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# **State, Village, and Ritual in Bali**

**A historical perspective**



VU University Press  
Amsterdam, 1991



CIP-GEGEVENS KONINKLIJKE BIBLIOTHEEK, DEN HAAG

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State, village, and ritual in Bali : a historical perspective / Henk Schulte Nordholt. – Amsterdam : VU University Press. – (Comparative Asian studies ; 7)

Met lit. opg.

ISBN 90-5383-023-5

NUGI 653

Trefw.: Bali ; sociale geschiedenis.



664

B

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VU University Press is an imprint of:  
VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij bv  
De Boelelaan 1105  
1081 HV Amsterdam  
The Netherlands

Typesetting: A. J. Scholten/Transcripta, Wijdenes  
Printing: Offsetdrukkerij Haveka bv, Alblasterdam

ISBN 90-5383-023-5  
NUGI 653

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## Preface

'It is not indeed government that man wants . . . . It is life he wants, and in the effort to live he does one thing after another till he eventually finds himself governed.'

(Hocart 1969:299)

During the past decade several important developments have taken place with regard to the study of Indonesian societies. First, more emphasis is placed on the state and the relationship between state and society. This resulted not only in debates on the nature of the modern Indonesian state, but also in a renewed interest in pre-colonial or indigenous polities. Secondly, there was a general reconsideration of the concept of the village. Villages were no longer seen as closed corporate communities, and old paradigms advocating this view came under attack. In the third place a re-evaluation has begun of the nature of large rituals in connection with processes of state-formation. 'Ritual and Power' has become a popular theme among historians and anthropologists in general. Finally, the shared interest by anthropologists and historians in rituals reflects an important development in which the boundaries between disciplinary domains tend to blur. Nowadays, research on, for instance, changing perceptions on villages, the development of indigenous polities into states, and the role of ritual in power relationships, requires anthropological concepts and historical perspectives.

As a student of Indonesian history I felt the need to familiarize myself with some anthropological conceptions. This became imperative when, in 1981, I began research on the history of a South Balinese *negara*. In my thesis I have given a detailed description of the complexity of the Balinese *negara* and of the changes that occurred within this political system from the early eighteenth century up to 1940.<sup>1</sup> In this essay I concentrate on the phenomena of state, village and ritual in Bali in terms of their historical intermeshing and their changing nature. I will also address the recent history (i.e. up to 1989) to illustrate the relevance of a historical approach for the understanding of modern Indonesian politics.

The research on which this essay is based was conducted between 1981 and 1984 and in 1989 in the Netherlands and Indonesia. It was financed by the Programme of Indonesian Studies, The Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research, and the Department of Political, Social, and Cultural Sciences of the University of Amsterdam, and was sponsored by Universitas Udayana in Denpasar. Earlier drafts were presented at the

1. Schulte Nordholt 1988. An English translation will be published by CASA in 1991.



Workshop 'The Village Revisited: Community and Locality in Southeast Asia' in Amsterdam organized by CASA (7–9 April, 1988),<sup>2</sup> the Workshop 'Contesting Cultural Symbols in Southeast Asia' organized by the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Canberra (10–11 November, 1989), and the KOTA Conference on 'Ritual and Politics in Asia' in Amsterdam organized by CASA (14–15 June, 1990). I would like to thank the participants of these meetings for their helpful comments. Valuable suggestions and criticisms were also given by Greg Acciaioli, Aletta Biersack, Tony Day, Ranajit Guha, Jeremy Kemp, Barbara Lovric, Geoff Robinson, David Stuart-Fox, Adrian Vickers, and Carol Warren to whom I am very grateful. Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to John Kraay who edited the manuscript.

2. See Ruiters and Schulte Nordholt (1989) for a report.



# 1. *Introduction*

## *State and village*

The relation between the state and the village in Asia has to be set off against the background of a series of dichotomies introduced by Western intellectual 'meddling'. When colonial officials and Western social scientists took possession of large parts of the so-called 'non-Western' world, 'the people ... like all God's children, got shoes, got structure' (Cohn 1980:199). An expanding Western academic industry produced an enormous number of studies in order to map this 'non-(Western)-world'. The main concern of both colonial regimes and social scientists was to establish order in what seemed to be a savage and chaotic *terra incognita*. This project, simultaneously driven by the academic penchant for intellectual order and by the emergent colonial states' quest for political control, was highly successful. Since the nineteenth century the non-Western peoples 'got structure' in terms of labelled 'things' (tradition, tribe, village, state, kinship, symbolic system etc.) and a variety of dichotomies (religion vs politics, culture vs social structure, individual vs corporate group, tradition vs modernization, state vs village etc.). They were also confronted with agents who represented the colonial state and, later on, the nation-state. These agents generally relied on an external power basis. They defined new institutional and ideological frameworks and imposed these on the population. Finally, people 'got shoes' in the guise of 'development'.<sup>1</sup> Western experts and government agents distributed the 'blessings of modernization' through the 'implementation' of 'projects' meant to initiate a take-off process in allegedly static or stagnating cultures.

One key concept in Western thinking about Asia was 'the village', defined as the closed, corporate community which lay at the basis of a timeless society. This picture of the Asian village is understandable in the light of Western developments in the second half of the nineteenth century. The concept of the village or local community was part of discourses on the profound social upheavals and processes of nation-building taking place in Europe at the time. The framework of such discourses usually was the shift from *Gemeinschaft*

1. In Southeast Asia shoes are an ironic metaphor for progress and modernization. A Balinese peasant once commented to me as follows: 'Those fellows from the Agricultural Information Service are of little use. They're *desa* boys, but they got educated and wear shoes now. They don't come here much any more; it would dirty their shoes.'



to *Gesellschaft* and/or from organic to mechanical solidarity, the village community representing the old order now lost (cf. Van den Muijzenberg and Wolters 1988). Next, this notion of the village, like many other newly invented traditions (cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), was exported to colonial Asia, where it enjoyed a long and extremely successful career as administrative ideology. It was much easier, and more efficient, to erect the colonial regime on conveniently arranged villages as basic administrative units than on hard-to-trace individuals.

In recent years, the collapse (or, more fashionably, the 'deconstruction') of this colonial myth of the Asian village has meanwhile been effectuated by many.<sup>2</sup> It strikes me, however, that most of these revisionist critiques approach the matter rather one-sidedly. Proceeding from the very administrative view held by the colonial authorities, they mainly demonstrate that the village was no more than a colonial construction imposed on an extremely fluid, rural society in which patronage was far more important than communal bonds. Roughly, this is where the matter stands at present, and it seems advisable that one avoid mention of the word 'village' as significant unit if at all possible. In fact, village studies are out of fashion; the emphasis today is on peasants as rural class, on vertical relations between the state and rural elites, on the articulation between penetrating capitalism and old labour relations in certain regional contexts, on the household as nuclear economic unit. The village concept, completely demythologized and considered rather irrelevant from the analytic point of view, has become a virtually negated category. But however important the revisionist critique and the new linkage approaches may be, the fact remains that the vast majority of the Southeast Asian population lives in villages still. Perhaps these people are unaware that their locality is analytically uninteresting; it may also be the case that Western researchers should take a new look at the village and be less prepared to underestimate its significance.<sup>3</sup>

Against this background I discuss the relationship between different, often conflicting, concepts of the village in South Bali in a historical perspective. Although 'the' Balinese village has been the focus of a debate which has by now reached its centennial anniversary, a historical perspective is still largely absent.<sup>4</sup> Without it, however, the highly complex and always shifting set of arrangements at the local level in Bali and recent changes under the New Order regime cannot be evaluated.

2. Dumont 1971; Anderson 1974; Ongkhokham 1975; Inden 1986; Holtzappel 1986; Breman 1980, 1988.

3. For an attempt to distinguish different meanings of the concept of village in Southeast Asia see Jeremy Kemp (1988).

4. Liefrinck 1890; Korn 1932:75-101, 179-248; Goris 1935; H. Geertz 1959; C. Geertz 1959; Guermonprez (unpublished); Hobart (unpublished); Warren 1989 and forthcoming.



In this essay I argue that in the nineteenth century the Balinese *desa* had a special ritual meaning which cannot be treated as a phenomenon of merely secondary importance. But this significance changed profoundly, owing to colonial and post-colonial state intervention. On the other hand, Balinese villagers did not just let change overtake them. In their opposition to undesirable penetration on the part of state agencies, they prove highly competent to formulate well-defined views regarding their *desa*.

### *Politics and ritual*

There is something odd about the relation between political power, symbols and rituals.<sup>5</sup> There is a fairly general tendency to concentrate on the abstract as if it were the concrete, and to underestimate the concrete because it is thought (too) abstract. Political analyses focus on 'state' and 'power' as if these are concrete entities, as mirrored in expressions such as 'apparatus of power' and 'machinery of state', and it still happens that the state is put on stage as an acting individual. In contrast, palpable manifestations of power and of the state, such as expressed in architecture, parades, uniforms, emblems and the like, often seem to be dismissed as secondary, symbolic 'window dressing', behind which the real machinations supposedly take place. In other words, the abstract and the concrete are inverted. It seems worth our while, however, to take the palpable (symbols and rituals) at least as seriously as the abstract (power and state). After all, 'The state is invisible; it must be personified before it can be seen, symbolized before it can be loved, imagined before it can be conceived.'<sup>6</sup>

At first sight it seems passé—again—to treat of symbols or, if you like, of the cultural aspects of power, in an epoch in which the political landscape of Southeast Asia is mainly conceptualized in terms of military bureaucracies or dominant capitalist formations, most of the countries in the region are popularly characterized as 'strong states' and the importance of the 'state qua

5. I adopt the broad definition of 'symbol' as given by Geertz (1973:91): 'any object, act, or event, quality or relation which serves as a vehicle for conception, while conception constitutes the meaning of the symbol.' In this essay the emphasis is on symbolic practice as 'a means of transforming ideas from the world of thought to the material world . . . while at the same time turning them into social relations' (Godelier 1986:229).

By 'ritual' I understand recurrent, standardized symbolic behaviour. 'Political power' is here taken in the Weberian sense of the ability to influence, control or coerce the conduct of others. A strict distinction between ritual and politics, however, is meaningless, since power is often manifested symbolically.

6. M. Walzer, On the Role of Symbolism in Political Thought, *Political Science Quarterly* 82: 191–205, 1967, p. 194, quoted in Kertzer 1988:6.



state' is underscored.<sup>7</sup> Emphasis on symbols and the cultural context of political relationships seems to belong to the 1960s, when Gunnar Myrdal (1968) described the rising Asian nations as 'soft states'. In those days social scientists tried to explain the political relations in Southeast Asia mainly in cultural terms. American studies on Indonesia, for instance, addressed themselves to themes such as 'religion and politics' or 'culture and politics' (for example, Jay 1963; Holt et al. 1972).

As of the 1970s most nations in Southeast Asia developed into highly centralized states and interest in the cultural dimension of politics subsided.<sup>8</sup> Even more than before 'culture' became the anthropologist's preserve and 'the state' the domain of political science. Anthropology was preoccupied with the 'software' of rituals and symbols; political science and political economy busied themselves with the 'hardware' of power and state.

This past decade, however, the tendency has become to reconsider the relation between politics and ritual without necessarily reverting to old points of view. Special attention is paid to the manner in which form is given to power relations within specific cultural contexts.

Somewhat arbitrarily I would take as turning point 1980, the year in which Clifford Geertz published his now renowned essay on the 'Theatre State' in Bali. The book reads like a kind of modern *Gulliver*. Geertz levels much of his criticism at the myopic Machiavellian tradition in Western political science. His strategy is to zoom in on contrasts between Bali and the West in order to point up the power of ritual (Geertz 1980:121–36).

Even though Geertz's interpretive approach—for which his conceptualization of the Theatre State is exemplary—evoked a good deal of criticism from various quarters, his ideas regarding the meaning of public rituals and symbols met with sympathy among historians.<sup>9</sup> Susan Hoeber-Rudolph, for example, questions the principles of current research into pre-colonial Asian states. One of her conclusions regarding rituals and symbols is: 'We underestimate

7. See for instance Anderson 1983b; Wolters 1983; Robison 1986; Lieberman 1987.

8. To be sure, this tendency is not met with everywhere. Pye (1985), for instance, wants to consider power solely in terms of the various Asian cultures without taking into account the new state contexts. Accordingly, he arrives at the highly questionable conclusion that in Asia power is something altogether different from power as understood in the West, and that because of his cultural background 'the Asian' feels the need for authoritarian rule.

9. See for instance the collection of essays concerning pre-colonial states in Southeast Asia edited by L. Gesick (1983), with a preface by Geertz. For a reevaluation of political history in relation to symbols and rituals on the part of historians, see Wilentz (1985). In this volume, too, Geertz is prominent: his influential contribution appeared earlier in *Local knowledge* (Geertz 1983) and was first published in J. Ben-David and T. N. Clark (eds), *Culture and its creators* (Chicago 1977). Another example of a historical-anthropological approach to ritual and symbols is Burke (1987). For criticism of Geertz's method see Lieberman (1984) and Walters (1980). Walters makes a point of the danger that one-sided emphasis on symbols would leave contextual power relations underexposed.



the power and reality of these forces. It is a lacuna in our historical and theoretical imagination.... We must treat the symbolic as a phenomenon' (1987:742). Even more explicit on this point are historians Cannadine and Price, who assert: 'Politics and ceremonial are not separate subjects, the one serious, the other superficial. Ritual is not the mask of force but is itself a type of power' (1986:19).

Historians Hobsbawm and Ranger published an important book on the role of ritual and symbols within specific political contexts. In *The invention of tradition* (1983) they undermine the static and a-political notions surrounding the concept of tradition, and stress that seemingly ancient and immutable ritual practices are makable. All of the essays in their book demonstrate how elements from the past can be put to use in the shaping of new social and political structures and to legitimize new relations of power. Traditions, they conclude, were used and are still used to furnish new relationships with a respectable past.

The debate regarding the role of rituals and symbols in political contexts concerns not only a remote past when 'rational' bureaucratic states were unknown. It concerns the present as well. In Geertz's words: 'Thrones may be out of fashion, and pageantry too; but political authority still requires a cultural frame in which to define itself and advance its claims; and so does opposition to it' (1983:143).

Much earlier British anthropologist Abner Cohen (1969; 1974; 1979) had insisted that rituals and symbols continue to play an important part in contemporary politics. In a recent comparative study David Kertzer, referring to Cohen's work, points out that the distinction made in the political sciences between politics as rational process and ritual as irrational décor is unjustified. 'To understand politics, then, it is necessary to understand how the symbolic enters into politics, how political action consciously and unconsciously manipulates symbols and how the symbolic dimension relates to the material basis of political power' (1988:2-3). Notwithstanding this promising starting point Kertzer's book contains little to arrest us, because basically it marches through a row of examples from the most diverse places and periods, all of them proving little more than that politics and ritual are no strangers to each other. Kertzer does not explain how rituals and symbols relate to the material basis of political power. Nor, for that matter, did Geertz (1980). Moreover, Kertzer's a-historical approach leads him to underestimate the changing political context in which public rituals and symbols gain specific meanings. I am thinking of processes of state building and the 'tidal' motion of state influences on the local level. After all, rituals have not just one meaning, but a plurality of meanings and in the change from one (set of) meaning(s) to another the political context is a dominant factor.



In this connection states should not be understood as monolithic actors, nor as arenas in which interest groups vie for access to power. Theda Skocpol suggests that, instead, we should look upon states as configurations of an aggregate, coherent or not, of organizations such as administration, armed forces, taxation, legislation, which may well operate on different levels. 'These organizational configurations affect political culture, encourage some kinds of group formation and collective political action (but not others), and make possible the raising of certain political issues (but not others)' (Skocpol 1985: 21). Starting from this sort of picture I will trace the changing meanings of a specific kind of public rituals in Bali.



## 2. *Desa, Ritual, and Negara in Nineteenth-century Bali*

Control of manpower determined to a large extent the power of noble houses in nineteenth-century Bali. This control was greatly fragmented because there were many intermediaries between kings and commoners, and a variety of lesser lords were in command of their own followings. Irrigation water was another valuable political item. Strong noble houses controlled large irrigation systems and distributed water among their followers. These followers were given access to rice fields and harvests, in exchange for loyalty and labour. The control of external trade—slaves and, later, agricultural products—made for a third source of power for the nobility. Finally, regional temples and large public rituals made the position of kings and lords manifest. Temples and rituals were not merely symbolic illustrations of power but enhanced noble authority. Both temples and rituals created and re-created a hierarchical order without which life was not possible, or at least extremely dangerous.

The extent to which these four sources of power could be used depended, however, on the qualities of leadership at the royal centre. When central leaders were able to attract followers and had proven their ability to control violence, hierarchical order could be maintained during their lifetime. If they were powerful enough kings could delegate tasks and confer privileges to their subordinates. In exchange for these 'gifts' they were recognized as paramount leaders and the ultimate guardians of authority and order. The paradox of nineteenth-century politics in South Bali was that successful leaders could enhance their authority only through delegating their power. Therefore the *negara* could never become a strong and stable state with a power monopoly at the centre. As a result South Balinese society witnessed an ongoing process of oscillation between royal centres and local powers or satellites.<sup>1</sup>

Within this dynamic system there were, at least in the *negara* Mengwi, two complementary orders which can be illustrated by two different ways in which the population was mobilized.

The first kind of mobilization is a familiar one. This took place when the

1. See for a detailed discussion of the control of manpower, land tenure, trade and temples in pre-colonial Bali, Schulte Nordholt 1988, chapters 2–5. The picture presented here is based mainly on material concerning the South Balinese *negara* Mengwi around the middle of the nineteenth century.



*negara* was attacked by visible enemies, when invaders or rebellious lords challenged the superiority of the ruling dynasty. At such times both the armed forces of the royal centre and manpower from the satellites was mobilized. The centre was, however, unable to recruit the manpower from these satellites directly; it had to appeal to local lords, who assembled their followers through their own network of local agents or *mekel*. Thus, in case of warfare, large-scale mobilization of manpower occurred in an indirect way and represented a fragmented hierarchy.<sup>2</sup>

At first glance the *desa*<sup>3</sup> did not play a role of any importance in the dynamic political structure of nineteenth-century South Bali. Followers of one lord often lived in the same *desa* where two or three other lords controlled other parts of the population. Consequently, the mobilization of manpower had nothing to do with the *desa*. Seen from this point of view the South Balinese *desa* did not exist as a corporate entity. Rather, a picture emerges of fragmentation tending to chaos, dominated by vertical ties of a personal nature.<sup>4</sup>

Still, this approach ignores an alternative perspective. Using a Dumontian approach, Guermonprez (unpublished) has convincingly argued that Balinese *desa* constitute a local hierarchical order in which the notions of origin and hierarchy are of fundamental importance. In this order the *desa* temple (*pura puseh/pura bale agung*) is the apex of a local hierarchy which encompasses the wards (*banjar*) and the individual households. I would argue that the *desa* temples, in turn, are part of a larger hierarchical order manifested by higher regional, and eventually 'all Bali' temples, which encompass the lower, local orders (cf. Stuart-Fox 1987, chapter 3).

This temple hierarchy cannot be dismissed as if it were some 'secondary' symbolic or 'religious' domain which had no 'political' significance. Through this temple order the second type of mobilization in the nineteenth-century *negara* Mengwi became visible. This type of mobilization concerned the ritual order of the *negara* and had a distinctive character. In contrast to the indirect and fragmented mobilization which occurred when the *negara* was attacked by visible enemies, ritual mobilization occurred when the *negara* was threatened

2. The same kind of indirect mobilization occurred in Mengwi also when the royal palace, or *puri*, had to be restored. This seems to imply that the *puri* was the apex of the fragmented hierarchy of the *negara*.

3. I will use the word '*desa*' for the traditional Balinese village. The word 'village' will be used to indicate the administrative units which were created in the twentieth century.

4. This is in sharp contrast to North Bali and the mountain area in East Bali, where the *desa* had much more autonomy. See Liefrinck (1934) for a detailed account on North Bali. In these areas noble houses had little or no control over large parts of the population, while Brahman priests—who in South Bali were closely connected with ruling noble houses—had virtually no access to local rituals. A major reason why the nobility could exercise so little influence was that irrigated *sawah* cultivation, which was one of the sources of power in South Bali, did not exist in these areas (cf. Schulte Nordholt 1988, chapter 2; Howe 1989).



by invisible forces and ritual instability. This ritual mobilization was direct and collective because it was organized by the royal centre itself and involved the *desa* as a corporate entity.

Although information is very scarce, it seems that the pre-colonial *desa* in Mengwi had their own leadership. From the available data the *bendesa* emerges as the local leader. In general the *bendesa* did not belong to the nobility but to a respected and privileged commoner family within the *desa*. He was in charge of the *desa* temples and, since he was not merely a 'religious' leader, settled matters such as internal disputes. One might say that the *bendesa* was responsible for internal *desa* affairs in which the ruling noble houses apparently were unable or did not feel the need to interfere.

Nor was the role of the *bendesa* confined to his *desa*; for he was also a vital link in the ritual mobilization by the royal centre. Such collective and direct mobilization occurred when the *negara* was threatened by natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, epidemics or crop failures). It took place also in times of political instability in the royal centre as a consequence of changes at the top of the dynasty (especially the cremation and other death rituals for a deceased king and the consecration of a new king). Finally, large-scale direct mobilization caused the people to attend large periodical rituals which had to purify the *negara*, and the regular *odalan* ('birthdays') of the main *negara* temples.<sup>5</sup> In all of these cases the royal centre of Mengwi sent a separate group of messengers (*peragae*) directly to the *desa* where they contacted the *bendesa* who was responsible for mobilization of his fellow villagers. Ideally the whole population of the *negara* was assembled in order to support the rituals that had to restore the ritual order in the *negara*.<sup>6</sup>

In his analysis of the nineteenth-century *negara* Geertz (1980) distinguished between politics and power on the one hand and religion and ritual on the other. I cannot support this view because the large public rituals were markedly political and made for the most powerful manifestation of the hierarchical order.<sup>7</sup> A fine example of how power and ritual belonged together is

5. See Schulte Nordholt 1988, chapter 5, and forthcoming a. See also Swellengrebel 1947 and Mershon 1971 for accounts of the consecration of a king of Gianyar in 1903 and the enormous death ritual (*maligia*) which was held in Karangasem in 1937. In this type of royal ritual an important role was played by the Brahman priest of the king (*purohita*) who prepared the holy water and invoked the presence of the gods with his prayers.

6. In this respect the South Balinese *negara* can be defined as a kind of 'segmentary state' in which there was continuous interaction between local forces and efforts from the centre to establish an overall ritual integration. See for a stimulating discussion on the segmentary nature of 'early states' in India, Stein 1977; Kulke 1982; Hoeber Rudolph 1987; Southall 1988.

7. Cf. Schulte Nordholt 1981. I do not mean to suggest that these rituals were only a legitimation of an already existing royal power which had its basis strictly outside the ritual domain. See also Tambiah (1985:319) who points at the 'disconnected' situation that results from Geertz's distinction between power and ritual.



given in a Balinese text in which a major death ritual is described.<sup>8</sup> The writer explicitly compared the ritual with warfare, since on both occasions the risks were high and the outcome insecure. Just like in warfare, the ritual opened an arena in which chaos might prevail, and it was the task of the central leader to overcome this dangerous situation and lead the participants, like his soldiers, to a successful ending. Only when the ritual was conducted precisely according to the rules the 'battle' was won, and order (re-)established. This implied that the royal centre had to have at its disposal not only massive manpower and plentiful means to make the ritual possible, but had to be able also to control the masses meant to enhance the ritual with grandeur.

The direct and indirect mobilizations, then, implied two intermeshing orders, collective and fragmented respectively. Physical violence, and especially the capacity to mobilize followers, made for fragmented power relations which did not automatically imply a ritual order. But power relations were a necessary condition if the encompassing ritual order were to assume visible shape. Neither king nor *negara* could exist by ritual alone, but without rituals the progression of life was unthinkable. Mutually cohering, the fragmented relations of power and the collective rituals together gave form to hierarchical order, i.e. to the Balinese *negara*. As long as this order was not threatened by visible or invisible danger it almost seemed as if the *negara* did not exist; to all appearances, there was little more than a loosely knit federation of greater and lesser lords, each of whom controlled a domain of his own. It was only under threat of chaos that the *negara* had to be rendered manifest to restore (temporarily) the hierarchical order. And so we have another paradox: in the nineteenth century the Balinese order politic was such that the *desa*, which were invisible in terms of power relations, nevertheless constituted the basic elements which ultimately shaped the *negara* ritually to realize the continuation of life.

8. See Vickers (forthcoming). The ritual was a *maligia* of the Dewa Agung of Klungkung and was held in 1842.



### 3. *The Colonial Order 1906–1942*

Although South Bali has known a rather brief colonial domination of no more than thirty-six years, its consequences were more incisive than mere 'scratches on a rock'. The colonial regime dismantled most of the royal centres and reorganized the relationships sketched above in a most rigorous way. Ostensibly, however, this operation was meant to 'restore tradition'.<sup>1</sup>

When the first Dutch civil servants arrived in South Bali in 1906, they believed they already knew the socio-political structure of this area and they even pretended to know how to restore South Balinese society to its 'proper traditional order'. Orientalist notions of Asiatic society in general, mixed with government experience in North Bali, had resulted in a standard description of Balinese villages by F. A. Liefrinck (1890). His model became the blueprint for the colonial reorganization of South Bali.<sup>2</sup>

According to Liefrinck the Balinese *desa* was a small, democratic, and basically religious 'republic'.<sup>3</sup> This definition had long-lasting implications with regard to measures taken by both Dutch and Indonesian governments, and it introduced several analytical dichotomies which were to be applied during the next century.

The assertion that the Balinese *desa* was a democratic republic stressed its autonomy *vis-à-vis* the outside world and in particular the Balinese nobility. Furthermore, it implied that 'primeval Bali' was to be found at the *desa* level, and depicted the Balinese nobility as a foreign élite of Javanese descent, which had conquered Bali at some point in the fourteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Despite its

1. On the colonial reorganization see Schulte Nordholt 1986; 1988, chapter 8.

2. Liefrinck served in the 1880s as a *Controleur* (district official) in North Bali, and between 1896–1900 he was Resident of Bali and Lombok. He was seen as one of the Founding Fathers of the Adat Law School established at the University of Leiden at the beginning of the twentieth century (Van Vollenhoven 1928). He gained even more prestige when he joined the Council of the Indies, the highest echelon of officialdom in the Dutch colonial hierarchy. Who would have dared to dispute his conclusions? Because of Liefrinck's dominant position Dutch colonial ideas about the Balinese *desa* were remarkably unanimous, in contrast to the multiple views and discussions regarding the nature of the Javanese *desa* at that time. Dutch colonial presence in North Bali dated from 1854, and the area was brought under direct colonial control in 1882.

3. Liefrinck 1927:281. It should be emphasized again that Liefrinck's conception of the *desa* was based on his research in North Bali, where village structures differed considerably from those in South Bali.

4. See Schulte Nordholt 1986: 11–14; 1988, chapter 2.



power at the regional level this foreign élite had, according to Lieftrinck, been unable to penetrate the *desa*. Consequently, there existed two different and separate worlds in Bali: that of the noble élite with its 'foreign' court culture derived from Java, and that of the 'genuine', or 'original' Balinese. The democratic nature of the *desa* reinforced the idea that the Balinese villagers had succeeded in protecting themselves from noble penetration in the isolation of their autonomous republics. In this layer-cake model there was thought to be no real interaction between these two worlds; they simply existed side by side. The image of the *desa* as a democratic republic fitted very well in the context of the requirements of the colonial state. This is why the Dutch, intent on forging a uniform and efficient system of government, had recourse to the *desa*.

According to Lieftrinck, the nature of the *desa* was basically religious. In this respect a second dichotomy emerged, since 'religion' was to be kept separate from administration. Religion was equated with traditional order (or *adat*), whereas administration belonged to the external domain of the colonial government.<sup>5</sup> The Dutch assumed governmental responsibility and wanted to restrict themselves to the 'administrative' domain and leave the religious or *adat* domain of the *desa* 'untouched'. Consequently, the Dutch pretended to govern Bali without violating its religious nature or 'essence'. They even prided themselves on their ability to respect and protect the traditional integrity of the Balinese *desa*.

In 1906 the newly arrived Dutch officials set to work 'to purge village administration of royal impositions and intrusions' in order to 'simplify the village administration and return it to its original state.'<sup>6</sup> They completed this project with considerable speed, for it was done within three years (1907–1910). Despite that fact that this reorganization was achieved without any prior research the Dutch were convinced that Lieftrinck's blueprint could be applied to South Bali without modification. As early as 1909, the Resident of Bali concluded that the whole operation had been successful and that 'no actual change was made in the essence of the village administration, except that there will be more regularity and order.'<sup>7</sup>

5. It should be emphasized here that *adat* is an Arabic word which was introduced by the Dutch. It replaced an existing terminology of local customs (i.e. *dresta*, the customary practice derived from the ancestors, formulated in certain rules of behaviour, *tata krama*), and created a new conceptual domain of 'religious tradition', which was entirely separate from 'administration'.

6. Algemeen Rijksarchief Den Haag (ARA), Ministerie van Koloniën (MvK), Memorie van Overgave (MvO) Assistant Resident (AR) South Bali, H. J. F. Schwartz 1909, quoted in MvO AR A. J. L. Couvreur 1920. Schwartz had served under Resident F. A. Lieftrinck and was the main architect of this reorganization, which included regional and local irrigation networks and the creation of sub-districts headed mostly by members of the Balinese nobility. In the *negara* Badung, Tabanan and Klungkung royal rule was abolished, whereas in the *negara* Karangasem, Gianyar and Bangli the royal dynasties were placed under Dutch control. The *negara* Mengwi ceased to exist in 1891 because of interregional warfare (Schulte Nordholt 1988: 167–78, 181–204).

7. ARA, MvK, Monthly political report on Bali, January 1909, in Verbaal (V) 28-10-1910-1.



Such was the official colonial ideology. If now we turn to colonial practice a different picture emerges. In the first place a new type of administrative village was created, usually consisting of several *desa* grouped together under a new name. Sometimes existing *desa* were split arbitrarily and grouped with different administrative villages. The reason was that the Dutch wanted to create local administrative units of more or less equal size. Apparently, an important criterion was that these units should consist of groups of 200 able-bodied men who could be recruited for colonial *corvée* labour.

A further change concerned power relationships at the local level. Since the royal networks of lords and followers with their many intermediaries (*mekel*) were formally abolished, many lesser nobles had lost their local power positions. The Dutch were afraid that these might prove a threat to the colonial regime and therefore recruited the new village heads from among the former noble *mekel*. In fact, the Dutch replaced the old fragmented political order with a uniform structure with one village head (now named *perbekel*) who was in charge of a specific territory. Although the nobility lost most of its strength at the regional level, it now exercised unprecedented power at the village level, since the noble *perbekel* was backed by the power monopoly of the colonial state. This meant that former *desa* leaders (*bendesa*) were shorn of their power as well, because they were now controlled directly by the new *perbekel*. In many cases the *bendesa* lost their position as *desa* leaders and were appointed as ward (*banjar*) heads.<sup>8</sup>

The Dutch maintained nevertheless that, actually, nothing had changed in the South Balinese *desa* and that, if anything was altered at all, it meant a restoration to its original state. They based their argument on a distinction, entirely new for South Bali, between 'religious' authority (or *adat*) and 'secular' authority (or administration). Consequently, the new *perbekel* and his village represented the administrative or secular authority at village level, while the *bendesa* was seen as the religious or *adat* authority within his own *desa* community. As the Dutch saw it, administration and *adat* were separate worlds; logic would have it that the local *adat*, embodied in the traditional *desa*, remained untouched by colonial interference.

Local *adat* as embodied in the *desa* was forbidden territory for the colonial government; nevertheless, the Dutch penetrated it. As indicated above, once the *negara* ceased to exist the *bendesa* had lost most of his local power and no longer acted as the vital link between his *desa* and the royal centre in matters of ritual mobilization. Instead, the *perbekel* had become the central link in

8. In the area of Mengwi 87 *desa* were re-grouped into 47 administrative villages. In 1920 only nine of these villages had a commoner as *perbekel*, while 38 villages had a *perbekel* of noble descent. The majority of these *perbekel* were recently appointed by the colonial government. Gianyar was rearranged in much the same way (Schulte Nordholt 1988:227).



the new chain of command between the state and the population. Moreover, the Dutch started to study *adat*-law in order to classify, codify, institutionalize and control 'the traditional situation'. In time the Dutch decided which should be considered as 'genuine' *adat* and which should be dismissed as being not truly Balinese. Finally the Dutch colonial state created its own village in which the distinction between administration and *adat*, or secular and religious affairs, was believed to be a 'natural' characteristic of Bali. The ancestor of the present-day Balinese village was called into being.

In the course of the 1930s colonial influence extended still further into the local level to reach the wards (*banjar*). Just like the village, the ward was split up into an administrative sphere, called *dinas* (from the Dutch word 'dienst', service/task), and an *adat* domain. As a result the Balinese were now confronted with two kinds of leadership in their *banjar*: a *dinas* head was appointed as the agent of the *perbekel*, while the *adat* head was placed in charge of a ward's internal religious affairs. Once again boundaries were drawn between 'entities' which were not easily kept asunder. Inheritance disputes, for instance, involved both *adat* and *dinas*, and many rituals and temples still had a political significance.<sup>9</sup>

In the 1930s the myth of the 'democratic village republic' was also used in another context. Since the late 1920s the Dutch colonial government had sought to 'restore' traditional royal rule in the 'Outer Areas' of the Netherlands Indies by establishing a kind of indirect rule by local *raja*, or kings. In 1929 eight descendants of former Balinese dynasties were appointed as *raja*.<sup>10</sup>

The measures taken by the Dutch were contradictory. On the one hand, the village was seen as the basis of 'real' Balinese society, whereas the royal dynasties were depicted as 'outsiders' whose influence had damaged local society. On the other hand, however, the Dutch felt the need to 'restore' the Balinese dynasties in order to secure a stable (and cheaper!) colonial regime. They looked upon the *raja* as religious leaders, a 'protective umbrella' over Balinese culture. In addition, they were also depicted as colonial buffers against nationalist ideas and organizations. Both as agents of the colonial state and as protagonists of dynastic authority the *raja* represented an extremely conservative power in Balinese society.

The Dutch had few problems with the simultaneous enforcement of local *adat* and royal rule, since, as they saw it, commoners and nobility lived in separate worlds anyway. The myth of the autonomous village republic was in full swing again in order to legitimize the restoration of royal rule. It was argued that the *raja* were not able to damage the democratic nature of local

9. See below, Schulte Nordholt 1988:280-3, and forthcoming b.

10. See Schulte Nordholt 1986:34-43; 1988:289-95.



Balinese society, because the 'egalitarian village' would prevent penetration of autocratic dynastic rule.

Under the pretext of restoring a supposedly original order, the colonial state restored royal rule, penetrated to the local level, and imposed a set of dichotomies which changed the local order in South Bali forever.

As mentioned above, the 1906 abolition of royal rule put an end to relations between *desa* and royal centres, and the old ritual mobilization ceased to exist. As secular authority the colonial government declined association with the local religion. The great public rituals of purification disappeared. The famed Dutch policy of *Rust en Orde* (law and order) thus saddled the Balinese with feelings of insecurity and disorder.

The Dutch introduced secular ceremonies of their own which gave expression to the authority of the colonial state. A major event was the annual celebration of Queen Wilhelmina's birthday (Wilhelmina's fifty-year reign began in 1898). On 31 August the Balinese were treated to a for them uncommon sight: in the squares in front of the Dutch civil servants' official residences there would be processions of singing schoolchildren, ponderous and flowery speeches and a reception or a banquet for the guests afterwards. Balinese were permitted to participate marginally only in these thoroughly Dutch celebrations.

Sometimes a more impressive pageant was organized, as in 1918, when the Governor General paid an official visit. For this occasion a number of Balinese cultural elements were added such as certain dances and even a Brahman priest who greeted this highest representative of Her Majesty as follows:

This memorable event causes each of us to feel as if Batara Maha Dewa [the supreme deity] has descended from the Gunung Agung and has come to the world, revealing himself to mankind, dispensing great joy and gladness among us; as if we are the recipients of holy water; yea, as if, by thy restoring breath, thou grantest us renewal of life. (Schmidt auf Altstadt 1920:169)

Notwithstanding this rather forced deification of the Governor General the colonial ceremonies lacked a religious dimension. Unavoidably so, since the Dutch represented a secular state and for that reason could not involve themselves in local religions. As a result, the colonial ceremonies remained alien events which the Balinese were unable to relate to the *negara* as they had known it earlier.

When the Balinese kings were officially 'reinstalled' in 1938, more religious trappings were allowed to be part of the ceremony. Still, the event remained an uneasy combination of colonial state ceremony and 'traditional' ingredients. The official inauguration took place in front of Bali's main temple complex of Besakih—although never before a king had been inaugurated on that spot—



on *Galungan* day, when all the gods and ancestors descend to their temples, and a Brahman priest took the oath of the new kings. The event visualized a new political model in which Balinese kings and their subjects were incorporated into the Dutch empire. The bond of loyalty between the kings and the Dutch throne was confirmed by the signing of a special treaty, while the ceremony at Besakih merely embellished the event to give it an authentic flavour.<sup>11</sup> Whereas pre-colonial royal rituals were an important means of creating and recreating the *negara*, the rituals under colonial rule were intended to legitimize foreign rule in the guise of 'traditional' Balinese authority.

In their own environment, however, the newly appointed kings and other high nobles were free to stage rather large-scale rituals according to their own ideas. As a result they managed to translate the power which they derived from the Dutch into Balinese terms through a whole range of rituals which manifested their regional authority. On these occasions the Dutch were not present or, at best, represented by a selection of honoured guests who were allowed to witness parts of the rituals. Although it seemed as if these events had an autonomous character, they were firmly embedded within the structure of the colonial state. The nobles who organized these rituals could only do so because they used the power which they derived from their Dutch superiors.<sup>12</sup>

Even though the local order had been reorganized quite thoroughly, the Dutch remained outsiders by definition. Colonial government could not allow the Balinese fully-fledged civil participation in the state, nor could the Dutch corps of civil servants 'go native' by adopting local conceptions of hierarchy, for this would cause them to lose the necessary distinction between white rulers and native subjects.<sup>13</sup>

11. See Schulte Nordholt 1988:292. The treaty signed by each of the new kings was the Short Declaration (*Korte Verklaring*).

12. See Schulte Nordholt forthcoming b, on how a South Balinese noble translated his power as a district officer into Balinese symbols and rituals in order to enhance his royal ambitions, and Mershon (1971) on a royal death ritual in Karangasem in 1937, which was perhaps the largest and most expensive 'private' ritual ever held during this century. At the beginning of the century, when colonial rule was not yet firmly established, the Dutch sometimes sponsored cremation rituals of noble Balinese officials in order to support their authority. In general the staging of large cremation rituals had become difficult because the heirs of the old dynasties no longer had the necessary manpower at their disposal, due to new colonial regulations with regard to *corvée* labour. In 1933 the leading dynastic families in Bali organized for the first time under colonial rule a small-scale purification ritual in Besakih; see Stuart-Fox 1987:353, 378-9.

13. Compare Guha (1989) who in his discussion of colonial India distinguishes (à la Gramsci) between state and civil society and between dominance by force and hegemony by persuasion: 'For under conditions of dominance without hegemony the life of civil society can never be fully absorbed into the state' (1989:289).



## 4. *Civil War 1945–1966*

After the Japanese occupation (1942–1945) the Balinese experienced more than twenty years of civil war with unprecedented outbursts of violence.<sup>1</sup> Virtually every Balinese household has tragic memories of this dramatic period; voluntarily or involuntarily almost every person was drawn into the unbroken chain of power struggles.

For many years Western scholars have passed over this political violence in silence, in part because very little research was done in Bali during this period. Instead, reprints appeared of older, colonial writings which dwelt on the peaceful and integrated nature of Balinese culture.<sup>2</sup> And those individuals who did engage in research largely based their views on pre-war conceptions. For example, inspired by the views propagated by Gregory Bateson, Geertz (1966) posited that 'Balinese are not the sort to push the moment to its crisis. . . . Balinese social life lacks climax because it takes place in a motionless present, a vectorless now' (1966:61).<sup>3</sup> But these were moving times soon to approach a climax: that very year, 1966, some 80,000 persons died in Bali because of the political revolution in Indonesia; the victims were adherents of the Communist Party (PKI).

Only recently Geoff Robinson (1988) has conducted serious research into Balinese history between 1945 and 1966. He convincingly demonstrates that the changing relations of power constituted the political frameworks in which the successive explosions of violence are to be understood. The central state lost its power monopoly, which made it possible for relatively autonomous power concentrations to arise at the regional and local levels.<sup>4</sup> Nation-wide political parties entered the regional arenas and national party conflicts mixed

1. See Lane 1972; Pendit 1979; Robinson 1988; Vickers 1989: 161–73; and Bagus (forthcoming) on political developments in Bali between 1945 and 1966. I owe the term 'civil war' to Geoff Robinson.

2. See for instance Swellengrebel 1960; Belo 1970; Covarrubias 1973.

3. To be sure, at the close of his essay Geertz indicates that he is aware of approaching change. Because of his preoccupation with the integrating power of culture (cf. Geertz 1960, chapter 22), Geertz was no more able to estimate the true proportions and intensity of the political conflict than other observers at the time.

4. See Legge (1961) on the administrative structure of the Indonesian state in the 1950s, and Oka (1988) on administrative changes in Bali between 1945 and 1966.



with local feuds.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, 'gangs' of revolutionary guerrilla spawned new interest groups, rural class conflicts escalated and army units gradually managed to gain independent power positions.

At the local level the village was no longer an administrative unit of the state, but became an arena for competing factions at the regional and local levels. The weak state was not able to give stable support to its local agents, as a result of which the *perbekel* had to rely on local factions in order to survive. Many *perbekel* who belonged to the nobility and were appointed under colonial rule were replaced by commoners who represented anti-aristocratic sentiments.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1950s a new vocabulary entered the village; words like *berjuang* (struggle), *pidato* (public speech) and *feodal* (feudal) illustrated the changing nature of local politics. Daily life had become insecure, and people usually refer to this period in terms of 'fear'.<sup>7</sup> Exacerbation of the conflicts at the national and the Balinese level, beyond the control of the parties involved, finally resulted in tragic violence.

Robinson (1988) shows that the mass murders between November 1965 and March 1966 were not perpetrated by some 'invisible hand', an autonomous cultural power which would wipe out the evil in society and restore equilibrium; rather, the killings were the outcome of well-organized campaigns involving the army and murder brigades of the nationalist party (PNI).

Although Robinson's analysis of the political framework in which the violence in Bali was generated is quite convincing, one or two points of importance for current developments remain obscure. I am thinking of the formation of a religious organization, associated from the start with the army, and displaying evident political aspects, and, secondly, of the attempts on the part of the army and the police to control the escalating political conflicts by means of a great public ritual.

Since Bali had become part of the Indonesian nation-state, in which Islam formed the major religion, Balinese leaders encountered serious problems in winning official recognition for their own religion. Only after the personal intervention of President Sukarno in 1958 was the Hindu Balinese religion (*Agama Hindu Bali*) recognized by the Department of Religion.<sup>8</sup>

5. Initially the socialist party PSI versus the nationalist party PNI; later the communist party PKI versus the PNI.

6. Although I do not have exact figures, interviews made clear that, at least in the Mengwi area, many noble *perbekel* were replaced by commoners who had gained authority during the revolution and/or had become members of one of the dominant political parties during the 1950s. See also Warren (1989:40) for a similar development in Gianyar. One consequence was that in many villages conflicts between nobility and commoners led to the creation of new *banjar* (for instance 'Banjar Triwangsa', denoting the noble descent of its members).

7. H. Geertz (forthcoming); Warren 1989.

8. Anandakusuma 1966; Forge 1980; Stuart-Fox 1987. Sukarno had a special relationship with Bali. His mother was a Balinese and he often stayed in his palace in Tampaksiring in Central Bali.



At the same time political tensions between the communist party (PKI) and the nationalist party (PNI) started to increase. In 1959 President Sukarno instituted the Guided Democracy; local political tension escalated rapidly because representative bodies ceased to function and parties and interest groups could make their impact felt only via massive public demonstrations.<sup>9</sup> Towards the end of the 1950s religious issues became inextricably intertwined with political ones as well.

In 1959 the regional parliament (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah*) began the procedure for the election of a new Governor of Bali. It turned out that a rather moderate candidate obtained the majority of the votes. Nevertheless President Sukarno re-appointed the more radical Governor, Suteja, who had obtained but a minority of the votes. Because Suteja showed a growing sympathy towards the communist PKI, the military commander of Bali, Lieutenant Colonel Soepardi, decided to support the recently established *Parisada Hindu Dharma* (PHD) financially in order to counteract increasing radicalism in his territory.<sup>10</sup>

From its very start the *Parisada Hindu Dharma* was both a religious and a political organization. It was seriously concerned with the Balinese cultural identity within the new national framework and tried to 'modernize' and 'rationalize' Balinese religion according to standards which were in part derived from India, which was seen as the source of 'pure Hinduism'.<sup>11</sup> The PHD was political in that it was used as a stronghold against 'communism' and, later, as a propaganda medium for the New Order.

It was however not (yet) the PHD, but the regional military commander and Head of Police Sutarto (both of them Javanese!) who were directly involved with the first large-scale purification rituals of the post-war period in the temple complex of Besakih on the slopes of the volcano Gunung Agung.

9. Robinson 1988, chapter 7. Informants told me that 'If the PKI met this week, the PNI immediately organized an even greater manifestation for the week following. Everything had become political.' Even harvesting had become a political activity. Adherents of both the PKI and the PNI, waving flags and armed with sticks, were harvesting rice at the same time and sought to outdo each other in shouting slogans.

10. Interview with I G. Ketut Kaler, July 1989, who was at that time chairman of the voting committee of the DPRD. Reappointment of Governor Suteja took place even before the voting was formally completed. The 1955 elections had given the PNI a majority in the regional parliament, and they now supported the moderate candidate. After 1955, however, the PKI had risen strongly, but was unable to gain more influence in parliament because no elections were held under the Guided Democracy. See also Lane 1972:33-4, 49-50, and Sarwa 1985. It was the military commander rather than the governor who controlled most of the central funds in Bali at that time (Stuart-Fox 1987:381).

11. See for instance Anandakusuma 1966; *Pokok-pokok Sedjarah Perkembangan Parisada Hindu Dharma* 1970; Geertz 1972; Forge 1980. The PHD not only initiated a new wave of Hinduization in Bali, but also introduced Hinduism in other parts of Indonesia.



Especially the *Eka Dasa Rudra* ritual of 1963 turned out to be a dramatic event.<sup>12</sup>

The *Eka Dasa Rudra* is the largest of the Balinese rituals and has its origins in the pre-colonial period. It involves the purification of the whole island and is to be held every century. Since Bali had gone through a period of political instability it was thought that this ritual might help to exorcise the (political) pollution which had affected Balinese society.<sup>13</sup>

The ritual and its organization were a metaphor of the political situation of that moment. The organization reflected the mixture of authority which existed in Bali at the time. Although officially the provincial government was in charge of the ritual, the Governor's attitude towards the event was initially very reluctant. It was in fact the head of police who took the initiative to organize the *Eka Dasa Rudra*, while the military commander provided most of the funding, and the Dewa Agung, former king of Klungkung, supervised the ritual itself. There was, moreover, a great deal of insecurity about the proper sequence of the ritual acts to be performed since no-one had ever witnessed this ritual before and nobody even knew when it was held for the last time.<sup>14</sup>

The outcome of the ritual was dramatic for it coincided with a devastating eruption of the volcano Gunung Agung. In consequence of this a large part of (East) Bali was destroyed, and the ritual could not be brought to its prescribed completion. With hindsight Balinese informants now state that the eruption foreshadowed and even legitimized the 'final cleansing' during the massacre of 1965–1966.<sup>15</sup>

In comparison with the colonial period many relationships had changed in an essential way. Bali was now part of the Indonesian nation-state and the power monopoly of the central state had disappeared. This led to marked segmentation—various state agencies and political organizations operating

12. The other ritual was the *Panca Wali Krama* of 1960, meant to be held every ten years. See Stuart-Fox 1987:379–81, and *Karya Pudja Pantja Wali Krama* 1960. See on the *Eka Dasa Rudra* of 1963: Matthews 1965; Grader 1970; Stuart-Fox 1987; *Programme Eka Dasa Rudra Besakih* 1963.

13. This was not the first time that rituals were staged in order to 'neutralize' political conflicts. Especially during the revolution many conflicts were accompanied by rituals. During periods of violence every night *Sang Hyang Dedari* (or trance) dances were held in the *pura desa* of Badung (Denpasar) in order to exorcise 'pollution' and 'disorder' (information by C. J. Grader and one of the women who took part in these dances). See also Franken (1960) and H. Geertz (forthcoming) for detailed and fascinating descriptions of the way political conflicts and local rituals were interconnected.

14. The organizing committee tried to construct the proper procedure on the basis of various old texts. One of the prescriptions was that all buried bodies had to be cremated prior to the beginning of the ritual. This meant an extra burden for the population, which was struggling with two successive crop failures and soaring *Rupiah* inflation (interview with the committee's secretary, I G. Ketut Kaler, July 1989).

15. At the time of the eruption this was, however, not yet the case, because newspaper reports saw it as a positive sign that the gods actually had attended the ritual (Stuart-Fox 1987:388).



separately—in which one must distinguish between the national, regional and local levels on which interest groups conducted their power struggles. The distinct arenas thus arising did, however, touch. It is true that conflicts in the villages or in the Bali region each had characteristics of their own; still, in the end they were connected with conflicts on the national level and involved in the decisive battle for power in the centre of the state.

Although the 1963 ritual seem to display *prima facie* similarities with the nineteenth-century purification rituals one should be careful not to overemphasize continuity. To be sure, in both periods political stability was lacking, but the nature of the conflicts in the 1950s and 1960s were entirely different, because regional politics had become intertwined with national issues and because political organizations were part of an external network—as very clearly illustrated by the fact that the Javanese military commander and the Javanese head of police played an instrumental role in the construction of the purification ritual held in 1963. Furthermore, this ritual was doomed to fail, since the conflicts that had to be exorcised were determined largely by outside forces.



## 5. *Desa, Adat, and the New Order*

President Suharto assumed power in 1966. Soon the New Order achieved a well-nigh absolute monopoly of power and all of Indonesia was caught up in an unprecedented process of state formation. The consequences of all this for Bali will be central to the rest of this essay.

From its inception, the New Order manifested itself as a modern state in which 'development' is a major concern and key concept (Van Langenberg 1986; Mas'oed 1990). Vast amounts of foreign aid and the oil boom of the 1970s encouraged the widespread initiation of centrally directed development projects, and a score of government agencies penetrated into the local level. But at the same time this modern façade fronts a policy meant to keep Balinese society under strict control through 'traditional' means. Too little attention has in this respect been paid to the striking continuities between the policies of the late-colonial state and measures taken by the Indonesian government since 1966 (see Anderson 1983b). In the matters of village government and local *adat* the New Order perpetuated a policy initiated by the Dutch.

### *State and village government*

After the killings of 1965–1966 the military held sway over Bali, and the provincial government bureaucracy was reorganized into a politically homogeneous representative of state power. At the same time many heads of villages (where formerly the PKI exercised substantial influence) were replaced by 'temporary' leaders who were appointed by the military.<sup>1</sup> Often these new *perbekel* were recruited from the ranks of the army or the police, and were subsequently 're-elected' by the local population for another term. Their position differed considerably from that of their predecessors of the 1950s and early 1960s because they could rely on strong support from above, while open conflicts between local factions had disappeared. Moreover, local society became more

1. Some village heads managed to survive the crisis of 1965–1966 because they had been able to prevent internal violence against (alleged) PKI supporters by handing them over to the military before they were executed by the local PNI faction. Information is based on interviews in the Mengwi area.



and more 'Golkarized'. This process of 'Golkarization' implies that the state party Golkar dominates the national, regional and even local elections, and that the national Panca Sila ideology penetrates at the village level through the so-called P4 indoctrination courses.<sup>2</sup>

State penetration at the local level was furthered also by the Law on Village Government of 1979.<sup>3</sup> In this respect the New Order government carried on from the point which the Dutch achieved in the 1930s. In the first place the 1979 law intended to create a stronger uniformity of village government, which was reflected in a new terminology. The 'foreign' terms '*kelurahan*' and '*dusun*' were introduced in Bali to replace the terms *perbekelan* (administrative village) and *banjar* (ward). Although initially there was considerable resentment against such 'brutal Javanization', as informants put it, most of the wards call themselves today '*dusun/banjar*'. But uniformity of terminology was a minor change compared with the impact of the new law on local power relationships. In the more densely populated areas there is a tendency to amalgamate villages into larger units (*kelurahan*), the leaders of which are appointed from above.<sup>4</sup> The same is happening with regard to the heads of the wards (*klian banjar* or *kepala lingkungan*). Although the *banjar* is allowed to propose two candidates, it is the *camat* (district head) who makes the final decision about the appointment. Smaller villages still have the right to choose their *perbekel* (or *kepala desa*) and *klian banjar* (or *kepala dusun*), but in practice there are several restrictions. Candidates are screened and sometimes there is pressure from above to eliminate candidates considered to be too independent or anti-Golkar. At the beginning of the 1980s, for instance, several candidates for the position of village leader in my research area who had expressed their support for the 'opposition party' PDI, were heavily intimidated by agents from the district (*kabupaten*) level, who 'advised' them to withdraw before the elections took place.<sup>5</sup>

When a new village head or ward leader is finally appointed, he becomes a *pegawai negeri* (civil servant). As such he receives a modest salary from the government, and is incorporated in—and brought under control of—the ruling Golkar party through obligatory membership of the national organization of civil servants KORPRI (*Korps Pegawai Republik Indonesia*).

2. In the eyes of a number of informants the P4 (*Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila*, Guide for the mental experience and implementation of the Pancasila) courses were closely associated with Golkar. After a Golkar candidate had won the local elections, and since the majority of the population had followed a P4 course, one informant concluded that his village had now been totally 'Golkarized' ('*di-Golkar-kan*').

3. See also MacAndrews 1986; Parker 1989; Kato 1989; Warren forthcoming.

4. The appointment of *lurah* was regulated by Government Regulation no. 55 1980.

5. The PDI is the Democratic Party and is the result of a fusion of several political parties (in Bali especially the PNI and the PSI).



The authority of local leaders is not only supported by higher levels of the state bureaucracy, but their power is also reinforced by the fact that the village head is the only channel to these levels of the bureaucracy and external funds. The influx of large amounts of money through their offices—especially the INPRES and BANDES funds<sup>6</sup>—as a result of the oil boom of the 1970s and early 1980s, provided village leaders with opportunities to distribute money among their followers and allies, and to create a situation in which villagers became dependent on their willingness to give access to the higher levels of the bureaucracy and external funds. Especially the INPRES money, with which construction of a large number of elementary schools was financed, enabled village leaders to earn a lot of money through informal ‘deals’ with their favourite local contractors.<sup>7</sup>

Another change in local power relationships was the creation of the LKMD, an advisory council which consists of representatives of the village élite.<sup>8</sup> It depends on the qualities of the village head whether he can dominate village affairs through this LKMD, or whether he is actually dominated by the members of the village élite in that council, who use him as a kind of executive secretary. In the village where I conducted my research the former village head—now a member of the LKMD—was able to dominate local politics, whereas the present village head has hardly any influence. The position of the village head has also been weakened since the amount of external government funds has dramatically dropped in the last few years as a result of the international economic recession and cuts in government budgets since the early 1980s. In general, village leaders and village élite nowadays make the important decisions on local affairs.

The discontinuity with the 1950s when state control was almost absent at the local level is evident. The current situation is actually more continuous with the 1930s. At that time many Balinese district officials (*punggawa*) managed to appoint village heads of their own choice who in turn appointed their ward leaders. They could do so since they were backed by the power monopoly of

6. INPRES (*Instruksi Presiden*) money comes directly from the central government under the direct control of the President’s office; BANDES (*Bantuan Desa*) funds are provided by the provincial government for local development projects.

7. In general those village heads who were in office during the 1970s are now considered to be rather well off, since they were able to accumulate enough money to start a modest enterprise or to buy land, and to build a modern bungalow in their yard.

8. The LKMD (*Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa*, Council or Organization for the Maintenance of Village Society) was created by Presidential Decree no. 28 1980, and replaced the LSD (*Lembaga Sosial Desa*, Social Council of the Village); see Nico Schulte Nordholt 1987; Kato 1989.

There is still another institution at the village level, the *Lembaga Musyawarah Desa* (LMD, Council for Mutual Consultation) which officially has a more legislative function (but see for local variations Parker 1989), but actual power is now concentrated in the LKMD.



the colonial state.<sup>9</sup> Only after 1966 did the state become strong enough to exercise the same kind of power. Moreover, state power was reinforced by incorporation of local leaders in the body of loyal state officials and by the distribution of government funds through these local leaders.

Although villages are still portrayed as 'democratic' entities, the majority of the local population is virtually excluded from the formal political scene. In the process of state penetration, or *dinasisasi* of village government, local support for the village leaders has become largely irrelevant, because their future depends on the backing provided by higher levels of the government bureaucracy.

The New Order has thoroughly appropriated village government in Bali. Still, this does not mean that the local population is no longer able to make itself heard. A small but significant incident in the village where I conducted my research will illustrate this. In the following sections I will discuss the two issues introduced by this case: the complicated relationship between administration, development, and local *adat*, and the manner in which villagers express symbolic protest against authorities.

Since the beginning of the 1980s the LKMD and the head of village B had tried to raise funds in order to build a new market because the existing one was old and had become far too small. Although the market was owned by the *desa* (or *adat* community) of B, only the head of the administrative village had access to government funding. In the ensuing years several plans were made, submitted to the higher levels of the government, revised and submitted again. Final government approval was given in July 1989, and at the same time a loan was obtained from a government bank.

A controversial role was played by the *adat* leader of *desa* B: instead of protecting the *adat* interests of his *desa* he promoted 'development'.

Half a year earlier, this local *adat* leader (who is a rich man, since he owns one of the two rice mills in the village and is a prominent member of the LKMD as well) decided to take the initiative by pulling down the old market. By this he wanted to show the higher authorities that his *desa* was determined to build the new market. He also proposed to cut a large part of the branches of the huge *waringin* tree, in the shade of which the market is located, in order to facilitate the building of the new market. This generated an enormous discussion among the population. Because the tree is considered to be holy and powerful, many objected to the cutting of the branches.<sup>10</sup> The issue was discussed in the *krama desa* (the council of representatives of all the house-yards which decide on *adat* matters) but no clear consensus was reached. Most of the people I interviewed said that they opposed the cutting of the

9. See Schulte Nordholt 1988, chapter 9. Officially, these local leaders were elected, but the higher officials had enough power to give a 'decisive advice' in these matters. Village heads in the 1930s were not paid by the government but received a plot of rice field.

10. On the origin of this tree see Schulte Nordholt forthcoming b.



branches, but did not want to obstruct the development of the village. Backed by the majority of the LKMD (in which some important local traders with private interests in the new market strongly advocated the cutting of the branches) the *adat* leader finally decided to do so. He contracted a group of workers from outside who were brave enough to cut the branches (no-one in the village even dared to touch the tree) for an amount of 700,000 rupiah. He also asked a *Brahman* priest to conduct a proper ritual in order to avoid the anger of the spirits believed to dwell in the *waringin*.

The ritual had to be supported by offerings made by all the house-yards in the village. However, when the priest came to perform the ritual only a few brought their offerings and the overwhelming majority stayed home and boycotted the event. The ritual and the cutting of the branches occurred anyway, but in an atmosphere of silence.

It was reported that shortly after finishing his job the leader of the group contracted to prune the tree had died. The connection between his death and the cutting of the tree was obvious. It was interpreted as a sign that the whole project was doomed. Another incident reinforced the idea that something was fundamentally wrong. The priest (*pamangku*) of the *Pura Dalem*, or 'Death Temple' of the *desa*, who was considered to be the most powerful of all the local priests, became seriously ill shortly afterwards. Although he had opposed the sacrilegious act of robbing the tree of its branches, he was forced by the LKMD to assist the Brahman priest when the ritual was conducted ('The feudal times when people were simply ordered to follow those in power is past, but nevertheless you have to come with us now', one of the LKMD members had said to him). Soon afterwards the priest fell ill—a bad omen—and his powers are believed to be waning.

In November 1989 the new market was officially opened by the *bupati* of Badung, who remarked in his speech that the village community had achieved a nice balance between tradition and development: while the building was a fine example of traditional architecture it opened the door to economic development as well. Despite the fact that the whole project was a success for the village entrepreneurs no-one will be surprised when new disasters will fall upon those responsible for having built the market. Especially the *adat* leader and some members of the LKMD were blamed by their fellow villagers: 'They are only after money, and don't respect what is considered to be holy.'<sup>11</sup>

11. A comparable incident between village administration plus LKMD and local 'adat-opposition' occurred in the *desa* Kapal in 1981, when the village administration decided to build a new elementary school on the temple grounds of *Pura Sada*. In a letter to the editor of the local newspaper *Bali Post* (February 1981) one of the opponents stated: '*Ya masalah kepercayaan adalah masalah yang otonom . . . milik kelompok masyarakat yang orang lain tidak ada hak untuk mencampuri apalagi melarangnya.*' (Religious belief is an autonomous matter which belongs to [local] society, in which others don't have the right to interfere. Moreover, they don't have the right to forbid such belief.)



## *Adat and development*

Next to expanding state control on village administration, the Indonesian government also tries to obtain a firmer grip on local *adat*. In this respect state officials rely heavily on the knowledge which was produced by the Dutch colonial government. Like their Dutch predecessors, they emphasize the distinction between secular government and *adat* in order to prevent popular participation in politics. They also try to codify local *adat* rules and put these in a uniform model. Unlike the Dutch, the Indonesian government means to use *adat* to achieve 'development', rather than to 'freeze' local society in a 'traditional', or quasi static situation.<sup>12</sup> This is illustrated in two important seminars on the relationship between government and local *adat*, held in Bali in 1969 and 1976.<sup>13</sup>

Both meetings began with a reiteration of the now well-established notions of the traditional *desa* autonomy (*otonomi asli*)—constitutionally guaranteed as of 1945<sup>14</sup>—the religious nature of the *desa*, and the *desa* as the natural basis for harmonious cooperation. Next, the perspective shifted to the state point of view and the central problem formulated was: How can the *desa*, and consequently local *adat*, be mobilized in support of national development? The national and the provincial government feared that village administration had inadequate roots in local society. The *dinas* or administrative officials were still believed to be outsiders in a local society where *adat* rules prevailed. This fear on the part of the government was partly due to the conceptual dichotomy between *dinas* and *adat* which had been developed under Dutch rule. And this government fear had serious political consequences.

The seminars arrived at intrinsically contradictory conclusions. In spite of expressed respect for *adat*, local autonomy etc., it was decided that the government should take action in order to protect and improve the weak and poorly articulated *adat* rules prevalent in local society. In a single stroke *adat* was turned from a traditional local stronghold into a state of decay and helplessness. Once this step was taken, the government bureaucracy could proceed. It was decided that an inventory should be made of all existing *adat* regulations (*awig-awig*), that these regulations should be evaluated and, if

12. See also Warren (forthcoming); Parker (1989); see for similar observations elsewhere in Indonesia: Acciaioli (1985); Bowen (1986).

13. Report by C. J. Grader on the Seminar on *Awig-Awig Desa* held in Denpasar in 1969; *Hasil-Hasil Perumusan Loka Karya Subak & Desa Adat Bali di Den Pasar* 1976.

14. The Balinese *desa* is explicitly mentioned in the Constitution (part 6, paragraph 18) as an autonomous 'Volksgemeenschap' (local community). The republican government adopted in this respect conservative colonial conceptions as 'natural' traits of the Indonesian cultures. For the political background of this point during the revolution, when the Republic was confronted with a number of federal states, see Reid 1974:20-1, 161-3.



necessary, 'improved' by external government experts, and that all *awig-awig* should be written down according to a uniform framework provided by the government.<sup>15</sup>

Since the local population was not considered able to formulate its own *adat* rules properly, it was felt necessary to provide information and guidance from above (*panataran dan pembinaan*). Moreover, local *adat* should fit the larger design of national development, or, translated in local government language, it was necessary to '*mensyncroonkan*' (synchronize, sic) *adat* and administration.

Despite an ideology which emphasizes the strength and even the autonomy of local communities in terms of 'mutual consultation', 'consensus' and 'corporate cooperation', the government generally denies local participation in development projects. The main concern of the government is to put local society under strict state control. In the end neither the 'original' *adat* nor development seems to be the most important issue of government policy. Incorporation of local *adat* in the state in fact serves one major goal: '*Stabilitas Sosial*'—an objective reminiscent of the Dutch colonial slogan of '*Rust en Orde*'.<sup>16</sup>

### *Counter-identities*

Despite the overwhelming control by both the Dutch colonial state and the present Indonesian government institutions, it would be incorrect to portray 'the state' as exercising absolute power and the population as doomed to remain passive. An unexpected way of expressing resentment, not only against the local powers but also against the ongoing penetration by the state, has been to phrase this in terms of *adat*. Ever since the colonial period the concept of *adat* as a distinct 'domain' made it possible to formulate a kind of counter-identity at the local level. This strategy is legitimate because, according to its own ideology, the state should respect *adat*. Paradoxically, the strong state created the opportunity for villagers to defend themselves against unwanted state penetration. Although *adat* contains no revolutionary language, 'soft protest' can successfully be expressed. An instance of such protest took place in the 1930s in the village where I conducted my fieldwork.<sup>17</sup>

One of the *banjar* (wards) of *desa* B consisted of loyal followers of a member of the Mengwi dynasty who had moved to this place in 1900. The followers all belonged to

15. For two examples of this type of model see Madra 1968; *Imba awig-awig krama desa adat ring Bali* 1975.

16. There was, however, also a feeling that Balinese culture should defend itself against disintegrating foreign influences, imported by tourism, urbanization and, in general, 'Java'. In this connection local *adat* had to provide a firm moral basis; see Putera (1976).

17. For more details on this case see Schulte Nordholt 1988:280–3.



the lower ranks of the nobility and were called *Gusi*. When they arrived in the *desa* with their lord a separate *banjar* was created where they were to live. Under colonial rule the Dutch appointed the member of the Mengwi dynasty as district head, and he recruited the lower village leaders from among his own entourage. One of the members of the new *banjar* was appointed as ward leader and he was later succeeded by his son.

This son was able to increase his local power through accumulation of functions. Next to being the leader of his ward, he was responsible for the recruitment of *corvée* labour in the district, while he was also appointed by the district head (or, as he saw it: by his lord) as *adat* leader of *desa* B.<sup>18</sup> Backed by the personal protection of the district head, he decided to use his power to enhance his status, and demanded from the population that they approach him respectfully as if he were a high noble (i.e. a *Gusti*). He also took to wearing expensive clothes and even shoes—exceptional in those days—as a sign of his privileged position.

The population of the *desa* resented his behaviour. In their eyes he behaved in a far too arrogant way, and he was known to be corrupt and brutal. Fellow members of his *banjar* objected to his ambitiousness and felt insulted by him. They saw him as an equal who had broken certain fundamental rules of decent social behaviour. In order to get rid of him, his fellow ward members decided to establish their own *desa adat*. As a result their opponent was no longer their *adat* leader, and they were able to ‘chase him out of town’.

Initially, the district head tried to protect his loyal follower. The case went to the regional court of justice and was ultimately handed over to the highest authority, the Dutch Resident of Bali and Lombok. The ward had proceeded to build its own *desa* temple, which the Resident considered to be sufficient proof of the existence of the new *desa*. The integrity of this *desa* had to be respected, both the ward-cum-*adat* leader and the district head suffered a serious defeat.

Although the actual power relationships did not change, the moral victory of the former ward/new *desa* was important. By formulating their grievances consciously in a language that was officially approved by the Dutch, they successfully defended their honour while their own identity was confirmed.

Conflicts like these still happen and make the present-day government officials in Bali very nervous.<sup>19</sup> Despite the display of power and the efforts to incorporate local *adat*, government officials have to admit that there are processes going on which remain beyond their control. Another example from the same village in recent times will illustrate this.

Although *desa* B did not show much ‘corporateness’, there was one particular issue which made the *desa* act as an aggressive community. More than eighty years ago, due to a complex of reasons, one *banjar* of B had been allocated to another *desa*,

18. The fact that an outsider was appointed by the noble district head as *adat* leader of the *desa*—where noble influence had been slight—shows that, despite the official Dutch dichotomy between administration and *adat*, no separate *adat* domain existed in this village during the colonial period.

19. See also Warren (forthcoming), who observes that ‘*adat* cases are regarded in provincial government circles as the most intractable and sensitive disputes.’



G, some fifteen kilometres to the north, where they formed a separate ward.<sup>20</sup> The migrants did not want to integrate into the *desa* to which they had been moved, and remained loyal to their old *desa*. When the leaders of *desa* G tried to force the new inhabitants to obey the local *adat* and to worship in the *desa* temples of G, they refused to do so. They declared that they had nothing to do with these temples, and did not want to give up their own identity which tied them to the temples of B.

At least three violent clashes between *desa* G and the immigrants occurred, and every time the immigrants were supported by external allies. The first time, in 1908, the district head, who could rely on the Dutch power monopoly, interfered in order to protect the separate ward. The second time was during the Revolution; one of the most famous revolutionary leaders, who had family ties with *desa* B, came with his men and threatened the people of G with guns.

In 1974 pressure on the 'immigrants' to integrate in the *desa* G increased again, and the members of the isolated ward asked for support from their *desa* of origin, B. Immediately a mass mobilization took place and almost all able-bodied men who were in the village that day went by truck and motorcycle to protect their fellow villagers. Armed with sticks and knives, about 500 people attacked the *desa* G. They drove its population out of their houses and chased them into the surrounding rice fields.

After this victorious raid the people from B went home; they had protected their fellow villagers in G whose identity was endangered no more. The government authorities, including the *bupati* (head of the region), were extremely upset by this spontaneous action. The leaders of the attack were interrogated that same night, but no further measures were taken. Government officials did not know how to handle this affair, because they were afraid that these 'stubborn villagers' were not going to obey their decisions.<sup>21</sup>

For the people of B who participated in the attack it was obvious that the government had nothing to do with this affair. They spoke of '*desa kala patra*', which means to stress the fact that every *desa* is different, depending on place, time and circumstances.

With legitimate claims on local *adat*, and stressing the fact that government should respect this 'domain', other *desa* also managed to win several cases while the government had to withdraw.<sup>22</sup>

20. This was part of a larger set of migrations in the area in 1904, shortly before the arrival of the Dutch in South Bali; see Schulte Nordholt 1988: 194–8.

21. It took another fourteen years of careful consultations—in which I, too, was involved, since I had access to the Dutch '*Adat Bible*' of Bali by Korn (1932)—and soft negotiations with the parties involved before this conflict was finally solved by the regional government. In 1988 the 'immigrants' in *desa* G were given their own graveyard, a move by which their separate status and their special link with their original village was officially acknowledged.

22. See for instance Forge (1980: 230) who reports that despite considerable government pressure the local population of the *desa* Gelgel refused to participate in a ritual in the 'all-Bali' temple *Pura Dasar* in Gelgel in 1977, which was held under supervision of the provincial government. They refused because their territory was ritually polluted by the birth of twins of the opposite sex in a commoner family.



One of these cases occurred in 1983 and attracted a lot of attention in the regional newspaper *Bali Post*. It concerned the plan of a rich man of common descent from Denpasar to establish a private graveyard in a *desa* some kilometres south of Denpasar. He had managed to obtain written permission from both the provincial Department of Religion and the government-sponsored institute for Hindu religion, PHD, and had already built a temple on his new graveyard. The plan failed because at the very last moment people from the *desa* where the private graveyard was located and several *desa* between the town of Denpasar and this *desa* opposed the project successfully. They argued that the man had no connections with the *desa* where the graveyard was located, that private graveyards of commoners were an insult against *adat*, and that all the *desa* along the route from Denpasar to the graveyard would be polluted in case of a burial or a cremation. Even more important was the resentment against the government, which had given its approval to this private graveyard without prior consultation of the *desa* involved.

When public debate in this affair increased the Department of Religion withdrew its permission and blamed the PHD for the mistakes that were made. Finally, the PHD withdrew its permission as well and was generally accused of violating elementary rules of local *adat*. Having read the newspaper report on the final outcome of the affair several people in the village where I stayed said: 'Yes, *they* [the government] should keep their hands off things *we* [the villagers] are entitled to handle.'

Perhaps the cases mentioned here have little to do with 'real politics' and big issues. However, the incidents encourage awareness that there is still room at the local level to counteract unwanted pressure from above. In the present context they are seen as important moments in local history because the winners were able to formulate their own identity. The incidents further show that different people have different ideas about the way 'the village' is represented. Representation means not only 'to portray as' but also 'to act on behalf of'.<sup>23</sup> Whereas the government wants to portray the village as a unit which can be defined and controlled from above, villagers decide sometimes to act otherwise.

Whether Balinese villagers will be able to formulate their own identity in terms of *adat* remains an open question. Government institutions have become more powerful on the local level and *adat* is more and more institutionalized. There are now island-wide *adat* competitions among *desa* (*Lomba Desa Adat*) organized by the government. *Desa* are obliged to obtain official approval and ratification of their *adat* regulations by government institutions. If they do

23. Hobart (unpublished). It is interesting that in some cases the local population uses a kind of 'counter-dichotomy' in order to distinguish their own *adat* from the *agama* (religion) imposed on them by government institutions (personal communication Carol Warren). The distinction between *adat* and religion (*agama*) is a recent one, and is applied in the rest of Indonesia as well; see for instance Kipp and Rogers (1987) and with regard to Balinese performing arts Picard (1990).



not, their regulations are considered invalid. The semi-government institution PHD plays an important role in reformulating and ratifying local *adat* rules. In this respect the government wants the PHD to 'stabilize' social order at the village level and to communicate in this respect with the government.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the distinction between *adat* regulations and development policy tends to blur because the obligation to visit primary schools and to participate in the family-planning programme have recently become part of the official *adat* regulations of some *desa* (Parker 1989:447-8).

Although institutionalization does not mean that *adat* is totally captured by the state, it becomes more difficult to oppose the government in 'legitimate' terms. In this respect much will depend on the way the population will be able to define its identity over against further state penetration within the boundaries of their ward (*banjar*). The state has penetrated the administrative village and the *desa*, but many *banjar* still manage to maintain a large degree of relative autonomy, mainly preserved in the unwritten rules of customary practice.<sup>25</sup>

24. Hasil-Hasil Perumusan Loka Karya Subak & Desa Adat Bali di Den Pasar 1976.

25. Carol Warren's PhD thesis on institutional change at the local level (1990, after I completed the present text) provides many important insights with regard to the strength of the *banjar*.



## 6. *The 'Revival' of State Rituals*

The New Order government in Bali did not restrict itself to redefining and controlling Balinese society in terms of village administration and local *adat*. It also stimulated the 'revival' of 'all-Bali' rituals which visualize and enhance in a symbolic way the over-arching authority of the state and the success of the New Order regime. Noteworthy is that the population is mobilized per *desa*, just as in the nineteenth century.

Towards the end of the 1970s two purification rituals were staged in the temple complex of Besakih. The first of these, in April 1978, was a *Panca Wali Krama* or ten-yearly ritual of purification, considered to be a try-out for the biggest ritual ever held in Bali. In March of the following year this centenary ritual, called *Eka Dasa Rudra*, took place.<sup>1</sup>

The provincial Department of Religion and the Parisada Hindu Dharma (PHD) jointly organized these events and dominated the discourse about their meaning. Relying on the experience gained in 1963, the provincial government attended to coordination; financial support was by provincial and central government funds. Although the PHD depended on government funding, it played a prominent role in connecting religious reform with state interests. At the present time it has developed into the recognized authority on the orthodoxy of Balinese Hinduism. In 1968 the PHD was incorporated in the state-'party' Golkar, which prompted the PHD to proclaim itself loyal to the Panca Sila, the state ideology, and to acknowledge the need of subordinating its own programme of religious reform to the national Indonesian government policy of 'development' and 'stability'. It is illustrative that in the 1970s a bureaucrat rather than a religious expert was appointed as Secretary General of the PHD.<sup>2</sup>

During the *Eka Dasa Rudra* of 1979 tens of thousands of people made a pilgrimage to Besakih and attended a well-organized ritual. Since pre-colonial

1. See on both rituals, H. Hinzler 1978; Stuart-Fox 1982, 1987; Forge 1980; *Warta Hindu Dharma* 1979; *Karya Eka Dasa Rudra di Besakih*, 1979; special editions *Bali Post* March, April 1979. The total costs of the *Eka Dasa Rudra* were approximately 89 million rupiah, 50 million of which was funded by the central and provincial governments (Stuart-Fox 1987:368).

2. This was I Wayan Surpha, a police officer. In 1972 the PHD managed to eliminate its main rival, the *Angkatan Muda Hindu Indonesia* led by one of the former PNI leaders of Bali, which operated outside Golkar; Lane 1972:103-9, 117-20.



days a successful ritual increased the authority of the one who was responsible for the event. The success of the ritual of 1979 proved that the government was in control and exercised legitimate authority. Supported by the organizational strength of modern state institutions and technology (walkie-talkies and the like), the successive stages all proceeded in an orderly way according to design. Great care was taken to have the ritual procedures conform to data derived from a variety of old texts studied by a special committee of scholars and priests.<sup>3</sup> The ritual unfolded without interruption, which was taken to mean also that the event of 1963, now seen as a failure, was 'corrected' at last, and that the subsequent massacre of 1965–1966 was 'exorcised'.<sup>4</sup> The ritual, then, confirmed that under the New Order conflict and chaos had been replaced with order and development.

As the ritual, witnessed by thousands, approached its climax, several things happened at the same moment. The presence of President Suharto and his wife and the Minister of Religion, Alamsyah, and the coverage of the ritual by national news media meant that Balinese Hinduism was now fully recognized as one of the national religions.<sup>5</sup> (Actually, the ritual not only displayed to the nation the exuberant pomp of Balinese Hinduism, but also drew international attention to Bali as a tourist paradise.) The presence of President Suharto had also another connotation: central to the ritual was the Indonesian state, rather than a representative of the old Balinese royalty. Consequently, the ritual was not just a 'religious' event but an important political statement. In this respect one may suppose that the ritual was a deliberate effort to return to pre-colonial patterns of statecraft. According to Forge, the *Eka Dasa Rudra* of 1979 was 'a great political religious rite dominated by concepts of hierarchy and the peace that comes to the world when its "natural rulers" perform their duties and look after it' (Forge 1980:231). In this connection it was also very significant that the Governor of Bali, Dr Ida Bagus Mantra, who represented both the state and, as a Brahman, the 'natural' Balinese hierarchy, received eleven kinds of holy water. By this very act he was more or less 'consecrated' as the rightful ruler of Bali.<sup>6</sup>

3. One of the consequences of government control of the ritual was that local priests in Besakih lost a great deal of their relative autonomy, since many of the ritual practices were now prescribed by higher authorities.

4. Wayan Surpha stated that the 1963 ritual was held 'too early' but that 1979 was the 'right time' since it coincided with the beginning of a new *Caka* era, i.e. 1901. Moreover, in 1963 'too many mistakes had been made' due to a lack of textual knowledge of the proper preparations of the ritual, whereas the texts were now analysed meticulously.

5. In 1963 President Sukarno did not attend the ritual. General A. Yani represented the government (Stuart-Fox 1987:386).

6. Dr Ida Bagus Mantra was in several respects instrumental to the rise of the PHD and the rituals of 1978 and 1979. During the 1950s he studied Hindu religion in India and after his return to Bali he became one of the leading intellectuals of Bali. He was engaged in discussions



By reinforcing the connection between politics and religion the New Order regime not only made visible its role as 'natural ruler', but enhanced it by an enormous display of indisputable symbolic power. By phrasing the manifestation of state authority purely in religious terms it had become 'a-political'. Since it was almost impossible to criticize the ritual as such—because one could then easily be accused of atheist, i.e. communist sympathies—the opportunity to challenge the government virtually ceased to exist.

The ritual of 1979 not only reinforced the connection between religion and politics but also between provincial authority and *desa*. The ritual in Besakih was followed up with smaller rituals in the *desa*, while holy water from Besakih was distributed among all the *desa* (Stuart-Fox 1987:392–4). Moreover, in many *desa* temples a special shrine was built to commemorate the event and to connect the local order with the over-arching hierarchy which found its expression in the 'all-Bali' temple of Besakih.

Although the *Eka Dasa Rudra* was definitely a unique event, the role of the state at the provincial level is regularly reinforced in smaller rituals as well. Every year, on the eve of Bali's new year (*Nyepi*) a purification ritual is held throughout Bali, initiated in front of the Governor's residence and in the presence of the Governor, on the big square in Bali's capital, Denpasar.<sup>7</sup> Holy water from this ritual is distributed among all the *desa*, where small purification rituals are held on the main crossroads. In other words, local purification depends on a central ritual which is supervised by the Governor.<sup>8</sup>

Besides these smaller events, large rituals tend to be repeated as well. This

about religious modernization and actively involved in the establishment of the PHD. Later on he became Director General of the Ministry of Education and Culture, in which position he was able to provide financial support for the ritual of 1979. In 1978 he succeeded the Javanese Governor of Bali, Soekarmen, just in time to play a central role in the *Eka Dasa Rudra*. In 1988 he was appointed as Indonesian ambassador in India; see Bagus (forthcoming); Vickers 1989:211–12.

7. It is also significant that the Governor's residence is located on the spot of the former royal palace of Badung, on the north side of the square and northeast of one of the main crossroads in Denpasar. Precisely at the corner, where in former days the king used to sit and watch his people, a *bale bengong* has been built. There are even plans to build a *wantilan* (open meeting hall) on the very spot (northwest of the crossroads) where in pre-colonial days the royal *wantilan* was located. This indicates a deliberate attempt to link up present-day architecture with former royal symbols. To continue the comparison: on the east side of the square (i.e. southeast of the Governor's house) the new 'all-Bali' temple, *pura Jagathnata*, was built, with an enormous *padmasana*, or 'chair' for the highest god Sang Hyang Widi Wasa, where modernized and 'rationalized' meetings are held regularly, complete with sermons and common prayers. Geertz (1972) missed the point when he called the *padmasana* a 'cremation tower' in honour of Siwa. While 'religion' is located on the eastern—i.e. higher—side of the square, military power (which resembles the *patih* of royal times) resides at the western side in a recently built complex where the headquarters of the military command of Kodam XVI Udayana is located.

8. Even in mountain villages, like for instance Les and Panuktukan north of Mount Batur, where other ritual calendars exist which may include several '*nyepi*', the official *nyepi* (sometimes called '*nyepi negeri*', government *nyepi*) is now also conducted. I am grateful to Drs I Ketut Riana for information on this point.



is illustrated by the recently held *Panca Wali Krama* in March 1989.<sup>9</sup> This time, too, the connection between state and religion was displayed. Hosted by the new Governor of Bali, a Brahman, President Suharto visited this ritual also, on this occasion accompanied by five members of his cabinet.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, during the preparations of the rituals time and again the important connections between religious well-being, social stability and national development were emphasized, as if these were elements of a timeless and divine triangular order.<sup>11</sup>

The continuity of the large purification rituals does not exclude change. Although the ritual of 1989 was attended by a large crowd, witnesses say that it aroused less excitement than the big event of 1979. The repetition of these large events within a relatively short period tends to make the events into a routine. This process of routinization or institutionalization is of fundamental importance, because the order created during the rituals of 1978 and 1979 is now re-created, and hence re-affirmed by the regular repetition of the event.<sup>12</sup> Purification rituals in which the Indonesian state participates have become a Balinese tradition.

Change also occurred in the way the ritual of 1989 was organized. In contrast to 1979, the actual organization of the ritual was now almost exclusively in the hands of officials from the PHD and could be staged without external support. This last point is illustrated by the way the ritual was financed. In 1979 financial support of the central and provincial government was crucial; this time most of the money was provided by the Balinese themselves, part of it levied in the form of 'ritual tax' by the provincial government. This tax was collected via all the *desa adat* leaders, whereby every member of the *krama desa* was obliged to pay 1000 rupiah. Besides this, a large amount of money was donated by private persons, schools and enterprises. In total over 464 million rupiah was collected, of which only 126.2 million was actually spent!<sup>13</sup> Representatives from virtually every village—and perhaps from most families—made a pilgrimage to Besakih. Even from the very 'remote' *desa* of Sembiran in

9. It seems that the PHD and the government intend to organize a *Panca Wali Krama* every ten years. I am grateful to David Stuart-Fox who generously provided me with newspaper accounts and official publications with regard to this ritual. Other information was gathered through interviews in July and August 1989.

10. It should be emphasized that in 1979 and 1989 the President did not wear Balinese clothes when he appeared in Besakih. This makes sense because he is not merely 'king' of Bali, but (Javanese) ruler of Indonesia.

11. Religious obligations and social stability logically went together back in pre-colonial times. The New Order added the element of 'development' and infused the idea of social stability with a new political meaning. In so doing the New Order was able to gain a place in the scheme of things.

12. See on the importance of ritual in processes of institutionalization: Cohen 1974:135.

13. *Bali Post*, 25 April 1989. The remaining amount of 337.8 million rupiah is reserved for the maintenance of the temple complex of Besakih. The provincial government donated only 54.5 million rupiah.



north Bali, which belongs to a group of 'old' villages with its own ritual order, two truckloads of people representing the twenty-three family groups of the *desa* went to Besakih.

Although the ritual in 1989 aroused less excitement than the one in 1979, it mobilized far more people than any of the secular ceremonies of the Indonesian state. The celebration of Independence Day on 17 August 1989, for instance, was an extremely dull event in which officials and school children participated with evident lack of enthusiasm. The large-scale rituals, on the other hand, have not only become self-supporting but 'cover' also the whole of Bali. The smooth process by which the ritual was organized, the firm grip of provincial government institutions on it, and the mass participation of the population all indicate that the Balinese have been persuaded to participate voluntarily in the symbolic expression of state authority.

### *Dissent*

Despite government success in institutionalizing a ritual display of its 'natural' dominance, there are voices of dissent challenging some fundamental notions of the present-day order in Bali. This order depends very much on the assumption that there exists a hierarchical system in which Brahmans exercise the highest authority. At first sight this resembles the well-known division of society into four 'castes', but it would be a mistake to equate Hindu-Bali with such a rigid and theoretical caste system.

Although pre-colonial Bali was to a certain extent conceptualized by the nobility in terms of a fourfold division of society (*Brahmana*, *Satria*, *Wesya* and *Sudra*), it never was a closed and uniform system. There was room for social mobility and the *Sudra*, which included the overwhelming majority of the population, in fact consisted of a variety of groups with different status positions.<sup>14</sup>

The fluidity of the Balinese ranking system was fundamentally changed by the Dutch, who introduced a fixed order based on a rigid interpretation of a four-castes model (see Schulte Nordholt 1986:28–31; 1988:217–24). Those who benefitted from this colonial re-interpretation and subsequent reorganization of the Balinese hierarchy were large groups of the nobility, whereas the former privileges of many commoner groups were denied. The Dutch

14. A more common distinction was made between the nobility, or *triwangsa*, consisting of *Brahmana* and *Satria*, who were in control of political power and made up about ten per cent of the population, and those who lived 'outside' the dwelling places of the nobility, i.e. the *wong jaba*. Hardly anybody was classified as *Wesya*; see Schulte Nordholt 1988, chapters 2 and 3.



interpretation of the Balinese 'caste' system was firmly underpinned by colonial legislation, which favoured the Brahman's view of Balinese hierarchy.<sup>15</sup>

During the 1920s the colonial caste system was challenged by a growing number of commoners who had received higher education and were now in the employment of the Dutch colonial administration. They stressed the importance of achieved status in contrast to the ascribed authority of higher castes.<sup>16</sup> This movement was rather easily suppressed by the Dutch, but it laid the foundations of nationalist thoughts.<sup>17</sup>

In the 1950s state control of caste divisions was officially abolished. The results were twofold. On the one hand there was, ironically, a growing number of people who tried to claim high-caste titles, like *Gusti Ngurah* and *Anak Agung*. Many members of this 'new nobility' formerly belonged to the fringes of the pre-war nobility and had gained access to higher positions in the state bureaucracy in the post-war period.<sup>18</sup> This upward mobility in terms of caste titles was in part caused by the fact that government was—and still is—dominated by high-caste people.

On the other hand, however, a powerful movement of commoners emerged which opposes the dominance of the social and ritual hierarchy in Bali, as embodied by the Brahman priesthood and still recognized by the present-day government as the prime source of ritual order in Bali.<sup>19</sup> The largest group that challenges the Brahman interpretation is the so-called Pasek movement. Originally the term *Pasek* referred to a category of *desa* leaders who pre-dated the emergence of the Brahman hierarchy in Bali in the sixteenth century.<sup>20</sup>

15. The Dutch established special 'native' courts of justice (*Raad Kerta*) whose judges were almost invariably Brahmans.

16. See Bagus 1970; Putra Agung 1974; Schulte Nordholt 1988:258–61; Vickers 1989:150–5.

17. One example of the transition from the challenge of caste boundaries to nationalist ideas can be found in a booklet by the Balinese school teacher G. Nyoman Wiryasutha (1939), which was immediately blacklisted by the Dutch authorities. He pointed out that caste divisions (i.e. the *catur wangsa*) had their origins in a political strategy, applied by priests and warriors in order to dominate a conquered population. Nowadays, he argued, the Dutch dominate our society and are the real upper caste, whereas all Balinese are nothing more than *sudra*. In order to liberate themselves from Dutch domination, the Balinese should therefore abandon internal caste (or *wangsa*) divisions and form a united front based on the consciousness of belonging to one nation (*bangsa*, Indon.). See for an analysis of the rise of national consciousness in similar terms: Anderson 1983a.

18. Others had no clear noble ancestry but managed to claim a higher status through recently produced genealogies. Most of the 'new nobility' live in the larger towns where social control is much weaker than in villages. Sometimes an *Anak Agung* family with a well-established reputation in town is not accepted as such in their *desa* of origin. This may cause rather embarrassing situations for these families, since the villagers treat them (with considerable satisfaction) as 'normal' commoners, because they 'still remember' the original status of these 'supposed nobles'.

19. The *Eka Dasa Rudra* of 1979 and the *Panca Wali Krama* of 1978 and 1989 were almost exclusively officiated by Brahman priests, while the two governors of Bali since the late 1970s and the president of the PHD are Brahmans as well.

20. Korn 1932:151–6, 160–4, 190–7, 210–16.



Nowadays the Pasek—and other commoner groups as well—have transformed into an enormous kin group which covers the whole of Bali. In terms borrowed from the nobility, Pasek leaders argue that they are equal to Brahmans. They demonstrate this by showing that their ancestry goes back to the brother of the ancestor of the Balinese Brahmans.<sup>21</sup> The Pasek also claim the right to have their own priests—the *Mpu*—and deny the necessity to obtain holy water from a Brahman priest. Furthermore, they claim certain temples as theirs, which is not always accepted by members of the nobility who used to control these holy places.<sup>22</sup>

Because of its critical attitude towards the ritual monopoly of the Brahmans the Pasek organization has an uneasy relationship with the PHD, which is to a large extent dominated by Brahman values about hierarchy and order. Recently the debate between Brahmans and Pasek dominated the pages of the *Bali Post* and the editor of the newspaper received a 'request' from the Department of Religion to desist from featuring this topic for a while.<sup>23</sup>

Besides its own ancestry, priests and temples, the Pasek movement had a journal and still has an efficient organization of its own—the *Warga Pasek Sanak Pitu*—which until recently was run by a former policeman. (Somehow religious organizations and policemen seem to fit very well in Bali.) The Pasek organization constitutes a framework for new bonds between patrons who have made a career in the bureaucracy and their clients who are eager to obtain a government job (Boon 1979).

In present-day Bali the Pasek movement has gained momentum and cannot easily be suppressed any longer. Like many other mass organizations the movement maintains close ties with Golkar, and it is even said that it actively supported the state party during national elections. Loyalty towards the government is indeed a pre-condition for the movement as it seeks to undermine the dominant position of the Brahmans. Only by declaring itself loyal to the regime do the Pasek have a chance that their claims will be recognized by the government, while the Brahmans will have to give up at least a part of their ritual monopoly. The role of arbiter enables the government to remain ultimately in control of the ritual confirmation of its authority in Bali.

21. In a private conversation one of the *Pasek* leaders stated that his position is actually higher than that of the Brahmans because one of the *Pasek* 'ancestors', the Javanese priest *Mpu* Kuturan, came to Bali as early as the eleventh century, i.e. long before the arrival of the first Brahmans, and established the present-day temple order. On *Pasek* historiography see Sugriwa 1976; Subandi 1981; 1982; 1985.

22. In the 1950s a serious conflict arose in this respect with the former royal family of Klungkung: Who was entitled to control the *pura Dasar* in Gelgel? Finally, a compromise was reached in which the claims of both the Klungkung court and the emerging *Pasek* movement were acknowledged.

23. *Bali Post* 29/4, 28/5, 29/5, 30/5, 31/5/1989. But the debate was resumed in August 1989 with a long article by a representative of the *Pasek* movement on the genealogical connections between Brahmans and *Pasek*.



## 7. Conclusion

In this essay I have tried to place the relationships between village, ritual and state in contemporary Bali in historical perspective. By this I do not mean to emphasize the continuity of underlying structures, because villages and public rituals were not unchanging phenomena which can only be understood in terms of Balinese culture. Instead, I showed how village, *adat* and ritual were conceptualized, re-interpreted and re-enacted within the wider context of changing power relationships. Conceptual boundaries were drawn and put into practice in order to define the nature of the 'village' and the relationship between state and locality. Public rituals were in this respect not just illustrations of power, but were and still are an important part of it.

In nineteenth-century Bali two kinds of mobilization made the *negara* manifest. The indirect recruitment of manpower revealed the fragmented nature of the political system. On the other hand, the *desa* was the basis of a direct mobilization through which a ritual order was visualized. The *negara* was not a permanent and institutionalized 'body'. Rather, it had to be re-created time and again, not only because of the nobility's obsession to display status differences. Much more was at stake. Threatened by perennial conflict, structural fragmentation, recurring epidemics and crop failures, in other words, faced with imminent death, the *negara* represented a never-ending quest for life.

The transition to the colonial order introduced basic change. Bali was incorporated in the colonial state, the Dutch representatives of which re-defined and re-organized society profoundly. They introduced a set of dichotomies which served to conceptualize and control Balinese society during the next decades. As a result a distinction was made between *adat* and administration which had a lasting impact on local society. The ritual re-enactment of the *negara* was replaced with the power monopoly of an external bureaucratic state. However, despite its superior power the secular colonial state remained an outsider. By definition, the people were subject to colonial power rather than participants in a body politic.

After 1945 Bali faced turbulent decades. Once the power monopoly of the colonial state and the political isolation of the island had ceased to exist the peaceful and harmonious nature of Balinese society, generally described as a property of Balinese culture itself, changed into a situation in which conflict



and violence became the 'normal' conditions of everyday life. Bali had become part of the Indonesian nation-state in which the borderlines between nation and state were very vague. The rigid order carefully maintained by the Dutch now changed into a set of different but interrelated arenas. Despite the efforts, initiated by outsiders, to exorcise the threatening disorder in traditional terms through the enactment of a large purification ritual, mass-violence could not be fended off by Balinese culture since this was ultimately determined by outside forces.

Under the New Order regime the state resumed its power monopoly and penetrated local Balinese society in an unprecedented way. On the one hand village administration was incorporated within the lower levels of the government bureaucracy and the dominant ideological discourse. On the other hand the state also tried to incorporate local *adat*, officially by 'protecting' its integrity and adapting it to the needs of 'development', in practice by taking control of the procedures by which *adat* regulations are formulated and sanctioned.

Evidently, this greater grip on village government and local *adat* were not enough to reassure the New Order that Bali was under complete control. The state proceeded to appropriate the over-arching purification rituals as well.

For the most part the relation between the Indonesian state and its society is in past years described in politico-economic terms. This has caused the role of symbols and rituals to remain underexposed.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, Balinese rituals generally tend to be described as purely religious affairs, and their political dimensions largely ignored.<sup>2</sup> I am suggesting that by means of island-wide rituals the New Order has brought about successfully a linkage between the modern bureaucratic state and regional notions regarding well-being and stability.

The paradox of the New Order is that the state emerges as a modern state aimed at economic development, and simultaneously creates 'timeless', traditional means to assert its authority.<sup>3</sup> It looks very much as if this was a conscious choice, inspired by the desire to neutralize a danger associated with development policy: insistence on political participation. In this view economic development cannot be permitted to offset the power monopoly of the state. In this light it is understandable that on the local level the state tries to impose a distinction between administration (and politics) and *adat* (and religion) to limit popular participation in politics, and that for its own

1. But see Nico Schulte Nordholt (1980) and Pemberton (1986) for an analysis of national elections as ritual, and Sekimoto (1990) on state ritual at the village level in Java.

2. This does not mean that I deny the religious aspects of these events, nor do I mean to say that rituals can be explained in political terms alone.

3. Anderson (1973) was one of the first to call attention to this.



purposes it recognizes that on a higher level politics and religion (or ritual) are inseparable and actually make for a useful and powerful unity.

The great rituals are presented as purely religious and hence completely non-political events. Nevertheless, they are thoroughly political manifestations in which the impersonal state can display regionally recognizable authority, and the success of the New Order and the role of president and governor as guardians of the comprehensive order can be celebrated.<sup>4</sup> Every time a large-scale ritual is successful the implication is that the government and especially those who represent it, are powerful, successful and, above all, morally good. Imperfection and corruption inherent in the state can be masked or neutralized by the staging of a perfect ritual. Important is that popular participation is not the result of coercion from above. The population has been persuaded to participate voluntarily. Naturally, inducement to participate in these great rituals is varied: one may join the fun, see the spectacle, be grateful for the wealth which a new class of entrepreneurs is gaining—made possible by the economic growth achieved under the New Order, its members now displaying their power by sizable public gifts. Nevertheless, this voluntary participation in the rituals is testimony to the *hegemony* of the New Order on Bali. In this respect the New Order outstrips the colonial state by a long way.

This hegemony is expressed in preponderantly religious terms, the meaning of which is jealously guarded by government agencies. Furthermore, these terms run parallel to a hierarchic order in Bali, which allows especially the Brahmans to combine prestige and strategic positions in the regional government. The New Order regime has been extremely successful in defining and controlling the frameworks within which and the language by which the population is allowed to express itself, and especially in defining the 'forbidden areas' of popular participation. By 'de-politicizing' Balinese society and incorporating 'traditional' Balinese items such as *adat* and large rituals, it has successfully grafted state-interests in the regional Balinese context.

This implies, for one thing, that protest can be expressed in a round-about way only. In several cases groups within local society managed to formulate their own identity via construction of 'counter-genealogies', and sometimes even opposed government decisions by using an officially approved '*adat* language'. Protests of this kind, however, have but limited effect since they remain caught in the dominant discourse, rigidly monitored by the state,

4. In many of my interviews and informal talks with Balinese in 1983 and 1989 the rituals were primarily seen as religious events. But their political dimension was generally recognized as well, even pointed out. I was told, for instance, that the organization was taken care of by the government, that government agencies had a monopoly on form and content and their concomitant hierarchic notions, and that the governor and the president did not usurp the central role of former kings without good reason.



regarding religious well-being, development and social stability.<sup>5</sup> This dominant discourse has also almost excluded the possibility to discuss in public the rapid economic changes that have taken place recently, such as the uncontrolled growth of a semi-urban sector around Denpasar, the penetration of large amounts of capital by Jakarta-based investors, the increasing class division between those who made large profits during the last decade and those who are forced to survive in the margin and so on.<sup>6</sup>

Since the beginning of the twentieth century the political fate of Bali has been made to depend on outside forces. Corresponding to the strength or weakness of an external state, Balinese society has been reinterpreted, reorganized, and put under firm control. It has been pictured as peace-loving and harmonious (as was done during the colonial period and is being done by the New Order). It has also been a victim of conflict and violence, and suddenly 'Balinese temper' emerged as ferocious, as in the period from 1945 to 1966. In a context like this rituals cannot guarantee political stability; they themselves are ambivalent because ritual creates an arena in which the threat of chaos is always potentially present.

For the time being the New Order has at its disposal the means to guarantee the success of a ritual. But as soon as the central state shows signs of disintegration the dominant discourse on Bali, at present controlled by the regional government, is very likely to be questioned and attacked. It may well be that struggles for power will break out again that rituals will not be able to prevent or appease.

5. Although *adat*-protest will continue to cause a lot of nervousness among government officials, the extent to which protest against the government can be phrased in terms of *adat* is limited. Protest formulated in *adat* terms will not only by definition remain a local affair, it is also limited in its political dimension because of its relatively conservative content. Moreover, the tensions between Brahmans and Pasek are of a limited nature since they are not undergirded by economic or otherwise political contrasts between the two groups.

6. Perhaps the old revolutionary vocabulary still alive in Bali can serve to express grievances concerning corruption, land transactions and so on (see Warren 1989).



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