4

Traditional Forms of Asian Theatre

See Fig. 4.1.

A. India with TIMELINE

- c. 5000 BCE, earliest evidence of religious practices in the Indus Valley
- c. 5000–1500, Indus Valley (Harappan) Civilization
- c. 3300, Harappan burial practices
- c. 2800, Harappan cremation rather than burial
- c. 1500–1000, migration of nomadic Aryans into the Indus and Ganges valleys
- c. 1500–500, Vedic Period and Gandhara Civilization
- c. 700, Aryan beliefs were codified into the Upanishads as the core of Hinduism, but the Charvaka philosophy also developed, focusing on pure materialist pleasure and critical of any spiritual beliefs
- 530, Persia conquered the Indus Valley
- c. 500, the *Ramayana* epic was composed by the sage Valmiki
- c. 400s, life of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama
- 327–25, Alexander the Great invaded India and then retreated to Babylon, Persia (today's Iran), which he had previously conquered, yet Hellenistic art influenced India afterward

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Fig. 4.1 Map of Asia (US CIA's *World Factbook*)

- 320–298, the Mauryan emperor Chandragupta conquered northern and central India, but then abdicated the throne to his son and converted to Jainism, becoming an ascetic and starving himself to death
- 200s, start of the **Classical Period**

- 268–32, reign of the third Mauryan emperor, Ashoka, who converted to Buddhism
- 200–80, Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek descendants of the army of Alexander the Great, who lived to the northwest of India (in today's Afghanistan and Pakistan), conquered and ruled parts of India
- c. 200 BCE–600 CE, 30 Buddhist cave-shrines were carved in Ajanta, eventually showing Gupta designs
- first century CE, Mahayana Buddhism developed (differently from Theravada) with the belief in bodhisattvas, as beings who reached nirvana but chose to return to the cycle of embodied lives through compassion, to help others reach enlightenment
- 320–550, the Gupta Dynasty ruled most of India, creating a "golden age" of art, philosophy, mathematics, science (Ayurveda medicine), and architecture, with Hindu rulers who were tolerant toward Jainism and Buddhism
- 650, start of the **Medieval Period**
- 712, Muslim invasions began in northern India
- 848–1279, the Chola Dynasty ruled in southern India, with many Hindu temples built and artworks created, such as bronze images of Shiva (the god of transformation) performing the dance of destruction and creation
- 1000s–1200s, Afghan and Turkish Muslims invaded northern India, destroying the 700-year-old Buddhist university and library at Nalanda (c. 1190), the university at Vikramashila (c. 1200), and many monasteries, shrines, images, and sacred texts, while killing monks and nuns—thus marking the final decline of Buddhism in India, except in the Himalayas and southern India
- 1206s, the Delhi Sultanate controlled most of India with Islamic rulers for 320 years
- 1500s, start of the **Early Modern Period**
- 1526–40, the Islamic, Indo-Persian, Mughal Empire ruled most of India and parts of Afghanistan
- 1540–55, the Islamic, Afghan, Sur Empire ruled northern India
- 1555, the Mughal Empire ruled most of India again, for the next 300 years
- 1757–1858, the British East India Company (a private company with stockholders) ruled parts of India with its own army and judges, starting the **Colonial Period**
- 1858–1947, the British Raj ruled India (after the Indian Rebellion of 1857)

- 1876, the Dramatic Performances Act gave police the power to stop a show and arrest actors if it was scandalous, immoral, or might inspire anti-government sentiments
- 1947–present, **Contemporary Period** (after India's independence from Britain and then the creation of Pakistan and Bangladesh as separate Islamic countries)

1. Over 3000 years ago, the Aryans from Central Asia brought to India a system of four main castes (priests, rulers/warriors, artisans/merchants/farmers, and laborers), plus "untouchables" as outcasts. This caste system was outlawed in 1950, but continues to influence Indian society.
2. From Hinduism, also brought by the Aryans, came sacred texts in the ancient Sanskrit language: the Vedas, Upanishads, and epic poems *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. They tell the stories of many gods, focusing on Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver (who also appears as Krishna and Rama), and Shiva the Destroyer/Transformer. These stories involve ideas of cyclic reincarnation (*samsara*), karmic fate, reality as an every-changing illusion through divine play (*maya lila*), and the goal of liberation (*moksha*) from that illusory cycle, which influenced traditional Indian theatre.
3. Buddhism started in India in the 400s BCE with a Shakya clan prince, Siddhartha Gautama, who discovered a "Middle Way" to truth, between asceticism and pleasure, through "non-attachment" as a cure to suffering. Buddhism promised liberation (enlightenment as *nirvana*, being "blown out") from karmic reincarnation. It spread across Asia, influencing theatre in various countries.
4. According to legend, the Indian king, Ashoka, after witnessing the carnage of his campaign against the Kalinga, with over 100,000 deaths, converted to Buddhism in 263 BCE. He sent Buddhist monks to Sri Lanka and Central Asia, while building 84,000 stupas with relics of the bones of the historical Buddha. He also erected pillars across India (some still standing) with ethical edicts that included religious tolerance, a ban on animal sacrifices, and protections for certain species.
5. The *Natya-Shastra* (or *Natyaśāstra*, "dance-drama scripture"), a manual from about 2000 years ago, by Bharata Muni and others, describes various elements of ancient Sanskrit theatre as a mythic gift from the god Brahma to Bharata and his 100 sons as the first actors. It defines the playhouse "like a mountain cavern" and its stage with four poles around it: white, red, yellow, and blue, symbolizing each caste. The

Natya-Shastra also describes gestures, gaits, prosody, meter, diction, intonation, temperaments, color-coded makeup, and costumes. It defines four performance styles—verbal, grand, graceful, and energetic (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 97). And it categorizes eight *rasas* as the "flavors" of emotions (*bhavas*), resonating within the viewer empathetically, yet tasted at a detached distance.

6. A ninth *rasa*, "peace" (*shantam*), was added a 1000 years later by the commentator Abhinavagupta, who explored the "mental state" of the viewer, in tasting *rasas* (Pollock 19). Indian theatre helps spectators toward liberation (*moksha*) of the self (*atman*) by purifying the mind's awareness of emotions, akin to the Buddhist sense of enlightenment. Abhinavagupta describes *shanta-rasa* as the purest experience of other *rasas*, like a string passing through the other eight as jewels in a necklace. Such mindful attentiveness aims at union with the divine (*Brahman*) through communion with other humans (*tanmayibhavana*), in calmness beyond sensual attachments.
7. Abhinavagupta regards the performer as an instrument for conveying *rasas*, not needing to feel the character's emotions—with the Sanskrit term for "actor," *patra*, meaning "carrier-pot" (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 98). But this also depends on the viewer being in "the right frame of mind … with all senses undistracted and capable of critical observation" (Virtanen 67). *Rasa* theory thus involves arousal yet quiescence, empathy yet distance, like Aristotelian catharsis, as a "cure by opposites," which is a technique in both ancient Greek and Indian medicine (Sen 92–97), although current interpreters differ on how similar the traditions are.
8. The nine *bhavas*/*rasas* (with their traditional, *Natya-Shastra* colors) are love/romance (green), joy/laughter (white), anger/fury (red), sorrow/compassion (gray or dove-colored), disgust/aversion (blue), fear/horror (black), courage/heroism (orange or wheat brown), awe/wonder (yellow), and peace/bliss (Schwartz 15). They are evoked in spectators' minds (inner theatres) by the Indian dance-drama's plot, characters, and poetry—through codified facial expressions, movements, and hand gestures (*mudras*), which developed from sacred rituals as a mimetic sign language that can be read by connoisseur viewers.
9. *Rasa* arises from the invocation of a primary emotion (*Sthyayi Bhava*) through its "Determinants" (*Vibhava*, causes in the story or in life), "Consequents" (*Anubhava*, aspects of performance), and 33 "Transitory States" (*Vyabhichari Bhava*) such as intoxication, stupor, sleep, sickness, insanity, impatience, despair, arrogance, agitation, shame, weariness, envy, weakness, anxiety, distraction, contentment, recollection,

apprehension, discouragement, cruelty, and death (Maillard 33–34; Richmond 81).

[Today, which types of stage and screen fantasies, or virtual-reality worlds, evoke emotions (*bhavas*) not just as immersive experiences, but also as changing flavors (*rasas*), toward new perspectives and mindful awareness, perhaps with the ninth *rasa* of "peace"?]

10. *The Little Clay Cart*, attributed to Shūdraka, who lived sometime between the third century BCE and fifth CE, is unlike other ancient Sanskrit dramas in featuring common people with noble spirits. Written in ten acts, its main plot shows the romance of a young Brahmin, Chārudata, and a virtuous courtesan, Vasantasenā, while she is pursued by a violent rival, Samsthānaka, with thieves, gamblers, and peasants involved also. Chārudata loses his wealth and is almost executed for the murder of Vasantasenā. But she survives being strangled by Samsthānaka and then joins Chārudata, his wife, and son as one family.
11. *The Recognition of Shakuntalā*, written by Kalidasa about 1600 years ago, exemplifies Sanskrit romantic drama, with its idealization, yet questioning of the noble hero and his love object, in a story drawn from the *Mahabharata*. It shows King Dushyanta falling in love with Shakuntalā when he first sees her, at her adoptive father's ashram. He is even envious of a bee that bothers her eyes. They consummate their union offstage, but he fails to recognize her later, due to a curse from a visiting sage, whom she offended, and the loss of a ring the king gave her. Rejected by the king, the pregnant Shakuntalā ascends to a celestial ashram, her mother's realm as a nymph (apsara). When the ring is returned to him, the king realizes his loss and longs for her, even creating a painting of her, while abjectly envying the painted bee. But the task of fighting demons (asuras) revives him. He rides in the fire god Agni's chariot to the celestial ashram. There, he recognizes his son by divine signs (a pet lion cub, webbed fingers, and dangerous amulet) and is reunited with Shakuntalā.
12. The lead actor, *sudtradhara* ("he who draws the strings"), was often the production manager of the Sanskrit drama troupe. In *Shakuntalā*, he introduces the play, along with the lead actress, encouraging viewers to experience the story with theatrical eyes.
13. Sanskrit performances began with a *puja* ritual to bring blessings from cosmic forces through the burning (and smell) of incense.
14. In the twelfth to sixteenth centuries, a series of Islamic rulers limited the practice of Hindu Sanskrit theatre. But various forms developed in

different regions, with *kutiyattam* ("combined-play") having the most direct lineage to ancient performances. They involve makeup with symbolic colors and elaborate costumes. They have little or no scenery, with props mostly mimed and with the sign language of hand *mudras* and codified facial expressions evoking imagery and *rasas* in the minds of spectators.

15. *Kutiyattam* or *koodiyattam*, with a tradition over 1000 years old in Kerala (southern India), is usually performed in Hindu temple theatres (*kootampalas*). Such a theatre has a square stage, usually with four pillars and a roof over it, plus a bronze oil lamp signifying divine presence. Men are seated on one side and women on the other—with men as the only actor-dancers, in colorful makeup and costumes, until about 50 years ago.
16. The performance also involves a curtain, pot-shaped copper drums and a smaller drum, metal cymbals (played by women), an oboe, and a conch shell. The script is recited by the actor-dancer with gestures and then repeated just in gestures, with further elaborations of the Sanskrit play. A full production may take 5–35 nights to perform.
17. The *kutiyattam* performer elaborates a single line of a Sanskrit play for up to an hour, with social and political analogies, emotional associations, and background stories. Each character appears onstage for several nights, played by a solo actor-dancer, giving different perspectives on the play, or the *vidushaka* (jester) appears and translates the Sanskrit text into local Malayalam, relating it to current events. Then the play itself is performed on the final night with several actor-dancers (Mee).
18. When entering the performance area, actors traditionally touch the stage with their right hand and then touch that hand to their eyes and forehead, honoring the sacredness of the place and asking the gods for blessing. While onstage, actors perform in the direction of the temple deity's statue.
19. *Krishnanattam*, another form of dance-drama in Kerala, performed in the Guruvayur Temple, shows the life story of Krishna, an incarnation of the god Vishnu, as a devotional performance.
20. *Kathakali* developed from *kutiyattam* and *krishnanattam*, emerging in seventeenth-century Kerala, with elements from the *Natya-Shastra*. It involves martial arts and athletics, with male actor-dancers and a separate vocalist (unlike the earlier related forms), plus a square stool onstage and canopy over it. Weapons are sometimes used in violent scenes, but most props are mimed by performers, who wear colorful

costumes and makeup. Faces are green with red lips for noble warriors, gods, and sages; red for evil characters; yellow for monks, mendicants, and women; and black for forest dwellers and hunters, or (with patches of red) for demonesses and other treacherous characters. Masks are used for animal faces (Zarrilli).

21. *Ottan thullal* originated in Kerala in the eighteenth century, using principles from the *Natya-Shastra.* It involves a solo male performer with a green face, red lips, and black eyes, plus a colorful skirt, dancing and singing in the local Malayalam, with a chorus repeating each sentence and giving musical accompaniment. It is traditionally performed on a bare stage *outside* the temple in daylight, during a festival, with social criticism in fast-paced humorous lyrics.
22. *Odissi*, from the eastern state of Odisha, is traditionally performed by women (*Maharis*) *inside* the temple and based on the *Natya-Shastra* (where it is mentioned as *Odramagadhi*). It involves poses and *mudras* matching sculptures on the temple, as one of the oldest Indian forms (Fig. 4.2). It includes myths, devotions, and poetry about the gods, such as Vishnu and Shiva, through an invocation, pure dance, expressive dance, drama, and climax of spiritual release (*moksha*). *Odissi* also involves young boys (*Gotipuas*) dressed as girls outside the temple, performing acrobatics at festivals.
23. *Bharatanatyam* ("Bharata's dance") is performed in the southernmost area of India, Tamil Nadu. Traditionally, it involves a solo female performer inside a Hindu temple, along with musicians and a singer, in a ritual, storytelling dance that follows the *Natya-Shastra* in movements, *mudras*, and facial expressions.
24. *Bhavai*, in the western state of Gujarat, satirizes people of all classes, in ordinary social life and myths. Yet it is a ritual offering to the goddess Amba Mata (Mother of the Universe). Originating in the 1300s, it is performed by men playing both male and female roles, in an open area of a village, at night by torchlight.
25. *Rāmlilā* festival plays in northern India have a tradition of more than 400 years, with various styles. They show the victory of Rāma (an incarnation of the god Vishnu) over the demon king Rāvana in the *Ramayana*, with singers chanting the text, actors honored like gods, and the cycle of episodes occurring over a number of days on platforms in open areas—in some cases up to 31 days, as at Rāmnagar, with episodes on various stages across the city.

Fig. 4.2 *Odissi* performance of *shringara* (love) *rasa*, with a *gavaksha* (grilled window) hand *mudra* as the heroine, Nayika, looks through the window in anticipation and longing (performed by Kaustavi Sarkar, photo by Debojyoti Dhar)

26. The *Rāslilā* festival also occurs in northern India, devoted to Krishna (another incarnation of Vishnu) on his birthday, with songs and depictions of his childhood and then his romance with Radha.
27. Various puppet theatres appear across India, with string, glove, rod, and shadow puppets. For example, *Kathputli* of Rajasthan in northwestern India is performed by a traveling puppeteer (*sudtradhara*, "string puller"), narrator-singer, and musicians playing a shrill bamboo reed, a drum, cymbals, and harmonium. Its marionettes are about two-feet tall, made

of wood and cloth, with large noses and eyes, in skirts without legs. They perform stories of local kings, with swordplay, horseback-riding, juggling, tumbling, dancing, and snake-charming, plus other animals and a character who flips from male to female with a second head under the skirt, in a tradition possibly over 1000 years old (Brandon 93).
[How are distinct elements in traditional Indian theatre related to current inner and outer theatres, from stage to screen, Bollywood to Hollywood?]

B. China with TIMELINE

- c. 1600–1046 BCE, Shang Dynasty—with oracle writings on turtle shells and ox shoulder bones, plus other archeological remains of palaces, temples, war weapons, and animal and human sacrifices
- c. 1046–256, Zhou (pronounced "Jo") Dynasty—with bronze artwork and clerical Chinese script in almost modern form, but ending with the Warring States Period (475–221), and yet Confucianism developing then with rituals to order society
- 221–206, Qin (pronounced "Chin") Dynasty—with the first Chinese Empire and Legalism dominating Confucianism and other philosophies, making the emperor's rule supreme for order and stability, as shown with the start of the Great Wall project and the army of thousands of life-size terracotta soldiers, chariots, horses, officials, acrobats, and musicians buried with the emperor, while people also practiced divination with spirit mediums
- 206 BCE–220 CE, Han Dynasty—with the Silk Road developing across Asia, Buddhism arriving in China, and Daoism becoming increasingly important, as China's population reached 50–60 million, as big as the Roman Empire, while families made animal sacrifices to gods and ancestors in temples, believing that burning such offerings sent them to the spirit realm and each person had a spirit-soul (*hun*) and body-soul (*po*), reunited after death through ritual
- 266–420, Jin Dynasty—with porcelain artwork, often involving animal and Buddhist figures, as Daoism developed medical practices and Buddhism offered philosophical ideas for ending suffering
- 420–589, Northern and Southern Dynasties—with the Han Chinese increasing their domination over other indigenous cultures

- 581–618, Sui Dynasty—with Daoism and Buddhism being favored by rulers and the Confucian system of civil service exams introduced
- 618–907, Tang Dynasty—with China expanding and esoteric Buddhism arriving
- 907–960, Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period—with China divided
- 960–1279, Song Dynasty—with China reunified, Neo-Confucianism (a more rational and secular form) becoming dominant, the first permanent navy established, the earliest military use of gunpowder, and the first national banknotes issued
- 1271–1368, Yuan Dynasty—with Kublai Khan and the Mongols ruling, Confucianism and Daoism discouraged, Buddhism favored, and increasing contact with the West
- 1368–1644, Ming Dynasty—with Confucianism reinstated and Zheng He making expeditions in 1405–33 on four-decked ships (four times bigger than Columbus's), with hundreds of soldiers, to southeastern, southern, and western Asia, plus eastern Africa
- 1644–1912, Qing Dynasty—with the Manchus ruling and European influence growing, yet the Boxer Rebellion against both at the turn of the twentieth century, inspired by Chinese Opera and martial arts, until eight countries intervened for trade reasons
- 1912–present—with post-dynastic, nationalist, and communist rulers

1. In the Shang Period (c. 1600–1046 BCE), female (*wu*) and male (*xi*, pronounced "shi") shamans performed ritual dances for hunting, warfare, and exorcisms of palaces, gravesites, and persons, accompanied by drums and flutes.
2. During the Zhou Dynasty (c. 1046–256), court entertainments developed, including Jester Ming, a very tall man who mimicked others. *Chu Ci* poetry, from the Warring States Period (475–221), mentions shamanistic songs and dances with mime, costumes, makeup, and props.
3. In the Qin (221–206) and Han (206 BCE–220 CE), pantomimes were performed at court.
4. During the Han, "wrestling theatre" appeared with characters, costumes, a plot, and acrobatic fighting. There was also *Baixi* ("One Hundred Games") with deity, demon, and animal impersonations, dances, acrobatics, and sword, dagger, and spear tricks.
5. In the Jin (266–420) and later periods, *gewu xiaoxi* (small plays of dance and song) developed with a simple plot, stock characters (female hero, evil villain, and country bumpkin), improvisation, and slapstick.

6. The Tang Period (618–907) included the Pear Garden theatre academy, located in a palace garden and created by Emperor Ming Huang. Also, the "adjutant play" (*canjun*) developed, as a social satire with two or more performers. Buddhist monks created morality tales with verses, colloquial language, and picture rolls or panels as illustrations.
7. The Song Period (960–1279) involved popular entertainments in "red light" (prostitution and entertainment) districts. There were mimes, dances, acrobatics, animal circuses, magic shows, and fortune tellers. *Nanxi* opera ("southern drama") developed with 20–50 scenes of coarse language, spoken dialog, and verses set to soft, lingering, popular music. *Zaju* ("variety show") musicals also developed with two to four acts having four to five characters, quick music, and happy endings, while focusing on one star singing per act. Typical roles were the *dan* (female), *sheng* (male), *jing* (painted face), and *chou* (clown).
8. In the Yuan Period (1271–1368), operas had more literary complexity and poetry. With the Mongols ruling, many Chinese scholars, no longer employed by the government, turned to theatre to make a living—although under heavy censorship, with old stories gaining new meanings.
9. Both actors and actresses played across gender. Some troupes were led by women. Performers used elaborate costumes, stylized makeup, and a bare stage with little scenery.
10. Guan Hanqing (1241–1320) was a prolific playwright of the Yuan period. His play, *The Injustice Done to Dou E*, shows the sufferings of Dou E and her mother-in-law, after she is sold as a child bride, due to her father's debts. Her husband dies and the two women are bullied by a series of men. One of them, trying to kill her mother-in-law, to get Dou E for his wife, poisons some soup, but this kills his own father instead. Dou E is framed for the murder. She is tortured, confesses to protect her mother-in-law, and is wrongly executed. But she appears three years later as a ghost to her father, by then a senior government official. He reopens the case, bringing justice at last.
11. During the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), *kun* operas (*kunqu*) developed with plaintive music, flowing melodies, supple notes on the bamboo flute, and continual dancing.
12. Ming playwright Tang Xianzu (1550–1616) became famous for the dream scenes in his tragicomic *kun* operas, such as *The Peony Pavilion* (*Mǔdān ting*, 1598), which has 55 scenes, taking about 22 hours to perform. Set at the end of the Southern Song Dynasty, it shows the daughter of an important official, Du Liniang, falling asleep in a garden and dreaming of a young scholar, Liu Mengmei, whom she falls in love with,

but does not meet in real life. Then she dies, but appears in his dream, while he sleeps in the same garden. At her urging, he wakes and exhumes her body, bringing her back to life. He is then imprisoned as a grave robber. But he escapes torture when news arrives that he topped the list in the imperial court examination results and is pardoned by the emperor.

13. Li Yu (Li Liweng, 1610–80), supporting a large family with 40 wives, organized a theatre company, toured it, and wrote popular comedies. He theorized that each play should focus on one main character, with an inciting incident, as its "central brain" (Fei 79). His play, *The Fragrant Companion* (*Lián Xiāng Bàn*, 1651), focuses on a scholar's wife, Cui Jianyu, who is attracted to the fragrance of Cao Yu, daughter of Lord Cao, while burning joss-paper offerings in a temple. The two women fall in love, vowing to become man and wife in the next life. In the meantime, Cui Jianyu convinces her husband to ask for Cao Yu as a second wife. He does but her father refuses. Yet they eventually get permission from the king and the women can then live together.
14. In the Qing Period (1644–1912), various local types of Chinese Opera developed, including *jingju* (opera of the capital) or "Beijing/Peking Opera," a fusion of earlier forms with everyday love stories (*wen* plays) or military, historical stories (*wu* plays). Mixed companies were popular before, in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, with some actresses becoming courtesans. But in the Qing era, until the 1920s, all Chinese Opera performers, musicians, and spectators were male and some actors became homosexual courtesans (Lim and Chunjiang).
15. In 1690, the 40-scene *Peach Blossom Fan*, by Kong Shangren, became a *kun* opera favorite, showing the romance of a scholar and courtesan, set against a mid-1640s Beijing rebellion, which caused the emperor's suicide and ended the previous Ming Dynasty. When forced to marry a governor, the courtesan hits her head against a pillar to commit suicide and drops of her blood fall on a fan the scholar gave her. She survives and they eventually reunite, but as a Daoist nun and priest.
16. Beijing Opera, like other types of Chinese Opera, continues today with stylized movement in curves and pantomime gestures, men sometimes playing female (*dan*) roles, songs performed with high voices, and music punctuating the action with a small orchestra of gongs, cymbals, drums, stringed instruments, and a clapper—on a mostly bare stage. It also involves color-coded makeup: purple as noble, black as bold or just, blue as stubborn, astute, or fierce, red as loyal or brave, green as impulsive, yellow as ambitious or sly, and white as evil and treacherous (Fig. 4.3).

Fig. 4.3 Mask showing Chinese Opera makeup (photo: Mark Pizzato)

17. The *wenchou* (clown in romantic *wen* plays) focuses on mime and the *wuchou* (clown in historical *wu* plays) specializes in acrobatic martial arts, but both derive from clowns in the Tang adjutant play. They do not sing and they use colloquial language while wearing white makeup around the eyes and nose.
18. Conventionally, Chinese Opera has a square stage with an embroidered curtain, musicians onstage, audience to the south, performers entering from the east and exiting to the west, and few props or scenery. But there is often a chair and table onstage, which can represent many things, such as a city wall, mountain, or bed. Also, a painted cloth may be brought onstage temporarily to show new scenery or flags waved to show a storm.

19. Chinese Opera costumes sometimes have "water sleeves" (*shuixiu*), extending emotional gestures, or a headdress with two, very long, pheasant plumes, also extending movements. Martial flags are sometimes attached to the back of *sheng* costumes.
20. Acting skills involve being accurate, being beautiful, and having a lingering charm. Special skills are also needed, with years of training, in using a fan to represent certain objects, or a whip to show horseback-riding, or an artificial beard for various moods.

Fig. 4.4 Beijing Opera star Tan Xinpei with flag-costume in the film, *Dingjunshan*, 1905

Fig. 4.5 Chinese puppet theatre, Qibao, Shanghai (photo: Mark Pizzato)

21. Beijing Opera has appeared in many movies, starting with the first Chinese film, Ren Jingfeng's *Dingjunshan* in 1905 (Fig. 4.4). Current companies sometimes adapt Western classics, such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or Strindberg's *Miss Julie*.
22. Chinese shadow puppetry may have started in the Han Dynasty 2000 years ago, but certainly by the Song 1000 years ago. It involves colorful, translucent figures with jointed sticks and more than one puppeteer controlling them, behind a lighted screen (Figs. 4.5 and 4.6). The puppets sometimes represent spirits in religious festivals with shamans or Buddhist priests.
    [How do the historical details of Chinese Opera and puppetry compare with European opera, American musical theatre, music videos, or movie and video game fantasy realms with soundtracks?]

Fig. 4.6 Backstage of Chinese puppet theatre, Qibao, Shanghai (photo: Mark Pizzato)

C. Korea with TIMELINE

- 108 BCE, the Chinese Han Dynasty took control of the 1000-year-old Gojoseon (Ancient Joseon) Kingdom of the northern Korean peninsula
- 37 BCE–562 CE, the Three Kingdoms Period (Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla)—with Buddhism arriving from China in 372 CE
- 668–926 CE, the North-South States Period (with Balhae in the north and Silla in the south)

- 892–935, the Later Three Kingdoms Period
- 918–1392, the Goryeo Kingdom (or Koryo, source of the term "Korea")
- 1392–1897, Joseon Kingdom
- 1897–1910, Korean Empire (after the First Sino-Japanese War was partly fought in Korea, 1894–95)
- 1904, Japan conquered Korea and six years later started ruling it as a colony
- 1945–48, after World War II ended, foreign military governments ruled Korea with the USSR in the north and USA in the south
- 1948, North and South Korea were formed, with separate governments, communist and capitalist

1. *Talchum* (or *kamyonguk*) is a traditional Korean dance-drama, with masks, dancing, singing, and acting. It is widely performed at village festivals, showing connections to the Northern Shamanistic Belt, involving Siberia, Central Asia, and Scandinavia. It was also performed at court during the Goryeo Period.
2. *Beolsingut talnori* (or *pyolsin kut-nori*), meaning "special ritual play for the god," was the earliest form of *talchum* (Lee). It originated in the middle of the Goryeo Dynasty (918–1392) from earlier folk rituals: shamanic trance-dances as exorcisms, involving the battle of old and new, with sacred marriage and resurrection motifs. It is still performed in winter, at the Hahoe Folk Village, to appease the goddess Seonangsin. It has six to eight episodes, involving (1) a female shaman (Gaksi), as village goddess, dancing on a man's shoulders, (2) lions fighting and simulating sex, (3) a butcher sacrificing a bull and selling its heart and testicles, (4) an old woman singing sadly at her loom about loneliness, (5) a lecherous Buddhist monk meeting a flirtatious girl and becoming aroused when she urinates, (6) a nobleman and scholar competing for the same girl by boasting of their breeding and knowledge, while she flirts by killing their lice, (7) a wedding ceremony of the scholar (Seonbi) and bride (Gaksi), and (8) the wedding night (Fig. 4.7).
3. Traditionally, men perform all *talchum* roles, wearing stylized wooden masks. Today, women also perform. Popular characters include the female shaman, wanton monk, prostitute, leper, vain nobleman, clever servant, animals, and supernatural beings, plus parodies of upper class or religious figures, such as corrupt aristocrats.
4. Korean dance is centered in the breath, as source of spiritual energy, expressed from the chest with feet grounded and arms extending in

Fig. 4.7 *Talchum* characters, Scholar (*Seonbi*) on left and Shaman/Bride (*Gaksi*) on right, from *Byeolsingut Talnori* at the Andong Maskdance Festival, Hahoe Folk Village, South Korea (photo courtesy of Kim Eun-Jeong)

elegant linear poses, also involving deep emotions, connecting with and entertaining the spirits (at the moment of *shinmyon*).

5. *Talchum* is usually performed in an open area of the village. Masks are kept in temples or burned at the festival's end to exorcise spiritual and social demons.

   [If you watch a video of *talchum*/*kamyonguk*, how is it like and unlike your previous experiences of theatre? In our current performance media, which faces are caricatured—and how are they satirized or "burned"—akin to this tradition? Which demons do we exorcise, religiously or metaphorically?]

D. Japan with TIMELINE

- 660 BCE, legendary Emperor Jimmu (descendent of the Shinto sun goddess Amaterasu and storm god Susanoo) began his rule, after the "Age of the Gods"
- 300 BCE–300 CE, Yayoi Period with extensive rice cultivation in paddy fields
- 300–538 CE, Kofun Period with burial mounds for the ruling class
- 538–710, Asuka Period with Buddhism and Confucianism introduced from Korea and China, and then Buddhism favored by the Soga clan in the court of Japanese Emperor Kinmei, leading to religious warfare

against the Mononobe clan, which favored Shinto, as the indigenous nature religion, but lost (552–87)

- 710–794, Nara Period with completion of *Kojiki* myths about the origin of the Japanese islands and its *kami* (gods and nature spirits), establishing the emperor's family as descended from Shinto gods
- 794–1185, Heian Period with the capital moved to Kyoto and *The Tale of Genji* written (c. 1008) by court lady Murasaki Shikibu, a novel about the romantic adventures of Prince Genji, his love affair with his stepmother, the son she bears eventually becoming emperor, and a girl Genji meets at age 10 (Murasaki), adopts, raises, and then marries
- 1185–1333, Kamakura Period with a military *shogun* becoming more powerful than the aristocratic emperor, as feudal ruler over the samurai clans of nobles and warriors
- 1336–1573, Muromachi Period with the Ashikaga shogunate (supporting the development of *noh* theatre) and *daimyos* as feudal lords owning vast lands under the shogun, plus trade with the Portuguese, starting in 1543, including Japanese slaves (until banned in 1571)
- 1573–1603, Azuchi-Momoyama Period with a religious debate between and then tolerance for different sects of Buddhism
- 1603–1868, Edo Period with the Tokugawa shogunate (in today's Tokyo) and 300 regional daimyos, supporting the development of *kabuki* and *bunraku* theatre—and with Japan closing itself from trade with Western countries (1633–1853), until US ships used "gunboat diplomacy"
- 1868–1912, Meiji Period, which restored the emperor's rule
- 1912–26, Taishō Period with power shifting toward the democratic legislature (National Diet) and then success in winning World War I with European allies and expansion into China
- 1926–89, Shōwa Period with Emperor Hirohito and Japan turning toward totalitarianism and nationalism—occupying Manchuria in 1931, invading China in 1937, invading Thailand and bombing Hawaii (Pearl Harbor) in 1941, but losing World War II in 1945 with the firebombing of Tokyo and atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and then being occupied by Allied powers until 1952, yet gradually developing an independent, democratic, capitalist state, with an "economic miracle" in the 1960s, becoming the world's second largest economy after the US
- 1989–2019, Heisei Period with the new emperor Akihito and the bursting of an asset price bubble (plus an aging population), producing Japan's Lost Decade in the 1990s with economic stagnation, which continued into the new millennium—and with Akihito's retirement leading to his son, Naruhito, becoming emperor in the Reiwa Period

1. *Noh* (meaning "skill" or "talent") was created by Kan'ami (1333–84) and his son Zeami (c. 1363–1443), during the Ashikaga shogunate, from the earlier *dengaku* (a popular mime-dance, which developed from rice-planting, fertility, and spirit-possession rites) and *sarugaku* (comic, acrobatic "monkey music"). It started as a meditative, Shinto-oriented, Zen-Buddhist-influenced, court theatre, with its comedic *kyogen* play as interlude and offshoot.
2. *Noh* movements became slower over the centuries, with plays taking longer to perform.
3. *Noh* roles include the *shite* (supernatural character with mask), *shite-tsure* (his/her companion), *waki* (priest narrator), *waki-tsure* (his companion), *kyogen* (fool), chorus of eight chanters sitting stage left (giving both narration and characters' voices at times), and four musicians in back. All performers are male with some cross-gender acting in masks (in *shite* and *shite-tsure* roles). The *noh* mask, made of cypress, can change expression at various angles.
4. Recalling its original outdoor performances, indoor *noh* has a pavilion roof over the stage, with four pillars, akin to a sacred Shinto shrine, under the theatre's ceiling. The stage has sounding jars underneath, two front-of-stage sighting poles for the masked actor, and a pine painted between the two rear-of-stage poles, as permanent scenic background. The audience sits on two sides, at the front of the stage and near a handrail bridge (*hashigakari*) to the offstage mirror room. Three pine trees along the bridge symbolize heaven, earth, and humans—a bridge where spirits may appear.
5. *Noh* theatre has minimal, symbolic scenery and props, with the performer's fan sometimes representing a sword, jug, flute, brush, or spoon. The stagehand (*kuroko*), dressed in black, sometimes brings or takes away props during the action and may stay onstage as if invisible.
6. *Noh* plays are usually performed in a program of five, with one from each of these categories: god play, warrior ghost play, "wig play" with a female lead, miscellaneous play, and final demon play. They often involve supernatural characters and nonlinear time, as in *Aoi no Ue* (*Lady Aoi*, based on a story from *The Tale of Genji*), *Dojoji* (which uses an unusual scenic element, a large bell), and *Matsukaze*.
7. *Matsukaze*, written by Kan'ami and revised by Zeami, shows a Buddhist priest (*waki*) traveling to Suma Bay and noticing a memorial on a pine tree. He asks a villager (*kyogen*) about it and is told the story of two fisher-girls, very poor sisters who died after falling in love with a court poet, Yukihira, who was in exile there and wrote poems about

them, then returned to the capital and died later. (That character, who does not appear, is based on a ninth-century poet and the play quotes his poetry, also using passages and parallels from *The Tale of Genji.*) The priest prays for the sisters, falls asleep, and meets their ghosts in a dream. Using their fans, they mime gathering seawater to be turned into salt, the work they did while alive. They see the moon, a symbol of Buddhist enlightenment, reflected in their pails of seawater. Later, one of the sisters, Matsukaze (Pine Wind), shows her continued, sinful attachment to the poet, hearing his poetry in the wind and seeing him in a pine, while dancing with the hat and cloak he left them. Her sister, Murasame (Autumn Rain), warns her that he is not there, but also becomes attached to the illusion again. The priest wakes, with the wind still "pining," yet the autumn rain gone—suggesting that Matsukaze remains in ghostly suffering, attached to her lost love, but Murasame is gone, as more enlightened.

8. Zeami developed a theory of *yugen* as the invisible, transcendent beauty felt through *noh*, which can lead to sudden Zen-Buddhist enlightenment for spectators, through the actor's *hana* (flowering) of bone, flesh, and skin (talent, skill, and ease).
9. *Kabuki* started during the Edo Period, first with Okuni (1572–c. 1603), a Shinto priestess in Kyoto, and then with groups of women performing male and female roles in comic plays about ordinary life. But they became known for prostitution, in red-light district theatres of the new capital, Edo (today's Tokyo). Women's *kabuki* was banned in 1629, but boys performing *kabuki* also became prostitutes. By the mid-1600s, only adult and adolescent males were allowed to perform it, as actors and musicians, with the male *onnagata* playing female roles. Prostitution continued as part of *kabuki*, for both male and female customers. Early *kabuki* theatres had performances all day, with teahouses and shops nearby.
10. Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1725) wrote plays performed as *bunraku* (puppet theatre) and *kabuki*, including *Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (1703) about a young merchant, Tokubei, who refuses a marriage arranged by his family in Osaka because he loves a courtesan, Ohatsu. Then he loses the dowry given his family when scammed by a friend who said he needed a loan. After being beaten up and shamed, Tokubei commits suicide with Ohatsu at the Sonezaki shrine, cutting her throat and his. This inspired similar plays and copycat suicides until such plays were banned in 1723.

11. Danjuro (1660–1704), a famous kabuki actor and founder of a long father-son line of actors, invented the *mie* pose with crossed eyes and was famous for the fierce *aragoto* style of movement, with martial arts *kata* (moves).
12. The traditional *kabuki* stage has a bridge (*hanamichi* or "flower path") through the audience. The wide main stage includes a revolve mechanism, added in the eighteenth century, prior to its use in Europe, plus lifts and trapdoors. In the nineteenth century, wires were added for flying above the stage.
13. *Kabuki* has sudden dramatic revelations, including onstage costume changes with the help of stagehands dressed in black, flipping a layer of clothing on the actor. Costumes have strong colors for joyful or foolish emotions, subdued colors for serious. Makeup is color-coded with sharp facial lines: red for passion and righteousness, blue or black for villainy and jealousy, green for nobility, and purple for nobility. The orchestra involves a *shamisen* lute and clappers. Actors are all male.
    [Why are political activities in Washington, DC, sometimes called "kabuki theatre"?]
14. *Ningyō jōruri* (puppet narrative) became known in the West as *bunraku* (a famous company), after developing in the seventeenth century as a serious, adult, puppet theatre, sharing scripts with *kabuki*. The puppets are two-thirds life size with three puppeteers for each major character, one for each minor. Puppeteers are visible, yet dressed in black. They must train 10 years at each position: first at feet and legs, then left arm, and then right arm and head (with only the top puppeteer unmasked). Usually, there is one chanter doing all the voices, seated next to the stage, by the *shamisen* player.
15. *Bunraku* scripts are of two main types: historical (*jidaimono*) and domestic (*sewamono*), with conflicts in the latter between duty (*giri*) and passion (*ninjo*), sometimes involving suicide. *Bunraku* uses a painted scenic background like *kabuki*, but focuses more on the text (*joruri*), chanter, and delicate puppet movements, while *kabuki* stresses bold acting and spectacular effects.
    [How is *noh*, *kabuki*, or *bunraku* like and unlike Western rituals, movies, or animations—regarding spirits evoked, rhythms, movement, music, plots, characters, masks/makeup, costumes, or scenery?]

E. Indonesian Traditions on the Islands of Java and Bali

1. *Wayang topeng* is a solo dance-drama, with the performer giving up his identity to the spirit of the mask he wears and some masks kept in temples. Court and village performances started over 1000 years ago.
2. *Wayang kulit*, meaning "shadow/spirit skin," involves a single puppeteer-narrator (*dalang*) improvising on a given plot (*lakon*), with two-dimensional puppets, two to three feet tall, shown against a screen by firelight. Performances run all night, for 9–10 hours. The flat puppets are made of buffalo hide on sticks of horn, with moveable joints at the shoulders and elbows (Fig. 4.8). Puppets are painted because they can be viewed from the *dalang*'s side of the cloth screen or through the screen as shadows. A complete set involves 300–400 characters, refined or coarse, categorized as Rama-type or Bima-type (key Hindu gods), aggressive, comic, or evil. Shows are performed annually at local founders' graves, to please their spirits, or in the village center—a tradition of 1100 years on Java and longer on Bali.
3. Performances begin with an invocation to the Hindu gods Ganesha (elephant-headed spirit of beginnings, luck, and obstacle removal) and Saraswati (goddess of wisdom and the arts). The shadow-puppet image of a *kayon* (tree) starts the show as *axis mundi* or ladder between worlds. Shaken by the *dalang*, it shows his shamanic travel upward to the gods and downward to meet demons—with such communication as crucial for communal welfare. Then two clown characters appear, as husband and wife puppets, commenting on village affairs.
4. The ritual origins of *wayang kulit* continue today, with ceremonies tied to life cycles, such as birth, marriage, and death, planting and harvesting. It also relates to current exorcism rites, as when a new house is cleansed of evil spirits. Plots are often based on a rite of passage: first a call, then a test (with the world imbalanced due to a demon or evil king), and then a divine blessing. The community values the *dalang* (puppeteer) as a shamanic healer, as well as artist. But recently, *wayang kulit* has stressed comic scenes and pop tunes, to compete with television and videos, losing some of its traditional characteristics.
5. *Wayang golek* is a three-dimensional puppet drama with a single puppeteer-narrator (*dalang*) and singers—invented by a Javanese Muslim ruler in the sixteenth century (Fig. 4.9).

Fig. 4.8 Indonesian, *wayang kulit* puppet, Sita from the *Ramayana* (photo: Mark Pizzato)

6. All three of these *wayang* forms involve a gamelan gong-chime orchestra, with stories from the Indian epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, plus local tales and clowns speaking the local language (with *wayang* meaning "shadow" or "imagination"). During the Hindu-Buddhist Period (800s–1500s, prior to the arrival of Islam), Indian stories influenced the development of *wayang*. But local ancestral spirits were also involved, such as the Javanese hermaphroditic jester, Semar, and animistic spirits, thought to inhabit carvings, puppets, and gongs. Islam also influenced the development of Javanese shadow theatre with more stylized puppets and Muslim stories or changes to the Hindu stories (but Bali remained Hindu).
7. In the Balinese *Barong* dance, Rangda, a witch queen (whose name means "widow") and her *leyaks* (demons who suck the blood of unborn

Fig. 4.9 *Wayang golek* puppet (photo: Mark Pizzato)

and newborn children) fight the Barong (a lion-faced guardian spirit), which are played by men in sacred masks and costumes. Other men, possessed by Rangda yet protected by the Barong, point their swords against their chests and bend them, unharmed, in this ritual battle of evil versus good.

[How is *wayang topeng*, *golek*, or *kulit* similar to and different from Western stand-up comedy, three-dimensional puppetry, or movie animation? How does the shadow-play side of the screen in *wayang*

***kulit*, or spirit possession in the *Barong* dance, relate to our culture's virtual-reality video games and mass-media violence?]**

8. Other traditional Indonesian forms include: *menora* (a male-performed, Thai-influenced dance-drama), *mak yong* (a dance-drama performed by women, except for the clown role), *kuda kepang* (a hobby-horse trance-dance), *dikir barat* (a call and response performance with poetry sung to music), *boria* (a comic sketch), *randai* (a martial arts dance-drama from Sumatra), and *main puteri* (a Malay healing rite with trance and drama).

F. Cambodian Traditions

1. From the sixth to fourteenth centuries, the Khmer Empire of Cambodia extended over much of Southeast Asia, developing an elaborate artistic tradition, especially at court. Political power declined after that, yet the arts continued—until the communist Khmer Rouge took power, led by Pol Pot, in 1975–79, when an estimated 80–90% of the country's artists were killed.
2. Traditional Cambodian dance-dramas are based on the Hindu epic story, *Ramayana*, but add further episodes, accompanied by the *pinpeat* percussive ensemble with bamboo and metal xylophones, gongs, drums, an oboe-like instrument (*sralai*), and cymbals.
3. Cambodian shadow puppets are up to one-meter (three-feet) tall, each one manipulated by a puppeteer using long sticks, with voices from a narrator and the *pinpeat* ensemble.

   [Why would traditional dance-actors, puppeteers, and other artists be a threat to a modern communist government?]

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