

WARD KEELER

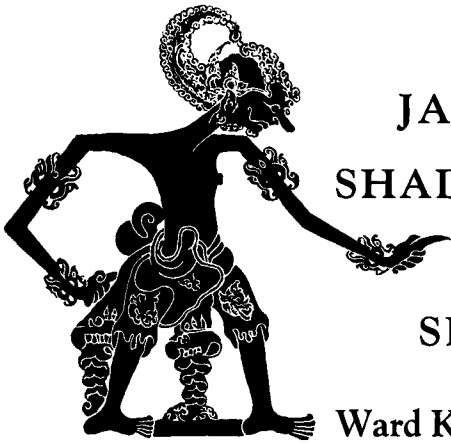
# Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves



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JAVANESE SHADOW PLAYS,  
JAVANESE SELVES





JAVANESE  
SHADOW PLAYS,  
JAVANESE  
SELVES

Ward Keeler

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For James T. Siegel

*Guruku*



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As a general rule, Javanese say “thank you” (*matur nuwun*) only in impersonal situations: in very formal encounters, or in addressing groups. True gratitude and indebtedness cannot be reduced to stock phrases, no matter how refined. In fact, to say “thank you” in Java can arouse disappointment, since it implies that such words can cancel the bonds between people that exchange relations set up. A student offers his teachers deference, and whatever material gifts he can muster. To his friends, he offers good company and the unspoken promise of support through thick and thin. But he never presumes that the debt he owes them could be paid, whether materially or by the expression of thanks.

I have been fortunate to find friends among my teachers, and teachers among my friends. I wish to acknowledge the debts I owe all of them, without presuming that such debts could ever be cancelled.

Benedict Anderson and James Siegel introduced me to the study of Indonesia, and since my first days as an undergraduate at Cornell I have benefited immeasurably from their insightful writings, from their classes, and from their advice and encouragement of my own work. Terence Turner and Victor Turner, in addition to James Siegel, were my first teachers in anthropology, and they imbued the field with the sense of excitement that it still holds for me—an inestimable gift.

I have turned to those same teachers many times since leaving Cornell, but I have also benefited greatly from the advice and encouragement of other scholars I have met more recently. Alton Becker, Judith Becker, Donald Emmerson, Clifford Geertz, Hildred Geertz, Wendy O’Flaherty, Valerio Valeri, and Paul Wheatley all helped me formulate my ideas about Javanese culture, and to them I am deeply grateful.

If my teachers in the United States have provided me with questions and skills, countless teachers in Java have provided me with the information, advice, and friendship that made living in Java such an enriching experience. Lest I appear unduly nostalgic, I should say

## X ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

that to be a Westerner in Java occasionally has its trials. Then again, being a Westerner strikes me as a fairly arduous business anywhere, in as well as outside the West. Teachers and friends in Java received me with unfailing graciousness, and I must attribute what sense I have made of Javanese culture to their wonderful patience and generosity.

To single out any among the many people who showed me such kindness seems tendentious. Yet I would feel remiss were I not to mention Bapak Sastrapustaka of Jogjakarta, and K1 Dhalang Sarwadisana and K1 Dhalang Gandawijaya, both of Klaten, for their invaluable teaching and kindness. I treasure the memory of the times I spent with each of them, times in which I felt, as the phrase in *wayang* puts it, cool as though bathed in a thousand waters.

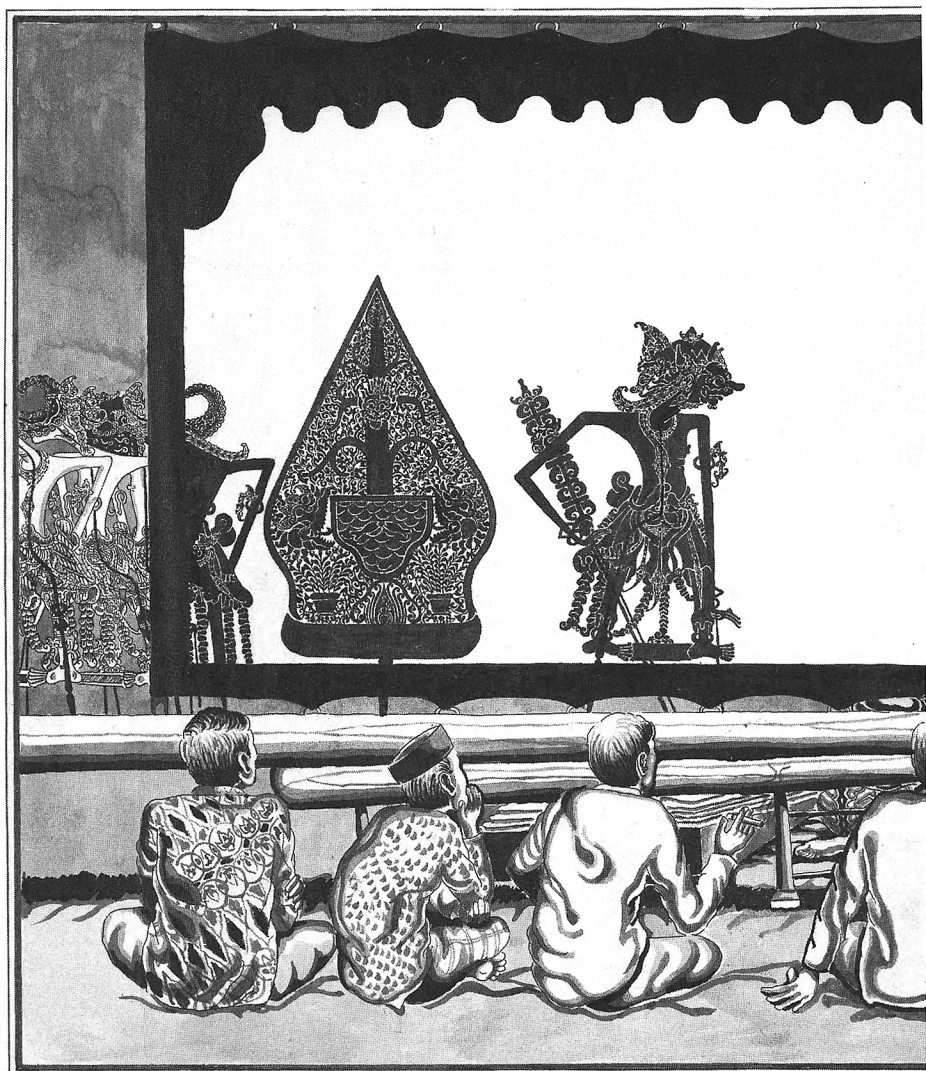
The ethnographic literature tells us that a special bond often unites ritual initiands. I feel just such bonds with friends whose researches in Indonesia overlapped, at one point or another, with my own. Anthony Day, Joseph Errington, Barbara Hatley, Ron Hatley, Terrence Hull, Valerie Hull, Jenny Lindsay, Anton Lucas, Ann McCauley, Gerry Meister, Hisako Nakamura, and Mizuko Nakamura provided intellectual stimulus and good fellowship during the two stays in Java on which this study is based. Shelly Errington conducted research in Sulawesi, not Java, but conversation with her has proved particularly important for all my thinking about Java.

In writing and rewriting this study of *wayang*, I have obtained invaluable advice from many quarters, including many of the scholars I have already mentioned. I am particularly grateful to Alton Becker, Thomas Beidelman, and David Sapir for excellent suggestions about the entire text, and to Peter Metcalf for an extraordinarily close and helpful reading. I appreciate as well the comments made on portions of the text by Judith Ferster, Susan McKinnon, Leslie Morris, and Nancy Munn.

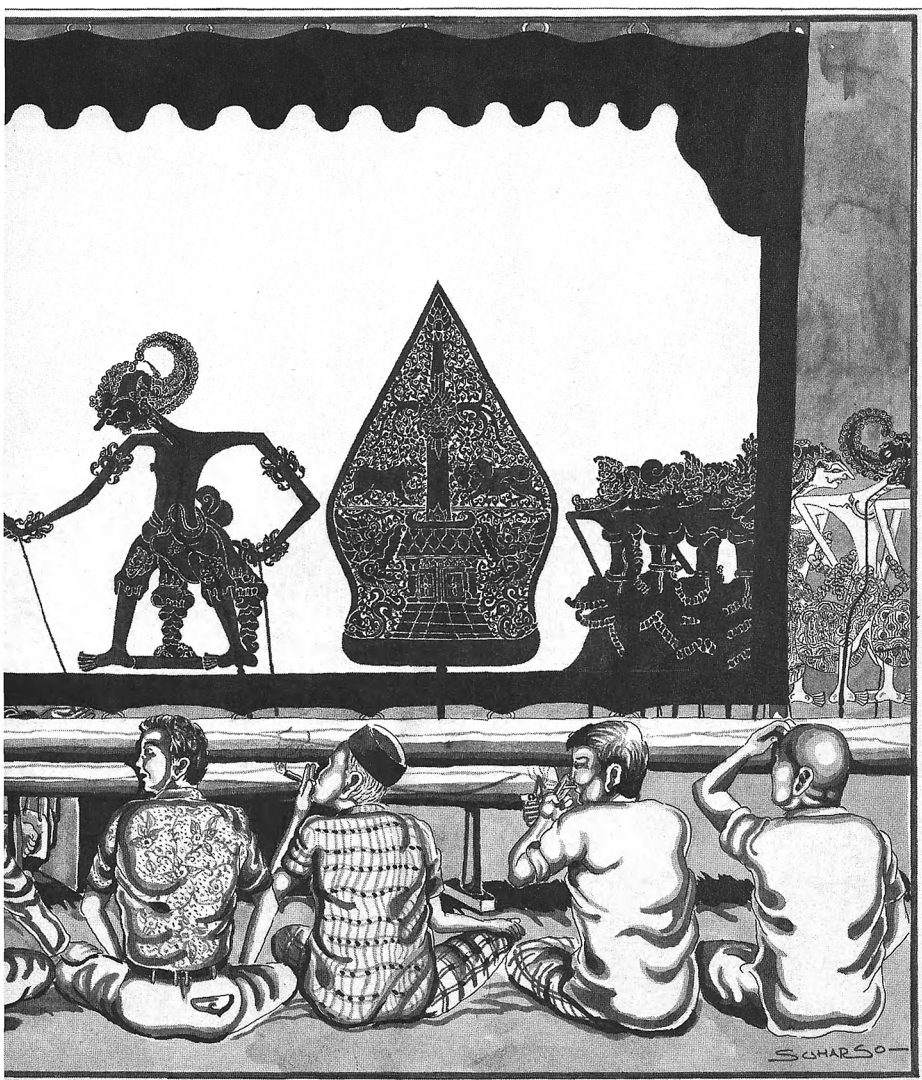
The Indonesian Institute of Sciences granted me research permits during both of my stays in Java, and I am indebted to Ms. Syamsiah Ahmad and Mr. Napitupulu and other members of that institute for their assistance in making my research possible. Mr. Humardani and K1 Dhalang Sutrisno of the Akademi Seni Karawitan Indonesia in Solo kindly sponsored my research in 1978-1979. My research in 1978 was supported by a Fulbright-Hays predoctoral grant, and in 1978-1979 by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. The latter grant also provided support during the writing of my dis-

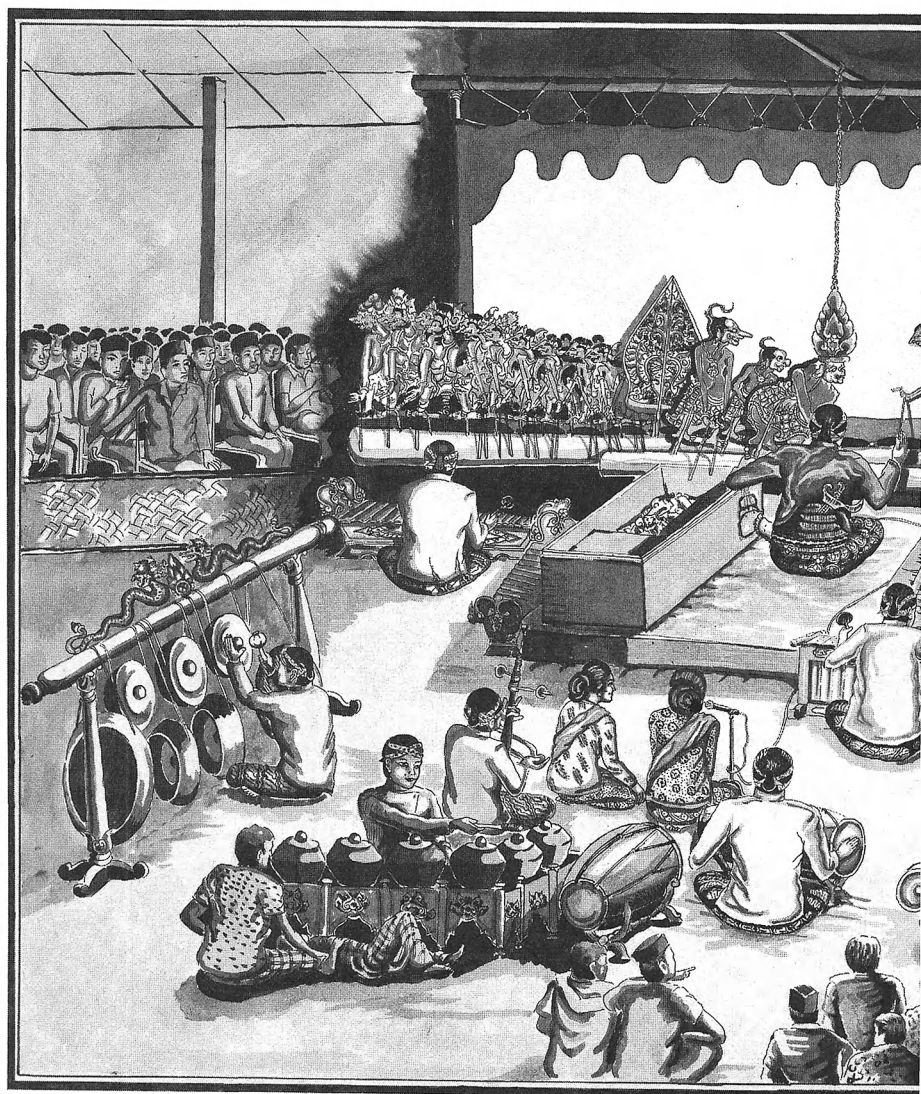
sertation. I revised and expanded the text as a Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton in 1983-1984, supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and as a Mellon Fellow in the Department of Anthropology at New York University in 1984-1985.

Finally, I am grateful to Gail Ullman and Sherry Wert, both of Princeton University Press, for their excellent guidance in preparing the manuscript for publication.



*Wayang* viewed from the shadow side. Men watch while sitting on mats, as is the traditional style. The *dhalang* can be glimpsed on the other side of the screen; the puppet box sits to his immediate left, with bronze sheets (*keprak*) hung on the side of the box, by the puppeteer's right foot. Drawing by Suharso.





Wayang viewed from the *dhalang*'s side. Invited guests, visible on the other side of the screen, are seated on chairs, as is now the standard practice in most city performances. Some members of the audience are nodding off—not surprising, since the puppets on the screen indicate that the time is well past midnight. A refined knight, on the right of the screen, faces three *punakawan*, or servant-clowns, on the left; they are playing the scene in which the *punakawan* first appear. Drawing by Suharso.