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CHAPTER 11

PREVENTIVE CARE FOR THE DEAD: MUSIC, COMMUNITY, AND THE PROTECTION OF SOULS IN BALINESE CREMATION CEREMONIES

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Prelude

In the introduction to this book, the authors describe an overarching unity that links together the broad range of approaches, disciplinary orientations, and epistemologies encompassed by the work in its totality. They identify promotion of health and healing as a common goal of all the volume's contributors and note that the recognition of music's powerful potential in this regard is key to the purposes of every chapter. Moreover, they emphasize the primacy of a shared commitment to understanding music's role in health and healing holistically, that is, in relation to multiple and complexly overlapping domains and contexts of cultural practice and meaning.

The present chapter subscribes to all these unifying values and priorities. In so doing, it employs an approach that is arguably the most conventionally ethnomusico
cological in the book. Writing as an ethnomusicologist, I employ established methods and narrative strategies of music ethnography and interpretive anthropology to describe and analyze a specific Balinese ritual context in which music serves efficaciously to promote individual and communal well-being both in the earthly Balinese world and in metaphysical realms believed to exist beyond it.

In mapping a specific music-cultural portrait of Balinese ritual practice onto a generically Western template of preventive care as I do here, my aims are twofold: first, to enhance understanding and appreciation of how people living in a particular cultural environment use music in ritual contexts to ensure their personal, communal, and spiritual well-being; and second, to challenge established Western cultural assumptions concerning the nature and limits of preventive care in a way that stimulates new dialogue on preventive medical practice and philosophy, especially relative to salient issues in medical ethnomusicology.

Introduction

At the most fundamental level, the function of preventive medical care is defined by two principal goals: to prolong life and to improve quality of life through the prevention of illness or other afflictions. In both cases, it is generally assumed that the kind of life that is being prolonged and improved is corporeal; the ultimate goal of preventive medicine is to improve the chances of preventing death—death, that is, of the physical human body.

But what if we were to look at the practice of preventive medicine through a different lens, from an alternative ontological and epistemological perspective? What if caring for souls of the dead, rather than caring for bodies of the living, was taken to be the goal of preventive care, at least in certain contexts?

In this chapter, I approach a culture-specific case, cremation rituals that are performed by communities on the island of Bali, Indonesia, from this perspective. I posit that certain elements of the traditional Hindu-Balinese cremation ritual known as ngaben may be seen to represent a form of holistic, community-based, preventive medical care for the atma, or soul, of the deceased individual who is cremated.1 In this interpretation, the purpose of the ngaben is not only to ritually mark and honor the end of human life on earth and the passage of the atma to the afterlife but also to provide the community that performs the ritual with an opportunity to undertake a series of practical measures aimed at protecting the vulnerable atma from harm and improving its prospects for an optimal quality of afterlife existence.2 Moreover, the purpose is to provide that community with an opportunity to care for itself through the provision of these measures.

Music figures prominently in this practical course of action—this protocol of preventive care—undertaken by the community on behalf of the departing atma...
during a ngaben. One type of music in particular has an especially crucial role, indeed, several roles. This is music played on a traditional set of Balinese instruments called the gamelan beleganjur, which is a large, processional ensemble of gongs, sets of melodically tuned gongs (gong-chimes), drums, and cymbals.

The term gamelan may be roughly translated as "ensemble." The gamelan beleganjur is one of many different types of Balinese gamelan. For centuries, beleganjur music has been an indispensable part of the Hindu-Balinese ngaben ceremony. Rital participants believe that the forceful sound of music played on a gamelan beleganjur has the capacity to frighten away evil spirits intent on capturing the atmaja and preventing its successful ascent to the upper world. At the same time, the music is thought to offer inspiration and courage to the atmaja itself as it commences its arduous afterlife journey. The powerful energy of the music is also used to give strength to the carriers of the heavy cremation tower (nagadhi), whose role in protecting the atmaja is seen as crucial during the perilous process of the cremation grounds that marks the first phase of its afterlife journey. Moreover, beleganjur music is used to regulate the overall pace and energy of the procession, during which the tempo and dynamics of the music are continually adjusted in response to ritual needs. Finally, during the act of cremation itself, it is upon a ladder of beleganjur music that the atmaja is believed to begin its ascent to the upper world of gods and deified ancestors to await reincarnation in a paradise that is just like Bali but is devoid of all troubles and worries.3

My purpose in this chapter is to examine these multiple functional uses of beleganjur music performance in the preventive care of the atmaja in a Balinese ngaben through a combination of ethnographic description and a mode of interpretation informed by medical ethnomusicology. Although the focus remains specific to the Balinese case throughout, it is hoped that the present discussion will inspire thought, dialogue, and further research on broader issues in the theory and practice of medicine, medicine, and culture in cross-cultural perspectives. Toward this end, I present some possible lines of inquiry in this chapter's conclusion.

**Background Overview**

This section provides a brief introduction to Balinese music and culture. It centers specifically on aspects of Balinese religion, social structure, ritual life, and music that provide a contextual base for the discussion of beleganjur music performance as a modality of preventive care for souls of the deceased in cremation rituals (ngaben) that follows in the main portion of this chapter.

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**Bali**

Bali is a small island located roughly at the center of the Indonesian archipelago. This province (propinsi) of the Republic of Indonesia has a population of just over 3 million people, most of whom live in the densely populated central and southern portions of the island. Rice cultivation has long sustained the Balinese people, who refer to their beautiful terraced rice paddies as the "steps of the gods." Tourism is a major industry in Bali. Hundreds of thousands of tourists from elsewhere in Indonesia and from nations throughout the world visit the island each year, some attracted by Bali's natural splendors, others by its rich and widely famed religious/artistic culture.

**Agama Tirta**

The core of Bali's culture is defined by a unique religion known either as Agama Hindu (Hindu Religion) or Agama Tirta (Religion of Holy Water), Syncretizing elements of Hinduism, Buddhism, and pre-Hindu-Buddhist forms of animism and ancestor veneration, Agama Tirta is the religious faith of most Balinese people. It is a religion that is markedly different from any form of Hinduism extant in India yet shares with those forms, among other features, culturally constructed beliefs in reincarnation and cosmic notions of cosmic order. Beliefs and practices of Agama Tirta also represent the vestiges of a Hindu-Buddhist empire, the Majapahit, that thrived centuries ago on Bali's neighboring Indonesian island to the west, Java.

Today Bali is the only majority Hindu enclave in the predominantly Muslim nation of Indonesia. Indeed, Bali is the only country outside the Indian subcontinent where Hinduism is the majority faith.

**The Banjar**

Balinese society is divided into a complex matrix of intersecting social units that range from sub-village levels of social structure to large regional ones. Of special importance is the social unit of the banjar, which defines conceptions of individual and social identities and frames social, civil, and religious practice for Balinese individuals in fundamental ways.

The term banjar is usually translated as "village ward" or "hamlet," though "neighborhood organization" may be more apt. A banjar typically consists of between 50 and 500 families and is responsible for planning and producing most of the core communal, religious, and social activities of its membership (Eisenman 1990, 72-73). When health-related or other troubles befall a member of the banjar, it is often seen as the communal obligation of the banjar as a whole to contribute to that person's recovery as best it can. Public ritual of one kind or another is usually key to the effort, and the performance of gamelan music is virtually always involved. Not surprisingly, then, Balinese banjars are responsible for the creation and sponsorship of the vast majority of Bali's thousands of active gamelan performance organizations, or kecak gong (gamelan clubs), as they are known.
 Provision of cremation rites for its membership is a paramount responsibility of every banjar. In attending to the care of souls of the deceased through cremation and other mortuary rituals, the banjar community extends its obligation of doing its best to ensure health and well-being among its living membership to the realm of the departed. Approaches to medical care in Bali, preventive and curative alike, are very often based in community efforts rather than in relationships of individual health practitioners and patients.7 This is the case where care both for living people and for souls of deceased individuals is concerned.

Balinese Gamelan

Agama Tirta is a religion defined by its profuse communal ritual activity, and much of this activity is produced at the banjar level. A plethora of different forms of music, dance, dance-drama, and shadow puppet theater (wayang) animate and underscore virtually all religious rituals and ceremonies. Specific ensembles and artistic forms are associated with each type of ritual, be it a tooth-filing ceremony or a cremation.

Gamelan music is a ubiquitous presence at Hindu-Balinese rituals. As mentioned, the term gamelan refers to a music ensemble. There are many types of gamelan, but most are dominated by percussion instruments—the best known forms of gamelan feature impressive bronze hanging gongs, melodic gong-chimes, and melodic metallophones of many sizes and pitch ranges. Other forms of gamelan may feature instruments of iron, bamboo, hardwood, or other materials instead of bronze, and there is even one gamelan, the gamelan suara, that employs only voices.

In all, more than two dozen distinct types of gamelan exist on Bali alone (see Tenzier 1998). Each is linked to specific ritual, ceremonial, or social context. Java is home to many vital gamelan traditions as well, and related types of ensembles exist elsewhere in Indonesia and throughout much of Southeast Asia, from Malaysia to the Philippines.

The type of gamelan that is most closely identified with the Balinese gamelan tradition today is the magnificent gamelan gong kebyar (see Tenzier 2000). The fiery ensemble virtuosity of kebyar music has become an internationally recognized sonic signature of Balinese culture since this nontraditional musical invention of the twentieth century burst onto the scene just under a century ago (see figure 11.1).5

The Gamelan Beleganjur: Sound and Symbol

Though less well known outside of Bali than its kebyar cousin, the traditionally utilized and less glamorous gamelan beleganjur is arguably the most indispensable of all forms of Balinese gamelan.7 The term gamelan beleganjur is difficult to translate literally into English. It may be glossed as “the gamelan of people walking in a crowd in an ordered manner” (gongpe), and there is an implication of warriors or other military personnel as well (beleg or bala); I have used the translation “gamelan of walking warriors” in other publications (e.g., Baken 1999).

Gamelan beleganjur music plays a central role in the day-to-day life of Hindu-Balinese ritual, especially in the ritual processions that may be witnessed in different regions of Bali on an almost daily basis. The role of beleganjur music is particularly crucial in ngaben processions and processions associated with other Hindu-Balinese mortuary rituals.

The gamelan beleganjur consists of three main sections of instruments, each with a specific role in the overall structure of beleganjur music (see figure 11.2):

- Punctuating gongs
- Melodic gong-chime instruments
- Drums and cymbals

Twenty-one musicians typically constitute the ensemble, and in ritual contexts the performers are usually all male. The punctuating instruments, anchored by a pair of massive, knobbed gongs called the gong ageng (great gong), collectively outline what is known as the gong cycle (gongset), which serves as the music’s foundation. In beleganjur, this is typically a continuously repeating, eight-beat sequence of gong strokes called tabuh glah that is marked out on several gongs of different pitch. The two “great gongs” are identified as the female gong (gong wadon) and the
male gong (gong kuning). The female gong is tuned slightly lower than its male counterpart. This reflects participants' beliefs, in which the feminine is tied to earthwardness and the masculine to skywardness.

A simple, recurring, eight-beat melodic pattern of one gong cycle's duration provides the music's core melody layer. This core melody is called the polok (literally “trunk”). It is played on a pair of medium-sized handheld gongs called the peggang, which are tuned about a semitone apart (e.g., G4, A), and is embellished by rapid melodic figures played by four players in interlocking style on a set of four smaller tuned gongs called the reyong. These are tuned to the four pitches of the gamelan beleganjur’s unique scale, which translates approximately as the notes D, E, G4, and A.10 The peggang and reyong are the only melodic instruments used in beleganjur music, which is very limited in its melodic scope and range compared with most other forms of Balinese gamelan music.

The beleganjur ensemble is directed by its two drummers, who play intricate interlocking rhythms on a pair of double-headed drums called kendang. Like the gongs, the drums are identified as female and male, with the female tuned slightly lower in pitch than the male. The rhythmic outline of their composite drumming part is reinforced by the cymbal (penggong) section, consisting of eight players who alternate between playing unison rhythms and interlocking passages that create a continuous rhythmic stream of powerful metallic sound. Whereas the punctuating gongs are played continuously and the melodic instruments (peggang and reyong) likewise for the most part, the drums and cymbals come in and out of the texture at different points.11

In its totality, the gamelan beleganjur, both in its instrumentation and the collective “voice” of its sound, may be interpreted as a symbolic representation of Hindu-Balinese conceptions and ideals of cosmic order. In this interpretation, the continually recurring, steady, and essentially unchanging gong cycle represents the constancy of time and the ordered nature of the universe on a macrocosmic level. In contrast, the faster moving, interdependent, interlocking patterns and melodies played on the drums, cymbals, and reyong symbolize a more variable, microcosmic, human dimension of temporal and spatial organization. Beleganjur music (like gamelan music generally) is defined in the interaction of these two distinct but interrelated planes of spatial/temporal order as made manifest in musical sound. Hindu-Balinese worldviews regarding the design of physical human form, the interdependent relations that exist between people, and relations between the earthly world of human life and the larger cosmic, spiritual realms that enframe it take similar forms. Furthermore, in this interpretation, the power of beleganjur music to prevent harm to souls and better their prospects for achieving a state of healthful well-being in the afterlife is tied to the music’s capacity to simultaneously encode and influence the shape of a balanced cosmic order, as we shall now explore.

Battling for Souls: Beleganjur Music in Ngaben Processions

Beleganjur music has traditionally served as a music of battle. It is believed that during the precolonial era of Balinese monarchies (before 1906), beleganjur groups accompanied the armies of rival Balinese kings into battle, inspiring the troops and striking fear in the hearts of their enemies with their foreboding sound and power. But beleganjur is a music of battle in a different sense as well. Today, as in the past, it is used by Balinese communities as a weapon in their battles against malevolent spirit forces such as bhutas and layus, who pose a perpetual threat to human life and to the balance of cosmic order upon which the integrity of the Balinese universe of ideas and beliefs rests. In a ngaben, the intensity of the battle between the community of ritual participants and their evil spirit adversaries reaches fever pitch during the procession from the home of the deceased to the location where the cremation itself will take place (the kuburan, or cremation grounds).
The ngaben procession route is a battleground upon which is waged a war for control over the fate of the atma of the individual who is being cremated. At stake in this battle is nothing less than preservation of the balance of the Hindu-Balinese cosmic order.

In the Hindu-Balinese worldview, the essential feature that distinguishes well-being—physical, emotional, or spiritual—from its absence is the existence of a state of balance throughout all levels of the cosmic order. Balinese cosmology posits a universe of three interconnected worlds, the triloka. The earthly world where human beings live is depicted as the middle world of the triloka. Deities and deified ancestors inhabit the upper world, where they are believed to watch over their earthly counterparts and return acts of human homage paid to them with benevolence and protection. The lower world is thought to be inhabited by evil spirits of many different kinds, and these malevolent beings are characterized as moving frequently and fluidly between their underworld habitats and the earthly middle world. Whereas the gods and deified ancestors appear as descending to the middle world to do humans good, the malevolent spirits appear as ascending to it to do them harm. If they succeed to too great a degree, it is feared that not only human lives but the entire balanced order of the cosmos will be imperiled.

The likelihood of this happening is thought to be greatest at moments when human beings and souls are in flux, crisis, transition, and liminality. At no point is the threat perceived to be greater than when the human soul, the atma, has passed on from the corporeal body but has not yet been liberated from its earthly bonds through cremation. This is understood to be the state of the atma during the ngaben procession. It is the desire of the banjar community, and presumably of the divine denizens of the upper world as well, that the atma ascend safely to the upper world, either to await reincarnation or to achieve final liberation from the reincarnation cycle altogether.

Blattis, layaks, and other lower world representatives, however, are feared by ngaben participants to have other designs on the vulnerable atma. Members of the banjar presume that these underworld forces will seize opportunistically upon any weakness, any chink in the armor of sanctity or ritual propriety, to capture and control the unliberated atma as it prepares to receive its crematory rites. If this misfortune occurs, it is feared that the atma will either be doomed to the underworld or may continue to dwell as an unliberated, tortured soul among the living in the earthly middle world, haunting its former community and serving as an agent of malice and destruction. For the sake of the atma, the maintenance of the cosmic order, and its own self-interest, the banjar community summons every resource at its disposal to avoid the possibility of this disastrous outcome. It engages in a coordinated effort to optimize the afterlife prospects of the soul of the departed through the employment of an established ritual protocol of preventive care. The performance of banjar music is key to this protocol on multiple levels.

Ritual Preparations and Early Stages of the Procession

The rituals of ngaben commence the night before the day of cremation with the striking of a kulal (large wooden slit-drum), which is used to inform all residents of the banjar that they are to assemble at the deceased’s home compound (nungah). There the body of the deceased is ritually prepared for cremation by a high priest (pandhula), who, with gamelan music being played in the background (though not usually on a gamelan beleganjur), summons the gods and deified ancestors and asks them to provide instructions on how to properly carry out the ceremony.

All members of the host banjar, together with invited relatives and guests from outside the banjar, assemble the following morning at the deceased’s home compound. After a final series of ritual preparations, the procession to the cremation grounds (kaburan) begins while the morning is still young. Music played on a gamelan beleganjur becomes the central focus of energy at the moment the procession is about to begin. At that point, the beleganjur musicians, led by the two drummers, assemble on the road immediately outside the deceased’s home. They launch into a highly charged musical opening (anu-anu) that sets the tone for the proceedings to follow. The music energizes the assembled crowd of banjar members and guests and serves as a signal to all who are taking part in the procession to move to the street. Once under way, the performance of the beleganjur ensemble continues uninterrupted for the duration of the procession, which may cover a route of more than a mile and take upwards of an hour to complete. Its performance helps integrate the community that is working on behalf of the atma, and as we shall see, the music is played also with the intent of integrating and mediating between the different worlds of the Hindu-Balinese cosmology whose various "representatives" are implicated in the atma’s fate before, during, and after the act of cremation.

Next, the body or skeletal remains of the deceased, wrapped in a very long white cloth (lampanon), is carried out and placed in the cremation tower (wadah) amid much ritual activity. The tower’s multistoried construction symbolizes the lower, middle, and upper worlds of the participants’ cosmological perspective, with the uppermost tier representing the upper world of gods and ancestors to which it is hoped that the atma will ultimately ascend (see Eiseman 1980, 1986; DeVale 1990). The beleganjur group lines up immediately behind the tower to ensure maximum positive impact on the proceedings. Via the music they perform, the players of the group will serve as key members of the preventive care team that is working on behalf of the atma (see figure 11.3).

At the front of the procession, women gracefully balancing colorful trays of fruit on their heads are followed by men carrying sacred daggers (kris) and other heirlooms. The rest of the processional participants take their proper places either in front of the tower or behind the beleganjur group. Anywhere from a few dozen to more than a thousand people overall may be involved in the procession, depending
on the size of the banjar and the stature of the individual (or individuals, in group cremations) being cremated. Other types of gamelan that can be played processionally (e.g., gamelan angklung) may be included in the procession as well, but the gamelan beleganjur is the only one that is regarded as essential.

Once the wrapped body of the deceased is securely in place, the tower is lifted off the ground by a group of men. The tower may be quite small, requiring as few as 9 or 10 carriers, or it may be massive, needing 20 or more handlers and sometimes as many as 100. The procession officially commences with the hoisting of the heavy tower onto the shoulders of its carriers. A moment before this occurs, the beleganjur group breaks into a musical style of great energy and intensity; the power of the music both symbolizes and inspires strength in the tower bearers for their difficult task. Shouting by the crowd in response to the rocking and tilting of the tower as the men hoist it up onto their shoulders fortifies the sonic energy of the beleganjur music. The procession proper now gets under way as the tower is carried horizontally toward the cremation grounds, buoyed by the sound of beleganjur (see figure 11.4).

The beleganjur group maintains its position immediately to the rear of the tower throughout the procession. This enables the lead drummer to carefully monitor the overall tempo of the procession and especially the mood and energy levels of the tower carriers. Musical tempo and intensity are adjusted in accordance with the situational needs he observes. The ngaben procession should move along at a relatively quick pace, so the lead drummer is especially attentive and responsive to signs of fatigue or lethargy among the processional participants. Any perceived lag

prompts more energetic playing from the ensemble. Conversely, if the pace of the procession becomes too fast, or if signs of overexcitement become evident among participants, then a contrastingly slower, less intense style of music is used to calm things down. Like a physician monitoring the heart rate of a patient and prescribing a protocol for its improvement and regulation, the lead beleganjur drummer monitors the pulse of the community in a ngaben procession and uses the performance of the beleganjur music he directs to facilitate maintenance of its optimal condition.

**Preventive Care of the Atma during Crossroads Battles**

It is at crossroads along the procession route that the performance of beleganjur music is thought to be most crucial in preventing harm to the atma and facilitating
strength and healthfulness for both the atma itself and the ritual participants dedicated to promoting its well-being. In other words, these are the places where the greatest preventive care efforts are put forth by the banjar community on behalf of the atma.

At every crossroads along the route, the tower must be rapidly spun around in a circle at least three times. The purposes of this turning are twofold. First, it is believed that it disorients the atma and prevents it from attempting to escape from the tower to return home, where it might haunt and harass surviving family members. Second, it is believed to confuse and deter potentially meddlesome evil spirits. Crossroads are thought by ritual participants to be the prime gathering places for bhutas and loyas and thus the locations where they are most likely to attempt to invade the tower and endeavor to capture the atma. Therefore, special preventive measures against potential harm are taken; the spinning of the tower is one such measure. Its utility rests on the belief that bhutas and loyas can only travel in straight lines and are therefore likely to be confused and deterred by the tower’s turning.

Turning the heavy, cumbersome tower is a difficult task, however, and it is a job that must be done with great gusto if the desired outcome on behalf of the atma is to be achieved. To garner sufficient strength and energy to meet the challenge, the tower carriers feed off the music furnished by the beleganjur group located immediately behind them. The group plays at maximum tempo and volume to optimize the musical/energetic effect on behalf of the tower bearers, and the rhythms of their music become especially driving and forceful. A very common type of rhythm for these crossroads battles is malpal, meaning “to fight or come into conflict” (Barber 1979, 1376). In malpal, one drummer and half the cymbal section pound out a steady stream of evenly spaced beats while the other drummer and the remaining four cymbal players answer each main beat with an offbeat accent. This straight, propulsive rhythm creates an effect of aggressive force that contrasts with the style of beleganjur music played elsewhere during the procession. Its intensity is generally greater than that of even the music played at the very beginning of the procession, when the tower is first hoisted.

Beyond inspiring and strengthening the tower bearers, powerful rhythms like malpal played at crossroads are believed to have a special capacity to work directly on the bhutas and loyas. It is thought that these evil spirits actually find the sound and intensity of such rhythms played on a gamelan beleganjur by their human opponents to be frightening, and the music is thus performed to drive the bhutas and loyas away. It is at this level of function that the performance of beleganjur music is most directly used as a preventive tool in the care of the atma. By keeping the bhutas and loyas away from the atma out of fear, beleganjur music is believed to prevent exposure to the most potent agents of “disease” to which the soul of a deceased individual may be subjected.

A third level of beleganjur functionality also comes into play, especially during the crossroads battles of ngaben processions. In their perceived ability to ward off evil spirits, powerful beleganjur rhythms like malpal are performed with the intention of decreasing the likelihood of the atma’s exposure to sources of harm, as we have seen, but they also function in a capacity more akin to boosting the atma’s atertile “immune system.” The music is believed to embolden the atma and thereby fortify both its resolve and ability in confronting the challenges it faces. This is of key importance at dangerous locations like crossroads, where the soul must be especially strong if it is to overcome its own fears and successfully confront any bhutas or loyas or other agents of malevolent purpose that manage to break through the protective shield of the beleganjur music itself.

The performance of beleganjur music at crossroads during ngaben processions, then, is multifunctional in the preventive care of the atma. On one level, it aids the individuals most directly responsible for the atma’s safe delivery to the cremation ground, the tower carriers, to perform their job at an optimal level of effectiveness. On a second level, it is used to directly battle the primary sources of affliction that it is feared might bring harm to the atma should they come into contact with it. At a third level, it is believed to strengthen the atma’s own capacity to successfully contend with any destructive agents it may encounter. Thus through its collateral benefits, its protective role relative to agents of “disease,” and its “immunity-boosting” function on behalf of the atma before the act of cremation, beleganjur music plays a key role in the preventive care protocol of the ngaben procession.

**A Musical Ladder to the Upper World**

When the ngaben procession reaches the cremation grounds, the beleganjur group concludes its performance with a climactic passage played just after the tower is lowered to the ground. The musicians are then escorted to a shaded area across the field from where the crematory burning (wayang) will occur and enjoy a brief respite after their arduous journey. Meanwhile, the body is removed from the tower, and the white lancinggar cloth is cut away, exposing whatever is left of the deceased person for a last glimpse by family members and others in attendance. The body is then placed in a sarcophagus together with sacred objects believed to possess magical powers that will assist the atma on its journey. The sarcophagus is often in the form of a black or white bull (for men) or a cow (for women). Everything is covered in a “magic cloth,” the ranah kejeng, and then doused with several types of holy water (tirta) in a series of offerings directed by a priest. The body is then set ablaze, either atop a wood fire or by a huge kerosene blowtorch.

As soon as the burning commences, the beleganjur group begins to play again, now from a seated rather than a standing position. The music helps set the proper mood for the occasion and also is believed to accompany the departing soul on its journey.

Compared with the processional performance that precedes it, the music played now is slow in tempo and soft in volume, creating a calm, tranquil mood. Some Balinese
characterize this music metaphorically as a ladder upon which the atma, having achieved the first stage of its liberation from the bonds of earthly life and the precarious liminality of death before cremation, may finally begin its ascent to the upper world. Here again, we find music operating in an important functional role relative to the care and treatment of the atma. Earlier in the ritual, belganjur was used to motivate, coordinate, and regulate the members of the banjar’s community care team; to directly attack and drive away bhutas, lepakas, and other destructive agents that are thought to possess the power to cause the atma terrible afflictions; and to improve the atma’s ability to protect itself from harm by boosting its immunity, as it were. Now its role becomes more directional and guiding in nature. By following the pathway laid out in sound by this transcendent belganjur music, the atma is believed to gain good counsel on the proper course to follow in pursuing a desired state of perpetual well-being in its afterlife journey.

**Conclusion and Future Possibilities**

Participants in a ngaben believe that the final liberation of the atma will not occur until weeks after the cremation (possibly even years later), following the successful completion of a postcremation purification ritual called memukur (see Bakan 1999, 79–77). Nonetheless, the importance of this culture-specific ritual cannot be overestimated, since it provides at least provisional resolution to the ambiguity and anguish associated with death. By caring for the atma in the ways previously described, the banjar community implements a protocol of communal preventive care on behalf of the deceased. At the same time, this protocol is considered essential to the well-being of the community and to the maintenance of a state of cosmological order and balance.

As we have seen, the performance of belganjur music is a major component of this ritualpreventive care protocol and functions on multiple levels to ensure the best possible outcome of a ngaben. It is played by ritual participants for the purposes of frightening and lancing off evil spirits, emboldening and fortifying the departing atma, strengthening the tower carriers, regulating the pace and energy of the procession for optimal ends, and accompanying the atma during its departure from this world. In all these ways, belganjur music plays a key role, directly or indirectly, in promoting and providing for the atma’s continued good health and vitality through a crucial life/afterlife passage. Its performance thus represents an important aspect of the local ritual protocol for community-based preventive care of souls thought to be in transition between this life and the next.

From a culture-specific standpoint, examining the performance and functional roles of belganjur music in ngaben rituals offers an interesting and revealing case study of how models of religious ritual and medical practice may be seen to intersect in the praxis of culture. Additionally, it provides an example of a context in which medical priorities, which in the West would typically apply exclusively to “the living”—in this case, those of preventive medical care—take on relevance and significance in the ritual care of people who have already passed beyond this life. Furthermore, we see in this example a model of community-based preventive care involving music in a prominent role that potentially has relevance for scholars and practitioners across multiple disciplines who are interested in understanding links that exist between music and healing cross-culturally.

In a broader view, the specific case addressed here potentially is relevant to even larger issues in the cross-cultural study and practice of music, culture, and healing. For example, it invites us to recognize that the benefits of preventive care for the living need not necessarily be limited to practices of care and treatment dedicated to the living. Regardless of whether the intended benefits of preventive care for the souls of the dead described in this chapter are actually realized in the afterlives of Balinese atma (let alone whether they can be empirically assessed through research), benefits of furnishing such care that are experienced by the care providers—that is, by members of the communities who participate in rituals like ngaben, musically or otherwise—are real, and these are certainly subject to research-based evaluation. For Balinese people, caring for the souls of their departed in communal rituals isngaben is of central importance to their ongoing efforts to maintain strong bonds of solidarity within their communities. It provides all members of a banjar with a shared sense of purpose and the opportunity to make productive contributions to their community. Whether serving as a musician, as a tower carrier, or in some other role, every individual is invested in the community’s effort and is valued for what he or she contributes to it. Mortuary rituals in other world cultures, including Western ones, exhibit similar features of concerted communal effort to prevent harm and to better “life prospects” for both the deceased and the communities they leave behind, and as in the Balinese case investigated here, music often figures prominently in the pursuit of these goals. There is thus significant potential for the cross-cultural study of “preventive care models” in mortuary rituals in medical ethnosemiology and allied disciplines, and for investigating their real and perceived benefits on behalf of both departed souls and the living human beings who provide for their care.

Studies such as this one also provide opportunities for cross-cultural adaptations in applied clinical contexts of medical care. Beyond learning about how Balinese people use music in significant ways in their approach to preventive care on behalf of souls of the dead, we might also learn valuable, adaptable lessons from this approach. Belganjur music may be unique, but the productive functional purposes to which it is directed in Balinese mortuary rituals such as ngaben are in many ways not like many other musical idioms in the world, belganjur music is perceived within its cultural context to have the capacity to inspire a sense of security among the vulnerable and the uncertain, galvanize and consolidate communities in their collective efforts, and bring courage to those who must contend with challenges well beyond their control.
It is, in short, music that helps people get along, literally and figuratively. On this level, the issue is not so much whether the people under consideration are living or dead, whether they are flesh-and-blood individuals or departed souls. Rather, the point is that the music is used to help people help each other, and in very practical and functional ways. Although beleganjur music of the type heard in a Balinese ngaben may or may not have any transferable potential to clinical care contexts in other cultural settings, the ways in which the music is purposefully used by Balinese people in their communal efforts to prevent harm and promote healthfulness among their own may prove very instructive in other situations. In our current research, for example, my colleagues and I are working with the application of Balinese-derived social-medical-musical models closely related to what I have described in this chapter in the development of a medical ethnomusicology program devoted to improving quality of life and social interaction skills among children with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) (Bakan et al. 2008). The directed use of music to foster security, build community, regulate energy levels, and inspire strength and courage that I have observed in the Balinese beleganjur world suggests great potential in terms of transferable benefits for people with ASD. 15

To conclude, we have explored in this chapter how a particular kind of music performed in a particular cultural context is perceived to play a significant role in preventing harm and promoting health. In other words, we have seen how this music serves the purposes of a culture-specific mode of preventive medical practice, albeit one principally dedicated to the care of souls in the afterlife. Though the case is culture and context specific, the lessons to be learned from it are broader. What Balinese communities do with and perceive in beleganjur music when they are performing it in ritual contexts such as the ngaben offers insights into the study of relationships between music and medical care more generally. It also provides a model of functional use of music directed toward achievement of specific goals that has transferable potential. It is my hope that this study will inspire new lines of thought, inquiry, and practice in medical ethnomusicology and related fields. There are souls everywhere who need help, care, inspiration, and protection from harm. Balinese communities, like communities everywhere, have their ways of providing such help, and it is my conviction that all of us can learn much from their example.

NOTES

1. The focus of this chapter is on cremation ceremonies (ngaben) in which only a single individual is cremated. It should be noted, however, that group ngaben in which several, possibly many, individuals are cremated on a single occasion also are common in Bali.

2. The word arama, "soul," is used in Bali to refer to the souls of both living and deceased individuals. Here, however, it implies "soul of the deceased" unless otherwise indicated.

3. In Agama Tirta and other forms of Hinduism, it is believed the souls who have achieved the most exalted levels of purity may be released from the reincarnation cycle of life-death-rebirth altogether and achieve a permanent transcendent state called moksha.

4. Though a large majority of Balinese practice the Agama Tirta religion, there are also Balinese communities classified as Bali Aga who do not. The Bali Aga carry on traditional, spiritual practices and cultural life-ways that are believed to predate the arrival of Hinduism (and also Buddhism) in Bali. Additionally, some Balinese communities are Muslim. This chapter deals exclusively with Hindu-Balinese, Agama Tirta cultural practices.

5. Although communal care is very important in Bali and is stressed here, the Balinese culture of medicine and healing also includes many health-care practitioners who work one-on-one with individual clients. Balinese people who are seeking individualized health care may consult a variety of specialists, ranging from high-end lay priests thought to possess special healing powers to charismatic healers (e.g., holari), body workers who specialize in massage and traditional herbal remedies, and medical doctors and other health professionals trained in Western allopathic medicine.

6. All photos are by the author with the exception of figure 11.1, by Michael Redig.

7. In addition to the traditional (kuntilan), inherently functional approach to beleganjur music dealt with in this chapter, Bali also has been host since 1988 to a more display-performance-oriented, virutious style of beleganjur music called komodi beleganjur that is featured in formal music contexts. Indeed, the context style has influenced the more traditional style in most regions of Bali to the point that the older, purely functional style of performance described here has become increasingly rare. For more information on komodi beleganjur and the complex syncretism of traditionalism and modernity that influences the contemporary culture of beleganjur music, see Bakan 1990, 2007.

8. Among the most important of these other mortuary rituals is memukar, a ritual purification ceremony for the arama that is performed weeks, sometimes years, after the cremation itself. It is not until the completion of memukar that the arama achieves its full liberation. For more information on memukar and the role of beleganjur music in this ritual, see Bakan 1990, 75–77.

9. Since the mid-1990s, a number of women's beleganjur groups have been established in Bali (see Bakan 1999, 24–37). These groups usually play in demonstration performance contexts rather than in traditional ritual contexts such as ngaben processions. However, I have heard some reports of instances in which women perform with beleganjur groups in ritual contexts (though I have never witnessed this personally).

10. The tuning system of the gamelan beleganjur is a four-tone derivative of the five-tone system called saba selas employed in gamelan gong kebyar and certain other types of gamelan. Such selas, in turn, is abstracted from a seven-tone system called pelog that is associated with older forms of Balinese gamelan like the gamelan gong kebyar and gamelan Semar pegulingan, as well as with certain Javanese gamelan tunings. For an accessible introduction to tuning systems (kata) in Balinese gamelan music, see Tenzer 1998, pp. 31–59.

11. For detailed discussion and visual and musical illustrations of instrumentation, structure, and form in traditional beleganjur music, see Bakan 1990, chap. 1.

12. In some cases, the body has already decomposed before cremation as a result of having been buried underground for a lengthy period. If only the bones remain when the body is finally exhumed, these are cremated.

13. See also chapter 19 by Koren et al. in this volume for a discussion of key features of the underlying philosophical orientation for this project.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER 12

THE APPLICATION OF HOOD’S NINE LEVELS TO THE PRACTICE OF MUSIC THERAPY

MICHAEL ROHRBACHER

PRELUDE

Ethnomusicology and music therapy are modern-day disciplines with roots that reach into the far past and share themes common to music and healing. This study seeks to systematically link ethnomusicology and music therapy by using ethnomusicological research methods to describe music therapy as practiced at a residential institution for persons with developmental disabilities located in the northeastern United States. Although my education, training, and professional activities include both ethnomusicology and music therapy, my viewpoint for this study was that of an ethnomusicologist. Over the 3-month period of field research for this project, my interaction with those in the institution, including administrators, music therapy staff, and residents, was based on the use of field methods that included observation and interview. I consciously chose to maintain the perspective of an observer and not actively engage in music therapy sessions as a participant or coleader. My background as a music therapist and music therapy educator, however, was instrumental in understanding the music therapy processes observed and the music therapists’ perspectives on their work. In turn, my education and training as