

**BAGIA – Indonesia**

**Megeret Pandan | Acrylic on Canvas | 140 x 120 cm | 2024**



**“Megeret Pandan”** refers to a Balinese tradition known as “Perang Pandan,” which is a ritual combat practiced by the Bali Aga population of Tenganan village in Karangasem Regency, Indonesia<sup>1</sup>. The term “Perang Pandan” literally means “pandan battle,” and it is also called “Mageret Pandan” or “Makare-kare” in Balinese language.

This tradition involves ritual combat with clubs made of pandan leaves, which are known for their small sharp thorns. The participants, who are male members of the community, engage in this combat as part of a month-long ceremony called ‘Usabha Sambah,’ held every sasih Kalima — the fifth month on the Balinese calendar, around June. The combatants fight shirtless, wearing only a sarong and traditional headdress, and use a rattan buckler as a shield.

The ritual is a homage to the deity Indra, the warrior god, and is believed to have originated from Hindu mythology about King Maya Denawa and Indra. King Maya Denawa arrogantly claimed himself to be a god greater than the entire Hindu pantheon, forbidding people from performing their religious ceremonies. This angered the gods, and Indra fought and defeated Maya Denawa. The “Perang Pandan” commemorates this battle.

For the young men of Tenganan, “Perang Pandan” serves as a rite of passage into manhood, with even children as young as seven participating. The blood shed during the ritual is meant as an offering to appease the gods, and the wounds are treated with traditional ointment made from a mixture of arrack, turmeric, galangal, and other spices. This tradition is not only a testament to physical strength and bravery but also a significant cultural heritage that reinforces community bonds and honors the ancestors.