# JURNAL KAJIAN BALI

Journal of Bali Studies

p-ISSN 2088-4443 # e-ISSN 2580-0698 Volume 15, Number 02, August 2025

# Sacred Paper: Exploring the Materiality and Symbolism of *Daluang* in Balinese Hindu Rituals

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.24843/JKB.2025.v15.i02.p01

Abstract: Balinese Hinduism provides a rich context for exploring the intersection of material culture and religious belief. This study aims to explore the dual roles of daluang (also known as walantaga) in Balinese Hindu rituals, functioning both as a ritual object and a sacred symbol. Utilizing ethnographic methods and textual analysis, the research draws from four Balinese Hindu lontar manuscripts, including Kakawin Ramayana, Yajna Prakerti and Wedana Pujastawa. Data collection involved participant observation and interviews conducted with seven Hindu priests. Guided by Geertz's interpretive framework, findings reveal that daluang serves not only as a material for crafting key ritual items but also as a vital medium for spiritual communication, embodying core cultural values and cosmological concepts within Balinese Hinduism. This study contributes to broader discussions on the role of material culture in sustaining intangible religious heritage and expression in contemporary Balinese society.

**Keywords:** Balinese Hinduism; *daluang*; interpretive approach; ritual; sacred symbol; *walantaga* 

#### 1. Introduction

Daluang, also known as walantaga in Bali, is a traditional Indonesian paper crafted from the bark of the paper mulberry tree (*Broussonetia papyrifera Vent*). In contrast to modern paper production, which relies on industrial processes and chemical treatments, daluang is produced using traditional, manual methods that honor ancient practices. Its production involves meticulous process of pounding, fermenting, stretching, and drying the bark fibers (Ekadjati, 1996; Guillot, 1983; Noorduyn, 1965; Soetikna, 1939; Teygeler, 1995b; Wirasoetisna, 1941). Historically, embedded in Indonesian culture,

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daluang manuscripts have been treasured as heirlooms passed down through generations (Ekadjati, 1988; Purwanto, 2016; Teygeler, 1995a).

Beyond its practical function as a writing medium, *daluang* serves as a vital conduit between the human and the spiritual. Its application extends to the inscription of sacred texts and its incorporation into the ritual attire of religious figures such as *sulinggih* (Hindu priests, also known by titles including *pedanda*, *pandita*, *rsi*, *begawan*, *mpu*, *sira mpu*, *and dukuh*), thereby embodying spiritual authenticity and cultural continuity (Guillot, 1983; Sakamoto, 2016a).

Previous research on daluang has predominantly concentrated on its historical aspects and production techniques as a traditional paper-making craft. Permadi (1998) conducted an ethnographic investigation into the manufacture of daluang in Garut Regency West Java, situating the practice within its local sociocultural framework and emphasizing its continuity across specific communities. In a subsequent study, Permadi (2005) analyzed the physical attributes of Sundanese manuscripts composed on daluang, presenting a detailed typological classification based on fiber texture, color thickness, and damage patterns, which proved essential for conservation strategies. Expanding on this work, Rachman and Salim (2018) examined daluang manuscripts from Cirebon, providing insights into their historical origins, technical production process and the challenges posed by material degradation due to environmental exposure and neglect. More recently, Praisra et al. (2021) contributed to the discourse by documenting innovative approaches to revitalizing daluang as a heritage craft, integrating modern design sensibilities with community-based production models to sustain its relevance in contemporary cultural industries.

Despite this rich documentation of material techniques and historical aspects in Sundanese community context, only a few studies (Guillot, 1983; Sakamoto, 2016a) have addressed the symbolic and ritual significance of *daluang* within Balinese Hindu rituals. This study examines the dual functions of *daluang* as both a ritual medium and a symbolic artifact within Balinese Hindu rituals. By exploring its application in inscribing sacred texts and its incorporation into the ritual attire of religious figures, this research aims to elucidate how *daluang* embodies spiritual authenticity and cultural continuity in the face of modernization.

#### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 Material Culture

Material culture studies physical objects, their creation, use and movement as meaningful carriers within society (De Cunzo & Roeber, 2022). In this framework, objects actively shape cultural identity and memory, embodying historical continuity while playing dynamic roles in present social

practices. Moreover, material culture reflects the relationship between people and objects, embedding cultural values and social structures (Sánchez-Climent, 2024). In addition, when linked to technology, it reveals how artifacts carry meaning beyond their form, shaping human experience. As Tilley at al. (2006) explained, material culture encompasses not only the tangible aspects of objects but also the meanings assigned to them by people with these artifacts actively mediating personal and social experiences while simultaneously influencing cultural values and practices. Furthermore, Appadurai (1988) emphasized that examining the life cycle of objects, from production to use and eventual change in value, demonstrates how material culture evolves within social networks shaped by cultural and economic factors. This integrated perspective on material culture underscores its critical role in revealing how objects serve as dynamic agents of cultural continuity and transformation.

In the context of rituals, material objects often assume a dual role as both functional supports and rich symbolic mediators. Traditional artifacts like *daluang* paper exemplify this complexity. On one hand, the craftsmanship behind *daluang*, its production from paper mulberry bark through methods steeped in ancestral knowledge, illustrates how materiality underpins cultural practices. On the other hand, in Balinese Hindu rituals, *daluang* transcends its physical form to embody sacred attributes, acting as a conduit between the human and the divine. This dual nature situates *daluang* within broader debates in material culture studies concerning agency and embodiment, whereby objects are not passive artifacts but active participants in ritual processes.

Geertz' interpretive anthropology further highlights how material objects within rituals serve as texts rich with layered meanings that reflect broader cosmological views (Geertz, 1992; Geertz, 2017). This perspective has been influential in studies of Southeast Asian cultures where artifacts often embody complex intersections between spirituality, identity and social order. Consequently, this framework provides valuable tools for understanding how ritual objects like *daluang* mediate cultural values and social relationships in Balinese Hinduism.

More recent scholarship has expanded this focus by exploring how traditional craft involved in producing ritual materials sustain intangible cultural heritage amid modernization pressures. As noted by Smith & Akagawa (2009), such crafts are vital for maintaining continuity between past traditions and contemporary religious life. It underscores the importance of examining both the materiality and symbolic significance of ritual objects to fully understand their role in cultural resilience.

#### 2.2 Daluang as Indonesia Traditional Paper

Daluang carries profound historical significance. It has served as a writing support, frequently appearing in manuscript text-blocks and occasionally as cover material (Permadi, 2012; Permana, 2017; Purwanto, 2016; Rachman & Salim, 2018). These manuscripts are preserved in both private and public collections and archives located in various parts of Indonesia as well as in institutions abroad (Ekadjati, 1988, 1996; Guillot, 1983; Purwanto, 2016; Teygeler, 1995b, 1995a). Beyond its role in written tradition, daluang also serves as a substrate in traditional fine arts, particularly in the creation of wayang beber, where epic stories are depicted through paintings on daluang sheets. Wayang beber is a storytelling art form that combines visual and oral elements. The use of daluang in wayang beber underscore its dual material and symbolic roles in artistic and cultural traditions (Pretković & Škrinjarić, 2017; Sakamoto, 2016b; Teygeler, 1995a).

Over time, the use of *daluang* as a writing support has largely been supplanted by modern paper, which is easier and cheaper to produce and obtain. However, the uniqueness of *daluang* in terms of texture, durability, and its profound connection to cultural traditions means that it is still valued and maintained in specific contexts. In various Balinese Hindu religious rituals, *daluang* continues to be employed as a medium for writing mantras and sacred symbols, as accessories of clerical attire, and as shrouds for bodies at cremation rituals. This ongoing usage underscores the community's recognition and preservation of the sacred value of *daluang* (Guillot, 1983; Sakamoto, 2016a).

The research of *daluang* is deeply rooted in understanding its historical and technical production processes, as well as its reflection of cultural identities, spirituality and the continuity of traditions in Indonesian society. A particularly illustrative example of this is the enduring use of *daluang* in various Balinese Hindu rituals. Due to its unique texture, durability and profound connection to cultural traditions, *daluang* has never ceased to be valued in this specific context. It has been continuously used as a writing medium for mantras and sacred symbols, as the material for priests' attire accessories, and as a ritual shroud for bodies during cremation rituals. Since the Indonesian tradition of *daluang* production became extinct in the 1960s, *daluang* was temporarily replaced by *fuya*, a bark cloth produced in Sulawesi. *Fuya* is expensive, with an A4 size selling for 250,000 rupiah. This substitution demonstrates that the Balinese Hindu communities still recognize and maintain the sacred value of *daluang* (Miles, 2018; Permadi, 1998).

#### 2.3 Daluang in Balinese Hinduism Texts

Several studies have documented the use of *daluang* in various religious ritual in Bali, particularly the *pitra yajnya* ritual which honors ancestors through the *ngaben* (cremation) ritual (Atmadja, 2016; Girinata et al., 2024; Mulyadi & Adi, 2016; Segara, 2020; Solihah, 2011). During the *ngaben* ritual, *rerajahan* (sacred symbols believed to possess spiritual powers) are inscribed onto small pieces of *daluang*. However, to date, no published research provides precise documentation of the *daluang* in the *ngaben* ritual. This lack of documentation can be attributed to two main reasons. *First*, the sacred nature of *ngaben* ritual prohibits researchers from creating photographic or otherwise visual records of the ritual settings and procedures. *Second*, the ritual accessories made from *daluang* are typically burned alongside the body during the cremations, resulting in no physical remnants available for subsequent research or recording.

The use of *daluang* among Balinese Hindus in Indonesia, drawing on textual resources such as the *Kakawin Ramayana* and the *Sumanasantaka* manuscript. These religious texts serve as guides for Hindu social and spiritual practices (Guillot, 1983). Specifically, the text of the *Kakawin Ramayana* manuscript contains references to the use of *daluang* in Chapter 4, Verse 66, as follows:

Apa tan pasahāya tungga-tungga, phala mūlāśana yāmangan gangan, "daluang" wĕdhihanya rūkṣa duhka, ikanang sakṣana yālahā ta dénta.

"Because he was alone without troops, fruit, tubers, and vegetables as food, *daluang* as attire, the priest wrinkled his face with sorrow; in just a moment, he would be defeated by my brother."

Furthermore, in the text of the Kakawin Ramayana, Chapter 5, Verse 66:

Atisáya śuddha untu maputih sphaţikopama ya, tuwi ya magaṇitri kuṇdala waluh ya sinaṇda bira, lituhayu warṇna lāka "daluang" nira rāmya mabāng, lumaku manasya yéka dalihan nira tan katĕngĕr.

"His teeth were white, spotless like the main jewel, and he was wearing *genitri kundala* pumpkin prayer beads that he held; the Hindu priest was wearing a beautiful head covering made of *daluang* dyed red. He walked while begging to trick himself so he wouldn't be caught."

The Sumanasantaka manuscript features multiple references to daluang across its various chapters. Specifically, mentions of daluang can be found in

Chapter 4, Verse 3; Chapter 29 Verse 2; Chapter 37, Verse 8; Chapter 42, Verse 15; Chapter 64, Verse 9. These verses indicate that *daluang* is utilized in several significant ways: as priest attire, sacred paper, *bhawa* (a crown head covering), and clothing intended to symbolically detach from worldly ties. The following is an example taken from the text in Chapter 42, Verse 15.

Yan kāngĕn sukaning licik dumadak āhun "adaluang" harşa ring jamang.

"By absorbing the happiness of people who have perfected their asceticism, I suddenly wanted to wear clothes made from *daluang* to cover my body."

Next, in the text of the Sumanasantaka manuscript, chapter 64, verse 9.

Sang wwanging uttama sāmpun "adaluang" adoh sira ring wişaya.

"The main person mentioned is the person who has worn clothes made from *daluang*; he has distanced himself from the ties of the misleading world."

Based on the information contained in the *Lontar Wedana Pujastawa* manuscript text, collected by Ida Pedanda Gde Aunggusta Lor Magelung from Grya Anyar Sibang Kaja in Badung Regency, *daluang* plays crucial role as a complementary element in religious rituals, particulary during the cremation rituals. This significance is reflected in the following excerpt from the manuscript:

Nihan tingkahing atiwa-tiwa, kawruhakna luput ikang sawa, bhinukti dening sang bhuta gigila, aja tan winehan "walantaga", genahakna rumuhun ring sawa, tungtunging "rcadananya", amneri lalatani sawa, ika maka lamat ikang sawa, kalinganya ikang "walantaga." Maka pramaning sawa widya, awaknia mulih ring sanghyang Tryagni, luput de sangyang kala gigila, luput maring sapta giri kang ngarengked paranira sang dewa pitara mulih tekeng don.

"The procedure for the cremation ritual is intended to release the atma (spirit) from the influence of sang bhuta gigila. Using walantaga (daluang) and placing it on the corpse after the arcadana ritual is crucial. This practice serves as the vehicle for the spirit of the body. The use of walantaga (daluang) is essential because it represents the body's breath and facilitates the process of consciousness. This enables the body to return to sanghyang Tryagni, avoiding the clutches of bhuta gigila,

bypassing the seven silent mountains, and ultimately becoming a holy spirit, thereby allowing it to return to its intended destination".

Based on an extensive search of library materials, including various manuscripts recognized by Balinese Hindu religious leaders, *daluang* is prominently featured in religious rituals. It serves as accessories for *sulinggih* attire, head covering crowns (*bhawa*), a means to convey spirits to nirvana in the cremation ritual (*ngaben*), calendars (*tika*), and shroud (*kajang*).

# 3. Method and Theory

#### 3.1 Method

This research employed a descriptive qualitative method in describing dual roles of *daluang* both as material object and cultural symbol in Balinese Hindu rituals. An ethnographic approach was employed to capture the spiritual and intangible dimensions of these practice (Murchison, 2010; Tacchi, 2015) proving especially effective for exploring *daluang's* role in sacred contexts, such as in the *ngaben* rituals.

Data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data comprised field observations and in-depth interviews with some Balinese Hindu religious figures. Specifically, interviews were conducted with Ida Pedanda Made Gunung at Griya Purnawati in Gianyar, with Ida Pedanda Aunggusta Lor Magelung at Griya Anyar Sibangkaja in Badung Regency, and with Ida Pedanda Gede Wayahan Buruan at Griya Gede Wayahan Buruan Manuaba in Gianyar Regency, all in mid-June 2015. In addition, three sulinggih, who requested anonymify were interviwed in Karangasem, Klungkung and Gianyar. Moreover, interviews with Ida Pandita Dukuh Celagi Dharma Dyaksa Kirti were conducted at Padukuhan Sidaswati in Denpasar in mid-August 2024 and again in late January 2025.

Field observations focused primarily on the ritual preparations during *pitra yajnya* rituals, while the tailored interviews explored informants' experiences and interpretations of *daluang*'s ritual use. Secondary data were obtained through a literature review of scientific journals, Hindu manuscripts and visual documentation related to *daluang* in Hinduism, thereby providing a robust theoretical and contextual framework analysis. Throughout the research, ethical protocol, including informed consent, confidentiality, and adherence to publication guidelines were strictly observed.

Data analysis involved systematically synthesizing the collected information. First, patterns and themes related to the functions and symbolic meaning of *daluang* were identified. Next, secondary data were integrated to contextualize and corroborate these findings. Finally, the data were interpreted

through the lenses of material culture theory and symbolic anthropology, offering deeper insights into *daluang's* multifaceted role as both a physical medium and a cultural symbol within Balinese Hindu Ritual. The research framework as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Framework on the Role of *Daluang* in Balinese Hindu Rituals

# Descriptive Qualitative Method + Ethnographic Approach **Data Collections** Primary: Interviews, Observations Secondary: Literature, Visual Documents Field Research Sites and Activities Sites: Grya Purnawati, Gianyar; Grya Anyar Sibang Kaja, Badung; Grya Wayahan Buruan Manuaba, Gianyar; Grya Telaga Sanur, Denpasar; and Padukuhan Sida Swasti, Denpasar. Activities: Interviews, Discussion, Ritual Observation **Key Insight from Informant** Daluang as a sacred material (arca rekadana, kekitir, kajang) Daluang as a priestly attire (bhawa) Daluang as symbol of purity and divine energy **Data Analysis** Thematic analysis Integration with material culture and symbolic anthropology theory Conclusion Daluang functions both as material medium and cultural-spiritual symbols in

# 3.2 Theory

This research applies two complementary theoretical frameworks to analyze the role of *daluang* in Balinese Hindu rituals, material culture theory, and symbolic and interpretive anthropology. Material culture theory centers on the study of physical object as carriers of cultural meaning within social contexts. It emphasizes how artifacts are not merely passive items but actively participate in shaping cultural identity, social relations, and historical continuity (De Cunzo & Roeber, 2022). Building on this perspective, Daniel Miller's theory further elaborates that material culture embodies a dynamic relationship between people and things. Miller (1997) argues that objects have agency in everyday life, they influence human behavior while simultaneously being

Balinese Hindu ritual tradition

shaped by human practices. This reciprocal interaction highlights how material objects like *daluang* serve as both products and producers of cultural values.

Complementing this approach, symbolic and interpretive anthropology, provides a framework for understanding how symbols function within ritual contexts to convey complex meaning (Geertz, 1992; Geertz, 2017). This perspective views rituals as texts rich with symbolic significance where objects such as *daluang* operate not only materially but also symbolically, embodying spiritual concepts.

By integrating these two theoretical lenses, the research offers a holistic understanding of *daluang* as both a material and symbolic element. This combined approach enables us to analyze *daluang* as a living tradition, bridging tangible craft with intangible spiritual meaning, thus contributing to broader discussions on cultural preservation, religious expression, and identity in contemporary Balinese Hindu society.

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Results

Daluang occupies a critical position in the Balinese cultural and religious practices due to its unique material properties and embedded spiritual significance. This traditional material has been extensively employed in diverse ritual contexts due to its durability, organic qualities, and spiritual symbolism. Beyond its practical uses, *daluang* is regarded as a sacred medium that facilitates communication between the human and the divine. Within Balinese Hindu rituals, it is integrally involved in multiple ritual domains. For instance, it functions as the substrate for inscription of tika, a ritual calendar essential for determining auspicious timings for religious observances; it is incorporated into the fabrication of priestly ritual attire, such as the bhawa (head covering), which is worn during sacred rituals; and it constitutes the material basis for various symbolic objects in the pitra yajnya ritual, including the arca rekadana, kekitir, and kajang, which are instrumental in guiding the metaphysical journey of the atma (soul) toward nirvana. Consequently, these ritual applications underscore the dual role of daluang as both a cultural artifact, but as a vital component in sustaining and enacting Balinese Hindu spiritual practices.

# 4.1.1 Daluang as a Medium for Inscribing Tika

*Tika*, is an intricate calendar system deeply intertwined to Hindu beliefs, playing an essential role in the daily lives of Balinese people. It integrates various astronomical elements such as *wuku* (a thirty-week-long cycle of time); *wewaran* (day cycle in Balinese culture), which consists of *ekawara* (one day

cycle), dwiwara (two-day cycle), triwara (three-day cycle), caturwara (four-day cycle), pancawara (five-day cycle), sadwara (six-day cycle), saptawara (seven-day cycle), astawara (eight-day cycle), sangawara (nine-day cycle), and dasawara (tenday cycle). Additionally, it includes purnama (full moon); and purna tilem (dead moon). All elements are used to determine auspicious days (dewasa ayu) or the right time for carrying out daily activities, including religious ceremonies. The special symbols in tika can only be understood by those who have in-depth knowledge of wariga (the science of calculation and astronomy) and jyotisha (Hindu astrology) (Ginaya, 2018; Martini, 2019; Pratama & Sari, 2023).

*Tika* is integral and essential to religious rituals and various aspects of life, serving as a guide for important daily activities. It embodies local wisdom that continues to be preserved today, with a significant contribution to the social, economic, and spiritual dimensions of Balinese society. The calendar incorporates various systems and remains a crucial reference for determining auspicious days for diverse activities in Bali (Ginaya, 2018; Martini, 2019; Pebriyani & Subagia, 2019; Ramdhani, 2020).

Based on fieldwork conducted since the 2000s in several *grya* (residences Hindu clergy for generations), the *tika* is a treasured object for a *grya's* collection. Typically kept in the *pemrajan* (a sacred area in the *grya yard*), it forms part of the heritage passed down from generations of Hindu clergy who inhabit and maintain the *grya*. However, accessing it for viewing and documenting has been challenging, as owners are generally bound by traditional rules and ancestral wills that designate these items as sacred and restrict their handling by unauthorized people. This research has successfully navigated this challenge, owing to the unique relationship between the primary author and various *sulinggih* or other stakeholders. As a *daluang* maker, the main researcher established close working relationships with the Hindu clergy in Bali, producing and supplying *daluang* tailored to their specific needs. This collaboration has granted access to *tika* in various *gryas*, with explicit permission from the relevant *sulinggih* or stakeholders.

The *tika*'s form is a horizontal scroll, typically measuring approximately 50 by 120 centimeters. Many of these scrolls are over 50 years old, embodying a rich heritage passed down through generations. It is usually safeguarded in wooden crates or stored within the upper interiors of *pemrajan* buildings, which are familial temples integral to Balinese households. This placement not only preserves the tika but also signifies its sacred role in religious practices.

The *tika* scroll are traditionally crafted from *daluang*, which is valued for its remarkable durability. Beyond its physical resilience, *daluang* carries profound symbolic significance within Balinese Hindu rituals. The natural

white hue of *daluang* embodies purity, aligning seamlessly with Hindu cosmology that emphasizes harmony among humans, nature and the divine. This inherent symbolism enhances the spiritual resonance of the *tika*, making it more than mere objects. It becomes conduits for cultural expression and spiritual connection. The use of *daluang* reinforces the Balinese commitment to maintaining balance within the universe. Figure 1 is a *tika* collection from Grya Telaga Sanur, Denpasar Regency, Bali Province.



Figure 1. *Tika* Grya Sanur Collection, Denpasar, Bali (Photo: I Made Dharma Negara)

As an archaeological artefact from the past, the *tika* qualifies as a manuscript due to its handwritten form, which generally dates back several centuries. However, many discovered *tikas* are in fragile state and face ongoing risks of deterioration. As illustrated in Figure 2, common damages include loss, discoloration, and other signs of deterioration. To safeguard these invaluable artifacts, both restorative and preventive preservation measures are essential.

Some preservation measures can be performed directly, even by individuals without professional training, particularly for manuscripts in relatively good condition. However, for manuscripts that are significantly damaged, professional intervention is necessary. Skilled professionals, adept at handling manuscript collections, should undertake more complex preservation tasks. One of the most straightforward effective preservation methods is to dry cleaning it with a brush to remove dirt, dust, grime and occasional mold that sticks to the material's surface.



Figure 2. *Tika* Griya Gede Wayahan Buruan Manuaba collection, Gianyar, Bali (Photo: Tedi Permadi)

Several *tika* owners have requested that copies be made using *daluang* materials for daily use, allowing the original *tika*, as a fundamental part of the *grya* collection, to be safeguarded from environmental factors such as sunlight and temperature/humidity fluctuations, as well as from handling. This preventative strategy aims to ensure the longevity and preservation of these artefacts. Figure 3 provides an example of a replica on *daluang* of an original *tika*. This copy was created in 2020 by Anak Agung Reddy Prabawa, a cultural observer based in Bali, who also facilitated the main reseracher' connections with several *sulinggih* in Bali.



Figure 3. A replica *tika* created with *daluang* material (Photo: Anak Agung Prabawa Reddy)

Predictions based on *tika* using *wariga* science, rooted in Hindu and local beliefs in Indonesia, encompass a wide range of aspects including financial status, health, forecasts of emotional, spiritual development, and so on. For example, the main author's life path prediction was calculated by Jro Mangku Suryadi Celagi from Pasraman Sri Taman Ksetra Denpasar Bali, a Hindu priest. Before interpreting *tika*, the priest performs a ritual prayer to God. These prayers are considered sacred, cannot be ethically recorded, and are not shared because they involve personal trust. The use of *tika* for divination allows for an assessment of prediction accuracy compared to the main author's live experience. The past predictions have corresponded with actual events, while future forecasts remain estimates, providing a guideline for safe navigation in living future life.

The *tika* divination reading for the main author, born on 24 June 1970, reveal his birth is known, which is on *Buda* day (Wednesday), within the *pancawara* cycle (five days) of *pon*, the *sadwara* cycle (six days) of *wrukung*, the *wuku* cycle (seven days) of *watugunung*, and the *sasih* cycle (month) of *sadha*. In 2024, the main author will be 54 years old. The calculations predict that he will have experienced life success at the age of 30, faced various difficulties between 45 to 50, gradually overcome life challenges between 50 to 60, and will be free of these difficulties by age 60.

Furthermore, the results of interpreting the main author's name using wariga science are intricately connected with social conditions, including the political climate in Indonesia. This divination has significant implications for the author's personal and professional life. The main author is advised against initiating any business ventures requiring substantial capital investment, as it is believed that such undertakings could exacerbate existing challenges and financial difficulties. Instead, the main author is encouraged to focus on maintaining and developing the existing work and business endeavors, while embracing a simpler lifestyle to ensure stability and reduce stress.

This recommendation is particularly relevant given the main author's present circumstances. At 54 years old, the main author is in the process of recovering the family's financial health and bears considerable financial responsibilities for his family. The handwriting of Jro Mangku Suryadi Celagi, who performed divination by the main author based on the *tika* by utilising the science of *wariga*, can be seen in Figure 4.

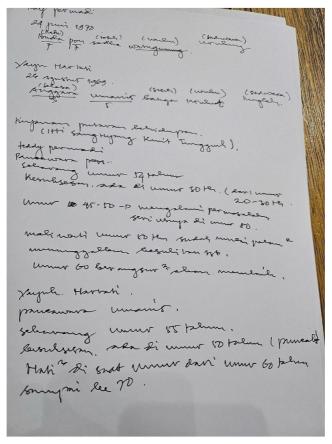


Figure 4. The interpretation of the researcher's name using *tika* and *wariga* science (Source: Pemangku Suryadi Celagi handwriting)

# 4.1.2 Daluang as a Material for Crafting Head Attire of Hindu Priests in Rituals

In Balinese Hinduism, *sulinggih* are esteemed figures who perform essential rituals and act as intermediaries between the divine for example in *yajnya*. This ritual involves sacred offerings directed to the Gods, ancestors, and spiritual beings to maintain the universe-balance, a concept known as *Tri Hita Karana*. *Yajnya rituals* encompass diverse offerings, including food, flowers, and incense, accompanied by sacred mantras and led by religious leaders known as *sulinggih*. There are several types of *yajnya*, each serving a distinct purpose: *dewa yajnya* for the Gods, *pitra yajnya* for ancestors, and *bhuta yajnya* for underworld beings (*bhuta kala*). Each *yajnya* is meticulously performed to ensure the welfare of the family, community, and environment, thus embodying the Balinese Hindu philosophy of harmonizing humans, nature, and God.

There are established guidelines regarding appropriate attire, typically classified into four categories: everyday clothing, work clothing, formal clothing, and traditional religious clothing. The latter, traditional-religious

attire, is specifically worn during Hindu religious rituals that are adapted to the place (*desa*), time (*kala*), and situation (*patra*). In a spiritual context, attire is not merely evaluated for its aesthetic appeal but must embody simplicity, modesty, and Hinduism ethical values known as *tri kaya parisudha* (good thoughts, words, and behavior). The selection of attire for religious rituals should be grounded in sincere intentions and a pure mind, aimed at worshiping God. Conversely, clothing that emphasizes luxury is considered to detract from the ritual's focus and undermine its primary goal of achieving a higher spiritual awareness.

Likewise, the incorporation of *daluang* into *sulinggih*'s attire is believed to symbolize simplicity and facilitate detachment from worldly ties. According to Ida Pandita Dukuh Celagi, *daluang* once comprised the complete ritual attire of a Hindu priest manifesting as the *bhawa* (head covering crown). However, due to the extinction of the *daluang*-making tradition in the 1960s, the clergy attire was replaced with more practical materials such as velvet.

Along with, the tradition of making and using *daluang* was successfully revitalized in 1998 by Bungawari group, a non-governmental organization in Bandung, West Java, the crafting of *bhawa* from *daluang* was resumed by the Hindu priest with the assistance of culturalists in Bali, such as I Made Dharma Negara from Badung Regency, who also served as an informant. An example of a *bhawa* made from daluang at Grya Telaga Sanur in Denpasar Bali is shown in Figure 5. The *bhawa* is then worn in rituals by the Hindu priest, who will use it to have *taksu* (spiritual power), providing comfort in religious practices. The use of *bhawa* in ritual attire is depicted in Figure 6.



Figure 5. The process of crafting *bhawa* from *daluang*. *Left*: The initial step involves cutting the *daluang* into appropriately sized pieces. *Centre*: Subsequent steps include shaping and adhering the pieces together. *Right*: The final step features embellishing the *daluang bhawa* base with gold, silver, and gemstone decorations (Photo: I Made Dharma Negara)



Figure 6. Use of the *bhawa* model of the Shiva Grya Telaga Sanur Pedanda. *Left:* Back view of the *bhawa*, *Centre:* Left side view of the *bhawa*, *Right: Bhawa* in use with the back of the *bhawa* (Photo: I Made Dharma Negara)

# 4.1.3 Daluang as a Material for Crafting Ritual Objects in Pitra Yajnya

In the context of *pitra yajnya* ritual, *daluang* is not merely a supporting material but serves as a primary medium that bridges the physical and spiritual realms. Its application extends beyond functional use to include sacred inscriptions, identity markers for the *atma*, spiritual vehicles guiding the soul to liberation, and symbolic representations of the eight cardinal directions. These multifaceted roles elevate *daluang* from a traditional craft material to a sacred object imbued with deep philosophical meanings associated with life, death, and the soul's release toward spiritual perfection. As such, *daluang* embodies both tangible materiality and intangible symbolic value, making it an essential and irreplaceable element in the ritual expression of Balinese Hinduism.

Based on information provided by several Hindu clergymen in Bali, the religious obligations of Hindus in Indonesia, particularly those adhering to the concept of religious *dharma* (implementation of religious teachings), signify a profound commitment to religious duties that must also be reflected in daily social interactions. As explained in interviews conducted in Gianyar (June 2015) with Ida Pedanda Aunggusta Lor Magelung and Ida Pedanda Gede Wayahan Buruan, religious *dharma* involves not only the practice of *yajnya* (devotion) but also a deep respect for all of God's creations, a cornerstone of Hindu teachings. Notably, one central manifestation of *yajnya* is the *pitra yajnya*, a ceremony to honor ancestors that constitutes the primary obligations for Hindus. Combined with the principles of *tatwa* (philosophy) and *susila* (ethics), *yajnya* forms an integral element of Hindu religious life.

In separate interview in Badung (June 2015), Ida Pedanda Aunggusta Lor Magelung elaborated on the Hindu conception of life, explaining that the four goals of life for Hindus, known as *catur purusa* include *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (material prosperity), *kama* (fulfilment of desires), and *moksa* (spiritual liberation). *Dharma* or righteous action forms the basis for achieving *artha* and *kama*, ultimately leading to *moksa*. Additionally, there are four paths of devotion known as *catur marga* through *bhakti* (worship), *karma* (action), *jnana* (knowledge), and *yoga* (meditation). These paths are implemented through various forms of *yajnya* or devotion that are adapted to the abilities and circumstances of each individual.

Furthermore, within Hinduism, there are three debts, known as *tri rna*, which arise from one's *karma* (actions) and represent spiritual obligations that Hindu must fulfil. These debts are owed to *dewa rna* (God), *pitra rna* (ancestors), and *rsi rna* (spiritual teachers). To honor these obligations, Hindus engage in *panca yajnya*, which comprises five forms of sacred offerings. These include *dewa yajnya* (offerings to God), *rsi yajnya* (offerings to spiritual teachers), *manusa yajña* (offerings to fellow humans), *bhuta yajnya* (offerings to the environment and other creatures), and *pitra yajnya* (offerings to the ancestors).

Drawing on further insights from interviews with Ida Pedanda Gede Made Gunung (Gianyar, June 2015), Ida Pedanda Aunggusta Lor Magelung (Badung, June 2015), Ida Pedanda Gede Wayahan Buruan (Gianyar, June 2015), and Ida Pandita Dukuh Celagi (Denpasar, April 2022), it is clear that the practice of *yajnya*, as a religious obligation, is founded upon the *tri rna* and is guided by three Hindu religious principles, namely *tatwa* (teachings), *susila* (ethics), and *upakara* (offering). In particular, the implementation of the *pitra yajnya* illustrates the integration of Balinese customs and Hindu teachings. The *upakara* in the *yajnya* holds significant symbolic meaning, representing the universe and the essential elements of life such as mountains, sea, and land, as well as reflecting the teachings of *shiwa-linga* and the concept of *tri-bwana*, which encompasses *bhur loka* (upper world), *bwah loka* (middle world), and *swah loka* (underworld).

According to the *Lontar Yajña Prakerti, upakara* carries three primary symbolic meanings: as a representation of the human body, as colours representing Gods, and as a symbol of the universe. These elements serve to maintain natural balance and the spiritual connection among humans, nature, and God. Based on information from Hindu adherents in Bali, the human body consists of *panca amaya kosa* (five layers): physical, energy, mind, wisdom, and happiness. These layers are symbolically represented in the *ngaben* ritual through the *kajang* (corpse cover), that signifies the *atma* (soul) and is placed over the corpse prior to cremation.

The *kajang* is characterized as a rectangular piece of cloth, approximately 90 x180 centimeters in dimension, typically fabricated from cotton or similar material. At its centre is affixed *daluang*, upon which mantras are inscribed

(udheng sekah). The use of daluang as udheng sekah on the kajang varies in size according to the intended user: approximately 25 x 25 cm for the general public, and around 25 x 120 cm for sulinggih. Although photographic documentation of the daluang used on the sulinggih's kajang has been obtained, its publication is restricted due to cultural sensitives. However, such images may be available upon request for academic purposes or research related to ritual practices (upakara) within the context of the pitra yajnya ceremony. Then, the surrounding area is adorned with ancient Chinese metal coins featuring central holes (pis bolong), arranged in the shape of a human body from head to toe. Additional embellishments include jarum (needles), cepuk (cloth), kaikik (banana leaves), and offerings made of blangsah (young nut).

This *kajang* must be endowed with spiritual significance through a *ngajum* ritual conducted by a religious leader, thereby imbuing it with magical powers. *Modre* (sacred characters) are inscribed on the *kajang*, a task exclusively performed by *sulinggih* who possess deep knowledge of these symbols. Subsequently, the family decorates the *kajang* as a symbol of their sincerity and legacy of the deceased. The *kajang* is also a symbol of the identity of the person who died so that they do not get lost on the road to nirvana. The *kajang* also serves as a symbol of the deceased's identity, ensuring they do not lose their way to nirvana. The spiritual symbolism of the *kajang* is crucial to the *ngaben* tradition, connecting humans with the spiritual realm. Due to its sacred nature, photo documentation of *kajang* from field research was not permitted to be published in this research.

The *pitra yajnya* ritual, performed when a parent passes away, is a fundamental obligation that involves completing their transition by separating the bond between the *jasad* (body) and the *atma* (soul). After the *kajang* has been prepared, the body must achieve a state of perfection through cremation, allowing it to reunite with the elements of nature. Meanwhile, the *atma* attains purity by entering nirvana and achieving *sunyata* (perfect peace), facilitated by *tirta pengentas* (holy water that separates the bonds of the *jasad* and *atma*). Furthermore, ritual accessories crafted from *daluang*, such as the *arca rekadana* and *kekitir*, play a crucial role in facilitating the *atma's* journey to nirvana. As documented in various *lontar* manuscripts on the *pitra yajnya* ritual, including *Lontar Wedana Pujastawa*, these sacred objects are inscribed with spiritual symbols and mantras by Hindu priests. They function both as symbolic representations and spiritual conduits that guide the soul through its transition from the earthly realm to spiritual liberation.

In *ngaben* ritual, *daluang* is transformed into two significant ritual objects: *arca rekadana* which represents the *atma* identity and *kekitir* symbolizing the vehicle for atma to attain nirvana. The *arca rekadana* is typically rectangular,

approximately 7x15 cm, while the *kekitir* is shaped like a butterfly, measuring about 3x5 cm. These objects are inscribed with *rerajahan*, sacred symbols of mantras, by the *sulinggih*, tailored to reflect the identity of the deceased, and subsequently integrated into the *ngaben* or *pelebon* funeral rituals, as can be seen in Figure 7. Moreover, the main author received the *arca rekadana* and *kekitir* from I Made Dharma Negara, an informant connected with several Hindu priests in Bali. The *kekitir*, *symbolizing* as a vehicle for the *atma* to nirvana, is crafted to resemble a butterfly, representing the transformation from a crawling caterpillar into a butterfly that can fly freely to enjoy the natural beauty full of fragrant flowers. Furthermore, Ida Pedanda Gede Wayahan Buruan noted that the *rerajahan* inscribed on *arca rekadana* and *kekitir* can only be inscribed on *daluang* due to its purity and inherent ritual sanctity.



Figure 7. Left: *Arca rekadana* and *kekitir*, blank *arca rekadana*, not yet inscribed with the identity of the deceased. Right: *Kekitir*, inscribed with the sacred script 'ang', 'mang', and 'ung' to guide the soul to nirvan (Photo: Tedi Permadi)

Following the completion of *ngaben*, where the *atma* is believed to have reached a level of nirvana in accordance with the *karma* of the deceased during their lifetime, the *pitra yajnya* ritual is declared *puput* (completed). Then, after a period typically exceeding 100 days as determined by *wariga* science, the next *pitra yajña* ritual, known as *nyekah* or *memukur*, is conducted. Similar to the *ngaben ritual*, *the nyekah* is led by a *sulinggih*.

In the *nyekah* ritual, *daluang* is used to create accessories such as *padma* walantaga (daluang flower) and selendang sekah (sekah shawl). The padma walantaga is drafted from small pieces of daluang around 5x5 cm in size, cut and shaped to resemble eight-angled flower petals adorn with floral ornaments symbolising the eight cardinal directions. The selendang sekah is made from small pieces of daluang around 3x40 cm, painted with geometric ornaments resembling batik motifs, a speciality of Balinese culture.

During the *nyekah* ritual, the *atma*, which resides in nirvana, *is symbolically* invited back to the world of living and placed in the *padma walantaga*. The body, which no longer exists due to the *ngaben* ritual, is represented by a human statue approximately 30 cm tall, typically made of wood decorated with woven palm leaves (*Borassus flabellifer*) to symbolize human attire, along with a *selendang sekah*. Upon fulfilling all the requirements of the *nyekah* ritual, the statue, as the embodiment of the body and the *padma walantaga*, representing the *atma*, are burned to help the *atma* reach a higher level of *sunyata* (perfect peace). The shape of the *padma walantaga* and selendang *sekah* as shown in Figure 8, were provided by I Made Dharma Negara, an informant who connected with several Hindu priests in Bali.



Figure 8. Left: *Padma walantaga*, crafted from small pieces of *daluang* around 5x5 cm in size and adorned with floral ornaments symbolising the eight cardinal directions. Right: *selendang sekah*, crafted from small pieces of *daluang* around 3x40 cm in size and painted with geometric ornaments resembling batik motifs (Photo: Tedi Permadi)

## 4.2 Discussion

This research discusses the findings of the *daluang* roles in Balinese Hindu Rituals both as physical objects and sacred symbols. Interpreting a symbol requires acknowledging its multiple meanings across contexts and individuals, its interconnectedness within a larger symbolic system, its function in reinforcing religious belief through ritual, and its influence on individual experience, identity and morality (Geertz, 1992; Geertz, 2017). Based on the framework, it can be elaborated that *daluang* functions not just as a material but as a sacred symbol with multiple layers of meaning and actively shaping religious experience.

# 4.2.1 Daluang as Polysemic Symbol

Geertz (1992, 2017) emphasizes the multiplicity of meanings inherent in symbols. *Daluang* clearly exemplifies this. While its physical function is diverse,

from *tika* inscription to priestly attire and materials for *pitra yajnya* ritual (*arca rekadana, kekitir, padma ulantaga and selendang sekah*), its symbolic meaning consistently revolves around purity, spiritual focus, soul and transformation, connection to the living and respect for the deceased. These core meanings branch out into more nuanced interpretations depending on context. The white color, derived from the mulberry bark, symbolizes not only the physical cleanliness but also spiritual purity, connecting it to broader cosmological understandings of a pure and life-filled universe, as noted by (Sakamoto, 2016a). The purity meaning presents across all its uses, whether for *tika*, *sulinggih* attire and ritual objects in *pitra yajnya*.

The spiritual focus meaning reveals when *daluang* is used for *bhawa* (the *sulinggih* head attire) which symbolizes simplicity and detachment from worldly concerns, reinforcing the *sulinggih* spiritual role, as echoed in the *Sumanasantaka* manuscript. specifically in Chapter 64, Verse 9 in the following: *Sang wwanging uttama sāmpun adaluwang adoh sira ring wişaya*. ("The main person mentioned is the person who has worn clothes made from *daluang*; he has distanced himself from the ties of the misleading world.")

In the meaning of soul transformation, *daluang* is used in the context of *arca rekadana* and *kekitir* within the *pitra yajnya* ritual. *Daluang* represents the *atma* (soul) and its journey towards nirvana. The butterfly-shaped *kekitir* further symbolizes the soul's transformation and spiritual freedom.

Then, the meaning of connection to the living and respect for the deceased are shown in *nyekah* ritual as part of the *pitra yajnya* ritual. The *padma walantaga* represents the eight cardinal directions and serves as a symbolic space for the *atma* to return to the world of living, highlighting the cyclical nature of life and death; whereas *selendang sekah*, crafted from *daluang*, signifies human attire and represents the presence and respect accorded to the deceased.

## 4.2.2 Daluang within a Symbolic System

Symbols operate within a network of interconnected meanings. *Daluang's* symbolism is interwoven with other elements of Balinese Hindu belief and practice. Its connection to purity links it to broader cosmological principles. Its use in rituals, particularly the *pitra yajnya*, connects it to belief about the afterlife and soul's journey. The mention of *daluang* in revered texts like *Kakawin Ramayana* and *Sumanasantaka* further elevates its significance and integrates it into a larger body of religious knowledge. The *Lontar Wedana Pujastawa* text, specifically its description of the *walantaga* in the cremation ceremony, explicitly links *daluang* to the *atma's* release and return to the divine, solidifying its role within the complex system of death ritual as follows:

Nihan tingkahing atiwa-tiwa, kawruhakna luput ikang sawa, bhinukti dening sang bhuta gigila, aja tan winehan walantaga, genahakna rumuhun ring sawa, tungtunging rcadananya, amneri lalatani sawa, ika maka lamat ikang sawa, kalinganya ikang walantaga. Maka pramaning sawa widya, awaknia mulih ring sanghyang Tryagni, luput de sangyang kala gigila, luput maring sapta giri kang ngarengked paranira sang dewa pitara mulih tekeng don.

"This is the procedure for the cremation ceremony; it is said to release the *atma* (spirit) from the power of the *sang bhuta gigila*. Don't forget to use the *walantaga* (*daluang*) and place it first on the corpse of the character at the end of the *arcadana* that's the spirit of body's vehicle, why should use *walantaga* (*daluang*), because as the body's breath (so) there is a process of consciousness, and the body can return to *sanghyang tryagni*, and avoid the clutches of *bhuta gigila*, avoid the seven silent mountains, and become a holy spirit to return to its destination."

The other symbolic system is the concept of *atma* and nirvana. *Daluang* in *pitra yajnya* ritual is used to guide the *atma* to nirvana Girinata et al., 2024; Mulyadi & Adi, 2016; Solihah, 2011; Wirata, 2022). The use of *arca rekadana* and *kekitir* links to Balinese Hindu beliefs about the soul's journey after death and the pursuit of spiritual liberation.

From the elaboration of daluang with its multiple meanings in symbolic systems, it can also be interpreted that rituals employing daluang offer a structured understanding of life, death, and interplay between human and the divine realms. In addition, the shared use and understanding of daluang across rituals fosters a sense of collective identity and belonging among Balinese Hindu. The communal aspects of preparing and utilizing daluang can further solidify social bonds. Moreover, daluang contributes to legitimizing social order. The restriction of mantra inscription on daluang to spiritually authorized persons (Hindus priests) and its use in priestly attire reinforces the hierarchical structure within Balinese Hinduism, signifying the authority and specialized knowledge of religious leaders. Then, *daluang's* symbolism can motivate action. Its association with purity can inspire individuals to strive for moral and spiritual cleanliness, while the belief in the soul's journey, facilitated by daluang in rituals like the pitra yajnya, can encourage righteous living. These functions intertwine to make daluang not just a material object, but a powerful force in shaping Balinese Hindu religious experience.

In the context of Balinese Hinduism, the significance of *Broussonetia* papyrifera (paper mulberry), the tree from which daluang is derived, can be further elucidated through the traditional botanical philosophy known as taru

pramana. This indigenous knowledge system categorizes plants not only based on their medicinal and utilitarian properties but also in terms of their spiritual and cosmological significant values. Within this framework, trees are regarded as sacred entities embodying three harmony principles that integrate human life with nature and the divine (*tri hita karana*) and the principle of the individual self is identical with the ultimate reality (*tat twam asi*) (Dharma & Jayawangsa, 2020; Martini, 2019; Padet & Krishna, 2020; Purana, 2016). Thereby, it underscores their integral role in both ecological balance and religious practice.

The *Broussonetia papyrifera*, characterized by its soft yet durable bark and regenerative growth, exemplifies the principle of *sattva* (purity and clarity), rendering it an ideal material for ritual applications. The bark, processed without chemical additives, preserves its natural essence, which is believed to enhance its *taksu*, the capacity to receive and channel divine energy, making it particularly suitable as a medium for inscribing sacred mantras. This inherent purity corresponds with the Balinese requirements that all materials used in rituals maintain spiritual cleanliness and efficacy. Furthermore, as a tree that naturally sheds and regenerates its bark, it symbolizes rebirth, spiritual transformation, and continuity of life, central themes in Balinese ritual practice, particularly in *pitra yajnya* which emphasizes the soul's journey from death to liberation. Thus, from the perspective of *taru pramana*, the paper mulberry is valued not only solely for its utility but also revered as a sacred plant that mediates between the physical and spiritual realms, thereby justifying its esteemed role in ritual contexts.

The importance of *daluang* emphasizes the urgent need for collaborative efforts to sustain *daluang*-making traditions. Preserving this unique craft is not only essential for maintaining ritual practices but also for safeguarding a vital link to Balinese Hindu cultural identity. A collaborative effort involving local artisans, religious leaders and government agencies could establish a *daluang*-making cooperative. This initiative could provide training in traditional techniques, ensure sustainable sourcing of mulberry trees through reforestation projects, and promote the sale of *daluang* products, thereby supporting the economic viability of the craft. Furthermore, integrating *daluang* into contemporary art and craft practices offers opportunities for innovation while respecting its cultural roots and expanding its reach.

From an academic perspective, this research enriches the discourse on material culture by exploring the dualistic roles of *daluang* as both a symbolic and practical medium in rituals. It contributes to the understanding of cultural resilience, particularly in the context of intangible heritage preservation. Practically, the findings suggest the importance of promoting community involvement in safeguarding the traditions of *daluang* production and use.

Future research is recommended to examine the role of *daluang* in broader cultural contexts and its potential adaptation in addressing modern societal challenges.

#### 5. Conclusion

This research illuminated the multifaceted significance of *daluang* within Balinese Hindu rituals, revealing its dual nature as both a tangible artifact and a sacred symbol. The material properties of *daluang* are evident in its varied ritual functions; it forms the substrate for inscriptions on *tika* is incorporated into priestly attire such as the *bhawa* and serves as the basis for sacred objects like *arca rekadana* and *kekitir* employed in *pitra yajnya*. These practices underscore that *daluang* transcends mere utilitarian value; it is a medium through which ritual meaning is both physically and symbolically inscribed reflecting associations with purity, spiritual transformation, and the journey of the *atma* (soul) within a broader Balinese cosmological context guided by principles of *Tri Hita Karana*.

In addressing the research objectives, the ethnographic data including interviews with *sulinggih* (Hindu priests), observation of ritual practices, and analysis of sacred texts, demonstrate that the use of *daluang* is guided by deeply embedded in religious philosophies, such as *taru pramana*, and cosmological constructs articulated in manuscripts like *Wedana Pujastawa*. The findings reveal that the selection and use of *daluang* are deliberate. It is valued for its intrinsic qualities, including its natural purity, regenerative symbolism, and ritual compatibility. Furthermore, the analysis shows that both access to *daluang*, and the authority to inscribe mantras upon it are regulated within the religious hierarchy, thereby reaffirming its sacred status and reinforcing spiritual leadership.

Ultimately, this research contributes to a nuanced understanding of how traditional materials like *daluang* endure and evolve within contemporary religious practices. By articulating the symbolic, spiritual, and social dimensions of *daluang*, this study not only fills a critical gap in the literature, where previous research has predominantly focused on its codicological or historical aspects, but also affirms the indispensable role of material culture in the preservation of intangible heritage. In sum, *daluang* emerges as both a sacred medium and a cultural bridge connecting ancestral legacy with modern spiritual expression, answering, thereby answering key questions regarding its ritual function, symbolic meaning, and enduring relevance in Balinese Hinduism.

# Acknowledgments

Our deepest gratitude goes to Ida Pedanda Gede Made Gunung at Grya Purnawati (Gianyar), Ida Pedanda Aunggusta Lor Magelung at Grya

Anyar Sibangkaja (Badung), Ida Pedanda Gede Wayahan Buruan at Grya Wayahan Buruan (Gianyar), Sri Mpu Dharmavala Vajravani (Karangasem), and Ida Pandita Dukuh Celagi Dharma Dyaksa Kirti at Padukuhan Sidaswasti (Denpasar). We also extend our thanks to Anak Agung Ngurah Mukti Prabawa Reddy, Jro Mangku Suryadi Celagi, I Made Guna Santosa, I Made Dharma Negara. Additionally, we express our appreciation to all participants and several informants, whose names cannot be included, for granting permission to conduct this research and publish the research results, thereby enriching the science repertoire.

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# **Lontar Manuscript**

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