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KEELER, WARD. *Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987. Xv+282 pages. Black and white plates, illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$37.50, ISBN 0-691-09425-X; Paper US\$17.25, ISBN 0-691-02836-2.

Wayang kulit or simply *wayang*, which means "shadow play" and at the same time puppets made of the leather of water buffaloes, is one of the most popular art forms in Java. *Wayang* means shadow and *kulit* means leather. The revered ancestors of Javanese *wayang* stories are the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, the great epics of ancient India. They have been developed and brewed in, or adapted to, the peculiar Javanese culture for hundreds of years. In addition to so-called *lakon pokok* or principal plots that relate events in the two epics, now Javanese people have a great many so-called second plots which have been created by many of the *dhalang* or puppeteers. During the performance, which usually lasts about eight or nine hours from evening until early next morning, some hundreds of puppets are manipulated by only a single *dhalang*. The *dhalang* is also responsible for making up the plot, and then for narrating the story, reciting the verses, and talking for the puppets. He also leads his *gamelan* or orchestra musicians including *pesindhen* or female vocalists.

Why does the *wayang kulit* enchant so many Javanese? This question may be directed more specifically to the *dhalang* himself as he is the center of the performance. The author writes in the conclusion as follows: "The peculiar fascination of the *dhalang* in Javanese culture stems from this fact: that he is at once a dissembled authority, one whose power is great, non-coercive, and unworldly, and a dissembled interpreter, one who mediates between an unreal but persuasive, and distracting world, and our own" (268). In the sentences just cited the word "dissembled" appears two times. This is one of the key words of the book. The author frequently uses terms such as "dissembled self," "dissembled center," and "dissembled authority" together with the adjective "dissimulated."

During the performance all those things and beings that relate to the *dhalang* such as plot, puppets, *gamelan* musicians, sponsor, sponsor's guests and neighbors, and even spirits are brought under his authority. Although the outline of the plot is determined conventionally, the details are left to him to create at his own will. Puppets are made to talk, sing, dance, and fight as if directed by the *dhalang*. The *dhalang* is authoritative in the eyes of the sponsor and his guests and neighbors because he is believed to grant them spiritual benefit.

Keeler's attempt to understand a performance as a relationship, and to look for similar features that that relationship implies in other social domains, is very unique. In fact, such kind of authoritative relationship can be observed repeatedly between a father and his sons, a village headman and his villagers, a *dhukun* (a magical specialist) and his patients, and a king and his subjects. Authority stems from *kekuwatan batin*,

or spiritual potency, according to Javanese belief. One can acquire this spiritual potency through rigorous ascetism which requires the suppression of one's desire or one's identity. This inclination of self denial apparently relates to the notion of being "dissembled." One can also be granted such spiritual potency by magical specialists, *wong tuwa* or persons thought to have great wisdom or spiritual power, and spirits. One may expect it from the *keris* or daggers, jewels, and pigeons, which are also believed to possess magical potency. Although the author does not refer to this belief, spiritual potency is distinguished from power which appears in the form of physical strength, material wealth, and formal political authority.

What the author seeks to show in this book is that the authoritative figures present themselves in, and then preserve their potency by, that "dissembled" or self-effacing way.

This is a magnificent and unique monograph which properly describes an important aspect of Javanese society. Upon reading this book I was deeply impressed by the diversity of Javanese society. A village in the *kabupaten* (regency) of Sleman in the Special Region of Yogyakarta where I conducted field research in 1977-1979 is not so far from Karanganom, the author's village. In spite of their proximity, people of my village seemed more secular and rational than those of Karanganom. I suspect that the difference comes from their peculiar historical backgrounds; Karanganom belongs to the culture area of Solo whereas my village belongs to that of Yogyakarta. The other characteristic of each village is in the different personalities of the *tokoh*, or figures of the two villages, who were very influential in their communities. In my village there was neither *dhalang* nor *dhukun*. Instead there were two retired elementary school principals, a middle school teacher, and a petit entrepreneur, whose ways of thinking and behavior were rather realistic, "scientific" and even materialistic. For example, one of them once told me that he did not intend to hold any of the many kinds of *kendhuri* or ritual feasts because he found them without effect. The petit entrepreneur indeed frequently did not present himself at neighbors' ritual feasts, but instead sent a male relative as his agent, because he felt that to join in was a waste of time and unprofitable, even though to present himself at the ritual was his obligation as a head of a household. In other words, they attempted to accumulate power or to enlarge their own "self-sphere" (my word) directly through their own secular activity rather than indirectly, that is, through acquiring potency, as the author describes it in the book. To such a realistic villagers' community, another method must be applied in order to clarify their underlying assumptions as I have attempted to show elsewhere (see SOMEYA 1982, 1984).

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