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Cameras and Incense: Negotiating Religious Dance on Tourist Bali

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**CAMERAS AND INCENSE:
NEGOTIATING RELIGIOUS DANCE ON
TOURIST BALI**

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SIT Study Abroad

Indonesia: Arts, Religion, and Social Change

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Introduction

The small island of Bali has become famous throughout the world as a center of arts and culture. Tourists visit the island in droves each year to collect traditional paintings, carvings, and fabrics, and to watch performances of dances, gamelan, and puppet shows, all of these based in a Shivaite Hindu tradition that has absorbed elements of Buddhism and Islam, as well as bits and pieces from the religions of China and other erstwhile visitors to the island. Bali, a strongly Hindu island in one of the world's largest Muslim countries, has achieved a worldwide fame perhaps greater than the Indonesian archipelago which houses it, and while its tropical beaches and picturesque volcanoes have something to do with it, much of the international attention focuses on Bali's perceived wealth of traditional "culture".

Indeed, the ways in which art and religion are interwoven in contemporary Bali are myriad, and probably unique amid the world's major religions. Temple ceremonies frequently feature dances or require them for completion, and great performers are said to have *taksu*, or a sort of divine inspiration that spills over into stage presence. Worshippers in trance will often perform dance moves or entire dances, and nearly all dancers make prayers before a performance. Dance, which serves as the major form of staged drama here, often draws its stories from the great Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, featuring deities as characters and sometimes imparting religious lessons. It is hard to talk about art in Bali without talking about religion, or vice versa—one man I met during the course of my fieldwork informed me, over a warung meal outside a temple festival, that they were simply the same thing.

However, interpreting Bali as a simple, paradisaical land of happily intertwined, ancient worship and creativity is, while a mistake well-rooted in tradition, unproductive and false. Though the historical research is thus far scanty, the Dutch colonial period had a significant influence on dance in Bali, including the way it was constructed as an art form, and the neo-colonial double impacts of globalization and massive foreign tourism have exerted their own pressures on Balinese art and religion, necessarily shaping them both.¹ Though there is evidence that dance and, to a greater extent, wayang performances used to play an important role in local storytelling and education, this role has diminished, and these art forms cast more into the light of a “culture” to be preserved and presented to others. Tourism provides more money and opportunity for dance performances, but often fundamentally alters the nature of these performances, as well as changing the economy in which they are presented. The growing prominence of the national arts conservatories have, according to some accounts, contributed to a focus on choreography over improvisation, and, perhaps, a growing standardization of Balinese dance, helped along by the pressures of tourism. Dance in Bali is no longer the same as it was—though when and what that was refers to is still in question.

This study, a series of 14 interviews conducted with dancers, priests, dalangs, and observers of the Balinese dance world, seeks to capture some of the complex interrelations between Balinese religion and performing arts, especially dance. Initial research goals sought to identify the importance of stories presented in dances in the daily lives and imaginations of the Balinese people; however, informants repeatedly indicated

¹ The problematic aspects of constructing any image of a “pure and unsoiled Bali”, in a culture that has experienced numerous waves of foreign migration and influence since 2500 B.C., are also important to consider.

that the stories did not, or no longer do, possess great importance in terms of the content of the stories themselves. Instead, they serve to indicate character, or the balance of good and bad, or as an archive of historical record and myth. Though it is possible that in the past these stories held greater prominence, Bali is no longer as self-contained as it once was, and stories in traditional-style performances do not hold the sway they once did.

It is true that, in Bali, dance and religion are intimately connected, often on a surprisingly practical level. However, recent changes such as colonialism, globalization, and tourism have changed that connection, and have eroded much of the storytelling and communicative function that the performing arts traditionally fulfilled. The following study will seek to investigate how and why.

The Paper

Background

Bali is a small island in the archipelago country of Indonesia, which comprises over 17,000 islands. Indonesia's history is one of many visitors—originally settled around 2500 B.C.E. by Austronesian migrants from the area of Taiwan, the archipelago received an influx of Buddhism and Hinduism, along with writing, from India in the first millennium C.E.. Most of these developments, though, came to Bali by way of western neighbor and much bigger island Java, which has dominated Indonesian culture in various ways for many centuries. When Java and many other areas of Indonesia became Islamized in the 1600s, several Hindu remnants of the Javanese courts fled to Bali, inflecting the island with an even greater sense of rootedness in Javanese tradition. Bali did not take part in the Islamization going on around it, and to this day maintains a particular Balinese brand of Hinduism, which mixes local tradition with religious thought out of India.

This local variant is tellingly referred to by the name Siwa Buda (Shiva Buddha, in Western spelling), hinting at the key influences of Buddhism on the religion as well as the central place of Shiva, one-third of the traditional Hindu trilogy, in the Balinese form of Hinduism. Balinese religion is known worldwide both for the elaborate rituals essential to the island, based off a complicated system of three simultaneous calendars, and for the arts connected to that religion, performed both inside and outside the temple. An extensive discussion of Balinese art forms would be impossible in this limited space,

and this paper focuses on the performing arts, especially dance—which, along with wayang², is always accompanied by the traditional gamelan orchestra.

Traditionally, all young children of both genders learn Balinese dance from a tender age, as some knowledge of the basics is essential to participate in both ritual and communal dance. Customarily, dance education takes place with a single teacher at a time, and involves as an important component the teacher dancing alongside the student and molding the student's body to theirs (Dibia et al. 2004, 14). Dances are usually gender-segregated, with girls and boys performing in separate groups, and children are encouraged as well as required to perform in public from early in their training. This is necessary because dance is required as a component of many ceremonies, as well as presented after many ceremonies, or at other communal events, as entertainment.

Common types of dance, currently, include the Baris warrior dance for boys, the Rejang offering dance for girls, the Legong court dance for women, the Topeng masked dance for men, and several more theatrical genres (Arja, Sendratari, Gambuh, Drama Gong) which are usually the favorite of the Balinese themselves (Dibia et al. 2004, 52).

Besides the fact that many dances take place at the temple, religion enters into dances in many important ways: dancers can be blessed or not with taksu, a mixture of stage presence and divine inspiration that is given by the gods. Taksu gives life and power to a performance, and makes a given dancer mesmerizing to watch. Trance, a more intense form of divine presence in the human that sometimes is a component of ritual dances, involves a human being entered by a divine or demonic spirit, and is a core part

² Wayang, a traditional storytelling form involving shadow puppets made from leather, is a quintessentially Indonesian artform. Puppeteers are called dalangs, and are usually well-versed in Balinese texts and culture, as well as esteemed in the community.

of some ceremonies in Bali. Those in trance can neither control nor remember their actions, and can only be relieved of their state through a priest's administration of holy water³.

Bali has been subject to a constant stream of outside forces throughout its history, from the first bearers of Hinduism and Buddhism to the frequent incursions and migrations of the Javanese. However, strictly Western influence commenced in a significant way with the colonization of the Dutch, which occurred on Bali largely in the 19th century. This colonization, conducted to some extent in cooperation with local rajahs but still often bloody and traumatic to the Balinese, necessarily reshaped Balinese culture⁴. The influence of this period that is most felt today is the efforts of the Dutch, starting in the early 20th century, to popularize Bali as a tourist destination, an ideal paradise combining all the friendliness and beauty of the South Pacific with all of the mystery and culture of the East. This image, infused with sexualization and sometimes described as the interplay of the archetypes of the dancing girl and the witch, has been built upon by various scholarly visitors to the island, several of whom achieved great fame in Europe and America through their studies on Bali, as well as several artistic expatriates that grew Bali's fame in the 1920s and 30s (Vickers 1989, 105). The image of Bali as a harmonious land of happy people who spend their days creating art has retained remarkable potency, even as those pushing it have changed from Dutch

³ Temple priests may come from all castes in Bali, but high priests are from the Brahmana, or highest caste. The remaining three castes, in descending order, are as follows: Ksatria, or warrior/ruling caste; Wesya, or merchant caste; and Sudra, or commoner caste, of which most Balinese are part.

⁴ Mark Hobart contends that the Dutch invented Balinese dance as a high art (Hobart 3).

colonizers and European expatriates to Indonesians and Balinese themselves and has had some effect of casting Bali as a museum culture (Vickers 1989, 192).

This notion that Balinese culture is static, fragile, and precious, and requires careful preserving, plays into tourist fantasies in many ways, but has also come to be accepted by many Balinese (Vickers 1989, 176), who fear commercialization and excessive Western influence on their society (Vickers 1989, 197). This has led to steps like the seminar in 1971 that created the distinctions of wali (sacred), bebal (semi-sacred), and balih-balihan (entertainment) for artistic performances, determining which ones could and could not be performed for tourists (Picard 1990, 63). It has also led to a not insignificant amount of confusion over what can and should be called “traditionally Balinese”, which, along with the lack of reliable historical information on the development and age of many of the dance forms, makes any discussion of “traditional dance”, as I have sought to undertake in this paper, particularly dicey (Hobart 2007). Adding to the mix is the rise of the conservatory system promoted by the national government—the official training process differs radically from the old village system of arts instruction, and has led both to a flowering of innovation in contemporary Balinese dance pieces and, perhaps, a certain standardization of dance on the island, as those trained at schools like ISI return home and teach the dances they learned in their own villages (Dibia et al 2004, 16).

I have not been a student of Balinese dance nearly long enough to speak authoritatively about the dance scene in Bali, and I would not wish to muddle into complicated cultural debates without the proper footing. In this paper I present the results of three weeks’ study, and I take the terminology I use primarily from that I heard during

my three months in Bali—“traditional” and “modern” dance, “religious” and “tourist performances”, etc. It is true that these dichotomies are problematic, but I hope to present them and other information about dance as I heard it from my Balinese and other informants, and to draw conclusions as best I can from the limited data available.

Methodology

This study was conducted in April 2013 in the regency of Gianyar, Bali. For the first two weeks of the project, I stayed with the family of Bu Sekar in Batuan village, attending several events at the temple festival at the Pura Dalem in Guwang, which was nearby, and interviewing many members of Bu Sekar’s family. Bu Sekar is a dancer and dance teacher whose uncle, Pak Jimat, is a famous dancer and teacher, and with her and other members of the family runs the Tri Pusaka Sakti arts foundation in Batuan. For the third week of research, I lived in Ubud to better observe and understand the various tourist performances offered to visitors to the island, interviewing those connected with the tourism industry as well as a few expatriates who live in the area and are involved with the dance community. I also include in this project two interviews conducted with dancers in Munduk Pakel village, Tabanan, during a stay there in the month of March.

Interviews lasted anywhere from six minutes to over an hour, with an average length of 36 minutes. All but one interview was conducted in person, and about a third of the interviews were conducted with the help of a translator. All interviews were conducted in a language comfortable for the interviewee—Indonesian, for Balinese informants, and English for the two American expatriates I interviewed. For these reasons, interviews in Indonesian were translated by or with the assistance of three

Balinese teachers, and quotes from interviews should largely be understood to proceed from their translations.

Informants were told that interviews were being conducted for an independent research project, as well as for possible use in a thesis, and all consented to the use of a recording device. For interviews scheduled ahead of time and requiring travel to the interviewee's place of residence, small gifts such as coffee, sugar, incense, and cookies were brought, as per Balinese custom; interviews with people I was already acquainted with, such as the two expatriates and host family members, did not involve a gift component, and participation was not incentivized in any way. All interviews were conducted at a time and place convenient to the informant, and consent forms and pseudonyms were deemed unnecessary by program advisors due to the uncontroversial nature of the research.

Although a guide to interviewees exists in the appendix, it seems appropriate to introduce them briefly here. My first point of contact for this project was Bu Sekar, a 48-year-old dance teacher who lives in Batuan. In Batuan, I lived with her at the family of her daughter, Sri, a 23-year-old housewife who dances and does makeup for dancers. In Batuan, I also interviewed Bu Sekar's younger brother, Pak Terima, a 43-year-old accountant for a resort in Nusa Dua who still dances sometimes; and his wife, Bu Sarni, a 43-year-old housewife who now only dances for temple festivals. In addition, Bu Sekar took me to meet a priest in Batuan, Mangku Bawa, who dances and paints, and whom I later learned was a son-in-law of Pak Jimat. Pak Jimat, Bu Sekar's uncle, is a well-known teacher, and all of the dancers listed above had studied with him at some point

(Unfortunately, I never met him because he was in Italy throughout the course of my field study, but he haunted my interviews with all of his students).

Outside the village of Batuan, I interviewed Pak Nartha, a 72-year-old dalang living in the village of Sukawati, and Pak Sidia, a 45-year-old dalang and dancer from the village of Bona. I also interviewed Pak Kodi, a 50-year-old lecturer in the puppetmaster department at ISI Denpasar and a topeng dancer. In Bedulu, I interviewed three people: Gusti Mangku, a 75-year-old priest; Pak Garrett, a 58-year-old writer and translator, originally from the United States and one of my program advisors, and, by email, Bu Diane, a 52-year-old dancer originally from America who lives at the SIT Program Center. In Ubud, I conducted an unrecorded interview with Pak Turun, an organizer of tourist dances whom I would guess to be at least in his seventies, and Bu Cok In, a 42-year-old dancer for tourist performances. Interviewees were found in a unsystematic, snowball-sample style way; I exploited all of my connections in Bali in order to find as many people as possible connected to the world of performing arts to interview.

In addition, I observed nine dance performances, practices, and rituals of varying types over the course of the fieldwork period. The first was a ritual during the odalan at the Pura Dalem in Guwang village where perhaps a hundred villagers, mostly children and young adults, dressed up in full dance costume and makeup and paraded through the village to another temple, where the priests collected holy water before the whole group paraded back to the temple. I also observed an Arja dance, performed by college dancers, after one of the nights of the ceremony at the Guwang odalan, at a stage outside the temple.

While staying in Batuan, I observed the women's gamelan practicing in a bale banjar in Sukawati, while the village's dancers practiced the two dances they would present at the festival in Gianyar: Tari Gabor for the girls and a new creation, Tari Batman, for the boys. During this period I also attended a movement showcase hosted by Diane Butler, one of the expatriates I interviewed, at the SIT Program Center in Bedulu, featuring several other expatriates and some Balinese children.

I also traveled to Denpasar to watch the Pengerebongan trance ritual in Kesiman with other program students. On my own, I attended performances in an inner temple courtyard of Tari Rejang (young girls), Tari Baris, (young boys) and Topeng Sidiakarya at an odalan in Bona, the village of Pak Sidia, one of my informants. After moving to Ubud, I attended performances in Gianyar City for the city's birthday with my Batuan host family. Two women's gamelans performed, and five dances were presented: the Tari Gabor, an offering dance with young girls, a duo piece with a woman and a man, a Baris with young boys, and the Tari Batman.

In Ubud, I attended two performances designed specifically for tourists, and the only dances which I paid to watch: a wayang show with an excerpt from the *Mahabharata*, and a dance performance featuring a "trance" Legong, a Topeng, a new creation symbolic of the city of Ubud, a Trompong Kebyar, and a ballet telling a story from the *Mahabharata*. Finally, I attended an offerings dance during the odalan at Pura Samuan Tiga in Bedulu, which ended in a "fight" between the male temple devotees of the area. I have based the results presented here on these interviews and observations, as well as other information gathered during my semester in Bali.

Results

Dance and the Gods

The symbolic center of Balinese dance is the temple, where many rituals include or even require dance, as part of or after the ceremony. Dances often take place outside a temple, for instance, after an odalan, but these dances are more for entertainment: those with the strongest relation to religion are dances performed inside the inner temple courtyard during the ceremony. Many dancers told me that the temple was their favorite place to perform, for various religious reasons: it is a “present for God”, according to Bu Sekar, and has “devotional value,” according to Pak Kodi. Sri told me that dancing in the temple makes her feel “so happy” and, like many other dancers, she contrasted it to dancing in hotels, where money is the primary motivator; “the feeling is a bit different,” she told me. Dances in the temple, for Balinese Hindus, seem to have an entirely different quality from dances anywhere else. Pak Garrett used the term “beyond wali,” saying that

within the context of a temple setting full of offerings, ritual, incense smoke going up and away and people sitting down and all the different sounds, then it takes on this extra character. It becomes so intertwined with everything. It’s not separate; it’s not just something watched anymore.

Bu Sekar presented a vision of dance as springing organically from the elements of the temple ceremony; the music comes from the bells of the priests, the singing from the mantras of the priests, and the dancing from the mudra of the priests.

Besides being a beloved and significant locale for dances, temple ceremonies often require dances to fulfill their functions. Tari Rejang, an offering dance performed by girls or women, and Tari Baris, a warrior dance performed by boys or men, are now

considered de rigeur for temple ceremonies in much of Bali. However, it is Topeng Sidyakarya which holds the most significance to many ceremonies in Bali; according to Pak Kodi, it is a “symbol of success.” Without the performance of Topeng Sidyakarya, in which several actors don carved masks, finally scattering rice over the temple courtyard, many ceremonies “cannot be said to have been completed,” according to Mangku Bawa.⁵ Similarly, wayang lemah, a puppet show with a single thread instead of a screen, must be performed for Dewa Yadnya ceremonies, according to Pak Nartha, though in the screened version it is often performed for many other ceremonies, such as “otonan, three month baby ceremony, wedding, cremation, and odalan” (Interview/Wayan Nartha, 18 April 2013).

Dance has a function, therefore, in facilitating the connection of the larger temple community with God; it is also, for many dancers, a way of forming a personal connection with God. Many dancers I interviewed described their dance as a way of forming a connection to God; Sri told me that, while dancing at the temple, she felt like she had “a good connection to God,” as well as the people and environment. Similarly, Pak Kodi noted that dancing was a good way not only to interact with “society and environment in real life,” but to be able to “make a connection to God as an abstract entity.” Others described the dance as “an offering to the gods” (Bu Sekar), or “offerings to God and all his manifestations” (Mangku Bawa). Most dancers pray before they dance, even at tourist performances; even dancers who are performing abroad do their best to assemble offerings to be able to pray before a performance. The dance is a way to honor and form a direct connection to God.

⁵ In fact, Topeng dancers must go through many specific ceremonies to be able to perform with the masks, which are considered sacred.

In return, the gods sometimes enter into the dance itself. This is called *taksu*, a uniquely Balinese concept that blurs the lines between stage presence, extreme charisma, and divine inspiration, and it was marked by everyone I interviewed as of great importance for successful performances. “A dance without *taksu* is nothing,” according to Mangku Bawa, and “if there is no *taksu* the performance will not be alive,” according to Sri. Dancers themselves do not know if they have *taksu* at any given moment; rather, the audience observes *taksu* in a given performer. It was described several times as something that makes you not want to look away from the dancer that has it—“*taksu* makes people amazed,” according to Pak Nartha—and has no relation to skill or technique.

However, most of the performers I interviewed did not consider it acceptable to pray for *taksu*—rather, performers who have *taksu* are chosen by the gods (somewhat like in trance). Without *taksu*, “the gods are not witnessing the event, they’re not present,” according to Pak Garrett. Pak Nartha described *taksu* thus:

I know it because I experience it. I sometimes don’t know what I say during the performance when I play the wayang roles. I feel like there is someone else who plays the wayang. There is a place where I have performed more than 200 times, but the people are still so enthusiastic for my performance. I as a usual human being will not be able to do that thing, so there is someone/something that helps me in doing that. That’s what I call *taksu*.

Taksu represents a sort of presence of the gods at the dance or ceremony, and therefore cannot be affected by human intervention—“you can’t study it, buy it, it just comes,” according to Bu Sekar. Indeed, trying too hard to have a personally impressive performance could be inimical to the entrance of *taksu*—this leans too close to arrogance, a vice that many informants stressed and which was contrasted with sincerity or honesty.

Interviewees differed on whether it was possible to have taksu outside of a Balinese Hindu performance. Mangku Bawa disagreed that something with “commercial purpose,” or other expectation, could be called a “fine art,” or, by implication, have taksu; Pak Garrett, on the other hand, allowed for a kind of “secular taksu” for non-divine dances. Bu Sekar had the strongest opinion in favor of non-ceremonial taksu. “Taksu is a kind of charisma,” she told me. “Even though you have no religion, you can still have taksu.” However, this kind of taksu was not as powerful as taksu with religious backing—it is her opinion that the level of taksu in Bali is higher than in other places due to the larger amount of ceremonies, prayer, and meditation.

Related to taksu is trance, a phenomenon central to several Balinese ceremonies. Interviewing people about trance proved to be particularly difficult: many people did not wish to speak to me about trance, and those who did often seemed uncomfortable or hesitant. I am still unclear as to why this is, though most of the people who seemed most uncomfortable with the topic seemed to have a negative view of trance in general—in fact, Bu Sekar and some others told me that trance only happens to those who want it, or who are not spiritually strong enough to resist it. Mangku Bawa told me he had never experienced trance, but a feeling like trance:

I do not know, I can't explain it. But I often experience a feeling like kesurupan—trance. That feeling I can control, the feeling of a flow, no mind, everything is under control by the other realm. It's like that for me. I do not dare [to talk about] the other trance because I have never felt it.

For Mangku Bawa, his trance-like state was related to his capacity for improvisation within sacral dance, especially Topeng Sidyakarya. True trance, however, was linked to a frightening loss of control. People in trance (which most often happens in a temple) are entered by a divine or demonic presence and cannot control their actions or remember

them afterward; I witnessed this most notably at the Pengerebongan ceremony in Kesiman, Denpasar. At that event, those in trance danced, stabbed themselves with krises, wept, screamed, and fought, driven by the presence of many magically powerful Barong and Rangda masks. Pak Garrett described the ceremony thus:

So when they open the gates and the trancers come out, it's just so full of energy that it just overflows, it spills out, and these people are in trance, screaming and crying and stabbing themselves—because the overflow inside that temple is like a flood, like these floodgates get opened, and all this divine energy comes in. Or demonic energy from below comes in, and that's where this conflict occurs.

Pak Garrett, who has been in trance twice, was one of the few people I spoke to who viewed trance positively, and told me that it was “very important” for certain ceremonies. “It’s not necessary, but when it happens, it adds that extra dimension, because there’s a divine or demonic presence that’s physically being shown to the people,” he said. Trance is important to dance because there are some ceremonial dances performed entirely in trance, and often those in trance dance. Trance, like taksu, reflects an entrance of unseen beings into a performance; unlike taksu, however, the entrance is literal in the case of trance, which gives the spiritual component a greater power. Deities will often speak through those in trance, or express emotions through them; trance and taksu are both ways of making a divine presence known.

Dance and the Balinese

Besides facilitating a religious connection to God, dance and the performing arts in Bali, like everywhere, also have an important role in facilitating connection to other people. Many interviewees emphasized the importance of connection to other people

when asked about the story of the dances, though I did get widely varied response to this question. Several interviewees said the story was important largely as a source of character; “It is important because we have to be able to feel the character,” Bu Sarni said. Sri told me that it was important because “in dancing if there is no story there will be no character as well.” Showing the distinction between good and bad (characters), and the balance between them, seemed to be the main reason why character was important. “The most common stories are about people’s personalities, good and bad—both are inside. How to balance them?” Bu Sekar told me. “Through the story, the audience can observe which one is good, which one is evil,” Mangku Bawa noted.

In this regard, performance serves also as a means of moral and spiritual education: a few interviewees emphasized this fact. “Dancers are like teachers, teachers to educate other people. So that we know how to keep a good relation with God, humans, and Nature. The performance is the medium of education,” Pak Kodi told me. For most of those who emphasized education, religion was an important aspect: “the story is significant in implementing the religion,” Mangku Bawa stated. “Humans can learn about codes of conduct, ethics of living, truth through the story.” Pak Sidia told me that “a story is important for the dance because it gives us philosophy and the essence of the dance; there will be no meaning in the dance if there is no story behind it.” Dance, then, at least traditionally, has a role in providing education and moral guidance to its audience. History (Pak Kodi) and the principle of karma (Bu Sekar) were two other forms of education that were mentioned as possible to gain from watching a dance. Stories are also sometimes chosen to provide a specific sort of influence for a ceremony—a story about a

famous king parents want their child to emulate is picked for a baby ceremony, for example.

Some informants, though, emphasized the story simply as a way to abstractly communicate with or cause understanding in the audience.

The story in the dance is important to make the audience understand what we, the dancers perform and to make them understand what they see. That's why the dancers have to understand the story in the dance that they perform. So they are connected to each other.

Sri told me. Bu Sekar told me that “from the story, the audience will understand the dance, even if they don't understand the language, like if I watch an American film, I can understand the story”. In this regard, the story is painted as a simple means of communication between performer and audience. Some interviewees, however, told me that the story was not particularly important. “The story is free, it depends on the dancers. Because we also perform for audience we try to make the dancing as interesting as possible for the audience. But that is not the main factor. The most important is that we are sincere and we dance for the ceremony and for God,” Pak Terima told me. Pak Garrett informed me that “I think story is not so important, except maybe in Calonarang, where the story is crucial to the whole thing with black and white magic.” The story, then, facilitates communication, or moments of spiritual tension, or enjoyment, in the audience—it doesn't shape the dance itself, according to these interviewees.

I did ask interviewees what the most common stories were, and several people told me a variant of what I had heard in my original interviews in Munduk Pakel village: stories of love and war, of rajas. Some were more specific: the Mahabharata and Ramayana are ever-popular sources, as are local stories; several of the dances, such as Topeng Sidyakarya, also had elaborate stories behind them. However, it appears that

storyline is usually more important in genres like the wayang. I did interview a few dalangs, and dancers who were also dalangs, about their work. The dalangs were those who most emphasized the importance of the performer's role as teacher; they understood teaching to be part of their job, and often studied deeply in order to perform wayang shows. Dalang is, traditionally, a more exhaustive job than dancer; as Pak Sidia told me, "a dalang could also be said to be a Guru Lokha because the dalang teaches people about philosophy, about the story of life . . . So dalangs have to know much about music, dance, philosophy, literature, story, songs, and everything." The meaning of "Guru Lokha" was explained to me by Pak Nartha: "a dalang is called Guru Lokha—the teacher for the society—because the dalang tells a story about human life, about truth, about action and etiquette." Both men compared dalangs to priests, and emphasized the teaching duties of their role. As research went on, it became clear that wayang shows would have been a better place to look to determine the importance of stories in Balinese performing arts.

However, it is also possible that dance previously placed a greater importance on story than it does now—like wayang performance. Several of my informants told me that they felt that clowning and humor had recently assumed a greater importance in Balinese performances, pushing out story-driven elements (which are often in a language many Balinese cannot understand). Humor has always been an essential part of most Balinese performance—Pak Kodi explained how a Topeng dancer must interact with the local community, perhaps observing people in the market and stealing a funny dialect, way of moving, or face for a masked dance, because that is what grounds the performance in reality. However, several expressed feelings that humor had now taken a bigger role in the performance.

In the past the dalang was the Guru Lokha, but in the 1980s it slowly changed to a performance with a purpose to entertain. Because people are getting more stressed they need entertainment instead of performance which is full of philosophy . . . There are now so many sources of education, like schools, books, etc., that if the wayang is also about education people might get bored of it.

Pak Nartha, an older dalang, told me. Pak Garrett explained the cause as partly mass media, partly the fact that people “need that dramatic release, that humor—humorous moments in their lives, just to forget about where the next rupiah is coming from.” And, discussing humor in dance performances specifically, Pak Terima simply told me that “nowadays all over Bali people prefer seeing more comedy during the performance.” Stories, according to my informants, along with the philosophy and education they traditionally represented in Balinese performing arts, have taken on a reduced importance, and the reasons why have to do with the greater changes affecting Balinese performing arts.

Dance and the Larger World

Bali, as stated previously, is an island not unaccustomed to change, but the changes most impactful on the modern day stem from the Dutch colonization and the wave of Westerners it brought: tourists. Today tourists come from Japan, China, and Australia, as well as various other Asian and European countries and America (to a lesser extent), and their numbers have only continued to increase: two million tourists visit Bali each year. A major draw for tourists both international and domestic is Bali’s wealth of “culture”, and dances are the most popular activity to perform for tourists, both at hotels and at special stages at palaces, temples, and other impressive backdrops. The performers

I spoke to had a variety of different perspectives on tourism, often incorporating both positive and negative aspects. The economic benefits of tourism were often mentioned, often very straightforwardly: “tourism can make people rich, people can have good income, people can also teach others to dance and the dancers can get money from tourism,” Pak Sidia informed me. Bu Sarni said that “through dancing we can entertain tourists who come to Bali, we get money from the performance, and we can use the money to fulfill our daily needs, for school, etc., so if no more tourists come to Bali, the economy might be diminished.” The chance to show Balinese culture to outsiders and the spurs to the development of Balinese dance were also mentioned, as well as possibilities for collaboration with artists from other countries. “The dancers from the West coming to Bali motivate the creativity of those who are already creative,” Pak Kodi informed me.

However, negative sides to the swell of tourism were also mentioned. “Competition between artists” (Pak Sidia), was listed as a possible downside of tourism, but most answers mentioned the possibility of adulteration and commercialization of Balinese dance by economic (touristic) forces, a pressure that is particularly threatening to a dance tradition so intertwined with religion. Tourist performances are usually significantly shorter than traditional performances, which can go on for hours, and several dancers seemed to feel restricted by this—Pak Kodi in particular pointed this out as a problem because he worried that dancers were no longer learning the complete, long version of the dances. He framed this as an increase in quantity and a decrease in quality across the board, drawing a distinction between cheap dancers and others. “Those who are creative will get more creativity, but those who are running after the money will get the money and their quality will remain second class,” he stated.

Tourist dances do, in fact, have many differences from those performed for the Balinese. Time differences were the most important difference mentioned by my informants, but the type of dancers is also relevant—tourists, perhaps unsurprisingly, tend to prefer watching young, attractive, female dancers, a fact that has pushed many older and male dancers out of the job market for dance performers (Pak Garrett). I asked the organizer of the dance I watched in Ubud (to my extreme regret, I did not have my tape recorder with me when I talked to him), Pak Turun, about how he chose the dances for his performances: he told me that tourists greatly preferred solo dances, and wanted variety. In order to remain competitive with the other groups in Ubud, he couldn't put on the same dances every night; he tried to choose dances that were not performed elsewhere in the city. Bu Cok In, a dancer for tourist performances in Peliatan, told me that tourists specifically like Legong, welcome dances, Oleg Tamulilingan, Barong, and Trompong, but also deferred responsibility for the content of the dance performances, saying, “performances for tourists have been scheduled by our leader. We just dance and satisfy the audiences by our performance. The leader knows what dances tourists like the most”.

Interviewees differed on whether tourist dances could have a religious component. Several interpreted this question as referring to the type of dance (sacred or entertainment) and answered it accordingly—yes, because we also perform these dances in the temple; or no, because these are not sacred dances. Several emphasized to me that trances during tourist performances were not real, that performers “will have control” (Pak Terima), though one (Pak Kodi) did tell me that it was possible for real trance to occur. Several said that they were religious because of the general religious atmosphere in Bali. “In Bali, sometimes a dance without any ceremony can display a religious aspect

because of the influence of the nature in Bali,” Pak Kodi told me. Some specifically referred to the prayer that precedes almost all performances, even those for tourists, and a sense that even these performances serve in part as an offering to God.

According to me [tourist performances can have a religious nature], because for all art performances we always offer a simple *canang* . . . We do something to offer to God—if we want to offer beauty to God, first we have to beautify ourselves. For example, if I dance, and I wear the costumes carelessly, will people love it? . . . We have to be able to present the beauty to God and the *niskala*, and also to the audience who watch our art performance through the movement, music, expression or *taksu* that we have.

Mangku Bawa informed me. Perhaps dance is taken so seriously in the ritual context in Bali that it would make no sense not to apply some of that same seriousness in the tourist arena as well—for religious Balinese, perhaps God is always part of dancing.

However, I also encountered some concern among informants that less Balinese people have been learning dance lately, for various reasons. Pak Kodi worried about this, saying,

In Bali, the artist will be sad if the son does not want to be an artist. Just like me—if my children do not want to be artists, I have masks, and if I pass away will they sell my masks or what will they do? But if I have children who become artists, I am so happy because the masks will still be a means of devotion . . . Now we have many Western friends from France, Italy, Japan [who are learning how to dance] but the more Western people learn how to dance the less Balinese people are interested in learning the dance and I as a teacher feel so sad. What is the future of our culture, what is the future of our religion?

It is unclear whether Pak Kodi felt that the influx of foreign students was actually decreasing Balinese interest in dance or if he simply linked foreign influence with decreased Balinese interest in culture, especially among the youth. Pak Garrett explicitly linked the two, bringing up a recent sentiment (probably Western in origin) that dance challenged men’s masculinity, and re-emphasizing that tourist performances don’t

provide much opportunities for male dancers, resulting in the fact that “men hardly dance in Bali anymore,” at least among the younger generation. Differences in the compulsoriness of dance education and other leisure activities probably also make a difference—in the past, Balinese children were all but forced to learn art. “I might say parents were like dictators, they educated their children just like a dictator, but for good reasons,” said Pak Terima, who explained that nowadays more attention is paid to children’s individual interest. Pak Garrett brought up the time necessary to receive a solid classical foundation in dance, something probably particularly onerous in an age with more distractions—TV, Internet, and after-school activities, for example. Pak Kodi suggested that some parents even pay their children to learn dance these days.

To add to all this, the process of dance education in Bali has changed. While villages and regions used to cultivate their own styles, which were presented at local courts, the dance conservatory in Denpasar has now become the arbiter of prestige with regards to the development of new dances, and the wider region it serves is perhaps erasing some of the diversity of local dances. Pak Garrett felt the most strongly about this, saying that “the new forms that are coming down from the dance academy . . . the new forms that are all standardized and created are being taught to the young people, who are teaching it to their younger colleagues in the villages”. The tension here is important—most innovative and new material comes out of ISI these days, where all graduates must create a new piece as a final project (Dibia et al. 2004, 101). However, this centralization, along with the greater pervasiveness of new forms of media like television, has meant that local variants are no longer as important—“now I think almost all areas in Bali do the same dances. That’s why at least 70% of children in Bali can

dance at least Tari Rejang and Tari Baris for ceremonies,” Pak Terima told me. The focus on choreography, probably influenced by Bali’s almost a century of interaction with Western choreographers and dancers, is also a new step— ritual dances, according to Pak Garrett, used to be, and still are in some places, so simple that they didn’t require choreography—one could simply follow along. Pak Kodi confirmed this, saying that “dances that have connection with religion/divinity, the form of the dances is usually very simple. Why? Because it is not the body gestures [that is important] but the concentration towards God. If it is complicated it won’t be easy to concentrate.” Bali’s interaction with the rest of the world, unsurprisingly, has changed traditional dance to look very different than it did pre-Dutch.

Conclusions

Dance in Bali, then, is undergoing a time of change. Traditionally the world of dance has had a strong link with the temple, and the ceremonies performed there, and most dancers believe that a personal connection to God is an essential part of their work. Taksu and trance serve as more-or-less visible manifestations of divine beings in the dance, and prayers are always said before a performance. While dance and wayang used to serve more of a role in local education, however, the stories embodied in the performing arts don't seem to have much import in the present day, except as a source of character and lessons about the balance of good and bad. Comedy has taken on a more prominent role, and other media have filled the storytelling place that traditional performing arts used to hold. This phenomenon is probably driven by the pressures of tourism and globalization, which are also changing the face of Balinese dance; dances are shorter, and fewer Balinese are getting a full dance education. The education that there is, while an important source of new dances, is contributing to the standardization of dance throughout the island, a tendency exacerbated by the pressures of the tourist market.

This is the question of the moment for Bali, which has for so long been defined by others as the "island of culture" (Vickers 1989, 172). Tourism, which provides the money, impetus, and attention necessary to develop Balinese culture, simultaneously threatens that culture's continued existence in a "genuine" state and attempts to preserve Balinese culture as a museum, a paradise free of "modern" influence. Religious dances in all cultures face this struggle to some extent, as Bu Diane pointed out; how can the role of these performances in society continue in the face of new forms of media and ways of

life? What aspects can remain the same (devotion to God) and which must change (storytelling power)? During my interview with Pak Terima, I asked him if he thought religion was important to Balinese dance, and he gave me the following answer.

In Brazil, someone asked me about the ceremonies in Bali. “Why, in all of the religious activities in Bali, do the people always have a big ceremony?” And he also asked: “Is it possible that one day the culture of Bali will be gone?” Those are good questions. My answer was that religion and culture, especially in Bali, have a very tight relationship. Religion in Bali without any culture is paralyzed, cannot walk by itself. But for culture in Bali, if someone forgets their religion, doesn’t understand their religion, it is like someone who is blind; they can walk, but they are blind. It’s like this: we may still dance the Topeng dance, but if we don’t believe in any religions, we will not be able to be sincere. The dance performance is like a theatrical performance, so if there is no audience we will not be able to dance, and people will think that we are crazy. It’s not like in a ceremony—people will dance Gambuh, and people around them will not see them dancing because they are still busy preparing the ceremony.

This is the tension running through Balinese performance art: how to remain sincere in the presence of an ever-growing set of global viewers. Sincerity is easy in the temple, when other humans don’t even necessarily pay attention, but Bali has grown used to having an audience, and their desires don’t always match up with those of the Balinese. For good or ill, the place of religion in traditional dance has had to adjust accordingly.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Study

This study, conducted over the course of three weeks, cannot in any way purport to describe the culture on all of Bali; it is limited by my own still relatively shallow knowledge of Balinese life, the short time period, and the constrained physical mobility of a student without a motorbike and reliant on public transportation and the kindness of others to get around. Additionally, sampling could not be conducted in any methodical way, due to limitations of resources and contacts in Bali, and this probably skewed my answers somewhat, especially because I interviewed five members of the same large family. My Indonesian skills (modest) and Balinese skills (nonexistent) also limited me in terms of communication—I often found it difficult to ask follow-up questions during solo interviews, and my interview recordings were translated largely by others, which affected the closeness of my connection with the data.

Further studies should focus on the specific ways in which tourism has transformed Balinese dance, and could delve deeper into the ways that stories are significant to the Balinese performing arts and investigate why they are not considered important in dance, now or ever. Investigations of why, exactly, dance is significant to Balinese religion would also be relevant, as well into the role of trance in rituals, as it seemed to be a controversial and sensitive topic among my interview sample. Tracing the iterations of one dance (i.e., Legong) in traditional and touristic forms could also prove productive.

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- I Ketut Kodi, personal communication, 10 April 2013.
- Ni Made Metri, personal communication, 21 March 2013.
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- Ibu Puspa, personal communication, 20 March 2013.
- Ni Made Sarni Arning, personal communication, 21 April 2013.
- Ni Wayan Sekariani, personal communication, 8 April 2013.
- I Made Sidia., personal communication, 17 April 2013.
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- I Wayan Terima, personal communication, 11 April 2013.
- Pak Turun, personal communication, 25 April 2013.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Question List

Questions varied greatly for different interviews: this is the standard list I took as a starting point. Questions are listed in English and Indonesian, and were translated largely by Dede.

Can you explain more about that?

Bisa tolong Bapak/Ibu jelaskan itu lebih rinci?

What is your name?

Siapa nama Bapak/Ibu?

How old are you?

Berapa umur Bapak/Ibu?

Where are you from?

Dari mana asal Bapak/Ibu?

Where do you currently live?

Sekarang Bapak/Ibu tinggal di mana?

What is your profession?

Apa pekerjaan Bapak/Ibu?

What is your religion?

Apa agama Bapak/Ibu?

When did you start dancing?

Kapan Bapak/Ibu mulai menari?

How long have you been dancing?

Sudah berapa lama Bapak/Ibu menari?

Who was your teacher?

Siapa guru menari Bapak/Ibu?

What was the first dance you learned?

Tarian apa yang paling pertama Bapak/Ibu pelajari?

Do you have a favorite dance?

Tarian apa yang menjadi favorit Bapak/Ibu?

Why do you dance?
Kenapa Bapak/Ibu menari?

Where do you usually dance?
Di mana biasanya Bapak/Ibu menari?

For what reasons/circumstances?
Dan untuk alasan/keadaan apa (Bapak/Ibu) menari (di tempat itu)?

What kinds of dance do you usually perform?
Jenis tarian apa saja yang biasanya Bapak/Ibu tampilkan?

Can you tell me a little about that kind of dance?
Dan bisa Bapak/Ibu jelaskan tarian itu?

Is there a story to that kind of dance?
Apakah ada cerita yang melatarbelakangi tarian itu?

Can you tell me about the story?
Bisa tolong Bapak/Ibu ceritakan cerita itu?

How important is the story to the dance?
Apa yang membuat cerita itu begitu penting untuk tariannya?

Is religion a part of the dance?
Apakah agama menjadi bagian dari tarian?

Can you tell me about how religion is important for the dance?
Bisa tolong Bapak/Ibu jelaskan kenapa agama penting untuk tarian?

Is taksu important to the dance?
Apakah 'taksu' juga penting untuk tarian?

Can you tell me about how taksu is important to the dance?
Bisa tolong Bapak/Ibu jelaskan kenapa 'taksu' penting untuk tarian?

Can you tell me about how taksu is related to religion?
Bisa tolong Bapak/Ibu jelaskan bagaimana keterkaitan 'taksu' dengan dengan agama?

How is the story of the dance important to the audience?
Kenapa cerita tarian itu menjadi penting untuk orang-orang yang menonton tarian itu?

In what situation might you talk about that story in everyday life?
Situasi apa yang mungkin membuat Bapak/Ibu bercerita tentang cerita tarian itu di kehidupan sehari-hari?

What is most important to perform a dance well?

Hal apa yang paling penting untuk bisa tampil menari dengan baik?

Can you tell me about repetition of movement in the dance?

Bisa Bapak/Ibu jelaskan terkait pengulangan gerakan dalam tarian?

What are some of the most common stories for dances?

Cerita-cerita apa yang paling umum tercermin dalam tarian-tarian?

Are dances that have the same story similar to each other?

Apakah tarian-tarian, yang berlatarbelakang cerita yang sama, saling mempunyai kemiripan?

What are the differences between different dances that tell the same story?

Apa perbedaan-perbedaan antara tarian-tarian berbeda yang ternyata menampilkan cerita yang sama?

Is the dance seen as an offering to the gods?

Apakah tarian-tarian itu dipandang sebagai persembahan kepada Tuhan?

Why are dances important to religion in Bali?

Apa (yang) membuat/kenapa tarian-tarian itu penting untuk agama, khususnya di Bali?

Why is religion important to dance?

Apa (yang) membuat/kenapa agama penting untuk tarian itu?

How do you feel that tourism has affected dance in Bali?

Bagaimana menurut Bapak/Ibu, apakah pariwisata membanguaruhi tarian di Bali?

Can tourist dances be religious?

Bisa tarian pariwisata bersitat religius?

Is there anything else important for me to know about religion and dance?

Menurut Bapak/Ibu, hal-hal penting apa lagi yang saya perlu tahu tentang agama dan kaitannya dengan tarian?

Appendix B: Glossary

Arja: a sung dance-drama

bale banjar: the village hall, center of a banjar, or neighborhood. Each village is composed of several banjars.

balih-balihan: performances purely for entertainment, performed in the outer courtyard of the temple. The lowest category of performance.

Baris: a warrior dance typically performed by young men, often with weapons.

Barong: a large mask/lion costume with great magical powers, representative of the powers of good.

Bebali: semi-sacred performances, performed in the middle courtyard of the temple. The middle category of performance.

Bu: short for Ibu, or mother, a term of address for a married woman.

Calonarang: an exorcistic dance relating a battle between black and white magic, involving the Barong and Rangda masks.

Canang: a small offering used in everyday prayer.

dalang: a shadow puppeteer, well-versed in many aspects of Balinese culture.

Drama Gong: An acting genre involving drama and gamelan.

Gabor: An offering and welcome dance.

Gambuh: A classical sung dance-drama.

Gamelan: an orchestra of largely percussive instruments, the basis of Indonesian music.

ISI: Institut Seni Indonesia, the main arts conservatory in Denpasar.

kris: a ceremonial dagger of magical power.

Legong: a feminine dance form usually performed by two girls or women.

Mangku: short for *pemangku*.

mantra: ritual chant by a Hindu priest

mudra: sacred hand positions made by a Hindu priest during prayer

niskala: the world of unseen beings, as opposed to *sekala*, the material world.

odalan: a temple festival or anniversary that occurs once every Balinese cycle, or every 210 days.

Oleg Tamulliningan: a duet dance for a man and woman, from the mid-20th century.

otonan: a Balinese birthday, based on the 210-day cycle.

Pak: short for Bapak, or father, a term of address for married men.

pemangku: a priest not from the Brahmana caste.

Pura Dalem: one of the three temples (*pura*) in a Balinese village; the Pura Dalem is the temple located nearest the graveyard and devoted to Shiva and his consort Durga.

Rangda: a witch mask with great magical powers, representative of the forces of evil.

Rejang: a sacred dance performed by women.

Sendratari: a form of pantomimed dance-drama dating from the 1960s.

taksu: a mix of divine inspiration, charisma, and stage presence.

tari: the Indonesian word for dance.

Topeng: a dance performed with wooden masks, usually with a dramatic arc.

Topeng Sidyakarya: a special form of Topeng performed to complete a ceremony.

trompong: an instrument in the gamelan consisting of 10 inverted kettle gongs.

Trompong Kebyar: a dance in which the performer dances while playing the trompong.

wali: sacred performances, performed in the inner courtyard of the temple. The highest category of performance.

warung: a combination convenience store/food stall.

wayang: traditional Indonesian shadow puppetry.

Appendix C: Guide to Informants and Contact Information

Mangku Bawa: Mangku Bawa, male, 47 years old, Batuan.

Bu Cok In: Cokorda Sri Indrayuni, female, 42 years old, Peliatan.

Bu Diane: Diane Butler, female, 52 years old, dancer, Bedulu. 08123614244.

Pak Garrett: Garrett Kam, male, 58 years old, writer/translator, Bedulu. 081558281056.

Gusti Mangku: Gusti Putu Kebyar, male, 75 years old, priest, Bedulu.

Pak Kodi: I Ketut Kodi, male, 50 years old, lecturer ISI Denpasar, Singapadu. 0817352043.

Bu Metri: Ni Made Metri, female, 53 years old, farmer, Munduk Pakel.

Pak Nartha: Wayan Nartha, male, 72 years old, dalang, Sukawati. 0361299080

Bu Puspa: Ibu Puspa, female, 42 years old, farmer, Munduk Pakel.

Bu Sarni: Ni Made Sarni Arning, female, 43 years old, housewife, Batuan. Pak Terima's wife.

Bu Sekar: Ni Wayan Sekariani, female, 48 years old, dance teacher, Batuan. 081338610888.

Pak Sidia: I Made Sidia, male, 45 years old, teacher/artist, Bona.

Sri: Sri Maharyeni, female, 23 years old, housewife, Batuan. Bu Sekar's daughter. 08174700112.

Pak Terima: I Wayan Terima, male, 43 years old, accountant, Batuan. Bu Sekar's brother.

Pak Turun: Male, dance organizer, Ubud. 081999216335.