Panji's Present Predicament: the artistic prominence and tension of the Malat in painting and contemporary Balinese performance

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PAÑJI'S PRESENT PREDICAMENT:

the artistic prominence and tension of the Malat in painting and contemporary Balinese performance

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SIT Study Abroad
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This study would never have come to fruition if it was not for the generosity and friendliness of Ibu Sekar and Pak Djimat. Ibu Sekar helped me secure housing and taught me how to dance. Pak Djimat encouraged me to attend as many of his rehearsals and performances as possible, even going so far as to cart me around Bali to watch his troupe perform (sometimes remembering to give me a ride back, too). I am endlessly grateful to all the artists I met and whom graciously allowed me to study their passions.

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Throughout the rest of my life, I will always try to take her advice to heart, to 'stay alive and lively.' Thank you, Bu Ary.
ABSTRACT

The *Malat* is a Balinese oral tradition and text composed of numerous episodic stories based on Javanese and Balinese courtly life of the pre-Dutch intervention era, when kings and princes dominated the political sphere and the court system governed aspects of social life. Many art forms blossomed out of this epic, notably in painting and in performance, known as *gambuh*. Through an exploration of the Balinese epic, the *Malat*, as a Balinese text, history, fine art, and performance, this study analyzes the modern cultural importance of this ancient pre-Indonesian courtly epic. *Gambuh* is an ancient dance-drama that serves as the origin of many other traditional Balinese dances, and plays the lead role in this study. The progression of *gambuh*'s prominence in Bali from pre-Indonesian State to current times is discussed, and predictions of the future of *gambuh* are gathered from conversations with informants and from personal experiences.
PART ONE
Introduction

This study addresses the artistic prominence of the uniquely Indonesian epic, the Malat, in modern Bali, and discusses the declining popularity of gambuh, an ancient dance-drama recounting the Malat epic. The role of the Malat in multiple aspects of Balinese life is examined and analyzed, as text, history, fine art, and as performance. Additionally, the study discusses the role of gambuh in religious functions and daily life of the Balinese.

The primary field work methods of experience-based participant-observation, and analysis of modern gambuh dance are included, as well as art historical formal analysis of Malat painting renditions. From the data acquired, I contextualized the opinions I received from interviews with the performances and audience reactions I witnessed. After my lessons in gambuh dance, I better understood the nuance of movement required by the dancers, which impacted my understanding of Balinese sentiments.

This study examines multiple questions revolving around the Malat: to what extent do Malat stories play an active role in Balinese contemporary arts? How well-known are the Malat stories? What are the underlying reasons behind the change in popularity of the Malat? And what, if any, is the intertextual relationship between the various artistic mediums that have served as vehicles for the Malat? What motifs exist, how do they function, and how do current depictions of the Malat differ from earlier ones?

This study was heavily influenced by my personal love of ancient epic poetry and the modern adaptions of the past that can be seen in every sphere of current life. As David Fetterman, in *Ethnography: Step by Step*, denotes, "ethnographic research begins with the
selection of a problem or topic of interest. The research problem that the ethnographer chooses guides the entire research endeavor.\textsuperscript{1} By melding together my interests in literature, art, religion, as well as a newfound interest in Balinese culture, this study grew out of brainstorming discussions with Jonathan Adams and Bu Ary, who serendipitously recommended I look into the Malat, read Adrian Vickers' *Journeys of Desire* and attend gambuh performances.

Current sentiment on the progress, development, and maintenance of one of the oldest forms of classical dance-drama in Bali is discussed, featuring interviews from artists and scholars in the Gianyar area, including I Nyoman Budi Artha, and his father, renowned dancer, I Made Djimat. Overall, while the Malat and its essential role in gambuh has a long history of popularity, decline, preservation and adaption, it is currently maintained through its integral link to religion which fully cements gambuh's role in the Balinese world.

**Methods**

My primary data for this project stemmed from interviews with performers as well as observation and participation of gambuh dances and gamelan practices. My data was collected from 5 April 2017 to 29 April 2017 from the village of Batuan, Gianyar, Bali, Indonesia. For my stay in Batuan, I rented a room at Umah Kodok owned by the Tri Pusaka Sakti Arts Foundation. Housing here was arranged by Ibu Ni Wayan Sekarani, and interviews took place in various locations in Batuan around this base. Throughout my time in the field I had the opportunity to interview various performers of gambuh, I Made Djimat, a master of the craft, I Nyoman Budi Artha, his son and a dancer and scholar at the Arts Institute, and Ni Wayan Sekarani, a female dancer and teacher (also related to Djimat, a niece). In each interview I began with a list of

questions that I formed specifically for each informant, translated with the virtual help of the language instructors from the program center in Kerambitan. While I did have this structure to fall back on, I approached the interviews in a causal setting as more of a discussion, allowing for follow-up questions and tangential lines of conversation to permeate the conversation. Due to my long stay with these artists, I was able to conduct multiple interviews as well as engage in a lot of informal conversation; I chose to stay in one area, for, as Fetterman states, "the longer an individual stays in a community, building rapport, and the deeper the probe into individual lives, the greater the probability of his or her learning about the sacred subtle elements of the culture."\(^2\)

Topics ranged from *gambuh*'s reception and history, the personal feelings of the dancers while performing, and the perceived future of the art form. Interviews took place in Umah Kodok's outdoor seating area, on a *bale* after a dance practice, and at an informant's home while his wife gave him a haircut. A mixture of Bahasa Indonesia and English was used by all informants and by myself, while most interviews were also recorded with verbal permission and transcribed later with the help of translators. Informants and Foundation names are used specifically only after I was given enthusiastic consent to use their real names.

**Limitations and Ethical Considerations**

Some limitations and ethical concerns arose during my study in the field, and they were dealt with as they appeared. Due to the nature of performance troupes in Batuan, I rarely interacted with groups outside of the Tri Pusaka Sakti Foundation. I fully recognized that my understanding of Batuan's *gambuh* culture is heavily influenced by the experiences and opinions of Pak Djimat and his family. With only three weeks of work in the field, I was only able to

\(^2\) *op cit*, Fetterman (1998), 17.
attend a limited amount of *gambuh* performances; were I given more time, I would have attended many more, learned more of the *gambuh* dance myself, and studied the music played as well. Given both more time and resources, I would have delved further into the fine art scene of Batuan and more of the portrayal of *Malat* in painting.

My limited grasp of Bahasa Indonesia often times meant that during an interview I would just smile and nod while recording the conversation later to be translated, and this meant that I may have missed important opportunities for clarification and expansion.

Ethically, during my time traveling with Pak Djimat and his performers, I found myself to be one Westerner amongst many local Balinese. I am very grateful for being able to have a more 'authentic' dance experience (instead of viewing commercialized performances meant specifically for tourists). However, I noticed that when I was around, the few other Western tourists that found their way to the temple performance area felt much more comfortable coming up to my group. My presence acted as a gateway for the tourists to the performers, regardless of whether they were welcome. While the performers seemed to not be bothered by their presence, I noticed that sometimes the tourists occupied space that blocked the view for others, especially children.

During rehearsals and practices (of which I attended many since I was staying in a room next door to the rehearsal space) I would often watch from the sidelines as Djimat taught. In the beginning, before I had met the student at least a couple of times, I could see that my watching made some students slightly uneasy; however, I discussed this with the dance teacher, Pak Djimat, who reassured me that my presence as an audience was good for the student, to learn to
dance with more focus, regardless of who was watching. I then initiated friendships with several of his students, including one foreign student from Japan who was studying topeng.

Oftentimes, after (or during) my interviews with a performer, the topic of discussion would shift to funding, and how I should return to the United States and attempt to find financial backers for gambuh in Bali. While polite, I made no promises to anyone, and reiterated my position as an undergraduate student in a study abroad program.

**Background**

The *Malat* stories are said to date back to the Gelgel kingdom (roughly the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries), and gambuh features a unique combination of both Javanese and Balinese styles of dance. The epic narratives center on the adventures and exploits of the kings and princes of the medieval pre-Indonesian kingdoms of the Kedhiri-Daha, notably featuring Prince Pañji, whose narrative makes up one of the oldest, longest, and most complex native artistic traditions of Indonesia, and which has spread around Southeast Asia: to Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, and Malaysia.

Pañji stories, as the *Malat* is often referred as, are a wealth of material for artists, dancers, and musicians alike; however, recently the stories have fallen out of favor with local Balinese. Only 40 years ago, gambuh could easily be seen all around Bali, as scholar Adrian Vickers (2005) discovered during his work in the field from 1978 to 1983. Since then, however, the quality of dance and frequency of performances has been in decline. Today, there are few gambuh repertoires available, and the remaining groups (like the Gambuh Desa Batuan

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4 Ibid.
5 Garrett Kam (personal communication, correspondence), 3 April 2017.
Ensemble and Tri Pusaka Foundation) are kept quite busy traveling when called upon to perform for ceremonies.

As the traditional Indonesian dance of *gambuh* has declined, Pañji stories in painting have been steadily replaced by images from the Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, or of typical scenes from the idealized daily Balinese village life. However, the *Malat* was never an extremely popular topic in painting to begin with.⁶ Painting in Bali has gone through several changes since Dutch intervention in the early 20th century. Some groupings of genre in Balinese painting include the Balinese Renewal, the Young Artists School, and Miniaturist School of Batuan. Some of these patterns were influenced by outsiders to the tradition, but foreign influences were not the only factor in the changing artistic landscape. As a text, the *Malat* shares several similarities with the more popular Indic epics, yet oddly, these similarities (paired with its indigenous nature) have not as firmly cemented the *Malat*’s place in Indonesian culture. Scenes of the *Malat* have often gone through waning periods of popularity, possibly stemming from Western influences and the emergence of the tourist market.

While efforts have been made to revive and maintain the *gambuh* tradition continuously, the effectiveness, and even the value, of such efforts are questionable. In this study, I also include sentiments from artists themselves. I will attempt to prove that while the *Malat* tradition has declined in Bali during contemporary times of the 2010s, it has not fully disappeared from Indonesia, as it is embedded in the cultural heritage and foundation of Hindu Bali. The first form I will examine is the appearance of the *Malat* in text and literature as relates to history.

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PART TWO

The Malat as Textual History

There are roughly five groupings of Javanese literature: a pre-Islamic period (900-1500 CE), a Javanese-Balinese period (1500-1900 CE), a Javanese North Coast/Pasisir period (1500-1900 CE), a period of renaissance of classical literature (1700-1900 CE), and the current modern period. According to an Indonesian Malat scholar, Dwi Woro Retno Mastuti, the "Pañji stories [were] written [in the] Majapahit golden era, or [the] Majapahit deterioration era [in the] 14th century." However, the subset of Pañji narratives that I discuss in this paper are from the Javanese-Balinese period. Stemming from a collection of stories revolving around Prince Pañji, the Kidung Malat, known colloquially as the Malat, exists on Bali’s shores, and gives plot to the ancient Balinese dance-drama, gambuh (See Figure 1).

The gambuh performances pull from a set of shortened episodes of the fuller episodic narrative. It would be both surprising and impractical to perform the entire Malat, even broken down in an episodic format over the course of a long period of time. Insofar as there is a Malat text, there is no single narrative, start to finish, and no 'full story.' Even the order of episodes comprising an idyllic 'whole' is debated, as "different episodes can be moved around, referred to, or presented together in performance depending on the length and context of individual performances, and depending on what the performers want to elicit in their work." Religion and

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8 Ibid., 178.

ritual have much to do with the purpose of gambuh performance and the episode that is chosen to accompany a certain ritual for the completeness of the ceremony.\(^\text{10}\)

While the broken-up nature of the written and performed Malat makes it hard to describe in Western views of a typical text, there is ample extant evidence of written Malat, and its importance, through manuscripts. One such manuscript, dated to 1873 CE, was owned by a commoner named I Teduh. This manuscript includes a notice written by the copyist, I Purwadaksina, that the text should be borrowed only for ten days, or a month if circumstances require; however, if the borrower fails to return the copy, they will be cursed (in accordance with the written threat found in the colophon).\(^\text{11}\) Another piece of information shared on this manuscript was a reminder to readers, mentioning both men and women alike, to be sure and maintain a safe distance from lamps when reading at night, so as not to scorch the manuscript. Dated to 1873, this manuscript shows that both men and women were not only able, but encouraged to read and to borrow texts, even as commoners.\(^\text{12}\) This shows the huge popularity and prestige of the Malat during this time period.

The subject matter of the Malat imagines a much different Bali than exists today. The settings are pre-colonial kingdoms and courts, the characters are soldiers and maidens, wandering princes and equally wandering princesses. The plots involve political intrigue, court dynamics, and the bitter realities of medieval warfare. The Malat dealt with these issues, since the time of its conception, Bali was dealing with them as well. The issues at the forefront of everyone's minds revolved around "princely ascendency, the ties that bound subjects to

\(^{10}\) Paraphrased from Wayan Sekarani (personal communication), 13 April 2017, Batuan Village.

\(^{11}\) *op cit*, Vickers (2005), 88.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.
aristocrats, the coexistence of many competing and allying courts, wiping each other out, 
reviving, moving location and changing identity as new princely figures came to prominence, 
new rivalries and alliances were formed." Adrian Vickers, in his detailed study, *Journey of 
Desire*, hypothesizes that the Malat was a way of legitimizing current politics. It also offered a 
morality system, guided by princely stories, that gave examples for the ideal man, ruler, and 
political system overall.14

By utilizing the particularly emotive example of a 'horse stabbing' episode in the Malat 
(where, in a fit of jealously, Prince Pañji's horse and groomsman are stabbed by another prince), 
Vickers describes the purpose of the Malat in Balinese culture:

By speaking of courtliness in all its glamorous and violent details, by describing 
the 'inside' of the courts and relation to 'outsides', commoners and foreigners, the 
Malat was part of the way the courts of Bali became the exemplary 'interiors' of 
Balinese culture. The Malat addressed the needs of periods in Balinese history 
when courtly life was being reoriented from the existence of one dominant court 
to many on a more equal footing. In a subsequent period these proliferating courts 
turned in upon themselves. The Malat and texts like it made possible the 
transition from a vision of kingship which embraced the whole of Bali to a 
political culture of contention over the right to become one amongst many princes 
and kings.15

Polarizing groupings and rivalries accompany the Malat wherever it goes. This study was 
written with the assistance of a triwangsa dancing group, which is an artistic group made up 
dancers of the first three castes in Bali. The division between triwangsa and sudra (the lowest 
caste of commoners), was much more prominent during the beginning period of popularity for 
the Malat. This division caused a polarized political environment, often causing feuds between

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14 Ibid.

Today, this factionalism has shifted to competition between performing groups, as "outside, particularly foreign, patronage of the arts has promoted a kind of 'star' system."\textsuperscript{16} From my communication with Pak Djimat (a sixty-eight year old male dancer, winner of multiple gold medals in governmental dance competitions and an internationally-known leading figure in Balinese traditional dance), I found similarities between what Vickers mentions as the emphasized role of genealogy in the \textit{gambuh} tradition and in Pak Djimat's opinion that his family held responsibility for the \textit{gambuh} revitalization in Batuan (See Figure 2).\textsuperscript{17}

Balinese court life and rules dominated the \textit{Malat}'s golden era of performance in the 19th century, and were reinforced through the characterization of \textit{gambuh} roles. Characters are either portrayed as sweet and refined, \textit{alus}; female (related to \textit{alus}); as strong and aggressive, \textit{keras} or \textit{gagah}; or as coarse, \textit{kasar}; characters like clowns and servants. Being coarse means being of a lesser status, made clear from depictions of the servants and especially from female servants, who might well be labeled \textit{manis} if not for their status. This differentiation highlights the importance of status, and reinforces the dichotomous strata of commoner and royal.

The unspoken cultural center of the \textit{Malat} is the ancient Majapahit kingdom of East Java. Balinese views of this text, which hold that the \textit{Malat} features a strong 'Javanese' quality, is indicative of its larger importance as a reflection of "an authoritative presentation of the Javanese courtly culture on which Balinese kingdoms were founded, and as the continuation and perpetuation of discourse and ideology dominant in the Javanese courts at the time of

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{op cit}, Vickers (2005), 246.

\textsuperscript{17} Paraphrased from I Made Djimat (personal communication), 10 April 2017.
Majapahit."\textsuperscript{18} This view of Bali as "Java preserved" has made its way into the main discourse of Western scholars.\textsuperscript{19}

In regards to the authorship of the \textit{Malat} (which is mostly a moot point, seeing as the epic holds an episodic oral history, in contrast to Western views of a complete written narrative), there are many dissimilar hypotheses. One tradition states that the text was authored by Dangdang Gendis, a king of Daa, a political idea which Vickers states gives the \textit{Malat} pre-Majapahit beginnings, while another tradition states that I Gusti Dauh Bale Agung from the sixteenth century was the true writer, a prolific author of other Balinese literature. There are several other hypotheses, all of which work together to underscore the mysterious nature of \textit{Malat} authorship. As a question that arises from the \textit{Malat} as a mostly performance-based oral tradition, authorship does not seem to matter too much in relation to the contemporary history of \textit{Malat} and gambuh.

Today, the historical links of \textit{Malat} renditions have fallen to the wayside, to be replaced by a protective label of sacrality that calls for gambuh's recognition as \textit{bebali} temple dance, meant to be performed for temple anniversaries and ceremonies only. Vickers finds the 'sacralization' of gambuh ironic, as "nineteenth-century Dutch accounts...show that gambuh was, in the courts, an entertainment for guests, foreign or otherwise, as well as a performance during rituals."\textsuperscript{20} However, it is also recognized by Vickers and the larger artistic community of Bali that the 'sacralization' of gambuh has helped to maintain the tradition in a noneconomic strain.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{op cit}, Vickers (2005), 268.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 267.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{op cit}, Vickers (2005), 310.
The Malat as Fine Art

Traditionally, the purpose of art objects in Bali centered around religious function which "determined their place, use and form"\textsuperscript{21} as well governed the composition of painting. There were nine types of traditional painting: prasi, illustrated tal leaf manuscripts, parba, wooden panels located before beds in bales decorated in myths, tabing, wood or cloth depicting the afterlife and used in cremation ceremonies, langse, oblong sheets used as screens, ider ider, hangings tied under eaves of pavilions, ulon, white cloth representing the gods, leluher, ceiling paintings over beds for offerings, kober/umbul-umbul/lelontek, flags of mythology, and rerajahan/tumbal, magical drawings and painted boxes.\textsuperscript{22} Each type had its own history, its own sacred ritual attached, and its own function. The Balinese local art market was fueled by practical necessity from villagers and kingdoms alike.

Since 1905, Bali's interaction with the western world has led to an interesting type of globalization, as both exploitation as well as artistic encouragement. Dr. Jean Couteau, in her curated Puri Lukisan collection self-titled \textit{Puri Lukisan}, hypothesizes that by creating an idealized image of Bali as a tropical paradise, the Dutch opened up world markets for the Balinese artistic community in a way that preserved the traditions of pre-Dutch intervention.\textsuperscript{23} Bali then "manipulated [the world economy] to its advantage,"\textsuperscript{24} and through the colonial market introduced the world to Balinese fine arts, music, and dance. The inclusion of Balinese art in a larger economy has led to a pattern of inclusion and renewal.
discontinuation of art's purely sacred purpose, as now no special type of wood, process, nor ritual were needed to mass create items for the tourist market. This "release from the symbolic meaning of color and wood opened the way for artists to investigate form and color for their own sake."  

Adopting mythos and iconography from the Indian subcontinent that arrived with Indian traders in the early centuries CE, the Javanese (and subsequently the Balinese after the Majapahit invasion of Bali), molded the borrowed narratives into patterns of tradition that were recreated again and again in a classical style that guided generations of artists. The classical style can be distinguished by its standardized three-quarters profile view of characters shown in overlapping rows that fill every inch of the foreground, and often the background as well. Any space that might be left without a character is filled with patterned trees, clouds or abstract designs that represent atmosphere. There is often little notion of depth, though sometimes characters differ in size (which may be of iconographic importance rather than dimensionally important).

The foreign art market's acceptance of Balinese tradition was not immediately enthusiastic. In terms of traditional painting, the art world looked with disdain at the 'recent' time stamp of many works, as Balinese painting lacked the label of 'ancient' that many collectors pine for. In addition, collectors from the West viewed Balinese works as seeming 'alien' according to Dr. Couteau:

Balinese aesthetics tend to be perceived as 'alien' by Westerners: the blunt symbolism of the 'primitive arts,' the use of flat color surfaces in Javanese prints, and the sober

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25 Ibid., 27.
26 Ibid., 9.
27 Ibid., 10.
synthesism of Far-Eastern drawing are undoubtedly closer to Western aesthetic concepts than the visual and narrative fullness and complexity of Balinese art works.\textsuperscript{28}

Vickers, in his research on the traditional Balinese fine arts states that "Balinese artists do not look at paintings as integrated or organic compositions with one or more central points...the tradition of painting supplies set forms and scenes from which to work...[and] in that sense has to be viewed as a set of fragments linked by a narrative."\textsuperscript{29} This feature of painting correlates to how the \textit{Malat} is portrayed in dance-drama performances as well.

In Anak Agung Gede Raka Turas' 1936 painting, \textit{Gambuh Dance}, a 20.9cm by 27.7cm painting on paper made with wash technique and natural pigments in Padang Tegal, Ubud, Prince Pañji is displayed as strong and powerful, standing with straight posture alongside two squatting \textit{patih}, or ministers (See Figure 3). The line, used in this painting, is all-important, as it delineates the foreground space with clear focalization on the three main figures; there is no differentiated background for the eye to shift towards.

Another painting of the same title, \textit{Gambuh Dance}, this time by Ida Bagus Nyoman Pudja in 1938 in Batuan, utilizes the grayscale wash technique common to Batuan style, and depicts a \textit{gambuh} dance and the atmosphere surrounding it (See Figure 4). The main figures of the piece are Prince Pañji and his attendants who pay respect to a kingly figure. In the larger framing story surrounding the dancing \textit{gambuh} troupe, the audience watches in traditional Balinese style: half-interestedly. In the upper left there is a young couple, running away together while being followed by a man. The main audience drinks palm wine and chats with each other, keeping one eye on the dance which is shown through the audience's less-than-rapt attention to not be

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{op cit}, Couteau, (1999), 7.

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{op cit}, Vickers, (2005), 52.
performed for them. Instead, the dance is performed near an architectural structure that is depicted in rudimentary perspective meant to illustrate that this performance is for a temple ritual or celebration, and thus performed for the gods. The style of this scene includes heavy outlines (common to the wash technique) that create a flat atmosphere, emphasized by overlapping characters but interrupted by a shading technique that gives each figure a sense of full-bodiedness. The stylization of figures' faces creates the illusion that everyone is wearing masks, leading to a feeling of narrative, both in the staged gambuh as well as the staged audience of gambuh. The lack of bright differentiating colors allows the viewers' eyes to travel across the scenes, traveling in a circular pattern among the audience with a focal point of the performance: Prince Pañji and his team of attendants.

In Ida Bagus Sali's 1940 painting entitled *Birds Dancing in the Gambuh*, made from tempura on plywood, the gambuh is performed by a group of birds mimicking tantri animal fables (See Figure 5). Some birds dance while others play traditional gambuh instruments, like the long suling flutes. The background consists of forests and mountains, leading the eye to a rice field featuring other animals and the one solitary human figure, a farmer. This scene feels crowded but organized, separated into two: a foreground and background of performance and surrounding environment. Perspective plays a large role in this delineation, and saturated doses of color appear to focus the viewer's attention to the foreground of the performance.

In these examples, the gambuh performance, as secular or religious tradition in Balinese culture, is the subject, while the Malat and its specific narrative is not. As an interesting side note, the Malat in painting depicts foreigners (mostly the Dutch) as commoners, antithetical to
the palace or religious system. They are not shown as aristocrats iconographically, instead they are distinctively outsiders to Balinese culture.\textsuperscript{30}

A major shift in Balinese painting was catalyzed by a shift in orientation from colonial to national, influenced by the introduction of the Indonesian state.\textsuperscript{31} Pre-World War II Indonesian artists viewed painting as an extension of their religious life and duty. However, the Renewal Balinese Painting of the post-World War II years showed an "increased tendency towards secularization...even the works with a mythological-cum-religious context are now produced within a secular context and a secular use: they represent more a look at mythology or religion instead of actual expression of it."\textsuperscript{32} The Miniaturist School of Batuan is a perfect example of this change in subject and function, as these artists were inspired by Balinese mythology. In Figure 6, an unfinished cultural scene of multiple traditional dances are crowded together. A classic example of the Batuan style, this painting was prepared with line drawing and then the wash technique is applied to slowly fill in the structure of the piece. In contrast to these dark monotones, the Young Artists school was inspired by Fauvic views of color, and dropped all reference to mythology. A third school, the School of Pengosekan, adopted a middle ground of subtle colors and animal and nature themes.

Hildred Geertz, in a description of traditional Balinese painting, says that "even the most ferocious battle scenes have a repetitive and decorative quality,"\textsuperscript{33} akin to the patterned structure of \textit{gambuh's} lengthy character introductions and narrative progression. With regards to the

\[ \textsuperscript{30} \textit{op cit}, \text{Vickers, (2005), 306.} \]

\[ \textsuperscript{31} \textit{op cit}, \text{Couteau, (1999), 33.} \]

\[ \textsuperscript{32} \text{Ibid., 46.} \]

\[ \textsuperscript{33} \text{Geertz, Hildred. \textit{Images of Power}, Honolulu: Univesrity of Hawaii Press , 1994, 13.} \]
audience of Balinese painting, as with the audience at a gambuh performance, there is a "group of people who are technically interested; they are unconcerned by the plight of the princess lost in the forest...but they are deeply concerned about the twist of her little finger."\textsuperscript{34} Again similar to the dance, details, form and artistry are what matters, above theme and narrative. As Couteau states, there is a "swamping of the theme by details."\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{The Malat as Performance}

Marianne Ariyanto, in her article 'Gambuh: The Source of Balinese Dance' states decidedly that "gambuh's position as source of almost all other classical Balinese dance-drama forms is indisputable."\textsuperscript{36} She also introduces the doubt that there is no proof that today's gambuh is identical to the older prototypes. This seems obvious; however, it is of importance to note. The perceived significance of gambuh today stems from this emblematic notion that it is the source of all other Balinese dance-drama, including Topeng, a masked dance, Legong, a dance performed by young women, and Wayang Wong, a dance-drama depicting episodes of the Ramayana, but "one common element among the dance-dramas derived from gambuh is that they all have a much smaller number of performers, and thus are cheaper and easier to produce."\textsuperscript{37}

The golden age of gambuh, according to Ariyanto, was during the nineteenth century, and led by the 'creative leaders' I Sabda and I Goya of Gianyar, and I Wayan Batubulan of

\textsuperscript{34}op cit, Couteau, (1999), 133.

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., 133.

\textsuperscript{36}Ariyanto, Marianne. "Gambuh: the Source of Balinese Dance," \textit{Asian Theatre Journal} Vol. 2, 1985, 222. The following facts mentioned in this paragraph are attributed to this source.

\textsuperscript{37} op cit, Ariyanto, 1985, 222.
Blahbatuh.\textsuperscript{38} Since then, the artists that I spoke with assured me that \textit{gambuh} has not changed significantly. Ibu Sekar told me that it was not possible to change or even to modernize \textit{gambuh}, seeing as the dance cannot change unless the music changes, and she assured me that the music will never change.\textsuperscript{39} However, in opposition to Ibu Sekar's assertion, there have been efforts to modify and modernize \textit{gambuh} for a new audience.

In 1999, the Arti Foundation, under the leadership of I Kadek Suardana, staged a dramatic retelling of Shakespeare's \textit{Macbeth} as \textit{gambuh}. The intent, as Brett Hough details in his article, 'Ancestral Shades: The Arti Foundation and the Practice of Pelestarian in Contemporary Bali,' was to "actively engage with the classical forms of Balinese performing arts as a means of stimulating interest in their ongoing survival."\textsuperscript{40} Attempting to introduce \textit{gambuh} to a larger audience, the purpose of \textit{Gambuh Macbeth} seemed to be to redefine an ancient form into a wide-reaching modern classic. I find it interesting that \textit{Macbeth}, a similarly ancient piece of art, was chosen as the narrative for this \textit{gambuh}. I hold concerns that in an attempt to modernize a traditional Balinese form, Suardana instead just molded \textit{gambuh} into a form that a western audience would understand and take interest in while changing the substance of the art form. I doubt the benefit that this melding of cultures had on \textit{gambuh}, both culturally and in an effort at survival.

In relation to the worrisome disappearance of \textit{gambuh}, Hough argues that the idea of loss and preservation is not inherent to Balinese cultural life, but instead is the effect of three factors:

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Paraphrased from Ibu Sekar, personal communication, 13 April 2017.
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1) the introduction of the European worldview, 2) internal social change within Balinese society in response to a rapidly changing world, and 3) the incorporation of the notion of preservation into official government rhetoric since independence.\(^\text{41}\) Traditionally, Bali was open to the pragmatic idea of things wearing out and needing to be reworked or renewed due to the tropical climate that deteriorates stone and wood carving. Religiously as well, Balinese Hinduism did not embrace a sense of deep loss:

Their sense of time or history conceived of elements of the 'past' as part of the here and now in the form of *niskala* realm of gods, deities, ancestral spirits, and other benevolent or malevolent forces that coexist with those who live in the *sekala* realm of contemporary life.\(^\text{42}\)

The effects of this 'museumification' included Bali being labeled as a 'paradise about to be lost,' and the introduction of tradition as something historically static and perennially threatening to disappear unless intervention (and documentation, commissioning, and placement in a museum) was made to halt the art's demise by force.\(^\text{43}\) This *gambuh* preservation project is one reason for the Ford Foundation's financial support of Pak Djimat and of the Tri Pusaka Sakti Foundation.

Hough's article delves into the issue of preservation, and the colonial underscores of such an idea. Before Dutch colonization and the subsequent shaping of Bali into a 'paradise,' Balinese art flourished without the need for documentation. Ritual and the strong connection between fine arts, performance, and religion kept art alive and flourishing. In fact, in numerous taxis and at the many *warungs*, or food stalls that I frequented during my field work, I was told repeatedly that

\(^{41}\) *op cit*, Hough, 2011, 70.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 69.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 72.
studying art and religion was a good idea here in Bali, as they are inseparably intertwined. Once the image of Bali as a free-for-all paradise for vacations and visits gained traction, Western visitors created a market for tangible products and called for the preservation of traditional arts. This preservation took hold as 'museumification,' and photographs were taken at every corner in order to document Bali as a living museum of Hindu-Javanese culture. Thus, art forms were preserved that foreign powers felt were worthy of inclusion in their microcosmic museum-world. With its "forms difficult to learn, boring to watch, and not very adaptable for presentation to foreign tourists," gambuh was not one of the forms designated worthy to preserve with commercialization. It was simultaneously deemed 'sacred' by the Indonesian government and religious authorities as it now holds a classic status and is linked to temple festivals.

Thus began a slow decline of the gambuh form, pinpointed to a decline of interest at community level from a lack of economic incentive. This lack of commercialization paired with lack of interest from both community and from individual dancers contributed to gambuh's fall from grace. Vickers' purpose of studying gambuh was as a way to understand the Malat, and found that "gambuh's advantage is that it preserves and perpetuates an older style of performing and way of acting." However, "present-day performers are at such pains to preserve the proper form of gambuh that the emotional expression, which is an integral part of it, is forgotten," and since this report was made in the 1980s, a whole new generation has already inherited gambuh

\[44\] op cit, Hough, 2011, 68.

\[45\] Ibid.

\[46\] op cit, Vickers, 2005, 310.

\[47\] op cit, Vickers, 2005, 51. Note: the following information in this paragraph is also attributed to this source.
(inherited gambuh that Vickers says lacks essential aspects of the old style, or in a way, that is modified).

Hough argues above all for conservation through development. Cristina Wistari Formaggia, who passed away in 2008, was an Italian dancer who converted to Balinese Hinduism and was allowed to perform in temples. She started the Gambuh Pura Desa Ensemble in 1993 as a way of preserving the gambuh genre. She has been reported as saying: "We wanted to create a space where everybody could come and learn gambuh. In Batuan, like in many other villages, rivalries are the threat of Balinese society and therefore I didn't want to ask the help of any pre-existing group, but instead created an endeavor where all people could learn both the music and the dance." The Gambuh Pura Desa Ensemble has since performed Ur Hamlet, another gambuh rendition of Shakespeare which incorporates gambuh as well as other Javanese, Balinese, and Japanese dances. One of the leading actors, I Wayan Bawa, said of Ur Hamlet that "we had to learn to keep the rhythm of gambuh inside even if the music changed." Reading his words, I was once again struck by the parallel of my interview with Ibu Sekar, when she assured me that the music could not change. I wonder if she meant that it should not, and furthermore, I wonder what concerns led her to this statement as fact.

48 *op cit*, Hough, 2011, 78.
50 Ibid. I Wayan Bawa was actually a student of I Made Djimat in Batuan.
51 Ibu Sekar, personal communication, 13 April 2017.
PART THREE

Personal Experiences and Interpretations

On 5 April 2017, before the formal beginning of the independent study project research period, I attended a gambuh performance at Pura Dalam in Batuan. The performance was for the temple's odalan, or anniversary, and thus performed for the gods more so than for the audience. While I arrived slightly late, I was assured that the performance had just began, and I saw on the stage a single figure, the condong, dancing in the center of the performance space. The atmosphere of the performance was different than I had expected; the performers were competing with a loudspeaker next door and children were running through the stage area and playing games with each other next to the dancers who never lost concentration. At one point, the electricity stopped working for the entire space and audience members focused the flashlights on their camera phones on the dancers who never hesitated during the entire ordeal. These performers were competent and professional, and knew their purpose completely: of providing entertainment for the gods on the event of this temple's odalan.

The stage was set up in the temple courtyard, the gambuh musicians were sitting together on stage left, not split on the sides of the stage as I have seen gamelan (traditional metal instrument orchestra) for Balinese dances typically set up. The orchestra was made up of several gamelan instruments that I recognized, such as kendang, drums, and rincik, cymbals. There were also six sulings, long flutes played with extended elbows, and a tiered bell-like instrument known as gentorag. The condong's appearance starts off the entire performance, starting the pattern of introductions that last for more than half of the two-and-a-half hour performance.
As I watched the condong dance, I noted that compared to the other traditional Balinese dances I have seen, she seemed to dance with more aggressive energy and force, but slower. After seeing other characters be introduced, especially the princess, Chandra, I realized that the condong seemed more aggressive due to the fact that her character was a keras one, meant to be acted with a strength that the putri, or princess, did not possess. When the putri finally came on stage (only after the condong and the other attendants had danced their introductions), her character role as soft, sweet, and refined was plain to see. Her movements were slow and gentle, her eyes almost always large but demure. The putri eventually also sang briefly (more of a screech than a song), directed towards her attendant, who replied in a more common language and with a lower pitch.

Each actor portrayed his or her character in a multitude of ways: through facial expression, voice, movement, make-up, costuming, and musical accompaniment. After the women left, led by the putri, they never reappeared on stage. This was evidently not a Malat episode where Prince Pañji and Princess Chandra were reunited. Two characters entered from the center of the stage, through the architectural structure motif of Majapahit-era gates. Coarse-type characters, the two men who entered were a minister, or patih, and a clown, or penasar. The clown was easily recognizable due to his costume of black-and-white checkered fabric and jester-like face makeup with white dots. There seemed to be more of a focus on characterization rather than set design, as there is little decoration on the stage area and no set changes, though the dance changes locations with every scene.

The next characters to enter the stage also arrive through the center gates; four men form the next attendant group, this time the soldiers of Prince Pañji. These characters dance for a
moment and then take a seat on the ground, facing the stage like another audience while two more characters enter. The real audience does not seem to care too much about the activity on stage; they chat with each other, and often get up to leave during the middle of a dance, only to return in the middle of another. The inclusion of dance in Balinese Hindu ritual appears exceedingly familiar to the Balinese, who are used to such artistic shows and therefore do not treat them as special performances, rather they are just another part of daily life. The humming of the music that I heard from behind me in the audience also proved that some people were very familiar with this gambuh performance. During the final scene, a war scene between the soldiers of good and evil, Prince Pañji and King Krtebang, I heard laughter and mocking from behind me. The actors seemed to be enjoying themselves as well, the younger dancers fought to hid their smiles as they mock fought their rivals with physical combat choreography. The stage was filled with actors, the music was loud and all-encompassing, and as a newcomer to the gambuh scene, I felt overwhelmed with the action.

The gambuh dance itself is a highly intricate and disciplined act, forcing the dancer to focus both outwardly and inwardly, and to feel the role of the character and the fuller narrative in an emotive way. While scholars that I have read have told me that the emotion of gambuh has slowly declined in quality, I could see definite emotion in Ibu Sekar's movements and expressions as I spent the morning and early afternoon of April 13th with her in an attempt to learn a part of the gambuh dance: the role of the condong, or maidservant. Before we began, Ibu Sekar led me through an exercise meant to focus the mind and protect the practice area from all entities who may want to cause us harm. We offered prayers, breathed slowly and let the spirit of the dance come to us, and we flicked away from the ground any potential troublemakers. When
the main practice began, I was instantly aware of why gambuh is considered the most difficult traditional Balinese dance.

Ibu Sekar told me that she prefers gambuh above all other dances, because she likes the details. She describes the act of dancing gambuh as meditation, a slow and mature dance that requires full focus. Facial expressions play just as important a role as the movements of the wrists and feet. Seledet refers to eye movements that get their energy from the chin. They are more abrupt, and require making the eyes large and flicking the gaze to a corner while displaying a large amount of the whites of the eyes. Ngliyer refers to eye movements with energy from the top of the head. They are opposite of seledet, and require small, almost squinted eyes that slowly move to the side following the movement of the head.

These expressions are meant to portray the character's emotions to the audience. The audience could be made up of men, women, children and deities, or a combination of any of these. The emotion behind the dancers' eyes contributes to the narrative progression. A storyline of intrigue caused by human relationships, the characters develop through human emotions. Characterization begins with type: either halus, refined and heroic, or keras, strong and crude. Ibu Sekar told me that when she was young she also started learning first the condong role, as a keras character. She thinks this may have been because, as a teenager, she was filled with the energy of a strong and aggressive personality. With experience and age, she has been able to master all characters of gambuh, and often times plays the leading manis role of Prince Pañji.

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52 Ibu Sekar, personal communication, 13 April 2017. Other information in this paragraph is sourced from this conversation.

53 Paraphrased from Ibu Sekar, personal communication, 13 April 2017.
My experience with dancing the *condong* was only a small glimpse into the maidservant's role, examining the basic foundations that make up the character. Ibu Sekar led me through several types of basic moves including *Jalan Nayog*, slow-walking, *Jalan Ngijnik*, walking featuring a series of arm movements, and *Jalan Capat*, fast-walking. While the descriptors of these moves may sound easy (just like walking), they require focus on every muscle in the body, including everything from the top of the head to direct the flickering eyes to the flexed toes. Paying attention to the outward forms of my dancing, I disregarded the inward forms, the emotion and passion that should always be included in a *gambuh* performance. With my experience I saw exactly why younger generations of Balinese may be hesitant to attempt this style of dance, but I also saw why older generations venerated it.

**Conclusions**

When tracing its progression through to the modern age, Vickers describes the *Malat* as having "faded dramatically in importance during colonial times and is now more of a cultural curio, revived because of its beauty rather than its implications."\(^{54}\) While I agree completely that the popularity and prominence of the *Malat* has steadfastly declined, I disagree that it exists now solely as a "cultural curio." The beauty of *gambuh* may have been a reason for the *Malat*’s refusal to disappear, but there are many more reasons for its continued existence: history, religion, foreign pressure, art and community.

Visual depictions of the *Malat* have changed dramatically; rarely if ever will there be a modern painting of the mythology behind the *Malat*. Instead, painting shows the *Malat* in its performing art form, *gambuh*, with characters represented in paint with the same rules that

govern their representation in drama. The style of these renditions vary due to the broad history of painting in Bali. Several periods, schools, and styles have existed since classical times, and many more will continue to spring up, as art's evolution is never fully complete.

On a larger scale, it is easy to dismiss the Malat and gambuh as in permanent decline, a vestige of a culture so far in the past that even Bali's lucrative cultural tourism cannot force it into permanence in the collective consciousness, but when I spoke to the teachers, dancers, and musicians of gambuh in Batuan, Gianyar, Bali, I could still see the passion and emotion that revolved around gambuh in the era of kings and courts.

While foreign influence has modified gambuh in a plethora of ways (though, interestingly, often in a Shakespearean context), the essence of gambuh, the slow and purposeful movement and its ties to medieval history firmly ground gambuh in its original context as the great ancestor to other types of Balinese dance. The mythology behind the Malat still guides the actor's portrayal of their character and the entire thematic structure of the dance-drama. Even if the storyline is altered, the structure follows character introductions reminiscent of the status-obsessed courtly history of the Malat. The costuming and scene designs are also stagnant, being either elaborately detailed or sparse, respectively.

Though some attempts have been made to ignore the original narrative and replace it with something that appeals more to larger audiences, with its vital role in gambuh, I see the Malat as continuing to play a role in Balinese culture. This conclusion is backed by the current proponents of the genre and can be seen in the progression of generations learning the style. I foresee the endless cycle of inactivity and revival playing out with the Malat for centuries more, for as Ibu
Ni Wayan Sekarani of Batuan told me, "if Hindus continue to live in Bali, then gambuh will continue to exist."\(^{55}\)

\(^{55}\) Ibu Sekar, personal communication, April 13, 2017.
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Pak Garrett Kam, personal communication, correspondence, 3 April 2017.

Secondary Sources


PART FOUR - Appendix

Figures

Figure 1 - *Gambuh* performed by the Tri Pusaka Sakti Foundation group at Desa Dalam Pura in Batuan for its *Odalan* 5 April 2017 (photo taken by Bu Ariati; reproduced with her permission)

Figure 2 - Pak Djimat getting ready for a performance on 9 April 2017, getting technology help with the microphone (photo taken by Emily Austin)
Figure 3 - Anak Agung Gede Raka Turas' *Gambuh Dance*, 1936, Padang Tegal Ubud from Jean Couteau in *Puri Lukisan*

Figure 4 - Ida Bagus Nyoman Pudia's *Gambuh Dance*, 1938, Batuan, Gianyar from Jean Couteau in *Puri Lukisan*
Figure 5 - Ida Bagus Sali's *Birds Dancing the Gambuh*, 1940, Batuan, Gianyar from Jean Couteau in *Puri Lukisan*

Figure 6 - Unfinished painting of *gambuh* and other traditional dances by local artist Pak Dewa Nyoman Tjita in the style of the Batuan Miniature School, 2017 (photo taken by Emily Austin)
- Siapa nama Bapak?/What is your name?

**My name is I Made Djimat**

-Berapa usia Bapak?/How old are you?

**I was born on 5 October 1949 (68 years old).**

-Di mana Bapak lahir?/Where were you born?

**I was born in Batuan, Sukawati, Gianyar, Bali - Indonesia.**

-Di mana tinggal Bapak?/Where do you live?

**I live in the same place, Banyar Pekandelan, Batuan.**

-Dan, Bapak menari, ya?/And, you dance, yes?

**I dance, sing, act, and play the Tabuh (musical instrument).**

-Siapa yang menari di kelompok gambuh di sini?/Who participates in Gambuh?

**Some of the ones who dance in the group are me myself, Nyoman Budiarta, Agus Hendra, Made Adi, Nyoman Bayu, Dewa Nyoman Suparta, Dewa Aji Putu, Dewa Putu Eka, Dewa Ketut Jatra, Ida Bagus Made Tegog, Dewa Nyoman Sutrawan, and Nyoman Trima.**

-Untuk siapa Bapak tampil menarikan Gambuh, dan di mana?/For whom do you perform, and where?

**We play for temples, especially in the Desa Temple in Batuan, Besakih Temple, Batur Temple.**

-Seberapa sering kelompok Bapak menari gambuh?/How often do you perform?

**We play about once in a month. And always in temples.**

-Ada pemuda belajar gambuh?/Are there younger generations learning?

**Yes, many youths learn to play (dance) Gambuh. Their age is usually from 15 – 17 years old.**

-Apa peran gambuh di jaman Bali modern? ATAU- Apa yang bapak rasakan tentang peran gambuh?/What is Gambuh's role in modern bali?

**Gambuh dance has 3 main parts, like; singing, speaking (monologue or dialogue), and dancing.**

-Bagaimana dulu bapak belajar gambuh, dan kenapa Bapak ingin belajar Gambuh?/How did you learn gambuh, and why did you decide to pursue it?

**I started to learn Gambuh, when I was kid, from the basic (more like gymnastic), then continued to play the characters in Gambuh.**

-Since 993 Gambuh has been a religious art in Batuan Village. And since I was born, I have been seeing Gambuh performance – I have been taking part of it in order to maintain, preserve, and continue this typical Batuan Village art through the generations. We don’t want this art to be abandoned (a.k.a. disappear). Additionally – in Adat Temple in Batuan, Gambuh must take a part in the religious events of the people, for particular ceremonies in Batuan – called as Odalan (the anniversary of Batuan Adat Village).

-Berapa orang di kelompok bapak?/How large is your group?
In my group, there are 40 people in it (men + women). All of them from Batuan Village as well – they all are my relatives.

-Apa ada kelompok lain di Batuan?/What other gambuh groups exist in Batuan?
There are 7 groups so far in Batuan Village. Batuan Village is rich with Gambuh groups nowadays. In the past, it was just my group, but today, they made other groups already.
-Apa hubungan kelompok gambuh bapak dengan kelompak gambuh lain?/What is your group's relationship with the other groups?
Friends.
-Kenapa?
This Gambuh group name is Tri Pusaka Sakti. Yes, surely – it is the best! And the oldest.
-Ada persaingan antar kelompok?/Is there a rivalry?
We all are friends – and always make friends. There is no any conflict or competition between groups (from my opinion – I do not know them). I do not like making problems up. I consider all of them are friends.
-Siapa saja yang datang dan belajar gambuh dari bapak? ATAU Siapa saja yang bapak ajarkan gambuh?/Who comes to learn gambuh from you?
The Gambuh group in Desa Adat Temple in Batuan comes to me to learn about Gambuh performance. Or I will go there (to teach them). And also the Gambuh group in Banjar Pekandelan in Batuan Village – they learn Gambuh from me.
-Di mana saja murid bapak?/Where are they from?
The Gambuh learners come from Batuan Village only – not from other areas yet. Because here the one which is specialized is Gambuh Performance.
-Terima kasih banyak!
Yaa
Glossary

**Bale**: open-air pavilions found in most house compounds and palaces

**Bebali**: type of dance performed in the semi-sacred area of the temple

**Condong**: the maidservant of the princess in a gambuh performance

**Gagah**: see keras

**Gambuh**: ancient dance-drama

**Gentorag**: bells used in gambuh gamelan

**Halus**: refined, heroic characters

**Ider-ider**: hangings tied under eaves of pavilions

**Jalan Nayog/Jalan Ngijnik/Jalan Capat**: several types of dance moves included in the condong's character

**Kasar**: course characters

**Kendang**: drums in gambuh gamelan

**Keras**: aggressive, crude and strong characters

**Kober/Umbul-umbul/Lelontek**: 

**Langse**: flags depicting mythology

**Legong**: tradition dance usually of three girls

**Lelehum**: ceiling paintings over beds for offerings

**Mahabharata**: Indian epic

**Majapahit Kingdom**: Hindu-Buddhist kingdom of 14-17th century Java and Bali

**Malat**: ancient text of Prince Pañji's adventures

**Manis**: sweet or refined character

**Ngliyer**: subtle and small eye movements in dance

**Niskala**: the unseen realm of reality

**Odalan**: a temple's anniversary

**Panji**: the main hero in the Malat

**Parba**: wooden panel behind bed in bale

**Patih**: minister characters

**Penasar**: clown characters

**Prasi**: illustrated tal leaf manuscripts

**Putri**: the princess character

**Ramayana**: Indian Epic

**Rerajahan/Tumbal**: magical drawings and painted boxes or chairs

**Rincik**: cymbals used in gambuh gamelan

**Sekala**: the visible realm of reality

**Seledet**: quick eye movements in dance

**Sudra**: lowest caste in Balinese Hinduism

**Suling**: long wooden flutes used in gambuh

**Tabing**: wood or cloth painting depicting afterlife; used in cremation

**Tantri**: tales and fables of animals

**Topeng**: masked dance of Bali

**Triwangsa**: the top three castes

**Ulon**: white cloth representation of gods for cremation

**Wayang Wong**: dance-drama of scenes from the Ramayana
Recommendations for Further Study

There is so much to cover in regards to this narrative tradition and the arts surrounding it, that my recommendations could span a length longer than my narrowed study. As far as fine arts go, I was limited in time and resources, as my photo quality shows. I wish I could have included more quantity as well as quality of Malat and gambuh representations in the stationary arts. Additionally, the relationships linking gambuh to the other Balinese dances (like topeng, wayang wong and calonarang) would be interesting to identity. My study was greatly informed by the Tri Pusaka Sakti group of performers, and thus deals mainly with their perspective on the traditions. Other groups in other areas would be interesting to compare to Batuan's styles and sentiments. As mentioned in the introduction of this essay, there are troupes in Denpasar, Kaliasem near Lovina, Budakeling and Padangaji in Karangasem, and an all-male group in Kedisan in Tegalang. Additionally, there are other artistic forms that perform renditions of the Malat: arja (an operatic-like performance) and wayang gambuh.

On a tangentially related note, the story behind the calonarang, an exorcism dance, would be fascinating to research, and link historical meanings with modern day usage. The dance, which I saw in its entirety on 18 April 2017, lasted hours, long into the early hours of the morning, and the audience was much more integrated with the performance than at a gambuh performance (kneeling on the floor when certain characters passed though the middle aisle, gasping at dialogue, etc.).
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Emily Austin 6 May 2017