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Master's

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Image created in Bali, Indonesia

# Bunga (Flower)

*Semi-finalist*

Today, almost everyone has heard of Bali. To some, it means a paradise which brings mental images of warm weather, palm trees, rolling waves, romantic getaways, or a scene of a wide-eyed Julia Roberts from the movie adaptation of *Eat Pray Love*. In general, the popular knowledge of Bali ends there. My research looks at a community of individuals that many Westerners and tourists visiting Bali are often unaware of - *warias* - the transgender women of Indonesia. The aim of my research is to document and analyze the disrupted life cycles of *warias* which are heavily influenced and marginalized by religion, national belonging, histories of transitioning, abuse, sex work, and tourism.

This image, taken at Taman Ayun (Mengwi) Temple during my ethnographic fieldwork in Bali, is a metaphor to the lives of these transwomen. Much like the decorative flower placed on one of the guardians of the temple, the *warias* of Bali bring beauty and diversity to the island paradise. My research hopes to shed light on this community that is often overlooked and misunderstood. And like any flower in bloom, we only realize how beautiful and important the lives of these individuals are until we take a closer look.