

## TRANSLATION

# Bila Bali di Tangan Bule: If Bali Were Held By Bules

by Gus Martin (translated by Michael Tenzer)

Who wasn't shaken up when Sekaha Gong Sekar Jaya from California presented their skills to us? The group of "white skinned" musicians were so devoted to and appreciative of Balinese gamelan. How agile were their fingers dancing over the tuned keys! They were like a wave that sometimes rumbled softly, sometimes roared.

The "bules\*," suddenly, on stage, became intimate members of our society. This is just as it should properly be when we get together with our loved ones at the balai banjar, balai desa\*\*, village pavilion— anywhere that we find ourselves involved with gamelan and at one with all sorts of music. But then we awaken to the fact that they are foreigners, and we must acknowledge the great facility with which they play.

It was as if Sekaha Gong Sekar Jaya, which played at the Art Center Theatre last Wednesday July 3, was taunting us. Rather, they were reminding us. We are at a crossroads. On the one hand we feel proud. On the other hand we feel "small." Proud, because our arts have received the highest possible appreciation — not only are they admired but they are actually studied by other peoples. Small, because many of us (Balinese) don't even know how to hold a mallet, much less play! Try asking members of our younger generation about Gamelan Pelegongan, Bebarongan, Kebyar or Gender and the vast majority will just shrug their shoulders. They don't know.

There is a sensitivity arising within us. We have rejected many of our traditional cultural values. Something becomes of value to us only when it is in the palm of a Westerner's hand. Only then do we begin to admire what we had never admired, when all of a sudden Balinese arts are performed by "bules." They play. They dance.

And us? Just ignorant observers.

Siapa yang tidak terkesima, ketika Sekaha Gong Sekar Jaya, dari California, memperlihatkan kebolehannya. Rombongan penabuh "kulit putih" itu seakan begitu lekat dan apresiatif terhadap seperangkat gamelan Bali. Betapa lincah jari-jari mereka menari di atas daun-daun laras. Mereka larut dalam alun yang kadang mendayu, kadang menghentak.

Para "bule" itu mendadak, di atas pentas, jadi masyarakat akrab kita. Seperti layaknya ketika kita sama-sama berkumpul dengan kerabat kita di bale banjar, bale desa, di wantilan di pelosok-pelosok, yang bergelut dengan barungan gambelan. Lalu larut dalam aneka tetabuhan. Namun kemudian, kita sadar bahwa mereka telah begitu fasih menabuh.

Sekaha Gong Sekar Jaya, California, yang tampil di wantilan Taman Budaya, Rebo 3 Juli 85 seolah berkelakat di hadapan kita. Betapa tidak, menonton mereka berarti menonton suatu 'peringatan' buat kita. Kita berada di dua sudut. Di sudut yang satu kita merasa bangga. Di sudut yang satu lagi kita merasa "kecil." Bangga, karena budaya milik kita telah mendapat penghargaan tertinggi yang bukan saja dikagumi, tetapi dipelajari oleh bangsa lain. Kecil, karena kita sendiri (orang-orang Bali) banyak yang tidak bisa menabuh dan bahkan memegang "panggul" saja tidak becus. Coba saja tanyakan kebanyakan pemuda kita, yang mana jenis gamelan pelegongan, yang mana Bebarongan, Gong Gede, Bebonangan, Gong Kebyar, atau Gender, pasti sebagian besar diantara mereka angkat bahu. Tidak tahu.

Rasa risi kadang menggejala di tengah kita. Banyak nilai-nilai seni budaya di sekitar kita yang enggan kita sentuh. Sesuatu menjadi begitu berharga bila sesuatu itu berada di telapak tangan orang barat. Kita baru merasa kagum, pada suatu yang tidak pernah kita kagumi bila kesenian Bali tiba-tiba dibawakan oleh kaum bule. Mereka menabuh. Mereka menari.

Lalu, kita? Jadi penonton yang bodoh.

—*Bali Post*, Sunday, July 7, 1985

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\* Bule is Indonesian slang for Westerner

\*\* balai banjar and balai desa are village and community meeting halls where gamelan rehearsals and other coordinated village activities take place.