

The Wedding of Koming and Kadek

When the invitation from Koming's parents arrived John and I both knew that this was an occasion we would both love to share having known Koming since she was a shy teenager and seen her grow into a poised and confident young woman, and having met Kadek on our last visit to Pondok Saraswati .It was just not possible for us both to go ,and so it was that on the 27th of October I found myself aboard an Air Paradise flight headed for Bali.

A pleasant surprise was the chance at the booking in desk at Perth to upgrade from economy to business class for just \$75 and on arrival at Ngurah Rai airport there was a smiling Nyoman to meet me.



For me Koming's wedding started at ten o'clock on the 29th October however for most of her relatives and friends the proceedings started well before this. For days they had been preparing the food to feed 200 guests as well as make all the necessary offerings.

Nyoman had sent a car to Pondok to collect Putu, her niece, and Made Indah, Putu's baby daughter, and me, to take us to Teges. Nyoman's village and the place of the wedding] Putu was done up in all her finery and looked beautiful . Not being able to fit into a Kebaya, I was wearing one of Nyoman's best sarongs and sash and a plain blue top, a bit dull but passable for the occasion .

The day before the wedding I was asked did I possess a camera. I had a camera, but it was just a "point and press "and I'm not the greatest photographer in the world. I took the camera with me, as requested, which was just as well ,as I became the official photographer for the day.

When we arrived at Teges the compound was decorated and the Bale was arranged as an altar, the reds and gold's of the cloth and piled up offerings a sight to behold.

Nyoman took me into the house where the bridal couple was being dressed. The bride and groom were being prepared by a professional make-up artist. Their robes were hired for the occasion and again dark red and gold were the dominant colours.

Kadek comes from the North Coast of Bali , a village called Tajekula, so we had to wait for the guests from Tajekula to arrive. In the meantime refreshments were served to all the people present.

Of course everyone was dressed in their ceremonial dress, with pastel colours being favoured by the ladies.



I was encouraged to start using my camera, and at first I was a bit shy and very careful not to offend anyone by taking a picture if it wasn't required, but everyone encouraged me to take one from here, and another from there, that I began to feel like the "official" photographer.

Three priests arrived and arranged themselves in the space that was provided for them on the front verandah of Koming's father's house, in the middle of the bridal party with Kadek's male relatives on their left and Koming's male relatives on their right side. I was told later that these priests were Pemangku and not of the absolute highest order, had they been Brahmin and Pedande, the ceremony would have to be much more elaborate with higher ceremony, and a lot more expensive not always necessary for a wedding.

At this stage the bridal couple had come out of the house and mingled, greeting their guests, they looked wonderful in their official robes.

Koming wore a very elaborate and heavy head dress made from gold leaf behind which, was a wreath of frangipani, fastened in her hair, her dress was strapless with a sash over one shoulder that fastened in the back.

Kadek was in the male version of a wedding costume with, of course, the traditional Kris on his back.

Their faces were carefully made up, in like fashion to a Balinese dance performance, and they looked as though they'd stepped out of an ancient Hindu painting.

The purpose of this part of the ceremony seemed to be the signing of contracts in the presence of the male relatives, which took about 20 mins.

After this came the official blessing with all the usual Balinese accoutrements, incense, holy water, flowers and food, carried out by Koming's eldest female relative.

The next stage was in the house temple, taking leave of the house hold Gods and the brides parents. Koming, her mother and father, knelt on the tikar [mat], this was also the first entry of Kadek's mother into the ceremony. Parental protection was taken from Koming by removal of the umbrellas in the house temple, which sheltered her while she was in her parents care, at this, Kadek's mother took her place on the tikar Koming's parents knelt on her side and Kadek's mother on his side, to show that the bride was moving from one family to another.

The priests had also moved into the house temple, and with some female relatives started a chant and continued with the blessings. This was quite a solemn and poignant passage, which brought a lump to my throat.

The Bride and Groom took their place on the Bale for another short ceremony ,with me being continually encouraged to take more photos and told “over here you’ll get a good shot” or “you must take this”.

Food was the next thing, and having been in catering, I was very impressed how quickly and efficiently 200 people were fed. It went like clockwork.

No sooner had everyone been fed than the trek North to Tajekula started Cars arrived and all those who were going over the mountains climbed into the cars and we started the two hour long trip, via Kintamani.

Tradition decreed that Koming’s parents would no longer join her as they had already parted from their daughter.

The compound in Tajekula was easily recognised by the decorated entry, and here more ceremonies took place, rather tending to the Indian Hindu style, as I was told , with exchanges of floral leis. etc.

There were about 100 guests at these ceremonies, again presided over by 3 priests and a lady [priest helper]. Upon arrival refreshments were served coffee tea and cakes and after these ceremonies a meal.

As in Teges the meal consisted of, sate, chicken curry, lawar, young banana plant stew rice and krupuk, followed by fruit.

A minor disaster was averted when I ran out of film, but with the help of a few ‘experts’ the camera was reloaded, and I re-commenced my ‘paparazzi’ snapping with a sneaky feeling of power, particularly since no one seemed reluctant to have their picture taken, and happily posed any time.

5.30 pm and for most of the guests this was the finish of all the proceedings, not however for Koming whose crown had become very heavy by then, and Kadek, as they had to go to Siririt about 30kms to the West of Lovina, to introduce Koming to Kadek’s ancestors. They did not return to Tajekula until 12 o’clock that night!

The Ubud contingent went back over the mountain, which by then was shrouded in fog, arriving back in Pondok at 7.30 and certainly I was very happy to have a nice hot shower a cup of coffee and a relaxing evening watching the fireflies from my balcony contemplating a rare and unforgettable experience... a Balinese wedding.