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Rudy Wiratama

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When Klana and His Mercenaries Sailed to Java: 
The Expression of Otherness in Surakarta Court-Style Wayang Gèdhog Performance

By Rudy Wiratama, Timbul Haryono, and Wisma Nugraha Christiano

Abstract: Wayang gèdhog was a courtly shadow performance involving hide puppets with Panji stories as its repertoire. Javanese traditional chronicles tell us that this form of puppetry has existed since the age of the Walsanga, the semi-legendary “Nine Saints” of Java of the mid-16th century. However, its iconography suggests it is directly connected with older forms of wayang, such as the wayang gambuh in Bali, which is said to have originated from the 14th-century Hindu Majapahit Empire.

The plays of wayang gèdhog mainly depict the romance of the Javanese prince Panji of Janggala and his fiancée Sekartaji from Daha, who seek one another through a series of adventures and disguises. At the end of the story cycles, they are rejoined, bringing prosperity to the island of Java. The couple were believed to be incarnations of Vishnu and Sri, or Sri and Sèdana, mythical figures associated with the cult of universal sustainability, fertility, and harmony.

In contrast with oral Panji tales, the wayang gèdhog version of this narrative was told in an epic way, involving various aspects of Panji as an ideal ancestor (lèluhur) of Javanese kings and nobles. In his heroic adventures, sometimes Panji entered a competition, or even a battle, with Klana, who considered his archenemy. The identity of Klana himself was variable. In some plays, he originated from various countries which are geographically—not mythically—overseas (Sabrang). On his journey to Java, Klana also brought his subjects, the bacingah soldiers who consisted of multiracial mercenaries, depicted in various iconography. This made wayang gèdhog performance more colorful and complicated than its purwa counterpart.

Some questions, though, emerge about this phenomenon. How did the sabrang figures fit into the world of Panji stories and what was their dramatic purpose? How did Javanese actually see “others” through the lens of wayang gèdhog?

Keywords: puppet, representation, race and ethnicity, Surakarta, Java, Panji
The art of puppetry in Indonesia, particularly in Java, has flourished for centuries. Besides the popular Mahabharata and Ramayana-based puppetry known as wayang purwa, there are performances dealing with various repertoires ranging from Semitic narratives (wayang menak, wayang wahyu) to local myths and legends (wayang krucil, wayang madya, wayang gêdhog). Wayang gêdhog mainly refers to a form of shadow puppetry that has Panji stories as its repertoire. Various etymologies are given for gêdhog as the specific name for Panji-themed shadow puppetry in Java. J.A. Wilkens, the Surakarta court’s juru basa (linguist), as cited by Noto Soeroto (1911), stated that the word could be derived from the word gedhogan, which means “stallion” (132–34). This is associated with the names of leading male figures who use the word kuda or jaran (horse) in their jejuluk, or nicknames, such as Panji Kuda Wanengpati, Kuda-Laleyan, or Kuda Rawi Srengga. In contrast, Wilkens also suggested that gêdhog could also derived from dhodhogan, the sound the cempala hammer makes when the puppeteer strikes the surface of the kothak (wayang-chest) to signal the musicians. But since almost all Javanese types of wayang performances use similar cempala-signals, this etymology is doubtful.

Another Dutch scholar, Beuringen van Helsdingen (1913), states that the word gêdhog could come from gedhug, meaning “farthest distance to reach,” since Panji stories deal with temporally distant historical Hindu-Javanese kingdoms such as Janggala, Kadiri, Urawan, or Singhasari (19–28). People from those kingdoms are usually considered by the Javanese as having actually existed, and they take some of those figures, mainly Panji, as their genealogical ancestors (leluhur). The Mahabhara and Ramayana-based figures from wayang purwa were also believed by Javanese to be their leluhur, but different from Panji figures, some Javanese already thought of them as part of dongeng (folktales), while Panji characters are placed as sujarah (historical) actors. Thus, Panji characters are located in a liminal realm between dongeng and sujarah, which Helsdingen classified as gêdhug, or farthest distance of wayang-storytelling. This interpretation was quite plausible until non-court artists created new wayang genres dealing with more recent historical periods up to the contemporary events following the Independence of Indonesia in 1945—Jlitheng

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1 The word wayang means “puppets,” “shadow,” or “reflections” in Javanese, derived from the word ayang-ayang, bayangan, or layangan. There is thus a double understanding of this performing art’s nature. The wayang theater can be defined as a performance that uses shadow figures projected on a screen, or wayang theater can refer to almost all theatrical forms that use any type of figures, ranging from hide shadow puppets (wayang kutil), flat or three-dimensional wooden puppets (wayang krucil, golek, or potehi), masks (wayang topeng) or live actors (wayang wong). All depict allegories or metaphorical epitomes from various textual sources.
Suparman’s *Wayang Kampung Sebelah* even recounts daily events of Indonesian society. Javanese traditional chronicle writers speculated that the word *gêdhog* came from *kedhok*, which means “masks,” since Panji stories were once performed mainly as masked wayang topeng plays before the repertoire transferred to courtly shadow puppetry. Wayang topeng itself was also believed by Javanese to be the work of Sunan Kalijaga, one of Javanese Islamic saints who was said to have lived in the 15th to 17th centuries and is often associated with the establishment of modern wayang purwa puppetry principles (Zarkasi and Adnan 1996, 55).

The presence of wayang gêdhog as a Javanese court art has been documented in traditional sources such as *Serat Centhini* of Amengkunagara I (later Pakubuwana V) and minor babads (chronicles). For example, *Babad Pangeran Panjang Mas* recounts the life of Pangeran Panjang Mas (the first Mataram court-writer), his son-in-law *dhalang* (puppeteer) Ki Anjang Mas, and their puppeteer family. Though it was said that wayang gêdhog was invented by the saint Sunan Giri during his short reign as ruler of Demak in 1485 AJ (1563 CE), Javanese writers stated that wayang gêdhog developed as a court art in the era of Mataram, during the reign of Senapati (1586–1601 CE) (Sajid 1981, 15–19). In the time of Sultan Agung (r. 1613–46 CE), wayang gêdhog’s development intensified. It was said that Sultan Agung even had his own wayang gêdhog puppeteer, named in the chronicles as Ki Wayah (*wayah* means “grandson”). This was Panjang Mas’s grandson from the marriage between his daughter, Retna Juwita, with the puppeteer Ki Lebdajiwa or Anjang Mas from the Kedu region in central Java (Reditanaja 1971, 70). After the Mataram era ended in 1677, the succeeding Javanese courts in Kartasura, Surakarta, and Yogyakarta each developed their own styles of wayang gêdhog according to the contemporary zeitgeist. After the long period of transformation and cultivation, wayang gêdhog puppetry settled into existence as an independent genre of performance. The significant differences with the much more popular wayang purwa included a) enacting Panji-based stories, b) using *pelog* tuning for the accompanying *gamelan* musical ensemble, instead of *slendro*, c) erotic and local heroic themes instead of mythological epitomes, and d) the presence of “real-world” entities such as the kingdoms of Java or Jawa (represented by Panji and his subjects) and overseas or Sabrang countries (represented by Klana and his allies).

**The Concepts of Jawa and Sabrang in the Wayang Purwa and Gêdhog Universes**

Panji stories recount the romance of Panji, prince of Koripan, with his cousin and lover, Raden Galuh (later called Candrakirana or Sekarta) from Daha. The Panji literature evolved around the 15th and 16th centuries when heroic episodes that cast Panji as a conqueror and war
champion “mythologized” the character. Originally, Panji stories were intended to be completed in a single episode, emphasizing the extravagant semi-fictitious court life based on the contemporary imagining of the East Javanese kingdoms’ glory (Robson 1971, 11–12). In later times, many Panji tales composed in post-Majapahit Java take on the structure of an epic or story cycle. Examples include Serat Kandha and classic Javanese Panji texts from the 17th to 19th centuries. In this stage of development, Panji texts often recount the heroic deeds of Panji in protecting Java from Sabrang, or non-Javanese enemies, and also his later life as a King of Jenggala/Koripan. Panji was depicted in wayang gêdhog and other artistic forms as a historical progenitor of Javanese kings. Some prominent nobles of Java, for example, Mangkunagara I in his official babad (dynastic history), which he commissioned in 1771 AD, even figured Panji of Jenggala as one of their ancestors (Ricklefs 2018, 247).

Besides the main theme of pakumpulan, or reunion, between Panji and Candrakirana as the incarnations of Wisnu (or in some texts: Sêdana) and Sri as the manifestations of the fertility cult that dominated the world of the ancient Javanese kingdoms’ cosmology, the lakon (stories) of wayang gêdhog also deal with interactions between Java and its surroundings, specifically encounters between Jawa characters and their Sabrang counterparts. Such scenes are to be found in almost all of its performances. In wayang purwa, the term Jawa (the Javanese) refers to almost all characters of the protagonist’s side, despite their Indian origins: Pandhawas, Kresna and his Yadawa tribe, or the other kings and nobles from Mahabharata are all Jawa. Meanwhile, “Sabrang” commonly referred to the antagonist party. (In Javanese, one asks “sabrangane ngendi?” or “where is the opposite?” or “sabrangane sapa?” “who is the ‘enemy’?“). The word “sabrang” in Javanese is polysemic: It can refer to both geographical (literally meaning “overseas”) and dramatic contexts. The Sabrang–Jawa dichotomy is deeply rooted in the wayang universe. Some major characters of the Mahabharata like Bhoma and Jarasandha are regarded as Sabrang, depending on the lakon. Some demon kings, though they reside in mythological “Java,” such as Niwatakawaca or Kurandageni, also are treated as Sabrang since they represent inhuman forces and play the role of natural enemies for “Javanese” or mankind. Other types of Sabrang characters occasionally appear in wayang purwa, but mainly as a form of malihan (disguise) of a missing major character, or as a srayan (ally) of central antagonists, such as the Kurawas in the Mahabharata, or as disciples of the goddess Durga, such as Dewasrani or Dewa Hiramba.
The conceptualization of Sabrang and Jawa in wayang purwa is a symbolic binary relationship akin to Pandhawa and Kurawa; human and demon; dharma and adharma. This fits with the Javanese belief of dualistic monism as described by Noorsena (2005, 141). The Javanese believe in an eternal encounter between two opposing forces that causes the universal life to run well. Neither of these forces can be annihilated. They can only change from time to time since they are the essence of the universe. Thus, the Javanese see that the climax of their struggles lies in the concept of balance and harmony (selaras), which is an ideal condition of everything in their paradigm. This is the basic concept that influences the wayang purwa universe, so the shadow performances with Indian Mahabharata or Ramayana repertoires were not considered literally as epic retellings by the Javanese, but rather as recountings of symbolic events, which could be used by the wayang spectators as life guidance (tuntunan agesang), as ancient Greek drama audiences attended performances to get their catharsis (Peursen 1976, 58).

In wayang gêdhog, however, the term “Sabrang” not only refers to an “opposite” sense, as in wayang purwa, but also has its own political, cultural, and geographical contexts. Sabrang roles in wayang gêdhog are mainly played by Klana and his subjects who arrive from various geographical Sabrang kingdoms such as Makassar in the Celebes, Manila in the Philippines, Pattani in Thailand, Bangkahulu in Sumatra, Wandhan (Banda) in the Moluccas, or even from remote Ngatasangin and Bantarangin (“Above” and “Below the Wind” countries, which refer to continental Asian regions). Unlike in wayang purwa, which adheres to a strict dichotomy between Sabrang and Jawa, there are some Sabrang figures that might be classified as part of the “right” or “protagonist” party, with a marital, genealogical, or political bound with Panji, the main hero of wayang gêdhog. These include the half-Papuan Brajanata or Kartala, Panji’s sibling; Kudanadpada, Panji’s Balinese brother-in-law; and Prabu Daneswara of Jambi, Panji’s Sumatran father-in-law. Even Panji and his companions often position themselves as Sabrang if necessary: In the lakon Kudasumarma, Panji serves the king of Ngurawan with the pseudonym Kudasumarma, purporting to be the son of a Dayak chief; in another lakon, Panji and Wirun are installed as a Sumatran king and his vizier, named Dhadhapwisesa and Dhadhapkerta.

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2 Roovink (1967) states that the term di bawah angin, a Malay rendering of Persian term zir bad, is often used in Malay annals as the epithet of the foreign countries at the farthest reach of civilization, also known as Hujung Tanah or “Land’s End” (oriented to the “southern” hemisphere, since the Malay and Persian world is located on the “north”). But on the other side, the Javanese believe that the word Atas-Angin also has the same meaning, which refers to the world in the “northern” hemisphere. Both Ngatas-angin and Bantar-angin occurred in wayang gêdhog as the realms of Klana figures.
Despite the various positions of Sabrang figures in the wayang gedhog universe, the role of the main antagonist of Panji in literary and performance worlds is generally played by Klana, a passionate, flamboyant, and lustful man who desires Sekartaji as his consort. The word Klana has various meanings, such as “evil, false, villain, demon” (Robson-Zoetmulder 1982); “talkative” (Ranggawarsita 1904); “wanderer” (Poerwadarminta 1943); or “demon; thief” (Winter 1928). Those definitions are explicitly opposed to the main characteristics of Panji as an ideal prototype of a Javanese main hero—calm, elegant, and refined in nature. Klana is the archenemy of Panji and also his antithesis.

Klana and his subjects not only aim for Sekartaji’s hand but also contribute to Java’s disharmony by kidnapping her and taking her hostage in his overseas palace, or even casting a spell on her so the princess becomes seriously ill. At the end of a given play, Klana is always killed by Panji. But in some plays, he is resurrected with another name, form, kingdom, or plan, though his eternal desire for Sekartaji remains. Therefore, we can see Klana as an important part of the Panji universe of wayang gedhog, where he acts as the deus ex machina who puts Panji’s true love for Sekartaji on trial.

Traditionally, Klana was considered a “wanderer king” who came to Java along with his multiracial allies to seek marriage with Sekartaji. Some other opinions see that the real aim of his plan is to usurp the throne of Javanese kingdoms. His subjects consist of the group of mercenaries, commonly known as Bala Bugis, the Buginese Troops, nominally from Sulawesi. But practically in wayang gedhog plays, Klana’s troops might originate from various geographical contexts, from continental Asia to the eastern Indonesian Archipelago. Many speculations arise about who the historical Klana was. There are various answers, from a satire of Majapahit’s enemies, an epithet of Raden Patah (the first Muslim king of Java), to the rebel Trunajaya, Pangeran Adipati Anom, or some other historical figures. In the end, the omnipresence of Klana, along with Panji, in all wayang gedhog plays also provides a deeper meaning that he is also considered as an alter-ego of Panji. Both of them are present in a Javanese traditional view of dualistic monism self-conception, combined with tasawuf themes of mystical Islam (Suanda 2014, 138–39).

Klana and his Sabrang subjects’ iconography developed between the late 18th to the early 20th century in wayang gedhog. Each represented the continuity and change of the Sabrang concept.

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1 For further information, see Pigeaud (1938, 79).
in Javanese culture. The iconographic development and change of Klana and Sabrang characters in wayang gêdhog is explained below.

**The Iconography of Klana and Sabrang Characters in Wayang Gêdhog**

Although Javanese chronicle writers recounted that wayang gêdhog, as a form of buffalo hide puppetry, began to flourish in courtly Java in the mid-16th century, little evidence has survived. Puppets are made from organic material that is not long-lasting, and there was little chance of it surviving the political turbulence of Java in the 17th and 18th centuries. There are some wooden bas-reliefs showing the form of “modern” wayang gêdhog figures (with stylized and elongated limbs, face, and body) from the end of the 16th century, such as those in Rondole (Pati, Central Java) or Keraton Kanoman, Cirebon. The latter is dated traditionally with the chronogram *kemangmang bumi pandawa candra*, “the flames of earth [and] the form of Pandawa [which is an epithet of stylized wayang form]” or 1515 Caka/1593 CE. Unfortunately, none of them shows a clear sign of Klana’s presence, only depicting Panji, a woman (his lover Sekartaji), or some male and female jesters (*panakawan*). The identity of a *gagah* (bold warrior) figure in the Rondole bas-relief is still uncertain.

The oldest courtly Javanese wayang gêdhog set that has survived might be the collection of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles in the British Museum. According to some *dhalang* (puppeteers) in Java, this collection can be identified as “wayang gêdhog Kartasura,” referring to an era when the Mataram kingdoms’ capital was based in this part of Central Java (1680–1742 CE). The main characteristic of Kartasura-style wayang gêdhog was its *bedhahan* (physiognomy), which combined the face of wayang purwa puppets with features of *topeng* (masks). It is said in *Serat Sastramiruda* that in the year 1656 AJ (*Anno Javanico*) or 1731 CE, Pakubuwana II (who still reigned in Kartasura before the fall of this capital city) instructed the puppet makers to redesign wayang gêdhog’s faces to imitate wayang purwa fully to distinguish them from the characteristics of topeng’s physiognomy (Kusumadilaga n.d., 20–21). Thus, the set of Raffles’s collection may have come from pre-1731 era. This is conjecture, as there is no year data on these figures’ *palemahan* (the strip of hide connecting the feet of the wayang puppet, which sometimes contains Javanese inscriptions about

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4 The choice to read the sentence *pandawa candra* as “the form of Pandawa” in terms of wayang-styled figures was caused by the reality that there was any depiction of an explicit Pandawa figures in this bas-relief, but instead of that, the relief bore the stylized figure of *tekes*-haired male. This leads to our assumption of a *Panji*-story figure, along with his lover (*Galuh*), each accompanied by two male and female servants resembling the form Bancak-Dhoyok, Limbuk, and Cangik. The *kemangmang bumi* (flame of earth) is itself shown by the depiction of two *singabarongs* with wings and fiery tails in the bottom side of the bas-relief.
the identity of the puppet). In this set, there is only one Klana puppet. This takes the form of a 
gagah gusen (strong figure with opened mouth) figure, named Klana Tunjung Seta (see Figure 1).
This version of Klana normally comes along with particular Sabrang officers, who are described as
having “animal faces” (see Figure 2). However, the Sabrang officers from Raffles’s set wear
common Javanese punggawa (courtier) attire, but with Balinese keris to depict their Sabrang-ness
(see Figure 3).

![Figure 1](image1.png)

Figure 1. (2012). Klana Tunjung Seta from the British Museum (coll. As1859, 1228.640), with the extravagant attire and gagahan gusen type of character, which symbolizes a dynamic, lustful, and antagonistic nature. Photo courtesy of the British Museum.
Figure 2. (2012). The physiognomic detail of a Sabrang officer “with animal face” (coll. As1859, 1228.533). Photo courtesy of the British Museum.

Figure 3. (2012). The detail of Balinese keris worn by Sabrang officer “with animal face” (coll. As1859, 1228.533). Photo courtesy of the British Museum.
It is interesting that the former curators, whether from their own impressions or Raffles’s notes provided by his Javanese informants, noted that the Sabrang officer’s face’s unique characteristic came from animal features. The Javanese today would say that those unusual features (strong jawlines, wide and flat nose, bulbous eyes) are kalawijan (peculiar type), not as belonging to an animal. In our opinion, in the era of Raffles’s presence from 1811 to 1816, there was still a trend of alienation that saw the non-Javanese entities as “inhuman forces” given their role in the fall of Plered, the Succession War, and even the fall of Kartasura—known today by the term Geger Pacinan (“the Chinese Turmoil,” even though many ethnic groups were involved). On the other side, Raffles might be influenced with his occidental paradigm, viewing non-Javanese people as “less-civilized” or “pagan” since the contact with them were less intensive and those lands were still considered as terra nostra, or unknown, uncertain realms.

In the era of Surakarta, beginning in the reign of Pakubuwana IV (1788–1820 CE), the depiction of Klana and his Sabrang officers changed. Klana was designed with two wandas: the “ancient” one with a gusen mouth and “the new one” with a closed mouth, named as Klana Bagus (“the handsome Klana”) (see Figure 4). This king also commissioned a much smaller figure of Klana that resembled refined types like Samba or Narayana characters in wayang purwa. This new figure was known as Klana Nom (“the younger Klana”) and functioned as Klana’s aide-de-camp. The Sabrang troops were dressed in baju kurung (long-sleeve shirts) and udheng (headcloths), emphasizing their non-Javanese origin, particularly depicting those from Makassarese and Buginese ethnic groups (see Figure 5). Hence, the Sabrang officer figures also were named as Bala Bugis (“Buginese Soldiers”) in courtly Javanese wayang gedhog collections. Even though the events involving Buginese and Makassarese warriors and adventurers were 150 years in the past, echoes of their brute strength, martial arts mastery, and agility, which had overwhelmed Javanese warlords, remained. In the wayang gedhog universe where demons and giants are not present anymore, the Bala Bugis replace their roles. Unlike in wayang purwa, where the demon party always loses in the perang gagal (first battle scene), the Bala Bugis in wayang gedhog often forces the Javanese party (Bala Jawa) to retreat, before the “real” Javanese hero, Panji, comes to the scene and defeats them in a perang kembang (second battle scene or “flower battle”), before he faces his ultimate archenemy, Klana himself.

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1 See the description of the British Museum’s wayang gedhog with the identification number As1859.1228.533, in https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_As1859-1228-533.
Representing Alterity through Puppetry and Performing Objects

Figure 4. (2020). Klana Bagus (the handsome Klana), became popular in Surakarta courtly wayang g̣lehọ after the reign of Pakubuwana IV (1788–1820 CE). Collection of Museum Radyapustaka, Surakarta. Photo by Ignatius Hari Purnama.
In the larger sets of wayang gêdhog, the Sabrang figures did not come only from Buginese and Makassarese origin. There are some figures with vests, *kamen-saput* (Balinese double sarong) and *kadutan* (Balinese *keris*). These puppets are usually used as Balinese soldiers in the story of *Bedhahing Bali* (the Conquest of Bali). Surprisingly, even though Balinese noblemen considered themselves to be the descendants of Javanese Majapahit royalties, almost all Balinese officer figures are still depicted with *kalawijan* faces (see Figure 6).
There are some exceptions to this phenomenon: The figures of Balinese kings, nobles, and princesses, often wore Javanese attire with “noble” type faces. An interesting specimen comes from the collection of Köln University (Germany), which shows a noble *ksatria* (knight) with *alus* (refined, handsome) type of figure with Javanese *tekes* headdress but wearing Balinese attire at the same time. Referring to *Serat Panji Jayakusuma*, which recounted the siege of Bali by Panji and his followers, this figure could be quickly identified as Kudanadpada through its iconography. Kudanadpada was one of Panji’s brothers-in-law and companions who was also a Balinese prince (see Figure 7). This figure attracted more attention because it shows another way in which Javanese
view otherness. While many puppets show foreigners as almost totally hostile, this figure shows a gradual acceptance of the presence of others as companions, family members, or allies. After the fall of Blambangan in the 18th century, it seems that the conflict between Javanese and Balinese dynasties slowly decreased as the Dutch control of both regions became much stronger, causing major losses in military and political power. In this situation, the stigma of “eternal enmity” faded, and the need for an alliance against the Dutch became more significant. The acceptance of the Balinese as a loyal ally for Mataram nobles can be found in some chronicles. One of the notable figures in this context was Untung Surapati who started a rebellion against the VOC by killing Captain François Tack in the town square of Kartasura. The reputation of Balinese as loyal allies remained until the Surakarta era, when a Balinese man was appointed as a senapati (commander-in-chief) during the reign of Pakubuwana IV. There is a Balinese settlement in Surakarta that has survived until the present located in the north of Keraton Kasunanan court, named Kebalen. Due to the massive assimilation with the Javanese, however, signs of Balinese presence in Kebalen have all but disappeared.
Besides the Celebes and Balinese Sabrang, there are also “double-minority” Sabrang figures, which refer to their ethnic groups and religious affiliation. In the Surakarta style of wayang gedhog, there are some figures with dark complexions, curly hair, strong jawlines, and thick beards called Bala Wandhan (Banda soldiers) or Ambon (Ambonese), such as Rengganisura and his companions. Rengganisura is often depicted with European military attire, such as high boots, a long sword, and, in some wayang from the Keraton collection, sporting a gun (see Figure 8). In the Sonobudoyo
collection, there are also figures of Wandhan or Ambon soldiers bearing the name Hendriyas (Andreas) and Hendrikus (Henry), showing their affiliation to Christianity (see Figure 9). In the context of the Javanese Muslim court, Christians of the Archipelago were still considered the same as the Dutch—the antithesis of Islam and Majapahit-descended “Javanese.” The Ambonese Dutch soldiers themselves are often called, like the African legion of the KNIL, Landa Ireng (“Black Dutch”). This refers both to their physical appearance and their Dutch-like attire and behavior. They resist assimilating to the local culture. In older Panji narratives, the presence of Wandhan people is often associated with Dutch and Christianity. But in late 19th century depictions, there was also a half-Wandhan descendant who entered the courtly environment and Java and was accepted as part of the nobility. His name is Kalang or Kartala, and he has physical features resembling Bhima from the Mahabharata and plays the role of the strongman in the universe of Panji tales. In the court wayang gêdhog of Surakarta, the figure of Kartala was depicted with noble features of Bhima, but his black complexion remains as the signifier of his Sabrang-ness. In an older figure commissioned by the Keraton from Madura in the early 19th century, secondary features such as reddish curly hair and red, bulbous eyes emphasized his Wandhan nature, though it was “domesticated” in the Javanese court context, indicated by his all-Javanese knightly attire (see Figure 10).
Figure 8. (2020). Rengganisura, a Wandhan commander of Klana. A copy of Mangkunegaran-styled wayang gedhog, collection of Ki Bambang Suwarno, Surakarta. Photo by Rudy Wiratama.
Figure 10. (2010). Kartala, one of Panji’s companion and half-brother, is of Wundhan descent from his maternal lineage. Note the physical features that emphasize his non-Javanese nature. A Madurese wayang gêdhog puppet from the time of Pakubuwana IV (1788–1820 CE). Collection of Museum Radyapustaka Surakarta. Photo by Rudy Wiratama.

In more recent times, under the reign of Pakubuwana X (1893–1939 CE), there were some developments in Sabrang figures in wayang gêdhog sets. One of them was the depiction of King Rama V from Siam and his subjects, who were depicted in noble Javanese attire. The wayang gêdhog story that recounts their appearance in performance is still unknown, but these figures are kept in the set of Kyai Sriwibawa (The Venerated Charismatic King—a rendered title of Pakubuwana X), which he commissioned at the peak of his golden age. The “Commoner Sabrang” also appeared as cameos, such as figures of Arabic clergymen, Dutch officers, or a Chinese food-seller. These figures emerged as a social reality in cosmopolitan 20th-century Surakarta. Those phenomena
indicated changes in Javanese court society: from a hostile and unfriendly realm to a much more open-minded, cosmopolitan environment in the middle of a globalizing world.

**Conclusion: Has Wayang Gêdhog Tended to be a Racist (and Chauvinist) Performance Form?**

Even though many Sabrang characters play antagonistic roles in wayang gêdhog stories, there are some exceptions: Sabrang entities are also “accepted” by the Javanese in marital, genealogical, and political bonds formed between them and the main hero, Prince Panji. This phenomenon leads to the classification of *Sabrang tengen* (“right” Sabrang) and *Sabrang kiwa* (“left” or “bad” Sabrang). This is different from the mythological wayang purwa world that sees Sabrang entities as an all-evil party who threaten “Javanese” satriya characters. In other words, the treatment of Sabrang in wayang gêdhog may vary—it is not as absolute as in wayang purwa. But we cannot deny that wayang gêdhog developed in the 17th through 19th centuries in a Javanese monarchy context. In those times, the search for supremacy was encouraged by cultural means such as literature and performance. The Sabrang as “Others” or non-Javanese entities are often considered as a threat, enemy, or ally. The Javanese, through wayang gêdhog, desire to express their *nyakrawati baudhendha* (superior position) by placing Panji and his descendants as the main protagonists. Even the sabrang figures on Panji’s side are always depicted as “second-rank” heroes.

In the wayang gêdhog universe, the *Sabrang and Jawa* classification is not only treated in a cosmological way, but also consists of many extra-performance aspects such as allusions to history, social aspects, and politics, which made the theme of wayang gêdhog more complex. Different from the wayang purwa universe that places Sabrang figures exclusively as a threat to harmony and stability, wayang gêdhog allows Sabrang figures to be protagonists or antagonists, reflecting the response of the Javanese facing the “early wave of globalization” that happened during the post-Majapahit era. The perception of the Sabrang and Jawa concept developed at this time, giving a broader place for wayang gêdhog audiences to rethink and recontextualize their concept of self and other in this post-globalized world.
References


About the Authors

**Rudy Wiratama** was born in Surakarta on August 31, 1990. He is a lecturer in Javanese Art and Culture in the Javanese Literature Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta. He is also a traditionally trained Surakarta-style based puppeteer (*dhalang*) who performs *wayang purwa, madya, gedhog, krucil* and *dupara* under the guidance of leading puppet masters, mainly Ki Bambang Suwarno of the conservatoire ISI Surakarta and Ki Hali Jarwosularso of PDMN (the Mangkunegaran royal court’s school). Outside campus, he was also appointed as the secretary of PEPADI (Persatuan Pedalangan Indonesia) for the city of Surakarta and a member of the Literature Committee in Dewan Kesenian Surakarta (Surakarta Art Council). Besides being a *dhalang*, he has written a number of books and journal and magazine articles about wayang gedhog and other genres of shadow puppetry. He has also been involved in a team initiating the creation of the new shadow puppet form *Wayang Gajah Mada* since 2017.

**Timbul Haryono** was born in Klaten on October 14, 1944. He is a professor in Archaeology specializing in metallurgy and traditional art subjects in Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta. Aside of his academic role, Haryono also appointed as a consultant of the Ramayana Ballet in Prambanan Temple and an advisor for Unit Kesenian Jawa Gaya Surakarta (Surakartanese Style Javanese Arts Unit) in Universitas Gadjah Mada. He has a great interest in Surakartanese style Javanese performing arts, mainly in *pedhalangan* (puppetry), *karawitan* (gamelan music), and dance. He was also appointed as an elder member (*sesepuh*) of Dewan Kesenian Klaten (the Art Council of Klaten Regency, Central Java) while also giving lectures in some state and private universities. Now currently works in Pengkajian Seni Pertunjukan dan Seni Rupa (Visual and Performing Art Studies) in the Graduate School of Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta.

**Wisma Nugraha Christianto** was born in Surabaya in 1961. He teaches in the Javanese Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, as well as in Pengkajian Seni Pertunjukan dan Seni Rupa (Visual and Performing Art Studies) in Graduate School of Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta. He graduated with a Baccalaureate in the Faculty of Letters and Culture of UGM in 1983, then graduated in 1986, then completed postgraduate in the Indonesian and Javanese Literature Study Program at the Faculty of Letters, UGM (1998), and finished his doctoral study in the Performing Arts and Fine Arts Study Program, UGM (2013). Some of his writings include: “Percantrikan Dalang Wayang Kulit Purwa Tradisi Jawatimuran” in *Seni dalam Dimensi Bentuk, Ruang, dan Waktu*, 2009 and a book chapter entitled “Pusaka, Tokoh, dan Lakon Pergelaran Wayang Jekdong” in *Kreativitas Minda Melayu-Jawa dalam Khasanah Bahasa, Sastera dan Budaya, Institut Alam dan Tamadun Malayu* (ATMA) Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2010.