



(MUDIMA)



## Analysis of Cultural Elements and Design of Bali Bebean Kites

Indah Fitriana Hapsari<sup>1\*</sup>, Vania Aqmarani Sulaiman<sup>2</sup>

Universitas Mercu Buana

**Corresponding Author:** Indah Fitriana Hapsari [indah.fitriana@mercubuana.ac.id](mailto:indah.fitriana@mercubuana.ac.id)

### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Bali, Culture, Festival, Bebean Kites

*Received* : 2 March

*Revised* : 24 April

*Accepted* : 25 May

©2026 Hapsari, Sulaiman: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



### ABSTRACT

In Indonesia, kites are flown for sports and recreation. One popular event is the kite festival in Bali. The festival is held annually. The first type of kite flown by the Balinese people was made from leaves. Strings were then attached to them, which is why the Balinese call them leaf kites. There are three types of traditional Balinese kites: the Tekuk or Pecukan kite, the Janggan kite, and the Bebean kite. This study was conducted to examine the elements of Balinese culture present in the design of the Bebean kite. Additionally, it describes the visual aspects of color, materials, and the components used in the kite. To address the research questions, an approach was taken that began with the product itself, focusing on color, materials, components, and function. The method used was descriptive qualitative. The descriptive research procedure was carried out by processing data in the form of words and explaining the results of the analysis in the form of sentences. The results of the descriptive method were used to explain the Balinese cultural elements in the Bebean kite. The study was conducted based on the basic principles of the study. The analysis was conducted on the dimensions present in the design product

## INTRODUCTION

In 5th-century BC China, philosophers named Mozi (Mo Di or Mo Ti) and Lu Ban (Gongshu Ban or Kungshu Phan) claimed to be the inventors of the kite. At that time, the ideal materials for making kites were silk for the sail and bamboo for the frame, as these were considered strong and lightweight. Early Chinese kites were known to be flat, not curved, and often rectangular in shape. The design of these kites evolved to include decorations and motifs featuring mythological figures or legendary characters. It was also not uncommon to find kites equipped with strings and whistles that could produce music while flying (Needham, 1965).

Kites were known throughout Polynesia, all the way to New Zealand, alongside the spread of Chinese communities across the globe. Kites were first brought to Europe by Marco Polo toward the end of the 13th century. Later, kites were brought back by sailors from Japan and Malaysia in the 16th and 17th centuries. Konrad Kyeser described dragon-shaped kites in Bellifortis around 1400 CE. Initially, kites were regarded merely as antiquities; however, by the 18th and 19th centuries, they were being used as tools for scientific research (Suay and Teira, 2014).

By the early 20th century, a wide variety of kite designs and shapes had been developed, ranging from tetrahedral kites, Rogallo-wing kites, gliding kites, parafoil kites, and electric-powered kites (Suay and Teira, 2014). Kites are widely used to support scientific research in meteorology; Rogallo-wing kites are used in aeronautics, wireless communication, and photography; and parafoil kites are used for skydiving and paragliding.

In Indonesia, kites are flown as a form of sport and recreation. One of the most popular events is the kite festival in Bali, which is held annually. The earliest type of kite played with by the Balinese people was made from leaves attached to strings. The Balinese refer to these kites as leaf kites. There are three types of authentic traditional Balinese kites: the Tekuk kite or Pecukan kite, the Janggan kite, and the Bebean kite.

The Tekuk kite, also known as the Pecukan kite, has a curved shape. The frame is made of bamboo and uses leaves. Originally, the body of this kite was covered with paper, but nowadays many also use fabric. In the past, Pecukan kites were made small. However, today these kites can be up to 3 meters long.

The second type is the Janggan kite. In principle, the shape of this kite is not much different from the Pecukan kite, but it is associated with a snake or dragon. The Janggan kite features an addition at the top in the form of a dragon- or snake-shaped head. The name Janggan means “tail,” which is reflected in the design of the lower part of the kite, which is triangular with a very long tail. The third type of kite is known as the Bebean kite. In the Balinese language, “be” means fish, so the Bebean kite is shaped like a large fish.

Some members of Balinese society, particularly experts in Balinese Hinduism, adhere to a specific philosophy. The kite’s frame—comprising the spindle and the bow—symbolizes the union of Linggabhawa, the union of Purusa and Pradana. All of this represents the Almighty God in all His manifestations, governing the preservation of the universe. Because of this belief, most Balinese people perform a purification ceremony, or *Diplaspas*, on the kites before the kite-flying festival begins.

The distinctive logos and posters for the kite festival feature various graphic elements that convey the cultural narrative being presented. The modern graphic design for the Weifang Kite Festival helps promote Chinese cultural traditions to people of all ages and enhances the festival’s appeal as a tourist attraction.

According to research by Sadsunk (2014), Thai kites consist of four types: the I-Loom Kite, Pak Pao Kite, Chula Kite, and Dui Dui. There are also several modern kites shaped like animals. The most common materials for making kites are bamboo and thin paper. Kite-making requires specialized skills, particularly in crafting Chula and Pak Pao kites, as it demands expertise in selecting the most suitable bamboo to achieve a strong frame structure. Thai

kites embody a cultural philosophy worthy of preservation and transmission from one generation to the next. Therefore, making Thai kites requires time to study various kite motifs based on design, patterns, and colors, and then create fabric designs that match the motifs. The creativity behind these kites is intentionally designed to reflect a beautiful combination of the past and the present.

In a study by Swandi, Wibawa, and Sadguna (2019), a book recounts a story about culture, highlighting that Bali is one of Indonesia's provinces rich in diverse arts, culture, and attractions. This diversity of arts and culture constitutes a heritage from ancestors that has been deeply ingrained in the community. Each regency in Bali possesses distinct arts and cultures, which have evolved according to local circumstances and conditions. The first Bali Kite Festival was held in 1979 at Subak Tanjung Bungkal in Denpasar. In fact, the tradition of flying kites (*melayangan*) has been practiced since ancient times. This is linked to the belief that Angon Langka is the manifestation of Lord Shiva who descended to Earth. "Rare Angon" means "shepherd's child." When the harvest season ends, farmers—especially shepherds—have free time they use for recreation. While tending their livestock, they fly kites in the dry rice fields. There are three types of kites in Bali: Bebean, Janggan, and Pecuk. The Bebean kite derives from the Balinese word "be," meaning fish, so it refers to a fish-shaped kite. The Janggan kite is a sacred kite believed to be a dragon that safeguards the stability of the world. According to myth, the earth is supported by a giant turtle named Benawang Nala and encircled by the body of a dragon named Naga Besuki. This dragon is immortalized in the form of a kite—the Pecuk kite, which is a very simple design. It consists of four corners and has a curved shape. In Balinese, it is called "Pecuk." Ultimately, every type of Balinese kite has a distinct story and cultural significance; each story offers benefits that harmonize with the balance necessary for the continuity of human life.

Based on the discussion regarding these types of Balinese kites, this study was conducted to examine the design, structure, materials, color

schemes, and supporting elements of the Bebean kite. The Bebean kite is one of the traditional kite motifs that is highly popular during kite festivals in Bali. This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the form and the story behind the fish-shaped designs whose beauty adorns the skies of the Island of the Gods. Therefore, the research question for this study is: "How are Balinese cultural elements reflected in the design and structure of the Bebean kite?"

## METHODS

In order to explain the research, a methodology is needed to conduct the study. According to Partanto and Al Barry (2001), methodology refers to the steps taken in an orderly and systematic manner to achieve a specific objective. In this study, the methodology employed involves collecting and analyzing data as required to address the research problem. Before collecting data, the variables to be observed must be identified, such as structural form, visual color, and materials.

### 1. Research Design and Research Approach

The research method used is descriptive qualitative. In descriptive research procedures, data results are explained using words in the form of sentences. Qualitative descriptive research aims to describe, depict, explain, and provide detailed answers to the research problem by studying an individual, a group, or an event as thoroughly as possible (Sugiyono, 2016). Descriptive research is a form of research intended to describe existing phenomena, whether natural or man-made (Sukmadinata, 2006 in Anggasana, 2020).

A qualitative approach was used in this study because it examines Bebean kites. Through observation and documentation, the findings were described to identify the issues at hand and address the research questions. These issues relate to key elements that can explain the structural form, visual colors, and materials used, as well as the manifestation of Balinese culture displayed in the form of Bebean kites.

### 2. Research Location and Data Sources

This study examines the Bebean kite, a distinctive feature of Balinese society. Data collection techniques are methods used to gather relevant information for the research. This stage involves the use of tools, instruments, and

procedures to collect objective and systematic data (Cresswell, 2018). The experience of actively participating in observation, participation, interviews, and self-reflection will make this research relevant.

Data collection through documentation techniques is conducted to seek data related to the research object or records, books, websites, newspapers, articles, transcripts, minutes, agendas, and so on that are related to the topic under study. Documentation in the form of images or photographs will be useful as verifiable supplementary data.

### 3. Data Collection and Data Analysis

According to Sugiyono (2016), observation is a data collection technique with specific characteristics when compared to other techniques. Observation is not limited to people but also extends to other natural objects. Through observation, researchers can study the cultural traditions and philosophy of the Bebean kites of Bali.

Once the data has been collected, the next step is for the researcher to analyze the data obtained regarding the research subject. This data analysis process is conducted by the researcher to draw conclusions from the data so that it can be described as research findings.

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching for and organizing data obtained from interviews, field notes, and documentation. This is done by organizing the data into categories, breaking it down into units, synthesizing it, arranging it into patterns, selecting what is important and what will be studied, and drawing conclusions so that they are easily understood by both the researcher and others (Sugiyono, 2016).

The data analysis technique used in this study is descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis was chosen because it can address the research problem by describing or portraying the state of the research subjects or objects at the time of the study based on observable facts expressed in written or spoken words (Soedjono, 1999).

The first step is to collect the data needed to observe the research subject. Next, the data is organized according to the research problem, then reduced to select the data to be included in the study, and finally, a conclusion is drawn to assess the research results.

With the data observations already summarized, the researcher can systematically interpret the analysis obtained as research results in accordance with the literature review conducted by the researcher.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Results

The Bebean kite is a kite originating from Bali. This kite is part of a communal tradition practiced by the Balinese people. This type of kite is associated with the basic shape of a large fish, “be,” which in Balinese means fish. The Bebean kite features a head, body, fins, and a tail shaped like fluttering fabric at the waist of its body. The Bebean kite has a design with its own established style. The Bebean flies in a swaying motion, known as “ngelog,” so that it looks like a fish swimming. When the kite flutters in the air, it produces a variety of sound effects. The sounds are produced by “guangan” attached to the head and waist.

Bebean represents an element associated with water or “Vishnu.” The Bebean kite is a kite that must always be present in accordance with the rules of the Banjar Bali faith.

Kite flying in Bali is a tradition and a cultural practice that is an integral part of the community’s way of life. This activity is typically held in Bali after the harvest season has ended. This activity is carried out as an expression of gratitude to Dewi Sri. Therefore, many villages, especially in South Bali, hold kite-flying competitions with great joy.

The following is a diagram of the structure of the Bebean kite:

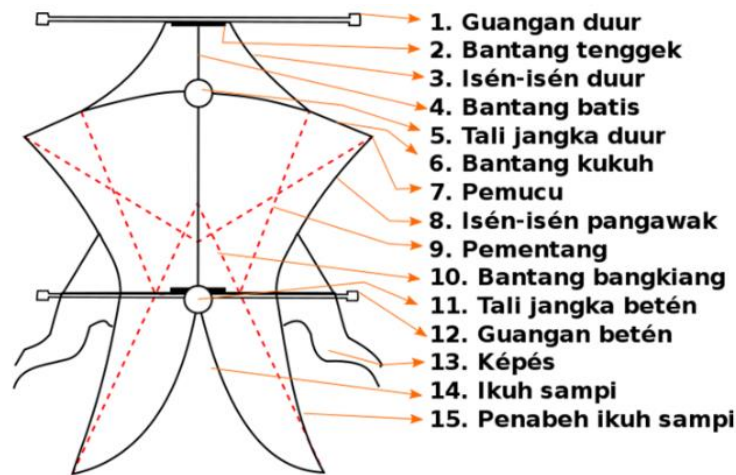


Figure 1. Structure of the Bebean Kite

According to Meisaroh, Widnyana, and Koriawan (2014), there are several types of Bebean kites, each with varying levels of strength. The distinguishing factor lies in their size—some are larger, others smaller—which results in kites that are either more balanced or more agile when flown above the clouds. The following are the types of Bebean kites found in Balinese society:

### 1. Bebean Ikan Duri (Spiny Fish-Shaped Bebean);

This kite shape is becoming increasingly rare among the community. A distinctive feature of this shape is its fin, called “kepes,” which is made of bamboo. This kite cannot flutter like other types of Bebean kites. This type is associated with fish that have spiny, sturdy fins. The corners of its body, called “pemucu,” are more pointed with a smaller angle, and it generally has a faster maneuver or “elog” than other types. This is likely due to its more pointed fins and body, where the fins typically influence the elog to sway more smoothly and gradually.

### 2. Small Fish Bebean;

This type of Bebean kite is characterized by a tail fin (“ikuhsapi”) that is smaller than that of other Bebean varieties. Its proportions appear to taper toward the lower section of the tail. This type of Bebean kite is associated with fish that have short fins, small tails, and are agile in movement. This shape is often found in rice-growing areas outside of South Bali. Consequently, it is commonly found in Central Bali, West Bali, and East Bali.

### 3. Bebean Ikan Jago;

The Bebean Ikan Jago kite has a distinct shape that clearly resembles a square head. It features a rounded, outward-curving “pemucu” body angle.

The tail section, or “ikuh sapi,” is shaped like a sickle. The colors generally used are combinations of black and white, black and yellow, or black and red. These color combinations represent the primary colors or Tri Datu of Balinese society. One of these types was once considered sacred by kite flyers in Semawang, Sanur Village. The black-and-white checkerboard pattern is known as the Jago kite. This design holds religious significance.

The following are the materials used to make Bebean kites:

#### 1. Santong bamboo;

Also known as Legi bamboo, this species grows in humid tropical regions but can also thrive in dry areas. The length of each segment ranges from 25 to 38 centimeters, with a diameter of 8 to 15 centimeters. This bamboo is known for its flexibility, durability, and strength, which have been proven since ancient times. It has a distinctive color—a pure white. Its natural hue remains whitish even after being varnished. The bamboo used for the Bebean kite’s frame must be approximately 4–5 years old. If the bamboo is too old, its flexibility will be reduced, and if it is too young, it will not yet have reached its full strength. In accordance with local traditions, an auspicious day must be chosen before the bamboo is cut. The bamboo selected must be intact and sturdy from the base to the tip, and have a fresh, yellowish-green color.

#### 2. Fishing Line or Kite String;

Also known as kite fishing line. It is generally made of polyamide and nylon monofilament, though some are made of PE, or polyethylene. Because of its well-proven strength, this fishing line is used to tie together the kite’s frame parts to form a single unit.

This line does not break easily and does not stretch when tied.

### 3. Nylon Rope;

Nylon is a thermoplastic polymer. Nylon rope is smooth, lightweight, and resistant to friction. Nylon rope is used to create connections that balance the structural framework of the kite.

### 4. Parachute Fabric;

This material is made from strong yet lightweight synthetic fibers. It resembles nylon or polyester in appearance. Its key advantages include high tensile strength and the ability to withstand pressures up to 1,500 psi. Parachute fabric is highly suitable as the main body material for the Bebean kite, as its small pores allow it to resist wind flow. Additionally, it does not easily absorb water and dries quickly if it gets wet.

### 5. Rope;

Rope is a cord made from fiber. Some are made from plant-based fibers, while others are made from synthetic fibers. The durability of rope is unquestionable. This rope has high strength and can be used to assist with various human tasks.

### 6. Sewing Thread;

Polyester thread or cotton twine is generally used for sewing kites. Sewing thread serves as the primary material in the process of sewing the fabric covering of the Bebean kite, particularly for the three Tridatu colors. This sewing process is performed using a sewing machine.

### Discussion

Visually, the Bebean kite features elements of lines, planes, and colors. There are three types of lines: horizontal, vertical, and curved, characteristic of the Bebean design style. The planes are defined by lines of different colors. The colors found on the Bebean kite symbolize the Tridatu. Black symbolizes Lord Shiva, white symbolizes Lord Vishnu, and red symbolizes Lord Brahma. Overall, the Bebean kite represents a harmonious unity of the dynamics of social life. This symbolism is interpreted as lives that coexist side by side, soaring through the turbulent winds they encounter.

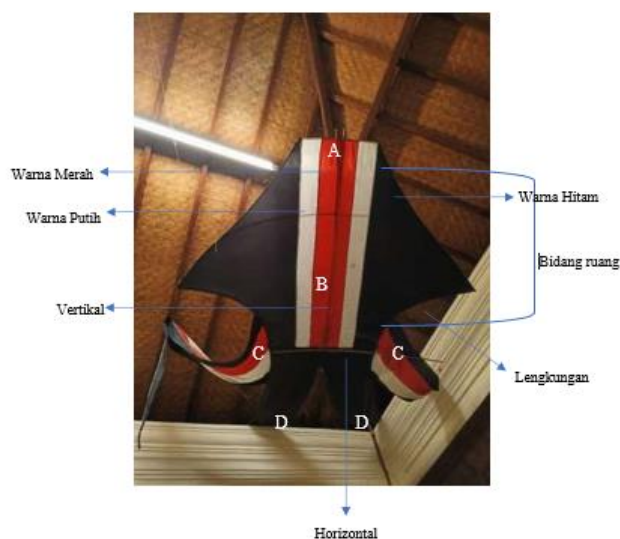


Figure 2. Bebean Kite

Bebean kites range in length from 1 meter to 4 meters. For kites flown during the festival season in Bali, larger sizes are used. As shown in Figure 2, section A is the head. Section B is the body. On the lower right and left sides are parts C, which are

elongated fins. Part D is the base, featuring two elongated tails of equal length. The complete illustration is shown in Figure 3, adapted from Wibowo (2023).



Figure 3. 2023 Bali Kite Festival

1. Edmund Burke Feldman (1994), as cited in Toelle (2015), identifies three functions of art: the personal functions of art, the social functions of art, and the physical functions of art. Here is the application of these functions to the cultural and aesthetic elements found in the Bebean kite:

2. The lines, colors, textures, and shapes found across the entire surface of the Bebean kite form a grand unity that dynamically interacts within the kite's design. Starting from the head shaped like a fish, the wide body forming an arch, the elegant fins on the right and left that flutter when hit by the wind, and a pair of long tails that complete the beauty of the fish's form. The three primary colors used in kite-making are often referred to as Tri Datu, associated with the Tri Semaya deities: Lord Shiva, the destroyer clad in black; Lord Brahma, the creator of the world clad in red; and Lord Vishnu, the preserver clad in white. In kite-flying, players often worship Lord Wayu/Bayu as the god of wind. This worship is often marked by the raising of a banner depicting Hanoman, accompanied by offerings and ceremonies. Personally, the act of flying a kite signifies paying respect to the gods as an expression of gratitude to the universe for the harvest season experienced by the Balinese people.

3. In social life, people refer to the act of flying kites as "melayang." This is connected to the story of Rare Angon. Rare Angon is believed to be the god of kites. Legend has it that during kite season or after the harvest, Rare Angon descends to earth, carrying a flute that he plays to summon the wind. Based on this legend, the activity of flying kites became popular among farmers during harvest season. Over time, the tradition of flying kites evolved. Children began to take on the role of herders while flying kites. Later, the Balinese people made this a regular

activity by holding kite festivals. There are three traditional kite shapes that are characteristic of Bali: the Bebean Kite, the Janggan Kite, and the Pecuk Kite

4. Functionally, the Bebean kite features a "Guangan" at the head. This part consists of a thin bamboo or wooden rod tied with fishing line or plastic string, forming a semicircular structure. When the wind blows, the fishing line or plastic cord produces a distinctive sound. During the kite-flying festival season, judges evaluate Bebean kites based on established criteria. The harmony of the left and right fin movements, the color combination, the balance of the body, the fan-shaped fins, the pair of tails, and the "guangan" sound are all important factors in the evaluation. The perfect physical form of the Bebean kite is an expression of respect for Rare Angon, who is believed to be the Kite God revered by the Balinese people.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis described above, it can be concluded that the Bebean kite embodies elements of Balinese culture. Through its design and structure, which work in synergy, binding one frame to another, the most prominent element is clearly the Tri Datu color scheme. This color scheme serves as a tribute to the gods and an expression of gratitude to the universe, displayed across the entire body of the Bebean kite. When the wind begins to blow strongly and lifts the Bebean kite into the air, a distinctive sound can be heard from the "guangan" section. This serves as an expression of reverence for Rare Angon, the kite god revered by the Balinese people. Flying kites is a tradition that has become an integral part of

the Balinese people's cultural customs during the harvest season. It has since become an annual event that serves as a gathering for people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Flying kites symbolizes the harmonious alignment of human social life on Earth.

## REFERENCES

- Abbasov, Iftikhar B., Van, Tszin'Bo. (2022). DESIGN SPACE FESTIVAL OF KITES. SSRN Electronic Journal <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4212893>
- Anggasana, Gabriela. (2020). ANALISIS PEMAHAMAN KONSEP MATEMATIS DAN KEMAMPUAN PROSEDURAL MENURUT KILPATRICK PADA SISWA KELAS IV SEKOLAH DASAR. [https://repository.upi.edu/52278/4/S\\_PGSD\\_1608234\\_Chapter3.pdf](https://repository.upi.edu/52278/4/S_PGSD_1608234_Chapter3.pdf)
- Creswell, John. W. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th Ed.). Sage Publications.
- Meisaroh, Siti., Widnyana, I Gusti Nyoman., Koriawan, Gede Eka Harsana. (2014). LAYANG-LAYANG BEBEAN DI DESA UNGASAN, KECAMATAN KUTA SELATAN, KABUPATEN BADUNG. *Jurnal Pendidikan Seni Rupa Undiksha*. Vol. 4 No. 1. <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/jjps/article/view/4256>
- Needham, Joseph. (1965). *Science and Civilisation in China*. Vol. 4, Part II. Cambridge University Press.
- Partanto, Pius., Al Barry, M. Dahlan. (2001). *Kamus Ilmiah Populer*. Surabaya.
- Sadsunk, Suwit. (2014). *Fabric Printing Design: An Inspiration from Thai Kites*. World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences. Vol 8, No 5.
- Satwika, I Putu Agus Eko., Ruastiti, Ni Made., Pradana, Gede Yoga Kharisma. (2025). Kites as Symbols in Balinese Karawitan Music New Creations: Deconstructing the Kite Tradition. *LEKESAN: Interdisciplinary Journal of Asia Pacific Arts*. Vol 8, No. 2, 111-127. <http://jurnal.isi-dps.ac.id/index.php/lekesan>
- Soejono, A. (1999). *Metode Penelitian: Suatu Pemikiran dan Penerapan*. Jakarta: PT Rineka Cipta.
- Suay, Juan Miguel., Teira, David. (2014). Kites: the rise and fall of a scientific object. *Nuncius. Journal of the Material and Visual History of Science*, Vol 29 No.2, 439-463. [https://brill.com/view/journals/nun/29/2/article-p439\\_6.xml](https://brill.com/view/journals/nun/29/2/article-p439_6.xml)
- Sugiyono. (2026). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D*, Cetakan ke-24. Bandung: Alfabeta
- Swandi, I Wayan., Wibawa, Arya Pageh., Sadguna, I Gde Agus Jaya. (2019). Visual Communication of Denpasar's Art and Culture Through Cartoons (Case Study in the Travel Guide Book of Denpasar City Entitled "Surviving Denpasar" Second Edition in 2012). *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, Vol. 421. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>
- Toelle, Christine G. (2015). *Fungsi Sosial Seni - Kajian Teori Feldman*. [https://www.academia.edu/35950418/Fungsi\\_Sosial\\_Seni\\_Kajian\\_Teori\\_Feldman](https://www.academia.edu/35950418/Fungsi_Sosial_Seni_Kajian_Teori_Feldman)
- Tylor, E. B. (1871). *Primitive Culture*. John Murray.
- Wibowo, Nyoman Hendra. (2023). *Festival Layangan Bali 2023*.

<https://www.antarafoto.com/id/view/2025750/festival-layangan-bali-2023>