

Women and girls kneel with hands held high in prayer at temple festival

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Women and girls kneel with hands held high in prayer at an Odalan temple festival. One praying woman and girl, dressed in various shades of red with flowers in their long pinned back hair, are seen with their thumbs held up near their foreheads as they pray. Parts of other praying women attired in colorful formal dress are visible in the background, kneeling in lines. Odalan are calendrical festivals held at temples every 210 days. Traditional Balinese calendars are depicted with beautifully illustrated images, either painted on cloth or etched on lontar palms. The calendrical system is logical but unfamiliar to those of us used to the Gregorian calendar. The Balinese calendar tracks seven-day weeks (and a variety of other length weeks) that are ordered into a thirty-five day "month." Six of these months of 30 seven-day weeks make a 210-day Balinese "year," when the Odalan festival is held. Sometimes Odalan are described like "birthday parties" for temples. Because there are thousands of temples on Bali, there are Odalan ceremonies occurring somewhere on most days. Some are elaborate, while others are more simple for minor local temples. Women and girls spend many hours making offerings that are carried to the temple and blessed by a priest. Then the offering, from which the gods take the essence during prayers, is carried home for the family or neighbors to eat.



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