

Hindu Calligraphy in Bali

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Abstract: Bali Calligraphy is the art of beautiful writing with a pen, which has been rooted and backgrounded by the Hindu culture in Bali. The purpose of this study was to determine the series and the art of Balinese script writing known as calligraphy. The research data was collected by the method of observation and literature, so that the results obtained is in the form of Balinese script calligraphy painting. After the data review and analysis was administered, it was found that the calligraphy which is suitable to be promoted to the public is derived from subasita calligraphy and modre calligraphy, while the holy characters that are sacred are only allowed for the sake of a sacred concern as well.

Keywords: Balinese script, Hindu calligraphy, subasita

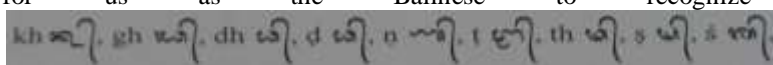
I. INTRODUCTION

Literacy is a symbol of spoken language that are realized in a visual form with a particular form which is linked according to a certain system so that it becomes a meaningful writing and serves as a communication tool between people who are agree or who have the same language. Spoken language is known first and then later human found a system of symbols in the form of letters. The discovery of a system of symbols in the form of letter/ script is a very important event in the context of the development of life of a tribe or people in general. The historians even uses letter discovery as a milestone in the boundary between the prehistoric and history periods, in the sense that when ethnic groups discovered a script and had a legacy that can be found, at that time, the tribe or nation is said to start the era of history. The letter as a symbol of the language continues to experience growth over the centuries from the most simple to the perfect level, marked by complete vocabulary mastery and a neat, beautiful and smooth writing (Suarbhawa, 2009: 149).

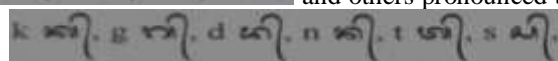
Literacy is a sign of the graphics used by humans as a means of communication, they can also represent an utterance. In this regard, the characters can be used as a tool to record every utterance systematically (Wiguna, 2010: 10). In addition, literacy is also a medium for conveying ideas or intention of a person to another person who can not delivered through oral language/ speech (Gelb, 1969: 1; Naveh, 1982: 1; Kridalaksana, 1983: 4).

In terms of the development of literacy in Indonesia in general and particularly in Bali, it seems that the script follows the pattern of *Brahmi* or further developments, which is *Pallawa*. Then, the next script is ancient Javanese script, ancient Balinese script, *Prenagari* that alphabetically similar to which in the Balinese script now is called *Swalalita* script, which consists of various types of articulation. In Balinese language, articulation is known as the *warga aksara*, which consists of; *warga aksara ostya*, *dantya*, *murdanya*, *talawya*, dan *kantya*. In addition, there is also a more concise script, which is called *Wresastra* script, and some are classified as holy script, which saves deep natural philosophy called *Modre* script.

Nowadays, there are three types of Balinese script forms, those are; *Wresastra* script, *Swalalita* script, and *Modre* script. *Swalalita* script has the most characters compared with *Wresastra* and *Modre*. The characters of *Wresastra* script is included in *Swalalita* but what is on *Swalalita* not fully exist in *Wresastra*. Is *Wresastra* a summary of *Swalalita*? There is a proposition stating that *Wresastra* script is used to write the words that come from the Balinese language. So, which is actually the original Balinese language? While in the days of ancient Bali, some inscriptions are using ancient Balinese language that was written with characters which has the same type as *Swalalita*. There are allegations that some *Swalalita* characters can not be pronounced by the tongue of Balinese people, it might be the fact, so Balinese people only write the letter that can be pronounced. Therefore, among of the *Swalalita* characters, the characters that pass the tongue of Balinese are *Wresastra* scripts. This is only a hypothesis which needs to be proved. However, it is not without reason, there are several reasons underlined this hypothesis. The reasons are; it is still very difficult for us as the Balinese to recognize the pronunciation of;



and others pronounced by balinese,










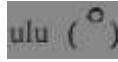

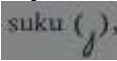
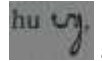
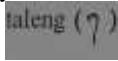
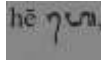
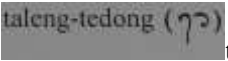
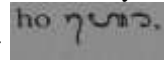
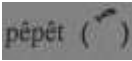

but the pronunciation that are recognized are; as included in the *Wresastra* script.

However, Swalalita script is still exist because there are *Kawi* and *Sanskrit* literatures that support it. Besides, the Swalalita script is still remain used for the sake of meaning sustainability, and the word's root/history, and the word's prestige. Balinese people still appreciate the remains of *Kawi* and *Sanskrit* literatures which is now packed with Balinese script with a literary tide which emphasize on its authenticity. This is done to appreciate the literature, maintain its authenticity, and the most important reason is maintaining the cultural richness of literary characters with a sense of appreciation.

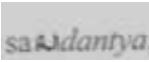


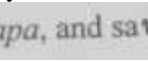
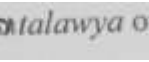
Swalalita script still exists to this day because of the preservation of the *Kawi* literature that is handed down from the ancient times. In addition, the Swalalita script that uses the spelling known as *pasang Kawi* have regular rules also, so it can be said that the structure of Swalalita script is already well established. Even though, there are people who write using *Wresastra* they would not forget the *pasang Kawi*, because if we ignore *pasang Kawi*, it will disrupt the use of the script in stringing words. Swalalita script which is derived from the old Javanese script or Ancient Balinese from age to age continues to change shape. It is not certainty known, whether this is happening because of the subjectivity of the author or the influence of other factors. Presumably the author could propose an allegation that, in the present form or style of Swalalita and *Wresastra* scripture, from different manuscripts and different authors too, have different types of writings, but its special features as a letter that represents a certain phoneme, is still recognizable in the visual differences.










It happens because each author has a streak style that differ according to each character, therefore, the result will be different too, in quotation marks, it is said to be good writing and there is also less good, although there must be an element of subjectivity in this assessment also. In addition, the desire of the author to create the best writing, encouraging them to find a good examples of writing, duplicate it with an intention to be able to write similarly. However, the result depends on the sensitivity of the writer in capturing the shape and style of writing. Some will stop over and some are kept thirsty for other variety, so that he will continue to try to get another form of writing with other styles as well. This will have an impact that the author has a different form of writing either in a single script or in different scripts. So that, this types of writer will be fickle and seemed to be confused in selecting which form to be applied because they have many varieties of character shapes. The writer, who has been well known, would have fixed shapes and variations, so that the writing has its own identity. This identity would ease readers to guess the writer of a particular script. However, a lot of processes are required to arrive at this stage.

Wresastra script is taught starting from the elementary school. It is started by the introduction of vocal;  then continued by;      For those are the basic script introduction and the easiest script to be understood by the students. The vocals above are not stand alone, but

they are started by the vocal  and then it is added by  to form the sound of  added by  to form the sound of  added by  to form the sound of  added by  to form the sound of  and also added by  to form the sound of  Those scripts in Balinese are well known as *aksara suara*. The above embellishments are called as *pengangge suara* (vowel embellishments). There are actually three types of scripts in *Wresastra* scripts; the first type of script is *aksara suara* (vowel), 2nd *aksara wyanjana* (consonant), and 3rd semi-vowel or consonant (*aksara ardasuara*).

Wyanjana script (consonant) is consisted of 18 syllables; it is different from the *Javanese Carakan* script that is consisted of 20 syllables. *Wresastra* script in the habit of literacy of the Balinese is called the *nguda* script (script for beginners who have a low level of script complexity). The content of the *Wresastra* script's consonants are simple and represent the consonants that exist in the *Swalalita* script; in the sense that all of the sounds of *Swalalita* consonants from different articulation places, are exist in the *Wresastra* script articulation which is easier. So the question is, is *Wresastra* script a simplification of *Swalalita* script? Or, in other words, is *Wresastra* script uptaken from *Swalalita* script? Considering that there is a character identity that has

a many name, such as;   or  and  or  which are only in *Wresastra* represented by *sa danti* only. Therefore, the *Wresastra* script which is well known in Bali, as what is taught in elementary school, are;

la ᮊ, ma ᮃ, ga ᮔ, ba ᮕ, nga ᮖ, pa ᮗ, ja ᮘ, ya ᮙ, ᮊaᮒᮓ

Or, there are also another set of script that is similar to Javanese Carakan script; *hana caraka, gata, mangaba sawala, pada jayanya (ña)*.

Based on the opinion above, the simplicity could be observable and all of the sounds are represented. However, in Bali, as what was taught at school, it has their own pronunciation, namely;

ha ᮊ, na ᮃ, ca ᮔ, ra ᮕ, ka ᮖ, da ᮗ, ta ᮘ, sa ᮙ, wa ᮚ,

la ᮊ, ma ᮃ, ga ᮔ, ba ᮕ, nga ᮖ, pa ᮗ, ja ᮘ, ya ᮙ, ᮊaᮒᮓ

The question is, are they have a special meaning, which refers to the specific meaning of the Balinese philosophy of life? Oral narrative in Bali disclosed that, it is based on the philosophy of life, where people live will always start with *ha* breath, and when people die also ends with *habreath* also. Similar to the *Carakan* its type in Java, it is said that, if it is pronounced inversely, it can be used to protect oneself and for healing. However it is also difficult to prove, because only those who are highly knowledgeable and have spiritual power (*kesiddhian*) can do it and be successful.

Back to Wresastra script issues, it is called *nguda* script, or the script for the beginners in learning the Balinese script. Writer assumes that the introduction of *Wresastra* script is as a method to facilitate the teaching of literacy in an early stage so that students can understand it. After this instruction, whether at the stage of elementary and junior high school, the students will continue studying Swalalita characters, starting from the *suara* script, until then continue to *wyanjana* script that involves a series of various group of script. This capability then continue to be developed until high school level, and then at the college, (especially the Balinese literature department, whether in education or non-education majors) the Swalalita script capabilities is honed in order to understand the tide of Balinese script. In the society, especially among writers and *suinggih* (Hindu priest), abilities in the field of this script is above average, because in addition to the understanding of the script and its tide, either because of the formal education or self-taught, the users also understand the philosophical values behind the script.

However, although the Wresastra script has a simple shape, it also has a deep philosophical meaning, and it has an important position in the human body. Because of this important philosophy, phonemes addition are tried to be proposed several times but it is always failed. Phonemes addition are tried to be proposed because of the difficulty of writing the words uptaken from Indonesian or foreign language. There is always a denial in accordance with the above reasons toward the proposal, but some agree to be able to write the uptaken words. Parents are very enthusiastic in teaching the Balinese which is aimed at the understanding of philosophical core of the characters. Thus, the Wresastra script, Swalalita script and other symbols are the symbols of purity, and then assembled into a series of letters to form a kind of calligraphy called *Modre* script. Profound expectations are extended to the God through this type of script, which is usually associated with *panca yadnya*.

Wresastra script which is depicted as *modre* is made with a different shape from the original letter which is written in a variety of shapes, where not only the main characters are used but sometimes the *gantungan* or its ligature letters are modified to *amodre* creation. The differences between *Wresastra* and *modre* lie on their construction/ combination. *Wresastra script* can be *Modre* if it is arranged in such a manner, in accordance with the philosophy and the certain expectation by someone who understands it. So that, it becomes a sacred and holy script that has a very complicated, secret and hidden meaning. The script teaching, including its variation in shape, is aimed at introducing the Balinese script heritage, therefore the Balinese people can recognize, read, and understand the contents of ancient literature that has been passed down by the ancestors as well as to understand their identity as a spark of *Parama atman*.

Based on the importance of the role of Balinese script, it is important to conduct a research especially with regard to the string and modification of Balinese script that commonly known as calligraphy. In general, the purpose of this research is aimed at knowing the recent progress of Balinese script. While in particular, it is aimed at knowing the string and modification art of Balinese script that is known as calligraphy. Theoretically this study is expected to add the scientific treasury of the archipelago's script and practically it is expected to be used as a reference for the Balinese to develop the string and modification art of Balinese script.

According to Bagus as cited in Medera (2005: 91) states that the Balinese script plays a very important role for Balinese people. It is proved by the tradition of respect for the character and knowledge (Veda) which is performed every six months, which is known as the day of *Sang Hyang Aji Saraswati*. This day is celebrated every Saturday, *Umanis, Watugunung*. On this day, there is a *bhisama* (abstinence) which should not be violated by the Balinese, which is killing the Balinese script. Killing Balinese script means that we give more than one vowel embellishment, so it can not be read (Medera, 2005: 92).

1. *Wresastra*, which is used to write general Balinese (common), namely; *urak*, *pipil*, *pangeling-eling*, etc.
2. *Swalalita*, which is used to write *Kawi* language, *Kawi Tengahan*, and Sanskrit, such as; *kidung*, *kakawin*, *parwa*, *sloka*.
3. *Modre*, which is used to write *kadyatmikan*, such as; *japamantra*.

105



Picture 1. Calligraphy in a form of a Swan

Source: The Document of Culture Department of Denpasar



Picture2. Calligraphy in a form of a Keris

Source: The Document of Culture Department of Denpasar

The submission of the above criteria, according to the author is very plausible. *Modre* script in a form of calligraphy is a secret script, which is a symbol and essence of a particular philosophy, as a form of a spiritual teaching. This script needs to get the right position in the placement, so as not to cause *tulah*. According to Drs. I Gede Sura, M.Si., *tulah* is the one who behave; if there are people who learn literacy, then felt that they are the smartest and if there are people who feel no guilt, when they made a mistake, and so forth. Those criteria and similar is called *tulah*. So, *tulah* is an unconscious behavior, or misbehavior due to the absence of a deep understanding upon something. In other words, people who are *tulah* do not have a proper meaning. In relation to the calligraphy, based on the opinion above, we should always consider the rules in writing Balinese script calligraphy to avoid *tulah* and improve ourselves well.

If we think about the opinion of the experts mentioned above about the calligraphy writing for the general criteria that will be widely disseminated, so that appropriate use is also the common script. *Modre* calligraphy is only for those who are already deserved to write and use the calligraphy derived from *modre*. Moreover, the writer should also consider several factors, namely; holy place and the upstream places/*hulu*, so that no *tulah*, for its spiritual purposes. The calligraphy that will be used as a decoration in a public places

should apply the *subasita* script. Therefore there are two types of calligraphy, those are; the calligraphy for decoration of a general nature and calligraphy for them who pursue spiritual. The calligraphy which contains *subasita*, will lead the readers to behave well. While the calligraphy which is derived from *modre* which has the essence of the teachings of the universe and give a direct effect into the human body and the natural environment should be learned carefully with the guidance of a teacher who has a broad and deep understanding about *modre*, in order to be able to reach an understanding towards it.

Long time ago, the traditional calligraphy was made on a palm leaves, paper, and white cloth which are used as a scripture and part of a ritual. But nowadays, there are *modre* calligraphies which are made in various form and shapes. For example, painting a *modre* on canvas, painted using paint color, complex style, hard to be read and understood because there are many rules which bind each other which is very difficult to be understood. These types of calligraphy are the new types which is not wellknown because of their complexity. We could not only just doodle it without understand the script character and the contained philosophy. Therefore, the calligraphy which is painted on a canvas is often copied from the literature which contains the calligraphy itself, but the style is modified. However, there is a function shift between those calligraphies. The calligraphy on canvas is often used as a decoration or may be used as a guardians after sacralization

The calligraphy which is suggested containing *subasita* script, is made to disseminate kindness and *tattwam asi* with all of the creature, in which there is the elaboration of philosophy that is aimed at deepening the understanding of the relation between human and god, among humans and with their environment. Through a deep understanding of that matter, people will hold the truth which will give a powerful grip on them in living the life, where they will find quietness and peace. After the people experience freedom in them, they would have once held the justice, and then they are already appropriate to understand *modre* as a summary and magical form of philosophy, so they will not abuse the powers that are in them. Calligraphy in the past is widely available in palm leaves, paper, and cloth. The calligraphy which is written on the fabric is usually functioned for a religious matter, and other religious functions, such as the body immune ritual and magic. There are no calligraphy written on stone discovered, as found at the grave sites of Muslims.


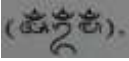
Hindus Calligraphy in Bali is rarely displayed on the walls of the room, because it felt like something different, as if the house owner put witchcraft. Moreover, if it is made plain by wearing a white cloth, it would have the same characteristics as incantations or some sort of *desti/ leak* repellent or caller. But, nowadays there is calligraphy which is painted on a canvas media, the scripts are made with a touch of art, and then the calligraphy looks like a painting. It is the art of script painting in addition to the hope behind the installation of the letter. Calligraphy will be seen sacred if it is painted by using a combination of black and white, compared to using a lot of color. If the script painting considers a process of coosing a good day, materials, and then reached the stage of *mlaspas* and *masupati/* affirmation, it means that the written calligraphy created is qualified to be called sacred. However, the function remains as a display or reinforcement repellent, before people agree to other functions. Traditionally, anything that includes *modre* script, such as; *rerajahan*, *ulap-ulap*, *kajang*, *pengijeng*, and so on is a form of art work that is aimed at obtaining or bringing the forces of nature, so what is expected could be achieved. Thus considering the importance of literacy in bringing the forces of nature and in order to increase the happiness of mankind, the modern calligraphy need to be disseminated, and placed at the appropriate place (Rema 2011: 1-5).

Jelantik (1990: 14) states that, in order to understand and enjoy the wonderful taste of an artwork, the aesthetic aspects concept can be applied, namely concerning the content of the artwork, the weight of the artwork, and the meaning which is presented to the observer. This weight can be captured directly by the senses or indirectly after live up to what is seen.

There are several paintings concentrate with *modre* cultivated in modern painting. Although not all seem *modre* as a whole, but it has been processed or transformed into a form that is clear enough or more abstract, but still show the modern painting style with *modre* themes. The Bali script is processed and painted with a specific style and preconfigured with aesthetic aspects so that there is a clear form of letters and nothing seems unclear or vague (figure 3).



Figure 3. Modre Script Calligraphy
Source: Document of I Gusti Ngurah Nala

The figure 3 above is the calligraphy painting composed by *ongkara*  and *triaksara*  which are painted using red dominated color, which makes the painting looks beautiful. There is a modification on the tip of each letter which looks like vines that wrap a tree, however, the identity of the scripts are remain recognizable that show aesthetic style.

In relation to calligraphy, calligraphy is a sacred script, which is formed with a sense of art, attractive, and has a high value of the Godness, which can only be understood by those who understand and profound inner mastery. Based on the discussion and description above, calligraphy is included to natural sense of aesthetics as it is drawn beautifully, contains the true faith of Godness, useful for improving trust in God, and increasing the value of oneself toward inner peace, knowing the natural phenomena, and understand the philosophy of the universe as the embodiment of God. Moreover, internalize moral value as the most important thing that initiates human character. Calligraphy is the teaching of the Godhead that prioritizes strict moral aspects, in order to maintain the balance of the universe, because calligraphy that can evoke magical powers should be based on the existence of ethics. It also can be seen from the arrangement of letters, which can not be exchanged in accordance with the direction and degree, as well as the function and meaning for the body.

III. CONCLUSION

Balinese script as one of the community pride in Bali has always been developed as a form of love by its supporters. Although it has grown and rooted very old, but in fact it has its own appeal in a form of technique to pack the Hindu teachings to be more close to the heart of his people. This technique is implemented by writing *subasita* literacy into the art of beautiful writing, which is commonly called as calligraphy.

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