

Wayang Tantri in Bali

“Inventing” Tradition in a Changing World

In this paper, **Jennifer Goodlander** draws on her experience of learning and performing *wayang tantri* to examine it as an example of the kind of “invented tradition” that has appeared in response to various changes in Balinese society.

Traditions, such as *wayang kulit* (shadow puppetry), provide powerful anchors for Balinese cultural identity in a rapidly changing modern world because of their perceived permanency. However, it has also been observed that traditions are constantly transforming in order to adapt to changing societies, even as they appear static. *Wayang tantri*, which features animal puppets, is an example of this kind of innovation. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger assert that such “invented traditions” are especially prevalent during times of rapid social change as a means to promote social cohesion, legitimize hierarchy, and promote certain beliefs or value systems.

“*Wayang tantri* must be different [to] other kinds of *wayang*, so that the audience clearly knows what you are doing. If the voices and action are the same, the audience will just think it is a story from the *Mahabharata*. The audience needs to understand that the puppets and the story are different, so that they will think ‘oh, it is the Tantri story. That is a special story that uses animals.’” – I Wayan Tunjung

The term “tradition” suggests an object or practice has come, unchanged, from some mythical past into the present. *Wayang kulit*, or shadow puppetry, is often considered one of the oldest and most important performance traditions in Bali. The performance features flat, two-dimensional puppets, made out of carved leather that are manipulated against a screen by a single puppeteer, and is an integral and entertaining part of a ceremony or ritual. The *dalang*, or puppeteer, is the central figure in this performance genre and is revered in Balinese society as a teacher and spiritual leader. The primary story sources are the Hindu epics of *The Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, and the method of performance has been handed down from teacher to student for generations. *Wayang tantri*, a new genre of shadow puppetry, which features animal puppets, complicates the idea of “tradition” because difference and innovation is what makes it popular with both Balinese and international audiences. The dynamic puppets and new story material are performed not only at temple ceremonies, but also recorded and available on DVDs and cassette tapes, making the performances widespread (sometimes *wayang tantri* performances are broadcast on television). *Wayang tantri* seems to stand in contradiction to the idea of *wayang kulit* as a traditional art form in Bali – a categorization that denies it change. How might *wayang tantri* be understood as “tradition” in Balinese society and what is the relationship, therefore, between tradition and innovation?

Traditional arts and culture in Bali are noted for their resilience and adaptability in spite of the many outside pressures such as tourism and global modernism. Unlike many others who seem to be in danger of losing their traditional art forms, the Balinese “have been readily praised for their ability to borrow whatever foreign influence suits them while nevertheless maintaining their identity over the centuries” (Picard, 1990, p.37). Much of this research focuses on Balinese cultural performance as reaction to and in relation with the large influx of tourists and other foreigners who have visited or moved to the island in the

last century or so.¹ Others, such as Philip Yampolsky, a prominent ethnomusicologist, complain that tourism is but one of a number of forces, including “television, the cassette industry, and, above all, the cultural policies of the Indonesian government” that are working together to impoverish regional arts around Indonesia (1995, p. 700). Against these two narratives of traditional arts versus innovations that will impoverish these traditions, emerges a third voice, which argues that innovation is necessary to the endurance and well-being of those very traditions. Balinese artist and scholar I Made Bandem advocates: “It is high time that Bali moved forward from simply revitalizing its arts and culture to also inventing contemporary creations” (Bali Daily, 2012). In the same interview, Bandem explains that maintaining the spiritual integrity of Balinese performance must be a primary concern while also exploring new creations that balance local, national, and global influences. *Wayang kulit* provides a useful case to examine the role of the many different influences on traditional performance in Bali within the context of Bandem’s “preservation with innovation.”

The idea that traditions change in response to social and political influences is not new. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger name these kind of innovations as “invented traditions” and note that they are accepted uncritically by the society as “traditions,” which reflect that society’s changing social and religious values while providing a key marker of identity in relation to others. Matthew Issac Cohen, writing about contemporary *wayang*, concludes that local artists in Bali were, and are, too embedded within their traditions to make *wayang* a “modern” art form that speaks to a contemporary audience, both during the colonial period in Indonesia and beyond (2007, p. 340). Cohen worries that the once great “diversity in local artistic life is threatened by corporate-driven culture and the standardization of artistic traditions by government agencies, educational institutions, media bodies, professional associations

¹ For more on this, see Picard (1990), Howe (2005), or Vickers (1989).

and diverse market forces” (2007, p. 339). These same forces can also foster creativity and provide an environment that allows for new forms such as *wayang tantri* to thrive alongside the established traditions – thus resulting in an increase of diversity. Even though *wayang tantri* is not an “invented tradition” per se, I find Hobsbawm and Ranger’s language useful because it speaks to how new or changing traditions, such as *wayang tantri*, are prevalent during times of rapid social change as a means of legitimizing hierarchy, and promoting social cohesion and certain beliefs or value systems (Hobsbawm 1983, p. 1). Through an examination of *wayang tantri* as “invented tradition” I hope to open up a dialogue about what tradition means and how it functions within a Balinese context that might prove useful in understanding tradition and change within Southeast Asian performing arts more generally. First I will give a brief overview of the discourse on tradition and the arts within an Indonesian and Balinese context, which will provide a basis for understanding how the arts have been used as both a political and social force. Next I will examine the origins of *wayang tantri* and provide parameters for understanding it as invented tradition within the larger practice of *wayang kulit*. Then I will analyze my own experience learning *wayang tantri* and the story I performed in order to demonstrate how *wayang tantri* functions as a contemporary, or invented tradition.

Situating Tradition: Bali and Indonesia

The idea of “tradition” is key for understanding the relationships between arts and culture in Bali and the greater Indonesian nation in both the historical and present moment. In this paper, I use the term tradition to designate objects and practices that are given a special status within Balinese culture because of their perceived authentic connection to the past. Traditions form the backbone of Indonesia’s motto “unity in diversity” or what Benedict Anderson describes as the “imagined community” of the nation (2006, p. 6). To create a cohesive nation, Indonesia’s early leaders had to devise a method to unify many different people; Indonesia is made up of over 6,000 inhabited islands and over 230 million

people, with vast geographic differences and a dozen major and hundreds of minor ethnic groups each with its own distinct language and culture. The national motto “*bhinneka tunggal ika*,” or “unity in diversity,” or more literally “many but one,” derives from old Javanese and expresses the Javanese ideal that there is an essential unity in all things. This motto became a way for Indonesians to recognize their differences, but to also come together. The arts and other markers of difference such as local dress and architecture, “traditions,” became the preferred symbols of Indonesia’s diversity. Political scientist Ian Chalmers, in an excellent introduction to Indonesian culture and politics, notes that:

[. . .] traditions collectively become an instrument used to maintain social and political dominance; traditions are ‘invented’, constructed so as to legitimize the power of ruling social groups. However, tradition can also be understood as the set of cultural forms that gives meaning to everyday political and social practice, sometimes in conflict with – or beyond the knowledge of – the dominant social group. [. . .] tradition-creation is understood as a dynamic social process involving interaction between political elites and societal forces. (2006, p. 1)

Chalmers recognizes that the central government prefers material and aesthetic traditional expressions as a way to celebrate diversity while legitimizing the dominant ideologies of the Indonesian government because people are encouraged to express local identity through dance and dress rather than through a bid for political power. Examples of how tradition and the arts are negotiated as national culture can be seen at the National Museum in Jakarta and Taman Mini Indonesia. This museum and amusement park respectively demonstrate that Indonesian culture is many things: traditional food, customs, language, dress, and architecture. All of these are on display so that visitors might be able to better understand the culture of Indonesia. Many of the exhibits are of musical instruments, local clothes, puppets, masks, and pictures of dance or other performances (Figure 1), rather than on historical,

linguistic, or religious differences. In Indonesia, culture often finds meaning and expression in the arts, so much so that these two often seem synonymous. Chalmers also recognizes that tradition can also function as a counter-hegemonic form of cultural expression in contrast to their use as part of the national narrative. *Wayang tantri* demonstrates how Balinese arts function as traditions that can both uphold and subvert the national status quo.



Figure 1: A display depicting differences in traditional regional clothes around Indonesia at the museum at Taman Mini.

Inventing the Tradition of *Tantri*

Wayang tantri stands apart from the many innovative forms of *wayang* described by Cohen (2007, p. 356-362), because it evolved within Balinese culture without direct influence outside of Indonesia. *Wayang tantri* has endured as an independent genre of puppet performance, with different stories that can be suited to specific performance situations, much like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are used, and with its own distinctive characters. *Wayang tantri* has survived as a genre outside the realm of one master artist and is being performed by other *dalang* (puppeters) on a more frequent basis.

Wayang tantri is one kind of several new genres of *wayang kulit* in Bali. It was first created in 1981 by I Made Persib, a student in the *pedalangan*, or puppetry, programme at the Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia Denpasar (ASTI),² for a performance at a university arts festival in Bandung. This new kind of *wayang kulit* tells stories from *Ni Diah Tantri*, an Indian story, also known in India as the *Pancatantra* (Cohen, 2007, p. 356) or *Tantri Kamandaka* (Sedana, 2002 p. 28). Persib only performed the new genre a couple of times. The name most often associated with *wayang tantri* is that of I Wayan Wija, a respected *dalang* from Sukowati, because he popularized *wayang tantri* through his use of dynamic animal puppets and the larger *gamelan* ensemble, *batel Semar Pagulingan*, such as that used in *wayang Ramayana* (2000, Yayasan Bali Galang). Wija has performed *wayang tantri* frequently in Bali and around the world; he performed *wayang tantri* in August 2011 as part of an exhibition, 'Balinese Art and Culture' at the San Francisco Asian Art Museum. My teacher, I Wayan Tunjung, was a student of Wija's and now regularly performs *tantri*.

Wayang tantri purposefully brings the tradition of *wayang* to a larger audience, in a time when traditional arts must compete with the draw of movies and television. In a film produced by the Asian Art Museum, Wija explains that after learning the tradition of *wayang* from his father, he desired to develop his own style and to create new characters so that he "could find ways for the tradition to be accepted by modern audiences" (Chu, 2012). Many Balinese artists share Wija's concern that *wayang kulit* will not continue as a dynamic performance in Bali and that audiences will dwindle because they do not find it relevant or interesting.³

² Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia (ASTI, Indonesian Academy of the Arts) is now the Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI, Indonesian Institute for the Arts) and offers S1 and S2 (BA and MA degrees) in puppetry, dance, theatre, and music. Previously it was also the Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia (STSI, Indonesian University of the Arts).

³ For example, Emiko Saraswati Susilo, one of the founders of the Balinese performance group Çudamani, recently posted on Facebook about this concern and the group's efforts to introduce and excite a young audience.

To be successful in both religious and secular contexts, *wayang tantri* must negotiate a balance between innovation and tradition. Balinese professor and *dalang* I Nyoman Sedana describes several criteria for understanding a contemporary *wayang* performance or as he terms it: *wayang kontemporer*. Sedana's criteria help situate the relationship between tradition and innovation that is happening within Balinese *wayang kulit*. The first type of change that Sedana notes is altering the technical requirements of the performance, for example using an electrical light instead of the traditional oil lamp or *blencong*, or instead of a single *dalang* manipulating all of the puppets, many different performers might manipulate and voice the puppet characters. The next feature of *wayang kontemporer* are inventive designs in puppets that might include new characters, puppets capable of special effects, or puppets that create a coloured shadow. The performance might also include puppets that serve as scenery or multi-media projections together with videos of other performances or actors using their bodies to cast a shadow on the screen. All of these elements together create visual spectacle that excites the audience, even in the opening descriptive scene, which in traditional *wayang kulit*, often "puts children in the audience to sleep" (Sedana, 2005, p. 78). In spite of all of these innovations, the "story and philosophy" of the performance "holds to tradition" (Sedana, 2005, p. 79).

Sedana describes the technical advances with the context of a kind of rupture to the fabric of Balinese society. The performance was part of a response to the 2002 Bali bombings, which was meant "to release inhabitants of Kuta and Bali from the psychic damage of the blast and to restore a sense of harmonious well-being. While the performance was theatrically innovative and technologically experimental, it rose from the traditional root of theatre in Balinese culture. *Wayang's* exorcist potential merged with modern artistic innovation to help make a shattered world whole" (Sedana, 2005, p. 74).

As the *pedalangan* programme often uses technology and other similar innovations in its *wayang* performances, ISI creates

these elements of performances as tradition through repetition. “Inventing traditions, it is assumed here, is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition” (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 4).

In a separate publication, Sedana also describes the criteria used for judging a *wayang kulit* as tradition – including in what ways and how drastically the *dalang* can apply his creativity in the performance. This creative element in *wayang kulit* is called *kawi dalang*: “the creativity (*kawi*) of the puppet master (*dalang*)” (Leon and Sedana, 2007, p. 17). The primary aim of *kawi dalang* is that each performance must be new or different from the previous performance; a *dalang* cannot just give the same performance over and over or the audience would become bored. This requires a *dalang* to know enough stories, philosophy, and all other aspects of his art to please many different audiences in many different circumstances: “*Kawi dalang* demands that each performance changes in accordance with the fluctuating place-time-circumstances, *desa-kala-patra*” (Leon and Sedana, 2007, p. 17). Genre or form, which includes the set structure and various apparatus of performance, story, and character form the three primary elements that a *dalang* manipulates within a single performance (Leon and Sedana, 2007, pp. 25-27). Even though the *dalang* has quite a bit of leeway within each of these, the three elements must work together in harmony according to tradition in order for the performance to find favour with the audience.

Wayang tantri, according to these two different frameworks proposed by Sedana, negotiates a tenacious balance between contemporary and traditional *wayang* because it features technical innovations along with the traditions contained within *kawi dalang*. The next section builds upon Sedana’s frameworks to analyse the performance through my experience of learning a particular story in exploring the ways *wayang tantri* negotiates the familiar and strange so as to both reify and expand the notions of tradition in Bali.

Elements of Tradition and Innovation

Wayang tantri is based on a story cycle originally from India that recounts the story about a girl named Diah Tantri who tells the king Iswaryadala stories about animals. Like *The Arabian Nights*, “*Tantri* encompasses a wide range of continuously superimposed stories within stories” (Sedana, 2002, pp. 28-29). The origins of the story appearing in Bali are unclear, but the Balinese have changed it to make it their own; Sedana notes, “local poets in Bali have superimposed numerous other tales in addition to and on top of the source material” (2002, p. 55).⁴ This kind of transformation is not unlike how the Balinese use *The Mahabharata* or *Ramayana*, also important religious texts in India, and have added or changed numerous characters and plots. The many elements of a performance of *wayang tantri* reflect current discourses of globalization and local and national identity that are negotiated within Balinese arts and culture.

The opening of the performance follows the same structure as other genres of *wayang kulit*, but also marks this performance as “different.” The musical ensemble plays while the *dalang* prepares for the performance by giving offerings, reciting incantations, ensuring a good performance as well as protection from the gods, and readying the puppets. The *kayonan*, or “tree of life” puppet begins the performance by “dancing” on the screen – the movement summons the world of the play, like a god creating Earth out of nothing. The *kayonan* used in *wayang tantri* is different to the one used in other genres of *wayang kulit* (Figure 2). Pak Tunjung explained that he designed his *kayonan* so that it would be distinct from Wija’s, and that the one he designed for me to use would be different from the other two. The basic shape is similar, but the details demonstrate

⁴ More definitive research on the origin of the story and how and why it gained popularity in Bali is needed, but outside the scope of this paper. For my purposes, it is enough that the story originated in India and was manipulated by the Balinese to make it theirs.

the originality of the performance and the identity of the *dalang* performing the story. The design, music, and movements at the beginning of the performance create a greater emphasis on individuality and artistic voice than in other genres and performances of *wayang kulit*.



Figure 2: Pak Tunjung holds the kayonan for wayang tantri.

The opening of the performance establishes the sacred context of a *wayang kulit* performance. After the two dances of the *kayonan*, the *dalang* sings the *Alus Arum* (which accompanies the entry of the first puppet characters on the screen).

bujangga anom kemalingan

“a young priest is confused”

genta hilang muang pustaka

“[he forgot his] bell and [his] scripture disappeared”

apan masaning mamuja

“since he is praying/worshiping”

sangkania karia menangis

“that’s why he is still embarrassed”⁵

The text invokes a performance or ritual mishap, the priest does not have or has forgotten the scripture he is supposed to recite. Such an incident would be disastrous for a Balinese person because great importance is given to language both written and spoken. Leo Howe comments that, in Bali, language provides the means to connect the mortal and ancestral worlds, and that “maintaining correct linguistic usage in relation to deities and ancestors is vital to safety and prosperity, since inappropriate words can bring misfortune” (2001, p. 92). The performance thus begins in uncertainty; the ritual might go wrong; and the priest is embarrassed. Compare that with the *Alus Arum* at the opening of *Arjuna Tapa*, a popular *wayang parwa* story:

rahina tatas kemantian humuni

“Every morning the *gamelan* music begins to play”

mredanga kala sangka gurnitan tara

“The voices of the instruments are beautiful to hear.”

gumuruh ikang gubar bala samuha

“The sound of the crashing cymbals brings everyone together.”

⁵ Translation by I Nyoman Sedana.

mangkata pada nguwuh seruh rumuhun

“And the one with the thunderous voice progresses to the front of the line.”

para ratu sampun ahyas asalin

“The kings change into their grand clothes.”

lumanpaha pada hawan rata parimita

“He who drives the chariot that is without compare.”

Rather than ritual mishap, this opening describes how ritual performance, expressed through the *gamelan* music, brings people together. The text also reinforces hierarchical social order because it is the kings who come to the front in “grand clothes” and a chariot “without compare.” The opening of *wayang tantri* suggests that the old social order might be changing, and rather than the stories of heroes and gods, a young girl tells stories to a priest. The audience, however, is made to feel on edge; will change bring about disaster?

The “correct” performance of ritual remains a prominent theme throughout the story that Pak Tunjung taught. In the opening scene Sri Ajidharma, the king who lives in Malawa Palace, tells his servant Patih Madri that his people are miserable; a large ritual celebration must be planned to bring happiness and prosperity back to the land. The king commands Patih Madri to lead an army into the forest to collect plants, flowers, roots, and animals to use for food, decoration, and ritual sacrifice. The servants, or *panasar*, Pengalasan and Pangkur, will accompany Patih Madri on his quest. They are excited about contributing to what they believe will be the “celebration of the century.”

The second part of the performance begins with Pondol and Klenceng, the servants of the ogre king, Suramaya, talking about the work they do helping their king take care of the animals of the forest. They must feed, wash, and protect these valuable resources of the forest – hard and often thankless work. Pondol devises a plan to try and sell some of the cows from the forest to

have money for a vacation, but Suramaya warns that it is important to nurture the resources of nature and not squander them on something temporary like a vacation. “If you sell the cow now, what will you do in the future? A vacation only lasts a brief moment,” Suramaya warns. Pondol reluctantly agrees, and he and Klenceng head to the forest. The next scene shows the many animals living in the forest: frogs, birds, tigers, cows, giraffes, elephants, monkeys, and many more. Several of the puppets are of animals that would not normally appear in Bali, like kangaroos, demonstrating the influences that frequent contact with people from many different countries has on the imagination of the Balinese. They incorporate these outsiders in their stories and their world. Finally, the scene returns to Pondol and Klenceng, but while they are talking, several animals dart past them, as if they are running from some danger. They hurry to warn their king of a possible threat.

The final scene of a *wayang kulit* often features a battle between the two opposing sides. Suramaya is angry that the neighbouring king is taking so much from the forest; he complains that it is wasteful. A long battle ensues between the soldiers and animals before Suramaya and Patih Madri finally meet to fight. At this moment, each says an invocation and their bodies change shapes. Suramaya becomes Rangda, a troubled witch from Balinese mythology, and Patih Madri becomes the Barong, or protector of the forest. Barong and Rangda battle, but there is no clear victor. At this point, a puppet representing the Buddha appears, floating high on the screen upon the *kayonan*, which is representing a cloud. Patih Madri appears, and after a short conversation with the Buddha, he is taken up and rides away in the cloud.

The main part of the story is over, but because much of the final action happens in Kawi, an ancient Javanese court language, the two *panasar* from the beginning of the story explain to the audience what happened. The final actions of the play serve to restore the ritual imbalance that is suggested by the opening lyrics used in the *Alas Arum*. The Barong is a central figure in the ritual

performance of *Calonarang* where the Barong does battle with the evil witch Rangda. There is no winner; rather the purpose is to bring conflicting sacred forces into balance. The Barong and Rangda even sit side by side in the temple and share the prayers and offerings of the Balinese people (Figure 3). Their appearance at the end of the story invokes a restoration to balance within a specifically Balinese context. The story no longer belongs to India, or some other, but contains dominant symbols of Balinese spirituality.



Figure 3: Masks for Barong and Rangda sit side by side in a temple in Ubud.

At the end of the play, the Buddha warns Patih Madri that the resources of the world are limited, and that it is preferable for people to express religious devotion in their heart rather than through the accumulation of things and animals for lavish meals or sacrifice. The scene of the Buddha together with the Barong and Rangda reflect how “tradition” is viewed after the bombings in a Kuta nightclub on October 12, 2002.

Many felt that the Balinese suffered this calamity because they had wandered too far from traditional values, religion, and culture and that in order to both heal and move forward, the Balinese must look to the past. This return to the past has been dubbed *ajeg*, a word that is difficult to translate directly, but emphasizes

a balanced harmony between all things, articulated in the Balinese concept *Tri Hita Karana*. The term has been invoked to justify architectural styles, religious imperatives, gender relations, political movements, and recently in actions against the large number of immigrants from other parts of Indonesia who are looking to share in Bali's thriving economy. It is not so much a longing to return to the past, but rather a desire for stability in an era of much change; and tradition becomes a litmus test and marker of that stability. These elements of the play express how Balinese society struggles to maintain a "Balinese" identity and values against many different forces including tourism, Indonesian nationalism, globalization, and modernization.

Tradition and Innovation – Learning to Perform

Puppet movement and vocal intonation work to differentiate *wayang tantri* while serving to relate the play to a specific Balinese worldview. Howe explains that this happens most clearly through the voices and actions of the *panasar* characters, "while the [main] characters 'speak in Kawi' via the interventions of the servants 'they *mean* in Balinese", and are thus in a Balinese social and cultural world" (2001, pp. 92-93). Pak Tunjung taught me to negotiate Balinese aesthetics and tradition as I learned to give voice to these four characters. Examining this process reveals how Balinese artists negotiate tradition and innovation in creating a performance that is contemporary for their audience.

The ideal of balance, or that the existence of two opposite yet complementary halves compose a whole, is a pervasive and longstanding aesthetic for Balinese culture and cosmology. Stephen Davies asserts that balance is the primary criteria for judging whether something is beautiful, pleasing, or good, or in Balinese *becik* (2007, p. 21). Balance in Balinese art forms is not just a matter of symmetry, but rather it is how the proportions relate to both the human body and the cosmological configuration of the island. Balance, rather than finding expression through opposites, also recognizes a middle position between the two extremes, and much of Balinese ritual and

performance strives to bring these extremes together in equilibrium. For example, temples are placed and designed in orientation to the ocean, mountains, and cardinal directions, linking sacred elements through position and proportion (James, 1973, pp. 145-148).

The aesthetic realization of balance within the puppets is better understood within the categories of *alus* and *kasar*. *Alus* roughly translates into “refined,” and *kasar* is “unrefined.” Many different features of the puppets communicate the personality of their characters to the audience. Characteristics of an *alus* puppet include a smaller, slim body, a head that is tilted downward, small or narrow eyes, a small mouth, and a small nose. The puppets’ kinesthetic sphere of movement will also be smaller and more delicate. A *kasar* puppet is often much larger, has big, bulging eyes, a large open mouth with teeth and/or a tongue showing, is looking straight ahead or upwards, and has a side stance. *Kasar* puppets move much more vigorously on the screen with large sweeping motions.

Pak Tunjung emphasized that it is important for the voices of the characters to match the puppet. The puppeteer must pay attention to the mouth of the puppet and how the puppet moves. This would determine the best way for developing the voice to create balance with the puppet. These puppets reveal how tradition and innovation work tangentially because these are new characters, and the voices do not depend as much on convention as the other voices for the *panasars*, or clowns, of the *Mahabharata*: Twalen, Merdah, Delem, and Sangut. When I learned the voices for those four, it was much more important to copy the quality and timbre of the voice that Pak Tunjung used as closely as possible. When learning the voices for the clowns in *wayang tantri*, he spent a lot more time explaining how to use the characteristics of the puppets to determine the voice. The character of Pengalasang (Figure 4) has a small head with a tiny nose sitting high above the mouth, therefore his voice sounds quite nasal and thin. In contrast, Pondal (Figure 5), his brother, has a very large, round, mouth area and his head is tilted up. Pak Tunjung explained that his voice should be deeper and come from the throat.



Figure 4: Pengalasang.



Figure 5: Pondol.

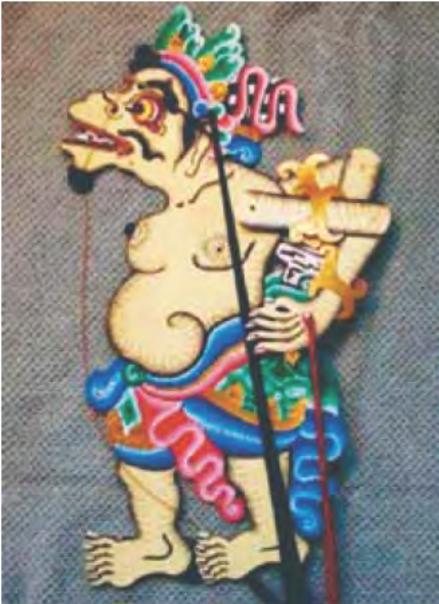


Figure 6: Pangkur.



Figure 7: Klenceng.

The leader of the two *panasar* who work for Suramaya is Pangkur (Figure 6), a surly character who dreams of a day when he does not have to work and can take a vacation. He has a very large face, and therefore has a deep kind of voice that sounds like he might have

been a smoker at one point in his life. His counterpart, Klenceng (Figure 7) is probably the most extreme example of how a voice should match the physical characteristics of the puppet. His leg kicks when he talks, making him appear unstable, and it is important that the rhythm of the voice is consistent with the movement, a kind of stutter. Klenceng's voice and movement match the personality of his character, which is shy and uncertain in contrast to the confident Pangkur.

Suramaya (Figure 8), the king of the forest, breaks with convention, and even though he is not a *panasar*, he has an articulated mouth, and speaks the language of the audience. His nose is small but his mouth is so big that it dominates his face. Suramaya's voice is high and gravelly. When Pak Tunjung first heard my voice for Suramaya, he broke out into a big smile. "Perfect," he exclaimed, "just like Patrick from Sponge Bob Square Pants™. Don't change that!"

Pondal, Klenceng, and Suramaya are all puppets from the left side, or the *kasar* side, and often appear on the screen together, which means that another important part of the vocal performance is making sure they are easily discernable between one character and the other. Pak Tunjung criticized one well-known *dalang* with regard to the similarity of the voices for his *panasar* characters. He felt that the audience would not always be sure who was talking unless they could visually see the character moving on the screen.



Figure 8: Suramaya.

Contemporary Traditions – Conclusions

Wayang tantri demonstrates a kind of preservation and maintenance of culture that moves beyond Picard's "resilience" because it shows how the Balinese use the past to speak to the present in a kind of "invented tradition." The story and structure reflect many values and a return-to-tradition, as represented in the *ajeg* Bali movement. Suramaya could be working to protect the land from those who would sell it to make rice fields into villas. Through language and mythic figures (such as the Barong and Rangda, and the Buddha), the performance promotes a hierarchy based on religious values rather than old kingdoms. Balinese musicians Ida Wayan Ngurh and his brother Ida Wayan Oka Granoka, both renowned for their creativity and compositions, remark that new forms of music and performance only come from exploring "the music's roots in ritual and spirituality" (Gray, 2011, p. 233). Locally, nationally, and globally, *wayang tantri* embodies that kind of invention – making a modern *wayang* for a modern Balinese audience.

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