

# SLIDE 1

Musicians play the instruments of the tuned percussion (*gamelan*) orchestra, which consists of metallophones, xylophones, and drums.

Female singers perform lyrics during and between scenes to enhance the emotional impact of the performance.

Banana logs are placed one on each side of the central space where the puppet master performs to hold rows of puppets. Puppet characters are separated into opposing forces of "good" and "bad" and placed accordingly. While so-called protagonists are placed to the dalang's right and antagonists to his left, the characters have complex personalities and struggle with their moral choices. As many as forty-five out of ninety puppets may be used during a single performance.



The puppet master (*dalang*) is the consummate storyteller. He delivers dialogue using voices specific to each character, manipulates all of the puppets, sings mood songs, and cues the gamelan orchestra. Dalang are revered in Indonesia for their puppetry skills and their knowledge of Hindu epics, Muslim legends, and Javanese historical tales.

The puppet chest is a large wooden box in which the puppets are stored.

Asep and his troupe before a performance at Ancol, a recreation center in North Jakarta, from *Voices of the Puppet Masters: The Wayang Golek Theater of Indonesia* by Mimi Herbert (2002). Photograph by Maria Farr. Reproduced by permission.

## SLIDE 1 DESCRIPTION

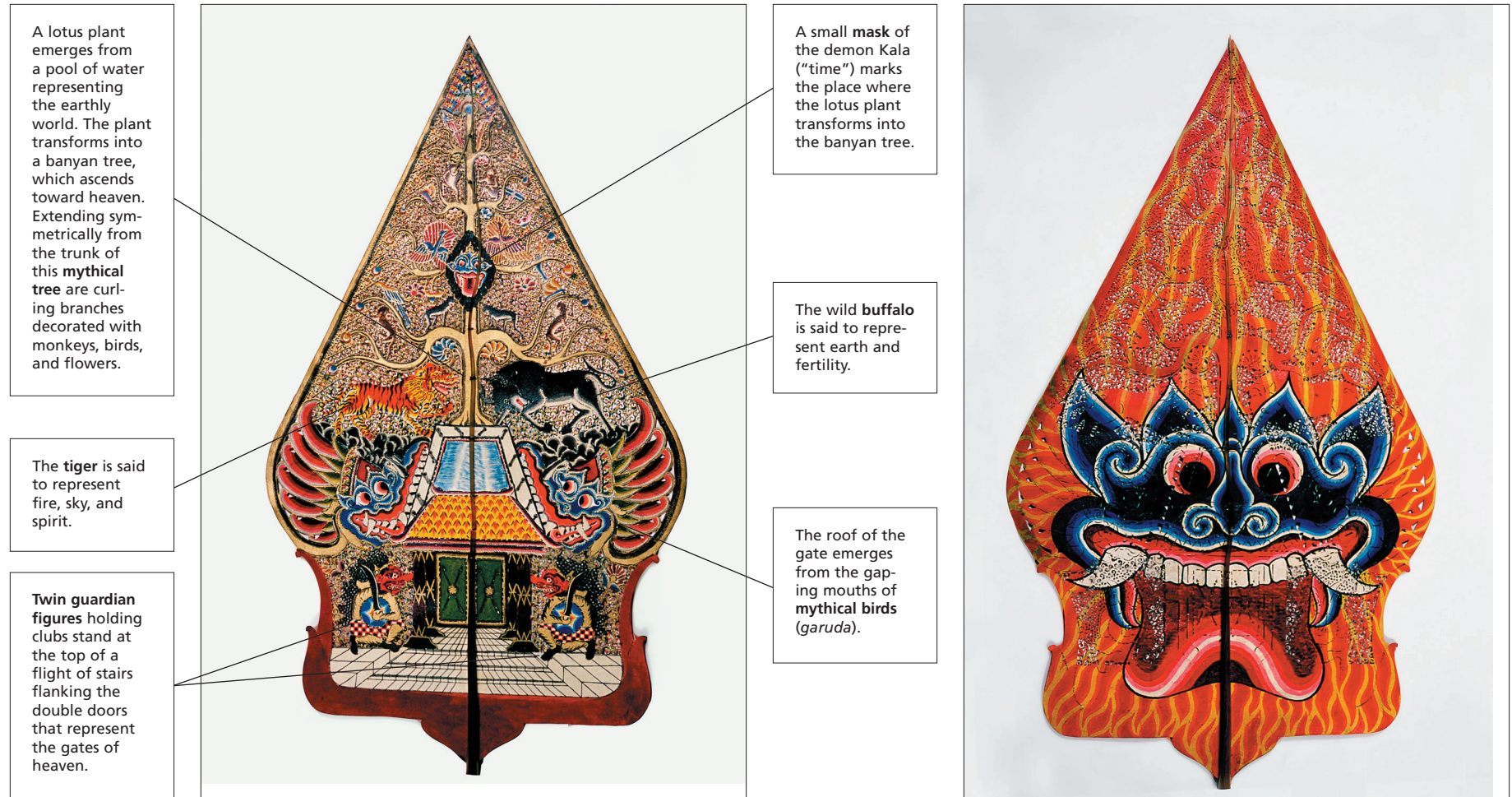
This photograph shows Asep Sunandar Sunarya, a famous Indonesian puppet master (*dalang*), known for his humor and innovative puppet creations, sitting with his troupe in preparation for a performance at a recreation center in North Jakarta. Rod puppet (*wayang golek*) performances are sponsored in conjunction with blessings held to celebrate weddings, circumcisions, rituals honoring one's ancestors, and occasionally exorcisms (*ruwatan*).

A *dalang* is invited, along with his troupe of musicians and singers, to perform episodes from one of the great Hindu epics—the Ramayana or the Mahabharata. In the case of *wayang golek menak* performances, the *dalang* uses three-dimensional rod puppets to tell Muslim stories; other repertoire includes stories derived from historical Javanese tales. Performances take place from 9:00 PM to 4:30 AM and are traditionally conducted outdoors on a raised platform covered by a canvas canopy. During the performance, the *dalang* sits cross-legged in the center of the stage, behind a banana log that rests horizontally on wooden stands. He remains in this position, facing the audience, during the entire performance.

Invited guests sit on the ground facing the stage while uninvited persons are allowed to sit behind the performers. *Wayang golek* performances hold appeal for all members of the village, teaching universal messages of morality, voicing political opinions of the common people through the jester characters, and entertaining with dramatic puppet fight scenes, music, and singing.



## SLIDE 2



Tree-of-life puppet (*kayon*, or *gunungan*), approx. 1970  
Indonesia; West Java  
Painted and cut leather, horn, and thread  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.127

## SLIDE 2 DESCRIPTION

This leaf-shaped shadow puppet, intricately carved from leather and supported by a central rod carved from horn, is known as a *kayon* (“tree”) or *gunungan* (“mountain”). In the symbolism of Indonesian rod puppet theater (*wayang golek*) the kayon represents the “tree of life,” the axis of the universe that connects the earthly world with that of the spirits. At the beginning of each performance, the puppet master (*dalang*) invokes a prayer. The first puppet he raises is the kayon, which he dances, spins, and flutters in the air, magically breathing life into the surrounding rod puppets. The kayon continues to be used throughout the performance for a variety of purposes. Its presence may indicate a change of scene, the entrance of a major character, elements of nature, or pieces of scenery such as a palace. The kayon may also be used to symbolize abstract themes such as war and destructive forces of nature such as fire and storms. Appropriately, the kayon is also the final puppet to be used in a performance—bringing to a close this depiction of the events of the spirit world

This kayon is decorated with a tree of life on one side and the face of the demon Kala (“time”) on the other. The tree of life (shown at left) represents the universe and all of the creatures that inhabit it, from the demon giants located at the base of the tree to the birds that perch on its peak, the latter symbolizing the human soul. The demon Kala (right) is surrounded by a halo of flames. His presence represents the annihilating forces that exist in the universe.

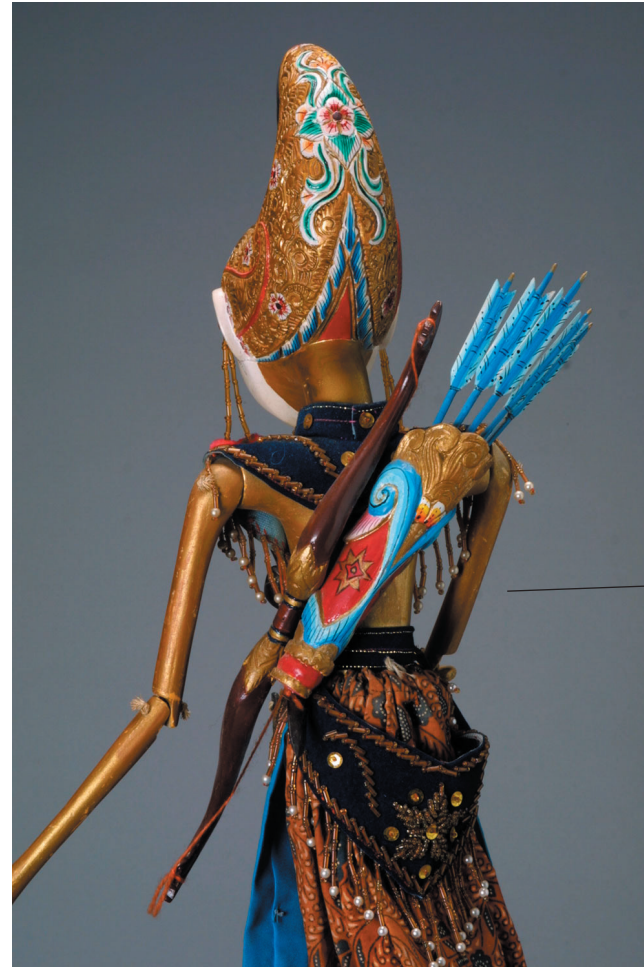


## SLIDE 3

Arjuna's hair is drawn up in a bun that curves upward in a swirl. This type of **headdress** is worn by noble characters.

Arjuna's refined character can be seen in his **facial features**: white face, bowed head, narrow downcast eyes, and straight nose.

Arjuna wears a ceremonial **dagger** known as a kris. Draped around his torso hanging from his back are a delicately carved bow, quiver, and set of arrows.



Refined characters such as Arjuna and Yudhishthira **do not wear arm or wrist ornaments.**

Arjuna, third of the Pandava (Pandawa) brothers, approx. 1993  
By Pak Aji  
Indonesia; Bogor, West Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.76

## SLIDE 3 DESCRIPTION

Arjuna is the third of the Pandava (Pandawa) brothers and warrior-caste hero of the Hindu epic the Mahabharata. He is the divine son of the god Indra and disciple of the god Krishna (Kresna). Arjuna is known for his chivalry, loyalty, and handsome looks, which draw the attention of princesses and other maidens. He is depicted as a graceful warrior whose agility on the battlefield is complemented by self-discipline, nobility, and the utmost loyalty to family.

The Bhagavad Gita (“The Lord’s Song”), a pivotal episode in the Mahabharata, is a dramatic dialogue that takes place between Arjuna and the god Krishna (in disguise to the prince as his charioteer). On the eve of the great battle, as the Pandava brothers prepare to go to war with their cousins the Kauravas (Kaurawas), Arjuna anguishes over whether he can fight his own relatives, friends, and teachers. Krishna councils Arjuna that sacred duty (dharma) must precede all personal desires. Therefore, one’s actions should be made in order to fulfill dharma, without concern for the consequences.



## SLIDE 4

Bhima is characterized by a stout black or gold body that is bare from the waist up. A snake curls around his neck.

Bhima's long red fingernails are fierce weapons symbolizing his power of concentration.



Bhima's strong character can be seen in his facial features: green (sometimes blue or ochre) face, bulging eyes with red irises, pronounced nose, and full beard and mustache.

Bhima wears a double arm bracelet. The only other character to wear such a bracelet is Hanuman, the monkey general.



Bhima (Bima), second of the Pandava (Pandawa) brothers, approx. 1960  
Indonesia; West Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.157

## SLIDE 4 DESCRIPTION

Bhima (Bima) is the second of the Pandava (Pandawa) brothers in the Mahabharata, a great Hindu epic. He is the divine son of the wind god Vayu (Bayu), and is known for his military skill, physical power, bravery, and voracious appetite. Although Bhima has a tendency to demonstrate a lack of self-control, his intentions are always honest and noble. While in exile because his brother Yudhishtira (Yudistira) has lost their kingdom in a gambling bet, Bhima marries the princess giant Hidhimba (Arimbi), with whom he has a son, who is named Ghatokacha (Gatokaca). Having descended from the wind god, Bhima has the ability to fly, as does his half-brother Hanuman (Hanoman) and his son Ghatokacha.

In one story from the Mahabharata, the fierce warrior Bhima defeats a dragon, which then transforms itself into a poisonous serpent. Bhima wraps the serpent around his neck, declaring that it may bite him should he ever tell a lie.





## SLIDE 5

Ghatotkacha is characterized by a slender body and wears **arm bracelets** sculpted in the shape of birds.



Ghatotkacha (Gatotkaca), son of Bhima (Bima), approx. 1970  
By M. Ahim  
Indonesia; Ciampea, West Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.78

Ghatotkacha's hair is drawn up in a bun that curves upward in a spiral. His **headdress** is decorated with the head of a mythical bird (*garuda*) looking backward.



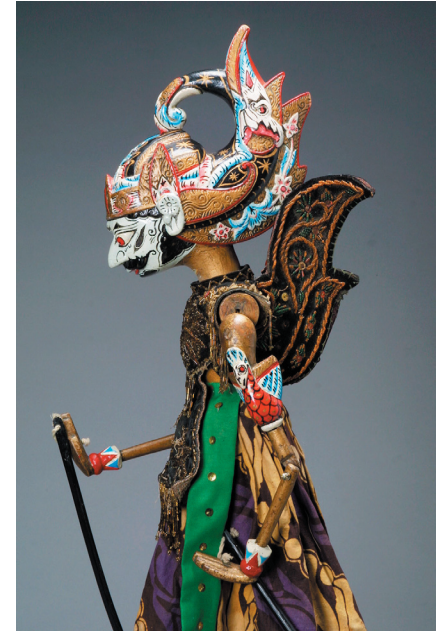
Ghatotkacha's strong character can be seen in his **facial features**: blue (or sometimes green or ochre) face, bulging eyes with red irises, pronounced nose, and full beard and mustache.

On his back, Ghatotkacha wears a **wing-shaped ornament** that functions like a halo.

## SLIDE 5 DESCRIPTION

Ghatotkacha (Gatotkaca) is the son of Bhima (Bima), the strongest of the Pandava (Pandawa) brothers, and the princess giant Hidhimba (Arimbi) in the Mahabharata, a great Hindu epic. He is the consummate warrior, symbolizing bravery, loyalty, honesty, and military strength. In a story from the Mahabharata, Bhima calls for his son to help him during the Pandavas' exile. During the great war between the Pandava brothers and their cousins the Kauravas (Kaurawas), Krishna calls upon Ghatotkacha to fight Karna, Ghatotkacha's father's half-brother. Krishna knows that Karna owns a magical lance given to him by the god Indra. This lance has the ability to kill any living creature, but it may be used only once. Although Karna wishes to reserve the lance for killing Arjuna, he is forced to use it to kill Ghatotkacha.

While the graceful and refined Arjuna, who represents the ideal man, was once the favorite among *wayang* characters, Ghatotkacha, recognized for his coarse features and fierce military skills, has since become one of its most important heroes and is often associated with the young men who fought for Indonesia's independence.



## SLIDE 6

Semar carries a black medicine bag over his shoulders.



Semar's tuft of hair represents the axis of the universe.



Semar's character can be seen in his facial features: white face, pug nose, and puffy cheeks.

Semar's black body consists of a bare torso, rotund belly, and large behind.

Semar walks with his right arm straight out in front of him.

The jester Semar, approx. 1960  
Indonesia; Bandung, West Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.14

## SLIDE 6 DESCRIPTION

Semar is the father of the jesters. According to Javanese lore, he is a brother of the god Shiva as well as a god in his own right. He acts as an advisor, attendant, and companion to the heroes of the Javanese renditions of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, great Hindu epics. His name is derived from the Javanese word *samar*, which means “vague” or “obscure.” This quality is expressed in his androgynous appearance: He is both man and woman in the mythological realm.

The jesters of *wayang* are of Javanese origin and do not exist in the Indian epics. They usually appear around midnight, at the climax of the performance, to provide emotional support for the heroes, and in comic interludes that often include crude humor. Semar, for example, is known for breaking wind and constantly crying “Ambung! Ambung! Ambung!” (“Oh my!”). Not surprisingly, the jesters have a special place in the hearts of the Javanese. In Indonesian rod puppet theater (*wayang golek*), they represent the voices of the gods, of the puppet master (*dalang*), and of the people—conveying both episodic commentary and the contemporary concerns of the audience.



## SLIDE 7

Cepot is dressed in village attire and wears a black headcloth.

Gareng's character can be seen in his facial features: pink face, big round eyes and nose, and protruding tooth.



The jester Cepot, perhaps 1800–1900  
Indonesia; Tegal, Central Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection,  
F2000.85.30



The jester Gareng, perhaps 1800–1900  
Indonesia; Tegal, Central Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection,  
F2000.85.32



Petruk's character can be seen in his facial features: long nose and large mouth. He always wears a closed jacket.

Gareng has the deformed body of a dwarf and disjointed arms.

The jester Petruk, approx. 1950  
Indonesia; Bandung, West Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection,  
F2000.86.13

## SLIDE 7 DESCRIPTION

These three jesters (shown here from left to right) are Semar's sons Cepot, Gareng, and Petruk. They act as companions and servants to the heroes in the Javanese renditions of Hindu epics. As the sons of Semar, they inherit his divine origin.

Cepot (also known as Astrajingga) is the Semar's third son. He is known for his thievish and eccentric qualities, and is traditionally the puppet through which the *dalang* makes political commentary, expressing the views of the people in the guise of comic relief. Gareng, whose full name is Nala-Gareng (meaning "dry heart"), is Semar's first son. He is frequently on the receiving end of his brother Petruk's teasing and is known to be dimwitted and pessimistic. Petruk (also known as Dawala), Semar's second son, is known to be a prankster and merrymaker. With their characteristic movements, speech, and quirky attributes, together these jesters engage in hilariously comic scenes. Jester characters are admired by audiences for their humor and their ability to maneuver effortlessly among gods, aristocrats, and the common people.



## SLIDE 8



A demon (*buta*), 1993  
By Duyeh  
Indonesia; Cibiru, West Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.121

## SLIDE 8 DESCRIPTION

*Buta* (literally meaning “to be blind”) are the ogres, or demons, who wreak havoc on the universe. In *wayang*, however, they often take the role of humorous oafs. While the characters from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the great Hindu epics, must adhere to a set standard of iconography, the buta—who are characterized by large bodies, round eyes, blunt noses, and exposed teeth—may be designed, carved, and painted according to the artist’s imagination. Modern buta incorporate a variety of features that appeal to younger audiences. These include body parts that appear to be lopped off in the course of a fight and inner tubes that spray fake blood. The mouth of the buta shown here pops open so that the upper portion of the head can tip back completely to reveal the small, wide-eyed and green-faced ogre inside.



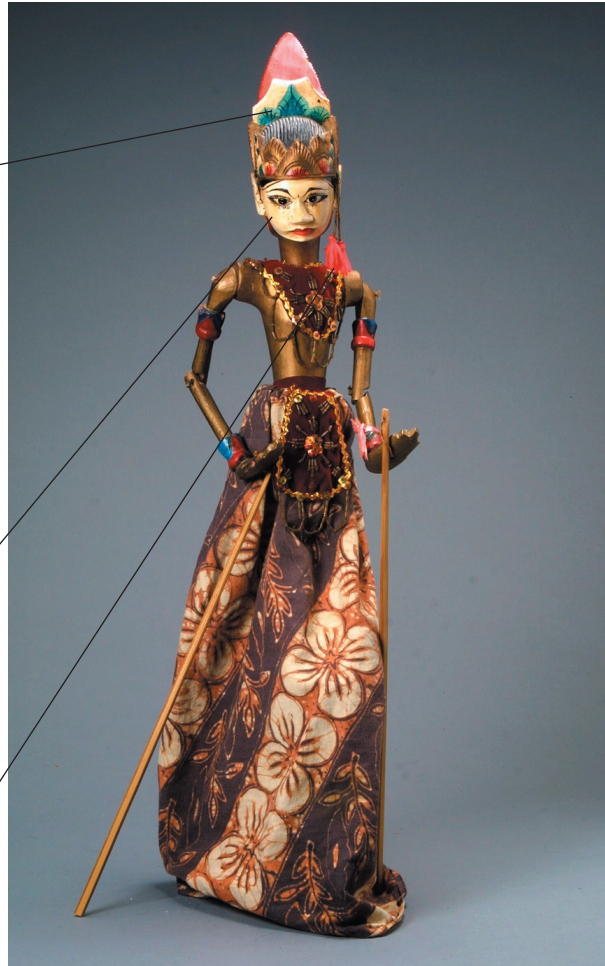


## SLIDE 9

Sita's hair is drawn up in a close bun, which curls up in the back and is held in place with a comb. Her sculpted **head-dress** depicts the head of a garuda (mythical bird) looking backward.

Sita's refined character can be seen in her **facial features**: white face, inclined face, and narrow, downcast eyes. This puppet, however, is a modern innovation: The princess's eyes are slightly larger and they gaze forward.

**Red tassels** hanging from Sita's headdress frame and ornament the side of her face.



Sita (Sinta), wife of Rama, approx. 1980  
Indonesia; West Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.148

Rama wears a **high crown** associated with kings and deities.

Rama's refined character can be seen in his **facial features**: white face, inclined face, and narrow, downcast eyes.



The hero Rama, approx. 1930  
By Abah Wikarta  
Indonesia; Kuningan or Tegal, Central Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.89

## SLIDE 9 DESCRIPTION

The virtuous prince Rama and beautiful princess Sita (Sinta) are the hero and heroine of the Ramayana, a great Hindu epic. Their bond of love, faithfulness, and dedication to sacred duty (dharma) are demonstrated in the events that unfold throughout the story.

Born by divine means to Dasharatha (Dasarata) and Kausalya, the king and queen of Ayodhya (Ayodya), Rama is the seventh incarnation of the god Vishnu in human form. He is born at the urging of the gods in hopes that as this form of Vishnu he will be able to kill the ten-headed demon king Ravana (Rawana). Ravana, on account of a boon granted by the god Brahma, cannot be killed by a god or any other divine being. Thus protected, Ravana has begun destroying the heavens.

Born of the earth, Sita appears to King Janaka of Mithila as he is ploughing his field. The king raises Sita as his daughter. The princess is thought to be a reincarnation of the goddess Lakshmi born to accompany Rama in his pursuit of Ravana.

The famous meeting of Sita and Rama takes place at the kingdom of Mithila when King Janaka holds an archery contest to decide who will have his daughter's hand in marriage. Her suitors are challenged to bend a magical bow once belonging to the god Shiva. It was claimed that no god or man could bend it. When it is Rama's turn, he bends it with such force that it snaps; thereby, he wins Sita as his wife.

The couple's adventures begin when Rama is banished for fourteen years by command of the second queen of Ayodhya. The lovely Sita faithfully goes into exile with her noble husband. In the forest Sita is captured by the ten-headed demon Ravana, who takes her to his kingdom, Lanka (Alengka). Rama enlists an army of monkeys to find her, but once she has been rescued, Rama begins to doubt that she remained faithful to him during her capture. Willing to die rather than be thought of as unfaithful to her husband, Sita ascends a funeral pyre. The fire god protects Sita from the flames, however, thus proving her innocence.

There are various versions to the ending of the Ramayana. In a later version, after Rama's coronation there is gossip in the kingdom saying that Sita broke her wedding vows while in Ravana's capture. Although Rama believes Sita is pure, he feels forced to banish her from the kingdom. While in exile, Sita gives birth to twin sons, Kusa and Lava. Twelve years later the boys visit their father in Ayodhya and sing to him the story of the Ramayana. Rama recognizes them as his sons and asks Sita to return. In front of the people, Sita calls to Mother Earth to swallow her up if indeed she is pure and has been loyal to Rama. At this time, the ground opens up, taking in Rama's beloved wife. After ruling for many years in grief, Rama is reunited with his beautiful Sita in the heavens.



## SLIDE 10

Jatayus is depicted with a pink face. This puppet is carved with its **beak wide open**, revealing rows of upper and lower teeth including sharp upper and lower canines.

Like this one, puppets of Jatayus may have their arms carved in the shape of **wings**, or they may be constructed to accommodate detachable wings.



The heroic vulture Jatayus, approx. 1970  
Indonesia; Cirebon, West Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.49

Hanuman has a **white face**, bulging eyes, and protruding jaws that reveal sharp upper and lower canines.

Hanuman's **tail**, carved in wood, emerges from his sarong, looping over his shoulders and across his chest. Earlier puppets representing the monkey general had tails constructed of cloth tubes filled with cotton wool and attached to the headdress and to a wooden stump located at the rear of the figure.



The monkey warrior Hanuman (Hanoman), aide to Rama, approx. 1950  
Indonesia; Bandung, West Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.85

## SLIDE 10 DESCRIPTION

The heroic vulture Jatayus and the monkey general, Hanuman (Hanoman) are allies of prince Rama and help to save the princess Sita (Sinta) from the ten-headed demon king Ravana (Rawana) in the Ramayana, a great Hindu epic. Throughout the course of the story, Rama is aided by a variety of animals including monkeys, bears, and birds.

Jatayus is the son of Vishnu's mount, Garuda, the mighty king of the birds. Jatayus is asleep in his tree when he hears Sita's cries for help as she is kidnapped and transported to the island of Lanka (Alengka) in Ravana's flying chariot. Jatayus attempts to rescue her but is pierced with hundreds of arrows from Ravana's bow. A vicious aerial battle ensues in which Jatayus tears off Ravana's heads and arms with his sharp talons. Each time Ravana is beheaded or dismembered, however, a replacement part appears. To Sita's horror, Ravana slashes Jatayus's wings, causing the heroic vulture to fall mortally wounded to the ground, where he is found by Rama and Lakshmana (Lakshmana). With his last breath Jatayus tells the princes where Ravana has taken Sita. In honor of the heroic vulture's valiant fighting, the princes perform funeral rites for him.

The celebrated white monkey general Hanuman, son of the wind god Vayu (Bayu), possesses supernatural powers. He flies to the kingdom of Lanka in a single bound to rescue the lovely Sita, who is captive in Ravana's palace. Hanuman hides behind a tree in the *asoka* garden and waits until it is safe to approach the princess. After presenting Sita with Rama's ring as proof that he is her friend and ally, the monkey general spies on her captors. In order to meet his enemy, Hanuman allows himself to be captured. Ravana pours oil on Hanuman's tail and sets it ablaze. The monkey feels no pain, however, and escapes, lighting the city on fire in the process. The monkey general then returns with news of Sita to Rama and Rama's brother, Lakshmana. Leading an army of monkeys, Hanuman builds a bridge to the island of Lanka in order to invade the demon palace and rescue Sita. Rama rewards the monkey general for his bravery with the gift of longevity.



## SLIDE 11

Demons with red faces have blue irises.



The demon king Ravana is an emotionally uncontrollable character. Such characters can be identified by their facial features: red or dark-colored face, bulging eyes, blunt, protruding nose, and fangs that point downward.



The demon king Ravana (Rawana) in his ten-headed form (Dasamuka), approx. 1950–1980  
Indonesia; Bandung, West Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.31

## SLIDE 11 DESCRIPTION

The ten-headed and twenty-armed demon Ravana (Rawana) is the villain of the Ramayana, a great Hindu epic. Ravana's power is a result of a boon given to him by the god Brahma. Ravana obtains the boon by meditating in devotion for ten thousand years while standing in the middle of five fires. After this, he proceeds to cut off each of his heads as an offering to Brahma. Just as Ravana is about to dismember his tenth and last head, Brahma appears to the demon and grants him any wish he desires. Ravana chooses to be made invulnerable to the powers of the gods and of other demons.

In the Ramayana, Ravana is so taken with the beauty of Sita (Sinta) that he devises a plan to kidnap the princess. He transforms himself into the form of a hermit to gain Sita's trust, after which he reveals his true horrific nature. He takes her captive in his kingdom on the island of Lanka (Alengka). Rama rescues Sita with the help of the monkey general Hanuman (Hanoman). In the course of the rescue, Rama kills Ravana with a magical arrow that flies through the demon's heart, exits through his back, enters the ocean to clean itself, and then returns to Rama's quiver.



## SLIDE 12



Amir Hamzah, uncle of the prophet Muhammad, 1991  
By Otong Rasta  
Indonesia; Bandung, West Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.62



Muslim characters such as Umar Maya wear a **turban** or a special court headdress.

Umar Maya, companion to Amir Hamzah, approx. 1980  
By Pak Rohman  
Indonesia; Gebang, West Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.51

## SLIDE 12 DESCRIPTION

These puppets representing Amir Hamzah, the uncle of the prophet Muhammad (left), and his faithful companion Umar Maya (right), belong to a rod puppet theater tradition called *wayang golek menak*. They tell a cycle of Muslim stories that originated in Persia and came to Indonesia in the 1400s and 1500s with the spread of the Islam. The menak stories are loosely based on the historical legends of Amir Hamzah, the sixth-century warrior hero who was the uncle of the prophet Muhammad. As king of Arabia, Amir Hamzah defends himself against the attacks of neighboring countries and spreads the teachings of Islam.

In Java, Amir Hamzah's character takes on refined qualities similar to those of the heroes found in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the great Hindu epics. Umar Maya's character, however, does not fall into a specific category, as he exhibits both refined and coarse qualities. He is characterized by his dark face and impulsive nature.





## SLIDE 13



Panji (whose name means "pennant" or "triangular flag") wears a crown in the shape of an inverted V.

Panji, a prince (and sometimes other refined characters), perhaps 1800–1900  
Indonesia; Tegal, Central Java  
Wood, cloth, and mixed media  
*From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.18*

## SLIDE 13 DESCRIPTION

This puppet belongs to the theater tradition called *wayang golek cepak* (*cepak* means “flat”), a name that refers to the style in which the puppets are carved. These puppets perform Javanese tales including the romantic adventures of Panji, an East Javanese prince, as well as stories of Amir Hamzah, the uncle of the prophet Muhammad. This puppet represents the handsome and brave prince Panji, who goes in search of his beloved bride Candra Kirana (“Radiant Ray of the Moon”), the princess of Kediri.

On the eve of their wedding day, the princess mysteriously disappears. A demoness who wants prince Panji for herself takes the form of a beautiful princess and tells the prince that she is his wife but has been transformed by the goddess Durga. Meanwhile, Candra Kirana finds herself deep in the forest, where she attracts the attention of the gods. Disguised by the gods as a man, she travels to the palace to be reunited with her husband. When the demoness’s true identity is revealed, Candra Kirana magically vanishes. Panji goes in search of his bride, who has since become the king of Bali. In the climax, the prince fights with the disguised Chandra Kirana. According to the gods’ command, she must draw Panji’s blood in order to reveal her true identity. For a long time, neither of them brings harm to the other, but eventually princess Candra Kirana draws her hairpin and pricks prince Panji; thus she is finally reunited with her beloved.



SLIDE 14



M. Ahim on his carving platform, from *Voices of the Puppet Masters: The Wayang Golek Theater of Indonesia* by Mimi Herbert (2002). Photograph by Tara Sosrowardoyo. Reproduced by permission.

## SLIDE 14 DESCRIPTION

This photograph of the puppet master (*dalang*) and expert carver M. Ahim was taken in his home on the outskirts of Bogor, Indonesia. Traditionally, *dalang* are carvers. They must be versed in the iconography of each of the 60 to 120 puppets that perform in a story cycle. A *dalang* carves each rod puppet (*wayang golek*) character from memory, never referring to drawings as a guide. He begins by carefully choosing a block of light softwood. He hacks a rough model of the puppet's face and headdress then uses his hand to gauge the proportions of the face. For example, the back of the *dalang*'s thumb should fit snugly in the slope between the puppet's chin and neck. After this, the finer features are carved with smaller tools, a hole is drilled in the headdress (if the hair is worn in a raised, curling bun), and the entire surface of the puppet is smoothed with sandpaper. With a pencil, the *dalang* then draws on the wood an outline of the intricate details of the face and headdress. These are then carved and sanded. Lastly, the head is treated and painted according to the nature of the character the puppet will represent.

Carvers and their families frequently construct, paint, and sew cloths for the *wayang golek* puppets during the fasting month of Ramadan, when no ritual feasts are held.



## SLIDE 15

Since the **upper torso** of the puppet is exposed, it is finely carved and sanded. The lower torso is hidden from view by the puppet's sarong and is left roughly carved.

A **central rod** extends through a hole in the body and into the neck, which supports the head.



The noble Subhadra wears her hair in a compact bun held in place with a **comb** in the shape of the head of a mythical bird (*garuda*).



Subhadra (Subadra), a wife of Arjuna and an incarnation of Lakshmi, 1995  
By M. Ahim  
Indonesia; Ciampea, West Java  
Wood  
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.118

## SLIDE 15 DESCRIPTION

This finished carving of a rod puppet (*wayang golek*) representing Subhadra (Subadra), sister of Krishna and a wife of Arjuna, was carved by the puppet master (*dalang*) and expert carver M. Ahim, who is featured in the previous slide. Intricate swirling decorative motifs are carved into the headdress along with the construction of the puppet body.

The structure of a wayang golek puppet consists of nine parts—the head, torso, four parts that make up the arms, sticks attached to the hands, and a central rod (*cempuriti*) that runs through the torso and into the puppet's neck. The process of carving and constructing a wayang golek begins with the head, considered the most important part of the puppet. Once this is complete, the torso is carved and a hole is drilled vertically through it. Next, a second smaller hole is drilled horizontally from shoulder to shoulder, and a thread is strung through it. The upper arms are then tied to either side of the torso, forming the shoulder joints. The elbow joints are similarly tied together, and wooden sticks are tied to holes in the hands. Wayang golek puppets range from fifteen to thirty inches in height.



SLIDE 16



M. Ahim with his wayang puppets, from *Voices of the Puppet Masters: The Wayang Golek Theater of Indonesia* by Mimi Herbert (2002). Photograph by Tara Sosrowardoyo. Reproduced by permission.

## SLIDE 16 DESCRIPTION

This photograph shows the puppet master (*dalang*) and expert carver M. Ahim in his home sitting next to rows of his rod puppets (*wayang golek*) showing various stages in their making. Ahim manipulates one of the completed puppets (Ghatotkacha, featured in slide 5), which has been carved, painted, and dressed. The iconography of the headdress, the facial features, and the dress of each puppet is based on its character type. For example, noblemen wear velvet bib-shaped chest coverings and aprons, and noblewomen wear velvet strapless bodices; these garments for nobles are adorned with sequins. All of the puppets wear a skirt or sarong made of batik cloth or silk, depending on the character represented. Puppets may be further distinguished by trinkets, jewelry such as hanging tassels, and miniature carved weapons.

In this photograph, Ahim demonstrates the proper way to hold a wayang golek puppet. All puppet masters are ambidextrous: being able to carry and manipulate puppets in either hand or in both hands at the same time. Ahim holds the base of the body between his thumb and index finger underneath Ghatotkacha's sarong while gently grasping the central rod in his palm. In this manner, he is able to rotate the head left to right by moving his thumb and index finger back and forth. In his left hand, he holds two long sticks connected by strings to the puppet's hands. One stick rests in the groove between the thumb and index finger while the other is held balanced between the index finger and the middle, ring, and pinky fingers, which are wrapped gently around the stick. Through years of practice, the dalang brings life to each of the puppets using a seemingly infinite number of movements accentuated by music, song, and speech.

