



Displaying Demons

Processions at the Crossroads in Multireligious Indonesia

In the Hindu Balinese imagination, demons (*buta kala*) are ambiguous figures of the crossroads. Across Indonesia, the display of giant demon puppets (*ogoh-ogoh*) has increasingly become part of the lunar Hindu New Year celebrations. Drawing on fieldwork among the Balinese minority on the island of Lombok, I argue that the display of demon puppets permits Hindu Balinese youth to unleash “wild” demonic forces. Building on Kaja M. McGowan’s (2008) notion of Balinese “internal aesthetics,” I propose that the puppets serve as potential sites or receptacles for the demonic. Just as each demon puppet mobilizes a display of fun and volatility, so it provokes passions and frequently becomes embroiled in conflict. Demon puppets are designed to amuse and dazzle by their outrageous appearance, yet they unsettle the porous boundaries between “religion” and “entertainment.” By examining the politics surrounding the annual *ogoh-ogoh* procession in Cakranegara, I show that their display acquires urgency in a multireligious context.

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In the Hindu Balinese imagination demons (*buta kala*) are ambiguous figures of the crossroads. Troublesome and often obnoxious, demons are beings in perpetual motion who are associated with spatial and temporal transitions. Hence it is fitting that the *buta kala* are entertained and feasted with lavish sacrifices at the end of the lunar Hindu (*Saka*) year, a critical cosmic juncture that is enlivened by display and pageantry. Across the Indonesian archipelago, the display of giant demon puppets (*ogoh-ogoh*) has increasingly become part of the Hindu New Year celebrations, which culminates with Nyepi, the Day of Silence, the first day of new year and a national holiday. Zooming in on the Muslim majority island of Lombok, I argue in this article that the public display of demon puppets permits Hindu Balinese minority youth to demonstrate their aesthetic prowess in ways that also intimate their capacity to unleash “wild” demonic forces.

The relatively flimsy papier-mâché demons have had a brief yet remarkable career. In just a few decades, strikingly new demons—from gorillas with AK-47 rifles to three-meter-long hairy mosquitos with bulging eyes crawling along the tarmac, Dracula vampires, and blood-dripping Suzuki motorcycles—have popped up across urban and rural Lombok and inserted themselves into the sequence of Hindu New Year celebrations (figure 1). Crucially, the startling range of demon puppets owes its existence to youth, whose passion for conceiving, making, and displaying their aesthetic creations to multireligious audiences has given the demons greater visibility in contemporary public life. Such displays of aesthetic ingenuity both delight and provoke. Nowadays the *ogoh-ogoh* procession in the city of Cakranegara usually includes 120–150 demon puppets, each puppet carried by a group of young men and accompanied by a sizeable entourage of female and male youth amid a vibrant cacophony of drums, cymbals, and gongs. The procession culminates with a sumptuous end of year ritual (*tawur kesanga*), in which the demons are invited to feast on a spread of delicacies before being requested to depart and not disturb people in the new year. Timed for maximum effect, the end of year ritual begins just before sunset (*sandikala*), the in-between transitional time when the demons like to roam about. The ideal place to perform these sacrifices is a large intersection, preferably one that has been ritually empowered by offerings and metal deposits buried deep in the ground.

In this article, I take the *ogoh-ogoh* procession in Cakranegara as the locus for unpacking Balinese feelings and assumptions about the display of demons and for



Figure 1. Giant mosquito-beetle with bulging yellow eyes, 2010. Photograph by Kari Telle

contributing to the anthropology of display as an important subject in its own right.¹ One of the fascinating things about the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets is that they, not unlike the demonic forces they evoke, escape categorization and refuse to be pinned down. Herein lies the source of their attraction and capacity to provoke strong sentiments. Although the diversity of their external appearance is vital to their performative and affective appeal, we should not, I suggest, be too dazzled by their outward forms. Nor should we think of display as merely intended for human audiences. To grasp what display entails in a Balinese life-world and to appreciate the passionate investment in the relatively ephemeral *ogoh-ogoh* puppets or sculptures, it is necessary to consider their “internal aesthetic” (McGowan 2008).

Writing about Balinese shrines, art historian Kaja McGowan observes that Western visual sensibilities have steered the attention toward “outward” monumental images, a tendency that has led scholars “to overlook the more ephemeral sculptures or ‘effigies’ made from raw ingredients in the landscape, ingredients that hold meaning as sheer potential” (2008, 245). Comprehending “the internal life of shrines,” she argues, “requires adjusting to an aesthetic that subsists on disappearing” as “images are always about to be wrapped up, to be contained, or to be swallowed” (2008, 243). Introducing the idea of an “internal aesthetic,” McGowan usefully directs attention to the intricate web of raw ingredients and deposit boxes that give “life” (*urip*) to Balinese shrines.² Taking McGowan’s notion of an internal aesthetics as my cue, I will show that the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets are assembled and animated through material and symbolic processes of activation, before being deactivated, disassembled, and ultimately pulverized by fire. Of course, it is only by bringing the “outward” and “inward” form of these puppets together that we can begin to grasp their significance

and capacity to incite strong passions. But this is easier said than done: pinning down what an *ogoh-ogoh* puppet is, is not easy at all. Yet it helps to trace the process of its fabrication; once the “outer” body has been completed, the puppet can be described as a juncture or crossroads, which brings me to the subject of display.

Judging from the drama that often surrounds the annual procession of demon puppets, I think it is fair to say that many Balinese struggle with how to deal with these intriguing puppets. Part of the problem is that the relatively short-lived *ogoh-ogoh* puppets defy easy categorization. This problem has perhaps been most acute for religious authorities, who have vacillated with regard to whether the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets should be included within public Hindu rituals or not. At the same time, it is precisely their inaccessibility and their potential as being more than matter that imbues the relatively flimsy, often comical *ogoh-ogoh* puppets with their affective power. In a Hindu Balinese life-world, display is firmly bound up with efforts to manage relations with the forces of the “invisible” (*niskala*) realm, both by manifesting their presence in the “visible” (*sekala*) realm, and, equally important, by maintaining a proper distance between these different ontological realms. As a practice of mediation, aesthetic display brings normally hidden forces into the realm of the sensory. Hence, in this context display should not be considered merely as a spectacle intended for human audiences but as a practice for entertaining, engaging, and moving invisible audiences. As McGowan’s notion of internal aesthetics implicitly suggests, the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets first become visible to beings of the invisible (*niskala*) realm. With this in mind, it is but a short step to argue that display is a fraught endeavor, a high-stakes process that involves both intrinsic and extrinsic risks (Howe 2000; Telle 2016).³

In what follows, I will bring some of these productive tensions to the surface, as they speak to Katherine Swancutt’s invitation in the introduction to this issue to approach display as an elastic phenomenon that may unsettle conventional



Figure 2. Rangda, the widow-witch, 2015. Photograph by Kari Telle.



Figure 3. Green-faced orangutan with spiky hair, bullets and army boots, 2015. Photograph by Kari Telle.

distinctions between self and other, sacred and secular, human and spirit, male and female, and ethnic insider and outsider, “thus inviting spectators to consider what lies at the crossroads between them” (2023a, 3-23). Honing in on the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets, I will show that they both give shape to the demonic and serve as intersections through which spiritual movement and transformation take place. Being made for display, the giant *ogoh-ogoh* puppets delight and amuse, yet these ephemeral three-dimensional performing objects also incite strong passions and frequently become embroiled in conflict. The *ogoh-ogoh* procession is *the* occasion when the demons show off and flourish for a brief yet intense burst of life—typically some lose a limb, or worse, their head. Fusing youth culture, entertainment, and spiritual concerns, the boisterous *ogoh-ogoh* procession allows Hindu Balinese youth to display their aesthetic prowess in ways that upend or unsettle the distinction between “secular” entertainment and “religious” ritual.

Display at the crossroads

Once per year, the main artery of Lombok’s urban center is taken over by demons. In March 2015, more than 150 large papier-mâché demons assembled outside the Mataram Mall around noon before moving in a boisterous procession down Jalan Pejanggik, a broad avenue named after a precolonial Sasak kingdom.⁴ As usual, the procession included classic Balinese demons, such as the widow-witch Rangda with her lolling tongue and sagging breasts (figure 2), and Kala Rau depicted as a huge gaping mouth about to swallow the petite moon goddess.⁵ Dazzling novel creatures also made their debut appearance, such as the colossal, green-faced gorilla with spiky orange hair sporting an AK-47 rifle and a belt of bullets draped around his fat torso (figure 3). A macabre execution scene depicted two hooded all-black henchmen taking aim at two blindfolded men. By the time all the demons and their human entourage reached the intersection where Pejanggik Street meets Anak Agung Ngurah Karangasem Street, where the procession ended, it was late afternoon and only the most avid spectators remained.

Few, if any, public events in urban Lombok can rival the popularity of the annual *ogoh-ogoh* procession in Cakranegara, an exuberant spectacle organized by Balinese youth from across Cakranegara, Sweta, Ampenan, and Mataram, the provincial capital of West Nusa Tenggara. That the demons are pulling youth from a sprawling urban area together in a shared undertaking, year after year, testifies to a remarkable groundswell of interest in putting demons on display. On Lombok, Balinese Hindus constitute less than 7 percent of the population, being concentrated in urban areas and in the western and central parts of the island. While the puppets are designed to impress and amuse, their oversized limbs and sexual organs easily risk offending moral and religious sensibilities, certainly among the more conservative Sasak Muslims, who constitute more than 90 percent of the island's 3.8 million inhabitants. Awareness of this potential is second nature to Lombok Balinese youth, who have come of age during the "conservative turn" (van Bruinessen 2013) in Indonesian Islam in the new millennium. They have also grown up with stories and memories of the anti-Christian violence in January 2000, when churches, shops, businesses, and homes belonging to Christians, often but by no means exclusively of Sino-Indonesian descent, were looted and burned (Telle 2010, 2011). While the *ogoh-ogoh* procession has a light, playful feel, this public event that draws thousands of spectators from all over the city and beyond tends to be heavily securitized. The heavy presence of uniformed police, Balinese civilian guards (*pecalang*), and snipers on many rooftops heightens the perception that "something" is at stake, adding a sense of excitement to the procession.

Why have the demons captivated the imagination of Hindu Balinese youth? What is at stake during the *ogoh-ogoh* procession? What does all this tell us about display as a phenomenon that does not just "mirror" or "model" the world (Handelman 1998) but potentially generates fresh collective imaginaries about the demonic and steers the social and cosmic orders in new directions? Before tackling these questions, let me briefly introduce the urban landscape where the demon puppets first emerged on Lombok, namely the city of Cakranegara. As this name indicates, Cakranegara was once the capital of a Balinese state (*negara*). A branch of the Karangasem kingdom began to build the city in the early eighteenth century, after troops from Karangasem in east Bali defeated smaller Sasak kingdoms (Hägerdal 2001; Harnish 2006). Balinese rulers placed much emphasis on temple construction: the Meru temple with nine roofs was constructed around 1720 in the center of the city, just across from the royal palace. The nearby Mayura temple, surrounded by a big lake and gardens, was built around 1740. Examining the city's spatial layout and the grid-system of streets, scholars have noted the impetus to embed cosmology in built form, producing structures that sought to integrate the macro-cosmos (*bhuwana agung*) with the micro-cosmos (*bhuwana alit*) (Funo 2002). Balinese ruled ended in 1894, when they and their Sasak allies were defeated by Dutch troops fighting alongside Sasak aristocrats from east Lombok. At the time, the supreme *raja* was Anak Agung Ngurah Karangasem of Puri Mataram, one of the wealthiest indigenous rulers in the archipelago (Vanvugt 1995). The palace was destroyed and looted, and numerous treasures were brought to Holland or auctioned off, and the aging king and his two sons were exiled to Java. Among the looted treasures was the fourteenth-century

Negara-Kertagama lontar-manuscript that tells the story of the Javanese Majapahit empire, which was eventually repatriated to Indonesia in 1974 and awarded UNESCO World Heritage status.

Although Balinese rule is long gone, the characteristic grid-system of streets and the major temples are tangible reminders of the time when Cakranegara was the “navel” (*puseh*) of the kingdom. What may be less obvious to a casual visitor, yet self-evident to Balinese residents, is how this urban landscape, jam-packed with stores, stalls, motorcycles, and cars, undergoes periodic transformations and is also a pulsating “living” or “spiritual landscape” (Allerton 2009; Telle 2009). My host in Cakranegara, Ratu Oka Netra, a high-ranking elderly Balinese man, explained that the construction of strategically located crossroads required offerings and the burial of thin sheets of precious metals (*pratima*) to anchor and activate these critical junctures. The precious objects in the subterranean spiritual landscape should not be exposed but remain covered by layers of earth. By far the most cosmologically pregnant “major” (*agung*) intersection in Cakranegara is where Jalan Pejanggik meets Jalan Anak Agung Ngurah Karangasem, named after Lombok’s last Hindu Balinese ruler. Like a spinning wheel (*cakra*), this busy crossroads is flanked by a police post, the large traditional market (Pasar Cakra), and an old Hindu temple dedicated to commerce (Pura Melanting). Not surprisingly, this historically significant intersection (*catus pata*) is widely considered to be the ideal place for major rituals that are tied to the lunar cycle, and notably the end of year sacrifice.

Yet it has proved increasingly difficult to use this intersection for ritual purposes, as municipal authorities fear that closing the city’s busiest thoroughfares may cause traffic jams and conflict. To this day, many Sasak feel uneasy when Balinese processions take over roads and obstruct traffic for extended periods. Harnish notes that “one elder Sasak friend stated that when Balinese ceremonies are held at an intersection in Cakranegara, it is like they are celebrating their victory over the Sasak and have once again colonized Lombok” (2021, 227). While it is an extremely delicate matter to perform Hindu rituals in busy intersections, municipal authorities have taken considerable interest in the demon procession. Rather than listening to those who would like to banish the demons from “the island of a thousand mosques,” as Lombok is commonly known nowadays, both municipal and provincial authorities like to portray the vibrant *ogoh-ogoh* procession as showcasing interethnic and interreligious tolerance and harmony, a local manifestation of Indonesia’s national motto “unity in diversity” (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*). This framing has given the demon puppets greater visibility and public fame. But there are certainly those who find that the demons are misrecognized and cheapened by being displayed as cultural products in a “secular” procession (*pawai*) alongside Sasak musicians and dancers. Others find that the hidden force of the flimsy puppets, their demonic power so to speak, is precisely to bring youth from different communities across a sprawling urban area together in a shared undertaking. All the better if Sasak Muslim musicians and performers also dance and drum the demons into being, using display to activate the life-affirming potential of coexistence across ethnic and religious boundaries.⁶ Turning now to how the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets are made, I pay close attention to their outward form and provide glimpses into their anatomy and internal aesthetics.

Conceiving demons

In March 2009, a Lombok Balinese friend and I spent many pleasant afternoons walking around the predominantly Balinese neighborhoods in Cakranegara and Mataram looking for puppets in progress. One afternoon we came across some teenagers and kids working on a human-sized figure with claw-like toes and a dagger in his right hand. This was the Demon Man (*Buta Kala Dengan*), whom Ida Bagus Nyoman (aged sixteen) described as “a very angry person who always wants to pick a fight and likes to hit people.” This was the first year Nyoman and his friends made a proper *ogoh-ogoh* that would join the procession on March 26, alongside another, bigger demon from the ward. Next to the Demon Man, they had placed a flower offering (*canang*) and a few incense sticks. They explained that they always burned incense and put out a fresh *canang* before beginning the work in order to reduce the risk of accidents. Showing me his bruised fingers, Nyoman said, “I got many cuts from the bamboo we used to make his frame. Actually, almost all of us have been injured, but nothing really serious has happened.” What had been difficult was to get permission to make a puppet in the first place. At first, Nyoman’s father had refused to let him occupy himself with the lowly demons. Eventually, after other family members intervened, Nyoman was allowed to work on the Demon Man, albeit on the condition that he did not carry him in the procession (figure 4).

These comments about minor mishaps, despite taking precautions, indicate that making an *ogoh-ogoh* is a somewhat risk-filled endeavor. So is the intergenerational domestic drama that likely involves both status concerns and parental worries about safety during the procession, when the puppets are lifted and spun around at a dazzling speed. Being born into the highest Brahmana strata, Ida Bagus Nyoman belongs to the select few who can become a priest (*pedanda*). The father’s reluctance to let his son occupy himself with the Demon Man was likely informed by the understanding that



Figure 4. The Demon Man (*Buta Kala Dengan*), Karang Bungkulan, Cakranegara, 2009. Photograph by Kari Telle.

for “learned Balinese,” as Angela Hobart notes, the demons “epitomize the cravings of the world, the passions and furies to which the human being may succumb” (2003, 169). Some high-caste Balinese avoid involvement with the *ogoh-ogoh* and will not carry or position themselves below the demons. Others mock such attitudes as hopelessly outmoded. For the most part the process of making and displaying *ogoh-ogoh* seems to galvanize a communal ethos that almost transcends status differences. Nevertheless, the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets are surrounded with ambivalence, not least because they infuse youth with a competitive spirit that occasionally spills into fights, especially if their demon is ridiculed or physically attacked.

Making these puppets is a collective endeavor, the most dedicated makers being unmarried youth (*terune*) and young married men from the same ward. When youth agree to make a demon puppet, they exercise their imaginations, the power to bring into being.⁷ In Balinese, *ogoh-ogoh* connotes “shaking” or “wagging,” which nicely captures the characteristic movement of the puppets in motion. Being made for display, the puppets are constructed from light materials and designed to give a sense of fluid, dynamic movement. Usually one leg is raised and one arm is positioned higher than the other, which helps to balance the structure and creates the impression of being alive as it glides through the air when it is lifted and spun around. Expert makers excel by realizing scenes involving one or more demons hovering over or devouring their victims. The process usually starts one or two months before Nyepi. Typically, youth request in-kind and monetary contributions for buying bamboo, wood, glue, paper, styrofoam, paint, various accessories, pieces of cloth, and T-shirts from people in the neighborhood. Despite growing residential segregation along ethnic and religious lines, giving donations for collective rituals and public events remains an important means of cultivating neighborliness (see also Suprpto 2013, 214–16). Hence Balinese youth can count on their Sasak, Javanese, and Sino-Indonesian neighbors to contribute, with more substantial donations from shops, banks, and businesses.⁸ In some Balinese-dominated wards, part of the money is raised through betting on cocks, a practice that is illegal in Indonesia—as it was when the police raided the famous cockfight that the Geertz observed in Bali, which was held to raise money for an elementary school (Geertz 1973).

Given the intriguing links between cockfighting, the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets, and the Balinese New Year celebrations, some comments about these phenomena are in order. Any cockfight, according to Clifford Geertz, “is in the first instance a blood sacrifice offered, with the appropriate chants and oblations, to the demons in order to pacify their ravenous, cannibal hunger” (1973, 420). In fact, Geertz observes that most villages on Bali used to arrange large-scale cockfights one day before Nyepi, with official approval, an exception to the general ban. On Lombok cockfighting is far more controversial, but in some wards the *ogoh-ogoh* are made in the communal hall (*bale banjar*), close to where the semi-secretive fights take place. Passionate gamblers were indeed quick to note that just as the spilled blood satiates the demons in the earth, the blood infuses the *ogoh-ogoh* with vitality. Both the illegality of cockfighting and the fact that such fights are typically accompanied by alcohol taints the *ogoh-ogoh* with transgressiveness—highly fitting for demonic figures, who exhibit raw passions and flaunt good behavior. Being a minority, Balinese on Lombok try to avoid offending

Muslim-majority sensibilities regarding gambling and alcohol consumption, and in most wards such activities are kept apart from the puppets.

The appearance of the Demon Man alongside oversized insects, and the archetypal Balinese witch Rangda in her ferocious form, shows that their visual persona and iconography are extremely varied. Many *ogoh-ogoh* makers emphasized that they enjoyed making these puppets precisely because they could draw on all kinds of sources for inspiration—from horror movie monsters like Dracula to the grisly ISIS execution spectacles on the news. Others insisted that they always make a “real” demon, by which they meant one of the 108 demons named in ancient *lontar* texts, Hindu epics, and *wayang* stories. As Dewa, a married man in his mid-twenties, put it to me in 2010, “This is Kala Celuluk, the king of sorcerers who likes to eat babies alive in order to become even more potent (*sakti*). You have to understand, he is truly a terrible demon, whereas those ‘new creations’ [*kreasi baru*] are merely designed to amuse.” Rather than weighing in on disagreements over real versus faux demons, the point here is that the demonic is a complex yet highly elastic concept. This elasticity is eloquently manifested in their outward appearance, where demons with genealogies stretching back to ancient Hindu figures appear alongside relatively modern horror film celebrities like Dracula and the ill-tempered Demon Man.

The value placed on bringing forth a spectacular outlandish demon is, however, matched by strict observance of the key stages in the fabrication process. Irrespective of the puppet’s phenotypical shape and the depth or shallowness of its genealogy, its anatomy and stages of growth are virtually identical. Much as youth revel in the freedom to conceive a demon of their own, they also take a number of precautions. The sense that conceiving an *ogoh-ogoh* is a risky undertaking is, effectively, built into the aesthetic process. Besides making the *ogoh-ogoh* into a distinct entity, what Birgit Meyer (2009) calls a “sensational form,” these habituated actions inculcate an



Figure 5. Boy with Demon, Cakranegara, 2009. Photograph by Kari Telle.

affective disposition toward the puppets, what Christopher Pinney (2004) terms a “corporetics” that mobilize all the senses simultaneously. Some of these conventions are similar to those that apply to other aesthetic objects, such as sacred masks (Hobart 2003; Kendall and Ariati 2020). What is specific to the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets is the expectation that they should be made during the final months of the Saka year and be burned shortly after Nyepi, the Day of Silence. Despite the temptation to keep a particularly well-crafted head for reuse, this is hardly, if ever, done. My interlocutors were well aware that *ogoh-ogoh* can fetch high prices in Bali’s art market and are made to order for individual buyers or for display at official functions (Nozlopy 2004). Yet such developments have not taken hold on Lombok, where the *ogoh-ogoh* are relatively short-lived creatures whose creation and destruction remains intimately tied to the annual Hindu ritual cycle.

Examining the internal process of conceiving *ogoh-ogoh* puppets, we hit upon an internal aesthetics that exploits selected raw ingredients in the natural world, “ingredients that hold meaning as sheer potential” (McGowan 2008, 245). To begin, an offering basket accompanied by incense is prepared before the work of crafting the frame begins. Shaped as a tall basket made from palm leaves, the offering basket contains coins, rice, flowers, and eggs and is identical to those used when paying visits to shrines. In this context, the offering conveys to the invisible (*niskala*) forces that the work will begin, requesting their permission and support. It is common to put a small flower offering (*canang sari*) inside the bamboo frame. Though Ida Bagus Nyoman and his friends always put out a small offering every time they worked on the Demon Man, more experienced *ogoh-ogoh* makers do not necessarily bother to do so (figure 5).

When the outer body has been completed, painted, dressed, and decorated, a temple priest (*mangku*) or someone with knowledge of mantra is asked to carry out a purification (*melaspas*) rite. Besides ritually completing the *ogoh-ogoh*, my young interlocutors explained that the *melaspas* rite is intended to prevent those who have worked on the demon puppet from being disturbed or literally inhabited by their own creation. Such disturbances may involve bad dreams, nightmares, illness, or possession (*kerauhan*), which is considered to be problematic if it occurs spontaneously outside a healing or performance context. The aim is to protect those who have made the demon puppet, strengthening their bodily integrity. What I add to this explanation, which pivots around the need to uphold distinctions between humans and spirits, is that this rite makes the *ogoh-ogoh* distinctly “other.” The importance of cutting ties and severing connections illustrates that the aesthetic process involves an interplay of beings who are situated across an “ontological divide” (Keane 2008, 120). Rather than binding makers closer to what they have co-created, the objective here is to set them firmly apart. At issue here is a process of severance, whereby the aesthetic object is alienated from its mundane context. Crucially, aesthetic display involves negotiating ontological dynamics as well as efforts to prevent the collapse of vital distinctions.

The *melaspas* rite that completes the *ogoh-ogoh* puppet is usually performed in close conjunction with another rite, one that is no less important but has a rather different purpose (figure 6). Since these rites usually take place within the same



Figure 6. Purification/ enlivening the demon (*melaspas/pasupati*), Karang Bang Bang, Cakranegara, 2010. Photograph by Kari Telle.

event, they can be tricky to distinguish. Known as *pasupati*, the aim of this rite, which requires knowledge of prayers and mantra, is to acquaint potent beings from the *niskala* realm with the recently completed puppet.⁹ This rite also involves prayers for the safety of those who will carry the puppet in the procession the following day. While incense, prayers, and mantra are indispensable communicative vehicles, it is unthinkable to call upon such powerful beings without providing them with the appropriate display of offerings. The core ingredients are raw meat and blood from a black or brown-feathered chicken, which are placed on the ground. No meal is complete without drink, and Balinese demons are fond of fermented rice wine (*tuak*) and liquor, substances that lubricate and form ties of relatedness. If these beings are moved to enter the *ogoh-ogoh*, it becomes “conscious” and “alive” (*urip*), and the body is filled with an unknown force. For this process of animation to happen, timing is important.¹⁰ Hence, the *pasupati* rite is usually carried out at sunset (*sandikala*), the in-between period between day and night when demons like to roam about. Significantly, at this time the piece of white cloth that covers the puppet’s eyes during the process of fabrication will be removed, a gesture that signals it may be conscious and enables an intimate exchange of gazes.

This kind of “visual intermingling” (Pinney 2001, 168) with the demonic can be scary, yet is thrilling and suggests that display enables a two-way communication (see Telle 2021, 410–12; and for a related discussion of two-way displays in Southwest China, Swancutt 2023b). From now on, the puppet is treated as a sentient being, who craves food, drink, company, and respect. People speak of the *ogoh-ogoh* as being alive. Henceforth, young and older men will guard the *ogoh-ogoh* throughout the night (*tangi*). To stay vigilant and have a good time, snacks and drink should be plentiful, which accounts for the somewhat disheveled appearance of some of the participants the following day. In this state, some are prone to lose their tempers, which partly accounts for the playful yet tense undercurrents of the procession.

Having caught glimpses of how the puppets are conceived and of their internal anatomy, we see that each *ogoh-ogoh* puppet is a highly unstable nexus of inner and outward material forms. Display in this context is firmly wound up with efforts to capture the interest of invisible (*niskala*) audiences and transform them from spectators into co-participants. Extending McGowan's notion of internal aesthetics, I suggest that the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets first become known or visible to the beings of the invisible realm. Once the *pasupati* rite has been performed, people say that the puppet looks and feels different: the eyes are more fiery and shiny, the body feels more heavy, its appearance is more terrifying, etc. In short, these expressions indicate that the puppet is filled with substance and is a conjunction or crossroads of invisible energies and outward form. These accounts express a common Balinese experience, namely that various kinds of spirits may temporally inhabit human bodies and different kinds of objects (see also Kendall and Ariati 2020; Pedersen 2008; Wiener 2017). The concept of *taksu* was often invoked when people talked about a well-crafted *ogoh-ogoh*, one that would inspire visceral effects, such as goosebumps or a quicker pulse. Notably, *taksu* is also the name of a specific shrine in the house yard at which one can pray for inspiration and protection. In June 2018, Made Yoga, a Balinese stone carver specialized in temple architecture, explained *taksu* as follows:

We [Balinese] are convinced that works of art possess *taksu*. We pray to the forces of the invisible realm to enter, so that the object becomes filled with power. I would say that *taksu* emerges from the combination of the quality of the art, the efficacy of the mantra, and the sensibility of the onlookers. Of course, an *ogoh-ogoh* is more likely to make you frightened when you are alone in a quiet place or in the forest than during a bustling (*ramai*) parade with many people around. Whether the *ogoh-ogoh* affects you or not is also a subjective perception. It's like a sense of euphoria. Sometimes people even get possessed (*kerauhan*).

This gloss underlines how *taksu* is an emergent property, a perception arising out of the fluid web of human-object-spirit relations.¹¹ Just as an *ogoh-ogoh* will elicit different responses from different persons, it will be experienced differently by the same person depending on the time (*kala*) and circumstance (*patra*).¹² Far from being a stable entity, these perceptual shifts reflect that the puppet is a juncture or crossroads traversed by multiple entities. Hence, any *ogoh-ogoh* could attract different beings, and there is not necessarily a correspondence between its outward persona and its internal, womb-like potential.

Far from being unique to the *ogoh-ogoh*, the gap between surface and interiority is an enduring puzzle and existential issue. "The capacity of spirit beings not only to change from a well-wishing attitude to destructive anger and back, but also to take many different shapes at a whim," as Hildred Geertz (1994, 32) points out, "has important implications for Balinese conceptions of truth." It implies, for example that "humans may not always know what form a being may take, nor can they know from the form of a prepared vessel what being may have taken his seat in it" (Geertz 1994, 32). In light of this pervasive ontological volatility, it hardly matters whether an *ogoh-ogoh* is shaped as a true demon or as a faux demon, such as the green-faced gorilla with military boots that appeared in 2015 whom Dewa would surely have dismissed as a "new creation that is merely designed to amuse." Indeed, this *ogoh-ogoh* could

potentially be more than dead matter.¹³ One conclusion that Hildred Geertz (1994, 32) draws is “that the artist who wants to portray such a being can use his own fantasy at will.” This argument may well hold for paintings, yet it is less obvious when dealing with rapidly proliferating demons who want to go on display in ways that unsettle the established, albeit porous, boundaries between entertainment and religion (figure 7).

Demonic politics

It is no exaggeration to say that the *ogoh-ogoh* demons have had phenomenal success in their relatively brief career. Besides proliferating in number and growing in size, the demons have migrated from the urban landscapes of Cakranegara and Mataram, where they made their debut appearance in the early 1990s, into the lush hinterland in West and Central Lombok and along the west coast into North Lombok, gathering small and large Balinese communities into their affective fold. Their swift movement has been powered by youthful enthusiasm, but these demons have also proved troublesome, igniting strong passions along the way. What is notable is how the display of *ogoh-ogoh* puppets, which has gathered steam since the turn of the millennium, has occurred in a period when Balinese and non-Muslim minorities on Lombok often complain of being marginalized in public life and politics. Among the most painful examples of this marginalization is the destruction of shrines and temples in the first decade of the new millennium following the collapse of the authoritarian New Order regime (1966–98). Considering that temples serve as “bridges to the ancestors” (Harnish 2006), the limited political will to enable their reconstruction remains a source of grievance for many Balinese (Telle 2013, 2014, 2016; Widana 2016). While the demon puppets had caught the imaginations of Lombok Balinese youth before these events exposed their precarious situation as a minority, the impetus to demonstrate their aesthetic prowess by putting demons on display has arguably been galvanized by it.



Figure 7. The Bony Demon, 2009. Photograph by Kari Telle.

I am tempted to suggest that the buoyant affirmation of aesthetic prowess and community spirit during a time of uncertainty and pushback springs from a quest for sovereignty. Sovereignty may be too big a word, yet it signals something of the aspirational and defiant energy with which Balinese youth have brought the demons into the public arena through display. However fleetingly, no more than a few hours once per year, the experience of playing with demons generates something like “collective effervescence” (Durkheim 1965). In turn, this has proved irresistible to young Balinese spectators who did not want to miss out on the fun and excitement. Those who mobilized friends and neighbors to make the puppets seem to have had an easy task. The demons, to borrow an Indonesian expression, grew “like mushrooms in the rainy season,” in a rhizomatic fashion that took almost everyone by surprise. Although fun and a quest for sovereignty may seem to be worlds apart, the point here is that display unfolds before the eyes of multiple audiences and imagined others, both near and distant, human and nonhuman. In her study of “would-be sovereigns” and the elusive quest for sovereignty in West Papua, Danilyn Rutherford argues that “every bid for power involves a confrontation with audiences of various sorts” (2012, 4). Moreover, “the sense that others are watching can spawn not only anxiety and embarrassment but also pleasure and hope” (2012, 5). Rutherford uses the term “audience” in an extended sense as shorthand for the varied kinds of interlocutors that social actors identify with or react to in life. One merit of this elastic understanding is to underline how the plurality of audiences, in terms of their various scales and unequal powers, both enables and bedevils the political projects that Rutherford examines in *Laughing at Leviathan* (2012). What resonates with the context of Balinese minority youth on Lombok is the audacious will to conjure invisible audiences and to manifest themselves in the company of demons. Having watched the heaving, boisterous procession, it sure seems that the pleasure and thrill that is palpably visible bubbles up from a collective sense of the outrageous audacity of it all. There is much laughter, but the conjuring of demons is serious business. Participants may even experience and see themselves with new eyes—perhaps as a little bigger, part of a larger collective body that is backed by powers that may be called upon in times of crisis.

The conjuring of audiences, both human and those situated beyond an ontological divide, is always risky (Howe 2000), but when this is done by a minority in a situation of simmering ethnoreligious tension, conflicting interests easily come into play (Telle 2016; Harnish 2014; Suprpto 2013). In Indonesia it has become a truism that democratization and the decentralization reforms since 1999 have turned everything into politics. This became all the more true with the introduction in 2005 of direct elections for village heads, mayors, district heads, and governors (Bush 2008). Despite the common complaint that politics is corrupting everything (Bubandt 2014), the competitive electoral climate has also given the demons greater public prominence. Although I have yet to meet a Balinese who did not marvel at the youthful will to realize impressive *ogoh-ogoh* puppets, they have also proved divisive (for a related discussion on the debates surrounding youthful displays of the gods in Taiwan, see Teri Silvio 2023). Even *ogoh-ogoh* aficionados readily admit that the puppets bring out raw feelings, making people hot-tempered and competitive. Occasionally these internal

conflicts have been fought out in the public realm, prompting separate processions and sacrificial rituals, including efforts to lure the demons to the other side.

To illustrate what is at stake in these conflicts over display, the situation that arose in 2009 is quite revealing and illuminates the major tensions that are at play to this day. However, few conflicts come out of the blue, and there had long been tension between the Ogoh-Ogoh Council of Mataram (DOM) and the Parisadha Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI), a nationwide council tasked with the promotion and standardization of Hinduism in Indonesia (Picard 2011). In the late 1980s, when urban artists began experimenting with making puppets, their efforts were enthusiastically supported both by senior members of the PHDI in Cakranegara and Mataram and by Balinese civil servants involved in the promotion of the performing arts. Local artists and sculptors had been impressed by the giant, colorful puppets they had seen in Denpasar and elsewhere in Bali, where such puppets emerged in the mid-1980s (Nozlopy 2004; Widana 2016).¹⁴ Despite their novelty, the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets quickly acquired religious clout by becoming integrated into the sequence of public Hindu New Year rituals. The first time they went on display was in 1992, when residents in six wards in West Cakranegara organized a small procession with six demon puppets to the Taman Mayura temple complex, where they took part in the Tawur Kesanga sacrifice (Kusuma 2003). Year by year, demons from other wards joined the procession and the sacrifice in which offerings are laid out in a mandala shape corresponding to the nine cardinal directions (*nawa sanga*), each direction associated with a Hindu deity, his/her key attributes, and emblematic color. For about a decade this arrangement worked relatively smoothly. But the proliferating demons became challenging to handle, and some found them a nuisance. In 2004, local Hindu authorities (PHDI) announced that they would no longer take responsibility for the *ogoh-ogoh* procession, based on the rationale that the puppets were not essential to the sequence of Hindu rituals culminating with Nyepi but merely a cultural practice popular among youth.

When PHDI pulled back, others stepped in to ride the wave of youthful interest in putting demons on display. The most tangible embodiment of these developments was the formation of the Ogoh-Ogoh Council of Mataram (DOM) in 2005, whose mission was spelled out in a booklet printed on yellow paper.¹⁵ Tapping into the groundswell of interest in *ogoh-ogoh*, DOM's founder aimed to make them more attractive for purposes of display by enhancing their aesthetic quality. Locating the "performing arts" (*seni budaya*) as the foundation of unity in the archipelago, in the past and in the future, the vision statement notes that "regional autonomy" permits each region to express its distinctiveness and to safeguard artistic diversity. Since art is a human need, artists have the obligation to express society's aspirations and anxieties. Thus, the DOM mission statement observes that "at a time when Indonesia has acquired a bad reputation in the eyes of the world, this is the time for Indonesia's artists, particularly those in Mataram, to demonstrate their creativity and ability to enhance the nation's dignity in the most desirable direction" (Kusuma 2005, 2). Besides accommodating the "hopes and anxieties" of *ogoh-ogoh* artists in Mataram, DOM will develop the aesthetic quality of *ogoh-ogoh* and other art forms to ensure their "strategic value in the field of tourism" (2005, 2). The latter aspiration is of

course highly reminiscent of the long history of branding Balinese arts as unique and commercially valuable assets (Picard 1996; Vickers 2011).

What is more interesting is the portrayal of the post-1999 democratic era of regional autonomy as permitting expressive freedom and the articulation of aspirations and anxieties, and the indirect reference to the communal conflicts and Islamist terror attacks on Bali in the early 2000s that hurt Indonesia's reputation as a tolerant Muslim-majority nation with great cultural diversity.¹⁶ A poor reputation adversely affects Lombok, whose economy is heavily dependent on international tourists—a diverse audience whose eyes and appetites increasingly shape local developments. Turning a bleak situation into an opportunity, Artha Kusuma, a Balinese painter, businessman, and aspiring politician, approached Muhammad Ruslan, the mayor of Mataram, to secure his blessing to form the association. During the mayor's reelection campaign for a second period (2005–10), Artha Kusuma served on the veteran Golkar politician's campaign team. Ruslan used the performing arts to promote the provincial capital as a progressive, multiethnic, and multireligious city. In a situation where the demons provoked hostile reactions from some Muslim groups, the mayor's support was important and strategic. But this also pushed the procession toward the public display of interethnic collaboration, a cultural celebration of "unity in diversity."¹⁷ Some Balinese were upset that the demons were becoming associated with party politics, while others felt that their sacred or religious character was sullied by being displayed as mere entertainment.

These issues came to a head in 2009 when the conflict between DOM and PHDI became exposed in public, and critics said that DOM was an acronym for a "special military zone" (Daerah Operasi Militer), likening the local situation to the longstanding armed conflict between the separatist movement in Aceh and the Indonesian armed forces. What catalyzed the situation was the coordination meeting for the procession, which came across as a political campaign event. The meeting opened with Artha Kusuma reading a statement by the mayor, who praised Balinese youth for their creativity but urged them to limit the consumption of alcohol to ensure an orderly procession, before a Muslim Golkar politician, campaigning for a seat in the provincial parliament, gave a speech and donated T-shirts for the procession. The next day, *Lombok Post* featured a piece in which "Mr. Tourism of West Nusa Tenggara" was quoted as saying that, "leading artists can help to birth talented new artists and ensure that the *ogoh-ogoh* become a major 'tourism brand.'" Participants were also given a booklet, *Art, Culture and Politics*, that featured campaign ads for two Golkar politicians. Printed on yellow paper, the color of the Golkar party, the distribution of this booklet was widely seen as inappropriate. Within days, banners rejecting the politization of *ogoh-ogoh* were put up in different areas of Cakranegara. Many were upset by the blunt attempt to harness the demons for political, and possibly financial, gain. In some neighborhoods, DOM banners and booklets were burned. During my two-hour visit to DOM's leader three days later, his phone rang six times, and three visitors came to discuss the tense situation. Suspecting that provocateurs had infiltrated DOM, the leaders now feared that the procession might be disrupted. Rather than relying on Balinese civilian security groups (*pecalang*), they agreed to request more police to secure the procession and end of year sacrifice to be held

in the major intersection (*catus pata*) in Cakranegara. Obtaining permission to hold the sacrifice in this highly auspicious location hinged on political connections and substantial funds. It was also rumored that PHDI in 2008 had requested to use the intersection for the end of year sacrifice but had not been given access and instead was relegated to another intersection.¹⁸

Strolling through the Banjar Pande Selatan neighborhood in West Cakranegara some days later, I ran into Wayan, a security guard I knew, who was watching teenagers working on the skeleton-like female demon Kala Gregek Tunggek, with wiry fingers and a gaping hole in the back. The previous evening, Wayan had attended a meeting in the “death temple” (*pura dalam*) in Karang Jongkang convened by PHDI in which it was agreed that the demon puppets should only be displayed within their neighborhoods followed by sacrifices in nine locations around the city. As Wayan explained, “PHDI is the highest, most representative body for Hindus. As for DOM, we see it as a guerrilla movement. Under the command of DOM, the procession is just a parade, with Sasak drummers and sexy *joget* dancers. All that is sacred [*sakral*] about the *ogoh-ogoh* is lost.” Strikingly, when newspapers reported that PHDI planned smaller parades and would provide financial support for nine sacrifices, they listed various organizations supporting the decision but made no mention of the Ogoh-Ogoh Council of Mataram (DOM), which refused to bow down.

Influential political and religious supporters were mobilized for the second planning meeting for the procession. The seventy representatives from wards making puppets were reassured that the procession would go ahead, being firmly supported by the mayor of Mataram. This time “Mr. Tourism” promised prizes to the three best puppets and to showcase them at an upcoming province-level tourism fair, but he also expressed regret that his support had proved so controversial. A distinguished temple priest who also serves as an educator in Hinduism (*binmas Hindu*) Jero Mangku Wardana gave a wry speech on how the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets mirror the demons. His comments that “big sacrifices nowadays require animals and ‘many envelopes,’ since the demons lately have become very modern” drew much laughter. By suggesting that money politics infiltrate rituals, he hinted that PHDI officials were not aloof from what they accused DOM leaders of succumbing to. Turning to the upcoming sacrifice, Jero Mangku stressed the cosmological significance of the main intersection in Cakranegara, which was likened to a mountain summit. Linking its historical significance at the center of a Balinese state to the present, the temple priest observed:

Lately, we have had difficulties convincing municipal authorities to close the intersection. They fear monetary losses. Facing a global monetary crisis, they should realize that it is better to close the intersection, shaped as a swastika, for a few hours once a year. This sacrifice is not merely done to protect the Hindu community. Not at all. Nowadays humanity behaves like sleepwalkers. The sacrifice pays our debts. By giving the demons food and drink they become satiated and less inclined to disturb us. We pray that they will leave us in peace.

Encouraging everyone to take part in the sacrifice in which some forty temple priests would participate, Jero Mangku concluded by reminding youth to remember

to sprinkle the demon puppet with holy water (*tirta peralina*) to remove its inner, vital presence immediately after the procession to avoid dangerous disturbances.

With different factions trying to recruit the demons to their side, *ogoh-ogoh* makers were effectively forced to display their loyalty. Many youth groups were hugely disappointed by the prospect of remaining within the neighborhood but did not want to be pawns in the rivalry between PHDI and the Ogoh-Ogoh Council of Mataram. Some pulled out, but the procession organized by DOM numbered 125 puppets. The large turnout pleased DOM leaders, yet most participants were probably mainly motivated by the desire to go on display. Once the puppets have been enlivened, they want to move about, to see and be seen by myriad others. In the company of a dazzling variety of demons, they flourish into something more. Only by gathering demons from near and far, manifesting their aesthetic prowess in public, could youth hope to unlock the magic, even transformative, powers of display.

Displaying demons

Taking place on the final day of the Saka year, the *ogoh-ogoh* procession is tied to cosmological cycles when the forces of the invisible world and the lives of humans are conjoined through display and sacrifice. The procession, “a celebration of demons” (Kapferer 1983), is a rare moment when Hindu Balinese youth manifest in public, showing off their aesthetic prowess. Located at a pregnant temporal juncture, the procession is steeped in a gay, frivolous atmosphere but also harbors darker intimations of demonic forces on the loose. This tension is built into the organizational logic of the procession, turning it into an alluring “spectacle” that mirrors the “invisible authority” of powerful spirit beings (Feuchtwang 2011, 65). As an interface where demonic forces may reveal themselves, the procession carries transformative potential.

Despite its simple organizational design, the sense that “something” might happen, that display may exceed its own boundaries, animates the *ogoh-ogoh* procession for participants and spectators alike. The procession is directed by one or two speakers, who briefly introduce the demon and his or her human entourage and invite the demon to come forward and spin around, before moving on. While each demon has been ritually enlivened before the procession, it flourishes into a fuller sense of life in the company of unknown demons from different wards and territories. Being lifted and spun around at dizzying speed, accompanied by gongs and frenetic drumbeats, the giant demon puppets seem to bask in the pleasure of display, their potential being realized through a brief, intense spurt of public fame (figure 8).

Typically, the spinning is particularly vigorous in front of the VIP tribune, where the mayor, police and military officers, high-level bureaucrats, and Hindu Balinese leaders are seated. Most demons cooperate, but there is also a deliberate testing of limits, as when an *ogoh-ogoh* puppet refuses to move forward, lingers too long before the VIP tribune, or moves dangerously close to the spectators lining the street and has to be forcefully restrained by police or Balinese guards. The sense that these powerful hidden forces can barely be reined in is a key performative dynamic. During the procession, youth show off their demon and let themselves be drawn into



Figure 8. Going on display, 2010. Photograph by Kari Telle.

its affective force field, taking on some of its wild, unrestrained power. Indeed, the procession exudes a sense of barely controlled order, with the demons threatening to spin out of control, creating chaos. The sense that display threatens to unleash potent forces that are destructive of human and natural orders is further heightened by the heavy presence of police and security personnel, who seem feeble and puny in relation to the giant puppets.

These elements of danger, risk, and uncertainty give the procession its transformative character as a public event where capricious demonic forces may make themselves known. As display draws out malevolent demonic forces, serving as a juncture or meeting place between different realms, the procession unsettles the boundary between entertainment and religion. But by the time the demons reach the intersection where Pejanggik meets Anak Agung Ngurah Karangasem Street and the procession ends, most have lost their spirited, sprightly appearance. Those who have lost a limb or are coming apart seem comical and pathetic, no longer fit to be on public display, much as their exhausted human entourage is now eager to return home. When the day turns to dusk, the puppets are placed at the entrance to their neighborhood and stand guard during Nyepi, the Day of Silence, when Hindus are expected to remain indoors and refrain from unnecessary activities (figure 9). Taking on a protective function, the demon puppets are recruited to ensure that people observe Nyepi and mark out their respective territories. Reaching their final stage, the demon puppets become protective presences, which is also consistent with how, “[A] Balinese ontology recognizes the capacity of things demonic to transform into things divine and for the divine to become demonic” (Kendall and Ariati 2020, 284). Shortly afterward, they are burned.

Conclusion

In sketching the brief career and life-cycle of the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets made by Balinese youth in urban Lombok, my purpose has been to demonstrate how display, as a practice of mediation, brings invisible forces into the realm of the sensory, involving risk and opportunities. Born of crossroads encounters, the demon puppets can be located at the intersection of youth culture, entertainment, and spiritual concerns. Part of their attraction, I have suggested, is precisely that the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets defy easy categorization and unsettle established categories, for instance between “entertainment” and “religion,” by being destructive and protective. Both Balinese youth and Hindu religious authorities struggle with what to make of these gloriously hybrid and rapidly proliferating demons, whose rules of fabrication and internal aesthetics are nonetheless reminiscent of how other Balinese sculptures, masks, and objects are ritually activated to attract various spirit beings (McGowan 2008; Telle 2016; Hobart 2005).

Being relatively ephemeral and only once being displayed in public, the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets do not accumulate spiritual clout over time, such as named ceremonial daggers (*keris*) (Pedersen 2008) or the eccentric mask *Jero Amerika*, vividly portrayed by Laurel Kendall and Ariati Ni Wayan Pasek (2020). What these shortlived demon puppets clearly possess, however, is a remarkable capacity to proliferate and to incite strong passions. The *ogoh-ogoh* puppets provide youth with an opportunity to display their aesthetic prowess to multiple audiences. Demanding engagement, the *ogoh-ogoh* puppets not only have expanded notions of the demonic but have also catalyzed heated conflicts over their roles in public life. Such internal conflicts are seen as particularly problematic when they are exposed in public, as they were in 2009 when



Figure 9. Demon placed at the entrance to the neighborhood during Nyepi, Cakranegara, 2009. Photograph by Kari Telle.

the conflict between DOM and PHDI resulted in separate processions and sacrificial rituals. As Gelgel, a Lombok Balinese friend in Cakranegara, wryly observed in 2009, “Before Nyepi we want to get rid of the demons, but now the *kala* arrive, the demons seem to win.”

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NOTES

1. This article draws on fourteen months of fieldwork between 2005 and 2018 based in Cakranegara and Mataram, West Lombok. Prior to this, I conducted sixteen months of fieldwork in rural Central Lombok, working mainly among Sasak Muslims.
2. McGowan’s (2008) primary focus is on the cosmological significance of the deposit boxes (*pedagingan*) placed near the crown of Balinese shrines, whose content includes paired statues and metal sheets.
3. Howe considers “extrinsic risks” to be “risks that accompany the enactment of a ceremony,” whereas “intrinsic risks” are “integral to the rite itself, part of its very essence” (2000, 69). In a Hindu Balinese context, rituals set in motion “certain kinds of forces which must then be channelled and controlled by the ritual’s managers” (Howe 2000, 75). This perspective can be extended to the process of making and displaying *ogoh-ogoh* puppets.
4. Located at the boundary between Cakranegara and Mataram, the Mataram Mall is situated adjacent to the old Balinese cemetery and the Karang Jongkang death temple (*pura dalem*). Part of the cemetery was demolished to make space for this mall, the first to be built in West Nusa Tenggara Province.
5. For an illuminating discussion of the mythology and masked performances involving Rangda in the context of the Galungan festival and the Calong Arang dance-drama in southern Bali, see

Hobart (2005). As Hobart argues, Rangda should not simply be seen as a malevolent figure but as a totalizing figure who unites destructive, reconstitutive, and protective forces.

6. Cooperation among Balinese and Sasak is a longstanding feature of several festivals and religious events on Lombok (see Gottowik 2019; Harnish 2014; Telle 2016).

7. My understanding of the imagination is informed by Castoriadis (1994) and his effort to dissolve the conceptual break between imagination and reality by theorizing the “radical imaginary.”

8. On Bali, some Balinese intellectuals are critical of the high sums of money spent on *ogoh-ogoh*, viewing this as a commercialization of Hindu religion (see Widana 2016). Nozlopy (2005) notes that the practice of requesting donations for making *ogoh-ogoh* may create tensions within the local community. On Lombok, there have been some concerns that funds from politicians and state officials have not been distributed downward but have been “eaten” by them along the way. Such allegations of corruption are quite common.

9. Hobart provides several examples of *pasupati mantra* that are recited to consecrate new Barong Ket masks in Bali (2003, 147 and 248 [appendix]).

10. See Kendall and Yang (2015) for an illuminating discussion of processes of animation with respect to Korean shaman paintings.

11. Davies describes *taksu* as “the spiritual inspiration and energy within a mask, puppet, character, or ceremonial weapon.” It is a condition that performers aspire to because it connotes “the artist’s being one with his or her musical instrument, mask, puppet or costume” (Davies 2007, 21).

12. For a discussion of the links between time cycles and demons, see Hobart (2003). She notes that demonic spirits (*kala*) are generally understood to be more potent than demons (*buta*), a Balinese term that also means to be blind.

13. Elsewhere (Telle 2009; 2011), I have described how the Balinese responded to the political uncertainties in the early post–New Order era by establishing a Hindu-oriented security force, Dharma Wisesa, headquartered in Cakranegara. According to the leaders, this group has the backing of an invisible “spirit army” (*bale samar*).

14. In both Bali and Lombok these initiatives were supported by the Parisadha Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI), a modernist, reformist organization tasked with unifying and promoting Hinduism in Indonesia. The original organization was established on Bali in 1959.

15. The organization’s Indonesian name is Dewan Ogoh-Ogoh Mataram (DOM).

16. For an interesting discussion of Balinese responses to the Islamist bomb attacks in 2002 and 2005 in relation to notions of balance and dependence on tourism, see Hornbacher (2009).

17. See Schlehe (2017) for a comparative discussion of what she calls “festivalization” to assert local culture while simultaneously promoting tourism in post-*reformasi* Indonesia.

18. Critics suspected that one reason PHDI in 2008 organized a big sacrifice in conjunction with Nyepi was linked to the gubernatorial elections, but this is difficult to verify. The discontent with PHDI at this time cannot be separated from the aborted initiative to build a big temple on the slope of the Mount Rinjani volcano and the perceived inability of PHDI to defend and promote Hindu Balinese interests (Telle 2014, 2016).

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