
EDITORS' NOTE

As this issue of *Indonesia* goes to press, the People's Consultative Assembly has taken the decisive step of effectively ratifying the results of the August 30 referendum by which the people of East Timor overwhelmingly declared their choice for national independence. The editors believe this occasion is of sufficient importance to congratulate the Consultative Assembly on the wisdom of its decision, and at the same time to congratulate the people of East Timor on the successful culmination of a long and painful struggle for freedom and self-determination. *Hidup Timor Loro Sae!*

THE TRADITIONAL JAVANESE PERFORMING ARTS IN THE TWILIGHT OF THE NEW ORDER: TWO LETTERS FROM SOLO

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By coincidence I spent the summers of 1997 and 1998 in Solo, Central Java, Indonesia. Along with Yogyakarta, its rival sixty kilometers or so to the west, Solo is the center of high Javanese culture, and heir to the traditions of a colonial-era royal court. I had lived there for three years in the mid-1980s, where I studied karawitan (traditional gamelan music). Aside from a two-month visit in 1994, however, I had not seen the place for seven years.

I returned to Indonesia in 1997 to participate in an international gamelan festival; in 1998 I came to purchase a set of gamelan instruments for my university. Needless to say, I did not know that Soeharto's thirty-two-year rule would end in May 1998, much less did I plan to take before-and-after snapshots of the Solonese artistic scene. Nevertheless, the reader may find these two personal accounts of some interest. I cannot pretend to offer extensive analyses based on in-depth research, only my own panoramic impressions and reflections. Greater historical distance will eventually bring these developments into focus; in the meantime, I hope that the timeliness of this collection of anecdotes will be sufficient excuse for it.¹

¹ I wish to thank all of the people who spoke with me in Indonesia, and those who read earlier drafts of this article: Philip Yampolsky, Nancy Florida, Marc Benamou, and especially Kathryn Emerson. Ben Anderson's detailed and thoughtful comments were particularly helpful. Nathan Albert kindly helped me trace the musical roots of Slank. I have in some cases stubbornly resisted the good advice these people offered; hence the blame for this article's deficiencies must fall entirely on myself.

First Letter: July 1997

The 1997 Yogyakarta *Gamelan* Festival is not quite what I expected. The New York Indonesian Consulate *Gamelan* (an ensemble of Americans who play traditional Javanese music) had been invited to participate in the festival, and they asked me to join them.² But it turns out to be more a celebration of musical syncretism and experimentation than of tradition. There is a great variety of performances. A Dutch ensemble plays on the Javanese instruments much as they would in a Western orchestra, with notated parts on music stands and a conductor waving his hands in front of the group. An American composer and an Indonesian composer from Sumatra perform an experimental piece which involves much chasing after bouncing ping-pong balls. A group from the local state conservatory mixes various traditional Javanese forms in a modern medley. A young musician from Medan leads a small ensemble of Sumatran instruments—no relation to the *gamelan*—in a fiery updating of Melayu musical traditions. The organizer of the festival, impresario and radio entrepreneur Sapto Raharjo, improvises on synthesizers and samplers with a percussionist.

Aside from some curtain-raisers performed by children, however, the only completely traditional performance in the festival is our own. The group of Americans from New York City, led by two Javanese teachers (I. M. Harjito and Al. Suwardi) presents two “classical” suites. I am reminded of a speech I heard the Governor of Central Java deliver to the Solonese state conservatory in the 1980s. He warned Indonesian youth not to abandon the traditional arts, for if they did, these cultural marvels would find protection abroad. How humiliating if future generations of Indonesians had to go to Australia, Europe, Japan, or America to study their own traditional music! I so often heard this pessimistic scenario in the 1980s that I had become rather sensitive about being held up as a model for Javanese youth. No one at the 1997 Festival has much interest in the purity of the tradition, however, and so we are not used as ammunition in any rhetorical crusades.

The last night of the festival draws the biggest crowd, but it is for one attraction: Emha Ainun Nadjib and *Gamelan* Kyai Kanjeng. Emha—known familiarly as Cak Nun—is a charismatic poet who has won a devoted audience for his fiery poems of Islam and social justice. He has for many years declaimed to musical accompaniment; now he appears with Novi Budianto and Kyai Kanjeng, a fluid network of Yogyakarta musicians who mix various Western and Indonesian instruments (keyboards, acoustic and electric guitars, drum kit, silver flute, violin, *kroncong* ukelele, *rebana* frame drums, the double-reed *terompet Ponorogo*) with Javanese *gamelan* instruments tuned to a Western scale. Their music is equally eclectic, ranging from jazz-rock fusion to Islamic chant to syrupy Indonesian pop, complete with warbling flute riffs and swooning harp glissandos. There are occasional eruptions of Javanese stylistic elements (interlocking *bonang* parts, dance patterns on the *kendhang ciblon*), but the *gamelan* instruments seem to function mostly as coloristic effects.

² The group is so named because it performs on instruments owned by the Indonesian Consulate in New York City.

I find it interesting, though quite peripheral to what I consider the mainstream of Javanese music. But it is obviously tremendously popular, and I survey with amazement the mass of enthusiastic young veiled women that filled the audience. However, after the festival ends and I move to Solo with some of my friends from the New York group, I begin to feel less certain I know what “the mainstream” is.

Solo in Taste and Tone

Solo is a city of food as well as culture, and someone wishing quickly to gauge the city’s atmosphere can start by hanging out at its food stalls (*warung*). In the 1980s one of my favorite eateries was Soto Gading, famous for its chicken-rice soup. The *warung* is still doing a brisk business in 1997; instead of the crowd of motorcycles I remembered parked in front of it, however, there is now a flock of cars. There are large family groups celebrating something or other, documenting the happy occasion with Video 8 handycams. The young lady sitting across from me wears a T-shirt of exuberant design, with the motto “Daripada Tripping Lebih Baik Bungy Jumping” (I’d Rather Be Bungee Jumping Than Tripping), and in English, “Don’t Worry Be Happy Without Ecstasy.” The young woman next to her wears a T-shirt with a rather garish primitivist design, featuring a mask-like toothy face.

To get a quick sense of the state of music, I visit the cassette shops. As usual, the stores are dominated by *dangdut*,³ the best-selling form of music, said to account for over three-quarters of the reported 80,000,000 cassettes sold each year in Indonesia.⁴ Although this music was associated primarily with the lower classes and with a tacky (*norak*), garishly flaunted sexuality through the 1980s,⁵ it has recently achieved respectability, abandoning class-conscious lyrics, mounting prestigious stages in front of seated audiences that listen in polite silence.⁶ Its newest stars avoid the bump-and-grind (*goyang*) and exhibitionistic costumes of earlier years.⁷ Now, high government and military officials listen to—and even sing—*dangdut*, and many of them showed up for the first annual Dangdut Awards, a Grammy-like extravaganza recently mounted by the *dangdut* television network, TPI.

The rest of the cassette market is given over to Indonesian-language pop music (Popindo), Western pop, Islamic devotional song, and various specialty tastes in popular music, such as Sundanese *jaipongan*.⁸ Popindo continues to track new developments in Western popular music. House music has arrived in Indonesia, where it has given birth to local variants (there are tapes of “Jawa House”). Guruh

³ W. Frederick, “Rhoma Irama and the Dangdut Style,” *Indonesia* 34 (1982): 103-30.

⁴ “Generasi Baru Dangdut Dut ...” *Adil* 65,40 (July 16-22, 1997): 4-5.

⁵ Ceres Pioquinto, “Dangdut at Sekaten,” *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 29 (1994): 59-90. See also Budi Susanto “Dangdut Sekatenan: Penguasa, ‘Agama’, dan Musik Rakyat di Yogyakarta,” in *Tantangan Kemanusiaan Universal*, ed. G. Moedjanto, B. Rahmanto, and J. Sudarminta (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1992), pp. 195-224.

⁶ “Goyang Dangdut,” *Tempo*, May 25, 1991, pp. 49-56.

⁷ “Generasi Baru Dangdut Dut ...”

⁸ Peter Manuel and R. Baier, “Jaipongan: Indigenous Popiular Music of West Java,” *Asian Music* 28 (1986): 91-137.

Sukarnoputra, a son of the nation's first president, who became famous two decades ago for his grandiose pop spectaculars, is now into house music (in part, he says, because its emphasis on repetition reminds him of much *gamelan* music). The authorities frown on house music, as they identify it with the drug Ecstasy. So Guruh issued a recording, *NTXTC: Hosmiks*, to defend the music. In the liner notes he cautions us not to throw out the baby with the bathwater; he insists that we can stamp out Ecstasy without eradicating house music. After all, he asks, what would we think of a farmer who tried to solve the problem of field mice by refusing to plant rice?

As usual, though, most of my time in the cassette store is devoted to the relatively small number of recordings of traditional Javanese *gamelan* music. In the 1980s there were a few local companies that supplied this market, though their recordings might stay in print only briefly, and tended to emphasize the lighter side of the repertory. One company, however, was different: the state-owned recording company, Lokananta, operated by the Department of Information, issued "classical" repertory, and kept its cassettes constantly in print. Even they, however, have reduced their attention to this area, and their recent "classical" recordings have been subsidized by a private patron. Oddly enough, the stores I visit say they haven't received any new Lokananta releases in quite some time. What they have instead are a hot new genre of Javanese music called Campursari, a still-popular 1980s genre, *Badhutan Sragen* (also called *Sragenan*), and a revitalized older one, *kroncong*.

"Classical" and "Popular" *Gamelan*

As a devotee of the "classical" music I am discomfited by this situation, though the ethnomusicologist in me tries to view it *sub specie aeternitatis*. The *gamelan* tradition is a capacious one, I remind myself, with great powers of incorporation. True, its repertory contains many long, difficult, challenging compositions that breathe seriousness and majesty. But it has always included as well tuneful little ditties with playful, or even raunchy, lyrics. It served as a serene backdrop to the ponderous hours of royal ceremony, as well as an inebriated and inebriating incitement to rowdy social dances. To find a comparable versatility in the European tradition, we would need to look back to the nineteenth century, when the same instruments could be used to play Brahms or the *Blue Danube*.

This comparison suggests the nature of the different layers of social meaning sedimented into the traditional repertory of *gendhing* (*gamelan* compositions). When I arrived in Solo in the 1980s, the state conservatory was already distinguishing "*gendhing populer*" from "*gendhing klasik*." The former were simply the most commonly played pieces ("Gambirsawit," "Kutut Manggung," "Pangkur," etc.), but they tended to have certain things in common. Although they might have a placid first movement, they almost always ended with a spirited second movement animated by the lively dance rhythms of the *ciblon* drum, often featuring as well solo passages for the *pesindhen*, the female singer whose voice and appearance embodies much of the charm this music holds for Javanese men.

Musically and aesthetically, "popular" pieces are reminiscent of an old form of participatory social dance, called *tayuban*. This was a dance-party featuring a

professional female singer-dancer, known as *ledhek* or *taledhek*, who would dance in turn (*ngibing*) with male partners from the assembled crowd. Various musical elements of the *tayuban* have been absorbed by the *gamelan*. The *pesindhen* now sings the part previously sung by the *ledhek*, and the *kendhang ciblon* drum plays the rhythms that would accompany her dance. The musical contributions of the male guests—keeping the beat with handclaps (*keplok*), interjecting short sung phrases (*senggakan*)—have now been taken over by the *gamelan*'s male chorus (*gerong*), but at sufficiently informal occasions the men in the audience will still join in with these.

The current repertory also includes songs borrowed from other participatory contexts (such as *gendhing dolanan*, adaptations of children's play-songs). But at its outer margins, it has also managed to incorporate the music of entirely distinct ensembles. The prime example is the urban popular music called *kroncong*. Sung in Indonesian, *kroncong* is accompanied by Western instruments (some of them adapted) like the guitar, flute, and cello, using Western scales and harmonies. Originally associated with the generation of the Revolution, it now seems to have become an option for young adults who outgrow their taste in Western pop music. I do meet one young music-lover who calls *kroncong* his favorite music, but he admits that it's more often the choice of people over thirty.

There is also a Javanese version of *kroncong* called *langgam Jawa*, which is sung in Javanese and uses Javanese scales (necessarily adjusted to Western intonation when played on instruments like the guitar). Interestingly enough, the same *langgam* can be played both by the *kroncong* ensemble (in Western intonation) or by the *gamelan* (in Javanese intonation).

During my years of research in the 1980s, the most popular pieces in the *gamelan* repertory were probably the so-called "new *gendhing dolanan*," composed in a style associated with (though not invented by) one of the most popular *dhalangs* of the 1970s and 1980s, Ki Nartosabdho.⁹ Though Nartosabdho made new arrangements of traditional compositions, his most characteristic pieces are distinctively different. They are songs, dominated by a vocal line, whose texts fit no particular meters of traditional Javanese poetry (*tembang*). Hence the words are fixed, unlike traditional compositions, but like *kroncong* songs.

In any event, their stylistic basis was somewhat different from that of the traditional repertory, and the instrumental parts, trying to accommodate the twists and turns of Nartosabdho's vocal lines, were sometimes forced into unidiomatic awkwardnesses. In the early 1980s, my teachers from the oldest surviving generation of court musicians felt this was an objectionable subordination of the instrumental parts to the voice, and derided Nartosabdho's compositions as shallow and incompetent. (These songs were never taught in the curriculum of the state conservatory.) After Nartosabdho's death in 1985, other composers continued to write in essentially the same style. But it was soon eclipsed by *Sragenan*, an even more accessible style originating in the town of Sragen.

Sragenan can be seen as an extension of certain tendencies of the Nartosabdho style. It is essentially the creation of a single individual, M. Karno KD, a teacher at the

⁹ Judith Becker, *Traditional Music in Modern Java* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1981).

state teacher-training institute in Sragen, and head of the village Ngarum.¹⁰ In his youth he had attended SMKI, the high-school level *gamelan* conservatory. In 1976 he became concerned that the tradition of *cokèkan* was dying out in Sragen. This small “chamber ensemble” usually involved just a *gender barung*, *kendhang ciblon*, *siter*, and gong *kemodhong*. Karno started a *cokèkan* ensemble, Sekar Puri, to preserve the tradition (though he expanded the ensemble, adding a *saron barung* and a *gambang*). By 1980, however, he began to feel that the traditional *gamelan* repertory was not attracting a younger generation, so he added *gendhing dolanan*, Nartosabdho tunes, traditional *tayuban* pieces, and some East Javanese compositions. He enlivened these further by having the *kendhang* play in a *dangdut* or *badhutan* style (i.e. appropriate for the coarse physical humor of the *badhut* clown). Sekar Puri became quite popular, and by 1982 a Semarang recording company released cassettes of the group. In 1984 they released a second group of tapes, including a Javanese version of a *dangdut* tune, “Rewel,” that I found inescapable when I arrived in Solo to start my dissertation research.

Sragenan departs even more radically from the traditional style than did Nartosabdho. In his pieces, all of the instruments could still play, even if they had to depart from what previously had been considered idiomatic. *Sragenan*, however, makes no use of the *rebab*. Nartosabdho’s recordings always featured his *kendhang* playing, but aside from a few innovations his drumming was conventional, just deliberately crude [*kasar*], as one of my teachers put it. In *Sragenan*, this crudity is even more strongly highlighted.

Thus in some ways, *Sragenan* is a logical development of the Nartosabdho style, and equally likely to be seen as a degeneration. The old generation of musicians I knew in 1984 has since passed away, and their scorn for Nartosabdho has largely died with them. But this scorn—detached from its object—has, it seems, been bequeathed to the younger generation of musicians, where it is directed at a new target: I know several musicians who hold up Nartosabdho as a model of artistry, and sneer at *Sragenan*.

Campursari and the Future of Javanese Intonation

Campursari represents a different kind of innovation, and one difficult to characterize precisely. Its name (“mixture of essences”) seems to derive from its instrumentation, the standard band forces centered on a synthesizer and drum set, combined with traditional *gamelan* instruments, perhaps just a *saron barung* or *demung* and *kendhang ciblon*—and lately just the *kendhang*. Some Campursari seems to be simply *kroncong* with a *dangdut* beat.

The term itself is fairly old, and I recall hearing it applied in the 1970s to a recording of *gamelan gendhing* with Western string instruments. The idea of such a combination is even older, as Sumarsam has shown in his study of nineteenth-century

¹⁰ Slamet Suparno, “Kehidupan Karawitan Sragènan pada Akhir Abad XX dan Beberapa Dampaknya,” in *Dies Natalis XXXIII Wisuda Srajana/Diploma III Periode II Tahun Akademik 1996/1997 Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia Surakarta*, 15 Juli 1997 (Surakarta: Penerbitan STSI Surakarta, 1997), pp. 9-22.

sources.¹¹ Indonesian cassette producers have probably always experimented with combinations of local and Western styles. In 1981 I bought a novelty recording called *Gamelan & Disco*, and in the late 1980s a Bandung label put out a collaboration between a jazz pianist and a Sundanese *kacapi suling* ensemble. The new popularity of Campursari, however, is due to a single individual, Manthous—though Manthous's own version of Campursari is in certain crucial ways idiosyncratic.

Manthous was born in the Gunung Kidul area of Java to a family involved in the traditional arts. He learned *gamelan* as well as guitar and cello. As a teenager he spent some time in Cirebon before moving to Jakarta in 1966, where he established himself as a musician in the *kroncong*, *dangdut*, and rock styles. Starting around 1990, Manthous developed the Western/Javanese musical mixture which has made him famous, and which has been so widely imitated.¹² His recordings dominate the marketplace; it sometimes seems difficult to find a cassette of Campursari which does *not* involve Manthous. But his style is also unique in a certain important respect.

Campursari is not a repertory; few of its tunes cannot be categorized under *kroncong*, *langgam*, *pop*, *dangdut*, *gamelan*, or other familiar labels. Rather, Campursari is an ensemble, and yet it is an ensemble with no standard instrumentation. It must include at least one *gamelan* instrument, and at least one Western instrument, but this leaves a wide range of possibilities. There are examples of both extremes: I have heard Campursari ensembles that are entirely Western except for a *kendhang*, as well as ensembles that are essentially small *gamelan* groups with a synthesizer and electric bass. Amidst all this variety, Manthous is still unique, for he is the only one to retune the *gamelan* instruments to match the equal-tempered scale of the keyboard. (He also seems especially fond of using sampling.)

Manthous is quite aware of this singularity, and in his statements to the press he emphasizes the importance of tuning the Javanese instruments to the "standard," "international" (i.e. Western) scale; he criticizes other Campursari groups for merely juxtaposing Javanese and Western tuning systems. These aren't true mixtures, he says, they aren't harmonious.

The preservation of the distinctive intonational identity of the Javanese scales (*slendro* and *pelog*) has long been an emotional issue for at least some traditional musicians. One of my teachers, the late Martopangrawit, once told me he was worried about his young daughter. The first songs she learned to sing in school were patriotic Indonesian songs set in the Western diatonic scale. When she later learned to sing traditional Javanese melodies in *slendro* and *pelog*, she adapted them to the Western intonation she had already learned. Another one of my teachers expressed similar concerns about his son, who was learning to play *rebab* at one of the state conservatories. The young man was asked to join in a radio broadcast of an experimental composition. The piece had a section in which the *rebab* had to play in Western intonation, and the father, listening at home, was horrified. When his son

¹¹ Sumarsam, *Gamelan: Cultural Interaction and Musical Development in Central Java* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 63-83.

¹² Jan Mrázek, "Phenomenology of a Puppet Theater" (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1998). See also Nancy Cooper, "From the Land of a Thousand Peaks," Paper presented at the 42nd annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Pittsburgh, PA, 1997.

came home later that evening his father sat him down and made him play *rebab* for a few traditional pieces, listening intently until he satisfied himself that his son's ability to play *slendro* and *pelog* was unimpaired.

The question of retuning *gamelan* instruments to Western scales is thus a potentially fraught one. This is perhaps why Manthous justifies himself by appealing to the cherished value of "harmoniousness": the *gamelan* instruments must change to preserve the unity of the ensemble. This is rhetorically shrewd, but it stacks the deck against Javanese practices by smuggling in a definition of unity valid only for Western music.

For Manthous applies a Western standard of pitch unison to the Javanese instruments. The keys of the *gamelan* instruments nominally tuned to the same pitch are not necessarily tuned identically; there can be small variations from one to another which enrich the resulting sound. Also, singers and players of adjustable-pitch instruments like the *rebab* may have their own, personal intonations (*embat*), which need not coincide exactly with the instruments they perform with. True, the difference between the Western tuning system and most Javanese ones is greater than would normally be found within one *gamelan* performance, but the fact that the great majority of Campursari groups do not bother to retune the *gamelan* instruments may indicate that the Javanese tolerance of intonational variety has not succumbed to Western influence.¹³

Still, I don't know whether to be optimistic or pessimistic about the future of Javanese tunings: I am glad that Manthous's ensemble is such an unusual case, but worried about its dominance in the mass media. But the real significance of Campursari may prove to have little to do with tuning systems. Campursari may be more interesting as a symptom of the emergence of a broad musical borderland, where the lightest parts of the *gamelan* repertory mingle with *kroncong*, *langgam Jawa*, *dangdut*, and even Indonesian pop songs. Campursari has given *kroncong* a new lease on life, but *kroncong's* resurgence has not been marked solely by its appropriation of *dangdut* rhythms, as one might expect, but also by its rapprochement with traditional *karawitan*. Campursari has opened the *kroncong* repertory to the most accessible pieces of the *gamelan* repertory ("Kutut Manggung," "Uler Kambang," "Sinom Parijatha," "Mijil Kethoprak," etc.).

¹³ It is striking that a desire to combine different scales or tuning systems normally associated with distinct ensembles has emerged around the same time in three different Indonesian music cultures. In Bali, I Wayan Beratha invented the *gong Semaradana* in 1987, combining the now-standard five-tone *kebyar* tuning with the relatively rare seven-tone tuning of the *semar pegulingan* ensemble. See Andrew McGraw, "The *Gamelan Semara Dana* of Banjar Kaliungu Kaja, Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia," M.A. thesis, Tufts University, 1998. In West Java (Sunda), since the late 1980s the most prominent dalangs have all adopted expanded *gamelan* sets with many more tones per octave than is usual (for example, ten). This permits the players to perform in as many as seven different traditional scales using the same fixed-pitch instruments. See Andrew Weintraub, "Constructing the Popular: Superstars, Performance, and Cultural Authority in Sundanese *Wayang Golek Purwa* of West Java, Indonesia" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1997), pp. 89-128. These cases are not really comparable to that of Campursari, since they involve the careful accommodation of existing traditional scales within a newly constructed set of instruments. It is remarkable, nevertheless, that the problem of scale combination should rise to prominence in each music culture at approximately the same historical moment.

The Modern System

The popularity of Campursari doesn't bother me as much as the newly curtailed opportunities to hear and play traditional music and *wayang*. The local radio station's annual competition for amateur *gamelan* groups has not been held since 1993. There are fewer live radio broadcasts of traditional music.¹⁴ There are still *klenengan* (musical gatherings) but their time frame is shrinking. In the 1980s they commonly lasted till the wee hours of the morning; now, a session that ends at 2:00 AM is considered unusually long. At one *klenengan* I attended, the leader nodded a few minutes before midnight, the *rebab* player signaled a quick change of *pathet* (musical mode) and the drummer immediately started "Ayak-ayakan manyura," the traditional closing piece. The music ended promptly at 11:59 and we all filed out. (*Wayangs* end early, too. The Islamic *dhalangs* must end in time for morning prayers, and in any event office workers now complain about having to wake up in time for work.)

Not only are performance occasions getting shorter, but the nature of performance is changing. The *wayang* is becoming more pre-planned, more intricately "arranged," less dependent on the traditional system of musical signals. Traditionally, musicians could play together without rehearsal, indeed, without exchanging a word.¹⁵ A *dhalang* could arrive at a performance venue bringing only two or three of his key musicians, confident that local players would be able to follow his lead without advance preparation. Now, however, all the major *dhalangs* have their own musicians, and they rehearse constantly.

The competition between the most successful *dhalangs* continues to fuel innovation, as *dhalangs* seek public attention by introducing constant novelties. Many of these are little more than outrageous gimmicks. Some of them (like the use of colored stage lights, or strobe lights) I have seen before: they are apparently stock innovations, periodically reintroduced in an everything-old-is-new-again cycle. Others seem to have become standard tokens of *dhalangly* outrageousness: for example, the trick whereby the *dhalang* ends a fight scene by himself pummeling or manhandling the already-defeated puppet, or tossing it roughly into the puppet-box (or the audience). But there are some truly new developments as well. The use of Campursari is one of them, adding synthesizers, trumpets, and other Western instruments to the bass drum and crash cymbal which were already a standard part of the *wayang* ensemble in the 1980s. The presence of "guest stars" is another: singers and comedians who are paid by the host to appear in a few scenes, to banter with the *dhalang*. Most scandalous of all, the guest stars sometimes stand up and dance—and the most daring *dhalangs* have been known to stand up as well.¹⁶

¹⁴ However, there has not been an irreversible decline. One of the main showcases for classical *gendhing* during the 1980s was a live broadcast by SMKI's Radio Konser held every thirty-five days, on the auspicious evening known as *malem Anggara Kasih* in the Javanese calendar. I had watched this event die when SMKI sold its radio station. The performance was revived, however, in 1995, though it is now simply a *klenengan*, and is no longer broadcast.

¹⁵ Benjamin Brinner, *Knowing Music, Making Music: Javanese Gamelan and the Theory of Musical Competence and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995).

¹⁶ For a survey of innovations in *wayang* current to 1996, see Jan Mrázek, "Phenomenology of a Puppet Theater," pp. 743-916.

I am curious to see these innovations, as well as others I hear of, such as the extravagant performances with two *dhalangs*, each with his own screen and puppets. But these colossal spectacles, it turns out, are sponsored mostly by government offices, or by the ruling party, Golkar, and I do not encounter any during my stay.

I do get to watch two *wayang* performances, by two extremely popular *dhalangs* (who happen to be brothers). The first, and more “traditional,” is by Ki H. Anom Soeroto, performing in Klaten. His musicians still contribute marvelous performances of the traditional repertory, but he has modernized the show as well, with a display of *jaipongan* drumming by his son, Bayu, and a roster of “guest stars” which includes Ranto Edy Gudel, a comedian formerly associated with *wayang orang*. And he reads some of his material from a prepared text.

Dhalangs have long been intimate with texts. (Indeed, the most ritual kind of *wayang* performance, the *ruwatan* or cleansing performance, contains a portion that is always read, not recited from memory.) Student *dhalangs* have long memorized the set recitations of the *wayang* from written, or printed, texts. Starting perhaps in the 1970s, however, with the rise of the cassette industry and the spread of radio, professional *dhalangs* began writing out narrative or descriptive set pieces, either to be memorized, or increasingly to be read directly from the page during a performance. By the time of my research in the mid-1980s, *dhalangs* were commissioning written texts from each other. Now, Solo’s most famous *dhalang* could perform perfectly well without reading from a piece of paper. Perhaps, I reflect, it is because of the accelerated rate of change of the *wayang* today, itself perhaps caused by the increased exposure of the *wayang* through broadcasts and especially recordings. After all, when you are constantly changing your set-piece narrations and descriptions, you don’t have time to memorize them. Anom Soeroto, I am told, pays someone to attend his every performance and write down every song played, and even every joke told, to leave a record that Anom can consult the next time he performs in that village, to make sure he doesn’t repeat himself before the same audience.

Anom Soeroto always had the reputation as one of the most traditional of the superstar *dhalangs*; his younger brother, Warseno, has a reputation as one of the least. Warseno’s nickname is “Slenk,” and I have some trouble finding a gloss for this word. Some say it is an acronym for “I’d rather watch you” (*saya lebih enak nonton kamu*). Some people tell me it means “youth”; others say it has no literal meaning, but its sound suggests everything *keras* (hard, loud, unyielding, inconsiderate). Others claim it comes from the English term “slang”; still others derive it from *slengean*, “not serious; farting around; not caring what others think.” Warseno was given this nickname by his fans because he introduced rock music into the *wayang*, but he has adopted it and reinterpreted it as a Javanese acronym: *Suka Langen Ēdining Kabudhayan* (approximately: “Cultural Beauty Entertainment”).

Like his older brother, Slenk, too, reads from a text. But whereas the source of Anom Soeroto’s words is not obvious—he might have written them out himself earlier in the day—sitting with the *gamelan* I can watch Slenk’s words take material shape. For I am seated next to a man who spends most of his time writing busily in thick magic marker on a large pad of paper. As far as I can tell from where I sit, he is writing a set-piece debate (*bantahan*) for the first major audience scene (*jejer*). I introduce

myself, and he tells me he is the *dhalang*'s director (*sutradara*). "Warseno uses the system of the modern performer, the director system," he tells me. He continues to write throughout the performance, mostly texts for the *dhalang*,¹⁷ but also an occasional exhortation for the singers. When one of the new *pesindhèn* ventures a mildly risqué remark during her dialog with the *dhalang*, the director chides her in a short note.

Besides the *gamelan* there is a full drum kit, a Technics KN2000 synthesizer, a trumpet, and the by-now-common bass drum and cymbal. The problem with Javanese music, the director tells me, is that it is slow and mild, music for meditation. They are trying to make it *keras*. But Slenk does not provide the wild, rockin' show I am eager to see; I have, it seems, come too late. Warseno is now trying to distinguish himself both from the conventionality of the old-style *dhalangs* and from the "excesses" of the most daring new ones. He attributes this shift to his nationalist sentiments. He has just returned from a vacation spent traveling around Southeast Asia, and—as he tells us through one of the *wayang* characters—he noted with pride how few of the countries he visited could boast as rich a traditional culture as Indonesia. He thereupon pledged himself to uphold the great *wayang* tradition, and to spurn meretricious crowd-pleasing innovations. "You won't see the *dhalang* standing up when I perform!" he shouts, making an implicit reference to Ki Entus Susmono, who is famous for doing just that.

The Islamic Revival

The growing cultural strength of Islamic devotionism in the 1990s—reflected in new styles of evangelical proselytization, in the acceptance of the *jilbab* (veil) as part of the school uniform, and acknowledged at the highest official levels in the founding of the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), and in President Soeharto's pilgrimage to Mecca¹⁸—is evident in the arts as well. There seems to be an increase in personal religiosity, and I notice that some of my musician friends are now much more diligent at their prayers. Solo's premier *dhalang*, Anom Soeroto, made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Rumor had it that Anom's patrons among the Christian elite then turned to one of his younger rivals, Manteb Sudarsono. But Manteb too eventually made the pilgrimage. Among the ranks of rising young *dhalang*, some are even more strongly identified with Islam. Ki Entus Susmono, from the traditionally devout area of Tegal, is one of them, and like Anom Soeroto he often quotes verses of the Quran in his performances.

Given that the majority of the Javanese profess Islam, this is not remarkable, but throughout my research period in the 1980s I had been struck by the strong Javanist affiliation of my musician friends and teachers. One of my older teachers once interrupted a music lesson to provide a long explanation of the superiority of Javanism to Islam. In 1994, as I was waiting for a *gamelan* rehearsal to begin, I heard two male singers criticizing Anom Soeroto's penchant for using the word "Allah" in his

¹⁷ For an anecdote illustrating the potential danger to the *dhalang* when he must sight-read an all-too-amusing text written by his director, see *ibid.*, pp. 896-899.

¹⁸ Robert Hefner, "The Politics of Popular Art," *Indonesia* 43 (1987): 75-96.

performances of stories based on the Indian epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata (*wayang purwa*). "The period of *wayang purwa* is *purwa* [ancient]," they agreed, "before Islam. Referring to God as Allah is anachronistic."

Now, Anom Soeroto's performances exhibit their Islamic identity in many more ways than this. His performance in Klaten was clearly crafted to appeal to the most Islamic elements in the audience, to the point that the *gamelan* was augmented by several *terbang* frame-drums (associated with *salawatan* and other devotional performances). Even the *senggakan* were given religious texts, for example reminding the audience to pray five times a day (*kudu ngerti syolat limang wektu*). "Sing lanang priyayi sing wadon seniwati" ("He was a gentleman, she was an artiste") was changed so that the woman is no longer an artiste (*seniwati*) but is *sregep ngaji*, "assiduous at studying the Quran."

At the Corner of Dewantara Street and Punk Rock Road

I pay a visit to my friends at the Indonesian College of Art (STSI), a government conservatory and the official sponsor of my years of study in Solo. For the first time I notice something curious about its address. STSI's official address is 19 Dewantara Street. Most major streets in cities throughout Indonesia are named after nationalist heroes; Ki Hadjar Dewantara was an influential journalist, educator, and supporter of the traditional arts, and it is fitting that his name should locate Solo's performing arts institute. Why, however, is the name of the cross street Punk Rock Road?

Supanggih, the newly appointed head of STSI, is a brilliant musician and articulate intellectual who brings a refreshingly informal and unpretentious style to this administrative position. He is quite clear about the need for STSI to change with the times. In the old days, he said, the model for the *gamelan* musician was "vertical": plumbing ever more deeply the riches of one's chosen style or instrument. Now, however, it is "horizontal": the mastery of as many styles and instruments as possible.

A day before STSI's graduation exercises I attend a special event. The STSI Alumni Association invited four successful alumni to speak to the seniors, illustrating four types of post-graduation careers. Suparno, a drummer for the *dhalang* Ki H. Anom Suroto, represented the graduates who found remunerative work in the traditional arts. He talked about opportunities for traditionally trained musicians in Campursari groups, and the demand for teachers of Javanese music and dance in Sumatra and the other Outer Islands. Mugiono, a dancer, represented artistic success in non-traditional, experimental, performance. He earned money during his student days by performing traditional dances at weddings, but those opportunities eventually dried up. He then collaborated with the German and British students who came to Solo to study movement meditation with Suprpto Suryodarmo, and started staging his own productions. After a year of sending out his promotional videos, he was invited to perform at a festival in London. The last to speak was Radiyo, a graduate of the *wayang* department. Upon graduation, he found there was little demand for his performance skills. However, he noticed a healthy market for *wayang* T-shirts, and developed entrepreneurial skills by producing and hawking T-shirts. He eventually

moved into the world of business, working in a Jakarta contracting firm, and now he occasionally performs *wayang* as a hobby.

The STSI graduation ceremonies themselves are an appropriately formal affair, with the parents of the graduates dressed in their best, listening to one formal speech after another. One STSI official uses the occasion to call on the government to increase its funding of the traditional arts. He appeals to national pride, saying that Indonesian support for the arts is small in comparison to that of India, China, or Japan.

But it isn't all verbiage. One of the lectures is illustrated by live music, and one of the examples is the beloved light tune, "Uler Kambang." To my surprise, in the midst of the politely seated audience, one of the male guests breaks the attentive silence of the crowd by clapping his hands (*keplok*) to the beat, as if we were at a *klenengan* or even a *tayuban*. The power of this music to invite participation, it seems, has not entirely vanished.

New Music: Politics and the Primordial

Solo has been a center for new music since the 1960s, when the dancer Sardono (about whom more later) staged one of his experimental productions there. Solo's composers and choreographers continue to innovate, and I saw two of their new works during my visit. Perhaps significantly, they were the only performances of any genre that had significant political content, however obliquely presented.

For many years most of the activity in this field was due to the efforts of S. D. "Gendhon" Humardani, head of the Music Academy in the 1970s. He made experimental composition a requirement for graduation (a move most of the students seemed to find congenial, since they could fulfill this requirement more cheaply than the recital of classical compositions which had been previously obligatory). For many of the staff (at least in the 1980s), though, new composition seemed to be a more or less pleasant duty rather than a passion, and they kept their works safely within the realm of Art, far from political commentary.

One composer who is passionately devoted to musical experimentation is I Wayan Sadra, a Balinese of long residence in Java. On July 27, 1997 he stages a concert along with several collaborators, entitled *Bunyi bagi Swara yang Kalah* ("Sounds for the Voices that Lost"). I know to expect something unusual from the invitation, which touts a "special guest star: Prof. Dr. Cowsapy (worldwide musician)." ("Sapi" means cow.)

The performance features several Javanese and Balinese instruments (*bonang, rebab, saron, demung, kempul, gong, gambang, slenthem, gender, suling*) alongside a violin, electric guitar, electric bass, two Roland D-50 synthesizers, and digital delay. There is also an African *jembe* drum, miscellaneous percussion and sound effects, and a fog machine. The stage has a rustic look, with foliage sprouting everywhere.

The music is a spirited mix. There is a traditional Javanese ditty ("Kaji-kaji," containing veiled mockery of a backsliding *santri*) as well as the rock stylings one would expect from the electric guitars. The gong player claps his mallets together to set the beat, just like a rock drummer. The instrumentalists take solos like jazz players.

There are bird and animal sounds to match the vegetation. The musicians isolate standard riffs from the traditional music and play with them, though it is hard to tell if it is done in a spirit of naive delight or gentle mockery. Towards the end, a man dressed as a female dancer does a parody of an exquisitely refined court dance (*bedhaya*), but the climax features the entrance of a actual cow, which stands impassive as the dancer and wild improvisations swirl around it. Sadra ends the performance by calling out in Javanese, "Stop playing, the cow can't budge [*ora isa polah*]."

And so the political symbolism of the event becomes clear. The cow represents the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), and the "voices" (or "votes") that lost are those for Megawati Sukarnoputri, the popular opposition figure who was forced from the leadership of the PDI in a government-backed power play. Protests by her followers led to the "Black Saturday" of July 27, 1996, when government toughs invaded PDI headquarters and beat and evicted her supporters, provoking a riot and subsequent government crackdown.

Sadra downplays the political significance of the performance, however. He claims that they had been rehearsing the piece since the previous February, but when they booked a performance date the only available date was July 27, the anniversary of "Black Saturday," so they got the idea of working in the reference to the PDI.

Sardono—to my mind, one of Java's finest dancers—has long had a penchant for the primordial. His first creative effort (from his high school days) was a dance-drama based on Indonesian translations of the wild west romances of Karl May. To depict Winnetou and May's other Apaches, Sardono used the movement vocabulary of an unusual Javanese court dance, *wirèng Dayak*. (In this dance, now apparently extinct, the dancers blackened their bodies and dressed like Hollywood savages, leaping around crazily.) Sardono, though born in Solo (the son of the royal apothecary) was a major figure in the Jakarta arts scene for most of his career, and became famous for his works promoting environmental awareness. In 1994, however, he moved back to Solo, and this, he says, made it natural for him to turn towards his roots. His next two pieces dealt with Javanese history ("Passage Through the Gong" and "Diponegoro"), and during my visit he was starring in a made-for-TV drama based on the life of the "last court poet" of Solo, Ronggowarsito. His new work, however, returns to ecological concerns. I watch a rehearsal of *Solonensis*, which he is preparing to take to Hamburg.

The stage is covered with coarse sand, a circular rocky mound in the middle. A human (or humanoid) skeleton lies in the center of the mound. There are two video screens. The five male dancers wear only loincloths, their long hair hanging loose; the two women are dressed in peasant costume. They start with yoga-like stretching movements, breathing heavily. The video screens light up: first with a scene from Sangiran, the site of Java Man, showing a dancing figure in the distance making bold movements, then a close-up of Sardono's hands, covered in mud, gracefully tracing gestures reminiscent of traditional Javanese dance. The other screen lights up: now we see Sardono lying mostly naked, half-sunken in a muddy field in Central Sulawesi, next to a group of women making gestures of threshing while singing a haunting choral song. Meanwhile, the men move either in the exquisitely slow movements of the "refined" style of traditional Javanese dance, or else in convulsive shudders

punctuated by hoarse screams. The video screen lights up again: we see footage of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, with speeches by Al Gore, Carl Sagan, Mother Teresa, and the Dalai Lama. Now the two women approach the rocky mound carrying bundles of dry twigs. Slowly they work their way around the circle, planting the twigs, then firming the soil. Meanwhile one of the male dancers has taken up a hoe and mimes breaking the soil. He reaches down, scoops up a handful of sand, and slowly turns his hand from the wrist in the traditional *ukel* movement, letting the sand spill back to the floor. He accompanies the meditative elegance of this movement with occasional bloodcurdling screams. The women have now finished their planting and, each carrying a twig, dance in ways suggesting the *bedhaya*. Another male dancer appears, wearing a simian mask, making monkey-like sounds and motions. Another video clip: a dance of the Asmat people of Irian Jaya, with little apparent movement but full of lusty screams.

If the political content of Sadra's piece was a demure hint, the ecological content of Sardono's is a shout. The contrast between the aridity of the stage set, the overtly topical newsclips, and the stylized but sensuous grace of the traditional dance movements—usually performed in a space heavy with the perfume of fresh jasmine blossoms—is too much for me: I feel this choreography has taken a bigger bite of politics than it can swallow. Yet when I speak with one of the dancers afterwards, he seems to feel no conflict between the aesthetic and political. He tells me he is pleased with Sardono's turn to ecology. He's concerned that "here in Indonesia the farm land is being taken over by factories." As a dancer, he appreciates the chance to work with the forces of Nature. "Sometimes I feel my body can become a bird, or a tree," he says.

Dance Practice and Wedding Music

TRADITIONS

are not only created by the cesire [*sic*] for change
but as a natural product of maturing tastes in lifestyle.

—*Motto on a schoolboy's shoulderbag*

My days in Solo pass quickly. As I go from one *wayang* to another, one *klenengan* to another, following around my musician friends, I am again astonished at the richness of their musicianship: their mastery of so many instruments and compositions, their expressive flexibility, at home in the majestic as well as flirtatious moods of the tradition; the authority with which they set beautiful tempos (it was only in learning Javanese music that I discovered how a tempo in itself can be beautiful); the delicacy of touch which brings glowing tones out of metal slabs.

I take one of the New Yorkers to see a *gamelan* foundry, and am myself impressed again by the art of *gamelan*-making: the men who, hour after hour, lift twenty-pound hammers over their heads and bring them down to strike with millimeter accuracy the surface of a red-hot bronze disk; the tuner who can feel with his knuckles inconsistencies in the thickness of a gong.

As I pack my bags, however, I realize that I still haven't found any new recordings of traditional *gamelan*. On my last day in town, I ride to the Lokananta factory on the outskirts of the city. There, at the factory store, I know the full line of Lokananta recordings can always be had. To my shock, however, the store is padlocked, and the offices are nearly deserted. I find someone in the Sales Department who tells me Lokananta is being privatized. That's why there have been no new releases of traditional music, and why they can't sell me any old cassettes. When I express concern over a privately owned Lokananta's commitment to the traditional arts, he assures me that they will screen prospective buyers carefully, and in any case the Finance Ministry will retain half-ownership. But I shouldn't worry about the old recordings going out of print, he says; there's still a strong demand for some of them, like the dance accompaniment and wedding music tapes.

Unfortunately I find this less than reassuring. The dance tapes will retain their market because they are used as practice tapes by the hundreds of schoolchildren and teenagers whose parents enroll them in dance classes. The thought of traditional Javanese music lingering on in the Lokananta catalog in the form of wedding music revives an old nightmare of mine, that *gamelan* music will turn into something the average Javanese encounters only as background music for that living museum exhibit, the Javanese wedding ceremony.

Metropolitan *Gamelan*

But the museum inspires its own passions, and it occurs to me that the Javanese may eventually come to love their traditional music with some of the same sort of distance-bridging affection that foreigners like myself feel for it. It will be a different sort of distance, of course, not nearly as severe as the distance between Solo and New York. Perhaps it will be something like the distance that separates Solo from Jakarta. Perhaps we can look to the nation's capital to guess the future of this music.

Even in the 1980s, on my visits to Jakarta I had noticed that the central Javanese repertory was cultivated there in a somewhat different spirit than I found in the heartland. To be sure, it was not so common, and it had to share space with other traditional musics (especially those of West Java) and, of course, popular music and Western music. But the distance from the sources and contexts of the music brought with it a difference in attitude.

In the mid-1980s, Jakarta's arts center hosted a local *gamelan* group, and on my visits there I was struck by how much more seriously their rehearsals were run than those I attended in Solo. Of course, in Jakarta such a gathering was more of a special event than in Solo, and perhaps that explained the earnestness they brought to these pieces. But even so, they seemed to display a passion for the most unusual and "classical" of the traditional pieces, like "Ela-ela Kalibeber," which they would sometimes practice twice in a single rehearsal.

They would speak in reverent tones of Solo as the home of the finest music, but the Solo they seemed to imagine through their music was not the present-day Solo I knew. I had fallen in love with the music because of my initial exposure to its more "classical"

aspects, and it was somewhat of a surprise to arrive in Solo to discover that the “classical” repertory had to share space with Nartosabdho’s pop-like songs, and even arrangements of *dangdut* hits like “Rewel.”

The “classical” side of the repertory is certainly cherished in Jakarta, but it persists within a different, more rarefied, cultural atmosphere—not a vacuum, to be sure, but one in which the force of conventional norms and the demands of current musical fashion are less pressing. This gives room for various eccentricities. For one thing, the differences between Solonese and Yogyanesse styles seem smaller here, and the repertory of the radio station *gamelan* ensemble included both. This mixture is hardly unprecedented—Solonese style has long been making inroads in Yogyakarta itself, and the *dhalang* Nartosabdho famously introduced Yogyanesse elements into the Solonese *wayang* style. But Jakarta also hosts some musical peculiarities I have found nowhere else. For example, a traditional performance occasion moves through six musical modes in a more-or-less fixed sequence. In Jakarta, however, there is a group (so I am told by Kathryn Emerson) that plays almost entirely pieces from a single mode. Another group earnestly and laboriously practices (and continually repeats) some of the playful pushing-the-envelope techniques occasionally used in Solo to enliven the familiar repertory (techniques like *Pantisarèn*, playing the first movement of a piece in the “wrong” *irama*). Significantly, perhaps, this group plays entirely for its own pleasure and has no opportunities for paid performance at all.

I derive a peculiar kind of reassurance from these examples. The imposing masterpieces of the repertoire will probably not die, but will be museumified *as* masterpieces. Cut off from the lusty high spirits and musical tomfoolery of the traditional *klenengan*, they will be revered as exquisite products of art (which they happen to be).

Some Other Musical Visitors

On the airplane coming home I meet a counterpart to the New York *gamelan* group, another American musical ensemble returning from performances in Indonesia. It is a North Carolina rock band, and I find myself seated near their road crew. I hadn’t heard of the group, but a roadie assures me they had a major hit in the early 1990s which was named “Wedding Song of the Year” by *Wedding* magazine. They haven’t had much US visibility since then, but they’ve toured Southeast Asia four times in the past two years; their power ballads are *big* in Indonesia. They played to medium-sized audiences (one thousand to six thousand people), but they were amazed at the crowd response. People went totally crazy, jumping on stage, pushing through the police barricades. The band felt like the Beatles must have felt on their 1964 American tour.

Odd, I think, how people in one society can become so enthusiastic over music that is taken for granted, ignored, or dismissed with a yawn in its original home.

* * *

In 1997, I had wondered how well the traditional arts would survive prosperity. In 1998, economic hardship and an increasingly fragile social order made such worries seem

irrelevant. In 1997, politics had figured as an inconspicuous backdrop to the arts, its smooth surface disturbed only by the occasional flagrant act of repression. In 1998 politics was inescapable, and concern for the future of the arts seemed a luxury. But everyday life continues even in times of crisis, and if concern for the arts was a luxury, it was still an affordable one.

Second Letter: August 1998

I did not realize it at the time, but the Asian economic crisis which began during my 1997 visit would bring enormous changes to Indonesian society before I returned. After weeks of student protests, several cities erupted in violence in mid-May, with looting and arson of the property of some political figures, including property owned by the family of President Soeharto, and large Chinese-owned businesses, and a systematic campaign of mass rape directed at Chinese-Indonesian women. Solo was one of the cities most badly affected.

The crisis which climaxed in May 1998 started to build up in Solo in March, with student protests at the two major universities, Universitas Negeri Surakarta (UNS) and Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS). Large crowds gathered weekly to watch the students throw rocks at the police, and as always when crowds gather on a regular basis in Solo, *warungs* sprang up to feed them. Eventually the students of most of the higher educational institutions in Solo joined the protests, including STSI, whose turn to demonstrate came on Wednesday May 13. The students invited representatives of the faculty to address them, Supanggah, the director, among them.

The next day it was the turn of UMS, and this time the violence was not limited to rock-throwing, tear gas and rubber bullets. Crowds shattered the storefront windows of a Timor car dealership on the Solo-Kartasura highway, then moved east toward the city center, attacking several banks, hotels, posh restaurants (including Kentucky Fried Chicken), and shopping centers.¹⁹ Cars, buses, and stores were burned, as were a movie theater, and the house of the Speaker of the Parliament (and former Minister of Information), Harmoko.²⁰ Nightfall did not completely halt the violence, though most of Solo was dark and without electricity. Friday morning saw the destruction resume, until the armed forces pacified the city on Saturday.²¹

The riots were an expression of rage, but a public one meant to communicate a message. They were, in a sense, a performance, and they were watched and interpreted by several different audiences, both domestic and international. The Solonese riots

¹⁹ The Timor automobile is a business venture of Soeharto's son, Tommy Mandala Putra, and a conspicuous target for anti-Soeharto sentiment. I'm told that some Timor owners have removed the brand name from their cars, or replaced it with "Toyota" or "Honda," to deflect possible violence.

²⁰ As Minister of Information, Harmoko had revoked the publication licenses of several magazines, but it is probably his reputation as a Soeharto toady that motivated this expression of outrage. As always, however, there are several competing rumors circulating, and those who see the riots as masterminded by Soeharto himself explain the attack on Harmoko's house as Soeharto's revenge: for at the height of the protests Harmoko had called on Soeharto to step down.

²¹ Anggit Noegroho and Bambang Harsri Irawan, eds., *Rekaman Lensa Peristiwa Mei 1998 di Solo* (Solo: Aksara Solopos, 1998).

were not televised, but they were played out in front of a local audience. Although some people shut themselves in their homes, and some *kampungs* put up barricades and isolated themselves completely, there were people on the streets to watch the show (and *warungs* open to feed them). On Friday morning the roads were filled with family groups, or pairs of young girls on motorcycles, driving around town to look at the destruction. There were people videotaping the events, and the rioters would crowd around the camera, jumping up and down, shouting “Long live the people!” (*Hidup rakyat!*) or “Bring down Soeharto!”

But like many other public representations circulating in Solo, it was not clear precisely who was sending the message. Student groups quickly disclaimed responsibility for the destruction. Some eyewitnesses reported a group of masked provocateurs inciting the crowds to violence, and many people seemed to find relief in the idea that a cadre of agitators—perhaps even the army’s own Special Forces—had instigated and masterminded the riots for its own purposes. Others said, however, that the rioters acted according to the will of local neighborhood people. Lippo Bank was fingered for destruction by its neighbors, I was told, since its stingy management had always refused to contribute anything to the community (“not even paint for repainting the *kampung* for August 17th”). By contrast, Hotel Agas, though Chinese-owned, was guarded by its neighbors, and emerged untouched.²² In any event, the looting, everyone conceded, was done by locals.

The targets of violence were clearly selected with care, and the rock-throwing and firebombing coexisted alongside some curious displays of solicitude. One Chinese-Indonesian car dealer saw his entire stock of new cars destroyed, but his personal vehicle—an antique Austin-Martin—was saved by some rioters who pushed it out of the way of the flames.

Almost immediately there were photographs of the riots posted on the Web, and viewing them naturally made me reconsider my planned visit to Solo. But then Soeharto resigned on May 21, and a few days later I called my friends at STSI to ask about the situation. “Don’t think twice about coming to Solo,” I was told; “everything’s fine here. We just held a *wayang* performance as a *syukuran* [thanksgiving celebration]. It was packed, and everyone stayed till dawn.”

“Giving thanks for what?” I asked.

“For Soeharto’s resignation!”

So I booked a flight to Solo.

Tourism naturally suffered during the months of unrest, but by the time I board my flight in late July it is starting to recover a little. My flight stops at Frankfurt, where the seat next to me is filled by a tall gentleman with a goatee and two large earrings, wearing checkered trousers and a black dressing-gown over a loose white cotton shirt

²² Of course, neighborhoods had pragmatic, as well as humanitarian, reasons to protect the large Chinese-Indonesian enterprises in their midsts, and no doubt various sorts of accommodations were negotiated. One Chinese-Indonesian businessman in the north part of town paid the local people 5,000,000 rupiahs to serve as night watchmen at his two factories, though I could not tell from the stories I heard whether that figure included the “gift” he gave them to get his factory equipment back after they removed it all to their own homes “for safekeeping.”

over a black T-shirt, with several necklaces. He is a jewelry designer; one of his pendants is something he made himself from mammoth's tusk (he would never dream of using elephant ivory)—it sells for about \$1,250. He is on his way to Bali for three months to soak up inspiration at a deep discount.

On the flight out of Singapore I meet some Indonesian students returning from study abroad, and a Chinese-Indonesian woman. She was in Solo during the May riots. Some of her friends had their houses looted; people took everything, refrigerators, tanks of cooking gas, even chickens. There were rapes in Solo too, she says, her voice darkening; the daughter of a stamp-maker was raped, a week before her wedding.²³ One of the students points out that Indonesian women's bodies have become politicized ever since the murder of Marsinah, the East Javanese labor activist. In Jakarta, the woman continues, you can now buy videos of the rapes. In East Timor, he responds, the army is distributing photographs of the Jakarta rapes—showing Chinese women's genitals with glass shards (*beling*) in them—to scare the resistance fighters.²⁴

Undoing Urban Development

We arrive on Happy Day, a government tourism-promotion scheme. All foreign tourists can stay free one night in a participating hotel. I am recruited by an upbeat team from Novotel Hotel. It seems I am the only candidate on the flight, so I let their enthusiasm sway me. I am as fond of a bargain as the next fellow, even though I have sentimental reasons to dislike their employer.

Novotel stands at the location of the old Ngapeman market. It wasn't much of a marketplace. In the 1980s I bought a bicycle there and some unusual secondhand batik. I spent many hours across the street from it, hanging out at a *warung* whose central location made it the natural gathering spot for my circle of friends. The *warung* disappeared in the 1980s, to be replaced by a department store, Sami Luwes. That was at the beginning of the modernization and commercialization of the cityscape, the invasion of shopping centers and suburban housing developments. Now Ngapeman is gone too, and I feel a certain resentment, perhaps out of all proportion to my scant emotional investment in the old marketplace.

The hotel staff members are earnest but awkward. The young lady at the check-in desk is so busy beaming at me that she forgets to give me my room key. The bellhop maneuvers the enormous luggage cart into the narrow elevator only to discover that he is out of reach of the controls, so he asks me to press the button for my floor. I am charmed by their eagerness, and I discover I bear no grudge against the place. Novotel employs two hundred local workers; will anyone miss the ramshackle and far-from-picturesque old market except for tourists, and the professionally nostalgic, like

²³ I later discover that this account, like virtually all the stories concerning the rapes, is contested. A Solonese photojournalist tells me he saw a doctor's report on this case which states that the woman was stripped but not raped.

²⁴ The source of these images, too, is unclear. Some claim that many of the photographs purporting to represent the sexual violence against Chinese-Indonesian women in fact predate the riots, and actually depict violence against East Timorese women. *Puncak, Puncak Kebiadaban Bangsa: Perkosaan Etnik Tionghoa 13-14 Mei 1998* (Yayasan Karyawan Matra, 1998), p. 61.

myself? The hotel even has a few *gamelan* instruments in the lobby. For a while it hired students from the state arts academy to serenade the guests; this was discontinued because of the economic crisis, and the instruments have become a purely visual ornament. (The bar band still plays pop favorites for four hours each evening, of course.)

Before looking up my old friends I venture outside to inspect the great blackened hulks of the shopping centers and car dealerships. The destruction greets me as soon as I leave the hotel. Across the street, the Sami Luwes store—built on the site of my old hangout—is gutted.

“Solo is a Barometer”

I hire a *becak* (pedicab) to drive me around, and the driver is quite proud of his city. “Solo is a barometer,” he tells me. “It was in Solo that the demonstrations started that made them rescind the electricity rate hikes. The riots started here and spread to neighboring cities. We’re better than Yogya [*Jogja kalah*]; in May there weren’t any riots there. It’s because of all the clever [*pintar*] and evil [*jahat*] characters here—after all, this is where the *kraton* [court] is.”

“Lots of people died here,” he pointed out as we passed the burned-out storefront of the Bata shoe company. “The funny thing is nobody died when we burned the Luwes store at Ngapeman. There are five stores in the Luwes chain, owned by Chinese. We planned to burn them down during the elections, but didn’t get the chance.”

This attitude is not one I commonly encounter. Most of the musicians and professionals I know in Solo are much more obviously chagrined at the events of May, but I find I have my own reasons to empathize with this *becak* driver a little. I spend some time standing in front of the remains of the Matahari department store at Singosaren Plaza. This, too, was once a marketplace, Pasar Singosaren, and that marketplace too was demolished in the mid-1980s. I was particularly angry, because Matahari was planned as Solo’s second shopping center at a time when the first, at Purwosari Plaza, had only indifferent success at attracting merchants and shoppers. The small traders who rented space in Singosaren would be needlessly displaced by larger, more upmarket firms. But as an academic I also had the luxury of nursing an affront to my sense of history. Pasar Singosaren had been the old Habipraya building, the club for court employees during colonial times and the site of some of the earliest nationalist agitation in the early years of the century; now it would disappear forever. (After I left Solo, an even more historic building—Balé Agung, the site of the first native parliament-like body permitted by the Dutch—was demolished to make room for the Beteng Plaza parking lot.)

I had given my anger no concrete form, and when Singosaren Plaza was built I shopped in it (unlike some of its more principled critics, who vowed never to patronize it). I am sure the people who burned it down had no knowledge of the Habipraya, much less any fondness for its memory, but staring now at the plaza’s blackened skeleton I can’t help feeling as if the impotent anger I nursed ten years ago had taken on a life of its own, smiling on the rioters.

“Reformasi Mania”

The silences of the ruins speak eloquently enough, but there are also more explicit messages. The city has become a vast blackboard. The writing is everywhere: on the walls, on houses, even on the streets. There are anonymous messages addressed to authority, written on public spaces like alley walls or the gate to the southern Alun-alun: “The Soeharto regime is over,” “Hang Soeharto,” “July 27th isn’t finished yet,” “Destroy the New Order, the Oppressor of the People,” “Revoke the Dual Function of the Armed Forces,” “Bring Soeharto to Trial,” “Reject Habibie,” and a pun on Soeharto’s name, combining it with the Javanese word for dog: “Asuharto.” There are prophylactic words scrawled on the houses to ward off the rioters and looters: mostly “Pro Reformasi,” but also “Jowo tulen” (pure Javanese), “Pribumi” (indigenous), “Muslim,” even “Ayam Kampung” (local chicken). (The words of denunciation, like “Chinese dog” written on the houses of Chinese-Indonesians, have long since been painted over.) Among the dozens of wall graffiti advertising Javanese-ness, there are a few that display their ethnicity in their very orthography, written in Javanese script. It is, I note bitterly, probably the first time in decades that this now purely symbolic expression of Javanese tradition has served a practical function.

Anonymous messages, untraceable to any source, continue to circulate in the form of rumors—rumors, for example, that further riots will erupt on Independence Day (August 17). But there is also an explosion of attributed representations, and a general determination to trace actions back to their authors. Despite the increasingly ruinous economics of the publishing business, the news media are expanding, with over sixty new publishing licenses issued. The newspapers eagerly track the top stories (determining who is responsible for the kidnappings of activists, or for the ouster of Megawati from the leadership of the PDI). Every day I read how people are demonstrating against suspected cases of corruption, going on hunger strikes, exposing their village headmen to the sun (*jemur*, a traditional ordeal). One *bupati* (subdistrict head) popularly suspected of ordering the assassination of an investigative journalist was forced from office by demonstrations. The employees of the Sragen Department of Public Works demand that their chief—a member of the military, like many high municipal officials—be replaced by a civilian. There are strikes, and the workers at one textile factory dramatize their grievances by parading down Solo’s main street, Jl. Slamet Riyadi.

The Shrinking Musical Market

But the loudest message comes from everywhere and nowhere, broadcast through the price system. Prices rise daily, even hourly, dramatically widening the circle of poverty. Some staples have merely doubled in price; others have increased by a factor of four, or ten. The urban poor are hit especially hard, and the burden weighs most cruelly on the now-jobless former employees of the large Chinese-owned stores. At a late-night *warung* I meet a newly unemployed young man. The car dealership he used to work at was destroyed in the riots, and he is now trying to make a living as a

photographer. "There's no justice in this world," I say bitterly, embarrassed by my own comparative economic security. "On the contrary," he says mysteriously, "It is a just world."

Musicians are suffering, and this includes even relatively affluent pop singers. Many of them are losing jobs and canceling recordings as the industry shrinks. (One cassette store owner estimates that half as many new titles appear each month than used to a year ago.) Opportunities for performance are decreasing for traditional musicians as well. Most obviously affected are the performance venues directly dependent on tourism. All of the Solonese hotels except one have discontinued live *gamelan* music, and that one has reduced its roster of musicians to three.²⁵ Civil servants (the radio station musicians, and the teachers at SMKI and STSI) have seen the purchasing power of their fixed salaries plummet.

It is impossible to say, however, exactly how the economic crisis has affected traditional performance opportunities overall. It seems that the villages in general are not as badly off as the urban areas, and I hear of *wayang* and *klenengan* performances throughout my visit. The young son of one of my teachers is establishing himself as a *wayang* musician in Yogya, and he has invitations to perform every night, mostly in Wonosari. Even on the outskirts of Solo *wayang* performances remain frequent. Performers are suffering, of course, but it is unclear who is suffering the most. Some performers find it hard to get any jobs at all; others have as much work as they can handle, but at reduced rates. A rising young *dhalang* from Klaten who used to perform fifteen times a month now gets only half that many invitations.

It seems probable that the market for upscale *wayang* performances has shrunk the most, largely because of the withdrawal of government offices from patronage, since they used to sponsor the most colossal performances by Golkar-affiliated *dhalangs*. Rustopo estimates that 90 percent of the patronage of the top *dhalangs* came from government offices,²⁶ a figure that astonishes me. As demand slackens the pay scale drops accordingly. One of the "superstar" *dhalangs* has only seven performances slated for August 1998 (compared to twenty-five for August 1997), and he now accepts fees as low as Rp 7,000,000—half of his old fee.

The End of the Reign of Culture?

The Soeharto regime had used the language of cultural particularity to ward off both internal and external criticism, reminiscent of the ways Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew and Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad used the rhetoric of "Asian values." When criticized for some violation of democratic process or human rights, the government was likely to respond with vague talk about the need to preserve the Indonesian "national character" (*kepribadian nasional*) or "national identity." John Pemberton has argued that the New Order was a "reign of culture," exalting a sense of "tradition"

²⁵ The situation is similar in Yogyakarta, where one hotel has managed to continue its indigenous background music by asking its regular workers to organize a *gamelan* group and perform as overtime, for which they are modestly paid.

²⁶ Rustopo, "Peran Dalang di Era 'Reformasi,'" *Gelar* 1,1 (1998): 45-52.

that was largely figured as submission to a diffuse, invisible authority. Moral duties became *traditional* moral duties²⁷; the government's extralegal summary execution of suspected criminals was justified, not by the concept of a nation founded on the rule of law (*negara hukum*) but by the concept of a Nation of Culture (*negara kebudayaan*).²⁸

Is it too much to hope that the New Order's rhetoric of cultural heritage might perish with it? There are some signs that it might. President Habibie, in his speech to the nation during the 1998 Independence Day celebration, categorically asserted that Indonesia no longer regards the idea of human rights as a Western concept. In the immediate aftermath of the Solonese riots, the language of culture as a stabilizing force was at least temporarily eclipsed. Of the public figures *Solo Pos* asked to comment on the riots, only Pakoe Boewono XII felt it necessary to point out that the violence and looting was "inconsistent with our people's high cultural values" (*nilai-nilai budaya luhur bangsa*), and even he went on to admit that they also violated humanitarian values in general. But within months the Establishment started mouthing culture-speak again. On August 8, the commander of the armed forces, Gen. Wiranto, addressed a conference on venture capital in Solo. Speaking in the parking lot of the ruined Purwosari Plaza, he expressed surprise that such arson and destruction should take place in Solo, a city which he said had always had a "culture of politeness and respect for the law" (*budaya yang santun dan menghormati hukum*).²⁹

Reclaiming Javanese Tradition

During the 1980s, I had occasionally wondered if the Soeharto regime's support for Javanese traditions might taint those traditions; in a post-Soeharto Indonesia, would the traditional arts be seen as guilty by association? There are signs, however, that people are beginning to contest the New Order appropriation of Javanese culture.³⁰

A letter to the editor of *Solo Pos*³¹ complains that Soeharto distorted the meaning of Javanese proverbs. The saying *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* was made to mean that subordinates should cover up for their superiors, whereas originally it signified that children, through their achievements, should reflect honor on their parents.

One of my friends at the state music academy wants to write an exposé of the influence of the New Order on traditional Javanese music. He mentions as an example the various compositions made to order to promote government programs, such as Nartosabdho's "Identitas Jawa Tengah," composed for the Governor of Central Java, and Anom Soeroto's "Solo Berseri," composed for the Mayor of Solo's municipal beautification campaign. (Of course, such songs were composed under the Old Order too.)

²⁷ John Pemberton, *On the Subject of "Java"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 220.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

²⁹ Pangab, "Pangab ajak Wong Solo jaga budaya santun," *Solo Pos*, August 9, 1998, p. 1.

³⁰ Even the Indonesian language is being de-Soehartoized. At a conference of *dhalangs*—described below—one speaker catches himself using the word "daripada" (a word Soeharto was famous for misusing) and stops, muttering "that's Soeharto-speak" (*basané Soeharto, 'daripada'*).

³¹ S. R. Winarso, "Makna mikul dhuwur mendhem jero," *Solo Pos*, August 6, 1998, p. 4.

The tradition can provide rhetorical resources for criticism of authority as well as reinforcement of it. As Pemberton noted, the New Order's revival of Javanese "tradition" was selective, quietly suppressing anything in it that suggested the carnivalesque, or even the merely messy. But revolutionaries of various stripes have long drawn on traditional images and stories. For example, Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo reportedly claimed that his determination to fight the Dutch and the Javanese aristocracy was inspired in part by his reading of the *Bratayuda*.³² For the 1920 congress of the National Indies Party in Solo, Tjipto hired some of the *kraton's* own *wayang orang* dancers to perform the tale of *Ki Ageng Mangir*, a story Tjipto felt illustrated the perfidy of the Javanese rulers.³³ More recently, the Communist *dhalangs* of the Old Order used *wayang* stories like *Udawa Waris* to agitate for land reform.

The oppositional potential of the *wayang* tradition seems reasonably robust, even after thirty-two years of State appropriation. Soebadio Sastrosatomo's blistering attack on the New Order, *Politik Dosomuko Rezim Orde Baru* (the ban on which is lifted during my visit), associates Soeharto with Dasamuka (Rahwana), the enemy of Rama in the Ramayana story. The *wayang* character Dasamuka—literally, the "ten-faced"—is often used as a symbol of pure evil, and by having him represent the Soeharto regime, Soebadio might have been simply expressing the depth of his hatred for the New Order. But he also develops the comparison in ingenious new ways that would do a *dhalang* proud. The ten-faced Dasamuka, he explains, represents the total concentration of power behind an appearance of democracy. The nominal independence of the New Order's executive, legislative, and judiciary branches merely disguises the fact that the many faces are controlled by a single brain.³⁴

Wayang in an Era of Reform

The *wayang* itself, of course, has not served the cause of partisan conflict for some decades, and the political history of the *wayang* has left the community of *dhalangs* with many traumatic memories. The *wayang* was caught up in the heated party politics of the Old Order. Many *dhalangs* joined the Communist Party's Lembaga Kesenian Rakyat (LEKRA) or the Nationalist Party's Lembaga Kesenian Nasional. After the elimination of the Communist Party at the end of the Old Order, many *dhalangs* associated with LEKRA were killed, jailed, or at least forbidden to perform. To prevent the future "politicization" of the *wayang* (which in New Order terms meant its use by political actors other than Golkar), some *wayang*-loving military and civilian officials led by (then) Major General Surono founded Ganasidi (Lembaga Pembina Seni Pedalangan Indonesia), an organization of Central Javanese *dhalang*, in 1969. It was located in Semarang, the capital of the province of Central Java, and headquarters of Surono's military district. Its relationship to the New Order regime was made explicit

³² George Larson, *Prelude to Revolution* (Dordrecht, Holland: Foris, 1987), p. 99.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 119. Panembahan Senapati, founder of the Mataram dynasty, used guile to subdue the rebel, Mangir. He sent his daughter to seduce Mangir; she then persuaded him to pay his respects to Senapati. When he did so, however, Senapati murdered him.

³⁴ Soebadio Sastrosatomo, *Politik Dosomuko Rezim Orde Baru: Rapuh dan Sengsarakan Rakyat* (Jakarta: Pusat Dokumentasi Politik Guntur 49, 1998), p. 3.

when it became part of Golkar, the government party.³⁵ (In consequence, some *dhalangs*—especially the Soekarnoists—refused to join it, seeing it as an instrument for governmental control of the *wayang*.)

After Soeharto stepped down, the environment of the *wayang* changed dramatically. Voices were heard calling for the dismantling of Ganasidi and the entire New Order apparatus for the control of the *wayang*. Suddenly, *dhalangs* for whom New Order slogans had become second nature had to guard against the inadvertent reference to Golkar code-words. One young *dhalang* performing in a remote village started the first clown scene with a conventional topos: Approaching the village, he had noticed the roads were in excellent repair; wasn't this a fine product of development (*hasil pembangunan*)? This incautious use of a New Order slogan immediately brought cries of "Bullshit!" (*Gombal!*) from the audience.

To address the role of the *dhalang* in the era of reform, the Surakarta Cultural Center (TBS), headed by Murtijono, held a symposium, attended by about 150 Central Javanese *dhalang*. The organizing committee, after canvassing the opinion of several respected senior *dhalangs*, drew up a report, which they presented to the symposium on its first day. The committee's analysis of the situation traced the problem to the *dhalangs'* greed and New Order manipulateness. The *dhalangs* were no longer content with economic sufficiency, but wanted luxury. The New Order made it possible for them to pursue material rewards, but had a hidden political agenda. It channeled its political messages through the government *dhalang* organizations. *Dhalangs* who prospered from this combination of culture industry and government control became arrogant and indulged in flashy performance gimmicks at the expense of higher values.

The political elite, thanks to their power and money, could make superstars out of their favorite *dhalangs*. Their taste was then imitated by the common people, until the taste of these government officials dominated the market. The organizing committee's analysis thus presented an image of passive, manipulated audiences strikingly reminiscent of the old American mass culture critique: "Actually the society has no taste of its own, it's the rulers and the *dhalangs* themselves who shape popular taste."

The committee's remedy was to recommend freedom from both political domination and the rule of the market. *Dhalangs* should no longer need bureaucratic permission to perform. The *wayang* should be de-professionalized—*dhalangs* should have other sources of income so they are not totally dependent on their performance fees. Yet at the same time the committee wished to expand the role of expertise in the *wayang*: *dhalangs* should have a staff of experts (*staf ahli*) to advise them on matters of law, politics, and religion.

Many of the *dhalangs* who spoke in response to this report emphasized the moral rather than the political role of the *dhalang*. The traditional *dhalang* (*dhalang pakem*) doesn't provide mere entertainment and off-color humor, but rather "spiritual nutrition." The Mahabharata is a holy book, a moral guide. The *wayang* is a repository of humane values (*nilai-nilai kemanusiaan*).

³⁵ Victoria M. Clara van Groenendael, *The Dalang Behind the Wayang* (Dordrecht: Foris, 1985), pp. 145-150.

The featured speaker, Emha Ainun Nadjib, was introduced by Sujiwo Tejo, a journalist who also performs as a *dhalang*. Emha, he said, was the sort of person from outside the *wayang* world who had much to say to *dhalangs*. We need to listen to people like him, people who became disenchanted with the traditional arts and moved to the modern arts, but who now see some potential for renewal in the traditional arts. Reform in Indonesia will take two or three generations, Sujiwo said, because the *wayang* has ruined our mentality (*mental*). The hierarchical, king-centered *wayang* world has made us think that presidents and governors are leaders, whereas in a democracy they are servants of the people. Indeed, the demand that *dhalangs* follow fixed rules (*pakem*) also unconsciously continues the tradition of oppression (*tradisi menindas*). Only the Holy Scriptures are perfect; saying the rules of the *wayang* tradition can't be changed is tantamount to declaring them a Holy Scripture; it is not democratic.

Emha then told the *dhalangs* that the *wayang* has become trapped in a false system of values. They should be the moral teachers of the nation; they have a spiritual position, superior to the bureaucrats. They should be priests (*begawan*), unconcerned with material reward, acting not in the sight of man but the sight of God. But they need to formulate a philosophical position, a spiritual and moral value system. They are in a position to spread democratic attitudes, since the *wayang* is the pioneer of democracy in Indonesia: for isn't the character of Semar, the deity who is also a beggar, a symbol of democracy? The *dhalangs* should give Semar a more progressive, a more oppositional role in their performances.

Emha's exhortations struck many of the *dhalangs* as unrealistic. The *begawan* concept was all right in the past, they said, but society is different now. In the face of strong criticism of the materialism of the Golkar *dhalangs*, a few spoke out defending the professional *dhalang's* right to earn an honest living from his work.

Some of the "flashy" *dhalangs* implicitly criticized as "arrogant" were present at the symposium, and they spoke in their own defense. Isn't it equally arrogant, said Entus Susmono, for you to tell me that I can't use a synthesizer in my performances, or can't stand up? Another attacked the demand for de-professionalization, saying that *dhalangs* need to become *more* professional, if necessary taking three months to rehearse one or two stories. Djoko Hadiwidjojo, the "Crazy Djoko" (*Djoko Edan*), said he felt *dhalangs* shouldn't set themselves up as moral guides since their own morals were questionable.³⁶ And the "superstar" *dhalangs* all agreed that the people weren't dupes—they knew perfectly well what they liked, they didn't blindly imitate the tastes of the wealthy and powerful.

One of the most difficult issues to emerge concerned the nature of the *wayang's* relationship to society. On one hand, the *wayang* should be relevant to its place, time, and audience, and there are many terms in the *wayang* lexicon that describe the *dhalang's* skill at tailoring his presentation to the needs of the viewers. *Sanggit*, for example, is a broad term for the *dhalang's* latitude in performance which includes the adjustments he makes to suit the story to the occasion and sponsor (Soetrisno n.d.) On

³⁶ The examples he gave of the immorality of *dhalangs* all concerned violations of what he seemed to feel was an informal system of copyright; that is, they were cases in which *dhalangs* imitated other *dhalangs'* innovations in puppet movement or singing (*sulukan*) without permission.

the other hand, in troubled times, being true to one's time can lead to trouble. The *dhalangs* who died because of their involvement with LEKRA were trying to fit in (*nyocog'ké*) with their society, trying to be relevant to their times.

How, then, can *dhalangs* be prevented from being caught up in political conflict, with possibly fatal consequences? One speaker demanded that *wayang* should be completely pure (*murni jernih*), unconnected to any political viewpoint whatever, and he called on the symposium to set in motion the purification (*pemurnian*) of the *dhalang's* art.

Other speakers were less willing to sacrifice the topicality and relevance of the *wayang* performance, or less willing to restrict the *dhalang* to the reiteration of timeless spiritual truths. Some sought protection from the dangers of political passion in the impartiality of the service economy. Murtijono suggested that the *dhalang* should not be a politically committed performer, but a professional selling a service (*penjual jasa*). Ideally, he would employ a staff representing a variety of political viewpoints. When hired by a PDI supporter, for example, he could have his PDI man make a speech before the performance, preparing the audience and framing the story in PDI terms. When performing for audiences of other political persuasions, he would similarly rely on his other staff members.

In opposition to this, some *dhalangs* demanded that each performer must have his own convictions (*adeg-adeg*) and should not be *plin-plan*, bending with the breeze; no one should try to restrict a *dhalang's* individual freedom.

Unsurprisingly, the symposium did not resolve these difficult issues, but some weeks afterwards Murtijono found an amusing, and very newsworthy, way to present his preferred solution to the problem. He announced his own political "party," the Art and Comedy Party (*Partai Seni dan Dagelan* Indonesia, Parsendi). It is a spoof on parties, but he suggests that it may have real value for *dhalangs*. "If someone tries to pressure a *dhalang* into joining some party, he can pull out his membership card in Parsendi and say, 'Sorry, I already belong to a party, but I'll work for you on a contract basis.' That way he can perform for as many different parties as will pay him."

The Islamic Revival, Continued

Jilbabs are still everywhere, though they coexist with the latest fashion, hip-hugging jeans and form-fitting blouses that reveal every curve. Of course, there is no technical incompatibility between the need to cover women's *aurat* ("indecent" parts of the body) and the imperatives of sex appeal, just as there seems to be no tension between the Islamic revival and the *gamelan*. *Gamelan Kyai Kanjeng* seems to be prospering; I look for the ensemble in Yogyakarta, but they are in Jakarta for a recording session. I hear that there is now a female counterpart to *Kyai Kanjeng*, called *Nyai Kanjeng*, an all-woman Islamic fusion *gamelan* group.

But there are also signs that relations are not entirely peaceful, as I discover when I decide to buy some *wayang* puppets to use in teaching. A friend tells me that he knows someone anxious to sell an extensive set of puppets for little more than I am going to

pay for a few dozen. The owner is a village schoolteacher; *wayang* is his hobby, and he has been accumulating puppets piecemeal over the years. He has a small screen set up in his house on which he practices, but he has never performed. I feel some guilt as I negotiate for the set, since I assume I am taking advantage of his need for cash in these economically difficult times. But it turns out that money is only one of the reasons he wants to sell.

Recently, his wife started working in an office of the Department of Religion, and she embraced a stringent form of Islam which not only enforces the *jilbab* on women, but also forbids them even to shake hands with a man other than their husband. (My friend reports this fact to me with amazement and distaste.) Her new-found religious fervor made her disgusted with her husband's "pagan" hobby, and pressure from her combined with economic hardship brought him to sell his beloved puppets.

Globalizing *Gamelan* Patronage

State patronage is shrinking for traditional music and dance as well as *wayang*, but the picture is not uniformly grim. Indeed, some of the state's long-dormant artistic activities are reviving. The radio station's *gamelan* competition was held again in June, after a hiatus of five years, though it was apparently announced so late that only thirteen groups entered. Lokananta, the state recording company, has apparently found no buyers (indeed, there is now talk of eliminating its parent office, the Department of Information). However, the private sector may compensate to some extent, and some old Lokananta recordings have been reissued, licensed to another label.

Private-sector support for the arts is emerging, not only domestically, but internationally. Foreign funds have been helping to support the traditional arts in Indonesia for some time. The largest amount by far has been contributed by foundations such as Ford, which has given money to various arts institutes and to individual artists. Many teachers both inside and outside of the conservatories have been able to augment their income by taking on foreign students. Some ethnomusicologists have arranged recording contracts for local musicians.

Now, however, the international patronage of the Javanese arts has entered a new stage. Stirred by the economic crisis, a German lawyer and amateur dancer has set up an endowment of Rp 180.000.000 (over \$16,000); the interest—about Rp 5.000.000 per month—will be used to provide scholarships for deserving young dance students from SMKI and STSI.³⁷

Murtijono calls a press conference to announce the gift, and asks me to make a statement about other donations foreigners have made to support the traditional arts. I agree at first, but am forced to back down by strong disagreement from my fellow foreigners. They are understandably sensitive about doing anything that might give the impression that economic power from abroad is directing the course of Indonesia's arts.

³⁷ "Asing Ingin Bantu Seni Tradisi," *Kompas*, August 18, 1998, p. 10.

I can see why my colleagues might want to deny a toehold to the sort of resentment that might lead to cut-off-your-nose-to-spite-your-face nativism. They may also want to avoid the frustrations and rivalries that can occur on the personal level—I have very occasionally heard grumbling about some foreign philanthropy because a private patron had insisted on placing a personal friend in a position of high musical responsibility. But all philanthropy, even the institutional kind, is sensitive, since it is balanced between the norms and values of the donor and those of the recipient. During my time in Solo I witnessed how local institutions articulately contested the rationalized criteria used by international funding agencies (such as impartial selection of candidates by merit) and defended their own criteria (such as seniority).

The conflict in this case is much milder. The foreign donors, by insisting on secrecy, wanted to avoid embarrassing the Indonesians. By contrast, Murtijono wanted to put this embarrassment to productive use, shaming prospective local donors and stimulating domestic philanthropy.

Amazingly, Murtijono's strategy seems to pay off. Soon after the news of the German endowment is made public, an association of Chinese-Indonesians approaches him, offering to provide a biannual prize of Rp 10.000.000 for the best dancer of the *wayang orang* role of Gathutkaca.

Salvation Through Commodification?

Of course, not all Indonesians wish to keep their traditional arts safe from foreign money. Consider, for example, Franki Raden, a composer of contemporary music in Jakarta. He publishes an article in Jakarta's English-language daily³⁸ in which he rails against the Soeharto regime's cultural policy which, he says, wasted billions of rupiah trying to "conserve" traditional art and culture, often using it as a propaganda tool in the process. The government should instead have concentrated on productively *commodifying* art and culture. The New Order took a small step in this direction in March 1998, when it added "culture" to the responsibilities of the Ministry of Tourism, but much more could be done. Indonesia's neighbors, Malaysia and Singapore, are already preparing to sell their cultural products abroad.

It is a bold argument, though I find it a bit facile. What Raden proposes is in essence a transposition in national terms of the cultural policy of the province of Bali, which has long relied on cultural tourism, so I would like to hear his comments on the debate over the impact of tourism on the Balinese arts.³⁹ Raden also seems remarkably sanguine about the marketability of the arts. "In the cultural global environment of capitalism, there is hardly any artistic product that cannot be turned into a commodity." Perhaps. He gives as an example the high prices now paid for once-ridiculed Cubist or Surrealist paintings, and the tourism income New York City derives from the Soho artistic scene. But this is not so much the automatic result of capitalism's irresistible commodifying power as a historically and culturally specific product of the growth of the European and American middle class, starting with the

³⁸ Franki Raden, "Marketing art and culture to help end crisis," *Jakarta Post*, July 5, 1998, p. 3.

³⁹ Michel Picard, *Bali: Cultural Tourism and Touristic Culture* (Singapore: Archipelago Press, 1996).

emergence of an artistic counterculture—Bohemia—as an object of repulsive fascination for the Parisian bourgeois of the 1830s.⁴⁰

In any case, it is ironic to see Raden faulting the New Order for insufficiently commodifying the traditional arts, since the *dhalangs* accused it of precisely the opposite.

Importing an Underground

It is also ironic to see Raden praising the commodifiability of the Western arts, since the rhetoric of anti-commercialism is so deeply embedded in so many of them, including Western popular music. Indeed, it seems that Indonesia has now imported this music so thoroughly that the idea of a defiantly non-commercial underground has emerged.

Western musical imports, like Popindo itself, are usually categorized under two large rubrics, “pop” and “rock,” though “reggae” is a common enough term, the word “grunge” is scrawled on *kampung* (neighborhood) walls all over town, and someone has written “hardcore” on the north wall of the Mangkunegaran palace complex. Cassettes of Madonna are sold here, as well as the Spice Girls and other up-to-the-minute pop sensations, along with Oasis, Metallica, and Green Day. One sidewalk vendor I notice sells posters of Kurt Cobain and Bob Marley as well as Leonardo di Caprio.

Indonesian “pop” (narrowly construed) continues to be somewhat more saccharine than its American counterpart. But local “rock” music has a much higher profile now than it did ten years ago, though it is still more prominent on stage and radio than on commercially available recordings. Up to 1988, Indonesian fans of rock music could satisfy their tastes cheaply with Indonesian copies of American recordings, since the absence of copyright treaties between Indonesia and the USA meant local cassette companies could legally “pirate” American releases. The signing of a copyright agreement in 1988 gave those companies increased incentives to find and promote local talent.⁴¹

Now I find that there is a small niche market for recordings of “noncommercial” rock styles, circulated by small labels—what in the West would be called “indies”—and on extremely lo-fi self-produced albums. In Yogyakarta I find a home-made compilation of local “underground” bands, with names like Brutal Corpse, Black Boot, Impurity, Something Wrong, Mystis, Atret (Reverse), and Death Vomit. (Their lyrics, like their names, are almost entirely in English; there is obviously something about “Death Vomit” and “Brutal Corpse” impossible to render adequately in Indonesian.) There is also a tape (on Riotic Records) of a punk band from Bandung, whose enclosure rails against fascism, racism, and animal testing, and invites the buyer to send away for a lyric sheet with Indonesian translations, and a leaflet about

⁴⁰ Jerrold Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930* (New York: Viking 1986).

⁴¹ A. Tjahjo Sasongko and Nug Katjasungkana, “Pasang Surut Musik Rock di Indonesia,” *Prisma* 10 (October 1991): 62.

anarchism. In an ordinary cassette shop in Solo I find *Metalik Klinik I*, a slightly more mainstream compilation of bands from Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bali—Betrayal, Hell Gods, Eternal Madness, Trauma, Tengkorak—with lyrics in Indonesian. The liner notes invite contributions to *Metalik Klinik II* from “noncommercial bands: Hardcore, Industrial, Punk, Ska, Gothic, Thrash, Death Metal, Grindcore, Black Metal, Grunge, Alternative, Indies, Techno, etc.” (The lyrics must be in Indonesian, and the upper age limit for band members is twenty-three.)

The Horizontal Generation

I meet two living incarnations of Supanggah’s concept of “horizontal” musicianship. The first is a young singer, Ari Lestari Dwimiyanti, known as Ari Jaipong. She is the granddaughter of Tukinem, one of the finest of the old generation of *pesindhen*; her *kendhang* player is the son of Daryoko of Ngreden, a *dhalang* himself and at one time the drummer for Anom Soeroto. Her band is a kind of Campursari, a *kroncong* ensemble (silver flute, violin, guitar, *cak/cuk*, cello) with synthesizer and drum set, combined with Javanese and Sundanese *kendhang*. She gives me a live recording of her group. It includes favorites from the lightest part of the traditional *gamelan* repertory (“Kutut Manggung,” “Sinom Parijatha,” “Mijil Kethoprak,” “Embat-embat Penjalin”), Nartosabdho compositions (“Ngimpi”), *langgam Jawa* (“Jenang Gula”), *dangdut*, and a Popindo tune from decades ago, “Layu Sebelum Berkembang.” She sings *jaipongan* in Sundanese, with a credible imitation of a Sundanese singer’s unique vibrato. With a male performer she acts out a comic episode from *wayang orang*, depicting Arjuna’s wife, the lovely and refined Sembadra, who has been abducted by the ogre Burisrawa. The music is an entirely traditional *srepegan* with *palaran*, though played in Western intonation by the synthesizer.

On my last night in Solo I am invited to hear another singer, Endah Laras. She, too, has a traditional background, and comes from a long line of *dhalangs*. The occasion is a *syukuran* held by a batik merchant to celebrate the birth of his new grandchild.

The band is also Campursari in the same sense that Ari’s is, since it includes a *kendhang ciblon* and *jaipongan* drums along with the electric guitar, electric bass guitar, synthesizer, cello, *dangdut ketipung*, drum set, and electrified *cak* and *cuk*. The *kendhang* player is a student at STSI (as is Endah herself). I arrive fairly early, as *kroncong* is giving way to *langgam*, though a few guests already request *dangdut* tunes. Endah switches between *langgam Jawa*, *jaipongan*, and Indopop, changing her vocal timbre with the style. She sings Joko Lelur, a song by a former *punakawan* dancer of *wayang orang*, Ranto Edy Gudel; its rhythm alternates between *dangdut* and a shuffle boogie. Endah is a natural performer, flirting with the men who request tunes, humorously characterizing them by their appearance (*nyandra*). She gets a big laugh out of her observation that the short, sharply dressed, but somewhat shifty MC reminds her of the *wayang* figure Sangkuni. (The traditionalist in me is grateful for this reference, but it isn’t particularly representative. On other occasions, I’m told, she compares the men to different kinds of birds, or even motorcycles.)

Endah yields the microphone to another singer, who offers a *langgam Jawa* and then a *palaran*; the bass guitar plays the *kempul* part.

I am impressed by the versatility of Endah and her accompanists. But most striking to me is the overall shape of the performance. The event starts with *kroncong asli* (interspersed with suitable pop tunes) and Indonesian *langgam* before moving on to *langgam Jawa* and *dangdut*. This is the typical progression, though *dangdut* episodes can appear sporadically in the early evening. It is, I realize, the same progression as the *klenengan*, from the most formal or serene music (what one of my teachers calls *sopan*, “polite, respectful”) to the most lively, rhythmic, and excited music. As in the *klenengan*, a variety of musical genres are included, with origins in different social contexts. The main difference is that the range of styles is now much broader, encompassing ambitious non-Javanese, and even non-Indonesian, genres. (There is an Indian song, “Sawan Kama Hina,” sung by *dangdut* singers which has been taken up by Campursari and even given Javanese lyrics (“Mleset Janjiné”). I’m told it sounds best sung after “Sinom Parijatha.”)

Indeed, there is even a new equivalent to the traditional aesthetic shape of a *gendhing*, in which a calm first movement is followed by an excited second movement, often featuring dance drumming. For when a *gamelan* plays *langgam Jawa* now, it often ends by shifting into *dangdut* rhythm.

It is a familiar pattern for the children of musicians to also become musicians, but in a different style or repertory.⁴² As a new generation of musicians replaces the old, are we seeing the end of *karawitan*? Not necessarily; this is not the first time that the children of traditional musicians have become pop singers. R. Ng. Wirawiyaga (“Walidi”), a court musician who died in 1950, saw his daughters become jazz singers. Indeed, *karawitan* has existed for decades alongside *kroncong* and other forms of light or semi-classical music, which may compete with it, but can also serve to recruit new talent for it. Wakijo, one of Solo’s finest *kendhang* players, comes from a musical family, but his father played *kroncong*, not *karawitan*. My teacher of *bawa* (a male vocal solo introduction to *gamelan* compositions) could also sing *kroncong*, and the gongsmith who made Brown University’s *gamelan* played in a *kroncong* band while he was studying *kendhang*. Martopangrawit’s wife was a *pesindhen* who also sang *kroncong*, as were some of the most famous *pesindhen* of later generations (such as Tukinem⁴³). The late Mujiono, formerly director of the Paku Alaman musicians in Yogyakarta, came to *gamelan* through an adolescent interest in the popular *kethoprak* theater.⁴⁴

Ritual Art and the Back-To-Nature Thing

One day a long-haired gentleman approaches me and asks if I know anything about traditional Javanese vegetable dyes. He is Aryo Wisanggeni, a painter who “paints sound.” He is getting into a back-to-Nature thing (*sedang back-to-Nature*) and would like to use natural colors in his painting; unfortunately I can’t help him.

⁴² Ruth Finnegan, *The Hidden Musicians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 310.

⁴³ Susan Walton, “Heavenly Nymphs and Earthly Delights: Javanese Female Singers, Their Music and Their Lives” (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1996), p. 141.

⁴⁴ Jennifer Lindsay, “Klasik Kitsch or Contemporary: A Study of the Javanese Performing Arts” (PhD dissertation, University of Sydney, 1985), p. 225.

He lives in Jakarta, where he most recently taught art at the headquarters of Subud, an international spiritual movement founded by a Javanese mystic, Mohammed Subuh. He talks of "ritual art," a term I first heard in 1994, when the Surakarta Cultural Center sponsored a festival of it. Ritual Art is a term that means different things to different people. Suprpto Suryodarmo, who was one of its earliest promoters, associated it with his own method of movement meditation, but I have also heard it applied to free improvisation and multi-media "happenings." Aryo Wisanggeni gives it an environmentalist slant. When Reason (*akal*) acts on its own (he says), it generates advanced technology to exploit the earth, pulling oil and ores out of it. With Reason and technology we take and take and take from the earth. We need spiritual art to help restore the balance, to give something back to the earth, to help us give thanks for it.

He is working on Teater Jagad, a multimedia project at Gua Tabuhan, a natural wonder in Pacitan. It is a cave with stalactites which, when struck, produce musical tones. For some time the local people have performed on the stalactites with a few *gamelan* instruments as a tourist attraction. Working with Sadra, Wisanggeni has stretched strings between the stalactites to form an enormous natural zither. Musicians will improvise on it as Wisanggeni paints the resulting sounds. He is excited about the improvisational aspect of the piece, the spontaneity of it. He also wants this to be the start of a regular event, staged every full moon, involving the local people. (He's worked in the villages before, with the "naif" people; he likes them because they're pure [*murni*] and their art is honest, unlike commercial, "packaged" art [*seni kemasan*].) His project has been approved by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture, and he hopes this performance will become a major tourist attraction, generating revenue for the community.

Javanese Music Becomes Ethnic Music

When did "ethnicity" come to Indonesia? Interest in the local has of course long been used to counterbalance the overwhelming push toward national unity; even in the 1980s the then-Governor of Central Java, Ismail, promoted a program of regional identity, insisting on a distinctive Central Javanese architectural style. (Whether there had ever been a traditional architectural style common to the entire modern administrative area of Central Java but not shared by the Yogyakarta Special Area, was far from clear to me.) He even commissioned a tune, "Central Javanese Identity," from Nartosabdho.

But in the 1980s the local had not yet become the ethnic. The art and culture of "primitive" groups like the Asmat of Irian Jaya, thought to be especially close to Nature, were valued in the work of environmentally conscious innovators like Sardono, but not necessarily in wider circles. In 1990, there was still some debate over whether the Asmat should be allowed to perform in the USA's Festival of Indonesia. Wouldn't such participation merely exploit their primitiveness (*mengeksploitasikan keprimitifan*) without helping them raise their quality of life and degree of civilization (*peradaban*)?⁴⁵

⁴⁵ "Menjual Kemiskinan, Ekses Lain Pengembangan Pariwisata," *Jayakarta*, November 1, 1990, p. 10.

Now, however, “ethnic” cultures have filtered into popular consciousness. “Ethnic” interior decor—especially a bold, stark, “primitive” look—became noticeable in the 1990s. The toothy, generic-looking mask I saw on a T-shirt at Soto Gading is part of a recognized fashion statement, the “ethnic look” (*gaya dandanan etnik*). A newspaper fashion column tells me the ethnic look is an informal one (*santai*) that is often associated with the sort of person who is concerned about culture and the environment (*peduli dengan budaya dan lingkungan*).⁴⁶

But even more noteworthy is the apparent enlargement of the “ethnic” to include traditional Java. A new T-shirt brand is coming out of Yogyakarta which explicitly labels itself “ethnic.” It has a few “primitive” images of Nias natives leaping over megaliths, but many of the T-shirts depict Java (though often an old, colonial Java, complete with old orthography—the legend of one T-shirt depicting a *kebaya*-clad “Javanese Woman” calls her a “perempoean”). One hilarious T-shirt series features the cartoon character Tin Tin. He is shown wearing formal Javanese court attire (*kejawèn*), or consulting a *dukun*, or appearing in black-and-white snapshots along with colonial-era postcards of “Soerabaja” and “Batavia.”⁴⁷

The Ford Foundation is funding a program to increase the content of traditional music on local radio stations; the Indonesian radio trade journal, *Eksponen*, now has a regular section on “Musik Tradisi,” but most of the articles refer to this music as “etnik.” (The result, as far as I can tell, has so far been to create an Indonesian discursive category comparable to what in America is called World Beat. A review in *Eksponen* of the Smithsonian/Folkways CD of vocal music from Flores uses three of its nine paragraphs to discuss the a cappella tradition in American pop music and its Indonesian imitators.⁴⁸)

Indonesian pop musicians have long experimented with admixtures of traditional music. The most famous early attempt is associated with the name of Guru Sukarnoputra. His early album *Gipsy* included among other things “Chopin Larung,” which combined Balinese *gamelan* riffs and a Balinese vocal text with a Chopin melody.

This sort of syncretism continues, though now explicitly under the “ethnic” rubric. Chrisye has a new, self-titled album incorporating various “ethnic” elements. The song “Kala Cinta Menggoda” uses some *kroncong* instruments and quotes the langgam Jawa “Loro Wuyung.” Other tunes on the album draw on Dayak instruments (“Kalimantan”) or quote Toba Batak or Acehese forms (“Negeriku”).

However, such experiments have always been dwarfed by the “regional pop” (Pop *Daerah*) industry, which for years has produced Popindo-style tunes using local languages. As Yampolsky points out, some varieties of Pop *Daerah* incorporate token musical elements from the appropriate traditional music, but the only effective ethnic

⁴⁶ “Busana etnik dalam kemasan modern,” *Solo Pos*, August 1, 1998, p. 12.

⁴⁷ These T-shirts are undoubtedly aimed at least in part at the tourist market, and it is true that I only rarely saw Indonesians wearing them around Solo. However, the location of the “ethnically” Javanese in a colonial past is, I feel, a nuance much more likely to be meaningful to the Javanese than to foreign tourists.

⁴⁸ “Acapella ala Flores,” *Eksponen* 26,20 (August 1998): 10.

signifier is the language; musically, the local style is overwhelmed by the Popindo style.⁴⁹

Now, however, a different kind of ethnically identified popular music may be emerging, what we might call Rock *Daerah*, or even Metal *Daerah*. It is perhaps still premature to proclaim this as a genre category, but there has been at least one heavy-metal hit sung entirely in Javanese, the Surabaya group Kalingga's "Sumpah Palapa."⁵⁰ The subject—the glories of the knights of the ancient Javanese kingdom of Majapahit—is entirely suitable to heavy metal, and though the musical content of the song fits Yampolsky's framework (there is nothing Javanese about it except for a token appearance of a *Reog Ponorogo* troupe), I find it impossible to think of the local as being dominated by the global in this song. If anything, the local (the Javanese language) may receive a charge of modern, transgressive energy from the power chords and screaming guitar riffs. The shock value of hearing Javanese sung to such a Western-associated genre must be considerable. When I had this song played in a cassette shop, two men contemplating a purchase elsewhere in the store interrupted their conversation to ask the salesclerk what was playing.

Punk Jawa

During my stay in Solo, the biggest musical event in the area is a rock concert in Yogyakarta by the group Slank, which attracts nearly ten thousand fans. Sponsored (like the American band I met in 1997) by the Sampoerna cigarette company, this tour promotes the band's eighth album, *Mata Hati Reformasi*.

Since its first album in 1991, Slank has consistently drawn its themes and language from real life, and its success has led to much emulation. Their sound, like that of many Asian rock groups, sounds oddly eclectic to me, mixing pop, grunge, country, glam rock, heavy metal, and surf punk; the album sounds like a joint effort by Aerosmith, Suicidal Tendencies, Derek and the Dominos, Pink Floyd, Living Colour, the Small Faces, Agent Orange, and Cheap Trick (with a guest appearance by Frank Zappa). The newspaper review of the concert paints a similarly incongruous picture for me: crowds of dreadlocked youths dancing with the characteristic headbanging movement of Heavy Metal fans. It's hard to judge how much of this eclecticism is consciously intended. In "You're Behind the Times" (*Ketinggalan Jaman*) the singer reproaches his girlfriend for her "feudal" attitudes to the tuneful sound of 1960s British pop. But I wonder if all of the musical references are this carefully crafted. Does the difference between punk and glam rock receive the same sort of emotional investments in Indonesia that it has in the West, or are all of the substyles of Rock heard as compatible options, to be mixed and matched as one pleases?

⁴⁹ Philip Yampolsky, "Hati Yang Luka, an Indonesian Hit." *Indonesia* 47 (April 1989): 1-18.

⁵⁰ On one of the underground compilation albums is a bilingual metal song (the lyrics are sung twice, first in Indonesian then in Javanese). The song is also from a Surabaya group, and (insofar as I can decipher the hoarsely shouted lyrics) it tells the story of a young man who falls in love with a Balinese girl whose parents disapprove of him; he tries to cast a magic spell on her, but succeeds only in affecting her dog, which goes crazy.

Slank's keywords, *cinta* (love) and *piss* (peace), suggest to me the ironic 1990s updating of 1960s counterculture themes I know from some recent American popular music. Slank's lyrics have always mixed social commentary with themes of sexual freedom. Their anthem, "Blue Generation," declares "You can't control me . . . I'm not your child, I'm a creation of God." "Feudalism" rails against this "inheritance from the Dutch East India Company." It is therefore hardly surprising that one cover photo on the new album shows the group in front of a fence bearing the words "Pro Reformasi" and a peace symbol.

There is a song about the unfulfilled promises of reform ("Nagih") which compares political transparency to "looking at a girl's see-through blouse." There is a song about the abductions ("Missing Person" [*Trend orang hilang*]) alongside a suggestive love song, "My you-know-what is for you only." One song (number 8 in the Indonesian charts by the time I leave) is about rising prices; it quotes the Indonesian children's song, "Climb, climb the mountain." Another song, a plea for religious tolerance, warns of "intellectuals" trying to exploit popular disturbances to foment anarchy. Amid echoing cries of "Allahu akbar" the lyrics ask whether the violence against the Chinese-Indonesians is really just an explosion of long-suppressed popular resentment. (A note in the lyrics sheet reads "my religion is my religion, your religion is your religion," then apologizes for the schoolmarmish tone.)

Slank, like other rock groups, has been experimenting with Javanese-language lyrics. But their new album carries the "ethnic" trend further, incorporating actual Javanese melodies. The last track, "Punk Jawa," is a grunge version of three traditional Javanese songs, "Cublak-cublak suweng," "Gundul-gundul Pacul," and "Suwé Ora Jamu." I am at a loss to guess what this may mean to Slank's fans, but I find that the new musical context suggests new associations for the tunes. The traditional *gendhing dolanan* "Cublak-cublak suweng," with its cryptic, fragmentary imagery, now sounds as Imagist and lapidary as a classic Talking Heads song. "Suwé Ora Jamu" now sounds like a tuneful tribute to disillusionment, something Kurt Cobain might have written had he lived long enough to discover the *pantun* verse-form:

<i>Suwé ora jamu</i>	It's been a long time with no herbal tonic
<i>Jamu godhong téla</i>	Herbal tonic made from cassava leaf
<i>Suwé ora ketemu</i>	It's been a long time since we met
<i>Ketemu pisan gawé gela</i>	Meeting at last is such a disappointment

A final power chord and spoken thank-you in polite Javanese (*Matur nuwun, inggih*) end the album, and I seem to be left standing as close as I will ever be to the intersection of Dewantara Street and Punk Rock Road.