



Sacred Dimensions of *Barong Ngelawang Sungungan*: Mythology, Process, and Performance

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the sacred dimensions of the *Barong Ngelawang Sungungan* based on the interconnectedness of mythology, the process of sacralization, and its sacredness in performance. During religious ceremonies, the *Barong* symbolizes pride, magical power, grandeur, and divinity. The ethnographic methodology is employed to gain insights into cultural aspects observed, heard, and concluded, thereby understanding cultural knowledge from the perspective of the local community. Research findings indicate that from a mythological perspective, the *Barong Ngelawang Sungungan* serves functionally as a sacred symbol, reinforcing the laws of cause and effect that must be obeyed and revered and a tool for creating a harmonious life. In its holy purpose, *ngelawang* can be manifested as a practice to strengthen fraternal bonds, interpreted as a signal of awareness, and a means of detoxification from the natural environment to eliminate negatively oriented forces..

Keywords: *Barong Ngelawang Sungungan*; mythology; sacred; performance; symbol

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INTRODUCTION

The arts have become an integral part of the cultured life of Balinese society (Pratiwi et al., 2017). The context of cultured living encompasses norms, values, protocols, and serves as a guide for the daily conduct of community members in both communal and individual life (Kusuma, 2003). Therefore, culture plays a role in directing individuals to adhere to all the rules stipulated by the culture (Sairin, 2002, p. 2). Regarding this aspect, Soedarsono also asserts that art with ritual value continues to thrive within communities that still uphold and preserve their traditional culture (Soedarsono, 1999, p. 174). The importance of art in various aspects

of religious and social activities has led to the conventional statement that almost no customary or religious ceremony in Bali excludes art (Ardhana, 2020). According to its accompanying ritual and social functions, performing arts in Bali are classified into *wali*, *babali*, and *balih-balihan* (Dewi et al., 2019). *Wali* and *babali* arts are types of performances with religious-sacred value, only staged at specific times and locations, and are bound to the execution of ritual ceremonies (Sukerna, 2016, p. 4), while *balih-balihan* art is a type of performance that is secular and can be staged anytime without restrictions on time or place (Dibia, 1999, pp. 3-4).

The province of Bali is known for having various types of *Barong*, including

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Barong Ket, Barong Bangkal, Barong Asu, Barong Macan, Barong Gajah, Barong Sampi, Barong Singa, Barong Landung, Barong Brutuk, Barong Blas-blasan, Barong Gagombrangan, Barong Sae, Barong Jaran, Barong Menjangan, and Barong Dawang-Dawang (Titib, 2003, pp. 418–422; Bandem & DeBoer, 2004, p. 30; Dibia, 1999, pp. 25–30). Based on this variety of *Barong*, in the sacred dimension of art performances in Bali, particularly during religious ceremonies, the existence of *Barong* plays a crucial role and always captures the attention of its owners' community (Limano, 2022). The *Barong* serves as a symbol representing pride, magical power, grandeur, and divinity. Therefore, in the belief of the community who owns it, the *Barong* possesses magical power as their protector and guardian of their safety (Wijaya, 2001, p. 38). Sacred *Barongs* are typically kept in village or banjar-owned temples and are only brought out for processions or performances during sacred moments in the Hindu community (Purwanto, 2019).

According to Durkheim, beliefs, rituals, and mythology are equally important because these three elements have the function of developing and maintaining social sentiments (Ahmad, 2021). These three elements are interrelated and form a unified whole. Therefore, to ensure the well-being and safety of others or to function as a protector, the *Barong* is treated with utmost respect and is placed in a high position within ritual ceremonies (Agung, 2023). Based on its attributes, the *Barong* serves as a totemic symbol, signifying that, almost universally, humans, in their rationality, feel themselves related to or connected with certain things within the cultural and social environment (Bosnak, 2020). Humans classify their natural environment and cultural and social surroundings into elemental categories, often elucidated through specific mythologies. Totem represents the oldest form of religion, predating animism (Pedersen, 2001). A totem is a symbol of a particular society or collective and is often the focal point in many religious ceremonies, thus considered sacred (Newman,

2018). Totems are sacred objects and religious traditions that aim to reinvigorate collective consciousness (I Gusti Ngurah Sudiana, 2010). Therefore, the *Barong*, as a form of totem, plays a crucial role and serves as the central orientation in the execution of a specific ceremony, including ceremonies held by the community in the Ubud tourism area.

Barong Ngelawang Sungungan

The *Barong*, believed by the Balinese community, possesses mystical powers as a village protector during specific occasions, such as Balinese festivals like Melasti, Galungan, Kuningan, and *Sasih Kanem* (Wibawa & Sudarsana, 2019). Generally, the *Barong* is paraded around the village (*ngelawang*) to safeguard the village from harm and neutralize negative elements (as a defence against malevolent forces) (Gottowik, 2014). The *Barong* used in the *ngelawang* activity is the sanctified *Barong Sungungan*, which has undergone a sacred purification process (B. M. Dana, 2022). The sacred activity of *Barong Ngelawang* or *Barong Sungungan* is carried out with pure intentions for *ngayah*, performing a task sincerely and selflessly as a devotion to God (Pitriani, 2020). They willingly dedicate their energy and time to *ngayah*, which holds significance as a ritual, in the hope that the environment and the community will be protected from harm and experience prosperity (Legawa, 2014). Therefore, community members who await and welcome the arrival of the revered *Barong* typically offer offerings in front of their house's entrance (Sukerna, 2016, pp. 6–7). As illustrated in Figure 1 below, the *Barong* is prominently featured in sacred rituals and ceremonies, demonstrating its integral role in these traditional events.

The term "*Barong Ngelawang*" is composed of the words "*barong*" and "*ngelawang*". "*Barong*" is derived from the word 'barwang' which means bear (animal) (Titib, 2003, p. 417). Dibia suggests that the word "*barong*" originates from the term "*bahrwang*," interpreted as a mythical bear-like creature with mystical powers (Dibia,

1999, p. 25). According to Bandem, when observed in terms of expression, colour, and decoration on the mask (*tapel*) used, there appears to be a fusion of Hindu and ancient Balinese Hindu culture with a touch of Buddhism in the *Barong* (Ardana, 2011, p. 86). “*Ngelawang*” comes from the base word “*lawang*” which means door, and the prefix “*ng*” means “towards or to”. *Ngelawang* signifies moving from one door to another to conduct a performance. Therefore, “*Barong Ngelawang*” refers to going from door to door to stage a *Barong* performance (Bandem, personal communication, July 6, 2022).



Figure 1. *Barong Macan Sesuhunan (Ratu Ling-sir)* during a procession in Pakraman Village, Padangtegal (Photo by Sukerna, 2018)

Based on the wealth of references included above, this article’s state of the arts illustrates how deeply integrated art is in the cultured life of Balinese society. Culture, encompassing norms, values, and protocols, guides daily conduct (Kusuma, 2003), with ritual art thriving in communities that uphold traditional culture (Soedarsono, 1999). The significant role of art in religious and social activities in Bali means almost no ceremony excludes it (Ardhana, 2020). Performing arts in Bali are classified into *wali*, *babali*, and *balih-bali*, each with distinct religious and secular values (Dewi et al., 2019; Sukerna, 2016; Dibia, 1999). The research highlights *Barong*’s crucial role as a symbol of pride, magical power, and divinity, believed to protect and guard the community (Wijaya, 2001).

Barong Ngelawang Sungsungan, a mystical village protector, is performed with sincere intentions for *ngayah*, or selfless devotion to God (Pitriani, 2020). The novelty of this research lies in its in-depth exploration of *Barong*’s role and meaning in Balinese life, mainly how *Barong Ngelawang Sungsungan* functions within rituals to ensure community well-being and safety through meaningful and sacrificial ceremonies.

METHOD

The study on the sacred dimension within the tradition of *Barong Ngelawang Sungsungan* in the tourism area of Ubud, Gianyar, Bali, emphasizes the acquisition and utilization of qualitative data. Qualitative research involves data in descriptions or narratives, using words and actions related to the research problem (Moleong, 2011, p. 157). This study also employs ethnographic principles by recording the events of the *Barong Ngelawang Sungsungan* performance, conducting interviews with traditional leaders *Barong* performers, and exploring all aspects related to ethnographic inquiries concerning the research object of *Barong Ngelawang Sungsungan* in Ubud, Bali.

Through the ethnographic method, this research is guided to understand cultural issues by observing, listening, and drawing cultural knowledge from the perspective of the local community (Sharma & Sarkar, 2019). In this study, both primary and secondary data are collected. Primary data consists of words directly related to the tradition of *Barong Ngelawang Sungsungan*. Information about everything associated with the activity of *Barong Ngelawang Sungsungan* is obtained through direct observation and interviews with field informants. Primary data is acquired through direct observation during the implementation of the *Barong Ngelawang Sungsungan* activity in Ubud. Additional primary data is gathered from informants considered competent in providing the necessary information for this research to supplement the observed data. Informati-

on is the data the researcher seeks for data analysis to address the research problem (Mathers et al., 2000). Informants provide information about the research object (Kaelan, 2012, p. 89). The selection of informants in this research is carried out using the purposive technique, which means selecting informants with a specific purpose in mind (Campbell, 1955). This is done considering that the researcher already has a relatively clear idea of the informants who will be interviewed (Ratna, 2010, p. 226). The informants are those involved in the *Barong Ngelawang Sungungan* activity, as well as local community figures and traditional leaders.

The tradition of *Barong Ngelawang Sungungan* referred to in this study, involves the performance of the *Barong*, moving from one house to another to ward off evil forces to keep the village safe from harm. This activity has become a customary practice and an integral part of a community's life, passed down through generations and still ongoing today (Pratama et al., 2021). This writing represents an effort to delve into the sacred artistic dimension of *Barong Ngelawang Sungungan*, focusing on aspects such as mythology, the process of sanctification, and the sacredness within its performance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mythology Around *Barong* Bali

As a symbol representing pride, magical power, grandeur, and majesty, the *Barong* in Balinese culture is believed to be one of the embodiments of the Almighty God (*Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*), manifested in the form of a sacred mythological creature (Newman, 2018). In terms of its visual artistic expression, the *Barong* is the result of the work of artists who translate their ideas or concepts from their minds into tangible forms (Nadya & Chiktra, 2021). This translation of ideas occurs within the local culture and external influences that shape and animate every aspect of Balinese community life, especially in art and religion (Winaja et al., 2019). For the

Balinese, the *Barong* is believed to possess supernatural power, acting as a guardian against disasters or evil spirits (Laili et al., 2023). Furthermore, there is a belief that the *Barong* holds a special significance as a protector of the village inhabitants (Wijaya, 2001). Various literary sources that examine the mythology surrounding the *Barong* state that its origin can be traced back to the Chinese Lion Dance, which served as a substitute for lion performances by traveling professional entertainers (M. Bandem & DeBoer, 2004, p. 185). When examining the visual iconography of the *Barong* mask (including expression, colour, and decorations), it becomes evident that Hindu and ancient Balinese cultures are fused, particularly with a touch of Buddhism (Ardana, 2011, p. 86).

The term "*Barong*" is traced through the cultural and linguistic perception in Bali, revealing a wealth of diverse *Barong* artefacts. "*Barong*" is derived from combining the words "*ba + rong*" or "*bah + rong*." *Ba* is a syllable from the word *b(h)aga*, which means body, and "*baga*" refers to the orifice in a woman's genitalia. It could also originate from the word "*bah*," taken from the term "*bah bangun*," which means the length, width, and height measurements of a traditional Balinese building. Meanwhile, "*rong*" means space or cavity. Therefore, *Barong* can signify the hole or cavity of a body or a structure equipped with an entrance, or it can also denote the length, width, and height measurements of a mythical creature's space (Ardhana, 2020, p. 106).

In another source, in *Tatwa Kanda Pat Bhuta*, *Barong* is equated with the element of water, representing human beings originating from the womb, positioned to the north, and associated with the *neptu* (numerical value) four, known as *Banaspatiraja* (Piartha, 2020). In the concept of "*catur sanak*," which comprises four siblings including *Anggapati*, *Prajapati*, *Banaspati*, and *Banaspatiraja* (Aryadi Putra et al., 2021), "*Banas*" means water. The water referred to here is equivalent to the concept of water. The womb is predominantly as-

sociated with water, symbolizing the existence of the god Vishnu, who governs the northern direction and serves as the sustainer of all life. “*Pati*” means death, and “*Raja*” is a title denoting a high-ranking leader. Therefore, when discussing *Banaspatiraja*, it signifies the revelation of Vishnu functioning as the “Supreme Ruler” of all life forms that grow and develop on Earth and beneath the sky (Budhiartini, 2000, pp. 9–10; Oka, 1989, pp. 20–22).



Figure 2. Several *Barongs* during ritual ceremonies at the cemetery in Pakraman Village, Singakerta (Photo by Sukerna, 2018)

Both *Barong* (and *Rangda*) are believed to possess specific characteristics and are considered dwelling places for spirits or supernatural beings, often associated with dualistic traits (Purwanto, 2019). This means that besides being seen as protectors against various threats to human well-being, such as disease outbreaks, they are also believed to possess contrasting attributes, as shown in Figure 2. Thus, beliefs and mythology provide legitimacy and firmness to the community's faith. Moreover, they often serve as guidelines in religious ceremonies (Dana et al., 2009). In many ways, they serve as guiding principles in religious ceremonies. This can be seen in the emergence of the *Barong Ngelawang* tradition, as narrated in the *Lontar Barong Swari*, which goes as follows.

“It all began when Goddess Uma was cursed by Bhatara Siwa, who happened to be her husband, to descend to the mortal realm and transform into Goddess Durga.

While serving this punishment, Goddess Durga resided in a cemetery (*Setra Gandamayu*). With her divine power, Goddess Durga engaged in the worship of the universe to disrupt the tranquillity of human life. When Goddess Durga practised yoga, aligning herself with the natural forces facing north, it resulted in the emergence of diseases or “*gering lumintu*.” When facing west, it led to the creation of “*gering hamancuh*.” Facing south, “*gering rug bhuwana*” emerged. And when facing east, the “*gering ngutah bayar*” epidemic came into being. With the appearance of diseases like these, the *bhuta kala* (evil spirits) rejoiced and celebrated, thereby threatening human life with various epidemics. This elicited compassion from Sang Hyang Tri Murti, namely, the Gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. To save the universe and human life from the threats of these diseases, these deities descended to the mortal world, transforming Brahma into the Red Mask (*Topeng Bang*), Vishnu into the White Mask (*Telek*), and Iswara (*Shiva*) into the *Barong*. These three deities collectively sanctified the universe through *ngelawang*, a dance performed from house to house and village to village. Upon witnessing the *Barong Ngelawang*, the *bhuta kala*, as the spreaders of diseases, fled in fear, and the epidemics vanished. Therefore, to seek protection from Hyang Tri Murti, when a *Barong Ngelawang* appears, the community must offer *canang* with a token to seek safety from the onslaught of diseases.” (Yudabakti & Watra, 2007, pp. 38–40; Pandji, 1975, pp. 9–10)

From this mythological perspective, the *Barong Sungungan* in Balinese society can be seen as a sacred symbol, reinforcing the principle of cause and effect that must be obeyed and revered. It is a source of strength safety, and a tool for creating harmony in the lives of the Balinese community. This aligns with Ardhana (2020), who states that the *Barong* is utilized as a performing art for warding off disasters, encompassing profound cultural values for strengthening the beliefs and traditions of Hinduism in Bali. Therefore, the artistic practice of *Barong* in Bali undoubtedly

involves a series of processes and specific rituals to reach a sacred phase.

Sacralization Process of Making *Barong*

The relationship between mythology and the sacralization of the *Barong* in Bali is like two sides of a coin closely connected in the community that owns them (Jayanti1 2015). The sanctity of the *Barong* is always grounded in the mythological aspects believed by the Balinese people. Generally, to attain the magical or supernatural power inherent in the *Barong*, a process of sacralization is required (Parmajaya, 2020). The concept of the sacralization process of the *Barong*, in this case, involves several stages. In the creation of the *Barong*, the process of sacralization begins with the selection of wood for the mask (*tapel*), and it continues until the completion of the physical form of the *Barong*, turning it into a work of art.

Typically, in creating the sacred *Barong* mask, the “*undagi*”, or skilled craftsmen responsible for making the *Barong*, pay close attention to the purity of the wood chosen for the mask’s foundation. Crafting the mask involves a spiritual belief held by the *undagi*, akin to a consequence of cause and effect. Mistakes in the process can negatively impact the owner or even the *undagi* themselves (Pandji, 1975, p. 46). Therefore, the sacred *Barong* strongly connects to the beliefs of the Balinese community, as it is considered a vessel or dwelling place for the deities (Purwanto, 2019).

The initial stage of creating the sacred *Barong* mask starts with “*ngepel*,” which involves cutting or harvesting wood from the tree to be used as the mask’s material. During this felling process, wood from the southwest side is typically chosen, as it is believed to be occupied by Dewa Ludra, symbolizing stability (Turun, personal communication, October 3, 2021). The cut wood is then handed over to the *undagi* for further processing into the mask. However, before this, a “*pemralina*” ceremony is conducted to spiritually deactivate the wood’s inherent power. Therefore, in creating the mask by the *undagi*, no spirits are residing in the wood. Through this cere-

monial process, the *undagi* gain more freedom in their work. When selecting wood for crafting the sacred *Barong*, *undagi* typically choose the “*kayu pole*.” This wood is favored for its soft, fine-grained, easily workable, and high-quality properties and because it possesses a sanctified purity valued by the Balinese community (Redha, personal communication, October 6, 2021).

The sacralization process of the *Barong* consists of three stages, namely (1) *maprayascita* or *pemelaspas*, (2) *ngatep* and *pasupati*, followed by (3) *mesuci* or *ngerehin* (Sukerna, 2016, p. 143). *Maprayascita* or *pemelaspas* is the initial sacralization process in the *Barong*-making process. This stage aims to ritually cleanse any religious impurities (*leteh*) that may have occurred during the crafting process. The *maprayascita* or *pemelaspas* stage serves to restore the sanctity of the wood, which has now become the *tapel*. As a result, the *tapel* is now ready to be imbued with supernatural power.

Ngatep and *pasupati* take place after the *maprayascita* or *pemelaspas* ceremony. *Ngatep* involves a series of rituals symbolically connecting (*ngatep*) the *tapel* with its body. The *Barong* maker or *undagi* typically performs this ceremony. After the *ngatep* ceremony, the complete and intact *Barong* is *pasupati* by a priest or *pedanda*. Completing the *ngatep* and *pasupati* ceremonies signifies that the *Barong* is now spiritually alive as a sanctified work of art.

Mesuci or *ngerehin*, as the final step in the sacralization process of creating the *Barong* is to strengthen belief. Additionally, it is a practice to demonstrate the presence of supernatural power within the *Barong*. The *ngerehin* ceremony occurs at a cemetery on a sacred day, coinciding with the dark moon (*tilem*), and is conducted at midnight. This ceremony aims to prove to what extent sacred objects like the *Barong* can establish or receive contact with the vibrations of the spirit world. This allows the person who interacts with or becomes a performer of these objects to experience possession (*kerawuhan*).

The Sacred *Barong Ngelawang* Performance

The sacred *Barong Ngelawang* or *Barong Sungungan* tradition is understood as a *Barong* performance activity that travels around the village, inherited since ancient times (Reksi et al., 2023). This heritage is still practised today and functions in the community's life. Regarding the sacred *Barong Ngelawang* activity, Covarrubias stated that the *Barong Ngelawang* performance occurs during the Galungan festival, along the streets, and even in the alleys. This event can be encountered everywhere, consisting of a sacred *Barong* procession accompanied by gamelan music (Covarrubias, 1972, p. 286). Additionally, de Zoete mentioned that during the Galungan period, the community released the *Barong* on the streets, which was accompanied by gamelan music. They can meet at any time, day and night, and the *Barongs* dance from house to house (De Zoete & Spies, 1973, p. 94).

Bandem also conveys a similar sentiment, stating that every Galungan festival, the youth group Taruna Banjar Sengguan in the village of Singapadu, Gianyar, and other youth groups from villages in the southern part of Bali engage in *ngelawang* activities. This enjoyable adventure occurs every 210 days (M. Bandem & DeBoer, 2004, pp. 184–185). Amid the audience, the *Barong* dances, and after the performance, the host voluntarily donates to the *Barong* troupe as a token of gratitude for the blessings brought to their village. In the practice of *Barong Ngelawang Sungungan*, the participants carry out their duties with a high level of awareness that this activity is purely *ngayah*, meaning a sincere and selfless dedication to God (Kadek Shanti Gitaswari Prabhawita, 2019). The willingness to sacrifice energy and time for *ngayah* holds significance as a ritual, hoping to safeguard the environment and the community from harm (Legawa, 2014).

In addition to aiming for the village to be free from harm, during the *ngelawang* activity of *Barong Sungungan*, there is also the intention to neutralize negative forces

(*penolak bala*) of the *bhuta kala*. These forces can return to their original nature with all their power and no longer disturb the community's peace (Sukerna et al., 2016). The sacred function of *Barong Ngelawang Sungungan* is also believed to bring blessings, safety, inner tranquillity, and peace. Generally, in navigating life in this world, all human beings desire happiness and to be free from negative influences that could lead to suffering. Therefore, people make various efforts to achieve their planned goals.

The Hindu community in Bali strongly believes in the supreme power of *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa* (Heriyanti, 2020). Therefore, they always seek protection from the Almighty God so that their actions and endeavors may yield results by their intentions (Santika, 2017). One of the ways they do this is through the personification of *Barong Sesuhunan*. In this endeavour, it usually starts with a vow (*masesangi*). If their efforts succeed, or whatever they have planned is carried out successfully, they will perform the *Barong* (*ngaturang sesuhunan masolah*) as an expression of gratitude towards God.

Determination of Sacred Time

The sacred performance of *Barong Ngelawang* generally holds religious values and is highly revered. Therefore, this sacred art form must be staged with great care, and it is only allowed to occur at specific times and locations. Additionally, it is linked to significant events in the execution of Hindu religious ceremonies (rituals) and customs in Bali. The timing for the performance of *Barong ngelawang* typically starts from *Buda Kliwon Galungan* (Wednesday, *Kliwon* day, and *Dungulan wuku*) until *Buda Kliwon Pahang* (Wednesday, *Kliwon* day, and *Pahang wuku*). This thirty-five-day period holds sacred significance in the Javanese-Balinese calendar, as it marks the convergence of the same day and market day, albeit in different weeks. In the Hindu community in Bali, the conclusion of the *Barong Ngelawang* performance is usually referred to as "*pegat uwakan*" or "*bunchal*

balung" (Sukarta, 2010, pp. 97–98; Goris, 1960).

Therefore, the implementation of this activity spans thirty-five days. This constitutes a sacred cycle in the calculations of the Javanese-Balinese calendar. At this time, a convergence occurs between the same day and weekday, but in different *wuku*. The Hindu community in Bali usually refers to the conclusion of this *Barong Ngelawang* period as *bunchal balung* (Goris, 1960). In the Hindu community in Bali, there are two calendrical systems used for day reckoning (calendar), namely the Hindu-Balinese calendar and the Javanese-Balinese calendar. The Hindu-Balinese calendar consists of twelve months with a duration of 355 days, but sometimes 354 or 356 days. The Balinese community uses the Hindu-Balinese calendar system to celebrate the transition of the Saka New Year, which falls on the 1st day of the tenth month marked by the Nyepi holiday (Ramdhani, 2020). In the Javanese-Balinese dating system, it consists of thirty *wuku*. Each *wuku* lasts for seven days, resulting in 210 days. This day reckoning is widely used to determine the observance of ritual ceremonies. One important commemorative day that uses the Javanese-Balinese calendar system is the Galungan and Kuningan holidays, which fall on Wednesday, Kliwon Dungulan, and Saturday, Kliwon Kuningan (Koentjaraningrat, 1997, pp. 302–303).

Galungan is a sacred day for Hindus in Bali, commemorated every 210 days, and is repeatedly observed in religious ritual ceremonies (Ardiyasa, 2018). The theological concept of Galungan is rooted in a legend that considers it a commemoration of the greatness or steadfastness of religious faith after undergoing various trials or temptations (Sumertini, 2017). As Galungan approaches, the universe is filled with subtle forces and disturbances. In the belief of the Hindu community in Bali, the threat to human safety arises from *Sang Kala Tiga*, also known as *Butha Dungulan*, namely *Kala Dungulan*, *Kala Dangastra*, and *Kala Amangkurat*. Leading up to Galungan,

starting from Sunday or "*penyekeban*" day, Monday or "*penyajaan*" day, and Tuesday or "*penampahan*" day, for three consecutive days, *Sang Kala Tiga* tempts and disturbs humans. Faced with such circumstances, humans take specific actions with complete respect, devotion, and so on. These actions then encourage humans to perform religious rituals to establish a connection with these forces.

These three *kala* reside within every human being, manifesting as inner turmoil that arises in the mind and soul, then tempting and disturbing during the preparations for the Galungan festival (Wartayasa & Heriyanti, 2020). Finally, on Wednesday, *Kliwon Dungulan*, or the Galungan festival, is the day of victory for Hindus in battling the forces of negative qualities symbolized as *adharma*. Therefore, in observing the Galungan festival, the Hindu community in Bali aims to celebrate and revel in the triumph of *dharma* over *adharma*. In this context, *Dharma* involves self-control and restraint in preparing all necessities for the Galungan festival. *Adharma* represents negative forces that constantly tempt and disturb humans (Pandji, 1975, p. 23). Regarding implementing the *Barong Ngelawang* on the day of Galungan, the Hindu community in Bali, in celebrating the victory of *dharma* over *adharma*, typically travels to a specific place (*plesir*) or visits the homes of relatives.



Figure 3. *Barong Macan*, used by children for *ngelawang* (Photo by Sukerna, 2018)

In Ubud, the presentation of the *Ba-*

rong Ngelawang during every Galungan and Kuningan festival has become a tradition that is still practiced by the residents who support the *Barong Sesuhunan* in Pura Dalem Agung, Pakraman Padangtegal Village. The execution of the *Barong* procession around the village during each Galungan and Kuningan festival is known as “*melancaran*” by the Padangtegal community (Sukerna et al., 2016). As can be seen in Figure 3, all village residents, including children, are also actively involved in this event or ritual. This Pakraman village has two accompanying *Barongs*: *Barong Macan* (*Ratu Lingsir*) and *Barong Bangkal* (*Ratu Anom*). Additionally, there is a character named *Rangda* named *Ratu Sakti*. The *Barong Melancaran* activity during the Galungan and Kuningan festivals in Pakraman Padangtegal Village is carried out on Saturday *Kliwon Kuningan*. The ritual procession begins with the ceremony of bringing down (*nedunan*) the *Barong Sesuhunan* from its storage place (*payogan*) in the morning and then carrying it to Pura Dalem Agung Padangtegal. At around 16:00 (WITA), the residents of Pakraman Padangtegal carry out the *melancaran* activity, departing from Pura Dalem Agung while carrying the *Barong Sesuhunan* and its accessories, circumnavigating the Pakraman village.

Supporting Sacredness

The *Barong Sungsonian Ngelawang* activity falls within the category of *wali* and *babali* arts, which means that in its execution, it involves sacred objects such as *Rangda*, *Tapel Sidakarya*, *umbul-umbul* (*lelontek*), the weaponry of the *Nawa Sanga* deities, spears (*tumbak*), umbrellas (*pajeng*), and gamelan instruments (Parmajaya, 2020). These sacred objects and equipment are typically involved and participate in the *ngelawang* procession (Suyasa, personal communication, September 28, 2021). The purpose of this activity is to neutralize the atmosphere from subtle disturbances and negative forces. Therefore, in carrying out this activity, various offerings (*upakara*) are also involved, in addition to using sacred object (Sujarwo et al., 2020).

The presence of the gamelan ensemble is an indispensable element in every *Barong Ngelawang* performance. The gamelan is crucial to the activity’s success (Putra, 2018). In the context of *ngelawang*, the gamelan enhances the vibrant atmosphere with its resounding melodies and dynamically reinforces each accentuation of the *Barong*’s movements in the performance. Through its resonating sounds, like the large *kendang* instrument in Figure 4, the gamelan also signals that a *Barong Ngelawang* performance is taking place. The sound, audible from a considerable distance, is a means of notifying people about the presence of the *Barong Ngelawang*.



Figure 4. Kendang instrument (gamelan Gong Beri) in the Ngunya procession in Pakraman Village, Padangtegal Ubud (Photo by Sukerna, 2018)

The gamelan ensemble used in the sacred *Barong Ngelawang* performance is the “*bebatelan*” gamelan set (Surianta, 2021). The instrumentation of this *bebatelan* gamelan set consists of one *kempul*, one *cengceng ricik*, one *kajar*, one *klenang*, and one pair (two pieces) of *kendang krum-pungan*. This gamelan set is typically used to accompany *Barong Ngelawang* performances featuring the *Barong Macan*, *Ba-*

rong Bangkal, and *Barong Landung*. If the *ngelawang* performance uses *Barong Ket*, then the role of *kendang krumpungan* is replaced by *kendang penyalah*, and *cengceng ricik* is replaced by *cengceng kopyak*. Considering the number of instruments, this gamelan ensemble is simple, and the repertoire presented is not overly complex (for more details, see Figure 5). In Balinese gamelan ensembles, the *kendang* is part of the instrument group (*tungguhan*) known as "*penandan*" (see figure 4 above), which serves as the leader determining the presentation or progression of the musical piece, including transitions from one part to the next (Sukerta, 2009, pp. 163–165).



Figure 5. Gong Pulu instrument in the gamelan *barong ngelawang* by children in Ubud (Photo, Sukerna, 2018)

The Balinese community is closely intertwined with Hindu concepts in engaging in artistic activities. Furthermore, Hindu teachings seem to have become the soul of various types of art owned by the community. The doctrine of *catur yoga* consists of four ways to seek unity with God and unite oneself with Him, including *jnanayoga*, *bhaktiyoga*, *karmayoga*, and *rajayoga* (Sudharta & Atmaja, 2005, p. 24). *Bhaktiyoga*, in turn, gives rise to various concepts that suggest that art is indeed a form of offering to the Almighty.

In the activity of *Barong Sungsun-gan Ngelawang*, the participants, known as "*ngupah*" or "*menanggap*," typically prepare offerings known as *canangsari*. These are arrangements of various types and colours

of flowers, usually accompanied by *sesari* in the form of money. In the past, *sesari* consisted of Chinese coins or "*pis bolong*," but now Indonesian Rupiah notes are used. *Sesari* forms the essence of an offering and embodies the highest value (Sudarma, 2008, p. 23). The *sesari* present in the *canangsari*, regardless of their nominal value, become objects offered to the *Barong Ngelawang* group. Another essential element in the *Barong Ngelawang* activity is "*sesajen*," or offerings. Since the *nedunan* ceremony, when the items are brought down from storage, *sesajen* have been used. Similarly, in the procession around the village, every stage, including the village entrance and the main intersections, involves *sesajen* in the ritual ceremony. At the end of the procession (*nyineb*), which takes place at the storage place of the *Barong*, a ceremony is held using *sesajen* as a conclusion to the *ngelawang* activity. During the procession, every member of the Pakraman village presents *sesajen* in front of their respective houses as a symbol of offering.

Sacred Purpose

As mentioned earlier, the Galungan festival commemorates the Balinese Hindu community's victory of *dharma* over *adharma*. The *Barong Ngelawang* activity during the Galungan festival, in addition to its ritualistic aspect of driving away (*ngulah*) *bhuta kala*, also encompasses the concepts of enjoyment (*plesir*), environmental purification from negative elements or forces, and fertility. The idea of fertility is usually observed in the *Barong Kedingkling* activity when the dancers enter the residents' houses. If they come across a tree in the yard, they rub or shake it as a symbol of a request for the trees to thrive and bear abundant fruits (Wijaya, personal communication, July 6, 2021). The *ngelawang* activity in the context of ritual-sacred practice is not only interpreted as performing the *Barong Ngelawang* and manifesting obedience to the Almighty God (*Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*). In a broader sense, *Ngelawang's* performance also serves as a practice for the Hindu community in Bali

to strengthen brotherly relationships, signal awareness, and detoxify oneself from the natural environment for ritualistic cleansing to eliminate negative forces.

CONCLUSION

The sacred dimension of *Barong Ngelawang Sungungan* is formed through the interconnectedness of three aspects: mythology, the process of sacralization, and the sacredness in its performance. From a mythological perspective, the *Barong Sungungan* can be seen as a sacred symbol that reinforces cause and effect that must be obeyed and revered, a source of strength and safety, and a tool for creating harmony in communal life. To imbue the *Barong* with a mystical, subtle power, a process of sacralization is required, beginning from selecting wood for the mask (*tapel*) to completing the physical form of the *Barong* as a work of art. The sacralization process of the *Barong* consists of three stages:

Maprayascita or *pemelaspas* is the process of consecrating the wood that has become *tapel* to sanctify it once more.

The *ngatep* and *pasupati* stages involve a series of ceremonies to connect (*ngatep*) the *tapel* with its body symbolically. After the *ngatep* ceremony, the *Barong*, now in its complete form, is *pasupati* by a priest, transforming it into a consecrated, living, subtle entity.

As the final part of the process of making the *Barong* sacred, the *mesuci* or *ngerehin* stage served as evidence of the mystical power within the *Barong* through a *ngerehin* ceremony conducted at a cemetery, coinciding with the dark moon (*tilem*) and carried out in the middle of the night.

In its performance, the sacred tradition of *Barong Ngelawang* or *Barong Sungungan* is bound by the determination of sacred time and the supporting means of sanctity to achieve its sacred purpose. The timing for the *Barong Ngelawang* performance begins from *Buda Kliwon Galungan* (Wednesday, Kliwon weekday, Dungulan *wuku*) until *Buda Kliwon Pahang* (Wednesday, Kliwon weekday -*pasaran*-, Pa-

hang *wuku*). In the Hindu community in Bali, there are two calendar systems used for day reckoning: the Hindu-Balinese calendar and the Javanese-Balinese calendar. The Hindu-Balinese calendar consists of twelve months with a duration of 355 days, sometimes 354 or 356 days. The Balinese community uses the Hindu-Balinese calendar system to celebrate the transition of the Saka New Year, which falls on the 1st day of the tenth month marked by the Nyepi holiday. On the other hand, the Javanese-Balinese dating system consists of thirty *wuku*. Each *wuku* lasts for seven days, resulting in 210 days. This day reckoning is widely used to determine the observance of ritual-sacred ceremonies.

In the performance of *Barong Ngelawang Sungungan*, the supporting means of sanctity involve sacred objects such as *rangda*, *tapel Sidakarya*, *umbul-umbul* (*lelon-tek*), the weaponry of the *Nawa Sanga* deities, spears (*tumbak*), umbrellas (*pajeng*), offerings (*sesaji*), and gamelan instruments. In addition to enhancing the lively atmosphere, the gamelan dynamically reinforces each accentuation of *Barong*'s movements during the performance. The sound of the gamelan also serves as a signal that a *Barong Ngelawang* performance is taking place. The sound, audible from a considerable distance, is a means of notifying people about the presence of the *Barong Ngelawang*.

Regarding sacred purpose, the *Barong Ngelawang* activity during the Galungan festival encompasses driving away (*ngulah*) *bhuta kala*, enjoyment (*plesir*), environmental purification from negative elements, and fertility. The *ngelawang* activity in the context of ritual-sacred practice is not only interpreted as performing the *Barong Ngelawang* and manifesting obedience to the Almighty God (Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa). In a broader sense, *ngelawang*, in its performance, also serves as a practice of the Hindu community in Bali to strengthen brotherly relationships. *Ngelawang* is also interpreted as signalling awareness and detoxification from nature and the environment. Additionally, *Barong*

Ngelawang's performance reminds humans that nature and the environment also need to be ritually cleansed to eliminate negative forces.

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