Soedarsono

Masks in Javanese Dance-Dramas

Speaking about masks in Javanese dance-dramas stimulates me to trace back the functions of the masks in the past, with the hope that it may clarify the hidden meaning of their roles in their aesthetic uses. Today, a mask literally means a cover for the face usually as a disguise or protection. In Javanese dance it means a cover for the face depicting a character in a story.

The Uses of Masks in the Past

Among the various religious rites of the primitive Javanese people was ancestor worship. It was done by using human or animal statues as the media of worship. Ancestor worship could also be performed by a man with special make-up or by covering his face with a mask. Masks had some signifying roles in the past. They functioned as representations of the ancestors, and also functioned as a kind of religious ceremony which had some connection with fertility rites. The head was considered the most powerful part of the human body; it had magical power. So, the human head as well as animal heads were very important in death rites as well as in fertility rites.

In Java there was an evolutionary development of this primitive ancestor worship to theatrical plays, i.e. wayang or puppet play and wayang topeng or masked dance-drama. In the prehistoric period ancestor worship could be done through the media of stone images. Later on, during the late prehistoric period those stone ancestor images were replaced by figures drawn on leather, the wayang. After the influence of Indian culture was deeply rooted among the Javanese, characters of the Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, were considered as the ancestors of the Javanese. The great deeds of the heroes of the epics were identified as the great deeds of the Javanese ancestors.

In its further development the word wayang, which originally means leather puppet play, has come to mean a dramatic performance, whether the actors are puppets or human beings. Until the 1930s even a movie show was called wayang putih — wayang means “dramatic performance” and putih means “white” — because the dramatic performance was projected on the white screen. The Javanese named some of the dramatic performances by using the word wayang, such as wayang topeng, a masked dance-drama, wayang wong, a dance-drama with dialogues of lyrical prose and wayang kulit, a leather puppet play.
The development from ritual to theatre is very common in the world of performing arts. For example, the Greek tragedy, which was originally a religious ceremony for the worship of Dionysus, god of wine, developed into a tragic masked play, and now has become a tragic drama.

When the centre of the Javanese culture was in East Java (10th to 15th centuries) masked dance-drama was one of the most popular performances in the courts. It had various names, i.e. raket, wayang w旺 and tapel. When the centre of the Javanese kingdom moved to Central Java during the Islamic period (beginning of the 16th century) masked dance-drama got a new name, wayang topeng.

It seems that the use of a mask is the easiest way to picture non-human characters. So, it is not surprising that in Javanese dance-dramas which are not classified as masked dramas, masks are still used for non-human characters, e.g. in the wayang wong and in the Langen Mandra Wanara, a Javanese dance opera.

**Wayang Topeng: A Javanese Masked Dance-Drama**

As I mentioned above, Javanese masked dance-drama which is called wayang topeng has a long tradition. It has developed for about 10 centuries. It was a court performance which had been staged in the palaces of the kings of East Java since the 10th century. During the East Javanese period (10th to 15th centuries), there was a Javanization of the Hindu-Javanese culture. In that period Indian influence was fading out, and Hindu-Javanese culture assumed more Javanese characteristics. Masked dance-drama was the favoured entertainment of the kings and the court nobles. I assume that the stories performed were still Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata during the first half of the East Javanese period. However, the dance techniques and the musical accompaniment were already Javanese. By the beginning of the second half of the period, with the ascendancy of the kingdom of Majapahit in the 13th century, masked dance-drama began to enact the Javanese story, the Panji romance. This romance has come to be the most well-liked story of the Javanese masked dance-drama until this present moment, and this cycle has developed into numerous versions.

As mentioned above, in the East Javanese period the masked dance-drama bore different names, i.e., raket, wayang w旺 and tapel. These names were written in East Javanese kakawin, Javanese poems with Sanskrit meters, e.g., the Sumanasantaka, Smaradahana, Bomakavya, Hariwamsa and the Nagaraker-
tagama. Though masked dance-drama had several names I assume, however, they were all of the same art form.

Raket in Banten, West Java was the favoured performance during the 17th century; it was a masked dance-drama presenting the Panji story. I suspect this West Javanese masked dance-drama came from East Java in the era of the Majapahit empire, when there was a political as well as a cultural contact between both kingdoms. Wayang wong or wayang wlang in Bali is a masked dance-drama enacting stories from the Ramayana. It is the oldest masked dance-drama in Bali, presumably dating back to the 16th century. The costumes and masks of the Balinese wayang wong are very similar to the costumes and faces on the reliefs of the Ramayana carved on the Panataran temple of East Java in the 14th century. Tapel is a word which means mask in Bali. So, it would be reasonable that raket, wayang wlang and tapel were the same art form, i.e. masked dance-drama.

After the fall of the Majapahit empire by the end of the 15th century, the centre of the Javanese culture moved from East Java to Central Java. Islamic religion began to be embraced by the Javanese. Islam, which has a democratic spirit, began to spread throughout Java, affecting people at all levels. The contact between the old culture, the Hindu-Javanese and the new one, however, did not totally alter the way of life of the Javanese. The influence of Islam on the Javanese was more spiritual rather than cultural. There were many noblemen who rejected the new religion, however, and went to Bali, where they could enjoy and preserve their Hindu religion and culture. The migration of the East Javanese noblemen to Bali has strengthened the development of the Hindu culture in Bali until this present moment.

The great religious teachers of Islam, the wali used Javanese performing arts to attract people to come to listen to their sermons. After the show was over, the wali closed the programme with religious teachings. It was a great success. After the enjoyable event, the wali could continue intensively teaching religious doctrines to the masses. At the present time more than 80% of the Indonesian people are Moslems. Masked dance-drama, the wayang topeng became more and more popular among the common people. It became a court as well as a folk performance.

By the middle of the 18th century another genre of Javanese dance-drama was created in the courts of Yogyakarta and Mangkunegaran-Surakarta named wayang wong. It was a dance-drama with dialogues of lyrical prose. The court circle began to love this new entertainment, and wayang topeng became less
popular among the court nobles. Yet, wayang topeng was still a favoured performance among the rural people.

In many villages in Central Java, there was a unique development of the wayang topeng performance. A great number of dalang, Javanese puppeteers of the shadow theatre, who performed only occasionally, had long periods of leisure time. As artists they mastered several art expressions, i.e., literature, poetry, lyrical prose, music and dance. With their mastery of dance they could easily improvise the movements of the characters of the wayang topeng. So, when wayang topeng began to develop in villages many dalang took advantage of this performing art as an additional artistic activity. They performed wayang topeng for the common people. Today, there are still some villages in Central Java where a group of dalang perform wayang topeng. The stories presented are also stories from the Panji romance.

It should be noted that all dancers in the wayang topeng wear masks. There is one typical characteristic of this masked dance-drama, that is, there are always clown-servants who wear funny masks and act and speak humorously. This comical scene is called dhagelan. There are three famous clown-servants in the Panji romance, i.e., Penthul and Tembem, servants of prince Panji and Sembunglangu, servant of King Klana Sewandana. The Penthul dancer wears a white mask with big eyes, a big, round nose, and the lower part of the face is left open. The Tembem dancer wears a black mask with narrow, down-curved eyes, small, flat nose, swollen cheeks, and the lower part of the face is left open. Both half masks enable the dancers to sing and to speak easily. Sembunglangu, servant of King Klana Sewandana, Panji’s rival, wears a full mask. The mask is lightly coloured and also very funny. It has small, round eyes, a small nose and a small puckered mouth.

The Panji romance is a love cycle about Panji, a charming prince of the kingdom of Jenggala and Dewi Chandrakirana, a beautiful princess of the kingdom of Kediri. The part of the romance which is most liked by the Javanese is the scene where Panji has to face and fight his strong rival, King Klana Sewandana from the kingdom of Bantarangin.

In the wayang topeng, prince Panji is pictured as a refined and humble hero who has to solve many problems in order to find his faithful consort, Dewi Chandrakirana. The dance movements of Panji are very refined. The mask of this charming prince is lightly coloured, usually light blue-gray, with long and oblique eyes, a small pointed nose, smiling mouth and no moustache. In profile, the stylized mask of Panji is similar to the face of the leather puppet Arjuna.
In many ways Panji has the same characteristics as Arjuna, the ideal hero of the Indian epic *Mahabharata*. So, the Javanese consider Panji as the Javanese Arjuna.

Chandrakirana is pictured as a refined, humble and faithful princess. The dance of this pretty princess belongs to the refined and humble female type. The mask of Dewi Chandrakirana is lightly painted, usually white, having long and narrow oblique eyes, a small pointed nose, and a smiling mouth. In profile, the stylized mask of Dewi Chandrakirana resembles the face of the leather puppet Sumbadra. Sumbadra, the first wife of Arjuna, is known as the ideal princess by the Javanese.

Another main character of the Panji romance is Klana Sewandana, the king of the kingdom of Bantarangin who is madly in love with Dewi Chandrakirana, Panji's consort. In the great duel, King Klana is killed by Panji. King Klana Sewandana dances as the strong and proud type. His mask is warmly coloured,
mostly red, with big wide-opened eyes, a long and rather big nose, with a laughing mouth and with an upturned moustache. In profile, the stylized mask of Klana resembles the face of a strong and proud king of the leather puppet, for example King Baladewa.

According to Javanese thinking, the comical masks of the clown-servants, i.e., Penthul, Tembem and Sembunglangu are realistic. They resemble funny human faces. As I mentioned above, Penthul has big eyes and a large, round nose; Tembem has narrow, down-curved eyes and swollen cheeks; and Sembunglangu has a small, puckered mouth. H. H. Noosten and G. H. R. von Koenigswald suggest that the models of the Javanese and the Balinese clown masks are sick men.

There are two ways to wear masks in the wayang topeng, i.e. by biting a piece of leather which is attached strongly to the inner part of the mask’s mouth, or by fastening two pieces of string which are tied up at both sides of the mask around the dancer’s head. The former way is older than the latter.

Masks of the wayang topeng are made of wood. A masked dancer needs to know the techniques of moving the mask to enliven the dead face. The Javanese masks should be moved expressively all the time. The stronger the character, the bigger and the more staccato are the movements needed.

Masks in the Javanese Wayang Wong

Javanese wayang wong, a dance-drama with dialogues of lyrical prose, literally has the same meaning as the old wayang wwang from the East Javanese period. Wayang means “dramatic performance” and wong or the old Javanese wwang means “human being”. As art forms, however, these two dance-dramas differ one from the other. Wayang wwang was an ancient masked dance-drama from the East Javanese period, while wayang wong is a Javanese dance-drama with dialogues of lyrical prose. Yet, in Bali wayang wong is a masked dance-drama presumably derived from the old East Javanese wayang wwang.

Though the Javanese wayang wong, created by the 18th century in the courts of Central Java, is today classified as an unmasked dance-drama, nevertheless, for some non-human characters masks are still used. Characters of the wayang wong are classified into two groups, i.e. human characters who do not wear masks and non-human characters who do wear masks. Gods and goddesses belong to the human classification, except Bethara Kala, the god of death, who wears a demonic mask. Giants and animals wear demonic and animal masks.
There are two different styles of masks in the wayang wong. Masks of the Yogyakarta wayang wong cover the whole face of the dancers, while masks of the Mangkunegaran-Surakarta wayang wong cover the lower part of the dancers' faces only. The Yogyakarta full mask is called *topeng*, and the half mask of the Mangkunegaran-Surakarta is called *topeng congoran*.

Wayang wong, both Yogyakarta and Mangkunegaran-Surakarta styles present stories based on the *Mahabharata* epic. By the second quarter of the 20th century however, they began to enact the *Ramayana*, *Lokapala* and mixed repertoires of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*.

Characters of the *Mahabharata* who wear masks are demons of the Sabranggan, a foreign kingdom. They are Newatakawacha, king of the kingdom of Ngimanimantaka; Mamangmurka, vizier of Ngimanimantaka; Chakil, the guardian of the border of a foreign kingdom; Bethara Kala, god of death; demonic soldiers, etc. Animal characters of the epic also wear animal masks, e.g. eagle and boar. Characters from the *Ramayana* epic who wear masks are demons from the kingdom of Alengka and monkeys from the kingdom of Suwelagiri who help Rama to rescue his faithful wife, princess Sinta from the hands of Rawana, the evil king. The soldiers of Alengka who wear demonic masks are prince Kumbakarna, brother of Rewana, Prahasta, vizier of Alengka and most of the demonic soldiers. Rawana himself, the king of Alengka, does not wear a mask. Physically he belongs to human character, but mentally he is a demonic king.

The monkey heroes wear monkey masks. The most famous of the monkey heroes from the kingdom of Suwelagiri are King Sugriwa, Hanuman, the greatest hero of the *Ramayana* and Hanggada, the bravest young hero of the epic. There are some unique soldiers of the monkey kingdom of the wayang wong in the palace of Yogyakarta. They are monkeys but physically portrayed as other animals such as a cock, goat, tiger, or a snake. Jatayu, the giant eagle who tries to rescue Sinta from the hands of Rawana, is also pictured as a giant bird.

During the Golden Age of the wayang wong in the palace of Yogyakarta, 1920–1940, animal characters were costumed like real animals, except the monkeys. In 1939, when I was six years old, I attended a big performance in the palace of Yogyakarta where I could see the dancing of giant eagles, elephants, snakes and of tigers. Even real birds were used as active background. Today, only eagles, deer and boar are still cast in the wayang wong Yogyakarta style.

Masks in the wayang wong Yogyakarta style are full masks, covering the whole face of the dancers. The old masks were made of wood, but since the
The mask of Hanuman, the monkey hero of the wayang wong. Yogyakarta style

The mask of Newatakawacha, the demonic king of the wayang wong. Yogyakarta style

1930s they have been replaced by paper. However, masks of the wayang topeng are still made of wood. The paper mask is lighter and softer than the wooden one and therefore does not break easily. Half masks of the wayang wong of the Mangkunegaran-Surakarta style, topeng congoran, which cover the lower part of the face, are made of cloth with bamboo and wire frames, and decorated with imitation hair. The upper parts of the faces are painted according to the characters portrayed. The non-human characters of the Yogyakarta dance opera called langen mandra-wanara, which depicts stories from the Ramayana, also wear half masks like the ones worn by non-human characters of the wayang wong Mangkunegaran-Surakarta style.

In profile, the demonic mask of the Yogyakarta style is similar to the demonic face of the leather puppet. The colour of the demonic mask is also the same
as the colour of the face of the demon in the leather puppet. It has big round eyes, a big long nose, big and pointed teeth and a heavy moustache. In profile, the monkey mask of the Yogyakarta style is similar to the monkey face of the leather puppet.

So, I would say that according to their iconographic similarities, full masks of the wayang topeng and the wayang wong of Yogyakarta style are based on the faces of the wayang kulit, leather puppets. Generally speaking, wayang topeng and wayang wong are personifications of wayang kulit, the leather puppet play.\(^{16}\)

**Masks in the Javanese Folk Dances**

Masks are also used in many Javanese folk dances, usually picturing mythological beings, demonic characters and clowns. Barongan, a Javanese mythological animal is danced by two male dancers. One dancer takes the part of the forelegs and the other one takes the part of the hind legs. The head of barongan
is made of wood and moved by the dancer with his hands. This frightening mythological animal has big, round eyes, a wide and movable mouth and is warmly coloured. The body is made of a coarse fabric of palm leaves. Barongan is always found in a Javanese jathilan, a folk horse dance, or in a reyog performance.

Cepetan is a demonic character in the jathilan or reyog performance. There are always two cepetan in the show, i.e. Cepetan or Cepet Lanang, male cepet and Cepetan or Cepet Wadon or female cepet. The mask of the Cepet Lanang is large, darkly coloured and very frightening. The mask of the Cepet Wadon is large, lightly coloured and very funny. Both cepet are danced by male dancers and they always dance back and forth trying to scare the children. When that happens, the children run away leaving the crowded audiences, but they come back again after a while.

Penthul and Tembem, clown-servants of prince Panji in the wayang topeng, also participate in the jathilan and reyog performance. According to Javanese folk tale, jathilan and reyog picture Panji's soldiers who are ready to go to the battlefield to fight King Klana Sewandana. Penthul and Tembem, the faithful servants of the prince always try to encourage the soldiers to go to war.

In many Central Javanese villages there are fragments of the wayang topeng masked dance-drama which are very popular among the rural audiences of all ages. They are humorous scenes between a clown-servant and his master, or between a clown-servant and his stupid brother. The most well-liked ones are Regol and Gunungsari, Klana and Sembunglangu, Blanchir, Sebul and Peled and Banchak and Doyok.

Regol is a servant of prince Gunungsari. In a duet dance, Regol always pretends to know everything, to be able to do anything, and always tries to advise his master in many things in humorous ways. Regol wears a funny half mask covering the upper part of the face. The mask is lightly coloured. Gunungsari, the younger brother of princess Chandrakirana wears a refined but proud mask. It is lightly painted, mostly white, with long, oblique eyes, a pointed nose and thin moustache.

Klana and Sembunglangu, a duet dance between master and servant, is also one of the most well-liked items in the repertory. Klana or Prabu Klana Sewandana is the king of the Bantarangin kingdom who falls madly in love with Dewi Chandrakirana, Panji's consort. In his uncontrolled mood, Klana dances to and fro imagining that Dewi Chandrakirana is in front of him. Sembunglangu,
the stupid and funny servant of Klana, always tries to imitate incorrectly his master’s movements. The Sembunglangu dancer wears a funny, full mask covering the whole face. It has small, round eyes, a small flat nose and a small puckered mouth.

Blanchir is a rich merchant of the Jurangparang village in Bantarangin. He has two jealous wives. In this repertory, there is a humorous scene where Blanchir has to divide his love between his two wives. Blanchir’s mask is warmly coloured, usually light pink. It has normal eyes and a very long nose. It is a half mask which covers the upper part of the dancer’s face only. The wives do not wear masks.

Sebul and Peled are brothers, clown-servants of the king of Jenggala. Peled, the elder is a clever servant who moves and acts rapidly, and he is able to imitate the actions of many warriors. On the other hand, Sebul, the younger, is a stupid servant. His stupidity makes the audience laugh. They wear full masks.

Banchak and Doyok, who wear half masks, are brothers, servants of Prince Panji. Banchak, the younger, wears a white half mask with big eyes and a big round nose. He is a clever servant who always advises his elder brother to do correct deeds. Doyok on the other hand, is a stupid servant. He wears a black half mask with narrow and down-slanting eyes, a small, flat nose and swollen cheeks. In the jathilan and reyog performances Banchak and Doyok have other names, i.e. Penthul and Tembem.

In the past few years, in the province of Yogyakarta, there was a new development of a comical genre called wayang topeng dhagelan. Literally wayang means “dramatic performance”, topeng means “mask” and dhagelan means “comical show”. The show casts an unlimited number of performers. It can be performed by three, four or more actors. The stories presented are also flexible, usually contemporary events. Acting is the dominant element, and dancing is done intermittently. Wayang topeng dhagelan is a combination of wayang topeng and comical play.

Conclusion

Masks in Javanese dance-dramas have a long tradition, dating back to the prehistoric period. During that time, mask dance-drama was a ritual ceremony, which was performed for ancestor worship. During the Hindu-Javanese period (1st to 15th centuries), when the Indian culture was deeply rooted among the
A scene from the wayang topeng dhagelan picturing a humorous wedding party; the bride and the bridegroom are sitting on a chair.
Javanese, there was a development of this ritual drama to secular theatre. Characters of the Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, were considered as the ancestors of the Javanese. In the second half of the Hindu-Javanese period, Panji romance, a Javanese cycle depicting the love story between prince Panji and princess Chandrakirana, has become the main theme of the Javanese masked dance-drama, the wayang topeng, until the present moment.

There are two styles of Javanese masks, i.e. full and half masks. Full masks are used for the masked dance-drama called wayang topeng and for non-human characters of the wayang wong Yogyakarta style. Half masks can be divided into two kinds, i.e. half masks covering the upper part of the face of the dancers and half masks covering the lower part of the face of the dancers. Half masks which cover the upper part of the face of the dancers are used for clown-servants of the wayang topeng. Half masks which cover the lower part of the face of the dancers are used for the non-human characters of the Mangkunegaran-Surakarta wayang wong and of the Yogyakarta langen mandra wanara.

Clown scenes have always taken an important role in the Javanese masked dance-dramas. These humorous scenes are usually performed by a clown-servant and his master, or by a clown-servant and his stupid brother. I observe that the clown figure is an integral part of the traditional theatre in Java. Even a contemporary comical show in Java uses masks to portray modern characters in humorous ways. So, I conclude that masks have played a very important role in the world of Javanese dance from the past to the present.

Notes
2 The inhabitants of Irian Jaya still have a special stage, the mbii-kawane for masked dance-drama performance to worship the ancestors. See Soedarsono, Tari-tarian Indonesia I (Indonesian Dances, Vol. 1). Jakarta: Proyek Pengembangan Media Kebudayaan, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1977, p. 94.
3 Soedarsono, "Wayang Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat Jawa" (Wayang in the Life of the Javanese Society), a paper submitted to the Wayang exhibition, Yogyakarta, April, 1972, p. 3.
5 Mrs. Edi Sedyawati Hadimulyo and her team mention in their research report, Tari Dalam Sejarah Kesenian Jawa dan Bali Kuna (Dance in the Ancient Javanese and Balinese Art History) about raket, wayang wong and tapel, though they do not clarify whether they were masked dance-drama or not.
7 Soedarsono, "Theatre Arts as a Creative Force for Nation's Social and Educational Development", Living Traditional Theatres in Indonesia (edited by Soedarsono, Yogyakarta: Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia, 1974), p. 120.
Wayang literally means "dramatic performance", topeng means "mask" and wong means "human being".

In 1755 the Dutch divided the kingdom of Mataram into two, i.e. the kingdom of Surakarta and the kingdom of Yogyakarta. Within the next few years the kingdom of Surakarta was divided further into two, i.e. the kingdom of Surakarta and the princedom of Mangkunegaran; the kingdom of Yogyakarta was divided further into two, i.e. the kingdom of Yogyakarta and the princedom of Pakualaman.

Villages which are still performing are the ones in the Klaten district.

Krida Beksa Wirama, a Javanese dance school in Yogyakarta was able to revitalize successfully the rural wayang topeng by the 1930s, and to enact not only Panji romance but also historical stories such as the establishment of the Majapahit empire, Ken Arok, the Riot of Ranggalawe, etc.

There are three main types of characters in the Javanese dance, i.e. female type, male refined type and male strong type. Each type can be divided into two characters, i.e. humble and proud characters.


The word congoran is derived from the root congor meaning "mouth of a non-human being" and suffix an meaning "imitation".

The Ramayana depicts the story of prince Rama from the kingdom of Ayodhya with his sorrowful experiences to find his faithful wife, princess Sinta, who is abducted by King Rawana. In the search for Sinta Rama gets some help from monkey warriors. In the great battle Rawana is killed by Rama. The Mahabharata depicts two families, descendants of Bharata. They are the Pandawa and the Kaurawa. The Pandawa, the good family, consists of five brothers and the Kaurawa, the bad family, consists of one hundred brothers. Lokapala is the pre-Ramayana story.


References


Noosten, H. H. and G. H. R. von Koenigswald, "Maskers en Ziekten op Java en Bali" (Masks and Sickness in Java and Bali), Djawa III (May 1941), pp. 1–21.


Nach dem Untergang des letzten indo-javanischen Reichs, des Kaiserreichs Majapahit, wurde das javanische Tanzdrama mit der Ausbreitung des Islam zunehmend wayang topeng genannt — wayang heißt wörtlich „Theater“, topeng „Maske“; es wurde fortan nicht nur bei Hof, sondern auch für das Volk aufgeführt. Die großen Lehrer des Islam, die wali, machten sich nämlich die einheimische Schauspielkunst zunutze, darunter auch die Tanzdramen, um das Volk anzulocken und im Glauben zu unterweisen; sie waren im übrigen äußerst erfolgreich, denn heute sind über 80 Prozent der indonesischen Bevölkerung Mohammedaner.


Im wayang topeng wird Panji, der Fürst des Reiches von Djenggala, als ein schlauer Held dargestellt, der viele Hindernisse überwinden muß, bevor er in der Person der Prinzessin Dewi Chandrakirana aus dem Reich Kediri die ideale Gattin findet.


Die aus Holz geschnittenen Masken des wayang topeng werden auf zweierlei Arten getragen: Ursprünglich wurden sie mit Hilfe eines auf ihrer Innenseite befestigten Lederstückchens mit den Zähnen gehalten; neuerdings bindet sie sich der Schauspieler mit zwei an den Seiten der Maske angebrachten Schnüren um den Kopf.


Masken haben also im javanischen Tanzdrama eine überaus wichtige Rolle gespielt; ganz besonders gilt dies für die komischen Masken, denn die Clowns stellen ein unerlässliches Element des traditionellen und modernen javanischen Theaters dar.
Soedarsono

Les masques dans les drames dansés de Java (résumé)

Les masques des drames dansés de Java ont une longue tradition qui remonte à la préhistoire. Les danses masquées étaient alors des cérémonies rituelles associées au culte des ancêtres. Durant la période indo-javanaise (du 1er au 15ème siècle), elles se transformèrent progressivement en théâtre de cour, auquel on donna le nom de raket, wayang wwayang ou tapel, qui puisait ses thèmes dans le Ramayana et le Mahabharata, puis, vers la seconde moitié de la période indo-javanaise, dans le roman de Panji.

Après la chute du dernier royaume indo-javanais, l'empire Majapahit, et avec l'ascension de l'Islam, le drame dansé masqué de Java prit le nom de wayang topeng — wayang signifiant littéralement «théâtre» et topeng «masque», interprété aussi bien à la cour que pour le peuple. Les grands maîtres de l'Islam, les wali, se servaient des arts du spectacle autochtones, y compris des drames dansés masqués, pour attirer le peuple et lui enseigner leur religion, avec du reste beaucoup de succès: en effet, aujourd'hui, l'Indonésie compte plus de 80 pour cent de musulmans.

L'essor du wayang topeng prit un tour unique dans de nombreux villages javanais, où les danseurs étaient les dalang, marionnettistes du théâtre d'ombres. En tant que tels, ils maîtrisaient plusieurs genres artistiques, comme par exemple la littérature, la poésie, la prose lyrique, la musique et la danse. Puisqu'ils étaient aussi danseurs, ils improvisaient facilement les mouvements des personnages du wayang topeng, qu'ils interprêtaient à côté d'autres activités artistiques. Dans certains villages du centre de l'île, les dalang exécutent aujourd'hui encore le wayang topeng. Les plus connus sont ceux des villages du district de Klaten, où les représentations ont encore pour thème le roman de Panji.

Dans le wayang topeng, Panji, prince du royaume de Djenggala, est représenté sous les traits d'un héros raffiné qui doit surmonter de nombreux obstacles avant de trouver l'épouse idéale, qui est Dewi Chandrakirana, princesse du royaume de Kediri. Panji est représenté par un masque de couleur claire, généralement bleu-gris, sans moustache, avec des yeux bridés et effilés, un petit nez pointu et une bouche souriante. Dewi Chandrakirana est une princesse délicate, humble et fidèle. Le masque qui la représente est lui aussi de couleur claire, souvent blanc; quant aux yeux, au nez et à la bouche, ils ont la même forme que ceux de Panji. Prabu Klana Sewandana, le roi de Bantarangin, follement amoureux de Dewi Chandrakirana, est un personnage puissant et fier. Il porte un masque de couleur chaude, rouge la plupart du temps; il a de grands yeux, un nez long et assez gros, une bouche fendue d'un grand sourire et une moustache fournie. Quant aux masques comiques des bouffons, on pourrait presque dire d'eux qu'ils sont réalistes. En effet, ils ressemblent à des humains aux traits amusants, et H. H. Noosten et G. H. R. von Koenigswald laissent entendre que ce sont des malades qui ont servi de modèles pour ces masques.

Les bouffons, qui jouent un rôle important dans le wayang topeng s'appellent Penthul, Tembem et Sembunglangu. Les deux premiers sont les fidèles serviteurs de Panji; quant à Sembunglangu, sot et drôle, il est au service de Klana. Dans de nombreux villages du centre de Java, le wayang topeng comporte des épisodes...
amusants, comme le «pas de deux» de Regol et Gunungsari, de Klana et Sembungglangu, de Sebul et Peled, de Banchak et Doyok, ainsi que la danse de Blanchir avec ses deux femmes.

Dans le wayang topeng, les masques, confectionnés en bois, se portent de deux façons: la plus ancienne consiste à tenir entre les dents un morceau de cuir solidement fixé à l'intérieur du masque, à l'endroit de la bouche, et l'autre à attacher des deux côtés du masque un cordon noué autour de la tête de l'acteur.

Le masque, qui a pour fonction de reproduire les traits du personnage incarné, est particulièrement utile pour la présentation des êtres non-humains. Son pouvoir expressif explique pourquoi les danseurs dansés de Java qui n'entrent pas dans la catégorie des danseurs masqués, emploient cet accessoire pour figurer des personnages non-humains comme les animaux et les démons. Les dieux et les déesses, quant à eux, ne sont pas représentés par des masques, car ils ont figure humaine. Bethara Kala, dieu de la mort, fait cependant exception à la règle, et l'acteur qui l'incarne porte un masque de démon.

Dans la province de Djokdjakarta, on peut assister depuis peu au développement du wayang topeng daghelan, genre comique combinant le drame dansé masqué et la comédie, où les personnages sont masqués. Les termes wayang, topeng et daghelan signifient respectivement «théâtre», «masque» et «spectacle comique». Ce genre est généralement interprété par trois ou quatre acteurs, parfois plus. Ses thèmes, très souples, se rapportent principalement à des événements contemporains. Le jeu prédomine et la danse n'intervient que par intermittence.

Les masques ont joué un rôle très important dans le drame dansé de Java, et notamment les masques aux traits comiques, car les clowns font partie intégrante du théâtre javanais traditionnel et contemporain.