

RELIGIOSITY IN ART INSPIRED BY SAMUAN TIGA AND TEJAKULA, BALI: UNITY IN DIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

At the dawn of this third millennium, growing numbers of forums worldwide are focused on the issue of how to sustain the diversity of the nature and of cultures for the well-being of the Earth and humanity. Concurrently, intercultural and interreligious dialogue is deemed essential for social cohesion. This dissertation advances the contributions of religiosity in art through a qualitative reflective account and chronicle of the art and dialogues offered by people of diverse cultures and faiths from 1999 to 2004 during *Sharing Art & Religiosity* in the vicinity of Pura Samuan Tiga in Bedulu, Bali and *Sharing Art Ocean–Mountain* at the seacoast village of Tejakula, North Bali; seen in tandem with creative transformations that occurred through *Sharing Art* in and with other cultural environments of the world.

Methodologically this study stemmed from and demonstrates the merits of public participatory practice-based art programs whereby activities are conceived by and implemented with the people of a locale. Participants generated the data and interpretations via mutual cooperation, dialogue, and creative praxis. The Balinese principle of Tri Hita Karana, that aims toward a harmonious human-nature-God/Source of Life relationship in accord with the place-time-conditions, provided a holistic perspective to analyze and derive meaning from the results.

Findings indicate sharing in the arts, religiosity, and nature fosters a common field such that traditional and modern cultures can study and engage in creative dialogue together. Moreover, interreligious innovations that have continued to develop since the seminal deliberation of reconciliation between Bali Aga, Çiwaist, and Buddhist faith groups at Samuan Tiga circa CE 989 to 1011 and intercultural egalitarian innovations since the seventeenth century dialogue of indigenous and migrant mountain and maritime cultures in Tejakula – constitute a model for furthering *bhinneka tunggal ika* unity in diversity in the world today.

Recommendations outline how the findings can be used for cooperative exchanges between villages and between villages and cities of diverse regions and countries to support interculture in cultural environments. Appendices provide two video compact discs; seventy-nine reflective essays by artists, religious/spiritual leaders, scholars, and educators from across the world; and nine transcriptions of initial public dialogues.

KEYWORDS: religiosity in art; local genius; intercultural and interreligious creativity; interculture in cultural environments; tri hita karana; unity in diversity; bhinneka tunggal ika; Samuan Tiga; Tejakula; Bali; Indonesia; Sharing Art; Pasuruan Seni; Srawung Seni; participatory practice-based methods

Introduction

At the dawn of this third millennium, growing numbers of forums worldwide are focused on the issue of how to sustain the diversity of the nature and of cultures for the well-being of the Earth and humanity. Concurrently, intercultural and interreligious dialogue is deemed essential for social cohesion. In light of these efforts it can be beneficial to ask what is the contribution of religiosity in art? For many people across the world art is a medium of offering to renew the accord between humankind, nature, and God/the Source of Life. As each place, time, and condition invokes distinct means – artforms are also unique. While religiosity (a feeling of reverence for the limitless nature of God) has inspired art in every era; discussions on how both traditional and modern creative practices enrich the tangible and intangible aspects of cultural environments and can support a common field for intercultural creativity are rare.

This dissertation advances the contributions of religiosity in art in a growing body of literature on intercultural and interreligious dialogue and education through a qualitative reflective account and chronicle of the art and dialogues offered by people of diverse cultures and faiths from 1999 to 2004 during *Sharing Art & Religiosity* in the vicinity of Pura Samuan Tiga in Bedulu, Bali and *Sharing Art Ocean–Mountain* at the seacoast village of Tejakula, North Bali; seen in tandem with creative transformations that occurred through *Sharing Art* in and with other cultural environments of the world.

Samuan Tiga's local genius is notably interreligious; demonstrated in the seminal deliberation of reconciliation between Bali Aga, Çiwaist, and Buddhist faith groups from *circa* CE 989 to 1011 that resulted in the formulation of the Bali Hindu three village temples system while ritual arts still evolve according to each village's customs. Tejakula's local genius is notably intercultural; demonstrated in the seventeenth century dialogue among the Bali Mula aborigines with migrant mountain and maritime cultures that resulted in the creation of an intercultural coastal temple, a reconciliation among castes, and new ritual arts. Yet, Samuan Tiga and Tejakula, Bali not only gave birth to interreligious and intercultural creativity centuries ago. Beginning in 1999, in the context of *Sharing Art / Pasamuan Seni*, local and visiting youth, adults, and elders; accomplished and developing artists, religious/spiritual leaders, and scholars from Bedulu, Tejakula, and villages and cities of Bali; Central, East, and West Java; South and Central Sulawesi; Sumatra, and Kalimantan, Indonesia; South-Eastern and Eastern Asia, Oceania, Europe; Northern, Central, and South America shared, studied, and created varied approaches to religiosity in art. Of particular significance is that although people had diverse perceptions, understandings, and practices of religiosity in art – they could also create together.

To convey the practical and ideological merits, this study looked back at the results via three main questions: 1) What can be learned about the meaning and role of religiosity in art through the dialogue of people from diverse fields, cultures, and faiths? 2) What are some of the ways in which religiosity is a source for both traditional and modern creative practices? and 3) How, then, does sharing in the arts, religiosity, and nature support intercultural in cultural environments?

Research Method

Methodologically this study stemmed from and demonstrates the merits of public participatory practice-based art programs whereby activities are conceived by and implemented with the people of a locale. Participants generated the data and interpretations via mutual cooperation, dialogue, and creative praxis. The Balinese principle of *Tri Hita Karana*, that aims toward a harmonious human-nature-God/Source of Life relationship in accord with the place-time-conditions, provided a holistic perspective to analyze and derive meaning from the results.

Results

An analytic description of the results of *Sharing Art / Pasamuan Seni* is presented through three views: 1) Art offerings rooted in singular cultural traditions, art emerging from collaborative dialogue among traditions, and art in which people from multiple cultures, each in their respective tradition, co-created new offerings. 2) Widening the scope to show the progression of *Sharing Art* in other regions of Indonesia and regions of the world from the perspective of the place, times, and conditions. 3) Portraying creative transformations and a creative synergy among people from traditional and modern cultures and diverse faiths actualized as art embodying *bhinneka tunggal ika* unity in diversity.

Discussion

The dialogues evidence that although people's reflections differed in worldview and terminology each address the contributions of religiosity in art for socio-environmental-religio well-being; hence, echoing the principle of *Tri Hita Karana*. Also, that the wisdom of *eka-aneka* / one-many in dialogue can be a fertile ground from which new shared understandings of religiosity can be deepened.

The art offered by individuals and groups from villages and cities of Bali; other Indonesian provinces, and countries show that religiosity has inspired a myriad of art genres. Clearly the vertical dimension is at the core of customary ceremonial and ritual arts. Yet it is also a source for traditional artists practicing inherited artforms, evolving new approaches to

them, or working in modern artforms stemming from their cultural traditions as well as modern artists working in tradition-inspired forms or exploring the connection of the arts and religiosity in new genres. So too, it has inspired the creative process of people whose feeling of religiosity is associated with a religion and for those who do not identify themselves with a specific religious tradition or faith group. It is also interesting that the human-nature relationship in art praxis is prevalent in many of the art offerings, while the landscape and elements were often a link for creative collaborations.

Creative transformations that occurred through the millennium *Sesaji Gong Samuan Tiga* followed by *Ritual Kalahayu* circulating the world; *Collaboration Asia-Europe in Art and Environment 2000 RONG* in Tejakula; *Sharing Art & Religiosity* in Assisi, Italy; *Celebration Ethnic Art in Time* at Xochicalco, Mexico; *Art Human Nature* in the coastal Redwood Forest of California; other programs in Indonesia and regions of the world, *Infinite Humanity: World Religions & Art for Peace and Respect of Life* opening 21 December 2001 at 12 noon in the United Nations Meditation Room followed by interreligious art and prayer circulating the World Trade Center site in cooperation with parallel programs in thirty-five villages and cities worldwide; the creation of *Barong Pa-Hayu Buwana / World Peace Barong* at Samuan Tiga initially adorned with materials gifted by fifty-six individuals/societies of twenty-three nations; and the new intercultural ritual dance *Tri Yoni Saraswati* presented at the Universal Forum of Cultures in Barcelona for the 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions – evidence that people can and do create both traditional and modern art offerings based upon their cultural roots, sense of community, connection to the nature, and feeling of religiosity in a variety of contexts together with people of other cultures and faiths. The implication is that the emergence of a common field for intercultural creativity came about through their mutual engagement in the arts and religiosity. Also, the genius loci and local genius of a place can be a source of creative inspiration and spiritual meaningfulness for people from diverse cultures and faiths. In this way the interreligious spirit of Samuan Tiga and intercultural spirit of Tejakula, Bali are far-reaching and have continued to be catalysts for creativity.

Conclusions

Dialogue among cultures and faiths via religiosity in art, of course, is not a new idea. However, the reconciliation process 1,000 years ago at Samuan Tiga resulted in a unique and perhaps pioneering paradigm. That being a deliberation whereby ethnic faith groups and three religions, each with their beliefs and means, co-created new socio-cultural-religio forms to include the diversity of their offerings and a three village temples system in which ritual arts

also developed according to each village's customs and manners. Then in Tejakula, in the seventeenth century, indigenous and migrant mountain and maritime cultures laid aside their social statuses and co-created an intercultural coastal temple and new ritual arts. As both are living cultural environments still embodying these values, we may thus conclude that the interreligious and intercultural creative paradigm of Samuan Tiga and Tejakula, Bali is a model for furthering *bhinneka tunggal ika* unity in diversity in the world today.

Key international guiding documents such as *The Assisi Declarations: Messages on Man & Nature from Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam & Judaism* (1986), UNESCO's "Declaration on the Role of Religion in the Promotion of a Culture of Peace" (1994) and "Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity" (2001), Parliament of the World's Religions "Towards a Global Ethic" (1993), and Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leader's "Commitment to Global Peace" presented at the United Nations (2000) have highlighted the need for concrete practical steps to enhance mutual respect and exchanges between people of different cultures, traditions, and beliefs to ensure social cohesion, environmental sustainability, prosperity, and peace on the Earth.

Sharing in the arts, religiosity, and nature contributes to all of these aspects of life and is how people in places and circumstances of ethno-cultural, spiritual, and linguistic diversity have mutually exchanged wisdom and skillful means and been able to engage in creativity together since the beginning of human history. In this era, as the world grows more complex due to the increasing speed of modernization, cultural and environmental changes, and cross-cultural interactions hastened by the movement of people between rural and urban areas, regions, and continents; this study offers evidence that art in connection with religiosity and the nature is also how East, West, South, North cultures and particularly traditional and modern societies can mutually share, study, and interact interculturally through varied disciplines with the value of unity in diversity – thereby contributing to the enrichment, natural transformation, and longevity of cultural environments.

Recommendations

In view of the above, the programs documented in tables 1, 2, 3, and videos of appendix A, and insights in the reflective essays by participants of *Sharing Art* and associated programs contributed for appendix B and in the dialogues of appendix C constitute a ground for future cooperative activities in the theme of sharing in the arts, religiosity, and nature to support intercultural in cultural environments. This recommendation stems from an awareness that:

1. The language of art is a primary gauge of cultural diversity; embodying the variety of worldviews and spatial-temporal kinesthetic cultural and spiritual values and knowledges, and innumerable creative practices of humankind in relation to the nature of each place, time, and conditions, and;
2. To enrich the tangible and intangible aspects of cultural environments and ecological well-being of the natural world, it is vital that culture-specific traditional knowledges and creative practices can continue to be innovative and dynamic; and it is vital that East, West, South, North cultures and particularly Traditional and Modern societies can mutually share, study, and interact interculturally through varied disciplines with the value of unity in diversity.

The participatory practice-based approach to intercultural in cultural environments presented throughout this study indicates that sustained genuine intercultural creative dialogue can be more fully supported by:

3. Continuing to conduct the public *Sharing Art* programs cited in this study; which can also serve as models for new cooperative initiatives to support exchanges between villages and between villages and cities of diverse regions and countries.
4. Cultivating intercultural art gardens that reflect the genius loci of a cultural environment as cultural educational facilities where the synergy of traditional and modern cultures and diverse faiths' creativity can flourish together.
5. Developing a dialogue of informal and formal education based on the contribution of the arts & religiosity for the world's living environment, life-long learning, the sustainable transformation of diverse cultural environments, and a culture of peace; which in time can serve as a basis for on-going curriculum to form an accredited school dedicated to the field of intercultural and interreligious dialogue and creativity.
6. Nourishing growth based on traditional market spiritual capital whereby mutual cooperation and the exchange of materials in daily life is aligned with the cycles of the nature and spiritual life of a community; such that the manner of life is for the earth's prosperity and humanity's well-being as a path toward enlightenment.

The author hopes that this re-presentation of religiosity in art inspired by Samuan Tiga and Tejakula, Bali and the wider scope of *Sharing Art* in other regions of Indonesia and of the world will generate further sharing, dialogue, and creativity among people of diverse cultures and faiths and the blossoming of many intercultural art gardens to foster *bhinneka tunggal ika* unity in diversity in the world for the benefit of infinite humanity and the Earth.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author thanks the Rector of Udayana University and Director of Postgraduate Studies for the facilities and opportunities provided during my doctoral studies in Kajian Budaya (Cultural Studies) at Udayana University. Gratitude also goes to my promoter Professor I Wayan Ardika and co-promoters Professor I Gde Parimatha of Udayana University and Professor Edi Sedyawati of University of Indonesia, Depok for their sustained encouragement and scholarly guidance from the development of the initial proposal to the completion of this dissertation. Finally, deeply felt appreciation to all of the people who shared art, prayer, ideas, questions, dialogue, skills and materials that made the *Sharing Art* programs at Samuan Tiga and in Tejakula, Bali; other Indonesian provinces, and in so many contexts and countries in the world chronicled in this study possible.