

Categories of Balinese Dance

At the heart of Balinese culture is Hinduism. This unique religion is the foundation of Bali's rich art forms and dance in Bali not only serves as an offering to the Gods but also as entertainment for human beings. In Bali, dances are divided into three categories based upon the religious significance of a particular dance and the place of its performance. The three categories of dance in Bali are:

Wali means “ritual” and refers to forms of music and dance that must be performed during religious ceremonies or festivals. These sacred dances are the oldest forms of dance in Bali. Usually, these dances are performed in the *jeroan*, the innermost, and holiest, courtyard of a Balinese temple. *Bebali* means “offering” and refers to ceremonial forms of music, dance and drama that are not necessarily a required part of a ritual but serve to accompany a ceremony. *Bebali* dances are held in the *jaba tengah*, the middle courtyard of a Balinese temple.

Balih-balihan means “performance” or “spectacle” and refers to secular dances that act as entertainment in Bali. Into this category fall all dances that are not *wali* or *bebali*. These dances are, however, often associated with religious ceremonies and can be performed in the *jaba*, the outer court of a temple.

The Art Of A People

Four Secular dances, known as *Balih-balihan*, are featured on this disc: *Teruna Jaya*, *Arja*, *Joged* and *Kecak*. Although enjoyed as entertainment, these dances are art as metaphor and fulfill a rich function in society as a purveyor of morals and ethics.

Teruna Jaya was choreographed before 1920 in north Bali by I Gede Manik. It means ‘victorious youth’ and is a dynamic and sophisticated dance which is very challenging to the dancer and gamelan orchestra.

Arja is known as Balinese opera. The dance drama is sung in Balinese which gives it direct accessibility to its audience (*Kawi*, the ancient Javanese tongue, is used in much of the theatre in Bali which must be then translated for the audience) and allows for the introduction of many contemporary topics.

Joged means ‘female dancer’ in old Javanese. A very improvisational dance structured around basic Balinese dance movements, but inviting audience participation which often times becomes very flirtatious and amusing. Often performed at ceremonial occasions, such as weddings, or for celebrating community works, such as harvest.

Kecak was developed in the late 1920s. Based on the *Sanghyang* trance dance, the German artist Walter Spies and the Dutch author Katherine Mershon collaborated with the village Dance troop of Bedulu and I Wayan Limbak. Often known as the monkey dance, it unfolds the exploits of the monkey king Hanoman from the Hindu epic the Ramayana. The *Kecak* shown here is a more contemporary creation by Sardono W. Kusumo from 1972. It plays out the drama, again from the Ramayana, of the brother monkey kings, Subali and Sugriwa.

Suggested Further Reading

There exists a vast range of literature concerning traditional Balinese arts and culture. Below are suggested books that will allow you to find out more information relating to Balinese dance and music:

Originally published in 1938, *Dance and Drama in Bali* by Walter Spies and Beryl de Zoete (2002, Hong Kong and Singapore: Periplus Editions) contains a large selection of both pictures and stories relating to various forms of Balinese dance-drama.

A more recent book on Balinese dance is *The Sacred Dances of Bali* by Christian Racki (1998, Denpasar: CV. Buratwangi). This book contains colour photographs and provides the reader with short introductions to many Balinese dances.

To find out more about the music that accompanies many of the various forms of Balinese dance Michael Tenzer's *Balinese Music* (1998, Berkley: Periplus) provides an excellent introduction and is presented in an easy to understand manner.

For more in-depth information regarding Balinese dance I Made Bandem and Fredrik E. de Boer's *Balinese Dance in Transition: Kaja and Kelod*. (1981, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press) and Colin McPhee's “Dance in Bali.” (1970, in *Traditional Balinese Culture* edited by Jane Belo, pp. 290-321. New York: Columbia University Press) provides a more technical and analytical approach.