

# The Ideologies Behind the Creation of the Sekar Jepun Dance as a Mascot Dance of the Badung Regency, Bali

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The Government of Badung, in Bali, uses the Sekar Jepun dance as a mascot. There are various types of new, and traditional arts of the region. However, only the Sekar Jepun dance is considered as the mascot dance. The questions posed by this study are: what is the form of the Sekar Jepun dance performance?; and what ideology lies behind the creation of the Sekar Jepun dance? This study was completed using qualitative methods. The primary data was obtained through observation, and interview techniques. The primary data acquisition was combined with secondary data obtained from the literature study. All data was analysed using both the deconstruction theory, and the aesthetic theory. The findings of the study included: the Sekar Jepun dance is presented in the form of a loose dance, and without a play, with a structure of performances of custodians, performers, and painters, which are expressed by a variety of pure dance movements, fashion, and makeup designs dominated by hues of white; and the creation of the Sekar Jepun dance is based on aesthetic ideology, cultural preservation ideology, and developmentalism.

**Key words:** *Ideology, Sekar jepun dance, Mascot of badung regency, Bali.*

## Introduction

Bali is a small island with stunning natural beauty. In addition to its enchanting natural potential, the Balinese Hindu community has a very expressive cultural tradition (Pradana & Pantiyasa, 2018; Ruastiti et al., 2020). Expressive culture is mainly portrayed in the form of art and culture (Geriya, 1985; Rai et al., 2019; Pradana, 2012). Art activities for Balinese people, especially those who are Hindu, are representations of self-expression through works

that contain beauty, and devotion, which is guided by traditional cultural values. Thus, the role of the people is very important in the growth and development of art, especially in the performing arts because the performing arts involve group work, namely the presenter, and the recipient (Sedyawati, 1981).

Various cultural arts live, grow, and develop, including painting, sculpture, kria, and performance art. Balinese performing arts include dance, musical art, and puppetry theatre. As a branch of performing arts, dance has a very important function, especially in the lives of Balinese people, particularly those who are Hindu. In general, the function of dance can be classified into three fields: dance as a religious ceremony, dance as a traditional ceremony, and dance as a holiday (Murgiyanto & Bandem, 1996).

Today, digital-based communication and information sciences and technology have coloured the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. At the same time, various aspects of Balinese life have been coloured by the spirit of a capitalistic economy. However, the vision and orientation of regional development and educational institutions in Bali, instead, chose the value of local wisdom as its basis, including in the form of new dance creations. The new dance creation was deliberately created to be a cultural symbol, namely as the mascot of an area or an institution. For an institution or region, the mascot is not as patient as a particular icon or symbol. However, the mascot is considered to reflect characteristics, potential, and be a symbol of good luck or safety.

In general, the various institutions in Bali have their own respective mascots. The city and regency governments in Bali also have dance works as mascots or regional identities. Philosophically, the Sekar Jepun dance was deliberately chosen as the mascot of the Badung Regency because the Jepun flower is an aesthetic representation of the Badung Regency icon, namely Sekar Jepun. The Sekar Jepun dance is a new dance. It is performed by five female dancers and using the same dance costume between one dancer and another. Furthermore, the Sekar Jepun dance is often performed at official events in the Badung Regency, both in government institutions, as well as private institutions at the regency, provincial, national, and international levels.

The Sekar Jepun dance has been featured at international events, including the China International Travel Mart (CITM) in China in 2012, and was staged at the High-Level Conference Summit in Bali, which was attended by Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders, and President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono at the Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center on Monday, 7 October 2013. The Sekar Jepun dance was also staged at the opening of the Badung Agricultural Culture Festival, which was held in the Pelaga Village, Petang Subdistrict, Badung Regency on 25 July 2013. This attracted several foreign tourists to visit a

festival that presents the potential of village tourism, and arts and cultural attractions. Culture is a tourist motive for travelling (Pradana, 2019).

The process of creating the Sekar Jepun dance is based on an aesthetic interpretation of the Badung Regency icon, the Jepun flower. Icons are anything that can be associated with something else (Murgiyanto & Bandem, 1996). An iconic sign can express something because between the sign is the similarity or likeness of a certain form or quality. The existence, characteristics, and potential of the Badung Regency are reflected in the Sekar Jepun dance mascot. This scientific work intentionally discusses the following: what are the aesthetics of the Sekar Jepun dance?; and what is the ideology behind the Sekar Jepun dance? This publication is expected to increase the repertoire of knowledge in the field of performing arts about the aesthetics and ideology behind the Sekar Jepun dance, as the mascot of the Badung Regency.

### **Research Method**

This research was conducted using qualitative methods. The object of this research is the Sekar Jepun dance. The determination of the object and location of this research is based on several considerations, including: the Sekar Jepun dance is a new dance creation related to the existence of natural potential, namely Jepun flowers; the dance was specifically created as the mascot of the Badung Regency; the dance depicts the development ideology of the Badung Regency, which is based on the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana.

The research data collection process used several techniques, namely: a study of documents, specifically by studying the references obtained through the document material; interviews with 11 informants consisting of artists, namely gassers, and dancers of Sekar Jepun dance, as well as authorised officials within the Badung Regency, and observers of Balinese arts and culture; and observation, which involved conducting direct observations in the field related to the training and staging of the Sekar Jepun dance. All of the data collected was analysed qualitatively and presented descriptively by explaining and describing in accordance with the topics studied in the aesthetic, and deconstruction theories.

### **The Performance Form of the Sekar Jepun Dance**

In the structure of traditional Balinese performances, the sublime message is usually implicit in the play (Pradana, 2018; Pradana, 2018b). The Sekar Jepun dance, as a Balinese performance, is presented in the form of a loose dance, without a play, and is accompanied by the gamelan Gong Kebyar. The Sekar Jepun dance is arranged based on the aesthetic concept of traditional Balinese dance. Aesthetics is the study of everything related to beauty. All

objects or events of art, in essence, contain three fundamental aspects: form or appearance, weight or content, and appearance or presentation (Djelantik, 1990).

The beauty or aesthetics is an observation of a work-art. That is, the attention lies in analysing the sense of art, a sense of beauty, and a sense of nobility, with a grandeur reaction due to intellectualism (Kartika, 2004). In the framework of general theories about values, the notion of beauty is considered as one type of value, as well as moral values, economic values, and other values (Pramono et al., 2008). The values which are related to everything that is included in the notion of beauty, are called aesthetic values. There is a measure that becomes the identity of a work of art which is considered to be aesthetically satisfying. It is the harmony between form, content, and appearance, which can bring the viewer into the world of fantasy, and present a complete roundness (Althusser, 2010). The aesthetics in the Sekar Japun dance mascot of the Badung Regency are reflected through their appearance, and weight. The beauty of form, weight, and appearance can be explained as follows.

Firstly, the form of the Sekar Japun dance is based on harmony, as well as wholeness in integration. The harmony of the Sekar Japun dance performance occurs when all of the components are harmonious between the dance moves, accompaniment music, and costumes. The harmony strengthens the sense of wholeness because it can provide a sense of calm, and comfort. Following Rwa Bineda's philosophy, something is intact if there is a balance between contrasting elements. The contrast in the Sekar Japun dance is seen in the motion of the retailer with the previous parts. In this section, the dance movements are performed with faster and more dynamic rhythmic movements, and the position of the dancers is moving around horizontally, and vertically, and forming a circle. Dynamics can be in the form of changes in values, rules, and other social parts that still have structural implications (Atmaja et al., 2019).

Secondly, the essence of the Sekar Japun dance has three aspects, as a Balinese dance, as well as the Badung Regency mascot dance. These aspects are the mood atmosphere, ideas, and messages. The Sekar Japun dance mascot in the Badung Regency was developed based on the aesthetic of the Badung Regency icon, namely Japun flowers. The Japun is a basic idea in the cultivation of the Sekar Japun dance, which is depicted abstractly. In the Sekar Japun dance, the message to be conveyed to the audience is the depiction of the Japun plant, with its branches being expressed through a variety of movements. Furthermore, the company's part depicts a Japun plant that has just sprouted, leafed, and flowered, ranging from flower buds to blossoming flowers. Moreover, many flowers are expressed through the motion of ngigelin sampur, which gestures to form flowers that are budding, and blooming. Subsequently, at the end, the movements in the Sekar Japun dance depict the strength of the Japun plant, which is known to have branching stems, that when experiencing turmoil due to rain and strong winds, are able to maintain their flowers to remain strong, and radiant. The aesthetics of the Sekar

Jepun dance as the mascot of the Badung Regency are very clearly conveyed through the contents in each part of the beautiful composition of the dance movement. In addition, the Sekar Jepun dance is also supported by a harmonious, and meaningful musical accompaniment. The meaning shows a valuable cultural element (Pradana, 2018a). A work of art which is felt and is meaningful for the performer, and the audience, indicates the importance of the work of art.

Thirdly, the aesthetics of the Sekar Jepun dance, as a whole, are reflected in its appearance. The performances of the Sekar Jepun dance include movement, accompaniment, makeup and fashion, actors, and infrastructure. The aesthetic value contained in the Sekar Jepun dancers' movements are flexibility, memorisation, and the dancers' skills in doing movements, such as the movement of ngelikas on the pepeson part; mapah biu, milpit, ngegol, metimpuh on the part of the man, and the rotating motion, the motion of the Jepun plant in the section. The expertise of the Sekar Jepun dancers in doing the right movements following the gamelan accompaniment will give the impression of a unified whole. One of the aesthetic values found in the Sekar Jepun dance is the vocal accompaniment sung by the gerong.

The Sekar Jepun dance uses fine princess dance costume makeup. It can be seen from the use of foundation, solid powder, and powder that matches the dancers' skin colour, providing a natural impression on the face, and dancers' skin. Besides, the use of black eyebrow pencil is adjusted to the shape of the dancers' eyebrows, and it is shaped like a curved line or mountain that has a peak. It creates the impression of a firm but still smooth line on the face because of the combination of black, and the natural skin colour. The aesthetic value contained in the Sekar Jepun dance performers is the compactness that is owned between the dancers and the musicians of the Sekar Jepun dance, and in interacting directly on each dance part, so that harmony occurs between the motion, and the accompaniment. This makes the Sekar Jepun dance feel fun to enjoy. The proscenium stage form used by Sekar Jepun dance is arranged by placing gamelan instruments that are divided equally between the right and left sides, which gives the impression of balance, and harmony, and directs focus onto the dance performance. There is harmony between the hearing and the sight of the audience, which can cause pleasure and comfort.

**Picture 1.** The Sekar Jepun dance using Tetanganan motion, and the Jepun flower symbol



**Source:** Ida Ayu Wimba, 2019

The Sekar Jepun dance is performed with the structure of the pepeson performance, with the earliest part depicting the Jepun plant and its sturdy branches. It is marked by the appearance of three Sekar Jepun dancers. The pengawak, the main part of the Sekar Jepun dance, depicts the growth of the Jepun plant, which starts to leaf, and flowering from a bud, blooms. The casting is the third or final part of the structure of the Sekar Jepun dance performance. In this section, we describe the Jepun flowering in rain, wind, and sun, however, it remains strong, blooming and glowing. This is marked by five dancers, as Sekar Jepun imitates the motion of the Jepun flowers that bud and bloom. The pekaad provides the picture of a sturdy, strong, united, and beautiful Jepun plant. Following below is a picture of the Sekar Jepun dance mascot of the Badung Regency, in Bali.

**Picture 2.** The Sekar Jepun dance in a group floor pattern, with the symbol of unity



**Source:** Ida Ayu Wimba, 2019

### **Ideologies behind the Creation of the Sekar Jepun Dance**

Ideology is a system of ideas, and the various representations that dominate the minds of humans or social groups (Pradana et al., 2016). Moreover, ideology is a belief system, and value system which is represented in various media, and social actions (Piliang, 2006). Ideology is maps of meaning, which although they appear to be universal truths, are historically specific understandings that cover, and perpetuate power. Meanwhile, ideology shapes certain characters and influences a person to be aware of his position (friend and foe), conscious of movement, and conscious of struggle.

The Sekar Jepun dance works contain ideologies according to the initiators' wishes. In the Sekar Jepun dance, as the mascot of the Badung Regency, it has a marker or shape, and a sign or concept. The Sekar Jepun dance mascot of the Badung Regency is a form of art that symbolises the Badung community and contains ideological values.

### **Aesthetic Ideology**

The Sekar Jepun dance is an aesthetic expression that feels pleasant to enjoy. The Sekar Jepun dance was born from the experience of the beauty of its supporting community. It will make its people feel happy, satisfied, relieved, and more passionate in their social life. The function of each element in a structure is intended to meet their daily needs (Nasikun, 2000;

Pradana, 2019). As a biological prerequisite, the psychological, and sociocultural implementation of the Sekar Jepun dance as a collective work has an integrated construction.

The Sekar Jepun dance contains the theme of the majesty of nature. The dance was derived from a process of the potential of nature, namely Sekar Jepun. The Jepun is a flower that has many philosophical meanings. As summarised from the results of a workshop of experts in 2007, featuring Badung artists who are members of the Badung Regency Artists Association (HSKB), Sekar Jepun contains philosophical elements of religion, unity, strength, inspiration, and economics (Dahana, 2001).

Modern humans, with a crush of economic needs that are increasingly heavy, sometimes lose their sense of humanity. Moreover, they are seized by western, modern, materialistic, and capitalistic ideologies, which tend to create selfishness and make them less inclined to care about each other. Amid modernisation, a person can lose their humanity. The problematic crisis of humanity due to modernisation can be anticipated with an ideological aesthetic.

Ideological art development can be undertaken to anticipate humanitarian crises due to westernisation. As once offered by Prof. Dr. Rai Mantra, the Governor of Bali in the nineteen-eighties, he was determined to build a Balinese personality through art. The personality referred to the cultural capital of Bali, which can be realised through art practices based on Hinduism (Pradana & Parwati, 2017). The relationship of Hinduism with art cannot be separated because religious teachings can foster a very deep sense of art in society. It encompasses an aesthetic understanding according to a beauty that can encourage humans to be creative, and dynamic in being elegant to achieve inner satisfaction, and in sharpening their institutions. The results of artistic creativity nuanced Hinduism are characteristic of Balinese society. It is feared that it will be degraded by the rapid modernisation of development in Bali (Sadiartha, 2018).

### **Cultural Preservation Ideology**

The Sekar Jepun dance has a foundation of cultural principles that are by the norms and values which are respected by the Balinese people. This can be seen from the cultural genealogy and truth values that are under the teachings of Hinduism. Culture is a cause for the social satisfaction of principals (Tejayadi et al., 2019). On the other hand, the sustainability of culture is inseparable from the effort to preserve and develop the culture of the community as participants (Ruastiti et al., 2018). The meaning of beauty must follow the cultural conceptions of the actors by remembering that artworks, as a cultural product, are integrated with the cultural system of the supporting community (Sumardjo, 2000).

The Sekar Jepun dance was created based on the ideology of cultural preservation, as established by the people of the Badung Regency. The Sekar Jepun dance contains an ideology of cultural preservation of the Balinese Hindu people, which upholds the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana, a principle related to the inner and outer happiness of the Balinese Hindu societies. The Tri Hita Karana is a balance between humans, and their peers (pawongan), humans and their environment (palemahan), and human relationships with our Lord (parahyangan) (Ruastiti et al., 2018; Pradana & Arcana, 2020).

Firstly, the parahyangan aspect in the Sekar Jepun dance is an effort to strengthen human relations with Ida Sang Hyang Widhi. Relations and power show a hierarchical relationship that has the potential to be sustainable (Pradana, 2017). God has a high value related to human life (Wijayanto, 2012). The essence of human life is to require religious observance for the perfection of life (Zubaidah, 2019). Therefore, since the creation process of the dance performance, the Sekar Jepun dance has never been separated from ceremonial elements based on the teachings of Balinese Hinduism.

The comprised a series of prayers for Balinese Hindus (Karmini et al., 2019; Arniati et al., 2020; Pradana et al., 2016). The supporters of the Sekar Jepun dance performed a prayer accompanied by a ceremony, pleading for safety, and a smooth performance. Thereafter, pleading for holy water given to the dancers, musicians, gongs, and other supporters for the successful staging of this Badung Regional Government mascot dance.

Secondly, is the aspect of pawongan, of which there are five ideologies in the Sekar Jepun dance. The first is unity. The ‘five strands of Sekar Jepun’ means a government system that prioritises the unity of the people, and the performance of its leaders. Furthermore, ‘the adhesiveness of Sekar Jepun's sari with its petals’ means the unity of the Badung people in carrying out development. Second, is creativity, wherein the “Sekar Jepun dance is formed through a creative process”. The challenges and problems of development in the Badung Regency need to be faced with creativity. Third is the inspirational and motivating; “Sekar Jepun when it was falling out remained fresh”. Fourth is independence, where “Sekar Jepun's trunk is firmly rooted and large, but has never damaged other plants or buildings near and around it”. Fifth and last is the economic well-being, where “Sekar is provided by nature, has economic properties”.

Thirdly, as the mascot of the Badung Regency, the Sekar Jepun dance contains cultural preservation ideology about the importance of environmental preservation. The choice of Sekar Jepun as a mascot is a form of the appreciation of the Balinese Hindus for the natural potential, which is an expression of the attitude with the environment. The Sekar Jepun dance is created from a human consciousness that acts ‘immanent’ to the natural environment, which is humans who are adaptive to their natural environment. The ecological principle on

the surface of this is that humans are indeed part of the web of life (Capra, 2001). The imbalance of ecosystems today is caused by ethics that legitimises humans as rulers, as well as destroyers of the web of life, without souls. Ethics need to be improved because according to ecologists, all creatures, whether human, fauna or flora, are entitled to the same dignity as citizens of the biotic community.

### **Developmentalism**

The ideologies behind the creation of the Sekar Japun dance contained the vision and mission of the development of the Badung Regency, which was based on the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana. The vision of the mid-term development of the Badung Regency for the period of 2016–2021 is “strengthening the direction of Badung Development based on Tri Hita Karana towards a society that is developed, peaceful and prosperous”.

The vision of the development of the Badung Regency Government refers to the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana. The philosophical teachings contain valuable knowledge for a wise life (Pradana, 2017a). The implementation of the Tri Hita Karana teachings was created because it was needed in human harmony, as a manifestation of the essence of the Vedas, namely Satyam, and Sivam, which are eternal or the highest holiness or truth (Mantra, 2006).

The Sekar Japun dance is a cultural capital that has been transformed into development capital, which is a determination to realise the vision, and mission of the development that is carried out by the communities and the Government of the Badung Regency. This is by the statement that art can be a mediator in caring, increasing or changing the public awareness (Smiers, 2009). It is hoped that through the creation of the Sekar Japun dance, it can influence as a stimulus to give birth to a positive reaction to the development improvements for the agents, and the communities. In terms of the cultural semiotics, the messages concerning developmentalism can be received through cultural symbols (Pateda, 2001). The messages in the development of the Badung Regency were more acceptable to the Badung people when it was also enlivened by the dance performance of Sekar Japun.

The implementation of the Sekar Japun dance, which is based on the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana, has been described in the nine points of the development mission of the Badung Regency, as follows:

1. Strengthening the harmony of people’s life in the fabric of the diversity of customs, cultures, and religions.
2. Strengthening the quality of public services through the application of information and communication technology.
3. Strengthening the principles of clean and good governance.

4. Improving the quality of education, health, and family planning (KB).
5. Strengthening micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), as a pillar of people's economy.
6. Realising the structure of the communities' life that upholds the rule of law and human rights.
7. Improving the protection and management of natural resources, the environment, and disaster management.
8. Strengthening regional competitiveness through improving the quality of human resources, and regional infrastructure.
9. Strengthening the development of agriculture, fisheries, and marine sectors that are in synergy with culture-based tourism (RPJMD) of the Badung Regency for the period of 2016–2021.

The dimension of the container in the mission points one, and seven, which are to strengthen the harmony of communities' life in the fabric of the diversity of customs, culture, and religion, the 'five Sekar Jepun dancers' reflects the 'five strands of Sekar Jepun leaves'. This means a government system that prioritises the unity of the people, and the performance of its leaders. Meanwhile, 'the stickiness of Sekar Jepun Sari with its petals', means the unity of the Badung people in carrying out development (Dinas Kebudayaan Kabupaten Badung, 2016).

The Sekar Jepun dance was developed because of the creative process of the supporting communities. The Badung Regency mascot dance embodies creativity that requires an understanding of the dance created, so that the concept and form shows a beautiful and harmonious unity. The principle of creativity is also an important part of carrying out the development mission of the Badung Regency, including the need for creativity in managing government systems, and creativity in carrying out the principles of good and clean governance in the Badung Regency.

As the mascot of the Badung Regency, the Sekar Jepun dance also contains educational values. Specifically, the values of discipline, work, creativity, and democracy. The educational values are reflected in the process and output of education (Karmini et al., 2019a; Karmini et al., 2020). This is reflected in all the efforts of the dance artists who can collaborate harmoniously, and are able to perform the Sekar Jepun dance artistically, and accompanied by synergistic cooperation. The description that the 'Sekar Jepun plant is sturdy, its support roots stick firmly in the ground, do not damage other plants', is a mirror of that independence. This is under the principle of regional autonomy from the Badung Regency Government.

The output and impact of development in the Badung Regency must improve the socio-economic well-being of its people. This was done partly through the efforts to strengthen



micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), as a pillar of the people's economy (5th mission). In addition, the Sekar Jepun dance also informs about the value of the love of the motherland, and the care for the environment. This development, which concerns environmental preservation (palemahan), is explicitly formulated in the seventh mission, namely, “Enhancing the protection and management of natural resources, the environment, and disaster management”. The Government, and the people of the Badung Regency, will try to preserve the environment, as part of sustainable development in this region (RPJMD, Badung Regency (2016–2021)).

## **Conclusion**

The Sekar Jepun dance is presented in the form of dance creations that are loose or without a play, and with a performance structure that refers to the tri angga principle. The structure of the Sekar Jepun dance performance is expressed through custodians, performers, and painters, and is accompanied by a variety of pure dance movements with dominant white makeup.

The creation of the Sekar Jepun dance is based on aesthetic ideology as a symbol. The aesthetic expression of Sekar Jepun can hone the Balinese conscience and personality. The cultural preservation ideology, accompanied by the practice of the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana, has succeeded in maintaining the cultural identity of Badung, and the developmentalism of the Badung Regency, as based on Tri Hita Karana towards a developed, peaceful, and prosperous society.

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