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A Balinese ‘Call to Prayer’: Sounding Religious Nationalism and Local Identity in the *Puja Tri Sandhya*

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Abstract: This article examines the *Puja Tri Sandhya*, a Balinese Hindu prayer that has been broadcast into the soundscape of Bali since 2001. By charting the development of the prayer, this paper summarizes the religious politics of post-independence Indonesia, which called for the Balinese to adopt the *Puja Tri Sandhya* as a condition for religious legitimacy in the new nation. The *Puja Tri Sandhya* is likened to a Balinese “call to prayer” and compared to Muslim and Christian soundings of religion in the archipelago to assert how these broadcasts sonically reify the national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (“Unity in Diversity”), and participate in a sounding of religious nationalism. Although these broadcasts are evidence of a state-sponsored form of religiosity, interviews concerning the degree to which individuals practice the *Puja Tri Sandhya* point to an element of secularism and position the prayer as an example that challenges the religion versus secularism dichotomy in studies of religious nationalism. This article also examines the sonic components of the *Puja Tri Sandhya* (when it is sounded, the vocal style, and the gender wayang and genta bell accompaniment), to argue how these elements infuse this invented display of religiosity with authority and facilitate a mediation between technology, space, and local identity amidst national religious requirements. Exploration of the gender wayang accompaniment in particular, further confirms the contrived nature of the *Puja Tri Sandhya* and demonstrates how technologies used to broadcast the prayer have had a significant impact on the gender wayang musical tradition itself.



Citation: Hynson, Meghan. 2021. A Balinese ‘Call to Prayer’: Sounding Religious Nationalism and Local Identity in the *Puja Tri Sandhya*. *Religions* 12: 668. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12080668>

Academic Editor: Heather MacLachlan

Received: 1 July 2021

Accepted: 4 August 2021

Published: 23 August 2021

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Keywords: religion; music; *Puja Tri Sandhya*; Bali; religious nationalism; soundscape; mediation; adat; gender wayang; Indonesia; identity; religious politics

1. Introduction

Although religiously diverse, Indonesia is home to the world’s single largest population of Muslims. The Islamic call to prayer, or *azan*, is broadcast five times a day from mosques, TV stations, radios, and cell phone apps, and is a prevalent indicator of faith and religious identity that fills the soundscape in many parts of the nation—but it is not the only one. Catholic regions in Indonesia use loudspeakers and other media to broadcast church news, Bible readings, and the *Angelus* prayer, a set of recited devotions to the Virgin Mary sounded three times a day. While the practices of sounding the *azan* and *Angelus* are centuries-old, a distinctly modern form of sounding religion has arisen on the Hindu island of Bali. Since 2001, the *Puja Tri Sandhya* (hereafter PTS), a Balinese Hindu mantra accompanied by *gender wayang* music and a *genta* bell, has been broadcast from loudspeakers on village meeting halls (*banjar*) during the three transition times of the day known as *sandyakala* (6 a.m., 12 p.m., and 6 p.m.).¹ Given this relatively recent addition to the Balinese soundscape, several questions arise: What is the function and impact of this Balinese “call to prayer?” How does the PTS relate to other technologically-aided soundings of religion in the archipelago? What role do music and sound in PTS broadcasts play in mediating technology, space, and the expression of national and local identities?

To answer these questions, this article examines the development of the *Puja Tri Sandhya* and demonstrates how PTS broadcasts play a multifaceted role in negotiating religious politics and sounding religiosity, national solidarity, and local identity. It begins

with an overview of the religious politics of post-independence Indonesia, which describe how the Balinese religion was forced to reform and adopt the PTS as a condition for religious legitimacy in the new nation. By comparing this Balinese “call to prayer” to Muslim and Christian soundings of religion in the archipelago, the function of PTS broadcasts is asserted to sonically reify the national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (“Unity in Diversity”) and mark participation in a sounding of religious nationalism—albeit a pluralistic one. Although these broadcasts are evidence of a state-sponsored form of religiosity, interviews concerning the degree to which individuals practice the *Puja Tri Sandhya* point to an element of secularism and position the prayer as an example that challenges the religion versus secularism dichotomy in studies of religious nationalism.

This article also examines the sonic components of the *Puja Tri Sandhya* (when it is sounded, the vocal style, and the gender wayang and genta bell accompaniment), as “the distribution of particular sounds, their audibility, and their value—reminds us that configurations of sound have political implications for a public” (Samuels et al. 2010, p. 339). The music and sounds used to accompany the PTS are argued to infuse the invented display of religiosity with authority and facilitate a mediation between technology, space, and local identity. It is here that the complexities of Balinese identity in the 21st century are revealed, untangling how the PTS allows the Balinese to retain local *adat* customs while also fulfilling nationalist religious requirements. Exploration of the gender wayang accompaniment in particular, further confirms the contrived nature of the *Puja Tri Sandhya* and demonstrates how technologies used to broadcast the prayer have had a significant impact on the gender wayang musical tradition.

2. The Political Origins of the *Puja Tri Sandhya*

Understanding the emergence of the PTS requires an examination of the religious politics at the start of Indonesian independence. The formation of the modern Indonesian state began after centuries of Dutch colonial rule and a short period of Japanese control, when the national revolution of 1945–1949 finally resulted in Indonesian independence. In addition to the challenges of economically and politically forming a new nation, Indonesia’s first president, Sukarno, was confronted with how to bring together a culturally and religiously diverse archipelago of over 17,000 islands. This was complicated by Islamic groups (*golongan Islam*) vying for an Islamic state and other nationalist groups (*golongan kabangsaan*) advocating a secular state in which religious and secular affairs were kept separate to accommodate the large number of Christians and animistic religions in the archipelago (Tarling 1999; Aragon 2000; McDaniel 2017; and Picard 2011a, p. 483).

To solve this problem, Sukarno instituted a set of constitutional laws, the *Pancasila*, with the goal of building nationalism and unifying a wide range of ethnic tribes that had no common language, currency, or culture (McDaniel 2010, p. 96). From *panca* or “five” and *sila* or “principle”, the five principles of the constitution included: (1) belief in one supreme God; (2) just and civilized humanitarianism; (3) nationalism based on the unity of Indonesia; (4) representative democracy through consensus; and (5) social justice (Kipp and Rodgers 1987, p. 17). Under this constitution, Indonesia was formed as a diverse and pluralistic nation, and participating in a religion (regardless of which one) was part and parcel of being an Indonesian citizen in the new state. This pride in ethnic and religious diversity became the bedrock for Indonesian nationalism and their national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, or “Unity in Diversity”.

The first of the *Pancasila* principles, “belief in one supreme God” or *Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*, invoked monotheism and joined constitutional law and the national sharing of religious faith to reach several political ends. It provided a concession for Muslim leaders, who wanted Indonesia to become an Islamic state, as the principle called for a common belief in one God without making any particular faith the religion of the state (using the Indonesian word *tuhan* and not the Arabic term *allah* to denote God). In order to enforce the first *Pancasila* principle, Sukarno established the *Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia* (KAGRI), or Ministry of Religious Affairs, in 1946. Although the *Pancasila* had guaranteed religious

freedom, one of the first tasks of the KAGRI organization was to restrict the legal acceptance of Indonesian religions and to categorize religious communities as either *agama* (belief systems having a name, a rational doctrinal philosophy, and a monotheistic god) or *adat* (practices and beliefs founded on local customs and rituals and not recognized as formal religious practice by the state).²

The problem behind this categorization, as anthropologist Michel Picard (2011a) points out, was that ideas of what constituted an acceptable religion, or *agama*, were influenced by Islamic and Christian models. For example, having a holy book, a system of law, congregational worship, and a belief in one God. In this way, Islam “succeeded in imposing their own conception of the relationship between religion and the state by framing and shaping all debates about religion” (Picard 2011a, p. 483). The acceptable religions at the time, were Islam, Protestantism, and Roman Catholicism, which posed a problem for many minority religions with belief systems founded on shamanistic or animistic practices including Dayak, Torajan, Karo Batak, and others, including the Balinese, who followed traditional ways of worshipping spirits and ancestors (Kipp and Rodgers 1987, p. 21; Kipp 1996; Pringle 2004, p. 64; Weinstock 1981, 1987). As a result, many of these indigenous religions were not included on the list of acceptable monotheistic religions outlined by the government and, as a result, were forced to convert to one of the major recognized religions or devise a way to legitimize their own. Many that did convert were able to retain their local beliefs and practices by disguising them as *adat*, or cultural custom.³ Others such as the Balinese, who chose to legitimize their belief system, endured a long process of religious reformation (see Picard 2011a, 2011b).

2.1. Legitimizing Balinese Hinduism

Obtaining religious legitimacy in Bali presented a problem. The Balinese orthopraxy of rituals including music, dance, and constant ceremonial activity devoted to the worshipping of ancestors and deities to ensure prosperity and fertile rice fields were classified as *adat* and the belief system was subsequently determined to be *belum beragama*, or “not yet a religion” in 1952 (Howe 2001). Rather than convert to Islam or Christianity, the Balinese argued that they were followers of Hinduism. In the words of Clifford Geertz (1973), this resulted in an “internal conversion”, as the Balinese reformed their religion to be recognized as an official *agama*. One of the first issues amongst Balinese intellectuals was to resolve controversy over the proper name of their religion, moving from *Agama Siwa* (Religion of Shiva), to *Agama Tirta* (Religion of Holy Water), and eventually settling on *Agama Hindu Bali* (Balinese Hinduism). It was also during this time that the *Madjelis Hinduisme* (Hinduism council) was established and aimed at adapting Hinduism in Bali and removing *adat* and animistic practices from the Balinese religion (Picard 2011a, pp. 486–91).

To achieve legitimacy, reformist organizations looked to Islam and Christianity as acceptable models of religion and redefined the Balinese belief system by: systematizing Balinese religious doctrines and scriptures; creating a creed known as the *Panca Sraddha*, or “Five Beliefs” (similar to the five pillars of Islam); simplifying rituals and translating Indian religious texts into Indonesian; standardizing Balinese theology and prayers performed at temple ceremonies such as the *Panca Sembah*, or “five prayers”; initiating the religious greeting *Om Swasti Astu*, a Balinese version of the Muslim greeting *As-salāmu ‘alaykum*; and promoting the god *Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa* as their monotheistic deity; and adopting the PTS as their daily prayer (Picard 2011a, p. 497; Lanus 2014, p. 266; Bakker 1997, p. 19). As a result of these efforts, which spanned from 1958 to 1963, the newly reformed and renamed religion, *Agama Hindu Bali*, was recognized as a state-sanctioned religion of Indonesia in 1963 (Picard 2011a, pp. 486–91). Later, this would again change to *Agama Hindu*, in order to make the classification accessible to other Indonesian ethnic groups (Ibid., p. 505).

On 23 February 1959, Balinese political and religious elites established the Parisada Dharma Hindu Bali (PDHB), which became the Parisada Hindu Dharma (PHD) in 1964 as the official name of the Balinese religion was changed from *Agama Hindu Bali* to *Agama Hindu*. The organization then became the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) in

1986, in order to officialize the national scope of the Hindu religion in Indonesia. The PHDI would later oversee additional ethnic groups from Java, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi wishing to join the classification of Hindu in Indonesia (Dana 2005, p. 12; Schulte Nordholt 2007, p. 22).

2.2. The Puja Tri Sandhya

It was by reflecting on Muslim practices such as the five-time daily prayer, or *salat*, that the question of whether Balinese Hindus had a daily prayer arose. In response to this, key figures in the early reformation era helped compose the *Puja Tri Sandhya*.⁴ According to Sugriwa (1967), *tri* means “three”, *san* means “good” or “word of God”, and *dhya* means “meditate”, so *tri sandhya* means “to meditate, three times, good thoughts to God” (Sugriwa 1967, p. 1).⁵ The concept of *tri sandhya* has long been found in South Asian Sanskrit and Old Javano-Balinese texts referring to the practice of three daily acts of worship during the transition points of the day (dawn, noon, and dusk), but prior to the 1950s, common Balinese people did not recite mantras and did not have a standardized prayer (Lanus 2014, p. 243). Recitation of mantra was a practice reserved for priests, and instruction in the teachings of Balinese religion had only taken place within the confines of the Brahman-caste compounds, or *griya*.⁶

Upon its incorporation into the newly reformed Balinese religion, the practice of worshipping during the three points of the day (*tri sandhya*) was combined with a newly constructed mantra to create the PTS for the Balinese public (See Lanus 2014 for a complete account on the formation of the mantra). One of the first places that the PTS was instituted was in Balinese schools, as the spirit of the *Pancasila* became the pivotal aim of the new national education system. The PHDI enforced that Balinese school children be instructed in the Hindu creed (*Panca Sraddha*) and in Hindu doctrine, and throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the PTS became a daily prayer for school children (Landmann 2012, pp. 146, 212, 259).⁷ By targeting Indonesia’s youth first, children were immediately indoctrinated into Balinese religious reforms and the process of “internal conversion” was successful in one generation. As a result, the PTS is now perceived as a traditional component of the Balinese Hindu religion that many do not know the history behind, representing a clear example of an “invented tradition” in the words of Hobsbawm and Ranger (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). It is because of the loss of this history that Balinese interpretations behind why the PTS is broadcast into the soundscape tend to claim its function is to combat the *azan*; however, the history presented above and the uniform ways in which it is sounded like the *azan* and *Angelus*, suggest another interpretation. This will be discussed more below.

In addition to instituting the mantra in schools, the PHDI has also played a major role in the dissemination and broadcast of the PTS through the radio and loudspeakers. Since the 1980s, the Tri Sandhya has been broadcast on Balinese radio stations such as RRI (*Radio Republik Indonesia*) and more recently on televised stations such as Bali TV (Lanus 2014). In 1992, the Tri Sandhya became part of *Lomba Desa Adat*, or the “Traditional Village Contest”, and was assessed on the degree to which the implementation of the mantra and its related worship activities were well socialized. The PHDI participates in evaluating these events, suggesting that part of the purpose of the competition is to encourage the population to participate in state-sanctioned forms of religiosity (Reisnour 2018, p. 15). It is from the start of these contests that Balinese *banjar*, or community meeting halls, have been equipped with loudspeakers (see Figure 1 of loudspeakers on the Bale Banjar Kawan) (Lanus 2014, p. 261).



Figure 1. Loudspeaker on the Balinese community meeting hall in Banjar Kawan, Mas, Bali. Photo by the author.

Since 2001, many, but not all Balinese banjar have begun broadcasting the PTS at 6 a.m., 12 p.m., and 6 p.m. The first broadcasts of the PTS reportedly took place in north Bali in Desa Kalisada, Buleleng Regency. It was conveyed by village leader I Made Toya of Desa Kalisada that the decision to project the Tri Sandhya each day at 6 a.m., 12 p.m., and 6 p.m. came from the 8th Maha Sabha meeting of BIMAS Hindu and Buddha (*Direktorat Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Hindu dan Buddha*, The Association for Hindu and Buddhist Community Guidance) in Jakarta in 2001. Toya's father was the *klian adat*, or "village leader", at the time and was responsible for carrying out mandates from national meetings. Toya described how Buleleng regency was one of the first regencies to begin this practice, as the region is home to a large population of Balinese Muslims and daily broadcasts of the Islamic *azan* are ubiquitous along the northern coast (interview with I Made Toya, 15 July 2018) (see Figure 2 for Ukhwatul Mosque with loudspeakers in Lovina, north Bali. Photo by the author).

This may suggest that Balinese Hindus sought to reclaim the soundscape in the north and combat the sounds of the Islamic *azan*, and this is the sort of Hindu-nativist reason offered by many Balinese regarding why the PTS began to be broadcast. This is not a surprising interpretation considering the increase in the Muslim population on Bali, the Muslim extremist groups who have supported religious violence such as the 2002 and 2003 Bali bombings, and that religious tensions remain high in the archipelago despite efforts toward a peaceful pluralistic democracy (see Hefner 2019). *Ajeg Bali*, a cultural revival movement and period of self-empowerment amongst Hindu Balinese that began after the Bali bombings in 2002, may also be the reason for such interpretations (Allen and Palermo 2005). According to Reuter 2009, *Ajeg Bali* was spawned by "political liberalisation and decentralisation, the 'touristification' of local culture, increasing dependence on the global

economy, the threat of terrorism after the Bali bomb, the influx of Muslim labour migrants and fears of an Islamisation of the Indonesian state” (Reuter 2009, p. 1). Interpretations of the PTS as a response to the *azan* are therefore not surprising, but they fail to consider the political history behind the PTS and seem to be the response offered by respondents marred in current events and fearing encroaching threats of Islamization. Given the political underpinnings of the prayer and the mandate to begin PTS broadcasts in 2001, a year before the start of *Ajeg Bali*, an alternate explanation behind why these broadcasts began is needed.



Figure 2. Ukhwatul Mosque with loudspeakers in Lovina, north Bali. Photo by the author.

Combative claims against the *azan* are also not substantiated when listening to the soundscape of Bali. Broadcasts of the *azan* and PTS occur at different times of the day, and although broadcasts of the *azan* may seem to eclipse the ritual life in Bali in certain areas where there is a heavy population of Muslims, these broadcasts of the *azan* tend to be amplified at a much lower volume than in other parts of Indonesia. The Balinese Hindu soundscape of the island is still very alive, as gamelan is constantly wafting over rice fields, the sounds of wooden *kul kul* can be heard calling worshippers to temple, and loudspeakers cacophonously project *kakawin* recitation and other activities happening at temple anniversaries, or *odalan*.⁸

3. The PTS and Sounding Religious Nationalism

So why did Balinese Hindus decide to start projecting the PTS into the soundscape at the turn of the 21st century? In an interview with the *ketua*, or head, of the PHDI in Bali, Dr. I Gusti Ngurah Sudiana, in 2016, I was told that the PTS shares no connection to the Islamic call to prayer and is not projected to combat or mimic it (I Gusti Ngurah Sudiana, personal

communication, 1 July 2016). I began to consider how the PTS might promote unity after encountering the Puja Mandala, a complex containing five places of worship for each of the recognized religions of Indonesia. This complex, located in Nusa Dua, Bali, contains the Great Mosque of Ibn Battuta, the Catholic Church of Mary Mother of All Nations, the Buddhist Guna Vihara, the Protestant Christian Church in Bali (GKPB) Bukit Doa, and the Jagat Natha Temple. It is meant to show that there is religious harmony in Bali and to facilitate visitors from around Indonesia and the world to continue worshipping according to their beliefs (“Puja Mandala, Message of Tolerance from the Island of Bali” 28 April 2021).

The PTS continued to emerge as a symbol of unity, when a Brahman-caste businessman from the village of Mas, Ida Bagus Oka Geni Jaya, responded to my inquiry concerning the decision to broadcast the PTS by saying “I don’t know why they started projecting it, but do you know that the Catholics in eastern Indonesia also sound their prayer three times a day?”⁹ Stunned to hear that it was not just Hindus and Muslims sounding their religion, I travelled to the island of Flores to investigate, and soon learned that Catholic communities around Indonesia were broadcasting the *Doa Malaikat Tuhan*, or *Angelus Domini Nuntiavit Mariae*, commonly referred to as the *Angelus*. The *Angelus* dates back to the 1300s in Italy and is a Catholic devotional prayer to the Virgin Mary. In Indonesia, the *Angelus* is sounded three times a day at 6 a.m., 12 p.m., and 6 p.m. and begins with the ringing of bells followed by the prayer recited in Latin or in other regions, Indonesian. It is broadcast from loudspeakers affixed to churches in Eastern Indonesia (I experienced this firsthand in Flores) and in other Catholic-dominant communities such as those found in Java, Sulawesi, and Sumatra, to name a few (see Figure 3—images of loudspeakers on churches in Labuan Bajo, Flores).¹⁰ After learning of the *Angelus*, it became clear that sounding religiosity in Indonesia was not just a Muslim and Hindu practice, but a pan-archipelagic phenomenon.



Figure 3. Loudspeakers that project the *Angelus* on the Paroki Maria Bunda Segala Bangsa Church (left) and the Gereja Katolik Paroki Roh Kudus (right) in Labuan Bajo, Flores. Photos by the author.

Evidence of this can be found in the way that the Islamic *azan*, Catholic *angelus*, and the PTS are broadcast uniformly, as they are not only broadcast through loudspeakers, but also on local radio stations and on TV. In Bali, the PTS can be heard on nearly all of the radio stations and in Muslim regions of Indonesia, and the *azan* interrupts public programming everywhere. While I have not personally heard the *Angelus* on the radio (I have heard the PTS and the *azan*), ethnomusicologist Emilie Rook has reported that the *Angelus* is broadcast on the Medan-based radio station Radio Maria Indonesia in Sumatra (Rook 2020, pp. 303–4).¹¹ A similar practice has been adopted on TV stations, where efforts have been made to visually broadcast each “call to prayer” in a uniform manner.¹² This is especially

apparent when comparing TV broadcasts of the *azan* and PTS, as both videos depict the beauty of Muslim or Hindu life by showing images of mosques or sacred Balinese sites and temples accompanied by the words of the *azan* or PTS in Arabic or Sanskrit with Indonesian translation below.¹³ Sounding religion through broadcasts, TV and radio stations, and even on cell phone apps, constitutes various “technologies of listening” (borrowing from Hirschkind 2006). We cannot devalue the implications that these sounds have, as Hirschkind (2006) reminds us that “the affects and sensibilities honed through popular media practices such as listening to cassette sermons are as infrastructural to politics and public reason as are markets, associations, formal institutions, and information networks” (Hirschkind 2006, p. 9).

With this idea in mind, I assert that the PTS and these uniform soundings of religiosity across Indonesia are part of a larger state-sponsored project to create collective identity and an “ethical soundscape” that values pluralism through a unique form of sounding religious nationalism (Hirschkind 2006). “Nationalism”, as defined by Omer Atalia and Jason A. Springs in their *Religious Nationalism: A Reference Handbook*, is a “group identity defined in terms of political, ethnic, or cultural identities, associations, and attachment . . . identified by common features that a group of people recognize as holding them together as a nation (“a people”)” (Omer and Springs 2013, p. 1). In Indonesia, sounding one’s “call to prayer” lends to a cohesive group identity through the shared practice of sounding religiosity; however, they represent a unique form of sounding *religious nationalism* in the way that they represent the discourses that center religion at the heart of Indonesian nationalism. These discourses, according to Roger Friedland are what define religious nationalism, as it is “not merely an ideology; it is also a set of discursive practices by which the territorial identity of a state and the cultural identity of the people whose collective representation it claims are constituted as a singular fact” (Friedland 2001, pp. 126, 142; 2002, pp. 386–87, also see Brubaker 2012).

An example of how rhetoric about religion has penetrated Indonesian nationalist discourse can first be found in the constitution. As mentioned above, religiosity was made part of the nationalist agenda through the first *Pancasila* principle, “belief in one God”. By making this the first component of the Indonesian constitution, this principle politicized religion and made professing, believing, and participating in one of the nationally recognized faiths part and parcel of being an Indonesian citizen.¹⁴ This made pluralism a condition within the country and the bedrock for the nation. Indonesia does not recognize atheism or agnosticism, and citizens must claim a religious affiliation on their residential identity card or KTP (*Kartu Tanda Penduduk*). One can therefore argue that the technologies used to sound the PTS, *azan*, and *Angelus* reify and put into practice the nationalist values concerning pluralism that are outlined in the constitution.

This assertion is also bolstered by examining the national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, or “Unity in Diversity,” which unifies the Indonesian people by promoting a shared celebration of ethnic and religious diversity.¹⁵ In fact, this motto carries an undertone of pluralistic acceptance, as it was adapted from an Old Javanese poem, *Kakawin Sutasoma*, which was written by Mpu Tantular during the reign of the Majapahit empire in the 14th century to promote tolerance between Hindus and Buddhists. The adoption of such a motto suggests that pluralism was the foundation for Indonesian nationalism from its inception. Given the politicization of religion in both the constitution and the national motto, interpretations of sounding religion in the archipelago take on unifying function rather than a combative one. I therefore suggest that soundings of the *azan*, PTS, and *Angelus* reify and put Indonesian nationalist discourses into practice, as each broadcast simultaneously demonstrates “unity” through the shared practice of sounding and “diversity” in the different ways each religion has chosen to sound their prayer.¹⁶

What is interesting within the context of Indonesia is how religious nationalism has been created from pluralism. Studies of religious nationalism typically focus on countries that share a single faith, and as Omer and Springs note in their 2013 book *Religious Nationalism: A Reference Handbook*, many people believe that “religion and nationalism

should not be mixed because doing so leads to dangerous, fanatical, and uniquely explosive results”, or, in the words of Roger Friedland, “states armed with powers of the divine” committed to the dogmas of a single faith (Omer and Springs 2013, p. 1 and Friedland 2002, p. 125). Examples of religious nationalism unified by a single shared faith have led some scholars to position religious nationalism as the binary of secular nationalism (Juergensmeyer 1996, pp. 26–44); however, Omer and Springs (2013) and political scientist Scott Hibbard (2010) have attempted to debunk this binary opposition, stating that it is “important to challenge the secularism thesis that informs many common assumptions that politics and religion inhabit separate spheres in the modern era” (Omer and Springs 2013, p. 5). Sounding religion in Indonesia represents such a case.

Omer and Springs define “secularism” as modernist practices that lead to the influence of religion in public and political life to gradually disappear, but this distinction is blurred in Indonesia. Religion is still present in public and political life and in nationalist discourse, yet at the same time, religious practice is subjective and takes place in the private sphere. This point is supported by Nicole Reissner’s 2018 dissertation, in which she explores the PTS as a space for Balinese Hindus to engage in self-making and world-making outside of the disciplining forces of the religion and the state (Reissner 2018, pp. 149–210). She notes that performing the PTS is not a doctrinal requirement (Ibid., p. 170). During broadcasts of the PTS and *Angelus*, individuals are given agency and the freedom to choose the degree to which they observe the broadcasts and can speak out for or against them. In a conversation with esteemed gamelan teacher I Made Lasmawan in 2019, I was told how he awoke one morning at 6am and was startled by how loud the PTS was blaring from the local *banjar*. He called the leader of the *banjar* to ask him what he was doing, and the leader responded that he was going to the bathroom. Upon hearing this, Pak Lasmawan asked that he turn the volume down if he was not going to take the prayer seriously. The leader obliged and Pak Lasmawan suffered no consequence. While humorous, this story demonstrates that observance of the PTS varies from person to person. Some take a moment for reflection or to recite the prayer, while others hear it and do nothing.

This was not the case in North Sumatra in 2018, when a Chinese-Indonesian woman of Buddhist faith complained of the volume of the *azan* in her neighborhood. She was later found guilty of blasphemy against a recognized religion in Indonesia under articles 156 and 156A on the criminal code on blasphemy (“BREAKING: Buddhist Woman Imprisoned for Complaining about Mosque’s Speaker” 2018). Stories such as this may suggest some truth behind the religion versus secularism model, but as shown within the case of the PTS (and the same goes for the *Angelus*), religion and nationalism can work symbiotically to support the nation and religious freedoms simultaneously.

4. Mediating Local Identity through the PTS

With over three hundred ethnic groups, Indonesia is home to a panoply of linguistic, cultural, and religious identities. The ways in which religion (*agama*) and local ethnic customs (*adat*) are balanced and negotiated have been a hot topic in studies of post-independence Indonesia. In his book, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism in Indonesia*, Charles Farhadian describes how negotiating social and personal identities becomes an important task for the maintenance of Balinese distinctives, particularly as the Balinese encounter attempts by the government at Indonesianization and Islamization (Farhadian 2005, p. 5). Add to this the process of Hinduization and religious reformation of post-independence Indonesia in which reformists sought to remove *adat* (traditions, customs, and values) characteristics and local customs from Balinese belief, and one might ask how the Balinese have managed to maintain local identity and traditional cultural beliefs while conforming to national standards.

By examining the sonic elements of the PTS, broadcasts of the PTS via loudspeakers, television, and radio represent a mediation between technology, space, and local identity. In his article “Technology and the Production of Islamic Space: The Call to Prayer in Singapore,” Tong Soon Lee demonstrates how the use of loudspeakers in Singapore are

closely linked to the politics of religious and ethnic expression, saying that “The call to prayer does not merely inform Muslims that it is time to pray, it is a statement that says ‘we’ are Muslims” (Lee 1999, p.93). Similarly, Anderson Sutton in his 1996 article, “Interpreting Electronic Sound Technology in the Contemporary Javanese Soundscape,” argues that the use of electronic sound technologies open a range of possibilities for indigenous values to be reinforced (Sutton 1996, p. 250). Drawing from both Lee and Sutton, I assert that PTS broadcasts are a not only a statement that say “we” are Indonesians, but also an expression of local Balinese values and identity. A closer look at the sonic components of the PTS demonstrate how *adat* cultural elements and a sense of Balinese-ness is retained through broadcasts.

The times of day that the mantra is sounded are a good example of this. According to traditional Balinese belief, 6 p.m., 12 p.m., and 6 p.m., are the three transition times of the day known as *sunya antara* (also commonly referred to as *sandyakala* or *sandhyawela*). *Sunya* meaning “empty, void” and *antara* meaning “between”, these times are transition points of the day and are believed to be fraught with danger and impurity (Zoetmulder 1982). One is supposed to avoid leaving the home or crossing an intersection during these times, as the god of time, *Kala*, is thought to be present and one is more vulnerable to his wrath in these moments.¹⁷ While living in a Balinese Brahmin-caste compound during my doctoral fieldwork, I was often told to wait for the PTS to be finished before I left the house and it was common to stall for 5–10 min until it was over. Interestingly, this seemed to be the chief concern signified by the PTS, rather than taking time to reflect spiritually, recite the mantra, or pray.

The vocal technique used to sing the mantra, along with the *gender wayang* and *genta* bell accompaniment, also play an important role in sounding local identity and in bringing power and authority to an invented display of religiosity. In his book *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Schafer 1994), Canadian composer and environmentalist R. Murray Schafer discusses the notion that soundscape includes the listener’s *perception* of sounds heard and how sounds have a rich symbolism for humans (Schafer 1994, pp. 5, 10). This idea is important within the context of the PTS, as the music and sounds used to accompany the broadcasts signify deep religious and cultural meanings for the Balinese. Each of the musical elements within the PTS are part of the *panca gita*, or “five sounds”, heard in the innermost courtyard of a Balinese temple (*jeroan*).

In his article “‘Cultural Tourism’ in Bali: Cultural Performances as Tourist Attraction” (1990), Michel Picard discusses how the Balinese response to cultural tourism was also an extension of religious rationalization in Bali, as the arts were categorized into a sacred–secular continuum, which deemed some art forms suitable for tourist consumption and others reserved for religious observation. This continuum is helpful in understanding the sanctity of the sounds used to accompany the PTS, as the innermost courtyard of the temple (*jeroan*) is where the *wali*, or “sacred, religious dances” and performances take place. This is opposed to the music and dances of the *jaba tengah* (“middle courtyard”), where *bebali* (“ceremonial”) activities take place and the *jabaan* (“outermost courtyard”), where *bali-bali*, or “secular dances” for spectacle occur (Picard 1990, p. 66).

In the *jeroan*, which is the holiest, most sacred part of the temple, sacred shadow puppet theater and *gender wayang* music combine with the ritual actions of the priest during the main blessing ceremony.¹⁸ As if sonically mimicking the sacred space of the *jeroan*, the PTS starts with Balinese *gender wayang* music and *genta*, a sacred bell sounded by Balinese priests while performing ritual chanting in the temple. The singing style used to recite the PTS is also the melismatic *kakawin* style used for Balinese temple celebrations and anniversaries.¹⁹ The mantra, *genta*, and *gender wayang* therefore have a deep and pervasive influence on the spiritual authority of the PTS, as they function as “keynote” sounds, to borrow from Murray Schafer. These sounds therefore carry a deep religious significance and “do not have to be heard consciously; they are overheard but cannot be overlooked, for keynote sounds become listening habits in spite of themselves” (Schafer 1994, p. 9).

When interpreting Schafer's meaning, I posit that these sounds accompanying the PTS signal a sense of sanctity and authenticity, as they subconsciously transport the listener to the sacred space of the innermost courtyard of the Balinese temple. They therefore bring power and authority to the PTS, despite it being an invented display of religiosity. Furthermore, the use of music to accompany the PTS is evidence of Balinese *adat* beliefs, as music is viewed as an offering and a way of calling and communicating with the gods and ancestors. This is opposed to the legal and spiritual dimensions of the Islamic tradition, in which instrumental music is considered controversial (*makruh/mubah*) or even forbidden (*haram*) and deliberately set apart from aspects of worship such as the *azan*.²⁰ Following this logic, music and sound in broadcasts of the PTS facilitate a mediation between technology, the soundscape, and the conveyance of local identity amidst conforming to national religious requirements.

5. Technology and the Influence of the PTS on the *gender wayang* Tradition of Bali

While *gender wayang* music has played a significant role in bringing authority to the PTS, broadcasts of the PTS through various technologies have also had a major effect on the *gender wayang* musical tradition itself. Broadcasts of the PTS have become so ubiquitous, that many children hear the PTS each day and are now eager to learn to play *gender wayang*. In particular, they want to learn how to play the song that accompanies the PTS. Nearly all recordings of the Tri Sandhya that are broadcast on the radio, TV, and *banjar* loudspeakers combine the mantra with the *gender wayang* piece Merak Ngelo.²¹ According to the famous *gender wayang* musician and teacher I Wayan Suweca, Merak Ngelo has become so synonymous with the PTS that many call the piece *Gending Tri Sandhya* or the "Puja Tri Sandhya song".²² PTS broadcasts have resulted in Merak Ngelo becoming incredibly famous, to the extent that Merak Ngelo is often a required piece, or *gending wajib*, for *gender wayang* competitions (Gold 2016 and interview with I Wayan Suweca, 6 June 2016).

This information demonstrates the dramatic effect that technology can have on a musical tradition, as historically, few children were interested in playing *gender wayang* and the Merak Ngelo piece held little fame or religious significance. According to Gold (1998, 2016), the Merak Ngelo piece was formed from a number of influences and even traveled overseas and back to Bali before it became a traditional part of the repertoire. Suweca had learned it in America from John Badanes and then taught it to his father, the famous Kayu Mas *gender wayang* player I Wayan Konolan (1931–2008). The entire piece was composed by the famous *gender* player I Wayan Lotring from Kuta, who borrowed influences from Tunjuk, Tabanan, where I Nyoman Sumandhi (a famous puppeteer from the region) learned the piece. The end section of the piece is said to come from the village of Mas, Gianyar. In the traditional repertoire, Merak Ngelo is not particularly religious and is typically a musical composition played for the instrumental overture to the shadow play (*tabuh petegak*). This makes it a strange choice for the PTS, as pieces such as Alasharum, Penyacah Parwa, or Tabuh Gari (Sudamala) would be more appropriate choices given that they are structurally associated with the religious language of the shadow puppeteer. Why then was Merak Ngelo chosen to accompany the PTS?

According to Suweca, Merak Ngelo may have been chosen because the piece is not too slow or fast and has three main sections that align with the mantra. At the time it was chosen, his father, I Wayan Konolan, was working as the music advisor at RRI (*Radio Republik Indonesia*) in the 1980s. Suweca had just taught his father the piece, who then taught it to the *gender wayang* group at the radio station. This group also played for TVRI (*TV Republic Indonesia*) and in 1983, Konolan suggested that the group play the piece in its extended version. Konolan had created an introduction (*gineman*) and a closing (*penutup*) to accompany the PTS prayer; however, due to the time constraints of the TV station, the opening and closing of the piece were omitted and only the main *pengawak* section of the piece was chosen (Gold 2016, p. 2). This makes it seem that the choice to pair it with the PTS was more a matter of practical convenience rather than a philosophical one. It

may have also been the case that the Kayumas gender wayang players accompanied far less shadow puppet theater than those in other villages such as Sukawati, and therefore primarily had *tabuh petegak* (opening) pieces such as Merak Ngelo at their disposal. This history behind the pairing of Merak Ngelo with the PTS further confirms its contrived nature; however, it is because of this decision that Merak Ngelo has become an “emblem of Balinese religion and culture as it accompanies the Tri Sandhya each day” (Ibid.).

In his book *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism in Indonesia*, Charles Farhadian states that “culturally Balinese, politically Indonesian, and Hindu in Religion, modern Balinese religious and national identities result in part from active involvement and participation in this relational matrix” (Farhadian 2005, p. 5). As discussed in this article, daily soundings of the PTS are one way in which the Balinese participate in this “relational matrix”. With each broadcast, the PTS is a symbol of local cultural beliefs and an assertion of Balinese Hindu religious identity. When considered alongside the Islamic *azan* and Christian *Angelus*, the PTS is also a sounding of religious nationalism and a cohesive mechanism that unites the ethnically and religiously diverse society of Indonesia through a sonic rendering of the national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, or “Unity in Diversity”. It is by studying PTS broadcasts that the role of music and sound in negotiating the complexities of Balinese identity in the 21st century are revealed, as the PTS conveys both national and local values and confirms religious politics that are still firmly in place and constantly evolving.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of University of California, Los Angeles (IRB# 13-001537) 10/15/2013.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ Gender wayang is a form of Balinese gamelan music used to accompany shadow puppet theater and other Balinese rituals. See Gold (1998, 2016), Heimarck (2003), and Hynson (2015). A *genta* is the ritual bell used by priests when chanting in Balinese ritual ceremonies.
- ² For more on *adat* and *agama*, see (Atkinson 1983, 1989; Hideharu 2006; Henley and Davidson 2008; Kipp and Rodgers 1987; Kipp 1996; Pringle 2004; Lanus 2014; Bakker 1993, 1997; Dana 2005; and Hauser-Schäublin 2013).
- ³ For examples in Sumba and Sulawesi, see (Hoskins 1987; Adams 1993), and in Borneo (Weinstock 1981, 1987).
- ⁴ Hindu missionary Narendra Dev Pandit Shastri and Balinese literary scholar I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa were pivotal in convincing the government that the Balinese were followers of Hinduism, although I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa advocated for distinguishing Balinese Hinduism from Indian Hinduism. Pandit Shastri settled in Bali and taught the PTS at Yayasan Dwijendra, a foundation and school that became a meeting place for the Balinese religious reform (Reisnour 2018; Picard 2011a; and Somvir 2004, pp. 258–59).
- ⁵ In her 2018 dissertation, Reisnour mentions a different translation saying that the word is derived from the root *tri*, meaning “three”, and *sandhi* meaning *hubungan* (connection) or “connection with god three times per day” (Reisnour 2018, p. 152 citing Darta and Duwijo 2014, p. 3).
- ⁶ Before 1950, Brahman priests did have a daily prayer called *Nurya Suana*, which was chanted at the beginning of the day at dawn (6am). They also performed three acts of daily worship: physical (*kayika*) ritual practices, uttering mantras (*japa*), and mental exercises such as meditation or visualization (*dhyana*) (Lanus 2014, pp. 243, 245).
- ⁷ Religious education was further stimulated by the government after the 1960s to prevent any movement toward communism (Bakker 1997, p. 21).
- ⁸ See (Rubinstein 2000) for more on *kakawin*.
- ⁹ Ida Bagus Oka Genijaya, personal communication, 1 June 2016.
- ¹⁰ Steenbrink (2007) mentions the arrival of *Angelus* bells to Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 1927 (page 376), but I have been unable to locate a concrete date of when this practice began in Indonesia. YouTube videos show examples of *Angelus* bells in Medan https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnqSVH_jdJI (2014) (accessed on 1 June 2021).

- 11 Emilie Rook explained that cell phone apps also sound these daily signals of religiosity, as she heard an *Angelus* alarm on her taxi driver's cell phone while conducting doctoral fieldwork in Indonesia in 2018. There are several *Angelus* apps in the iPhone app store.
- 12 This does not seem to be a practice adopted by Catholics yet; however, there is a YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNDNEBmt1ZE> (accessed on 1 June 2021).
- 13 The similarity between these videos can be seen in the YouTube clips: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1L4pm8vUF4c> (accessed on 1 June 2021) (PTS on Bali TV) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1UnLS7RlZQ> (accessed on 1 June 2021) (CNN Indonesia *azan* Maghrib for Jakarta and the surrounding area).
- 14 Reissnour 2018, points out that the opening passage for each stanza of the PTS emphasizes a singular, all-encompassing God (*Tuhan*), which promotes monotheism and a Hindu identity that aligns with nationalistic values and the first *Pancasila* principle (Reissnour 2018, p. 205).
- 15 Although commonly translated as Unity in Diversity, the phrase literally means "although in pieces, yet One".
- 16 According to the 2018 government census, Buddhists make up about 0.77% of the population and Buddhism is an officially recognized religion in Indonesia; however, I have not encountered soundings of religion in Buddhist communities. It may be that their populations are not dense enough to warrant sounding a Buddhist prayer. Buddhism has not been as controversial in religious politics of post-independence Indonesia as much as Balinese Hinduism has, so there likely has not been as big of a need for Buddhists to demonstrate their religious legitimacy and national collectivity.
- 17 See Hynson 2015 for more information about these times in the story for shadow theater purification ritual *wayang sapuh leger*.
- 18 Gender *wayang* is considered one of the most difficult and sacred forms of music on the island, and in addition to accompanying shadow puppetry is used to accompany rituals such as temple anniversaries (*odalan*), cremations (*ngaben*), tooth filing ceremonies (*masangih*, *mapandes*, or *matatah*), and purification with holy water (*melukat*) such as the *wayang sapuh leger*.
- 19 For a discussion of the development of the PTS, see (Lanus 2014).
- 20 Unlike the *azan*, which is often sung by different *muezzin*, who sing different *maqam* (scales) and ornaments through each individual rendering, broadcasts of the Tri Sandhya mantra have, for the most part, been taken from a single recording. A possible reason behind the standardization was to create a reliable version with Balinese gender *wayang* and the *genta* bell.
- 21 When performed by priests or congregations in the temple, the PTS is not accompanied by gender *wayang*.
- 22 Pak Suweca seemed to mourn the fact that many of the younger generation only know the piece as the "Tri Sandhya song", as many of the original names of the pieces have a "meaning in a meaning". For example, Merak Ngelo, which Suweca translates as a "Peacock Moving its Head", has an important "meaning within a meaning". Given that the peacock is such a beautiful bird, perhaps the most beautiful, this piece teaches the dangers of the *Sapta Timira* / *tujuh kemabukan* / *tujuh kegelapan*, or the "seven forms of drunkenness/darkness", including: wealth, smarts (skill), beauty, hereditary factors such as caste or ancestry, youth, liquor, and courage. *Sapta timira* is derived from the Sanskrit word *sapta* meaning "seven", and the word *timira* meaning "dark" or "gloomy", and refers to the seven traits that cause people's minds to become dark. Interview with I Wayan Suweca, 6 June 2016.

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