

How Balinese Culture Thrive on European Continent

Ida Bagus Putra Setiawan*

ABSTRACT

The Balinese workforce is one of the best workers with expertise in tourism, recognized by various companies engaged in hospitality services in different parts of the world. Along with the times, a few Balinese people migrated out of their homeland to pursue careers overseas. They spread to various corners of the world, especially to well-developed countries, for a better chance of living. Art and its strategic position in the Balinese Hindu community is the people's expression of gratitude to the Higher being. As part of the religious activities of the Hindu community, a Ceremony or religious ritual held at the temple (holy place) always showcases performing arts. The customs are strongly associated with identity; for instance, despite being far away from Bali, the Balinese diaspora in Belgium commemorated Balinese Hindu holy days festively. In Pura Agung Santi Bhuana, Belgium, the Balinese Hindu Diaspora of Europe attended the temple ceremony in the early morning. The members of the social group Banjar performed their service by staging a dance and gamelan orchestra to accompany the holy day ceremony. The talented Balinese Diaspora on dance and play gamelan instruments constitute a significant part of the total population. They support the Government's tourism promotion programs of the Republic of Indonesia through their traditional religious activities. Subsequently, they enlivened the existence of temples in Europe, such as in Belgium, Hamburg, and Berlin, with their stunning performing dance and percussion art service. Balinese Hindu community who lives in Europe could maintain steadfastness by respecting their own culture amidst the onslaught of a global culture. He admitted that global influence penetrated all practical activities and influenced all aspects of life. Albeit the unevaded facts, thousands of the Balinese diaspora and the local citizens respectfully attended the religious movement.

*Sanur Village Community
ibsetiawan@gmail.com

Received: 2022-09-18
Accepted: 2022-12-02
Published: 2022-12-15

Keywords: Balinese Culture, Diaspora, Europe, Art

Cite This Article: Setiawan, I.B.P. 2022. How Balinese Culture Thrive on European Continent. *Bali Tourism Journal* 6(3): 58-61.
DOI: 10.36675/btj.v6i3.83

BACKGROUND

In multiple archaeological discoveries, since ancient times, Balinese society has interacted with various ethnic groups. The discovery of various ancient artifacts, including ancient pottery from India and China, strongly supported the claim that Bali, with its people, holds a strategic position in global social interactions.¹ The social interaction significantly influenced how Balinese culture thrives, especially in religion, culture, and arts. Hitherto, the Balinese distinctive culture and skills have developed into tangible and intangible identities. It is well presented on Balinese Tourism, which has been Indonesia's pride in the eyes of the world. The Balinese workforce is one of the best workers with expertise in tourism, recognized by various companies engaged in hospitality services in different parts of the world. Along with the times, a few Balinese people migrated out of their homeland to pursue careers overseas. They spread to various corners



Figure 1.4 Bird's eye view of Pura Agung Santi Bhuwana, Pairi Daiza, Belgia

of the world, especially to well-developed countries, for a better chance of living.

These Balinese ethnic groups that spread to various countries are known as the Balinese diaspora. Despite having

been far away from their homeland for years, the Balinese diaspora has strong kinship ties and is fond of their land. The condition is arguably due to the strong influence of religion, customs, and

culture, which is reflected in the life of the people, albeit in their current geographical position. According to Tempo, in 2015, the Indonesian diaspora was spread over 90 countries.² In terms of global quantity, the number of Indonesian diasporas is smaller than that of Chinese diasporas, which reached around 70 million people, and the Indian diaspora, which figures at approximately 60 million. The figure is, however, directly proportional to the total population of the two countries. Jusuf Kalla, Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, at the opening of the Congress of Indonesian Diaspora III, stated that in terms of population size, Indonesia has the opportunity to occupy the third position as a contributor to the diaspora in the world. However, the statistic was outnumbered by the Philippines.³ The Balinese diaspora spread across various continents, including Europe. The existence of the Balinese Diaspora in Europe for many years has been viewed as a dual role agent; they acted as cultural intermediaries/agents and tourism agents for Bali and Indonesia in general.

BALINESE ART AND CULTURE AS IDENTITY

Each ethnic group has a distinctive cultural identity related to its respective regions and geographical conditions. Thus, cultural identity firmly adhered to ethnicity or regionalism, which was born in each ethnic ground and then socially integrated or co-existing with the hosts in their new habitat. Cultural identity is a sense of belonging. It may refer to a sense of belonging to a particular group, a personal conception, and perception, and related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, localism, or social groups with their cultural characteristics. In this context, cultural identity is a breakdown of individual and group features that have cultural similarities and can be seen compared to other groups' cultural characteristics.⁵ Meanwhile, national cultural identity is a mixture of various cultural features owned by individuals and groups that are considered capable of representing the characteristics of a country (nation) and all of its people. It is visible when compared to the national cultural identities of other countries.

From Balinese Hinduism's perspective, art has its strategic position. Art is part of the religious activities of the Hindu community in Bali. When a Ceremony or religious ritual is held at the temple (holy place), the society presents performing arts, such as dance, musical arts, fine arts, and literature, as part of the people's expression of gratitude to the Higher being. Temple and others building in Bali are designed and erected in such a way as an expression of the aesthetic, ethical, and religious attitudes following Balinese Hindu teaching. In the spirit of service (*Ngayah*), the dancers perform their skills as a devotion to God Almighty (*Ida*

Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa). The religious nature of the Balinese community and the universal teachings of Hinduism lead to the proliferation of art. Much of the art is intended for a particular ceremony or as a complement to a ceremony. Apart from religious purposes, performing art as entertainment is well-developing. Using gamelan instruments in Hindu ritual activities represents Lord Iswara's existence. His presence emits spiritual vibrations in the ceremony.⁶ Gamelan creates festivity in some rituals like Dewa Yadnya, Pitra Yadnya, Manusa Yadnya, Rsi Yadnya, and Bhuta Yadnya is an integral part of the ceremony.



Figure 2.⁷ From Balinese Hinduism's perspective, art has its strategic position. Art is part of the religious activities of the Hindu community in Bali.

BALINESE CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN BELGIUM, EUROPE

On the European continent, in Belgium, to be precise, there is a traditional Balinese temple building. This temple is named Pura Agung Santi Bhuwana, located in the Pairi Daiza Park in Brugelete, Belgium. Pura Agung Santi Bhuwana is the largest Balinese temple outside Indonesia. This sacred area is part of the Indonesian Garden, built on 6 hectares of land, and is located in Pairi Daiza Park in Brugellete, 85 km from Brussels City, Belgium. Pairi Daiza Park is a conservation park for nature, flora, fauna, and world culture, located 85 km from Brussels. This park has been named one of the best in Europe

because it glorifies other world cultural civilizations, such as the presence of a Balinese temple called Pura Agung Santi Bhuwana, complete with a terraced rice fields landscape.

Built by a Belgian named Eric Dombecausens, the temple was inaugurated on May 18, 2009. Dombecausens' love of Bali's uniqueness and cultural traditions motivated him to establish the shrine. The temple construction process was carried out in stages. Thirty Balinese *Undagi* (craftsmen, architects, and stonemasons) were brought to Belgium to build the temple and worked on it for two years. The temple stone materials were directly imported from the slopes of Mount Merapi, Central Java. These meticulous efforts were made to maintain the culture's

authenticity. The holy sanctuary was inaugurated simultaneously with Taman Indonesia (The Kingdom of Ganesha), a 5-hectare Indonesian Park Complex within the 55-hectare Parc Paradisio Tourism Park area.⁸

When the Balinese Hindu religious holiday is commemorated in Belgium, hundreds of Balinese Hindus who live in Europe, such as Luxembourg, the Netherlands, England, Germany, France, and Sweden, flock to the temple since early morning. This ceremony activity involves members of the *Banjar*, consisting of the Balinese diaspora who live throughout the European region. Some prominent groups include Banjar Bali from the Netherlands, Banjar Suka Duka from Belgium, Banjar Santi Dharma from Paris, Sekar Jagat from Indonesia, and Hindu communities in Luxembourg, England, Germany, and Sweden. The Balinese diaspora in Europe is dominated by social groups talented in dancing and playing gamelan instruments. They represent and subsequently support tourism promotion programs of the Republic of Indonesia through their traditional religious activities. They naturally support the existence of temples in Europe, such as in Belgium, Hamburg, and Berlin, with their stunning performing dance and percussion art service.

BALINESE PERFORMING ART IN THE HEART OF A FOREIGN CONTINENT

Balinese dance is divided into three according to each function and purpose: Wali Dance, *Bebali* Dance, and *Balih-bali* Dance. The art of *Wali* means a sacred dance; this dance functions as a complementary executor in a religious ceremony, which is only staged in holy places, either the main temple area or places according to custom. Then, the *Bebali* dance, or ceremonial dance, is closely related to traditional ceremonies. Serves as a complement for ceremonies/ceremonies at temples or outside temples. *Bali-Bali* dance (secular dance) is all dance that functions as entertainment art, a means to express joy, a sense of fun, and for association.^{9 10}

In 2017, The ceremony was even led by a Hindu priest, directly escorted from



Figure 3.¹¹ The temple of Agung Santi Bhuwana is not only a place of worship for Hindus but also a venue for promoting Indonesian cultural heritages in Europe.

Bali. The priest, Ida Pedanda Dalem Putra Sibang, came from Bali to oversee the temple inauguration ceremony in 2017, together with the entourage. On occasion, The priest performed spiritual cleansing ceremonies, including *Sudi Wadani*, an initiation ceremony for fifteen European citizens who decided to convert to Balinese Hindu. The Deputy Head of the Indonesian Representative Office, Kristanyo Hardjo representing the Indonesian Embassy in Brussels, said that the Galungan and Kuningan celebrations were among the most important religious festivals celebrated by the Balinese Hindu community. This celebration simultaneously illustrates the tolerance of inter-religious life in Indonesia, where all levels of Indonesian society from various religions and cultures can commemorate the holy day together, whether in Indonesia or abroad. He further explained that the existence of the Pura Agung Santi Bhuwana is not only a place of worship for Hindus but also a venue for promoting Indonesian cultural heritages in Europe.

In his remarks, the Chairman of the Belgian Hindus Association, I Made Wardana said that the Balinese Hindu community who live in Europe could maintain steadfastness by respecting their own culture amidst the onslaught of a global culture. He admitted that global influence penetrated all practical activities

and influenced all aspects of life. Albeit the unevaded facts, thousands of the Balinese diaspora and the local citizens respectfully attended the religious movement. They came from various cities in Belgium to join the ceremony. They witnessed Balinese art performances enlivened by the Pendet and Kecak dances by the Sekar Jagat Indonesia of Paris Group and Balinese children's music by the Banjar Suka Duka Group from the Netherlands.¹²

In the Tumpek Kandang Day celebration at the Pura Agung Santi Bhuwana, the pilgrim celebrates the day to maintain the harmony of life with all living things and the universe, representing the core teachings of Balinese Hinduism. Hindus always try to teach love to God's creation, including livestock and pets. As a form of this love, Balinese Hindus have a special day of celebration for animals. The event was held in the morning with a prayer ritual and simple ceremonial materials made by the women. Then from 1 to 3 pm local time, a *megibung* event is held. It is a feast, where each participant brings their homemade dishes to be shared with others. This tradition becomes a routine in every prayer ceremony held at this temple, with the hope that *megibung* can strengthen their unity without being disturbed by caste or clan differences, social classes, or other disputes. Besides that, Pendet, Rejang, Janger dance, Genjek

chant, and Panyembrama dances are usually performed. On several occasions, gamelan players and dancers carried out their stages interactively. They invite Belgians to dance in Bali. This invitation to dance was in great demand by the visitors who flocked to the venue for the performance.¹³

CONCLUSION

Art and its strategic position in the Balinese Hindu community is the people's expression of gratitude to the Higher being. As part of the religious activities of the Hindu community, a Ceremony or religious ritual held at the temple (holy place) always showcases performing arts. The customs are strongly associated with identity; for instance, despite being far away from Bali, the Balinese diaspora in Belgium commemorated Balinese Hindu holy days festively. In Pura Agung Santi Bhuwana, Belgium, the Balinese Hindu Diaspora of Europe attended the temple ceremony in the early morning. The members of the social group *Banjar* performed their service by staging a dance and gamelan orchestra to accompany the holy day ceremony. The talented Balinese Diaspora on dance and play gamelan instruments constitute a significant part of the total population. They support the Government's tourism promotion programs of the Republic of Indonesia through their traditional religious activities. Subsequently, they enlivened the existence of temples in Europe, such

as in Belgium, Hamburg, and Berlin, with their stunning performing dance and percussion art service. Balinese Hindu community who lives in Europe could maintain steadfastness by respecting their own culture amidst the onslaught of a global culture. He admitted that global influence penetrated all practical activities and influenced all aspects of life. Albeit the unevaded facts, thousands of the Balinese diaspora and the local citizens respectfully attended the religious movement.

REFERENCES

1. Ardika, I Wayan. 1997. 'Bali Dalam Sentuhan Budaya Global Awal Abad Masehi' dalam *Dinamika Kebudayaan Bali*. Ardika, I Wayan dan Sutaba, I Made (eds) Denpasar: Upada Sastra
2. Memanfaatkan Diaspora Indonesia. Tempo. 2015. Available at URL: <http://www.tempo.co/read/opiniKT/2015/08/11/10672/memanfaatkan-diaspora-indonesia>
3. The Marketeers.com. 2005. Harusnya Diaspora Indonesia Terbesar Ketiga di Dunia dalam <http://marketeers.com/harusnya-diaspora-indonesia-terbesar-ketiga-di-dunia/> diakses tanggal 20 Juli 2017
4. Image by IMA Wardana 'Keunikan Pura Hindu Bali di Belgia, Iro Mangkunya Orang Belanda'. IDN Times. 2022. Available at URL: <https://bali.idntimes.com/science/discovery/idn-times-hyperlocal/pura-hindu-di-belgia-c1c2>
5. Ennaji, Moha. 2005. Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco. Springer Science & Business Media hal.19-23
6. Suhendra EA. Governor of Bali: Tumpek Krulut as momentum to cherish love for Balinese. *Bali Tourism Journal*. 2021 Dec 28;5(3):62-5.
7. Image from Dinas Kebudayaan Provinsi Bali "Mendunia! Ratusan Perangkat Gamelan Bali Tersebar di AS-Eropa". Detik. 2022.

Available at URL: <https://www.detik.com/bali/budaya/d-6146306/mendunia-ratusan-perangkat-gamelan-bali-tersebar-di-as-eropa>.

8. S Hutajulu. Mengenal Pura Agung Santi Bhuwana, Pura Khas Adat Bali di Belgia. *rakyatbali[dot]com*. 2021. Available at URL: <https://www.rakyatbali.com/kabar-bali/pr-2011742100/mengenal-pura-agung-santi-bhuwana-pura-khas-adat-bali-di-belgia>
9. K Adnyana. Memperkenalkan budaya Bali di Eropa lewat Seni Tari. *goodnewsfromindonesia[dot]id*. 2016. Available at URL: <https://www.goodnewsfromindonesia.id/2016/08/04/memperkenalkan-budaya-bali-di-eropa-lewat-seni-tari>
10. Januar R. Topeng Sidakarya Dance; A Man who made it a success. *Bali Tourism Journal*. 2020 Feb 10;4(1):6-9.
11. Image from article 'Pura Agung Santi Bhuwana, Pura Megah Di Daratan Eropa Yang Tetap Menjaga Tradisi Megibung'. Denpasar Now. 2021. Available at URL: <https://denpasarnow.com/pura-agung-santi-bhuwana-pura-megah-di-daratan-eropa-yang-tetap-menjaga-tradisi-megibung/>
12. Z Gibon. Warga Hindu Bali di Eropa rayakan Galungan di Belgia. *Antara News*. 2014. Available at URL: <https://www.antaraneews.com/berita/437271/warga-hindu-bali-di-eropa-rayakan-galungan-di-belgia>
13. Umat Hindu Bali di Eropa Rayakan Tumpek Kandang di Belgia. *Kompas*. 2017. Available at URL: <https://internasional.kompas.com/read/2017/07/01/15330181/umat.hindu.bali.di.eropa.rayakan.tumpek.kandang.di.belgia?page=all>



This work is licensed under
a Creative Commons Attribution