

Balinese and Old Javanese Literature as A Source in Creating the Calligraphy of Balinese Script



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ABSTRACT: The existence of Balinese script, which nowadays has become part of the Balinese people's culture heritage, is significantly influential on the value of daily basis. Balinese script is not merely a means for written language, but has a very vital function in maintaining, fostering, preserving, and developing the overall Balinese culture. Over time, the role of Balinese script in more recent developments has also penetrated the creative industry sector through Balinese calligraphy. In related to this study, this study mainly examined the creative process of creating Balinese script calligraphy using literary sources. The main data of the study was Balinese calligraphies which its scripts were from Old Javanese literature and Balinese literature. The Old Javanese literatures were from the *Kakawin Ramayana*, while the Balinese literatures were from *Rajah Dasa Bayu* and *Geguritan Salampah Laku*. By quoting from *Kakawin Ramayana*, the Balinese calligraphy artists wanted to interpret the guidances for people to reach the right path and avoid anger, through *Rajah Dasa Bayu*, the artists wanted to interpret the ten holy winds that existed in the human body, and through the *Geguritan Salampah Laku*, the artist wanted to interpret the important of always seeking for various knowledge to enhance one's self-development.

KEYWORDS: Calligraphy, Balinese Script, Old Javanese Literature, Balinese Literature

I. INTRODUCTION

The Balinese scripts inherited by the Balinese people today are commonly used as a writing form of the Balinese language and various matters related to religious rituals. Over time, the existence of Balinese scripts has been developed into a variety of forms of aesthetic value or better known as Balinese script calligraphy. Balinese script calligraphy is a relatively new phenomenon in the creativity of developing the art of Balinese script beautiful writing, even though it has existed in the history of the Balinese script for quite some time.

From the view of using the various forms of script, for example the non-literal variations, the roots of calligraphy writing seemed to be quite ancient in Bali. Through his writing entitled *Calligraphy in Balinese Culture*, Suastika (2003: 130) included various types of tattoos as a form of calligraphy in Balinese script. If the identification made by Suastika is correct, then the art of Balinese script calligraphy could be said to have existed since the ancient Balinese era (around the 9th century).

In Old Balinese inscriptions, there was a special occupation called *mangjahit kajang*. If the *kajang* referred in the Old Balinese inscriptions appear the same as the *kajang* tattoo used in the death rites in Balinese life with its various scripts as it is today, then the creativity in writing calligraphy existed from quite a long time ago in Balinese culture. However, the ancestors who wrote Balinese calligraphy were not for purely aesthetic purposes, but were more related to religious functions.

Not only in the *kajang* tattoos that have been written in a fairly ancient period of time, the use of letters for aesthetic purposes has also been seen in literary works written during the Gelgel and Klungkung eras. In the Gelgel era, a literary work entitled *Kidung Puspa Sancaya* which was strongly assumed been written by *Dang Hyang Nirarta*, had shown the use of Balinese script in writing literary works very aesthetically. During the Klungkung era, *Anak Agung Istri Biang Agung* also composed literary works with a similar model. The literary work which also utilized beautiful visual forms named *Yantra* literature by the research teams of the Faculty of Humanities, Udayana University.

With the history of the use of Balinese script in the world of high aesthetics, it is fairly to say that Bali actually has roots of high creativity in the use of script for aesthetic purposes beside its main orientation of being religious. By having that basis, the journey of Balinese calligraphy milestone started from an official event named the Balinese Languages International Festival at the Gunarsa Museum which was held from 8 November to 30 November 2013. In the event, there was a Baligraphy competition which was used as a term to replace Calligraphy.

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Soon after that, Balinese script calligraphy became popular in Balinese life, and even developed into creative industries such as sticker design, clothes, bags, and others. Nevertheless, there is one advantage of Balinese Calligraphy that has not received much attention before. It is about the use of literary works as a source of creating the calligraphy. Therefore, the aim of this study is to dissect the literary works that could be utilized as sources for the creation of Balinese Script Calligraphy and the meanings of each works. By dissecting the sources of these literary works, the creative process of the calligraphy artist including the meaning that the artist wants to convey through his work could be seen in details.

Furthermore, this study applied three study methods, which were (1) data collection, (2) data analysis, and (3) presentation of analysis results. In collecting the data, two methods were used, which were listening and speaking method. The listening method obtained through basic tapping and advanced techniques in the form of free listening to the spoken data and note-taking techniques were applied to provide documented language data in written form.

This method was based on Mahsun (2007:133), stated that the listening method with the basic tapping technique could be applied to the use of spoken and written language, in this case was in the form of types of scripts, language, and Balinese literature applied in the Balinese Calligraphy. The listening method was supported by the advanced technique in the form of a note-taking. This note-taking technique served to record the type of script, elements of language, and quotations from Balinese literature as outlined in Balinese Calligraphy. The note taking technique was done in the form of phonemic transcription. In order to explore the creative process carried out by an artist in creating Balinese Calligraphy, the advanced techniques used was in the form of interview and speaking recording.

After collecting the data, the next step was data analysis. The data analysis stage was mainly based on the phonological and semiotic theory. Phonological theory was applied to analyze the types of Balinese script used in the creative process of creating Balinese calligraphy. On the other hands, the semiotic theory used to interpret the meaning of literary works in the Balinese Calligraphy.

The next step was presenting the results of data analysis. The methods used were informal and formal. The informal method was the presentation in the form of ordinary words, including technical terminology, while the formal method was formulated with signs and symbols (Sudaryanto, 1993: 145; Mahsun, 2005: 224).

II. DISCUSSION

Based on researches on Balinese Calligraphy collection in the Gunarsa Museum, Klungkung, there were two types of literary works used by artists in the creative process of painting Balinese Calligraphy, which were from the Old Javanese and Balinese literary works. The Old Javanese literary work that was used as the source of the creation of Balinese script calligraphy was *Kakawin Ramayana*. Meanwhile, the Balinese literary works used were *Jnyana Siddhanta* and *Geguritan Salampah Laku*. Both Old Javanese and Balinese literary works were used as sources for their creative process. Both selected literary works had values that were believed to be timeless. The details of the works would be described as follow.

A. Old Javanese Literature

Adikawya kakawin Ramayana who was named the oldest, longest, and most beautiful *kakawin* of its kind (JJ.Ras, 2014: 61) is also the source of the creation of Balinese script calligraphy. The calligraphy below is taken from a fragment of Rama's advice to Wibhisana.



1. Calligraphy by I Gusti Made Rama Among, with the title Bait Ramayana.
Nyoman Gunarsa Museum Collection

The painter of the Balinese script calligraphy above was based on his reading on the literary work of *Kakawin Ramayana*. The calligraphy presented was not only beautiful, but contained messages of life as well. The message presented in the calligraphy was taken from the advice given by Sri Rama to Wibhisana.

Wibhisana is Ravana's younger brother who had kidnapped Rama's wife, Sita. This kidnapping led to a great war involving gods, giants, sages, and even an army of monkeys. In the midst of the war situation, Wibhisana tried to carry out his obligations as a younger brother to save his brother Ravana from the calamity that would befall him through advice about the truth. Wibhisana had repeatedly reminded his beloved brother to apologize to Sri Rama (*Santikangen-angen pangupasama, haywa tan wawarengo lara humadang, kweh arista hatikasta katakut, yapwa tan upasaman pati bhisama*). However, Ravana did not heed the words of Wibhisana in the slightest. In fact, he said Wibhisana was a traitor who was despicable and unfaithful to his brother who was also

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his king. Ravana's mind and character at that time was portrayed as hard as a *nirrasa* stone. He was unable to sort out the words which ones contained *amerta* or poison in his life, which were not.

Wibhisana was finally expelled from the *Alengka* palace because he was considered to have betrayed Ravana and the kingdom. It was then that Wibhisana, who from the beginning had seen the truth from the ends of the arrows of 'weapons' and Rama's 'mind', that was apparently the reincarnation of Vishnu. There was interesting news that was conveyed by Hanoman regarding the arrival of Wibhisana to Sri Rama's place. The composer of *kakawin Ramayana*, whose prototype said to have been received from Bhatti Kawya's work, stated that, "*Prawara guna wibhisana ikana teka, huluna ri suku sang prabhu tan alang-alang, sahuripana maharddhika tuwi gunawan, nipuna ring aji sastra wenanga sarana*", which was translated as follows, "the wise Wibhisana has now come, intending to serve His Majesty Rama with a sincere heart. He was wise (*gunawan*), religious, and independent-minded." The word '*maharddhika*' which was 'freedom' in the *Kakawin Ramayana* text above was indeed appropriate for Wibhisana. He was a figure who dared to fight for the truth by siding with Rama. Wibhisana was not tied to the realm of the kingdom where he lived with his wife and children since it was filled with untruth. Up to this point, Wibhisana had a different attitude with his brother, Kumbakarna. Sang Kumbakarna in a number of interpretations was indeed considered a patriotic figure, because his desire to fight and die on the battlefield was not solely for defending Ravana but because of the spirit of defending his country. He went to the battlefield with the motivation to fight for the territory of his kingdom that was attacked by the enemy. In Kumbakarna's point of view, Rama and his army were enemies who wanted to destroy the kingdom. It was the destruction of his kingdom and territory that motivated him to defend with his body and soul.

From the attitudes taken by the two brothers, the *Ramayana* story, which for some people might be simple, to some extent could be more complex and had multiple interpretations. Those who think the story was simple might only know the story from hearing or watching certain parts of the *wayang* 'classical Javanese puppet' performances. In *wayang* performances, the story would always end with Rama's victory over Ravana.

Meanwhile, for a number of people who read deeply in the literary work of *kakawin Ramayana*, they would find how complex the story was framed through the density of *kakawin*'s meter. In fact, there were not many people able to read the *Kakawin Ramayana* thoroughly. The life lessons were all presented in the dialogues as well as in the behavior and dilemmas of the characters. The dilemmas of the characters had multiple interpretations, such as in the fragment of *Dewi Kekayi* who demanded the *Bharata* to become the king of Ayodya, the fragment of the war of Subali and Sugriwa, the fragment of Laksmana in guarding Sita which ended with Ravana's disguised as a priest and others.

To be more specific, in the context of the attitude of Wibhisana and Kumbakarna, whether for the sake of the moral of the story or for other reasons, it could be seen that Kumbakarna died in the battlefield. While Wibhisana was still alive, even Rama handed over the *Alengka* kingdom which was originally ruled by his brother to Wibhisana. Wibhisana seemed to be considered as a figure to represent a *mahardhika*'s soul or 'free soul'. From the Wibhisana's attitudes, he was actually not someone who did not have patriotism. Wibhisana preferred a dialogical approach to give considerations to Ravana as the head of the *Alengka* kingdom. Perhaps only in that way, Wibhisana hoped to convince Ravana to undo his intention to fight against Rama. In that way, the kingdom would be saved. His dialogical approach turned out to be in vain, even leading to him being expelled. Wibhisana then faced Rama who was the central character of the story. Despite the reincarnation of Vishnu, Rama was still human who had a body (blood and flesh) and feelings. As a human, Rama continued to walk and build bridges over the sea with an army of monkeys. As crown prince, Rama was willing to be replaced by his younger brother, the *Bharata*. As a husband, he was also angry, sad and emotional when his wife was kidnapped by Ravana. From the whole story, both the winner and the loser suffered. It was said that the world did not only provide pleasure, but at the same time sorrow and death.

In this *Adikavya*, Rama was considered as a symbol of truth. By devoting all his abilities to Rama, Wibhisana could be interpreted as a servant to the truth itself. Wibhisana did not side with Ravana, even though he was his biological brother. That meant, Wibhisana did not possess the character of nepotism. Wibhisana's attitudes were certainly an anomaly in his own surrounding. Especially in the territory of the kingdom which was full of greed, nepotism, even corruption by the giants. In such an environment, he became a hated figure. However, those of us who lived in the real world which was definitely different from the story of Wibhisana in the *Ramayana*, was able to recognize his characters of being on his own feet or being independent. With a firm foundation of faith and determination, Wibhisana then decided to side with the truth. The political situation of the chaotic kingdom that wanted to achieve all desires including love, wealth, and throne was unable to bind it. Wibhisana was like a dewdrop in the lotus *mahligai*, on which it still exuded clarity, even though its roots were stuck in the mud and its stems lived in water that was not infrequently friendly to 'turbidity'.

When a great war broke out between Rama and Ravana, Wibhisana with full consistency defended the truth he believed in until Ravana was killed in the battlefield with ten heads separated from his body. Wibhisana felt very sad for Ravana's death, although on the other hands with Rama's victory the truth could be established. While sprinkling flowers on the tip of his brother's head, who was drooping limply, Wibhisana kept on regretting Ravana's death. His heart was broken. He felt unsuccessful as a younger brother to prevent a real war that would cause the death of his brother. Realizing Wibhisana's sorrow and the socio-ecological devastation

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that occurred after the war in Alengka, Rama then carried out political reconciliation. It was Wibhisana who he appointed as king. By appointing Wibhisana as the new king in the Land of Alengka, Rama hoped that the kingdom's infrastructure (*pulih pahayu tañ salēnka pura*) could be immediately carried out in various spheres of life. By crowning Wibhisana as the King of Alengka, Rama also hoped that the giants who previously had a rebellious heart because they were covered in darkness could be counseled with brighter religious teachings.

Before handing over the reins of government of Alengka to Wibhisana, Rama gave him advices. Rama emphasized greatly in the exemplary as a king to Wibhisana. This expressed in the following statement:

*Nihan kramani deniñ andāni rāt,
awakta rumuhun warah riñ hayu,
tēlas ta mapagēh magōm āgama,
tēke rikañ amatya mantrī tumūt.
(Kakawin Ramayana, XXIV: 48).*

Translation.

This is how to organize the government,
it is you who first advise the essence of truth,
if you truly have faith and carry out religious teachings,
then your Hulubalang 'armys commander' and the ministry would follow you.

That was the introduction to Rama's advice to Wibhisana which contained the procedures for governing the government in the world. Rama stated that managing this large universe would not be possible without embodied the core teachings of truth within the small leader himself. If a leader had succeeded in adhering to religious teachings, naturally his subordinate staff, starting from the Hulubalang, Ministry, old patih, down to the younger generations, and the whole community would follow all his policies. In short, a true leader was the one who had himself perfected.

After explaining the basic teachings of leadership, Rama then explained about the nature of anger.

*Krodhambēk yelagakēnika,
dosa kweh durbbala winuwus,
mwang wadwanuñ rahayu milag,
mitradoh tañ musuhaparēk.*

Translation:

Stay away from ill-tempered character!
Many sins, being called ugly,
And the good followers will go away,
Friends evade, enemies approach.

Those advices were from Rama to Wibhisana. It was about the consequences of anger. All above were then being compiled in the Balinese calligraphy by I Gusti Made Rama Antara, entitled *Bait Ramayana*. By quoting Rama's advices to Wibhisana, I Gusti Made Rama Among had expressed advices in the *Kakawin Ramayana* about anger. The nature of being angry must be avoided because it would lead to many sins. If a leader had an ill-tempered, it was a certain that good subordinates and followers would go away. On the other hands, the angry of a king would bring him closer to the enemy.

B. Balinese Literature

As it had mentioned previously, Balinese calligraphy was also sourced from Balinese literary works. Two sources of Balinese literature were found were *Jnyana Siddhanta* and *Geguritan Salampah Laku*. These two literary works were very important in Balinese life since they were the main sources of teachings in Hinduism.

First, the *Jnyana Siddhanta* contained a dialogue between Shiva and Parwati about the teachings of Shivaism. That Balinese Calligraphy was made by Ida Bagus Maswa Saputra, entitled *Surat Pripih*.



2. Calligraphy collection of Ida Bagus Maswa Saputra, entitled Letter Pripih
Nyoman Gunarsa Museum Collection

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Rajah dasa bayu., lexically came from the word *dasa* meant ten and *bayu* meant breath, air, wind. *Dasa Bayu* in the *Jnyana Sidhanta* text could be described as follows.

Nihan Sang Hyang Dasa Bayu ngaranira, lwirnia : prana, apana, samana, udana, byana, naga, kurmara, krkara, dewadatta, dhananjaya. Yeka dasabayu ngaranira. Ya dasaprana ngaranira. Ikang dasabayu ya makatatwa Dasaksara, maka sarira Sang Hyang Saptatma

Translation

There was term called Ten Holy Winds, which were: *prana, apana, samana, udana, byana, naga, kurmara, krkara, dewadatta*, and *dhananjaya*, known as Ten Winds (*Dasa Bayu*). There were also the Life-Giving Breath (*Dasaprana*). These Ten Winds manifest their character in the Ten Syllables (and) manifest in the Seven Sacred Veins.

In the quote from the *Jnyana Sidhanta* text above, *Dasa Bayu* was defined as the ten holy winds consisting of *prana, apana, samana, udana, byana, naga, kurmara, krkara, dewadatta*, dan *dhananjaya*. The concept of ten holy winds that give life to humans was then stated to display its character in the form of ten syllables. In this context, the concept of the ten holy winds was then 'manifested' with syllables. These ten syllables were visually symbolized by the form of *Dasa Bayu's* tattoo. The example of *Jnyana Sidhanta* were as follows.

Dasaksara ngaranya :

*Ikaras ca (H)Akaras ca KAkarah SAkaras tatha
Makaro Rakaras ca tu LA WA YA U karo dasadha
Kalinganya.*

Nihan Sang Hyang Dasaksara, lwirnia: Ing-Hang-Kang-Sang-Mang-Rang-Lang-Wang-Yang-Ung. Sira Sang Hyang Dasaksara nga. Sira ta pinaka murti ning Dasasandhi. Sira Sang Hyang Windudewa ngaranira. Saptatma ngaranya nihan..

Translation.

There were Ten sacred syllables: ING-HANG-KANG-SANG-MANG-RANG-LANG-WANG-YANG-UNG. They incarnated into the Ten Bodies. They were also called *Windudewa Suci*.

As described above, *raja dasa bayu* was not only a script formulation that symbolized certain sounds linguistically, but also symbolized the ten breaths that give human life. This breath flowed through the veins in the human body. The *Wrehaspati Tatwa* text explained that there were ten main types of wind, which were *Ida, Pinggala, Susumna, Gandari, Hastijihwa, Pusa, Alambusa, Kuhu*, and *Sangkini*. The text further described in details, including the location of the breath in the human veins and their functions.

1. *Prana*: air flowing through the mouth and nose. Its job is to breathe. *Prana* is also in the chest. All other air moves because of *prana*.
2. *Apana*: air that flows in lower part such as the sperm, urine, rectum, and genitals. Its function is to remove sperm, blood, feces, and urine. Another function is to remove the air.
3. *Samana*: air that works in all parts of the body, heart, and liver. *Samana* works in the liver functions to turn food into bile, food substances into blood, and substances that are smelled into mucus, like snot and saliva.
4. *Udana*: air flowing in vital parts. It locates in the skull. It moves the eyes, frowning, and grow hair.
5. *Wyana*: air flowing over the joints. This air can make the disease worse. It can also influence the body movement, cause anger, and old age.
6. *Naga*: air flowing that play roles to vomiting from inside.
7. *Kurma*: air flowing for winking
8. *Krkara*: air flowing to sneeze.
9. *Dewadatta*: air flowing to evaporate.
10. *Dananjaya*: air flowing that takes roles in producing sound. When a person dies, *dananjaya* remains in the corpse.

According to Soebadio (1985), the ten functional life-giving holy winds in human life also symbolized certain gods. The gods represented by the script were as follows.

| | |
|------------------|------------------------|
| <i>I</i> script | : symbolizes Sadasiva |
| <i>Ha</i> script | : symbolizes Vishnu |
| <i>Ka</i> script | : symbolizes Mahadev |
| <i>Sa</i> script | : symbolizes Brahma |
| <i>Ma</i> script | : symbolizes Sangkara |
| <i>Ra</i> script | : symbolizes Maheswara |
| <i>La</i> script | : symbolizes Rudra |
| <i>Wa</i> script | : symbolizes Sangkara |
| <i>Ya</i> script | : symbolizes Sambu |

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Ung script : symbolizes Sadasiva

Thus, the *raja dasa bayu* which consists of a series of characters *Om, I, A, Ka, Sa, Ma, Ra, La, Wa, Ya*, and *Ung* means the ten winds that give life to humans. The ten breaths/winds were *prana, apana, samana, udana, wyana, naga, kurma palm, krkara, dewadatta*, and *dananjaya*. The winds that spread in the human veins also symbolize the ten manifestations of God, which were *I = Sadasiva, Ha = Wisnu, Ka = Mahadewa, Sa = Brahma, Ma = Sangkara, Ra = Maheswara, La = Rudra, Wa = Sangkara, Ya = Sambu, dan Ung=Sadasiva*.

It could be clearly seen that the essence of the teachings on *Dasa Bayu* was channeled into Balinese script calligraphy made by Ida Bagus Maswa Saputra, entitled *Surat Pripih*. This calligraphy work was beautiful and it contained an important philosophy about the teachings of *Dasa Bayu* in the life of the Balinese people.

Besides, there found *Geguritan Salampah Laku* as sources of the calligraphy. The example could be seen below.



3. Calligraphy by I Made Marthayana Yusa, entitled *Nandurin Karang Awak*.
Nyoman Gunarsa Museum Collection.

The calligraphy above was based on *Geguritan Salampah Laku* made by Ida Padanda Made Sidemen. This literary work wrote around 1940 (Agastia, 1994: 57). It began with an apology that the author was not knowledgeable, poor, and lazy. When he was twenty-seven years old, he married a girl. This girl was told to experience many regrets, such as she was still bounded by her love for her parents. This story then was narrated with emotion by Ida Padanda Made Sidemen. After traveling to leave the village as a promise for his marriage, he decided to return to the village of Intaran. His determination was unanimous to make poverty as a *tapa* (*mayasa lacur*). He also addressed this determination with the concept of "cultivating one's own land" (*nandurin karan awak*) through various village skills (*guna dusun*). More specifically, Ida Padanda Made Sidemen stated the concept as below.

*Dĕlah pianak raja putra,
gumanti ĩadĕg bhupati,
yan mĕnek tuwun masoĩsoĩ,
luĩane marambat joli,
idĕp bĕline mankin,
makinkin mayasa lacur,
tong ngĕlah karan sawah,
karang awake tandurin,
guna dusun,
ne kanggo ring desa-desa. (Geguritan Salampah Laku, Pupuh Sinom, 11).*

Translation.

Having children as princes,
who would later become regent,
if ups and downs are upheld,
its journey was with jolly,
my wish now,
prepare for poverty as a *tapa*,
do not have paddy fields,
cultivating land,
use various village skills,
win the villages.

The quote above showed that Ida Padanda Made Sidemen always used the body and its surrounding as a place where various knowledge is planted, especially about *Guna Dusun*. *Guna dusun* or village skills such as *Asta Kosala-Kosali* by Ida Padanda Made Sidemen. This expression is very popular in Balinese life because it has a high philosophical dimension. The classical quote of *Nandurin Karang Awak* was also used by I Made Marthayana Yusa as the source of his Balinese calligraphy entitled *Nandurin Karang Awak*. Indirectly, Martana Yusa, through his Balinese script calligraphy, wants to continue the meaning of cultivating fields within oneself in the process of treading life.

III. CLOSING

Based on the discussion above, it could be concluded that Balinese calligraphy, which had penetrated the creative industry, also used literature as a source of creativity. There were two literary works used in the creative process, Old Javanese and Balinese literature. The old Javanese literary works used were the *Kakawin Ramayana*, while the Balinese literary works were *Jnyana Siddhanta* and *Geguritan Salampah Laku*. By quoting the *Kakawin Ramayana*, the author wanted to interpret his work means to guide someone to the right path and avoid anger. On the other hands, by picking the *Dasa Bayu* tattoo, Balinese calligraphy artists also wanted to interpret the ten holy winds that existed in the human body. Whereas, through the words of *Geguritan Salampah Laku*, the artist wanted the audience of his work to always cultivate their fields with various knowledge. The creative process that uses literary sources is the hallmark of Balinese calligraphy.

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