

# The Concept of *Rwa Bhineda Kriya* on the Island of Bali towards *Jagadhita*

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## ABSTRACT

The concept of “*rwa bhineda*” on the island of Bali is reflected in the intertwining of “*kriya*,” religion, tourism and local customs as regulators. These qualities make “*kriya*” beautiful because it is very adequate in carrying out its functions, namely meeting religious and non-religious needs. This art is sacred and profane, reflecting the nature of “*kaja*” (north) and “*kelod*” (south), which denotes mountains and sea, or upstream (above) and “*teben*” (below). In “*kriya*” on the island of Bali, this concept is manifested in the form of “*barong*” and “*rangda*” as symbols of good and evil. The “*kriya*,” which appear creepy, frightening, but making you miss it, have a function as decorations, making the temple beautiful and comfortable like heaven on earth. This situation shows the activities of the Balinese Hindu community at the ceremonial level and also tourism is full of “*kriya*” dynamics. This art grows and develops in various variations, emerging as a continuous manifestation of the soul in fulfilling the necessities of life towards the “*jagadhita*.”

**Keywords:** *kriya*, *rwa bhineda*, Bali, *jagadhita*

## INTRODUCTION

*Jagadhita* that is intended in this paper is mutual happiness, and physical and spiritual well-being. *Jagadhita* is also mentioned in terms of *bhukti* (dedication) or *bakti* (devotion), namely the prosperity in life of the people and the State (Parisada Hindu Dharma 2002). Puniatmaja (2014) outlined that *jagadhita* means happiness, prosperity, prosperity of mankind, sustainability, and peace of mankind. *Kriya* comes along with the development of community life. Its existence is to make what it occupies to be beautiful and meaningful. It is also said to be a satisfying art for the beauty that is manifested and applied to all types of goods or objects (Ahimsa-Putra 2009). In Western countries, *kriya* is known as decorative art (Johnson 1973). Art as decorative, functional, and can be enjoyed and integrated into people’s lives. *Kriya* is also said to be the heart of a work that is useful for the life of the Indonesian people (Bandem 2002). It is an art, which in the manufacturing process prioritises human ability rather than machines (Soedarso 1990). *Kriya* is uniquely Indonesian art—a display that is inseparable from the reflection of Indonesia. The Indonesian *kriya* is very diverse that each region has different art styles with its own characteristics. Those characteristics show the faces of each region. The *kriya* that exists in each region is the inspiration for the development of *kriya* designs to find the next product style (Hannan 2002). The Indonesian accepted *kriya* because the source of the creation of this art mostly uses Indonesian resources. Therefore, *kriya* is well preserved compared to other types of art in Indonesia (Ahimsa-Putra 2009).

One of the islands in Indonesia that is integrated with *kriya* is the island of Bali. This island is also known as the Island of a Thousand Temples and the Island of Ceremonies because the art activities almost fulfil the activities of the people; routine activities that is full of charm (Picard 2006). In this context, *kriya* plays a big role because the ceremonial equipment is *kriya*. Here, the *kriya* carries out its distinctive function as adequate ceremonial equipment, so it is said to be a happy and very beautiful art. This makes art inseparable from ceremonies; it is the source of life and the vein of the community (Davies 2007). Hinduism is a major driver of art creation in Bali. The role of religion and *kriya* has a duty in developing society (Moerdowo 1963). Covarrubias (1946) stated that society, art, and Hinduism on the island of Bali form a complete and inseparable unity. Religion, local customs, and cultural arts are difficult to separate. Everything melts in one completely and

unified as a whole. In every worship ceremony, there will be *tetabuhan* (traditional music) performed, songs, local customs, *kriya*, and other arts that are fully and coherently related (Ismail 1980). It is a beautiful and harmonious religious activity that is soothing, fun, and mesmerising. In Bali, *kriya* is a continuation of religion and it is a mean of ceremonies in another form. This makes *kriya* always enjoyable and developing for the religion needs in Bali. Shusterman (2008) further stated that religion has strict and a must or even cannot be violated rules, whereas art is the opposite. The presence of opposing or even contradictory concepts makes the art appear wild, free, rebellious, and angry, like the various forms of *kriya* that adorn various sacred places (temples) in Bali. The appearance of stylised various natural elements and visualised imaginary animals with violent, creepy, and frightening characters displayed various myths of the supernatural, which are terrible; but unique, interesting, and beautiful. Just look at how the *karang bhoma* on the Kori Agung (main entrance) of a temple, *karang sae*, *karang tapel*, and others, seems like they are waiting to grab and squeeze their prey for a meal. It turns out that behind these myths of horror, there are tenderness, kindness, and beauty. *Kriya* admonish mankind with its uniqueness and it is far more effective than long discourses. Thus, various *kriya* displayed in the temple to carry out their very adequate functions.



**Photo 1** Karang bhoma, karang sae, and karang tapel.  
Source: Sunarya (2011). Photographed by I. W. N. Febri.

*Kriya* in the above function is the art of generating spiritual sense of the community, showing the true beauty of the concept of *rwa bhineda*. It is very apparent here that the concept of beauty and function is a concept of twins or identical intertwined (Suryajaya 2016). In Bali, religion, in this case Hinduism, gives a breath of life and enlightenment to the existing culture (Titib 2007). Religion and *kriya* synergise in such a way, intertwine like a weave, which reinforces one another inseparably. This braid can also be witnessed in various displays of *kriya* in the form of *jejahitan* (a series of *janur* or young coconut leaves as ceremonial equipment), *pratima* or statues (symbols of gods), and various other ceremonial equipment that are sacred to the Hindu community, those are what *kriya* meant.



**Photo 2** An example of *jejahitan* and *pratima Acintya*.  
Source: Bali Tours Club (2016) and Legawa (2010).

Zoetmulder and Robson (1995) stated that the *kriya* comes from the Sanskrit language, which means action or *damel* (work) associated with rites or ceremonies. Here, the term *kriyantara* (Sanskrit) also appears, which means the whole field of rites and ceremonies is unique, attached to creativity to produce personality.

Djalari (2000) emphasised that *kriya* is a work that has a broad and deep meaning, it fulfils the needs of a creative life. Through a coherent work process, the implementation and management arrangements are very clear. It is also mentioned that the meaning of *kriya* lies in the accuracy of their function. A distinctive appearance, showing newness, and full of meaning, it is the Indonesian *adhiluhung* cultural heritage, which is so rich in variety (Ahimsa-Putra 2009). *Adhiluhung* culture in this context concerns to the benefits of an abundance natural resources, cultural resources, and creative human resources, so the Balinese people call it the art of *becik* (finished). It is because *kriya* is a crystallisation of values, attitudes, and belief systems or treatment of nature in the context of preservation and also give benefits for the survival of the community. In Bali, religion is closely related and even propagated art (Barbato 2019). Its function as a sacred art is the reflection of it, meanwhile, *kriya* also develops to fill and beautify Bali in its profane function. Since its existence from prehistoric times until now, *kriya* exists because the supporting people need it. It is an art that was born to fulfil religious and non-religious needs. Aside from that, it has the character of the binary opposition of sacred–profane, good–bad, and *kaja–kelod* (north–south). The emergence of different and even contradictory traits is believed by the Hindu community in Bali, towards a balance of life, which is called the concept of *rwa bhineda*.

In interpreting the concept of *rwa bhineda kriya* on the island of Bali in this study, the author borrowed the theory of Dillistone (2002), which offered a way of interpreting symbols through analogy and allegory methods. The analogy method is in the form of a parable or figurative word with something that is already known to the public. This context is often referred as a symbol of customs or culture regulated by the customs of the local community. Meanwhile, allegory interprets symbols through text in the written scriptures and is said to be a verse covering divine truth. In practice, these two approaches do not stand alone, but are mutually convincing and strengthening. The results of the study are expected to be able to provide an overview for the next generation and so that the *kriya* is not lost in time.

### **KRIYA IS THE ROOT OF THE INDONESIAN VISUAL ART TOWARDS JAGADHITA**

When a work of art is stated to exist and develop, it is called the art of living and is needed by society. Likewise, with the existence of Indonesian *kriya*, this art is dissolved in the life of the nation, and always fills in every activity of its people. *Kriya* is an expression of the soul of the nation and is the root of Indonesian art (Gustami 2002). Haryono (2008) emphasised three concepts of the presence of *kriya* based on the needs of human life, there are *idiofak*, *teknofak*, and *sosiofak*.

The birth of *kriya* with the concept of *idiofak* is to meet human needs for their longing for the Holy One (God) and His protection. Until now, the Hindu community in Bali still makes it to fulfil the ritual needs of the community. The concept reflects the people’s longing for the Holy (God) and makes the protector become real, so that *kriya* as a symbol of gods was born. This *kriya* is a ritual *kriya* that is highly sacred, respected, and preserved. It places more emphasis on creation for offerings. The form of something that is very loved and respected becomes a figure that is considered worthy of being obeyed and followed. When the human need for the presence of ritual *kriya* has been fulfilled, the *kriya* function shifts to a profane function, namely the presence of various *kriya* to fulfil other needs.

Joedawinata (2000) emphasised that the role of *kriya* has a unique position in shaping the identity of society and national culture in Indonesia. *Kriya* carries a dual role in the life of society and the nation. As a reflection of traditional culture, *kriya* represents the pattern of people’s lives, which is reflected in their values and beliefs. Meanwhile, in industry, it is an important part of the people’s economic system. *Kriya* is part of culture that appears in two structures, namely meeting the needs of religion and outside religion. Gustami (2000) stated that when the contact for *kriya* expands and begins to be needed outside of its main function, the bonds between crafts and religion will become loose. New contacts emerge and new meanings, namely the meaning that is born from a combination of the values of materialism, commercialism and individualism. This is a characteristic that the existence of *kriya* development in general is inseparable from influencing factors, such as social, political, economic, and technological. Thus, these influence factors will produce new values. Situations like this are not much different from the development of the Ganesh concept in Thailand. Agarwal and Jones (2018) explained that various types of Ganesh statues that are present in Thai society are “active subjects” and “passive objects.” Ganesh as a symbol of deity in religion is an active subject that has many forms and gives many positivity to its owner. Ganesh is simultaneously a passive object in the market where these statues are mass produced and sold for economic purposes.

Furthermore, *kriya* with *teknofak* concept exists for physical needs or as a tool to pamper the human body. Humans create this *kriya* to reach a place or something that they cannot reach. Like the presence of various tools for human life, from farming tools, toys, even to rest, humans need tools in the form of *kriya*.

As this objective, *kriya* is a finished work in the sense that the supporting community selected and chosen the works. Indonesian *kriya* are included in the ranks of folk-culture and some are incorporated in *adhiluhung* culture (high-culture). Soedarso (2002) emphasised that *kriya* included in folk culture are called traditional arts that are unpretentious, not complicated, but spontaneous and honest. It is the art of rural communities that are still intimate, homogeneous, and instead function to bind community solidarity (Kayam 1981a). It is different from the *adhiluhung kriya*, which is full of sophistication with rules, both in terms of process, material selection, and even the creator. The *kriya* creators on the island of Bali are called *undagi*, in the past they were patrons of the ruling family (kings), but now they have spread in society. The presence of *adhiluhung kriya*, which until now can still be witnessed in both the temple (worshiping place) and also the *puri* or castle (the building where the royal family and the brahman lived), is now present in people's homes and hotels with the aim of beautifying the buildings. In the development of visual arts today, carving *kriya*, both two-dimensional and three-dimensional, made of wood or stone, have spread throughout Indonesia and even abroad. Its presence not only makes users happy and satisfied, but also makes the creators feel satisfied because the user in community appreciated their works.

The next type of *kriya* comes with a *sociofak* concept, namely work that shows the identity of a group with its distinctive characteristics. The appearance of this *kriya* is to show the identity or where the owner is from, such as the presence of *barong* and *rangda kriya* will show the area of the owner, namely Bali; the *joglo* house *kriya* will show its Javanese; *megamendung batik*, which shows the Cirebon area; *parang rusak batik* is *batik* from Yogyakarta; *terang bulan batik* is *batik* from Pekalongan; and so on. Traditionally, the characteristics shown by the *kriya* of each region in Indonesia will be seen wherever it is. This is because the work shows its identity and the presence of the *kriya* is one way of conveying the real cultural arts that exist in society. During its development, *kriya* show the personal identity of the creator, such as Amri Yahya's batik with its abstract strokes; Gustami wood carving characterised by its complexity; Sunarno with its simplicity of form; Ida Bagus Tilem and I Tagelan with elongated styles; while Ida Bagus Nyana with its *pulung-pulung* features, namely the form of inflated people; I Ketut Tulak with his traditional strength; and I Tjokot with his *cokotism*, which comes from the Balinese leak. This is a form of responsibility from the Indonesian community to maintain and preserve the national identity (Kim and Ko 2016).

*Kriya* is an art that is inseparable from the history of the nation's culture that lasted thousands of years ago. When large stones are rolled away, they are not only arranged and erected as menhirs or *stamba*, but early humans carved them on the face to become a unique statue. The statues are not made in detail, only expressive carvings to reveal the eyes, nose, and mouth, while others are depicted in broad outline (Raharjo, Munandar, and Zuhdi 1998). Did early humans think of making art for their heirs to enjoy? It may be far from that, but what is clear is that the works produced by early humans were the basis for the birth of today's works of art. Small pieces of stone in the form of flakes are not thrown away, but are processed into various tools such as hand axes, *perimbax* axes, hammer stones, and others that are also sharpened. These objects were found scattered throughout Indonesia, including in Bali. Tools associated with the life of hunting and gathering food at the initial level, were found in the northwest complex of Mount Batur (Raharjo, Munandar, and Zuhdi 1998). Although these utensils are now no longer intact due to age, they were very delicate in the past. Metal objects can also be found in various regions, one of which is the largest *nekara* in the world with a height of 186 cm and a circular diameter of 160 cm. This *nekara* is arguably still intact, stored in a temple in Pejeng Gianyar, Bali. The *nekara* is well preserved until now because it is considered sacred by the local people and they believe that this *nekara* is the moon falling from the sky. Therefore, the *nekara* is called the Moon of Pejeng, and it is stored at Penataran Sasih Temple, Pejeng (Bernet-Kempers 1960; Holt 2000). It can be seen that the preparation of these prehistoric works uses very precise calculations, both the creation of the surface of the object and the precision is very perfect. Shea (2013) described the superiority of the symmetrical concord nature of prehistoric objects, which are also called beautiful. In that symmetrical design, the beautiful and the functional are intertwined. The prismatic blade is functional, that is, it can be relied on for hunting, precisely because the axe is symmetrical, similar to the appearance of the Moon of Pejeng with the accompanying mask decoration and the strokes that divide the plane of the *nekara*, which are very calculating with meticulous workmanship. Because these works adequately perform their distinctive function, they are called beautiful. In the *kriya*, beauty and function are a pair of twin concepts if not identical (Suryajaya 2016). So, there is no doubt that past works called Indonesian *kriya* are the roots of the presence of visual arts in Indonesia to this day.

In the current era of the creative economy in Indonesia, the duties and responsibilities of *kriya* creators (*kriyawan*) are very important in producing works that are not only unique, beautiful but also full of meaning, and can be accepted by all parties. They must be capable of entrepreneurship in the society. Sri Edi Swasono (quoted in Swasono 2003) emphasised the qualities of *kriyawan* who are entrepreneurial, creative, innovative,

have originality, dare to take risks, and forward oriented while prioritising achievement. They are a generation that is resilient, persevering, not easily discouraged, disciplined, and steadfast in their stance. In addition, they have to be dedicated with a strong productive work ethic and cleverly breaking through the rules in searching opportunities. Wertheimer (quoted in Tabrani, Himawijaya and Piliang 2006) stated that creative thinking, dismantling a gestalt (superior work) is to build another better gestalt (excellent work). Howkins (2001) argued that using his new product can inspire him to be creative, and so the cycle of creativity begins again. Creativity requires a sustainable step, a spirit that gives birth to various visual arts that develop in society. Art that is needed by the community, such as two-dimensional carving *kriya*, are applied to various traditional houses and luxurious hotels in Indonesia. *Kriya* developed into paintings such as *wayang beber* painting, *wayang kamasan* painting, glass painting, and others. Preserving *kriya* and by imitating *adhiluhung kriya*, the needs of tourists for ritual *kriya* are met. In fact, due to the flood of tourists coming to Bali demanding art for souvenirs, kitsch has emerged. It is an art for mass consumption, the appearance of it is what it is, even it looks bad, moral-free or value-free, art that shows the search for aesthetics separated from ethics (Wibawa 2018). This art is a complementary work that is cheap and quite adequate. Gustami (2002) emphasised that as a cultural product, *kriya* undergo changes and developments according to the demands of the times. This statement shows that creating Indonesian visual arts also means creating new values in order to shape the national identity.



**Figure 1** *Kriya* is the root of Indonesian visual art.  
Source: Author's illustration.

*Kriya* is an Indonesian icon, it is also mentioned as Indonesian mosaic whose development is inseparable from the nation's economy. In this responsibility, the excavations of traditional art in the form of pseudo traditional art nurtured it (Soedarsono 2002). Apart from that, its novelty demands were also the trigger for *kriya* to develop the economy based on creativity, skills, and individual talents; to create individual creativity and power that has economic value; and affects the welfare of society. As an Indonesian art that grows and develops in tune with people's lives, *kriya* is presented to improve the quality of life both physically and spiritually, in order to achieve the ideals of the *jagadhita* of the Indonesian nation.

### **KRIYA IN BALI AND THE UPS AND DOWNS**

The expression of the name of the island of Bali is inseparable from the words *wali*, *bali*, and *banten* (Agung et al. 1985; Zoetmulder and Robson 1995). These three words have the same meaning, namely offering. Therefore, it is not excessive that Bali is also mentioned as the Island of Offerings, which means ceremony. Ceremony is an outward form of religion and elements of art are born from these ritual activities. Indirectly, it also makes art activities as a measure that is directly related to spiritual vision (Sastrosupono 1982). So, it is not surprising that Indonesian *kriya* that were born on the island of Bali are art created for ceremonies—symbols of gods and various ceremonial equipment in Hinduism are ritual *kriya*. *Kriya* is also known as traditional art, because it is used in religious ceremonies, namely Hinduism, so its creation follows strict customary rules. The *empu* (*kriya* maker specifically for religious ceremonies) are required to have skill and taste sensitivity, to be familiar with various distinctive Balinese decorative patterns, and not to deviate from predetermined rules.

1908 was the initial process of Balinese *kriya* openly fulfilling needs outside of religion, namely *kriya* for tourists. *Kriyawan* began to imitate ritual traditional *kriya*, which were remade for souvenirs (Purnata 1976/1977). A further development is the presence of Balinese handicrafts in meeting tourism needs (pseudo traditional art). Pseudo traditional art is a traditional art without meaning and free from the demands of creativity. Crafts are made available to fill tourist needs as a souvenir for their visit. The development of tourism in Bali is increasing, so the demands for souvenirs become greater. Bali seems overwhelmed in providing suitable souvenirs for tourists, namely easy to carry, lightweight, and cheap. This situation creates a challenge for craftsmen, a challenge for making souvenirs that are getting cheaper. If in the creation of classic *adhiluhung kriya*, the quality of the materials, the quality of the process, and the depth of the concept are taken into account. However, in the era when there is a flood of tourists, the opposite happens. Hence, you can see that moulded and slightly burned clay can turn into a dollar; simple wood scraps with a simple scratch and a little polish can be sold. Tourists seem to be thirsty for products obtained from the visiting area as souvenirs. Morreall and Loy (1989) called it as kitsch or instant art. It is an art that appears too simple, meaningless, very shallow, and cheap (Bourdieu 1984). Meanwhile, Kayam (1981b) called it with the term “art in order.” In this context, namely in order to fill the thirst of tourists for souvenirs, in addition to the economic demands for Balinese craftsmen, anything can happen. Likewise, when it comes to stomach matters and the sustainability of “kitchen smoke,” unexpected things will happen (Santikarma 2004). Kitsch is a work of art that breaks the deadlock in tourism towards souvenirs. It is here to meet the needs of mass consumption by tourism.

The tourism movement raises the doubts of the Balinese people in determining the direction of the development of art, which concerns art (*kriya*), customs, and religion which are believed by the community as the main elements in shaping the character of society in Bali. This discourse raises people’s doubts about local customs and traditions, indecision on which steps to maintain and which to transform. Roth and Sedana (2015) emphasised that in this era of increasingly rapid development, the Balinese longing for the *ajeg* Bali remains visible—their desire to revive traditional culture filled with religious values. Putra (2004) stated that since many foreign tourists choose Bali for tourist attractions, the polemic of Balinese culture occurred since the 1920s, namely the debate about the direction of the development of Balinese culture between Bali Adnyana and Surya Kanta groups. One movement was declared too conservative, while the other was too aggressive in managing tradition and welcoming change. The existence of these two differences is a form of public concern towards Balinese art. These two concepts basically have the same core, namely maintaining the continuity of Balinese art life in an increasingly developing era—the concept of binary opposition to lasting happiness.

Gustami (1984) asserted that the debate about cultural development is a storm of drunk (shock value) in anticipation of cultural changes that exist in society. This includes changes to *kriya* on the island of Bali in the future. Nevertheless, change is a difficult thing to avoid and must occur because it is present for its benefit in society. Martindale (quoted in Ortlieb and Carbon 2019) emphasised that in the development of art, it shows that changes in style and content of each period occur not apart from social changes in society, such as politics and also the authorities will give their own style. The appreciation of beauty (including *kriya*) is flexible and based on the history of its existence (Carbon 2011). Cultural renewal is also back-to-basics, in the sense that the progress of civilisation cannot be separated from the process of learning the meaning of history as a reference for building the future (Swasono 2003).

Moerdowo (1963) stated that Balinese sculpture (*kriya*) has a lot to do with religious services, namely Hinduism in Bali. *Kriyawan* is able to give a strong and distinctive colour in the formation of identity in Indonesia. This is very different from the work of craftsmen called handicrafts—works that are produced from a diligent nature, far from being creative. It exists only to meet economic needs as *kriya* that ignore the quality of *kriya* itself and it is just a clone of *adhiluhung kriya*. The most surprising thing is the presence of kitsch, which Kayam (1981a) stated it as an art that is “packed” in the package, set aside to be served in spare time. It is no longer a functional part or element of a whole life; it is merely entertainment, only consumption-art, and nothing else. Consumer demands make handicrafts pursuing the principle of *asal laku* (saleable) with the nature of *bebondresan* (contemporary), and the work of *ngulurin indrya payu* (quick to get money). Balinese *kriyawan* are making works based on the concept of worshipping Bhatara Jinah. (Sujana 2004). Perhaps when it comes to matters of urgent necessities of life, there will be craft that is so carelessly made (Santikarma 2004). The movement of *kriya* that is dynamic and in accordance with the constellation of times and yields with the necessities of life will certainly create a variety of new cultures, whether positive or negative is something that cannot be avoided. Geriya (2000) emphasised that it is the era of double-faced Balinese art and culture. As a result, the movement will create *kriya* without character and identity. Over time, the *kriya* that are made will become meaningless, purposeless, and away from their proper quality. As a result, art is made carelessly in order to earn a living.



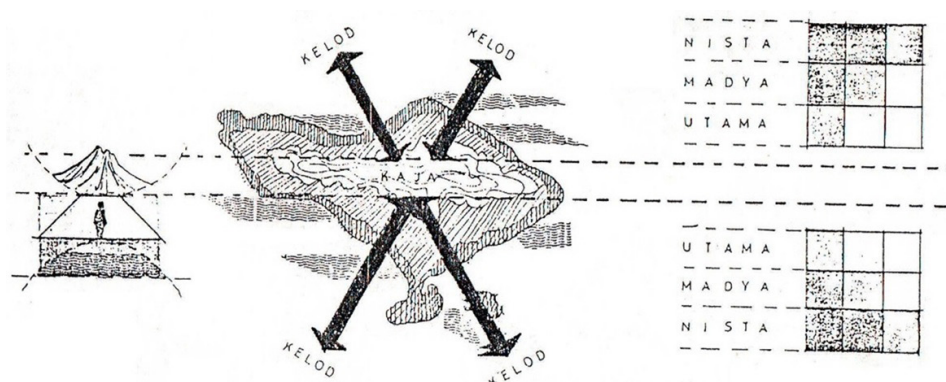
**Photo 3** Kitsch in Bali.  
Source: Teo (2017).

The various remarks mentioned above are a warning to the people on the island of Bali for the presence of *kriya*, which are more coloured by the tastes of the customer, that *kriya* have lost their spirit, and compromised on quality. Euphoria of devotion to economic goals that is very excessive is a culture that does not mirror any goodness to the next generation of successors. In a context like this, the role of *kriyawan* as a gatekeeper relay for high-quality devotional *kriya* is completed, they (*kriyawan*) are only turned into robots with the drunken *tajen* (cockfighting) entertainment. The phenomenon predicted in the future development of Balinese culture will grow increasingly complex, so it needs to be studied in depth.

### **KRIYA ON THE ISLAND OF BALI IN THE CONCEPT OF THE KAJA–KELOD**

*Kriya* on the island of Bali are related to the cosmic line of the island of Bali and cannot be separated from the concept of *rwa bhineda nyatur* (four directions), namely *kanging–kauh* (east–west) and *kaja–kelod* (north–south). Latitude produces a midpoint called *pancer* (the balance at the centre of life). *Kaja* (north) is associated with sacred rituals, while *kelod* (south) is associated with dirty lines (the sea for removing dirt). Meanwhile the *kangin* (east) has sacred values, which is where the sun rises, it is called the main area of early life or upstream. Finally, *kauh* (west) which is an evil value (*teben*), is the direction of sunset (Adiputra et al. 2016).

The middle realm is the centre of human life as a balancing area. Eiseman and Eiseman (1989) emphasised that something that is opposite in achieving this balance is the concept of *rwa bhineda*, which the Balinese Hindu community believes leads to a harmonious life. This concept is deeply rooted in the life of the Hindu community in Bali (Kaler 1994). In Balinese cosmology, the Hindu religious community believes that heading north is *kaja*, which is referred as pointing to a mountain or altitude as a place for the gods to reside and also referred as the realm of goodness. On the other hand, to the south is *kelod*, heading towards the low area, namely the deep sea, which the Balinese Hindu community believes to be the realm of *butha* or the realm of evil. Meanwhile, the central area is the neutral point as a place for humans to rotate the universe with their *rwa bhineda* behaviour, namely good and bad.



**Figure 2** *Kaja–kelod* on the cosmology of Bali Island.  
Source: Gelebet and Meganada (1982).

Bandem and deBoer (2004) stated that in the Hindu religious tradition in Bali, the gods have a permanent residence at the height of the mountains. The highest centre point in Bali is Mount Agung (a volcano) with Besakih Temple on the peak of it. Thus, Besakih Temple is the most sacred place in Bali. Gelebet and Meganada (1982) stated that in traditional villages in mountainous areas of Bali, placed a sacred zone with the main value system in the direction of the mountain as *kaja*, which is the upstream of the village. Dharmayuda (1995) stated the concept of *luan-an-tebenan* (going back and forth), that is derived from learning from nature. This is also called as the concept of *segara-giri* or *pasir-wukir*. Driyarkara (1980) asserted that natural environment that is comfortable and cool is aesthetic realms as *tremendum* and *fascinans* (fearful nature but sought out because of its beauty). It is able to create an atmosphere of natural *aetereal* vibration environment that has the potential to generate spiritual vibrations (Sudibya 1997).

In the life of the Balinese Hindu community, it is depicted that something that is opposite and contradictory is always happening towards a harmonious life. Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa (God) is believed to be *rwa bhineda*, namely *bhuta ia*; *dewa ia*, he is an evil spirit; he is a god. Thus, the proper language to describe the goal of a particular *upacara* (ceremony, such as *mecaru*) is appeasement, satiety-not eradication, or driving out evil (Eiseman and Eiseman 1989). This is also called the *matemahan gumi* (natural law). *Matemahan* is the characteristic of the nature that is at the heart of Hinduism in Bali's fundamental mind, such as the natural elements of water, fire, and air. These three elements of nature are very different in their *menyame braye* (togetherness), which is always moving, rhythmic, and surging in harmony. Water always moves down to the sea, fire moves up, and air moves freely in various directions (Hobart 2000). It is the nature of human life on earth, which is at all times inseparable from the changes that occur. This change means *bhakti* and *pica* (sincerity and grace), a sacred reciprocal relationship (Soethama 2004). The nature of Bali provides an abundance of beauty in the form of *bhakti* (devotion) in the concept of *yajna* (religious ceremony) which is vertical *kaja-keleod*, namely holy and sublime.

This understanding of the concept eventually gave birth to the *becik kriya* of *barong* and *rangda*, which is also called the *metaksu kriya*, *urip* (alive), *kriya* created for religious needs or offerings. *Barong* is a symbol of goodness, while *rangda* is a symbol of evil in the concept of *rwa bhineda*. The harmony of good and bad will produce true peace. The Balinese Hindu community believes that these two *ketakson* Balinese *kriya* (*barong* and *rangda*) are their protector. Davies (2007) emphasised that *taksu* is something uniquely Bali. *Metaksu kriya* lives spiritually and the supporting community recognises it as having strength. *Taksu*, when connected to an object or *kriya* work is called *ketakson kriya*, meaning a spirit or soul that is included in the work (Mantra 1993; Bandem and deBoer 2004). The success in making *metaksu kriya* is a form of devotion (Davies 2007). Djelantik (1995) emphasised that the Balinese attitude towards works of art for offerings is not to express self-concept, but to do what can be learned for many people, so it is quality work. Furthermore, a work of art is said to have quality if it can be enjoyed and is a part of life. *Becik kriya* are also known as ideal *kriya*, namely the acceptance of the work as part of the ceremony. *Kriya* stand as a form of devotion and needed by the community, so, at times, *kriyawan* feels their life is useful.





**Photo 4** *Barong* and *rangda*—*kriya* in the concept of *rwa bhineda* (good and evil).  
Source: Photographed by author.

### **BECIK KRIYA MAKES THE TEMPLE AS A HEAVEN ON EARTH**

In Bali, *becik kriya* generally have the main concept of unity and balance between elements, perfect cultivation techniques, and through consideration of ties to life (Davies 2007). The perfection of *kriya* lies in its usefulness for life itself. This usefulness is called the eternal beauty, which in Bali is expressed by the word *becik* earlier. It correlates with the *kriya* function of *menyame braye* (living together) for collective consciousness. *Kriya* that make life *asah*, *asih*, and *asuh* each other into *sabyantaka*. This statement means that in social life, we must respect each other, love each other, and guide each other with the aim of harmony (Parmajaya 2018).

Given that human beings live not only looking for beautiful appearance but also social people who come from society, it is not surprising that in creating art, a creator also experiences the influence of the environment and their time (Hartoko 1981). Environment and life are unity that supports each other. The beauty of the natural environment becomes their spiritual food, which becomes their nature in their whole beauty. Every human being has aesthetic awareness, despite the different intensities (Sachari 1989). Abidin (2000) asserted that basically, humans have three existences, namely aesthetic, ethical, and religious. Aesthetics existence is characterised by the principle of pleasure, which acts according to mood. Ethical existence is a kind of repentance, in which humans begin to accept morals and attach themselves to something outlined in the environment around them. Meanwhile in the religious existence, human life is a subject that plunges into the reality of God. This existence is transcendent, without rationalisation, and without worldly ties. Soethama (2004) asserted that people on the island of Bali assume that when they get something, God fully determines it. They express gratitude for the highest, the best, the most important, and the greatest offering is to the Holy One.

This is also seen in the realisation of temple (Hindu holy place), the role of *kriya* is very important and inseparable. The temple is a religious indicator of the existence of a place, especially in Hinduism (Adiputra et al. 2016). The temple is the centre of worship and is also mentioned as the eternal and natural house of God. Establishing a temple is as same as giving birth to a heavenly world, it is also said to give birth to a beautiful new life. Humans and temples are personifications of the realm of microcosms and macrocosms. This concept is the concept of *manunggaling kawula-gusti*, namely the harmonious relationship between the servant and God (Hadi 2001).

The temple as a sacred place in Hinduism is a symbol of the macrocosm, while humans themselves are a symbol of the microcosm. The Hindu community in Bali believes that the realm of the macrocosm and the realm of the microcosm or *jagad gede-jagad alit* are interconnected and even inseparable, so that the

concept of Hinduism to beautify the temple is like self-dressing. The position of humans as a *jagad alit* is always alive, developing, and full of dependence on the *jagad gede* (the nature), while the *jagad alit* absorbs the *jagad gede*. This situation is a form of embodiment of the basic concept of Hindu community life in Bali. The concept is based on the *rwa bhineda* concept to lead to harmony and the balance of life on the principle of devotional service. In addition to temples appearing beautiful and magnificent, *kriya* makes it a heaven on earth and also increase the close ties of community solidarity. For this reason, *kriya* is not only for mere beauty and entertainment, but also as important religious goals (Haviland 1995). The temple as a holy place of origin, the temple for the lord of the ground, and finally the villager will later also worship the deified forefather, or clan and villager founder. The beauty of the temple shows the reciprocity between art and the collective awareness of the community. The appearance of the temple reflects the strength of the people's belief in their religion for sacred and magical purposes that are full of peace and natural both physically and spiritually (Soekiman 2000).



**Photo 5** Temple that is *sthana* (dwelling place) of Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa.  
Source: Sunarya (2011).

Everything that is poured out in the form of work in a holy place is an expression of respect and obedience, loyalty, and a form of one's devotion to those who are respected and adored (Luchesi 2011). *Kriya* for ceremonies and as equipment in temples are sacred works of a religious nature because the Hindu community in Bali uses them to face Him. Driyarkara (1980) asserted that religion only really exists if humans face God and surrender themselves to Him. Likewise, in the life of the Hindu community in Bali, *kriya* make a beautiful temple like heaven, a temple full of comfort, and full of peace in worshipping Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa.

## CONCLUSION

*Kriya* is the root of Indonesian visual arts. In Bali, *kriya* is the lifeblood of the people. The existence of *kriya* synergises with religion and tourism, which are regulated by local customs. Hinduism and tourism give life breath to *kriya*, while *kriya* prepare its form as a symbol and ceremonial equipment that is sacred. Besides that, *kriya* also meet the needs of tourism by creating profane arts. The concept of *rwa bhineda* is a concept based on the beliefs of the Hindu community towards harmony in life, such as *kangin-kauh* (east-west) and *kaja-keleod* (north-south). *Kaja* is towards the mountains, the realm of gods with the nature of sacred rituals, while *keleod* is towards the sea, the realm of *butha* or evil. The composition of the *kangin* (east) is of sacred value, the rising of the sun is the source of life. Whereas *kauh* (west) is *teben* (below), which means *nista* realm, it is a place of the setting of the sun, which means the decline of life. This concept is reflected in *barong* and *rangda kriya*, which are *ketakson kriya* created for religious needs in addition to fulfilling tourism needs as a traditional pseudo art. *Kriya* as stands a symbol of good and bad towards eternal peace. Therefore, the activities of the Hindu community on the island of Bali at the ceremonial and economic levels are full of *kriya* dynamics. This

art serves as an increase in excitement in religious activities and on the other hand, fills the economic needs of society. This makes *kriya* on the island of Bali fill the continuity of people's lives towards the *jagadhita*.

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