



## Classical Painting of Wayang Kamasan to be UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

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### ABSTRACT

In the past, Balinese artists have been perfecting their skills in arts as an expression of gratitude to the Higher being or as a service to the community. One of the classic painting styles that endured through time in Bali since the days when King Anak Wungsu reigned. The classic art is the painting style from Kamasan village, Klungkung, known as *Lukisan Wayang Kamasan* or Kamasan Shadow Puppet Painting. Kamasan puppet painting is an expression of Wayang performance, composed into a 2-dimensional painting. The method of storytelling in the form of painting developed rapidly during the reign of ancient Bali, especially by the people who lived in the Kamasan village of Klungkung. The steps in determining the layout of the image, the drawing process, color making, and the coloring process of the Kamasan puppet painting are still used traditionally. The Indonesia Education and Culture ministry announced the submission of the Wayang Kamasan painting to UNESCO in early February 2022. This submission is a re-submission after the Kamasan puppet painting was proposed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2018 by the Indonesian Government. However, the submission of the Kamasan Wayang painting as an intangible cultural heritage in 2018 was rejected because the documents were incomplete. The purpose of the protection in this convention is for art preservation, especially, for future generations. It means that anyone can use it, not just the group to whom the recognition of ownership of the intangible cultural heritage is given.

**Keywords:** Wayang Kamasan painting, Classical Painting, UNESCO, Intangible Cultural Heritage.

**Cite This Article:** Ariani, N.M. 2022. Classical Painting of Wayang Kamasan to be UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Bali Tourism Journal* 6(1): 17-20. DOI: 10.36675/btj.v6i1.74

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Received: 2022-03-20  
Accepted: 2022-03-28  
Published: 2022-04-01

### BACKGROUND

In the past, Balinese artists have been perfecting their skills in arts as an expression of gratitude to the Higher being or as a service to the community. One of the classic painting styles that endured through time in Bali since the days when King Anak Wungsu reigned. The classic art is the painting style from Kamasan village, Klungkung, known as *Lukisan Wayang Kamasan* or Kamasan Shadow Puppet Painting. The word *Wayang*, etymologically, means shadow.<sup>1</sup> Wayang is a figure from an animal's hide in a shadow play performance. Then, the word Kamasan has mentioned in the year Saka 994 or 1072 AD as a village name in the Klungkung Regency. It is called the Kamasan shadow puppet painting because the art school originated in the Kamasan area. This village was the only village in Klungkung where the painter's community flourished.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the art of Wayang Kamasan Painting refers to a painting depicting the character of shadow

play, made in Kamasan village.

The roots of the Wayang as performing art, a method of mass storytelling in Balinese culture, can be historically traced for more than 2,000 years. The Indian trader communities who settled in the Nusantara (Indonesia before it was known as the Dutch East Indies) are said to have brought Hindu culture and religion on their way to trade to the archipelago. Some of their famous epic stories later became the main theme for the Wayang performances. As a traditional play, this shadow performance settled its position as mass entertainment. Despite Wayang plays being usually based on stories taken from the Hindu epics, such as Ramayana and Mahabharata, The Javanese modified the story with a local touch. As a result, other plays are based on old Indonesian stories, such as the Kala Rau and Panji stories.<sup>3</sup> In addition, some even manifested the art of Wayang performance as storytelling paintings outlined in 2D media, such as stone plates, tree bark, cloth and canvass.

Currently, Wayang Kamasan Painting artisans have produced many paintings in various media, yet only limited consumers use the products. This situation relates to the target market because limited communities use Kamasan Wayang painting products. To expand the market, a study by Raditya et al. (2018) proposed that modern painters utilize digital marketing, namely marketing that is carried out by information technology. Innovative products such as media to paint classical paintings, such as wall clocks and lighted frames, might significantly increase the market's demand regarding product quantity and quality. Marketing innovations are carried out using digital marketing techniques to expand the market.<sup>4</sup> Another fact is that Kamasan puppet paintings on canvas are no longer sold in the market. Painters do not dare to make large-scale paintings on canvas. The painter only makes Wayang Kamasan paintings on canvas if there is an order from a customer.



**Figure 1.<sup>5</sup>** The painting style from Kamasan village, Klungkung, known as *Lukisan Wayang Kamasan* or Kamasan Shadow Puppet Painting.



**Figure 2.<sup>10</sup>** Wayang Kamasan Paintings on Bale Kambang Kertagosa's Ceiling.

### A Classical Fine Art from Klungkung Regency

Historical records mention that a storytelling culture through Wayang stories in two-dimensional fields grew and developed during the Majapahit Kingdom of East Java. The event occurred approximately around the 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The artisans carved Wayang characters as reliefs, often found on temple walls.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, in the form

of paintings, it is found depicted on processed bark, cotton cloth and wood. It is used to decorate temples, pavilions, and noble houses, especially at temple ceremonies and festivals. Meanwhile, in Bali, the painting culture developed, in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, then from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the village of Kamasan, Klungkung, had been classical art's epicenter.

Classical works are mostly communal,

where the artist rarely declares a work as their private property. The artistic process becomes a medium of gratitude to God. In the artistic process, the artist will usually be the main designer who forms the composition and sketches the details and outlines. Then, their pupils will be assistants in blending and adding color. Colors are created from natural materials such as iron oxide rock for brown, calcium from bone for white, ochre oxide clay for yellow, indigo leaf for blue, carbon soot or ink for black, then mixed with water to produce watercolors. The Chinese introduced enamel paint several hundred years ago to be used on the wooden panels of pavilions, temples, or glass.<sup>7</sup>

The painting Kamasan style flourished during the reign of Dalem Waturenggong in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Traditionally, this painting style only draws figures from the epic story of Mahabharata or Ramayana as its object. The art is bound by standards, norms, values and provisions, done collectively and communally, using natural materials and equipment, including color processing techniques such as *pere*, *belau*, *mangsi*, and *tulang*. Besides, it uses the colors *gincu* (lipstick), *atal*, *perada gede*, and *ancur*, imported from China. Not only does the painting result in an aesthetic look, but it also contains symbolic, philosophical values often used as enlightenment to reflect on human life in this world and the hereafter.<sup>8</sup>

### The Cultural Heritage Painting's Uniqueness

Kanta (1977/1978) stated that the *Dalem* or King of Klungkung, Dewa Agung Jambe, was highly concerned with art. The ruler of the 1870s even provided protection and guidance for painters. One prominent Wayang Kamasan painter was I Gede Mersadi, or Gede Modara, from Kamasan village, who gained his reputation after finishing a private project from the King himself. One day, Dalem instructed Mersadi to sketch a figure of the great general Modara from the story of Bomantaka. After Mersadi finished the task, the King applauded Mersadi's work as perfection. The King complimented Mersadi's skill in drawing a hauntingly beautiful figure of General Modara. Since that time, Mersadi was called by King Gede



Modara. Gede Mersadi proved himself able to express a mind-theatre character in the form of an extraordinary painting.<sup>9</sup>

In the 21st century, the painter of Wayang Kamasan applies traditional methods to produce fine-quality paintings. Due to its unique painting method, the Classical Painting of Wayang Kamasan has been registered as an Intangible



**Figure 3.**<sup>13</sup> The Painting of a warrior figure, antagonist or ogre would have certain authoritative, dashing, and strong expressions. Meanwhile, Punakawan figures such as Tualen, Merdah, Sangut, Delem, then animals, and plants are only a complement to liven up the atmosphere, with characters according to their roles in the play.

cultural heritage of Indonesia since 2015. The process of making fine art is described in several stages. They start by preparing the canvas as the media, known as *nganjinin* or *mubuhin*. Then, *ngreka* or making sketches, followed by *nyawi*, the coloring and giving ornaments process.

As the media for Wayang kamasan paintings, the canvas is made from white cloth, usually calico cloth. The cloth would be soaked in water to clean it from stains, then basked under sunlight until half dried. The half-dried cloth would later be dipped in sticky rice flour mixture and re-exposed to sunlight until it is completely dry. the *mubuhin* process is to cover and glue the fabric threads; thus, there will be no small gap between threads. The dried canvass is placed on a slab of boards to be rubbed repeatedly with sea shells until they are even, creating a perfectly white and smooth surface for the painter to sketch. At the beginning of the sketching process, the painter divides the canvas to determine a balanced image composition known as *Ngedum Karang*. Continued by *melokin*, the painter draws thin lines on the cloth to determine the character's location, supporting elements and others. Traditionally, the painter used charcoal as a drawing tool in this process, which was later developed using Chinese ink.

After determining the desired plan, the painter would start the sketching phase, known as *Ngreka*. Once the painter finishes the drawing, it is time for the coloring process. The colors used in Kamasan-style paintings are mostly naturally based, such as black from charcoal, white from grated animal bones, or blue from a plant's stem. The next step in the painting process is *Nyawi*, the ornaments-adding process, to balance the figure composition. According to the

place in the picture. The process then continued by *neling*, repeating or reviving what has been amended, such as the lines of the hands and fingers on all the characters in the picture/painting. After these stages are completed, then proceed with *nyocoin* and *muluin*. *Nyocoin* gives the *soca* (gemstone) to the clothes worn by each puppet character, while *muluin* gives hair or feathers to the hands, feet and certain body parts. In the final part, *mutihin*, this stage where the

painter gives white-colored shadows to the gemstones to make a radiant or luminous look.<sup>11</sup>

If visually observed, the Kamasan Puppet Painting character has certain shapes, attitudes, figures, expressions, and colors according to its role in the story it plays. Generally, Wayang Kamasan paintings take themes from old literature, especially literature in lontars and folklore. Among the parts of literature that are often used as the story, themes are stories from *Itihasa* and *Tantri* lontars, such as *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Sutasoma*, *Men Brayut*.<sup>12</sup>

The painting of high deities reflects the nature of justice and compassion. For instance, a God or priest figure would be depicted as an old face with a calm expression, complemented by yellow radiant light on the back to show a holy, just and compassionate nature. Meanwhile, The Painting of a warrior figure, antagonist or ogre would have certain authoritative, dashing, and strong expressions. These characters are usually considered the primary object of a certain epic story scene that the painter had sketched. *Punakawan* figures such as Tualen, Merdah, Sangut, Delem, then animals, and plants are only a complement to liven up the atmosphere, with characters according to their roles in the play.

### Registration Of Intangible Cultural Heritage to UNESCO

In 2022, the Ministry of Education and Culture proposed ten Intangible Cultural Heritage at ICH UNESCO. One of them is the classic Wayang Kamasan painting. Intangible cultural heritage Registration to ICH UNESCO is carried out every two years. Further, a country can only propose one intangible cultural heritage.

The Central Government proposed The Classical Painting of Wayang Kamasan from Kamasan Village, Klungkung regency, to be the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) conveyed in a virtual meeting on Tuesday, 15 February 2022. Previously, the Indonesian Government proposed a Kamasan painting to ICH Unesco in 2018. However, due to several reasons, the enrolment was unsuccessful. Then,

in 2022, the painting was re-proposed and competed with nine other intangible cultural heritage throughout Indonesia, such as *Rendang/Rendang*, *Ulos*, *Pempek*, *Tempe*, *Kamu*, *Tenun*, *Reog*, *Babiola/Rebab*, and *Kolintang*.<sup>14</sup>

To be registered as UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage is a conservation action plan for the sustainability of the Wayang Kamasan Style Painting. The local Government of Klungkung cooperated with several studios and communities to increase public awareness of the art. Many engagement activities, such as free lessons to learn how to paint the Wayang Kamasan Painting and participating in various cultural exhibitions at both local and national levels. The Wayang Kamasan Painting proposal, as one of the international cultural heritages, would be the best way to appreciate and preserve classical art.<sup>15</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Kamasan puppet painting is an expression of Wayang's performance, composed into a 2-dimensional painting. The method of storytelling in the form of painting developed rapidly during the reign of ancient Bali, especially by the people who lived in the Kamasan village of Klungkung. The steps in determining the layout of the image, the drawing process, color making, and the coloring process of the Kamasan puppet painting are still used traditionally. Although some colors are used over time, they change according to the available materials on the market.

The Indonesia Education and Culture ministry announced the submission of the Wayang Kamasan painting to UNESCO in early February 2022. This submission is a re-submission after the Kamasan puppet painting was proposed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2018 by the Indonesian Government. However, the submission of the Kamasan Wayang painting as an intangible cultural heritage in 2018 was rejected because the documents were incomplete. The purpose of the Convention is to preserve the heritage for generations of humankind. It means that anyone can use it, not just the group to whom the recognition of ownership of the intangible cultural heritage is given.

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