INDONESIA, WAYANG GOLEK

TOPIC, TOLOSA PUPPETS INTERNATIONAL CENTER
(www.topictolosa.com/en)
Wayang is a traditional puppet theatre form from Bali, Java, Sunda, and other Indonesian and Malaysian regions under great Javanese influence. It is believed that originally it meant “shadow” and that, therefore, it referred to shadow theatre, considered the ancestor or the primal form of puppet theatre. Nowadays, the Indonesian puppet shadow theatre is known as Wayang Kulit, while the Indonesian three-dimensional wooden puppet theatre is called Wayang Golek. There are still many other wayang forms: Klitik (two-dimensional wooden puppets in bas-relief), Topeng (with masks), etc.

Wayang Golek puppets are rod puppets, and they have a central shaft connecting the puppet’s head with the right hand of the handler. The body of the puppet lies on this shaft, freely turning when the puppeteer moves his wrist. The arms, however, are moved by a couple of rods the handler takes only on his left hand. The characters, gods (dewa/batara), nobles (satria), monkeys (wanara), giants (raksasa), devils (buta), etc., can be told from one another by their faces and headdresses, for they have common elements in their make-up, hairstyle, clothes, etc.

Most of the plays represented by Wayang Golek are based on the two most important religious epics of Hindu origin: the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Their Javanese adaptation adds some new characters like clowns or advisers, adapts it to certain Muslim standards, or even takes in on the performance the adaptation of poems on the local stories, and more.

Indonesia is the biggest Muslim country in the world and it is known that this religion forbids to represent the human figure —yet, puppets are an exception on the grounds that their bodies are deformed (their necks are too long; their waists, too tiny; etc.).

UNESCO declared wayang as a whole Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2003, therefore turning it into one of the brand marks of the country. It is thanks to it that we have greater guarantees for these different regional varieties of this peculiar puppet style to be preserved.
INDONESIA, WAYANG GOLEK EXHIBITION

This display approximately gathers a 100 Indonesian rod puppets, all belonging to the Tolosa Puppets International Center, Topic. Said puppets are presented in two different ways: on the one hand, stacked on wooden stands, showing the viewers how a wayang theatre scene really is and, on the other hand, the rest are exhibited on a more educational exposition where different traditions and characters are distinguished and explained. This display was opened at Topic in October 2010, and was available to visitors until March 2011.

The exhibition starts with the tree of life, Kayon or Gunungan, which represents the world of gods and underlines all that is divine in life. It is used at the beginning of the show to imbue the puppets with life. During the show, it indicates a scene change or the appearance of outstanding characters or, ultimately, it serves as plain decoration in some scenes.
On second place, the *Ramayana* is explained through puppets. This religious epic from the Hindu tradition tells “Rama's Journey”. Rama is the reincarnation of the god Vishnu on earth. The poem has 80,000 couplets in its 7 cantos, dating back from the 1st century BC, although they refer to older cantos. *Ramayana* puppets are organised in this exhibition in three blocks, as follows:

- The main characters of the poem: Rama, Sita and Rahwana;
- the wanara monkey tribe; and
- some secondary characters.
The other block is made up of the puppets explaining the religious epic *Mahabharata*, also from the Hindu tradition, telling the “great (battle tale of the) Bharata”. Their descendants, the Kaurawa (100 brothers) and the Pandawa (5 brothers) confront each other on a battle to the death. The longest version of the poem has around 200 000 verses divided into 18 books, making the *Mahabharata* the longest poem in world literature. It took centuries for the verses to be compiled (from the 4th century BC - 4th AD). The *Mahbharata* puppets are organised in this display in three blocks:

- The Kaurawas and their allies;
- the Pandawas and their allies; and
- other heroes of the poem.
Finally, there's the characters that do not only appear in both *Ramayana* and *Mahbharata* poems, but also on the rest of epics and stories originated from the chapters of these two mother-poems. They are, essentially, the gods from the Hindu poetry and the advisers or clowns from the *wayang* stories. These last ones tend to help the upright characters, and they are allowed to give an opinion on real life situations and to laugh at everything. They are a Javanese addition to the Hindu epics.

This exhibition also includes a brief explanation on the introductory *wayang* ritual, which usually takes place outdoors, on a stage slightly elevated from the ground and covered by a cane ceiling. Inside, and on the forefront from the audience, the *Dhalang* or narrator and handling master places himself along with some of the puppets to be used during the show, or at that right moment, placed on rows on both sides. Meanwhile, the *Gamelan* or instrument orchestra, generally percussion, is placed at the background. The *Dhalang*, the only actor and handler in the show, and the musicians interact very closely and with a great mutual understanding during the whole performance. He, before starting, turns on a light and does a series of invocations. His figure is highly respected in the society.
TECHNICAL DETAILS

- **Room**: This exhibition is designed for a undivided, multi-purpose and versatile space of approximately 200 m². Nonetheless, the puppet selection and display can be adapted to smaller areas. As this display is divided into two, the first one representing the *wayang* scene on a big-scale pull-down structure and the puppets placed very closely together on wooden bases can be reduced, or even suppressed. The room should measure no less than 3 m in height.

- **Needed material**: 

  **Electricity**: At least, three power points (220 V; 25000 W).

  **Lightning**: 130 spotlights. Nevertheless, lightning can also be accommodated to the means and capacity of the different spaces.

  **Sound**: At least one audio broadcasting system for the screening of an audiovisual product, as well as a DVD player and a projector or, if not possible, a computer and a screen to play said audiovisual product.

  **Personnel** It takes at least two people to load and unload the pieces, as well as a light technician to correctly set the illumination once everything is in place. In addition, a maintenance technician familiar with the room to come every now and then would be desirable in order to solve the questions that might arise during the set-up. Finally, presence of staff during the display is essential.

  **Time**: The set-up takes 4 days, and 2 more days for it to be dismantled. During these days it might be necessary to extend the opening hours of the room for the process to be carried out adequately.
In addition to the exhibition itself, TOPIC can offer parallel activities such as a workshop on rod puppet handling, similar to wayang, or a lecture or projection on the different wayang varieties. These activities would have to be budgeted separately.

For any questions, please do not hesitate to contact with:

IDOYA OTEGUI MARTÍNEZ
TOPIC, Tolosa Puppets International Center Director
Plaza Euskal Herria 1
20400 Tolosa
(+34) 943 650414
iotegui@cittolosa.com