

## **When Ritual Becomes Event: Conflicting Ideas about the Place of Religion in Modernity**

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In many parts of the world a transformation of ritual practices is taking place in order to meet the requirements of a modern religion. This transformation goes hand in hand with a standardization of ritual practices and a rationalization of religious beliefs. Frequently, ritual practices are either reinterpreted as profane cultural events or entirely suspended, when they are not compatible with the revealed scriptures. As a consequence, religiously defined borders separate social groups which otherwise are linked by a shared ethos as expressed, for example, in shared ritual practices and mixed festive events.

This paper takes Central Indonesia (Java, Bali, Lombok), one of the most densely populated areas in the world, as an ethnographic example to discuss the reinterpretation of ritual practices in the light of the concept of a modern religion. Particular reference is made to the Lingsar Festival (*Pujawali Lingsar*) in Lombok, where, in a variety of ritual performances, Hindus and Muslims, Balinese and Sasak emphasize, what connects and what separates them as distinctive ethnic and religious groups. Ambivalence and competition find their visible expression in a symbolic battle between them, which is settled with rice cakes (*Perang Topat*). The conflicting interpretations of this mock war as sacred ritual or profane event reveal different concepts of the place of religion in modern society, which are central to this paper.