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The rhetoric of paintings

The Balinese *Malat* and the prospect of a history of Balinese ideas, imaginings, and emotions

Peter Worsley

Abstract

Balinese paintings from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shed light on how painters and their works speak to their viewers both about how Balinese in this period knew, imagined, thought, and felt about the world in which they lived, and about the visual representation and communication of these ideas, imaginings, and feelings through the medium of narrative paintings. In this paper I discuss five Balinese paintings of the *Malat*. The first two illustrate the episode in which Raden Misa Prabangsa stabs Raden Ino Nusapati's horse. The third and fourth paintings illustrate Prabu Melayu's rescue of his sister Princess Rangkesari of Daha from the court of the King of Lasem, and the fifth, the reuniting of Princess Rangkesari with her parents, the King and Queen of Daha. However, before I consider the paintings, I discuss briefly a number of historiographical issues concerning the reception of ideas, imaginings, and feelings conveyed in these five narrative paintings of the *Malat* and which need to be kept in mind when assessing interpretations of them.

Keywords

Bali; historiography; philology; representation; narrative paintings; *Malat*; Panji.

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1. Introduction[1]

Western historical scholarship has taught us much about the period between 1800 and 1940, a time when the insistent, intensifying, and transforming influence of Dutch colonial society and its culture became widespread in Bali and more broadly in the Archipelago. Much has also been written about the discursive frameworks, which inform "European" histories of these times. However, it is important that we do not overlook what the indigenous peoples of the archipelago themselves thought, imagined, and felt about a period in which the Dutch colonial presence came increasingly to impact upon the worlds in which they lived. Balinese paintings from this period are no exception. They shed light on how painters and their works speak to their viewers both about how the Balinese knew, imagined, thought, and felt about the world in which they lived, and about the visual representation and communication of these ideas, imaginings, and feelings through the medium of narrative paintings.

In a series of earlier papers and published articles (Worsley 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2019a, 2019b), I have discussed historiographical issues relevant to the interpretation of Balinese narrative paintings. The paintings are or were, as Hobart argues, like all forms of rhetorical exchange, sites of discussion and disputation (Hobart 2019: 23-24). Accordingly, I have considered the importance of the rhetorical effects of a painting's iconography and design and the role philology plays in the interpretation of Balinese works recorded in manuscripts which provide access to Balinese imaginings about those same social and cultural issues to which paintings gave expression.

In this essay I consider the rhetorical effects of the iconography and design of five Balinese paintings of the *Malat*, which I have selected from previous publications.[2] The first two illustrate the episode in which Raden Misa Prabangsa stabs Raden Ino Nusapati's horse. The third and fourth paintings illustrate Prabu Melayu's rescue of his sister Princess Rangkesari of Daha from the court of the King of Lasem, and the fifth, the reuniting of Princess Rangkesari with her parents, the King and Queen of Daha. However, before I consider the paintings, I should say something at least briefly about a number of historiographical issues concerning the reception of ideas, imaginings, and feelings conveyed in these five narrative paintings of the *Malat* and which need to be kept in mind when considering interpretations of them.[3]

[1] I would like to thank Mark Hobart, Andrea Acri, the late Merle Ricklefs, Stuart Robson, Adrian Vickers, and the anonymous reviewer who commented on this article for *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* for their valuable comments. I must also thank Ir I Putu Astawa (Kepala Dinas Kebudayaan Provinsi Bali), Gusti Agung Ngurah Di Putra (Kepala UPT Taman Budaya Provinsi Bali), and Ni Nyoman Sueti (UPT Kepala Museum Provinsi Bali), for permission to publish illustrations of *Malat* paintings in their collections. My thanks also to Dr Natasha Reichle of the Asian Art Museum in the Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture in San Francisco and Sati Benes Chong of the Honolulu Museum of Art who arranged permission for *Malat* paintings in their collections to be illustrated in this article.

[2] See Vickers (1984, 2005, 2012) and Reichle (2011).

[3] The principal protagonists in the *Malat* change their names and adopt different incognito

2. Obstacles in the way of historical interpretation of narrative paintings from this period

There are obstacles, which stand in the way of the historical interpretation of Balinese narrative paintings from this period. Very often we know little about the dating of particular paintings or the identity of painters and the communities in which they lived and worked, and the individuals and institutions who patronized them and for whom the works were painted. Furthermore, while we know that these paintings were painted and embroidered on cloth and on wooden screens or *parba* for display during religious festivals in temples and private household shrines – just one aspect of the elaborate reception and entertainment of the gods and ancestral spirits who visit for the time of a ritual – and that they also decorated the ceilings of pavilions of justice and the living spaces of palace and house compounds, we in fact know very little about what viewers made of them when they were displayed. Finally, we need to keep in mind an important point which A. Forge (1977) made some time ago now. He argued that the abstraction, which inhabits all art systems, lends a multivalency to the elements of visual design of paintings so that in one social and cultural context they may be perceived to have one meaning, but at the same time suggest other cognate meanings, which only "those who have been socialized into the society within which they were created" understood and could contest. The ensuing ambiguity, Forge says (1977: 31), created the opportunity for the expression of "a very real and intense emotion in their [viewers]" concerning "key associations and relationships that are essential to ritual and cognitive systems".[4]

3. Resolution of these obstacles

Vickers (2005) was aware of these difficulties when he discussed the paintings he included in *Journeys of desire*, his study of the Balinese *Malat*, and was clear about the interpretive strategy he needed to adopt in order to identify different renditions of the story and which, in particular, explained the emotional sensibilities he had identified in the paintings he had viewed. He sought to marry contemporary viewings of *gambuh* performances and paintings with readings of the *Malat* recorded in manuscripts and information gleaned from other sources such as *gambuh* performers and officionados and painters themselves. However, the viewings of *gambuh* performances which he witnessed and the conversations he had with contemporary painters

identities in different episodes of the story. I refer to these characters by the names Vickers (2005) uses to refer to them in the different episodes illustrated in the paintings I discuss. Vickers employs the name Panji to refer to the principal protagonist. I refer to him as Raden Ino Nusapati, the name he bears as the Crown Prince of Koripan before he sets off in search of the Princess of Daha, Rangkesari, to whom he is betrothed. His cousin, Raden Wiranantaja the Crown Prince of Daha, is referred to as Prabu Melayu.

[4] This is a view quite consonant with a more general observation Hobart has made concerning communication: "[w]hile lack of ambiguity is carefully engineered to be a feature of computing, it is notably absent in human communication, where inexactitude, equivocation and opacity – let alone muddle and confusion – are common conditions in social life" (Hobart 2017: 4).

and others, it seems, served only to highlight the historical distance which existed between seventeenth-to-nineteenth-century and late twentieth century Balinese knowledge of the *Malat* and aesthetic sensibilities. It was only when Vickers turned to his manuscripts that he discovered evidence of the intense expression of emotion which his viewings of *Malat* paintings had led him to anticipate (Vickers 2005: 50-52).

4. Philology and the historical interpretation of the Balinese *Malat*

Vickers' realization that the versions of episodes from the *Malat* recorded in manuscripts gave expression to the intensity of emotions he anticipated finding in seventeenth-to-nineteenth century renditions of the *Malat*, alerts us to the importance that philology has in the historical interpretation of narrative paintings from this period in Bali. However, as in the case of paintings, there are also difficulties which stand in the way of the historical interpretation of works recorded in manuscripts. Often faced with the absence of any substantial information about the authors and copyists of manuscripts, the variable renditions of narratives they record and the presence of what are referred to by some rather too easily as "errors" in manuscripts made by "careless" copyists, we have to ask ourselves what role philology should play in the business of locating particular renditions of narratives in the historical context of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in order to understand what they have to say about the ideas, imaginings and emotions of Balinese in this period.

Sheldon Pollock, in his writings about philology in recent times (2014, 2015), has argued that while the philologist has a legitimate interest in identifying a work's autograph and determining a fully comprehensible text, philology also has a legitimate interest in a text's tradition of reception. In this enterprise, Pollock emphasizes the "historical malleability" of texts as audiences respond to them over time and in different social and cultural contexts. Interpretations of texts, he argues, cannot be judged to be "correct or incorrect *in their historical existence*" [my emphasis]. In these circumstances the task of the philologist is not to expunge variations, errors and contaminations in the text of a work but to explain them in the historical moment of their occurrence – in the context of what the German medievalist Hans Jauss (1982a, 1982b) terms the "horizon of expectations" shared by writers, copyists and their readers at different moments throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Jauss, in his attempts to understand the generic distinctions between epic, romance, and novella in medieval literature, argued that historically distant works had to be interpreted in the context of the expectations which a work's author explicitly or implicitly presupposed contemporary audiences had – that is in the context of the interrelatedness of the different facets of a work itself and its involvement in wider sets of "historically determined, delimited and described" generic and cultural relationships. In pursuing this task, Jauss insisted, the historian of literature was to work inductively from existing contemporary works rather than imposing preconceived Western

categories of literature.[5] Jauss was primarily interested in the moment of a work's genesis and its author's anticipation of its contemporary reception and sought to overcome traditions of misunderstandings on the part of previous generations of medievalists – he mentions classical philologists and structuralists in particular – in order to recover medieval genres "in their historical contemporaneity and sequence".[6] However, as we seek to understand painters' intentions and viewers' understandings of the paintings we are about to discuss, we need to be mindful of the fact that narrative works – whether literary or painted – survive the moment of their creation to be viewed by later generations, whose expectations may well not be those of the audiences for whom the works were originally produced. The historian, therefore, when interpreting literary versions of narratives, need to keep in mind that both the paintings they seek to interpret and the literary versions both exist in a dynamic process of historically shifting "horizons of expectations" presupposed by successive generations of viewers – what Fox (2005: 90-91) referred to as the "performative reframings" which any work undergoes in the changing social conditions in which its reception takes place over time.

To this end it is particularly important that we identify the textual practices of Balinese authors and scribes during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – what their copying, reworking, excerpting, glossing and recitation of texts might have to tell us about their knowledge of narratives and what they tell us about the ideas, imaginings, and emotional sensibilities of Balinese throughout this period. In particular we need to consider whether the hermeneutic search for the true form of an autograph, which Pollock has identified as so fundamental a Western philological preoccupation, was shared by Balinese authors and copyists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My reading suggests that there existed what we might refer to as an "openness" in the Balinese tradition of textual transmission. By which I mean, depending on genre, copyists were not always narrowly focussed on the reproduction of a work's autograph. Robson has drawn attention to evidence of the freedom that copyists felt they had to enhance a work's appeal (Robson 1988: 22-23). Acri (2013) too, has drawn attention to the kind of radical paraphrasing, synthesising and restyling of key works at important moments of religious history – in this case of Balinese premodern Śaiwa *tattwa* and *tutur*, which became the object of debate among the various factions of the Balinese intelligentsia who sought to reform their religion in the early twentieth century.[7] According to Acri, these practices were based firmly on a traditional understanding of Sanskrit and Old Javanese, "folk etymological derivations" and "analogies of sound and meaning", when anomalies in the

[5] Jauss (1982a, 1982b); Aoyama (1992: 1-75) has adapted Jauss's insights to propose a history of genres for fourteenth and fifteenth century Javanese literature.

[6] Jauss (1982b: 76). See also Pollock (2014: 405) for a brief comment on Jauss.

[7] For a discussion of cultural change in Bali between the beginning of the twentieth century and the Japanese occupation see Picard (2017: Chapters 1-4).

text of these premodern works were identified (Acri 2011, 2013: 68-71, 74-78, 82-85; Acri and Stephen 2018).

Vickers (2005), in particular, in the case of the *Malat*, has argued that there is in fact little evidence at all that there was ever a single written original of this work, "that this original was 'complete', or that it preceded all visual representations and performances of the *Malat*" in paintings and in the *gambuh* dance-drama. Vickers notes that cataloguers described all but one of some ninety eighteenth and nineteenth century manuscripts of the *Malat* he had located as being "incomplete", "fragments", or "variants". Only one manuscript, discovered in Brandes' collection, was said to contain a complete version of the *Malat*. However, in this case there are doubts about whether the manuscript was a copy of a "single Balinese manuscript into a folio book, or whether Brandes had a number of different manuscripts copied as one". In the case of the *Malat*, "the process of the formation of the written text", Vickers argues, "was a lengthy and complicated one involving interactions between oral storytelling, musical forms, theatre and other visual traditions, and that these interactions did not cease once a body of manuscripts had been produced" (Vickers 2005: 10).

5. *Kamasan* painting in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

Kamasan paintings from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and those of related schools are predominantly narrative works and in a style which the painters themselves and the viewers of their works regarded as realist, able to represent the events, places and beings of the world in which they imagined they lived.[8] The iconographic conventions of *Kamasan* paintings were designed to convey information about distinctions drawn between various categories of beings. The focus of these was the body, particularly the face, and the costume, in particular the headdress. Representations of the body were intended to draw physiognomic distinctions between various kinds of beings. Types of eye, eyebrow, nose, mouth, and teeth and degrees of hirsuteness were important in this respect. These physical characteristics pointed to an inner condition – how refined or brutish – was the god, demon, or human who was portrayed. Clothing on the other hand, in particular the headdress and hairstyles worn by the various characters, signalled hierarchical differences in social status and role. Crowns distinguished kings. Princes wore their hair in a number of different styles; the *supit urang* (lobster-claw) and *gelung* were perhaps the most frequently illustrated. Śaiwite priests were recognizable because of the *gelung ketu* they wore, while Buddhist priests wore their hair in long black tresses behind their necks. The gods – the divine kings and queens and

[8] For Balinese accounts of realism in painting see Pan Mertasih, Nagasepuh. Gedong Kirtya Manuscript Collection, MS 2091: "Satua I Sangging Lobangkara" transcribed by I Gusti Nyoman Agung, 30 October 1940; Kat Angelino (1921-22: 387-389) and the *pangipuk wimba* (Making of Portraits) episode from Canto 4 of the *Malat* (Vickers 2005: 23, 209, 326). See also Covarrubias (1937: 165) for the report of a conversation he had with I Gusti Bagus Jelantik, the regent of Karangasem, in the early 1930s on the subject of realism. See Worsley (2014: 7-9) and Vickers (2012: 21) for earlier commentary on realism in Balinese painting.

priests who inhabited the world of the gods – were identified by the radiance (*praba*) which surrounded them. Commoners had their hair arranged in less elaborate styles and their clothing was modest, frequently nothing more than a *kamben* tied about the waist. The clothing worn by kings and queens and their courtiers of noble descent of course was highly elaborate. Not only their headdress distinguished priests but they were often portrayed wearing long coats of a cloth decorated with floral motifs over trousers. An iconographical array of bodily comportments and gestures signalled clearly behavioural relationships between the actors in *Kamasan* paintings and through these illustrated the strict etiquette, which governed the hierarchically ordered relationships between the categories of beings we have just described (Kanta 1977-78; Forge 1978, 1980). There were also iconographical conventions which represented aspects of place: brick motifs (*bata-bata*), images of pavilions, shrines and temples, kitchens and cowsheds, and potted plants and trees, which illustrated inhabited spaces and rock motifs (*gunung-gunungan*), wild animals, and images of trees and shrubs which illustrated a wildness beyond the bounds of civilized human society.

Painters painted their paintings from particular points of view, as members of some status, class or kin group and gender, and viewers too viewed paintings from these same sorts of points of view.[9] Each telling and viewing of a story was, as Inden (2000) put it when writing about another cultural context, a moment in "the relationship between social agents, simple or complex, who are engaged in the rhetorical processes of 'criticism, appropriation, repetition, refutation, simplification, [and] abbreviation […]".[10] Painters achieved their rhetorical intentions by selecting stories to tell and scenes to illustrate and by sequencing and juxtaposing scenes and other visual elements in the design of a painting to draw the attention of viewers visually to those aspects of the painting they wanted to highlight and thus to the points they wished to make about the world. This same rhetorical intent is also embedded in a variety of ritual and other narrative practices – in dance, theatre and in texts inscribed in manuscripts and their recitation and glossing. If we are to discover the rhetorical intent of a painting, it must be in the context of the rhetorical practices in which painters and their viewers were engaged at particular historical moments.

6. The rhetorical configuration of paintings

It is with some reservation because of the difficulties these obstacles provide for the interpretation of Balinese paintings that I turn now to the five *Malat* paintings I have chosen to discuss. My purpose is an attempt to understand how these Balinese painters of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries designed their works not just to recount a story but configured them visually

[9] Vickers (1985) discusses the *sudra/jaba* identity of painters and its implications for their paintings.

[10] Inden (2000: 11-12) following Vološinov (Bhaktin). Mark Hobart [personal communication, 10 August 2017] drew my attention to Inden's discussion.

in order to persuade viewers of the probable logical, ethical, and emotional validity of generally shared beliefs and values (Smith 2007).

The first *Malat* painting is from the collection of the Museum Bali in Den Pasar[11] and illustrates the story of the stabbing of Raden Ino Nusapati's horse, Dalang Anteban, by his older brother of lower status, Raden Misa Prabangsa (Illustration 1). The horse stabbing episode Vickers (2005: 241) argues, "is about the clash of princes, warriors testing their mettle in the intricate processes of court politics by which some rise and some are eclipsed". It was required of princes that they test their mettle both as warriors in the bloodletting of armed conflict and cockfighting and their poetic, musical, and performance skills and ardour as they competed to win the attention of the women they desired – mostly those of noble descent but commoners as well. The episode provides the opportunity for what Vickers terms a "psychologizing of action" and an "ethical contrast" of behaviour between Raden Ino Nusapati and Raden Misa Prabangsa (Vickers 2005: 71). It is these themes, Vickers says, which gave the *Malat* its relevance in "the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when kingdoms were formed and reformed", and again, in the nineteenth century in the changed circumstances created by the insistent pressure of Dutch colonial society and culture, when it provided an exemplary vision which explained the relationship between competing Balinese courts and those over whom they ruled (Vickers 2005: 241).

The painting we are viewing is a *langse* (curtain) used to decorate pavilions in temples during rituals, and ceremonial and sleeping pavilions on houseyards and in palaces. They vary in size between 70 and 110 cm in width and 180 to 210 cm in length.[12] Visually prominent in the painting are the brick motifs (*bata*), which compartmentalize the painting into scenes and parts of scenes, and which the painter has arranged in four vertical columns that divide the work horizontally. The motifs signal clearly that the events illustrated in the painting take place in an inhabited space, in this case the palace of the King of Gegelang. The painter has created a work that is visually busy (*rame*). The ranks of kings and queens, princes and princesses, and courtiers and other figures who crowd the scenes, the brick motifs which divide scenes and sub-scenes and the dust particle motifs (*aun-aun*) which fill the painting's remaining spaces all lend it an air of crowded liveliness, which Balinese painters attach to illustrations of powerful and prosperous royal courts.[13]

[11] Museum Bali No. 2212. See Vickers (1984, 2005: 52-61) for his discussion of the painting.

[12] Vickers (2005: 53). Their size is determined by Balinese (back-strap and other styles of) looms on which local cotton cloth was woven.

[13] Vickers (1991) provides a lively account of one royal ritual, which took place in Klungkung in 1842 and which is described in the *geguritan Kidung Karya Ligya.* He describes the sometimes frenetic activity on such occasions – the pleasure enjoyed because of the grandeur of the occasion and the worry and fear about the success of the ritual and the apparent chaos created by the mixing of different social groups, normally separated from each other by etiquette and place of habitation. See also Zollinger (1847: 350; 1849) for another nineteenth century account of a karya dewa yadnya held in Lombok. In both these royal rituals a rhinoceros was amongst the principal animal sacrifices.

Illustration 1. *Malat*: "The stabbing of Raden Ino Nusapati's horse Dalang Anteban". *Kamasan*, mid to late nineteenth century, pigments on cotton cloth, Museum Provinsi Bali, 2212. (Photograph by Adrian Vickers, see in Vickers 1984: 9).

Illustration 2. (Detail) *Malat*: "The stabbing of Raden Ino Nusapati's horse Dalang Anteban". *Kamasan*, mid to late nineteenth century, pigments on cotton cloth, *langse*, Museum Provinsi Bali, 2212. (Photograph by Adrian Vickers, see in Vickers 1984: 9).

The painter's rhetorical intention in painting this work is to be discovered in the visual contrast the painter has drawn between the two scenes in a single panel on the far right of the painting and the large scene to its left which occupies the painting's three remaining panels. Here the painter has sought to draw viewers' attention to, and to contrast, two different causes of disruption to the orderly social life of a royal court and the manner of their resolution. In the two scenes in the righthand panel (Illustration 2) the painter has focused attention on the damaging disruption to orderly social life of the court of Gegelang as a consequence of rivalry between male kinsmen of noble descent – Raden Ino Nusapati and his older brother, Raden Misa Prabangsa. In a small sub-scene of narrative transition, almost hidden from view, but appropriately positioned in the top righthand corner of the painting's second scene illustrating a unified court of Gegelang (Illustration 3), the painter hints at the capacity of courtly society itself to resolve rivalries of this sort between kinsmen through alliances of the "virtuous". Here we see Prabu Melayu counselling his cousin, Raden Ino Nusapati, in an attempt to restore peace and calm to the court of Gegelang once more.

Illustration 3. (Detail) *Malat*: "The stabbing of Raden Ino Nusapati's horse Dalang Anteban". *Kamasan*, mid to late nineteenth century, pigments on cotton cloth, *langse*, Museum Provinsi Bali, 2212. (Photograph by Adrian Vickers, see in Vickers 1984: 9).

It is on the second scene, which occupies perhaps as much as two thirds of the painting's surface, that the painter has clearly given greatest visual emphasis to an event which is not recorded in any other version of the *Malat* (Illustration 3). The scene is itself visually focussed on an illustration of a *caru* ritual or *bhutayadnya*, something in the order of a Pancawalikrama (Illustrations 3 and 4).

Illustration 4. (Detail) *Malat*: "The stabbing of Raden Ino Nusapati's horse Dalang Anteban". *Kamasan*, mid to late nineteenth century, pigments on cotton cloth, *langse*, Museum Provinsi Bali, 2212. (Photograph by Adrian Vickers, see in Vickers 1984: 9).

In this illustration of the ritual in which the demonic presence is represented not by the usual beings whose bulging eyes, fangs, and corpulent and hirsute bodies mark them as demonic, but by black-coated-and-hatted Dutch soldiers who cavort under an image of a *sarad* offering, at a moment of ritual climax when the cosmos is about to be transformed and to be rid of the presence of the demonic.

In this scene the painter presents us with the vision of a hierarchically ordered court, in which all are united in their concentrated attention on the ritual performance taking place before them. Interestingly the painter hints here in this scene that the rivalry between Raden Misa Prabangsa and Raden Ino Nusapati and his ally Prabu Melayu continues: we catch sight of Raden

Misa Prabangsa on the righthand side of this scene in the protective shadow of the King of Gegelang while directly on the opposite side of the scene Raden Ino Nusapati is pictured in conversation with Prabu Melayu. The painter has painted this work in times of increasing Dutch diplomatic pressure on the royal courts of Bali and Lombok to agree to treaties which imposed terms which suited Dutch imperial ambitions in the archipelago and, as Vickers reminds us, times which saw the defeat of Buleleng and Karangasem in the Bali Wars of 1846-1849, of the Lombok kingdom of Mataram in 1894, the fall of Badung in 1906 and the defeat of Klungkung in 1908.[14] Here in this scene in this painting the painter has declared his confidence or hope – I know not which – in the efficacy of ritual as a means of removing the damaging effects of Dutch diplomatic and military intrusion into the affairs of Balinese society.

In *Journeys of desire*, Vickers (2005: 61-71) discusses a second painting of the horse stabbing. Again the painting contains scenes illustrating the rivalry between Raden Ino Nusapati and Raden Misa Prabangsa in an even more dramatic fashion than in the first painting. Unfortunately, I do not have an illustration of this painting but one is to be found in Vickers' book on the *Malat* (Illustration 15 in Vickers 2005: 63). This painting, once part of the collection of the Australian painter, Donald Friend, is not a *Kamasan* painting but in a style related to that of *Kamasan*. Vickers describes its design as fluid. I would add dramatically so. As Vickers points out, the viewer's attention, is drawn first to a large scene, the painting's largest scene, in the bottom left hand side of the painting where Raden Misa Prabangsa is depicted cock fighting in the midst of bawdy scenes of publicly displayed male sexuality. A line of rock motifs or *gunung-gunungan* and brick or *bata* motifs above it, then carry the viewers' eye from the scene of cockfighting diagonally across and down the painting to a triangular scene in the painting's bottom right hand corner, where we see Raden Ino Nusapati and his entourage rushing to challenge his older brother as he stabs the horse, Dalang Anteban. Directly above this scene is another in which members of Prabu Melayu's entourage heal the horse and to its left a scene in which Prabu Melayu calms the fury of Raden Ino Nusapati kneeling before him in a successful attempt to re-establish good order to the court of Gegelang. The painting's design establishes the narrative sequence of scenes in this manner, but at the same time, it also draws a contrast between the scenes of frustration and anger, blood-letting and crude male sexual behaviour below, and scenes of healing, reconciliation and courtly proprietary above. Interestingly, the scenes of blood-letting and the display of bawdy male sexuality are marked by rock motifs (*gunung-gunungan*) and thus relegated to a category of space beyond human habitation and the civilized behaviour required of a virtuous and stable social order. On the other hand, the scenes of healing and courtly proprietary are marked by brick motifs (*bata*) indicating that they take place within the virtuous and civilized confines of the court of Gegelang.

[14] See Worsley (2011) for an example of a painting of an episode from the *Rāmāyana* which makes allegoric reference to Balinese resistance to Dutch military intervention in Buleleng in the 1846 and 1849.

Illustration 5. I Wayan Gereha, *Kamasan, Malat*: "Surud Bela", mid-nineteenth century, pigments on cotton cloth, 76 x 24 cm, langse, ex-Collection Pasedena Museum, Collection of the Honolulu Museum of Art, 13257.1.

Illustration 6. (Detail) I Wayan Gereha, *Kamasan, Malat*: "Surud Bela", mid-nineteenth century, pigments on cotton cloth, 76 x 24 cm, *langse*, ex-Collection Pasedena Museum, Collection of the Honolulu Museum of Art, 13257.1.

The third painting, another *langse*, is housed in the Honolulu Museum of Art. The painting is signed. It is by I Wayan Gereha (Greda) whom de Kat Angelino identifies with the nineteenth century painter Modara, who, as we shall see, is the painter of the final painting we shall discuss.[15] It illustrates the episode from the *Malat* in which Prabu Melayu, in reality Princess Rangkesari's brother Raden Wiranantaja the crown prince of Daha, rescues her from the court of the King of Lasem following his death in the battle of Widasari (Illustration 5). In the middle of the painting and immediately above the bier on which the two dead kings of Lasem and Mataram lie and three of their queens suicide, the painter has illustrated Prabu Melayu with his arm about his sister's shoulder, comforting her (Illustration 6). The visual placement of these two moments in the story immediately one above the other invites viewers to consider the painter's rhetorical interest in this work. The painting's place in a series of works illustrating other narratives, which focus on the rites of widow suicide, is of as much interest as the place this painting

[15] Outside the painted frame on the painting left hand edge is an inscription written vertically along the outside edge of the frame. It is difficult to decipher but begins: *ika pakaryan …* See Vickers (2012: 74-77).

has amongst episodes in the narrative of the *Malat*. The rhetorical interest of these paintings is in the circumstances in which widow suicide takes place. The illustration of Princess Rangkesari's rescue draws attention to her refusal to be bedded by the King of Lasem who had taken her to be his wife and to the fact that her virginity has remained intact and that she was still in a fit state to realise her destiny to marry her cousin, Prince Raden Ino Nusapati, Crown Prince of Koripan.[16]

There is a storage box in the collection of the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco which is decorated on its four sides with this same episode from the *Malat*.[17] The arrangement of the paintings on the four sides of the box draws attention to the same contrast as that in the painting we have just been discussing: between, on one side, the suicide of the queens of the kings of Lasem and Mataram (Illustration 7), and on the side directly on the other side of the box, Prabu Melayu comforting Princess Rangkesari following her rescue (Illustration 8).

Illustration 7. (Detail) *Malat*: "Prabu Melayu rescues Princess Rankesari from widow suicide". Royal storage container, approx. 1825-1875. Indonesia, Southern Bali. Painted wood and pigments, 52 x 47 x 77 cm. Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Acquisition made possible by Richard Bateson, 2007.4.a-b.

[16] Paintings of Sitā's Ordeal, which are commonly found in collections worldwide, illustrate the truth of Sītā's defence of her sexual loyalty to Rāma in the face of Rāwaṇa's attempts to seduce her. See for example *Sītā's ordeal, tabing*, 1915, 136 x 177 cm, Tropenmuseum Amsterdam 118-13. Compare paintings of Siti Sundarī's suicide, for example, *The death of Siti Sundarī*, nineteenth century, *langse*, 71 x 216 cm, from the Doremus Missionary donation, Division of Anthropology, the American Museum of Natural History in New York, 70-1709. See Vickers (2012: 42, 44).

[17] Vickers (personal communication, 11 September 2018) drew my attention to this storage box in the collection of the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco (2007.4.a-b). See Reichle (2011: 25, 272-275).

Illustration 8. (Detail) *Malat*: "Prabu Melayu rescues Princess Rankesari from widow suicide". Royal storage container, approx. 1825-1875. Indonesia, Southern Bali. Painted wood and pigments, 52 x 47 x 77 cm. Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Acquisition made possible by Richard Bateson, 2007.4.a-b.

The fifth and final painting is one now in the Wredi Budaya collection in Den Pasar. It illustrates the reunion of Princess Rangkesari and her parents, the King and Queen of Daha (Illustration 9). It is one of three *langse*s from the Pura Ibu Dadia Pulasari, the Mother Temple of the Pulesari clan (*dadia*) in *Kamasan*, which illustrate episodes from the *Malat* (Vickers 2005: 221-223). Vickers argues that these three works were by Modara, the same *Kamasan* painter, who painted the third of our paintings discussed above. In this crowded and visually busy painting, Modara has designed his work to direct the viewer's attention to a scene in the lower righthand side of the painting (Illustration 10). Here he celebrates the long hoped for reunion of Princess Rangkesari with her parents, the King and Queen of Daha. However, at the same moment Modara's illustration of this reunion in the presence of the kings of Koripan, Daha, and Gegelang and the crown princes of Koripan and Daha, Raden Ino Nusapati and Prabu Melayu, provides the opportunity to celebrate an alliance of the virtuous, one that both embraced several royal households which share consanguineal and affinal kin affiliations and to signal the opportunity available to further consolidate the alliance through an appropriate marriage, in this case a patri-parallel cousin marriage between the children of two royal brothers, the King of Koripan and his younger brother, the King of Daha.[18]

[18] For discussion of marriage in Balinese royal houses, see Vickers (2005:193-194), H. Geertz and C. Geertz (1975: 120-124, 131-138), and C. Geertz (1980: 27, 35-36).

Illustration 9. "Modara, *Malat*: Reunion of Princess Rangkesari and her parents, the King and Queen of Daha", *Kamasan*, pigments on cotton cloth, *langse*, early to mid-nineteenth century, ex-Collection Pura Ibu Dadia Pulasari, Collection Museum Wredi Budaya, Den Pasar. (Photograph by Adrian Vickers, see in Vickers 2005: 230).

Illustration 10. (Detail) Modara, *Malat*: "Reunion of Princess Rangkesari and her parents, the King and Queen of Daha", *Kamasan*, pigments on cotton cloth, *langse*, early to mid 19th mid-nineteenth century, ex-Collection Pura Ibu Dadia Pulasari, Collection Museum Wredi Budaya, Den Pasar. (Photograph by Adrian Vickers, see in Vickers 2005: 230).

7. Conclusion

We have seen that careful attention to the disposition of scenes and other visual elements in the design of these five paintings of the *Malat*, has enabled us to identify the rhetorical intention of their painters. In the case of the first two paintings we have discussed, both painters were concerned to draw their viewers' attention to an important source of tension in Balinese courts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the rivalry between male kinsmen, and the capacity of these courts themselves to circumvent the violence to which such rivalries sometimes gave rise. In the case of the first painting however, the painter appears also to have felt it necessary to transcend the narrative boundaries of the *Malat* in order to search for and illustrate a solution to a new and different kind of threat, one imagined to be beyond the capacity of royal courts to resolve by themselves. Wise council, in the painter's opinion, had proved itself unable to resolve the problems created by increasing Dutch intrusion into the affairs of Balinese society. The painter in these circumstances appears to have placed his hope in the capacity of ritual to remove the demonic scourge of Dutch intervention. The painter responsible for the second painting of the horse stabbing was intent on drawing viewers' attention to the contrast between the scenes of frustration and anger, blood-letting and crude male sexual behaviour associated with Raden Misa Prabangsa, and the scenes of healing, reconciliation, and courtly proprietary associated with Raden Ino Nusapati.

The third and fourth paintings display the painters' interest in the circumstances in which widow suicide takes place. It draws attention to a young princess's heroic defence of her virginity so that she remained in a fit state to realise her destiny to be married to her patri-lateral cousin, the crown prince of a neighbouring kingdom. In these circumstances she was under no obligation to suicide. By 1872 there was an agreement between the Dutch colonial government and the Balinese rulers that the self-immolation of widows in the funeral pyres of their husbands was to be stopped. However, support for this practice had not been abandonned entirely among the Balinese, and it seems, there is evidence that Balinese women were to be counted among those who continued to support the practice (Van Eck 1872: 390). In fact it was not until 1903 at a time when Dutch colonial control was expanding to the whole of Bali that an end was finally put to the practice. In the case of the final painting, its painter Modara, appears to have been intent on celebrating an alliance of royal houses bound by consanguineal and affinal ties and the opportunity it had to further consolidate the alliance through the marriage of a crown prince in a patri-parallel cousin marriage to the daughter of his father's younger brother.

It remains to be seen to what extent the rhetorical interests which each of these painters displayed in their works were appropriated, repeated, or refuted by their viewers in nineteenth and early twentieth century Bali and to identify any allegorical references to particular historical events to which the painters may have been alluding. For this purpose we shall need to situate them in the context of the rhetorical exchanges which took place in Bali on the subjects

the growing impact of Dutch colonial expansion in Bali, widow sacrifice and royal marriage practices in other paintings, in works in the corpus of Balinese manuscripts and the commentaries and reports of Bali in this period which European officials, missionaries and visitors have provided us.[19]

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[19] Worsley (2019a) discusses a play by Graaf Carel van Hogendorp celebrating a Dutch military victory over Buleleng in 1946 and an article by Rutger van Eck (1872), two nineteenth century commentaries on gender relationships in Bali in the mid-nineteenth.

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