mason, "The End of Fasting: Evolving Performances at Hari Raya Celebrations Are a Window into Deeper Cultural Change." *Inside Indonesia* 93 (July-September 2008). <http://insideindonesia.org/content/view/1126/47/>
14. Clara Brakel, "Masked Dances, Spirit Worship and the Introduction of Islam in Java." *Assaph: Studies in the Theatre* 9 (1993): 20; Claire Holt, *Art in Indonesia. Continuities and Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 281; Soedarsono, *Wayang Wong: The State Ritual Dance Drama in the Court of Yogyakarta* (Yogyakarta: Gadjaj University Press, 1984).
15. Holt, *Art in Indonesia*, 281; Tomé Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, 2 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, [1515], 1944), 177; Stuart Robson, trans. *Desawarnana (Nāgarakṛtāgama)* by Mpu Prapañca (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1995). The first concrete mention of masked dance in Java is in the fourteenth-century (1365) Hindu-Javanese panegyric about King Hayam Wuruk of Majapahit, *The Nāgarakṛtāgama of Rakawi Prapañca*.

16. A female *dalang topeng* who also performs sans mask as an improvisational dancer.
17. The French set designer, Ernest Alfred Hardouin (1820–1854), came to Java with a theater troupe in 1842 and traveled throughout West Java after the troupe dissolved. Although the book was first published in 1855, the drawings were executed c. 1851. Y. M. de Jager, *Excerpta Indonesia* 44 (1991): 42; Ensiklopedi Jakarta, “Ernest Alfred Hardouin.” Dinas Komunikasi, Informatika dan Kehumasan Pemprov DKI Jakarta: <http://www.jakarta.go.id/jakv1/encyclopedia/detail/538>
18. Much has been written about this debate in Islamic art, although no Quranic *surah* support such injunctions. Thoughtful treatment of the subject is presented in Sir Thomas Arnold, *Painting in Islam* (New York: Dover, [1928], 1965), 1–40. See, too, K. A. C. Creswell’s extensive bibliography on this topic in “The Lawfulness of Painting in Early Islam.” *Ars Islamica* 11, 12 (1946): 159. Also, Eva Baer, *The Human Figure in Islamic Art: Inheritances and Islamic Transformations* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2004); Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).
19. *Gestok*, the acronym for *Gerakan Sabtu Oktober* (October 1 Movement), reflects the actual date of the coup attempt in which six generals and one army officer were killed in an effort to overthrow President Sukarno. The term was introduced by Sukarno in his (unsuccessful) bid to stop use of the pejorative acronym initiated by the Suharto regime, *Gestapu* (September 30 Movement), which places the date of the event as one day earlier, September 30. Hersi Setiawan, *Kamus Gestok* (Yogyakarta: Galang Press, 2003), 99–100.
Two theories persist about who initiated the *putsch* that swiftly led to Suharto’s coup and ultimate control. Anderson and McVey’s early report points 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 with compelling new evidence by Boden and Roosa. Benedict R. O’G. Anderson and Ruth McVey, *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965 Coup in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971); Ragna Boden, “The ‘Gestapu’ Events of 1965 in Indonesia: New Evidence from Russian and German Archives.” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 163 (2007): 507–528; John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement & Suharto’s Coup d’État in Indonesia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).
20. According to Bandung dancer, Irawati Durban Ardjo, who performed at the New York World’s Fair in 1964, Ibu Tien was part of the Indonesian Pavilion there, where she sold textiles. Personal Communication, August 27, 2012. For more on the Indonesian pavilion in 1964, see Ardjo (2008).
21. Administratively, Indramayu is part of the Cirebon region. When I first visited Al-Zaytun in 2005, it was the largest *pesantren* in Indonesia. Its

- enrollment has steadily declined since then, although the current numbers are impossible to verify.
22. Martin van Bruinessen, “Wahhabi Influences in Indonesia, Real and Imagined” (summary of paper presented at the *Journée d’Etudes du CEIFR (EHESS-CNRS) et MSH sur le Wahhabisme*. Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales / Maison des Sciences de l’Homme. Paris, June 10, 2002). http://www.archivesaudiovisuelles.fr/11/163/martin_van_bruinessen-7.pdf
23. *Tarekat* has two meanings. In this context it refers to the Sufi orders or fraternities. It also means the Sufi path.
24. Hamid Algar, “Some Notes on the Naqshbandī Tariqat in Bosnia.” *Die Welt des Islams. New Series* 13, 3–4 (1971): 168–203. Martin van Bruinessen, “Origins and Development of the Sufi Orders (Tarekat) in Southeast Asia.” *Studia Islamika* 1, 1 (1994): 1–23.
25. Hamid Algar, *Wahhabism: A Critical Essay* (Oneonta, NY: Islamic Publications International, 2002); Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia. Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle-Eastern ‘Ulamā’ in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 148–153.
26. I am indebted to Hamid Algar for his insights on the nuances of *dzikir*.
27. The earliest important figure in the Naqshbandī lineage, ‘Abd al-Khāliq Ghidjūvānī, introduced the eight principles of the Naqshbandiyya and a silent form of *dzikir* at the turn of the thirteenth century. However, the practice became normative only with the crystallization of the order and those practices endorsed by its spiritual master and eponym, Bahā’ ad-Dīn Naqshband. See Hamid Algar, “Silent and Vocal Dhikr in the Naqshbandī Order.” *Akten des VII. Kongresses für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft. Göttingen 15. Bis 22. (1974)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 42–43.
28. Algar, “Silent and Vocal Dhikr in the Naqshbandī Order,” 40–41.
29. R. Ng Soeradipoera et al. eds., *Serat Tjentini* (Batavia: Ruygrok, 1912–1915).
30. Poerbatjaraka, “De Geheime leer van Sunan Bonang (soeloek Woedjil).” *Djawa* 18 (1938). Trans. and cited in Brakel, “Masked Dances, Spirit Worship and the Introduction of Islam in Java,” 24–25.
31. Michael W. Dols, *Majnun: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society*. Ed. Diana E. Immisch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).
32. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1975), 176; Martin van Bruinessen, “Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani and the Qadiriyya in Indonesia.” *Journal of the History of Sufism* 1–2 (2000): 361–395; Bruinessen, “Origins and Development of the Sufi Orders (Tarekat) in Southeast Asia.”
33. Sundanese: *Ari ngibing teh kudu siga anu geregeteun; geregeteun di dieu yeuh...ngarah anu lalajo oge milu geregeteun*. Suanda translates the Sundanese word *geregeteun* as being emotional and full of intensity in

- both madness and love. Endo Suanda, "Dancing in Cirebonese Topeng." *Balungan* 3, 3 (1988): 7–15.
34. Ngūgī wa Thiong'o defines three schemas for understanding performance space: as "a self-contained field of internal relations" or "the totality of its external relations to these other centres and fields," or "in its entirety of internal and external factors... in its relationship to time." Ngūgī wa Thiong'o, *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams. Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 39–41.
 35. Penny Edwards, "Half-Cast: Staging Race in British Burma." *Postcolonial Studies* 5, 3 (2002): 281–282; James D. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Laurie J. Sears, *Shadows of Empire: Colonial Discourse and Javanese Tales* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Thiong'o, *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams*, 69.
 36. Marieke Bloembergen, *Colonial Spectacles: The Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies at the World Exhibitions, 1880–1931* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006); Carolyn Schiller Johnson, "Performing Ethnicity: Performance Events in Chicago 1893–1996" (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1998).
 37. *Sirih* circulated throughout the Muslim world. It was exported from India to the Middle East at least as far back as the thirteenth century where it enjoyed some notoriety in Mecca and Yemen, but proved too fragile for the long, arduous journey. Some conservative Muslims contend that sirih, in its comparisons to alcohol and stimulants, violates Islamic doctrine, which resulted in its being banned in much of the Arabian Peninsula and among many Indian and Pakistani Muslims. In Java, *sirih* has a long history as an aphrodisiac. This reputation, which has contributed to betel nut's prominent role in courtship and marriage throughout the Malay world, is found in the lingua franca, Malay. The Malay word for areca, *pinang* (Cirebon Javanese: *nginang*), is the root of *pinang* and *memingan*, the words for engagement and to propose marriage, respectively. Furthermore, *pinang muda* is the young nut, whose two halves, when combined, represent a perfect match. Brownrigg, *Betel Cutters from the Samuel Eilenberg Collection*, 30; Laurie Margot Ross, "Journeying, Adaptation, and Translation: *Topeng Cirebon* at the Margins" (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2009), 236, 250–255; Huan Ma, *Ying-yai Sheng-Lan: The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 92–93.
 38. The *Naqshbandiyya* refer to this as *khalvat dar anjuman* (isolation in gathering).
 39. Laurie Margot Ross, "The Artist Registry. Tracking Itinerant Artists Before and After Suharto's 1965 Coup d'état in the Cirebon Region, West Java." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 39, 114 (2011): 163–166.
 40. For the role of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and other groups, including Muhammadiyah in the 1965–1966 massacres, see Greg Fealy and

- Katharine McGregor, "Nahdlatul Ulama and the Killings of 1965–66: Religion, Politics and Remembrance." *Indonesia* 89 (2010).
41. Endo Suanda, "The Social Context of the Cirebonese Performing Artist." *Asian Music* 13, 1 (1981): 38–39.
 42. Ross, "Journeying, Adaptation, and Translation," 408–437.
 43. Abu Toto eventually rose to become its Ninth Regional Commander in 1993. Following an organizational split in 1996, he launched his own faction, *KW9 al-Zaytun*. Martin van Bruinessen, "'Traditionalist' and 'Islamist' Pesantren in Contemporary Indonesia" (paper presented at ISIM workshop, Leiden, "The Madrasa in Asia," May 2004); Al Chaidar, *Sepak terjang KW. IX Abu Toto Syech A.S. Panji Gumilang menyelewengkan NKA-NII pasca S.M. Kartosoewirjo* (Jakarta: Madani Press, 2000); International Crisis Group, "Recycling Militants in Indonesia: Darul Islam and the Australian Embassy Bombing." *Asia Report* 92 (February 22, 2005): 15, 26–27. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/092%20Recycling%20Militants%20in%20Indonesia%20Darul%20Islam%20and%20the%20Australian%20Embassy%20Bombing.pdf>
 44. Founded in 1964, the organization claimed to be apolitical, yet was supported by senior army officials in response to the PKI's growing influence. When Suharto made his first "official" presidential run in 1968, he joined Golkar. From that point forward, Suharto and Golkar have been virtually synonymous. The organization took swift control of artist activities in the immediate decade.
 45. Panji is also widely known as Damar Wulan. The tales are described in Poerbatjaraka, *Tjerita Pandji dalam perbandingan* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1968).
 46. Examples being the four cardinal points and the center; the five days of the Javanese calendar (*Pon, Wage, Kliwon, Legi, and Pahing*); the victorious five Pandava brothers of the *Mahabharata*; and associations to Bhima's magic *Pancanaka* nails.
 47. Kathy Foley, "My Bodies: The Performer in West Java." *TDR: The Drama Review* T126 (1990): 69.
 48. Sunglasses are also worn in a variety of female and male trance dances in Cirebon, notably *sintren, warilais*, and the old seafaring dance form, *angklung bungko*. In the context of trance, sunglasses are employed to enhance concentration and conceal the rolled-back eyes of the performer.
 49. Sukarta Chandra, personal communication, August 31, 2012.
 50. Foley, "My Bodies: The Performer in West Java," 68.
 51. Farid ud-Din Attar, *The Conference of the Birds* (London: Penguin, 1984).
 52. James Peacock, "Symbolic Reversal and Social History: Transvestites and Clowns of Java." In *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*. Ed. Barbara A. Babcock (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978).

53. Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, vol. 1: *The Land Below the Winds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 75.
54. Yellow is associated with *supiyah* (possessiveness, but also fertility, e.g., water), and the androgynous Samba.
55. Serial marriages are ubiquitous in rural Cirebon. First unions are often prearranged between families or as a "practice" marriage prior to the onset of menses.
56. Today, divorces are more difficult to attain in rural Cirebon, where conservative Islam is firmly entrenched. According to several *dalang topeng* that I interviewed in 2012, *ulama* are increasingly reticent to grant them. Combined with increased monetary costs, it is nearly impossible for rural dancers to attain a divorce without a wealthy benefactor.
57. Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680*, 1:75.
58. Brownrigg, *Betel Cutters from the Samuel Eilenberg Collection*, 21.
59. Jean Gelman Taylor, "Costume and Gender in Colonial Java, 1800-1940." In *Outward Appearances: Dressing State and Society in Indonesia*. Ed. Henk Schulte Nordholt (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997), 85.
60. *Wayang wong* and *topeng* troupes were often composed of the same artists. The Claire Holt Collection of Indonesian Dance. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. "Photographs of Indonesia: Java, East and West: Dances (Miscellaneous)": Image 1122589.
61. Liesbeth Hesselink, "Prostitution: A Necessary Evil, Particularly in the Colonies: Views on Prostitution in the Netherlands East Indies." In *Indonesian Women in Focus: Past and Present Notions*. Ed. E. Locher-Scholten and A. Nichof (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1992); A. de Braconier, "Het Prostitutie-vraagstuk in Nederlandsch-Indië." *Indische Gids* 55 (1933): 916; Thomas Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, [1817], 1965), 1:342; Henry J. Spiller, *Erotic Triangles: Sundanese Dance and Masculinity in West Java* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 76-103; W. F. Stutterheim, "A Thousand Years Old Profession in the Princely Courts on Java." In *Studies in Indonesian Archeology*. Ed. W. F. Stutterheim (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956); R. Anderson Sutton, "Who Is the *Pesindhen*? Notes on the Female Singing Tradition in Java." *Indonesia* 37 (1984): 119-133.
62. F. De Haan, *Priangan: De Preanger-Regentschappen onder het Nederlandsch Bestuur tot 1811* (1910-1912). In 2009 Governor-General Daendels restored *ronggeng* schools at Cirebon's royal courts. An extensive overview of the *ronggeng* in Java is found in Spiller, *Erotic Triangles*, 76-103.
63. Heating up the body is often related to dzikir practices. Persian Sufi poets often describe drunkenness metaphorically in the *shaykh/murid* dyad, since alcohol consumption is prohibited in Islam.
64. Hadisutjipto, trans. *Babad Cerbon* (Jakarta: Department of Education and Culture, 1979); Sharon Siddique, "Relics of the Past? A Sociological Study of the Sultanates of Cirebon, West Java" (PhD Dissertation,

- Universität Bielefeld, Germany, 1977), 79-80; P. J. Zoetmulder, *Pantheism and Monism in Javanese Suluk Literature: Islamic and Indian Mysticism in an Indonesian Setting*. Trans. M. C. Ricklefs (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1995), 248-249.
65. Rasinah, pers. comm., May 26, 2005.
66. Wita, personal communication, June 20, 2005.
67. During the 1850s roughly 2,000 pilgrims were said to have left the Dutch territories for Mecca. The numbers grew steadily after the Suez Canal opened.
68. Robyn J. Maxwell, *Textiles of Southeast Asia: Tradition, Trade, and Transformation* (Melbourne and New York: Australian National University and Oxford University Press, 1990), 306, 334; Taylor, "Costume and Gender in Colonial Java, 1800-1940," 92; Stephen Vernoit, *Occidentalism: Islamic Art in the 19th Century* (London and New York: Nour Foundation and Oxford University Press, 1997), 62.
69. U.S. Committee for Saudi Arabian Cultural Heritage, *Palms and Pomegranates: Traditional Dress of Saudi Arabia* (Washington, DC, 1989), 9-10.
70. Judi Knight-Achjadi and Asmoro Damais, *Butterflies & Phoenixes: Chinese Inspirations in Indonesian Textile Arts* (Jakarta: Mitra Museum Indonesia, 2005), 10.
71. *Kisa* is the term employed by Shia Muslims.
72. Patricia Baker, *Islam and the Religious Arts* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 184.
73. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 102.
74. *Ibid.*, 102. The color blue has far-reaching significance. According to Jasleen Dhamija, the "use of checkered cloth in the slave trade for buying and selling slaves, led to it being called the 'cloth of sorrow' and it has been suggested the 'Blues' owes its name to the indigo which the slaves cultivated and in the indigo-blue cloth in which they were dressed." Jasleen Dhamija, "The Geography of Textiles." In *Textiles from India: The Global Trade*. Ed. Rosemary Crill (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2006), 265.
75. I interviewed all of Dasih's known former students. None had studied all five characters of her family's Palimanan style. All had undergone some form of an initiatic bath (*mandikan kembang*), but had not performed the extensive fasts nor visited the holy shrines (*ziarah*) incumbent upon pedigreed *dalang*-in-training.
76. Robson, trans. *Desawarnana (Nāgarakṛtāgama)*.
77. Literally, a house of spiritual retreat. The designated Arabic and Persian terms for *tekke* are *zawiya* and *khanaqah*, respectively.
78. The term *suluk* has a very different meaning in Javanese mystical discourse, where it refers to a polemical exchange between a *shaykh* and his student. In Arabic, *suluk* means "wayfaring."
79. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, Semavi Eyice, Nathalie Clayer, and Thierry Zarcone, eds., *Anatolia Moderna II Yeni Anadolu: Dervishes et*

- Cimetieres Ottomans* (Paris/Istanbul: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient/Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes d'Istanbul, 1991); M. Baha Tanman, "Settings for the Veneration of Saints." In *The Dervish Lodge: Architecture, Art, and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey*. Ed. Raymond Lifchez (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 130–171; Hans-Peter Laqueur, "Dervish Gravestones." In *The Dervish Lodge: Architecture, Art, and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey*. Ed. Raymond Lifchez (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 284–295.
80. Hamid Algar, "Amāma." In *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 1:9. Ed. Ehsan Yarshater (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 920. The fur brimless hat, *kalpak*, *fez*, and turban were banished following World War I in Turkey and Iran by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (the founder and first president of the Turkish Republic), who proclaimed the Hat Law of 1925. The *kalpak* worn today in Central Asia are usually constructed from wool or felt, while in Iran they are made from felt or sheepskin. According to Hamid Algar (personal communication), those made of sheepskin are still worn in Northeastern Iran and not considered problematic. The issue that conservative Muslims have with the *sobrah* may be that shorn human hair is considered unclean.
 81. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 14; Ladan Akbarnia with Francesca Leoni, *Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2010), 2, 23.
 82. Nawi, personal communication, June 25, 2006.
 83. Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, "Idea of Power in Javanese Culture." In *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).
 84. Whether the axes of the pillars of Islam are vertical, for example, *shalat* (prayer), or horizontal, for example, *zakat* (almsgiving), they always exist in relationship to God; that is, everything belongs to, and is an extension of, Allah.
 85. Other terms for the third eye are *baduk* (Cirebon Javanese), *topeng*, and *tarang* (Sundanese). The third eye is widely understood as panreligious tantrism of the chakra. With the growth of spiritual theism over the centuries, it took on a transcendental quality of inner consciousness contrasted with the physical realm. It thus merges enlightenment and the external "material manifestation of the senses, a world-conquering physical strength" corresponding to a higher perceptual plane. A. David Napier, *Masks, Transformation, and Paradox* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 139.
 86. Sufi binaries include remembering/forgetting, drunkenness/sobriety, right/left, horizontal/vertical, vocal/silent, and interior/exterior.
 87. Ricklefs, *Mystic Synthesis in Java*, 171.
 88. Sukarta Candra, personal communication, June 29, 2009.
 89. Kalim, personal communication, June 26, 2006.
 90. Miska Lukmanul Hakim, personal communication, June 28, 2009.

91. Dasih binti Wentar, personal communication, February 3, 1978.
92. Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, 1996).
93. Some dancers, both male and female, have elected to wear white socks for a long time; however, in past generations they were not a response to piety, but instead signaled cosmopolitanism from the late Dutch era forward. They were also worn to protect the feet when performing on dirt and other inhospitable conditions.
94. Mask dancers lacking the proper lineage are referred to simply as *penari topeng* (mask dancer).