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# Religious change and experimentation in Indonesian Hinduism

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## Abstract

This paper examines change and experimentation in Agama Hindu Dharma, a form of Hinduism which has adapted to the modern Muslim influence in Indonesia by emphasizing a monotheistic deity unique to the country and an ethical system and prayer rituals with many similarities to Muslim practices. This is a new form of Hinduism developed by scholars, psychologists and priests. The paper analyzes changes in ritual, the arts, and theology. It also focuses on the major locale for modernization, the religion curriculum used in public education. It is a study of religion as lived, with experimentation that has been adopted into state policy.

In this paper, we shall investigate change and innovation in Agama Hindu Dharma, a form of Hinduism which has adapted to the modern Muslim influence in Indonesia by emphasizing a monotheistic deity unique to the country (Sanghyang Widhi Wasa), and an ethical system and prayer rituals with many similarities to Muslim practices. We shall look at changes in ritual (the Hindu call to prayer and the conversion process of condensed purification known as Sudhi Wadani), changes in the arts (the creation of the Ogoh- Ogoh) and changes in theology (the development of a monotheistic Hindu god concerned with sin and salvation, with prophets and revelations). We shall focus on the major locale for modernization, the religion curriculum used in public education. It is a study of religion as lived, with experimentation that has been adopted into state policy.

We shall also briefly examine modern Indonesian Buddhism, called Agama Buddha or Buddhayana, which has accepted the monotheistic god Sanghyang Adi Buddha. These recent developments show new possibilities for interfaith dialogue through the adoption of common categories of interpretation.

When we speak of experimental religion, we refer to discourses, practices, and institutions with religious traditions that reconfigure and push beyond the dominant, or mainstream, boundaries about what “counts” religion or *dharma* (for Hinduism and Buddhism). It also addresses the processes of adaptation and innovation, especially in the modern world. Indonesian Hinduism is a particularly interesting situations because it is a form of Hindu religion consciously developed by scholars, psychologists and priests, which has adapted to the current cultural concerns of Indonesia by focusing on Indonesian Hindu *dharmasastras*.

With Indonesian independence, a new understanding of religion came to Indonesia. The constitution emphasized religious tolerance, and religions could become “people

of the book” if they could find a sacred book, a single god, a prophet, and an ethical system for all followers. During the 1950’s, Hindu Balinese intellectuals came together in a council, which they called the Parisada Dharma Hindu Bali (PDHB),<sup>1</sup> to reformulate Hinduism to fit the criteria set down by the government. One god was called the Almighty God (the other gods and ancestors were demoted to angels or other aspects of the one god), the Vedas and the Bhagavad Gita became the equivalent of the Qur’an or the Bible, and the Vedic sages or *rishis* became prophets (there was a particular focus on Maha Resi Vyasa, who was described as organizing Sang Hyang’s Widhi’s revelation in the Vedas).<sup>2</sup> Philosophy and theology were developed, and justified by Sanskrit mantras on the unity of *brahman*, translated as the divine ruler of the universe.<sup>3</sup> There was a strong emphasis on ethics and national identity, and the Parisada emphasized text and theology, and simplified ritual. A dharma both ancient and modern was created.

### Background

Indonesia is a country with over 14,000 islands, with the largest Muslim population in the world. It also has a government policy of declaring only monotheistic religions to be legitimate. In order to be accepted, Indonesia’s major religions have been adapted by theologians and scholars of religion into monotheistic systems, fulfilling the government’s requirements for a sacred text, a prophet, and a universal ethical code. Then, as prominent Indonesian Muslim writer Nurcholish Madjid has noted, all people who worship one god can be understood as believers, indeed as Muslims. Members of all monotheistic world religions can be viewed as equals, who can live in peace with each other.<sup>4</sup>

Hindu culture and religion arrived in the Indonesian archipelago in the first century CE, closely followed by Buddhism, which influenced the development of a number of Hindu-Buddhist empires. Hindu and Buddhist forms of theology and ritual combined over the centuries, and this fusion can still be found to some extent today. However, the Hinduism that came to Indonesia had not yet developed the *bhakti* tradition, thus the devotional aspect of Hinduism never became important there. Instead, the focus has been on *dharma*, understood as responsible and ethical behavior, in harmony with the universe.

There are a variety of theories of how Hinduism came to Indonesia. I Gusti Putu Phalgunadi describes four of these, using the metaphor of the caste system. According to Vaishya theory, Hinduism came with traders and merchants from India, whose voyages often included intermarriage with Indonesians. According to the Kshatriya theory, defeated warriors and soldiers fled India with their followers to take refuge and build alternative strongholds in Indonesia. The Brahmana theory posits that priests and missionaries from India spread the religion, which was accepted because these people were believed to possess supernatural knowledge and power. In contrast, the Bhumiputra (“native son” or nationalist) theory holds that Indonesians visited India, liked the culture, and brought back religious ideas. Indonesia (especially Bali) is mentioned in such ancient Indian texts as the *Ramayana*, *Brahmanda Purana*, *Vayu Purana*, and *Jataka* tales in the (Buddhist) Pali Canon. In these texts, Bali is usually called *Suvarnadvipa* (“golden island”) or *Suvarnabhumi* (“golden land”).<sup>5</sup> In the sixth-century encyclopedia, *Brihatsamhita*, and the eleventh-century collection of stories, *Kathasaritsagara*, Bali is called *Narikeladvipa*, “the island of coconuts.” (Phalgunadi 1991).

The Hindu religion influenced kings and warriors on the major Indonesian islands of Sumatra, Java, Bali and Kalimantan. The most influential Hindu kingdom was the Majapahit Empire, which reached its peak in the fourteenth century. Hinduism lost its status as the dominant religion during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when the Majapahit Empire was conquered by Muslim armies. As that empire disintegrated, many of its priests, artists, musicians and leaders moved to Bali, and Islam became the state religion of Indonesia. Foreign merchants, especially Portuguese and later Dutch traders, were attracted by the spice trade of Indonesia. Dutch seamen came to the islands of Bali and Lombok in 1597, and the Dutch East Indies Company came to dominate much of Indonesia (Charle 1991).

Indonesia gained its independence when the Dutch relinquished sovereignty over the former Netherlands East Indies in 1949, and Bali was integrated into the Republic of Indonesia. Its first president was Sukarno (1901–1970). To appease the Muslim majority, Sukarno proclaimed belief in One Almighty God to be government policy, thereby forging a compromise between secularism and Muslim law (*sharia*, or in the language of Bahasa Indonesia *syariah*). It was the first of five constitutional laws in Indonesia, the *pancasila*, intended to build nationalism and discourage ethnic loyalties within a wide range of tribes, kingdoms and societies lacking common language, currency or culture.<sup>6</sup> The other four laws are a just and civilized humanity, Indonesian unity, democracy and social justice.

The term *pancasila* comes from two Sanskrit words, *panca* or five, and *sila* or principle (or virtue).<sup>7</sup> These five principles form the non-secular basis of modern Indonesian statehood, emphasizing religious tolerance as a sacred duty. Human rights are understood as gifts from God, and the basis of national unity is belief in the one God. Thus, both constitution and law are based on religious faith. (Efimova 1996). Indonesia defines itself as a religious state while avoiding labels of theocracy, with its perceived danger of extremism, and of secular state, with its perceived danger of Communism.<sup>8</sup>

The basis of Indonesian national unity was monotheism (*Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*—belief in One Supreme God). Thus, both the constitution and the national law are based on religious faith. As article 29 of the Constitution states, every citizen has freedom of religious belief and expression. However, the government will only officially accept monotheistic religions, giving them financial support, identity papers, passports, voting rights, and protection from proselytizing by other religions.<sup>9</sup>

Currently, Indonesia accepts six officially recognized religions, and has institutionalized five of them: Islam, Catholicism, Protestant Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism.<sup>10</sup> Confucian religion has been officially accepted, but its access to some educational, social, and political benefits is still under debate.<sup>11</sup> Atheism is not accepted, and some Muslim groups (such as the Ahmadiyahs) have been banned for moving too far from orthodoxy.<sup>12</sup> Indigenous religions have not been accepted as official religions, and interact with the government through the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The accepted religions have all adapted in various ways to the state requirements. Theology is used to support state tolerance, and the adoption of common categories of knowledge allows for communication between the traditions.

The major center of Hinduism in Indonesia is the island of Bali. According to the 2010 Indonesian census (*Badan Pusat Statistik, Sensus Penduduk 2010*), there are about 3.25 million Hindus on Bali, out of a population of almost 4 million.<sup>13</sup> There are

also slightly over four million Hindus in the whole country of Indonesia. The island of Bali has the most Hindu practitioners, followed by Sumatra, Java, Lombok and Kalimantan islands. Indonesia currently has the fifth largest Hindu population in the world.<sup>14</sup>

### **Hinduism in Indonesia**

Modern Indonesian Hinduism, or Agama Hindu Dharma, was accepted as an official religion in several stages during the late 1950's. There are currently various layers of Hinduism, which include folk Hinduism (local indigenous beliefs which are mixed with Hindu ones), Agama Tirtha (the religion of holy water, which emphasizes ritual and is largely Saivite), and Agama Hindu Dharma (which emphasizes ethics, philosophy and social responsibility). These may be mixed, and practiced simultaneously.

Here we shall focus on Agama Hindu Dharma, an approach which was developed to fit the Indonesian government's standards of religious legitimacy, which included a revealed text, a prophet, and a clear ethical system which is not limited to a regional or ethnic group. In order to reformulate Hinduism to fit government criteria, Hindu Balinese intellectuals met together in a council (*parisada*, or society) which they called the Parisada Hindu Dharma Bali. In their formulation, one god was called the Almighty God, with other gods and ancestors demoted to angels or other aspects of the one God. The *Vedas*, *Ramayana*, and *Bhagavad Gita* became the equivalent of the Qur'an or Bible, and the Vedic sages or *rishis* became prophets. Philosophy and theology were based largely on South Indian Saiva Siddhanta and justified by Sanskrit *mantras* on the unity of Brahman (as divine ruler of the universe).<sup>15</sup> The Parisada strongly affirmed morality and national identity, and promised to emphasize textual sources and theology while simplifying ritual.<sup>16</sup>

The one God is called Sanghyang Widhi Wasa, a god unknown in India. This avoided sectarian conflict between Hindu groups in Indonesia. There is devotion to the four teachers or *gurus*- God, parents, schoolteachers, and the government. Devotion to the government thus becomes a part of the religion- another area of compromise. Ethical behavior was based on several *dharmasastras* found in Indonesia, primarily the *Nitisastra*. There also five pillars of belief (in *brahman*, *atman*, *karma*, *moksa*, and reincarnation) and five pillars of practice or *yadnya*. Its focus is not *bhakti* or devotion, but rather *dharma* or religious and social obligation. This dharmic form of Hinduism differs from the popular Hindu practices, which emphasize ancestors and the creation of holy water to worship deities.

One recent new government ritual is the Hindu call to prayer, at 6 AM, noon, and 6 PM. It broadcasts the *triseandhya* prayer, and it can be heard over loudspeakers in many villages. It became popularized on television in the 1990's. On Bali television, there are images of nature- birds, monkeys, rice fields, waterfalls, and the ocean (similar to the backgrounds used for the Indonesian televised Muslim calls to prayer, and both have images of people dressed in white praying). The Hindu god is addressed as Ya Tuhan, the Indonesian generic term for god, and on Bali television the prayers are written in both Balinese and Indonesian scripts. Chimes sound in the background as the *triseandhya* stanzas are chanted. The prayers are broadcast in schools, with a break in classes, and in offices, when workers take time off for prayers.

The *triseandhya* prayers begin with the Gayatri *mantra*, which is described as stating the unity of Sanghyang Widhi Wasa. The multiple names of the god Siva are recited,

and then the person admits sorrow over sin. As stanza 4 says, “OM, I am full of sorrow, my action is full of sin, my soul and my birth are poor. Save me from all this sorrow, O God, purify my body and mind.” Stanza 5 addresses Mahadeva (Siva) specifically and asks him for forgiveness, and stanza 6 is a general plea for forgiveness for sins of body, speech and mind. The prayer ends *Shanti, Shanti, Shanti* (peace).<sup>17</sup> All of these names are understood as emanations or attributes of Sanghyang Widhi Wasa. It adapts a *nir-guna* deity, changing him to a god concerned with sin and salvation.

Another new ritual in Bali is the Sudhi Wadani purification process, for conversion to Agama Hindu Dharma. This one-day ritual was developed in the 1960’s, primarily for tourists who came to Bali and wanted to marry Hindus (in Indonesia, both marriage partners must be members of the same religion).<sup>18</sup> It is called purification rather than conversion, and has been officially recognized by the Parisada (HPDI), the national Hindu organization of Indonesia. It includes all of the purification rituals that are required for Hinduism, from the time of conception on, compressed into one day. Non-Hindus who go through this process get a decree with signatures from the local government, and they are then considered to be Hindu. They are then able to marry and participate in temple ceremonies. Again, religious conversion is a ritual understandable to both Islam and Christianity.

In terms of the arts, a new style of expression of religious ideas was found in the creation of the Ogoh-ogoh images. Bali is known for its paintings and statues, including both religious and secular themes. Ogoh-ogoh are statues built for the Ngrupuk parade, which takes place on the eve of Nyepi day in Bali, or New Year’s Eve. The Ogoh-ogoh art is a very recent addition to the Nyepi ceremonies, first appearing in Bali in the early 1980s. Ogoh-ogoh figures normally have the form of mythological beings, ranging from demons (*bhuta kala* and *raksasa*) to figures drawn from popular culture or from contemporary Indonesian society (such as politicians and cartoon villains). These figures may be classical, humorous, terrifying or satirical, representing disease, conflict, greed, and corruption. The deeper goal of the ritual is to destroy desires and passions, and transform them into benevolence.

The holiday of Nyepi is held in celebration of Saka New Year, a day to ask Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa to maintain harmony between human beings and the universe. Three days before Nyepi, rituals are held to purify the living environment of three spirits: Bhuta Raja, Bhuta Kala and Batara Kala. This is so that they do not interfere with humans. The rituals include *melasti* (praying at temples), *pecaruan* (offerings) and *pengrupukan* (spreading rice, lighting homes with torches and making noise by hitting objects). During Nyepi, Indonesian Hindus ritually abstain from four acts: *amati geni* (abstinence from lighting fires), *amati karya* (abstinence from working), *amati lelangan* (abstinence from pleasure) and *amati lelungan* (abstinence from traveling).

The *pengrupukan* ritual is usually followed by the parade of the Ogoh-ogoh. This involves a set of giant puppets being carried around the *banjar* or neighborhood. The major puppet is the image of Bhuta Kala, who is thus expelled from the environment. The ritual, which ends in the burning of the image, brings harmony to both mankind and nature, to enable a solemn celebration of Nyepi. (Bhakti 2014).

An Ogoh-ogoh statue is usually created on a foundation built of wood and bamboo, and made from papier-mache. The Ogoh-ogoh, which are up to 10 ft tall, are carried around the village or the town square by eight or more men. This procession is

accompanied by orchestral music and flares. The Ogoh-ogoh is rotated counter-clockwise three times at every T-junction and crossroad of the village. Rotating the statues is intended to confuse the evil spirits so that they go away and cease harming human beings. Approaching midnight, the figures are then dragged to a prominent crossroad and burned. Ogoh-ogoh may also be burnt to ashes in a cemetery, where the passions are symbolically buried. On the following day, the holiday of Nyepi, people are silent, and do not work, cook, or travel. It symbolizes the beginning of the world, which started with a void. The Ogoh-Ogoh figures are new, but the idea of destroying the passions and transforming evil inclinations is old. When Nyepi falls on a Friday, in the interests of religious cooperation Muslims in Bali hold their Friday prayers without the usual loudspeakers, and go to the mosque on foot, to avoid noise from vehicles.

In terms of theological innovation, we have the introduction of the god Sanghyang Widhi Wasa, who has sometimes been described as a form of Brahman, detached and *nirguna*, He is thus without form, and not in need of temples or statues. But lately he has also been described as a god concerned with moral behavior, closer to Muslim and Christian ideas of god. Modern Balinese Hindu temples have been changing, and several temples in Bali have developed a special shrine to him, which is empty, in the northeast corner of the temple. Sanghyang Widhi Wasa is occasionally represented by a sketch or a statue, a person with no gender or clothing, but with flames that represent energy or *sakti* emerging from *cakras* and joints. This image is also starting to appear on altar cloths and other ritual items.<sup>19</sup> Because he is a formless god, it is difficult to find paintings or statues of him. He is described as the only god, concerned with humanity but beyond human understanding.

While many religions show modernization primarily through the use of technology and scientific metaphors (one informant compared the high Hindu offering towers to cell phone towers which contact the gods), the primary locale for modernization in Indonesian Hinduism is the public school religion curriculum.

While India does not have a public school curriculum for teaching Hinduism, Indonesia does, and it is quite sophisticated. Religious education is understood to be an obligation of the state, and it is understood to give students faith, and an appreciation for religious truths (called *rasa agama*). Education is important throughout life, and even Hindu pregnancy rituals have been justified as “prenatal education.” (Bakker 1993) Religion is a compulsory topic taught in the schools, with a strong emphasis on ethics and obedience to authority, and children must attend school for at least 6 years. (Howe 2001). Agama Hindu Dharma is understood to be based on revelation, a “religion of heaven,” as opposed to the ethnic “religions of the earth” which are human-made.

A variety of types of Hinduism are incorporated into Agama Hindu Dharma in Indonesia. Sacred texts include the *Vedas* and its commentarial literature, in both Sanskrit and its related Kawi language of Old Javanese. There is respect for *rishis* and ancestors, use of the Gayatri *mantra*, and the Vedanta concept of *moksa* as *sat cit ananda*. Students are taught that Atman merges with Brahman, in the state of highest liberation, and they are taught about multiple levels of body and soul. We have the one god who manifests as the Trimurti, with Brahma, Wisnu, Siva and their *saktis* (female powers and consorts), and there are *dewas*, *awatars*, and the powerful *bhatara* figure (who functions as a guardian, much like Siva *bhairava*). There is belief in karma and reincarnation, and the four *asramas*, *margas*

and goals of life. The textbooks include many aspects of Indian Hinduism, including both *sruti* and *smriti*.

From yoga, we have *pranayama*, the body positions or *asanas*, and the *siddhis* (which in this case belong to the deity rather than the yogic practitioner), as well as the *yamas* and *niyamas* as *brata* obligations. From Sankhya philosophy, we have the *tattvas*, the *mahabhutas*, the *tanmatras*, the *indriyas*, the three *gunas*, and such concepts as *manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahamkara* (though the figures of Purusa and Prakriti are notably lacking). From *bhakti*, we have love and singing, the emphasis on sincerity, service to God, and the four forms of devotion (to parents, gurus, and God, with the government added as a fourth). From the Saiva tradition, we have the three forms of Siva as Paramasiwa and Sadasiwa, and Siwa-atma (who appears within the person). From Tantra, we have the *mandalas* (sacred diagrams) of the gods, with their images and architecture involving colors, directions, images, and weapons, and ritual chanting of *mantras*. All of these diverse elements are united together in the religion textbooks for students, which is a major locale of religious experimentation.

However, the textbooks avoid some more controversial issues. We may note that there is no concept of outcaste or “untouchable” groups in Agama Hindu Dharma, no emphasis on vegetarianism, and no sacred thread ceremony for the three higher castes, as we see in Indian Hinduism. The same *samskaras* are available to all (or at least all who can afford them), and there are priests for each of the castes. One need not be a Brahmin to be a priest.

Each school year has special emphases. In the first grade, students learn about the One God, prayer techniques, and obedience to religious authorities. In the second grade, they learn how the gods of Hinduism are manifestations of God’s attributes, and they learn about sacred texts (*sruti* and *smriti*). In the third grade, they learn about human and divine leaders, the bases of major rituals and moral actions, and the understanding of God through the categories of Saiva Siddhanta. In the fourth grade, they learn the five basic beliefs (God, soul, karma, reincarnation, and *moksha*) and how to restrain bad actions. In the fifth grade, they learn of the three bodies and Sankhya philosophy of the *gunas*, *mahabhutas* and *indriyas*, and also the five types of worship. In the sixth grade, they learn of the range of God’s powers, and the history of Agama Hindu Dharma. In the seventh grade, they learn the obligations of secular and religious leadership, memorize and chant religious hymns and songs, and learn the details of temple creation and symbolism.

In the eighth grade, the students learn theology (the manifestations of God as shown in the Saivite *nava devata mandala*), the relationship of the macrocosm and microcosm, Indian forms of Hinduism, and the five offering rituals (to gods, sages, ancestors, living people, and spirits). There is also a discussion of crime and its consequences. In the ninth grade, they learn about the emanations of God (as *deva*, *bhatara* and *avatar*), rituals performed to the various forms of God, and more detail on the history of Hinduism in Indonesia. In the tenth grade, they learn the theories of the *astika* (insider/Hindu) and *nastika* (outsider/non-Hindu) philosophical schools, the nature of the soul, ethics from the *Nitisastra* text, and the use of multiple calendars to calculate holidays. In the eleventh grade, there are further details on the Sankhya theories of creation, karma, and ethical imperatives in Hindu scriptures, and Atman and Brahman. In the twelfth grade, they learn about

ethics, caste, marriage, and law, and the obligations of Indonesian Hindus to follow both religious and secular law.

Thus, we have the major sacred Hindu texts introduced to the children by age eight, variations on Saiva Siddhanta taught by age nine, the Sankhya elements involved in the microcosm and macrocosm taught by age ten, the existence of multiple levels of material and spiritual bodies detailed age eleven, the ability to calculate holidays according to multiple calendars taught by age fourteen, and the unity of Atman and Brahman and the legitimacy of different religious and secular legal systems taught by age eighteen. The students learn the philosophies of Saiva Siddhanta, Vedanta, and Sankhya, among others. The texts take the earlier Saiva background of Indonesian religion, and combine it with other Hindu philosophies and belief systems. They also add the dominant categories of discourse found in Islam and Christianity: monotheism, revelation, ethics, and moral obligation. The curriculum has shown that Indonesian Hinduism can adapt to those requirements. As such, it has become a recognized religion, with the safety and support that such status can bestow (Pye et al. 2006).

Indonesian Hinduism has been influenced by Buddhism over history, and for a period of time was fused into Siva-Buddha synthesis. We may note that experimentation is also seen in Indonesian Buddhism, in its modern attempt to create a Buddhist monotheism. Buddhists have had a harder time with the required monotheism, partly because most forms of Buddhism are non-theistic, and partly because there are dozens of Buddhist factions in Indonesia that disagree with each other. A form of Indonesian Buddhism called Buddhayana was somewhat able to incorporate the other forms of Buddhism under an umbrella of belief in a Buddhist deity. There has been much disagreement over this. Some Buddhist groups accept the notion of a single celestial Buddha, while others evade the issue and focus on ethics. Currently there are two major Buddhist groups in Indonesia, WALUBI (or Indonesian Buddhist Trust, which accepts Buddhayana monotheism) and KASI (Sangha Indonesia Conference, which emphasizes ethics and pluralism, and largely ignores the issue of monotheism). There are also many smaller groups. Buddhism has sacrificed its non-theistic perspective of universal emptiness or *nirvana*, which is now interpreted to mean that nothing ultimately exists except God. There are Indonesian Buddhist organizations rapidly coming into and out of existence (perhaps demonstrating the Buddhist concept of impermanence).

During the medieval period, Indonesian Buddhism was fused with Hinduism, into a form of tantric Buddhism which accepted the five meditation Buddhas (images of them may be found on the bas-reliefs at the ninth century Borobudur temple complex in Java). There were Siva-Buddha priests, who still practice today, and who meditate on the *mandalas* of the five Buddhas and the adi-Buddha ("original Buddha") to create the holy water needed for rituals. Hindus can use the holy water created by Buddhist priests, and vice versa. However, the Buddhist population of Indonesia is small, and there is only one Buddhist village remaining in Bali. As a Balinese Buddhist priest stated in interview:

Paramabuddha is in the center of all *mandalas*. There is an inner, visualized mandala and an outer *mandala*. *Diksha* is necessary to create the inner *mandala*, though the outer *mandala* can be learned from texts... In Bali, we worship the five *tathagatas* [buddhas] together, there is no focus on individual worship. However, each *tathagata* has different *mantras* and *mudras*. They are worshipped in both Saiva and Buddhist



rituals... Buddhists can perform rituals for Saivas, and Paramabuddha can give grace (*anugraha*) to worshipers as Paramasiva can.<sup>20</sup>

Buddhism became an accepted religion indirectly, starting out as a subcategory of Hinduism. There have been many forms of Buddhism practiced in Indonesia, including Theravada, Mahayana, Tantrayana, Tridharma, Maitreya, and Nichiren. The Buddhayana group describes itself as non-sectarian and incorporating the other forms of Buddhism. Its founder, Bhikku Ashin Jinarakkhita, proposed in 1954 that there was a single supreme deity, Sang Hyang Adi Buddha, basing his argument on ancient Javanese texts, and on the shape of the Buddhist temple complex at Borobudur. The earthly figure of Gautama Buddha was considered to be the prophet of the god Sanghyang Adi Buddha, and the universal ethic of Buddhism was based on the four noble truths.

During the 1970's, other Buddhist leaders also emphasized that all sects of Buddhism in Indonesia believed in one Almighty God, adapting his absolute form as Sanghyang Adi Buddha, his creator form as Avalokitesvara and his savior form as Padmapani. All sects recognize Siddhartha Gautama as a prophet, with the revealed texts as the *Tipitaka* scriptures and the *Sanghyang Kamahayanikan* (Brown 1987). The Indonesian Buddhist doctrine includes the existence of God, the Triple Jewel, dependent origination, karma, rebirth, *nirvana* (as ultimate happiness and being with god), and the existence of the *bodhisattva*. Wesak was accepted as a national holiday in 1983, which in Indonesia represents official government acceptance. However, the issue of a monotheistic god is still protested by several Buddhist groups, especially Theravadins.

As one national Buddhist representative phrased it, the goal for practitioners of Buddhism in Indonesia is to be role models for peace and helping the world, so that people will say a good person is "like a Buddhist."<sup>21</sup>

Modernization can create strange bedfellows. Shadow puppets or *wayang kulit* are a traditional form of entertainment in Bali and Java, and most often tell the stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* (or the Pandava story, as it is called). However, neither Krishna nor Rama are understood to be gods. Instead, they are heroes of the past, more like Daniel Boone. This allows Indonesian Muslims to watch the shadow puppets and not be involved in idolatry. The puppets are used for a variety of purposes, to get messages out by the government and NGO's, for teaching family planning and disaster preparedness, and for entertainment.

A Wayang performance in 2012, in Jakarta, showed this modernization. The gamelan orchestra played both traditional and modern Western music (this included the Shaker song "Simple Gifts" and the Simon and Garfunkel version of the song "Scarborough Fair" played on gamelan chimes.) There were singing and dancing police-women, as well as traditional women singing in sarongs and kebaya blouses, with video projections onto the wayang screen. The puppeteer or Dalang was behind the screen, and there were politicians on both sides of it.<sup>22</sup> Normally, the Dalang wears ritual dress of three parts: a hat, a cloth belt, and a sarong (representing heaven, earth and the underworld). But in this case, the Dalang jumped out amid light shows and dry ice clouds, and he acted like a rock star, wearing a leather jacket with his sarong and playing jazz saxophone. The story of the Pandava heroes was rock entertainment.

Television comedy shows have Wayang clowns flashing back and forth with rappers chanting hip-hop songs, wearing dreadlocks and dancing. Women's talk shows may be introduced by traditional Balinese dancers in sarong and kebaya, who are then followed

by belly dancers in jingling belts, and women in yoga clothes doing dancing and calisthenics. Religious figures have been adopted into advertising and entertainment, and become spokesmen for merchandise.

### **Conclusion: current challenges**

There are several areas of challenge in the area of modernization. The island of Bali has the largest concentrated population of Hindu practitioners in Indonesia, and it has been widely advertised as a center for American and Australian yoga, and for Buddhist meditation. There are New Age groups from the West in Bali holding workshops and claiming to have the 'true' versions of Hinduism and Buddhism. Members of ISKCON have been condemning the local Balinese Hindus, who are not vegetarian, and generally do not consider Krishna to be a god. There are classes in Sound Yoga, Kundalini yoga, and Vinyasa, and Rajneesh and Satya Sai Baba groups, none of which are native to Bali, as well as Nichiren and Zen groups. There are existing New Age Indonesian groups, like Subud and Sasangka Jati, but these are largely ignored by the foreigners. According to Balinese informants, the issue of who has the 'true' Hinduism and Buddhism has come up often between foreign visitors and native Balinese people, and irritated many inhabitants of Bali. The foreigners are understood to dress improperly, and not show appropriate respect. For academics, we have the ongoing question of whether Agama Hindu Dharma is a subset of Indian Hinduism, or a religion of its own. Should it be taught at the college level in relation to the religions of India?

We also see the commercialization of trance as entertainment. Tourists crowd in to the Ubud palace to watch dancers possessed by *apsarases* (celestial nymphs in the *dedari* dance), or to see the good Barong who struggles against the evil witch Rangda. There have been debates among anthropologists about whether people actually enter trance or just simulate it, especially in group trance rituals.

I interviewed several *pedandas* or Brahmin high priests in 2014, and they noted that there are many degrees of trance. People rarely enter deep trance before audiences of foreigners. Light trance occurs when dancers act out the experiences of the gods, and through this they sense the god's presence. Sometimes dancers are taken over by the Taksu spirit of inspiration, which causes the dancer to become charismatic and admired.

Medium (*madhya*) trance tends to be found in the healers or *baliangs*, who become possessed by the local gods and rarely remember what happened during the trance. The body can be controlled by the deity, but the person's soul is not free of passions. Deep or highest (*uttama*) trance is believed to occur during the Saivite rituals of the *pedanda* priests, especially during the creation of holy water, which sanctifies water that becomes equivalent to Ganges water, or the nectar of immortality (*amrita*). At such times we have mystical union, when the priest becomes fully identified with the essence of the god. This is *Surya-sevana*, which is not a public ritual. However, most foreigners do not recognize degrees of trance, and simply debate whether commercial trance dancers are really in trance states or faking it- with the latter as the most popular accusation.

Another problem which concerns Hindu high priests is the commercialization and professionalization of the *banten* ritual. Bali is full of offerings to deities, but the concept of *bhakti* to a god is not based on emotion. *Bhakti* is responsibility, and following one's obligations to the deity. One's *bhakti* works through the creation of offerings- thus making offerings expresses the harmonious relationship with the god. When laypeople no longer create the offerings, they lose their pathway to the god. This is a

problem both in life and in death, when corporations start to control group cremations, and *banten* professionals take over the tasks that once linked communities together.

Balinese Hinduism has a great focus on material culture, and there is much debate about how this can continue with practitioners studying abroad and travelling. All Hindu rituals require holy water- but this must be blessed by priests, and cannot be taken in large quantities on airplanes because of TSA requirements. Thus rituals must be abbreviated, and substitutions made.

Indonesia is a land of compromise, in religion and also in politics. It has recently elected a moderate Muslim as president, rejecting the hard-line general supported by Islamists. His banners in Jakarta in 2014 said "Pluralism" in large letters. It is one of the only Muslim countries today where there is has been political change without warfare. The elections were quite sophisticated- there were crowds of observers with cell phones taking pictures of the announced votes outside every polling place in Indonesia. The younger generation seemed to be firmly supporting Joko Widodo, who came in emphasizing religious tolerance.

This is important because of the large amounts of Salafi literature and advertising coming into Indonesia, especially from Saudi Arabia. The Salafi or Wahhabi approach is not tolerant of other religions, and resists any sort of compromise or innovation. The most well-known organization that serves as a conduit of Saudi funding in Indonesia is the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (the Indonesian Society for the Propagation of Islam, or DDII). Extremist groups have been in conflict with the more tolerant forms of Islam traditional to Indonesia, and some groups following Salafi tenets have supported Islamic violence. In Indonesia, these have included leaders of militant groups, such as the transnational organization Jemaah Islamiyah, and Darul Islam, which called for an Islamic state in Indonesia in the 1950s and 1960s.

The DDII has built mosques, distributed Qur'ans and other Islamic literature, given textbooks to religious schools, and trained religious leaders. It has fostered Salafi student organizations and funded scholarships to universities in Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries. Indonesian students studying in the Middle East are visited by DDII representatives. The DDII has also sought to network with other Islamic organizations at home and abroad, including Muslim Brotherhood groups and Jemaah Islamiyah. Returning graduates have been encouraged to emphasize the Saudi or Wahhabi interpretation of Islam in Indonesia (see von der Mehden 2014). They have been active in setting up mosques and student centers. According to one informant, over a thousand Salafi mosques have been built in Indonesia over the last few decades, funded by Saudi Arabia and staffed by Salafi imams.<sup>23</sup> There is much concern that their lack of religious tolerance will affect attitudes towards the other religions in Indonesia.

Dealing with extremist groups has been a great challenge for the country, and the interfaith groups have been very active, travelling to calm down areas which have had conflicts. In a country with 14,000 islands, it is easy to have complex conflicts that involve politics, economics and religion. But religious modernization which recognizes common categories of discourse, allowing shared categories of faith and practice, has helped the country to retain peace between potentially warring factions. Such religious innovation is important, both theologically and politically.

## Note

23. Interview, Dr. Luthfie Assyaukanie, Jaringan Islam Liberal (Liberal Islam Network), 2012.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>There are also some Old Javanese texts, such as the *Sarasamuccaya*, which are considered to be divine revelations.

<sup>2</sup>In the first grade reader, to be described later in this paper, *Weda* is divided into *Sruti*, as scriptures arranged according to the revelation from Sang Hyang Widhi, and *Smerti*, scripture arranged according to the memories of the Maha Resi. As Maha Resi Vyasa was considered to be the major organizer of the *Weda* scriptures, he was emphasized as the major prophetic figure. We should note that the Indonesian spelling of some terms resembles Sanskrit, but is spelled differently and does not use diacritical marks (ie *resi* for *rishi*).

<sup>3</sup>These included the *mahavakyas* of Sankara, statements from the Vedas and *Upa-nishads* made famous as the basis of the Advaita Vedanta school in India. For instance, *aham brahmasmi* or “I am Brahman” refers to the unity of self and ultimate reality.

<sup>4</sup>See Kamal et al. (2006). Nurcholish Madjid’s 1972 dictum: “Islam yes, Islamic party no” was a part of the platform of the reform movement, and was influential in discouraging the development of an Islamic state in Indonesia. See Sirry (2005).

<sup>5</sup>Phalgunadi uses *Suvarnabhumi* to refer to Bali, while some other authors use the term to refer to Burma.

<sup>6</sup>In its earlier draft form, the preamble to the Constitution contained the Jakarta Charter stating that Indonesian Muslims must follow Islamic religious law (*sharia*), and that the President must be Muslim (in order to properly protect Muslims). The *pancasila* was a compromise between nationalist Muslims who wanted a Muslim State and the demands of other religions. When the 1950 final version of the Constitution did not include the Jakarta Charter, radical Muslim groups (which we would later categorize as Islamist) broke off, creating the Darul Islam movement, arguing for an Islamic state of Indonesia. It motivated the creation of later Islamist splinter organizations, such as the Commando Jihad group.

<sup>7</sup>The term *pancasila* may also be used for the five Buddhist precepts.

<sup>8</sup>These concerns about Communism and extremism are noted by many Indonesian writers up to the present day, both officially and in the opinion pages of Indonesian newspapers.

<sup>9</sup>The requirement for a religion on the identity card has recently been lifted by the government, and officially people should be able to leave the religion space on the identity card blank. However, this message has not gone out to many of the islands, which still require one of the six official religions on the identity card. As of May 20, 2015, indigenous religions are also allowed to be written on the identity card. See <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/05/20/indigenous-faiths-allowed-id-card.html>.

<sup>10</sup>Buddhism too had to become monotheistic, and went through the same sort of challenges that Hinduism did- at one point the Bandung group proposed that the Three Jewels be called a monotheistic entity, but currently it is Sang Hyang Adi Buddha who is called the Buddhist God. Catholic and Protestant forms of Christianity are considered as different religions, due to historical debates.

<sup>11</sup>In the year 2000, a Presidential Decree repealed the ban on Chinese religion (once it became the monotheistic worship of the Sky God). Now Confucian marriages can be officially registered, and its followers can get government identity cards. There was earlier tension over accepting Chinese religion, as Chinese Communists were implicated in the

coup of 1965. Confucians are now in the process of organizing Indonesian religious textbooks, focused on the Ru tradition, of which Confucius was the last prophet. The one god is Tian or Shang Ti, who is understood to forgive sins, and accept the soul after death.

<sup>12</sup>Religious organizations other than the five accepted groups can register with the Ministry for Culture and Tourism, but only as social organizations. Such groups cannot rent places to hold services and must find other means to perform rituals. They often have problems registering marriages and children's births, and the lack of a birth certificate can prevent the child from enrolling in school, getting government scholarships, and having government jobs. Indigenous beliefs are considered to be cultural traditions, but not religions.

<sup>13</sup>See <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010/148869.htm>.

<sup>14</sup>See Wikipedia statistics, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism\\_by\\_country](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism_by_country) Accessed June, 2015.

<sup>15</sup>These included the *mahavakyas* ("great sayings") of Sankara, statements from the Vedas and Upanishads made famous as the basis of the Advaita Vedanta school in India.

<sup>16</sup>On this topic, see the work of Picard, Michel (2011) and Ramsted (2004).

<sup>17</sup>For the record, here are the last verses, following the Gayatri/Savitri prayer and prayers to Narayana and Siva. The translation is by Ida Pedanda Gde Putra Tlabah, from interview, 2014:

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OM, I am full of sorrow, my action is full of sins, my soul is so destitute, and my birth is also so poor. Save me from all this sorrow, purify my body and mind.

OM, forgive me Mahadeva, He who gives salvation to all sentient beings, save me from all this sorrow, guide me, redeem and protect me, O Sada Siva

OM, Forgive my sinful deeds, forgive my wrong speech, forgive my sinful mind, forgive me for all those misdeeds.

OM, May there be Peace, Peace, Peace forever, OM.

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<sup>18</sup>Interview, Ida Pedanda Putra Yoga, Hindu priest, Tabanan, 2014.

<sup>19</sup>Interview, Pinda, local driver, Ubud, 2010.

<sup>20</sup>Interview, Ida Pedanda Jlantik Duaja, Buddhist priest, Budakeling, 2012.

<sup>21</sup>Interview, Cornelis Wowor, former Director of Religious Affairs for Buddhism, Ministry of Religions, and professor, Sriwijaya Public College, Tangarang. 2010.

<sup>22</sup>A popular saying is that politics is like *wayang*, with secret puppet masters, so corruption can never be fixed.

#### Competing interests

The author declares that he/she has no competing interests.

#### Publisher's Note

Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Received: 24 October 2016 Accepted: 21 April 2017

Published online: 16 July 2017

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