

DOI 10.31696/2618-7302-20223-029-042

## CEREMONIAL SINGING: *KIDUNG* AS RELIGIOUS PRAXIS IN CONTEMPORARY BALI

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Desak Suarti Laksmi<sup>1</sup>

*Kidung* is Balinese ritual hymn or canticle, typically recited in a homophonic choir by a group of local singers based on a pre-existing text to accompany religious celebrations. Selected lyric of *kidung* verse is deliberately recited for a number of ritual reasons. The role of *kidung* is to complete the ritual and religious celebration as the fifth Gita. The four related ritual gitas or sacred sounds include the sound of symbolic narrative forms (*Swara Yantra Abinaya*) of *wayang* puppetry, infused with edification and divine philosophy; the sound of *Gamelan* music accompanying temple dances (may it be a female *Rejang* dance, *Makerab* dance, *Sutri*, *Pendet* dance, or male *Baris* warrior dance, *Sandaran* dance, etc.); the sound of *Kulkul* wooden bell, and the sound of Veda / mantra incantation recited by the temple priest, who invariably leads the ritual ceremony. *Kidung* hymn and *gamelan* music together create *Vadyagita*. The dance and the mantra incantation together create *Nertya Puja*, which creates divine matrix of the on-going ritual ceremony. Almost no Hindu-Balinese religious ceremony (*yadnya*) is complete without *kidung* singing with lyrics drawn from Middle Javanese literature. *Kidung* is used for the *panca yadnya* (five ceremonies) namely: *dena yadnya* (for god), *bhuta yadnya* (lower spirit), *rsi yadnya* (for priest), *pitra yadnya* (for ancestor), and *manusa yadnya* (for human), with the appropriate *kidung* text selection. This singing supports the solemnity of spiritual practice of singers and listeners, perfecting the ceremony as an offering of expressive communication.

*Keywords:* *kidung*, *yadnya*, Hindu-Balinese religion

*For citation:* Desak Suarti Laksmi. Ceremonial Singing: *Kidung* as Religious Praxis in Contemporary Bali. *Vestnik Instituta vostokovedenija RAN*. 2022. 3. Pp. 29–42. DOI: 10.31696/2618-7302-20223-029-042

## ОБРЯДОВОЕ ПЕНИЕ: *КИДУНГ* КАК РЕЛИГИОЗНАЯ ПРАКТИКА НА СОВРЕМЕННОМ БАЛИ

Десак Маде Суарти Лаксми

*Кидунг* – это балийский ритуальный гимн или песнь, обычно исполняется гомофонным хором на основе уже существующего текста группой местных певцов и сопровождающий религиозную церемонию.

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<sup>1</sup> Desak Suarti Laksmi, Lecturer and faculty member of music department of the Indonesian Art Institute (ISI), Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia, a renowned *kidung* performer; suartilaksmi@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-6308-2109.

Десак Суарти Лаксми, доцент Индонезийского института искусств, Денпасар, Бали, Индонезия, известный исполнитель кидунга; suartilaksmi@gmail.com.

Избранные строфы *кидунга* исполняются специально в различных ритуальных целях, обычно завершая обряд и выступая в качестве пятой *гиты*, в то время как предшествующие четыре включают звучание символических нарративных форм (*Svara Yantra Abinaya*) кукольного представления *вайянг*, проникнутых просветительством и религиозной философией; звучание музыки *гамелан*, сопровождающей храмовые танцы (женские танцы *реджанг*, *макераб*, *сутри*, *пендет* или мужские – воинский *барис*, *сандарам* и т.д.); звучание деревянного колокольчика *кукул*, а также звучание ведийских гимнов и *мантр*, произносимых храмовым жрецом, который проводит обряд. Танец и произнесение мантр вместе создают *нертья-пуджу*, придающую божественность церемонии. Ни одна индуско-балийская религиозная церемония (*yadnya*) не считается завершенной без *кидунга*, исполняемого на стихи из среднеяванской литературы. *Кидунг* используется для пяти обрядов (*panca yadnya*): в честь бога (*deva yadnya*), в честь духов (*bhuta yadnya*), в честь жреца (*rsi yadnya*), в честь предков (*pitra yadnya*) и в честь людей (*manusa yadnya*) с выбором соответствующих текстов. Эти песнопения обеспечивают торжественность религиозной практики певцов и слушателей, придавая церемонии завершенность и экспрессивную коммуникативность.

*Ключевые слова:* кидунг, yadnya, индуско-балийская религия

*Для цитирования:* Десак Маде Суарти Лаксми. Обрядовое пение: кидунг как религиозная практика на современном Бали. Вестник Института востоковедения РАН. 2022. № 3. С. 29–42.  
DOI: 10.31696/2618-7302-2022-3-029-042

## INTRODUCTION

The Hindu-Balinese religious song *kidung* is a form of *tembang* (song in Javanese poetic meters), which is included in the *dharma gita* (religious songs) offerings.<sup>2</sup> *Kidung* are originally poetic narratives written in Middle Javanese and their subject matter is historical or legendary events, for example stories of the East Javanese Prince Panji in the Malat cycle. The *kidung* tradition is the activity of sung recitation of those Javanese and Old Balinese texts that began in the sixteenth century with the entry of Javanese culture to Bali as Hindu-Buddhist courts of Mahapahit relocated due to Islamization of Java (see [Hinzler, 1993, p. 443; Suarka, 2007, p. 149]). Our mythology in Bali attributes the origin of Indian Music to the Divine Brahma. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva the Eternal Trinity were said to be the first musicians: Brahma kept the time beat with the clanging cymbals and Vishnu sounded the holy mridangam or the drum.

Similar to the mascot of campus ISI Denpasar, Lord Shiva displayed his infinite modes of rhythm in his cosmic dance of Universal creation and preservation. Origin of Music is traced to the Vedic hymns too that were chanted in ancient India during ceremonies and other religious occasions. As also mentioned in Natya Sastra, music can be found in Sama Veda (1200 BC), which is the second oldest scripture — after Rig Veda — in the Hindu tradition.<sup>3</sup>

*Kidung* traditions, together with other Balinese sung poetic forms, involve participants in singing, translating, and reviewing these traditional literary texts in the format of solo presentation, but in ceremony at present one finds *kidung* as largely cuttings of short poetry segments with content deemed appropriate for the specific ritual and sung by the group.

<sup>2</sup> Previous literature in English on *kidung* includes [Robson, 1971; Wallis, 1979; Zurbuchen, 1987; Vickers, 2005; Hinzler, 1993 and Creese, 2000]. Robson and Vickers discuss a particular case and translate texts. Wallis' interpretation was largely based on my information as a practitioner. Zurbuchen approached the socio-linguistics of the genre, relating it to other Balinese genres. Creese discusses *kidung* in relation to gender issues and palace protocols. Our approach here is more emic than the rather linguistic, sociological, and historical approaches of earlier analyses.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.freepressjournal.in/mind-matters/music-is-divine/197264> (дата обращения: 23.10.2022).

*Kidung* singing began to grow more popular in the 1980s and it is currently thriving, with more groups forming themselves as *sekaa santi* ('peaceful' choral groups). It is possible that the economic development provided by tourism and the renewed interest in Hinduism have helped the Balinese counter both Western globalization and the Islamic revival in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim society, and intensify ceremonial practices including this ritual singing. By vocal activities, singers hope to achieve moral and ethical formation for themselves and their listeners. *Kidung* singing is both a religious and an aesthetic activity for laywomen and men. Along with *wayang* puppetry, ritual reading, and topeng masked theatre, 'Musick hath charms to soothe a savage beast, to soften rocks or bend a knotted oak', as William Congreve had said. Sacred music (both vocal and instrumental) through holy artists and pious reciters has touched the heart of God. Music is still perceived as the blissful path to reach God.

Singing *kidung* remains an important requirement in Hindu-Balinese communal religious ceremonies and is one of the four categories of Balinese song.<sup>4</sup> Vocalists understand that the text they sing must be appropriate to the ceremony being held, with tone and tune suited to the event. Music has the power to heal our ailments too. After many experiments, it has been established that musical therapy can cure diseases like headaches.<sup>5</sup> *Kidung* is not just a supporting musical background, but itself an offering in and for the ceremony [Suarti Lakshmi, 2006; 2007, p.1]. The ontology of *kidung*, a largely female art, will be discussed and compared to the Veda (Hindu scriptures) and *kakawin* (Old Javanese [Kawi] narrative texts), which I will argue are more male specialist recitations, yet which model religious singing that *kidung* emulates.

Next, I hope to clarify *kidung*'s function in Balinese society: I argue the genre represents Balinese values concerning human life and spiritual thought. While the Veda and *kakawin* are distant, performed by specialists, and difficult to access (written in Sanskrit and Old Javanese, respectively, languages obscure without extensive translation), *kidung* verses are nearer, performed by ordinary members of the community (often females), and are in the relatively more accessible Middle Javanese.

### SAMPLE *KIDUNG* PERFORMANCE

Before continuing I will describe the progress of a representative performance discussing a *dewa yadnya* (divine) ceremony in which I was the song leader, which took place on 9 June 2018 in Mengwitani village, Badung regency, Bali during Kuningan, a holiday which comes every 210 days to celebrate the return of the ancestors to heaven at the end of their visit to the earth during the important Galungan festival.

A *yadnya* or ceremony, from organization to completion, it is a voluntary activity, demanding the attitude of *ngayah* (devotional service). A featured dancer or top *gong sekaa* (*gamelan* group) from another area are sometimes hired for a ceremony or, when time or expertise is lacking, some communities may hire a specialist to make the *banten* offerings, but, for the bulk of the labor and almost all artistic performances, including *kidung*, participation is a matter of devotion with no financial payment. Singing *kidung*, as an *ngayah* offering, brings the pride through the sincere efforts of each member of the *sekaa santi*. The appreciation of the community and karmatic gain are the singers' reward.

For the June 9 performance, six people sang *kidung*, three women and three men (an exception to the normal gender grouping which is heavily female and which gives an ideal number of eighteen – one singer to represent each letter of the Balinese alphabet). The group performed about two hours

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<sup>4</sup> These include *kakawin* (Old Javanese chanted narratives), *kidung* (Middle Javanese verse-song in relatively free meter), *macapat* (Balinese verse-songs in strict Javanese meters), and *dolan* (children's songs).

<sup>5</sup> <https://time.com/23952/21-natural-ways-to-prevent-and-treat-headaches/> (дата обращения: 23.10.2022).

prior to the beginning of the ceremony, singing various passages in *mebasaban* style, which has one person singing and their partner (*paneges*) translating.<sup>6</sup> Each of the six singers may in turn perform in this more entertainment-oriented section of the presentation, though as performers interpret the chosen passages for the community, literary- and theological-exegesis meet.

After this entertainment and semi entertainment section (*balih-balihan* and *bebali*), the sacred (*wali*) section began. During the one-hour duration of ceremony, there was about a half hour of *kidung* songs. This sacred section will be the focus of this discussion. Although casual bystanders can join in singing along with the group, in this case no one did. Our group, as always, had a specific area prepared for the performance; usually this area is a *wantilan* (open hall) near the sacred altar where the priest will officiate the ceremony. In cases where there is no pavilion available, singers will sit in front of the congregants.

For the first piece of the ceremony, ‘Kawitan Wargasari’ (overture of ritual song) was sung and lasted about ten minutes as the singers delivered two stanzas in *kidung* style, drawing out syllables via vocal elaborations and trills in monophonic acapella group singing. The text chosen was appropriate to the *dena yadnya* and talked about the beauty of flowers (which are extensively used in the actual ceremony): all community members arrive with flowers that they will hold above their head to pray and then tuck behind an ear or nest in their hair. The priest used them in his blessings, and later assistants will dip *campaka* flowers in the holy water to sprinkle the drops on the community members. The lyrics of the first verse of ‘Kawitan Wargasari’ are as follows:

*Purwakaning angripta rum ning wana ukir  
kabadang labuh kartika  
panedenging sari  
angoyon tangguli ketur  
angringring jangga mure*  
[Kidung Panca Yajna, 2006, p. 1].

*The fragrance of the forest  
Especially in the fourth month (spring season)  
When flowers are blooming  
Makes all look beautiful spreading out through this life.<sup>7</sup>*

The placement of the voice in this song is conceptualized as in the middle of the tongue (*madianing jiwa*), the technique most common in *kidung* singing. Resonance is achieved by pulling in the sides of the mouth while producing the relatively high tones of the singing and the sound creates a contemplative atmosphere as words are drawn out. The vocal wavering used may approximate the ‘shimmering’ effect characteristic of the Balinese *gamelan*. A single syllable may move through multiple notes. This song, as most of the *kidung* repertoire, used the non-equal interval of seven-toned *pelog* scale.

The second song was ‘Kidung Bremara Ngisepsari’ (The Bumblebee Sucks Flowers), which used again the *madianing jiwa* vocal placement. The first verse is:

<sup>6</sup> Kidung as semi-entertainment (*bebali*) presented before the ceremony, as with the solo singing and translation before the ceremony on June 9, emphasizes the aesthetic quality. In the ceremony itself, I argue it has a *wali* (sacred) function. Kidung can also be a secular entertainment (*balih-balihan*) in contests organized by the government. Groups I have trained have won first place in these contests, but my own interest in teaching has been to share the art and its spiritual ideas with my students.

<sup>7</sup> Translations are my own but sometimes I made them in consultation with either I. Nyoman Catra or I. Nyoman Sedana.

*OM OM sembah i katunan dumadak juwa keaksi  
mungwing pangebaktin titiang  
diastun langkung tuna sami  
pakirang artha wibhawa  
nista solah kalawan murus  
minah banget hina budhi  
[Kidung Panca Yajnya, 2006, p. 57].*

*Om, Om. My humble worship to the Supreme God.  
May the Divine One bless me,  
Realizing my respect toward Him.  
Although I am so deficient in wealth, behavior, and speech,  
and so lacking in proper conduct and everything,  
I acknowledge my nothingness before the Divine.*

These lyrics instruct us to be humble in the face of the Godhead to whom the ceremony is directed. The intent of the song is that if one seeks the pure essence (i.e. ‘honey’), the devotee (i. e. ‘the bee’) can infuse The Absolute in his/her life. During this song, the priest prepares the holy water. As this *kidung* progressed, one could hear the priest’s muffled *mantra* and the ringing of his bell.

Next the priest and his assistants started taking from the altar and dispensing the holy water and the group started singing *kidung* ‘Totaka’ with lyrics of ‘Turun titra’ (‘Water flows down’). Sometimes the priest’s assistants could also sing along as they worked their way through the crowd sitting cross-legged on the ground for the outdoors ceremony. The dispensers sprinkled drops of water over community members with the flower held in their right hand. Then they poured a little water in a congregant’s cupped hand for him/her to wet head, hair, and sip. Finally, a congregant took a few grains of rice from a silver pan the assistant also holds to stick to damp forehead while reciting *mantra Sryam bhavantu* for aesthetic sensibility, then to the chest with *Sukham bhavantu* for happiness, and then swallowed a few grains with *mantra purnam bhavantu* for perfection. The rice would remain for a while as a sign of participation in the rite.

The melody of this ‘Totaka’ song is slow and serious, giving a feeling of weight. Of the blessed individuals, some would recite the lyrics *sotto voce* or contemplate in internal concentration. The expressiveness and gravity of the singers were impressed as they joined the congregants at this height of the ceremony to wash away all evils.

*Turun tirtha sakeng lubur  
Pemangkune manyiratang  
mangelencok muncrat mumbul  
mapan tirtha mertha jati  
paocan bharata sami  
panyapatan dasa mala  
sami pada lebur  
malane ring bumi  
[Kidung Panca Yajna, 2006, p.74].*

*The water flows from above.  
The pemangku (priest) sprinkles it.  
The holy water splashes.  
It is the water of life, amirta,  
given by the gods  
to purify us from the ten evils.  
Everything worldly and negative will be destroyed.*

Depending on the number of people to be sprinkled, the *sekaa santi* might go to another less well-known song that is also appropriate for the dispensing of holy water – though in the June 9 case this was not needed.

After this blessing sequence, the group could do a song in Sekar Agung (Old Javanese poetic meters) but sung in light and ornamented *kidung* mode, rather than more guttural *kekawin* style. In this event, the group delivered a song, from *kakawin Arjuna Wiwaha* (written by Empu Kanwa c. 1030 AD) to a solemn tune.

*Çaci wimba haneng ghata mesi banyu;  
Ndanasing suci nirmala mesi wulan;  
Iwa mangkana rakwa kiteng kadadin;  
Ring angembeki yoga kiteng sakala.*

*Like the moon's reflection in the water-filled jar;  
The image only manifests if the water is clean and pure.  
So with the radiance of God in this world:  
Only in the good person who performs yoga  
Will God manifest His true self, shining holiness in its fullness.*

In this song, the placement of the voice differs and sound is focused at the base of the tongue, giving a deeper resonance. Still, the sound is 'lighter' than in normal *kakawin* recitation and the strict rules of *kakawin* meter, so important for *kakawin*, are deemphasized in the relatively free delivery. This *kidung* reminds us the Divine will not reveal its merit to just anybody. God shows his resplendence only to those who diligently purify themselves on the path of *dharma* (right action).

This passage drawn from the important mystical story of how the heroic Arjuna, the third of the Pandawa heroes in the *Mahabharata*, through his righteous and solitary meditation on Mount Indrakila won the weapon Pasupati (literally, 'Lord of Beasts') by conquering his animal [sensual human] nature. This weapon is gift of Siwa (Shiva) in recognition of Arjuna's meditation. Arjuna thus shows himself as equal to this Divinity of Shiva who is the lord of the dance and of destruction.

The final piece presented in this ceremony was 'Rikala Ngaluhur' (Time of ascending Ancestors). This song marked the conclusion of the June 9 event.

*Rikala ngaluhur manunas wara nugrane  
menawi kirangne katur  
agung sinampura ugi  
canange asebit sari  
mangda ica Ida nonton*

*nodya saking lubur  
mamuputang sami*  
(Kidung Panca Yajna 2006, p. 86)

*To the ancestors  
Flowers are the only things we have to offer.  
Please receive them.  
Of what is asked from above,  
Everything is already accomplished.  
We ask forgiveness  
For all we have done.*

The emotion of *kidung* is expressive and contemplative. The vocal feeling is light and the melody elaborated. To sing it gives the singer a feeling of freedom as she and co-singers draw out the syllables on the basis of breath capacity. In *kakawin* the *guru lagu* or metrical rules are restrictions, but in *kidung* the voices float freely giving a feeling of contemplation. Hearers are moved from mundane into the sacred via melody, lyrics, and intent.

In theory, if not practice, a group is made up of eighteen members (each representing one letter of the Balinese alphabet).<sup>8</sup> Men may of course participate as group members (as in the June 9 ceremony) and any person in the community can join during the actual ceremony. The leader is usually the person with the best voice who commands the largest repertoire and this is usually a woman (as I was the leader for June 9). The selection of stanza requires the leader to know what is appropriate to the ceremony and its progress. Lyrics corresponding to a marriage (*a manusa yadnya*), for example, would be strange in ceremony for a *dewa yadnya* for the gods.

The texts perhaps in greatest use today will be drawn from a selection available widely in small books that singers bring with them to each event (just one example is [Kidung Panca Yajna 2006]): such printed collections first appeared in the 1990s and are now the norm for singers.<sup>9</sup> Each ceremonial performance conceptually (as most Balinese performances) has an opening or head (*pengawit*) (here, 'Kawitan Wargasari'), a body (*pengawak*) (here, 'Totaka'), and closing (here, 'Rikala Ngaluhur'). The length of a song or the number of repetitions that the group might make of the same hymn would depend, as in this ceremony, on the actions of the priest. If he hurries, it will be a single rendition of the poem timed to conclude with his actions, if he is not rushing off to another ceremony, the presentation might be more leisurely, allowing viewers to truly savor the sound and the words by multiple iterations of the same lyrics.

Comprehension of the exact meaning by the viewers admittedly would be partial: a skilled singer would probably understand all the words, even if they too need seeking for the inner meanings. A casual observer might only comprehend 20%, yet the soothing sound and the implications of the grasped words would still give an impact. Those seeking to deepen the more meditative and peaceful feeling would sit near the singers or even join the song.

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<sup>8</sup> This idea of eighteen, one for each letter, is based on a traditional veneration of writing and literature. In a number of Indonesian forms (as in the opening passage of wayang theatre in many areas), one finds mantra regarding culture bringers like Aji Saka (Hindu-Buddhist cultural bringer) who divides the alphabet to the directions and letter give life and potency. This indicates the veneration of poets and literacy, which prevailed in a society when few could read. Ordinary people only had access to sacred stories, texts, and ideas through oral recitations, giving the letters themselves a kind of mantric potency in the mind of the society.

<sup>9</sup> In earlier periods group members would just learn orally-aurally by sitting in and singing along.

The performance of *kidung* is perhaps notable as that it is a necessary ceremonial performance where women predominate.<sup>10</sup> By contrast in other required or optional arts done with ceremonies, such as *wayang* (puppetry), *kakawin* (recitation of Old Javanese narratives), or *topeng* (mask dance) men lead. Each of these art groups (including *kidung*) must be considered supportive ‘stand-ins’ for the primary but more inward part of the event, the prayers and gestures of the priest, who effects the actual action of the ceremony and blessing of holy water. However, in singing *kidung*, women usually take a primary role: thus the one who arranges monthly meetings to go over songs and who leads the group in its monophonic performance is most often a woman, usually chosen for the quality of her singing.

It is also notable that this is a group operating in a relatively egalitarian manner to the outside eye – the group singing avoids emphases on a particular individual soloist – and this may reflect female norms in Bali, where the ideal woman is modest and self-effacing. The male dominated arts seem more hierarchical: a reciter of the Kawi poem-narrative heads *kakawin* while the interpreter to contemporary Balinese vernacular is secondary. In *wayang* the puppet master leads. In *topeng* masking, a male troupe head prevails.

The singing style may also favor the female. In these male arts, a deeper throat tone is needed. In *kidung*, the preferred vocal quality is light, trilling, and suited to the female voice. *Kidung* in structure, tone and its ideal of *ngayah* gives an important avenue for women to participate in ceremony as actual performers and so *kidung*’s aesthetics and organization manifest this Balinese ‘female’ inclination.

### **KIDUNG IN HINDU-BALINESE RITUALS: THEOLOGY, ONTOLOGY AND VALUES**

In this section, I discuss first the development of academic understandings of theology in contemporary Bali and then argue that *kidung* has an ideological relationship with the older genres, which include the Sanskrit Vedas and the Kawi *kakawin*, but moves further from the rarified world of sacred languages understandable to only the divine and the learned (Sanskrit, Kawi), toward what can be accessed by the average person (Middle Javanese). *Kidung* continues to maintain, linguistically or sonically, the distance from the layperson’s contemporary Balinese, and can therefore be clearly marked as ‘other’, giving it a feel of ‘sacred’, yet, since many words can be understood, *kidung* provides a way average people can enter the realm of the holy.

#### *Theology*

In the Hindu religion of Bali, the study of theology in an academic or theoretical mode has developed only since the 1960s with the founding of the high school of religion and later tertiary education. Previously, the teachings of religion were largely based on tradition passed from generation to generation, and ‘feeling’ was, for most believers, more important than rational study. The foundation of the Hindu-Balinese religious framework concerns *tatwa* (intellectual or philosophical aspect), *susila* (ethical aspect), and *upakara* (ritual aspect, ceremony). Only certain people – clergy, literati, cultural experts (including singers of *kidung*) – concern themselves with philosophy; while the general public, mostly, just try to carry out the ethics implied (*susila*) and correctly execute the ceremonies (*upakara*). The Balinese ceremonies are, of course, grounded in religious symbols but implemented by most Balinese Hindus without full understanding.

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<sup>10</sup> Of course, preparing the visually stunning offerings (*banten*), cooking/serving food, are other major female activities. Some women also sprinkle the holy water as priests’ assistants.



*Kidung* as a song art, until recently, has been mostly confined to ritual,<sup>11</sup> and includes a theological approach to the literary texts. In connection with the *kidung* in the ceremony for the dead (*ngaben* or cremation) to honor the ancestors, the *kidung* helps legitimize the success of a ceremony; therefore, the text choice is adjusted to the need of the particular ritual. *Kidung* combines the arts that are considered *wali* (sacred) (ceremonial), with the *bebali* (semi-sacred, entertainment, as in the *mebasaban* section before the ceremony discussed above), and *balih-balihan* (entertainment outside ceremonies, i.e. contests), meanwhile, in choice of texts, *kidung* is attentive to *desa, kala, patra* (place, time and situation).<sup>12</sup>

*Yadnya* or ceremony is described in Indian Vedic teachings and, as something articulated in these ancient religious texts, must be implemented by Hindus [Sanjaya, 2008: 4]. For the Balinese, the greatness and majesty of Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Waça (the highest god of the Hindu Bali pantheon; Brahma, the creator),<sup>13</sup> the sincerity of the devotees, and the form of offerings are provided in the form of symbols (*niyasa*) of the ceremony (*yadnya, upakara*) [Ibid, p, 4--5].

In Balinese thinking, every birth brings bonds of debt known as *tri rna* (three debts) which must be repaid with five ceremonies: 1) *dewa rna* is the debt to Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Waça, who has created and given the necessities of life and is repaid with the ogre or *bhuta yadnya* and god or *dewa yadnya*; 2) *pitra rna* is the debt to ancestors, especially parents who give us life and succor to be repaid with *manusa yadnya* and *pitra yadnya*, the ceremonies for humans (birth, tooth filing for coming of age, weddings) and ancestors (death rites), respectively; 3) *rsi rna* is debt to our teachers of religion, art, and culture, and repaid with the *rsi yadnya* [Ibid, p.4]. Ceremonies can be tailored to the patron's means and so they can be *kanista* (small, also called essential [*nista*]), *mediama* (medium, also *madya*), and *mabotama* (large, great, also called *utama*). From small to great level, *kidung* is integral to all *yadnya*, while more elaborate performance forms like *gamelan* can be omitted for modest level ceremonies.

The simplicity of the singing, which requires only human voice via a genre that is shared through the community, makes *kidung* easy to include as essential in the ceremony. *Kidung* singing is a way laypeople can contribute to the offering and provide greater access for the listeners and singers themselves to religious concepts.

*Kidung* as part of religious rituals requires the singer to have theological understanding of the texts, which often deal with relationship to the divine or mention ceremonies. Singers select songs considering the context of the event, as well as practical and aesthetic elements. Chanters have packed their small 'pocket book' books of lyrics to consult. These compilations have been in print since at least the 1980s, but older people may also have hand-copied notebooks of lyrics to augment these pocket hymnals. Even with such guides, self-understanding of text and sensitivity to the context are required: singers are making choices that open hearts and lead listeners into the mystery of the holy.

<sup>11</sup> In recent years, there have also been performances of *kidung* in regional competitions for youth in Bali where prizes are awarded for the best groups. A group trained by the author has in a number of contests taken the prize.

<sup>12</sup> In the 1970s in an attempt to respond to the influx of tourists, the Balinese developed three categories to differentiate performances that might fit the needs of tourist or entertainment functions. The sacred arts were designated at those created for performance inside the temple courtyard (*wali*), while those performed in front of the temple (*bebali*), and those which could be performed anywhere (*balih-balihan*) were judged acceptable for sharing with tourists. The concept of space, time, and situation is another gauge by which Balinese judge what can and cannot be allowed. This system creates some flexibility in interpreting what is acceptable and what is a violation of Balinese ethics.

<sup>13</sup> Emphasis on Sang Hyang Widhi Waça (Brahma) as unitary creator divinity is strong in contemporary Balinese Hinduism. In some ways, the idea of all divinities as being different manifestations of the same divine energy is old and in the core of Hinduism, but the emphasis upon the Panca Sila, the five important principles of the Indonesia nation which demand belief in one god, has helped to spur in the theological emphasis on Widhi Waça in the post-colonial period theology. The Balinese, to counter the Muslim challenges that Balinese Hinduism is 'polytheistic', have emphasized this unitary aspect since independence.

### Ontology

Ontologically speaking, I see the use of *kidung* as based on the Vedic emphasis on song as an integral part of a religious offering. Song as an offering is further modeled in the singing of the old Javanese *kakawin* texts in ceremonial contexts. *Kidung* must be seen as the further iteration of such vocal practices that uses song to enhance religious events.

The Rīgveda X.71.11 says:

*Rcām tvah posamāste pupusvām, gāyatram tva gāyati sakvarisu bhahmā tvo vadati jātavidyām yadñasya mātrām vi mimita utvab;*

*A duty is to pronounce the verses of the Vedas, one sings the songs of praise in the sacrament, another controls the Vedic knowledge and teaches the Vedic content, and the other teaches the order of carrying out the sacrifice (yadnya)* (quoted in [Sanjaya, 2008, p. 4]).

Here we see a kind of division of labor – singer, expert, organizer – that is still evident in contemporary Balinese ceremonies: the *pedana* or *pemanku* (priest) controls the knowledge, *sarati* are the people taking care of the protocols, but singers are also needed. Of course, for the Veda in India, the singers have been and are male Brahmins. This contrasts with Bali where all genders and classes can join a *kidung* group.

The other chanting and performances which occurs in the context of a temple ceremony will be, as noted earlier, the duo performance/recitation of *kakawin* and the presentations of *wayang* or *topeng*, where the puppet master or mask dancer(s) perform with their musicians. These activities are dominated by men and use more linguistically challenging texts for their narration. The *kakawin* is in Old Javanese (Kawi) and must be interpreted. The *dalang* has the noble characters speak a form of Kawi that is improvised in performance and the clown puppets interpret the dialogue in contemporary Balinese, ensuring understanding. The *topeng* dancer uses the somewhat archaic language of *babad* (historical chronicles) and interpolates contemporary ideas by using contemporary Balinese for the clowns.

As mentioned earlier, the text of *kidung* song is more accessible and audible than the mantra of the priest and does not need the kind restatement, as is provided by the translator in the *kakawin* presentation or as is given by the clowns in puppetry or masking, to understand the gist of the language. *Kidung* more nearly clarifies the religious service for the public and gives advisement on what the event means.

### Values

Thus, *Kidung* is effective in making Balinese religious values accessible. Translations of the previous texts have already given us examples of how religious thought should permeate life and how humans are small as compared to the divine. I will conclude this discussion with very brief examples of lyrics sung in other kinds of ceremonies – *manusa yadnya* for the living, *rsi yadnya* for the priest-teacher, *pitra yadnya* and *buta yadnya* for the dead and for lower spirits respectively.

### Manusa Yadnya

The following *kidung* ‘Wilet Mayura’ is sung in *pelog* tuning for a wedding, a *manusa yadnya*.

*Angrerimang sang ulangun  
sang lara angunur guyu  
sang karwa lingnya kasemaran  
amawas istri kaleson  
dadyata amuwuhing angrawit  
sasolah ira sang arum  
sang kakung lingniya*

*duh yayi paran denkwa  
a munung saking larasta.  
[Kidung Panca Yajna, 2006].*

*The longing of a lover,  
The sadness of not knowing – is your love requited?  
Yet both are engulfed in love.  
The girl looks so listless and melancholy.  
Finally, the music starts to play.  
Her presence is the fragrance of a flower.  
He talks to his beloved:  
Oh my darling  
Why do you look like so sad?*

The love alluded to in the *kidung* is understood to be more than just an earthly passion, but a metaphor for love of God. Agastia following Zoetmulder says that the poet (*kawi*) of Old Javanese is conceptualized as a wandering seeker of beauty via yoga whose search culminates in deliverance [Agastia, 1987, p. 82]. In *kidung* lyrics, the beauty of the beloved, nature, or the universe are also understood as love of the creator. The beauty of creation penetrates the soul of the poet, directing him to the divine.

#### *Rsi Yadnya*

Kidung Rsi Yadnya is especially used for the ordination (*pediksan, dwijati*) that raises one from an ordinary person to a priest. The following is an example of one of the songs.

*Nihan polahing the tatas wiku  
Nawang bhumi langit  
diya ento warangane.  
punika standing wiku.  
nulan surya lawan wintang  
sampun kawasne ring langit  
endi pamating ipun  
Mwang riuriping banyu asri  
[Kidung Panca Yajna, 2006]*

*A person who is a hermit,  
Knows heaven and earth,  
Where all is connected,  
That is the base of a hermit,  
Moon, sun and stars,  
He already masters the mysteries of the heavens  
and of his death,  
And life giving holy water.*

The ceremony initiates the priest and communicates to the initiate and the community the ideal of priestly power, exemplified by his ability to make holy water.

*Pitra Yadnya and Buta Yadnya*

In the ceremony for ancestors (*ngaben* or cremation), death is thought of as part of the life cycle as the soul is now taking its return journey to the elements from which it came: earth, air, water, fire. One of the *kidung* sung is ‘Aji Kembang’ (Aji Flower) which also is included in *buta yadnya* for demons. The text goes through *Sanghyang Catur Sanak* (Gods of the Directions). The hymn references Balinese religion’s correlations between the macrocosm (*bhuvana agung*, exemplified by gods who each have their own compass point) and the microcosm (*bhuvana alit*, our human body). The cosmos can be articulated by either the idea of four directions (*Sanghyang Catur Sanak*) plus the center, or, alternatively, by the gods of the Nine Directions (*Dewata Namasanga*, made up of four directions, their quadrants, and the midpoint). The midpoint is always associated with ascension and self-realization. Each divinity has a goddess (*shakti*), color, element, *urip* (life energy), weapon, steed, demonic form, part of the body etc. Suffice it to say that the singers are inviting themselves and listeners to internalize these gods/ideas as in a Hindu *nyasa* ceremony where syllables, gods, etc. are envisioned on the parts of the body in a meditation meant to unite the believer’s body with the cosmic divine.

In this ceremony for ancestors, after burning the bones and before releasing the ashes to the ocean, one recollects the gods and directions to help the dead return to elements from which they came and unite with ether (center/divinity/enlightenment). The five-tone martial sounding *selendro* tuning is unusual in *kidung* with a different feel than the customary *pelog* tunes. Here I will give only one verse of this important song.

*Ring purwa tunjunge putih  
Hyang Iswara dewatanya  
ring papusuh pranahira  
alinggih sira kalihan  
pantesta kembang petak*

*ring tembe lamun dumadi  
suka sugih tur rahayu  
dana punya stiti bhakti*  
[Kidung Panca Yajna, 2006, p. 163]

*In the east, the lotus is white.  
Iswara [a form of Sima/Shiva] is the god.  
His abode is in the heart.  
He stays with two.  
Indeed the lotus is white.  
If you come to reincarnate again,  
Hope for wealth and happiness  
Give to others, pray, and do not loose hope.*

The *kidung* progresses through the other directions/gods/body points/etc. as it reminds us of positive behaviors in life. The use of this same *kidung* for the demon ceremony emphasizes the importance of micro- and Macro-cosmic thought in the religion.

## CONCLUSION

In large-scale ceremonies, many arts meet: the sounds of the place, human voices, *gamelan* and instruments, *kakawin*, *mebehasan*, and theatre fuse in a busy (*ramai*) atmosphere. During *genta* the priest's bell, the village split drum (*kukul*), the *kidung* chorus and other sounds unite with the song in a complementary way. *Kidung* is an important part of the offering. Ida Pedanda Gede Putra Bajing from Geria Sumerta Denpasar in an interview 22 July 2018 gave his view that the power of a ceremony rises from the synergy of all elements and leads to its success [Putrawan, 2018]. For example, at the peak of the ceremony for *bhutakala* (demons), the priest with his formulas for demons, the sound of the loud percussive ensemble Bleganjur, the *kidung* for the demon ceremony, and the hustle and bustle of the event climax, causing the demonic to be pacified and not disturb society. This is effected by the communal focus of all to one goal.

The *kidung* is only one segment of the whole, but an important one. It is especially open to females and allows women a place to excel in the ceremonial context where men predominate. Singing *kidung* requires artistic and theological understanding of practitioners who remain laypersons, yet serve as a sacral function. *Kidung* is a relatively accessible avenue for listeners to understand, linguistically and emotively, aspects of the event, and invites them, if they wish, to join.

Even when *kidung* is done in the *bali-balihan* mode, it can direct people back toward its sacred roots. The government through competitions held for Utsawa Dharma Gita—the contest for various religious songs—involves the singers in different groups: children, adolescents and adults. Those who participate in the contest use modern tools such as their hand phone to record and play back the songs when they practice. For such contest presentations, innovations are possible, and musical accompaniment, including western instruments, may be included as part of creative modernizations. This is fully acceptable in the secular context of the competition and their trainings. Nevertheless, everyone understands that it is only in the context of religious ritual that these *kidung* tunes truly sound and that competitions are meant to prepare new generations to sing in the less elaborated ritual context where one can truly understand the complexity of thought, art, and religious meanings embedded in the genre.

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