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The Art of Dealing with the Gods: Balinese Women and Ritual Labor

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THE ART OF DEALING WITH THE GODS
BALINESE WOMEN AND RITUAL LABOR

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the ritual labor required of Hindu Balinese women to produce obligatory daily offerings for their households. It analyzes how Balinese broadly perceive this work and what women themselves hope to accomplish through these objects. The thesis situates this ethnographic analysis through theoretical connections with the scholarship on Bali, feminist theories of domestic labor, and ritual economies. The research was based on six months of fieldwork and interviews with thirty Balinese women and two Balinese men. I found that while many Balinese women expressed weariness or dissatisfaction with the never-ending nature of offering making, many of them also expressed satisfaction in being able to help their families achieve the state of *selamat*, a condition of safety and equilibrium between the visible world of humans and the invisible world of spirits.
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Introduction

Invisible Offerings Everywhere You Look

Balinese sunsets fall dramatically and suddenly. I sit with Ibu Ariasih, watching clouds of gold and crimson splash across the sky as her mother-in-law carefully sets an offering down by the door, its flower petals reflecting the heavens. Ibu Ariasih continues our conversation on the bombings in Bali fourteen years ago with a sigh, gesturing at the offering and telling me,

“Maybe we weren’t paying enough attention to the gods, maybe they were upset. It was a reminder to pay attention to our lives and cultures, to be aware of what we must do. I don’t know why those people [the terrorists] did that. But for us Hindus, we can only fulfill our own responsibilities.”

*****

Offerings greet visitors around every corner in Bali. They are beautiful, skillfully constructed from leaves and flowers and transformed into works of art that must be refreshed multiple times a day. Most of the offerings seen on a regular basis are the small *canang* varieties, but most of the attention in both Bali and in the literature on the subject focuses on the large impressive types made annually by Balinese men. The constant presence of the smaller types made by women have not received the same amount of attention, and the huge amount of domestic ritual labor is seldom noticed. However, to exist in Bali is to be in constant need of protection from demons and love from the gods. To rely on annual offerings alone, no matter how spectacular they are, would be far too risky. Daily offerings are essential to insuring a constant layer of protection for families in a dark and chaotic world. These daily offerings are almost exclusively produced by women. In this thesis I call attention to this invisible labor, and reveal the care and effort women pour into maintaining the visible and invisible worlds in Bali.

I situate my analysis in the theoretical treatment of women’s domestic labor globally, and the particular spiritual landscape of invisible threats in Bali. I argue that the Balinese concept of *selamat*, from the Malay term for safety, uniquely captures the complex form of physical and
existential security that women seek through elaborate ritual practices rooted in the domestic sphere, which relies on women’s uncompensated labor. To achieve selamat is to achieve the delicate equilibrium of protection and stability, balancing the lives of humans between the invisible forces of gods and demons through offerings. To love one’s family is to devote oneself to ritual production.

_Anthropology of Bali_

Bali is a small island and province within the Indonesian archipelago. Its presence within cultural studies, however, belies the actual landmass and population, for it has been a constant source of fascination for anthropologists and other cultural scholars for generations. With a population of just over four million, 83.5% of which are Hindu (Badan Pusat Statistik n.d.), Bali is a small seclusion of Hinduism in the largest majority Muslim country\(^1\) in the world, which accounts for some of this fascination.

Bali has been idealized by Westerners as “Java as it might have been.” Harold Forster, who mostly worked in Java, waxed poetic over Bali being unique among Indonesian islands because of its Hindu religion and because of its relatively short time under the Dutch colonial rule during the twentieth century. He describes the “natural gaiety undimmed by Moslem puritanism and the welcoming self-confidence that contrasted with the reserve and inferiority complex of their long-colonized cousins” (Forster 1958:139). In his view, and in many others, these traits made Bali a hidden gem in the necklace of Indonesian islands, a place undimmed by the stresses and drudgery modernization had caused elsewhere.

1 Hindus comprise approximately 0.02% of the Indonesian population at the time of the 2010 census (Badan Pusat Statistik n.d.)
The Western world’s first encounter with Bali was during the quick stop of Cornelis de Houtman during his voyage to the East Indies in 1597, where, to summarize Miguel Covarrubias (1937), they found it very pleasant and took a short holiday. The Dutch East Indies Company controlled most of Indonesia until the Dutch government stepped in at the beginning of the 19th century when the company failed. However, the Dutch did not begin their attempt at colonizing Bali until 1846, and they did not fully succeed until 1908 (Covarrubias 1937:29), in part due to a lack of natural harbors, as well as difficulties with the rest of their Indonesian colonies. James A. Boon suggests that the Dutch and the Balinese got along quite well throughout the colonization, in part because of the similarities they shared in “domestic scale and elaborate hydrotechnology” (Boon 1977:16). That is not to say there was no conflict. In 1908 the royal court of Klungklung, one of the kingdoms that had remained independent in Bali up to this point, went out to meet Dutch troops armed with kerises and lances, where they were massacred by the Dutch troops and their guns, including the massacre of accompanying women and children. The Dutch then went on to destroy the Klungklung royal palace (Wiener 1995:3).

Balinese became increasingly worried about retaining their own culture with the ongoing presence of outsiders during the colonization of Bali by the Dutch. With increasing awareness of the ‘other’ came increasing awareness of themselves, and what made them unique. When this was paired with the emphasis the Dutch placed on the “living museum of Hindu-Javanese civilization – the one and only surviving heir to the Hindu heritage swept from Java by the coming of Islam” (Picard 1999:19), the pressure to retain and preserve their culture and religion grew. Glorifying this more ‘traditional’ religion suited the Dutch for several reasons. To begin with, they looked poorly upon Islam, both because of worries over its radicalism and the fact that it was a monotheistic religion – but the wrong sort of monotheism (that is, not Christian).
fact that Islam was closely connected to Java, with its nationalist and communist movements (Picard 1999:21) was also worrisome, and the Dutch felt that it would be better if the Balinese remained distinct. Hinduism was far less of a threat, as far as the Dutch were concerned, with its charmingly primitive polytheism, and the knowledge that they could use a traditional system to their advantage.

During the beginning of the twentieth century, the Dutch took on an Ethical Policy. This policy included a more thorough takeover of local society as part of an effort to “reform them in the cause of peace, order, and welfare” (Picard 1999:19). In 1910 the Dutch reinstituted the caste system, which was much more uniform and unyielding than the precolonial system as part of an effort to legitimate their authority. The castes consisted of the three ‘closed’ noble castes (Brahmana, the priestly caste; Satria, the ruling royalty; and Wesia, the military class), and everyone else: either those classified as Sudra, or outsiders. Although Covarrubias argued that the caste rules are much simpler and less restrictive than they were in India at the time of his visit, he does note that the Balinese are highly aware of caste, and that their social life and etiquette was ruled by the observance of caste differences (Covarrubias 1937:46). However, Picard argues that the differences between castes were greatly exacerbated by the Dutch, who replaced commoners with nobles in positions of power as well as exempting the nobility from corvée labor on their roadwork. By doing this, they encouraged noble classes to support the Dutch, from fear of losing their advantages.

In the 1920s Dutch administrators began to focus on “strengthening indigenous communities through enforcing their own customary law” (Picard 1999:21). V.E. Korn was assigned to research Balinese customary law, and he further encouraged the Dutch in their belief that Bali was a special place that must be protected, primarily because of their religious beliefs. It
was also believed that their religion was so intricately and inseparably wound up with their laws that to destroy it would be to plunge Bali into chaos. As a result, the Dutch redoubled their efforts to keep Islam at bay, as well as forbidding missionary work. They also began to institute Balinization, a cultural-cum-educational policy designed by Dutch orientalists to teach the Balinese to be authentically Balinese, and to appreciate their own language, literature, and arts (Picard 1999:23). As a result, whether religion was as all-consuming in Balinese thought before colonization, it was clearly brought to the forefront of their minds as a result of these various policies. Adrian Vickers argues that before colonialism, religious differences were merely symbols to differentiate different groups from one another, although they were basically the same. Religious differences were no more dividing than different tastes in clothes (Vickers 1987:35). In part, this might have had something to do with how localized religion was before the Dutch started instituting their policies.

Around the same time, the Balinese intelligentsia began to form organizations and publish periodicals in the lingua franca of Malay, mainly about topics relating to religion and social order (Picard 1999:24), reflecting the emphasis the Dutch had placed on these topics. The organization Surya Kanta was devoted to raising the position of the jaba (the preferred term for Sudra, which was seen as a derogatory term). Many of these members had been teachers or civil servants who saw Western education as a means of social mobility, and believed that they could acquire intelligence and character, which would allow them to closely examine their own culture and society and decided which aspects were beneficial and should be retained and which should be abandoned or changed. One of the main beliefs of this group was the argument against caste bias and for merit-based achievements, which they argued held true to teachings in the Balinese lontar and the Bhagavad-Gita. Opposing this was the organization Bali Adnjana, which argued
that the Balinese had ordered the hierarchical status system from their ancestors, and that it was based on religious teachings in the lontar. Bali Adnjana was also worried that under the influence of Western education, children would look down on their parents and find them, and a farming culture, backwards and beneath them (Picard 1999:26–29).

As the independence movement strengthened, concerns grew that Balinese Hinduism might be subsumed by the proselytizing forces of Islam and Christianity (Picard and Wood 1997:189). However, the new Indonesia state went to great lengths to prevent the obvious preference of any one religion, fearing to alienate minorities. The original preamble to the 1945 Indonesian Constitution included a reference to follow syari’ah, or Islamic law, but it was removed at the last second (Hosen 2005:419). The Pancasila ideology which Indonesians are expected to follow, beginning with belief in one God, was intended to ensure that Indonesia was a religious-based state, but not a theocratic one. When the constitution and Pancasila were originally created there was no strict definition of religion, but in 1952 the Ministry of Religion went about creating one. This definition is currently comprised of a number of traits which a religion must possess to qualify as ‘official.’ These include a prophet, a holy book, international recognition (that is, a ‘world religion’ and not one limited to one ethnic group), divine revelations by God, and a codified system of law for its adherents (Picard 2011:13). While these traits might be seen as favoring Islam, they also can be made to fit other religions, including Hinduism.

In 1965 a group of young pro-Sukarno officers in the Indonesian army kidnapped and killed generals, in an attempt to stop a purge against Sukarno. Suharto, one of the surviving generals, commanded a purge of the army, which led to his becoming the leader of the country. The young officers were labeled communists, which ushered in a purge of communism.
throughout Indonesia (Dayley 2013:227–228). Suharto used Pancasila as a legitimizing tool, and it was raised to a higher prominence. The first principle, belief in one God, was also elevated. Communism is traditionally associated with atheism, which Suharto banned. All citizens were required to choose one religion, which had to be mentioned on their national identity card. The Prevention of Blasphemy law was implemented in 1969, which pressured deviating religious views to conform to the homogeneous viewpoint of their official religion (Picard and Madinier 2011:16–17).

More recently, Balinese cultural identity has been closely entwined with its popularity as a tourist destination. In the 1920s, Walter Spies and many of his friends, including Margaret Mead, began writing and describing Bali (Vickers 1989; Covarrubias 1937), which led to the beginning of its popularity. The description by Colin McPhee in A House in Bali (McPhee 2000; first published 1944) further contributed to the idea of Bali as a cultural powerhouse. As well as the descriptions of Bali’s culture, it is probable that the former custom of women going without shirts was part of the attraction for some of the visitors, as attested by Covarrubias’ description of this occurrence, which was slightly too long and rapturous to give the impression of disinterest (1937). From the 1970s on, tourism has exploded (Picard 2008:159) and with the popularity of Elizabeth Gilbert’s Eat Pray Love (Gilbert 2006), this explosion shows no signs of abating. In response to this popularity, and since it was due to the attraction towards culture, Balinese authorities instigated a policy of ‘cultural tourism,’ through which they hoped to encourage tourism, but not at the cost of corrupting or degrading their culture, by using some of the tourist revenue to nurture culture (Picard 2008:160). Through the creation of this policy, they are acknowledging that the fate of Bali, with its dependency on tourist revenue, relies on the retention of authentic Balinese culture. Although both men and women work on generating
Balinese culture, most of this cultural maintenance performed within the household is accomplished by women.

While more recent writings on Bali are often concerned with equality, they are usually focused on types of equality which affect men. I Gde Pitana, when discussing the struggles between Brahmana priests and priests from other castes who desire the same recognition, focuses almost entirely on men. Although one of the sources the jaba\(^2\) Balinese cite are religious writings that stress the equality of all human beings (Pitana 1999:195), the struggle for the priesthood appears to take place between men of different castes, and the only time women are mentioned is when he discusses the category of ‘once-born’ priests, and lists a number of persons that qualify for this, including female temple attendants (Pitana 1999:184). This staggering omission serves as an example of the tendency to overlook female religious roles in Bali.

*Domestic Labor*

Ayami Nakatani points out that while the Indonesian government acknowledges that women have both productive and reproductive roles, it has tended to emphasize the importance of being a wife or mother. Additionally, national ideologies have also rigidly associated women with the domestic sphere (Nakatani 1999a:204). In the 1980s, the area of Bali that she studied experienced a dramatic rise in the home based industry of hand-loom weaving, while market trading, a traditionally female labor, declined (Nakatani 1999a:207). This shows an increased emphasis on domestic activities being more appropriate for women. Historically, there are close parallels between the type of domestic labor American middle to upper class women in the 1950s were expected to perform and that of women of high caste in Bali during the 1930s. As the

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\(^2\) *Anak Jaba*, or *jaba*, are members of the Sudra or commoner class, as opposed to those belonging to one of the three upper castes (Brahmana, Satria, and Wesia).
American sociologist Arlie Hochschild discusses, many American women of means have employed household help, as have those in Bali. While servants were expected to do the dirty work, the women of the house were expected to remain, supervise and perform the more genteel tasks. Working in textiles was traditionally approved of, with noble-women in Bali devoting themselves to their handlooms (Covarrubias 1937:101) and making and presenting offerings, which are presented by Covarrubias as the “main artistic activity of the women” (Covarrubias 1937:161). This is similar in many ways to Betty Friedan’s description of American housewives’ need to find a domestic activity that gives them the opportunity to exercise their creativity (Friedan 1982:204).

In 1963, Betty Friedan published one of the defining descriptions of the unique malaise of American housewifery, and its attendant identification of feminist frustrations, The Feminine Mystique. In it, she discussed the glorification of the American housewife in the 1950s and 1960s, and the capitalist, patriarchal ideology that positioned women’s only value through reproductive and consumptive labor. Women, particularly white, middle-class women, were to take care of their children and husbands, cook, clean, and generally work within the house, but not out of it (Friedan 1982:14). Many of these women suffered from what Friedan called ‘the problem that has no name,’ which she defined as the frustration and boredom that comes from concentrating entirely on domestic labor (Friedan 1982:27). However, as bell hooks aptly points out, most of the women Friedan discusses were white, middle-class, and college-educated, and may have even employed women of other races and classes for domestic work in their homes. Those women often had no choice as to whether or not they had to work outside of the home, often performing domestic labor for other households, as well as their own household duties.
hooks 1984:3). Working outside the home was therefore not necessarily liberating or a solution to patriarchal cultural or economic systems in the way that Friedan imagined.

Arlie Hochschild recognizes the fact that whether women have careers outside the home or not, domestic labor still has to be done by someone. In her book *The Second Shift*, she describes the extreme pressure women faced when many of them returned to paid employment after spending years as housewives. Most of these women had full time jobs, and did not employ household help. Once they were home, they also did the household chores and childcare that they had not been able to do during their working day, with their husbands helping very little, despite priding themselves on occasionally firing up the grill (Hochschild 1989:3). Working outside the house put greater strain on completing chores traditionally seen as the responsibilities of women. The need to complete housework oneself (or of buying materials necessary to quicken the process) puts greater amounts of stress on working women. Buying offerings has become increasingly common in Bali, but anxieties over the cost or the quality of bought offerings makes this a painful necessity for working women.

Offerings are one of the most important duties women in Bali have, as evident from the stress placed on their preparation. Nakatani notes that for the financially rewarding work of weaving, unmarried daughters tend to be more productive because married women are responsible for other duties, most notably the preparation of offerings (Nakatani 1999:216–219). However, it is also worth noting that for some women, much of the profit from these weavings is spent on offerings, especially if a husband’s income is eaten up by other costs, because provisioning the household falls under her obligations (Nakatani 1999:221). In order to properly fulfill their duties as housewives, they may even have to work outside the home in order to earn enough money to buy the items necessary to prepare the household offerings. Nakatani notes that
the improved standard of living and financial status is coupled with a trend of “spending more money and hosting more elaborate rituals” (Nakatani 1999:225).

Friedan identifies the start of idealizing housewives in the years immediately following the Second World War. Magazines, upon hearing the complaint that women feel an “inferiority complex” upon writing their occupation as housewives in the census, consoled these women by pointing out that they have had dozens of careers contained within their roles as housewives, and that they were just as successful as those earning money because they were saving money (Friedan 1982:36). Additionally, by giving into their truest feminine natures, they were being true to themselves. This was parallel to the increasing emphasis on the importance of women being essential parts of society and the nation in Indonesia, which they can do by being good wives and mothers (Blackburn 2004). In this logic, to be feminine was not inferior to men, it was simply different. While Friedan passionately argued against the fact that a woman’s place was in the home, she did not seem opposed to the idea that domestic labor is naturally feminine. When discussing the “Kinder, Kuche, Kirche” campaign in Nazi Germany, which attempted to confine women to their ‘biological role,’ she merely argues that this limited women, not that domestic labor was, in fact, a biological fact (Friedan 1982:32).

Sylvia Yanagisako and Jane Collier question biology as the basis for male and female cultural differences. While they do not deny that there are biological differences between the sexes, they do find fault with the theory that women are identified with the domestic sphere around the world because their biological role as mothers makes this a natural path (Collier and Yanagisako 1987:18). In addition to their discomfort of the universal nature of this assumption, they also make note that most of these theories are rooted in Western conceptions of gender, sexual reproduction, and the ‘biological facts’ inherent in these conceptions (Collier and
Yanagisako 1987:32). That biology is a ‘fact’ while cultural beliefs vary so much that they must be relative has become so engrained in Western discourse that it fails to recognize that cultures and gender differences might not be as enslaved to biology as is commonly believed. Since science ‘indisputably’ tells us that women are the ones who become pregnant and give birth, any assumptions built off of that (such as women must be responsible for childrearing) are easier to define as natural and universal, since they are based on such indisputable facts. When different cultures seem to fall under these guidelines it is easy to see, and any inconsistencies can be comfortably ignored or explained by an Occam’s razor type of philosophy.

Friedan criticized the magazines claiming that women’s work is different but can still be equal, arguing that this view is clearly hierarchical based on lack of choices. However, she ignores the fact that although men have a much greater variety in their choices, they are still limited. Just as women cannot find cultural approval under the current dominant ideologies by going out of the house and finding a career, men also fail to acquire respect by staying home and taking on the domestic matters. Friedan appears to buy into the fact that biology forces genders into those roles, but that in an enlightened society such as America we can rise above these base tendencies and follow the paths that our minds wish us to follow, rather than the forced ones our bodies tend towards (Friedan 1982:32). She fails to fully examine the possibility that the type of beliefs surrounding one type of work might be more influential than the work itself. Balinese offerings were often described as a form of worship, or of expressing love for their families, and these beliefs about what the work in constructing offerings actually accomplished was fundamental to how Balinese women felt about their labors.

One of the key reasons that many of the housewives Friedan and Hochschild discussed suffered was because their domestic labors were framed as sacrifice, suggesting that women
were to subsume themselves and their dreams for a life of domestic work in the service of others, their families. Their guilt in wanting something of their own arose from the fact that to want more from life seemed like a self-indulgent sin. Friedan assumed that women who enjoy being housewives were also women who enjoyed being subservient. She discussed the housewife-mothers who rejoiced in their type of femininity, which apparently includes “the receptivity and passivity implicit in their sexual nature” (Friedan 1982:52), going on to quote a magazine article which discussed those happily content women as “gracefully conceding the top jobs to men” (Look Magazine: 1956 Friedan 1982:52). While Friedan did not agree that women should be submissive to men, she did assume that one can only enjoy domestic labor if one is acquiescent to a husband.

Hochschild notes that the ‘traditional’ type of ideological marital role she found in some wives, where the woman may work but wants to mostly identify with her duties at home, and desires for her husband to focus on his career, also wants less power in their relationship than her husband (Hochschild 1989:15). Again, the person who controls the domestic sphere is seen as less powerful than those who venture out into public spheres, regardless of how successful they are outside of the house. It is a strange dichotomy that whatever happens within the domestic sphere is assumed to be what prepares the rest of the family to go out and face the world, yet appears to be the least publicly valued role in society. Perhaps a housewife does not get credit because she and her tasks are not in the public gaze as often as those who concentrate their powers outside the house? Or perhaps it is because there is a correlation of domestic labor with repetitive, uncreative drudgery. However, one could argue that many careers also fall under that category, such as factory line work, which has even less variety than household chores, or filling out endless bureaucratic paperwork. It also ignores the fact that there can be ample room for
creativity in domestic labor, which might be due to the fact that the result of domestic labor, such as food or cleaning, are quickly consumed or destroyed. The tendency not to take the effort and necessity of domestic labor seriously is a common thread. However, there is no denying the importance of this work. Domestic labor is necessary, for food must be produced, clothes must be cleaned, and in the case of Bali, the relationships with the invisible world of gods, ancestors, and demons must be maintained.

Religious Relationships and Exchange Systems

There has long been an acknowledgement of the relationships between religious or magical beliefs and economic choices. However, effects of these relationships vary widely. The systems of exchange surrounding offerings in Bali are as varied and elaborate as the offerings themselves, and the hopes driving these exchanges are the impetus behind the offerings. Because of the complicated nature with which these patterns of interchange are pursued, I have found it useful to utilize a number of aspects from different theories of non-pecuniary economies.

The tendency to oversimplify the differences in systems of exchange between Karl Marx and Marcel Mauss exaggerates the contrasts, even though they are similar in many ways. Mauss’s analysis of gifts, which are bound up with goodwill and reciprocity are seen as the opposites of Marx’s self-interested and profit oriented commodities (Mauss 2000; Marx and Engels 1954). Arjun Appadurai argues that although the type and intensity of sociality accompanying objects varies, a calculative dimension remains present (Appadurai 1986:11–13). Pierre Bourdieu goes one step farther, discussing the multiple forms of capital, which includes symbolic, social, and cultural types as well as the usual economic capital (Bourdieu 1986). These are not necessarily physical objects, but can include items such as knowledge or status. The
attention is not on the items themselves, but focuses on the motivations between parties, the relationships with the other, the etiquette and expectations, and the methods of “trying to structure, manipulate, and control a treacherous social and supernatural world” (White 1988:173). When one considers the addition of supernatural agents into systems of exchange, matters become even more complicated.

There have been several different takes on religious economies. In his book on spiritual economies in Muslim Indonesia, Daromir Rudnyckyj argues that a spiritual economy “is not blind ascription to a totalizing gospel; instead, it is the mobilization of a particular set of religious techniques to address specific challenges” (Rudnyckyj 2010:134). However, this type of economy focuses on using religious techniques in a variety of ways, whether to gain favor with God by creating a work ethic that will lead to corporate success in secular environments (Rudnyckyj 2010; Weber 2001), or by giving donations and charity to those less fortunate (Work 2014:9). While these are certainly economies with religious features, they differentiate from the religious economy of offerings in Bali in that there is a heavy focus on using religious practices during systems of exchange with other humans, and the accruement of religious favor results from these, not from a direct exchange with the supernatural. Although there are spiritual economies in Bali, I am not sure that the world of offerings falls under this title.

The most accurate terminology to describe the economy of offerings would be that of a ‘ritual economy.’ Patricia A. McAnany and E. Christian Wells, in the anthology they edited on the subject, define a ritual economy as “the process of provisioning and consuming that materializes and substantiates worldview for managing meaning and shaping interpretation” (Wells and McAnany 2012:3). Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood accurately point out that anthropologists have long noticed the use of provisioning and consuming patterns in creating and
reinforcing social networks (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:38). For the Balinese, the production and consumption of offerings offers a tangible symbol for relating to and communicating with the otherwise invisible world of the supernatural. It also acts as a form of tithes, in which the individual donations of offerings which people make and bring to temples for rituals are for the greater good of society. Because these provisions rely on values and social networks within a religious setting that is unusual to usual economic beliefs, it has been called ‘liturgical forms of economic allocations’ (Monaghan 2012). Balinese offerings are used for both these public spirited purposes and for the use and well-being within families, but these are always exchanged with the invisible world in the context of rituals.

When talking about the intersections of rituals and economies, it is easy to slip into functionalist modes of thinking. Functionalism, in anthropology, is the belief that the ‘real’ purposes of religion or magic was to solve psychological, social, or environmental problems (see Malinowski 1922; Rappaport 1967; Lansing 2006; Harris 1992). Although there is no denying that many religious or magical practices do have unintended consequences on issues such as these, I do take issue with the assumptions that rituals arise from material, psychological, or social necessity and were only then given ritualistic status. The idea that religion has developed in response to a certain set of problems is oversimplified, and ignores other possible factors. In this thesis I will be taking a more phenomenological approach. I acknowledge that some religious rituals do seem to be connected to solving specific predicaments, but I find it more useful and respectful to those with whom I worked to notice how they use religious beliefs to think about and cope with certain issues (Robbins 1995). Taking an emic stance allows me to investigate how these beliefs work for the Balinese, rather than being caught up in concerns about where they originated. Although Balinese do not agree whether it is the preferences of
humans or spirits which shape the exact nature of offerings, their beliefs over the origination reveal much more about their society than I could find espousing my own beliefs. This thesis examines the nature of the relationships and exchanges between the world of humans and the world of supernatural beings in Bali.

Methods

In compiling the data for this thesis, I interviewed thirty-two people in Bali. My research was carried out from February to May of 2017, followed by an additional month from July to August of the same year. The majority of this research was conducted in the regency capital of
Tabanan, Kerambitan, in Southwest Bali, and two weeks of further research were carried out in a small agricultural village in the foothills of Tabanan, Sembian. At my base in Kerambitan I was fortunate enough to be accepted into a local family, who kindly helped me understand the basics of Balinese households. This family included the head couple of the family, Ibu Gede and Bapak Wayan, their adult son Bapak Yudi and his wife Ibu Ariasih, and two teenage children, Made and Maheswari. Ibu Gede, Ibu Ariasih, and Maheswari in particular were instrumental in helping me understand the Balinese domestic and religious cultures.

In Sembian I stayed in a small guesthouse owned by one of the local families. In Kerambitan I interviewed twenty women and two men, while in Sembian I interviewed ten women. Ages ranged from women in their twenties to women in their eighties, and with four exceptions all of these women were married. The two men included a man from the Brahmana caste and a pemangku priest. In order to find those willing to be interviewed I depended on the snowball method of recruitment, where my hosts or those I had interviewed recommended others willing to talk to me about offerings.

This ethnographic research was generated through a series of semi-structured interviews and observational participation. IRB clearance was procured for this project, to ensure that the people I interviewed were comfortable and safe. These interviews were all done in person, and were conducted in English, Indonesian, or Balinese. All of the Balinese and a few of the Indonesian interviews were conducted through an interpreter. Some sections of the other Indonesian interviews were sent to an interpreter to be transcribed into English, while I translated and transcribed the rest. Interviews were conducted in homes, at restaurants, or at stalls where vendors sold pre-made offerings, depending on where those I interviewed felt most comfortable. Pseudonyms were given to individuals and to some locations to protect their identity.
Structure of Thesis

The following chapters aim to show the complexities of Balinese religious life and the responsibilities women shoulder as part of their ritual labor. In Chapter 1 I discuss the manifold nature of offerings and the basic religious beliefs behind them. I then discuss the fetishization of housewifery in Indonesia under the New Order and post-New Order, including the focus on ritual labor for women in Bali in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 focuses on the process of visualizing and materializing religious beliefs in the form of offerings. In Chapter 4 I discuss the many social pressures and anxieties women struggle with surrounding offerings, while Chapter 5 examines the ritual economies of offerings, and the ways in which women use their labor to generate safety and maintain relationships. Chapter 6 concludes this thesis by summarizing the disappointments and hopes Balinese women find in their ritual labor, and offers my perceptions on the role of invisible domestic labor in ethnographic research.
Chapter I
Learning How to Please the Gods

There are hundreds of types of offerings in Bali. One of the instructional books I looked at, specializing on the offerings where palm leaves are woven together in order to hold small amounts of rice, has over forty varieties, and it warns its readers that it only begins to cover the basics for that type of offering (Raras 2007). Most women learn about offerings from their mothers and grandmothers, and it is a constant process of learning, for each occasion requires a different type, with different designs and different ingredients. Learning the basics can take a lifetime.

The Complexities of the Balinese Calendar

“There is our obligation, we must be able to make offerings. At least in our household, we have to make banten saiban everyday, banten segehan every Kliwon, banten canang with rarapan (food) like fruits or etcetera every Full moon, New moon or Buda Kliwon. We must be able to make offerings for family household compound anniversary and for banten otonans for each member of the family (Balinese birthday) every 6 months. Then even more offerings for temple and village occasions.”

At least to outsiders, the Balinese calendar system requires what might seem like a mind-boggling amount of offerings. Daily life is ruled by two calendars, the Gregorian, which is used for most official business, including governmental scheduling, and the uniquely Balinese calendars for the rest of life’s plans. Close knowledge of the calendar is essential for individuals in order to know the auspicious or dangerous days for performing certain tasks, such as building a house, getting married, or planning rituals. Although I cannot explain the full complexities of
Figure 1: Balinese Calendar. Photo Courtesy of Author.
their calendrical system, it is necessary to begin an explanation in order to understand the full weight of religious duties which fall upon women’s shoulders.

In addition to the Gregorian calendar, the 210 day Pawukon calendar and the Saka lunar calendar are also employed. The Pawukon year is divided into ten separate week systems, each of which contains a one day week, a two day week, and so on, up to the ten day week, which all occur concurrently (Eiseman and Eiseman 1989:172–192). However, most Balinese focus on the three day week (Triwara), the five day week (Pancawara), and the seven day week (Saptawara). Each week has day names for each of their days. Some of the days of the weeks, such as Kliwon, in the five day (Pancawara) week, are holy on their own. But many days of religious significance occur when certain days of the varying weeks overlap. One of the most prominent of these is *Kajeng Kliwon*, when the last days of the three and five day weeks overlap, which occurs every fifteen days. While *Kajeng Kliwon* are auspicious days, and many temple anniversary festivals fall on them, it is also a day when the demonic spirits (*bhuta kala*) are more active, and extra offerings are necessary to protect the family. Somewhat less frequent are the five conjunction days which land on overlapping five and seven week days, which also have specific offerings. Temple anniversary ceremonies (*odalan*), occur once in every 210 day cycle, and since every Balinese neighborhood has at least three temples (the ancestral temple (*pura puseh*), the official town temple (*pura desa*), and the temple of the dead (*pura dalam*)), in addition to the family temples (Covarrubias 1937:269), and not including various regional, agricultural, or state temples (Stuart-Fox 2002a:53–65), the much repeated claim of Bali as an island of ‘a thousand temples’ is clearly a conservative estimate at the least. *Odalan* ceremonies are frequent and extravagant, and most families are expected to participate in at least four (although this low number would be exceedingly unlikely) ceremonies a year, along with the ritual labor that
accompanies them. The Saka calendar consists of twelve lunar months, each consisting of thirty days. The day of the full moon (Purnama) and the day of the new moon (Tilem) also require special offerings and ceremonies.

The complexity of the Balinese calendrical system is explained by the fact that it is used not for measuring the duration of time, but for ‘punctual’ time. It is used to note what Clifford Geertz defines as the “distinguishing and classifying discrete, self-subsistent particles of time…They don’t tell you what time it is; they tell you what kind of time it is” (Geertz 1973:393). The determination of holy or (in)auspicious days give the Balinese a firm sense of location and order within the world, and the knowledge of what is expected of them. Because the calendar is so focused on the meaning of the day itself, the Balinese can use that meaning to understand their role and responsibilities during the day, including the knowledge of what offerings they are expected to make in order to make the day go by smoothly.

New Year’s Day (Nyepi) occurs on the first day of the tenth lunar month in the Saka calendar, and is preceded by a day of casting out evil, which is accomplished by the use of large sacrifices in cross roads, making as much ruckus and noise as possible, drinking arak, a liquor distilled from palm, and running around with flaming torches. In the last twenty to thirty years, the creation of giant papier-mâché demonic figures, known as ogoh-ogoh, constructed by boys and men at the banjar community hall about a month beforehand, have become popular, and during the pre-Nyepi celebrations are paraded around the village several times, before they are burnt and dumped into the sea (Noszlopy 2005:187–189). The parades of ogoh-ogoh include ogoh-ogohs from surrounding banjars, and they all circle their specific neighborhood counter-clockwise a number of times before being taken to the cremation area to be burnt. Traditionally these and the accompanying gamelan marching orchestras are male, but all-female groups are
starting to participate as well. All of this commotion is meant to either scare away demons, or to entertain and feed them until they are bloated and satisfied and therefore distracted from harming people for a while, depending on whom you ask.

Figure 2: An ogoh-oghi. Photo Courtesy of Author.

Nyepi itself is meant to be a day of fasting and silence, and before the actual day I was told this by many Balinese. However, a vast amount of food was made in the preceding days, which caused me to wonder when exactly this feast was meant to occur. All of Bali (including airports) are shut down, and tourists are requested to stay inside of their hotels. All electricity and other machines (such as motorbikes) are forbidden, entertainment (such as board games or reading) is frowned upon, and people are warned to keep off of the streets. Cultural police patrol the streets during the day to make sure people are obeying. In reality, I spent the day with the rest of my household lying in front of the television, watching movies and eating huge amounts of
food, finished by a walk around the village in the afternoon. However, vehicles were non-existent, and at night everyone made sure that their televisions were silent and their lights were not visible. Some families did fast and refrain from entertainment, but that seemed to be the exception rather than the norm.

Rituals (yadnya) are classified into five groups (panca – known collectively as the panca yadnya), named after the being or category for which the ritual is held. These are known as dewa yadnya, performed for the gods; bhuta yadnya, performed for demons; manusa yadnya, performed for humans; pitra yadnya, performed for the spirits of the dead; or rsi yadnya, performed for holy men (or women, occasionally) (Stuart-Fox 2002a:128). However, the worlds of sekala and niskala are so closely woven together that these ceremonies often involve other beings. Each type of ceremony is then broken up into further sections. For example, manusa yadnya is broken up into thirteen different ceremonies, covering everything that occurs to humans from conception till death (although death ceremonies fall under pitra yadnya). These ceremonies all require specific and numerous offerings and preparations.

Although Tilem, Purnama, and Kajeng Kliwon occur often enough to be of constant concern, the diurnal offerings on their own generate a huge amount of work. Each Balinese household places offerings either two or three times a day in a number of locations around the

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3 Visible and Invisible worlds – those which can be seen and inhabited by humans and those which the spirits occupy
4 These rites include Pegedong-gedonan (taking place six months after conception), birth ceremonies, Kepus pungsed (when the umbilical cord falls off), Ngelepas hawon, Tutug kambuhan, and Telubulan (which take place twelve days, forty-two days, and 105 days after birth, relatively), Oton (210 days after birth, when babies are first allowed to touch the ground), Ngempugin (the first appearance of adult teeth), Maketus (when the last milk tooth falls out), Munggah dua/teruna (puberty – based on either the beginning of menstruation for girls or when the voice begins to deepen or the genitals develop for boys. Frequently this ceremony is only performed for girls, especially depending on the wealth of the family), Mapandes (tooth filing- no longer frequently occurring), Pawiwahan (marriage), and Pawintenan (purification for certain types of study – discussed at greater length later in this chapter). Although not every person has a full ceremony for each of these occasions, many of them are important rites of passage in an individual’s life (Eiseman and Eiseman 1989:89).
house. While sunrise and sunset are essential, placing offerings at noon as well depends on the household and its schedule.

**Navigating the Balinese Household**

![Figure 3: Placing Offerings Outside the Front Door. Photo Courtesy of Author.](image)

Balinese households consist of a walled compound surrounding a number of buildings. Although those of wealthy families vary slightly, each household shares a number of components. The large, often elaborate doorways into the houses are met with a small wall (the *aling-aling*), placed there to confuse any *bhuta kala* who might be tempted to come in but who famously have difficulty navigating corners. However, most traffic by both foot and vehicle in and out of houses these days use the large gated opening. Similarly, while the central courtyard traditionally was open or had a pavilion inside, it is more common for it to be filled with motorbikes and possibly a car. In the corner of the house closest to the mountain is the family
temple, a miniature version of the communal village temples, filled with a variety of shrines to ancestors and gods. That side of the compound also contains the building housing the head of the family couple. The other side of the compound contains living quarters for the rest of the family and guest rooms.

Balinese residential patterns are typically patrilocal, and family compounds include the heads of the families, their sons, wives, and their children, and unmarried daughters. In the event that a family has no sons, a daughter will marry a man who is willing to become part of her family, rather than vice-versa. As more Balinese move to towns to work rather than remaining within their natal families, this pattern has changed slightly. Especially in the more remote agricultural village in which I studied, many households were occupied by grandparents and their grandchildren, while the parents worked in town and came back on weekends. However, it is still much more common for families to live in their ancestral homes. A pavilion is usually tucked in somewhere, even if it does not occupy the center of the courtyard, and in some families these pavilions are where everyone will sleep besides the heads of the household. The kitchen area is generally in a corner somewhere, although its location varies from house to house. Just as certain locations in the house correspond from holiest to least holy, so does the location of offerings matter.

The scale of offerings varies from village to village, and even from house to house, but the general placement of offerings is similar. They are always placed near the door and the gate into the compound, as these are the most vulnerable spots of the household. Although necessary to allow human residents in and out, they also provide an entry and exit point for the dangerous bhuta kala, as well as any other spirits who might be angry or upset. In addition, the shrines both in the family temple and the one or two shrines which may be scattered in other areas of the
compound require their daily offerings to ask for the protection of the gods. Other places that require offerings include the stone under which placentas are buried after the birth of family members, the top of the large basket holding rice supplies, and various machines, such as televisions and stoves. Corners are sometimes considered dangerous, and will have offerings placed there as well. Households living near crossroads take on the responsibility of placing offerings in the shrines located there, and on holy days families will take offerings to the appropriate temples. Although the nature of these locations vary, they are all charged, powerful zones that require protection.

“One Balinese person out of a thousand will calculate how much money they have spent on rituals. Many people just borrow money from the bank for ceremonies like cremations. It has to be done, and it has to be done well. Even though you owe people money afterwards, it is a good sacrifice, because you give the offerings with sincerity.”

Figure 4: Shrines in the Family Temple. Photo Courtesy of Author.
Although the total number of offerings depends on the size of the area, most houses use 15-25 offerings a day, with this number going up for holy days. These offerings varied slightly, with most households in the agricultural village offering only the simple segehan (discussed below) or banten nasi for every day, and canang sari (also discussed below) every five days for Kliwon. However, most households in less remote areas of Bali, including the village in which I conducted most of my fieldwork, used both canang sari and segehan every day. The money spent also varied, depending on a number of differences. If a family collected all of the ingredients themselves and also made them, most of the cost was in time, excepting such items as incense, and possibly holy water. However, although this was the norm in the past, it is now exceedingly rare. It was far more common for families to buy some of the ingredients (although a few, such as flowers, might be collected from the garden) and make them themselves, in which case families spent around 20,000 to 50,000 rupiah a week. If women did not have the time to make them, and bought them instead, cost varied from 50,000 to 150,000 rupiah a week. For important holy days, such as Galungan or Kuningan, it is not unusual to spend a million rupiah on the ingredients necessary for offerings. Considering that the average annual salary in Bali is 2,251,544 rupiah as of February 2016 (although many of the people I interviewed had members of the household involved in professional, administrative, or clerical work, which averaged closer to three or four million rupiah annually), offerings constitute a major expense (Badan Pusat Statistik 2016). For a major ceremony such as a cremation (Ngaben), several million could be spent, one of the reasons why cremations often took place several years after the actual death, once the family had managed to collect enough money for the ceremony (Warren 1991:156).

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5 A folded triangular piece of palm leaf, with a dab of rice tucked in.
6 $1.50 - $4.00 USD approximately
7 $3.50 to $11.00 USD, approximately.
8 Approximately $75 USD
Women reported that they spent anywhere from half an hour to seven hours a day constructing offerings, although most women spent two hours a day. For minor holy days, such as Tilem, several more hours are required, whereas for major holy days, such as Kuningan, several ancillary days (up to a week) are spent working on the necessary offerings.

![Image: Preparing Offerings. Photo Courtesy of Author.](image)

**Categorizing Offerings**

“We can’t see the Dewa [gods] and we don’t know what the Dewa want but all of the offerings come from our self or our faith. They have values of totality, aesthetic, and art. So we want the best offering with these for the Dewa.”

The most common type of offering is the daily jejahitan variety, which roughly translates to ‘sewn objects.’ These are offerings where traditionally leaves are bound together or into particular shapes by taking a long sliver of bamboo or the spine of a palm leaf, which is then used to skewer together the leaves. The skill which goes into even this simple task is impressive, as the process of forcing the sliver through the leaves requires delicacy, and the slightest
misplacement can ruin the whole leaf. After each stitch is placed, women break off the sliver of wood with their thumb before moving on to place the next stitch. I can attest to the difficulty of this, for during the first month or two that I was learning to create offerings my fingers were constantly full of bamboo splinters, and many of my offerings had large ugly gashes where I had messed up on placing the stitch.

Increasingly, the stitches are not made of bamboo or palm slivers, but are held in place by staples instead. While many of the older women can place the traditional stitches just as quickly as a stapler can, by and large the younger generation seems to prefer this easier method. Although the use of staples contradicts the ideology that offerings should be constructed solely of ingredients collected from nature, no one I talked to expressed concern that this unnatural ingredient was thrown into the mix (a similar common ingredient, used for slightly fancier
decorations, were the crepe paper *tjilis*, found in the local convenience store). In some areas, packaged candies are a popular offering ingredient. I am not sure how long this trend will last, especially for an item as frequently made and disposed of as *canangs*. In nearly all villages and towns in Bali there is no infrastructure available for garbage disposal, and the closest recycling plant is on Java. For the most part, garbage is either thrown in the ditches which line every road, or thrown into the town dump (usually located in the corner of town closest to the cremation area) and burnt. However, items which do not burn easily, like staples or some more durable plastics are doomed to remain in these dumping spots. The tendency to dispose of non-biodegradable products such as these were often explained (on the rare occasions that they were explained at all), by the fact that the Balinese were used to having objects that did decompose quickly, traditionally using things such as banana leaves for plates rather than the now prevalent use of plastics.

Figure 7: The Base Containers for Canang Sari. Photo Courtesy of Author.

The base containers of these *jejahitan* offerings generally come in three shapes; circular, triangular, or square. In the villages I stayed in, square *jejahitans* were the most common for the
everyday canangs. From the making of a square container, offerings could go several ways. In some, small slices of sugar cane and bananas were placed in the bottom in addition to the porosan, although many only had the porosan. Sometimes a small decoratively cut leaf was also added. These leaves can either be very small, and relatively simple in design, or they can be a much more elaborate version of a jejahitan, called a sampian. The purpose of these is more decorative than the simple functionality of the base, and usually comprised of long strips of leaves which women carve into beautiful patterns with a few quick flashes of their knives (no patterns are used), before twisting and pinning them into elaborate wheels or triangles, which are then placed into the base. For some occasions, jejahitan become even more sumptuous, and are shaped into fans, or fringes, or even birds or human figures. These can either stand on their own, be added to a simpler base, or they might be pinned to a long banner, which are then hung on shrines. Occasionally these especially elegant designs of jejahitan are supposed to come in some specific design for a specific occasion. But sometimes it was merely a case of women exercising their own creativity and skills.

Figure 8: Sampian. Photo Courtesy of Author.
Richard Fox argues that in Bali offerings are “teleologically overdetermined,” by which he means that offerings might be made for “multiple and often conflicting purposes,” depending on the individual making and/or offering them (Fox 2015:31). Offerings that look identical, that are offered in exactly the same way at the same place might have entirely different intents behind them, depending on the person offering. For instance; the same offering could be summoning purity, safety, or forgiveness.

There are so many hundreds of types of offerings that it is not infrequent to hire an offering specialist (known as a tukang banten) to instruct families on which types of offerings are appropriate for which occasions. However, offerings are such a constant in life that it would be incredibly expensive to hire a tukang banten for every occasion. Usually, they are hired for specific temple ceremonies or varying types of rites of passage (Codron 1999:163). A pemangku described to me the importance of hiring an offering specialist for certain occasions:

“Even though we have those differences, we also have to think about what kind of offering we make: when we make it, whom we make it for, why we make it. Even though it’s very common for the women to make offering, sometimes they don’t know the name and the function of that offering… For example, for pitrananya (cremation), it’s totally wrong if we make an offering that’s usually for temple/odalan ceremonies. Like in a car that uses gas even though we have a lot of diesel oil it’s not appropriate to put in the gasoline car [if it’s not gasoline]. In making offering we also have to know not only the meaning and function of the offering, but also to know the complimentary offering called sesayut. That’s why a tukang banten is required not only to know about it, but also understand. So you have to understand which is for which. Sometimes this is overlapping. Because they don’t really know which is which.”

However, it mostly seems to be either the priests or other religious experts that care about the exact offering being made exactly correctly for the exact occasion. By and large, women
agreed that the intent behind offerings was more important than the way in which they were made.

*What the Gods Desire*

Rice is central to the Balinese culinary scene and daily diet, and thus is also a large part of their religious life, and is nearly always an integral part of offerings. There are several commonly used types of rice, the plain white type, a red dryland variety, black and white versions of glutinous rice, and yellow rice, which is plain white rice colored by turmeric (Brinkgreve, Francine 2003:321). These four colors of rice represent the types of seeds doves sent from Brahma carried to the world (Covarrubias 1937:71), which were then given nutritional value by the goddess Dewi Sri, the goddess of fertility, wealth, and beauty (Brinkgreve, Francine 2003:329). For various other special occasions an offering (the *metjaru*) is prepared representing the cardinal directions, and for each of the eight directions rice is dyed the corresponding color (Covarrubias 1937:280). Each day, after the first rice has been cooked, dozens of small offerings are placed out for the spirits before the household eats, as the spirits are honored guests and receive their meal first. Other offerings, designed to appease the demons, consist of white and yellow rice (although on certain days they might include black and red rice as well). Most of these small daily offerings consist of rice and some side dishes, as well as flowers and other decorative items (Brinkgreve, Francine 2003:321–323). While rice is normally steamed, it is also prepared in a myriad of other methods, such as rice cookies (*jaja*), which are made of the glutinous types of rice, and are often dyed various colors and have flavorings such as sugar added, and are used for everyday snacks as well as offerings (Brinkgreve, Francine 2003:325).
Offerings in Bali are made of natural things, and those that the Balinese consume themselves, thus, even as rice is ever present in the diet of the Balinese, so must it be common in the diet of the spirits (Eiseman and Eiseman 1989:217). The importance of rice and the sharing of food in one household in Southeast Asia has been discussed by Janet Carsten, who identifies it as “the medium through which houses and people are tied to each other,” (Carsten 2004:40). For the Malay she studied, eating rice from the same hearth not only strengthens family ties, but also forms new bonds between new members of the household. The idea of bonds formed over food, and the importance of rice as the staple source of this, and of nutrition, shows how bonds are formed between the humans and spirits in Bali.

![Porosan](image)

Figure 9: Porosan. Photo Courtesy of Author.

*Porosan* are frequently described as the most important component to an offering. These consist of a bit of lime paste and the sliver of an areca nut, wrapped up within a betel leaf to create a small triangle, which is then pinned to the base of the *canang*. These three ingredients represent the Hindu trinity, as the green of the betel leaf is associated with Wisnu, the red of the areca nut is associated with Brahma, and the white of the limestone represents Siwa. Occasionally it also includes base, the leaf of a type of pepper. These three deities are the most
important aspects of God, and the porosan provides offerings with their presence. Porosan are usually created in extremely large quantities, and are then threaded onto a tall spike of wood to dry there, and are used or sold as needed. Since porosan are so necessary, but are frequently placed under all of the other ingredients of a canang, their presence (or lack thereof) is a frequent concern in offerings that are bought, especially if they might have been made by a non-Hindu who would not understand their necessity. To dig through the other ingredients to check if a porosan is present would destroy the rest of an offering, so buyers must just have faith in their presence.

*Canangs* are finished with a pile of fresh flower petals and the shredded leaves of pandanus leaves. These flowers might have a variety of meanings, depending on their color.

“And we cannot put the flower everywhere they want, they have different meanings. First we have the base of coconut leaves and we must put in the center, for Siwa located in the center of the canang. In the north side of the canang we must put the flower that’s almost black, like purple or something. In the south side there’s red color of the flower, in the east there’s a white color of flower, dedicated to Lord Iswara, and in the west area there’s a yellow color, dedicated for Mahadewa.”

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9 The Balinese compass is an ever-important presence in daily lives. North (*kadja*) does not correspond with Western ideas of magnetic or true north, but is decided based on the direction of the nearest large mountain, just as south (*klod*) is the direction towards the sea. Each of the cardinal directions has a patron god and a corresponding color (Covarrubias 1937:297).
However, this amount of knowledge about the meaning and the positioning of certain colors is unusual. For most women, the general concept of metanding is primary. Metanding is the knowledge of how to correctly assemble an offering. Although color symbolism is important, having something that is beautiful is of equal or even paramount importance. And for the vibrant Balinese, this usually means to have bright, contrasting colors. In most cases it is important to keep the colors from being jumbled up, with the exception of red and purple petals, which are frequently mixed. Each type of petal is placed in its own area of the canang, so that the colors are strong enough to startle the eye.

Placating the Demons

“Rotten things smell like very yummy food. And for the deities everything should be very fragrant. Therefore when we do offerings on the ground we have blood, sacrifice blood, sometimes from chicken, also egg, also sometimes beer and onion, something with a very strong smell just to invite the bhuta khala to feast on our offering.”

While canang sari are always beautiful, detailed, and fragrant creations, their counterparts are ugly, simple, and smelly. Segehans are the most commonly made type of caru, offerings. Caru are sacrifices, and with the exception of segehans contain blood. They are placed on the ground and meant to placate the bhuta kalas, or demonic spirits. Segehans consist of a small, simply folded leaf, filled with rice and whatever other food women have cooked that day, although it must include of pungent items such as ginger and onion, which are designated as ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ foods, respectively. The combination of hot and cold is meant to remind the bhuta kalas of the importance of balance (Eiseman and Eiseman 1989:228). Both a segehan and a canang sari are usually placed together at various spots such as the front gate, or similar liminal and dangerous spots, to prevent bhuta kalas from venturing in and causing havoc.

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10 An example of an exception are the offerings of rice designed to look like the cardinal rose, where the center is a mix of different colors of rice grains.
Segehans are only appropriate caru for simply daily needs such as this. Any greater sacrifice must contain meat or blood.

Figure 11: A Collection of Segehan. Photo Courtesy of Author.

Segehan consist of pungent items because that is what the bhuta kala are attracted to. They are so greedy and eager for food that the beauty of the offering does not usually matter to them, and they are eager to take whatever they can get. As Balinese cuisine usually includes quite a bit of items such as onions, ginger, and garlic (and meat, when the family can afford it), it is clear that segehan are another case of the invisible denizens enjoying much the same type of things that the Balinese partake in. The equal prominence and frequent pairing of segehan and canang sari are an example of the location of the Balinese as residents of the middle world, while the gods live up above in the mountains and the demons usually inhabit the underworld of the sea. The Balinese balance their enjoyment of the intricate and fragrant flowers and sweets the gods prefer, with the strong flavors the bhuta kala relish.
Since men are traditionally responsible for offerings made from meat (gayah), and other types of caru, I have frequently wondered why women are the ones who make segehan. Since segehan are technically made without meat (the ginger, garlic, etc., stand in its place), I have wondered if these are the only acceptable caru types that can be made by women. On the other hand, it could be that the delicate and beautiful offerings are fashioned by women, while the violence and ferocity necessary in immolating is required from men, in the same way that Balinese women are seen as dainty and graceful, whereas men are strong and hardy. Segehans do not require the same type of vehemence. Most likely, however, is the fact that segehans must be made in large numbers every day, and thus fall under domestic work. If it was practical or affordable to include a blood sacrifice in each one, no doubt it would still be done by women. In a striking similarity, although women are responsible for the everyday cooking, including any meat, men are responsible for banquet food, such as babi guling (roast pig, a Balinese favorite). While men can be depended upon for the occasional elaborate offering or sacrifice (although the true extent of their participation even in this is not as clear as the ideologies would have it, as discussed in further chapters), the constant ritual labor falls on the shoulders of women.

Traditionally, while caru are always meant for bhuta kala, and are thus always placed on the ground, offerings meant for benevolent spirits might also be placed on the ground, although they are just as likely to be placed in higher positions (Stuart-Fox 2002a:153–154). However, I observed many segehans that were placed on various machinery, such as the stove, washing machine, or motorbikes. I believe that they are placed in these locations due to the frequent electricity problems or other technical issues, to protect them against the bhuta kalas who might be causing them. On one of the occasions when I realized how deeply involved I was in my
research, I went and begged to have an offering placed on my computer, after I had been having difficulties.

*Attracting Gods*

“The mostly I believe the preference of the Dewa decides what offerings look like, but if there are good suggestions from other people I will try them. Then when there is a ceremony for the Dewa I get a sense of ‘oh it’s right’ from the Dewa.”

The frequent holy days require the shrines in which many of the offerings are placed to be decorated. At times this is simply decorative cloth which is wrapped around the shrines, with runners covered in intricate embroidery and bright silver mirrors or coins. However, many women also make the elaborate lamak, the most intricate form of jejahitan. These consist of a runner made of strips of light colored leaves pinned together, with either dark leaves or leaves that have been dyed a vibrant pink cut into ornamental patterns of varying complexity and pinned on top of the lighter leaves. These are meant to act as the leaf that is placed underneath offerings (Brinkgreve and Stuart-Fox 1992:73), and is pinned to the front of shrines, to cascade down. Like most offerings, these are short lived, lasting a couple of days at most. Because of this, they are admired at greater length than the reusable cloth ones, and are a mark of stature. They are frequently hung from a temporary shrine near the front of the house, where it might be seen by passersby, rather than being confined to the walled off family temple. The lamak is one offering where the maker’s creativity can truly be shown, as there is room for a much greater variety of designs than usual.
There are certain motifs and patterns (*patra*) which are repeated over and over again in Balinese art, including offerings. One of the most common is that of the *tjili*, the image of a woman with a body shaped like an hourglass. Covarrubias argues that this image is repeated so often because it is connected with the deities of rice and fertility, Dewi Sri or Dewi Melanting (Covarrubias 1937:171). The idea of *tjili* seems to have captured the interest of many scholars, as I saw it repeated over and over again in the literature.\(^{11}\) However, although I saw this design frequently, when I asked about it women were generally confused as to what exactly I was talking about, often shrugging and saying it was just a design, rather than a design with a specific

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\(^{11}\) Also sometimes known as *Cili*. See Covarrubias 1937:171; Brinkgreve and Stuart-Fox 1992:110–112; Belo 1949; Hitchcock et al. 1995, etc.
name, leading me to believe that although common, it is common only visually, rather than something that is talked about.\footnote{There is always the possibility that I was just butchering the pronunciation, but the few times I literally spelled it out it was still not understood.}

_Suci_, or purity, is one of the most important aspects of making offerings. All of the varying components of offerings must be _suci_, but this is difficult to ascertain, although certain safeguards can be taken. Before one begins any study of an aspect of religious life, it is necessary to go through a purification ceremony, to prevent contaminating holiness. _Tukang Banten_, those women who specialize in offerings, are supposed to remain unmarried, virgins, and of good reputations during their training, although recently they are allowed to marry and continue working after they have completed their training (Codron 1999:168).

There are several ways that a ceremony specifically for purifying an individual can be done, although all of these rely heavily on the use of holy water (_tirtha_; High Balinese). Certain temples are associated with water, and have large springs devotees might enter, to bend their heads under the water and thus be purified. Holy water can also be made by either _pedanda_ or _pemangku_ priests, or by a _dalang_, the individuals responsible for making and performing with shadow puppets. The holy water made by _pedandas_, high priests from the Brahmana caste, is usually more powerful than that made by _pemangkus_, who are lay priests and typically not members of the Brahmana caste. When _tirtha_ is made by a _pedanda_ the god Siwa is supposed to guide its creation (Rubinstein 1991:44) Water is made holy when a priest chants holy mantras and performs _mudras_ (hand gestures, occasionally using religious paraphernalia such as bells) over the water, after putting themselves into a hypnotic holy state. Three types of water might be made, including _pangelukatan pabersihan_ (to purify the body), _prayascita_ (to purify and
strengthen one’s thoughts), and *tirtha biu kawonan* (to drive bad thoughts away). Less complicated and more general purpose holy water might be made by *pemangkus* by simply leaving a container of water within the shrines of a temple, as long as the thoughts and feelings of the *pemangku* are appropriate (Eiseman and Eiseman 1989:53–54).

Because it is imperative for offerings to be *suci*, and because I was going to be making them as well as studying them, it was essential that I go through a purification ceremony. After preparing the correct basket of offerings (including a monetary fee for the priest), another student wishing to study a religious topic and I were taken to a small town about an hour away, to a *pendanda* specializing in purification. He was sitting in the central pavilion when we got there, but got up and ushered us over to some mats at one of the patios of the other houses, where we all sat, mostly silent, although occasionally the *pendanda* would ask us various questions about what we were doing, dispersed between long silences where we all just sat around. Eventually he got up and took the basket of offerings into a backroom, where he worked over some water, accompanied by a great deal of bell ringing.

Eventually the priest came back out with incense sticks for each of us and a bunch of flowers, and we went through the usual praying routine – praying twice without holding a flower, three times with a flower, during which we would flick the water we were using out in front of us and wave the new flower through the incense, finished with once more without any flowers. At this point, the *pendandas* retreated to the back room and we could hear some more mantras and bells, calling out to us periodically to check and see if we were doing everything correctly. After the prayers he came out and flicked holy water over our heads, after which we pressed uncooked rice dipped in holy water onto our foreheads and between our collarbones. After that we went and stood on the lawn, where the priest went to each of us in turn, and
sprinkled water over our heads, had us sip some, and then had us lean over and poured some on the back of our necks with a little copper bowl with a tiny spout. As usual, after a purification ceremony, I was mildly surprised to realize that I did feel cleansed, physically and mentally.

Offerings are purified during the time they are formally put out for the spirits, with the sprinkling of tirtha, sometimes accompanied by the chanting of a mantra. Occasionally the spirits also receive sprinkles from coffee, tea, or (mainly in the case of bhuta kala), liquor, showing once again that they also find enjoyment in human indulgences. Similarly, some offerings include the popular clove cigarettes, usually lit. These do not seem to play the same role that the smoke of the incense plays, however. While these extras are optional, the use of tirtha and incense are mandatory. Just as tirtha prepares the offering to be worthy of the gods, incense is the vehicle or the invitation, for as the evanescent incense smoke floats up, it transfers the essence of the offering into the invisible world, to be enjoyed by the spirits there.

Figure 13: Offering with Clove Cigarettes. Photo Courtesy of Author.
Chapter II

Men Know Why, Women Know How

It’s the week before Galungan, and the household is abuzz with preparations. Heads are bent over pinwheels of palm leaves, carefully pinning on bright pink ibung. Back in the kitchen, the grandmother is carefully tying together sausages of dried pigs’ blood before hanging it up to dry, for the fridge is already chock full of canang sari offerings. When Bapak Yudi arrives home, his wife guides him over to the twenty foot bamboo pole lying in the courtyard, before rushing off to bring out all of the ready-made attachments, the large and elaborate palagantung to dangle off the tip, and the delicately twisted alis-alis to attach along the length. Bapak Yudi calls out for his son, who has been busy watching television inside, to help him attach the alis-alis. This is work for men only, so Maheswari sits on the steps near me, cutting off lengths of ribbon for her father and brother to tie the alis-alis she and her mother spent the day preparing onto the bamboo pole, directing eye rolls and sighs of impatience towards her brother, stepping in occasionally to retie his efforts, or to move them to the correct position. Made is clearly enjoying his position of superiority, and shoots smug looks over his shoulder whenever he calls out for more ribbon, every inch of him a teenage brother. Bu Ariasih sits on the steps next to me and watches, waiting until they carry the completed bamboo pole, the penjor, out to the street to erect in front of the house. They nod, pleased with themselves, and go back in, as Maheswari sweeps up all the debris, and Bu Ariasih hurries out to the penjor with all of the fruit and remaining alis-alis they had forgotten to attach.

Bali as a ‘Unisex’ Society

Clifford Geertz argued that “Bali is a rather ‘unisex’ society, a fact both its customs and its symbolism clearly express….sexual differentiation is culturally extremely played down in Bali and most activities, formal and informal, involve the participation of men and women on equal ground” (Geertz 1973:417–418). He goes on to argue that the Balinese cockfight, and the other few areas in which women do not participate is “more a mere matter of fact than socially enforced” (Geertz 1973:417). Unfortunately, he does not explain what the difference is between an assumed social fact that women should not be present at cockfights, or if that is aggressive, socially enforced decision. Furthermore, he cites the customs of such things as economics,
religion, kinship, and dress as proof of the Balinese being ‘unisex.’ In contrast, in this chapter I argue that Balinese society is indeed differentiated by sex and gender among other criteria.

Figure 14: Men and Women in Traditional Balinese Clothing. Photo Courtesy of Author.

I assume that one of the things that Geertz is referring to is the matter of sarongs in traditional clothing, which is still required for those entering temples in Bali. At first glance they do seem unisex. Each gender is expected to wear a long piece of cloth, which is wrapped around the waist several times and then tied together. However, on closer inspection they differ in a number of ways. Women wear a *kamen* (B.), which is usually flowery and colorful, and is wrapped around the waist until the end is slightly off center, which is then tucked into the waist, which is hidden from sight by the *kebaya* (B.) lacy shirt, which then has a brightly colored sash tied around the waist. For Balinese men, an under sarong (B. *saput*) is put on first, before the
outer *kamen* (B.) is wrapped once around, with the remaining fabric carefully folded to descend in a slightly phallic manner between their legs. An unobtrusive sash is tied around this all before the plain shirt is placed over it. Men are expected to wear clothes that are entirely white, although an occasional splash of yellow is allowed when going to the temple. If I accidentally tied my sarong or sash incorrectly (*especially* if it was at all similar to the male methods of tying), a Balinese woman would quickly rush over and show me how to wear my sarong correctly, according to my gender.

The reason that women are tasked with making the vast majority of offerings was particularly clear in the introduction of a book instructing women on how to make various types of the *jejahitan* offerings. “Wives or housewives oversee the children and keep the house. They are responsible for the cleanliness and security of the household. As well as managing the expenditure, income, and household economic finances, any spare moments are used to make offerings in preparation for upcoming holy days”13 (Raras 2007:1). In general, women tended to agree with these sentiments. As women are the ones responsible for the wellbeing of their children, and for the upkeep of the house, they are responsible for the diurnal offerings necessary for both of these domains.

*Women and Money*

This book also ties in the pecuniary duties of women to the construction and presenting of offerings. As Suzanne Brenner points out, in Java the financial contributions of women through “agriculture or other wage labor, craft manufacture, business, or employment in the civil

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service or other professions frequently equals or exceeds their husbands’ financial contributions to the family” (Brenner 1998:139). And Barbara Hatley points out that there is a “natural female household concern with money matters. The association of women with money brings more disparagement than esteem” (Hatley 1990:182), due partly to the denigration of anything related to women’s work, and partly related to the general distaste for worrying about money. The fact that women are frequently the family members who control the family finances, and frequently take on the role of the primary breadwinner, has created the perception in the west that women have a “high status,” (Errington 1990:4). The fact that women do indeed have ‘financial power’ does not mean that women handling something that is seen as too ‘uncouth’ for men to concern themselves with gives women any social power. While I am not arguing that women would be better off if men took over money matters, it is worthwhile to caution against the assumption that what might give woman social status in western contexts might not hold true in other cultures.

In my experience this was not emphasized in Bali quite as much as in Java, although that is likely due to the fact that I was not interested in the general topic of finances beyond how it related to the ritual economy. However, with a few minor exceptions women were the ones who sold and bought assembled offerings. Men only became involved in the actual construction of offerings when they were obliged to, such the penjor offerings made for Galungan. However, it was common to see men carrying home large quantities of palm leaves on their motorcycles, as men, according to several women, are supposed to be responsible for providing the ingredients for offerings. Similarly, it was not unusual for large offerings such as the penjor to be sold by men, but the smaller offerings sold at markets on a daily basis were overwhelmingly made and sold (and bought) by women.
These *canang* sellers represent the crossover between the money driven economy conducted between humans, and the offerings and exchange that occurs between humans and the occupants of the invisible world. Although this is still sacred work, it is also practical. On my daily walk to the center of town, I usually passed a young woman sitting in her doorway, selling offerings. She described her choice in selling *canang* to me as based on the fact that she could make them and sell them from her home, and thus watch over her children, who were very young and usually playing under her feet. It was evident that she was financially successful with this enterprise, as eventually she was able to knock down part of the wall into an adjoining room facing the street and create a very nice shop, with glass cabinets displaying various offering components.
“I love my job. I can help those who don’t have time to make offerings, and when they buy my offerings then it can help them worship as well. And I get paid, and that helps me support our family. It helps everyone”

The Daily Workload

“The responsibilities of housewives are doing chores around the house, taking care of our children and husband, socializing with the community, performing rituals at home or with the community. And nowadays there are many women working to help their family economy. There are so many obligations. It’s hard for the Balinese people because they need to maintain the family economy, and maintain traditions and our culture. But we can do that.”

The family in my household consisted of two teenage children, a boy and a girl (Made and Maheswari, respectively), their parents, and the parents of the husband. The husband (Bapak Yudi) worked as a civil servant in an office near Denpasar, while the wife (Ibu Ariasih) was working on an advanced degree, primarily from home. The family’s Nanek and Kakek (grandmother and grandfather, Ibu Gede and Bapak Wayan) lived in several rooms on the north side of the family compound, while I, Bapak Yudi, Ibu Ariasih, and the teenage children shared rooms opposite the courtyard from them. Each area had a private living space, with a television in each one, as well as a number of bedrooms. The shared kitchen and dining area were in the back southern corner, and laundry space was located along the back wall, which opened out into a chicken coop. The vast majority of the housework was done by Ibu Ariasih and her mother-in-law, Ibu Gede, although on weekends Bapak Yudi would occasionally help sweep up the courtyard or do some minor ironing.

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14 Bapak (or Pak) is the honorific given to older or respected men, while Ibu (or Bu) is the honorific given to older or respected women in Indonesia. They also mean ‘father’ and mother.’ All names are pseudonyms.
Ibu Ariasih and Ibu Gede’s days would start at around 3 or 4am every day. They would begin by cooking the rice, tidying the kitchen, heating the water kept in thermoses all day for tea or coffee, sweeping the yard, bathing, and preparing and placing offerings around the compound, usually aiming to have the latter task done just at dawn. Ibu Ariasih would also rouse the teenagers, feed them breakfast, and see her youngest, Made, off on his walk to school. Maheswari, being older, went to a high school in the nearby major town, and Ibu Ariasih would usually take her there on her motorcycle, which took about an hour round trip. Upon her return, they would cook the food for the rest of the day, sweep in all of the rooms, and do any miscellaneous cleaning, such as laundry or cleaning the bathroom. Sometimes they would take a brief nap in the afternoon, or watch Indian soap operas, dubbed into Indonesian. The rest of the afternoon would usually consist of making offerings or shopping at the market. If a holy day was approaching (as it did at least every two weeks), five to six hours a day would be spent making the hundreds of small and intricate offerings necessary, although at least one hour each afternoon was necessary to make the daily offerings. Ibu Ariasih would then pick up her daughter as Ibu Gede tidied the yard again (the frequency of sweeping the yard is necessary in most Balinese households, because of the ubiquitous frangipani trees, whose flowers drop constantly). In the evenings they would place the offerings in time for sunset, feed the family, wash the dinner dishes, tidy the kitchen, and then usually watch a movie, work on schoolwork, or help the children with their homework, until around 10pm.

In the agricultural village, the routine was quite similar, although women also helped out in the fields, and they had to fetch water from the river at the bottom of a steep hill, as well as attending to laundry down there if needed. The vast majority of women I talked to also had some further occupation besides household work. In the village, they often ran a small roadside shop
(warung) outside of their house, or they participated in some other cottage industry, such as producing coconut oil, as well as farming. In the town, they also ran warungs, but the women I interviewed also included teachers, civil servants, nurses, professional dancers, hospitality workers, or workers in shops. The amount of work done is truly flabbergasting.

![Figure 16: Man and Woman Returning Home from Working in the Fields. Photo Courtesy of Author.](image)

It is worth noting, however, that the majority of women’s work produced tangible but impermanent results. All of the products of their cleaning, cooking, and offering work had disappeared by the next day, and the labor to produce a cleaner house, meals, and offerings had to begin again. The one exception to this would be the feminine and domestic labor of textile work, which although I did not observe personally, has been discussed in other anthropological literature (Nakatani 1999b; Brenner 1998). Although much of the male labor was also temporary, it often lasted more than one day. Farmers could see their rice harvest in use for months at a time, and the penjor offerings were meant to stand in front of their houses for weeks. The lack of
a monetary income from domestic work is also worth noting. The commonality among women was that if they had income producing jobs, these jobs usually allowed them to stay close to the house. Men’s jobs would usually take them further afield (literally, in the case of farmers).

Hanna Papanek argues that middle-class women in particular are expected to withdraw from working outside of the house, and instead spend their time producing their family’s status, through a variety of ways, including through ritual, in an attempt to “anchor the family in its relationship with God and gods” (Papanek 1979:778). She argues that women from the upper classes can afford to do what they please, as their family’s status is somewhat secure, that women from lower classes are required to help procure a living, but that middle class women are most likely to find the need to spend time generating social status for their family, as social mobility is “the most possible and most sought after” (Papanek 1979:779). Although she refers to ritual labor as mainly used to find status with the gods, in Bali it can also be used to cement one’s status within the community, as many of the rituals are necessary to ensure the wellbeing of the entire community. Her argument about middle-class women may also explain the greater presence of visible ritual labor in the town versus the small farming village I also observed.

Marriage in Bali

Bali is generally a patriarchal and patrilocal society, with sons often being the sole inheritor of their parents’ land and wealth. With falling birth rates (and the government’s push to have only two children, rather than the traditional Balinese four) it is becoming more common for women to inherit, but this remains an anomaly. Although many women remain in close and loving relationships with their natal family, the fact remains that their most promising social and economic well-being lies in being married. Megan Jennaway, in her research on polygynous
marriages in North Bali, discusses the urgent requirement to marry. Even if the marriage is unappealing in other ways, the discomforting awareness of the economic and social vulnerability of women who do not marry, and the need for children as a further “guarantee of material security” in their old age, ensures that they will get married anyway (Jennaway 2000:156).

Figure 17: Sign in the Jakarta Airport About the Ideal Age to Marry. Photo Courtesy of Author.

Women are usually supposed to be married by the age of 25. This sign, located in the Jakarta airport, is provided by the National Population and Family Planning Agency (Badan kependudukan dan keluarga berencana Nasional – BkkbN), encouraging passengers to remember their gate number of 21 by remembering the ideal ages that men and women should be married by: ages 25 and 21, respectively. Any woman older than 25, in Bali, is considered an old
maid. Throughout my time there, I was often asked my age. When people heard I was 26, they immediately asked me if I was married. I’d smilingly reply “Not yet!” which usually instigated women patting my hand and telling me that they were sure I’d find someone, in a slightly worried tone. I had usually explained that I was a student, but if I was questioned about that, or about what kind of job I hoped for, they were clearly of secondary importance to my marital status. This is explained by Susan Blackburn as “motherhood is considered by most Indonesians as clearly the desirable state for women, ineluctably bound up with their kodrat (nature)…officially people are expected by religion, state and society to conform to the gender expectations of kodrat with its heavy emphasis on marriage and parenthood” (Blackburn 2004:139).

\textit{Wives, Mothers, and the State}

“It seems to me, maybe just in my modern perspective, that offerings make women more busy. That’s why it’s so hard to be a career woman in Bali. If you want to be a career woman go out from Bali. Go to some places where they appreciate education, or have more time.”

Although motherhood was important in Indonesia prior to the colonial period, its importance and what it meant was enforced by colonial concepts. Dutch notions of the scientific and ‘modern’ mother were encouraged, especially as it related to colonial ideas of “cultural hygiene” (Stoler 1995). Motherhood was elevated during the independence movement when Indonesia was referred to as \textit{Ibu Indonesia} (Blackburn 2004:145). The ideal of a woman as a ‘wise mother’ who could raise her children to be good nationalists emphasized the essential nature of women as mothers, as well as emphasizing the need for nurturing roles in a developing nation. And this continued after Indonesia achieved independence. Under the Guided Democracy ideology,

\footnote{15 Although Susan Blackburn defines \textit{kodrat} as an inherent characteristic of nature in relation to gender, it could also be defined as ‘duty.’}
Sukarno encouraged women to devote themselves to the nation, although his vice president, Mohammad Hatta, encouraged women to participate in a social manner, rather than a political, urging them to focus on raising their children (Blackburn 2004:148). Even the women’s organization Gerwani, favored by President Sukarno but later vilified as militant sexual deviants by the New Order (Pohlman 2017), tended to place a heavy emphasis on the role of women as mothers, although it acknowledged that many mothers worked outside of the home, as money earners. Many of their issues focused on creating a strong nuclear family against neo-imperialism, where women could act as “faithful companions to their warrior-husbands.” Gerwani differed from other women’s organizations of the time not by separating women from their perceived kodrat as mothers, but by combining motherhood and political activism (Wieringa 2003:75).

The New Order placed a heavy emphasis on the role of women as wives and mothers, and that their primary duties lay in becoming nurturing wives and mothers, rather than joining the workforce. Teaching women how to be women, or rather, how to display the correct type of feminine behavior through ‘state-sponsored femininity’ (Jones 2010:275), has played a key role in shaping the ways women think about themselves and in how women act. Two main women’s organizations were created and promoted by the New Order, including Dharma Wanita and the Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK), both of which concentrated on the duties of women as wives and mothers (Blackburn 2004:152). Dharma Wanita was created as an organization for the wives of civil servants, and was not often talked about by my interlocutors. However, the PKK remains very active in Indonesia, and women in villages are still expected to participate in it.
The PKK is officially meant to include women in the effort for ‘national development,’ but as Carol Warren points out, the ideologies of what a woman’s duty consists of, as produced by the PKK, “is more compatible with the state’s interest in social control than with its stated economic objectives” (Warren 1991:245). Women I knew conveyed that PKK meetings focused heavily on child care, family planning, or managing household expenses. Julia Suryakusuma uses the phrase ‘State Ibuism’ to describe the state’s ideal role of a woman as dependent on her husband, both financially and socially (Suryakusuma 1996:98). In Bali, the PKK is closely tied to the banjar, which is the name given to hamlets, and provides customary and governmental organization for the hamlet. The banjars will often organize groups of women to make offerings for certain occasions, or might tell them what kinds of offerings are necessary to make for various types of ceremonies. Domestic labor is fused to ritual labor through official rhetoric.

“Generally women care more about the offerings – because they’re closer to the earth, closer to daily activities, closer to family members/children. Women want to make sure everything’s secure and safe – women care more about safety, men worry more about economics.”

Child care and ritual labor are the two most publicly viewed aspects of domestic labor, and according to the conversations I had with Balinese women, are the two areas about which the government has the most to say. This unease might be explained by the issues and unhappiness some women forthrightly expressed over the communal banjar offering making meetings. Some women complained that the other women were too critical over how they were making offerings, some complained about the sheer number of offerings they were told to make. While the anxieties surrounding these issues will be further discussed in Chapter VI, it was clear that the

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16 While admittedly most of the conversations I had with women were about offerings, and thus I probably heard more about this aspect of governmental interference than I might have otherwise, these were also the two topics that came up most often in informal conversations with women who did not know what I was studying, although family planning was often a part of the childcare conversation.
participation in this local governmentally promoted ritual labor task was expected of women. If a woman does not participate, the reasons for this are a fascinating source of gossip. Women are expected to perform their traditional duty of making offerings.

Many women who bought offerings told me that they were judged harshly for it. One woman, Ibu Ayu, whose job kept her constantly busy and traveling, and thus frequently bought offerings for her household rather than making them, talked about how her housewifery skills, and thus her innate skills as a woman, were called into question. Although Ibu Ayu excelled at her paid job, the question over whether or not she could also function as a housewife and mother was of higher importance to some of her neighbors.

“All people think that since we’re career woman ‘oh maybe she forgot to make offering, maybe she doesn’t know how to make offering…””

Although many women can and do work outside of their homes, their role as a housewife and caretaker has primary importance in the eyes of many. The push of state ideologies in past and present Indonesian history has created the expectation that a woman’s highest calling is to be a wife and mother. In Bali a key feature of these roles is the inclusion of ritual labor, and the creation and proffering of offerings.

*When Women Can’t Make Offerings*

“Women that are having their period are considered spiritually dirty. When we are ‘dirty’, we cannot make something that has a holy value to be offered to the Gods. It is cuntaka, and we have a negative aura spiritually.”

A woman is considered to be unclean during menstruation. During this time, she is not allowed to participate in any religious labor or to enter any temples. This lasts for three days after the first sign of bleeding, after which the woman is considered clean once she has washed her
hair. The reason that a woman is considered unclean during this time is most often given as the fear that demons are attracted to blood (hence the blood sacrifices), and that a menstruating woman is unclean in much the same way that anyone with a gaping, bleeding wound would be. However, the fact that this pollution lasts three days only, and not until the cessation of all blood, implies that the blood is not the only polluting factor.

Covarrubias argues that during menstruation a woman’s life is miserable (the only time during her life, according to him), as she is not allowed to make food, go to the temple, or sleep in the same room as her husband (Covarrubias 1937:156). However, in my experience periods of menstruation were not an unhappy time for women. For many, it seemed to be a relief, a holiday from the usual constant stress of ritual labor. They would usually sit around during the day gossiping, watching television, and snacking in comfortable clothes. Many households require the woman to sleep in a separate room for the duration, and most households have a bedroom set aside for this purpose, although the presence and comfort of such a room depends on the financial well-being of the family. It has even been known for women to induce their periods through the ingestion of certain foods, such as the dried pig’s blood found in lawar, although a woman might also attempt to delay her period through the use of birth control pills, if there is a temple ceremony she particularly desires to attend (Pedersen 2002:309).

However, if a woman misses too many temple ceremonies in a row, suspicions start to arise that she is either cursed or missing them on purpose, and various cleansing ceremonies are conducted to ensure that this pattern will not continue. In the introduction of the instructional book on assembling offerings mentioned earlier, there is a passage which states:

“Most likely in the future both men and women will master the challenge of sewing and assembling these offerings, especially if they both
understand how lofty and noble this work of sewing and assembling these offerings is. Men especially enjoy greater freedom and benefit in this regard, because they would not experience resentment from their fellow workers for having to withdraw every month during menstruation. The production of offerings in and for the household...should therefore be highly prioritized among the public, especially among men and boys.” (Raras 2007:1)\(^\text{17}\)

This indication that women with frequent menstruations (or those women who menstruate at all) are resented by other women is puzzling, considering the fact that all women will menstruate at some point during their lives. However, it may be possible that this resentment comes not from other women who have to pick up the work, but the men of the household who must take on additional tasks. In situations such as this, or if women are sick, or if the unusual situation occurs that there are no women living in the household, men are expected to make offerings. That they did and could do so was a fact that I was assured of repeatedly, although I only saw a man participate in constructing household offerings once in my six months of fieldwork.

Although I have my doubts over whether or not men know how to make offerings, they are seen as playing a complimentary role in their construction. While women have the ‘nimble fingers’ and general skills necessary for the techniques that go into making offerings, men (that is, priests or members of the Brahmin caste) have the knowledge of how to make them. This knowledge has been recorded in lontar, the holy books made of coconut leaves that are carefully soaked, dried, sanded, stretched and pressed before being written on, and which are carefully replaced by new generations as the old book becomes faded or damaged. The possession of these

books has been held by families and by men, and are often written in the holy (and unknown except for priests, usually) language of Kawi. One local priest told me that “Even though it’s very common for women to make offerings, they don’t usually know the name and the function of that offering.” The role of priests is often to go around and inspect the offerings, and to tell women whether or not they have been made correctly, which often varies depending on the village.

Figure 18: Priest Inspecting Offerings. Photo Courtesy of Author.
Most of the time when I asked the meaning of an offering, or of ingredients, women would tell me to talk to a priest, or a man from the Brahmin caste. They often seemed eager to include men in the process of offerings, and reluctant to take credit for doing most of the work themselves. When I asked one woman about why I was told to ask men about this I was told that:

“Because the job description here in our community, here in Bali so man have more time to read, so he reads the lontar, the palm leaves, and usually they will read a lot, and then the women will do the practice. Usually the man, you know, the priest, will read ‘okay this is what we need to do, we do this.’ So all the meaning is known by the man. But the women know how to make it. The combination between men and women makes it complete, actually.”
“For me, like a…devotion, actually. Expressing our feeling of the unseen power, because this is just about our beliefs, and then to visualize our beliefs, that’s what we do by giving our offerings there. Because usually the gift that we get from the unseen, like our health, and our food….must be power up there that we don’t know.”

In the Protestant tradition in which I was raised, materiality is perceived as inimical to religion. Tangible items, including bodies, churches, crosses, gifts at Christmas, statues of religious figures…were just seen as stuff that to varying degrees cluttered up our lives and distracted us from what was real – our souls, beliefs, and God. Trying to access God by using techniques such as offerings or praying to holy relics didn’t just not work; it actually took us farther from Him. But tangible items cannot be escaped, and some items such as Bibles became holy in spite of ourselves. I was always very careful not to stack any other books on top of my Bible, or to even put it too near other books that were not what I deemed ‘appropriate.’ As Webb Keane argues in his book *Christian Moderns* (2007), the struggle to separate oneself from a material world without actually leaving it is impossible, and prompts feelings of unease.

I use this example from my own upbringing not to make an argument about the correct opinion about materiality and religion, but to explain why my understanding of materiality and its place in Balinese Hinduism may be flawed. Although the ease with which Balinese used materialism in their everyday religious practices was likely a large part of the reason I was so fascinated by it, my inability to understand how they can marry what I have long seen as polar opposites has likely prevented me from comprehending the precise ways that they have combined the two. However, I will say that over time I became increasingly jealous of their
ability to use a beautifully constructed object to cope with the uncertainties of life, and that when I came home my first instinct when my printer was not working for any discernable reason was to put an offering on top of it in the hopes that whatever demons were tampering with it would leave in peace.

The concept of materiality is not easy to define. For the purposes of this paper, I will use it to discuss things (visible and invisible, tangible and intangible) which are used by both humans and non-human entities to interact across the border between the visible and invisible worlds of Bali. For this, I am drawing upon Bruno Latour’s Actor Network Theory (Latour 2005), especially in the sense that by using ‘materials’ these agents are creating a network of relationships. I will also use Webb Keane’s definition of materials as “things [which] have repeatable forms that are a minimal condition of their recognizability across instances, of their circulation across social space, and of their capacity for temporal extension” (Keane 2007:21) which by virtue of these qualities also reflects a semiotic understanding.

Hegel argues that there can be no dissociation between humanity and materiality because we understand ourselves by reflecting upon the materiality present before us (Hegel 1910). As we understand clothes we understand ourselves as clothed or naked, and as we understand religion we understand ourselves as those with a spiritual life or without. Balinese use offerings as a way to comprehend the presence of the invisible inhabitants of their world, managing to use the sense of sight to see that which is unseen. They remind people that the spirits are ever present and ever hungry, and of their obligations to provide oblation in return for their own well-being. Offerings are visual representations of the labor of women to create relationships with the invisible world, and their relationships and love for their families.
In the village in which I did most of my fieldwork, offerings are placed everywhere. Every three days, at least, supplementary offerings are placed at locations such as the stove, washing machine, all the motorcycles, and various corners, as well as the usual ones at entrances and in the shrines. However, since a Balinese household consists of a variety of buildings tucked away inside of a tall wall, most of these offerings will only be seen by the residents of the house, both human and spirit. The offerings placed in front of the household’s gate near the street, on the other hand, are highly visible to passersby. It is probably partly for this reason that these offerings are often more elaborate than the ones placed within, although it should be remembered that the entrance to the house is a liminal spot, and thus a dangerous and more permeable one than on top of the washing machine, so a more elaborate offering is also necessary. The offerings are often placed just far enough from the gate that those walking by are forced to look at them.

Figure 19: Offerings on Rice Bin and in by Front Gate. Photo courtesy of author
Although offerings are a technique which people use to shape their own religious beliefs, they are also used as a way to gauge the beliefs of others. There is always the risk that what another person does to anger the invisible entities might affect you or the community at large, so how other people assemble their offerings is important. There is also an element of interest in examining the skill and artwork present in offerings, much like the sly glances at the other peoples’ pies during bake sales.

I repeatedly heard women mention pamphlets that the government had distributed detailing the types of offerings and frequency in offering that people should make. These pamphlets were usually attributed to the organization Parisadha Hindu Dharma (Indonesia Hindu Society), which was formed in 1959 and tasked with shifting Hinduism from a ritual based religion to one based in holy text. This was part of an ultimately successful attempt to legitimize Hinduism as a world religion worthy of being added to the list of official state religions (Picard 1999:42) (discussed in greater detail in the introduction). These mentions always piqued my interest, and I eagerly asked if I could examine one of these pamphlets. Most of the time women promised to look around and find one to show me, but I never did see one. I am unsure if these pamphlets ever existed, or if the memory that they did was merely a reflection of how pressured women feel by the government to provide material proof of their active religious life.

_Homogenizing Religion_

“Offerings are different in different places. It is different even in one village to the other, let alone in different regencies like Tabanan, Denpasar, or Buleleng. Even in this banjar and the next one over have some differences. For an example, we call one offering that looks exactly the same by different names, or sometime one offering with the same name has different ingredients.”
One of my interlocutors, who grew up in a small agricultural village up in the mountains discussed the ‘standardizing’ effects of the Parisadha Hindu Dharma, which she also referred to as the ‘Hindu Umbrella.’ When she was growing up, she told me, the only offerings made and used for day to day purposes were the *saiban*, where leaves are simply folded and a bit of the daily rice is tucked in, which serve to protect the family from demonic spirits. The more complicated *canang sari* were only made every two weeks, for the new moon and full moon festivals. But the flyer from the Parisadha Hindu Dharma instructed them to make *canang sari* at least every five days on *Kliwon*. The quantity and complexity of offerings now far exceeds what she experienced in her childhood, and I repeatedly heard reports of these types of inflations of offerings needed for daily use.

![Figure 20: More Elaborate Offerings. Photo Courtesy of Author.](image)

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18 Kliwon is the fifth day of the five day week. The Balinese calendar consists of the three-day week (*Triwara*), the five-day week (*Pancawara*), and the seven-day week (*Saptawara*), as well as seven other types of week which all run concurrently to make up the 210 day year, although the Gregorian calendar is now also used. For more information see (Eiseman and Eiseman 1989:172–192).
Parisadha Hindu Dharma has not only tried to standardize the types of offerings and the times which they are made and offered, but also attempts to regulate what these types of offerings look like. Everyone is aware that what a canang sari, for example, looks like from village to village varies widely, and some women told me that when they had married and moved to a different village they had to change their methods somewhat. But apparently the Parisadha Hindu Dharma has gone to some lengths to try to homogenize the appearance of offerings. However, variety from place to place seems to have continued to some extent. I noticed quite a diversity in a number of ways, such as the types of flowers used, the differences in additional ingredients (in some towns and cities packaged items such as cookies were added, some places included cigarettes as well as the incense, and some simply added a few grains of rice). For the most part people seemed to accept the fact that the construction and appearance of offerings differed depending on the village, and did not judge between them, although one woman from a larger town known for its artistry proudly asserted that they had the only good ones. In general, however, people talked about the multifarious designs of offerings in much the same way that they discussed food from different regions. It may be what other people preferred, but at home they preferred what they (and/or their local spirits) were used to.
It is a curious fact that the immaterial beings which populate Bali have the need for sustenance from material objects. That this hunger exists, however, is without question. Several of my interlocutors discussed the need to feed demons to turn them into divine and protective spirits:

“Sometimes we are very angry and it seems that our demonic side comes up and then we’re in good mood and it seems like our divine being come up. So one entity could be good or bad. We need to neutralize it or balance it.”
Although this was not a commonly expressed view, the fact that several people independently mentioned it is an indication that how people perceive the idea of spirits being hungry was important. For women, feeding the invisible members of their household is as important as feeding their families.

Every morning begins a couple of hours before the crack of dawn. The ubiquitous rice cooker in every cooking area has to be cleaned of the previous day’s rice before cooking the rice for that day. Once the fresh rice is hot and steaming some of it is scooped out to be added to the daily offerings. It is important that the first members of the household served are the invisible spirits which inhabit it, as this is a sign of respect, similar to the tradition of human guests being the first ones served. After this is done the rest of the household can eat from the pot. In fact, many duties surrounding the invisible inhabitants involve making sure that they have their basic needs taken care of. During cremations some of the important offerings include bolts of cloth for the departed spirit to clothe themselves. One of the yearly (according to the Balinese calendar) temple festivals involves taking a physical manifestation of the god down to the river to be cleansed. These services are provided by men and women, but for the daily needs of food, the duty falls to those performing all of the other daily duties of cleaning, tending, and feeding – the women.
As mentioned previously, in many ways the tastes of the spirits and humans are similar. During the temple festivities that happen at least every two weeks, large baskets of offerings containing such things as fruit and cake are placed on a platform to be sanctified and proffered to the gods by the priest. For some festivals beautifully elaborate offerings made of meat (especially the favorite of all Balinese – roast pig (babi guling)) shaped into representations of deities or flowers are made by men for the gods. The demons tend to prefer pungent or slightly rotting food, while gods seem to favor the pastries (jaja) made from sugar and rice flour. The
more important the festival the more elaborate the feast. The spirits consume the essence or soul of the offering, and the remains are enjoyed by the families who presented them\(^{19}\).

But for day to day needs, offerings usually consist of rice, a bit of fruit, and the all-important \textit{porosan}. \(^{20}\) Francine Brinkgreve argues that this is included because the betel quid “is a token of hospitality throughout Indonesia” (Brinkgreve and Stuart-Fox 1992:22). This may also be true, but when I asked about the meaning behind the ingredients of offerings, I was always told that the \textit{porosan} was the most important part because it represented the Hindu \textit{trimurthi}. I hypothesize that this, and the offerings consisting of more elaborate representations of gods made out of rice and meat at the important festivals, is used as a method to attract the gods, and to let them know that this offering is meant for them. The physical representation of the gods is one method by which humans can communicate with the invisible world.

Spirits’ preferences occasionally differ from humans’. Flowers are an important aspect of most offerings. Those who wished to talk to me about the meaning of offerings frequently wanted to discuss the meaning of the different colors of the flowers, which are usually related to the colors associated with certain gods or with certain directions. The color of the flower appears to be more important than the type of flower. While helping to assemble large quantities of \textit{canang sari} I would occasionally use up all of the marigold petals I was given, and the woman I had been helping would pat my hand and go and find some other orange or yellow flower that I could use. Surprisingly the frangipani, by far the most prevalent type of flower grown in the area that I stayed, was not usually used in the offerings themselves, although they were used for

\(^{19}\) The meat offerings (\textit{gayah}) are usually not eaten by anyone after the gods have had their full, as the flies start to take over and they have usually been out in the sun most of the day.

\(^{20}\) The \textit{porosan} represents the Hindu trinity, or \textit{trimurthi}, and consists of a green betel leaf (representing Wisnu) wrapped around a slice of red areca nut (representing Brahma) and some white limestone (representing Siwa), although it sometimes also includes base, a leaf from a type of pepper.
sprinkling holy water or for praying. However, this could have been because they turn brown within hours after falling from the trees.

That color is important is also made clear by the segehan offerings, which are usually offered every few days. The day on which this is offered differed not only from village to village, but from house to house. The household that I lived in the majority of the time rarely made segehan, but a household two blocks down made it every day. Segehan is an offering which includes colored rice. Rice in Bali naturally comes in white, red, or black grains, although turmeric is added so frequently that ‘yellow’ rice is included in the collection of ‘natural’ rice types. The word for yellow (kuning) is derived from the word for turmeric (kunyit), and is an important element of offerings during the holy day Kuningan, which takes its name from the prevalence of yellow rice in offerings (Eiseman and Eiseman 1989:182). For most segehan however, rice is dyed different shades of painfully vivid colors. Usually segehan consist of white, black, and either red or an eye-smarting pink. On holy days such as Nyepi rice is dyed one of the colors associated with the eight cardinal directions (Covarrubias 1937:279), with a mixture of these eight colors placed in the middle to represent the combined power. Different colored rice varieties and flower petals are kept separate, as the mixing of them could have unintended consequences. One woman complained about how her neighbors were always sloppy with their presentation of offerings, and once, when they mixed together the segehan colors she later overheard them having a huge fight, which she attributed to their lackadaisical offering construction. Usually the only safe method of mixing them is to put this mix in the middle of separated colors.
As with many forms of materiality, the ways in which the materials themselves are handled has changed. There is a common perception that the quantity of offerings has increased over time, which one woman explained to me was because:

“In the past only a few people make banten because at that time the economy was very difficult, moreover at that time Indonesia has not been independent. So the important thing is that they can have foods for their family. But now Indonesia is already growing and progressing. Everyone has their job and they have money so they can manage their time and knowledge. Also their religious knowledge is good. They know how to manage their family and how to make banten, so now everyone is getting better to manage all those things. Now we have a lot of rituals maybe because now everything is so easy to get.”

This is similar to the seemingly worldwide perception that humanity is becoming more and more focused on material goods. As they do in so many respects, spirits mirror the needs and values of the humans they live with. Bali in particular, with its heavy reliance on tourism, is experiencing a large pecuniary inflow, and some of this must be spent on the gods. I did notice that more touristy towns tended to have more elaborate offerings. Traditionally the ingredients for
offerings are supposed to be collected by men for women to transform, but these ingredients are increasingly being bought (not to mention the increase in pre-made offerings). With money it is not only easier to buy more ingredients in general but also to buy a greater variety in ingredients (there is a growing trend for more varieties of flowers in offerings in places where the ingredients were bought rather than plucked, for example). It is important to note that although much of the appeal of offerings is their appearance, elements that cannot be seen are equally important. Everyone knows that the spirits know what should be in offerings. Although they give some allowance for mistakes, in general they tend to be picky eaters and insist on certain ingredients.

Beliefs in the originating design of offerings were generally unclear. In Hinduism, offerings originate from the Bhagavad-Gita, a section of the great Hindu epic the Mahabharata. The
Bhagavad-Gita consists of Krishna’s speech after he reveals himself to be an avatar of Wisnu. This passage is a long, philosophical discussion of the concepts of dharma and moksha (a simple translation of these would be religious duty and liberation from the cycle of reincarnation when one can join the atman of Brahman, respectively). It also discusses how to worship, and Krishna explains what is expected in an offering:

“Whosoever offers to me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, that offering of love, of the pure heart I accept.” (Eiseman and Eiseman 1989:216)

This explains the basic ingredients of an offering, but it is still a long cry from explaining the elaborate and specific types of offerings present in Bali today.

Many of my interlocutors believed that humans decided on the design of offerings, but that the gods decided whether or not they liked it. One woman, the wife of a priest, argued that it was the taste of the gods, but if another person makes a good suggestion she senses whether or not the gods would like it. This sense of a ‘gut feeling’ was a general trend, whether people thought that the tastes of humans or the tastes of the gods mattered more in the construction of offerings. The belief that the offerings (for gods especially, it did not matter as much for demons as they were so greedy that they’d accept anything) should be pretty and carefully done was another frequent opinion.

One woman was very clear on the fact that gods decided exactly what they wanted offerings to look like, and when they wanted them, and she had a compelling argument. She discussed occasions at the temple when a god would go into details about their expectations during trances:
“When there’s the temple festival there will be someone in a trance. So in that way we know what the god wants. So for example, we have temple festival in the banjar and there’s someone in a trance, and when he’s in trance he says, “Oh you need to do something in this part (like placing saiban on the street, etc.).” [Does that happen often?] – Yes, every temple festival, most of the time some of the people are in a trance. After most people enter into trance people go to the river. So for example, in the Pura Puseh (a temple dedicated to the founding ancestors of the village) there’s big tree that grows there, and someone wants to cut it because the tree is too old and after they cut the tree someone’s in a trance because the batara (ancestor spirit) needs something to change the tree (like the new shrine). And also in the pura down by the river some of the people in this village want to cut the tree the god that stays there says don’t cut it, and the way she told the people here was being in trance. During the new moon festival the people here will go to the Pura Dalem (the temple of the dead) and will offer the pig in front of the Pura Dalem, because that’s also the request made by the batara by entering someone to trance.”

The Joy of Creation

A clear argument for the idea that immaterial beings do care about material objects and that they are, in some way, necessary, is the fact that Brahma, the creator, created the world. Every physical component of an offering comes from something that Brahma made. Offerings, as well as basic sustenance, are a way that people show that they understand the importance of the art of creation and are grateful for it. Daniel Miller argues that one of the roles of materiality is to handle the “responsibility for creating order and cosmology” (Miller 2013:293). In order for the invisible world to dwell comfortably alongside the visible world, the inhabitants of the latter must show the inhabitants of the former that they will help to sustain their mutual relationship by also contributing to the constant upkeep of the world. Without constant production the carefully arranged organization of the world would begin to fall apart. While the basic ingredients of offerings are provided for humans, the transformation of these into a new creation is a sign that humans recognize their need for reciprocity.
“All of the ingredients for canang come from nature. Balinese Hindus reap the benefits from nature. Therefore, we have to maintain and preserve it, especially flowers and coconut trees, which must flourish so that we can utilize them in making canang and other offerings.”

Scent is one of the methods which help to transform the visible, tangible object into the invisible world. Offerings for the gods are supposed to smell good as well as look good, which is part of the reason that the flowers have to be fresh. Offerings for the demons are more effective if they have pungent items such as garlic, ginger, meat that has started to go off slightly, and blood. This seems to tie in with the role of incense. When offerings are placed out for the spirits, women carefully sprinkle holy water (which in its own way is a substance with properties that cross between worlds) over them, before gently wafting the smoke from an incense stick over it or placing the incense into the offering.

Incense is used not only for offerings but for prayers (although the two often go together). Although the appealing scent of the incense has some role in acquiring the interest of the spirits, its role in prayer shows that it does not just create hunger. Incense is used in many cultures as visible proof that a physical item can travel into the invisible world. In his discussion on the role of incense in China, Mikkel Bunkenborg suggests that the burning of incense is “a dialogical meeting of matter and spirits where the disappearance of the incense as a material object is simultaneously seen as the appearance of immaterial agents consuming the incense” (Bunkenborg 2015:181). And it is true that for the length of time that the incense is burning over an offering in Bali that offering (or that time of prayer) is seen as sacred. After the sari (essence) of the offering has been consumed, what has happened to the remains does not matter, and incense plays the role of signaling both to humans and to spirits when the offering crosses into the liminal space between the worlds of sekala and niskala (visible and invisible).
The most important step that changes the materials of the offering into sustenance for the spirits is the time and labor that goes into their construction. Although all of the ingredients are meant to come directly from nature (with the exceptions, apparently, of artificial food dye and the use of staples to hold together leaves), they cannot be transformed into anything meaningful until a great amount of work has been accomplished. Francine Brinkgreve argues that “time seems never to be a problem when it is necessary to please the eye of invisible powers. Sometimes the creative act as such is even more important than the final result, since many lovely details get lost in the abundancy of the total design” (Brinkgreve and Stuart-Fox 1992:47). That the making of offerings is labor, and highly skilled labor at that, I cannot stress enough. For many women the majority of their day is spent carefully transforming bits of plants into something that can keep their entire families safe and happy.

The time and skill put into creating offerings is not the only aspect of labor that plays into the transformation. By creating this gift themselves, women attach a bit of themselves to it,
which makes offerings that much more appreciated by the spirits. This is one of the reasons that women prefer to make offerings whenever possible rather than buying them. A pemangku (a local priest, not belonging to the Brahma caste) described it as:

“The ones we make are better than the ones we buy because they are our creation. It involves our initiative, our feelings, our thoughts. The offerings that we make are entered by our soul, which gives strength to the offering.”

Many women agreed, stressing the feeling of prayer or good intentions as being just as vital an ingredient to the offerings as any other. Without this transformative component the offerings could not accomplish their raison d'etre, of protecting the members of the household. Because offerings are one of those dangerous forces designed to navigate the liminal border between the visible and invisible world (Douglas 1966), special care is necessary in their creation, for both the discernable and imperceptible elements. Women can sweep the yard while thinking of other things with no more risk than missing a few spots, but to make an offering while allowing bad thoughts to enter one’s head is to invite in calamity.

The complicated nature of the labor involved in making offerings is one reason why there is a differing moral value to offerings. Money can be earned a variety of ways, but devotion is not usually a necessary constituent of that labor, as it is in offerings. Much in the same way that a homemade birthday cake is more valuable than a store bought one, even if the homemade option has a tendency to slide apart and become generally unlovely, homemade offerings are always to be preferred to the bought versions. Women with full time jobs in the cities often mentioned that they were looked down upon in some ways for buying rather than making offerings, and whenever I asked about their choice in making of buying offerings, those that bought offerings
were quick to mention that whenever possible they made them instead. Making offerings on behalf of your family is a way to express love in a way not possible to the same degree with bought offerings.
“The Balinese, perpetually weaving intricate palm-leaf offerings, preparing elaborate ritual meals, decorating all sorts of temples, marching in massive processions, and falling into sudden trances, seem much too busy practicing their religion to think (or worry) very much about it” (Geertz 1973:176).

Offerings are imbued with layers of risk. There are risks within the act of exchange with the spirits, whom remain the unknowable other, despite a lifetime of familiarity. But there are also the risks within human social groups as well, from the daunting aggregation of offerings required for rituals, the expectations and demands of banjars, and the critiques of priests. The possibility of mistakes in offerings are innumerable, and to some degree cannot be avoided. But every effort to avoid them must still be made, and all the pressures must be dealt with, because to do otherwise would be unthinkable.

Although the initial request concerning offerings was relatively simple, asking for merely a “a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water” (Eiseman and Eiseman 1989:216) to be offered with devotion, offerings now are complicated beyond belief, and there are numerous possibilities for error, even within the ingredients. The materials for offerings are meant to be collected or purchased for precisely the use of offerings, that they are properly holy (sukla B.). The alternative, offering ingredients which come from leftovers or the castoffs from other uses (lungsuran B.), would be completely unacceptable. Just as the elder and more important members of the house eat before the younger generations, so do the gods eat before humans (Fox 2015:43). A clear instance of this hierarchy would be the cakes and fruits eaten by families after
they and the other offerings are brought back from the temple, after the gods consumed their essence.

**Polluted Offerings**

![Image of Polluted Offerings](image)

*Figure 27: Old Offerings. Photo Courtesy of Julia Martin.*

Although this is easy enough to avoid if one collects the ingredients and makes the offerings themselves, if a woman is too busy and must buy some portion, she must also accept the risk that the ingredients may be *lungsuran*. Since offerings can be made *sukla* by buying them specifically for offerings, it is unusual for women to worry about the fruit or flowers she buys on their own to be polluted. However, for full offerings one doesn’t know whether some of the ingredients were used before. One woman expressed her worries in response to a query about the possibility that offerings purchased might not be pure:

“Yes, sometimes it worries me. Because I’ve witnessed myself a seller in market selling coconuts that were not holy anymore, *lungsuran* coconuts,
which had already been used for offerings once. It certainly worries me.
If I happen to reoffer banten lungsuran, I feel uneasy.”

Since offerings can only be used once (although in some instances, such as the decorative penjor, they can be used for long periods, rather than being used up within a day), to reuse an element which has already been included in an offering is just as bad as using rice left over from a meal. Unfortunately, like so many of the other possible polluting factors, it is impossible for a human to tell whether ingredients are lungsuran or sukla, but spirits can tell immediately, and might be horribly offended.

While there is some concern over lungsuran ingredients, there are other, more severe worries. An incorrect ingredient is to be preferred to leaving an ingredient out altogether, especially if it’s an ingredient as important as the porosan (discussed at further length in Chapter III). The porosan, representing the Hindu trimurthi of Siwa, Brahma, and Wisnu, is necessary to attract the attention of the gods. However, since the porosan is put at the bottom of canang sari, buyers are not able to dig through all the layers of flower petals to ascertain its presence.

“In my opinion, making banten ourselves is better than buying it. Because if we make it ourselves, we know that the ingredients are complete. Sometimes when we buy it, it lacks the porosan because sellers sometimes forget it. If we make our own we can be sure that it is complete. And also for us, Hindu people, if we make banten on our own, we pay more attention of ingredients like its cleanliness and purity. We can wash the canang before arranging it. That is what sellers usually ignore.”

A general trend in worrying about whether bought offerings are acceptable are worries about who exactly has made them. Tourism has become increasingly popular in Bali, and revenues from tourism have supplanted agriculture as the top source of income (Picard 1990:41). The presence of the pecuniary benefits tourism has brought to Bali has meant that migratory work forces from less wealthy Indonesian islands has grown, and most of these migrants are
practicing Muslims (Baker and Coulter 2007:253). There is concern not only that offering sellers might be Muslim, but that some offerings (or parts of offerings) are made elsewhere. I frequently heard rumors of ‘offering factories’ in Java or other nearby islands, where labor is cheaper. When I attempted to find the source of these rumors however, it all descended into vague memories of hearing it from ‘somewhere.’ Similarly, when I attempted to find a Muslim offering vendor to interview I had a difficult time, even in the capital city of Denpasar.\textsuperscript{21}

These rumors, whether true or not, show a deep concern that non-Hindus might be the ones making offerings, usually specifying Muslims from Java. Although this may be due to some distrust of Java in general, arising from most political power being centralized in Java since Indonesian independence (Beatty 2012), there is also concern that those who are not practicing

\footnote{\textsuperscript{21} I should acknowledge that it is very possible that when I asked offering sellers where they were from, they told me that they were from Bali, because that is what they believed I (and their customers) wanted to hear, even if they were from other islands and were not Hindus.}
Hindus should not and cannot contribute to Hindu ritual practices, whether out of concern that religions should remain separate or that non-Hindus lack the knowledge necessary to do a good job. Since this knowledge contains all the complexities of what material objects need to be added, what prayers should be included, and at what times offerings should be made (for example, would Muslim women know not to make them during their menstruation cycle, which might attract *bhuta kala*?), it is understandable that the Balinese are concerned that outsiders might not know how to make offerings, and due to the differences of belief, might not care if they do it incorrectly. Although it is likely a combination, the latter reason is more likely.

Outside of the tourist heavy areas, I encountered little of Geertz’s experience with seemingly incurious Indonesians, whether on Bali or elsewhere (Geertz 1973:413). To the contrary, once I replied in Indonesian to the ubiquitous “*Kemana?”* (“Where are you going?”), I was usually bombarded with questions. The three most common were: where I was from, whether I was married, and what religion was I? As discussed in the introduction, religion has come to be of central importance in many identities, and this is clearly true in Bali, where daily lives revolve around religious ritual. Thus, most people that I met, and certainly everyone I interviewed knew that I was Christian, and not Muslim.

Most of my interviews were conducted while sitting on a mat with the women I was talking to, while they skillfully cut and folded and pinned leaves together and I sat with two leaves and a bamboo skewer, usually managing to stab myself far more than the palm leaves, with frequent interruptions to gently tease me about my skills before offering helpful advice. When I would ask them who, exactly, could make offerings, I would usually be informed in no uncertain terms that only Hindus could make them. Having divulged my religious identity only a few minutes later, I would glance up in astonishment. However, I came to realize that since I was
being supervised and taught by Hindus, my offerings were acceptable. Although I doubt (for multiple reasons, not least of which was my comparative lack of skill), that I would have been able to possess a thriving business of selling offerings, in part due to my obvious appearance as a foreigner, it would not be due entirely to my religious identity, but due to the fact that I would not possess the knowledge of how to correctly make an offering, with all of the mandatory components.

“I heard if we make it wrong on purpose, we will get bad karma and it will influence our life, for example; we get sick, have accidents, or we lose something. But if we make it wrong accidentally because of lack of knowledge (of either the material or the meaning), I think it is fine, as long as we do apologize to the gods and admit our faults.”

Although the quality and the presence of material objects within offerings is important, the predominant concerns regarding the value of offerings surrounded the inner character of the person creating them. Many women reported feelings of devotion or meditation while they were involved in creating offerings. An offering is the visual expression of the devotion and gratitude felt to the gods. This feeling of bhakti (a willingness to pray and to obey the gods’ wishes), can only be fully satisfied when women make offerings themselves. One concern about using canangs made by other women is that they might not be thinking the necessary holy thoughts while fashioning them. This not only detracts from the purifying strength which comes from putting prayers into the creation of offerings, but if angry thoughts enter there is great risk of attracting angry spirits rather than benevolent ones, or even turning benevolent spirits into angry ones.

Women were rarely concerned over the possibility that they themselves may have had angry or unhappy thoughts creep into their heads while creating offerings, or indeed that they
may have made the offerings incorrectly. This, apparently, was only of great concern if the making of offerings had been done by others, outside of their field of control. If women accidently forgot to add something, or used something that was not entirely *sukla*, then they usually assumed that the spirits would forgive them, since they had gone into it with the best intentions. The thoughts and the intents matter. However, while everyone agreed that it was better to make offerings oneself, there is no denying the fact that with very few exceptions, women bought offerings either most of the time or at the very least, occasionally. This habit has grown over the years, with the inflated amount of offerings needed for day to day uses and with more women acquiring jobs outside of their homes.

“Sometimes people will say if the offering is not complete we have to put the Sesari (small amounts of money). Whatever is lacking or not complete in the offering, the money can release it, or complete it. It’s like the additional thing, whatever is not there in the offering the money can be that.”

Although buying offerings, and the inherent risks which come with it, is sometimes unavoidable, there are a number of practices which can be done to negate any polluting factors. These are also done to protect individuals or households if they have incorrectly made offerings themselves in some way. Many offerings, especially those prepared for temple rituals, have a small amount of money slipped in, which is called *sesari*. *Sesari* acts as both an apology and a completion of the offering, on the off chance that some item was forgotten or incorrect. Traditionally *sesari* consisted of Chinese coins, those with holes in them being favored, but nowadays it is more common to use Indonesian currency, either paper or coinage. Richard Fox noted a belief amongst some older Balinese that bought offerings are purified because they are
passed through markets with the exchange of money (Fox 2015:44), although most of my interlocutors did not express this view.

![Offerings and Tirtha. Photo Courtesy of Author.](image)

The most common method of ensuring the rectification of any mistakes occurring in offerings is the sprinkling of holy water (tirtha), when the offering is put out. The purifying effects of tirtha should prove enough to erase any impurities which have accidentally been included with the offering. When this is paired with a purity of intent for the individual placing the offering, it is unlikely that the spirits would be too displeased. However, even with safeguards such as these, women are still responsible for attempting to ascertain that these mistakes do not happen. As my research was mostly done in villages with small populations, where most people knew one another, there was an element of safety in only buying offerings from women within these towns. The small tables offering canang sari and other basic offerings were all run by women known to be locals, and thus it could be trusted that they at least had the knowledge of what types of ingredients and thoughts were necessary for offerings. Most
purchased daily offerings were either bought at these stalls, or when women arranged to pay their neighbors to make some of their offerings. This was generally only applicable for ordinary offerings. If a slightly more complex offering was needed, it was not unusual to go to a larger town and purchase from one of the dozens of stalls selling offerings there. The plethora of options, however, meant that once again women were unaware of exactly who they were buying from.

**The Possibility of Orthodoxy**

“According to me, the Gods do not decide what style of the offerings they want. They merely accept them. They accept our offerings, not because they are much, not because they are beautiful, but because of people’s sincerity – their pure hearts and holy thoughts. Even if you offer a lot, but your mind and thoughts are not pure, the Gods won’t accept the offerings.”

The importance of intent demands a closer look at what religion means for the Balinese. For many scholars, religion in Bali has been shaped by their acceptance of Geertz’s espousal that Balinese religion is focused on “orthopraxy, not orthodoxy” (Geertz 1973:177). For the Balinese themselves, the concern tends to be on the relationship between *adat* (traditional practices) and *agama* (religious beliefs). Since Indonesian independence, Balinese Hindus have been struggling to make their religion count as *agama* rather than *adat*, in order to receive the validation of being an ‘official’ religion, especially as compared to Islam, and many scholars have observed an effort to draw the focus of religion away from the mere practices, devoid of meaning for those besides a few religious specialists, and to focus more on the meanings behind the rituals (Picard 2011). However, recent studies have shown that not only has there been a proliferation of holy texts on Bali, there has also been evidence of high rates of literacy (comparatively) and access to these
holy books even for those who are not of the Brahmana caste (Acri 2011:150). The Balinese maintain that their religious rituals arose directly from religious doctrine, and that Balinese Hinduism in general “comprises three closely related components, namely philosophy, ritual, and ethics” (Bakker 1997:22), a relationship that has remained constant.

While I am not denying that religion in Bali has been influenced by political and social concerns over the last century, nor am I denying that Balinese religion does contain a massive amount of ritual behavior, I do argue that Balinese Hinduism is much more complex for most individuals than a simple concern over ritual (although that is complex enough). The definition of orthopraxy as a concern about the correct practices rather than the correct beliefs (Bowker 2003) is a clear simplification of the concerns of Balinese women. While it could be argued that worrying about inner thoughts or moods during the construction of offerings could still count as orthopraxy because it is concerned foremost with a religious practice, this would be dismissive of a very real concern over the impacts and meaning of belief.

Policing Balinese Culture

“In the house, no one cares if the banten are wrong or right. But during the temple festivals – they care about the banten. If an ibu makes the wrong banten someone will tell them, and change the banten to what they think is correct for the temple festival.”

The importance of conforming to traditional expectations is personified in the figure of the pecalang. Traditionally, pecalang were the men who would wander around on Nyepi in order to make sure that everyone was obeying the observance of staying inside their households and
refraining from using electricity. In the past 20 years or so, although they still help on Nyepi, they have become the ‘cultural’ police for any matter of occasions. They are meant to support the desa adat, the village customary unit responsible for maintaining rituals and traditional culture (Warren 1991). They are highly visible in Bali, and they wear uniforms of head cloths, flowers behind one ear (the typical sign in Bali that one has been to a religious ceremony of some sort, as flowers are placed behind the ear after prayers), a black and white chequered kumpuh over a sarong, a kris (Balinese sacred knives), and a cellphone (Nordholt 2007:402). They have a number of duties beyond patrolling the streets during Nyepi, most frequently blocking off streets and redirecting traffic during public ceremonies. In tourist heavy areas, they also have the responsibilities of preventing menstruating women and tourists who are not wearing sarongs from entering any temples.

There are a variety of theories about the reasons behind the growth and additional duties of pecalang. Henk Schulte Nordholt argues that “Since adat was seen as the cornerstone of Balinese culture, and the ultimate stronghold against the evils of globalization, it follows that pecalang were seen as the guardians of this culture” (Nordholt 2007:403). While this could be seen as a protest against the growing influx of tourists, Nordholt goes on to argue that it was actually caused by concerns over the growing Muslim migration from other Indonesian islands. They are used to “provide strict enforcement of population ordinances” (I Ketut Widia 2002:16), including quizzing migrants to Bali about their presence there, and collecting the monthly dues for village costs, including temple maintenance (ICG 2003:8). Diana Darling argues that by policing outsiders, especially the presence of permanent outsiders, the pecalang are protecting “Bali’s famous collectivism” and homogeneity of culture (Darling 2004:203). The sight of a
pecalang should be enough to remind any Balinese Hindu that their culture is under threat from globalization, and that they must do their part in maintaining it.

Although pecalang are not priests, and therefore it is doubtful that they can tell whether offerings are made in the correct style, they can certainly note the presence of offerings, and whether women are fulfilling their religious responsibilities. On the occasion of one holy day, a large table was set out in a public courtyard, and women brought large baskets of offerings to pile on the table. After waiting around and gossiping, a procession came through the gate, led by a priest and flanked by pecalang. After the priest came two men holding tall checkered banners and other men carrying the umbrellas used for religious purposes, as well as women holding yet more baskets of offerings. At the rear of the procession came a man holding a big box with a mask of a demon on the front of it, which came and lingered over the offerings, ruminating, before deciding they were acceptable (apparently). The priest blessed us all with holy water, and then the whole procession turned around and went on to the next pile of offerings. A truck drove up and all of the offerings were stuffed into bags and then loaded into the back by the pecalang, before driving off.

During both this event and when blocking off roads for religious festivals, the presence and purpose of pecalang did not seem to be solely for the protection of Hindu beliefs against the encroaching threat of globalization. These were small villages, where if there was much of a Muslim population, it could be presumed that everyone would be aware of which individuals were migrants. Rather, it seems that they are there to remind the current population of their adat responsibilities.
There has been an increasing emphasis on creating some religious similarities to Islam in response to the pressures caused by *Pancasila*, discussed in the introduction. Although Muslim Indonesians have been moving away from the ‘pagan’ practice of placing offerings on the graves of their ancestors (Brenner 1998:230–231), the Balinese practice of placing out offerings at various points in the day has developed similarities to other Muslim practices. *Salah*, one of the Five Pillars of Islam, is the obligatory five prayers a day (Woodward 1989:116), which in Indonesia are announced over the scratchy and blaring tones of a loudspeaker. Sometime in the last few decades, these loudspeakers have started to make appearances at temple festivities and other ritual ceremonies (Darling 2004:200), and at sunrise, sunset, and noon, when they remind women to put out their offerings and to utter mantras over them. This constant, grating reminder of religious obligations ensures that women create the requisite amount of offerings and place them outside of their households each day, with no excuses to forget.

*Banjars*

Balinese local government is comprised of an elaborate set of systems. The island is comprised of a number of local kingdoms, and then a number of villages (*desa*) within each kingdom. Each village then has a variety of social units, which often overlap but in general remain independent, a pattern Clifford Geertz has called “pluralistic collectivism” (Geertz 1963:85). In his discussion on the forms and variations of Balinese villages, Geertz identifies seven ‘planes of social organization,’ which consist of (1) the temples households belong to, (2) the location of their house within the village, (3) the watershed their rice land belongs to, (4) social status or caste, (5) kinship ties, (6) membership in ‘voluntary’ organizations, and (7) legal subordination to government officials (Geertz 1959:991–992). Of these, I have briefly touched on several planes, such as the multitude of temples a household might belong to (at least three,
but up to twelve, with the groups which support temples known as *pemaksan*), and membership in ‘voluntary’ organizations such as the PKK. However, the location of a house within the village determines which *banjar* it belongs to, which in turn comes with a number of ritual duties.

![Banjar's Gamelan Orchestra](image)

*Figure 29: Local Banjar’s Gamelan Orchestra. Photo Courtesy of Author.*

*Banjars* have usually been translated into ‘village hamlets,’ and are responsible for many of the necessary social and community tasks. They organize purification rites, rites of passage (especially cremation rituals), and other religious events, the building and maintenance of meeting halls, sports grounds, markets, and have authority in witnessing marriages and deciding household occupation rights (Warren 1991:11). Each household belonging to the *banjar* is responsible for donating money, labor, and other necessary goods. For most women in Bali, this consists of the making of offerings, either in a collective group or delivering a required amount.
There is no separation of the church and state in Bali. Carol Warren states that “ritual order is perceived as the [original emphasis] fundamental prerequisite to collective and individual well-being in Bali…neglect or incorrect conduct of these rites [worship of village deities, cremation rituals, and other communal rituals] endangers the welfare of all” (Warren 1993:140). To not participate in *banjar* work would be the equivalent of telling all of your neighbors that you are trying to doom them all.

Although it is mandatory to participate in *banjars*, the type of participation varies considerably. As mentioned above, *banjars* either make requests for women to come to the *banjar* for part of a day to make offerings for a specific purpose, or they give notes to households, telling them the amounts and varieties they are expected to bring. In many cases, going to the *banjar* is necessary, because that is one of the locations where women are expected to learn about different types of offerings. Sometimes this learning comprises of learning from elders (just as most women learn how to make offerings at the knees of their mothers or grandmothers), but at times they also learn the updated techniques, as this description shows:

> “The *Parisadha*\(^\text{22}\) usually comes to the *banjar* or *desa adat* to choose a leader from each *banjar*. Every *banjar* has a *Srati* (someone who expert in making *banten* or whom knows more about *banten*). Each *Srati* will meet to discuss or learn about *banten* with a tutor from *Parisadha*. After that the *srati* will tell us how to make a good *banten* and everything that they learned from the *Parisadha*.”

This learning is also necessary because the aesthetics and specific styles of various types of offerings vary from village to village, and even from *banjar* to *banjar*. While this is viewed as artistic choices for some women, a degree of homogeneity is expected. While individuality in

\(^\text{22}\) *Parisadha Hindu Dharma*, the Balinese Hindu religious organization which promulgates the ‘official’ Hindu religion.
western cultures is highly valued, Balinese artistry does not usually encourage this. Covarrubias argues that “the anonymous artistic production of the Balinese, like their entire life, is the expression of collective thought” (Covarrubias 1937:164). When women complained about banjar members or priests criticizing their offerings because they didn’t resemble everyone else’s, their frustration did not arise from a feeling that they were doing something innovative and unique. It upset them because they were making offerings the same way they always had, and now they were being expected to do something different. Although the patrilocal tradition in Bali is less extreme than it is in many cultures (I would usually accompany my host-mother to visit her natal family about once a week), women are still expected to move in and adjust to the customs of her husband’s house. The way women have been accustomed to making their offerings presumably has worked in protecting their natal family and pleasing the invisible spirits, and understandably they resent being told that they have been doing it incorrectly.

There is a large variety of personal opinions surrounding banjar duty. Some women find it a pleasant opportunity to sit and gossip with their friends, while others fear the recrimination cast upon their offering skills. But many women simply find it tiresome. There is no denying that making offerings can be extremely repetitive, and while some women find this soothing, others try to avoid it whenever possible. In the small remote village in which I did some of my fieldwork, women whom I asked whether or not they ever bought offerings would vehemently deny the possibility. However, when we would talk about banjar demands, often within the same conversation, they would freely admit to paying other women to make those required offerings for them, at least occasionally.

Doing this too frequently, however, invites a good deal of censure and gossip. Women will assume that someone who does that constantly is probably ‘Muslim or Christian or
something.’ This uncertainty about what ‘other’ religion women might be, if she has a tendency to not come and make offerings at the banjar with everyone else, especially after considering that the Balinese (and all Indonesians) do not hesitate to ask individuals about their religion, is indicative that this reason for not participating is not absolutely known. It could be that some Hindu women are just too busy or too dismayed at the thought of repetitive work to participate. The following description was of a woman who was probably not Hindu, a conjecture based on her behaviors.

“She never makes offerings in the banjar. When there’s a temple festival, and all of the Ibus get notes that tell them what offerings they’re supposed to make, that Ibu doesn’t want to make them. She tells someone else to make them and she pays them after.”

One of the frequent responses I received when asking about whether banjar offering meetings were enjoyable were shrugs accompanied by a simple “Suka” (I like them). In general, these responses were from women who were not verbose in their other responses, but occasionally they were from women who were happy to talk at length about most other subjects. In these cases, I am unsure about whether they were women who did not enjoy banjar get-togethers, but were reluctant to disclose those reasons to me, or whether they did enjoy them, and found that response to be sufficient. A reluctance to gossip in general would be unusual for Balinese women (or men), however my presence as a foreigner, especially for women that I did not know well, might create this hesitation. In general however, women seemed to like gossiping to me about banjar happenings, and they enjoyed going to banjars because of the opportunity to gossip.

While the unending workload of offerings is present regardless of attendance, banjars offer women an opportunity to get out of the house. While Balinese women are in no way
confined to their houses presently, and frequently run market booths, do the shopping, and work outside the house in a number of ways (as was discussed in Chapter II), they still spend much more time within their houses than men do, taking care of various household chores. Working on domestic duties such as offerings outside of the house gives them an opportunity to socialize, to be seen being dutiful (to both their family and spiritual responsibilities), and to learn various matters of importance. Although some of this learning comprises of offering techniques, as seen above, it also is a space for women to learn about the current state of village social life.

“For example, a woman might have a close friend she makes offerings with, and they will gossip. We must be careful about giving another woman our opinions about her *banten*, because if we act like we understand about her *banten* maybe then the other woman will not like us. We must be careful about what we talk about with women about other women and their offerings, because we never know if someone who likes that *ibu* or doesn’t like that *ibu*...we never know.”

Gossip has been seen as one of the methods by which women create supportive networks of knowledge (Belenky 1986). And while this is no doubt true, it can also be used to censure those who do not fall in to cultural norms. Creating offerings communally is a way for women to learn about the importance of offerings in protecting and nurturing their families and community. Similarly, it is a way to prove that you care about your family and neighbors, and that you are willing to put in the effort to keep the patterns of life running smoothly. To assume that a woman never participates because she’s of a different religion is to give her the benefit of the doubt, because anyone who is Hindu should be able to understand what and who is at stake, and if one understands that and still doesn’t participate would essentially be telling everyone that you are hoping for doom to fall upon them. The gossip over women who do not attend *banjars* at all is to inform women who are there that the only way to not participate is to change religions, because no real Hindu would care that little for people and spirits.
Dereliction of civic duties (*dosa*) is the same word used when discussing moral sins (Warren 1993:42), which shows how oriented *banjars* are towards the ritual sphere. *Banjars* exist to take care of all of their members, and to help families not only in ritual matters such as cremation ceremonies, but in times of harvesting and economic crises. However, the fact that so many of their resources do go towards the ritual sphere goes only to show that humans are not considered to be the only members of the community. Gods, ancestor spirits, and *bhuta kala* also need to be taken care of, and I hesitate to assume that the *banjar* or people in general offer things only to stave off disaster. Collective *banjar* offering making sessions help ensure that the denizens of *Niskala* are being taken care of, as well as all of the human residents.

*Priests*

Figure 30: Priest Overseeing Cremation. Photo Courtesy of Author.
I was frequently told that while women were the ones who made the offerings, men were the ones who knew about it. In Balinese society, the highest religious specialists are all from the priestly Brahmana caste. Brahmana priests (pedanda) can be either men or women (Rubinstein 1991:44), but they are usually male. Lower in hierarchy are the pemangku, priests from lower castes, who conduct most of the ceremonies in ordinary temples, as well as other religious rituals in the general popular sphere (Swellengrebel 1984:65). Both pedanda and pemangku play important roles in ritual life, but the Brahmana pedanda are supposed to be more knowledgeable in their readings of lontar, religious instructional texts (Stuart-Fox 2002a:139), and this carries over to Brahmana men in general. Once women found out that I was interested in offerings, they consistently encouraged me to talk to pemangku and Brahmana men, whether pedanda or not. In general, since I was not strictly interested in the meaning behind offerings, I did not go and interview these men, although I did make a few exceptions. One of these, a Brahmana painter (whom, unusually for Bali, was the solitary member of his household), informed me that traditionally only members of the Brahmana caste were allowed to make offerings, hence their expertise, although he also admitted to mostly buying canang sari for daily use, and usually only making offerings himself for important occasions.

All of the men I interviewed had very firm opinions on offerings, both daily and those for more elaborate occasions, although they only admitted to making offerings for the latter, a pattern which repeated across males of varying professions and castes. These firm opinions were not expressed only to me, but were also told to women making the offerings. Women frequently complained about priests telling them that their offerings were not complete or were incorrect in some way. Although I doubt that priests would be able to make offerings with the same skill women possess (certainly I never witnessed any men actually making offerings, although they all
professed to know how to), they are apparently much better than women at knowing how they should look. Additionally, I also heard a number of complaints from working women who have experienced priests doubting their ability to make offerings, since they usually buy them, and who have been tested on whether or not they are still able to make offerings.

“Okay, this happened in the priest’s house, in Sanur once, and in the village. They told me to make offerings. They cut the offering, the materials, and tell me to stitch it, and of course I know that, because I did it since I was small girl. And in Sanur, also, the priest’s wife tested me to make different offerings, so I do it very well and they are so amazed. “Oh, you still can do that!””

There was often a strong feeling of resentment over these opinions and doubts in women’s ability to make offerings. Even if women have achieved professional success in their labor outside of the house, they find it necessary to clarify that this is not due to the inability to accomplish domestic tasks within the house.

Parisadha Hindu Dharma

Since 1950, formal lessons on religion have been taught in all schools, from elementary to universities. This emphasis on education has expanded to courses and workshops focusing on offerings (Ngurah Nala 2003:81), which several women reported going to (and which is also responsible for providing the Serati (offering specialists) to teach at banjars, mentioned above. These are paid for by the Balinese government (Ngurah Nala 2003:79), which is motivated in part by the urge to cement Hinduism’s status as an official religion and in part by the knowledge that Bali’s tourism income comes from a desire to see traditional Hindu culture.

Much of this knowledge is disseminated by the organization Parisadha Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI), the government controlled organization which represents Hindus in Indonesia (Reuter 2003:184), and which has attempted to regulate and homogenize Hindu rituals in Bali (I
Gusti Ngurah Bagus 2003). I mostly frequently heard about PHDI when women were discussing how many more offerings are required now, in comparison to what they used to be:

“In the past we don’t do *canang sari* offering every day, like what people are doing now. We make offerings every *Kliwon*, every 5 days, we do *canang*, like simple *canang* that I show you. Then *segehan* on the ground is more important. To protect us from the demonic spirit, also transform the demonic spirit into protective spirit. Also now since PDHI, the Hindu umbrella, they standardize our religion. So they give us flyer, to the village, saying okay, this is what you do this day, during the full moon you have to go to temple, pray in the temple, during *tilem* you have to go to temple…so that’s been standardized. In terms of the quantity of the offerings we have much more now. So like in the past we didn’t celebrate *Kuningan* in my village. So what I do, my mother told me to just do *segehan*, like normal *segehan*, on the ground. And then after being standardized everyone in Bali just make the same thing.”

Although people referenced these flyers or pamphlets frequently, when I asked to see one people were never able to provide them. While I am still uncertain over the actual existence of these pamphlets, it is clear that women are concerned over the possibilities of their offering production being overseen by governmental agencies, and the increasing pressures to homogenize religious practices. The fact that the demands for the number and the complexity of offerings has increased over the years is undoubted, and the concerns over where these demands arise from is prolific.

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In general, it seems that while the gods might forgive you, people never will. I noticed a trend in that the women who talked to me about the negative opinions of other people, and the stress involved in pleasing everybody, were often the same women who were less than enthusiastic about their own offerings. In contrast, women who talked about how offerings strengthened their ties with the gods and tended to focus less on what other people thought were eager to show me their offerings, and to teach me how to make offerings myself. While the
possibilities for anxiety are innumerable, those women who are able to look past the nitpicking habits of others to the original purpose of offerings are still able to find some joy and pride in their work.
“Because that’s our culture, and it’s our obligation to make canang and banten, so that’s just something that we must do. Other religions maybe think it’s something really complicated and maybe too costly as well. Splurging money on leaves and flowers that you just throw away every day. Like ngaben, that costs 17 million rupiah, and at the end of the day you just burn it all. ‘Burning money’ but for us Balinese it’s our culture. It’s worth the cost as well, because in return we have safety and prosperity.’”

Economy and ritual are often thought of as entirely separate realms of human society. This is due in part to the focus on economies as something that occurs entirely between human subjects, as well as the moving away from materialism during the protestant reformation, as was briefly discussed in Chapter IV. But it is also due to a sense of unease in seeing economic theory
as applied to invisible things. Even as religion in Bali is highly visible, with statues of gods and offerings around every corner, the invisibility of the spirits, some of the characteristics of offerings, the labor required, and finally the invisible nature of the gifts the gods bestow, creates a tendency to think of ritual and economics separately. However, the economic processes necessary to correctly navigate through religious rituals is real and complicated, and requires great skill.

In the introduction to *Dimensions of Ritual Economy*, E. Christian Wells and Patricia A. McAnany argue that the economic systems of provisioning and consuming “communicate and constitute values and beliefs, because economic processes and objects carry meanings beyond utilitarian concerns…. [and] reaffirm, challenge, or reinvent both self and overall social structure” (Wells and McAnany 2012:5). For the Balinese, offerings are one method of materializing and understanding the constantly present invisible spirits. This kind of exchange is one of the methods by which they create relationships across both the visible and invisible worlds, and it is how they understand and create their culture and position within the world.

**Sacrifices**

When people talk about sacrifice, they usually have some sort of blood sacrifice in mind. And this type of sacrifice is very much present in Bali, most commonly in the form of sacrificing a chicken or rooster. However, most offerings concerning meat (*banten gayah*) are ideally supposed to be made by men. The blood is an important component of the meat in these sacrifices, because the blood is part of what attracts the *bhuta kala*. It is an interesting combination that women are banned from ritual labor because of blood (during menstruation), while men are required for ritual labor in making blood sacrifices.
However, there are many kinds of sacrifice that do not require the death of animals, and one of these is the sacrifice of time and energy, as well as peace of mind, and these sacrifices are the cost that women are expected to take on for their families. Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood define consumption as “a system of reciprocal rituals which entail expenditures for appropriate marking of the occasion, or of the guests and hosts, or the community at large” (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:xxii). The effort that goes into either making offerings, buying them, or simply proffering them, is the sacrifice which allows women to form a personal relationship with the invisible spirits.

These various types of sacrifices, whether the traditional caru sacrifices or the sacrificial nature of spending time and money on offerings such as canang sari, achieve several purposes. Claude Levi-Strauss defines sacrifice as an intermediary between “two polar terms, the sacrificer
and the deity, between which there is initially no homology nor even any sort of relation” (Lévi-Strauss 1966:224–225). In order to overcome the distance between the worlds of Sekala and Niskala an effort has to be made, and offerings act as both the invitation to cross over and the courier by which messages are delivered. In a further examination of sacrifice, Hubert and Mauss note that a sacrifice is kept in a state of duality, “inducing a state of sanctity and that of dispelling a state of sin” (Hubert and Mauss 1964:58), a paradox due to its simultaneous relationships between the divine and the profane. Creating sacrifices, or other forms of communications between humans and God, is to create a liminal space.

‘Betwixt and Between’

Liminality (derived from the Latin limen, or threshold) is perhaps most accurately described by Victor Turner’s phrase “betwixt and between” (Turner 1967:93). A liminal space is the ambiguous location, neither here nor there. Although he was talking specifically about the use of liminality in rites of passage, it can be used for a large variety of situations and places. The timing and locations that offerings are utilized in Bali clearly shows a distinct connection between concerns of liminality and the reasoning behind offerings. Because liminality is inherently ambiguous, it is dangerous. Mary Douglas recognizes that places or items which are unclear or contradictory, and which resist falling into any one category, are dangerous or unclear (Douglas 1966). And it is places which are dangerous in these ways which need the ritual protections of offerings.

When one notes the location and frequency of offerings in Bali, it is easy to notice the presence of liminality. Daily offerings are placed in doorways, at crossroads, on cars, and at corners, all places where one transitions from one place to another. In addition, the presence of
daily offerings on items such as washing machines, stoves, and rice cookers all help in transforming items from one state to another. Special offerings are also needed at rites of passage, such as weddings, births, and cremation ceremonies. Indeed, all of the Manusa Yadnya ceremonies (ceremonies that are predominantly concerned with human beings, see Chapter II) are various rites of passage. But even ceremonies that do not focus on humans require numerous offerings, such as Nyepi, the Balinese New Year, are liminal.

Rituals allow liminal areas of life to be “focused on and resolved within a framed structure which brackets the ambiguity and keeps it from polluting the unified cultural patterns” (Beers 1992:41–42). Curiously however, Balinese rituals could be seen as creating further liminal spaces. They create another threshold between the visible and invisible worlds, and as the smoke from incense dissolves, it invites the crossing over of invisible spirits. Perhaps it is a case of two rights making a left, but it is also because rituals in and of themselves are not enough to rectify equivocal zones, and resolving the dangers of ambiguity is not something that humans can achieve on their own. Offerings are used in a variety of ways to maintain these liminal spaces.

Bamboozling with Bhuta Kala

In many ways, interactions with the demons are the most confusing types of transactions. Although their preferences all seem to be similar, and offerings consist of some sort of sacrifice offering (caru) which is left on the ground, the behavior surrounding these offerings varies. These caru can vary from the simple segehan, where the sacrifice is represented by items such as ginger and garlic, to the larger animal sacrifices. They can be placed with little to no ceremony,

23 Offerings are also placed on the rock in the middle of Balinese courtyards, under which the placenta and the rest of the afterbirth is buried after a child is born, which while not a liminal place in and of itself, does symbolize a liminal experience.
as an afterthought, or as part of a large and incredibly elaborate ritual. While Hindu philosophy argues that sacrifices are an attempt to sacrifice one’s own evil characteristics (Eiseman and Eiseman 1989:228), most of the women I talked to saw the varying types of *caru* as a way to directly affect the *bhuta kala*.

![Figure 33: Balinese Statue. Photo Courtesy of Julia Martin.](image)

*Segehans*, those daily offerings meant for the consumption of the demonic *bhuta kala*, are in many ways the simplest offerings, as they do not require beauty or care, but simply need to have a pungent item, such as onions. This is due to the fact that the *bhuta kala* have simple tastes, or, to be more accurate, are so completely subsumed by their one taste that it is easy to

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24 *Segehan* fall under the category of *caru*, sacrifices. They are the simplest form, and more elaborate *caru* require more focus on the aesthetics, but are also only needed a few times a year.
satisfy or distract them. However, the fact that the front doors of houses have short walls immediately past them as a defense, because the bhuta kala are so easily confused and distracted by corners, does not speak highly to their general intelligence. These offerings qualify as bribes or distractions, and while these are placed in liminal areas where it is easier for the bhuta kala to enter and interfere with households, I am not sure if this could be called a system of exchange in the same way offerings to the ancestors or to the gods might be. If bhuta kalas were to enter, they would wreak destruction, and bribes to not enter could be seen as an agreement of services (or the agreement to not perform their service, as it may be). However, do distractions count as an exchange? If demons are so distracted by their overwhelming hunger that they will accept the sloppy and unattractive segehan it would seem that they are not in any state to make decisions on their actions, and will blindly head towards any puissant odor. In this sense, segehans are not so much an offer to interchange as they are a redirection. The ease in which these bhuta kala are dispatched speaks to the greater intelligence of women, and their ability to think around corners in ways which lesser creatures have no ability.

Larger sacrifices are also known as taur, whose meaning is closer to ‘payment’ than offering (Stuart-Fox 2002b:155), and are usually present at rituals directed towards demons (bhuta yadnya). The most elaborate of these, Eka Dasa Rudra, which takes place every hundred years, requires the sacrifice of every type of animal native to Bali (Eiseman and Eiseman 1989:232). However, even the simpler and more frequent25 types of caru are dependent on complicated combinations of colors, directions, and types of animals. The differences between the simple segehan and the larger taur indicate that there are different levels of demons, and that while some may be easy to trick, others extort payment from humans.

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25 Which take place during holidays such as Nyepi, before rites of passage, or before a house is built.
Domestic and Ritual Economies

Betty Friedan argues that the main role of housewives is to act as a consumer (Friedan 2013:242–245). As she observes it, the main reason economists and companies want women to stay at home is so they can convince women to buy the materials necessary to make unnecessary goodies, such as cake mixes (Friedan 2013:250–251). Friedan seems incapable of acknowledging cooking, and other creative domestic endeavors, as anything other than alienated labor, and is incapable of giving them credit as valuable productions. This move towards viewing domestic work as “domestic production” rather than “domestic consumption” (Hollows 2007:39) is a move towards valuing domestic labor and not dismissing it as pointless and unnecessary just because it has historically been female labor.

The skill and creativity that go into the construction of offerings is a key component of the system of exchange between households and spirits, and along with the satisfaction that they are protecting their families, is one of the aspects of domesticity that women were most enthusiastic about. Although some women did see it as a form of ‘drudgery,’ for many women it was an opportunity to exercise their creativity, and to experiment with different designs and techniques. It represents a valuable contribution to their economies, for it creates social value for their family amongst both the Sekala and Niskala worlds. However, the fact that their payment is not direct or necessarily tangible\(^\text{26}\) might contribute towards the low appreciation of women’s labor in this economy. Without it however, all of the work that men accomplish would be worthless, because their lack of protection against misfortune would leave them open to financial or physical disaster despite how hard they work.

\(^{26}\) An example of a tangible award would be a productive crop, but this also falls under the category of an ‘indirect payment.’
Although large ceremonies and rituals, and the offerings which men make for these occasions, are important to the continuation of a viable ritual economy, they are hardly efficient at keeping it running on their own. An example might be the occasion of ‘Black Friday’ in America, the day with increased sales commonly seen as necessary for the success of the economy (Lotterman 2013). However, these occasions build on the massive reserves of religious capital built up by the daily offerings made by female domestic labor. Although major religious celebrations take several days of preparation (which is still mostly done by women), when added up the diurnal labor, varying from thirty minutes to two hours far outweighs the efforts for the occasional major ritual. Women are responsible not only for the emotional labor (Jones 2004:510) necessary for maintaining the relationships between family members, but are also responsible for this and the ritual economy between families and invisible beings.

Controlling the Uncontrollable

“Probably something bad will happen, for instance a family member will get sick, or have an accident, or something like that. When someone in the family becomes ill, Balinese Hindus will go and ask the Balian (traditional healer). Then the Balian will let them know if they have made spiritual mistakes, including about banten, and we can fix them.”

Mary Douglas argues that one of the purposes of religion is to help cultures classify their experiences. By imposing patterns onto the inherent messiness of life, people are able to demonstrate their ability to exercise some control over their lives. That which is ambiguous is thereby dangerous, because it does not allow for precision (Douglas 1975:xiv). If ritual is a method to avoid or control various ambiguities (Douglas 1966), it is all the more important that the ritual itself should be couched in exacting symbols. In a world such as Bali, where the visible and invisible realms overlap and intermix, there are innumerable ambiguities. The exacting
nature of offerings are a reassurance, and a way to exert some control over an uncontrollable world.

Humans are doomed to be followed by unfortunate events of one sort or another. And many of these are inexplicable. While many Balinese understand that various types of illness are caused by bacteria or virus, this knowledge does not help explain why that particular person would become ill, even though many others were also exposed to the same pathogens, or why another person keeps getting into car accidents, even though they are safe drivers. Much like the Azande, studied by Evans-Pritchard, the Balinese use their concepts of mystical occurrences to explain “the particular conditions in a chain of causation which related an individual to natural happenings in such a way that he sustained injury” (Evans-Pritchard 1937:67). Women use offerings to ward off the curses of the bhuta kala or to ask more kindly spirits for their protection, to add to the physical walls surrounding family compounds’ defenses against illnesses and accidents.

Types of Exchange

“I like making banten. When I make offerings for the gods, I feel satisfied and glad, because we can offer something to the gods, whom have been giving us health, wealth, protection, and so on.”

This leads us to ask what kind of system of exchange offerings count as, and opinions on this vary from woman to woman, relying more on opinions of the nature of invisible spirits than on noting what exactly is being exchanged. Curiously, little seems to be known about distinct personality traits of demons or gods in Bali. There is even debate about what differentiates them. I heard several people argue that the demonic bhuta kala were simply extremely hungry spirits,
and could be changed into benevolent spirits by feeding them. Others argued that the gods were happy to provide the physical gift of the world (and thus a place to live and food to eat for humans), and that offerings were not a repayment but a chance to offer some devotion (bhakti), with the only repercussion if offerings were not put out being a feeling of shame, rather than imminent disaster.

Offerings share several similarities to Mauss’ definition of gifts. The sense that offerings fall under the “obligation to reciprocate” (Mauss 2000:7) guidelines, comes from the belief that the gods have provided the world for humans. Francine Brinkgreve argues that the form offerings have taken originates from the belief that “the Creator provides the natural products – flowers, leaves, fruits, grains, fowls – which make life possible, and these in the form of the offering are returned to their origin” (Brinkgreve and Stuart-Fox 1992:20). In this sense, people reciprocate the exact aspects of the gifts which please them most – not only the basic nutrients and needs, but an enjoyment in the beauty and fragrances of the earth. And using this logic offerings also fulfill the sense of “spiritual mechanisms” (Mauss 2000:75). The ‘spiritual mechanism,’(or hau27) is what the spirit objects are endowed with by their giver, and which compels them to return to their originator. Thus, the objects which offerings are created out of (the leaves, flowers, rice, etcetera), are given back to the god/s whom were their original creators.

Using the theory of a ‘spiritual mechanism’, the exchange of offerings can be thought of as a cycle. Just as the leaves and flowers for offerings are manipulated into an item varying in appearance from its original form, so do the items become imbued with additional powers from

27 The Maori term used by Mauss’ informants (Mauss 2000:3)
the humans who make them. As such, when the offerings are given to the gods, the gods then also have a reciprocal obligation to return gifts to humans, and Bali continues to be fertile.

Although obligations to reciprocate gifts would seem to make the two parties equal, it is far from clear that they are. In some senses, the whole fact of existence seems to be a set up by the gods to place the Balinese in a position where they are forced to reciprocate, since it was the gods who first gave the gift of creation. The gift of protection and of the necessary materials to live is a temporary gift, as seen by some, for there is the threat that if the gods do not then receive the gift of offerings, this protection will be taken away. It seems to be unclear if unfortunate events such as illness or crop failure are always lurking and held only at bay by the protection of the gods, or if they are also given, meted out as a punishment to the undeserving.
The belief that these gifts are conditional might also explain some of the weariness women express over the unending demands for ritual labor.

It is worth noting, however, that when the gods were discussed as giving (*memberi*), it was most often paired with the word *bhakti* (devotion). In one of these conversations I was told that “When I make offerings for the gods, I feel satisfied and glad – that we can offer something to the Gods who have been giving us health, wealth, protection, and so on.” This seems to imply that the largesse given by the gods is imparted freely, without the expectation of receiving anything in return, and that offerings are simply a matter of expressing thanks. But while this type of exchange is free of the fear ingrained in the type previously discussed, there is still the matter of guilt. When I asked women what would happen if people stopped making and giving offerings, I often had difficulty making myself understood, because the concept of stopping was so foreign a thought that women had difficulty processing it. Even the women who believed that the gods wouldn’t really care about the occasional lapse\(^{28}\) told me that they themselves would feel guilt over neglect. Which calls into question whether it could be considered a ‘free gift’ in the end.

The idea of a purely altruistic devotional offering is called into question by both the frequent appearance of guilt and the sheer amount of offerings which must be made, although this might be an overly cynical viewpoint. Even if women who profess this do believe that the gods would be magnanimous in their gifts and protections even without the receipt of offerings, there is some expectation of what offerings will achieve. Expressing devotion in this way serves to cultivate a relationship between humans and the divine, and this relationship can “benefit the

\(^{28}\) And the fact that a ‘lapse’ was as far as they were willing to think about the lack of offerings indicates both that it truly is an incomprehensible proposal, and also that the gods might mind something of greater length than a temporary lapse.
devotee spiritually and substantively” (Bell 1997:110). A desire for this type of relationship could explain the initial creation of a world which could nurture humans on the side of the creating gods as well, and the satisfaction which the spirits and humans find in the act of giving is given additional weight by the knowledge that their gifts are received by the other party with pleasure.

This pleasure in gifts would indicate that there is a mutual interdependence of some sort between the worlds of Sekala and Niskala. The knowledge that at least one type of being from the Niskala world (the bhuta kala) are undoubtedly described using terms of hunger would indicate that other beings from that world have needs of some sort as well. The frequent discussions of how the gods enjoy pleasant fragrances and carefully arranged flower arrangements reinforces this idea. One could also ask if the purpose of the gods creating the Sekala world was to receive the necessary goods to continue existing, or at least to be satisfied. That there is some form of consumption besides just appreciating the general appearance is also not something that is questioned. The meaning of sari in the offering type canang sari is ‘essence,’ which was what the spirits imbibed, and this was one of the constants across geography, caste, and age in the explanations I received about offerings.
Monetary Matters

Technically the ingredients for offerings are free, since most of them come from the things which occur naturally and profusely in Bali, leaves and flowers. However, collecting these requires a great deal of time and effort which women don’t have. I did not talk to one woman who said that they collected all of the ingredients, women all admitted to buying most of the ingredients necessary, if not all. In part, this is because the expectations of offerings have changed over the years, due to the changing economy. As more money flows into Bali, more money is used for religious purposes.
“In the past only a few people made banten because at that time the economy was very difficult, moreover at that time Indonesia was not yet independent. So the important thing was to provide food for their family. But now Indonesia is growing and progressing. Everyone has jobs and they have money so they can manage their time and knowledge, including learning more about religious matters. They know how to manage their family and how they should make banten, so now everyone is getting better at managing all those things. Now we have a lot of rituals in part because now everything is so easy to get.”

This is necessary in part because most of the money in Bali comes from tourism, and tourists come to see traditional Balinese culture and crafts, including offering making. In order for the Balinese to continue capitalizing on this, they need to continue devoting monetary resources to traditional religious practices (Picard 2008). But more money put into rituals is also necessary to express thanks to the spirits for helping them to accumulate the money, and to ask for their protection and help in retaining it. The change of focus from agricultural lifestyles to commercial has also made it more unlikely that people have the time to collect the ingredients, let alone make the offerings, hence an increased pecuniary need to make offerings.

Although the (relatively) huge amount of money spent on offerings was mentioned in Chapter II, the demographic differences were not. Wealthier families, especially those where only one family member must work, and the women have the option to stay at home and create ‘status’ capital, have more time and money to devote to the ritual economy as well. And there is no doubt that they do, but there are also attempts to curtail truly extravagant spending. One of the purposes of banjars is to use collective support and labor for ngaben, cremation ceremonies. However, some of the costs (up to two thirds) that the family pays cover the cost of providing food and refreshments to their helpers. The larger the ngaben ceremony is, and the more offerings (and thus, the more workers necessary), the higher the cost of paying for the overall
ritual. Since this is reciprocal helping, and since not all families can afford to buy meat for everyone in the banjar, regulations have been passed to prevent lavish spending, that low-income families could never hope to match. As carefully constructed as these regulations are, it is still remarkably difficult to find a balance. Carol Warren found that most disagreements and offense within the banjar arose from disgruntled feelings over “those having wealth or claims to status are thought stingy in the quantity or quality of food and refreshments they serve. Haughtiness or overt display on the other hand may be equally offensive” (Warren 1993:157–158).

“Someone who sells his rice field to afford a big cremation ceremony will have less valuable offerings. But for someone who does a small cremation ceremony, and tries his best to support the ceremony financially without selling his rice field, this is much better and has better value.”

Privately however, those with more wealth, and certainly those belonging to the Brahmana caste, are expected to have larger and more elaborate offerings. In the case of the Brahmana caste members, the fact that they, as the priestly caste, are supposed to have closer relationships with the gods means that they also have a moral obligation to give them better gifts. While all Balinese Hindus have relationships with the Niskala spirits they live side by side with, the descent of Brahmanas from the god Brahma29, albeit distantly, gives them closer ties with gods, especially considering that in Balinese Hinduism it is to be expected that you are reincarnated within your own family, assuming that you have led a dutiful life. The tie between the need to provide offerings of greater complexity and caste is another method to ensure balance

29 By way of Dwijéndra, an earthly descendent of Brahma, although tales of his conception vary. Brahmana subgroups vary depending on which of Dwijéndra’s wives they are descended from (Rubinstein 1991:54–55).
and constraint amongst members of other castes, even as the base expectations for offerings has grown.

Ritual Relationships

The caste system also regulates the expectations of ancestral spirits. While these do not retain the individual personality (or names) they had in life, they continue to live within the household, in the family temples. These ancestors are deified, and are accorded the same respect within households as other gods (although there tend to be more ancestral shrines in family temples than those for other deities, which tend to be more prominent in public temples). They understandably have an affinity for their families, and are understanding if offerings and shrines
are limited by the financial ability of the family. What matters is regular attention and respect, and if they receive these they will provide whatever protection and help they can. If this effort is not made, however, they become extremely offended, and will cause endless difficulties for their mortal descendants. Although the offerings do not necessarily change shape, some of the ways in which they are presented are, as they can include inviting the ancestors to family rituals, or directing familial feelings of love. In response to these invitations, ancestral spirits continue to maintain their familial responsibilities to love and provide for their families after death as well.

Similar to ancestral spirits are the *Kanda Empat*, the four spiritual siblings of every Balinese. The location at which offerings are given to these spirits is important as well, as they are represented by the placenta\(^{30}\), and offerings to them are placed on top of the rock which the placenta is buried under. If these siblings are treated with the proper respect, they are the closest and most constant helpers of that individual from the *Niskala* world. Fred Eiseman notes that they help “to protect the baby from sickness, to ward off evil spirits, to insure that he or she grows into a healthy, strong adult…[where they continue to help by] helping out at work, guarding against enemies – particularly at night – and finally accompanying the spirit to heaven to testify to the good karma that the person has built up over his or her lifetime” (Eiseman and Eiseman 1989:101). Depending on the individual, they can also help the individual gain supernatural powers, whether for good or evil. However, this depends on whether they are acknowledged and treated as members of the family, and they expect certain things. Along with the offerings placed on their rock, they are so closely entwined with their human sibling that they expect offerings at certain rituals for their brother and sister. These are included at major rites of

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\(^{30}\) The placenta (*ari-ari*) is one of the *Kanda Empat*, as well as the amniotic fluid (*yeh nyom*), the blood present during birth (*getih*), and the vernix caseosa (*lamas*), all of which help the entrance of the child into the world of the living (Eiseman and Eiseman 1989:100).
passage, such as the first time a baby touches the ground (the oton ceremony), and at one ngaben I attended there was a separate cremation tower for the Kanda Empat. But they also receive offerings at regular birthdays, and while some of these offerings are the general canang sari or some variant, there are others to specifically remind them of their fraternal or sororal relationship. A long white string is used to represent the umbilical cord, and they receive a birthday cake, which is shared with the rest of the family after the Kanda Empat have consumed the essence.

“In Bali we believe this is like a guardian for us. We use saiban to pray to them to come with us and get them to protect us from bad spirits.”

Even with the intensely personal nature of Kanda Empat, individuals do not usually make and place the offerings themselves. The placentas for all of the children in the family are buried under the same rock (at least in the households I lived in), and the offerings for these were placed by the mother or grandmother of the house on behalf of their entire families. While offerings are usually made and given by one (female) representative of the whole family to the bhuta kalas, the gods inside of the family temple, around the household, and at temples, this is logical, because it is often the fate of the entire family that is at stake. However, I found it odd that the offerings to spiritual beings who specifically concentrate on one individual were also provided for by that person’s sister, mother, grandmother, or aunt, rather than the individual themselves. But it cements the fact that it is women who are responsible for ritual economies, and for maintaining all relationships between the members of her family and Niskala.

When I asked what women hoped to receive in return for offerings, I was usually rewarded with the response of selamat. Selamat is a word with many meanings, which I will discuss at further length in the conclusion of this paper. But because of these many meanings,
which might include health, safety, and good fortune, it is also vague. Unless an offering was made for a certain purpose, such as a purification ceremony, or on the directions of a balian (traditional healer) to satisfy an unhappy spirit, women did not wish for specific things during their prayers, while making an offering or offering it. Because of this reluctance to ask for particular matters, it is more logical to look at this as a reciprocation of ‘credit,’ rather than ‘capital.’ Julie Chu, studying systems of exchange between the visible and invisible world in China, makes this preference because it encourages one to think “beyond an examination of value production as accumulation, growth, or surplus to a broader inquiry into credit-able practices that involve activities as the personal assumption of loss and the collective generation of karmic debt and its repayment” (Chu 2010:7).

This credit is not only applicable to family members during their lifespan, but to their afterlives as well. A popular instructional book on offering making quotes the Bhagavad-Gita: “When the multitude of colorful offerings of your devotion are placed before Brahman, all created from your knowledge of this work, you will reach moksha\textsuperscript{31} [the term in Hinduism used when talking about the liberation from the cycle of rebirth; the aim of human life]” (Raras 2007:2). Presumably this counts if someone in your family makes and gives them on your behalf as well. This section also mentions that palm treats that are used frequently in offering creations can be reincarnated as beautiful men or women, and since these were selected by women one can assume that their work in offerings transfers to those around them.

I opened this chapter with a quote from a woman worried that outside observers might think that the constant production of offerings doomed only to last the day was a waste of time.

\textsuperscript{31} Banyak dan beraneka warna persembahan yajna bhakti dihaturkan kepada Brahman, semuanya itu berasal dari kerja mengetahui ini, engkau akan mencapai moksha.
and money. In fact, the ritual economies sustained by Balinese women reveal careful consideration of possible eventualities, and an effort to protect their families. Offerings are a chance to control the uncontrollable, and to send petitions across world boundaries. They also maintain relationships with those closest to them, both human and the divine. There is no little effort involved, as both offerings and the rituals which enclose them have to be expertly handled. These manipulations transform offerings into a different type of value, one that is “harnessed more to a cosmology of ontological debt and karmic repayment than to one of alienable surplus and capital accumulation” (Chu 2010:207). This ritual economy is not only necessary for more traditional economies to continue unimpeded but for the opportunity to find happiness and love.
Chapter VI
Selamat: Producing Blessings

Selamat

Selamat is the desired effect of offerings. In Indonesian, the word *selamat* is a polyvalent and almost infinitely useful term. It is used as a greeting, placed when modifying times of days, or before the words for traveling or leaving. It is used for congratulations, for wishing good fortune on others, and for assuring someone of your well-being. Broadly and simply, to utter it is to will a condition of happiness, healthiness and peace of mind. Above all, *selamat* means achieving safety in all facets of life, and staying there. In the preceding chapter I described that women do not usually have a specific wish in mind when they give offerings to the gods, but they do devoutly wish for *selamat*. *Selamat* is the divine blessing and protection which hovers around families, provides their good fortune, and shelters them from disaster. In a dangerous world it is impossible for a woman to follow each individual member of her family around each day in order to watch over and take care of them. There are the numerous chores at home, she frequently has a job outside of the home, and she is only human. But by providing offerings for her family, she is able to endow them with otherworldly protections, and she can rest comfortably in the knowledge that her work is keeping them safe even when she cannot be there. Achieving *selamat* does not simply entail removing risk, but actively producing a sense of equipoise in the world, secure in the knowledge that forces and entities are content.
An exemplar of this concern over accomplishing cosmic and personal balance is the textile pattern used for religious purposes, a simple black and white checkered fabric. The careful balancing of black and white is representative of one of the goals of Balinese religion, finding an exact equilibrium between extreme forces. Clifford Geertz describes the Javanese perception of *selamat* as a state where “the local spirits will not bother you, will not make you feel ill, unhappy, or confused. The goals are negative and psychological – absence of aggressive feeling toward others, absence of emotional disturbance” (Geertz 1976:14). Although the methods for attaining this objective differ in Java and Bali, the end goal of securing stability remains much the same. Balinese women are responsible, through offerings, for achieving the delicate counterbalance between the destructive forces of the *bhuta kala* and the protections of the gods.

One of the women I interviewed, Sundri, talked about how her mother’s protections had safeguarded her. When I first met Sundri, she held out her left hand to shake mine, and I, used to seeing the use of the left hand as a grievous insult by that point, stiffened slightly until I realized that her right arm was a mass of scars. Later, during our interview, she told me that she had been in a terrible car accident as a girl, which should have killed her. But she knew that because of the safety given through offerings, the gods protected her and kept her alive. Although her injuries were still severe, and left her arm partly paralyzed, she still felt and exuded a feeling of extreme gratitude that these injuries had not been any worse, and she attributed this entirely to the protection of the gods.

32 Used for wrapping a length around statues of the gods or shrines during holy days, or used by priests as a sarong, among other purposes.
Invisible Labor

Offerings in Bali are such a constant sight that after the first day or two they start to fade into the background, to become a pleasant but discreet cacophony of colors and scents. Feet automatically start to swerve around them, but the only time that they are truly noticed is if they are absent. Just as windows only become noticeable when they are too dirty to see through, many families only notice the protection of the gods when it is absent, and disaster strikes. All of the housework women in Bali do, from cleaning to ritual labor, falls under the category of ‘invisible labor,’ for rather than directly producing money or long-lasting goods, their work is simply to keep the household running smoothly. As the flowers in offerings wilt, as the incense fades, and as insects start swarming over the rice, offerings are quietly and without fuss swept up and replaced.

Figure 37: Making Offerings. Photo Courtesy of Julia Martin.
Jan Newberry explains the infrequency of ethnographic research focusing on the housewife because researchers usually “find it (1) boring, (2) of secondary importance, or (3) troubling” (Newberry 2006:160). These thoughts are not limited to academics. Both at home and in Bali, among women and men, I was greeted with raised eyebrows and glazed expressions when I explained that I wanted to look at domestic labor. And there is no denying that housework, religious or otherwise, is boring. There’s a lot of sitting around for hours on end, repeating the same repetitive task. It’s truly Sisyphean labor, for even the slight variations heralded by holidays of the Balinese calendar are an endless pattern. But most jobs are Sisyphean, and few are as vital as housework. Without the constant production of the necessities of life, little else could be done. And with housework there is the added satisfaction that what you are accomplishing brings a glimmer of pleasure and peace into the lives of those whom you love most.

When people were gossiping about offerings, topics never included mentioning those who made especially elaborate offerings, or women who had tried a new design and found that their family’s health had improved. Instead, topics focused on women who bought offerings instead of making them themselves, or women who didn’t make enough offerings, or women who made offerings incorrectly. Women are expected to meet an exacting standard, but any efforts to surpass that standard are ignored. Similarly, the only time I heard men comment on women’s offerings was when something was incorrect. And the only time I heard about offerings providing a specific protection, rather than offerings causing a particular problem, was Sundri’s story about her accident. This is what I found most troubling about both religious and secular housework. While women are constantly made to recognize the consequences of not fulfilling their duties, they have to find their own satisfaction in a job well done. The only ones who seem
to reward them are the gods, and even then the gods only bothered to enter someone through a trance and forward messages when they were displeased with offerings in some way.

Part of the reason I chose this topic for my thesis was because I was hoping to shine a light on the often unrecognized domestic component of labor. I hoped that by focusing on this through the ever popular and glitzy lens of Balinese religion my readers could realize the time, skills, anxieties, and sweat which go into keeping the world (whether visible or invisible) running smoothly. While I wholeheartedly agree that women are just as capable as men at having jobs or interests outside of the home, I do not feel that pushing domestic labor to an even lower status is the way to establish equality, because it still needs to be done, whether this is accomplished by men, women, or hired labor. Rather, the full importance of housework needs to be acknowledged.

Although the small canang sari is not as spectacular as the sight of a raised penjor, and sitting for hours on end, patiently twisting leaves into intricate designs that will fade in a number of hours is not glamorous work, most women I talked to did not seem to mind their burdens. This was because what they were producing, in the end, was something rather glorious. With each bamboo sliver stitch, with each flower carefully tucked in, and with each sprinkle of holy water, they were building the walls of safety to protect their household, they were creating mantles of wellbeing, and they were pleasing the gods. They were skillfully and creatively harnessing their worries about the outside world, and producing their love for their families.
Glossary

Adat – Customary or traditional

Adharma – See dharma

Agama – Religion

Alis-Alis – The decorations attached to a penjor

Anak Jaba – see jaba

Aris-Aris – the placenta

Babi Guling – Roast pig

Balian – A medicine man or healer

Banjar – Neighborhood association

Banten – General term for offerings

Banten Pulagembal – Dedicated to Dewa Prethivi, this offering consists of a mountain several meters high, representing the cosmic mountain, with plants and flowers, and sometimes iconography representing the Hindu myth of gods and demons churning the milky ocean to produce the elixir of life. All of this is made of rice dough

Bapak (Pak) – Honorific for men, also ‘Father’

Barong – A supernatural creature which looks a bit like a lion, representing ‘good’

Batara – Ancestor spirit

Bhakti – Devotion or worship

Bhuta Kala - Demonic spirits. Can be known by Bhutas or Kalas as well

BKKBN - Badan Kependudukan Dan Keluarga Berencana Nasional (National Population and Family Planning Agency)

Brahma (Brahman) – The manifestation of the god who created all living things

Brahmana (or Brahmin) – (Member of) The priestly caste, highest of the aristocracy

Busung – The young leaf of the coconut used in constructing offerings

Canang – A common type of everyday offering, with an assortment of types that generally consist of a sewn shallow square made of busung which contains porosan, fruit, flowers, and shredded pandanus leaf
Canang Sari – Sari refers to the essence of the offering, Canang Sari are the most common type of canang

Caru – (Blood) sacrifice to the Bhuta Kala

Cuntaka – The negative spiritual aura present during a woman’s menstruation

Dalang – Shadow puppet marker and puppeteer, from the Brahmana caste

Dalem – See Pura Dalem

Desa – Village

Desa Adat – Traditional or customary village

Dewa (or Dewi) - General term for a god

Dewa Sri – Goddess of agriculture and fertility, the wife of Wisnu

Dharma – Religious duty, according to the individual’s caste. Adharma is the neglect of this duty

Dharma Wanita – Women’s organization for the wives of civil servants

Dosa – Civil duties

Eka Desa Rudra – Large ceremonies to purify the universe, once every hundred years

Galungan – Festival that marks the beginning of the 10 day Galungan festivities, that celebrate the triumph of dharma over adharma and the return of the ancestors to earth

Gamelan – Balinese orchestral groups

Gayah – Offering made out of meat

Gayah Sari – Meat offering in the shape of flowers

Gayah Paiteran - Meat offering in the shape of weapons

Gerwani – Women’s organization

Ibu (Bu) – Honorific for women. Also ‘Mother’

Ibung - Dried leaves used for offerings, often dyed bright pink

Jaba - members of the Sudra or commoner class, as opposed to those belonging to one of the three upper castes (Brahmana, Satria, and Wesia).

Jaja – Cakes or cookies made of rice dough and often used in offerings. They come in a large variety of shapes and colors

Jejahitan – ‘Sewn’ offerings (offerings that have been stitched together using the spine of coconut leaves or staples)
Kaja – The direction towards the mountains
Kajeng – Last day of the three day Triwara week
Kamen – Sarong
Kanda Empat – The four invisible brothers of sisters of a newborn child
Kangin – East
Kauh - West
Kawi – Literary language of ‘Old Javanese,’ the language which the gods speak and which lontars are usually written in
Kebaya – Colorful lacy shirt worn by women for religious or special occasions
Kelod - The direction towards the sea (antipodal to kaja)
Kelapa – Coconut
Keris (Kris) – Short sword with magical powers
Kliwon – Day of the five day Pancawara week
Kodrat – The ability, duties, and responsibilities of one’s nature.
Kuning – Yellow
Kuningan – The end of the ten day Galungan festivities, so named because the rice in offerings used for this day is dyed yellow with turmeric
Kunyit - Turmeric
Kwangen – Small cornucopia shaped offerings used during prayers at temple ceremonies
Lamak – Runner or banner of coconut leaves to be hung from shrines or placed under offerings
Lawar – Sausage made for special occasions out of dried pigs blood
Lontar - Palm leaf manuscripts of sacred writings
Lungsuran – Left-over or cast off
Majapahit – A Hindu-Buddhist kingdom in East Java which eventually moved to Bali (1294-1520)
Melasti – Journey to the sea or to a sacred spring where the village gods are bathed
Memberi – To give
Metanding – the knowledge of how to correctly assemble an offering, especially to make it aesthetically pleasing
Metjaru - An offering is prepared representing the cardinal directions, and for each of the nine directions rice is dyed the corresponding color

Moksa – State of being in which one is freed from the cycle of reincarnations and the soul joins with god.

Mudras – Hand gestures performed during prayers

Nasi - Rice

Ngaben – Cremation Ceremony

Niskala – See Sekala

Nyepi – First day of the Balinese calendar and the Day of Silence

Odalan – The anniversary festival of a temple

Ogoh-Ogoh – Constructed Papier-mâché figures made for the day before Nyepi to frighten off demons

Oton (or Otonan) – Balinese birthday celebration (every 210 days)

Palagantung – The elaborate and beautifully delicate offering which hangs on the end of the penjor.

Pancasila – Five official principles of Indonesian state ideology: Belief in one God, Just and civilized humanity, A unified Indonesia, Democracy led by the people, and Social justice for all Indonesians

Pancawara – Balinese five day market week

Panca Yadnya – Five categories of Balinese rituals, see yadnya for further details

Pandanus – A leaf that is commonly shredded and used in offerings

Parisadha Hindu Dharma – Balinese agency formed in 1959, tasked with shifting the focus of Hinduism from ritual to a theology and text based religion.

Patra - patterns

Pawukon – 210 day Balinese Calendar

Pecalang – Cultural Police

Pedanda – A high priest from the Brahmana caste

Pelelintangan – Balinese astrological calendar

Pemangku – A temple priest (often from the Sudra caste)

Pengabenan – Cremation Ceremony
Penjor – A type of offering made during the Galungan ceremony consisting of a tall bamboo pole with many decorations attached to it. Erected in front of the family compound

Pitrananya – Cremation

PKK – Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga: The Family Welfare Movement of Indonesia

Porosan – A betel leaf wrapped around a sliver of areca nut, lime, and sometime base (the leaf of a type of pepper) which represents the Hindu triad of Brahma, Wisnu, and Siwa.

Pura – General term for temple

Pura Dalem – Temple for the dead

Pura Desa – Village temple

Pura Puseh – Ancestral temple

Puri – Palace of the raja and his court

Purnama – Full moon

Raja – Local king

Rangda – The counterpoint to the barong, represented as an evil witch (literally means widow)

Saka – The lunar calendar

Saiban – Daily offering made from the food cooked first thing in the morning, before humans begin to eat it

Sampian – Elaborately folded and pinned coconut leaves used in offerings

Sang Hyang Widhi – The one God in Balinese Hinduism, comprised of all manifestations/gods

Sanggah – Shrines within a family temple

Saptawara – Seven day week

Saput – Under-sarong for men

Sarat - Offerings consisting of flowers made of dough

Sari – The essence of an offering, the part which the spirits consume

Satria – (Member of) The princely caste

Sebel – Impure

Segehan – Offerings of rice and other (often pungent) food held in a small folded leaf, placed at the entrance to a compound daily, as well as other locations. Smallest type of caru.
**Sekala and Niskala** – The visible and invisible worlds respectively, with the visible world inhabited by humans and other things we can see, while the invisible world is inhabited by gods, demons, ancestors, and other spirits

**Selamat** – Safety, which encompasses equilibrium, happiness, healthiness, lack of worry, etcetera

**Sesari** – Money added to offerings

**Sesayut** – Complimentary offerings with many varieties

**Siwa** – God of destruction (Known as Shiva in Indian Hinduism)

**Srati (Serati)** – Expert on offerings

**Suci** – Pure or holy.

**Sudra** – (Member of) the commoner/peasant caste

**Suka** – To like

**Sukla** – Pure and unused

**Syari’ah** - Islamic law

**Taman Gembal** – Offerings consisting of flowers made of dough

**Tauh** – Type of caru, can also mean ‘payment’

**Tilem** - New moon

**Tirtha** – Holy water

**Tjili** – Representation of a beautiful girl, present in many patterns and decorative art

**Trimurti** – The Hindu triad of Brahma, Wisnu, and Siwa

**Triwara** – Three day week

**Tukang Banten** – A specialist in making offerings, often a woman, often from the Brahmana caste

**Warung** – Small ‘mom and pop’ type store

**Wayang Kulit** – Shadow puppets

**Wesia** – The military caste

**Wisnu** – The god of preserving or protecting. Has also been reincarnated as Rama (in the Ramayana) and Krishna (in the Mahabharata). Known as Vishnu in Indian Hinduism

**Yadnya** – Rituals. Can be for the gods (dewa yandnya), for demons (bhuta yadnya), for humans (manusa yadnya), for the dead (pitra yadnya), or for priests (rsi yadnya)
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