10-1-2012

The Gods Come For Play: Visualizing the Divine in Balinese Theatre

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Abstract

Playwrights, practitioners, and art historians have been shocked and inspired by Balinese theatre time and time again because it reveals the extent of devotion the Balinese have for their religion. Although many researchers have investigated the functionality through the performance aspect of the play, there is a lack of published research devoted how the functionality of the ritual and play are influenced by the physical aesthetic properties of the Barong and Rangda mask. The theatrical aspects are to be considered through investigating these masks in relation to the temple space of the Taman Aran. By investigating the aesthetic properties of the Barong and Rangda in relation to the Taman Aran temple through investigating the correlation between the functionality of the play and the effects of the aesthetic features, we have found that the masks act as a catalyst to physicalize and magnify the unseen battles between Rangda and Barong into human flesh within structure and perimeter in order to ultimately soothe the audience's conscience by capping the performance and reinstating the spirits to their original place. Thus, our study reveals that the Balinese culture does not have a religion wholly devoted not to defeat "evil", but rather devoted to awakening the mind to these supernatural forces in their daily lives.

Introduction

Balinese theatre is an extreme example of how a religion believes in visualizing the divine. In their society, the people believe that by entering this trance state and putting on masks one becomes the god to the point where even their words are authoritative, as stated by Jane Belo. Balinese theatre is typically performed in the nista man dala or outer zone of the temple, attracting the entire village to attend this ceremony and religious event which has the surface of Hindu ideology yet has the religious practices and values of indig n enus Bali which run deep within the performance. Within these performances, the Barong mask is representative of good and comes in many different forms, it most commonly presented as a barong kek, a mythical lion or dragon-like animal. The Rangda mask is made to represent evil and is most often depicted as a terrifying, unidentifiable creature.

Methodology

The method we will use to analyze the artistic features of the Barong and Rangda within Taman Ayun is largely based upon finding the original functional intent through scholarly research and then observing the art pieces to see how the artistic features work in accordance with the performance's function. First, we will compile more research and information about the functionality and ritualistic role of the performance, and also gain some basic cultural and religious understanding. Then, we will create a visual analysis of the Barang and Rangda within the Taman Ayun Temple and create a visual analysis of the Barang and Rangda performance, Capak.

Bibliography