

## Bulian *Saa*: Exploring the Distinct Characteristics of Ritual Language of North Bali's Indigenous Community

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24843/JKB.2025.v15.i02.p02>

**Abstract:** Bulian *Saa* is a distinct form of Balinese Hindu ritual language used by the Bali *Mula*, the indigenous Balinese community of Bulian Village, North Bali. Unlike other Balinese Hindu ritual languages, Bulian *Saa* exhibits lexical and structural features that diverge significantly from the standardized ritual language used across Bali, particularly in the names of deities, temples, and sacred elements. This research explores Bulian *Saa* in comparison with standard Balinese Hindu ritual language, with a focus on the *Panca Sembah* (Five Turns of Worship). This comparison enables a thorough investigation of the unique characteristics of Bulian *Saa* that are reflected in language identity and language preference of Balinese Hindu people in Bulian village. The study's significance lies in documenting and analysing this under-researched variant of Balinese ritual language, fostering its preservation, and providing insights for broader discussions on the relationship between language, tradition, and identity in minority communities.

**Keywords:** Bulian *Saa*; Bali *Mula*; Balinese Hindu ritual language; language identity; comparative analysis; language documentation

### 1. Introduction

Besides being used for social communication, the Balinese language also plays a crucial role in ritual contexts, particularly in Hindu ceremonies. Among the indigenous Bali *Mula* communities, ritual language manifests in unique linguistic forms, one of which is Bulian *Saa*, the ritual language of Bulian Village in North Bali. This specialized form of ritual language is distinct from the standard Balinese Hindu ritual language, with notable differences in

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Submitted: 4 November 2024; Accepted: 7 July 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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lexicon, structure, and ceremonial application. Despite its significance, Bulian *Saa* remains under-documented, raising concerns about its transmission and preservation. This gap in documentation reflects a broader pattern: minority linguistic traditions among the Bali *Mula* have received less scholarly attention compared to the more dominant Balinese Hindu practices shaped by the Majapahit legacy (Hauser-Schäublin, 2004). The study of ritual language in Balinese Hinduism has predominantly focused on well-documented varieties associated with mainstream Balinese Hindu practices. However, indigenous communities such as the Bali *Mula* maintain ritual speech traditions that predate Majapahit influences, offering a glimpse into linguistic and cultural continuities that are often overlooked (Creese, 1997). The Bali *Mula*, also known as Bali *Aga* (a term some consider derogatory), are believed to have preserved elements of pre-Majapahit Hindu-Buddhism, merging local animistic beliefs with early Hindu and Buddhist influences (Covarrubias, 1937; Reuter, 2002).

Unlike mainstream Balinese Hinduism, which was significantly reshaped following the migration of Javanese noblemen and priests after the collapse of the Majapahit Empire in the 16th century (Hanna, 2004), the religious and linguistic traditions of the Bali *Mula* have remained distinct. This distinction is also reflected in linguistic differences between Mountain Balinese, spoken by the Bali *Mula*, and Lowland Balinese, spoken by the rest of the population (Arka, 2005; Dhanawaty, 2021). Linguistic studies highlight that Mountain Balinese retains more Austronesian features, distinguishing it from the Javanese-influenced Lowland Balinese (Shepard et al., 2005; Pratiwi et al., 2020). Bulian *Saa* is particularly intriguing because its linguistic features diverge from the common Balinese Hindu liturgical speech, reflecting a distinct religious and cultural identity. The Balinese language, particularly its Lowland variety, is known for its complex speech level system, influenced by the Indian caste hierarchy (Clynes, 1995; Arka, 2005). Notably, such distinctions do not appear in Bulian *Saa*. This absence of speech levels in Bulian *Saa* aligns with linguistic features found in Mountain Balinese, further underscoring its uniqueness within the broader Balinese linguistic landscape (Matradewi et al., 2023). Furthermore, while Balinese ritual language has been extensively influenced by Sanskrit and Old Javanese lexicons, Bulian *Saa* appears to maintain distinct lexical and syntactic structures that warrant closer investigation (Dhanawaty, 2021).

This research explores Bulian *Saa* and compares it with the standard Balinese Hindu ritual language, with a particular focus on the *Panca Sembah* (Five Turns of Worship). This exploration allows for a thorough investigation of Bulian *Saa*'s unique characteristics, as reflected in the language identity and preferences of the Balinese Hindu people in Bulian village. The analysis aims to identify unique lexical and structural elements that define Bulian *Saa* while also

examining the broader implications of ritual language use for cultural identity and linguistic preservation. By addressing these aspects, the study contributes to the understanding of Balinese ritual language diversity and underscores the importance of documenting and safeguarding minority linguistic traditions. The study's significance lies in documenting and analyzing this under-researched variant of Balinese ritual language, fostering its preservation, and providing insights for broader discussions on the relationship between language, tradition, and identity in minority communities.

## 2. Literature Review

To contextualize Balinese Hindu ritual speech, it is important to understand the distinct characteristics of Balinese Hinduism. While sharing historical roots with Indian Hinduism, Balinese Hinduism has evolved uniquely, blending Hindu beliefs with local cultural customs. Unlike the universalist approach of Buddhism, Hinduism historically embraced particularism, with dharmas tailored to individuals' sex, caste, and age, under the guidance of Brahmin leadership (Laine, 2014). This framework allowed for diversity within a ranked and hierarchical structure, often supported by royal authority. In Bali, these principles merged with deep-rooted cultural practices, resulting in a rich tapestry of ritual and community life that distinguishes Balinese Hinduism from its Indian origins. Balinese Hinduism has become an inseparable belief for the communities in Bali, where most of its practices are very unique, and cannot be found elsewhere in the world. It has been described as much more animistic than Indian Hinduism (Covarrubias, 1937). The matter of ritual and practices can be traced back to the beliefs (thus, identities) of each member/participant of the community. Belief is dynamic and context-specific in nature, where a socio-cultural approach may provide evidence to changes in belief (Li & Ruan, 2015). An alternate reality is an important dimension of ritual and is considered a significant reason why participants are so dedicated to their rituals (Droogers, 2012).

Ritual generates its own occasions, typically activated when people experience a crisis, undergo a transition, or change their social position within everyday life. Droogers (2012) also points out that ritual plays a role in its own right, presupposing another reality that obliges people to work within it and within its specific characteristics. At the same time, contrary to its ordinary usage, ritual language allows for varying use and an outburst of new ideas and action, though not everything is feasible. Balinese Hinduism provides a structured framework for rituals, establishing a set of rules or "grammar" that guides how ceremonies should be conducted and what language should be used. However, within this framework, individuals express their spirituality

in unique ways. The term “accent” signifies that while everyone adheres to the general rules of ritual language, personal interpretations and local variations emerge. Each practitioner brings their own cultural background, experiences, and beliefs into their practice. This dynamic highlights the diversity within Balinese Hinduism, where a shared ritual language coexists with individual expressions of faith, reflecting the rich blend of beliefs and practices among its community members.

In terms of identity, Deters (2013) outlines three dimensions: i) *social identity*, which refers to the roles a person is born into or adopted through various memberships; ii) *personal identity*, which relates to an individual’s temperament and characteristics; and iii) *self-identity*, which encompasses a person’s sense of integrity and coherence over time and across different contexts. These identities are dynamic and fluid, constantly evolving based on an individual’s perception of themselves at both personal and social levels. Culture and identity are interconnected, with personal identity shaped by the relationship between language and the individual. Different linguistic perspectives can lead to varying narratives about one’s existence, highlighting that identity is not solely an individual concept but also a social and intersubjective one. Culture and identity are interchangeable, in which they are dynamic and fluid, constantly evolving around an individual’s own perception of self at personal and social levels (Issa & Hatt, 2013). This personal or individual identity is shaped differently by different takes on the nature of the relationship between language and the individual – different paradigms of linguistics can account for different narratives of being in the world and to see identity not only as individual, rational and located entirely in the head but also as progressively becoming social and intersubjective (Evans, 2018).

The impact of language on the formation of clusters may depend on the shifting salience of multiple identity attributes as determined by organizational context (Kalra & Danis, 2024). In a multicultural scenario, as in Bulian village, the concepts of identity are being contested and reflected in the way minority groups hold on to the cultural or ethnic labels constructed for them by the majority group, while also taking on new identities – suggesting that cultural identities are not given, but formed, maintained and changed in society in order to fit emergent needs (Sarangi, 2009). These conceptual foundations established the means to justify the existence of a different ritual speech distinct from the common Balinese Hindu ritual speech by relating the concept of religion with identity.

Any changes to the identity can be seen from each person’s ideology. Language ideology derives from the tie to particular social groups interests and the foundation that turns groups of people into communities, societies, and cultures (Blommaert, 2006). These ideologies are closely linked to power,

because the nature of the ideology's assumptions embedded in particular conventions, and so the nature of those conventions themselves, depends on the power relations which underlie the conventions. Additionally, they legitimise existing social relations and power differences by routinely reinforcing them through familiar, taken-for-granted behaviours (Fairclough, 2001). This concept can suggest that given a disadvantage in terms of the community standing and environment, changes to the community member identity (as well as its language) can occur. After all, language is a part of society; linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena are (in part) linguistic phenomena.

A communicative strategy of power in its liberal manifestation is deeply rooted in the pragmatic context, which is why linguistic articulation is regarded as an open rhetorical and obscure semantic representation (Petrenko & Potapova, 2014). In a specific community, local elites and their affiliates had at their disposal many religious symbols to mediate the intersection between religion, society, and politics – this intersection illustrates how invisible but real the web of power that binds rulers and ruled in networks of visual and verbal discourse (Edwards, 1996). The circumstances in Bulian village are no different, where these specific (but different) practices are still applicable due to the agreement made between the local elites and their affiliates.

The primary aim of language documentation is to create a lasting and versatile record of a language (Himmelmann, 2006). This inherently multidisciplinary process incorporates methods and concepts from linguistics, ethnography, psychology, computer science, and recording arts (Austin, 2016). It systematically involves recording, transcribing, translating, and analyzing spoken and written language samples within their social and cultural contexts, capturing both linguistic practices and the speakers' metalinguistic knowledge (Seifart, 2012). Motivations for language documentation include preserving cultural heritage, enhancing linguistic research, and supporting speech communities. However, challenges such as disparities in existing literature and the need for flexibility, economy, and fair decision-making complicate the process (Bennett, 1998). Ethical considerations further highlight the importance of addressing indigenous peoples' rights, power differentials, and historical contexts, which are often overlooked in data-sharing principles (Musgrave & Thieberger, 2023). To navigate these challenges, this study incorporates community engagement, organizing gatherings to introduce younger generations to findings, particularly regarding ritual languages. Grounded in community practice research, this approach begins with ethnographic study, involving systematic, open-minded observation of populations (Emma, 2010), ensuring ethical and impactful documentation.

### 3. Method and Theory

#### 3.1 Method

This research employs a qualitative approach through fieldwork conducted in May 2024. Primary data were gathered via direct engagement with the local priest at Taman Sari Temple in Bulian Village, where Bulian *Saa* is actively used in ritual practices. This immersive approach ensures an authentic understanding of the language within its cultural context. The analysis employs discourse and comparative methods to investigate the linguistic features of Bulian *Saa*, with a particular emphasis on how worship practices in Bulian differ from the standard Balinese *Panca Sembah* 'Five Turns of Worship'. The *Panca Sembah* is performed on a daily basis and is the most common form of prayer practiced by Balinese Hindus.

It is to be understood that a comparative approach to languages focuses on the areas of similarities and differences between two or more languages varieties, with a direction from one variety to another – the starting point of this comparison can be from one variety to another (Alkhuli, 2007). In conducting comparative analysis, the use of two corpora consisting of the same number of samples is needed (Gong et al, 2024). Therefore, using the common Balinese Hindu ritual speech as a comparison would be an ideal way to justify the existence of Bulian *Saa*. A stratified random sample strategy can be used to ensure the equivalence of these corpora and their sub corpora (Brown in Ahn & Oh, 2024). By documenting these practices in detail, the study uncovers insights into language identity, ritual variation, and cultural preferences within the Balinese Hindu community in Bulian. The *Panca Sembah* is typically performed during various prayer sessions throughout the day. The duration of the ritual can vary depending on individual practices and the context in which it is performed, but it generally lasts around 15 to 30 minutes. By incorporating ethnography techniques in observation, interviewing, and recording to document real-life encounters and cultural subtleties associated with religious ceremonies and indigenous knowledge, the study derives insight into the underlying principles, shared beliefs, and the influence of local knowledge on religious practices by actively participating in the daily routines of religious and community leaders (Agung et al., 2024).

The initial phase of this project, conducted from January to April 2024, was a collaborative effort led by I Komang Sumaryana Putra. The project team was consisted of individuals with specialized roles: Amrita Nugraheni Saraswaty (budget management), I Kadek Surya Jayadi (data collection for ritual language), Aldila Tania Agatha (social media manager who was responsible for disseminating research updates and findings), Ni Luh Made Maitrya Putri (questionnaire development and field assistance). George Saad played a crucial

role in guiding the proposal writing process, which successfully secured a grant from OCSEAN for this research. Additionally, he provided significant assistance in writing and editing this article and took part in a dissemination workshop in Bulian village in 2024. During the research phase, the team organized preparatory meetings to define research goals, set up linguistic tools, finalize consent forms, and establish communication with priests and village elders in Bulian Village. These preparations facilitated a successful fieldwork period in May 2024, during which the team collected essential linguistic and cultural data. Fieldwork activities included recording rituals, conducting interviews with community members, and documenting unique lexical items associated with deities, temples, and sacred trees. Interviews were primarily conducted in Balinese by I Kadek Surya Jayadi, with occasional use of Indonesian to ensure mutual understanding between the interviewers and interviewees. Collaboration with local priests ensured the accuracy and cultural relevance of the data. Community engagement was a cornerstone of the project. The team prioritized ethical practices, seeking explicit consent from participants and involving community leaders, elders, and stakeholders to explain research objectives and gain their support. Simultaneously, the social media manager shared real-time updates and highlights of the project through social media, fostering broader awareness and appreciation of the Bulian *Saa* ritual language.

We transcribed the data and translated it into Indonesian and English using *ELAN* (annotation tool for audio and video recordings). The data underwent linguistic analysis, employing tools and methodologies to explore morpho-syntactic structures and lexical features of the chants. This was followed by another level of analysis where the data was interpreted by local experts, especially priests, to interpret the cultural and historical significance of Bulian *Saa*. In addition to the research phase of the project, we also conducted several dissemination and community engagement activities. One of these activities involves playing the recordings in community gatherings focusing on disseminating the results to the younger generation in order to help them understand the linguistic and cultural significance of Bulian *Saa*.

The recordings were also used in workshops and discussions, where we presented our findings, explained the importance of preserving the Bulian *Saa* language, and encouraged active participation in the documentation process. We organized gatherings at temple community halls to play back the recordings, explain the chants, and share insights that arose during the research process. This phase aimed to maintain oral traditions and ensure the transmission of the ritual language (Bulian *Saa*) to younger community members, preserving its cultural richness for future generations. Lastly, continuous feedback and adaptation was achieved by maintaining an ongoing dialogue with the community throughout

the research process. This was also done by encouraging feedback, addressing concerns, and adapting the methodology as needed to ensure the project aligned with the community's values and expectations.

### 3.2 Theory

In language documentation, the basic method of participant observation involves a paradox: it is logically impossible to fully participate and observe at the same time. Despite this, the method has been effective. Although relying on the researcher's personality to build rapport may be seen as biased and subjective, it still provides valuable insider insight (Droogers, 2012). In the practice of language documentation, there are several issues that need attention, such as adherence to the needs of stakeholders, data handling, data archiving, access restriction, legal/ethical issues, and data enrichment tools (Broeder et al, 2012). During the research process, ethical considerations and community involvement were crucial. Prior permissions and consent were diligently sought from the Bulian community, ensuring that the purpose, benefits, and applications of the research were clearly communicated. During the creation of audio and video recordings, native speakers played a pivotal role in guiding the recordings, transcribing them, and providing commentary. This provided transparency, respect for cultural sensitivity, and a collaborative approach, ensuring that the documentation process was conducted with the full understanding, validation, and agreement of the community members involved.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Results

Our results reveal that Bulian Hinduism differs from mainstream Balinese Hinduism in four key areas: 1) *Number of temples*: Bulian Hinduism features a distinct number of temples compared to the more centralized temple structures found in mainstream Balinese Hinduism. This reflects the unique religious practices and community organization of the *Bali Mula*. 2) *Historical background of the priests*: The priests in Bulian are often local elders who have not undergone formal training in contemporary ritual languages, unlike their counterparts in mainstream Balinese Hinduism. This difference highlights the preservation of traditional practices and the community's commitment to maintaining their unique religious identity. 3) *The ritual language used*: A significant distinction lies in the ritual language employed during ceremonies. While mainstream Balinese Hinduism frequently utilizes Sanskrit in its prayers and rituals, Bulian Hinduism relies on *Bulian Saa*. This language differs markedly from standard Balinese ritual language, particularly in its lexicon, which includes specific names for deities, temples, and sacred trees. 4) *The linguistic features found in the*



*chants*: The linguistic features of chants in Bulian *Saa* often include specific deity names and employ a first-person chanting style.

The comparison between Bulian and common Balinese Hinduism reveals several key differences, specifically in the following aspects:

- a. **Concept of Temples:** Mainstream Balinese Hinduism is centered around the *Khayangan Tiga* concept, which consists of three main temples—*Puseh* (representing creation and honoring The Deity *Wisnu*), *Desa* (representing preservation and honoring The Deity *Brahma*), and *Dalem* (representing vanquishing and honoring The Deity *Siwa*). Bulian Hinduism, on the other hand, utilizes a more complex system with 33 main temples. In Bulian, the two central temples, *Banua* Temple and *Dalem Purwa* Temple, replace the *Khayangan Tiga* concept. The *Banua* Temple oversees executive authority, while *Dalem Purwa* Temple governs legislative authority.
- b. **Historical Origins:** The *Khayangan Tiga* concept was introduced to Bali during the era of the Majapahit Kingdom and is predominantly used by non-Bali *Mula* communities. In contrast, Bulian Hinduism reflects a more indigenous practice that has retained its distinct characteristics separate from the influences of Javanese culture.
- c. **Ritual Language Used:** Common Balinese Hinduism often uses *Sanskrit* in its rituals and prayers. In contrast, Bulian Hinduism uses Bulian *Saa*, which is based on Highland Balinese. This language features a different lexicon, including distinct names for deities, temples, and sacred trees.
- d. **Linguistic Features in Rituals:** The chants and prayers in Bulian *Saa* exhibit unique linguistic characteristics that differentiate them from standard Balinese ritual language. These features include specific deity names and a first-person chanting style that reinforces the community's cultural identity.

These aspects highlight the distinctiveness of Bulian Hinduism compared to mainstream Balinese practices, emphasizing its historical roots, unique linguistic features, and community-centered rituals.

The priests that are assigned to these temples are different as well. On these two main temples, the priests are called *Jero Prawayah*<sup>1</sup> (and are classified further into *Kiwa*, *Tengen*, and *Tengah*) (Photo 1). In the rest of the 30 temples, the priests are called *Jero Sedahan*. These priests are chosen through a very sacred ritual that typically goes from their bloodlines. In the case where this bloodline

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<sup>1</sup> *Jero Prawayah*, the three-main-priest in Bulian, symbolizes balance among these three orientations: *Kiwa* (the left side, often associated with protection and guidance), *Tengen* (the right side, focusing on action and manifestation), and *Tengah* (the center, symbolizing balance and harmony). Each of these positions carries distinct spiritual significance and plays a crucial role in the rituals performed by the Bali *Mula* community.

method is not possible, a very special ceremony is conducted to choose the eligible priest. From the interview, it was gathered that the least criteria needed for any person to be eligible as a priest would be the ability to recognize right away which gods reside in which particular temple – not everyone can do this, they would need to receive some sort of divine blessing to recognize it. These priests are considered to be very different compared to the typical priests in other regions in Bali, since they are regarded as the chosen ones (chosen by God), and do not receive their knowledge from regular formal training received by other priests in Bali.



Photo 1. The three main priests – *Jero Prawayah Tengen*, *Jero Prawayah Dalem/Tengah* and *Jero Prawayah Kiwa* – are leading the purification ceremony (Photo: I Komang Sumaryana Putra)

In mainstream Balinese Hindu practices, the priests began prayer by following the common ritual of *Panca Sembah* 'Five Turns of Worship'. Typically, this is done by clasping both hands up to the head level, using the two distinct postures for males and females: *masila* 'cross-legged sitting posture intended for males', *masimpuh* 'knee-sitting posture (*Vajrasana*) intended for females'. Example (1) illustrates the chants used by Balinese Hindu people during *Panca Sembah*.

(1)

The first turn: *Puyung* (empty hands, acknowledgment of emptiness, humility, or the recognition of the divine beyond form).

Original text	Translation
<i>Om atma tatwatma suddhamam swaha.</i>	O Lord, <i>atma</i> or the soul and truth, cleanse me.

The second turn: *Ida Bathara Surya* (The Sun Deity, symbolizing the life-giving energy and the sustenance of all living beings).

Original text	Translation
<i>Om adityasyaparam jyoti, Rakta teja namo'stute Sweta pankaja madyasthe, Bhaskaraya namo stute.</i>	O Lord, the Great Light of Sun ( <i>Hyang Surya</i> ). You shine red, I worship You. <i>Hyang Surya</i> , who resides in the centre of the white lotus. I worship You, the creator of the brilliant sunlight.

The third turn: *Dewata Dewati* (A worship act recognizing all the deities in the temple, acknowledging their presence, roles, and divine power within the temple's sacred space).

Original text	Translation
<i>Om nama dewa adhisthanaya, Sarwa wyapi waisiwaya, Padmasana eka prastisthaya, Ardhanareswaryai nama namah.</i>	O Lord, to the deity who resides in the exalted place, to <i>Hyang Siwa</i> who is omnipresent, to the deity who resides in the lotus seat in a place, to <i>Ardhanareswari</i> , I worship.

The fourth turn: *Ida Bathara Samudaya* (great blessings, reflecting the universal forces of creation, abundance, and prosperity).

Original text	Translation
<i>Om Anugraha manohara, Dewadattanugrahaka, Ancanam sarwa pujanam, Namah sarwanugrahaka, Dewa dewi maha sidhi, Yajnanga nirmalatmaka, Laksmi siddhiscadirghayuh, Nirwighna sukha wrddhisca</i>	O Lord, You who captivate the heart, bestower of blessings, blessings given by the Deity, the worship of all worships, I worship You as the giver of all blessings. Supreme perfection in the Deities manifests as pure sacrifices, happiness, perfection, longevity, freedom from obstacles, joy, and spiritual and physical progress.

The fifth turn: *Puyung* (empty hands, emphasizing unity, closure, and gratitude).

Original text	Translation
<i>Om dewa suksme pramacintya ya Namah swaha Om santih, santih, santih, om</i>	O Lord, I worship You, the deity who is inconceivable, supreme, and transcendent. O Lord, grant me peace.

The comparison between common Balinese Hindu practices and Bulian *Saa* highlights key differences in the performance of the *Panca Sembah*, a ritual typically performed during prayers in Balinese Hinduism. In the standard *Panca Sembah*, participants follow a precise sequence: first, raising their hands and combining their palms; second, placing flowers on top of the clasped palms; third, adding additional flowers in a specific order; fourth, continuing with more flower placement; and fifth, raising the hands again without flowers. In contrast, the Bulian version of the *Panca Sembah* condenses these five turns into three distinct actions. The first and second turns are combined, with participants raising their hands and placing flowers on the palms simultaneously. The third and fourth turns are also merged, reducing the number of flower placements to one integrated step. The final turn retains its original form, with participants raising their hands without flowers.

The most noticeable difference is the reduction in the number of turns, which not only changes the physical gestures but also alters the pace of the ceremony. Additionally, while flowers are still used, their placement in Bulian *Saa* is less sequential and more integrated into the three turns, creating a visually and tactilely distinct ritual. Another key difference lies in the role of participants: in Bulian, they primarily observe and listen to the priest chanting in *Saa*, whereas in mainstream Balinese practices, participants are more actively involved in raising their hands and adding flowers. These modifications reflect how Bulian *Saa* adapts traditional Balinese Hindu rituals to maintain its unique cultural and spiritual identity, offering a distinct version of the broader Balinese Hindu tradition (Photo 2). This is illustrated in example (2).



Photo 2. Ritual speech *Saa* is uttered by *Jero Sedahan Ni Ketut Rentini* at Taman Sari Temple, Bulian village (Photo: I Komang Sumaryana Putra)

(2)

The first turn:

<b>Bulian Saa</b>	<b>Translation</b>
<p><i>Singgih nawegang Ratu Gede Sasuhunan Siwa sane malinggih driki sareng sinamian. Kaping kalih Ida Ratu Bhatara Bhatari sane malinggih driki.</i></p>	<p>As your humble servant, I beg for His mercy, <i>Ratu Gede Sesuhunan Siwa</i> who resides here. Also, <i>Ida Ida Ratu Bhatara-Bhatari</i> who resides here (in the temple).</p>
<p><i>Kaping kalih Ida Ratu sane malinggih ring Gedong Simpen. Sane malinggih ring (Bha)tara Surya. Ratu Gede Luhuring Akasa. Ratu Gede Sasuhunan Siwa. Ratu Ayu Taman Sari. Ratu Ayu Puncaking Gunung. Ratu Ngurah Wayan Kebon. Ratu Ayu Manik Kembar. samaliha sane malinggih driki. Samaliha sane malinggih ring bale panyucian. Ratu Gde Panyineb sane malinggih ring Bale Panyineb. Ratu Gede Patih Ngapit Lawang. Mangda sweca ida ratu medal rauh ngarauhin titiang, titiang nambet, ngiring Ida Ratu Panembahan titiang sane malinggih driki sareng sinamian!</i></p>	<p>Secondly <i>Ida Ratu</i> who resides in <i>Gedong Simpen</i>. To whom are residing in <i>Bhatara Surya; Ratu Gede Luhuring Akasa, Ratu Gede Sasuhunan Siwa, Ratu Ayu Taman Sari, Ratu Ayu Puncaking Gunung, Ratu Ngurah Wayan Kebon, Ratu Ayu Manik Kembar</i>. Your servant calls upon those who dwell in <i>Bale Panyucian. Ratu Gede Panyineb</i> who resides in <i>Panyineb</i>. Your humble servant worships <i>Ratu Gede Patih Ngapit Lawang</i>. I humbly beseech Thee who are glorified to come. For I am a fool, who becomes the custodian of the gods and goddesses.</p>
<p><i>Makasami ampun titiang ngayat Ida Ratu, nawegang Ratu panembahan titiang sane malinggih iriki sareng sinamian. Kirang langkung titiang matur, titiang nunas ampura. Kanambetan titiange ngiring Ida Ratu Panembahan titiang sane malinggih (riki), mangda sweca ledang Ida Ratu malingga-malinggih, nyuryanin titiang, nampinin titiang, ngiring Ida Ratu Panembahan titiang sane malinggih driki sareng sinamian..... Nawegang.</i></p>	<p>All of whom have already been summoned, I beg Your glorified presence for mercy. For I am a fool, who becomes the custodian of gods and goddesses and who resides in this temple, I pray that my worth is received by Your light. Once again, your servant begs for Your understanding!</p>
<p><i>Sane mangkin titiang ngarauhang bungan asep, asep menyan majegau, asep pajati, titiang ngaruhang. Mangda sueca ledang ida ratu malingga malinggih, nyuryanin titiang, nampinin titiang, ngiring Ida Ratu panembahan sane malinggih driki sareng sinamian.</i></p>	<p>Now I offer <i>pasepan</i>, made from <i>kemenyan</i> and <i>majegau</i> wood, <i>asep pajati</i>, dedicated for Your presence. I pray for Your glorified presence to witness, and to receive me as Your custodian in this temple.</p>
<p><i>Sane mangkin titiang ngarauhang mapawajik tangan, mapawajik suku, trebesan danu, crapcapan bukit, mangdening bersih.</i></p>	<p>Now I offer infiltrated water from the lake and the hill for cleansing our hands and feet.</p>

The second turn:

<b>Bulian Saa</b>	<b>Translation</b>
<p><i>Singgih Ratu Gede Sasuhunan Siwa sane malinggih driki sareng sinamian, malih titiang matur Gede Ratu. Sane mangkin panji ratu rauh tangkil ngarauhang bhakti, bhakti peras daksina-canang sariberas jinah, sampun madaging bhaktin panji ratu sami sampun madaging bhaktin panjak ida ratu. nawegang ida ratu panembahan titiang sane malinggih driki sareng sinamian, kirang langkung titiang matur, titiang nunas rena geng sinampura kenambetan titiange ngiring Ida Ratu Panembahan titiang sane malinggih driki sareng sinamian.</i></p> <p><i>Sane mangkin panjak ida ratu rauh tangkil ngwang bhakti, bhakti peras (daksina-canangsari-beras jinah) sampun madaging bhaktin panjak Ida Ratu. Panjak Ida Ratu uli jagat...,Badung, rauh tangkil, ngarauhang bhakti, nawegang ratu panembahan titiang sane malinggih driki, mangda sweca ledang ida ratu mapaica-nyuryanin-nampinin, panjake, mangda rahayu mangda selamat, nunas keselamatan kerahayuan panjak Ida Ratu rauh tangkil ngarauhang bhakti, nawegang Ratu sane malinggih driki sareng sinamian, kirang langkung titiang matur, titiang nunas rena geng sinampura kanambetan titiange ngiring Ida Ratu panembahan titiang sane malinggih driki sareng sinamian, nawegang.</i></p>	<p>The Exalted <i>Ratu Gede Sasuhunan Siwa</i>, gods and goddesses who reside in this temple, your servant worships You. Your servant, who comes before You, now presents the devotional offerings in form of the precious materials. I beg for Your glorified mercy in this temple, for my foolishness as the custodian of the gods and goddesses.</p> <p>Your servant, who comes before You, presents the devotional offerings in form of the precious materials. Your worshiper who comes from <i>Badung</i> presents before You, worships You. May your glorified exaltedness who resides here accepts our presence, shines us with Your holiness, and bestows Your blessings upon us. I beg Your understanding compassion for my flaws in delivering this offering, I beg for Your glorified mercy in this temple, for my foolishness as Your custodian.</p>

## The third turn:

<b>Bulian Saa</b>	<b>Translation</b>
<i>Sane mangkin titiang ngarauhang mapawajik tangan mapawajik suku, trebesan danu-crapcapan bukit, mangdening bresih.</i>	Now I offer water to cleanse our hands and feet, infiltrated from the lake and the hill.
<i>Singgih nawegang Ratu Gede Sasuhunan Siwa sane malinggih driki sareng sinamian, malih titiang matur, Ida Ratu. Sane mangkin panji Ida Ratu rauh tangkil ngarauhang bhati segehan, nasi kepel maulam bawang jahe, sampun madaging bhaktin panji ratu sami, sami sampun madaging bhaktin panjak Ida Ratu, Ida Ratu madrebe bale iring-iringan, mangda sweca ledang iring-iringan Ida Ratu, anyari amuji, bhakti panjak ida ratu rauh tangkil ngarauhang bhakti, nawegang Ratu Panembahan titiang sane malinggih driki. Amunika keni titiang matur, titiang nunas ampura kenambetan titiange ngiring Ida Ratu panembahan titiang sane malinggih driki sareng sinamian. Nawegang.</i>	The Exalted <i>Ratu Gede Sasuhunan Siwa</i> , gods and goddesses who reside in this temple, your servant worships You once more. We present to You <i>segehan, nasi kepel maulam bawang jahe</i> , as offerings. I present these to Your retinues; may they be pleased to accept our offering. I can only present these due to my limitations, I beg Your glorified mercy, who reside in this temple. Please have mercy on me.

#### 4.2 Discussion

Based on the results presented above, several distinctive features of *Bulian Saa* can be observed in the chanting of *Panca Sembah*. The ritual speech in *Bulian Saa* is regarded as a distinct Balinese variety meant solely for communication with the deities, with clear connections to the Bali *Mula* heritage. This connection is evident in several lexical items found in *Bulian Saa*, such as unique names for deities (*Ratu Ngurah Wayan Kebon*), temples (*Pura Dalem Purwa*), and sacred natural elements (*bingin ring catus pata*, sacred banyan trees). The linguistic features of *Bulian Saa* reveal how traditional elements have persisted in *Bulian Hinduism*, reinforcing the unique identity of the Bali *Mula* community. The analysis of religious speech in *Bulian Saa* reveals significant patterns in the use of pronouns and the overall structure of rituals. This analysis requires more than just discourse analysis, as the transcripts reflect the beliefs and ideologies of all Balinese Hindus in *Bulian Village*, not just the priests. According to Fairclough (2001), discourse analysis consists of three stages: description, interpretation, and explanation. The first stage focuses on the formal properties of the text, the second examines the text as a product of interaction, and the third investigates the relationship between interaction and social context.

In comparing Bulian *Saa* to common *Panca Sembah*, a notable increase in pronoun usage is observed within Bulian *Saa*. For example, deities' names like "*Ratu Gede Sasuhunan Siwa*" and "*Ratu Ayu Taman Sari*" include multiple references to deities, contrasting with the more singular invocation of one God, such as "*Om*," in mainstream Balinese practices. This difference arises from the nature of the priests' roles in communicating with the gods. They are expected to possess extensive knowledge about specific deities associated with particular locations, acting as representatives for the prayers of all people in Bulian Village. Consequently, Bulian priests use first-person pronouns during their rituals instead of third-person pronouns, reflecting their direct involvement and authority in leading prayers. They are obliged to pray on behalf of the community rather than merely delivering prayers partially.

In many religions, written liturgical forms are normally elevated in style, sometimes poetic, often veering towards the archaic; statements of doctrine and academic theological writings share features such as consistent use of technical vocabulary with scientific writings; while the language used in private prayer is much more likely to reflect the usages of everyday language (Fudge, 2006). This is also true in common Balinese Hindu transcripts, where most of its content is focused on figurative language to express the representation of God (e.g., fourth turn: 'O Lord, You who captivate the heart, bestower of blessings, blessings given by the Deity, the worship of all worships...'), which justify the reason why Bulian *Saa* is unique. Based on this concept, aside from the vocabularies of gods, the documentation (combined with the interview from the informant) of Bulian *Saa* also managed to capture and deduce specific form characteristics during the chanting, such as the repetition of several excerpts or even vocabularies (i.e., *Ratu Gede*, *Ida Ratu*, *malinggih*, or *titiang*). Zenner et al. (2019) mentions that the use of loanwords is not merely a lexical act, a means to fill a lexical gap in a given language, or of introducing a shorter word in place of a longer expression – selecting a loanword should also be considered a socially meaningful act, a contextual expression of self, social identity, and language regard. This would suggest that there are meaningful purposes in applying these repetitions. With regards to the meaning, Yelle (2006) states that spells and chants are often formulaic and invariant, whereas glossolalia and certain forms of prayer are, at least ostensibly, spontaneous and improvised.

Some forms of ritual language aim to achieve practical objectives, whereas others, including some forms of prayer, do not. Based on this concept, the following interview revealed that the priests using Bulian *Saa* has become a direct emissary of the gods, which also justifies the use of direct communication (as if they were having a conversation with the gods during their prayers) and the emphasis on glorifying the gods to show their reverence. Droogers (2012) states



that the phenomenology of religion is described to subdivisions of scriptures, views concerning human beings and salvation, images of God or gods, ritual, ethics, and degree of institutionalisation. In the application, through the use of Bulian *Saa*, Balinese Hindu people in Bulian village would view the ritual process and its speech as a very sacred custom (aside from it being unique).

Looking at how historically Bulian *Saa* has been preserved for several centuries (preceding the *Majapahit* era) the particular role that these priests have taken suggests that they have attained a relatively respected position in the community. The use of prayers, recitation, and singing are all examples of ways religious communities engage in literary practice, where the comprehension of text is secondary to the fluency and oral expression of reading or speaking the text, because the meaning is communicated by religious leaders (Sarroub & Schroeder, 2023). Indeed, as a respected figure supported by the community beliefs in the teaching (that they are a direct emissaries of gods), there were very few who questioned the use of Bulian *Saa* instead of the common Balinese Hindu ritual speech.

The use of particular lexical items that may seem similar in nature to the Balinese language (instead of Sanskrit) also supports this belief, since semantically, the people can generally grasp the meaning and intention of this ritual speech. Given the crucial role of the emissaries of the gods, there are several limitations to this study. These include the lack of detailed procedures for selecting a successor in cases where bloodlines fail, the limited insight into the subtle shifts within the younger generations that might suggest the adoption of common Balinese Hindu ritual speech (potentially influenced by newcomers to the village), and the inability to conduct a comprehensive comparison of ritual speeches across all 33 temples due to restricted access to informants. Nevertheless, it is evident that maintaining the preservation of Bulian *Saa* requires a certain level of involvement and depth. Secrecy, after all, is closely tied to various religious symbols, rituals, institutional hierarchies, and, arguably, to the very nature of religious authority itself. As Urban (2021) notes, secrecy is inherent to religion—concealment and unknowing are as critical to religious experience and practice as knowledge and revelation. Future research might benefit from adopting a similar approach, maintaining sufficient distance to ensure that the documentation process does not inadvertently compromise the preservation of this tradition.

While this study provides valuable insights into the distinctive features of Bulian *Saa*, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The focus on a single village may restrict the generalizability of findings to other Balinese communities or broader contexts within Indonesian Hinduism. Future research could explore comparative studies across different villages or regions to

understand how local practices influence ritual language and identity further. Additionally, examining how younger generations perceive and engage with Bulian *Saa* could provide insights into the language's future viability amidst modern influences. Investigating how external factors, such as globalization and migration, impact traditional practices would also enrich our understanding of language preservation and cultural identity.

## 5. Conclusion

Ritual language can be seen as the representation of language identity, which in the case of Balinese Hindu people, requires unwavering beliefs that cannot be adjusted even through cultural means – this was shown by how the tradition of Bulian *Saa*, has been preserved throughout the last few centuries in Bali without conforming to mainstream Balinese Hindu practices, which are also quite distinct in global perspectives with its own religious-cultural embedded practices. Through detailed examination of its linguistic features, ceremonial applications, and cultural significance, we have identified several key elements that define this unique form of ritual communication. Bulian *Saa* exhibits specialized vocabulary, distinctive pronoun usage, and modified ritual structures that reflect the community's indigenous heritage and spiritual worldview. The documentation of Bulian *Saa* contributes to our understanding of linguistic diversity within Balinese Hinduism and highlights the importance of preserving minority language traditions. By recognizing and valuing these distinctive linguistic practices, we can support cultural continuity while acknowledging the rich tapestry of traditions that constitute Balinese Hindu identity.

This study, however, is limited in scope, as it focuses primarily on the linguistic and cultural dimensions. Future research could explore how young generations engage with Bulian *Saa* and investigate the impact of external factors such as globalization on this unique ritual language, as well as explore the socio-political influences on Bulian *Saa*, its impact on community identity, and the role of ritual language in intergenerational transmission. Additionally, comparing male and female *Saa* usage in different temples in Bulian could offer deeper insights into gendered language practices and variations in ritual speech across settings. Future research could also on how *Saa* get passed onto future generations and which factors in addition to being an heir of a priest condition to which the ritual language is passed onto.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to the following contributors who, while not meeting the criteria for authorship, have significantly contributed to this work: I Gede Suardana Putra, *Jero Prawayah Desa Bulian*, *Jero Sedahan*

Ni Ketut Rentini, I Ketut Muliarka, PKK Desa Bulian, Gede Sukayarsa, Made Sudirsa and all components of the Bulian community, both the customary and administrative authorities. Their insights, feedback, and support have been invaluable. Last but not least, many thanks to members of Oceanic and South East Asia Navigators (OCSEAN) for providing training, equipment, and funding that made this fieldwork possible. This research was funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 873207 titled 'Oceanic and South East Asia Navigators (OCSEAN)'.

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