



Women in the Shadows: Gender, Puppets, and the Power of Tradition in Bali (Ohio RIS Southeast Asia Series)

Jennifer Goodlander

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Wayang kulit, or shadow puppetry, connects a mythic past to the present through public ritual performance and is one of most important performance traditions in Bali. The *dalang*, or puppeteer, is revered in Balinese society as a teacher and spiritual leader. Recently, women have begun to study and perform in this traditionally male role, an innovation that has triggered resistance and controversy.

In *Women in the Shadows*, Jennifer Goodlander draws on her own experience training as a *dalang* as well as interviews with early women *dealing* and leading artists to upend the usual assessments of such gender role shifts. She argues that rather than assuming that women performers are necessarily mounting a challenge to tradition, “tradition” in Bali must be understood as a system of power that is inextricably linked to gender hierarchy.

She examines the very idea of “tradition” and how it forms both an ideological and social foundation in Balinese culture, and ultimately, Goodlander offers a richer, more complicated understanding of both tradition and gender in Balinese society. Following in the footsteps of other eminent reflexive ethnographers, *Women in the Shadows* will be of value to anyone interested in performance studies, Southeast Asian culture, or ethnographic methods.

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