

# MALAYANGAN WITHOUT RARE ANGON: THE TRADITION OF KITE FLYING IN THE VIRTUAL KITE FESTIVAL AMIDST THE PANDEMIC IN DENPASAR CITY

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## Abstract

This research is aimed to examine the repercussions of the global pandemic, which has imposed restrictions on social interactions and community engagements and indirectly impacted traditional Malayangan activities. The Rare Angon community vehemently opposes this state of affairs. In response, the innovative minds of the Rare Angon elites have proposed the concept of a Virtual Kite Festival, aiming to preserve the cultural significance of kite-flying amid the global pandemic in Denpasar City. This qualitative study adopts a cultural studies framework and employs a critical ethnography methodology. Data collection entails observation, interviews, and document analysis. Theoretical frameworks of Power Relations, Practice, and Symbolic Interaction are employed to analyze the studied issues. Data analysis is conducted employing a descriptive interpretive approach, critically depicting the observed phenomena. The study findings revealed that, within the socio-cultural context, the Rare Angon community demonstrates its capability to innovate by leveraging communication technology in accordance with the surrounding circumstances and environmental needs in order to sustain the existence of traditional Balinese kite-flying. The Virtual Kite Festival serves as both an economic-oriented endeavor and a means to seek legitimacy. The culture of the Virtual Kite Festival illustrates a new cultural construction within the kite-flying tradition amid the global pandemic, allowing it to evolve and be embraced by the Rare Angon community in Bali, particularly in Denpasar city.

**Keywords:** Malayangan Tradition, Virtual Kite Festival, Global Pandemic

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## 1. Introduction

The Virtual Kite Festival is an event that harnesses information technology systems to celebrate the art of kite-flying. From late 2019 to 2020, the world was gripped by the formidable Covid-19 pandemic (Setiati & Azwar, 2020: 12). This global crisis has engendered profound changes across multiple facets of human life. Consequently, individuals have adapted their attitudes and behaviors to accommodate the new social dynamics dictated by the pandemic, responding to the evolving circumstances and conditions (Widaty, 2020: 34). Among the affected activities, Malayangan has faced significant disruptions, leaving the Rare Angon community, particularly disheartened by the prevailing situation. The far-reaching impacts of the global pandemic have prompted widespread transformations, compelling individuals to navigate novel social shifts and adapt to the demands of the new circumstances. Therefore, indirectly, the creative minds of the esteemed

Rare Angon community conceived the idea of a Virtual Kite Festival, aiming to sustain the existence of the traditional kite-flying heritage amidst the global pandemic. The Virtual Kite Festival can be seen as a cultural construct, introducing new elements to the conventional Balinese kite-flying tradition. This innovative event has presented a novel practice, as participants, including the Rare Angon community and kite enthusiasts, can easily access the Virtual Kite Festival through the Instagram social media platform. The festival has been meticulously curated to provide a virtual experience complemented by advanced digital technology.

In the conventional Bali Kite Festival, participants and spectators typically gather under the scorching sun. However, in the Virtual Kite Festival, participants and art enthusiasts can enjoy kite-flying artistry from the comfort of their homes, watching the live-streamed event according to the predetermined schedule set by the organizing committee. The Virtual Kite Festival serves as a temporary bridge to deviate the limitations and government policies that strictly prohibit public gatherings or crowded events amid the global pandemic. Its presence during this challenging time presents an intriguing subject of study, particularly from a cultural perspective.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework utilized in this study encompasses relevant theories that are deemed applicable to the research subject, aiming to achieve the intended objectives. The theories employed in this study are as follows:

1. Theory of Power Relations: The theory of power relations, proposed by Foucault, explores the concept of power as a dimension of relationships. According to Michael Foucault, wherever there are relationships, power exists (Sutrisno & Putanto, 2005:146). Foucault's uniqueness lies in his emphasis on elucidating how power functions within specific domains rather than delivering a definitive definition of power itself (Afandi, 2012).
2. Theory of Practice: Pierre-Felix Bourdieu is a prominent scholar who proposed the practice theory, which greatly affected the development of social sciences. Bourdieu introduces three key concepts that apply to the practices of individual actors. Firstly, habitus directs to the result of learning and upbringing. It is a historical product that is formed as individuals are born and interact with society within specific spatial and temporal contexts (Siregar, 2016:82).
3. Symbolic Interactionism: This theory is not intended to analyze large-scale societies, such as indigenous communities or general society. It primarily focuses on the behavior of small groups that possess unique characteristics in social interactions (Herbert, 1969:157). Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the role of symbols and shared meanings in shaping social interaction and social reality construction.

Concerning the research problem, the Virtual Kite Festival, initially conceived as an alternative medium to uphold the tradition of kite flying during the global pandemic, has undergone subsequent developments that have incorporated various personal and group interests, including economic orientations and the pursuit of legitimacy. Consequently, it has deviated from its original purpose as a pure vehicle for preserving the traditional cultural practice of kite flying amidst the pandemic in Bali, specifically in the city of Denpasar. Hence, this theory is employed to dissect the first research question posed in this research problem formulation.

## 3. Research Method

This study aims to interpret the meaning of an event within a specific context from a cultural studies perspective. Qualitative research is employed to describe and analyze phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts of individuals or groups (Ratna, 2010:102). The study employs two sources of

data: primary data and secondary data. Primary data is obtained directly from informants regarding the research topic, while secondary data is collected through literature review, document analysis, and field studies. Analysis of the research data employed inductive analysis for its easier to describe. What is meant by inductive data analysis according to the qualitative paradigm is the analysis of specific data from the field into units followed by categorization. This method is carried out by concluding that it starts from a specific understanding of cases in the form of a general conclusion.

#### 4. Result and Discussion

##### A. The Background of the Virtual Kite Festival amid the Global Pandemic

###### 1) Dynamics of the Malayangan Tradition amid the Global Pandemic in Denpasar City

The dynamics of society and culture can always be observed in every era. The development of society and culture in Bali is inherently dynamic and changes. The dynamics and changes in culture tend to exhibit a particular order in processes and structures. Analyzing the processes of societal and cultural shifts, including field research, is generally referred to as social dynamics (Koentjaraningrat, 1979: 241). Amid the pandemic, such dynamics occur within the tradition of kite flying in Bali, especially in Denpasar city. Many changes or cultural shifts by the Rare Angon, who are the practitioners of the Malayangan tradition, are significantly evident in the continuation of the tradition. These changes are indirectly influenced by the situation, conditions, and needs amid the pandemic.

The tradition of Malayangan has revealed remarkable adaptability and controlled development while staying true to the authentic Balinese kite culture, particularly in Denpasar. The sustainability of the kite-flying tradition in Denpasar is characterized by dynamic changes influenced by the local environment and circumstances. In line with these dynamics, the art of kite-flying has also responded to the global pandemic, which imposed limitations on gatherings and public events.

To address these challenges, the concept of the kite festival has been transformed into a virtual experience, leveraging technology and digital media platforms such as Zoom. This innovative Virtual Kite Festival, introduced amidst the global pandemic, exemplifies a progressive approach to preserving the kite-flying tradition. By embracing virtual platforms, the festival manages to maintain its essence while adhering to safety measures and promoting community engagement in a new and creative way.

###### 2) The Consistency of the Role of Elite Rare Angon in Malayangan Cultural Practices Amidst the Pandemic

The elite members of Rare Angon play a crucial role in sustaining the Malayangan tradition in Bali, particularly in Denpasar. The pandemic has compelled these elite members to adhere to prevailing norms. Amid the pandemic, the central and local governments have implemented strict regulations to prevent mass gatherings and public activities. In response to these regulations, the cultural system preserved societal patterns by providing actors with a set of norms and values. It, in turn, motivates the actors to comply with and follow the established norms (Brown, 1980). Societies possess a structure and fulfill various functions. The pandemic has brought about profound changes across all aspects of life.

Hence, communities must adapt and innovate to cope with these new circumstances. Talcott Parsons' functionalism theory clarifies how interconnected elements within a society serve typical functions as part of a larger system. Amid the pandemic, society naturally navigates and overcomes challenges by relying on established structures that prioritize collective action. As society undergoes a transitional phase, adaptation,

setting life goals, fostering positive relationships, and self-motivation become crucial factors (Ritzer, 2004; Parsons, 1985).

The role of Rare Angon's elite members is pivotal in their dedication and contribution to nurturing and advancing Bali's traditional kite-flying culture. They adeptly adapt the Malayangan tradition to their environment, keeping pace with the evolving era influenced by the rapid forces of globalization. The emergence of the Virtual Kite Festival is a testament to their innovative thinking, as they employ Instagram's virtual platform to present and encapsulate the essence of a kite festival amidst the pandemic. The creative ideas conceived by Rare Angon's elite members in conceptualizing and organizing the Virtual Kite Festival reflect their moral obligation to uphold and preserve the time-honored tradition of kite-flying in Bali, particularly in the city of Denpasar, during these challenging times. It ensures that the kite festival can be celebrated and cherished, even if it takes place in a virtual realm.

## B. The Acceptance of Virtual Kite Festival by the Rare Angon and Developed Amidst the Pandemic in Denpasar

### 1) Virtual Kite Festival as an Alternative Event Amidst the Pandemic

The Virtual Kite Festival represents a cultural practice employed to persevere the endurance of traditional kite-flying during the global pandemic. Specifically, it serves as an alternative event to preserve the tradition of Malayangan in Bali, particularly in the city of Denpasar. Through the Virtual Kite Festival, the Malayangan tradition can maintain existence and acquire acceptance among the Rare Angon community, particularly in Denpasar.

The existence of the Virtual Kite Festival is well-received by various groups, ranging from the elderly to children who are enthusiasts and appreciators of traditional Balinese kite-flying. However, the younger generation, particularly the millennials, dominates the Virtual Kite festival. It inadvertently leads to rapid development and adoption of the festival, as it resonates strongly with the millennial generation, known for their quick adoption and consumption of cultural practices within the virtual realm. Given that virtual culture aligns well with the millennial generation's affinity for digital culture and gadget usage, it is undeniable that conducting a virtual event is highly suitable amidst the pandemic.

The utilization of information technology, specifically the social media platform Instagram, has had a notable positive impact on preserving the traditional kite-flying culture in Denpasar, particularly through the Virtual Kite festival. This innovative approach indirectly contributes to social well-being amid the global pandemic by allowing individuals to engage in their hobbies and simultaneously enhance their immune systems. The virtual competitions provide a temporary escape from the realities of the Covid-19 virus, making it an excellent alternative form of entertainment for the Rare Angon community in Denpasar specifically.

### 2) Virtual Kite Festival as an Economic Orientation amid the Global Pandemic

The emergence of the Virtual Kite Festival amid the global pandemic has inevitably opened up economic opportunities. In this context, the Virtual Kite Festival is no longer solely a platform or space for preserving the tradition of Malayangan amidst the pandemic. Various practices driven by personal or group (Sekaa) interests exist behind the evolution and acceptance of the Virtual Kite Festival amid the pandemic. These practices reflect particular ideologies and interests among the organizers of the event.

According to Sukmadewi (2021:85), the orientation towards economic activities and well-being is a fundamental characteristic of human beings driven by rationality and personal interests. As economic beings, human thoughts, and actions are guided by rationality, which leads to the urge to maximize advantages not only from resources and income available to humans and nature but also from other aspects, including culture, as human desires are essentially unlimited. The organizers of the Virtual Kite Festival consider the economic

potential of the event, as they perceive social media's role in the practice of the Virtual Kite Festival as a tool for business purposes. Social media plays a complex role in influencing economic-oriented practices within the Virtual Kite Festival amidst the pandemic.

### 3) Virtual Kite Festival as an Event to Seek Legitimacy

The organization of the Virtual Kite Festival undoubtedly involves the pursuit of personal or group interests and the establishment of an ideology to seek legitimacy among participants. The recognition or legitimacy attained in the Virtual Kite Festival context can bring advantages to both the participants and the continuity of the Malayangan tradition in Denpasar city. The organizers of the Virtual Kite Festival use this platform as a stepping stone to seek recognition and legitimacy, primarily for the kite-flying community (Sekaa Layangan) rather than for themselves as the event organizers.

In this case, many recently formed or aspiring kite-flying communities (Sekaa Layang-Layang) join the Virtual Kite Festival as a means to establish their presence in the traditional Balinese kite-flying world. Therefore, these newly formed Sekaa Layang-Layang utilize the Virtual Kite Festival as a platform to perform and promote their community. By participating in the festival, these new communities can quickly gain recognition and become known to the Rare Angon Bali community and kite enthusiasts in Denpasar, specifically.

## C. Implications of the Virtual Kite Festival on the Sustainability of the Malayangan Tradition in Denpasar City

### 1) Social Implication

The social aspect entails the interaction between individuals and their surrounding environment. The comprehension of the implications within the Virtual Kite Festival undoubtedly affects diverse groups involved in the Malayangan tradition, specifically in Denpasar, Bali. As the Virtual Kite Festival emerges as an alternative event amidst the pandemic, initiated by the esteemed Rare Angon elites, it aims to preserve the essence of the kite-flying tradition in Denpasar. Employing social media as a platform for the Malayangan tradition brings about positive impacts, expediting the advancement of kite culture.

There is a loss of the culture of togetherness in the Virtual Kite Festival, such as the culture of borrowing, embracing, and working together joyfully among the Sekaa (groups), despite the competitive context. However, the Rare Angon community still upholds a strong sense of brotherhood. Additionally, there are issues and social disparities, as well as occurrences of misconduct between the organizers of the Virtual Kite Festival and participants who have conflicting interests within the virtual event amidst the pandemic. These give rise to several social implications that are complex and rooted in the surrounding environment, creating various challenges related to the virtual implementation of the Malayangan tradition amidst the pandemic.

In the virtual event, there is a loss of the culture of embracing and ownership among the Sekaa (groups) during the traditional kite flying. Although the Rare Angon members compete with each other in the competition, they still uphold the value of brotherhood in the continuity of the Balinese kite flying tradition, especially in Kota Denpasar. Unfortunately, in the Virtual Kite Festival, irresponsible organizers can be found. It is not uncommon to come across fraudulent events where, after the live-streaming process, the organizers fail to schedule the announcement of the winners and simply disappear without any sense of responsibility.

It is undeniable that there is a high possibility of social inequality and various forms of cheating occurring in the virtual realm, including within the Virtual Kite Festival. Social media use or the virtual world plays a

significant role in facilitating these situations. However, the Rare Angon members do not approach this issue lightly. They prioritize and uphold the values found within the tradition of kite flying, valuing and respecting them.

## 2) Economic Implication

The economic aspect is crucial for the sustainability of an individual's or group's livelihood. It significantly influences the improvement of their standard of living. There are economic implications amidst the pandemic in Denpasar city. In the Virtual Kite Festival, there are economic implications amidst the pandemic. In this case, the practice of kite flying tradition in Denpasar is carried out online instead of the conventional way we are familiar with in traditional festivals.

The virtual or online execution of the kite festival has resulted in the loss of livelihood sources. Before the global pandemic, the traditional kite festival involved the active participation of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the culinary sector, as well as street vendors who contributed to the vibrant atmosphere of the festival. Additionally, the local community residing around the festival venue experienced economic implications, particularly regarding parking services, as their income sources dwindled amidst the pandemic. Consequently, the traditional kite festival had to be put on hold, leading to the emergence of the Virtual Kite Festival as an alternative means of celebrating this cherished tradition amidst the global crisis.

## 3) Cultural Implication

The presence and growth of the Virtual Kite Festival as an alternative event amidst the pandemic have had significant cultural implications and influenced the reception of the festival in Denpasar. The Virtual Kite Festival has brought about several cultural implications, including the loss of traditional kite-flying techniques and the absence of particular artistic performances, such as the traditional Balinese music (Balaganjur) typically featured in kite festivals. Traditional kite festivals prioritize the mastery of kite-flying techniques, encompassing the entire process from launch to descent, which is central to the art of kite-flying. Furthermore, cultural performances featuring traditional music contribute to the lively and celebratory atmosphere of the traditional kite festival in Denpasar.

The Virtual Kite Festival amidst the pandemic serves as a creative form of entertainment for the Rare Angon. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the essence of Malayangan lies in the vibrant experience of flying kites under the sun's warm rays, accompanied by the joyful collaboration of Sekaa Layang-Layang working together to launch the kites. Within the kite-flying competitions, a multitude of techniques and skills are employed. In the current virtual context, these playing techniques may become lost, necessitating a fresh start or a return to learning when traditional kite festivals resume in the future.

## 5. Conclusion

The socio-cultural tradition of Malayangan holds significant influence in the lives of the Rare Angon and the Balinese community, particularly in Denpasar. The development strategy for traditional Balinese kites indirectly indicates an influential transformation process that aligns with the surrounding environment's situation and conditions. From a socio-cultural perspective, the Rare Angon skillfully adapts kites to suit the situation, conditions, and needs of the local environment. They aim to ensure the continued existence of traditional Balinese kites, specifically in Denpasar. This evolution encompasses various aspects, including advancements in kite frames using the knockdown system (assembly and disassembly) and the utilization of information technology systems, reflecting the influence of globalization. These adaptations are implemented to realize virtual kite festivals amidst the pandemic.



The Virtual Kite Festival serves as a collaborative platform for multiple community initiatives, fostering the development of cultural products within the Malayangan tradition. This convergence of activities produces economic prospects amidst the global pandemic, particularly in Denpasar, Bali. By performing and nurturing cultural products regarding Malayangan, the festival stimulates economic growth and prosperity within the local community.

The Virtual Kite Festival has been influenced by an ideology of personal and group interests, shifting its focus from being a pure alternative space for preserving the traditional kite culture in Denpasar. It has now become a platform utilized to fulfill personal or communal desires and serve economic objectives. The festival has been transformed into an event-driven by economic orientation and the pursuit of legitimacy.

The Virtual Kite Festival serves as a temporary bridge to overcome the limitations and government policies imposed at both the central and regional levels. It is a breakthrough that allows the Rare Angon and kite enthusiasts in Denpasar to fulfill their urge to engage in kite flying. The virtual format became the only feasible option to realize the kite festival given the prevailing situation amidst the pandemic. The Virtual Kite Festival has managed to sustain its existence and has garnered significant popularity, particularly among the millennials. Leveraging social media platforms, the festival offers a practical and convenient way to participate, ensuring its continuity even beyond the pandemic.

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