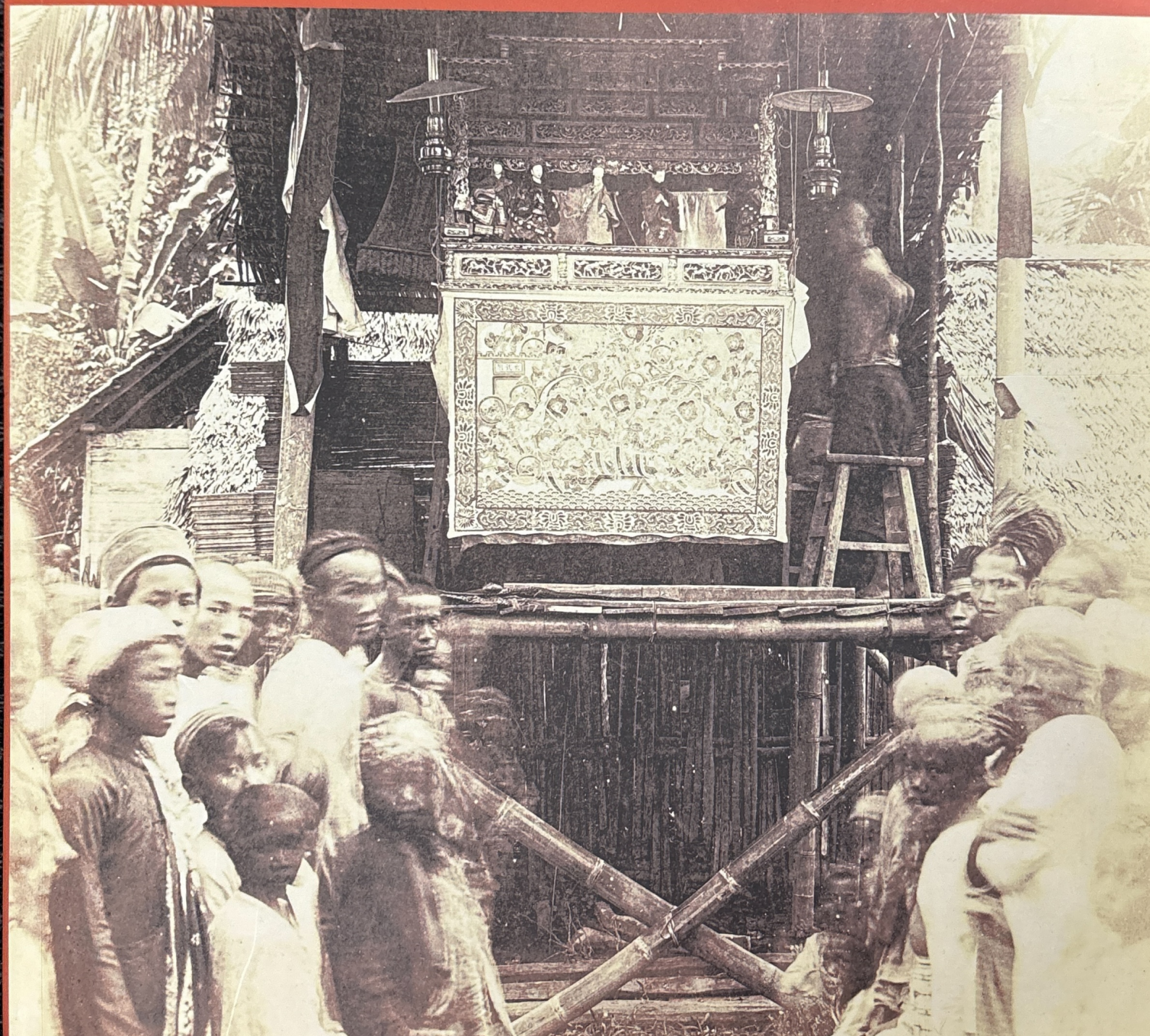


Potehi

Glove Puppet Theatre in Southeast Asia and Taiwan

edited by
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Wayang Potehi:
Hokkien Origins, Indonesian Contexts

Figure 5.1: Javanese-style *potehi* puppet (Collection of the Fu He An Company from Gudo)

Introduction

The Indonesian variety of *potehi*, the glove puppet form which originates in southern Fujian, is frequently known as *wayang potehi*. *Wayang*, a Javanese word for 'shadow', is the Indonesian term for a large family of human and puppet theatres, and has become an important national emblem.¹ The best-known genres of *wayang*, such as the Javanese-Balinese shadow puppet genre *wayang kulit* or the Sundanese rod puppet genre *wayang golek*, are intimately connected with belief and ritual. But the term *wayang* is inclusive both in terms of form (wood, leather, grass, human, cardboard, painted screen) and content (for example, *Ramayana*, Javanese hero Panji, Indonesian revolutionary, Muslim, Christian). In fact, until at least the mid-twentieth century *wayang* was also used to refer to various forms of *xiqu* (Chinese opera), a usage the word retains in Malaysia and Singapore but not in Indonesia. Thus, the term has broad historical use: Indian troupes visiting Java from Malaya in the 1880s were known as *wayang parsi*; Cantonese *xiqu* was known as *wayang makau*; Hakka marionettes in West Kalimantan are sometimes known as *wayang gantung*.² Given this background, the use of the designation *wayang* to apply to the Hokkien glove puppet form *potehi* was natural, and dates at least to the late nineteenth century, when the term appears in Chinese Malay texts, as well as Dutch colonial newspapers and ethnographical accounts.³ While having an organic origin, widespread usage of this term today is also one way that scholars and practitioners of *wayang potehi*

signal their inclusion of this genre within Indonesian conceptions and terminology for performing arts.

Wayang potehi as a genre is deeply affected by the sociopolitical history of Indonesia, especially since the position of Sino-Indonesians has been complex and volatile. To sketch out the history in necessarily oversimplified terms, migration from coastal southern China had produced ethnic Chinese communities on the coasts of Java by the seventeenth century, when the Dutch colonial period began. Despite often brutal conflict and repression, as an administrative ethnic category the Chinese occupied a middleman position which permitted the accumulation of substantial wealth for some families. Inter-marriage with local populations having been the norm, many Chinese communities became linguistically and culturally hybridised or assimilated, while the colonial economic system and racial classification incentivised retention of a separate identity. New migration starting from the nineteenth century produced another large group of less acculturated Chinese populations, who were socially substantially separate from the acculturated (Peranakan) Chinese communities. In the early twentieth century, awareness of events in China and institutional attempts to awaken a pan-Chinese identity caused a process of resinicisation.

Relatively few Chinese identified with the developing revolutionary Indonesian nationalism. After the turmoil of the 1942–1945 Japanese occupation (which treated

the Chinese as an enemy population), and the 1945–1949 Indonesian national revolution (against Dutch and British attempts to recover the Netherlands East Indies), the Chinese were left in the position of being economically powerful but politically vulnerable and suspect. While numerically among the largest ethnic Chinese communities, probably outstripping the numbers of Malaysian, Singaporean or American Chinese, they constitute only 2–3 per cent of Indonesia's total population.⁴

Under President Sukarno (1945–1967) policies targeting 'foreign citizens', almost always Chinese, caused the displacement of many Chinese from rural areas, but a systematic effort at the effacement of the Chinese fact in Indonesia was only experienced under his successor President Suharto (1967–1998), whose dictatorship, known as New Order (*Orde Baru*) was bracketed by harrowing anti-Chinese violence. In the lead-up to Suharto's seizure of power from Sukarno, the Indonesian army instigated and sometimes carried out large-scale massacres in 1965–1966, supposedly to suppress an abortive communist coup. These killings often took on an ethnic character, and in some areas Chinese communities all but disappeared. In the waning days of Suharto's power in 1998, Chinese Indonesians were the targets of killings and rapes in several urban areas, probably fomented by the military.⁵ In the 32 years of New Order, Chinese culture was banned from public spaces, Chinese schools were closed and the Chinese press was all but wholly destroyed. However,

1 See, for instance, Jürgen Hellmann, *Performing the Nation: Cultural Politics in New Order Indonesia*, Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2003, pp. 33–35.

2 It is worth noting, in passing, that there is almost certainly a Chinese marionette history on Java as well. A Chinese Yogyakarta respondent, Liem Ing Hwie, in 1949 was aware of such a form (using the term *kuileixi*), which he regarded as older and as sharing the same repertoire. If they were performing at the same festival, tradition decreed that glove puppetry would perform after marionettes. See J.L. Moens, 'Een Chineesche poppenkast en het spel van den linen zak' [A Chinese puppet show and play from the linen sack], *Jade*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1949, p. 1. This work is referred to several times since his account is an early detailed academic description. Moens's source was practice in Yogyakarta by a Semarang Chinese, whose teacher was an 'Amoy' (that is, Xiamen, but possibly just generally southern Fujian) Chinese. Also worth noting in this context is the practice of telling Chinese stories with special *wayang kulit* puppets, a genre known as *wayang kulit Cina-Jawa* or some variant thereof. The principal source for this genre is

B. Soelarito and S. Ilmi Albaladiyah, *Wayang Cina-Jawa di Yogyakarta*, Jakarta Depdikbud, 1980/1981. It also seems probable that some migrants brought Chinese shadow puppetry to Java. These practices have now vanished, although *wayang kulit Cina-Jawa* puppets are extant.

3 See, for instance, the 1887 Chinese Malay text quoted in Helen Pausacker, 'Peranakan Chinese and Wayang in Java', in Timothy Lindsey, Helen Pausacker and Charles A. Coppel, eds, *Chinese Indonesians: Remembering, Distorting, Forgetting*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005, p. 188; or the 1896 Dutch ethnographic text in Margaret J. Kartomi, 'Indonesian-Chinese music in the Netherlands East Indies', in Ronald M. Radano and Philip V. Bohlman, eds, *Music and the Racial Imagination*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 284.

4 Numbers are notoriously hard to pin down. Recent censuses have recorded a little over 1 per cent, but these are self-reported exercises, and for many there has been and still is a perceived benefit to obscuring Chinese identity.

since religion was protected under New Order, some expressions of Chinese culture could subsist under spiritual or ritual auspices.

Since the *reformasi* period, which began the same year, and especially since the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid, better known as Gus Dur (1999–2001), legal restrictions on Chinese have been abolished and the social environment has been increasingly welcoming of Sino-Indonesian cultural expression in the public sphere. The governor of Jakarta since November 2014, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, is ethnic Chinese, and for many Sino-Indonesians, a new period of integration is at hand. However, the era of oppression and violence is not long past, and many Sino-Indonesians continue to regard questions of identity and ethnic relations with concern. Historical and contemporary performance of *potehi*, as well as its scholarly treatment in Indonesia today, must be understood with this background in mind.

Potehi in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Dutch East Indies

Since several currently active troupe and/or puppeteer (known, by analogy to other forms of *wayang*, as *dalang*) lineages can independently trace their origins to southern Fujian, the most appropriate way to model the genre history is to assume repeated entries of *potehi* practices to various areas of the colonial East Indies.⁶ The earliest suggestion of *potehi* occurs in a Middle Javanese text called *Nawaruci* which mentions 'awayang Cina'. Although it has been suggested that this situates *potehi* on Java in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries,⁷ the term (*a*)*wayang* is too broad for any



Figure 5.2: Chinese *wayang* in Bandoeng (Bandung), early 1930s (KITLV Leiden University Libraries)

particular kind of Chinese performance of entertainment to be identified with certainty.

The earliest solid evidence for *potehi* performance in the Indies concerns the 1772 performance of a Batavia (the Dutch colonial capital, now Jakarta) *potehi* troupe in Semarang. According to the history of Semarang authored by the local Peranakan figure Liem Thian Joe (Lin Tianyou), *potehi* was performed over two months to mark the opening of new buildings of the Tay Kak Sie temple in the Chinatown area *gang* Lombok.⁸ Since the temple is still a *potehi* venue today, assuming the historical account is accurate, *potehi* has been performed for 240 years in the same place. Liem's history draws substantially on now-missing documents of the Semarang Kongkoan (Chinese Council) which he salvaged when it closed in 1931, and thus his claims, while not verifiable against originals, have considerable credibility.

It is certain that by the mid-nineteenth century, human *xiqu* and *potehi* were

both a part of major festivals. At that time, it seems most *potehi* performers were invited from China, and permission had to be obtained for their three- to six-month sojourns; Javanese dance theatre was also being performed alongside the Chinese forms.⁹ There is evidence of *potehi* performance, among other forms of *wayang* at Chinese and civic festivals, in various regions by the late nineteenth century. Sometimes, as in other *potehi* regions, puppetry had ritual purposes: for instance, a month-long performance was held in Kediri in 1869 to exorcise smallpox.¹⁰ At other times, *potehi* was integrated into European colonial festivities: Chinese puppets – almost certainly *potehi* – were present at the quintessential Dutch festival of St Nicholas in Semarang in 1877 alongside the Dutch puppet Jan Klaassen.¹¹ Naturally, many of the earlier accounts are in Chinese festival contexts, generally present alongside non-Chinese Indies forms: in Ambarawa, near Semarang, *wayang potehi* is reported in 1899 alongside *wayang orang*, *tandak*

5 The anti-Chinese suppressions must be contextualised in the thoroughgoing brutality of the regime against all its opponents, perceived or imagined. Given the prominence of the Chinese Indonesians there is sometimes legitimate concern that the suffering of this community obscures the outright wars led by the New Order regime against others, for instance Acehnese, East Timorese or leftists.

6 One of the most prominent puppeteers of the mid-century, Tan Tjoe Yoe of Semarang, only arrived from Fuqing in the 1930s. See Ardian Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi of Java*, trans. Hermanto Lim, Jakarta: Afterhours Books, 2014, p. 44.

7 Hirwan Kuardhani, *Mengenal Wayang Potehi di Jawa*, Mojokerto: Yensen Project Network, 2012, p. 31.

8 Liem Thian Joe, *Riwajat Semarang: Dari Djamannja Sam Po Sampe Terhappoesnja Kongkoan*, Semarang: Ho Kim Yoe, 1933, p. 50.

9 Chen Menghong, *De Chinese gemeenschap van Batavia, 1843–1865*, PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2009, p. 70.

10 Victoria M. Clara van Groenendaal, 'Po-té-hi: the Chinese glove puppet theatre in East Java', in Bernard Arps, ed., *Performance in Java and Bali: Studies of Theatre, Narrative, Music and Dance*, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1993, p. 7.

11 *De Locomotief Samarangsch handels- en advertentie-blad*, Semarang, 7 December 1877 (<http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011023167:mpeg21:a0007>).

and *wayang kulit* on the occasion of the Zhongyuan festival (called *rebutan* or *cioko* in Indonesia).¹² In April 1901 *De Locomotief* reported that *potehi* performances in Welahan were being offered, alongside music and *gamelan* performances for worshippers of Siang Thee Kong, that is, at Hian Thian Siang Tee Bio, established in 1840. An account from 1905 has a devotee travelling to Welahan by foot from Semarang to fetch some incense ashes from that temple; his return was welcomed in Semarang with firecrackers and *potehi*.¹³ As for spectators, colonial articles repeatedly indicate that the audiences at markets and festivals were ethnically mixed (as they remain today). For instance, the 1899 article reports dozens of Javanese viewers coming early in the morning and staying until 5.30 p.m.

Present-day *dalang* lineages mostly originate with arrivals on Java at the turn of the last century. For instance, the Surabaya *dalang* Ki Mudjiono describes his teacher Gan Co Co as 'third generation', which suggests roughly a turn of the century arrival of the genre in Surabaya. *Potehi* performance there is supposedly 'as old as the temple', which is tentatively dated to 1899.¹⁴ Gudo *potehi* practitioners approximate their tradition to 1915–1920, when the present patron Toni Harsono's grandfather arrived from the southern Fujian city of Quanzhou.¹⁵ The Kediri *dalang* Ki Bejo learned the genre from Tan Ang Ang, the pupil of a *dalang* who arrived in Semarang in the 1880s.¹⁶

We have further evidence of the popularity of *potehi* in Semarang in the second half of the nineteenth century from the biography of Oei Tiong Ham (1866–1924), the famous sugar baron, who watched *potehi* as a youth at Tay Kak Sie.¹⁷ The Semarang *potehi* was prominent enough at the turn of the century to spawn a short-lived spin-off called Komedi Boneka Stamboel (Stamboel Puppet Theatre) which used *potehi* puppets but emulated the costumes, narratives and music of the *stamboel* commercial theatre.¹⁸ Another genre, clearly also influenced by *potehi*, was the pedagogical puppetry of the popular mid-century figure Pah Wongso (an Indo, that is, a Dutch-Indonesian Eurasian, Wongso's official name was Louis Victor Wijnhamer).¹⁹ In this period, *wayang potehi* also attracted the attention of several colonial-era Dutch-language researchers on Javanese theatre. Some considered it probable that the Sundanese rod puppet theatre *wayang golek* (being, unlike other forms of *wayang* but like *potehi*, made of carved wood) derived directly from *potehi*.²⁰

In the first half of the twentieth century, *potehi* was performed across a much broader geographical range than is now the case. For instance, the genre is recorded in Sumatra, with attested performance in Padang in the 1870s²¹ and 1901,²² in Medan in 1925²³ and 1933²⁴ and in Solok (West Sumatra) in 1931.²⁵ It seems appropriate to posit wide performance of *potehi* in Hokkien

communities of Sumatra and Java, with the range narrowing to East and Central Java over the course of the second half of the twentieth century. It is thus something of a historical reiteration to find in the present era that the patronage of *potehi* troupes by affluent Chinese in East Java is again extending the range of performance, both geographically and in terms of venue type.

Though disrupted by Japanese occupation and the national revolution, *potehi* did not go into decline immediately after independence. Accounts from Surabaya report *potehi* performance in the Sukarno period occurring 'as usual',²⁶ although there is also a suggestion that it was losing popularity in this period to other forms of *wayang*.²⁷ A 1954 Dutch-language newspaper in Batavia ran advertisements for Pehtjun (that is, Duanwu) festivities in Tangerang, including *potehi* from Semarang alongside other entertainment; the repertoire (*Xue Rengui*; *Qu Yuan*; *Investiture of the Gods*) suggests similarities with repertoire today.²⁸ Along with other mid-century reports, it also suggests that a linguistic shift was gradually occurring from Malay/Indonesian to Hokkien. Some troupes even alternated language on a performance-by-performance basis.²⁹ The fact that the *potehi* performers were from Semarang may suggest that by this time *potehi* had already retreated from West Java and Jakarta. Thio Thiong Gie, who became a *dalang* in the early 1950s

12 *De Locomotief*, 19 August 1899 (<http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010299796:mpeg21a0026>).

13 Lin Tianyou, *Sanbaolong lishi* [History (of the Chinese) of Semarang], trans. Chen Xunhua. Guangzhou: Jinan Daxue Huaqia Yanjiusuo, 1984. p. 212.

14 'Po tay hie, merdeka tampil di mana-mana', *Kabar Independen*, 5 August 2012 (<http://kabarindipendend.com/2012/08/po-tay-hie-merdeka-tampil-dimana-mana/>); Xiao Feifei, 'Yinni Sishui "Fengdexuan" miaoyu budaixi tuan fazhan shi', *Minsu quyuan*, no. 170, 2010, pp. 245, 252. Purwoseputro associates the Surabaya tradition with the arrival of the Go family from Quanzhou; Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*, p. 43.

15 Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*, p. 42. Another source gives the arrival as 1909, and identifies Toni Harsono's great-grandfather as the first arrival. Dwi Woro Retno Mastuti, 'Wayang Cina di Jawa sebagai wujud identitas etnis Tionghoa di Jawa', in *Chinese-Indonesians: Their Lives and Identities*, Surabaya: Institute for Research and Community Service, Petra Christian University, 2013, p. 256.

16 Van Groenendael, 'Po-té-hi', p. 17.

17 According to Toni Harsono, the Gudo patron of *potehi*. Toni Harsono also tells an anecdote about a young Oei inviting a friend to watch *potehi*. In a rush to reach the show, his friend accidentally damaged some wares, which Oei convinced his father to pay for, since – having invited his friend to watch the show – he was responsible for the

associated risks. Presumably, the anecdote is meant to demonstrate Oei's probity. One can find it in several places on the Sino-Indonesian blogosphere, for instance at: <http://djendral-iwan.blogspot.tw/2011/09/mengenal-oei-tiong-ham-4-punya-bakat.html>.

18 Matthew Isaac Cohen, *The Komedi Stamboel: Popular Theater in Colonial Indonesia, 1891–1903*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006, p. 277; *stamboel* was the Dutch and Malay designation for Istanbul, p. 52.

19 Pah Wongso, though not ethnically Chinese, was prominent particularly among the Sino-Indonesian community and starred in two films in 1941. Throughout his career, he was dedicated to various social causes, using puppetry as one means to promote them. Both the pictures and the two puppets held in the Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum collection suggest strong material influence from *potehi*, but other influences, including *wayang golek*, are also discernible. An undated card for his Foundation (some time after 1948) advertises Pah Wongso's 'shows with four kinds of puppets: performances which give advice and education for children who are naughty or wicked. It also attempts to eradicate demoralisation = the wrack of character'. At present, the only available résumé of Pah Wongso's biography is a Wikipedia article painstakingly pieced together by Chris Woodrich, a Yogyakarta-based doctoral student, on the basis of digitised Dutch-language colonial newspapers as well as archival materials made available by the Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum.

(and of whom more below) estimates that there were in that period no more than 10 *dalangs* in Indonesia, all of them in Central or East Java.³⁰ At the same time, additional stimulus may also still have been coming from China, since the Zhangzhou *potehi* troupe (*Zhangzhou mu'ou jutuan*) toured eight cities in Indonesia as late as 1963.³¹

Potehi under New Order (1967–1998)

Potehi did not disappear during New Order, despite the anti-Chinese

sociopolitical climate and legislation. Several Western-language researchers noted ongoing practice during this period. Margaret J. Kartomi and her husband saw *potehi* in Malang in 1974, and Victoria M. Clara van Groenendael, conducting her research from September 1984 to June 1986, saw *potehi* at various sites, concluding that the puppets were 'very popular' in East Java.³² In Pasuruan, Dede Oetomo reported that *potehi* had not been performed there for the 10 years after the beginning of New Order, and that at the time of his writing in 1987

scheduled performances were 'cancelled periodically as a result of a wave of anti-Chinese feeling or a spell of rioting aimed at Chinese business'.³³ Work on Surabaya suggests that performance went on 'without interruption',³⁴ though the *dalang* Sukar Mudjiono reports considerable difficulty getting permission to perform outside of Surabaya in the New Order years.³⁵ Similarly, John B. Kwee, writing in 1996, reports that the *dalangs* needed to obtain permission from local authorities, and were advised to refrain from insulting or political humour, and that 'about ten minutes during the performance [had to be] allegorical in regard to the development program'.³⁶ Similar political complications are reported regarding performances in Malang and Semarang.³⁷ One *dalang* opined that New Order restrictions shifted the centre of Chinese performance from Central Java to East Java, where policy was being less stringently enforced.³⁸ Audiences and performers of Gudo and Mojokerto also confirmed ongoing performances in the 1970s and 1980s. Respondents in Gudo reported that the ascension and birthday of the temple god Guangze Zunwang, with its twice-annual month-long puppet performances, was an even greater festival in New Order years, since none of the other temples of East Java dedicated to that god could celebrate the festival, and hence all the devotees came to Gudo.³⁹



Figure 5.3: *Potehi* performance at Tandjoengkait near Maoek around 1910 (KITLV Leiden University Libraries)

20 G.A.J. Hazeu, *Bijdrage tot de kennis van het javaansche toneel*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1897, pp. 92–93. Moens, 'Een Chineesche poppenkast', p. 2, takes it as a given that *wayang golek* 'evolved under Chinese influence on Java'. The association remains highly speculative, along with all others which suggest that genres of *wayang* were influenced by Chinese puppetry at a formative stage.

21 This circumstantial reference consists of the information that *wajang* meant to Padang people 'Javanese or Chinese box puppetry'. Arend L. van Hasselt, *Volksbeschrijving van Midden-Sumatra*, vol. 1, Leiden: Brill, 1882, p. 131.

22 *De Sumatra Post*, 'Een en ander over het Chineesche tooneelspel', 6 September 1901 (<http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010320643:mpeg21:a0053>).

23 *De Sumatra Post*, Medan, 'De volksspelen', 25 September 1925 (<http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010359328:mpeg21:a0086>).

24 *De Sumatra Post*, 'De opening van den Pasar Malam', 25 February 1933 (<http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010970727:mpeg21:a0074>).

25 Sunariyadi Maskurin and Septina Alrianingrum, 'Perkembangan wayang potehi di Surabaya 1967–2001', *Avatara E-journal Pendidikan Sejarah*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2014, p. 177.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 177.

27 Moens, 'Een Chineesche poppenkast', p. 9.

28 *Java-Bode: nieuws, handels- en advertentieblad voor Nederlandsch-Indie*, Jakarta, 4 June 1954 (<http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010861812:mpeg21:a0071>). According to Matthew Isaac Cohen, Malay and Hokkien were already being combined in *potehi* in

late nineteenth-century Surabaya. Cohen, *The Komedi Stamboel*, p. 39.

29 Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*, pp. 42–43.

30 For names and areas of activity of mid-century *potehi dalangs*, see *ibid.*, p. 44.

31 Wang Yilin, 'Zai shuai san jie haishi zunshi yanghui: Zhangzhou mu'ou jutuan fazhan licheng chuyi', *Fujian jiaoyu xueyuan xuebao*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2009, p. 111.

32 Kartomi, 'Indonesian-Chinese music', pp. 298–303; Van Groenendael, 'Po-té-hi', p. 11. While Santoso is still active in Tulungagung, and the Gudo practice will be discussed below, it would seem that there is no longer a Kediri group.

33 Dede Oetomo, *The Chinese of Pasuruan: Their Language and Identity*, Canberra: Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1987, p. 52.

34 Maskurin and Alrianingrum, 'Perkembangan', pp. 178–79; Xiao, 'Yinni Sishui', pp. 252–54.

35 Indra Harsaputra, 'Sukar Mudjiono: Puppet master bridges worlds', *Jakarta Post*, 11 February 2010; *Kabar Indipenden*, 'Po tay hie'.

36 John B. Kwee, 'A study of potehi, the Chinese puppet theatre in Indonesia', *Asian Culture*, no. 20, 1996, p. 47.

37 Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*, p. 50.

38 Van Groenendael, 'Po-té-hi', p. 18.

39 Indeed, a picture of a 1977 performance shows a large audience. Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*, p. 96.



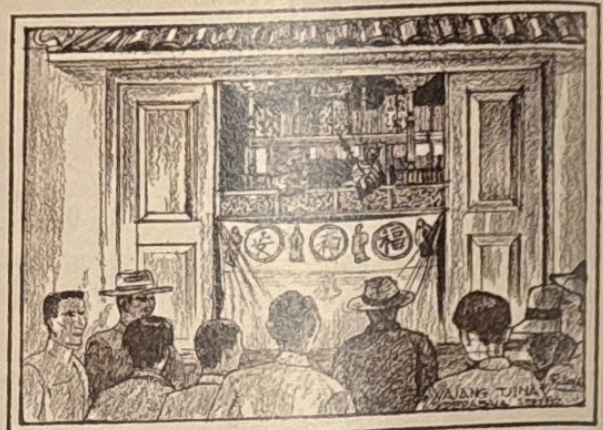
Figure 5.4: Chinese glove puppet theatre in Solok, Sumatra in 1891 (KITLV Leiden University Libraries)

In this period the shift in performer ethnicity also began, with new *potehi dalangs* and musicians largely drawn from the ethnic Javanese rather than the Chinese population, in several cases on account of proximity to a temple and early exposure to *potehi*. One Javanese *dalang* Ki Sesomo began performing as a musician in 1964, and became a *dalang* in 1968, arriving in Gudo specifically to perform *potehi* in 1971.⁴⁰

If the overall result of New Order on *potehi* was a 'decrease in performances, causing many *potehi* performers to change professions or retire, and many temples not to dare to host *potehi* shows, leaving only a few temples and private individuals to maintain the art',⁴¹ how ought one to reconcile this with the wealth of evidence for ongoing *potehi* performance in the period? It seems most appropriate to regard the suppression of Chinese culture as uneven over era and region. The balance of evidence

suggests strong suppression towards the beginning of New Order, substantially but unevenly tolerated temple performance, and performance growing increasingly frequent towards the end of the period. A 1997 Jombang local government document explicitly prohibited the temple performance of '*wayang golek potehi*'⁴² and '*liang-liang*' (dragon dancing) while allowing *wayang kulit*, Javanese dances, a band and cinema – but these prohibitions were often ignored, and it is clear that local authorities turned a blind eye when it was worth their while.⁴³

The present period of *reformasi* (1998–to date), with its increasing public space for Sino-Indonesian performance, has allowed for the free exhibition of *wayang potehi* inside and outside of temple grounds. One result has been the growing representation of *wayang potehi* as an emblematic Sino-Indonesian art, expressed in the increasing prominence of performances through systems of symbolic patronage, village



1933		M	E	I	1933	
1	ZONDAG	+	7	14	21	28
2						+
3	MAANDAG	1	8	15	22	29
4						+
5	DINSDAG	2	9	16	23	30
6						+
7	WOENSDAG	3	10	17	24	31
8						+
9	PONDERDAG	4	11	18	25	+
10						+
11	VRVDAG	5	12	19	26	+
12						+
13	ZATERDAG	6	13	20	27	
14						
15						
16						

Figure 5.5: *Wayang Tjina* in Surabaya 1933 by H. van Ingen and B.W.J. Deppe, lithograph (KITLV Leiden University Libraries)

outreach, museums and exhibitions, and scholarship which seeks to reposition *potehi* as the ethnic Chinese element of a pan-Indonesian *wayang* system. This instrumentalisation of *potehi* in order to negotiate ethnic identity will be returned to in the final section.

One effect of the *reformasi* era has been the reopening of cultural exchange with China and the Chinese diaspora. As a consequence, in recent years *wayang potehi* patrons and enthusiasts have visited and/or performed in Japan, Taiwan, China and Europe. By the same token, the door is also now open for a renewal of exchanges with *potehi* elsewhere, as with the Zhangzhou official troupe's 2004 visit to Sino-Indonesian organisations in Palembang,⁴⁴ and the 2005 Jakarta performances of the official Jinjiang *potehi* troupe at the invitation of the Indonesian association for descendants of Jinjiang emigrants.⁴⁵

Wayang Potehi Companies

All active companies in Indonesia today are situated in the cities of Central and East Java. There are three active temple-based troupes: Fu He An, which is situated at the Hong San Kiong temple in Gudo, which belongs administratively to Jombang; the troupe, sometimes known as Lima Merpati (Five Doves), in Surabaya at the Hong Tiek Hian temple; and the Tulungagung troupe at the Tjoe Tik Kiong temple. In addition to these, a Mojokerto troupe, which is not largely temple-based, and the historic Semarang tradition deserve mention. The latter, with the death of Thio Thiong Gie in August 2014, faces an uncertain future.

Performances outside of East or Central Java consist of travelling troupes

from these two provinces. *Potehi dalangs* and patrons usually number the active *dalangs* at from nine to twelve, and put the number of *potehi* musicians at several dozen. *Potehi* is loosely documented, so there are always more troupes and more performance sites than typically listed in any one source; and *potehi* troupes all perform in both their home locales and away. Ethnic Javanese *dalangs* now form the overwhelming majority of musicians and puppeteers, including all those of the younger generation.⁴⁶

Ardian Purwoseputro lists 34 locations all over Java in the pre-New Order era (plus Lampung on Sumatra), but occasional temple sites today are overwhelmingly also in East and Central Java. Hirwan Kuardhani mentions Pekalongan, Lasem,

Rembang and Tuban as historic locations; Kartomi contains references to Malang, Tuban, Kediri and Blitar; in the 1960s Thio worked in Cianjur, Sukabumi and Mojokerto at some length; Oetomo writes about *potehi* in Pasuruan; and John Kwa cites Lamongan as still active.⁴⁷ Media references from the last few years indicate shows in Welahan,⁴⁸ Bogor, Kediri and Malang, generally for particular festivals. In one blog post, Surabaya *dalang* Ki Mudjiono is quoted as saying that 'thanks to *potehi*, I have visited 134 cities all around Indonesia', before the author mentions upcoming performances in the United States and Germany.⁴⁹ Today, most Jakarta performances are in shopping malls, other relatively upscale venues, which recently have included Hotel Majapahit Surabaya,⁵⁰ Hotel Grand City Surabaya, Trans Studio Bandung, as well as the Chinese Cultural Centre and a Javanese Protestant church (Gereja Pugeran) in Yogyakarta. On several of these occasions there have been exhibits of puppets accompanying performances.

Fu He An: A Representative Temple Troupe

Fu He An is the hereditary troupe of the Harsono/Tok family,⁵¹ now represented by the local gold merchant Toni Harsono (Tok Hok Lay, b. 1969), the grandson of Tok Su Kwie (who arrived from Quanzhou) and son of Tok Hong Kie, both *potehi dalangs*. Toni Harsono inherited their traditional stages (of which one is from China) and puppets (of which 30 are from China). A collector, Toni Harsono has also kept his

Name of temple Chinese name of temple	City Chinese name of city	Note
Hong Tiek Hian 鳳德軒	Surabaya 泗水	Often known by the street name: Dukuh
Poo An Kiong 保安宮	Blitar 勿裡達	Visits of Fu He An
Hong San Kiong 鳳山宮	Gudo (Jombang) 古島 (絨網)	Home of Fu He An
Hok Sian Kiong 福善宮	Mojokerto 惹班	Visits of Hong Tek Kian
Tjoe Tik Kiong 惹德宮	Tulungagung 圖隆阿貢	Resident troupe
Tay Kak Sie 大覺寺	Semarang 三寶壟	Earliest known Indies <i>potehi</i> site

Table 5.1: Principal temples featuring *potehi* performances

⁴⁰ Interviews with Ki Sesomo in January and May 2013, as well as *ibid.*, p. 52. 'Ki' is a Javanese honorific, used before the names of accomplished artists. Van Groenendael identifies the adoption of 'Ki' as a response to government policies of assimilation; van Groenendael, 'Po-té-hi', p. 15.

⁴¹ Xiao, 'Yinni Sishui', p. 238.

⁴² It is worth noting that even in the process of (ineffectually) forbidding *potehi*, authorities used vocabulary assimilating *potehi* not only to *wayang* but to the rod puppet genre *wayang golek*.

⁴³ Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*, p. 51.

⁴⁴ Minnan Ribao, 'Zhangzhou shi jutuan fu Yinni Yanchu', 24 September 2004.

⁴⁵ *Jinjiang shiqing xunxi wang*, 'Zhangzhong mu'ou jutuan fu Yinduonixiya yanchu', 26 July 2010.

⁴⁶ In an interview, the Surabaya *potehi* researcher Ardian Purwoseputro puts the proportion of *pribumi* musicians and *dalangs* at 90 per cent. Dinie Tama, 'Wayang

potehi Indonesia lebih original', *Portal Jatim*, 30 August 2013 (<http://portaljatim.com/index.php/pariwisata-budaya/item/1264-wayang-potehi-indonesia-lebih-original>).

⁴⁷ Kartomi, 'Indonesian-Chinese music'; Kuardhani, *Mengenal Wayang Potehi*; Oetomo, *The Chinese of Pasuruan*;

⁴⁸ Fatkhul Muin, 'Imlek di klenteng Hian Thian Siang Tee Welahan', *Detik*, 8 August 2012 (<http://travel.detik.com/read/2012/08/08/063255/1822856/1025/imlek-di-klenteng-hian-thian-siang-tee-welahan>).

⁴⁹ Lambertus Hurek, 'Daleng potehi panen di klenteng', *Blog Hurek*, 12 May 2015 (<http://hurek.blogspot.tw/2015/05/dalang-potehi-panen-di-kelenteng.html>).

⁵⁰ Noviyanto, ed., 'Hotel Majapahit gelar seni tradisional wayang potehi', 14 January 2012 (<http://www.lensaIndonesia.com/2012/01/14/hotel-majapahit-gelar-seni-tradisional-wayang-potehi.html>).

⁵¹ Processes both of acculturation and repression have contributed to the phenomenon that most Indonesian Chinese individuals have Chinese and Indonesian surnames.



Figure 5.6: Permanent temple stage structure at the Hong San Kiong in Gudo



Figure 5.7: Original stage of the Fu He An (Hok Ho An) company

father's performance notes, and many of the print sources, mostly from the 1930s to 1950s, on which his father drew for performances. Only 13 years old at his father's death, Toni Harsono's interest in and knowledge of *potehi* was obtained to a great extent from others, such as the *dalang* Ki Gunawan (Liem Sing Tjwan) and the musician Tan Ping Han.⁵² Harsono and the Hok Ho An carver Supangat, a 48-year-old former furniture sculptor, who moved to Gudo for this work, are among the most prolific producers of *potehi* puppets and stages. Seeking to spread *potehi*, Harsono has donated examples of his work to the Quanzhou Museum, the United States consulate in Surabaya and several Western museums.

The troupe is housed at the Hong San

Kiong temple, where performances are generally held surrounding the festivals of the main temple god, Kong Tek Cun Ong. At these junctures, performances go on for 30 to 40 days or so, telling a different episode from the same narrative system twice a day. For instance, in October and November 2012, for the month following the god's ascendance to heaven, the performance being featured was *Eighteen Warlords Oppose the King*. At the same time, at Blitar's Poo An Kiong temple, other members of the troupe were performing two alternating Xue Rengui stories, in the afternoon and evening.⁵³ In both places, performers and audiences were largely ethnic Javanese. In January and February 2013 the resident *dalang* Ki Sesomo played *Xue Gang Opposes the Tang*

over a total of 43 days, having recently finished a shorter sequence about Lady Meng Jiang and the Great Wall, the latter being an adaptation he had put together himself from a translated book.⁵⁴ During the festival performances, Ki Sesomo performed twice a day, one and a half hours in the afternoon, and two and a half hours in the evening. In Surabaya, during the Imlek celebrations, there are even three daily performances, at 9 a.m., 1 p.m. and 6 p.m.⁵⁵ As in colonial times, we find *potehi* in the context of wider celebrations and performance arts. In October 2012, for instance, *wayang kulit* performers came from Kediri to Gudo for performances on temple grounds, which were largely for a local Javanese audience. Similarly, in Mojokerto both *ludruk* and transvestite

52 Personal communication. See also Sutono, 'Jelang Imlek wayang potehi banjur job', *Tribun News/Surya Online*, 4 February 2013 (<http://surabaya.tribunnews.com/2013/02/04/jelang-imlek-wayang-potehi-banjir-job>); Norma Anggara, 'Mengintip seni wayang potehi di klienteng Hong San Kiong Jombang', *Detik*, 4 February 2013. Also worth noting is Matthew Isaac Cohen's account of meeting Ki Sesomo in Yogyakarta, posted on his blog Indonesian Performance, 9 February 2009 (<http://indonesianperformance.blogspot.tw/2009/02/more-on-wayang-po-teh-hi.html>); and Hirwan Kuardhani, *Toni Harsono: Maecenas Potehi dari Gudo*, Yogyakarta: Isacbook, 2011, p. 36.

53 Moens, 'Een Chineseesche poppenkast', p. 5 in 1949 reports no afternoon performances, with evening performances only from 8 p.m. to midnight.

54 In Surabaya, there have also been *potehi* series based on the novels of the Sino-Indonesian author Kho Ping Hoo. Xiao, 'Yinni Sishui', p. 256.

55 I.D. Nugroho. 'Let the potehi puppets perform', *Jakarta Post*, 23 January 2009 (<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/01/23/let-potehi-puppets-perform.html>).

56 The information on Thio is based largely on my own interview in January 2013, while corroborating via Kuardhani, *Mengenal Wayang Potehi*, pp. 95–97; 'Chinese puppeteer back on stage after 32 years', *Jakarta Post*, 9 April 2000 (<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2000/04/09/chinese-puppeteer-back-stage-after-32-years.html>); Lutfi Retno Wahyudanti, 'Teguh Chandra: Exit the persecuted puppets', *Jakarta Post*, 20 March 2009 (<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/03/20/teguh-chandra-exit-persecuted-puppets.html>) and Ganug Nugroho Adi, 'Thio Tiong Gie: Preserving the vigor of potehi', *Jakarta Post*, 10 November 2010 (<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/11/10/thio-tiong-gie-preserving-vigor-potehi.html>). Also valuable are the blog post 'Thio Tiong Gie, banteng terakhir wayang potehi', *Saetu Baik*, 5 October 2014 (<http://saeitubaik.blogspot.com/2013/10/dinasti-terakhir-wayang-potehi.html>), and Wibowo Wibisono, 'Finding Thio Thiong Gie', *My Journal*, 26 May 2013 (http://wibowowibisono.blogspot.com/2013_05_01_archive.html). Wibowo Wibisono also kindly granted permission to use his photograph of Thio.

Javanese dancing were incorporated into *potehi* events.

Because his patronage is temple-based and his family has a long history with *potehi*, there is a great deal of continuity in Harsono's approach. He is both the chairperson of the temple and the employer of the puppet troupe. Other locals, many of them members of his family, or people in his circles, sign up to fund a particular performance in the long performance series. That funding is often related to thanks they wish to offer or help they want to enlist from the temple deities. On many days there is no audience at all; the ritual purpose is central. Respondents note that such performances occur primarily to satisfy religious obligations or express requests from the deities, not to entertain audiences.

Bridging the Eras: Semarang's *Potehi Dalang* Thio T(h)iong Gie

The most representative figure for contemporary *potehi* is perhaps also the only *dalang* who performed both before and after the Suharto-period anti-Chinese repressions.⁵⁶ This is Thio T(h)iong Gie (1933–2014), who also used the Javanese name Teguh C(h)andra Irawan. Alongside two brothers in Tulungagung (Ki Santoso [Liem Giok Sam] and Ki Kuwato [Liem Giok Bing]), he was at his death the only active *dalang* of Chinese ethnicity. Born in Demak, Thio moved with his family in 1942 to Semarang. Thereafter, he lived in the historic Chinese quarter and gave interviews around the corner from where the 1772 *potehi* performance occurred.

As a young man, Thio found a book, *Prince Ciyun Flees His Country*, in some junk paper his father bought. Hearing

Thio retell the narrative with such gusto, a friend of his father's suggested that he consider performing *potehi*. Thio was invited to perform *Prince Ciyun* at Cianjur, where he was contacted by a Blitar *dalang* called Tan Ang Ang who gave him various Chinese stories in book form. Thio proceeded to develop his career as *dalang* in Blitar, where he soon attracted large audiences. At one point, Thio replaced the Gudo performer Tok Hong Kie (father of Toni Harsono, now patron of the Gudo troupe) in Blitar when Tok was unable to perform. 'Within a week, I learnt to be a *potehi dalang* autodidactically'.⁵⁷ At the height of his career in the early 1960s, Thio performed two or three engagements a year, usually surrounding the temple holidays. Many of the engagements were of considerable length: on Mojokerto on one occasion he was engaged for four or five months, in Sukabumi for two months and seven days. The furthest away he ever performed was in Lampung and Palembang (both on Sumatra, at the time several days' journey from Semarang).

Interestingly, Thio had also performed what he called 'Hokkien opera', presumably related to forms such as *gezaixi* or *gaojiayi*.⁵⁸ Consequently, according to his own account, his performances as *potehi dalang* adopted 'traditional opera' tonality. However, he also made use of a variety of musical influences. For instance, he used the melody of 'Siji ge' ('The Song of the Four Seasons'), a song adapted from a Suzhou folk song by He Lüting, one of the most prominent of China's composers of the middle decades of the twentieth century. Thio, who watched a great many Chinese films in his youth, adapted the song with Indonesian lyrics for use in his *potehi* performances. Conversely, he

also translated lyrics from Javanese songs for use as Hokkien *potehi suluks*.⁵⁹ When asked what qualities a *dalang* needed, he replied that one needs to be 'crazy' (*gila*) which, when asked to elaborate, he said meant that one needs to take on all sorts of influences.⁶⁰ The fact that Thio could become a *dalang* without formal study, and that musical influences could be easily added, suggests that in the 1950s the genre was loosely defined. This, in turn, suggests that at a performance and repertoire level divergences between *potehi* performance in China and in Indonesia were already substantial. Thio's career also underwent the shift from Hokkien to Indonesian, which he explained as necessary to maintain audience interest, although he also reported harassment from authorities to remove Hokkien *suluks* and lotus flower imagery.⁶¹

Until his death in 2014, Thio was also a part of the *potehi* revival of the *reformasi* period, although Semarang has had neither the frequency of performance nor the level of patronage compared to Gudo and Mojokerto. In 2010 he was still travelling a great deal, performing that year in Jakarta, Solo and Sukabumi, sometimes for several weeks and in a group of up to 20 musicians, from Semarang and Surabaya. In the last few years he performed less often and for shorter periods – such as a three-day stint in Semarang after Chinese New Year and on the occasions of other important festivities, such as those honouring Zheng He and Guan Gong. Then again, in July 2014, one month before his death, he had finished a 70-day stint in Sukabumi.⁶² His death received coverage in the major national newspapers.

57 Kuardhani, *Toni Harsono*, p. 35.

58 For *xiqu* in the East Indies, see Josh Stenberg, 'Sketches towards an Indies and Indonesian *xiqu* history', *Asian Theatre Journal*, forthcoming. Genre boundaries, even in China, between various opera forms are disputable. Trying to rigidly apply mainland China genre terms to extinct performance practices in the archipelago may be anachronistic.

59 *Suluk* is a Javanese *wayang* term designating a kind of 'mood song' sung by the *dalang* periodically to generate a particular atmosphere. Generally, characters who first appear in Chinese theatre (including puppetry) explain who they are and what they intend. These fixed Hokkien phrases have been retained in *potehi*; the term *suluk* has been applied to them by analogy in *potehi*, and was already recorded by Moens in 1949. Moens, 'Een Chineseesche poppenkast', p. 4.

60 Similarly, the Surabaya *dalang* Gan Co Co is credited with having opened up *potehi* to various influences, including Javanese *campursari* rhythms. Harsaputra, 'Sukar Mudjiono'.

61 Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*, pp. 50–52. The lotus flower apparently recalled the banned Sino-Indonesian organisation Badan Permusjawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia (Baperki), founded in 1954 with the objective of gaining equality for Chinese Indonesians.

62 Kistyarini, ed. 'Thio Tiong Gie sang dalang wayang potehi tutup usia', *Kompas*, 20 August 2014 (<http://regional.kompas.com/read/2014/08/20/20172811/Thio.Tiong.Gie.Sang.Dalang.Wayang.Potehi.Tutup.Usia>).



Figure 5.8: Traditional puppet carving of the Fu He An company in Gudo (Carver: Supangat)



Figure 5.9: Traditional stage suspended with ropes inside the permanent temple stage structure



Figure 5.10: Production of traditional stages with the Fu He An company in Gudo

Stage and Puppets

In terms of stage and puppets, Javanese *potehi* troupes have shown themselves to be quite conservative, departing relatively little from the stages and puppets that were brought from China (and some of which are still conserved). The full stage consists of a raised stand-alone structure (3–4 m in length x 3–4 m width x 2–3 m height, raised on 1 m poles), usually on temple grounds with a box in front of it as the puppet stage made of teak (125 cm length x 50 cm width x 110 cm height).⁶³ Lighting was once accomplished through 'dainty lanterns, a few at the front of the ceiling and a single one in the middle of it, right against the back wall of the stage'. In 1949 'naked electric bulbs' were in use,⁶⁴ while nowadays various forms of electric lamps are employed. This means evening performances may sometimes be interrupted by blackouts. It is also common for the *dalang's* voice to be amplified.⁶⁵

Traditional stages in venues such as Gudo, Mojokerto and Blitar are enclosed raised wooden structures within the temple grounds, facing the altars of the gods, and accessible through a back door. The stage in the Surabaya temple Hok Tik Hian, on the other hand, is built into the structure of the temple. Musicians and puppeteers sit behind the stage rather than stand. The puppets are kept in chests and arranged before the performance on bars in order of appearance. Small mobile stages are used for performances in villages, galleries and malls, and in such cases the puppeteers and musicians are not enclosed. Before the performance begins, the musicians play *lau-tai* to signal that a performance will soon begin. Previously it seems that *lau-tai* was played half an hour before the beginning of a show; now it is done five minutes before.⁶⁶

Stages and puppets were at first brought from the Quanzhou area of Fujian, and examples of both stages and puppets from that era are extant in Gudo. A 1949 account

gives the size of clothed puppets as 25–30 cm,⁶⁷ which roughly corresponds to their size today. New puppets were beginning to be made in Indonesia in the 1970s and 1980s, especially in Tulungagung and Surabaya, supplementing those that had been brought from China. In recent decades, Gudo has also become a centre of puppet-making. Puppet sets usually number 100 to 160. Toni Harsono has one of the largest collections, at 3,000 *potehi* puppets. Another substantial collection forms the basis of a *potehi* museum in Mojokerto. While older puppets with costumes (from China) are still preserved and are sometimes exhibited, puppets in general use are now Indonesian-made. In Gudo, costumes are now computer embroidered, copying scans of older costumes. One unusual feature of this process is embroidering which mimics wear and tear in the original artefact.

The price for a set of *potehi* puppets is reported as Rp 50 million in Gudo and Rp 50–75 million in Tulungagung (\$3,600–

63 Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*, p. 118.

64 Moens, 'Een Chineesche poppenkast', pp. 2–3.

65 For instance in Gudo, where the stage is near to a major street, and the voice of the *dalang* might otherwise often be inaudible.

66 Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*, p. 101.

67 Moens, 'Een Chineesche poppenkast', p. 2. In that era, the puppets were likely still of Chinese origin.

5,440).⁶⁸ An interview with the principal Tulungagung sculptor (and *dalang*) Liem Giok Bing in 2014 suggested a recent steep rise in *potehi* orders, not only sets from domestic puppeteers but also individual puppets (at Rp 350,000–1 million or \$25–75) from 'Australian, Korean and Taiwanese *wayang* enthusiasts'. Sie Djin Kwie was the most popular puppet.⁶⁹

The following represents the comments of a Quanzhou *budaixi* aficionado, Wang Xiaobo, who examined *potehi* puppets donated by Fu He An. Wang concluded that at a material level the Chinese and Indonesian puppets closely resemble each other, with the following differences:

- 1 Whereas Quanzhou puppets are made of camphorwood, Gudo ones are made from six-year *waru* (sea hibiscus) or mahogany.
- 2 Quanzhou puppet beards and hair are now predominantly made of yak hair or silk, while Gudo puppets (like traditional Quanzhou puppets) use human hair.
- 3 For the headdresses, Quanzhou puppets use the traditional embossed painting and gilding method (*lifén tiejīn*) while the Gudo puppets use the newer Zhangzhou (or a similar) method of using cardboard, silk and beads.
- 4 Quanzhou puppets use Panjin-style hand embroidery, while Gudo now uses computer embroidery.
- 5 The inner bag of Gudo puppets is the same length at the front and back, whereas for Quanzhou puppets it is shorter at the back than the front, which makes it easier to get the puppet on one's hand.
- 6 The inner bag for Quanzhou puppets has an L form where the arms meet the torso, which makes the waist and the hands of the puppets more clearly delineated. The Gudo puppets have an inner bag which is almost square-shaped.
- 7 Almost all of the Gudo puppets have two strings to fix the headdress to the

head. This is still seen in Zhangzhou rural puppets. The Gudo puppets have two head nails at the temple, to fix the strings. Quanzhou *budaixi* puppets no longer have head nails, although Quanzhou marionettes have head nails which are part of the suspension system.

- 8 Quanzhou puppets have a hole in the hand stick for the auxiliary rod, use of which allows the puppets to do complex motions such as pouring liquids, fanning themselves or shooting arrows. Gudo puppets have no such fine motions, no rod, and no hole in the hand stick for the rod.⁷⁰

While it would not be difficult to apply *xiqu* role-types to *wayang potehi*,⁷¹ in practice these role types are not generally mentioned by practitioners, although casually they certainly speak in terms of categories such as 'generals', 'princesses', 'kings', 'children' and so on.

Roman characters in use in Indonesia		Chinese		English
Hokkien	Indonesian or Javanese	Characters	Pronunciation in Pinyin	
<i>sai-hu / schu</i>	<i>dalang / dhalang</i>	師傅	<i>shifu</i>	chief performer ⁷³
<i>au tay</i>		後臺	<i>houtai</i>	musician
<i>ol hu</i>	<i>rebab / kongayan</i>	二胡	<i>erhu</i>	larger two-string spike fiddle
<i>hian na / cinghu</i>	<i>rebab kecil</i>	京胡	<i>jinghu</i>	smaller two-string spike fiddle
<i>san hsien / sam-hian</i>	<i>tiga senar</i>	三弦	<i>sanxian</i>	three-string lute
<i>bien siau / phin-siau</i>	<i>suling / seruling</i>	簫	<i>xiao</i>	end-blown flute
<i>guch kim / yeh cin</i>	<i>kecap</i>	月琴	<i>yueqin</i>	moon guitar (four-string lute)
<i>lang-kham / yangqin</i> (Mandarin) also in use	none	揚琴	<i>yangqin</i>	hammered dulcimer
<i>pan / cia pan</i>	none	板 / 拍板	<i>ban / paiban</i>	wooden clappers
<i>twa gawk</i>	<i>kecer</i>	鐮	<i>cha</i>	cup cymbals
<i>thua juwe / sona</i>	<i>slompret / terompét</i>	噴呐	<i>suona</i>	shawm
<i>toa lo / twa luo</i>	<i>gembreng besar</i>	大鑼	<i>dalu</i>	large gong
<i>siau w luo</i>	<i>iheng-iheng / gembreng kecil / sambal</i>	小鑼	<i>xiaoluo</i>	small gong
<i>tong ko / dongko / donggu</i>	<i>gendang / drum / tambur</i>	通鼓 / 堂鼓 / 筒鼓	<i>tonggu / tanggu</i>	drum
<i>piak ko / piak ku</i>	<i>kayu</i>	none? ⁷⁴	none	wood block

Table 5.2: Musical instruments accompanying Indonesian *potehi*

Music

Most *potehi* performances are accompanied by live music by musicians seated behind the stage.⁷² As in other forms of *potehi* and of *wayang*, the *dalang* is the dominant performer, and the musicians and assistant puppeteers take his cues, which can be verbal or physical (the Mojokerto *dalang* sometimes cues with a large leaf). Several *dalangs* began as musicians, advanced to assistant puppeteer, before assuming the full position. All musicians are capable of playing several instruments, and typically four or five musicians play up to a dozen instruments.

The instruments are known by a mixture of Hokkien and Indonesian names, compiled here from various *potehi* sources.

In general, the diverse accounts given of the orchestra in different sources suggest considerable variability. Besides the puppeteer and an assistant (*ershou*), Moens's 1949 account describes the four-person orchestra as using the following instruments – *tonggu* (drum), *guzai* (little drum), *di* (transverse flute), *dizai* (shawm), big *rebab/paxian* (*erhu*?), *rebab/xianzai* (*jinghu*?), *guiqin/guipa* (*yueqin*?) – with terms for gongs and cymbals almost identical to those in the terms above. The noteworthy differences with records today include the presence of a large transverse flute (larger orchestras had two of these, and two shawms) but the absence of the end-blown flute (*xiao*). The *yangqin* and clappers are also missing.

As with other forms of *potehi*, certain instruments are today associated with

battle scenes (drums and gongs) and others with civil scenes. The flute is associated with the entrances of a king or emperor, while the shawm is used when ministers appear before the king, or when decrees are read.⁷⁵ Many *dalangs* sing little or not at all, with orchestral interludes moving directly into dialogue. The 1949 account reports that as soon as the *dalang* spoke, the music ended; this is certainly no longer always the case. It also reports singing from the strings, while in contemporary practice no voice but the *dalang's* is heard.⁷⁶

The music can be described in a general way as *beiguan* ('wind music from the north [of China]'), although this is not a term known in Indonesia. *Beiguan*, as it is understood in southern Fujian, is the 'northern' form which contrasts with the earlier indigenous *nanguan* ('southern wind music'). Both forms were transmitted to Taiwan and the Southeast Asian Hokkien diaspora, and both have been used for *potehi* and other puppetry forms. All music that one hears accompanying *potehi* troupes in Indonesia today, however, belongs to the *beiguan* system.

At present, performance with recorded, rather than live, music is rare, if not unknown.

Performance and Context

Regionally, it is unusual though not unique for a genre of ethnic Chinese performance (as distinct from a narrative system) to undergo complete linguistic indigenisation.⁷⁷ *Wayang potehi's* language practice is also unusual in Indonesian



Figure 5.11: *Potehi* performance

terms. James Brandon's observation that the use of Indonesian makes *potehi* the only genre of *wayang* performed in the national language (rather than the regional languages Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, and so on) is often repeated. As briefly noted above, the language shift from Hokkien to the new national language Indonesian was already underway with performances in Malay/Indonesian in the 1940s and 1950s,⁷⁸ while in Semarang Thio's account suggests a shift occurring in his career in the 1970s or 1980s. In Surabaya, at roughly the same time, the language shift was accomplished in the space of one teacher-student relationship: 'Gan Co-Co was an old Chinese man, he could only speak a few simple words of Indonesian. Because he saw that the young Mulyanto was enjoying the *potehi* show, he brought

68 'Wayang potehi made in Tulungagung diburu kolektor asing', 22 January 2014 (<http://news.detik.com/berita-jawa-timur/2474471/wayang-potehi-imade-ini-tulungagung-diburu-kolektor-asing>).

69 *Ibid.*

70 The only information here which is not from Wang's comparative analysis concerns the wood of the Gudo puppets, which Wang identified only as not being camphorwood.

71 Cf. Kartomi, 'Indonesian-Chinese Music', p. 299.

72 There do not seem to be, historically or at present, any women active as *dalangs* or as musicians, although it is common for women to sponsor shows and audience is more or less gender-balanced. Moens in 1949 noted also that all performers were men (Moens, 'Een Chineesche poppenkast', p. 4).

73 Most often in Indonesia this means puppeteer, and is often translated into English as such. However, the *potehi sehu* is not necessarily manipulating the puppets. For instance, I have seen performances where Ki Sesomo played instruments and spoke

the voices into the microphone rather than manipulated the puppets; two others were instead charged with the puppeteering duties.

74 While phonetically speaking, *beigu* 北鼓, *bigu* 逼鼓 or *bangu* 班鼓 are conceivable options, the likeliest explanation seems to be that (like the *beiguan* instrument otherwise known as *xiaogu* 小鼓), *piak ko* is an onomatopoeic term affixed to *gu* 鼓 (drum), *gu* in this case expanded to mean wood block. Cf. Li Jinghui, 'Beiguan jianjie.' *Taipei National University of the Arts, Music Department*, n.d. (<http://trd-music.tnua.edu.tw/ch/intro/d.html>).

75 Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*, p. 117.

76 Moens, 'Een Chineesche poppenkast', p. 5.

77 Other examples might be the practice of performing Chaozhou opera in the Thai language, or the Vietnamese adaptation of *Jingju*, *Hát tuồng*.

78 For instance, in Moens, 'Een Chineesche poppenkast', p. 4.

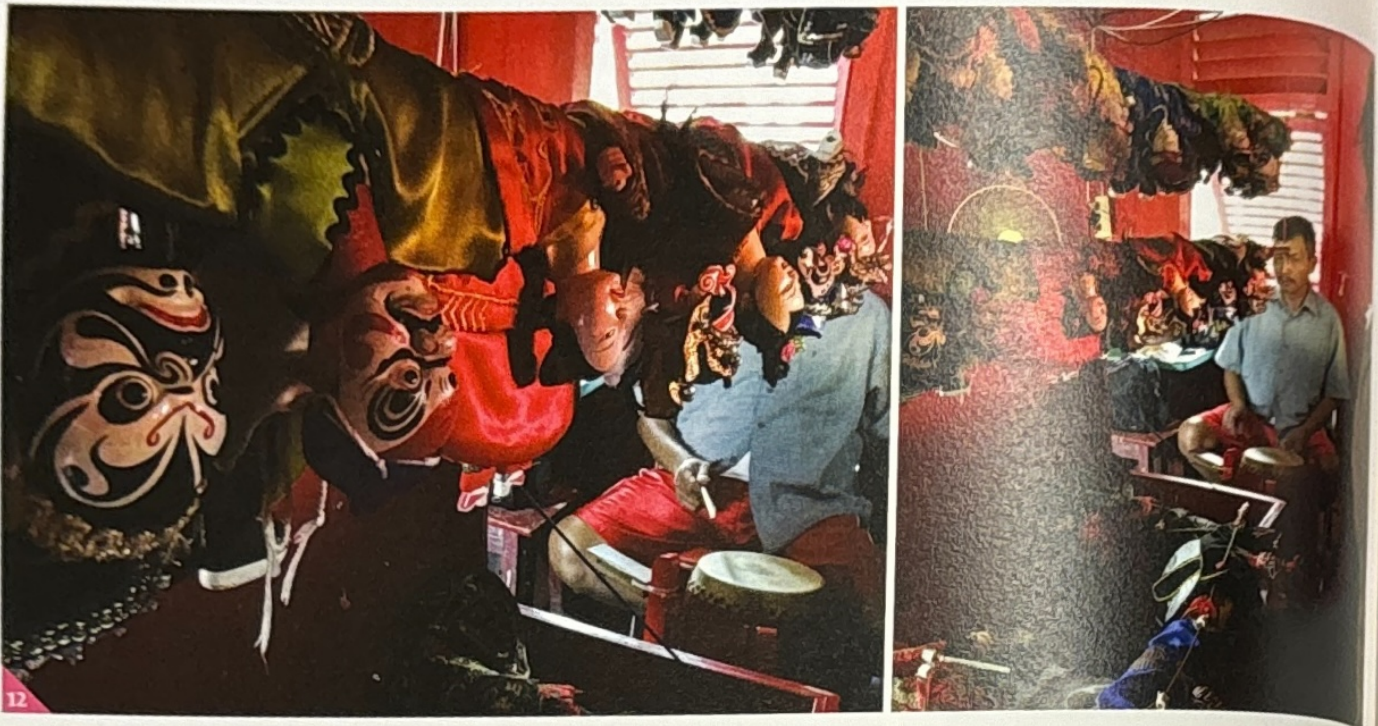


Figure 5.12: Backstage at a *potehi* performance

him into the [back]stage and showed him how the performers manipulated the puppets'.⁷⁹ In the mid-century distinctions between early, assimilated Chinese communities ('Peranakan') and recent, Chinese-speaking immigrants ('*totok*') were often sharp; thus, there may well have been different troupes serving different communities in their respective languages.

Nowadays, it has probably been a quarter of a century since *potehi* was being performed in Hokkien. The primary language is now Indonesian, with elements such as *suluk* being memorised Hokkien, which neither *dalangs* nor audience members understand directly, even if they know the general import. In more cosmopolitan contexts (such as a Jakarta mall), the register of Indonesian will be more standard than in the temples and villages of East Java, where an admixture of Javanese is noticeable.

Also, some *dalangs* may employ at times either a 'Chinese' accent or loan words of Hokkien origin in their dialogue.⁸⁰ One aspect of using Indonesian as the primary performance language is that it opens up *potehi* to other poetic forms, for instance the *syair* and *pantun*. Both are major poetic forms in their own right, used in *potehi* for romance and humorous excitement. In many cases these poems are written by the *dalangs*, though they can also be borrowed from printed texts.⁸¹

Performances and troupes are connected by family, apprenticeship and institutional relationships. Performances in Blitar and Sidoarjo temples, for instance, are both Fu He An arrangements, while the Sidoarjo *dalang*, Ki Subur, hails from Surabaya and was a musician at the temple there before becoming a *dalang* in his own right.⁸² Collaborative agreements are common. For four months in 2013 Mojokerto's

assistant *dalang* Ki Kuwato (Liem Giok Bing) was taking afternoon sessions in Tulungagung, while his brother Ki Santoso was taking the evening sessions; the performance thus constituted a blend of the Tulungagung and Mojokerto troupes, with sponsorship from Mojokerto-based Project Yensen.⁸³ Family lineages are common: Surabaya *dalang* Ki Mudjiono is the nephew of the late Gudo *dalang* Ki Sesomo; Ki Subur's son is a *potehi* musician.⁸⁴

The temple remains the primary unit for most *potehi* troupe organisations, even as occasional venues become more common. Since the New Order period, when religious policy subsumed Taoist practice into an official classification of Buddhism,⁸⁵ *potehi* venues were largely restricted to the temples, where *potehi* did and does indeed play a role in ritual.⁸⁶ Although the temple association is no longer the only guarantor of the genre's

79 Xiao, 'Yinni Sishui', p. 253.

80 Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*, p. 112.

81 *Ibid.*, pp. 111–12.

82 This list is derived from interviews as well as from the lists given by Kuardhani, *Mengenal Wayang Potehi* and John Kwa on the Budaya Tionghoa ([Sino-] Indonesian Culture) website.

83 Yuli, 'Pentas wayang thithi tiap hari sampai 2 bulan lagi', *Tribun News/Surya Online*, 3 June 2013 (<http://surabaya.tribunnews.com/2013/06/03/penas-wayang-thithi-tiap-hari-sampai-2-bulan-lagi>). *Thithi* sometimes refers to *potehi*, and other times to *wayang kulit Cina-Jawa*.

84 Lambertus Lusi Hurek, 'Wong Jawa dalang wayang potehi', *Blog Hurek*, 15 January 2007 (<http://hurek.blogspot.com/2007/01/wong-jawa-dalang-wayang-potehi.html>).

85 Tsuda Koji, 'The legal and cultural status of Chinese temples in contemporary Java', *Asian Ethnicity*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2012, pp. 389–98. Not surprisingly, Koji also notes *potehi* performance present in many temples.

86 Van Groenendael, 'Po-té-hi', p. 18.

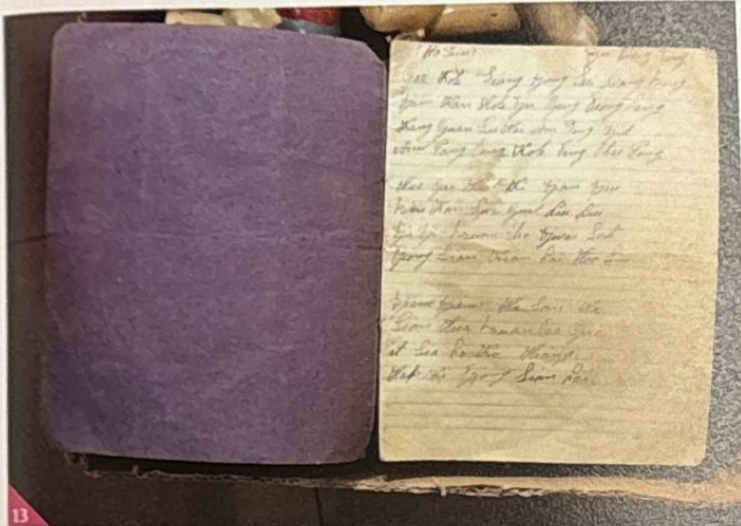


Figure 5.13: Phonetic notation of passages in Hokkien for performance, Hok Ho An company



Figure 5.14: Antique puppet head

existence – for instance, the Mojokerto troupe is centred on the patron's residence, which is also a *potehi* museum⁸⁷ – it remains the pivot for most troupes and performances. One source describes the motivation to sponsor a performance in the following terms: 'donating a *potehi* performance for the gods to see is a way of expressing one's sincerity, and a hope that in this way the sponsors can receive the gods' favour, allowing themselves and their families to be safe from disaster, or hoping that they will gain affluence, or else that they will be delivered from a difficult situation'.⁸⁸ The selection of plays typically occurs through a process of consultation with the temple gods through use of divination by means of crescent-shaped pieces of wood (*poah poe*).

Other rituals are associated with performances. For instance, golden money called *kim choa* is burned twice in the course of a series of performances, once on the first day before the beginning of a performance series, and once on the last day after the performance series has come to a close.⁸⁹ The 1949 account reports that this occurred before and after

each performance.⁹⁰ *Potehi* musicians are also expected to musically accompany the arrival and departure of important visiting gods (that is, statues from other temples) during festivals. Ki Mudjiono in Surabaya is quoted in a newspaper report as having learned from Gan Co Co that boiling *potehi* hairs could exorcise an evil spirit.

The ritual aspect of the performance is particularly prominent just before a performance begins. Consider this account from Surabaya, where at the beginning of a performance

some *potehi* character appears from the tiny cloth door. First he says who today's sponsor is, what the purpose is, for instance: wishes of peace for a son's birthday, wishes for a rapid convalescence of a family member, thanksgiving to the god(s) for the good fortune of their business, etc. When he is done giving an account of the sponsor, he presents the name of the play, or explains a little about the story's setting, identity or era.⁹¹

In an account based on practice in Gudo, shows begin with the presence of

the three characters representing good fortune (Zhang Guolao), prosperity (Caishen) and longevity (Old Man of the South Pole; Nanji Xianweng). A fourth figure is a little child in the arms of Zhang. Each character begins with a Su Liam Pek (known in Java as a *suluk* by analogy with other forms of *wayang*). The god of prosperity usually says the Hokkien phrase '*Kok tjing thian sin sun. Kwan djing min the an*' (May the nation be in order, the heavens harmonious, officials be incorruptible, and the people at peace). Then the puppet conveys the day and date of the show, the name of the temple, the name of the sponsor, and thanks and blessings.⁹² Then, in this account, the puppet used for the god of fortune goes on to become the 'masked prime minister', the Tang figure Di Renjie (Tek Jin Kiat). According to Javanese temple sources, Di Renjie opens the performance with a mask because he was abashed to officiate at palace events. The puppet goes to the four corners of the stage and bows.⁹³ This would seem to be a form of *tiao jiaguan* (promotion of the official), a ritual performance for the opening of

87 The troupe is centred on Pak Yensen's residence, which also has a stunning *potehi* exhibit. However, Mojokerto's principal Chinese temple Hok Sian Kiong has featured both performances by the Yensen Project troupe and the Ki Mudjiono's Surabaya troupe.

88 Xiao 'Yinni Sishui', 250.

89 Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*, p. 101.

90 Moens, 'Een Chineesche poppenkast', p. 5.

91 Xiao, 'Yinni Sishui', p. 261; see also pp. 254–56 and John B. Kwee, 'A study of *potehi*, the Chinese puppet theatre in Indonesia', *Asian Culture*, vol. 20, 1996, p. 49.

92 Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*, p. 102.

93 *Ibid.*, p. 103.



Figure 5.15: Antique puppet heads

theatre pieces in various southern Chinese (Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong) theatre forms; it is associated with Di Renjie in some *chaoju* performances.⁹⁴

At Gudo, temple performances typically take place for a month to two months, with one afternoon session and one evening session. In Surabaya, the practice has been to guarantee one performance every day, the only temple to do so, with up to two performances added in the time slots (9–11 a.m., 2–4 p.m. and 6–8 p.m.) when there is sponsorship.⁹⁵ Sometimes the evening session may be a continuation of the afternoon performances; in other series the afternoon and evening performances may follow separate narratives. Typically, performances in other public spaces or in the roadshows are shorter both in the duration of each session (sometimes as short as half an hour) and in period of engagement (one day to one week).

Payment varies from troupe to troupe and according to performance context. Sukar Mudjiono's fee in 2006 was reported at Rp 100,000 (\$7.50) per show while in Surabaya, but at Rp 400,000–500,000 (\$30–37) when performing away, for instance at a temple in Pasuruan.⁹⁶ In 2011 Sukar Mudjiono's troupe's fee for a performance with twenty musicians was reported at Rp 4 million (\$300).⁹⁷ In 2014 Harsono remarked that puppeteers received sometimes only Rp 500,000 per show, although it was more over New Year and at malls.⁹⁸

The economic relationship in Gudo between troupe and temple reportedly involves the free use of the temple's *potehi*-related property. Besides that, of course, the temple is one of the principal clients for performances, and sister temples supply much of the remaining work. The fact that work as a *dalang* is not lucrative, however, does mean that

few Sino-Indonesians are attracted to the profession.

Lastly, it is difficult to describe *potehi* audiences with any precision, given the variety of performance contexts. Temple performances have larger audiences when *potehi* is part of a series of events surrounding a festival, which may include dragon and lion dances, *wayang kulit*, Javanese dances or comedy. These events occur one or two days surrounding the festival. The remainder of the performance series (up to two months) will then be sparsely attended, and sometimes not at all. Mall performances attract the urban elites, art spaces cosmopolitan and international audiences, and village performances almost the entire local population. In general, the proportion of children is high, and the proportion of non-Chinese audience members, even in temple performances, generally over half, despite the reluctance of some Muslims

94 Ronnie Pinsler, 'Teochew opera – the masked 'Tek Jin Kiat', a minister during Empress Wu's Reign, in a Pre-Show Ritual', 1 November 1978, National Archives of Singapore, Media-Image no. 19990007481-0104.

95 Xiao, 'Yinni Sishui', p. 254.

96 Indra Harsaputra, 'Sukar Mudjiono – Chinese puppeteer: Java, Indonesia', *Planet Mole: Indonesia in Focus*, 21 February 2006 (<http://www.planetmole.org/indonesian-news/sukar-mudjiono-chinese-puppeteer-java-indonesia.html>); Xiao 'Yinni Sishui', p. 250.

97 'Sukar Mudjiono: Potehi Puppets Conservationist', *Ciputra Entrepreneurship*, 3 March 2011 (<http://www.ciputraentrepreneurship.com/sosial/sukar-mudjiono-potehi-puppets-conservationist>).

98 'Almost lost, the art of puppet theatre', *The Nation*, 30 June 2014 (<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/webmobile/life/Almost-lost-the-art-of-puppet-theatre-30237286.html>).

99 Lai Bojiang, 'Youjiu er duocai de Yinni Huaren waiwen wenxue', *Yishu Yanjiu*, vol. 1, 2007, p. 137; Claudine Salmon, 'Introduction', in Claudine Salmon, ed., *Literary Migrations: Traditional Chinese Fiction in Asia (17th–20th Centuries)*, Beijing: International Culture Publishing Corporation, 1987, p. 6, and Claudine Salmon, 'Malay translations of Chinese fiction in Indonesia', in Salmon, *Literary Migrations*, pp. 410, 658; Wang Hanmin, *Fujian xiqu haiwai chuanbo yanjiu*, Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2000, pp. 14, 19; Robin Ruizendaal, *Marionette Theatre in Quanzhou*, Leiden: Brill, 2006, pp. 151–52.

100 Xiao, 'Yinni Sishui', p. 260.

101 Edi Sumardi, 'Drama Romeo Juliet ala Cina di Trans Studio Makassar', 30 January 2012 (<http://www.tribunnews.com/lifestyle/2012/01/30/drama-romeo-juliet-ala-cina-di-trans-studio-makassar>).

102 Xiao, 'Yinni Sishui', p. 256.



Figure 5.16: Costume making

(and, for that matter, some minority Christians) to enter temples. Audiences sit on chairs or on the ground, looking up at the raised stage.

Repertoire, Text and Performance

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, large amounts of Chinese literature were translated and adapted into languages of the archipelago, first and foremost Malay and Javanese. For instance, *Xue Rengui* appeared in Malay in 1883; *Xue Rengui's Campaign to the West* appeared in Javanese in 1859.⁹⁹ *Potehi* repertoire is heavily weighted towards Qing fiction, especially narratives set in the Tang dynasty. However, one cannot be sure if the repertoire reflects the textual influx, or whether the process consists of Fujian to Javanese stages. It is likely to be both (and perhaps storytelling genres also played a role). Several of the same narratives feature in Quanzhou marionette repertoire, and *puxianxi* troupes (a *xiqu* form originating in Putian) performing in Malaya from 1920 to 1930 also had similar repertoire. *Xue Rengui* narratives are recorded also as Chinese shadow puppet narratives, including in Taiwan.

Probably the most popular narrative system revolves around the clan of Sit

Djin Kwie/*Xue Rengui*, set in the seventh-century early Tang frontier wars and based on a historical general. The *Xue Rengui* narrative has also been adapted in comic books, for the leather puppet form *wayang kulit Cina-Jawa*, and for the contemporary Jakarta popular stage (in three productions of Teater Koma, which contained references to *potehi*). Other narrative systems that are popular are Tek Djeng, Kew Co Gie and *Journey to the West*.

Potehi repertoire in Indonesia participates in a system of narrative genres which influence each other. No *dalangs* now active in Indonesia read Chinese, and so their performances may draw on: 1) the notes of previous *dalangs* (especially the morsels of Hokkien, written out according to Indonesian orthography); 2) memories of previous performances; 3) translations or adaptations of a Chinese work; and 4) representations in other genres. Most *dalangs* do not use an actual script, but will plan the portion of the show to be represented each day according to the number of performances scheduled, and inform musicians before each show what section they intend to perform. A researcher in Surabaya found that the troupe there 'used no teaching materials or notes'. In response to the question of

what happened if they forgot the story, the *dalang* Mulyanto answered that they would converse among each other and perhaps consult *dalangs* in other cities.¹⁰⁰ Evidently there is a substantial degree of flexibility and improvisation in all performances.

New performances can be invented, an occasion that may arise, for instance, if a temple devoted to a particular god requests *potehi* performance. For instance, in performances in Makassar, the popular narrative *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (very well-known in Indonesia) was performed for Chinese New Year in 2012. It is also probable that this was a creation to fit a particular demand, perhaps because Makassar audiences (where there is not usually *potehi*) would be unfamiliar with regular repertoire.¹⁰¹ The clown figures may also insert commentary on current affairs for comic effect.¹⁰²

Adaptation and Acculturation

Besides the obvious linguistic adaptation, acculturation in *wayang potehi* can be identified in various ways, both in specific performance features as well as in the manner the genre is talked about by practitioners and scholars. The relationship between orchestra and puppeteer, for instance, with its

verbal and/or physical cues, resembles the practice in other *wayang* genres.¹⁰³ Terminology often mirrors the usage in other forms of *wayang*: for instance, in an Indonesian-language interview a few months before his death, Thio cited *kedhatonan* and *sabrangan* to refer to elements of *potehi* narratives. *Kedhatonan*, a derivative of *kedhaton* (palace) portrays a scene of a queen meeting the king in palace, while *sabrangan*, a derivative of *sabrang* (opposite, overseas, foreign) describes a scene of the antagonistic overseas kingdom in Javanese *wayang kulit*. In the Javanese cultural context, a *sabrang* implies a savage kingdom ruled by giants. Thus, Thio referred to Seeriang (Western Liang, the antagonist kingdom of *Sie Djin Kwie Clears the West*) as '*sabrang*' in contrast to Tai Tong Tiaue (that is, the Tang dynasty), although the fictional Western Liang would actually have been connected to Tang territory by land; an antagonistic kingdom is always located overseas for Javanese narrative systems. In addition, Thio explained that persons from Chinese dynastic figures (most often the Tang) had to be placed to the right while *sabrang* figures belonged on the left. Since, in *wayang kulit*, the right is associated with virtue which triumphs and the left with vice which will ultimately be defeated, both terminology and spatial conception show evidence of Javanese *wayang* influence on *potehi*.¹⁰⁴ For instance, Thio compared a set of desk and chairs on the *potehi* stage to a *gunungan*, a shadow puppet shaped like a mountain, explaining that the furniture is placed for the scene change, operating like a *gunungan*. Most if not all *dalangs* have watched *wayang kulit* and other forms of *wayang* since childhood. Since training is informal and/or autodidactic, it is reasonable to assume that elements ranging from narrative

structure to vocal characterisation show the influence of other Javanese *wayangs*.

Another feature that comes up in the discussion of *potehi* as a form of *wayang* is the ritual purpose. In *wayang kulit* performance, a screen is placed on the boundary called *pringgitan* between the *pendopo* (outer ceremonial hall) and the *dalem* (sacred inner room) of a residence. Just as a *wayang kulit dalang* performs facing the *dalem* in order that ancestral spirits could see it from the shadow side, so a *potehi dalang* faces to the inner temple to offer a performance, sitting in the theatre on the temple grounds facing the main altar. Although this also reflects traditional *potehi* practice in Fujian and Taiwan (and thus does not necessarily suggest Javanese influence), the parallels encourage an understanding of the genres as having metaphysical kinship.

Wayang Potehi and Identity

Chinese Indonesians are among the world's largest overseas Chinese communities. The questions of their identity, ethnicity, social position and history fill many volumes, but by and large the cultural and performative aspects of this question are underrepresented in the literature. For the purposes of this chapter, suffice it to say that *potehi* acculturation in Java occurs in the context of a centuries-old, highly assimilated, overwhelmingly non-Chinese-speaking community with considerable local economic prominence and a religious difference from the surrounding majority population. Although lion and dragon dancing are perhaps more prominent performing practices, *wayang potehi* is the best known and the most frequently performed theatrical genre of the Chinese in Indonesia. As a consequence, *potehi* often

becomes a site of identity negotiations, since it can be positioned as a 'symbol of the Chinese' in Indonesia,¹⁰⁵ or else modelled as the distinctive contribution of an ethnic minority to a larger concept of Javanese or Indonesian culture. For this reason, *wayang potehi* practice today, as well as related promotion, reporting and academic work, often have a pronounced ethnopolitical dimension.

One example is the performance model that has been developed in Mojokerto to bring *potehi* to a broader public. From 18 December 2012 to 25 January 2013 the Roadshow Wayang Potehi toured 18 villages of the city of Mojokerto, East Java. Unlike the city, which has a prominent Sino-Indonesian community, these villages have no substantial ethnic Chinese presence. The poster for the roadshow features the *dalang*, Ki Marteh Sutarto (Pak Kekek) and is described as being sponsored by 'the Yensen Project for the city of Mojokerto', with performances consisting of *Journey to the West* and *Xue Rengui's Campaign to the West*.¹⁰⁶ The project is led by Pak Yensen, a Mojokerto Hokkien plastics manufacturer who has watched *potehi* in Mojokerto's central *klenteng* since childhood.¹⁰⁷ A project staff member, Herno, like most others ethnically Javanese, described the roadshow as a first for Mojokerto, 'maybe even for Indonesia' and called the project's mission an effort to 'raise Indonesian culture. *Wayang potehi* is itself generally performed inside the Chinese temple. Maybe many people who are curious don't dare to enter the temple. So, in order to introduce the art of *wayang potehi*, we held a roadshow for all the villages in Mojokerto'.¹⁰⁸

The project's *potehi* programme has only expanded since then. In April 2013 a

103 In 1949 this possible influence was already mentioned in Moens, 'Een Chineesche poppenkast', p. 4.

104 The second half of this paragraph draws primarily on Michi Tomioka's unpublished interview with Thio, 31 May 2014, which she generously provided for this volume.

105 Xiao, 'Sishu Yinni', p. 251.

106 A third piece is mentioned on the poster, but I was told by Pak Kekek that this was an error.

107 It is worth noting, however, that Pak Yensen is not a *klenteng* member, being a Protestant.

108 'Kenali wayang potehi, hasil asimilasi Tionghoa dan Indonesia', *Tourism News*, January 2013. Herno's account tallies closely with what I heard from Pak Yensen, staffers and local municipality workers.

109 These projects were being planned during my 2012–2013 visits, and I was subsequently kept informed by email and a Facebook group.

110 Kuardhani, *Mengenal Wayang Potehi*, p. 108.



Figure 5.17: Puppet head painting by Toni Harsono

school performance followed, advertised as a roadshow with a *barongsay* (lion dance) opening, and with Pak Kekek billed as 'one of nine *potehi dalangs* in Indonesia'. From 2 August to 7 October 2013 Pak Kekek performed *Xue Rengui's Campaign to the West* and *Prince Ciyun Flees His Country* twice a week at the Tridharma temple in Mojokerto (belonging to Mojokerto), twice daily at 3.00 p.m. and 7.00 p.m. From 8 October 2013 to 8 January 2014 a new series of performances was scheduled (*Emperor Tang Minghuang Visits the Moon Palace*) in the Mojokerto temple Hok Sian Kiong, twice daily at 2.00 p.m. and 7.00 p.m., also with Pak Kekek as *dalang* and Yensen Project's support.¹⁰⁹

The roadshow, by bringing *potehi* into villages, and integrating it into a programme of Javanese festivities, appears designed to demonstrate that there is no contradiction or distance between local *pribumi* culture and Sino-Indonesian culture (here separated from temple context and implicitly secular). Attendance at roadshow performances was sweetened by the offer of five tricycles as 'door prizes' (though since these were performances on tarpaulins at village crossroads, there were no doors). Kuardhani has written that the roadshow is 'quite a tactical conservation measure'. And, whether consciously or

unconsciously, taking *potehi* out of the temple grounds recalls the pre-New Order festival context, allowing people to realise that *potehi* is acculturated and 'really a genre particular to the folk culture and art of Java'.¹¹⁰

Though *potehi* performance is the central element of Yensen Project's activities, the organisation presents itself as an ecumenical group with various cultural projects. Many of these seek to promote the integration of Chinese culture into the concept of the Indonesian nation, and thus it produces DVDs of *potehi* performances, has established a *barongsay* group, recorded patriotic Chinese Indonesian music ('I am a daughter of Chinese, and my nation is Indonesia' [*Aku putri Tionghoa, dan bangsaku Indonesia*]), funded the roadshow, and acquired puppets, stages and accoutrements for the museum. On the Chinese place in Indonesian society, the group takes a strong discursive line, including such strategies as labelling its *potehi* DVDs and performances as '100 per cent Indonesian'.

Within this effort is contained an old paradox of Chinese public performance in Indonesia – largesse in the service of a public festivity (with Chinese culture, as here, embedded) can also read as ostentatious display. That is to say:

presenting a village festival with Javanese arts, door prizes and *potehi* – visibly sponsored by a local Chinese businessman and performed by the troupe he pays – may be meant to stimulate familiarity and liking for local Chinese culture. Yet it also runs the risk of reinforcing existing cultural stereotypes. This paradox may be insoluble, and remains a dissonant element within the celebration of *potehi* and indeed of much public Chinese performance in the present *reformasi* period.

Potehi patrons invest a great deal in their collections, stages, performance troupes and support of recordings and research, all of which contribute to the public representation of the genre and consequently of the community. It is likely that the troupes they support do not turn a profit (except perhaps in the karmic sense, since temple performances are meant to bring good fortune to their sponsors). Given the close cooperation between the roadshow and the city of Mojokerto, and the presence of dignitaries at the roadshow performances, the dynamics of local politics are certainly sometimes in play. Even when expressed in less overt fashions, the extension of *potehi* performance and display beyond the temple consistently contains an

element of ethnic self-representation. *Potehi*, with its potential to interest international academia and museums, can also lend new prestige to patrons. At the core, however, and always central in the sponsored scholarship and the media reports, is the effort to represent *potehi* as an Indonesian art, and therefore the local Chinese community as a component of local culture.

Turning *potehi* into village happenings is one symbolic way of representing Chinese culture to a general population. Invoking patronage by renowned Indonesian figures is another. This is one strategy pursued by Harsono and Fu He An. For instance, pictures of Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwono XIII, the sultan of Surakarta, are featured in the puppet workshop area at the Gudo temple, as well as, *potehi* puppet in hand, in the published biography of Harsono. The sultan also wrote an introduction to that book, in which he compares *potehi* with the most emblematic of *wayangs*, writing that, 'like *wayang kulit* Purwo Jawa, *wayang potehi* very much deserves to be protected, as a cultural heirloom of great value', and going on to praise Harsono for preserving the patrimony of his ancestors.¹¹¹ The renowned part-Chinese Yogyakarta dancer Didik Nini Thowok also wrote a preface in the same book, in which he recalls watching *potehi* versions of Xue Rengui and Three Kingdoms stories with his grandfather in his native Central Java town of Temanggung, presumably in the early 1960s, since he was born in 1954.¹¹² Scholarship on his work notes that he was a fan of *potehi* from a young age, and 'performed a home-made children's version of it for his Javanese and Chinese friends at his home – with dinner plates used for sound effects, and puppet heads carved by a friend'.¹¹³ As a recognised giant

in the Javanese arts with acknowledged Chinese heritage, Didik Nini Thowok can symbolise the same kind of relation of community to culture *potehi*'s patrons claims for it – local Chinese as a component of Javanese culture.

The memory of the late president, Gus Dur, who abolished anti-Chinese legislation, also has an emblematic place in *potehi* practice, though there was no apparent connection to *potehi* during his lifetime. For instance, at his death, *potehi* was one of several arts included in performances to commemorate him,¹¹⁴ and in Semarang Thio Thiong Gie led a prayer for Gus Dur at Tay Kak Sie, remarking that with him, Islam had been a force for reassuring minorities rather than oppressing them.¹¹⁵ In Mojokerto performances, Gus Dur, Megawati Sukarnoputri, Joko Widodo (then governor of Jakarta), Basuki Tjahaja Purnama and other figures from Indonesian politics have been represented as *potehi* puppets. In a performance in December 2012, during a well-attended show in a Mojokerto-area village, the Gus Dur puppet appeared at a break in the monkey king story and encouraged the young (non-Chinese) visitors to become *potehi* fans, highlighting the fact that as an Indonesian art it belonged to everyone present. Efforts to invoke political figures in puppet form to further the acceptance of *potehi*, and to encourage a positive view of Sino-Indonesian culture and community, may or may not be effective; but it would certainly seem to be the intent.

If exhibits and performances are one manner of raising the profile of *potehi*, then publications and academics are another. By sponsoring and supporting the activities and travel of *potehi* scholars,

patrons are helping to create a network of sympathetic specialists on Chinese Indonesia.¹¹⁶ In all of these endeavours – exhibits, publications, performance promotion – the Indonesianness of the genre is highlighted: Hirwan Kuardhani's book is called *Mengenal Wayang Potehi di Jawa* (About *Wayang Potehi* in Java), Dwi Woro R. Mastuti's report 'Wayang Cina di Jawa sebagai wujud akulturasi budaya dan perekat negara kesatuan Republik Indonesia' (Chinese *wayang* in Java as a feature of cultural acculturation and adhesive for the national unity of the Republic of Indonesia) and Purwoseputro's *Wayang Potehi of Java*.

The desire to use *potehi* to represent Sino-Indonesian identities influences the type of account one reads in works on the subject, which tend to emphasise its role as a bridge between Chinese and non-Chinese Indonesians. For example, one Indonesian scholar has written that '[t]hrough performances of Chinese Peranakan *wayang potehi*, other ethnicities such as the Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese and Minangkabau can interact with and understand the patron of the performance in terms of Chinese ethnicity',¹¹⁷ making the claim that *potehi* is 'loaded with moral messages and guidance for noble behaviour'.¹¹⁸ A Chinese Indonesian scholar writes that '*Wayang Potehi* is the uniting force that bond [*sic*] us in our childhood regardless of race and religion',¹¹⁹ and elsewhere that the Javanese ethnicity of most performers demonstrates 'that *Wayang Potehi* is no longer an art that is exclusive to the Chinese Indonesian community, especially the Hokkien subgroup and followers of [Chinese religions], but belongs to the wider public'.¹²⁰ Indonesian scholars and patrons stress that *wayang potehi* now has independent characteristics

111 Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwono XIII Simuhun Tedjowulan, 'Sambutan Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwono XII Simuhun Tedjowulan Surakarta', in Kuardhani, *Toni Harsono*, pp. 6–7.

112 Didik Nini Thowok, 'Sepatah Kata dari Seniman Tari Didik Nini Thowok', in Kuardhani, *Toni Harsono*, pp. 8–9.

113 Jan Mrázek, 'Masks and selves in contemporary Java: the dances of Didik Nini Thowok', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, p. 266.

114 Pramono, 'Pameran Karya Seni Cina Mengenang Gus Dur', *Tempo*, 18 February 2010.

115 Irwan Suhanda ed., *Gus Dur: Santri Par Excellence: Teladan Sang Guru Bangsa*, Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2010, p. 40.

116 Not excluding the present author.

117 Kuardhani, *Mengenal Wayang Potehi*, p. 105.

118 *Ibid.*

119 Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*, p. 11.

120 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

121 Kuardhani, *Mengenal Wayang Potehi*, pp. 105–6.

122 The historian Didi Kwartanada on the *obi* (the promotional strip of paper around the book) of Purwoseputro, *Wayang Potehi*.

(usually citing the language shift to Indonesian) which differentiate it from the ancestral Hokkien genre, leading to the affirmation that the 'speciality of *potehi* in Java is a manifestation of the adaptive and assimilative attitude of the Chinese people who had already arrived in the region of Java hundreds year ago',¹²¹ or that the genre is 'no longer an exclusive Chinese art, but one imbued with Indonesian values'.¹²²

Given the easy narrative of the repression of Chinese culture under New Order, news reports often represent *wayang potehi* as a dying art. Yet, given the presence of active sponsors, the increasing profitability of puppet carving, the growing openness of Indonesian institutions to the genre, and the relative rapidity with which the performance elements can be acquired, there is no reason to expect any imminent crisis. On the contrary, *wayang potehi* will continue to be one of the most interesting areas to watch for those interested in the performance and negotiation of Sino-Indonesian identities.

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