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Class of 2017
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On May 17, 2015, I caught a flight bound to the other side of the world with several suitcases and a piece of advice: Bali gives you what you need. I did not know at the time what I needed, but I can now say no truer words were spoken. For my Burch Fellowship, I traveled to Bali, Indonesia for my Burch Fellowship to study the performative customs, specifically ceremonies and healer-patient interactions, of traditional medicine and spiritual healing with a concentration on the connections between medicine, music, and dance in Bali. I wanted to anthropologically explore and understand the qualitative medical practices of the Eastern hemisphere after being exposed to a Western healthcare system. This would ultimately allow me to incorporate a holistic worldview of medicine in my future study and practice of clinical medicine, as well as in my own life.

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BALI: AN EXPLORATION OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND SPIRITUAL HEALING

I quickly realized that the town of Ubud, the first of my five destinations and Bali's art and culture hub, was teeming with opportunities for my research so I made Ubud my home for the majority of my trip. The last two weeks of my journey were in Lovina, a beach town on the northern coast, and Amed, a small fishing-village on the eastern coast, both of which are regions of Bali that are less tourist-trodden.

Over the course of my fellowship I conducted formal and informal interviews with traditional Balinese healers; musicians and dancers for



gamelan, the traditional ensemble music of Java and Bali; *topeng* ("mask") makers; the founders and administrators of various organizations; yogis; and a spa owner. With such a wide variety of interviews, I wanted to figure out what connected the cultural aspects of Balinese society, specifically gamelan music and dance, *topeng*, and yoga with Balinese practices of traditional medicine and spiritual healing. I was also interested in taking a look at the Western healthcare system in Bali, and determining whether or not this practice of medicine has integrated with the ancient traditions. Along with conducting interviews, I attended religious ceremonies, paid homage to my Hindu faith by visiting 11 puras, watched a traditional Balinese music and dance performance, and learned one myself. Through deep immersion in Balinese culture and society, I was largely successful in accomplishing everything I intended to do and to learn.

Daily prayers and *canang saris*, handmade Balinese Hindu offerings of different colored flowers in small



palm-leaf baskets, welcomed me to Bali as soon as I arrived by taxi at my homestay in Ubud. It became clear to me that these prayers and offerings represent the thread of religion that connects all aspects of Balinese society together. The Balinese form of Hinduism emphasizes the significance of harmony with oneself, others, and the environment in both physical and spiritual healing. Methods of Balinese healing are holistic, and include meditation, yoga, massage, and acupuncture in addition to gamelan music and dance. Importantly, the Balinese visit a traditional healer or medicine man for ailments of the "plasma" body, or spiritual body, and they visit a doctor for ailments of the physical body. Dewa, one of the healers I visited, informed me that Balinese healers do not necessarily heal patients, but rather, they teach patients how to spiritually heal themselves. Doctors, on the other hand, perform examinations and prescribe medication to patients that need physical healing. I was able to experience both forms of healing firsthand. My many visits to Balinese healers were all distinct from one another, but comparable in that they

all sensed similar spiritual and physical conflicts in me. As a result of the Bali Belly stomach bug that I contracted my third week, I gained direct exposure to Bali's western healthcare system at the Toya Medika Clinic. The limitation of one doctor per shift and a waiting room crowded with locals and travelers made

the wait-time quite frustrating. After being seen by the doctor, however, I understood the demand. The doctor was dressed in professional clothing without a white coat and took her time listening to me explain my symptoms, examining me, and fully explaining both her diagnosis and the effects that

every prescribed medication would have on me. The integration of Balinese ancient traditions with the modern healthcare system became apparent to me through my prescription of probiotics, herbal supplements, and other symptom-targeting pills. Not only did I feel as though my physical health would improve in no time, but I felt a sense of spiritual peace that helped me understand and give meaning to the word "holistic."

During my two-month journey, I was able to do almost everything I planned. However, it was everything that I did not intend to happen or wished to avoid that turned my travels into adventures. Bali tested me again and again and again. Along with Bali Belly, I had a difficult time adjusting to the heat, I suffered from a cold, I became very frustrated with the language barrier, and I became homesick.

With each unpredictable obstacle, I found myself eventually saying *terima kasih* ("thank you"). The breathtaking



views of the orange ombré sunset at Gili Trawangan Island and the peak of Mount Batur were more soul strengthening and more powerful than the heat or any stomach bug could ever be. The patient and warm-hearted nature of the local Balinese people made it possible for me to communicate and overcome verbal gymnastics through an expression as simple as a smile. Above all, each beautiful soul I was fortunate enough to meet became members of my family in a place I slowly felt becoming more and more a home. It is to the island of Bali that I say *terima kasih* for figuring out exactly what I needed. Bali gave my mind a sense of clarity, nourished my heart and soul, and expanded my perspective of people and places of the world. *Terima kasih* to Bali and to the Burch Fellowship for the greatest adventure of my life.