

THE QUEST FOR LIFE VIOLENCE AND ORDER IN 19TH CENTURY BALI

Henk Schulte Nordholt

Centre for Asian Studies - Amsterdam

IKHTISAR

Negara di Bali pada zaman penjajahan Belanda digambarkan sebagai suatu kerajaan yang tersegmentasi. Dalam sistem tersebut terdapat tata cara hierarkis ganda. Di satu pihak ada hubungan yang bercorak vertikal antara para bangsawan dengan pengikut-pengikut mereka. Di lain pihak ada pula hubungan langsung dan penting yang bersifat keagamaan antara pura desa dan pura kerajaan. Melalui upacara-upacara, tata hierarkis biasanya dijalankan, namun hanya pemimpin-pemimpin yang kuat (dengan banyak pengikut) yang sanggup melakukannya. Sistem politik yang demikian selalu terancam oleh adanya konflik menahun serta berbagai bencana alam. Dalam hubungan tersebut, upacara-upacara kerajaan tidak bisa sepenuhnya dimengerti dalam hal 'teater' dan 'kebanggaan status'. Adanya perpecahan terstruktur tersebut, maka negara di Bali pada abad ke-19, mewujudkan suatu bahan studi yang tidak pernah habis-habisnya.

INTRODUCTION

The pre-colonial state in (Southeast) Asia has received much scholarly attention in the past decade. In most of the recent publications well-established ideas and conventional analytical categories are challenged and replaced by new conceptions and different approaches¹⁾. In comparison with some decades ago, the segmentary nature of the pre-colonial political systems is much more emphasized²⁾. In connection with this fragmented representation of the political system a regional perspective was developed in order to trace the dynamic interactions between royal centre and locality³⁾. Besides a new conceptualization and a different approach, the role of royal rituals has received much attention⁴⁾. Rituals not only legitimized power relationships once they were established, but were also essential in processes of pre-colonial state formation.

- 1) See for a summary Bently 1986, and for a new conceptualisation of the pre-colonial order in Southeast Asia Tambiah 1985a. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Conference on Balinese Studies, July 1988 in Den Pasar. I would like to thank the participants of that conference and professor Jim Fox for their helpful comments. A grant from the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Amsterdam and the Dutch Organisation for Scientific Research enabled me to write the present article during a stay at the Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University, where I enjoyed the hospitality of the Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History from September till November 1989.
- 2) See for instance Southall 1988.
- 3) See also Wolters 1982.
- 4) See especially Greetz 1980.

Power is to a large extent an abstract phenomenon and power relationships are not always visible. In order to manifest himself as a central power holder, the king had to make his power visible in texts, architecture, and rituals. This means that the symbols that were created and used by the centre were not merely decorative illustrations of royal power, but the very concrete building blocks of it⁵⁾.

The island of Bali offers ample opportunities to make a contribution to the above mentioned discussion, since Bali is world wide known for the richness of its rituals. The aim of this paper is to give an interpretation of the 19th century Balinese *negara*. In section 1 I will briefly summarize the history of the South Balinese *negara* Mengwi during the 18th and 19th centuries, and the qualities of one of its most famous leaders⁶⁾. Then I will sketch in section 2 the way in which the *negara* Mengwi was organized around the middle of the 19th century. Especially the very fragmented nature of this organization will be emphasized. The rituals of the *negara* cannot be fully understood in terms of theatre and status pride⁷⁾. Instead, I will argue in section 3 that the never ending quest for hierarchy in 19th century Bali was a dramatic quest for life.

THE NEGARA MENGWI 1700 – 1891

Origin

After the fall of the old royal centre of Gelgel in 1650 new dynasties arose all over Bali. After several decades of warfare an unstable balance was established in which the second king of Mengwi emerged as one of the strongest leaders. His name was Gusti Agung Made Alangkajeng. His road to power was paved with numerous bloody contests : again and again he was forced to prove his prowess on the battlefields. At the same time he sought to legitimize his rule by linking his kingship to the historic Javanese kingdom of Majapahit (1292 – 1520). This was illustrated by the pilgrimage that Gusti Agung Made Alangkajeng organized to East Java in 1729 – 1730.

Entourage and Circle

The power of the king depended centrally upon his ability to attract a large following. As long as he was surrounded by a loyal entourage at the centre he could win control over wider circles of followers⁸⁾. The

5) See also Hoerber Rudolph 1987 : 742.

6) This paper is based on my Ph.D. thesis (1988) in which the history of Mengwi between 1700 and 1940 is constructed and the political system in Bali during the precolonial and the colonial period is analysed.

7) See C. Geertz 1980.

8) See on the concept of entourage and circle L. Hanks 1975.

relationship between the king and his followers was in many ways one of fictitious kinship. In the royal entourage the brahman priest (or *purohita*) was seen as 'older brother' of the king. This priest officiated at public rituals and legitimized the superior position of the emerging dynasty. Most members of the entourage were loyal retainers who had proven their courage in battle and they received a special noble status (the so-called *perbali* who had the title Gusi or Si). Some retainers became affines of the king who even adopted the army leader and the core of his army as his sons.

Besides attracting followers, the powerholders sold large groups of the Balinese population as slaves⁹⁾. The slave trade was a source of great wealth and strengthened the position of the dynasty. It also heightened the need for protection among the population. Paradoxically one had to seek protection by attaching themselves to one or another of the powerholders cum slave traders.

The *negara* was established by shows of force both 'at home' and 'abroad'. The first leaders of the Mengwi dynasty fought their battles between 1690 and 1730 in Mengwi, in northern Bali and as far away as East Java. These leaders were seldom at home, for 'strong government was literally on the move all the time'¹⁰⁾.

Centre and Satellites

The dynasty's home base centred on a number of satellites around the *desa* Mengwi. The relationship between centre and satellite, like that between king and retainer, was expressed in kinship terms. Sons of the king became leaders of lower lineages of the dynasty, which became semi-autonomous satellites within the larger system. Sometimes these sons founded new settlements but in several cases they incorporated existing noble houses and transformed these into lineages of the royal dynasty. Other noble houses managed to retain their autonomy, but they were obliged to submit to the royal centre and became 'younger brothers' of the king. However, the royal centre was not able to monopolize the means of power and never succeeded in appointing the leaders of the satellites. The relationship between centre and satellite remained therefore tense. Due to the support of the centre a satellite could expand its local power. Consequently the power of the satellite rose proportionally with that of

9) See also A. van der Kraan 1983.

10) O.W. Wolters 1982 : 21.

the centre. Once in control over its own domain a satellite soon became a semi-autonomous centre of its own and could threaten the centre's precedence¹¹⁾.

The fragmentation of the political system offered numerous opportunities for rebellion and fission. The *negara* tended to break up into disconnected units, especially during periods in which the royal succession was at stake. In such interludes, the Mengwi centre came under threat from hostile satellites and external enemies. Only strong leaders could restore the hierarchical order. *Cokorda* Munggu (± 1740 — ± 1770), the third king of Mengwi, was such a man. He destroyed his main rivals, reorganized the royal entourage, and established a new centre in Mengwi around the middle of the 18th century. This centre consisted of a large *puri* and the central temple of the *negara*, *pura* Taman Ayun. The temple formed a centre for the mobilization of manpower and agricultural surplus. It symbolically expressed the hierarchical order and was the place where ceremonies to celebrate the king's power and precedence were held.

Conflicts

At the beginning of the 19th century the political relationships in South Bali stabilized more or less. The existing *negaras* survived and there seemed to have been no room left for new emerging dynasties. Despite this apparent continuity the relationships within the *negara* were still extremely unstable.

Towards the end of the 18th century a woman, Ni Gusti Ayu Oka, played a prominent role in the royal centre of Mengwi. She was the widow of *Cokorda* Munggu and dominated Mengwi politics for some thirty years. During her reign the nobility of Mengwi closed ranks while the marriage pattern of the dynasty became more and more endogamous. At the same time differences in rank tended to replace fictitious kinship as a means of expressing hierarchical relationships. This process did however not result in the formation of a kingly state. The centre was not able to overcome the fragmented nature of the political system and fell victim to numerous intrigues. Mengwi lost its control over all its 'outer territories' (Blambangan, Buleleng, Jembrana and Badung) and its main harbours between 1765 and 1804. Shortly after this the slave trade in the Indonesian archipelago was gradually abolished and the Balinese kings and lords lost their main source of income.

11) See in this respect Tambiah 1985a : 252 — 286, esp. 271 — 272.

The rise of Singapore as the new emporium in the archipelago provided new opportunities for them to enrich themselves. Instead of slaves, agricultural products — and particularly rice — became the main source of profit on the interinsular markets ¹²⁾. The Balinese power-holders showed great flexibility : within two decades (1815 — 1835) they switched to exporting rice and other products. This shift in the trade pattern did not lead to centralization of power, but to an increased competition for control of irrigation systems in South Bali. Wars intensified and the Mengwi dynasty entered a period of severe crisis.

The crisis reached its climax in 1823, when several interrelated conflicts came simultaneously to a head. A weak centre gradually lost its credibility because it had not supported its satellites when they were attacked by external enemies. A new king had ousted the old royal entourage and brought in his own favorites who lacked courage and political experience. A new and controversial royal 'manager' (or *sedahan gede*) — *Sagung Nderet* — had gained great influence in Mengwi at around this time. When he tried to monopolize royal taxations, the distribution of opium and the control over the new export products he came into conflict with the leader of a southern satellite who controlled a large area of rice fields ¹³⁾. This conflict resulted in a war in which local feuds were mixed with regional tensions and inter-*negara* competition. Finally the royal hierarchy collapsed and the king of Mengwi surrendered to the king of Badung.

The Great Leader

The gradual restoration of the royal hierarchy was accomplished by Gusti Agung Nyoman Mayun who emerged as the central leader of the dynasty after a prolonged internal strife. Although he was born in the lower lineage of *puri* Mayun, he became the strong man in Mengwi and remained the central figure in the *negara* from 1836 till his death in 1871. His rule was characterized by several interrelated aspects which will be summarized briefly. In the first place he proved to be a courageous leader and gained the respect of both his subjects and his enemies by vigorous displays of force. Secondly he surrounded himself with a new entourage which was recruited from local — non — *triwangsa* — notables with whom he established marriage bonds. He also established a small but well-trained band of warriors who were ready to fight whenever their

12) See also Schulte Nordholt 1981a.

13) The text *Kidung Nderet* offers valuable information and interesting insights with respect to Mengwi politics at that time. Hedi Hinzler and I will publish this text in the near future.

leader called upon them. Gusti Agung Nyoman Mayun was succeeded by his son who became an even more famous army leader. According to local history both father and son had received their power from the gods and were believed to be *sakti*. What made them ultimately famous was not the actual display of force — which was after all destructive — but their ability to control violence : their appearance put the enemy to flee. As long as they were in power there were no serious attempts to attack Mengwi while none of the satellites dared to rebel.

The third aspect concerned agriculture. Under the leadership of Gusti Agung Nyoman Mayun new tracts of land were brought under cultivation in the northern part of the *negara*. Large irrigation systems were built and the production of coffee was stimulated. Besides the creation of new arable land Gusti Agung Nyoman Mayun built several temples in order to increase fertility. It was in fact the *person* of Gusti Agung Nyoman Mayun who was believed to produce fertility. It was even said that he could eliminate disease and prevent crop failure : "Wherever he went the harvest was rich and plagues disappeared". In other words, Gusti Agung Nyoman Mayun did not only control physical force in the visible world, but also the invisible forces of nature.

In the fourth place Gusti Agung Nyoman Mayun issued decrees and regulations which had to establish order at the local level and safeguard the rural life-cycle

Personal charisma, a loyal entourage, the control of violence and attempts to govern the *negara* were not enough to guarantee the continuation of life in Mengwi. The fifth factor was perhaps the most important of all and this was the establishment and maintenance of a ritual order which encompassed the whole *negara*. This order was manifested in the three main *negara* temples which were located in the mountains, the centre and at the sea shore. In section 3 this will be further elaborated.

Gusti Agung Nyoman Mayun was the last great leader of Mengwi. Because he controlled the vital aspects of royal authority he was able to make the hierarchical order of the *negara* manifest.

The End

Soon after the death of Gusti Agung Nyoman Mayun Mengwi was threatened by several serious crises which ultimately led to the disintegration of the *negara*. The first crisis occurred in the royal centre where the heirs of Gusti Agung Nyoman Mayun fell victim to intrigues and dissension. These conflicts weakened the position of the centre and as a result some of the major satellites immediately sought to expand their own autonomy. At the same time political relationships in South Bali had

become very tense because of the Dutch colonial presence in North Bali. Since the Dutch had established a separate *Residentie* (or administrative area) called *Bali and Lombok* in 1882, it was feared that South Bali would soon be conquered by the colonial state. The southern leaders were convinced that the only way to overcome this threat was to unite all forces in South Bali under the leadership of the Dewa Agung of Klungkung. He was after all the king with the highest esteem and the embodiment of the hierarchical order which was derived from the glorious past of the Majapahit empire. This ideological construction did however not produce a coherent and powerful opposition against the Dutch. Instead there was a sudden eruption of internal warfare which affected South Bali within a few years (while the Dutch had no intention at all to interfere at that time). Whether kings and lords liked it or not they became all involved in a complex set of conflicts which no-one was able to control anymore. Eventually the leaders of Mengwi could not cope any longer with their internal conflicts and the pressure from outside. In June 1891 Mengwi was attacked by Badung, Tabanan, Bangli and Klungkung and the royal centre was destroyed. Deserted by most of his followers the powerless king of Mengwi decided to die like a *satria*. He ordered his servants to carry him to the enemy. A few moments later he was killed and the *negara* Mengwi ceased to exist.

THE ORGANISATION OF THE NEGARA ¹⁴⁾.

In this section I want to emphasize that it was not as important to establish a uniform government in Bali as it was to win recognition for the hierarchical order.

Centre and Satellites

Around 1860 the *negara* Mengwi was probably inhabited by 85.000 people, the majority of which lived in the southern wet rice area. Whereas the mountain area was thinly populated some villages in the southern plain — like Kapal, Sibang and Mengwi — had 3000 inhabitants. The population was controlled by a network of 27 large and small satellites around the royal centre ¹⁵⁾. This network can roughly be divided into three parts. The first was the nuclear area around the *desa* Mengwi which

14) The sections 2 and 3 are based on chapter V of my thesis (1988 : 137 – 150).

15) About half of the 27 satellites belonged to the royal dynasty of Mengwi. The other half consisted of separate noble families.

was dominated by the royal centre. The second part consisted of four large and semi-autonomous satellites around the royal centre — Sibang, Kapal, Kaba-Kaba and Blayu — headed by a *manca agung* and surrounded by their own sub-satellites. The third part was a large number of smaller satellites — headed by a *manca* — which formed an 'outer circle' around the large satellites. All these satellites were more or less modelled after the royal centre (which was modelled after the exemplary centre of Klungkung which was believed to be a replica of centre of Majapahit). Architecture and art were in this respect important means to express the dominance of the dynasty and the nobility as a group, and the linkages between centre and satellite.

Fragmentation

The actual control of the centre over its satellites was minimal since the control of manpower and irrigation was fundamentally fragmented. The centre and the satellites had their own separate networks of followers and agents (or *mekel*) who connected the local population with specific *puris* and *jeros*. Besides this fragmentation of manpower each of the four main satellites had its own irrigation system consisting of a major dam and a network of primary and secondary canals. As a result the large satellites could provide their followers with access to land and water, thus reinforcing particular bonds between leaders and their subjects. Loyal followers received the usufruct of a so-called *pacatu sawah*, in return for which they had to perform duties for their lords. In this respect the traditional view that irrigation in South Bali was strictly a local affair which was managed within the confinement of the autonomous *subak* must be rejected. Irrigation was not possible at all without the crucial vertical relationships between peasants and *puris* in order to guarantee water, protection and the performance of ritual.

The irrigation systems were managed by groups of *sedahan* which belonged to the royal centre and each of the main satellites. These agents were also tax collectors. The royal centre received only the taxes which were levied in its own domain for the *manca agung* controlled their own taxes which were not given to the royal centre.

Besides the mobilisation of manpower and surplus, the distribution of justice was also fragmented. Each of the *manca agung* had his own judges (*kerta*) and made his own decisions. In daily practice the *negara* consisted of a loosely integrated system of semi-autonomous centres which recognized the superiority of the centre as long as it did not interfere with their internal affairs.

Power and Respect

The structural weakness of the royal centre was that it had not any direct political influence within the satellites, for it could not appoint or dismiss *manca agung* and *manca*. The centre could only obtain some indirect influence by marrying women from the main satellites. However these satellites could by way of these women also exert a great deal of influence over the centre. During the 19th century, for instance, two *padmi*-widows (one from Kaba-Kaba and one from Sibang) became very powerful in Mengwi.

The centre could also gain the respect of its satellites by offering protection against an external enemy. Both Gusti Agung Nyoman Mayun and his son assisted for instance the satellites of Blayu and Carangsari by expelling enemies from their territories. The fame of the central leaders was widespread after these campaigns and the satellites were put in a position of indebtedness towards the centre.

Royal authority was by no means 'ascribed' in the 19th century for every central leader had to establish his personal ascendancy over his environment. This environment could only be convinced of the validity of the central leadership by the performance of personal actions. Anonymous leadership, or kingship as such had very little practical value. When the personal authority of the central leader was respected a hierarchical system emerged in which the central leader could 'delegate' his power to the lower levels of the hierarchy in return for which the *manca agung* and the lesser *manca* accepted his precedence. The word *anugerah* (divine or royal gift) illustrates this relationship nicely for it denotes the fact that local autonomy was perceived as a privilege given by the centre, and not as a something that had been taken by the satellites from the centre. In other words, not the establishment of a permanent and uniform hegemony, but a fluctuating hierarchy characterized the *negara* Mengwi. The paradox of the 19th century *negara* was that the authority of the ruler was not increased by the centralisation of power but by the distribution of power among the local lords¹⁶⁾. And the ongoing oscillation between central authority and local autonomy provided the *negara* with its main political dynamics.

16) This point of view differs fundamentally from the statement by Clifford Geertz that 'culture came from the top down, while power welled up from the bottom' (1980 : 85). Such a distinction cannot but result in a disconnected situation in which power and culture belong to totally separate domains. See Tambiah 1985b : 319 and Schulte Nordholt 1981b : 474.

Political Power and Ritual Order

The exercise — and ideally the control — of physical power in the visible world was not the only factor in the *negara* Mengwi. Gusti Agung Nyoman Mayun did not solely derive his authority from the way he exercised physical force, but also from his ability to cope with invisible forces. Physical force produced political power but not necessarily ritual order. Political power formed on the other hand the precondition for the establishment of the ritual order. Political power and ritual order produced both the hierarchical order which eventually characterized the *negara*.

When the hierarchical order was not threatened the *negara* was in fact non-existent and consisted of a confederation of higher and lesser lords who ruled their own domains. Only in case of general disorder the *negara* had to be made manifest to re-establish order. The main causes for general disorder can be summarized under the headings warfare, natural disasters and royal rituals.

In this respect the distinction between political power and ritual order can be illustrated by two different ways in which the population of Mengwi was mobilized during the 19th century.

Political Mobilization

As indicated above, control of manpower was extremely fragmented because there were many intermediates between ruler and commoners and a variety of lesser lords were in command over their own follower. Followers of one lord lived in the same village where two or three other lords controlled other parts of the population. Seen from this perspective villages — as corporate entities — did not play a role of any significance at all in this dynamic system.

In case of an external attack the well-being of the whole *negara* was at stake and it was the task of the royal centre to mobilize all available manpower. In such cases not only the armed forces of the centre but also manpower from the satellites were mobilized. The centre could however not mobilize manpower from the satellites directly but only by way of the *manca agung* and the *manca* who mobilized their own followers through their local agents or *mekel*. This indirect and fragmented mobilization of manpower occurred in order to defeat the visible enemy with physical force. Warfare was often chaotic and difficult to control while the results were unpredictable. A victory over one enemy might establish a new balance of power which was however soon to be challenged by yet another among the many competitors within the South Balinese 'arena'.

The same type of indirect mobilization occurred also when the royal *puri* had to be repaired and this indicates that — in contrast to the central temple — the *puri* belonged to the political hierarchy.

Ritual Mobilization

The second type of mobilization concerned the ritual order and differed from the first. This type of mobilization occurred when invisible forces threatened the *negara*, and reveals the efforts to establish a ritual order. This time the whole population was *directly* mobilized, and in contrast to the first type of mobilization villages were of central importance. Instead of mobilizing the population by way of the *manca agung* and the *manca* and their *mekel*, the royal centre sent a separate group of messengers (in Mengwi : *pragae*) directly to the villages where they contacted the village heads, or *bendesa*. The *bendesa*, who had nothing to do with the first type of mobilization, were now responsible for the mobilization of the village population.

Death and Disaster

When for instance one of the central dams breached — which often occurred at the beginning of the rainy season — the agricultural cycle was in danger and this often resulted in crop failure and eventually starvation. Then the so-called *bebanjaran* system was put into practice and the whole population was expected to contribute labour in order to repair the dam and to restore the agricultural cycle.

Such mass mobilization occurred also when the *negara* was struck by disease (especially smallpox and cholera) and crop failure. How often these disasters occurred and how devastating they were can be illustrated by the following (but incomplete) data from colonial reports¹⁷⁾ :

- 1850 : smallpox in Badung, Mengwi and Klungkung 4000 people died.
- 1856 : harvest in Mengwi, Tabanan and Badung destroyed by mice.
- 1861 : smallpox in Klungkung.
- 1862 : crop failure in South Bali, starvation.
- 1863 : cholera and smallpox in Mengwi.
- 1864 : smallpox still in Mengwi.
- 1868 : crop failure in Tabanan and Mengwi; starvation; cholera and dysentery from Buleleng, 2000 people died.
- 1871 : smallpox in South Bali, at least 15 to 18.000 victims.

17) Schulte Nordholt 1988 : 126; Frequently warfare was followed by widespread cholera epidemics and crop failure which often caused more victims than the actual fighting.

- 1872 / 1873 : smallpox continues; in Mengwi 3000 people died in one month, in Sempidi 700 of the 1000 inhabitants died.
- 1874 : cholera in Badung and Mengwi, 'many death'.
- 1878 : harvest in almost the whole of South Bali destroyed by mice.
- 1883 : smallpox from Karangasem, via Klungkung to Mengwi.
- 1884 : smallpox in the whole of South Bali, followed by cholera.
- 1888 : earthquake and cholera in South Bali.

South Balinese society was constantly threatened by visible and invisible dangers which disrupted the continuity of life. The building of temples and many of the large public rituals were intended to secure some protection against the ever returning ravages of epidemics and crop failures. It was one of the main responsibilities of the royal centre to build and maintain the important *negara* temples and to organize the rituals which were necessary to safeguard the well-being of the population.

The royal centre was also responsible for the large scale cleansing ceremonies for it was the task of the king to secure health and fertility and to avert the invisible threats. In a recent article Barbara Lovric emphasized this crucial role of the royal centre also : [A] causal relationship is assumed between human welfare on the one hand, and the proper enactment of rituals, the care of temples, devotion to the gods, and propitiation of the vast array of demonic beings on the other. It was the duty of the ruling *raja* to stage large-scale rituals considered crucial to the well-being of subjects and the survival of the kingdom¹⁸⁾. And again the centre mobilized the whole population through the village heads in order to perform these ritual tasks.

The King

Since the king embodied the apex of the hierarchical order on earth, every change in his position implied that the whole hierarchy — and thus the stability of the *negara* — was in danger. The death of a king marked the beginning of a period of imbalance which ended theoretically when the new king was consecrated¹⁹⁾. The rituals that took place during these

18) Lovric 1987 : 117. It is interesting to note that Gusti Agung Nyoman Mayun was believed to have received his power through meditation during the years when he was exiled on Nusa Penida. This island is also the dwelling place of Ratu Gede Macaling, the demon who is held responsible for the cholera epidemics on Bali. It is in this context important to note that the largest public rituals in Bali were (and still are) in fact *Buta Yadnya*.

19) The death of a king had not only repercussions in the ritual sphere but it also affected power relationships. There were often internal wars of succession between factions within the royal centre.

periods mattered the whole *negara* and every household from every village was — at least in theory — obliged to contribute to these 'works' (i.e. *karya*, which means both 'ritual' and 'work'), which were performed by the highest ritual authority, the king's *purohita*.

The Negara Temples

To what extent the central leadership had to sustain and control the hierarchical order has been indicated in section 1. One aspect of the rule of Gusti Agung Nyoman Mayun needs further elaboration. One of his most important achievements was that he restored the 'ritual axis' between mountains, centre and sea by creating a new mountain temple and a temple at the seashore. The three main temples of the *negara* Mengwi — the mountain temple *pura* Panataran Agung in the *desa* Tinggan, the central temple *pura* Taman Ayun in de *desa* Mengwi, and the sea temple, *pura* Ulun Siwi, near the *desa* Seseh — manifested this vital axis²⁰⁾.

The importance of this axis was that it connected the gods of the mountains and the forces of the sea with the people who were living in between. Furthermore the temples were of vital importance with regard to agriculture, since water from the sea is believed to ascent to the mountains from where it flows down to the sea. Only by this circulation fertility could be achieved and it was the responsibility of the royal centre to secure this circulation through temples and rituals. Dams, canals and temples were in this context equally important. For, '[t]emples are just as utilitarian as dams and canals since they are necessary to prosperity; dams and canals are as ritual as temples since they are part of the same social system of seeking welfare'²¹⁾

In the same way the souls of the Balinese are believed to circulate, for they descend from the mountains into man and after death and cremation they are brought to the sea from where they reunite with the divine ancestors in the mountains. So, Balinese life — whether it concerns irrigation water or the human soul — is a constant circular movement between *kaja* and *kelod*. The main *negara* temples are the most important signs in this 'flow of life' and — at least in Mengwi — it was the temple of the royal centre which formed the crucial connection between these two directions. It can be argued that the ruler constructed his *negara* by

20) In the *negara* Mengwi the temple axis was not permanent for in the mountains the temple of Tinggan succeeded the former mountain temple of Bratan, while at the seashore the temple near Seseh replaced the old sea temple in Jimbaran. The central temples of the Mengwi dynasty were *Pura Sada* in Kapal, *pura* Bekak in Mengwi and finally *pura* Taman Ayun also in Mengwi. The connection between the temples was made by *pasimpangan*, shrines in one temple which represented other temples.

21) Hocart 1970 : 271.

constructing these temples. It will be clear then that I disagree with the statement by Clifford Geertz that 'the driving aim of higher politics was to construct a state by constructing a king' ²²⁾. Moreover Geertz description of 'The Palace as Temple' is highly debatable ²³⁾. In the first place temples and *puris* were different things, and secondly a temple was of an higher order than the dwelling place of the king. The royal *puri* formed the apex of the (fragmented) political hierarchy in the *negara*. The *negara* temples on the other hand gave shape to an overarching ritual hierarchy. In this context J.F. Guernonprez argued convincingly that the village temple (in most cases the combination of *pura puseh* and *pura bale agung*) formed the apex of a ritual order at the local village level ²⁴⁾. In addition to this it could be argued that the *negara* temples encompassed these local or village orders at a higher regional level and thus formed the ultimate apex of the hierachical order of the *negara*.

Life and Death

Temples themselves do nothing. It is only through rituals that their significance is realized. Consequently, just like power relationships and the political hierarchy, the ritual order had to be enacted time and again to make the *negara* manifest. It will be clear that only strong leaders were able to do so and that these manifestations did not last for ever. On the contrary, the hierarchical order — which the *negara* ultimately was — was threatened by permanent conflict, perennial warfare, structural fragmentation of the political order and ever recurring epidemics and crop failures. Faced with imminent death the 19th century Balinese *negara* manifested a never ending quest for life.

22) Geertz 1980 : 124.

23) idem : 109 – 116. See for a critique on Geertz's conception of divine kingship in 19th century Bali Guernonprez 1985.

24) Guernonprez unpubl. paper.

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