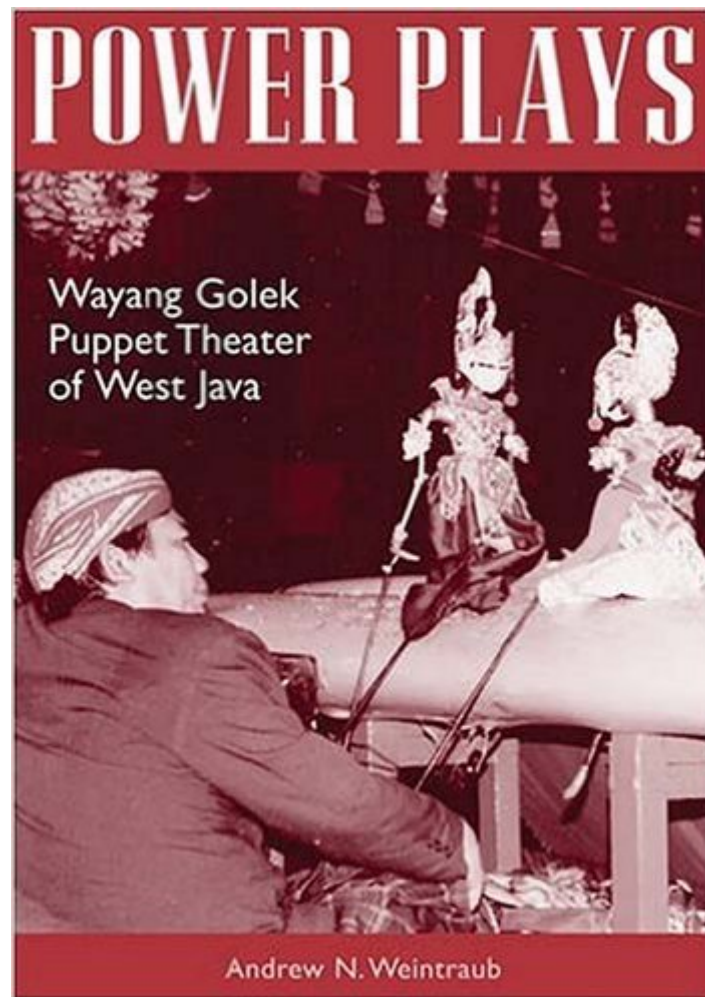


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Power Plays: Wayang Golek Puppet Theater Of West Java (Ohio RIS Southeast Asia Series)



Synopsis

Based on ethnographic fieldwork spanning twenty years, *Power Plays* is the first scholarly book in English on wayang golek, the Sundanese rod-puppet theater of West Java. It is a detailed and lively account of the ways in which performers of this major Asian theatrical form have engaged with political discourses in Indonesia. Wayang golek has shaped, as well, the technological and commercial conditions of art and performance in a modernizing society. Using interviews with performers, musical transcriptions, translations of narrative and song texts, and archival materials, author Andrew N. Weintraub analyzes the shifting and flexible nature of a set of performance practices called Padalangan, the art of the puppeteer. He focuses on "superstar" performers and the musical troupes that dominated wayang golek during the New Order political regime of former president Suharto (1966-98) and the ensuing three years of the post-Suharto period. Studies of actual performances illuminate stylistic and formal elements and situate wayang golek as a social process in Sundanese culture and society. *Power Plays* includes an interactive multimedia CD-ROM of wayang golek. *Power Plays* shows how meanings about identity, citizenship, and community are produced through theater, music, language, and discourse. While based in ethnographic theory and methods, this book is at the center of a new synthesis emerging among ethnomusicology, anthropology, and cultural studies. Its cross-disciplinary approach will inspire researchers studying similar struggles over cultural authority and popular representation in culture and the performing arts.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I think *Power Plays* is a very good book. What I most like about it is the way the book unfolds -- Weintraub seems to lead the reader slowly into the different modes of being of wayang golek and gets across a sensation of the density and depth of the genre and its practice. One of the manners in which this is done is the way the content is presented, slowly building the density of multiple forms of significance of Wayang. I also like the way the humor of the performances is actually presented in the book. To me this is an ethnography in a very deep sense of the word -- the time the author spent there permeates the book and the fact that he has multiple entry points into the subject-- performance practices, structure of sound, discourses on wayang, changing policy attitudes throughout different historical moments, characters and their roles--- is something that one can only learn or perceive with a thorough understanding of the genre. The book covers the politicization of entertainment, the discussion of the relation between policy and performance; the fun people have performing or listening to Wayang Golek and the significance of that. I also found the discussion of sound structure and changing tuning of instruments and their social signification a crucial contribution of the book. I think this is a really good book that can stand as an excellent example of how ethnography is done in a globalized world.

One of *Power Play*'s unique features is its CD-ROM, which includes an interactive introduction to wayang golek that covers wayang history, puppets, and performance practice. The book's text focuses on the many layers of political maneuvering that make Sundanese wayang golek such a vibrant cultural production. The CD-ROM, with mp3 files (oops, should have been OGG/VORBIS, I suppose), lots of photographs and video clips, as well as an authoritative text, makes for a much more entertaining introduction to wayang than any introductory chapter ever could, and is worth the price of the book all by itself. Which is not to say the book part isn't good, too -- lots of ethnographic and biographic information and keen cultural analysis. You can see Andrew's book's blurb at [...] by the way, you can take a (very limited) e-book tour of *Gamelan: The Traditional Sounds of Indonesia* at [...] Cheers, --Henry Spiller

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