2016

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Recommended Citation

Harnish, David (2016) "Religious Processions in Indonesia: Cultural Identity and Politics on Bali and Lombok," *Yale Journal of Music & Religion*: Vol. 2: No. 2, Article 9.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17132/2377-231X.1054>

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Religious Processions, Cultural Identities, and Politics on Bali and Lombok, Indonesia

David D. Harnish

In Bali and Lombok in Indonesia, processions—like similar events in many other parts of the world—are ritualized events breaking the normal flow of time. They are always temporally marked, and can be characterized as either religious and temple- or mosque-sponsored, or secular and state-sponsored.¹ Even religious or spiritual processions tend to have political overtones and secular implications, while more secular events uphold or resort to metaphysics to gain solemnity and sanction.² The music performed, which represents the orientations and histories of the procession and its participants, may simply be one part of the proceedings, or it may in itself stimulate or create the procession. I have observed many processions in Indonesia that conflate nation-state, rulership, or central authority with modern religiosity and citizenship. These are seemingly meant to show Indonesians how to be modern citizens, and may feature sanitized or aestheticized music to promote regional identity and government agendas concerning proper behavior, dress, and values such as tolerance.³

Pawe (also spelled *pawai*) is the Indonesian word most often used for processions and parades, though these events are also defined by words in the insider language (for example, Balinese or Javanese), and many are attached to institutions with an assortment of distinct terms

¹ See Harnish, “The Lives of Processions in Bali and Lombok, Indonesia,” in *Public Festivities*, ed. J. Santino (Utah University Press, in process).

² See Alessandro Falassi, “Festival: Definition and Morphology,” in *Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, ed. Alessandro Falassi (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 1–10.

³ See David D. Harnish, “Tensions between Adat (Custom) and Agama (Religion) in the Music of Lombok,” in *Divine Inspirations: Music and Islam in Indonesia*, ed. David D. Harnish and Anne K. Rasmussen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 80–108.

and purposes. In recent decades, Indonesia has been locked in a struggle over its Islamic identity. Reformist movements and tensions have shaken the interethnic and interreligious relationships developed over centuries throughout many regions, prompting reassessments of religious practices and connections to global forms of Islam.⁴ With a vast Muslim majority (nearly 90 percent of 250 million people), the country has contended with Islamic terrorism several times since the beginning of this century, for instance in Jakarta and Bali. Once a bastion of pluralism and tolerance, Indonesia has attracted the attention of, and provided local recruits for, militant forms of Islam, often funded by Salafi leaders in Saudi Arabia. It has seen the formation of organizations seeking to forcibly rid Islam in Indonesia of its local flavors and national elements—to make it more “pure” in a transnational sense. The Indonesian president, Joko Widodo, and major Islamic institutions (in particular the more than 40-million-strong Nadhlatul Ulama) are countering with the proclamation of “Islam Nusantara” (Southeast Asian Islam), which denounces the Islamic State (ISIS) and other Islamist groups, asserts that those organizations work outside of Allah’s commands, and upholds local Islamic traditions.

In the power struggle over personal and institutional legitimacy with regard to Islam, externally funded movements with Indonesian adherents have been challenging local leaders. Followers of Indonesian leaders and institutions sometimes attack new reformist offices in an effort to maintain local authority over Islam; in Lombok, for instance, Salafi Islam offices have been destroyed shortly after being erected. In this context, it is not surprising that the cultural and political identity of Islam is at stake in Indonesia’s many religious and state processions. Several cultural events have changed markedly in recent years as a result of politicized Islam, while others continue to uphold the traditions of the ancestors even as they adapt to the times. The Lingsar festival in Lombok is one event in which the Muslim participants (from the majority ethnic group, Sasak) re-evaluate their actions in the light of local and national movements and their interactions with the Hindu participants (local Balinese) virtually every year.

This paper introduces religious practices and processions on Bali and Lombok, and identifies their meanings, processes, and musical functions. It then explores the Lingsar festival and its processions on Lombok to illuminate what makes those events unique. I have published on facets of the Lingsar festival before, but have not at the time of this writing published research focusing primarily upon the processions.⁵ The actors under discussion in Bali are Hindu Balinese; those in Lombok are local Muslim Sasak; those at the Lingsar festival are both migrant Hindu Balinese and Muslim Sasak, who come together to celebrate the festival. Underlying the social dynamic at Lingsar is the fact that Hindu Balinese ruled over Lombok and the Sasak for 200 years while Islam became the inspiration for Sasak resistance. Both Hindu and Islamic reform movements

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⁴ See Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin and David Harnish, “Introduction,” in *Between Harmony and Discrimination: Negotiating Religious Identities within Majority-Minority Relationships in Bali and Lombok*, ed. Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin and David Harnish (Leiden: Brill Press, 2014), 1–32.

⁵ See, for instance, David Harnish, “New Lines, Shifting Identities: Interpreting Change at the Lingsar Festival in Lombok, Indonesia,” *Ethnomusicology* 49/1 (2005): 1–24; *Bridges to the Ancestors*; and “Balinese and Sasak Religious Trajectories in Lombok: Interactions, Tensions, and Performing Arts at the Lingsar Temple Festival,” in *Between Harmony and Discrimination*, ed. Hauser-Schäublin and Harnish, 61–83. Some material in this article is drawn from my forthcoming publication “The Lives of Processions in Bali and Lombok, Indonesia,” in *Public Festivities*, ed. Santino.

have been forces for change in processions and other ritual events in Bali and Lombok. In addition to their aesthetic and transformational power, processions, both political and spiritual, are public barometers for measuring socio-religious and political change.⁶

Religious Practices and Musics in Processions in Bali

As recently as 150 years ago, Bali and Lombok engaged in similar religious practices based on *adat*, customary laws and “non-standardized sacred beliefs and rituals.”⁷ Both islands, along with the rest of Indonesia, received Indic influences (mostly via Java) in uneven and inconsistent ways. Thus, elements of Buddhism and especially Hinduism were widespread even though the primary deities associated with these religions—Buddha, Shiva, Vishnu, and so forth⁸—were never directly worshipped in rituals (ancestors were),⁹ and most of these Indic elements (terminology, epic narratives and notions of ruler, meditative practices, and perhaps reincarnation) were absorbed within *adat*. *Agama*, a Sanskrit term that can be translated as “world religion,” is usually placed in opposition to *adat* in contemporary Indonesian discourse (including in Lombok, where *adat* is denigrated by modernists). Based on his research in Java, Robert Hefner situates *agama* as divinely revealed and *adat* as humanly generated.¹⁰ Since the increase of *agama*-type religiosity (declared as globally legitimate) dating from the later twentieth century, *adat* practices have been challenged on many islands. Lombok’s religious leaders have sought to eradicate these practices; in fact, two popular local mottos are “Yang penting Islam” (What’s important is Islam) and “Islam hilang adat” (Islam without *adat*).¹¹ Reformist organizations in Lombok, including the influential local Nahdhotul Watan (NW, established in 1936) and the national Muhammadiyah (founded in 1912 in Java), have sought to purge all syncretism from Islamic practice.

Like Islam in Lombok, Hinduism is contested in Bali. Again, the distinction is largely between *adat* and *agama*, manifest as Adat Hinduism (polytheistic, animistic, and featuring ancestors) and Agama Hinduism (government-sponsored and monotheistic, with revealed scriptures, saints, moral rules, and rhetoric).¹² After hundreds of hours of observations over 24 trips to Bali, I believe that Adat Hinduism is still more accurate in describing practice than Agama Hinduism, which is nevertheless gaining traction since it is taught in schools and is highlighted in public discourse. When Balinese came from East Bali to Lombok in the sixteenth

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⁶ Harnish, “The Lives of Processions in Bali and Lombok, Indonesia.”

⁷ Hauser-Schäublin and Harnish, “Introduction,” 1.

⁸ Indonesian/Balinese spellings for these deities are normally Budha, Siwa (or Çiwa), and Wisnu.

⁹ Some Balinese intellectuals, for instance Wayan Juniarta, hold that Balinese still worship and pray to ancestors rather than Hindu deities despite the continued Hinduization of Balinese culture, including the glossing of temples, altars, deities, and religious practices as “Hindu.” Nominal Muslims in Lombok still worship and pray to ancestors, rather than to Allah or His Prophet, Muhammad, though some of these ancestors helped spread Islam to the island.

¹⁰ Robert W. Hefner, “Religion: Evolving Pluralism,” in *Indonesia Beyond Suharto: Polity, Economy, Society Transition*, ed. Donald K. Emmerson (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), 212–13.

¹¹ See Harnish, “Tensions between Adat (Custom) and Agama (Religion).”

¹² See Leo Howe, *Hinduism and Hierarchy in Bali* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2001); and June McDaniel, “Agama Hindu Dharma Indonesia as a New Religious Movement: Hinduism Recreated in the Image of Islam,” *Nova Religio: A Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 14/1 (June 2010): 93–111.

or seventeenth centuries, however, there was no Agama Hinduism. In fact, there was no such thing as “Hinduism”—the term was almost completely unknown, as was “agama”—and even notions of “Bali” may have been obscure. These early settlers into Lombok likely identified themselves as being from the area of Karangasem (in East Bali) under the rule of the palaces. Over centuries, their connections to Bali disintegrated and they became “Bali-Lombok” (as Balinese in Lombok describe themselves), only to be revived during the wave of religiosity in the late twentieth century, which served to reinvigorate identification with Balinese places, ancestors, and agama. (The Balinese settlers always had adat, which had adapted to Lombok and included honoring places of power—water springs [as at Lingsar] and mountains, especially the mighty Mount Rinjani—that were also worshipped by nominal Muslims.) Promoting Agama Hinduism is the reform organization Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI), which helped Hinduism become an acknowledged agama (rather than simply a set of illegitimate beliefs) in Indonesia in the 1950s and 1960s.¹³ Like NW and Muhammadiyah for Islam, PHDI—which opened an office in Lombok by the end of the 1960s—seeks to purge local and adat elements from the practices of Hinduism.

These areas of contestation can sometimes be seen in processions, the most public events of ritual life. In Bali, processions can be national (e.g., Independence Day), provincial (e.g., celebrating Balinese heroes), district, or religious events, and they are a cornerstone of Hindu Balinese religion functioning in life-cycle rites and public temple festivals. With over 25,000 temples in Bali holding these events generally every 210 days out of every year, festivals are celebrated tens of thousands of times a year. Nearly all festivals include one procession, and many festivals include multiple processions.

Cremation Ceremonies

Processions are also crucial in Balinese cremation ceremonies (*ngaben*), depending upon the financial means of the family involved. The procession (usually one per event) is held after mourning periods, body-washings, prayers, and purifications within the home compound. It begins when the corpse is carried up a ramp to a tower. Once the corpse is in place, ten or as many as 100 men hoist up the tower and commence walking toward the cremation grounds (*sema*) near the Temple of the Dead (*pura dalem*). They are accompanied by another group carrying a sarcophagus, family and community members, attendants carrying offerings, ritual specialists, and one, two, or three gamelan (percussive) ensembles, depending on the status of the deceased. The procession marks the final journey of a soul’s travel through life; generally, all of the deceased’s belongings are burned along with the body. (Additional death ceremonies, which frequently involve new processions, may take place in the ensuing years, again depending on the social caste of the deceased and the resources of the family.)

These cremation processions stimulate celebratory behavior. The *gamelan beleganjur*, consisting of gongs, gong-chimes, cymbals, and drums, is the primary Balinese processional ensemble. It performs marching music that is considered noble and stately, and accompanies the

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¹³ See Harnish, “Balinese and Sasak Religious Trajectories in Lombok.”

deceased, the family, the community, and the relics or ritual items on display. There may also be a *gamelan angklung*, a processional ensemble that often includes metallophones strapped onto the musicians' bodies, adding a somber sound to the proceedings. Directly connected to life-cycle rites, and particularly cremations, the *gamelan angklung* is linked to the ancestors and the afterlife.

As the procession reaches a crossroads, the body and tower are spun around three times to prevent the soul from knowing the path back home (or, in a different interpretation, to confuse bad spirits and keep them away from the deceased), while the *gamelan beleganjur* musicians play with greater tempo, energy, and volume. The culminating rite, after purifications, takes place at the cremation grounds, where the tower and sarcophagus (in which the body is inserted after arriving at the grounds) are burned along with the deceased's earthly belongings. *Gamelan* music—*angklung* or *gambang*, an ensemble featuring split-bamboo xylophones often directly connected with cremations—may continue during the cremation at ceremonies for well-to-do families. In mass cremations that combine the resources of several or many poorer families, the ceremony might include ritual circumambulations of the cremation grounds. High-caste deceased are sometimes dispatched to the heavens by a “butterfly” dance performed by martial dancers. Many guests then depart for home or picnic, and young people may flirt. Family members collect the remains of the deceased, some of which may be stored for a second cremation or for ritual dispensing, either into the sea or into a river leading to the sea.

Caste and wealth are immediately apparent at any cremation. A ceremony for a member of royalty or a wealthy commoner might include numerous *gamelan* ensembles, dance and theater or shadow-play performances, food for hundreds of neighboring villagers and guests, a huge tower and sarcophagus (often in the shape of a giant bull), hundreds of community volunteers to carry the tower, sarcophagus, and various offerings and paraphernalia, and the officiating of high priests (*padanda*) with a number of ritual assistants. A commoner cremation might include a brief procession and a common priest (*pamangku*), and use simple bamboo poles to suspend the corpse over a burning pit.¹⁴ While caste disparities have declined since national independence in 1949, they have not disappeared, and income inequality between the elite (the remaining nobility, wealthy commoners, and expatriate foreigners, including Westerners and Chinese) and the common classes is as wide as ever. The constitution of the procession reveals the status and orientation of the deceased and his or her family as people (communities, clans, families), regalia and relics, and the corpse are escorted via *gamelans'* sonic, emotive, symbolic, and powerful pulsations, and sent off in a ceremony that is the first step to creating a potential divine ancestor.¹⁵

Temple Festivals

Balinese temple festivals are generally communal, rather than family events like cremations; they may downplay caste and wealth disparities and are intended to benefit whole communities.

¹⁴ Harnish, “The Lives of Processions in Bali and Lombok, Indonesia.”

¹⁵ For many families, the later ceremony involves the burning of an effigy and is called *mukur*.

The integral processions and rituals thus differ in meaning and structure. These processions often connect sacred sites of importance (for instance, nearby temples) that are tied to a common point in history; figurines, if used, represent deities or divinities and are accompanied to a sacred spring or river for bathing or purification. Participants and officials carry a myriad of ritual implements and offerings including clothing and toiletries for deities, water bottles or vessels, and symbolic poles or woven plaits, in addition to numerous ornate family offerings of rice flour and food (mostly fruit, often stacked high and carried on women's heads).

Processions in the context of festivals are part of re-enactments of the founding of a temple as the procession route highlights a chosen and privileged path, and sacred objects, which may be connected to the founding of a temple, are publicly exhibited or danced. The processional music provided by the gamelan beleganjur makes martial and cosmological statements, and is often thought to clear the path of malevolent forces. The musicians, according to some, represent "walking warriors" that protect the procession—its offerings, implements, and participants—as everyone traverses potentially dangerous space.¹⁶ Purifications or sacrifices are usually necessary to generate or maintain spiritual cleanliness at sacred spaces and to help safeguard the mission.

Other festival processions circumambulate temple altars or structures; these may set in motion the life of a festival, serve to activate the temple items (sacred implements and offerings), or accompany deities down from the heavens or mountain peaks during the first day and back to the heavens on the final day. These two types of festival processions—journeys through the appointed path to connecting sacred sites (often involving water) and circumambulations around temple altars or structures—are found at the annual Lingsar temple festival in Lombok discussed below.

Music in Processions in Lombok

In Lombok, a neighbor island of Bali inhabited primarily by the Sasak people and part of the Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB) province, processions can be national (e.g., Independence Day), provincial (e.g., celebrating the founding of NTB), district, adat (customary law), or religious events.¹⁷ Though not normally a cornerstone of religion (Islam) like those in Bali (Hindu), processions are nevertheless crucial in adat ceremonies (e.g., agricultural, grave-cleaning, big feasts), weddings, and other life-cycle rites (e.g., circumcisions and other coming-of-age events).¹⁸ In addition, people and mosque organizations in Lombok celebrate some Islamic holidays with processions, such as on Idul Fitri (Eid el-Fitr) at the end of the Ramadan fast,

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¹⁶ Michael B. Bakan, *Music of Death and New Creation: Experiences in the World of Gamelan Beleganjur* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); and "Walking Warriors: Battles of Culture and Ideology in the Balinese Gamelan Beleganjur World," *Ethnomusicology* 42/3 (1998): 441–84.

¹⁷ *Adat* is an Arabic loan word often used to distinguish non-Islamic (or syncretic Islamic) practices from Islamic practices; these are "traditional" (prereform Islamic) and generally connected to an earlier complex of belief and convention. In Bali, the term is not so politicized and is used to describe traditional rituals, spirituality, kinship, and customary laws, though it is now clearly distinguished from the realm of agama.

¹⁸ Adat ceremonies are also important in Bali and frequently interrelated with religion but are not discussed here. Life-cycle ritual processions in Lombok may be considered "adat" or "Islamic" depending on the religious orientation (nominal or orthodox Muslim) of the family involved.

when youth groups create *masjid mini* (literally, “miniature mosques”) and drive through towns. Remote villages following a nominal form of Islam (the group called Wetu Telu) also celebrate Islamic holidays (e.g., Idul Fitri and Maulud, Prophet Muhammad’s birthday) with processions, but these events are considered “adat” and not “religious” by outside Sasak.

Here I will concentrate briefly on the processions that can be labeled “traditional” and are part of adat festivals and rituals, including agricultural, life-cycle, calendrical events at nominally Islamic shrines, and local Islamic observations. These are most often performed by the rural Wetu Telu, the nominal Muslims whose beliefs are a synthesis of animism, ancestor worship (the landscape is frequently ancestralized), mysticism, and elements of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.¹⁹ Many traditional rites and processions, which differ slightly in the few villages maintaining them in contemporary Islamizing Lombok, call into the present and reactivate the deeds and power of the ancestors. In Sasak belief, ancestors, particularly the first cultivators, bond and mediate between descendants and the national powers in the landscape, eventually attaining divine status.²⁰ According to Ruth Krulfield, the Wetu Telu worldview “indicates no definite boundary between living and dead villagers, or between the past and the future, which are considered aspects of the present.”²¹ Indeed, a great many rites are held around gravesites or at sacred spots (often at water springs) related to a divine ancestor. Shrines memorializing ancestors are abodes of deities (who may control fertility), and the pathways traversed by processions during ritual events connect sacred spots or re-enact sacred narratives and myths. Sometimes divine ancestors have mysteriously vanished at a spot (which may also be a water spring), and rituals and processions will take place around that spot.²² Rituals and processions of the Wetu Telu in the village of Bayan, the last remaining stronghold of this culture, revere local spirits, reconnect with the original ancestors (who mediate with higher gods), unify the human and local divine communities, and, with a complex series of postmortuary rites, help ensure that the deceased become divine ancestors.²³

The performing arts involved in adat and all traditional processions are similarly connected to ancestors (or to Bhatara,²⁴ understood as a primary deity) and steeped in Wetu Telu beliefs. Processional gamelans—*klentang* (individually carried single metal bars), *gendang beleq* (gong and drum ensemble), *tawak-tawak* (cymbals attached to lances), and *rebana* (tuned

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¹⁹ See Leena Avonius, “Performing Wetu Telu: Islam, Adat, and the Promises of Regionalism in Post-New Order Lombok” (Ph.D. thesis, Leiden University, 2004); and Erni Budiwanti, “The Purification Movement in Bayan, North Lombok: Orthodox Islam vis-à-vis Religious Syncretism,” in *Between Harmony and Discrimination*, ed. Hauser-Schäublin and Harnish, 144–61.

²⁰ Coen Peppinkhuizen, “Religion: Visions of Duality and Balance,” in *East of Bali: From Lombok to Timor*, ed. Kal Muller (Berkeley, Cal., and Singapore: Periplus Editions, 1991), 38.

²¹ Ruth Krulfield, “The Village Economies of the Sasak in Lombok: A Comparison of Three Indonesian Peasant Economies” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1974), 88.

²² Albert Polak, *Traditie en tweespalt in een Sasakse boerengemeenschap (Lombok, Indonesie)* (Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1978), 340.

²³ Budiwanti, “The Purification Movement in Bayan, North Lombok,” 149.

²⁴ *Bhatara* (or *Batara*) is an Indic term sometimes referring to Shiva (or a manifestation) and used to characterize high deities; it indicates the Buddhist/Hindu influences of an earlier time. One small group of Sasak, the Boda (also spelled Bodha or Budha), declare themselves Buddhists. Otherwise, Buddhists in Lombok are Chinese and Hindus in Lombok are Balinese.

drums), for instance—accompany relics, offerings, and officials, and move through predetermined space connecting sacred sites and home compounds. Traditional wedding processions operate the same way, though generally connect with home compounds in addition to sacred sites.

Circumambulations are very common. Every traditional procession I have witnessed included circumambulations, nearly always performed in sequences of three (encircling sacred sites three times). While this three-ness in circumambulating processions is also common among the Balinese, it is more foundational among the Wetu Telu; in fact, *telu* means “three.” These three-time circumambulations are also usually conducted a total of three times, thus relating both to the number three and to the number nine (three times three), also a sacred number. Singing or double-reed (*preret*) performance is also common in processions, though *preret* is disappearing because its loud and distinctive repertory announces a nominal, rather than an orthodox, form of Islam.

Because of decreasing population and increasing persecution, scant detailed research is available on Wetu Telu rites and processions. Polak describes three kinds of rituals: life-cycle, local Islamic observations, and agricultural/fertility.²⁵ I have witnessed all three types and observed processions connected to each; unfortunately, I have not been present at some major rites and processions, such as the annual pilgrimage to Lake Segara Anak within the sacred, volcanic Mount Rinjani,²⁶ and the festival held every 25 years in the village of Bayan, a Wetu Telu stronghold.²⁷

Musics and Processions at the Lingsar Festival

The Wetu Telu have been well known for their tolerance and shared rituals with others of similar orientation, such as the Boda, the small group of Sasak Buddhists who follow similar adat.²⁸ Rural Balinese, both in Bali and in Lombok, also have a history of sharing rituals with other ethnic groups with a similar orientation toward adat.²⁹ The Lingsar temple—both a statement of Balinese hegemony over Lombok and a symbol of Balinese–Sasak and Hindu–Islam (particularly nominal Wetu Telu Islam) tolerance, sharing, and harmony—is a realization of two peoples with differing spiritual orientations coming together to normalize interethnic relationships for their mutual benefit.

The temple and its festival bring migrant Hindu Balinese and Muslim Sasak together. The early Balinese (ca. 17th century) and Sasak shared similar adat and exhibited very few behaviors that could be considered “Hindu” or “Islamic.” Since the earliest festivals, each

²⁵ Polak, *Traditie en tweespalt in een Sasakse boerengemeenschap*, 126–78.

²⁶ See Volker Gottowik, “When Differences Are Down-played: Multi-religious Encounters at Gunung Rinjani on Lombok, Indonesia,” paper presented at the European Association for Southeast Asian Studies (EuroSEAS) conference, Vienna, 2015.

²⁷ See Dr. J. van Baal, *Pesta Alip di Bayan* (The Alip Festival in Bayan), trans. Dr. Nalom Siahaan (Jakarta: Bhratara, 1976).

²⁸ Avonius, “Performing Wetu Telu,” 27.

²⁹ See Avonius, “Performing Wetu Telu,” and Harnish, “Balinese and Sasak Religious Trajectories in Lombok.”

group has contributed offerings, performing arts, and religious officiants. Each group has its own legend of the temple's founding, and these origin myths, each favoring one group over the other, have become politicized over recent decades.³⁰ The temple has particular importance to the Balinese migrants: according to Balinese legend, it helped convince nobles to come to Lombok, conquer Sasak kingdoms, and restore righteousness. The Balinese mission was led to Lombok by butterflies, which had transformed from leaves to guide the platoon of warriors.³¹

For the Sasak, Lingsar represents a central point in early Islam. As the place of a culture hero's pact with God and his divine sacrifice (disappearing into the newly created water springs) that preserves the fecundity of the region, Lingsar is credited by many as the initiation point of Sasak culture in West Lombok. The participation of the Sasak, who were once all Wetu Telu but have been converting to normative Islam since the late 1960s, has been challenged numerous times by Islamic officials. A determination was made in 1968 that the Muslim Sasak and the main priest (pamangku) can participate in the festival, but only as an expression of "culture" and not of "religion," since worshipping the land and ancestors with non-Muslims is not permitted in the Qur'an or Hadith. Although shared with the Balinese, the festival remains one of the largest and most significant events on Lombok associated with the Wetu Telu.

The annual festival, called Pujawali, is held around the full moon in December³² and lasts five days; three of those days have set programs. Up to 20,000 people visit the temple and participate in the tens of rites at the festival, attending to either the exclusive Balinese courtyard, the *gaduh*, or the shared courtyard, the *kemaliq*.³³ The temple grounds are also the site of the major water springs on the island, irrigating most of West and Central Lombok. As this region contains some of the island's most productive rice fields, Lingsar represents the center of fertility. Historically, the temple, its festival, and its processions demonstrated the power of the Balinese kings, whose legitimacy was bound up with safeguarding that fertility.³⁴ Decisions on the distribution of water from the springs are still made during the festival, even though the feudal, royal connections have decreased since Indonesian independence in 1949 and are nearly nonexistent today.

The Opening of the Festival

The first day of the festival begins with a procession called Mendak Tirta ("greet holy water"), led by a Sasak gamelan ensemble called *tambur*. This gamelan, consisting solely of a gong and drum, is associated with the earliest ancestors at Lingsar; it publicly displays Lingsar's

³⁰ See Harnish, *Bridges to the Ancestors*.

³¹ See Anak Agung Ktut Agung, *Kupu Kupu Kuning yg Terbang di Selat Lombok* (Yellow Butterflies that Flew across the Lombok Strait) (Denpasar, Bali: Upada Sastra, 1991), 76–77.

³² The date of the festival is determined by the sixth full moon of the Balinese *sasih* lunar-solar calendar and the seventh full moon of the Sasak *wariga* calendar. It can range from late November to early January.

³³ There are actually two temples, each with *gaduh* and *kemaliq*, and one additional ritual space just outside of the main temple, Pura Lingsar. For more, see Harnish, *Bridges to the Ancestors*.

³⁴ See Ingela Gerdin, *The Unknown Balinese: Land, Labour, and Inequality in Lombok* (Gothenburg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1982); and Harnish, "The Lives of Processions in Bali and Lombok, Indonesia" and *Bridges to the Ancestors*.

spiritual power (the instruments themselves are sacred) and provides a Sasak claim to the temple's origins. The participants, however, are overwhelmingly Balinese, who add at least three more processional gamelans (*gamelan gong gilak*; sometimes one is a gamelan beleganjur). The gong gilak, similar to the gamelan beleganjur in Bali, features *cengceng* (cymbals), *reyong* gong chimes, drums, and gongs (See Images 1, 2, and 3). For reasons that have never been clear, gamelan beleganjur does not include gong-chimes in Lombok.

Image 1. Indonesian flags (colors representing Balinese and Sasak here) precede Gamelan Tambur. Photo by author.

Image 2. Balinese group waits to process behind Gamelan Tambur. Photo by author.

Image 3. First Balinese Gamelan Gong Gilak group during Mendak Tirta. Photo by author.

The main Mendak Tirta procession goes eastward to a temple with a sacred water spring. Meanwhile, another procession, which departs earlier and with little fanfare, proceeds west to a different water spring and temple. Each procession collects water in two vessels with specific colors representing the two high deities of both Bali (the western spring) and Lombok (the eastern spring).³⁵ The two processions converge on the three-way intersection outside the entrance to the Lingsar temple (See Clip #1 on article download page). In a ritual led by Balinese common priests (pamangku, the same title as the Sasak ritual attendant), the waters and deities are “married,” thus unifying Bali and Lombok under Balinese control and confirming the Balinese origin legend. Long ago many Sasak participated in this procession; today, however, the only Sasak are the gamelan musicians, some dancers associated with the gamelan, and a few

³⁵ These deities include Batara Gunung Agung (deity of Mount Agung) and Batara Alit Sakti (a child deity who directed Balinese to Lombok) in Bali, and Batara Gunung Rinjani (deity of Mount Rinjani) and Batara Gede Lingsar (deity at Lingsar) in Lombok. Excepting Batara Alit Sakti (credited with Balinese divinely arriving in Lombok), these are the most significant and powerful natural deities on the islands; all relate to adat, not agama. See Harnish, *Bridges to the Ancestors*, 104–05.

officials, because Sasak do not want to be seen supporting the Balinese claim over Lingsar. Much of the ritual life has become politicized over recent decades.

The next procession, called Mendak Kebon Odeq (“greet *kebon odeq*”) begins at the Sasak pamangku’s home compound. The two main festival offerings, a male/female pair called kebon odeq (little garden), are processed in a large, nearly entirely Sasak entourage to the kemaliq, the second courtyard of the temple shared by Sasak and Balinese. The kemaliq encloses a pond with sacred spring water guarded by large eels. The shrine beside the pond consists of many stones ritually dressed in white and yellow cloth, and the Sasak pamangku leads worship at that site on each day of the festival (See Image 4).

Image 4. Kemaliq altar just before festival. Photo by author.

This procession concludes with the kebon odeq being positioned in the shrine and a prayer session. A variety of processional performing arts—two or more Sasak gamelans and three to five cross-dressed dancers (women dressed as men) re-enacting the Sasak founding myth of Lingsar—encircle the participants along with the *pesaji* covered-food offerings, which are supposed to be made in any multiple of nine (9, 18, 27, etc.). Many Sasak state that the festival “really” begins once the kebon odeq are in position in the kemaliq. One other item carried in this

and the final Sasak/Balinese processions is *momot*, a bottle that is sealed while empty and placed in the shrine. The level of water that mysteriously appears in the bottle by the end of the festival is considered roughly equivalent to the level of rainfall and the produce of the coming harvest (See Image 5).

Image 5. Momot (front) and two Kebon Odeq carried in procession around Kemaliq pond. Photo by author.

The Sasak gamelans functioning in this and other Sasak and shared processions include the *gamelan baris*, derived from gamelan tambur with additions of other drums, *rebab* (fiddle), and *suling* (flute); *gendang beleq*, the tremendously loud and powerful ensemble consisting of multiple large drums, gong-chimes, and numerous *cengceng* (cymbals) players; and *gamelan beleganjur*, similar to the Balinese model but formed from another Sasak gamelan called *gong Sasak*. (Gamelan *tawak-tawak*, featuring cymbals connected to tasseled lances and individually carried kettle-gongs, or *gamelan klentang*, featuring single metal bars playing in interlocking parts, may also perform.) At some festivals in this century, two or three *gendang beleq* ensembles performed in some of the processions, shattering the environment with their thunderous volume. Three to five cross-dressed dancers, called *Telek* or *Batek* and featuring women dressed as culture heroes, promote fertility and perform abstract, non-narrative movements as they walk and

dance in this and other processions (See Image 6).³⁶ They are led and protected by nine male dancers (three times three, including a “commandant” who carries a sword) wearing Dutch-style military outfits and carrying wooden rifles. This dance is called *Baris*, and both groups of dancers together are called *Batek Baris* (See Clips #2 and #3 on article download page).

Image 6. Telek dancers in procession. Photo by author.

Shortly afterwards, a large procession consisting of various offerings and ritual implements, dancers, and four or five Balinese and Sasak ensembles accompanies a water buffalo, and all circumambulate the entire temple structure three times in a clockwise direction, representing the descent of deities (See Clips #4 and #5 on article download page).³⁷ The water buffalo, a

³⁶ The culture heroes sometimes number five and consist of king, two warriors, and two scouts. In most years only three or four dancers participate. In most interpretations, they abstractly re-enact the coming of Islamic evangelists from Java. Cross-dressing (more usually men as women) or mixing sexes in traditional Indonesian ritual dances is often intended to promote fertility.

³⁷ All circumambulations at Lingsar are clockwise. In Sanskritized Balinese, the clockwise term is *purwedaksina* (east-south). Some priests have mentioned that *purwedaksina* should be performed at the beginning of the festival to escort the deities down to the festival, and then a counterclockwise procession should be held at the end to escort deities back upwards. One priest, Mangku Saka, was confused about the tradition at Lingsar, even

sacrifice for the residing deity, is ritually slaughtered the following morning; the head and right foreleg are then positioned in a tree within the kemaliq representing the buffalo's ascent into the heavens. (A second buffalo is also sacrificed, and the meat of both is divided between Sasak and Balinese for feasts.) This procession is meant to unify the Balinese and Sasak camps around ritual action and a central sacrifice.

Following the procession, which takes around an hour due to the sheer numbers of participants and gamelans, two other processions take place: one with only Balinese thrice circumambulating the inner altars of the gaduh, the exclusive Balinese courtyard at Lingsar, and the other with mostly Sasak encircling the inner structures of the kemaliq three times. The number three is not arbitrary: it is charged with cosmological and numerological significance, and is related to a series of cultural and religious phenomena in Lombok and in Bali.³⁸ The processions conclude with prayer periods in both courtyards. Following these processions, the inherent qualities of the offerings are believed to be activated and alive, and the deities are believed to be present in the courtyards.

Thus the opening day of the festival, features a total of six processions—those which initiate the festival, unify Balinese and Sasak (and Bali and Lombok), introduce and activate the kebon odeq, usher in the deities in the gaduh and kemaliq, sacrifice the water buffalo, and bring the courtyards and offerings to life. In addition, there may be evening performances, which are considered recreational.

The Second Day

The second day of the festival is the main day; it falls on the full moon and brings out many thousands of participants. Because of the importance of the event and the sheer numbers involved, politicians want to take part and be seen as endorsing (and claiming credit for) the festival. With the exception of the current governor, who is also a reformist religious figure, Lombok's chief government officials have attended and generally spoken at every Lingsar festival since 1988.

Many more offerings are made on this day (pesaji by the Sasak, *banten* temple offerings by the Balinese) and most of them will be processed in later events. A procession called Mendak Pesaji, originating at the Sasak pamangku's home, proceeds to the kemaliq in the afternoon (much like Mendak Kebon Odeq on the opening day), with a full entourage of gamelans and dancers; this is again an overwhelmingly Sasak event. Both groups engage in separate feasts as music floods the temple grounds from Sasak and Balinese gamelans. A number of sacred or semisacred dances (accompanied by seated musicians performing on the ceremonial gamelan gong gilak or the more modern *gamelan gong kebyar*, both consisting of metallophones—gong-chime, drums, and gongs) take place in the Balinese gaduh (See Clip #6 on article download page), followed by the unison chanting of the sacred *Trisandya* multiverse mantra and the major

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though he had officiated there for 60 years. He said that the Balinese dare not change the tradition. Sasak leaders do not have a term to refer to directionality during processions. I believe they also would never want to change what they have been doing for many decades, if not several centuries.

³⁸ See Harnish, *Bridges to the Ancestors*, 184.

prayers called Mabakti (literally, “to do prayer”) or Panca Sembah (a sequence of five prayers). Meanwhile, in the kemaliq begins the Ngilahang Pesaji, the three-time circumambulation around the shrine and pond, accompanied again by Sasak gamelans and dancers.

For this occasion, many Balinese farmers participate in the kemaliq rather than the gaduh, demonstrating their history and commitment to that space. Originally, Balinese farmers, all of whom were low-caste, were not allowed in the gaduh. Instead they worshipped in the kemaliq with the Sasak, who also consisted largely of farmers. With the end of feudalism in 1894 and the achievement of independence and democratization between 1945 and 1950, Balinese commoners increasingly attended rites in both temple courtyards. The gamelan musicians, the Batek Baris/Baris dancers, and the cross-dressed Telek or Batek dancers in the kemaliq, however, are Sasak. The dancers sometimes stop to dance while in procession, and the Telek dancers usually perform again while congregants sit before the shrine. While the Balinese position a high priest (padanda) and a women’s group of *kidung* praise-singers in the kemaliq, strongly establishing the Balinese presence in this shared space, the Sasak pamangku leads the worship around the shrine.

Following Ngilahang Pesaji is the worship period known as Ngaturang Pesaji, with prayers and the burning of incense in front of the kemaliq altar, adorned with some 60 erect stones dressed in white and yellow cloth (see Image 4). Balinese outnumber Sasak during this prayer period, which is usually led by the Sasak pamangku.³⁹ Meanwhile, Balinese prayers continue in the gaduh. The official conclusion of the day is the Perang Topat, the ritual of throwing *topat* (rice-squares cooked in palm leaves) at each other outside the gaduh and kemaliq. (The Balinese tend to be outside the gaduh, the Sasak outside the kemaliq—and some of those are not involved in any other festival rites.) This 15–20 minute ritual is fun and often rowdy, signifying abundance. Afterwards, farmers collect the topat and place them in trees or rice fields, as they are considered blessed. For many, this is the climactic rite of the festival.

The Third Day

The third and final festival day features more offerings, particularly new pesaji by the Sasak, and frequent Balinese and Sasak gamelan performances. The new pesaji are again processed to the kemaliq in another Mendak Pesaji procession accompanied by dancers and gamelans, followed by another slow Ngilahang Pesaji circumambulation of the shrine and pond. Balinese conduct more prayers in the gaduh, and gamelans continue almost unceasingly. A concluding worship Ngaturang Pesaji rite is held in front of the kemaliq shrine, functioning as a request to leave, while the Balinese hold a procession of circumambulation around altars within the gaduh. All of these events include the retinue of gamelan accompaniment.

Then the largest procession of all begins to organize. Once again it is led by the Sasak gamelan tambur, followed by Balinese gamelan gong gilak (or beleganjur), priest, and congregants from a separate Lingsar temple (the “head” temple, thus needing “to go first” before

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³⁹ The reason that there are fewer Sasak is that this prayer is clearly not Islamic, and most Sasak participants do not feel inclined to participate along with the Balinese. Parman, the current pamangku, unlike his predecessors, does not participate; instead, his sister leads the prayers. Parman was a civil servant and has a modern and less Wetu Telu perspective on the festival.

the other congregants). These in turn are followed by the Balinese gamelan gong gilak, priest, and congregants in the gaduh. Next come the Sasak group of gamelans (gamelan baris, gamelan beleganjur, and sometimes gendang beleq and/or tawak-tawak or klentang), dancers, pamangku, and congregants in the kemaliq, and finally another Balinese group from a shrine area behind the temple with gamelan beleganjur, priest and congregants.

Overall, the procession includes 5,000–7,000 participants and stretches over nearly a mile. Their destination is the temple to the west, where the small Balinese procession arrived during the morning of the opening day. The Balinese and Sasak participants walk two-by-two in their respective groups, disrupting traffic for hours as they march to the sounds of five, six, or seven gamelans. Several Balinese men also play ceremonial music on *preret* (wooden oboes) as they walk, sometimes in accordance with a personal vow—for instance, to perform if a family member's health returns.⁴⁰ All participants wear ceremonial dress, hundreds carry parasols or implements, and thousands carry offerings. Intermixed throughout are priests bearing offerings and incense bowls. During many of these final processions the leaders of the Balinese and Sasak temple organizations hold hands as they walk with the kemaliq group, signifying the renewed union between them and, by extension, the union of Balinese and Sasak as a result of the festival and this particular procession.⁴¹

When all arrive at the cremation grounds, most Balinese enter and pray in the temple there, which had been the site first to invite and now to send back the high deities of Bali. Meanwhile, the kemaliq group goes to a nearby river, conducts a final rite (often including dance), and ritually discards the kebon odeq offerings. Then the momot, the bottle sealed while empty at the festival's beginning, is ceremonially opened. In all the years that I attended save one, this bottle was about 30 percent full of water; this is a sign that the rainwater for the coming season will be sufficient. The water is considered sacred and bestowed by the deity; it is dispensed in portions to the encircled participants—mostly farmers and a mixture of Sasak and Balinese—who drink some of it and ritually place more around parts of their heads. Most will store the remaining water, believed to have purifying and healing powers, in vessels for their families at home.

Interpretations of the Lingsar Processions

One basic question is, why are there so many processions—12 by the Sasak, seven by the Balinese, and two joint processions—at the festival? A further issue concerns the categorization of processions: those that circumambulate structures (nine by the Sasak, six by the Balinese, one shared) and those that visit sacred sites outside of the temple (one for the Balinese on the first day, processing in two directions, and one shared at the very end).⁴² I think that the answers to

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⁴⁰ The piece they play is *Turun Daun*, considered a Sasak poem of praise that has been performed at the festival—and at other Balinese festivals and Wetu Telu rituals—for generations. Two Sasak *preret* players used to play this piece, too, in connection with all aspects of the kebon odeq, but that tradition, associated with the Wetu Telu, ceased as the Sasak at Lingsar began to acknowledge Islam in new ways.

⁴¹ See Harnish, *Bridges to the Ancestors*.

⁴² The circumambulating processions can be further divided into (1) those around the structures within the kemaliq (primarily Sasak, nine times), (2) those around the structures within the gaduh (Balinese, six times), and (3) those around the entire temple complex (shared, once).

both issues lie in the notion of “completeness.” Balinese and Sasak both have hierarchies of rites based on level of importance and completeness. The most important rites and festivals are the most “complete,” that is, the most all-encompassing of events requiring a “complete” array of performing arts, offerings, priests, and processions. These practices have been established by the ancestors and proven successful, and it is the current leaders' responsibility to conduct the festival in the most spectacular and complete fashion.

The Lingsar festival is, indeed, at the top of the rankings of important and crucial rites. For both communities, it is the existential source, related to the coming of Islam and prosperity for the Sasak, and, for the Balinese, to the coming of the Balinese royals, led by local divinities, to restore righteousness and connections between kingdom and divine. In addition, the water springs on the land irrigate the majority of rice fields in West Lombok and many of those in Central Lombok. The festival is the prime way to maintain this water and to request rainwater and fertility. Officials meet during the festival to negotiate distribution of irrigation waters from Lingsar throughout a year; thus the festival serves religious, interreligious, agrarian, and ecological functions.⁴³ As I have stated elsewhere,⁴⁴ the union of Balinese and Sasak is the main goal of the festival, regardless of the tensions between them at other times of the year, because that union represents the oneness of complementary duality and balance, and that balance is necessary to maintain spring water, rainwater, and fertility. The Balinese-Sasak union is a manifestation of the unity of duality (male/female, hot/cold, inside/outside) that is required for fertility, and fertility—via water, the cross-dressed dancers, and offerings—remains the main function and outcome of the festival. Thus, Balinese and Sasak strive for absolute and balanced completeness, based on the established traditions at the festival.

However, the pressures coming from outside and within the Sasak organization and leadership over recent decades have resulted in forceful and newly diverse expressions. For instance, *gendang beleq* was included in the festival only in the 1990s, and the first appearances of the gamelan *tawak-tawak* and gamelan *klentang* were in this century. The Sasak *pamangku* has become so independent that he can make decisions, supposedly based on tradition, that further the Sasak claim over the festival. The Sasak were formerly subordinate to the Balinese, particularly during the feudal period (17th–19th centuries), and it has taken decades for Sasak presence and authority to fully equal Balinese authority. The Sasak also have had to deal with Islamist leaders in the government who sought to dismantle or reshape Sasak participation at the festival. Overall, the Sasak are still not equal to the Balinese; royal houses still own the temple lands, whose produce is distributed to both communities to conduct the festival, and of the 20,000 people who attend the festival, at least 15,000 are Balinese. In addition, both Balinese and Sasak have had to deal with the forceful emergence of reformist (Hindu and Islamic)

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⁴³ It is my observation that water springs are sacred everywhere they emerge on both islands. Balinese temples in Bali and Lombok and Sasak kemaliq shrines are erected at those spots to maintain the springs. Kemaliq within Balinese temples were constructed at three sacred water springs sites in West Lombok and sacralized; strict taboos were enacted to regulate behavior, which indicates the level of sacredness of these sites. Of these three, only Lingsar retains an active kemaliq bringing Sasak and Balinese to the same location to worship.

⁴⁴ See especially Harnish, *Bridges to the Ancestors*, 207–16.

organizations; both communities have made adjustments over the past 20 years as a result of pressures from these organizations.

But the processions endure. Apart from being shortened (the Balinese Mendak Tirta used to process all the way to the coast) and less inclusive, they have not changed in at least a century, and possibly more than three centuries. (I can only directly account for 33 years, when I first began researching the festival.) The offerings, relics, and emblems used in the processions remain the same, as do the performing arts (apart from some recent changes among the Sasak). The gamelan musics are indexical for “ceremony” and “festival,” and interpreted as based on religious or cosmological/numerological principles.⁴⁵ Moreover, the gamelan tambur is an icon associated with the earliest ancestors at the festival. These gamelans have the power to transform the notion of time and call forth the divine, a power that is felt in the bodies of the participants as the music commands their ears and other senses. The processional music—representing completeness and Balinese and Sasak religious and cultural identities—is the soundscape that allows for other ritual behaviors, experiences, and transformations to occur at the festival.

Ritual protocol, found even within processions, signals spiritual and political hierarchy.⁴⁶ The political order and its inherent tensions, the arrangement of the divine, the elements of legends, and the icons of harmony and balance—necessary to enact or restore interethnic relations (a primary festival outcome)—are all public in the processions; these occur separately from the more exclusive and even private rites (the kebon odeq, for instance, are made in a special secluded space within the Sasak pamangku’s compound). The Sasak and Balinese pamangku and other ritual officials are clearly the leaders. The offerings made by Sasak and Balinese organizations (in addition to the thousands made by mostly Balinese individuals) have symbolic elements that are publicly acknowledged—perhaps especially the kebon odeq, with their fertility and male/female ingredients—and are placed in efficacious spots both in the processions and, later, within the gaduh and kemaliq.

The recent divisiveness between Balinese and Sasak is noticeable at the festival. As mentioned, most processions are exclusive, or largely exclusive, to one community or the other. The first procession consists only of Balinese walking westward to collect holy water; the immediate second procession is led by gamelan tambur and Sasak musicians, but consists again almost entirely of Balinese. Here the Balinese have appropriated the Sasak, represented by the sacred ancestral booty of the gamelan tambur, and the land, initiated by connecting the sacred water points around Lingsar, and even the deities, bringing forth the high deities of Sasak Wetu Telu faith and marrying them to Balinese counterparts, where they are nearly equal but “younger.”⁴⁷ This creates a pact between Bali and Lombok, though it does so under the auspices

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⁴⁵ Gamelan musics are constructed in gong cycles and feature slower- and faster-moving elements related to cyclical calendrical systems, to micro- and macrocosm, and to tripartite and other binary cosmological divisions. Musics also make specific historical references and manifest the values of the past into the present. See further Harnish, *Bridges to the Ancestors*, 122–49.

⁴⁶ Robert W. Hefner, *Hindu Javanese: Tengger Tradition and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 73.

⁴⁷ Representing the Sasak are Batara Gede Rinjani of the main volcano and Batara Gede Lingsar of the Lingsar area; representing the Balinese are Batara Gunung Agung of the main volcano on Bali and Batara Alit Sakti, a deity born a noble human who sacrificed himself and directed the Balinese to Lombok.

of the Balinese, hence marking the temple and festival as under Balinese hegemony. The former Balinese colonizing of Lombok was at least partially centered on and rationalized by the Lingsar temple, its festival, and the resulting rainwater and fertility. This is the main reason why fewer and fewer Sasak participate in this procession, and virtually no Sasak participates in the following ceremony marrying the waters and deities of Bali and Lombok under Balinese control.

The following event—the processing of the kebon odeq with their localness and male and female symbolism from the Sasak pamangku’s compound to the kemaliq—features almost entirely Sasak and provides a counternarrative to the Balinese processions described above. I believe this procession has become a statement of Sasak ethnicity and history at Lingsar, a history that does not include the Balinese. Balinese farmers were often attracted to the kebon odeq, representing the fertility of the area, and also the momot, the empty and sealed bottle that later mysteriously contains water that is considered sacred and bestowed by the deity. Kebon odeq and momot are processed to the kemaliq, but Balinese are no longer encouraged to participate in that opening Sasak procession. The ethnic divide—as represented by the two communities’ distinctive religions and legends, and contestation over ownership of the festival—has led to fewer joint participations, which undermines the ethnic unity theoretically required for fertility and water. On the one hand, processions today negate that unity because of increasing ethnic exclusivity in some rites. On the other hand, they generate interethnic unity in the shared rites—the circumambulation around the temple structures with sacrificial water buffalo on the first day, and the shared procession to sacred water springs outside the temple that concludes the festival.

During the opening day, the main day, and the closing day, the kebon odeq are processed by men and women around the temple and around the shrines in the kemaliq. Formerly, Balinese were given every opportunity to carry the offerings as well; transporting the kebon odeq is a high honor, and touching them provides access to the power of the festival and the unification of male/female and generation of fertility. But in 1988 some Balinese were denied access to these crucial offerings. The Balinese leader of the time, Anak Agung Biarsah, confronted the Sasak pamangku, Sanusi, and demanded to know why this was happening (I was interviewing Sanusi at the time). Sanusi immediately relented and said, “Of course, Balinese can carry the kebon odeq. Just like always.” There has been an effort by the Sasak to restrict those rites considered “Sasak” only to Sasak, despite the shared history of access. Sasak leaders have crafted the idea that gaduh and kemaliq are separate and represent respective temples for Balinese and Sasak—and the interaction between Biarsah and Sanusi brought the issue to the fore.⁴⁸ Separation from the Balinese is important; if there is too much sharing (particularly around anything considered “religious”), it could create problems for Sasak leadership and bring reformist groups to apply even more pressure on the Sasak. Access to the kebon odeq in processions, however, remains a high-tension issue between Balinese and Sasak. These offerings allow leaders to state that the Sasak are the true leaders of the festival.

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⁴⁸ The reason that Sanusi quickly submitted to Anak Agung Biarsah is that Biarsah was the grandson of the last king of Lombok and Sanusi had officiated for decades in a political climate that had always favored Balinese.

Concluding Thoughts

After 33 years, I have noticed significant changes in the Lingsar festival, despite the fact that leaders and participants consistently state that neither it nor its processions have changed.⁴⁹ Most changes have to do with Balinese and Sasak reorienting their culture (and their actions and rites at the festival) to contemporary sociopolitical developments provincially and nationally in Indonesia. In 1983, the first year I attended the festival, reformist forces, both Hindu and Islamic, had just begun to flex their muscles in governing ritual actions but had little influence at Lingsar. Within the next decade, however, changes became evident in ritual protocol, processional music, and ethnic makeup, and since then the pressure from reformists and modernists has increased. While many changes took place within the gaduh and kemaliq, the true barometer of change is the processions that are the public face of the festival. Moving out from temple spaces into the streets and environs, these processions represent who the Balinese and Sasak are and what they believe.

The grandiose processions are often filled with power and tension; at other times they are effective vehicles for creating and maintaining unity and harmony. What they represent has undergone a similar evolution. Formerly, the processions told about unifying Bali and Lombok (via Mendak Tirta on the opening day) and collectively returning the deities while embracing the union that has stimulated divine boons via prayer and momot (in the final procession and actions). Today, the processions are major ethnic theaters that define both the separate Balinese and Sasak communities and the union that emerges by the final procession. The contextualized ritual activities, the musics—with their historical references and values, and cosmological narratives imposing upon the environment (see footnote 45)—and the many processions moving in tandem nurture the transformation from postures of respective ethnic borders to a collapse of those borders into the oneness that leads to fertility and abundance. Throughout all of the changes over the decades, this spiritual union—caused by three days (out of five total for the festival) of socio-religious interactions, ritual processes, all-encompassing processions, and the powers within the musics—remains the goal of the festival.

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⁴⁹ See Harnish, “New Lines, Shifting Identities.”