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# MEPANTIGAN

Balinese Martial Art

As a part of celebrating Indonesia's 63rd Independence Anniversary, The Green School, Sibang Kaja, conducted The 1st. Open Mepantigan Championship.

*Mepantigan* is a type of sport exhibition with thick Balinese tradition. The word is derived from Balinese, and literally means "clinging each other". "The sport is a combination of dancing and martial arts, especially wrestling. The techniques in this sport are mostly clinching and locking," explained Putu Witsen Wijaya, co-founder of Bali Mepantigan Arts.

The sport can be traced back to ancient India. The Mahabharata, one of the major Sanskrit epics of ancient India, describes the encounter between Bhima and Jarasandha "grasping each other in various ways by means of their arms, and kicking each other with such violence as to affect the innermost nerves, they struck at each other's breasts with clenched fists. With bare arms as their only weapons roaring like clouds they grasped and struck each other like two mad elephants encountering each other with their trunks".

The uniqueness of this "wrestling ala Bali" is the arena. Instead of thick mattress on the floor, *mepantigan* uses wet and muddy rice field as the arena. The selection of muddy rice field is not without reason. For Balinese, rice field is not only their livelihood, but also a kids' playground. Rice field is a part of people's lives in Bali. Other than that, the use of *kamen* (sarong) on their waists and *udeng* (head band) as the official costume for the fighters add the local atmosphere to the sport.

With gamelan music accompanies every fight, it is not exaggerating to say that mepantigan is a artistic creation as a collaboration of dance, sport and music. (Ruslan)

PS: Mepantigan performs in Ubud every Thursday  
at ARMA Museum, 6.30 pm.

# *Mepantigan,* Balinese Martial Art





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