

Negotiating the Third Space: Islamic Performing Arts and Cultural Diplomacy Between Muslim Minorities and Royal Patronage in Bali

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Abstract: In Bali, Islamic performing arts have long bridged relations between Muslim minority communities and the *puri* or royal courts, shaped by trade, intermarriage, and mutual coexistence. This study examines *Rodat* as a medium of social interaction and identity negotiation in Kapaon, Denpasar, and Puri Agung Pemecutan, with comparisons from other regions in Bali. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach that combines observation, interviews, and document analysis, the research traces the historical, symbolic, and political dimensions of these practices. The findings show that *Rodat* and other Islamic performances serve dual functions: preserving Muslim identity while legitimizing palace authority, creating a third space that enables coexistence without forced assimilation. This space functions as a mechanism of interfaith diplomacy, reinforced through rituals, mutual recognition, and cultural patronage. In doing so, this study advances theoretical understanding by demonstrating how Bhabha's 'third space' can be institutionalized through traditional patronage, enabling coexistence without assimilation.

Keywords: third space; identity; Islamic performing arts; patronage; cultural diplomacy

1. Introduction

Traditional performing arts have long served as a vital medium for building social relations among peoples of different cultural and religious backgrounds. In Bali, the relationship between Muslim communities with the *puri* royal courts as traditional centers of power has endured for centuries (Bachtiar et al., 2022; Purnawati and Martayana, 2022; Putra, 2023). These ties were often initiated through trade interactions, inter-community marriages, and social agreements whereby migrant Muslim communities settled in specific

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locations (Kartikayasa et al., 2021; M. Saihu, 2021). Within this historical process, Islamic art forms such as *Rodat* and *Burdah* emerged as means for maintaining good relations, celebrating identity, and fostering cultural diplomacy (Niam et al., 2022; Yudhistira, 2022). Amid the dominance of Hindu-Balinese culture, the presence of Islamic performing arts reflects dynamics of adaptation and identity negotiation that invite scholarly attention (Hauser-Schäublin & Harnish, 2014; Yafi et al., 2024; Yoga & Sutama, 2025).

In Bali, Muslim communities are spread across regencies closely connected to the history of local *puri*, such as Kampung Islam Kepaon (Denpasar) linked to Puri Agung Pemecutan, Kampung Islam Pegayaman (Buleleng, North Bali) to Puri Agung Singaraja, Gelgel (Klungkung) to Puri Klungkung, Kampung Islam Kusamba (Klungkung) to Puri Kusamba, Kampung Islam Sindu Sidemen and Kampung Islam Kecicang (Karangasem) to Puri Sidemen and Puri Agung Karangasem, and Kampung Islam Loloan Timur (Jembrana) to Puri Agung Negara (see Figure 1). Each of these communities emerged through diverse historical processes, ranging from migration and trade to population displacement caused by wars, which in turn gave rise to local variations of Islamic performing arts traditions such as *Rodat* and *Burdah* (Sari, 2023; Wulandari, 2017). This historical distribution of Muslim community settlements demonstrates that Islamic arts in Bali have consistently existed within the framework of cross-identity relations rooted in *puri* patronage.

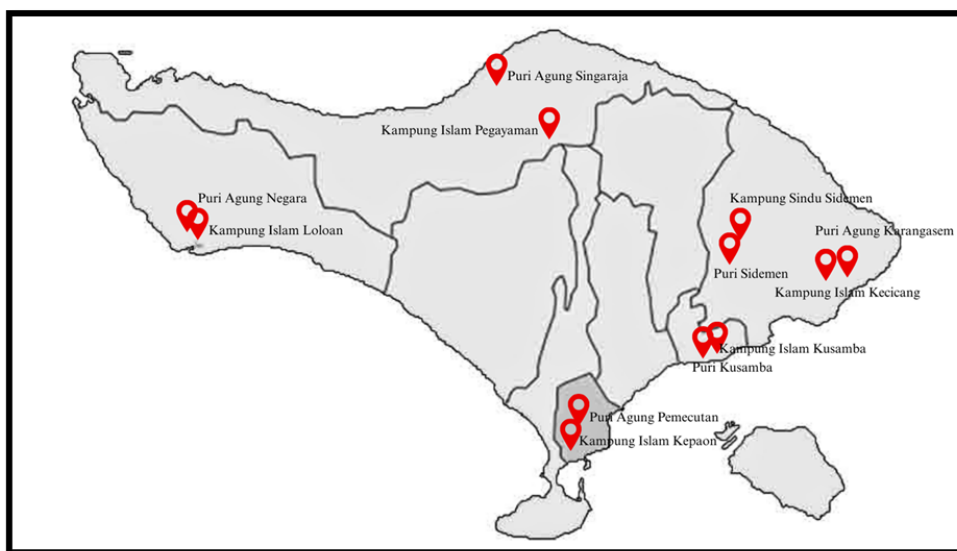


Figure 1. Distribution of Muslim community settlements and connections with *puri* in Bali (Source: Data processed by the authors, 2025).

This phenomenon holds strong relevance to the discourse on tolerance and religious moderation in Indonesia (Hanafi et al., 2023). Traditional performing arts serve as a medium that internalizes values of togetherness, respect for difference, and the preservation of harmonious intergroup relations. In Balinese society, these relations are not passive but actively maintained through cultural mechanisms passed down through generations. This demonstrates that tolerance and moderation can be embodied in everyday cultural practices, not only through regulations or normative discourse. Hence, the concept of a Third Space put forth by Homi K. Bhabha (2012) is significant, as a social sphere that allows for encounters and cultural dialogues which produce hybrid forms of identity. Subsequent scholars have challenged assumptions about hybridity in art forms, the 'self and the 'other' and erasure of authenticity (see Amoamo, 2011; Hollinshead, 1998). It is this author's opinion that the staging of Islamic performing arts within the Balinese *puri* setting constitutes a third space in which Muslim identity can be expressed in its fullness, while upholding the legitimacy of local traditional authorities to govern their cultural environment.

Nevertheless, academic studies that examine the relationship between *puri* and Muslim communities through performing arts in Bali are still limited. Most research on Balinese performing arts has focused on Hindu-Balinese traditions, or has treated Islamic arts merely as expressions of minority identity without addressing the dynamics of cross-identity relations (Budarsa and Purwanti, 2021; Faizah et al., 2025; Megiyono et al., 2024; Mustolehudin et al., 2024; Sitohang and Wijaya, 2025). While Mashino (2024) identifies the patronage structure, our study delves deeper into the micro-politics of performance, examining how identity is actively negotiated on stage and in ritual space, and how this process generates a sustainable 'third space' for interfaith harmony. This finding is important because it reveals art as a bridge that sustains interreligious social cohesion in Bali. Yet the question arises as to whether Islamic performing arts only served as a historical bridge or whether it also generates new spaces for identity negotiation in the current era. Thus, a further critical exploration can ensure that one's understanding does not culminate with the historical, but also captures the dynamics of identity and cultural diplomacy in today's multicultural Bali.

To fill this gap, the present study aimed to analyze the role of Islamic performing arts in shaping cultural relations between Balinese traditional authorities and Muslim communities, and to explain how processes of identity negotiation unfold through these performances. It specifically focused on *Rodat* in the Kepaon Muslim hamlet of Pemogan Village, Denpasar and its connection with Puri Agung Pemecutan, Denpasar, as a case study, with comparative contexts drawn from similar phenomena in other regencies of Bali. The research

is framed around the following questions: what role do Islamic performing arts play in fostering relations between local traditional authorities and Muslim communities in Bali, and how does identity negotiation happen in the practice of these art forms? This research proceeds from the assumption that Islamic performing arts in Bali serve a dual function: as a medium for preserving Muslim identity while respecting Balinese royal authority and creating a third space that enables social cohesion without forced assimilation. This function is supported by the shared collective awareness of both parties to sustain a historical legacy that has become part of their common identity. As a mechanism for interfaith diplomacy, a third space is generated through rituals, mutual recognition, and cultural patronage. Thus, the study hopes to contribute to the field of cultural and performance studies by proposing a framework that links artistic practice, identity politics, and interreligious harmony in multicultural societies.

2. Literature Review

There are numerous studies on the relationship between local traditional authorities and minority communities through customary and performing arts within the fields of cultural studies and the anthropology of art. In Southeast Asia, early research indicates that performing arts often function as a medium of cultural diplomacy (Abd Fatah, 2025; Mariano and Vårheim, 2022; Ocón, 2021; Simorangkir, 2023), reinforce the legitimacy of royal rulers and polities (Antons, 2022; Fibiger, 2022; Sujuan and Hiong, 2025), and shape narratives of collective identity (Akshar and Solissa, 2025; Ching, 2024). Within the context of kingdoms or *puri* royal courts, performing arts carry a dual role: as aesthetic representations of power and as social bridges connecting traditional elites with other ethnic or religious groups.

In Indonesia, Islamic performing arts have a long history of interaction with local power structures. Studies on various forms of Islamic arts highlight its role both as a medium for religious propagation and as a means of negotiating Muslim identity within the cultural landscape of the archipelago that was shaped by earlier Hindu-Buddhist traditions (Alfarisi et al., 2022; Chaterji, 2025; Hidayatullah, 2020; Nurrahmah Laili et al., 2021; Septarina et al., 2025; Wirandi and Sukman, 2022). Research on the *Burdah* tradition in Pegayaman, Buleleng (Fauzi, 2019; Kardinal et al., 2020) and in Loloan, Jembrana (Pramesti, 2019; Sosiowati et al., 2025) demonstrates that good relations between Muslim communities and Hindu society have been sustained through ongoing social interactions, particularly in the context of ceremonies and commemorative events. Similar traditions are also found in Kampung Islam Gelgel and Kusamba, Klungkung, where practices such as *ngejot* or offering food to neighbours during religious celebrations, and *magibung* or Balinese tradition of communal dining,

are preserved as legacies of historical relations between local rulers and migrant Muslim communities (Saihu, 2020; Yoga et al., 2024).

Research on Kampung Islam Kepaon notes the presence of *Rodat* as an art form sustained by the Muslim community (Ruastiti, 2018, 2019; Tangine, 1994), yet its connection with Puri Agung Pemecutan as a cultural patron has not been examined in depth. A more recent study by Mashino (2024) makes an important contribution by showing how Muslim communities in Denpasar, Klungkung, and Karangasem developed their arts within interdependent relations with the *puri*. Mashino emphasizes that the *puri* provided legitimacy, residency, and symbolic support, while Muslim communities reciprocated with political loyalty, labor, and performing arts that simultaneously reinforced their identity. However, that study does not fully reveal the variations of patronage of Islamic arts in other regencies of Bali, such as Pegayaman (Buleleng) and Loloan (Jembrana), which sustain *Burdah* traditions shaped by distinct histories and patterns of interaction.

Scholarship on a more global level, often interprets performing arts through two main frameworks: first, as instruments of power to reinforce legitimacy and maintain social stability (Alexander and Bowler, 2021; Hengstermann et al., 2025; Wei et al., 2025); and second, as arenas of resistance, negotiation, and the articulation of group identities (Benda-Beckmann and Turner, 2018; Darmawan, 2020; Fernandes, 2025; Hasan and Bleibleh, 2023; Karlander, 2025; Rentschler et al., 2023; Turner, 1978; Wei et al., 2025). This debate is also present in research on minority-based performing arts in world regions where the majority population holds a different religious belief (Bar Zaken and Walsh, 2021; Guo et al., 2025; Kim et al., 2023; Missonova, 2013). In Indonesia, however, the discourse on tolerance and religious moderation has more often been framed in terms of formal policy or normative rhetoric rather than analyzed through the lens of concrete cultural practices (Prakoso et al., 2024; Ulum and Tuhri, 2022; Wahidin et al., 2023). Although a number of studies have highlighted the role of Islamic performing arts in Bali, most remain descriptive, confined to a single locality, and not yet integrated into global theoretical debates on art, power, and identity.

In summary, while scholarship on Islamic arts in Indonesia and Southeast Asia is relatively robust and studies on Bali's Muslim communities are increasingly emerging, a critical gap persists in theorizing the performative space itself as a site of political negotiation and cultural diplomacy between minority communities and traditional centers of authority. Existing research has yet to conceptualize how performing arts function not only as aesthetic heritage but also as active cultural mechanisms that mediate interreligious coexistence. This study directly addresses that gap by positioning *Rodat* and other Islamic performances in Bali not merely as cultural expressions but as

dynamic, politically charged “third spaces” that generate and sustain interfaith harmony through performance practice.

3. Method and Theory

3.1 Method

This study employed a qualitative approach that combined historical ethnography and case study method. Historical ethnography made it possible to trace the connections between performing arts traditions such as *Rodat* and the dynamics of sociopolitical relations, both through collective memory and documentary evidence (Butler, 2008; Horst and Hjorth, 2014; Rutten, 2016). The case study method was chosen to focus the analysis on the relationship between the Kapaon Muslim community and Puri Agung Pemecutan, with *Rodat* serving as a medium of cultural diplomacy and identity negotiation (Patnaik and Pandey, 2019; Yin, 2011; Zucker, 2009).

Data collection was carried out by field observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and study of related literature. The main field observation took place on 10 August 2025, at Puri Sidemen in Sidemen Village, Karangasem Regency, East Bali. On that occasion, *Rodat* was performed at the *setra* (cremation ground) as part of the funeral procession for the *ngaben* cremation of a deceased Balinese writer, Cok Sawitri. The presence of *Rodat* within this Hindu-Balinese ritual was a crucial moment for understanding how an art form originating from a Muslim community can be integrated into an *adat* customary ceremony predominantly carried out by Hindus. During this field observation, the co-authors recorded the sequence of the performance, the interactions between *Rodat* performers and the Sidemen royal family, audience responses, as well as the spatial and temporal arrangements for the performance. That observational data constituted one of the primary sources enriching the analysis of meaning, function, and processes of identity negotiation through performing arts.

In-depth interviews were conducted with resource persons purposively selected considering their direct involvement with *Rodat*, capacity to provide contextual information, and strategic position within the relational network between the Kapaon Muslim community and Puri Agung Pemecutan (Table 1). Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, enabling an open yet guided exploration of issues while keeping attention on the central themes of the research.

Table 1. List of Research Informants and Their Expertise

No.	Name	Role	Origin/ Institution	Relevance
1	Irham Asyri	Leader of <i>Rodat</i> Dance	Kampung Islam Kapaon	Leader of the <i>Rodat</i> group; knowledgeable about history, traditions, preparation processes, and coordination with Puri Pemecutan.
2	Anak Agung Ngurah Agung Damar Negara	Puri Pemecutan Figure	Puri Agung Pemecutan	Eldest son of King Pemecutan XI; knowledgeable about the history of relations between the Puri and Kapaon Village, the meaning of <i>Rodat</i> at the <i>puri</i> , and perspectives on adat.
3	Anak Agung Ngurah Alit Wira Kusuma	Bendesa Adat (Head of Customary Village)	Puri Agung Pemecutan	Provides insight on the relationship between the Puri and Kapaon Village, the meaning of <i>Rodat</i> at the Puri, and adat and traditional perspectives at Puri Pemecutan.
4	Padani	<i>Rodat</i> Cultural Expert	Kampung Islam Kapaon	Preserver of <i>Rodat</i> ; knowledgeable about its history, religious values, and role in interfaith relations.
5	Risky	<i>Rodat</i> Performer	Kampung Islam Kapaon	Young generation of <i>Rodat</i> performers; provides perspectives on preservation, challenges, and youth identity in <i>Rodat</i> .
6	Anak Agung Ngurah Adnyana Widya	Local Hindu-Balinese Resident	Banjar Tengah Sasetan	Represents Hindu public perspectives on <i>Rodat</i> , social acceptance, and its multicultural values.
7	Dwi Wahyuning Kristiansanti, S.Sn., M.Si	Secretary, Denpasar City Department of Culture	Denpasar City Department of Culture	Provides insights on cultural preservation policies, support for minority arts, and multicultural policy perspectives.

Source: Author's notes (2025).

Study of related literature was carried out to establish the theoretical foundation, understand the historical context, and identify previous research relevant to the theme of relations between traditional authorities and minority communities through performing arts. Sources examined include academic books, journal articles, local government archives, cultural preservation policy documents, research reports, and media publications documenting *Rodat* performances in various regencies of Bali. The co-authors also reviewed studies on cultural diplomacy, identity negotiation, hegemony, and cultural hybridity, as well as research related to Islamic performing arts in Bali, Lombok, and other provinces of Indonesia.

3.2 Theory

This research is grounded in a theoretical framework that combines three main perspectives. First, Homi K. Bhabha's theories of cultural hybridity and the third space are applied to understand the processes of identity formation through cross-cultural interaction, in which the *Rodat* dance becomes a symbolic meeting ground between Muslim and Hindu-Balinese cultures (Bhandari, 2020; Jafarova & Ozkaleli, 2024; Kalua, 2009; Prieto-Arranz et al., 2013). Bhabha's 'third space' will be used to analyze the performative moments where Hindu and Muslim cultural codes intersect without fusion. Second, Antonio Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and cultural politics are employed to examine the potential for symbolic domination and cultural patronage by *puri* authorities over minority communities, as well as the strategies of accommodation pursued by both sides (Koch, 2022; Martins, 2017; Sardar, 2024). Gramsci's 'hegemony' will help us interpret the *puri*'s patronage as a form of consensual power that grants legitimacy to both the ruler and the minority group. Third, James C. Scott's notion of hidden transcripts is used to interpret the implicit narratives of Muslim communities regarding their roles within Hindu-Balinese ritual contexts (Massoumi & Morgan, 2024; Scott, 1987). Scott's 'hidden transcripts' will allow us to read the preservation of *Rodat*'s original form as a subtle act of resistance and identity preservation within the public ritual. Together, these three perspectives provide a complementary analytical framework for understanding the meanings, functions, and cultural-political implications of the *Rodat* dance in the context of relations between traditional authorities and minority communities in Bali. In summary, while previous studies have discussed Islamic arts and patronage in Bali descriptively, there remains a lack of theoretical engagement that views the performative space itself as a site of political negotiation and cultural diplomacy. This study directly addresses that gap by positioning the *Rodat* performance not merely as an art form but as a dynamic, politically charged 'third space' that actively shapes interreligious relations.

4. Result and Discussion

Although the main case study focused on the *Rodat* in Kampung Islam Kepaon and its relationship with Puri Agung Pemecutan, this analysis also takes into account connections with other Islamic performing arts traditions in Bali, such as *Rodat* in Kampung Islam Gelgel and Kusamba (Klungkung, East Bali), *Burdah* in Pegayaman (Buleleng, North Bali), *Burdah* in Loloan (Jembrana, West Bali), and *Rodat* at Puri Sidemen and Puri Agung Karangasem (East Bali). These traditions reveal similar relational patterns, namely the establishment of patronage and cultural collaboration between *puri* authorities and local Muslim communities, often rooted in histories of trade, migration, or kinship. A summary of these patronage patterns and the performing arts developed in each regency is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Patterns of Patronage between *Puri* and Muslim Communities in Bali

No.	Puri Name	Patronage Model	Settlement Location	Performing Art
1	Puri Agung Pemecutan, Denpasar	Bugis Muslims led by Raden Sastroningrat (from Madura) were promised marriage ties with the royal family and given residence in return for military support.	Kampung Islam Kepaon, Pemogan, Denpasar	<i>Rodat</i>
2	Puri Agung Singaraja	Muslim followers from Blambangan were granted residence after serving as war allies.	Kampung Islam Pegayaman, Sukasada, Buleleng	<i>Burdah</i>
3	Puri Gelgel, Klungkung	Muslim soldiers from Lombok became military allies and were given residence.	Kampung Islam Gelgel, Klungkung	<i>Rodat</i>
4	Puri Sidemen, Karangasem	Muslim soldiers from Lombok became military allies and were given residence.	Kampung Muslim Sindhu, Sidemen, Karangasem	<i>Rodat</i>
5	Puri Agung Karangasem	Muslim soldiers from Lombok became military allies and were given residence.	Kampung Islam Kecicang, Bebandem, Karangasem	<i>Rodat</i>
6	Puri Agung Negara, Jembrana	Bugis Muslims established trade relations and were given residence as part of a military alliance.	Kampung Islam Loloan, Jembrana	<i>Burdah</i>
7	Puri Agung Kusamba, Klungkung	Muslim soldiers from Lombok served as military allies, while Bugis Muslims served as trade allies; both were granted residence.	Kampung Islam Kusamba, Klungkung	<i>Rodat</i>

Source: Author's analysis (2025).

In examining patronage patterns in Table 2, it is important to understand that these relationships were not only structural but also shaped by distinctive historical contexts in each regency. In Kampung Islam Kapaon, Denpasar, the Muslim community traces its origins to the entourage of Raden Sastroningrat, a Madurese noble who assisted Cokorda Pemecutan III (1817-1829) in conquering the Mengwi Kingdom (Basudewa & Sulistyowati, 2023; Subroto & Ningsih, 2022; Wulandari, 2017). In return, they were granted permanent residence, and through a political marriage with a royal princess, close kinship ties were established. Within this environment, the *Rodat* developed, inspired by the martial spirit of those royal guards.

In Kampung Islam Pegayaman, the Muslim community is said to have began with the policy of the King of Buleleng, Ki Barak Panji Sakti, who welcomed an entourage of the Mataram Kingdom as a gesture of friendship after the conquest of Blambangan in 1587 (Punia & Budi Nugroho, 2022). These selected soldiers later settled in Pegayaman and became the foundation of the local Muslim community. In the nineteenth century, Bugis migrants joined them with the approval of the King of Buleleng, merging with the existing community and together developing the *Burdah* tradition as an expression of religious devotion and collective identity (Budiwanti, 2022).

A similar context is found in Kampung Islam Gelgel, Klungkung, where the Muslim community descends from selected soldiers of the Mataram Kingdom in Java, who maintained an alliance with the Gelgel Kingdom under the reign of Sri Semara Kepakisan in the 14th century (Nuryanto et al., 2024). They were granted permanent settlement and developed the *Rodat* as both a medium of religious celebration and a means of affirming ties with the *puri*. Likewise, the Muslim community in Kusamba emerged from a pattern of military and trade patronage, welcomed by the King of Puri Kusamba and settled in Kampung Islam Kusamba (Aditama et al., 2022).

In Sidemen, Karangasem, the origins of the Muslim Sindu community are layered and recounted in multiple oral and written versions. One account notes that Ida Dewa Agung Dangin Sasak of Puri Sidemen, after participating in an expedition to Lombok, returned to Bali with a group of Sasak Muslims. They were married into local Brahmana families and settled in Kampung Sindu, Sinduwati Village, Sidemen. Since then, this community has consistently participated in various religious ceremonies at both Griya Sindu and Puri Sidemen due to their close historical ties. Another source suggests that the origins of Kampung Sindu are linked to the arrival of the entourage of Jero Dangin from Lombok in the seventeenth century (Mashino, 2024). While Jero Dangin converted to Hinduism after marriage, his followers retained their Islamic identity and settled in the Buu area, which later developed into Sindu

and Puniya. From this context, the *Rodat* became an integral part of rituals and communal activities that connected both groups.

In Kampung Islam Kecicang, Karangasem, the Muslim community also originated from Lombok soldiers brought by Puri Agung Karangasem to strengthen military power. After the Karangasem Kingdom conquered the Pejanggik Kingdom in 1662 with the assistance of the Mataram Kingdom of Lombok, some of the Mataram soldiers and subjects who had played a vital role were relocated to Bali (Sumarja et al., 2016). They were granted land for settlement and developed the *Rodat*, which has undergone changes in costume and symbolism over time.

In contrast to the historically military-based patronage relationships described earlier, the Muslim community in Kampung Islam Loloan, Jembrana, stemmed from trade networks of Bugis, Makassarese, and Malay merchants who established strategic ties with Puri Agung Negara (Ali, 2019). The *Burdah* tradition flourished here, initially as a martial performance to raise the spirits of troops before battle, and later as part of various rituals, including *Maulid Nabi* celebrations and local adat ceremonies. These findings affirm that patterns of patronage between *puri* and Muslim communities in Bali were often rooted in military alliances, political marriages, or trade partnerships. The Islamic performing arts that emerged from these contexts functioned as media for sustaining relationships, transmitting identity, and symbolizing cultural diplomacy across generations.

4.1 Identity Negotiation in Patronage: The Case of Kepaon – Puri Agung Pemecutan

The negotiation of identity between the Kepaon Muslim community and Puri Agung Pemecutan does not end at the symbolic level of ceremonial processions but is also sustained through tangible and continuous practices of patronage. At the structural level, this patronage is not merely a matter of historical memory but endures as a living practice. Resource person Anak Agung Ngurah Agung Damar Negara emphasized that the relationship is grounded in ties of history and blood, further reinforced by the provision of *wakap* in the form of permanent housing and burial grounds for the Muslim communities of Kepaon, Kampung Jawa, and Bugis in areas that have now become an integral part of the *puri* domain. As Damar Negara explained, “They were granted *wakap*, that is, permanent residence and burial grounds. The residents of Kampung Islam Kepaon and others are part of the extended family of Puri Pemecutan” (Interview, 11 July 2025). This statement illustrates that the recognition of Muslim communities under the *puri*’s authority is not only acknowledged verbally but also formalized in settlement spatial governance and asset management, with long-term implications for social cohesion.

The institutionalization of patronage is reflected not only in the provision of physical space but also in the mechanisms of communication that signify social intimacy. According to Irham Asyri (leader of *Rodat*), when his group is invited to perform at ceremonies in the *puri*, communication usually takes place informally without formal procedures or written letters, relying instead on phone calls or direct visits of *silaturahmi*, since “there are already family ties” (Interview, 8 July 2025). This pattern of informal communication indicates that the relationship between the *puri* and the Kepaon Muslim community has moved beyond contractual interactions toward a form of symbolic kinship, in which participation in *puri* events is regarded as both a moral obligation and an honor. From the perspective of identity negotiation, such mechanisms reinforce a sense of belonging, where participation in *puri* rituals is not simply an invitation but rather the manifestation of a historically institutionalized relationship (Rochmaniyah, 2020). This closeness allows the Muslim community to preserve its artistic autonomy without altering the form of its performances to meet *puri* expectations, thereby safeguarding its identity while engaging intensively in a predominantly Hindu-Balinese cultural sphere.

Identity negotiation is most clearly visible in the absence of demands for assimilation of form. As Irham Asyri emphasized, “there has never been any adjustment of movement or music”; rather, the *pencak silat* identity at the core of *Rodat* continues to be performed in its entirety (Interview, 8 July 2025). Statements from the *puri* reinforce this: “There are no special rules or agreements ... freedom is given in accordance with the identity of the *Rodat* dance” (Interview, 11 July 2025). This reflects a patronage scheme that recognizes artistic autonomy rather than the kind of “fusion” strategies often imposed on minority traditions. At the level of artistic language, a performer Risky explained that the identity of *Rodat* is sustained by Malay songs, circular or face-to-face formations, and the village image as a “*kampung pendekar silat*” or “village of martial arts warriors” (Interview, 8 July 2025). Such articulations mark both a protective and communal ethos, aligned with the function of *Rodat* as an expression of *dakwah* to strengthen and deepen Muslims’ faith as well as collective solidarity.

Performatively, negotiation has moved from the margins toward the center. Padani recalled a key moment when, during the early years of Ida Cokorda Pemecutan XI, *Rodat* was repositioned from the rear to the front ranks of the procession. This shift transformed *Rodat* from a mere complement to a marker of honor, a form of symbolic capital binding both parties together (Interview, 8 July 2025). The *puri* even interprets *Rodat* as a “dance of victory,” parallel to *Baris Tengklong* in Hindu-Balinese tradition. It is performed in both celebratory and mourning contexts, with special emphasis on its association with the *puri* lineage. This can be understood as a symbolic analogy that

positions *Rodat* as a mirror genre within the ceremonial cosmology of the *puri* (Interview, 11 July 2025). For the Muslim community, the consequences are quite clear. As Irham Asyri stated, they experience “the obligation to be at the front, as commanders” in the procession. For them, this represents both full acceptance and a mark of honor (Interview, 8 July 2025).

From the perspective of the Hindu-Balinese public, Anak Agung Ngurah Adnyana Widya observed that the presence of *Rodat* enhances the solemnity of ceremonies and serves as a symbol of tolerance rather than a disruption of ritual (Interview, 8 July 2025). This narrative expands the social basis of acceptance, extending beyond elite patronage to include public affection. At the level of government relations with local customary authorities, Dwi Wahyuning Kristiansanti explained that Denpasar’s cultural preservation policy provides equal space for minority arts through four dimensions: preservation, protection, development, and utilization; and supports inter-ritual integration as long as it aligns with local traditions (Interview, 12 July 2025). This policy framework acts as an infrastructure that stabilizes cultural patronage relations within the modern urban setting.

Viewed through the lens of the third space, *puri* processions create an “in-between” social realm, not solely Hindu, not solely Muslim, but a symbolic meeting ground where *Rodat* is performed in its fullness employing Malay language and *silat* aesthetics, yet, is orbiting within the *puri*’s ritual framework. In this space, hybridity operates by maintaining Muslim identity through artistic autonomy while simultaneously extending the *puri*’s legitimacy as a guardian of diversity, with the public embracing both as a natural harmony. The repositioning of *Rodat* to the front ranks, its parallelization with *Baris Tengklong*, and the absence of assimilation demands highlight an egalitarian negotiation. This demonstrates that minority identity does not “disappear” within the majority but emerges in its own form while reinforcing narratives of togetherness.

The case of the Kapaon Muslims and Puri Pemecutan illustrates how patronage has transformed into symbolic kinship that serves a dual function: preserving Muslim identity through choreography, language, *silat* ethos, and artistic autonomy while affirming the *puri*’s cultural authority in terms of stage repositioning, genealogical narrative, symbolic parallelization. Identity negotiation unfolds not through homogenization but through co-presence that is recognized, respected, and institutionalized by the *puri*, the public, and municipal policy. The third space that emerges here is not merely a “space of compromise” but an arena of shared meaning-making that sustains social cohesion and religious moderation in contemporary Bali. Thus, the findings of this subsection demonstrate that Islamic performing arts, particularly the *Rodat*, function as a central medium linking traditional authorities and Muslim

communities through mechanisms of patronage, symbolic recognition, and participation in *puri* rituals that reinforce cross-identity cultural cohesion.

4.2 Patronage, Continuity, and the Third Space of Islamic Arts in Bali

The patronage of the *puri* toward Islamic performing arts in Bali carries strategic functions that go beyond the aesthetic dimension. This relationship grants social legitimacy to the *puri* as an inclusive customary institution while also ensuring an honorable performance space for Muslim communities. The case of Puri Agung Pemecutan illustrates how Kapaon *Rodat* appears not only in major customary ceremonies such as *Palebon*, but is also invited to various other socio-cultural events, including Independence Day celebrations, *Maulid Nabi*, weddings, and even official government functions. This expansion of function strengthens the continuity of *Rodat*, as its existence is no longer entirely dependent on the *puri*'s ritual cycle but is also supported by cross-community acceptance and its adaptability to new social spaces.

Similar phenomena can be observed in other parts of Bali. In Gelgel, Klungkung, *Rodat* has become a symbol of historical ties with Puri Klungkung, rooted in military alliances that later transformed into socio-cultural bonds. In Sidemen, the historical legacy between Puri Sidemen and the Sasak Muslim community remains, as demonstrated by the performance of *Rodat* during the *ngaben* funeral of cultural figure Cok Sawitri (Figure 2). Here, the *Rodat* dancers were positioned at the front ranks, mirroring similar practices at Puri Pemecutan. In Buleleng, the *Burdah* of Pegayaman emerged from the harmonious relationship between King Panji Sakti and the Muslim community from Banyuwangi, who were then granted permanent residence in Pegayaman (Zuhri, 2024). The *Burdah* there has retained its *qasidah rebana* format, with verses praising the Prophet Muhammad, undergoing little change even when performed in Hindu public spaces.

The example from Jembrana, the *Burdah* of Loloan, also illustrates the role of non-formal patronage. Its historical connection as the accompaniment of the royal guard of Puri Agung Negara highlights its strategic function in fostering social cohesion (Sabara, 2019). On several occasions, representatives of Puri Agung Negara have been invited to Kampung Muslim Loloan to witness specific ceremonies as a way of maintaining these strong traditional ties (Figure 3). The Loloan *Burdah* is performed both at community events and at invitations from outside parties, while consistently preserving its religious content and original musical structure. This reflects a model of full acceptance characterized by autonomy, where the continuity of the art is sustained not only through customary patronage but also through the community's own agency in safeguarding tradition.



Figure 2. *Rodat* during the *ngaben* cremation ceremony of cultural figure Cok Sawitri at Puri Sidemen, Karangasem (Source: Sariada, 2025).



Figure 3. King of Puri Agung Negara (red jacket seated), the now-late Anak Agung Gede Agung Benny Suteja, and his wife watching *Burdah* in Loloan Timur, Jembrana (Source: Sabara, 2017).

This comparison shows that the continuity of Islamic arts in Bali is sustained not only by the strength of customary institutions but also by the community's ability to balance identity and adaptation. In cases of full acceptance, such as *Kepaon Rodat* and *Loloan Burdah*, patronage functions as symbolic protection that preserves the original form of the art. In adaptive forms of acceptance, such as *Kecicang Rudat*, patronage provides performance opportunities while opening space for visual or symbolic changes to align with shifting sociopolitical dynamics. This spectrum of variation underscores that the patterns of *puri*–Muslim relations in Bali produce layered and contextual forms of patronage.

The identity negotiations that take place through these performing arts can be read through the framework of the third space. Islamic arts function as a medium that brings together the horizons of meaning of both Muslim and Hindu-Balinese traditions without demanding full assimilation. The *Kepaon Rodat*, for instance, has consistently preserved its foundation in *pencak silat* and its Islamic nuances in every performance. Group leader Irham Asyri emphasized that “there has never been any adjustment of movement or music,” since the basic movements are martial arts techniques passed down across generations (Interview, 8 July 2025). From the other side, Hindu-Balinese audiences have welcomed *Rodat* as a sacred element that enhances the solemn atmosphere of ceremonies. Anak Agung Ngurah Adnyana Widya remarked that *Rodat* “does not disturb the solemnity” and even “makes the atmosphere more sacred” (Interview, 11 July 2025).

This third space has been further expanded through its institutionalization in public spaces. The City of Denpasar government has provided platforms for *Rodat* in cultural festivals and official events, although its protection remains general under broader cultural policy. In the 1980s, *Rodat* also entered mass media through a TVRI national television broadcast and academic performance arenas such as at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI) Bali, thereby broadening its cross-identity audience. The regeneration of young Muslim performers has also contributed to its continuity: Risky, one of the dancers, affirmed that while the basic techniques remain unchanged, the appeal for youth comes from the fusion of Islamic nuances with *pencak silat* movements, which fosters a strong sense of communal ownership (Interview, 8 July 2025).

From the perspective of the *puri*, *Rodat* is interpreted as a dance of victory and thanksgiving, symbolically parallel to the *Baris* tradition in Hindu-Balinese culture. This interpretation demonstrates how the *puri* situates Islamic arts within its own symbolic language, while Muslim communities continue to view them as expressions of *dakwah* and martial memory. Two horizons of meaning thus meet within the same symbolic space without dissolving into one another, transforming the performance into a practice-based form of cultural diplomacy.

The findings therefore suggest that Islamic arts in Bali operate on two levels: first, through *puri* patronage, which ensures the continuity of traditions across regencies; and second, through the third space created by performances outside the *puri*, public policies, and interreligious acceptance. The combination of these two levels reveals that the negotiation of Muslim identity in Bali does not unfold within a framework of subordination but rather through symbolic coexistence that strengthens social cohesion. The various configurations of patronage and practices of the third space discussed above illustrate how Islamic performing arts function as mechanisms of identity negotiation and social cohesion in Bali. At the same time, these findings point toward a more prospective reading, showing how Islamic performing arts can serve as cultural resources for strengthening religious moderation and cultural diplomacy in the future.

4.3 *Islamic Performing Arts as Pathways to Moderation and Cultural Diplomacy*

Building on the frameworks of patronage and the third space identified in the research findings, the future potential of Islamic performing arts lies not only in the preservation of tradition but also in their contribution to designing strategies for religious moderation and cultural diplomacy (Abed, 2024; Ghardashkhani et al., 2024). This discussion explores the prospects of such development while situating the Balinese case within a broader dialogue that includes both national and global contexts. The study finds that Islamic performing arts such as the *Rodat* dance play a strategic role as media of identity negotiation between Muslim communities and *puri* authorities in Bali. The case of Kapaon–Puri Agung Pemecutan demonstrates that this negotiation occurs through a patronage pattern that enables Muslim communities to maintain the original form of *Rodat* without forced assimilation, while simultaneously granting cultural legitimacy to the *puri* as an inclusive authority. These findings affirm that interreligious cultural diplomacy in Bali can be realized without sacrificing cultural authenticity, but rather through symbolic recognition and mutually respectful spatial arrangements.

The results expand our understanding of Homi Bhabha's theory of the third space, in which the negotiation of identity can occur not only through hybridity but also through the preservation of intact cultural identities facilitated by traditional social structures. The findings also reinforce Antonio Gramsci's view that cultural hegemony does not always manifest as unilateral domination but can be constructed through consensus and patronage (Kandel, 2022; McGuire, 2020; Pfoh, 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). Meanwhile, from James C. Scott's perspective, the involvement of Muslim communities in *puri* rituals

may be read as a form of public transcript affirming their acceptance, while at the same time preserving hidden transcripts through the maintenance of original movement idioms and musicality (Clark, 2011; Oslender, 2007). These findings resonate with earlier research by Pageh et al. (2013) who identified similar patron–client dynamics between Balinese royal courts and Muslim communities in regions such as Badung, Karangasem, and Jembrana. Their study highlighted that interreligious cohesion in Bali has historically been sustained through cross-kinship, shared rituals, and collaborative arts, a form of pragmatic coexistence that aligns with the third-space framework proposed in this study, while our research extends it by theorizing how such relations operate as institutionalized cultural diplomacy.

The relational patterns between *puri* and Muslim communities in Bali, as revealed by this research, reflect a layered process. Beginning with histories of trade, political alliances, and kinship ties, these interactions eventually found one of their most important media in Islamic performing arts such as *Rodat* and *Burdah*. This medium serves a dual function: reinforcing the aesthetic identity of Muslim communities while also providing the royal courts (*puri*) with cultural legitimacy in the eyes of the public. From this dual function emerges a symbolic form of interreligious harmony that more broadly contributes to the discourse of tolerance and moderation in Indonesia (Figure 4).

Figure 4 visualizes the conceptual framework derived from the findings of this study. The historical relationship between *puri* and Muslim communities in Bali forms the foundation of interactions that are subsequently mediated through Islamic performing arts such as *Rodat* and *Burdah*. These art forms carry a dual function: preserving Muslim identity while simultaneously reinforcing the cultural legitimacy of the *puri* in the eyes of the wider society. This dual function creates an intersection of interests that constitutes a third space, a shared cultural sphere in which two distinct identities can interact without losing their respective characteristics.

In this context, the third space becomes more than a theoretical construct, finding tangible expression in cultural practices, the symbolic placement of performances within customary rituals, and the recognition granted by traditional authorities. From this third space emerges a symbol of interreligious harmony that serves as a vital form of social capital for maintaining cohesion in Bali's multicultural society. This harmony does not occur spontaneously but is nurtured through cultural mechanisms transmitted across generations. The model demonstrates that cultural diplomacy utilizing performing arts can serve as an effective strategy to promote tolerance and moderation, both at the local level and as a reference for the study of interreligious relations in other regions. This study refines Bhabha's notion of the third space by demonstrating that in

Bali, hybridity is not merely discursive but institutionalized through ritual and patronage. The Balinese case transforms the third space from a transient site of negotiation into a sustained framework of ritualized coexistence maintained by cultural authority and collective memory.

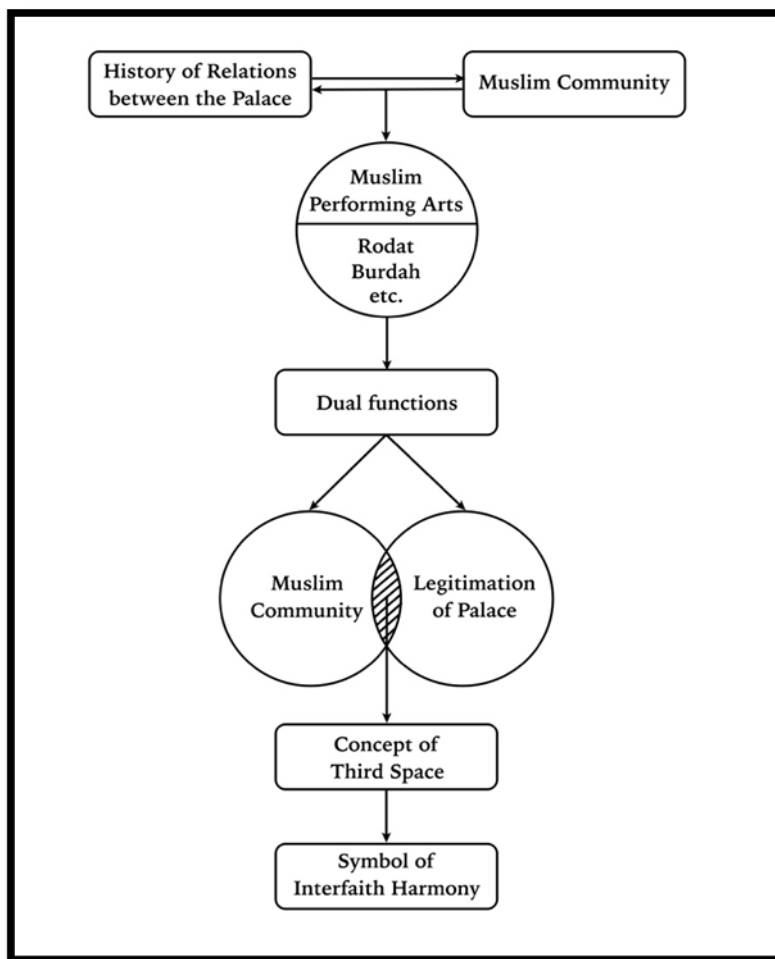


Figure 4. Conceptual framework illustrating the historical relationship between Balinese palaces and Muslim communities through Islamic performing arts (Source: Author's analysis and interpretation).

The Balinese experience demonstrates that a third space supported by cultural patronage, symbolic recognition, and kinship histories can sustain relatively stable social cohesion (McGee, 2020; Oriol, 2021; Tade & Nnamani, 2017). This situation contrasts with India, where cultural encounters in public spaces are often marked by political tensions and communal violence (Bundela & Saxena, 2023; Gour, 2024), as well as with southern Thailand, where Islamic performing arts emphasize identity segregation due to local political factors

(Kvam, 2015; Yusuf & Thongin, 2025). By contrast, a pattern more similar to Bali can be observed in Kelantan, Malaysia, where traditional Islamic arts receive royal patronage and are positioned as part of the state's cultural heritage (Ismail et al., 2023; Sripaoraya, 2022). In this region, as in Bali, the support of traditional authorities has been key to sustaining the arts as instruments of social cohesion.

In a broader context, art-based strategies can also be found across different parts of Asia. In Kelantan, *Wayang Kulit Kelantan* has been preserved as both an Islamic heritage and a symbol of royal identity (Eyo et al., 2021; Yousof & Khor, 2017). In Thailand, the Nora Rong Kru tradition has adapted to Muslim–Buddhist spaces (Jungwiwattanaporn, 2006; Saleepun, 2023), while in China, Islamic calligraphy has blended with Chinese visual traditions and serves as a medium of cultural hybridity (Alashari & Mohd Azhar Abd. Hamid, 2021; Mohammed Al-Mannai, 2021). These comparisons demonstrate that the arts, whether performing or visual, can serve as instruments of cross-identity cultural diplomacy, provided that they are supported by strong social foundations and legitimized by authority.

Looking ahead, the findings of this study also open opportunities for the development of Islamic performing arts as part of Bali's broader cultural strategy. We recommend two potential pathways. First, through cultural tourism facilitated by collaboration among communities, *puri*, and local government, for example by staging *Rodat* regularly in public venues such as Puputan Badung Square in Denpasar, making it more accessible to both domestic and international visitors. However, it is crucial to prevent the commodification of *Rodat* and ensure that its ritual significance and historical meaning are not diluted for tourist consumption (Arshiniwati & Peradantha, 2025). This can be achieved through community-based curation, where local performers and *puri* representatives collectively design performance guidelines and educational materials for audiences. Second, through formal education in schools and art universities, where the *Rodat* dance can be positioned as a teaching material representing minority arts within Bali's multicultural ecosystem. Curriculum developers could incorporate *Rodat* into art appreciation, ethnomusicology, and cultural diplomacy courses, emphasizing its intercultural values and historical ties with royal patronage. Such integration would help younger generations understand Islam–Hindu coexistence in Bali not as an abstract idea but as a lived cultural practice. These initiatives broaden audiences and sustain tradition by involving younger generations in both formal education and community arts, positioning Islamic performing arts as sources of cultural preservation, innovation, and learning for the future.

Islamic performing arts in Bali offer a distinctive model of multiculturalism in Southeast Asia. Rather than demanding extensive adaptation, the Balinese

case shows that recognition and patronage can preserve the original forms of minority traditions while positioning them at the center of majority cultural spaces. This has important implications for inclusive cultural policy in Indonesia and provides inspiration for interreligious tolerance globally. The study contributes both theoretically, by integrating the concepts of hybridity, patronage, and cultural resistance, and practically, by recommending cultural preservation policies that respect diversity without sacrificing authenticity. In doing so, it extends Mashino's (2024) view of art as a bridge between *puri* and Muslim communities, demonstrating that this relationship also creates a contemporary third space that sustains authenticity while enabling cultural diplomacy.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed the role of Islamic performing arts in shaping cultural relations between Balinese traditional authorities and Muslim communities, and explains how identity negotiation unfolds through these practices. Taking the *Rodat* in Kampung Islam Kepaon and its relationship with Puri Agung Pemecutan as a case study, and comparing it with similar phenomena in Gelgel, Loloan, Kecang, and Sidemen, the research finds that Islamic performing arts serve a dual function: preserving Muslim identity while reinforcing the social legitimacy of the *puri*. This dual function creates a third space that allows for the expression of identity without loss of authenticity, while at the same time opening a space for interreligious coexistence. These relational patterns take shape within a spectrum of acceptance, ranging from full inclusion to symbolic adaptation, influenced by *puri* patronage, historical ties, and local sociopolitical contexts.

The findings affirm that interreligious harmony in Bali is achieved through active and continuous cultural mechanisms rather than solely through formal regulation. The significance of the study lies in its contribution to performing arts scholarship and the study of interreligious relations by highlighting the dynamics of art, power, and identity within a predominantly Hindu cultural sphere.

The limitations of this research stem from its focus on specific case studies and the constraints of direct observation due to the infrequency of performances. Future research could further develop models of cultural tourism that incorporate Islamic performing arts as expressions of multiculturalism and practices of tolerance, as well as explore integration into formal education as a medium of multicultural learning relevant to the Indonesian context.

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