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## **Transforming wayang for contemporary audiences: dramatic expression in Purbo Asmoro's style, 1989-2015.**

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## CREATING DRAMATIC HIERARCHY: THE POIGNANT AND THE FAMILIAR

### ***All-Night Pakeliran Padat?***

Mas Purbo is what we would call—well, if we speak in terms of a chef, he has mastered what *gudeg* is, what *soto* is, what characterizes *tahu kupat*, and all the rest. He knows how to properly mix the necessary spices and has the talent to rework the various ingredients so as to create a new style of cooking. It all depends on which village he is performing in, who the sponsor is, and who he is working with ... but no matter what, his performances are inspirational. From the beginning to the end they sparkle and have an energy as if on fire. Mas Purbo's many talents combined into one have made it possible for him to create all-night *padat* style [*padat semalam suntuk*]. He took the *padat* concepts from Pak Gendhon and associates, then remastered them ... added a heavy influence of Pak Narto ... spiced it up with Mas Manteb, Mas Anom, Mas Darman, Pak Tristuti. From this he has created the perfectness [*perfektnya*] of his performances that we have now.... In addition to all of that, Mas Purbo is a genius. You never see him studying or preparing, yet when he performs you think, "There you have it—it's all there, he's integrating it all." (Supanggih, Balai Soedjatmoko, May 2013)

Now that we have examined Purbo Asmoro's use of prologues in single-episode all-night *garapan* style, how does he craft the remaining six hours of his wayang performances? Supanggah labels Purbo Asmoro's style as "all-night *padat*," and at least three other intellectuals have independently used this same characterization (Kayam 2001, 212-213; Nugroho 2012, 421; Perlman, personal communication, 2006). Since 2005 when I first started following Purbo Asmoro's all-night *garapan* style, I have been struggling to reconcile this oft-heard phrase with what I observe on stage, performance after performance, and what I glean through conversations with Purbo Asmoro himself about his process. After documenting 224 single-episode *garapan* performances over 11 years, something the four intellectuals quoted of course did not have the benefit of, my impressions take the form of a more wordy description, perhaps something like this:

Throughout a seven-hour wayang, Purbo Asmoro creates a new type of dramatic hierarchy through a purposeful juxtaposition of newer, conceptualized, *padat* techniques with familiar, stylized, traditional techniques. The segments he selects for *padat* treatment rise to the top and stand out as special moments of poignancy, focus, and intensity. The result is a performance shaped quite differently from either classical or *padat* treatment, but with elements of both.

Of course the insightful scholars mentioned earlier were speaking off the cuff, looking to capture the essence of Purbo's style in a short phrase. By contrast, I am focused here on exploring the complexity of the style. In the Balai Soedjatmoko seminar quoted above, Purbo Asmoro himself rephrased Supanggah's term, calling his style *padat disewengèkaké* ("padat all-night-ed"). This is not just "all-night *padat*" in the passive, but in fact has a different connotation. This chapter will explore how, more accurately than "all-night *padat*," Purbo Asmoro's performances are "*padat* all-night-ed": *padat* style interspersed, selectively juxtaposed, and at times combined, with traditional style. This contrast creates a new type of dramatic hierarchy, and allows poignant moments to rise to the surface over the course of the night.

Purbo Asmoro uses three broad categories of scenes to create this hierarchy:

1. Scenes in which he applies *padat* techniques across all six main artistic elements (scene structure, interpretive details, movement, gamelan accompaniment, dialogue and narration, characterization). This category is reserved for a limited number of chosen, crucial scenes or moments.
2. Familiar scenes that are retained, yet transformed using a limited range of *padat* techniques across selected artistic elements.
3. Familiar, beloved scenes that are retained more or less as per tradition.

Each of these categories is briefly defined below, and then explored further, one by one.

### *1. Creating Dramatic Hierarchy Through Selective Application of Padat Techniques*

In addition to his heavily *garaped* prologues, Purbo Asmoro uses *padat* techniques selectively throughout an all-night performance in order to highlight focal points of the lakon. During these chosen moments, special attention is given to the recrafting and rethinking of scene structure, explicit character development, and a fresh interpretation of story details (*sanggit*). Purbo Asmoro applies narrative, musical, and movement techniques from the *pakeliran padat* movement in order to support these pearls of *garap* interspersed throughout the night. By leaving other moments relatively traditional, a hierarchy and shape to the dramatic energy emerges; an ebb and flow of intensity. Audience attention is reined in at these moments, tension created, and poignancy sculpted through this defining of important junctures. *Padat* techniques are meant to condense and compress content. Paradoxically, the resulting effect when applied to an all-night wayang is a thickening, deepening, and enhancing of content during these segments. Rather than any abbreviating or shortcutting that may be associated with *padat* techniques, these segments are lengthened, and more elaborate than in their classical-style counterparts, due to the intensity and complexity of the *garap*. These *garapan*-heavy segments tend to occur in the same seven places, regardless of the lakon:

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1. the prologue
2. a climactic moment at the end of *Prang Gagah*
3. the transition from *Pathet Nem* to *Pathet Sanga*
4. the transition from *Pathet Sanga* to *Pathet Manyura*
5. the single defining scene (climax) of the lakon
6. the final battle scene
7. the precise manner in which the performance ends

This chapter examines the nature of these *garapan*-heavy moments in *Rama's Crown* and *The Grand Offering of the Kings*, and how the resulting conscious sculpting of these selected segments creates a clear graph of dramatic hierarchy over the seven-hour progression of the lakon (see Figures 7-4 to 7-9 at the end of the chapter). The experience of an all-night *garapan* performance by Purbo Asmoro, therefore, is one of moving in and out of the world of *pakeliran padat*, rather than being "all-night *padat*."

### 2. *The Familiar Transformed*

Aside from these seven *garapan*-heavy segments to be discussed later in this chapter, what else characterizes an all-night *garapan* performance by Purbo Asmoro? Immediately after the prologue, he slips seamlessly into a court audience scene (*jejer*) of traditional length and feel. As mentioned in Chapter 4 in reference to the radically new *Kunthi Pilih* performance at Rebo Legèn in 1989 (see p. 116), there is a sense of relaxation at this point and even perhaps the false supposition that the performance will now proceed classically. This familiar scene, disallowed by the *padat* movement as too stylized, may seem unaltered. In fact, however, Purbo transforms it in subtle ways into a *padat* (dense, meaningful), albeit not condensed, construction. Characters expound on philosophy and engage in extended debate over a central conflict in a far more directional and focused way than in typical traditional practice. This chapter will explore the first court scene in both *Rama's Crown* and *The Grand Offering of the Kings*.

### 3. *The Beloved Retained*

Throughout the seven hours, Purbo Asmoro faithfully supplies his audiences with beloved, familiar attractions such as the elaborate troop departure scene (*Budhalan*),

the fierce and virtuosic *Cakilan* battle scene, and a lengthy *Prang Gagal* sequence, complete with ample slapstick. At times, depending on the lakon and situation, Purbo may transform these scenes in subtle ways also, in order to enhance the focal points in a *padat*-esque way. But most often these scenes appear much the same as they would in a completely traditional performance. Finally, not to be forgotten, Purbo Asmoro unapologetically provides his audiences with the two entertainment interludes they have come to love from the *hura-hura* days: a full *Limbukan* and *Gara-gara* of 60 to 90 minutes in length each. During these two intermezzi, the lakon and any thought of theme or character is entirely left behind. Anything goes including stand-up singers and dancers, comedians, guest speakers, and even, although rarely in the case of Purbo Asmoro, *campursari*, *dhangdhut*, or pop bands. This is clearly not in alignment with *padat* practice, or anything that could be labeled “all-night *padat*.”

Hence, as we will see through an examination of *Rama’s Crown* and *The Grand Offering of the Kings*, it is not literally accurate to label Purbo Asmoro’s all-night *garapan* style as all-night *pakeliran padat*.<sup>1</sup> Rather, his style features his deliberate creation of dramatic hierarchy through the selective use of interspersed *padat* techniques, and the crafting of highly *garaped* milestones that give the lakon shape. This shape sits within the encasing of both the familiar transformed and the entirely traditional. We will now examine the progression of this hierarchy across a lakon.

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<sup>1</sup> I feel certain that the scholars mentioned who have termed Purbo’s style as “all-night *padat*” would qualify the label as well, given an opportunity for further thought. I am grateful for their quick and inspired comments in public settings though, as the first time I heard the term (Perlman, 2006, personal communication) was in many ways when the seed material of this dissertation was sown.

## The Familiar Transformed: The Opening Court Scene

### *The First Court Scene: As Weighty as a Classical Performance*

After the prologue, Purbo Asmoro almost always<sup>2</sup> moves into a traditional court scene similar to one that would open a classical performance. In spite of the length of his prologues this initial court scene is not shortened. And more importantly, the essential content of the scene is consistently at least as weighty as in a classical performance, and in fact often more so. This can be seen by examining the court scenes in the Lontar recordings.

In the classical performance of *Rama's Crown*, the opening Astina Kingdom scene lasts 55 minutes [MK-Class 1, tr 1]. Thirty minutes are taken up by the musical selection, generic narration, *sulukan*, and elaborate, formal introductions. That leaves only 25 minutes of the scene actually dedicated to discussing the issue at hand. The Astina Kingdom scene in the *garapan* performance [MK-CInt 1, tr 4] is a comparable 50 minutes long. However, a more weighty 38 minutes are dedicated to discussing the issues surrounding the plot. Moreover, the narration describing the kingdom is not generic, but was written by Purbo Asmoro and actually helps to develop the audience's understanding of the corrupt nature of King Duryudana.

In *The Grand Offering of the Kings* classical performance [SRS-Class 1, tr 1] a monumental 65 minutes is dedicated to the opening court scene in Kresna's kingdom of Dwarawati, with only 24 minutes spent discussing content. In the *garapan* performance of *The Grand Offering of the Kings*, [SRS-CInt 1, tr 5 and 6] the scene is only 30 minutes long, but with 20 minutes of that dedicated to content. So although in this case the court scene is much shorter than the classical version, it is comparable (20 minutes versus 24 minutes) in terms of time spent on content. Figure 7-1 shows that, when the plot-intensive prologues are included, more than three times as much time is spent on content in the *garapan* performances, opening to Limbukan, than in the classical performances.

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<sup>2</sup> This based on data from the same 40 recordings used for the prologue analysis in Chapter 6. Every recording moves from the prologue into a traditional court audience scene. Even aside from these 40 examples over 11 years, I have no recollection of a single-episode performance by Purbo Asmoro that did not move from the prologue into a formal court audience scene.



Figure 7-1: Time spent on plot, theme, and non-stylized character representation, <sup>3</sup> opening to Limbukan				
	<i>Rama's Crown</i> palace-classical	<i>Grand Offering</i> village-classical	<i>Rama's Crown</i> all-night <i>garapan</i>	<i>Grand Offering</i> all-night <i>garapan</i>
Prologue	(no prologue)	(no prologue)	<b><u>38 minutes</u></b>	<b><u>56 minutes</u></b>
Opening Court Scene Set-up (before any plot- related dialogue begins)	30 minutes	41 minutes	12 minutes (a non-generic narration, however, that in fact does contribute briefly to character development)	10 minutes (a non-generic narration, however, that in fact does contribute briefly to character development)
Opening Court Scene Dialogue	<b><u>25 minutes</u></b>	<b><u>24 minutes</u></b>	<b><u>38 minutes</u></b>	<b><u>20 minutes</u></b>
<b>TOTALS</b> (time spent on plot, theme, character development)	<b><u>25 total minutes</u></b> (45% of the 55- minute opening)	<b><u>24 total minutes</u></b> (37% of the 65- minute opening)	<b><u>76 total minutes</u></b> (86% of the 88- minute opening)	<b><u>76 total minutes</u></b> (88% of the 86- minute opening)

In the case of a freeform prologue, there is no question that *garapan* concepts are employed from beginning to end. But, in fact, so are the subsequent formal court scenes, only in more subtle ways. Purbo succeeds in making these classically-based scenes dense and meaningful by applying the concepts developed initially for *padat* performances as outlined in Chapter 3. Hence, while familiar, these court scenes are also significantly yet subtly transformed in the ways outlined below.

#### *Recrafting Lakon Interpretation in the Court Scene*

Purbo Asmoro ensures that the discussion in the court scene stays focused on the central idea, avoids digression, and is infused with conflict rather than being flat. As he himself jokes in one of the interludes, “In the old days, the dialogue and banter was not always connected to the theme, and that was considered fine.” In Purbo’s contemporary-interpretive court scenes there is much less stylization in the dialogue, and each discussion is infused with debate and contrasting viewpoints.

The priest Bisma, who does not appear in the classical court audience, serves as the spark of conflict in the opening court scene of *Rama’s Crown*.<sup>4</sup> Bisma enters and

<sup>3</sup> "Non-stylized character representation" meaning narration or dialogue that contributes to an understanding of the character's position with regard to the conflict at hand, as opposed to generic greetings and small talk.

immediately criticizes his great-nephew Duryudana's corrupt and irresponsible rule. He accuses the young king of only thinking of his own wealth, and of not being willing to take an honest look at the decline of his nation. It is in this context that he challenges Duryudana to better himself through attaining the boon soon to be handed down by the gods. This sets up a tension and resistance that does not occur in the classical treatment, where Duryudana simply announces to his court, devoid of any particular conflict, that he has been visited in a dream and told of a boon to be handed down by the gods. He orders his court to take action to find the boon in a flat interpretation that denies any of the characters, including Duryudana himself, choice in the matter.

In the contemporary version Purbo crafts the lakon into a human conflict rather than a heavenly decree. The corrupt and powerful King Duryudana is reprimanded by his great-uncle priest in front of his entire court, and an argument ensues. The minister Sangkuni and the court tutor Durna both chime in with their opinions, heating the atmosphere of the court to a palpable melting point. After considerable discussion Uncle Bisma finally leaves in disgust. The brave and virtuous cousin Prince Karna then steps up to suggest that if Duryudana is indifferent to the god's gift perhaps he himself may be granted permission to strive for the boon, in the interest of Astina Kingdom. While this infuriates Duryudana, he grudgingly gives his permission. The end result is the same in both versions: the Astina troops depart for Mount Swélagiri, with Karna in the lead. In the contemporary version, however, the plot has been *garaped* into a rich conflict infused with numerous and varying viewpoints and with ample opportunity for philosophical content.

### *Recrafting Characterization in the Court Scene*

In Purbo Asmoro's all-night *garapan* style, every character appearing in the court audience scene has a crucial role. For example in *Rama's Crown*, we hear from every single member of the Astina Court. Each one expresses an opinion on whether King Duryudana should strive to attain the boon, and each speculates on whether the

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<sup>4</sup> Purbo Asmoro described to me on numerous occasions, how his inspiration for consistently and deliberately enfusing the court scene with conflict came from Tristuti's performance practice. When the opening court scene takes place in Astina, the spark of conflict and criticism most often comes from Bisma.

Kurawa have a chance or not. By the end of the scene, each of their separate personalities is clear, each of their perspectives is distinct, and there is a specific reason for everyone's presence. The intense philosophical nature of Bisma's commentary contrasts with Sangkuni's sly cynicism, and with Durna's comic exasperation at the good-for-nothing Kurawa sons, and all in contrast to Karna's virtuous, but ultimately futile, aspirations.

Most strikingly, Purbo Asmoro rejects generic and traditional responses to an issue that do not reflect a character's true nature. In the classical version of *Rama's Crown*, and in every performance I have seen or read by other dhalang, Duryudana does not question the advice to pursue the gift from the gods, but unceremoniously hands the task over to Karna. Purbo Asmoro fills the scene with meaning by using it as a chance to reinforce Duryudana's arrogance, while also highlighting Karna's nature as a bit of a renegade. It is a subtle, yet radical, departure from tradition to portray Duryudana as completely disinterested:

**DURYUDANA:** I have no intention of pursuing this boon. The only people in need of such a boon are those who have no status. The only people in need of such a boon are the destitute. The only people in need of such a boon are those whose lives are in disarray, people with no direction. The only people in need of such a boon are those who have no position in life and no respect. I am in control of a third of the universe. Yet the world-renowned Duryudana is being told to go after a boon? For what? Without any sort of boon I am already victorious. Without any sort of boon I am already esteemed. Without any sort of boon I already have authority over all. The Legacy of Rama's Crown consists of King Rama's philosophy. Yet this is no longer the era of Ramawijaya. This is the era of Duryudana. Therefore it is not Rama's legacy that should be sought after, but rather the legacy of Duryudana. It's not Rama's legacy that the world needs right now, but rather clear and strong action. He with the ability to make a country strong and powerful will be the one respected as a protector, will be thought of as someone having a legacy.

Again, the end result of Karna departing for the boon is the same, but the character development is far stronger in the *garapan* version. Duryudana insists he has no need for such a boon; Karna replies with an individualistic and strong-willed response. This all could simply be referred to as good interpretive practice—effective *sanggit*—which any classical dhalang might also create. But, as he often remarks in public forums, Purbo Asmoro's *padat* training has helped him address issues of *sanggit* in a more systematic, consistent, deliberate, and thoughtful way, assuring

attention to conflict and character development in every opening court scene of every lakon.<sup>5</sup>

### *Recrafting Narration in the Court Scene*

Purbo Asmoro writes his own narrations rather than using those traditionally associated with the opening court scene. His narrations depict the nature of the kingdom and are unique. He also shortens the post-narration introductions and tightens up the content and speed of the dialogue throughout the court scene. Below is the narration to the Astina Court scene from *Rama's Crown*. As is a common practice of his, Purbo Asmoro begins the narration with a phrase in Old Javanese, which would be incomprehensible to modern audiences, and then translates the phrase into everyday Javanese. In this case he chose a phrase concerning leadership. This opening narration is much more specific to the situation and far less stylized than the classical opening narration (see Chapter 6, p. 187).

→ *Gd Udan Soré kt 2 kr mg kt 4, sléndro nem, Semarang-style chorus (comes down in volume)*

1. *Nihan kramani déning ngaunirat awakta rumuhun warah ring hayu telas ta-mapageh mango magama, teke ri kangamantya mantri tumut.*<sup>6</sup>

In essence, a phrase describing the path a leader must take. His entire being must first be completely dedicated to virtue. If his loyalty to higher powers is stalwart, if his actions speak of idealism, if his heart is led by pure motives, then inevitably his advisors, ministers and the like will follow suit. Now let's begin our tale, which takes place in Hastinapura Kingdom, also known as Gajahoya, Limanbenawi, or Kurujanggala.

2. It's a vast country covering a huge area, famous in stature but in a state of decline. Year after year, again and again, the great hopes and aspirations for the kingdom are shattered due to the contemptuous actions of the king who indulges his every whim, and with one simple goal: to accumulate as much wealth and as many riches as he possibly can. It is therefore no surprise that the country's advisors have given up and the kingdom's priests have lost their patience, while the common people scrape for bits of food and the generals show off their gold. It's a desperate state of affairs, with no light in

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<sup>5</sup> Purbo Asmoro texted me a few months before the Lontar recordings with the comment, "Having Duryudana reject the boon and show disinterest is so much more in character. But it's not the classical treatment to be explicit about his nature in this way. So don't be disappointed in the flatness of the classical version. That's the way things were done—just look at all the original sources of this lakon. I'd be more satisfied showing Duryudana's arrogance, but let's save that for the *garaped* version. It is *garap tokoh*, after all."

<sup>6</sup> Purbo Asmoro reports taking this phrase from a paragraph on leadership found in a text entitled *Sarwaçastra* (1963 edition) that he had saved out from his father's literature collection. He had no more information on the origin or era of the passage, and I was unable to gather any on my own. Purbo Asmoro has hundreds of tidbits like these that he has collected over the years, many on small scraps of paper already torn and yellowed, and often with scant details on origin. (The numbers placed in this narration excerpt are to aid the analysis of the language that follows on the next page.)

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sight. What's more, such a multitude of problems will never be solved when justice is up for sale.

3. Those at the top are constantly questioning, while those at the bottom simply wait to see: when will the situation improve?

4. The country is proceeding like a boat with no captain, thrown about by the ocean waves. From all directions of the compass we find people spreading death and destruction, enticing conflict and pitting members of different cultures and religions against each other.

5. There are only a few who keep up their faith and rely on the Creator for inspiration, waiting for a golden age to arrive whose coming cannot be accelerated, cannot be sped up. A time when the world is bright again, the leaders honest, the government calmly and peacefully in control, integrity in place. This is where their hopes lie.

6. On this particular day, the leader of Ngastina, the Great Ruler King Jakapitana, has graced the court with his presence by presiding in the Audience Hall. The hall is packed with every village elder and all reigning advisors and ministers. Priest Durna, the regent of Awangga, and Minister Sir Sangkuni are all present. Everyone is then startled to see the arrival of the priest of Talkandha, the great pundit Bisma, who causes a stir among all who witness his entrance.

Purbo Asmoro employs rhyme in this narration, with long phrases based on similar ending sounds:

### **-ar: paragraph 2**

Negari jembar, wewengkon wiyar, hadegé wus kawentar, parandéné 'tan bangkit tumangkar, krana ing mangké hambyar buyar ingkang ginayuh jinangka mataun-taun gagar wigar pating balesar, labet tingkahing ratu kang anasar, nuruti napsu kang dèn-umbar, marma katekan sedyané kanthi mayar angukup bandha, hanumpuk dinar. Mila nayaka bebahuning praja koncatan nalar, pandhita wiku brahmana wus datan sabar, kawulané cakar-cinakar, sénapatiné mamrih onar, pepeteng 'tan bangkit pajar, sakèhing prekara 'tan bisa wudhar, merga ukuming negara kena dibayar.

### **-é: paragraph 3**

Ing nginggil samya ramé-ramé, ing ngandhap ngantu-antu mbésuk kapan padhangé.

### **-i: paragraph 4**

Lakuning pepréntahan kadya baita ingkang tanpa kemudhi, kombak-kombul ing jaladri. Kéblat papat wus kèbegan manungsa ingkang nyebar pepatii, urub-urub memanas ati, ngedu kumba suku miwah agamii.

### **-é: paragraph 5**

Amung sekedhik ingkang tasih éling dhateng panembahé, suméndhé marang kang nitahaké, ngentèni timbuling jaman kencana ingkang nyata 'tan kena ginégé, ginelak wanciné dadya srana padhang jagadé, jujur ratuné, adhem préntahé, jejeg adeg-adegé; mangkono pangarep-arepé.

The opening narration to *The Grand Offering of the Kings* is much shorter and less elaborately constructed, but in a simple and straightforward way reflects the purity and virtue of the Amarta Kingdom, without relying on traditional structures (contrast to the narration in the village-classical performance: Asmoro 2013, 5).

Purity surrounds amidst incantations of wellbeing. The world's evil vanishes; all dangers perish, swept away by the presence of such purity. From the beginning it was intended that this story be unfolded: may it serve as a looking glass into the ways of a people; may it develop nobility of character. And indeed, here appears the kingdom of Indraprastha, otherwise known as Cintakapura. A grand kingdom, a great kingdom, a kingdom that protects, thus feels peaceful. The overarching crown of authority in the palace belongs to His Majesty King Yudhisthira, or the Honorable Puntadéwa. He has been holding audience as he observes the arrival of the great monarch of Dwaraka, along with his older brother the monarch of Mandura, King Halayuda. Thus it was that the musings of their hearts were expressed.

### *Recrafting Movement Techniques in the Court Scene*

Although a court audience scene will be entirely devoid of *sabet tématik* (the highly symbolic vocabulary of expressive movement developed in the *padat* era), and although traditional movements are used, Purbo Asmoro does recraft movement by reducing the amount of time it takes for a character to enter and leave the scene. He shortcuts classical sequences, such as the elaborate path the maid servants traditionally take across the screen to bow and position themselves, and he chooses gestures carefully to efficiently reflect personality and emotional state. Characters enter and depart much more quickly and simply than in a classical treatment.

### *Recrafting Gamelan Accompaniment in the Court Scene*

Although the musical selections in the contemporary versions of initial court scenes are not significantly shorter than their classical counterparts, Purbo Asmoro chooses pieces with a view toward dramatic liveliness. He presents faster tempos as well as fuller vocal chorus orchestration, such as *Gd Téjanata, bedhayan Solo* for Dwarawati Kingdom in *The Grand Offering of the Kings* and *Gd Udan Soré, koor Semarangan* for Astina Kingdom in *Rama's Crown*. This helps to sustain the audience interest, dispelling potential audience dread that the initial court scene will be slow-moving, since this scene follows what has already been a lengthy prologue. By moving quickly and dynamically from the prologue into one of these fast-paced vocal chorus

pieces, Pak Camat and Pak Lurah and the village masses remain glued to their places after the prologue, with expectations that dramatic tension and interest will remain high in the court scene. Each musical element is also shortened: pieces are cut off before they are completed and the number and length of *suluk*, for the most part, are reduced. Character development is also enhanced through the *iringan*. The dramatic and regal entrance of Priest Bisma in *Rama's Crown* is accompanied by *Ldr Uluk-uluk*, and the aggressive entrance of the enemy Hamsa in *The Grand Offering of the Kings* by *Ldr Wirangrong*. In classical treatment, a guest's entrance in the initial court scene is most often accompanied by the more generic *Ayak-ayak, sléndro nem*.

Hence we can see that although the court audience scene may appear to be a familiar element from traditional practice, in fact Purbo Asmoro subtly applies *garapan* concepts across every element: movement, narration, musical accompaniment, story details, and characterization. Unlike the obviously *padat*-inspired prologue, this scene does not come across as *padat*-esque in any way. It has the same long and expansive feel as in the classical counterparts and seems deceptively classical in nature. But *garapan* techniques are used by Purbo Asmoro, nonetheless, to transform the scene into something consistently deeper and thicker than the more stylized and flatter, more predictable classical versions. Again, creative and innovative dhalang all over Central Java for centuries have infused the court scenes with life, conflict, and creative interpretation. But Purbo Asmoro's *padat* background manifests in more rigorous and consistent application of *garapan* principles to the court scene, and more deliberate thought and interpretation than is traditionally and generally the case with most dhalang.

### The Familiar and Beloved

To return to our hypothetical audience of Pak Camat, Pak Lurah and the masses, it is now approximately 11 PM and there has been an hour and a half of focused and powerful drama: the heavily *garaped*, multi-scene prologue and the expansive, philosophically-intense court scene infused with conflict and debate. *Rama's Crown* featured a 38-minute prologue and 50-minute court scene, while *The Grand Offering of the Kings* a 56-minute prologue and 30-minute court scene. A *padat* performance would be nearing the end if not over, as would, for that matter, a Western theater

performance, feature film, or ballet. Also important to remember is that the audience would have been in place even longer, through some 30 to 45 minutes of pre-wayang concert music from the gamelan, followed by speeches and protocol.<sup>7</sup>

At this point in Purbo Asmoro's all-night *garapan* performances, there is a move away from the intense *padat* techniques and concepts of the prologue scenes, as well as the heavy philosophy and debate of the court scene. For the next approximately two hours (until about 1:15 AM in both performances being analyzed) audiences have the chance to relax into what I have termed the "familiar and beloved." Although there may be a moment of intense *padat* treatment here and there, depending on the lakon, for the most part these next two hours are a combination of the traditional, the traditional spiced up with a contemporary element here and there, and even the *hura-hura*. That is not to say that anything relaxes for the dhalang. He now segues into two hours of movement sequences, battles and visual attractions that require virtuosic physical skills, and an entertainment interlude that requires comedic talents and a high level of clever spontaneity. In these two hours, however, with the exception of the 20-minute Foreign Kingdom Scene (*Adegan Sabrang*), the heady matters of theme, message, philosophy, debate, and, for the most part, all matters of *garapan* as well, are given a rest. This is where the traditional scenes that audiences have loved for decades, perhaps centuries, are presented by Purbo Asmoro without considerable recrafting.

In *Rama's Crown*, the next 127 minutes contain the following scenes, all with little to no *padat*-style *garapan*:

- Court Dispersal Scene (*Bedholan*), 4 minutes
- A Court Dancer (*Gléyongan*), 5 minutes
- Entertainment Interlude (*Limbukan*), 65 minutes
- The Troops Depart (*Budhalan*), 12 minutes
- A Foreign Kingdom (*Adegan Sabrang Alus*), 21 minutes
- A Series of Inconclusive Battles (*Prang Gagal*), 20 minutes

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<sup>7</sup> Current audiences for the typical superstar dhalang's performance in a massive venue tend to arrive at the beginning of the performance and stay somewhat in one place until midnight or so. This is in contrast to the more fluid ebb and flow of a traditional performance, pre-1990. The VIPs are expected to be present from the beginning, and the masses of fans usually want to secure a good seat early on, be it in chairs, on the grass, or at the sidelines. Purbo Asmoro, without a doubt, plans on this dedicated attentiveness through the first few hours of the wayang, and crafts his interpretation with this in mind.



## Ch 7: Creating Dramatic Hierarchy

In *The Grand Offering of the Kings* the next 132 minutes contain the following scenes:

- Court Dispersal Scene (*Bedholan*), 5 minutes
- A Court Dancer (*Golèk*), 7 minutes
- Entertainment Interlude (*Limbukan*), 67 minutes
- Foreign Troops Gathering (*Paséban Njaba: Hamsa*), 10 minutes
- Foreign Troop Departure Scene (*Budhalan Sabrang*), 2 minutes
- A Series of Inconclusive Battles (*Prang Gagah*), 41 minutes

In subtle ways Purbo Asmoro's focus and theme for the night is often still palpable, but the overall feel in many of the scenes is a release of contemporary treatment, a considerable relaxation of the pace of the plot, and an immersion in non-conceptualized, traditional and more stylized movement, narration, dialogue, battle, and musical offerings. These scenes are briefly outlined below.

### *The Court Dispersal Scene*

In the court dispersal scenes we see for the first time the traditional stylized movements of each character as they depart from the court. The musical accompaniment choices are contemporary in both recordings (*Ldr Undur-undur, pl lima* → *Ldr Runtung* → *Kemuda Rangsang, pl lima* for *Rama's Crown*, and *Kilayunedheng* → *Ldr Bayangkaré* → *Srepeg Mataraman, sl nem* in *The Grand Offering of the Kings*). The overall impression, however, is a return to the traditional. Purbo Asmoro does use the opportunity in *Rama's Crown* to highlight the foreign origins of Sangkuni, with special dance and drumming patterns from Ngawi, East Java known as *Orèk-orèk Nggorang-Garèng* [MK-CInt 1, 1:30:45]. Other than subtle matters of *iringan* and a few subtle matters of particular movements, most audiences can truly take another deep breath and relax even more than they did when the prologue was complete. The release of tension is real at the beginning of these court dispersal scenes, especially for audiences familiar with Purbo Asmoro's style. Everyone is prepared for an upcoming two hours during which the artistry will not let up and the storytelling will continue to be exquisite, but the intellectual demands will loosen a bit.

### *A Court Dancer*

After the court dispersal, most current wayang performances, whether *garapan*, classical, or primarily *hura-hura*, go straight into the *Limbukan* entertainment interlude. The classical practice of describing the king going through the elaborate gateway and then into the Queen's Quarters (*Gapuran*) is, at most, only referred to momentarily. During the dispersal, without any interruption or change in the music, the dhalang might place the king before a gateway (*kayon*), with a maid servant waiting nearby, in a nostalgic depiction lasting only a minute or so and with no narration. The *Kedhatonan* scene, in which the king enters the Queen's Quarters and reports the issues brought up in the court scene to his wife, with servants Limbuk and Cangik nearby, has disappeared from all but the most classical performances.

In almost all of his wayang, however, Purbo Asmoro retains one vestige of the Queen's Quarters scene. After the court scene and before Limbuk and Cangik come out, Purbo Asmoro features a court dancer. This dancer is, in effect, entertaining the king and queen in the Queen's Quarters, a reference that only audience members who have a strong understanding of classical tradition will appreciate. In *Rama's Crown*, Purbo brings out what is known as *gléyongan* [MK-CInt 1, 1:33:00] a figure with a moveable neck joint so that her head can reflect dance movements. She can perform a variety of dances: *golèk*, *gambyong*, or *tayuban*. *Gléyong* is the name of a more refined dance in the *tayub* tradition that was specifically offered as court entertainment (Purbo Asmoro, May 2011). A number of people refer to this moveable neck joint dancer scene as *srimpèn* (Sutino and Wakidi, June 2009) even though I have never seen her do *srimpi* dance moves, even by the performers who use that term.

In *The Grand Offering of the Kings*, Purbo varies his typical *gléyongan* practice and instead brings out two *wayang golèk* figures: a beautiful female dancer and her male heckler from the audience, Jiwèng [SRS-CInt 2, 0:00]. For decades a number of dhalang have used *wayang golèk* characters in the beginning of *Limbukan*, representing the king and queen's entertainment as they are dining. Gandabuwana of Madiun, Gandadarman of Sragen, and later on Tristuti Suryasaputra of Solo (all Klaten-born) popularized this attraction, and were Purbo Asmoro's inspiration as well (Purbo Asmoro, 2008). In the 1990s Purbo Asmoro often employed *wayang golèk*

characters to open the *Limbukan* scene. Since about 2005 he has preferred the more refined *gléyongan*. He returned to a *wayang golèk* attraction for this recording in order to add variety and complete the representation of styles in the Lontar project (interview, September 2009).<sup>8</sup>

### *The Entertainment Interludes*

After the dancer has finished, the *Limbukan* entertainment interlude begins. Technicians turn up all the stage lights, the video team adjusts the position of their cameras slightly in order to take frequent shots of the *pesindhèn* section, and any stand-up comedians or other special guests in attendance prepare themselves to be called on stage. Crowds balloon, fans move in closer and the audience is often more packed than before, with numbers reaching the highest of the night. At the same time, connoisseurs of storyline, interpretation, and dhalang artistry will often take a break to use the facilities, communicate on their cell phones, move around a bit, get something to eat, or even, in some cases, go home and in an hour or so tune in to listen to the rest of the story on the radio. The interlude will have absolutely nothing to do with the story, and could easily be spliced out with no interruption in the dramatic flow of the lakon, yet it is one of the most popular aspects of a performance among some. I have timed hundreds of these interludes in Purbo Asmoro's performances and they run from 30 to 90 minutes, with the vast majority around 60 to 70 minutes in duration. In fact, Purbo Asmoro is consistent in capping off the interlude by the 70-minute point, frequently checking the clock on his cellphone to monitor the duration.

*Limbukan* begins with the dhalang explaining the purpose of the event, introducing and elaborating on who the sponsor is, and praising all the neighborhood parties involved in the production. After this introduction the remaining 50 to 60 minutes resembles a television night-time talk show. The dhalang is in complete control as host, through the voices of Cangik and Limbuk (see Figure

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<sup>8</sup> There is also an older, long-standing village tradition of bringing out a *wayang golèk* character at the very end of a performance. This reference employs a play on the word *golèk* (to search for something) and is a symbolic message from the dhalang to the audience encouraging them make their own personal meaning out of the performance they have just seen (Sutino, 1995). In this case, the character would do a short dance, often to the song *Godril*, to end the performance.

2-5). Especially in Purbo Asmoro's performances, the dhalang reigns firm throughout this interlude as the beloved star and most talented comedian on stage. He interviews, and more precisely roasts, his own *pesindhèn*, any guest *pesindhèn* or other stars who have been invited by the sponsor, or any respected officials or guests in attendance. Just as a talk show host, he manages the guest stars: cleverly gauging how he will use the most unusual or most talented among them, delicately cutting off those who tend to ramble, diplomatically stepping in if a comment goes into uncomfortable territory, and alternating all the interactions with light songs from the gamelan. He reads notes passed up to him from the crowd through the musicians, and screens the multitude of text messages he receives. Some of these texts may be from his crew informing him of respected guests he did not realize were in attendance and who need to be recognized. Some may be from the sponsor or friends informing him of various details to announce such as which radio stations are broadcasting, upcoming performances in the area, or requests from listeners who happen to have his cell number. Dhalang even sometimes are asked to announce the license plate of a car blocking someone's way, or a lost item. Occasionally drawings for prizes are held during the interludes, with the dhalang being asked to call out numbers matching audience members' tickets.

Unlike many other dhalang, Purbo Asmoro never invites *campursari*, *dhangdhut*, Western pop bands, stand-up comedians, or *wayang orang* comedians directly. Rarely, he finds himself required to invite guest *pesindhèn* from outside his typical line-up. All of these types of attractions are requested specifically by the sponsor and their fees, in most cases, negotiated separately by the organizing committee. Once on stage, however, Purbo Asmoro alone is responsible for managing these many elements into an interlude that is without a moment of downtime, leaves no one important out, sufficiently highlights the sponsor's efforts, agrees with his own aesthetic principles, and ends within his own prescribed time-limit. While the pretense of the scene is still, as per tradition, Cangik and Limbuk passing time while the king and queen finish their private time in the Queen's Quarters, it currently stands as an interlude completely separate from the lakon.

Later on in the performance the second entertainment interlude, known as *Gara-gara*, proceeds in much the same way, serves many of the same purposes, and

lasts about the same amount of time. However, it is “MC-ed” by the jesters Pétruk, Garèng, and Bagong, and requires slightly less attention to the sponsors since they were given their due in *Limbukan*.<sup>9</sup> Much more could be written about *Limbukan*<sup>10</sup> and *Gara-gara*. However, in this examination of Purbo Asmoro’s contemporary-interpretive style the important aspect to note is that the interludes are considered a break from the plot and a remnant of the *hura-hura* era. Some, particularly Western commentators, have alluded to the attractions in *Limbukan* and *Gara-gara* as “innovative,” citing the use of realistic wayang figures such as George Bush, Saddam Hussein, Barack Obama, or the variety of pop music and light songs as “innovations.” Purbo Asmoro does not consider them as part of his own mark in the history of wayang:

Oh *Limbukan* and *Gara-gara* are just a break, a complete break. They have nothing to do with *garapan* and nothing to do with my innovations in wayang. My construction of *Gara-gara* comes from Pak Narto [Nartosabdo], and *Limbukan* from the *néka-néka* era of PANTAP. Anything goes. Stand-up comedians, *pesindhèn* that stand while interacting or that dance while singing, *dhangdhut*, and even *campursari*, although I don’t use it. These aren’t my innovations. Are they “innovations” at any rate? Well, it’s for the scholars to decide what to call them. But these “attractions” anyway are from the 1990s and in my performances are actually rather toned down compared to the days of PANTAP. They have come to be viewed as necessary for the balance of the performance, and they are certainly expected by the audience. The dhalang also needs a break, especially in *garapan* style, lest his brain burst! (interview, April 2012)

### *Ornamentation of the Dramatic Action*

After *Limbukan*, Purbo Asmoro’s performances most often skip the redundant *Paséban Njaba* scene, in which the head of the troops repeats the mission set out in the court audience with the king, unless the head of the troops plans to be rebellious.

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<sup>9</sup> Although these interludes are a complete break from the storyline, Purbo Asmoro does assure that they do not clash with the storyline. When performing lakon that precede the births of Pétruk, Garèng, and Bagong (*Aji Saka*, *Semar Lair*, *Lairé Panakawan*, *Lairé Bethara Gana*) he substitutes other figures as the MCs for *Gara-gara*, such as whimsical spirit figures, or villagers. In a lakon in which Pétruk is missing or captured before *Gara-gara* (*Semar Mbangun Kahyangan*, for example) Pétruk does not preside over the interlude, and Garèng and Bagong will refer to his absence. When the sponsor has invited a stand-up comedian from the *wayang orang* tradition dressed as Garèng, Purbo only brings out Pétruk and Bagong and allows the comedian to represent Garèng for the scene. When there would be no Queen’s Quarters, such as in one of the Baratayuda War episodes on the battlefield, Purbo Asmoro will employ the *panakawan* jesters in both interludes, rather than using Cangik and Limbuk. If he does use the maid servants from the Queen’s Quarters, he will start with an apologetic explanation that he is now truly stepping completely out of the story, even more than usual.

<sup>10</sup> See Suratna’s 905-page book on *Limbukan* (2013) in which he compares three superstar dhalang (Anom Soeroto, Purbo Asmoro, and Warseno “Slenk”) and their construction of this interlude.

Generally, *Limbukan* is directly followed by the visually magnificent troop departure scene. The various visual attractions: the court dispersal scene, the *gléyong* or *golèk* dancers, the elaborate troop departure, and, later in the wayang the *Cakilan* battle in the forest, have been eloquently described by Wesleyan University ethnomusicologist Sumarsam as “ornamentations of the dramatic action” (2013, 33):

The presence of these other arts produces effects that are peripheral to the story, but essential to the wayang; I call these “ornamentations of the dramatic action.” These ornamentations often draw the listener’s attention away from the story; the key to understanding and appreciating wayang performance lies in the interplay between the drama and its ornamentations. The juxtaposition of the visual presentation, soft music, and the stylized language of the dhalang’s narration [in a *Gapuran* scene, for example] emphasize pure aesthetics while the story itself recedes into the background. The sequential clarity of the plot becomes ambiguous as the relation between one scene and another is often “disturbed” by ornamentation.

Although they are primarily discarded in *padat* tradition, Purbo Asmoro uses these ornamentations of the dramatic action, particularly during the two-hour segments of “familiar and beloved,” to create a distinction—a hierarchical ebb and flow between moments of intense dramatic importance that are wrapped in *padat* techniques, and moments focused more on sensory attractions or pure aesthetics that are more traditional.

The troop departure scene is followed by another court audience scene (*Sabangan*), which is usually treated fairly traditionally by Purbo Asmoro, and then opposing sides of the conflict face off in the familiar and beloved *Prang Gagah*, or extended series of inconclusive battles. These battles alternate between serious, slapstick, and back to serious again. They end, however, in a sudden return to the dramatic intensity and *garapan* of the 90-minute opening, as we will see in the next section.

## Dramatic Hierarchy and Poignancy: Pearls of *Garap*

It is now 1:15 AM or so, and the audience has experienced a plot-heavy opening of some 90 minutes of pure *garapan*, a philosophic court scene full of debate and conflict, an hour-long entertainment interlude, about an hour's worth of the beloved and familiar ornamentations of dramatic action, a second court audience scene (*Sabranagan*), and a virtuosic battle scene with slapstick elements as well. It is here that intense *garapan* and focused *padat* techniques return and are sustained through the end of the performance, with the exception of *Gara-gara* and some inevitable comedic relief here and there. Of the seven pearls of *garapan* mentioned at the opening of this chapter, only one occurs before 1:00 AM, the prologue. The remaining six come much later.

### ***Garapan Pearl #2:*<sup>11</sup>**

#### **The Climactic Moment at the End of *Prang Gagat***

In both *Rama's Crown* and *The Grand Offering of the Kings*, audience attention is now drawn away from the more sensory, comedic battle, or slapstick attractions, as more intellectually demanding material presents itself again. The focal point often revolves around a climactic event marking the end of *Prang Gagat*. In *Prang Gagat* no one side will be victorious, and the outcome will be ambiguous (see p. 48). Purbo Asmoro treats this ambiguous and complex moment—a question posed by the *dhalang* that is left unanswered until it is wrapped up at the end of the performance—with full *padat* techniques in order to give it a strong position in the dramatic hierarchy of the *lakon*.

In *Rama's Crown*, such a moment occurs when Prince Karna decides to use his heirloom *wijayandanu* arrow against Anoman's onslaught. In the classical version, this five-minute scene [MK-Class 3, 16:00–21:00] is straightforward in every way. After many inconclusive battles between Anoman's forces and the Kurawa, all to the accompaniment of *Sampak*, *sléndro nem*, Karna bringing out the *wijayandanu* arrow to yet another *Sampak* in *sléndro nem*. The arrow is intercepted by Anoman and there is

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<sup>11</sup> *Garapan Pearl #1* being the Prologue.

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a brief moment of despair by both Karna and Sangkuni since they are fearful of Duryudana's reaction. The key moment, lasting only a few minutes, is over. In the 10-minute contemporary-interpretive version [MK-CInt 3, 27:30–37:30] Purbo Asmoro uses the opportunity to develop Karna's complex character. The orphan Prince Karna took a risk by taking on the challenge to attain the boon. He does not have the official support of Duryudana in this struggle, and yet now has been humiliated by Anoman who has managed to wrest his precious heirloom away in battle. Karna is loyal to the Kurawa and yet cannot trust them, proven by how they simply desert and taunt him in his moment of weakness. He wishes to uphold virtue at all times, yet is goaded by Dursasana into shouting obscenities in his frustration. Readers can see below how, instead of a brief, primarily text-less moment to the accompaniment of only *Sampak, sléndro nem* in the classical version, there is extensive attention given to the gamelan accompaniment, texts, and expressive stances, in order to "thicken" the characterization of both Karna and Anoman. One of Purbo's themes for the lakon is how the individual makes a difference in any conflict. Here an example is made of Karna, for whom nothing ever seems to go right.

*Sampak, sléndro nem* → **crashed into by Garap Balungan I**

**[Karna brings out his *wijayandanu* weapon.]**

→ *Garap Balungan I* (**sirep**)

→ **sung over by a male chorus**, *fragment of Ada-ada Hastakuswala, sléndro nem*

<i>Menthang gandhéwa dibya,</i>	<i>(The mighty bow is drawn,)</i>
<i>Bintulu rinukmi gadhing,</i>	<i>(That made of golden wood,)</i>
<i>Parianya kumuning,</i>	<i>(With a striped pattern across it,)</i>
<i>Kang trisula panggah.</i>	<i>(The trident holding strong.)</i>

**[Karna prepares his weapon.]**

→ *Garap Balungan I* **crashed into by Sampak, sléndro nem**

**[Karna releases the weapon.]**

ANOMAN: King Karna!

*(Sampak, stops suddenly)*

**[The weapon is intercepted by Anoman in a dramatic, full screen shadow effect.]**

*Ada-ada Srambahan, sléndro nem*

ANOMAN: Open your eyes, Regent of Awangga. Did you think that Priest Kapiwara would fall at the hands of your weapon? The *wijayandanu* is now in my possession!



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*Sampak, sléndro nem*

**[Karna is seen in deeply disturbed stance.]**

→ *Ayak-ayak Dudukwuluh, sléndro nem (sirep)*

**NARRATION:** As if he had been struck by lightning, the Regent King Karna Basuséna fell lifelessly to the ground in a heap. His priceless heirloom weapon, the *wijayandanu*, which was his mortal protection, had now vanished, ripped away by the Priest Kapiwara and swept up into the heavens. His heart felt an indescribable sense of despair. And thus as tears were gushing down his face, the great leader of Awangga began to speak in broken phrases.

**KARNA:** Oh dear gods in the heavens, I ask for your protection.

→ *Srepeg Tlutur, sléndro nem (sirep)*

**KARNA:** Dear Great God in the Heavens, how could I have aspirations so great, yet instead lose the manifestation of all belief in myself? How could an heirloom weapon vanish from my possession like that? And of what use am I now on this earth?

**SANGKUNI:** Ah my son, my son, I can imagine how devastated you must feel, my son of Awangga. But remember—just remember—His Highness did announce that he was not planning to go after the boon, yet you insisted on this. What is there to do once something like this has happened? It's like the saying, "If you go after the little fish, you'll lose sight of the bigger ones." It was never a certainty that you would attain what you were after, and you have in fact now lost what is most important to you.

**KARNA:** Uncle, it's as though I have lost my very blood vessels themselves. I swear, may it take decades, I will not return without the *wijayandanu* back in my hands. It would be better that I die here and now, my Uncle.

*(Srepeg Tlutur, sirep)*

**[Karna disappears.]**

**SANGKUNI:** Ah, serves you right. We told you there was no need to go after that boon. It's only when you happen to meet with disaster that you recognize the situation for what it is and feel disappointed, unlike someone who happens to always be lucky and everything goes his way. (Someone who gets fanned when he's feeling stuffy and hot; that's someone for whom everything always goes right. Or someone who's having some urinary troubles, there will be a helper right there to heat up a hot water bottle for him.<sup>12</sup>) Ah just imagine what you've lost, oh my, my. Dur?

**DURSASANA:** What is it Uncle?

**SANGKUNI:** Why are the Kurawa so quiet?

**DURSASANA:** What do you call that over there? They're making quite a noise over to the west there.

**SANGKUNI:** And the ones to the north?

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<sup>12</sup> Despite the seriousness of the scene, these are hints to Purbo's assistant that he is getting sweaty and would like to be fanned, and then extension jokes beyond that about various other services an assistant could provide during the performance.

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**DURSASANA:** They're continuing with their game. The ones who lost are proposing another challenge.

**SANGKUNI:** Those lowlifes.

**DURSASANA:** Don't pay any attention to that. Join me over here!

**SANGKUNI:** Alright, let's keep going.

→**crashed into by** *Sampak, sléndro nem*

**DURSASANA:** Come on 'Ti!

**DURMAGATI:** Alright, fine.

→**crashed into by** *Lnc DHAYOHÉ TEKA, sléndro manyura*

**[Dursasana and Durmagati are seen continuing their festivities. Dursasana goads Karna from the rear.]**

**DURSASANA:** Don't stop the festivities!  
(*Dhayohé Teka, stops suddenly*)

**KARNA:** Bastard! Get the hell out of here!

*Sampak, sléndro nem*

**KARNA:** You Kurawa are so heinous. To the point where even I spoke obscenities.<sup>13</sup> You have gone too far. You care nothing for standards of virtue. Oh dear gods in heaven, protect us all.

*Srepeg Tlutur, sléndro nem (sirep)*

**KARNA:** Kurawa, I can accept the fact that you don't want to defend me in my time of need, but don't taunt me when I'm in despair. Oh Great God in the Heavens, give me a sign. If I don't get my precious heirloom back, better that I be carried away to the afterlife.

This moment is consciously sculpted to create poignancy, through the use of *padat*-inspired techniques. The gamelan accompaniment truly comes across as a snippet from a film score. Purbo Asmoro writes original narrative passages, selects specific vocal texts, and designs expressive *sabet tematik* visuals, all with an eye towards thickening emotional moments and explicitly developing individual character traits. This recrafting results in a dramatic hierarchy that the traditional version does not

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<sup>13</sup> For princely types, one of the worst things that can happen in an interaction is to lose your temper. Even worse, is to be brought to the point of losing control and yelling obscenities.

allow, across all elements of performance practice. Around the same time (1:15 AM) audiences watching *The Grand Offering of the Kings* are also drawn back in to a heavily *garaped* moment, after experiencing some two hours of traditional material. For that moment, when Bima kills Hamsa and Dhimbaka and Supala enters the storyline, see SRS-CInt 3, 27:00–40:00.

**Garapan Pearls #3 and #4:**

**The Transition Between *Pathet Nem* and *Pathet Sanga***

**The Transition Between *Pathet Sanga* and *Pathet Manyura***

While in classical treatments a wayang is broken into three segments (*Pathet Nem*, *Pathet Sanga*, *Pathet Manyura*) in Purbo Asmoro's *garapan* performances a different, and in fact more distinct, three-part structure emerges: from the Prologue up to *Limbukan*, from *Limbukan* to *Gara-gara*, and from after *Gara-gara* to the end. *Limbukan* and *Gara-gara* serve as lengthy breaks, separating the triple segments of the story. This three-part structure cuts across *pathet* divisions, as follows:

1. Prologue to *Limbukan*: starts off in a variety of modes, depending, and ends in *sléndro nem*
2. *Limbukan* to *Gara-gara*: starts off in *sléndro nem* and ends in *sléndro sanga*
3. *Gara-gara* to end: starts off in *sléndro sanga* and ends in *sléndro manyura*

Within this new three-part distinction, however, Purbo Asmoro crafts the precise moments at which he will move from *Pathet Nem* to *Pathet Sanga* (happening somewhere in #2 above) and from *Pathet Sanga* to *Pathet Manyura* (somewhere in #3 above) with special treatment. These moments no longer stand out as generic classical scene breaks, but as small pearls of *garapan* within a section. Not every lakon features a special moment at both transitions, but the vast majority of these junctures are somehow consciously highlighted with *padat*-esque treatment by Purbo Asmoro.

The moment of transition between *Pathet Sanga* and *Pathet Manyura* in *The Grand Offering of the Kings* is, although short and simple, one of the most striking moments in the two *garapan* performances [SRS-CInt 4, 24:40]. Arjuna, confronted by

the mysterious drum at the entrance of Jarasandha's kingdom, is told by Kresna to pierce the skin and release the spirit of the long-dead King Brihadrata. Audiences saw the entire terrifying story of Jarasandha murdering his father acted out in the Prologue, and there is emotional involvement in the horror of this drum. Of course one could predict that the piercing of the skin and release of Brihadrata would be made into a pearl of *garap* by Purbo Asmoro, but in this case he adds to the power of the moment by designating it also as the juncture between *Pathet Sanga* and *Pathet Manyura*. Arjuna readies his arrow to the accompaniment of *Sampak*, *sléndro sanga*, with a vocal chorus sung above it (*ditumpangi*):<sup>14</sup>

*Out comes the talisman, provoking a lightning storm,  
Gales pounding unabated,  
Darkness encompasses all and the ocean seethes,  
The deafening turmoil.*

A *kayon* creation by Bambang Suwarno from the *padat* days at ASKI symbolizes the drum and at the precise moment of puncture by Arjuna's arrow, the gamelan moves vigorously into a fast-paced *Sampak Pi-Ma* in *pélog barang* (7777 5555, but with interlocking 6s played on some of the *balungan* instruments, resulting in: 67676767 65656565). *Sampak Pi-Ma* was created by Purbo Asmoro during rehearsals specifically for this performance and this moment. *Pathet Manyura* has arrived with the burst of energy contained in the piercing of the arrow.

In *Rama's Crown*, Purbo Asmoro singles out one moment to use as the transition from *Pathet Nem* to *Pathet Sanga*, which is the dramatic arrival of Kumbakarna to reunite with his long-lost brother in the hermitage [MK-CInt 3, 1:00:00]. Kumbakarna descends from the sky to the accompaniment of *Sampak Gosongan*. This is a modally ambiguous piece, composed by Mayangkara, used interchangeably in *sléndro nem* or *sléndro sanga* (Asmoro *Gamelan Scores*, 96). As Kumbakarna approaches and embraces his brother Wibisana, the gamelan descends to gong pitch middle 1 and segues into the calm and meditative *Ktw Kaduk Rena*, firmly in *sléndro sanga*. *Pathet Sanga* has officially arrived, and the moment is

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<sup>14</sup> This chorus was written by ISI instructor, and Gendhon apprentice, Wahyu Santosa Prabowo in 1984 for his dance drama *Jemparing* (*Bow and Arrow*). It is based on the poetic form *sekar ageng Nagabanda*.

poignantly focused on Kumbakarna, his good heart, his genuine intentions, and the peaceful atmosphere of the Candramanik Hermitage.

In traditional practice, the manner in which each act ends and moves into the next is highly stylized and often predictable: *Ayak-ayak, sléndro nem [kayon in center of screen]* → a knock on the box → *Pathet Sanga Wantah* OR *Ayak-ayak, sléndro sanga [kayon in center of screen]* → a knock on the box → *Pathet Manyura Wantah*. Purbo Asmoro considers these two transitional points, filled with meaningful connotations for the knowledge wayangoer because of their function in classical practice, to have intense dramatic potential, and often gives them full *padat*-esque treatment.

### **Garapan Pearl #5:**

#### **The Single Defining Scene of a Lakon**

Every lakon has at least one single defining scene, serving as the pinnacle toward which all comes together, all becomes clear or, most importantly, the primary essence of the lakon is revealed. This is the moment that educated wayang observers await, the one scene to which dhalang watching other dhalangs' performances are most attentive, and the place through which, historically, dhalang could potentially exhibit their most meaningful *sanggit*. Usually this content is presented in the penultimate scene, around 3:00 AM or a bit later, right before the final battle and the closing. Some examples from a variety of lakon are:

- the moment when Brataséna finally faces his alter ego, known as Déwa Ruci, and takes in a set of philosophical teachings about how to access true spirituality (*The God Ruci*)
- the scene in which Princess Sukèsi is finally allowed to hear the dangerously powerful *sastrajéndra hayuningrat* teachings from Priest Wisrawa (*Sukèsi's Hand in Marriage Contested*)
- the moment Kunthi and Pandhu finally meet at the competition in *Kunthi's Choice* and know they are fated to be together
- the scene in which the rice goddess Dèwi Sri finally explains why she has abandoned the Javanese people (*Sri Returns*)
- when Kresna presents Duryudana with a choice: to acknowledge him as his one single adviser or have the support of 1,000 allied kings at his disposal in the Baratayuda War (*Kresna As Emissary*)
- the heart-wrenching meeting up of the Pandhawa with Pandhu and Madrim in hell (*Pandhu's Afterlife*)
- the series of disturbing revelations communicated to Kresna's spirit by the gods, predicting the bloody outcomes of the upcoming Baratayuda War (*Kresna Awakened*)

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- the nature of the final surrender of an aspiring prince to the hopelessness of his situation as an outsider (*Palgunadi*)
- the advent of hope as the young Parikesit is finally crowned king of Astina after the Baratayuda War (*The Coronation of Parikesit*)

In his contemporary-interpretive performances, Purbo Asmoro crafts deliberate, heavily-*garaped* treatment for these moments in order for them to shine as highlights of the seven-hour structure.

### *Rama's Crown: Defining Moment*

In *Rama's Crown*, the defining moment is when the Hasthabrata philosophy of leadership, great King Rama of yore's legacy or his metaphorical "crown," is passed down to a worthy mortal at Mount Swélagiri in Kutharungga Hermitage. The entire storyline, from the prologue on, has been building around the mystery of the revered legacy of King Rama. Who will be the chosen recipient? Who is this elusive priest named Késawasidi charged with handing out the boon? What are the criteria for his choice? Arjuna has been the focus of Purbo Asmoro's treatment since the prologue, but how exactly will he prove himself worthy? What will the content of the Hasthabrata ultimately be?

In traditional performances of *Rama's Crown* by other dhalang that I have attended or studied<sup>15</sup> the Hasthabrata moment is treated with a surprising lack of ceremony, with no special *iringan*, relatively short-shrift on narration (compared to the long, elaborate, generic narrations in other sections describing a random carriage, gateway, or garden), and little dramatic tension or conflict.

The Hasthabrata scene in the contemporary-interpretive performance of *Rama's Crown* by Purbo Asmoro lasts about 30 minutes and is *garaped* into a number of small segments. The first is a 10-minute scene in the mountain hermitage, in which Priest Késawasidi receives a visit from Anoman [MK-CInt 5, 28:00–37:00]. Anoman intends to hand over the *wijayandanu* arrow he stole from Karna in exchange for praise and recognition for his loyalty as an apprentice of the priest. Not only are his intentions rejected, but Késawasidi scolds Anoman for interfering in

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<sup>15</sup> A recording of a live performance by Nartosabdo, 1980s; a studio recording by Anom Soeroto, Lokananta 1980s; and live performances by Sutino Hardokocarito (Eromoko 1993), Suyati (Baturetno 2000), and Hali Jarwosularso (Solo 2008).

Karna's affairs, criticizes him for his arrogance, and tells Anoman to leave. Although Purbo Asmoro's theme for the lakon is the difference a single force can do for the betterment of the world, he is able to point out here, in contrast, that do-gooders meddling in others' lives are not to be celebrated. Anoman, as admirable as his intentions may be to return the arrow to Arjuna, its rightful owner, has no right to meddle.<sup>16</sup>

Upon Anoman's departure, Arjuna arrives [MK-CInt 5, 37:00–45:00]. With the *wijayandanu* in his hands, the priest Késawasidi has an idea: he will test Arjuna's worthiness by pretending that the *wijayandanu* itself is the boon from the gods. This is *sanggit* unique to Purbo Asmoro, devised to thicken and create tension in the defining moment of the lakon. Arjuna is devastated. Although his trip to Mount Swélagiri has been long and arduous, although he has meditated for months in preparation, although he knows this boon is a unique opportunity to understand the famed King Rama's principles of leadership, although strong leadership is so desperately needed right now to bring under control the effects of the natural disasters that have struck the land, and although he knows that the *wijayandanu* was originally meant for him all those years ago, he cannot accept it as a vessel of Rama's legacy.

Once Arjuna rejects the offer, thus proving his integrity and character, he has passed the test and is determined worthy. Priest Késawasidi takes him into the meditation chambers on the mountain and delivers the Hasthabrata philosophy of leadership [MK-CInt 5, 45:00–53:00]. After Arjuna has received the teaching, Késawasidi further challenges him to have the integrity to take the *wijayandanu* arrow back to Karna without delay, which he does [MK-CInt 5, 55:00–1:03:00]. Immediately upon Arjuna's departure, the priest Késawasidi reveals his true form, Kresna, and expresses his satisfaction with how the whole interaction has transpired [MK-CInt 5, 53:00–55:00].

Here is the all-important moment, from the October 2007 performance by Purbo Asmoro in Pacitan, in which Arjuna receives the teaching:

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<sup>16</sup> Wayang enthusiasts know that the *wijayandanu* arrow was originally meant for Arjuna and ended up in Karna's hands by mistake years during a previous lakon (*The Birth of Gathutkaca*).

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**KÉSAWASIDI:** It is true that I have been appointed to be the vessel through which this esoteric teaching will be passed. But what is Rama's crown, about which we have heard so much? What is it exactly, which is referred to as the Hasthabrata? *Hastha* means eight, and *brata* principles or steps to be taken. Thus we can see that the Hasthabrata takes the form of eight virtuous characteristics, or eight aspects of character that need to be mastered by a king. Anyone appointed as a leader, as long as they can master the Hasthabrata, can be said to be a leader who truly bears a crown. And why? Because the crown can be thought of as the symbol of legitimacy in a king.

The eight principles known as the Hasthabrata are derived from the basic elements. The first one being the essence of the sun. The sun's role is to illuminate the entire universe and to bring life to all existence. And thus it is with a king, who must serve as a beacon of light for his entire monarchy.

The second is the essence of the moon. The moon's role is to illuminate the night hours, as well as to provide a peaceful and protecting radiance. And thus it is with a king, who must be able to offer enlightenment when the empire is cast in darkness.

The third is the essence of the stars, which serve as adornments in the sky, as well as points of the compass to determine the seasons and impart a sense of direction. And thus it is with a king, who must be at the center of all ethics, conduct and cultural traditions in his kingdom; who must be willing to serve as an example.

The fourth is the essence of the clouds. The clouds are able to elicit foreboding in all those who behold them, yet at the moment they break into rain, they become a source of renewal. It is the same in the case of a king, who must exude a fearful and powerful aura. Yet his governance must lead to prosperity and peace.

The fifth is the essence of the earth. The earth embodies a robust and pure nature. A king must possess strength of character, not be easily influenced by flattery, and not be swayed by those spreading tales.

The sixth is the sea. The ocean is wide, without limits, and fills all spaces as though infinitely. Just as in the case of a king, whose character needs to be open and generous, not overly sensitive to those critical of him.

The seventh is the nature of fire. Fire has the ability to conquer all in its path without discrimination, yet at the same time is a vital and necessary force. Just as in the case of a king, who must have the courage to hand down punishment to those who deserve it, without an eye toward friend or family.

The final characteristic is that of the wind. The wind has the ability to sweep across an entire locality in even measure. Just as a king needs to act consistently throughout his reign. Even if some parts of the nation seem remote and inaccessible, all must be known equally by the leader.

**ARJUNA:** Then what is the essence of the Hasthabrata, Venerable One?

**KÉSAWASIDI:** The essence of the Hasthabrata lies in serving as an example. If you—or anyone—can at once become an example to yourself, to the greater community and also



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to the entire universe, then you have internalized the Hasthabrata. Whether you are a king, a minister, a soldier, a noble warrior, or of the most humble of origins, as long as you can serve as an example to yourself, your family, as well as society, this world will truly know health and wellbeing, my Prince.

The content of the Hasthabrata teaching itself here, comes from classical tradition.<sup>17</sup> The difference dramatically between most classical versions and Purbo Asmoro's *garapan* version lies in the multi-segment structure of the hermitage scene, in which Purbo tests Arjuna.

Another primary difference between the classical and *garapan* versions of this defining moment lies in the gamelan accompaniment. In most classical versions, an *ayak-ayak* is played when Arjuna greets Késawasidi, and then repetitions of *srepeg* or *sampak* during the process of revealing the Hasthabrata. Purbo Asmoro's contemporary-interpretive version features something specific to illustrate each event in the sequence:

### **The scene sequence starts with a transition to *pélog barang*:**

Anoman arrives in Kutharungga:	<i>Ldr Kuwung, bedhayan Solo</i>
Anoman's offer of the <i>wijayandanu</i> is rejected:	<i>Sampak Tlutur → Ada-ada Tlutur</i>
Arjuna arrives in Kutharunggu:	<i>Sampak → Ayak Rangu-rangu</i>
Arjuna refuses the <i>wijayandanu</i> :	<i>Pathet Onengan, chorus</i>
Arjuna enters meditation chambers, Hasthabrata:	<i>Ldr Mijil Ludira, kemanak</i>
Celebration that the Hasthabrata is complete:	<i>Srepeg Kalatidha (text by Purbo Asmoro)</i>
Késawasidi transforms back to Kresna:	<i>Ada-ada Mataraman → Galong Semarangan → Ada-ada Mataraman, keprak Yogyan</i>
Arjuna meets the <i>panakawan</i> to report success:	<i>Lagu Lepetan</i>

### **Mode switches from *pélog barang* to *sléndro manyuri*:**

Arjuna meets up with Karna:	<i>Ada-ada → Srepeg Manyuri</i>
Karna demands the boon from Arjuna:	<i>Ada-ada Kebumènan digarap palaran</i>
Karna receives the <i>wijayandanu</i> from Arjuna:	<i>Srepeg Galong → Ayak-ayak, Mataraman</i>

### **Mode switches from *sléndro manyuri* to *sléndro manyura* to signal end of scene.**

We have examined gamelan accompaniment choices in enough detail for the reader to infer from this list how carefully Purbo Asmoro crafted the accompaniment for the *garapan* version. He uses everything from ceremonial Kraton pieces to underline

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<sup>17</sup> See Asmoro 2013, 402 where Emerson's footnote outlines the two major classical versions of the Hasthabrata, of which using natural elements as a metaphor for the qualities of a king, is one.

the weight of the Hasthabrata, to tongue-in-cheek regional pieces for the moment Kresna reveals himself. The Karna sequence is given its own dedicated mode, being exclusively in *manyuri* (see Glossary of Terms). The lends a unique poignancy and tension to the moment. Note that in the entire Hasthabrata segment the single item specially composed was the text by Purbo Asmoro to Nartosabdo's *Srepeg Kalatidha*:

Thus complete,  
The meaning of a revered philosophy,  
Revealed and no longer concealed,  
In fact it was a mere mortal who,  
In his ever insightful way,  
Was ever searching for wellbeing.<sup>18</sup>

### ***The Grand Offering of the Kings: Defining Moment***

In *The Grand Offering of the Kings*, the *sesaji raja suya* ceremony itself is of course one of the defining moments of the lakon. Since the opening court scene, suspense has built around the exacting requirements of this most sacred ceremony. The Pandhawa need to gather the support of 100 foreign allies, collect dozens of rare offerings, and work against the bad karma of a destructive force in the world, in this case Jarasandha. Audiences know that with the completion of the *sesaji raja suya* ceremony, the golden age of the Pandhawa in Amarta will begin.

Traditional performances I have seen or studied of *The Grand Offering of the Kings* by other dhalang skimp, to say the least, on the presentation of the actual *sesaji raja suya* at the end.<sup>19</sup> In some cases it is only described through short narrations, and in some cases it is just assumed to have happened, after seven hours leading up to it (Nartosabdo, Blora). Traditional dhalang feature the first appearance of the dreaded Jarasandha, on average, about 30 minutes before the end of the wayang, and in all cases his battle against Bima features no debate, conflict, or development of his perspective.

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<sup>18</sup> Wus kacakup,  
Werdining kang ngèlmu luhung,  
Sumendhang datan karempit  
Nyata janma kang wus putus,  
Saliring kang sarwa lungit,  
Tansah ngudi karahayon.

<sup>19</sup> A live recording of Nartosabdo, Blora 1980s; a live recording of Mujoko, RRI Solo 1984; and live performances by Suyati (Jatisawit 2004), Sutino Hardokocarito (Ngadirojo 2005), and Manteb Soedharsono (Pati 2008).

It is hard to fathom why exactly, in many of these versions, the final ceremony is often not even played out on the screen. Some possible reasons were given by Tristuti in an interview in 2007 concerning his own *sanggit* for this and other lakon. "Sometimes the dhalang may simply run out of time and feel that this is the most self-evident part of the lakon; sometimes they are either fatigued, have lost enthusiasm or are truly disheartened by the lack of audience remaining.<sup>20</sup> Sometimes there may be a feeling that the actual ceremony itself is impossible to depict and should remain mysterious."

Purbo Asmoro, however, consistently crafts the *sesaji raja suya* ceremony as one of the particularly outstanding *garapan* pearls of the evening, not only in the Lontar recording [SRS-CInt 4, 1:22:00–1:28:00] but in all of the 20 of his performances of this lakon that I have seen, both before and after the Lontar documentation. Unlike other defining moments, this one is not heavy on philosophy or content but rather on the visual presentation of regality and ceremony. The requirements of the offering do not include the profession of any profound knowledge but simply the presence of the priests and 100 allied kings whose support speaks for itself, as it has taken the entire lakon to come to fruition.

There are ceremonial pieces used to underscore the regality of the moment (*Gd Anglir Mendhung* in *kemanak* style, *Ktw Pisangbali* in loud style, *Ktw Langengita*) and expressive visual sequences with innovative Bambang Suwarno *kayon* figures. One of the most unusual moments in the entire performance is when the kings recite a simple pledge of allegiance. The leader of the 97 formerly imprisoned kings (represented by the dhalang) initiates the pledge and the other kings (represented by the entire gamelan troupe speaking in chorus, both players and singers) parrot the pledge back:

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<sup>20</sup> This feeling of disheartened apathy (*malas*) due to lack of audience may be a phenomenon of the past. According to Purbo Asmoro (interview May 2010): "Dhalang today cannot afford to let up in their performance when the audience thins out. Most every performance is being documented these days on video, TV, internet, or at least in audio form. Even if there is no one left in the audience, my performances will last forever as a result of some form of documentation."

**REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGS:** From the pride and happiness in my heart, and in all the hearts of the monarchs who have been set free by none other than Your Highness himself, we will now recite the following vow:

Pledge:—"Pledge,"  
We—"We,"  
An assembly of rulers—"An assembly of rulers,"  
Are here to lend support—"Are here to lend support,"  
In free will—"In free will."

We—"We,"  
An assembly of rulers—"An assembly of rulers,"  
Recognize—"Recognize,"  
The Grand Offering—"The Grand Offering,"  
Of the Kings—"Of the Kings."

We—"We,"  
An assembly of rulers—"An assembly of rulers,"  
Anoint—"Anoint,"  
His Majesty the King—"His Majesty the King,"  
Yudhisthira—"Yudhisthira,"  
As Most Exalted of Kings—"As Most Exalted of Kings,"  
His Highness the Godlike—"His Highness the Godlike."

This is then crashed into (*ditabrak*) by the dramatic and repetitive *Garap Balungan Wisudhan* by Blacius Subono. All this in contrast to Purbo Asmoro's classical recording in which the entire sequence is only accompanied by one *Sampak* and one *Ayak-ayak* in *sléndro manyura*.

While the *sesaji raja suya* ceremony is purely a show of regality, Purbo Asmoro crafts another defining moment about 30 minutes earlier, in the debate scene between Jarasandha and Kresna. Purbo Asmoro describes this as his own original contribution to the lakon, inspired by current events (interview, May 2013):

I don't believe that the destruction of Jarasandha should simply be an item on the list when Kresna outlines the requirements of the ceremony in the prologue, as it often is in classical treatment. I wanted Kresna to engage with Jarasandha and try to make him see reason. I constructed the debate on purpose, in order to invite thought on the current terrorist threat right here in Indonesia, fostered by radical groups who believe that anything can be justified in the name of their beliefs.

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In a 20-minute scene in the main Audience Hall of Giribajra [SRS-CInt 4, 47:00–1:07:00] Kresna enters into a debate with Jarasandha about his plan to sacrifice one hundred kings in a black magic ceremony:

**KRESNA:** King Jarasandha, one moment. I am a brahmin.<sup>21</sup> I was put here on this earth as a priest—a brahmin—with the sole purpose of protecting the wellbeing of the universe. I have heard the news that you plan to put on the Grand Offering to Lodra, in which you will slaughter one hundred kings. It is said that you already have 97 in your grasp and are in need of the last three. In other words, in no time at all you plan to conduct a horrific massacre.

**JARASANDHA:** Yes, I admit it, Your Eminence.

**KRESNA:** What is your intent?

**JARASANDHA:** What kind of thing is that to ask? It's a belief system. You can't ask about that. I'm following my belief system.

**KRESNA:** Now hold on. What is a belief system, in truth?

**JARASANDHA:** As far as I'm concerned, a belief system is something that resides deep in your heart, consists of your convictions and your faith, and is carried out according to your own instinct.

**KRESNA:** How can it be left to your instinct, when your own personal instinct may be correct or it may be faulty?

**JARASANDHA:** Regardless of whether my own personal instinct may be correct or faulty, I'm the one with the right to define it as correct or faulty, right?

**KRESNA:** If you're the one defining whether it is correct or faulty, that may mean your belief system is a faulty one that you yourself have consciously decided to deem correct.

**JARASANDHA:** How can you criticize me? A belief system is the same thing as a religion, is it not?

**KRESNA:** But does a belief system cause the suffering of others? Think about it. You plan to slaughter kings who have done no wrong and have committed no sins.

**JARASANDHA:** Listen to me. Humans are brought into this world with the right to choose, have faith in, and organize their own individual religions. So don't judge my belief system by your own belief system. There is no connection.

**KRESNA:** Jarasandha, there may be no connection and they may not be in alignment, but you must understand that He Who Designed the Universe created humans to love

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<sup>21</sup> Kresna, Bima, and Arjuna have all entered Jarasandha's court disguised as brahmin, as it is well known that while Jarasandha despises kings and princes, he respects spiritual leaders.

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each other. He didn't intend for the differences in belief systems and religion to result in killing each other.

**JARASANDHA:** The Creator of the Universe, huh? Yes, the work of the Creator of the Universe. If humans were created to love and care for each other, then why were they given different belief systems and religions, huh? Why? You know what? This world is in chaos precisely because of different religions and belief systems, which are used to kill each other.

**KRESNA:** Jarasandha, hold on, hold on. Examine this for a moment. Think about it. The essence and meaning of any religion or belief system is the same: to assure the wellbeing of humans here on Earth and on into their eternal life. And part of assuring the wellbeing of life on Earth is to avoid conflict and the killing of others.

**JARASANDHA:** You're forgetting. You're forgetting that every belief system has its own tenets and its own rituals of devotion that must be carried out. It is inevitable that they are not the same. So the fact that I plan to kill those kings and offer them up as a sacrifice is not a sin but rather a requirement of my belief system. It's not a sin.

**KRESNA:** Tenets should not involve the killing of humans, but rather should involve harmless offerings, objects. And if a sacrifice is necessary it should be an animal sacrifice, such as a chicken or other fowl, a cow, horse, elephant, or other. But you are slaughtering humans. Are you equating those kings that you're planning to slaughter with animals? Is that it?

**JARASANDHA:** I may be murdering kings, but they are kings who do not share my belief system. And according to my religion, that is not a sin.

**KRESNA:** Now hold on. In other words, you don't realize that by putting complete faith into this belief system, you stray from all righteousness in your life. You are becoming inhuman. Jarasandha, you are being driven by evil. All empathy has been drained from you. You no longer have empathy for other humans. Think about this: if one of those kings rules over ten thousand citizens, that means that with the murder of those one hundred kings you will cause the deaths of a million people. And every single mortal on Earth will be made a victim, since no one will feel at ease anywhere due to their constant fear of the soldiers you have deployed and the spies you have ordered, who kill furtively. You steal around like a coward, setting fires to places where people gather, only because their inhabitants don't share your belief system. Jarasandha, if types like you are not stopped they will become dangerous.

For this scene, and this scene only, the gamelan accompaniment goes into *sléndro manyuri*, including pieces like '*Bang-bang Wétan* (in *ladrang* form), a piece that is not technically in *manyuri* (i.e., not a traditional piece in *sléndro manyura* transposed up a pitch) but definitely has an "up a step from *manyura*" feel to it. This practice is similar to *Rama's Crown*, when in the tension-filled moment that Arjuna faced Karna, holding the *wijayandanu* arrow the gamelan also went into *manyuri*. Purbo Asmoro

often creates a new modal hierarchy by pinpointing a scene to conduct entirely in *manyuri*, thus making it stand apart tonally from the rest of *Pathet Manyura*.

In the Lontar recordings, there is not as much distinction between the classical and *garapan* treatment of these defining moments as there is in general performance-practice everyday across Solo. The main difference between the recordings, for these particular *garapan* pearls, lies in the musical accompaniment. This is most likely because Purbo Asmoro could not bring himself to treat the defining moments lightly in either recording. Evidence from the many classical performances by a number of dhalang shows, however, that typical classical treatment is much more brief and less developed during these moments.

### **Garapan Pearl #6:**

#### **The Final Battle**

There are certain scenes in traditional wayang that every wayang enthusiast expects no matter what the lakon: the opening court scene, the troop departure, the battle between Cakil and a prince in the forest being a few. The final battle scene is certainly in this category, and this is another scene that Purbo Asmoro inevitably extends with some sort of special *garap*.

In *Rama's Crown* the final battle occurs when Kumbakarna wants to find eternal peace by reincarnating into Bima's thigh through battle. In *The Grand Offering of the Kings* the final battle is the grueling weeks-long match between Jarasandha and Bima. Purbo Asmoro keeps the actual battle itself primarily classical in terms of stylized battle-movement techniques and, as is traditional, there is very little narration or dialogue involved in these scenes.

The primary area in which these battle scenes are crafted is through the choice of *iringan*, and very occasionally through some special contemporary features in the design of the antagonist wayang figures. During the early days of *garapan* in dance dramas at ASKI (1970s) composer Rahayu Supanggah was reportedly the first to juxtapose repeated *sampaks* throughout the initial skirmishes in the last battle with a climatic, distinctive choice for the final battle segment. Bambang Suwarno debuted this practice in wayang accompaniment with his *Rama* script in condensed style, in

which many repetitions of *sampak* are capped off by the distinctive *Kodhok Ngorèk* for the final standoff between Rama and Rahwana.

Tristuti spoke of a sequence he preferred (interview 2006) in which he used many repetitions of *sampak*, until the penultimate moments of a battle for which he would use *Sampak Galong* (6666 5555 3333 2222), and the final blow for which he would move into *Sampak Kebumènan* (6666 6662). Purbo Asmoro also uses a version of this sequence frequently, including in the final battle in *Rama's Crown* [MK-CInt 5, 1:22:00–1:25:00]. Numerous repetitions of *sampak* finally break into the distinctive *Gegilak* when Bima and Kumbakarna truly face off. This moves into *Sampak Galong*, followed by *Sampak Kebumènan*, again, giving the battle a shape and internal hierarchy that the classical version, which simply uses multiple repetitions of *sampak*, does not have.

The same kind of hierarchical shape within a battle is created in *The Grand Offering of the Kings* [SRS-CInt 4, 1:07:00–1:22:00]. Bima and Jarasandha's first few threatening moments are simply to the accompaniment of *sampak*, but when the maces comes out and things get very serious the *iringan* goes into *Ganjuran*, a piece used often by Mayangkara for the climatic battle moment.

Another *garapan* element that can be found in final battles is the use of unusual versions of the antagonist character. While he would not consider using it when presenting a classical version, in the contemporary-interpretive performance



Figure 7-2: A Sangkuni figure that comes apart during the death scene.

Purbo Asmoro uses a wayang figure made depicting just the severed head of Jarasandha. He also, at times, uses a version of Jarasandha that can actually be severed into two pieces, so that during the final battle with Bima he literally comes apart upon his death [SRS-CInt 4, 1:15:40]. For use in other lakon, there are also versions of Dursasana and Sangkuni (see



Figure 7-2) that can come apart, as both of experience highly violent deaths in which their bodies are maimed.

### ***Garapan* Pearl #7:**

#### **The Ending**

Endings in classical wayang are as stylized as openings, with an obligatory final court scene. Although it may be as short as three to five minutes, this final gathering of the protagonist kingdom wraps up the seven-hour performance, presenting harmony, symmetry and a return to balance and normalcy in the world no matter what the story and no matter what the outcome. Sometimes, as in *Rama's Crown*, Purbo Asmoro's *garapan* performances end with this type of traditional closing. Often, however, the ending is *garaped* by Purbo Asmoro in ways that create a sense of quiet shock in the audience. While in a classical wayang audiences start their exodus after the final battle, knowing that only a standard and brief court audience scene remains, in these *garaped* endings audiences remain gripped by the dhalang's interpretation of the story to the very end. Rather than picking up their belongings and wandering away feeling calm and a bit fatigued but assured of the balance in life, they may leave stupefied and with more questions than ever about what to think and how to interpret the tale.

Both classical and *garapan* versions of *The Grand Offering of the Kings* end with the aggressive Supala from Cèdhi Kingdom disrupting the *sesaji raja suya* ceremony, as he had planned to do ever since receiving his invitation. He has a longtime grudge against Kresna, which he plans to air before all 100 kings and numerous priests. Kresna responds with equal aggression and frustration and kills Supala before the entire gathering. In the meantime, Duryudana, who has been wandering around the new Amarta Kingdom grounds festering with envy over the Pandhawa's success, accidentally falls, completely clothed, into a pond that he mistook for one of the many crystal floor pieces in the courtyard. Regardless of both odd occurrences that disrupt the regality of the ceremony, the final scene in the classical version follows with little explanation and concludes with the elder King Matswapati's words:

## Ch 7: Creating Dramatic Hierarchy

**MATSWAPATI:** The danger among us has been destroyed. All priests in attendance, let us set the ceremonial fires alight and burn the sacred incense. Let us all begin to chant, to bring on prosperity and wellbeing in the world, by means of the Grand Offering of the Kings. May the Pandhawa be forever in control of the universe. Let us chant the mantra for peace, plenty and eternal wellbeing.

In the *garapan* version the progression of the plot is identical [SRS-CInt 4, 1:28:00–1:38:00], but the treatment is quite different. Following the violent murder of Supala by Kresna, Duryudana falls into the pond and the final words of the entire seven-hour wayang are Duryudana's, mixed in with the orchestrated, loud laughing of the entire gamelan troupe, meant to reflect the sneering of the guests in attendance:

**DURYUDANA:** Hey! Shut your mouths and stop mocking me! My ass is wet, don't you see? Uncle Sangkuni!

This is immediately followed by an eerie mantra repeated in a chant style, as the dhalang places a small *kayon* by Bambang Suwarno in the center of the screen to signal the ending, with the gamelan and chanting fading out to the accompaniment of a single *suling* (bamboo flute) melody:

*Malékaha malékaha,*<sup>22</sup>  
If there be ill will may it not fall here,  
And if it were to fall here, may no one suffer.  
*Malékaha malékaha.*

In the Javanese language, greetings and leave-takings are communicated with special care and, more than in English, a generic set of expressions that allow everyone to feel at ease and know what to expect. This is the same in wayang, where traditionally certain expressions of good wishes are recited at the end. The *garapan* ending is disconcerting, even if the text to the mantra is of well-wishing. Questions are implied about the authority of the *sesaji raja suya* ceremony after all; about the integrity of Kresna who lectured Jarasandha on respecting life yet then marred this sacred occasion by murdering one of the guests in anger; about the potential for peace and prosperity in Amarta given Duryudana's hatred. Audiences leave with

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<sup>22</sup> *Malékaha* has no specific meaning but is a chant of well wishing that is uttered in blessings.

their mouths agape rather than feeling like the wayang was a force for forging, or at least reflecting, order in the world. Purbo Asmoro refuses the audience the traditional sense of peace and order at the end of the wayang.

Thus, Purbo Asmoro weaves tradition, classical structure, innovation, and *padat* techniques into an all-night package, interspersed with two entertainment interludes. In order to summarize what I have referred to throughout as dramatic hierarchy, I provide some charts at the end of this chapter that depict visually the way intense *garapan* is interspersed throughout Purbo Asmoro's all-night *padated* performances, *padat diwengèkaké*. In the next chapter, we will take a look at how Purbo Asmoro applies this approach to the multi-episode constructions he creates. In closing, I offer a quote from an interview in December 2007, in which Purbo Asmoro shared his take on modern audiences (see Figure 7-3 and back cover for examples of contemporary audiences) and the challenge of the modern dhalang:

Audiences are much more sophisticated these days. Not only are they used to the fast-paced and climax-based directional drama of film, but they also expect to be shown how these stories are relevant to them and to modern life. They have no patience for the unquestioned authority of a king, or generic narrative passages that don't distinguish the virtuous from the corrupt and questionable. They expect clever, sharp humor and will not stand for empty digression. They demand strong technique, high quality equipment, a professional presentation, a good voice, and they aren't interested in long, extended musical selections. That being said however, they may be much less familiar with characters, plot lines and ancient literary phrases than their elders, and may need to be led along in the cleverest, most discreet and most respectful of ways throughout the performance. The classical style of the past is for moments of nostalgia and for those interested in preserving something from history. But it is not what is going to keep wayang alive. Wayang is not like an artifact that simply needs to be taken out and delicately dusted off or occasionally mended here and there. It needs to be developed and it requires innovation to keep it alive and relevant. Yet at the same time we must retain its integrity and depth as an art form. This is my challenge as a modern-day dhalang.



Figure 7-3: The audience at Purbo Asmoro's contemporary-interpretive performance of *The Grand Offering of the Kings*, 24 Nov 2007, Pacitan, East Java, that has been used for analysis in this dissertation. This photo only shows 20% of the audience, who eventually filled up this left field, but also the right field, center field, left front stage area, and right front stage area. The performance had not even commenced yet; this was at about 8:00PM. As the evening progressed, the audience swelled to even greater numbers (photo by Kartiko Nugroho).

## Charts (Figures 7-4 to 7-9) Reflecting Dramatic Hierarchy

The intent of the charts that follow is simply to allow the reader to see, at a quick glance, what is expressed in this dissertation as "dramatic hierarchy." The pearls of *garap* outlined in this chapter, in which *padat* concepts are applied to most all elements of the performance (narration, movement, characterization, and gamelan accompaniment choices and techniques) are represented in blue. Green reflects strong, philosophically-rich, conflict-rich plot development that is presented somewhat traditionally, without significant *garapan* techniques, such as many court audience scenes. Pink and red reflect "ornamentations of the dramatic action"<sup>23</sup> (visual attractions such as troop departure scenes and court dispersal scenes are in pink, and battle scenes in red). Yellow reflects moments of comedic relief that are still within the context of the plot, while gray shows the entertainment interludes.

Looking at the blue and green sections combined, readers can see how much total time is spent on plotline development in each performance. The difference between the contemporary-interpretive and classical performances when this is compared is striking:

### **Rama's Crown, contemporary-interpretive:**

99 minutes *garapan* plot (blue) + 113 minutes basic plot (green) = 212 total minutes  
= 47% of the performance the audience is engaged with intense plot development

### **The Grand Offering of the Kings, contemporary-interpretive:**

126 minutes *garapan* plot (blue) + 52 minutes basic plot (green) = 178 total minutes  
= 46% of the performance the audience is engaged with intense plot development

### **Rama's Crown, palace-classical:**

0 minutes *garapan* plot (blue) + 98 minutes basic plot (green) = 98 total minutes  
= 24% of the performance the audience is engaged with intense plot development

### **The Grand Offering of the Kings, village-classical:**

0 minutes *garapan* plot (blue) + 113 minutes basic plot (green) = 113 total minutes  
= 28% of the performance the audience is engaged with intense plot development

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<sup>23</sup> See this term as defined by Sumarsam, on page 243. My application of the term may be different from Sumarsam's original intent.



Figure 7-5: Rama's Crown, palace-classical style

		21:00-00:53 3 hours 53 minutes					00:53-02:44 1 hour 51 minutes					02:44-03:57 1 hour 13 minutes								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
INTENSE GARAPAN																				
PLOT		Green						Green		Green							Green			
ORNAMENTATION (dark red = battle scenes)		Red		Red		Red	Red	Red	Dark Red	Red	Red		Red	Dark Red	Red	Red	Red			Red
HUMOR					Yellow							Yellow								Yellow
		NEM					SANGA					MANYURA								

98 minutes	
PLOT	
242 minutes	ORNAMENTATION
60 minutes	HUMOR

Figure 7-6: *The Grand Offering of the Kings*  
contemporary-intepretive style

	21:00-22:38		22:38-23:45		23:45-00:47		00:47-01:50		01:50-3:29				
	1 hour 38 minutes		1 hour 7 minutes		1 hour 2 minutes		1 hour 3 minutes		1 hour 39 minutes				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
<b>INTENSE GARAPAN</b>	[Blue]						[Blue]			[Blue]		[Blue]	[Blue]
<b>PLOT</b>		[Green]			[Green]						[Green]		
<b>ORNAMENTATION</b> (dark red = battle scenes)		[Dark Red]			[Dark Red]	[Dark Red]				[Dark Red]			[Dark Red]
<b>HUMOR</b> (gray-unrelated to lakon)								[Gray]					
	<b>SANGA</b>		<b>NEM</b>			<b>SANGA</b>		<b>MANYURA</b>					

<b>126 minutes</b>	<b>52 minutes</b>	<b>63 minutes</b>	<b>18 minutes</b>	<b>130 minutes</b>
INTENSE GARAPAN	PLOT	ORNAMENTATION	HUMOR	INTERLUDE



Figure 7-7: *The Grand Offering of the Kings*  
village-classical style

		21:00-00:38 3 hours 38 minutes						00:38-02:21 1 hour 43 minutes				02:21-03:30 1 hour 9 minutes					
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
INTENSE GARAPAN																	
PLOT		Green					Green		Green					Green	Green		
ORNAMENTATION (dark red = battle scenes)		Dark Red			Dark Red	Dark Red	Dark Red	Dark Red	Dark Red	Dark Red		Dark Red			Dark Red		
HUMOR				Yellow								Yellow			Yellow		
		NEM						SANGA				MANYURA					

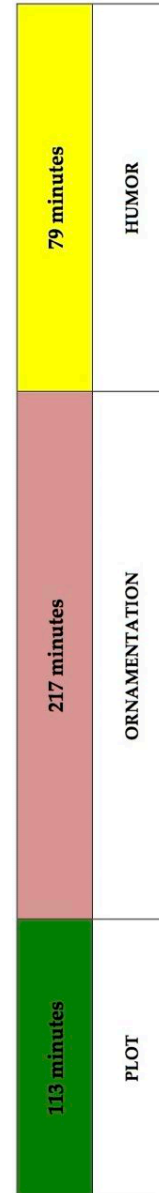


Figure 7-8: *Rama's Crown*, condensed style

	21:00–21:14	21:14–22:04				22:04–22:32			22:32–23:03		
	14 minutes	48 minutes				28 minutes			31 minutes		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
INTENSE GARAPAN	Blue					Blue			Blue	Blue	Blue
PLOT		Green	Green	Green		Green		Green			Green
ORNAMENTATION (dark red = battle scenes)			Light Red		Dark Red						
HUMOR (gray = unrelated to lakon)							Gray				Yellow
	PL NEM	NEM				SANGA			MANYURA		

Figure 7-9: *The Grand Offering of the Kings*, condensed style

	21:00	21:09–21:48					21:48–22:19			22:19–22:57			
	9 min	39 minutes					31 minutes			38 minutes			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
INTENSE GARAPAN	Blue					Blue			Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
PLOT		Green		Green									
ORNAMENTATION (dark red = battle scenes)			Light Red		Dark Red			Light Red					
HUMOR (gray = unrelated to lakon)							Gray						
	SANGA	NEM					SANGA			MANYURA			