

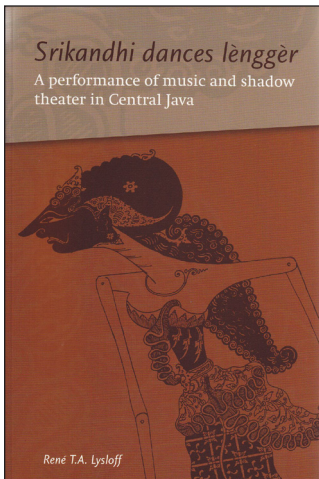
disadvantaged position of women in the traditional Chinese society, she succeeded in painting that as well as creating a novel which is compelling, and with the power to touch the reader's emotion.

One of the most touching parts of the book is when Carolien, after experiencing a number of frustrations and hard-knocks in life, in her late thirties, finds happiness in looking after a foundling, a three-month old baby girl. However she only has a year of maternal bliss. When the baby's biological family is found, Carolien knows that she cannot keep her. The scenes of separation are the most heart-wrenching moments at least this reviewer has had to endure. In fact, this chapter is made even more significant by the sad utterance Carolien gives at the discovery of the baby's sex, that she understands why it was abandoned, 'you are only a girl' (p.182). This utterance I think, gave the book the title.

Credit is also due to the successful translation of the book from English. It retains the magic of a fiction work and all at once, has increased the scope of its readership.

It is a book not to be missed.

René T.A. Lysloff, *Srikandhi dances lènggèr; A performanca of music and shadow theater in Central Java*. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2009, viii + 571 pp. [Verhandelingen 248.] ISBN 978-90-6718-298-0. Price: EUR 39,50 (soft cover).



Dick van der Meij

Center for the Study of Religion and Culture
Syarif Hidayatullah Islamic State University,
Jakarta

dickvdm2005@yahoo.com

Lysloff discusses in his book one performance of the shadow-puppet theater (*wayang*) story (*lakon*) *Srikandhi Mbarang Lènggèr* (translated by him as "Srikandhi dances Lènggèr") as performed in Banyumas. Banyumas is a city which lies on the administrative borders of West and Central Java, and in the cultural fringe of the Central Javanese cultural sphere to the east, and the lands of the Sundanese to the west. The area has long been considered to be culturally peripheral vis-à-vis its eastern neighbours, the refined and cultured Javanese of the Central Javanese principalities.

The book is based on extensive fieldwork, and presents a commercial recording of a studio performance *dhalang* (puppeteer) Sugino and his

troupe made in December 1985. The performance was thus staged in a rather superficial environment, without the presence of invited and uninvited spectators as would be the case in the original setting at home. There was thus no natural public, and this means that part of the discussion Lysloff offers may be considered to have little bearing on the performance he presents and discusses. However, Lysloff states that the *dhalang* of the performance was clearly aware that the commercial cassettes of his recordings would be sold solely in the Banyumas area, and were therefore aimed at a specific Banyumas audience (p. 17). In view of his discussion of the role of *wayang* performances in the local cultural settings and the intricate interplay between the performance troupe, the performance itself, and the audience, I feel that more space might have been devoted to this aspect of the recording. For instance, the direct and localized interactions and commentaries on local subjects, actors, and events that a *dhalang* usually makes during his performance remain absent, notwithstanding Sugino's awareness as mentioned above. The recording was chosen mainly for practical reasons. In a studio there are no ambient noises that might make a transcription of a recording hazardous and tiresome, and he is right, of course.

The book devotes quite some space to a discussion of cultural universals and local traditions and the (often) uneasy relationship between the two. Local traditions are oftentimes ignored in favour of "traditional" culture, usually not because of aesthetic or other cultural reasons, but rather as a result of political considerations. The usual and expected New Order bashing is thus presented, whereas it is not yet clear if the same political games are not being played out in the present, modern, democratic times. His description of this issue in Chapter 1 is useful, however his further elaboration in Chapter 6 eluded me. I have the feeling this chapter used to be an article, and although it fits in rather awkwardly has been included in the book anyway.

The "fundamental" aim of this study becomes clear on page 4: "to examine the process that brings Banyumas particularities and Javanese cultural universalities together in a performance of shadow-puppet theater." This does not seem to accord with his statement on page 97 where he writes:

My purpose of this book has been to provide a case study of musical difference *within* a larger cultural setting - what might be called *intra-cultural* musical difference. My transcription and translation of "Srikandhi Dances Lènggèr" is intended to demonstrate how regional culture is articulated through performance. (Italics in the original book).

I don't think that is actually what the book is about, and for me the introductory chapters seem to have been made as an addition to the real book, which is the second part containing the texts, translations and musical transcriptions. I agree that culture is indeed being articulated in this performance, but not necessarily *regional* culture. I would think that Banyumas culture is not regional for the Banyumas people themselves, but only for those looking at it from the outside. I also wonder if it is the process that has been described, or rather the

outcome of this process. I feel that we should also be talking about multiple, concurrent processes, as the entire cultural complex can hardly be considered to be the outcome of one process only.

The book consists of two parts: part 1 contains the background and discusses cultural universals and local traditions, shadow theater as a cultural institution, the temporal organization of *wayang kulit*, *wayang* temporalities, Sugino and his audience and music and intra-cultural difference. Part two contains a synopsis of the story, the Javanese text and his translation of the performance with musical notes and transcriptions, and as the main topic of the book it is twice the length of part one. The book ends with six appendices containing music transcriptions and drawings of a number of the shadow play puppets used in the performance of this particular *lakon*.

Anyone concerned with Javanese stories – from manuscripts or from oral and theatrical performances – does well to read Chapter 2. It is very interesting and teaches us a lot about the possible ways we might understand these stories. We learn that the stories

[...] are informed by an aesthetics that is more concerned with situational and conceptual intersections than with character development and causal sequences as such. In other words, a *wayang kulit* plot revolves more closely around questions of how and where than those of why and when. (p. 20).

We also learn that characters are seemingly driven by forces beyond their control, and the consequences of their actions sometimes disrupt the universal order of things (p. 21). Furthermore, one “might argue that characters are hardly differentiated from character *type*” and that characters:

[...] become distinctive not in the way they transcend archetype but in how they come to *embody* archetype. Heroes behave the way they do because they are heroes, priests are priests because they are priests, gods because they are gods, and so forth. (p. 21, italics in the original).

Inevitably, drawing on Becker’s work, Lysloff states that “Wayang, then, is made up of multiple conceptual worlds, and the intersection of these worlds – these epistemologies – form the crises at the heart of its plots” (p. 21). For the audience it is important “*how* the story is presented, the *dhalang*’s skills in comedy, characterization, puppet manipulation, singing, and so forth” (p. 23, italics in the original).

For Lysloff, “wayang is, above all else, a *verbal* art form.” (p. 31, italics in original). I think the verbal part is crucial, but the other parts of the performance such as puppet manipulation are also extremely important. For him, perhaps, *wayang* is above all a verbal art, but I think that each member of the Javanese audience has their own preferences, and I imagine that especially the younger spectators are enthralled more by the puppet manipulation than the *dhalang*’s at times rather boring verbal acrobatics. He implies this himself on page 42 where he writes:

One can appreciate the amazing skill and dexterity involved when seeing opposite character types battle, such as an ultra-refined character, like Arjuna, fighting an ogre. With a puppet in each hand (using his fingers to move the arms), the dhalang simultaneously manipulates the gross and restless actions of the ogre and the fluidly calm movements of Arjuna. The more attention a dhalang pays towards such detail, the more his puppets come to life – and *the greater the thrill for his audience.* (italics mine).

Lysloff's exposition of the musical structures (pp. 44 and further) is very interesting and lucid, particularly his remark that unmetered music has "not drawn a great deal of attention in America, perhaps because it does not fit elegantly into our – sometimes rather exotic – notions of what gamelan music should be: organized according to principles entirely different than our own" (p. 47). This is a very important remark, as we cannot deny that the proclivities of the researchers can seriously obfuscate the object of study while claiming to elucidate it. Also, the attention he devotes to the interplay of the dramatic and musical elements of *wayang kulit* (pp. 49 and further) is worthwhile reading, as it reveals yet again a rather understudied part of the *wayang* complex. As Lysloff states, the interaction between the *dhalang* and his gamelan players is complex and deserves more attention. It has moreover – as far as I know – never been studied from the perspective of the gamelan players, but rather from the perspective of how the *dhalang* signals the players what to do, rather than how the players receive, interpret and turn these signals into action. I see no reason why this should be so, and I think that the gamelan players, and especially their social and artistic lives are worth attention.

The book is full of other wonderful remarks that need serious attention. The fact that *dhalang*, among them *dhalang* Sugino under discussion, now resort to additional modern musical and other additions to their plays, and the reaction of the public and other *dhalang* to these innovations (p. 88), is a matter worth of study. The role of *dhalang* on and off stage is also an interesting subject, as implied on page 91. His chapter on the two *dhalang* Sugino (modern, very popular) and Sugito (more traditional and revered but less popular) in the Banyumas area, their competition and many other social phenomena surrounding *wayang* and its players is worthwhile reading and not without humor.

Books containing studies on entire *wayang* performances with texts, translations or commentaries or a combination of these are rare. It is therefore a pity that three of the five studies Lysloff mentions in his note 17 in this book are not in the bibliography, while unfortunately, and for no obvious reason, he has omitted the studies published by Ras and Hinzler. For completions sake I will mention these references at the end of this review. As well as this, some things have gone seriously wrong with the editing. There are quite a few grammatical and syntactic errors, while the number of works quoted but unreferenced in the bibliography is also annoying. This is especially so when whole paragraphs have been quoted, as in the case of the works of Stokes 1994 (p. 99), Devereaux 1989 (p. 101), and Lowe 1996 (p. 107), and especially

Mrazek 1999 (pp. 32-33) which is not in the KITLV library. He probably means Mrazek's 1998 Cornell dissertation published by the KITLV in 2005.

The CD contains nine tracks. Their content is explained on pages 121-125, and the exact place in the book where these tracks are to be found is indicated for easy reference. Tracks one and two presents the *patalon* or *talun*, the overture medley of gamelan music and the music played while the puppeteer sets up the puppets for the opening scene, the first part of which is also presented. Track three contains a *sulukan*, while the remaining tracks present parts of scenes of the rest of the play.

In conclusion, this book is a valuable for those engaged in *wayang* studies, and for others interested and engaged in the study of Javanese and, indeed, Indonesian literatures. In view of the scarcity of published materials in Modern Javanese, the book is also a goldmine for linguists interested in this important Indonesian language.

Liesbeth Ouwehand, *Herinneringen in beeld; Fotoalbums uit Nederlands-Indië*. Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2009, 262 pp. + 200 photos. ISBN 978 90 6718 330 7. Price: EUR 24,90 (hard cover).



Mursidah

Faculty of Humanities, University of
Indonesia
mursidah@ui.ac.id

The Dutch East Indies time has left valuable historical evidence, both for the Dutch who ruled the archipelago at that time as well as for Indonesia, which eventually became an independent nation. With the invention of photography in the early nineteenth century and the increasing

wide availability of photo cameras, photography began to be used to record events in the Dutch East Indies. Nowadays these pictures of the past are sources of important historical data, because through them we can actually 'glimpse' what the real past might have looked like.

The Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) has an extensive collection of photographs of the Dutch East Indies and they are an important source of data for research. The KITLV has also published pictorial reminiscences and the present book *Herinneringen in beeld; Fotoalbums uit Nederlands-Indië* (2009) is one among them. It is compiled and written by Liesbeth Ouwehand, a cultural anthropologist who works as a