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Portrait Of The Japanese Colonial Period In The Wayang Kamasan Illustration Of 'Lintang Perau Pegat' At The Klungkung Royal Palace

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The Wayang Kamasan illustrations at the Klungkung Royal Palace store traces of the history of Bali during the Japanese colonial period. This research analyzed one located in the Bale Kambang pavilion with the 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene to discern representation in that era. An art historical method was used drawing from field observation and literature resources with an iconography and iconology analysis approach of Erwin Panofsky. Findings from a pre-iconography phase showed that this illustration presents a scene about the splitting of a Japan-flagged ship by a large fish. An iconographic analysis was about themes and concepts regarding belief in the strength of nature (gods), which can influence human life and undermine the glory of human beings. Given the psychological atmosphere during the Japanese colonial period, hence, this illustration is the crystallization of a symbol from an attitude of resistance amidst helplessness towards a ruler (the Japanese occupation government), and hopes for the presence of the power of the gods to help eliminate oppression and misery that occurred during that era in Bali.

Keywords: wayang kamasan, illustration, japan, bali

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Introduction

The Wayang Kamasan illustrations at the Klungkung Royal Palace not only entice many tourists to visit, but also store traces of the history of Bali during the Japanese colonial period. One is located on the ceiling of the Bale Kambang pavilion in the Puri Agung Semarapura palace, which is a seventeenth-century Klungkung Kingdom heritage complex that was renovated between 1930 and 1940. Scholars estimate that this illustration was made around the 1940s during the Japanese occupation of the island of Bali (Kam, 1993: 32; Vickers, 2012: 83). This paper examines the influence of the Japanese invaders' presence by analyzing the meaning conveyed through traditional *wayang* style painting of Kamasan Village referred to as Wayang Kamasan. Specifically, it takes up the illustration located in the Bale Kambang pavilion with the scene of 'Lintang Perau Pegat' – the star of a split or broken ship. This research is significant given the scarcity of writings on Balinese visual arts from the Japanese occupation period.

The Wayang Kamasan painting beautifully displayed on the ceiling of the Bale Kambang pavilion illustrates three story themes. On the bottom level is the *palelintangan* Balinese calendar system theme, on the second level is the legendary mother Brayut folk tale, and on the third, fourth, fifth and sixth levels is the story of Sutasoma. At first glance, the Wayang Kamasan in the Bale Kambang does not show any connection with the Japanese occupation period. The shapes and composition resemble the traditional Balinese *wayang kulit* shadow puppet. The illustrations are the visualization of a story depicted through several scenes in rows across the ceiling. Figures and scenes appear in ornamental forms that retain the traditional Wayang Kamasan style. However, if one looks closely, a number of unusual visual elements are scattered in several scenes, which is very interesting to study.

Artisans, in Balinese termed *sangging*, from Kamasan Village painted this illustration in the Bale Kambang and where coordinated by I Wayan Kayun. Before that, Kayun participated in repainting the Wayang Kamasan panels on the ceiling of Bale Kertha Gosa in 1933 with Pan Ngales, Nyoman Dogol, and Pan Seken. Pan Seken and Nyoman Dogol are listed as having been members of the Pita Maha painters cooperative (Adnyana, 2015: 152–154).

The visualization of the *palelintangan* Balinese calendar system knowledge on the ceiling of the Bale Kambang pavilion is on the bottom row. Based on previous research, this author (Cahyadi, 2015) found three types of scenes in the *palelintangan* illustration, namely: (a) the *lintang* star or calendar scenes; (b) the gods, *wayang*, puppets, plants, and birds scenes; and (c) *sato* or animal

scenes. The cross-section consists of 35 panels or scenes, the gods and *sato* each have 7 panels, so that the total sum of the *palelintangan* scenes on the ceiling of the Bale Kambang is 49 panels (Cahyadi, 2015: 449). The *palelintangan* system presents information about the character and fate of person based on the day of birth (Ardhana, 2005). According to I Nyoman Mandra (interview, 11 August 2017), visualization of *palelintangan* refers to the name of the *lintang*. For example, the *lintang* of *perau pegat*, which is the main object of this case, is a *perau* (boat) that is *pegat* (split) into two.

The 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene in the Bale Kambang, which is the focus of this study, occupies the line number 39 in a row of *palelintangan* illustration scenes, calculated from the Northeast direction. It is interesting because the name with a meaning of a splitting ship implies a conflict. Visually it shows several foreign elements not found in the Wayang Kamasan painting tradition. The most striking one is an object that resembles the Japanese flag. Several researchers such as Kam (1993: 32) and Vickers (2012: 83) argued that the appearance of the Japanese flag marks the time of the illustration as being during the Japanese occupation.

Based on the information outlined above the purpose of this study was firstly, to determine the shape of visual markers in the Wayang Kamasan of the 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene in the Bale Kambang pavilion. Secondly, to uncover the themes and concepts visually conveyed. Then, thirdly, to suggest the intrinsic meanings revealed as related to the Japanese occupation of Bali.

Method

This qualitative research aimed to show a deeper understanding of a specific case by involving a variety of qualitative data and reporting the results of the study descriptively (Creswell, 2007 [2015]: 135–136). An art historical method was used drawing from field observation and literature resources with an iconography and iconology analysis approach of Erwin Panofsky (1955 and 1972). This analysis process can be made use of to discover the meaning and symbolism of a work of art through the lens of art history. To do so, German art historian Panofsky (1972: 14–15) put forth three inter-related progressive steps, namely a Pre-iconographic description phase, an Iconographic analysis phase, and an Iconological interpretive phase. In the Pre-Iconographic phase one identifies the primary or natural subject matter as motifs, which are subdivided into factual and expressional. Factual aspects are apprehended in shapes, colors, lines, or textures that are 'representations of natural objects such as human beings, animals, plants, houses, tools and so forth'. Then, mutual relations are viewed as 'events' and expressional qualities can be perceived such as the sad quality of a gesture or the at-



Figure 1. Wayang Kamasan illustration of 'Lintang Perau Pegat' (1940). Source: field survey (Cahyadi, 2015: 449)

mosphere of a comfortable home. In the Iconographic phase the artistic motifs are analyzed as carriers of a particular meaning or themes and concepts; and hence are considered as images, stories, or allegories (Panofsky, 1972: 19–20). In the Iconological phase one interprets the 'intrinsic meaning or content by ascertaining the underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion' (Panofsky, 1972: 20) as manifested in the composition.

Discussion

Visual Markers – the Pre-iconography

This author (Cahyadi, 2015: 449) identified the 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene in row 39, counted and read from the Northeast corner with a *pradaksina* clockwise movement, precisely located on the Northwest side of the ceiling of the Bale Kambang pavilion. The measurement of the 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene panel is 50 cm × 30 cm, made with a natural Balinese color template on the surface of asbestos sheets.

The scene in this illustration shows an *ulam agung* (large fish), probably a whale shark, emerging from the surface of the seawater, with its large head crashing and splitting the hull of the ship, splitting it into two parts. The large mouth of the fish adorned with sharp teeth managed to devour a male passenger until only a leg

with trousers and shoes is visible. Of the four remaining passengers, two people fell due to the impact, and the other two look stunned staring at this incident with frightened faces.

The ship passenger figures are depicted wearing a hat with a cloth decoration on the left and right sides of the face. Their long-sleeved collarless shirts are equipped with shirt buttons and the trousers reach half-way down the calf of the leg, wrapped tightly with a strap. Their black shoes have rather pointed tips that are slightly bent upward. From this apparel, it appears that the passengers and ship owner were not Balinese, but foreigners from another country; perhaps Japanese soldiers. Meanwhile, this broken boat with luggage packed in a box does not resemble a typical Balinese *jukung* fishing boat. The mast was equipped with six white flags with a red circle in the center reminiscent of the Japanese flag.

In the upper right corner of the scene panel is a banner in the shape of a luminous circle and is a visualization of a *lintang* star formation in the middle of which are two letters, 's' and 'pua', written in Balinese script. The letter 's' represents *Sukra* (Friday) of the seven-day *saptawara* week and 'pua' represents *Pon* (Tuesday) of the five-day *pancawara* week. The intersection of *Sukra* and *Pon* means the day of birth of a person with a *lintang* (star) of *perau pegat* (a split or broken ship). Adjacent to

the banner is a text box that contains the Balinese script: *lintang perau pegat, kepegatang lanang wadon, ngwat balu, babaribinan, bobotoh pangan, pati bati, muka prihania, duh katemahaniya, pamahayuniya, bawi, ji, 777, bebek, 2, ayam, 11*. This text explains the predicted fate of a person born on the day of *Sukra-Pon*, as well as actions that can be taken to avoid the predicted disaster.

Expressional aspects can be identified by the relationship between forms and events such as the quality of a character or body language in relation to an object. The 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene shows a tense event, an attack by the Lord of the Sea against humans who are aboard a Japanese-flagged ship. A very large black fish breaks through the sea surface, splits the ship, and preys on a passenger. This sea ruler fish appears to be very disturbed and rejecting the presence of the ship in the territory. It violently broke the ship and devoured a passenger. Its large mouth is entirely opened displaying a row of sharp teeth and the bulging eyes have a look of high confidence as if the fish is convinced that its actions are right. The atmosphere on the ship seems tense and two passengers have fallen over helplessly. Meanwhile, the other passengers are only witnessing and clearly show a sense of fear of the events happening. Their gaze is indeed directed at the large fish, but their posture is recoiling backwards as if wanting to avoid danger.

Themes and Concepts – an Iconographic Analysis

The theme of the 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene reminds one of the belief in *niskala* – the invisible forces that are acknowledged by Balinese society. People strongly believe in the existence of unseen forces or the power of the Gods. Mythology continues to develop about magical animals considered as the *rencangan Ida Bethara* or soldiers of the Gods, or an *unen-unen* spirit that lives in a temple in the form of an animal, or *ancangan Dewa* spirit of a place such as a tree or rock. Sightings of certain animals, rare and mysterious, are often considered as messengers to convey a warning from the ancestors or Gods. In this scene, the enormity of the power of a big fish that can easily split this ship is a representation of an unseen force.

In the Awatara Vishnu story, it is said that Vishnu descends to Earth in various forms, one of which is in the form of a holy animal. The first Awatara Vishnu to descend to Earth was in the form of a Big Fish called *Matsya Awatara* with the purpose of saving human beings from floods. Balinese people, the vast majority of whom are Bali Hindu, highly respect the natural forces in mountains, oceans, forests, large trees, rocks, and animals. A big fish, known as *Ulam Agung*, is believed to be the messenger for or sign of the power of *Sang Hyang Baruna*, the deity who governs the sea. Throughout the island there are *pelinggih* shrines or sacred sites with an

elephant-headed fish statue for venerating the god of the sea.

As noted above, by the shape of the ship and apparel worn by the people in the 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene, it appears the passengers were not Balinese, but rather were either traders or intermediaries from another country. The visibility of the Japanese flags seems to confirm that this was a Japanese-owned ship, which was rammed by a big fish. If analyzed in terms of various sources of mythology, history, and allegories, it can be concluded that the artistic motifs are carriers of the Balinese concept of the existence of unseen forces as represented through the presence of the big fish that can defeat the sophisticated technological prowess of a large Japanese-flagged ship.

Intrinsic Meaning – An Iconological Analysis

The psychological tones and way of life depicted in the 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene are closely related to the 1930s. At that time the organization of modern Balinese artists called Pita Maha, centered in the village of Ubud, influenced the revival of Balinese art. Many innovations emerged in Balinese art, ranging from concepts and themes to techniques often due to contact with western artists. Painters began to find freedom in expressing new ideas in their work. Some art critics say that the *wayang* painting genre began to shift to naturalism with more attention to everyday life as an object in the illustrations. The influence of this Pita Maha style also spread to other villages such as Batuan and Sanur.

Yet, discussions about Pita Maha rarely address Wayang Kamasan illustrations even though the influence of that movement also reverberated in Kamasan village. Several Kamasan artists were members of Pita Maha; including Pan Seken and Nyoman Dogol (Adnyana, 2018: 151–154, Vickers, 2012: 84). I Wayan Kayun (1878–1956), who coordinated the illustration work at Bale Kambang, had previously worked with Pan Ngales, Nyoman Dogol, and Pan Seken when Kamasan painters were commissioned to decorate the ceiling of a restored structure at Kertha Gosa (Vickers, 2012: 83, Kam, 1993: 33). Thus, it is very possible that the Pita Maha spirit of renewal was still ringing for I Wayan Kayun while working on the Bale Kambang. Amidst the grandeur of the mythology themes, several naturalistic everyday themes infiltrate the illustrations. For instance, in the 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene new elements were the apparel worn by the passengers and Japanese flags flown in Bali during the Japanese occupation period.

Viewed within such a framework, the 1940s 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene in the Bale Kambang pavilion as expressed under the guidance of I Wayan Kayun reveals Balinese values and the cultural history of the times. During World War II, the Pacific War erupted when

Japanese troops attacked Pearl Harbor on 8 December 1941. Then, on 19 February 1942 the Great Japanese Army (*Dai Nippon*) successfully landed at Sanur on Bali, without any resistance from the Dutch or the people of Bali (Pendit, 2008: 22). Thus, the Dutch colonial government capitulated to Japan and the Japanese occupation of Bali began.

The Dutch weakness against the Japanese troops in Bali fascinated the Balinese; who subsequently did not resist Japan. Some even welcomed Japan as liberators and helped subdue the Dutch regime. At first, the Japanese occupation seemed to offer new hope for the Balinese. The propaganda section *Sendenbu-Sendenka* and *Naimobu* made great efforts to win the hearts of the people; initially succeeding in driving the people's enthusiasm. There was a spirit to remain obedient and believe that the war under the leadership of Dai Nippon would be won and that mutual prosperity would be achieved in the region (Pendit, 2008: 30, Robinson, 2006: 107).

But things began to change when Japan suffered a serious setback in the Pacific War in the second half of 1944. As the regime demanded more and more food and other ingredients, the burden on the local population increased dramatically (Robinson, 1995: 108–114). The actions of the Japanese army on the island of Bali, all of which were aimed at achieving victory in war, turned out to be too contradictory with the Balinese values, beliefs, and collective spirit. This situation caused a change in the attitude of the Balinese, from feeling submissive to becoming silent (Pendit, 2008: 44).

The silence of the Balinese, as a form of challenging the Japanese government, was undetected by the Japanese army. Hence the troops thought there was no need to fear or be suspicious of the Balinese. The Japanese occupation government never attempted to alleviate the sufferings of the people. Thus, in the early days of mid-1943, the Balinese began to feel how arbitrary the actions of the Japanese army were. People became poor and destitute. Wealth in the form of property was collected by force and all material goods were allocated for war supplies (Pendit, 2008: 44).

Given that cultural history background and the various psychological states of Balinese artists in the 1940s, the images around the object can be interpreted in terms of the psyche and outlook on life. Hence, the 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene is the crystallization of a symbol from an attitude of resistance amidst helplessness toward a ruler (the Japanese occupation government), and hopes for the presence of the power of the gods to help eliminate the oppression and misery experienced by the people of Bali during that era.

Conclusion

To conclude, this article firstly discussed the genre of traditional Wayang Kamasan style illustration and about the various visual markers in the 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene as factual and expressional. Factual aspects were apprehended from the shapes of the big fish figure in the ocean attacking the ship and its passengers, which splits the ship into two. The presence of Japanese flags and apparel resembling Japanese soldiers' uniforms shows that the lead artisan, Wayan Kayun, incorporated new elements to portray the conditions in the 1940s during the Japanese occupation of Bali. Expressional qualities were perceived by the sense of resistance between a sea-dwelling creature and human passengers on the ship, which is felt from the decisive action of this fish that preyed upon and split a Japanese-flagged ship in two.

Secondly, the themes and concepts that make up the 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene reveal the tremendous unseen forces of nature represented by the big fish breaking through the sea surface, which is capable of destroying ships and the passengers. More specifically, this big fish image also symbolizes the power of God's messenger to protect the people of Bali from the occupying forces on the Japanese-flagged ship.

Thirdly, this author reflected on some Balinese values expressed in the illustration. The intrinsic meaning of the scene content was obtained by an intuitive synthesis of psychological tendencies and *weltanschauung* (worldview) while taking note of the situation in the colonial era, especially of the Balinese people who experienced oppression by Japanese occupying forces. Therefore, the 1940s 'Lintang Perau Pegat' scene in the Wayang Kamasan illustration at the Bale Kambang pavilion can be interpreted as a symbolic expression of the Balinese people's attitude of resistance toward the oppressor (the Japanese occupation government). This study thus shows that during the Japanese colonial period, Balinese people used art as an expression of their resistance against the invading Japanese regime.

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Informants

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