

# Identities under construction



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# Bali

## An open fortress

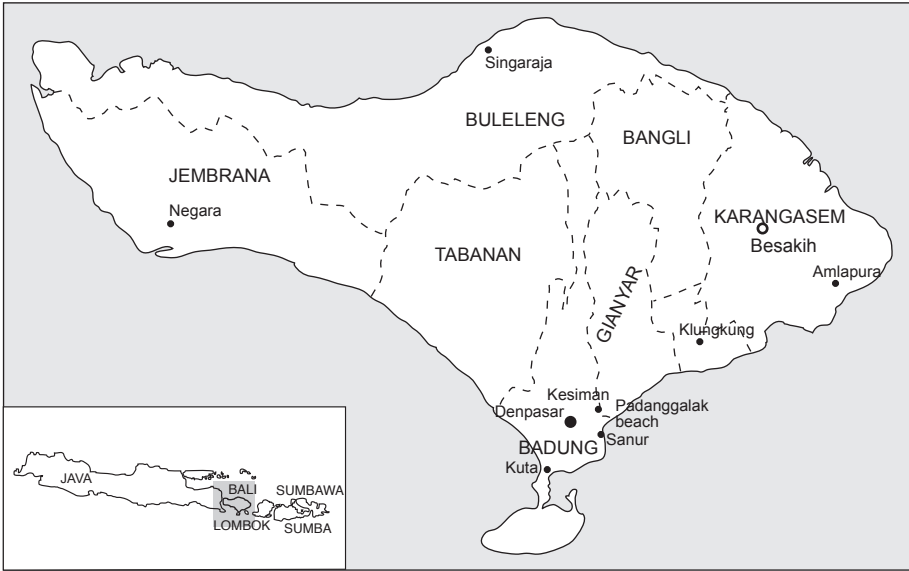
*'Ajeg Bali'*

On 16 August 2003 the *Bali Post* celebrated its 55th anniversary with a special edition.<sup>1</sup> It contained an extensive report on a seminar held earlier that month under the title *Menuju strategi ajeg Bali*, towards a strategy for a strong and resilient Bali.<sup>2</sup> The word *ajeg* refers to a discourse about the position of Balinese culture in present-day Indonesia, in particular since Reformasi and *desentralisasi* had changed the political map of Indonesia. The general feeling at the seminar was that Bali was endangered by a variety of negative external influences and that Balinese culture had to be rescued.

Representatives from various sectors in society voiced a shared concern that uncontrolled building activities and the rapidly expanding tourist sector cause large scale environmental damage, while they also feared that Western influences stimulate criminality, the use of narcotics, and a hedonistic materialistic attitude, at the cost of traditional religious Balinese values. Moreover, the influx of thousands of Muslim migrant workers from neighbouring islands Java and Lombok gave the unpleasant feeling that Balinese are becoming a minority on their own island. In order to counter these negative developments, the need for a spiritual revitalization and the strengthening of cultural self-confidence was felt. *Ajeg Bali* became the key word in a quest for a new master plan that respected the delicate balance between Gods, men and environment (*Tri Hita Karena*).

<sup>1</sup> The information for this article was gathered in 2003 and 2004. I was assisted by Nyoman Wijaya, Slamet Trisila, Ngurah Suryawan and I Wayan Supartha. I would like to express my gratitude to Margreet Bersma, I Nyoman Darma Putra, Gerry van Klinken, Graeme MacRae, Michel Picard, Carol Warren, Adrian Vickers, and the participants of the workshop 'Renegotiating boundaries; Local politics in post-Suharto Indonesia' (20-22 December 2004 in Jakarta) for their helpful comments.

<sup>2</sup> See also Satria Naradha 2004.



Map 16. Bali

The discourse on Ajeg Bali has a long history, which is closely connected with efforts by outside forces to define the unique (non-Islamic, Hindu) identity of the Balinese. Especially from the 1930s onwards measures were taken to preserve Bali in a steady state of supposed authenticity while at the same time a set of new categories was introduced by which Balinese were invited to think about themselves. In order to preserve the special customary arrangements an institutional distinction was made at the village level between custom (*adat*) and administration (*dinas*). Custom or tradition was framed by religion (*agama*), while later on the notions of culture (*kebudayaan*) and art (*kesenian*) were added. Balinese started to think about themselves in terms defined by outsiders and, according to Michel Picard, they discovered that they had a culture, which was turned into a separate entity that could be displayed, performed, and sold (Picard 1999:16. See also H. Schulte Nordholt 1999; Picard 1996).

Since the 1970s tourism has become a part of Balinese culture. The notion of cultural tourism implied not only the commoditization of culture but also the touristification of society, blurring artificial boundaries between culture (inside) and tourism (outside). Tourism thus contributed to the making of a Balinese culture, which had become a marketable object (Picard 1996, 2003).

The island came increasingly under pressure as Jakarta-based investors and rising numbers of tourists and migrant workers invaded the island from the late 1980s. Were Balinese still in control of their own culture, which formed the backbone of their economy? Two other factors increased a sense of crisis and insecurity among Balinese: first the decentralization laws (Law no. 22 and 25/1999), which promised more autonomy but also brought fragmentation and confusion, and secondly the bomb attack in Legian on 12 October, 2002, which ruined the image of Bali as a peaceful resort isolated from international terrorism. In this context *ajeg* became a catchword to indicate the need for a socio-cultural self-defence. However, apart from the good, but vaguely phrased intentions to strengthen Balinese culture, very few practical solutions were suggested by the participants of the *Bali Post* seminar in August 2003. In the end two dilemmas surfaced: First, how to achieve more regional autonomy vis-à-vis Jakarta, whereas decentralization had produced administrative fragmentation; second, how to get rid of dangerous external influences and unwanted immigrants, while at the same time the Balinese economy needs foreign visitors, investors and labour in order to survive. Bali, the open fortress.

For many Balinese, recent developments have been a confusing experience. It looks as if various seemingly unrelated and diffuse processes are at work with highly insecure outcomes. In this essay I intend to trace some of these processes and investigate to what extent they are interrelated. I will look briefly at recent shifts in economic and political relationships between

Bali and Jakarta, the impact of political reform and administrative decentralization in Bali, and in particular at the effects these had on the politics of caste, the position of regional aristocracies, and the formation of new party-based politics. In Bali decentralization did not stop at the district level but affected the village level as well. What were the implications of these changes in terms of local autonomy and conflict management? In this context it is important to look at long-term trends, which were only accelerated by the recent agony of decentralization and reform. These changes increased a sense of insecurity, which formed the breeding ground of the Ajeg Bali movement.

It would be misleading to focus too exclusively on the special nature of Bali, as 'Baliologists' tend to do. Instead I want to point to some 'Indonesian' phenomena in present-day Bali: ethnic tensions, 'sweeping' of immigrants, the connections between gangs of *preman* (thugs) and politicians, recent election politics, and the role of urban middle class intellectuals in articulating exclusive cultural identities. It is against the backdrop of these developments that the discussions about Ajeg Bali and its post-New Order nature should be understood. And this raises eventually the question of how Indonesian Bali actually is.

### *Figures of change*

One of the key questions regarding the development of tourism in Bali was: how to profit from tourists while at the same time keeping them at a safe distance?<sup>3</sup> Around 1970 it was decided to concentrate mass tourism in the southern tip of Bali. Soon, however, more areas were opened and when in the 1980s the touristification of Bali gained momentum and the deregulation of the banking sector facilitated a sharp increase in domestic investment, tourist areas eventually covered a quarter of the island. In a relatively short period the Balinese economy became increasingly dependent on the tourist industry, which was primarily fuelled by an increase of direct foreign arrivals. In 2000, two million foreign tourists visited Bali compared to one million in 1990 and 300,000 in 1980. Since the early 1990s the number of domestic tourists, who are not included in the official statistics, increased significantly and even outnumbered foreign visitors. It is estimated that in 2001 the total number of tourists was close to three million, which approaches the total population of Bali.

The tourist boom had an immediate impact on the environment, the economy and social relationships. The rise in the number of hotel rooms, from 500 in 1970 to 40,000 in 2002, was accompanied by a rapid increase in restaurants,

<sup>3</sup> *Bali Membangun* 2003; *Bali Post* 16-8-2003; *Jakarta Post* 25-5-2003; *Kompas* 12-3-2001, MacRae 1997; Picard 1996, 2003, 2005; Pringle 2004; Putu Suasta 2001.

art shops and so-called *ruko* (*rumah toko*, a combination of a shop and a house, on top of which the house temple is built). As a result every year approximately 1000 hectares of irrigated rice-land disappear and in 2001 there was only 86,000 ha left. The traditional landscape has become a scarce commodity while ongoing erosion and the large quantities of water needed for hotels and golf courses cause serious water shortages for the population of Denpasar.

Bali is no longer a predominantly agrarian society. In 2005 half of the population will live in urban areas. Between 1970 and 2002 the agrarian sector decreased from 56.6% to 21.4% and in 1998 51.6% of the Balinese income was earned from tourism. If related fields like handicraft, garment production and transport are included, 50 to 70% of the workforce depends on tourism.

With an average economic growth of about 8% Bali experienced a transition from an agrarian economy towards an urbanized tourist economy. Social changes included the massive inflow of Muslim immigrants from neighbouring islands, and the rise of a new Balinese middle class for whom the village was a distant icon of 'Balineseness' and the rapid growth of the modern economy and its global dimensions a point of ongoing concern.

### *Protest*

Since the early 1990s external investors have become more and more interested to participate in the tourist economy in Bali, and governor Ida Bagus Oka (1988-1998) proved to be a cooperative go-between, which is why he was also called Ida Bagus 'O.K.' (George Junus Aditjondro 1995). Growing feelings of discontent about the intrusion of Jakarta-based investors culminated in 1993 in the rise of a protest movement against the realization of the Bali Nirwana Resort in Tabanan, close to the holy sea temple of Tanah Lot (*Far Eastern Economic Review* 26-5-1994; C. Warren 1994; Putu Suasta and Connor 1999). The protest was supported by a broad middle class coalition of academics, public intellectuals, students, NGO activists, the regional newspaper *Bali Post* and representatives of the oppositional party Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI, Indonesian Democratic Party). The rallying point of the movement focussed primarily on religious sentiments. It was the proximity of the resort to the temple that mobilized an island-wide protest that embarrassed both investors and government institutions. Resistance was silenced after direct intervention by President Suharto, and in 1997 Le Meridien Nirwana Golf and Spa Resort advertised its soft opening.

Commenting on the issue, the military commander in Bali, Maj. Gen. R. Adang Ruchiatna stated that 'demonstrators are not part of Indonesian culture' (*Far Eastern Economic Review* 26-5-1994). Public protest was indeed not part of the ideology of Indonesia's New Order, but it was now firmly framed

within a religiously informed Balinese discourse of discontent. This became evident when in 1997 another protest was launched against the building of a hotel at Padanggalak beach close to Denpasar. The issue was similar to the Bali Nirwana Resort but the outcome was very different (H. Schulte Nordholt 2001:66-8).

In October 1997 the *Bali Post* reported that at the Padanggalak coast, which belongs to the village of Kesiman, a large tourist resort was being planned and that building activities had already begun without a proper environmental impact assessment. The owners of the project were based in Jakarta but the actual building was done by a local firm in which governor Ida Bagus Oka was indirectly involved. The beach was an important religious site where ritual cleansings (*melasti*) and post-cremation purifications were held. A broad coalition, this time also supported by local villagers, protested against the project. In the village of Kesiman a powerful alliance was formed between villagers, customary (*adat*) leaders and the local nobility. Governor Ida Bagus Oka originated from the village of Kesiman, and the village council decided to ostracize him (*kasepekan*), which implied that the village would boycott his cremation and prevent the proper continuation of the journey of his soul. When he heard about the village verdict, the governor immediately declared that nothing had actually been decided yet about the Padanggalak project, and that the village had, of course, a final say in this matter. With remarkable speed all the building activities at Padanggalak beach were cancelled, and by the end of November 1997 the place had been restored to its former condition. The Padanggalak case showed that a combination of middle class protest and village-based resistance was strong enough to defeat a coalition of external investors and local administrators.

### *Hubris, shock and recovery*

Despite the protests against the boundless expansion of the tourist sector, the ambition of growth prevailed and it inspired sculptor I Nyoman Nuarta to design a 146 meter high bronze statue of the god Wisnu on the Garuda bird. The project reflected a belief in an almost unlimited growth, and symbolized a Balinese sense of hubris. While the economic crisis (*krismon*) hit Java in 1997, Bali suffered less from the crisis. The number of foreign visitors even increased, and optimists speculated that by 2007 seven million tourists would visit Bali.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Whereas the national economy contracted by 14% in 1998, the Balinese economy went down by only 4%. Recovery in Bali started in 1999 with 0.5% growth and reached a level of 3.4% growth in 2001.



The new governor of Bali, I Dewa Made Beratha, emphasized that Bali was a safe place amidst the turmoil of ethnic and religious violence in Indonesia. But he also knew that tranquillity on Bali was fragile: 'If a bomb explodes in Bali [...] its image as well as Indonesia's in general will be completely ruined' (*Jakarta Post* 14-8-01). And he was right. The terrorist attack in Legian on 12 October 2002 shattered the image of Bali as an isolated safe heaven. Tourists immediately abandoned Bali and in 2003 the recession in the tourist sector continued due to the SARS epidemic and the Iraq War.

On 15 November a large ritual, attended by thousands of people, was staged on nearby Legian beach to release the souls of the victims and to cleanse the site of the attack from evil forces. It was generally believed that due to this ritual the perpetrators of the attack were soon arrested. Earlier bomb attacks elsewhere in Indonesia had never been solved, but the successful uncovering of the Jema'ah Islamiah network proved, according to this view, that Bali was different from the rest of Indonesia.<sup>5</sup> So, for many Balinese, the ritual gathering in November 2002 marked the successful ending of the tragedy, but the extent to which recovery would succeed depended very much on the political configuration, which had experienced fundamental changes as well.

### *New rulers*

Reformasi came to Bali in the guise of numerous seminars and interactive radio talk shows, but did not bring much reform.<sup>6</sup> There was a brief outburst of (anti-Islamic) 'Bali Merdeka' (Independence for Bali) sentiment in October 1998 when Minister A.M. Sjaefuddin remarked in an interview with *Republika* that Megawati was not a suitable presidential candidate because she worshipped Hindu gods. On 28 October 50,000 demonstrators in Denpasar demanded Sjaefuddin's resignation, but this did not materialize either.

In the early 1990s the oppositional PDI, forerunner of the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan (PDI-P, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), had been relatively strong in Bali. In the elections of 1992 it won almost 20% of the votes, but the number of seats the PDI acquired in provincial and district elected assemblies was modest compared to the comfortable majority of Golkar and the armed forces. PDI gained in popularity when Megawati

<sup>5</sup> The ritual was on strained terms with the desire among foreigners to commemorate the tragedy every year. For why should one invite the souls of the deceased to return after they had been released with care and splendour?

<sup>6</sup> Former governor Ida Bagus Oka was accused of corruption and nepotism. In January 2001 he was arrested and brought to court, but in April 2002 he was acquitted of all charges (*Jakarta Post* 13-1-2001, 8-4-2002).

Sukarnoputri became party leader. In 1996, however, the PDI was weakened due to an internal conflict manipulated by the government. Megawati lost her position and the PDI lost most of its popular support. During the elections of 1997 the PDI won only 3.5% while Golkar and the armed forces monopolized the district assemblies.

How strong Megawati's position in Bali still was became clear in October 1998 at the first congress of the PDI-P (PDI's Reformasi-era successor) in Sanur when 50,000 supporters surrounded the Bali Beach hotel where the convention was held. There was 'an outpouring of emotion and an explosion of energy', one witness wrote.<sup>7</sup> This atmosphere surfaced again during the elections in June 1999, which celebrated both the demise of the New Order and the victory of the PDI-P. The fact that the elections coincided with Galungan – the day when ancestors and gods descend – added to the euphoria.

The elections of 1999 caused a political earthquake in Bali. Golkar fell back from 93.5% to 10% of the votes whereas PDI-P rose from 3.5% to almost 80%. The PDI-P victory was primarily a manifestation of Balinese ethnicity expressing anti-Javanese and anti-Muslim sentiments. These erupted in a violent manner in October 1999 when it turned out that instead of Megawati, Abdurrahman Wahid was elected president of Indonesia. On the evening of 20 October and during the following day riots occurred in Negara (Jembrana), Singaraja, and Denpasar. Especially in Singaraja and Denpasar many government buildings were set on fire while the residences of the (Golkar) district heads were also attacked.<sup>8</sup>

Although the period between May 1998 and October 1999 did not result in fundamental reforms, there was a changing of the guard among the political and administrative elite. In 1998 governor Ida Bagus Oka was replaced by the former provincial secretary I Dewa Made Beratha. He was not a very reform-minded politician but an experienced Golkar bureaucrat and skilful diplomat, who managed to accommodate an overwhelming PDI-P majority in the provincial parliament after the elections of 1999. The provincial and district assemblies were controlled by PDI-P, and in contrast to other regions in Indonesia, where experienced Golkar bureaucrats managed to survive, in most districts new PDI-P leaders came to power.

Apart from a shift from Golkar to PDI-P, the position of the nobility within the administration was also challenged. Until 2000 the majority of the

<sup>7</sup> E-mail Rucina Ballinger, 10-10-1998.

<sup>8</sup> *Bali Post* 21-10-1999, 23-10-1999; Couteau 2002: 243-5. The attacks were not a spontaneous expression of popular anger. Unidentified trucks coming from Java left a trail of damage in north Bali, while in Denpasar 'unknown people' played a leading role in the riots, which were over as soon as Megawati was chosen vice-president on 21 October.

district heads in Bali still belonged to the nobility, but by 2004 commoners prevailed.<sup>9</sup>

The demise of aristocratic rule was accentuated by the defeat of Bali's most famous royal lineage during the elections in Klungkung in 2003. The previous district heads had come from the royal house of Klungkung and maintained close connections with Golkar, but this time the old royal family was defeated by a commoner who represented a new type of politician. I Wayan Candra was a successful independent entrepreneur, who was supported not only by the PDI-P grassroots but also by various Pasek groups, large non-aristocratic kinship organizations. He had mobilized both anti-Golkar and anti-aristocrat sentiments and terminated the administrative rule of Bali's oldest dynasty (*Bali Post* August, September, November 2003; *Jawa Pos* 24-11-2003).

The fall of Golkar was accompanied by a general decline of aristocratic power. The extent to which Golkar had been intertwined with the aristocracy is reflected in the composition of the provincial assembly. Especially in the mid-1980s Golkar hegemony coincided with a strong aristocratic dominance. In the 1990s, however, a gradual shift in favour of commoner representatives occurred. It seems as if it was no longer necessary for Golkar to rely on the nobility. Instead, the party had nurtured its own bureaucratic cadres most of whom were of commoner descent.<sup>10</sup> In 2004 the ruling elite of the New Order had been replaced by a new group of district heads: four of them were entrepreneurs, two were politicians, one was a dentist, one had a mixed background in education and martial arts, and only two had a bureaucratic background.<sup>11</sup>

### *Changing caste relationships and religious reform*

Leo Howe (2001) has pointed out that in pre-colonial times Brahman priests and noble rulers maintained an ambiguous relationship. Under Dutch colo-

<sup>9</sup> In 1970 six districts heads belonged to the nobility and two were commoners; in 1990 the relationship was 5:3 and in 2004 3:6.

<sup>10</sup> Composition DPRD Bali:

	Non Balinese	Nobility	Commoners
1982-87	10	22	8
1987-92	9	21	15
1997-99	8	12	25
1999-04	4	16	35

This development was not unique for Bali. Michael Malley (1999) has shown that elsewhere in Indonesia Golkar started to rely more and more on its own regional cadres.

<sup>11</sup> In 1980 four district heads came from the military, two from the police and two from the bureaucracy.

nial rule caste hierarchy was reinforced, but royal dynasties lost most of their power while the superior status of Brahmans was confirmed. Strong externally imposed states tended to reinforce caste hierarchy and especially the position of Brahmans, whereas periods of weak states (1945-1966 and 1998-) coincided with the emergence of egalitarian tendencies in Bali.

Since the mid-1920s an emerging group of commoner intellectuals, who advocated a status system based on achievement and merit, had challenged the aristocratic colonial elite who maintained that Balinese culture was based on caste hierarchy. While both groups sought to achieve modernity, representatives of the aristocracy emphasized the Balinese nature of their religion, which was rooted in *adat* and caste hierarchy, whereas their opponents pointed to the universal nature of modernist Hinduism, which was more egalitarian in nature (Picard 1999; Ramstedt 2002, 2004). It was along these lines that hierarchy was to be contested or defended during the next 80 years.

In 1958 Balinese Hinduism was recognized as one of the national religions in Indonesia. Balinese had to prove that, if their belief was a religion, it had a god, prophets, a holy book and a daily prayer. External criteria derived from Christianity and Islam started to determine the parameters of religion in Bali, and external sources of inspiration helped to institutionalize Hinduism in Bali as young Balinese intellectuals visited India where they were inspired by new modernist Hindu ideas (Bakker 1993). Modernist ideas caused a gradual shift from ritualism to scripturalism, from magic to ethics, and from a collective to an individual experience of religion (Howe 2001:148). The emphasis on personal merit and individual daily prayers facilitated more egalitarian ideas in which achievement instead of birth determined one's position, while caste could be separated from religion.

The gradual development of these new ideas was increasingly constrained by the rigid bureaucratic structures of the semi-government organization, Parisada Hindu Dharma. In 1986 Parisada was renamed Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia when it became a nationwide organization with the task of supporting the Indonesianization of Hinduism. The ongoing bureaucratization of the organization as well as its orientation towards Hindu communities outside Bali facilitated the rise of commoners within the ranks of Parisada. Just like Golkar, Parisada offered commoners the possibility of challenging aristocratic dominance. This was accentuated even more when the national headquarters of Parisada moved to Jakarta in 1996.

The rise of commoners within Parisada strengthened the influence of commoner groups which were organized in quasi clan-based organizations. High on the agenda of these commoner groups, or *warga*, was the recognition of their own priests at the same level as Brahman priests, or *pedanda*.

In 1999 Reformasi in Bali took the shape of caste conflict and was focussed on one of the largest island-wide cleansing rituals, the so-called Panca Wali

Krama which would have its climax at the all-Bali temple of Besakih (I Gde Pitana 1999, 2001). A massive alliance of commoner groups demanding that *warga* priests should act at the same level as Brahman *pedanda* caused heated public debates and complex bureaucratic intrigues. Facing each other were conservative aristocrats supported by Golkar and Parisada leaders, and reform-minded intellectuals plus commoner organizations that threatened to boycott the ritual at Besakih. Governor Dewa Made Beratha understood the signs of the times and helped the commoners to gain a victory, but conservative aristocrats were not yet defeated.

Soon caste conflict manifested itself within Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia. Since the early 1990s Parisada had lost a great deal of government subsidy as President Suharto started to support the newly established organization of Muslim intellectuals, ICMI (Ramstedt 2002:160-1). Meanwhile growing numbers of Muslim immigrants accentuated the 'rise of Islam' in Bali. Alarmed by the invasion of both Muslim immigrants and Jakarta-based investors, and convinced of the need for a revitalization of Balinese culture, Balinese intellectuals criticized Parisada for its lack of inspiration and inability to protect the Hindu community. Shaken by decreased government protection and external criticism, the aristocratic cum bureaucratic power holders in Parisada had become vulnerable.

At the Parisada congress in 1996 in Surakarta, criticism was raised concerning the intellectual poverty of the organization and its emphasis on bureaucratic procedures. But attempts to separate Parisada policy from Golkar interests and to increase the number of commoners in the board of the organization failed (I Gede Ngurah Bagus 2004). However, at the next congress in Sanur in September 2001 the opposition succeeded in toppling the Brahman hegemony within Parisada. A newly elected board was dominated by commoners and *warga* priests formed the majority of the advisory board.

Whereas modernist Hindu ideas had gained ground in the national Parisada, a powerful group of conservative aristocratic dissidents in Bali remained loyal to old concepts of hierarchy. When these dissidents refused to obey the decisions of the new national board, Parisada in Bali split into two opposing factions, the so-called Parisada Campuan and Parisada Besakih. Tensions ran high when in November 2001 the aristocratic opposition planned to hold its own convention and supporters of the national Parisada tried to prevent this and besieged the house of the governor of Bali to force him to side with them. The governor tried to remain neutral but many people suspected that he sympathized with the conservative Parisada Campuan. Whereas Parisada Besakih criticized the 'feudal' nature of caste differences, the Campuan group criticized the 'Indianization' policy of the modernists of the Parisada Besakih, which would in their eyes eliminate Balinese culture.

The dissident Parisada Campuan can still count on substantial popular support, as its chairman, Ida Pedanda Made Gunung, is a very popular public figure who has an influential daily talk show on Bali TV. Moreover, many commoners are reluctant to give up their long-standing relationship with their Brahman priests, which could bring illness and other disasters.

Hierarchical relationships have changed considerably over the last decades and changes have accelerated since 1998, when caste conflicts formed the core of Reformasi in Bali. The different external concepts introduced in the course of the 20th century in Bali have led to fundamental changes in the way culture, religion and custom were represented as separate categories. In the use of language and in ritual practices there is a tendency towards egalitarianism. At the same time there is an increase of ritual activities.

Modernist religious ideas advocate modest rituals, which enable more people to participate, especially since public transport has made it possible to visit virtually every temple all over Bali. As a result Bali has become more Hindu than before, while religion is no longer exclusively framed in caste hierarchy.

#### *Administrative fragmentation*

The relatively small province of Bali is – with its provincial administration, eight districts and one administrative town – rather over-administered. Since decentralization has transferred funds and administrative tasks to the district level, the districts are often called ‘little kingdoms’ whose leaders prefer to ignore the coordinating capacities of the provincial government. Officials at the provincial level complain that they have more expertise on a variety of matters but they are no longer consulted because inexperienced district administrations pursue their own policies. District heads often send low-ranking staff members to meetings convened by the governor about matters of common interest where he intends to arrive at a coordinated approach. As a result pressing problems concerning irrigation, the supply of drinking water, and a balanced development of tourism remain unresolved.<sup>12</sup>

A key issue in the relationship between the districts concerns a more equal distribution of administrative funds and locally raised taxes. The amount of money from the centre (Dana Alokasi Umum, DAU) forms in most districts the bulk of the incoming funds. In 2002 DAU covered about two-thirds of

<sup>12</sup> Although from time to time efforts were made to put the issue of special autonomy for the province on the agenda, discussions never materialized in concrete political decisions (*Kompas* 8-2-2000, 22-11-2004, 13-1-2005).



Bali's total government income and two-thirds of the DAU was spent on salaries.<sup>13</sup> Overall income increased, but expenditure rose as well. While 2001 still showed a surplus, this evaporated in the following years due to '9/11', SARS, the Iraq war and the 'Bali bomb'.

At the district level the amount of local taxes makes the difference. Eighty percent of the so-called *Pendapatan Asli Daerah* (PAD) is derived from the hotel and restaurant tax, *Pajak Hotel Restoran* (PHR).<sup>14</sup> Already during the New Order, rich districts like Badung, Denpasar and, to a lesser extent, Gianyar generated large sums of money, while poor districts like Jembrana and Karangasem produced next to nothing in this respect. Although some adjustments were made to redistribute the PHR from the affluent tourist centres to less prosperous regions, major differences in wealth continued to exist and no structural changes occurred after decentralization.<sup>15</sup>

Regional autonomy reinforced the tendency among districts to give priority to their own interests, as a result of which differences in wealth between regions did not decrease. At the same time there was an uneven distribution of funds between government sectors. As elsewhere in Indonesia, large sums of money went into new prestigious government offices, while, for instance, the educational sector was by and large neglected (*Bali Post* 13-8-2003, 4-9-2003). After decentralization the district budgets show not only that differences in wealth between districts are maintained but also that Bali remains to a large extent financially dependent on Jakarta.

### *Fragmented autonomy: from desa dinas to desa pakraman*

Decentralization in Bali was not restricted to the district level but affected the village as well. Dutch colonial rule introduced a distinction in the 1930s between administrative (*dinas*) and customary (*adat*) rule at the village level. This construction was designed to keep Balinese religion and culture (*adat*) in a supposed authentic state, while modern administration would form 'a thin layer of modernity' touching village Bali only superficially. This *adat-dinas* divide was to survive well into the New Order, when the state penetrated deeper into village affairs and the *desa adat* was increasingly subordinated to the *desa dinas*. Various government regulations stipulated that *adat* was

<sup>13</sup> In 2002 Bali received Rp 1,539 billion DAU from Jakarta; the total income was Rp 2,362 billion, and Rp 1,145 billion was spent on salaries.

<sup>14</sup> In 2001 PAD in Bali totalled Rp 563 billion, Rp 420 billion of which consisted of PHR.

<sup>15</sup> Since the 1970s Badung was required to pay 30% of its PHR and Denpasar 10% to the other districts (Picard 2003; *Kompas* 12-3-2001). In 2002 the district assembly of Badung wanted to reduce its contribution to the other districts from 30 to 15% of the PHR. Governor Made Beratha needed all his diplomatic skills to reach a compromise. In July 2003 it was agreed that Badung would pay 22% and Denpasar 10% of their PHR to the other districts but not to Gianyar and the province.

but an instrument in the pursuit of development and needed state guidance and supervision.<sup>16</sup> *Adat* remained, however, a contested field and on some occasions became a bastion of resistance against unwanted government intervention.

Reformasi and Law no. 22/1999 on decentralization opened the way for a revision of the relationship between the *dinas* and *adat* spheres.<sup>17</sup> It was in the *adat* domain where fundamental changes would take place.

In 2001 the provincial government of Bali issued a regulation on the role of the *desa adat* (Perda no. 3/2001). It reflects in many respects the concerns of urban middle class Balinese who believe that Balinese culture should be protected against the evils of globalization. Since Balinese culture is in their eyes rooted in the *desa*, and the *desa* is based on *adat*, it follows that *adat* forms the cornerstone of Balinese culture. In order to emphasize the authenticity and the autonomy of the traditional village, the word *adat*, which was considered to be too colonial, was replaced by the term *pakraman*, taken from ancient inscriptions.<sup>18</sup>

Perda no. 3/2001 gives the *desa pakraman* full authority to run its internal affairs and makes the village council the highest authority. The *desa pakraman* has authority over village land, which may not be sold and is not subject to government taxation. Illustrating their newly acquired autonomy, some *desa pakraman* requested from the provincial government a larger profit from the tourist 'objects' such as temples, which are located within their borders. Other villages even demanded money from nearby hotels for the view on the authentic village their guests enjoyed.<sup>19</sup>

Whereas under the New Order the *desa dinas* formed the main channel of government funding into the village, after decentralization the provincial and district governments in Bali prefer to subsidize the *desa pakraman*. In June 2001 the provincial government announced that it would donate every *desa pakraman* Rp 10 million and a tax-free Honda Supra motorbike for the village head. According to the announcement, local *adat* had to be reinforced because 'Bali was seriously ill'.<sup>20</sup> District governments also decided

<sup>16</sup> Peraturan Menteri Dalam Negeri no. 11/1984; Perda no. 6/1986 and no. 12/1988.

<sup>17</sup> Within village administration the advisory board (LKMD) was replaced by a representative assembly (Dewan Perwakilan Desa) with representatives from each hamlet or *banjar* that would control the village head. However, in Law no. 32/2004, which replaced Law no. 22/1999, provisions regarding new democratic village assemblies have been deleted.

<sup>18</sup> The word *krama* refers to customary practice as well as the village council (C. Warren 2004; *Sarad* 36, 2003). Unlike the situation in West Sumatra where the *nagari* has replaced the New Order village, in Bali the *desa dinas* has not disappeared. It still provides basic services such as the issuing of identity cards and so on.

<sup>19</sup> *Bali Post* 20-3-2002; C. Warren 2004. The new regulation also reinforced the possibilities for the *desa pakraman* to provide credit, set up local businesses and attract investors.

<sup>20</sup> *Radat Bali* 7-6-2001. In 2003 and 2004 villages received Rp 20 and Rp 25 million (*Bali Post* 25-3-2004).



to support the *desa pakraman*. Depending on district wealth, villages in the eastern district of Karangasem received only Rp 5 million per year in 2002, whereas villages in the rich tourist area of Badung were given Rp 100 million each.<sup>21</sup>

Officially Perda no. 3/2001 has been effective since March 2002, but its practical implementation remains uneven (C. Warren 2004). Many Balinese appreciate the new flow of funds, which supports temple restoration and ritual activities and strengthens a sense of community. But the Perda was also criticized because it is based on Dutch colonial ideas about the autonomous and republican nature of the Balinese village while reflecting a romantic desire for cultural authenticity.<sup>22</sup>

### *The invention of traditional police*

The new village autonomy was accompanied by the establishment of a brand new traditional police force at the local level, the so-called *pecalang*. Already in 1996 and 1997 village policemen in Sanur and Kuta were active under this name. However, the place where this police force was truly launched was not the traditional village but the founding congress of PDI-P in Sanur in October 1998 (*Sarad* 31, 2002; *Suara Merdeka* 10-7-1997; ICG 2003c). The armed forces were present with more than 3000 men, but there was widespread suspicion that they were pro-Golkar and might cause riots instead of maintaining order. PDI-P had organized its own security forces comprising of 1200 men. The story goes that when tension ran high one man dressed in *adat* clothes managed to stop a crowd that was almost in a trance and persuaded them to sit down. The PDI-P congress proceeded in an orderly manner and it was clear that invisible (or *niskala*) forces had been at work here. Since then militias dressed in traditional attire have served as security forces at other big gatherings, while all over Bali villages established their own groups of *pecalang*. In June 2000 the provincial department of culture organized a seminar about the phenomenon in an attempt to impose some uniformity, and in 2002 a booklet was published in cooperation with Parisada in which tasks, func-

<sup>21</sup> Law no. 34/1999 stipulates that 10% of the Hotel and Restaurant Tax has to be redistributed among the villages. In Bali the *desa pakraman* received these funds. Due to the effects of the 'Bali bomb', income from tourism declined and in 2003 villages in Badung only received Rp 50 million.

<sup>22</sup> I Gde Parimartha 2003. Another criticism concerned the status of immigrants. Informed by the same modernist ideas, which separate caste from religion, Perda no. 3/2001 separates religious and social spheres of interaction in the village. Hence immigrants are only expected to perform social duties, which are relatively light in comparison with the ongoing flow of religious obligations (*Sarad* 39, 2003; *Bali Post* 27-5-2004).

tions and dress of *pecalang* were explained (Nyoman Widnyani and I Ketut Widia 2002). Within less than four years a moment of charisma had been transformed into a new island-wide and village-based institution.<sup>23</sup>

Perda no. 3/2001 recognizes *pecalang* as a traditional security force (*satgas keamanan tradisional*), especially with regards to *adat* and religion. Their uniform consists of a *destar* or head cloth, a flower behind one ear, a t-shirt on which the word *pecalang* and the name of their village is printed, a safari jacket without sleeves, a black and white chequered *kampuh* over a sarong, and a *kris* which has been blessed in the temple, plus a hand phone, while tattoos are taboo. Thus attired they are supposed to represent traditional authority, which must be seen in contrast to the corrupt practices of an external and often absent police force.

Although some *pecalang* have acted as well-paid and well-equipped security guards, while others have been involved in criminal activities, in most villages the new village policemen play a modest role. The most visible – and often also rather annoying – manifestation of their authority is when they block entire roads and redirect traffic during temple ceremonies and other rituals, for which commercially sponsored traffic signs are used.

### *Social volcanoes*

Far-reaching decentralization, village autonomy and the establishment of a village police increased violent conflicts within and between villages. Since regional autonomy was put into motion, the coordinating power at the provincial level and government authority as such have weakened. As a result, administrative institutions are no longer capable of managing many – sometimes long-lasting – local conflicts. Under the heading *kasus adat* – which is seen as a legitimate form of violence – land and border disputes as well as conflicts about caste and status claims within villages easily explode into large-scale violence, often conducted by groups of unemployed youths. The Balinese journal *Sarad* estimated that between 1997 and 2003 almost every month a *kasus adat* resulted in mass violence (*Sarad* 44, 2003). It seems as if villages show less tolerance toward deviant behaviour, while the implementation of social sanctions has become more violent.

Due to a combination of population growth and rising market prices for land, conflicting claims on land easily result in violent confrontation. According to Indonesian law the village is not a legal body, but according to local *adat* villages do own land. In many disputes, conflicting parties refer

<sup>23</sup> In the old days *pecalang* did not belong to the village sphere. In nineteenth century Mengwi they were agents/spies acting on behalf of the royal centre (H. Schulte Nordholt 1996:150).

either to national law or local *adat* to legitimize their claims (Sarad 49, 2004). Apart from land disputes within the village, there are also an increasing number of confrontations between villages involving claims on land and contested borderlines.

Although many *kasus adat* have an economic background, others are rooted in caste conflicts or long histories of rivalries between villages, which tend to generate their own dynamics. Regularly caste conflicts within villages come to the surface when villagers boycott or even prevent cremations of aristocrats who ignored local *adat* rules. Increasingly, conflicts between villages, and between hamlets within the same village, are reinforced by political antagonisms. In most cases government administrators and the police are rather powerless. Meanwhile the government itself has also become the target of popular anger. In several instances police offices were the prime targets of popular discontent at the local level. Taken together, the long list of conflicts also demonstrates that the newly created *pecalang* were not able to prevent the regular outbreaks of violence at the local level.

### *Sweepings*

Since *adat* was seen as the cornerstone of Balinese culture and the ultimate stronghold against the evils of globalization, it follows that *pecalang* were seen as the guardians of this culture. Degung Santikarma (2001a) has argued that, under the New Order, culture was conceptualized in material terms. As a commodity, culture could be reproduced and sold, but it could also be stolen, as was evidenced by a series of temple thefts in the mid 1990s, which were attributed to 'Javanese'. It was therefore not only the task of *pecalang* to protect their village from narcotics and the like, but also to keep their territory free from suspicious strangers.

In the late 1990s a steady flow of immigrants looking for jobs suddenly began to increase, as conflicts and crises drove people from Eastern Indonesia and Java to Bali. Most immigrants concentrated in South Bali, where they tried their luck in the tourist sector. The 2000 census counted about 250,000 Javanese and Madurese immigrants in Bali, out of a total population of 3.1 million people.<sup>24</sup> Apart from a small group of well-to-do entrepreneurs, the majority of immigrants provide cheap labour in the construction and agrarian sectors, furniture and textile production, and in hotels and restaurants.<sup>25</sup>

Muslim immigrants came to embody social pollution, which threatened

<sup>24</sup> *Penduduk Indonesia 2001*, Seri L.2.2: 10.9, 11.1.

<sup>25</sup> ICG 2003c:8; *Bali Post* 3-1-03. Construction workers from Lombok earn Rp 25,000 per day, whereas Balinese are paid Rp 50,000.

Balinese culture. These feelings were eloquently summarized by the deputy mayor of Denpasar in April 2002:

Most of these people are jobless, they create a problem. They are criminals. There are problems with housing and traffic jams are getting worse. These people produce a lot of waste; they make slums. (*South China Morning Post* 3-4-2002.)

Although the terrorist assault on 12 October 2002 did not result in a violent cleansing of Muslims, the immigrant population of Bali experienced physical and administrative repression. Immigrants who returned from Java after the fasting month were screened and intimidated by a combined force of regular police, administrative police and local *pecalang*. These forces also conducted razzias on a regular basis in Denpasar and other places in South Bali in search of illegal immigrants. In the administrative sphere especially the municipal government of Denpasar took strong measures to reduce the number of immigrants by applying a 'shock therapy'. In order to obtain an immigrant identity card (Kartu Identitas Penduduk Pendatang, KIPP or Migrant-ID) the immigrants had to show letters from their home village and their employer and landlord in Bali, while the official costs of the card increased to Rp 400,000 per year, to which a similar amount in bribes often had to be added (ICG 2003c; *Sarad* 34, 2003). In January 2003 the governor of Bali and the district heads reached an agreement to issue a uniform rule, according to which non-Balinese immigrants had to pay Rp 200,000 per year for their permit, and immigrants from other places within Bali only Rp 20,000 (*Bali Post* 11-2-2003).

During a meeting of *adat* village leaders in Gianyar early in 2004 emotions ran high about the supposed 'take-over' of Bali by immigrants. Public intellectual Prof Luh Ketut Suryani did not hesitate to depict a gloomy future, in which Hindu Balinese might become a minority on their own island (*Taksu* May 2004). Many villages put up signs forbidding 'scavengers' from entering village territory, and *pecalang* were depicted as vanguard troops defending Balinese culture (Nyoman Widnyani and I Ketut Widia 2002).

The answer to the threat of Western decadence and Islamic intrusions was found in the intimacy of the *desa pakraman*. But the 'revival' of the *desa pakraman* and *adat*, with its conservative, male-biased and exclusive ethnic attitudes, are not in line with the requirements of national citizenship and democracy.<sup>26</sup> It is, moreover, difficult to determine the borderline between legal authority and legitimized violence on the one hand and the criminal activities on the other of semi-official groups who act in the shadow of formal state institutions and political parties.

<sup>26</sup> See Connor and Vickers 2003:177-9.

*Preman and party politics*

Apart from immigrants and ethnic conflict, other aspects of 'Indonesia' penetrated into Bali as well. The rise of PDI-P in Denpasar and Karangasem was accompanied by the formation of gangs of allied *preman* who provided public support in exchange for political protection and room to manoeuvre in the criminal sphere. The genealogy of the biggest gang in Denpasar can be traced back to the 1970s when Ngurah P., a former leader of a PNI militia who had been involved in the killings of 1965, established the Armada Racun. This group wanted to protect Denpasar against the so-called 'Anak Sudirman', or non-Balinese military from the Kodam Udayana, who tried to control the entertainment centres in Denpasar and Kuta. In order to gain protection from higher authorities the Armada allied itself in later years with the thuggish pro-Golkar youth group Pemuda Pancasila.

According to well-informed people in Denpasar, there is a direct link between the Armada Racun and the Forum Peduli Denpasar (FPD), which was established in September 2002.<sup>27</sup> Whereas the name of the Armada (army) Racun (poison) reflected aggression, the new Forum Peduli Denpasar (Forum Caring for Denpasar) presented itself in the guise of a NGO dressed up in a civil society discourse. Supported by intellectuals, politicians, artists and entrepreneurs, the FPD stated in its 'vision and mission' that it aimed to enhance the security and cultural unity of Denpasar and that it would fulfil this task in the spirit of the Puputan Badung – the heroic suicidal resistance of the king of Badung against the Dutch in September 1906. In his opening speech the chairman of the FPD, I Made Sutarna Minggik, emphasized that FDP advocated a bottom-up approach to development, resulting in a clean city, with less traffic jams, where people would obey the rule of law. In order to reinforce regional culture he promised to fight drugs and secular marriages.<sup>28</sup>

From the start the FPD maintained a special alignment with the mayor of Denpasar, Anak Agung Puspayoga, who acted as the patron of the organization. Through the person of Puspayoga the FPD was also allied with the PDI-P and puri Satria, the old ruling dynasty of Denpasar. At first sight the FPD manifested itself as a decent organization. It offered assistance to the victims of the bomb assault in Legian in October 2002, for which they received a prestigious award from the national chief of police Dai Bachtiar during a big event at the Hotel Borobudur in Jakarta. However, the FPD also harbours a variety of illegal activities, from which police, politicians and *preman* benefit.

<sup>27</sup> See also ICG 2003c:10.

<sup>28</sup> *Bali Post* 30-7-2002, 12-8-2002, 22-8-2002, 20-9-2002, 23-9-2002; official documents of the establishment of Forum Peduli Denpasar 20-9-2002.

It has its basis in the transport sector of Denpasar and controls entertainment areas and gambling spots. It also showed its less friendly face when it became deeply involved in so-called anti-immigrant 'sweepings'. In July 2003 the FPD operated as strongmen protecting the interests of their patron, mayor Puspayoga, when the group attacked one of his political opponents.<sup>29</sup> Commenting on this incident a colleague from Universitas Udayana lamented that in the early days of Reformasi he was often invited to participate in discussions convened by the mayor, 'but now Puspayoga seems to rely on *preman* to solve his problems'.

### *Unstable party rule*

The intertwining of administrative interests, party politics and criminal activities does not only occur in Denpasar, but also in the small town of Amlapura in the eastern district of Karangasem. Here the political influence of the local dynasty ceased to exist in the mid-1980s. After a period of military district heads, a new PDI-P politician became the new administrator in 1999. He had a degree in public administration but more important was his network in martial arts (*pencak silat*) circles that helped him to win the elections. Just like the mayor of Denpasar, the new district head of Karangasem was supported by a 'civil society' organization, the Dewan Perwakilan Massa (DPM, Council Representing the Masses). The DPM is headed by Kari Subali, a tough guy with a big beard and a moustache, every inch a strong man, who can easily mobilize 200 to 300 men to underline the point he wants to make.

As a new player in the political arena in Bali PDI-P had a weak basis in the administrative bureaucracy, which was still dominated by old Golkar networks, and the party had not much experience in controlling decision-making processes in the district assemblies. Auxiliary forces like FPD and DPM were therefore helpful to support the interests of newly elected administrators.

Apart from the marriage between party bosses and *preman*, the sudden rise to power of the PDI-P was accompanied by spectacular internal conflicts. In the districts of Jembrana and Buleleng Reformasi and decentralization offered ample opportunities for clever political entrepreneurs to seize power, while tensions between party headquarters in Jakarta and regional branches played an important role as well.

In August 2000 a new district head was elected in the region of Jembrana in West Bali. With 17 out of 30 seats PDI-P dominated the district assembly and it seemed as if the party was in full control of the electoral process.

<sup>29</sup> *Bali Post* 28-7-2003; *Denpost* 26-7-2003, 27-7-2003, 28-7-2003, 29-8-2003, 5-9-2003, 6-9-2003; *Fajar Bali* 26-7-2003.



The party candidate had the blessing of the national headquarters and was expected to gain an easy victory. But due to a miscalculation he was unable to obtain the required 50% plus one of the votes and a second round was needed. To the astonishment of the PDI-P he was then defeated by an outsider, Dr Gede Winasa, who had managed to buy – as many believe – the votes of a majority of the assembly, including a number of PDI-P members. Anger and frustration among PDI-P cadres led to violent attacks on the party office of Jembrana (ruined) and the house of the PDI-P chairman of the district assembly (burned).<sup>30</sup> In July 2003 Gede Winasa also succeeded – against the wish of party headquarters – in gaining control over the regional branch of the PDI-P.<sup>31</sup> Despite his contested rise to power Gede Winasa did achieve remarkable results as an administrator. Although Jembrana is known as a poor district, he managed to increase the local budget and provided both free education and free health services, so that the Indonesian weekly *Tempo* called him ‘a record breaking district head’.<sup>32</sup>

Unstable party politics in Jembrana had facilitated the rise of a new strong man. A similar but more complex process occurred in the northern district of Buleleng.<sup>33</sup> Here the position of the district head I Ketut W. Sindu came increasingly under pressure after the elections of 1999.<sup>34</sup> After the elections of 1999 PDI-P had gained a majority in the district assembly and Sindu’s room to manoeuvre was seriously restricted. He had to make deals with the leader of the PDI-P, I Nyoman S. Duniaji, whose star was rising rapidly in Buleleng. Duniaji had been headmaster of a high school and a travel agent. While his father had been secretary of the Sukarno-era party PNI in Buleleng, he himself had been a fierce supporter of Megawati when she was ousted from the PDI in 1996. Supported by party headquarters and representing a new generation of reform-minded politicians, Duniaji was in 1999 elected chairman of the district branch of PDI-P in Buleleng. In 2000 he became chairman of the district assembly (DPRD) of Buleleng, while a close friend of his, D.K. Astawa, succeeded him as chairman of the party branch.

The career of Duniaji was resented by an older party cadre, Wayan Dangan, who had lost the elections for party leader and speaker of the district

<sup>30</sup> The official inauguration of the new district head had to be postponed when a mob of angry PDI-P supporters of the defeated candidate disturbed the ceremony and several people were wounded and one man was killed. (*Kompas* 15-8-2000; *Apakabar* 28-8-2000).

<sup>31</sup> *Denpost* 21-7-2003, 26-7-2003, 14-8-2003, 8-9-2003, 20-9-2003, 23-9-2003.

<sup>32</sup> *Tempo* 28-12-2004. I was told that Gede Winasa maintained good relationships with a group of Japanese investors.

<sup>33</sup> See Lay 2002:Chapter 3; Savirani 2004:Chapter 4.

<sup>34</sup> Sindu was an old and loyal Golkar administrator who had been active in the so-called ‘Golkarization’ campaign in Buleleng during the 1970s, which had to erase the grass roots support for the leftist wing of the nationalist PNI. In 1993 he had become district head and served now for a second term.

assembly. Daging wanted revenge. Meanwhile Duniaji's power increased. As chairman of the assembly he made deals with district head Sindu, who depended on him for support. He organized overseas trips and cars for his fellow PDI-P assembly members and influenced decisions regarding infrastructural projects and the appointment of high-level officials. Towards the end of 2001 he felt strong enough to start a campaign to replace district head Sindu. Ironically Sindu was now supported by Daging, who opposed Duniaji's ambitions. But to no avail. In January 2002 district head Sindu was forced to step down, immediately after which Duniaji started a campaign to be elected as the next district head of Buleleng.

Because Duniaji was confident that he would win the elections, he started to ignore his local power basis. He rejected his political friend and ally Astawa (the local PDI-P chief) as running mate because he preferred a candidate with more education. Actually Duniaji looked down upon most of his fellow PDI-P men in Buleleng and considered them backward and ignorant. Although supported by party headquarters, Duniaji ran the risk of isolating himself.

Suddenly a new candidate appeared, Putu Bagiada, a businessman with a background in private banking in Jakarta. Bagiada was warmly supported by Duniaji's enemies. And as a businessman Bagiada had ample funds to finance his campaign. When the district assembly convened to elect the new district head, Duniaji presided the meeting in his capacity as chairman of the assembly. When he realized that he was losing the elections he tried to postpone the meeting halfway the election procedure, but he failed. Bagiada was elected with 27 out of 45 votes. Shocked by this unexpected defeat Duniaji mobilized his supporters and staged demonstrations against the supposedly fraudulent election. However, in early July 2002 Bagiada was officially inaugurated as district head, while Duniaji remained a relatively powerless chairman of the district assembly.

In the end an alliance between old local party cadres with external money had defeated an alliance between a high-handed leader and party headquarters in Jakarta. Party headquarters was very unhappy with the fact that it had lost control over the party branches in Jembrana and Buleleng. The other district heads in Bali were also worried. The consequence of electoral democracy – fuelled by money politics – was that the PDI-P faced uncontrolled processes of decentralization within its own organization. This offered outsiders an opportunity to penetrate into powerful positions. And this would also have serious repercussions for the election of the governor of Bali in July 2003.



### *Rising tensions*

Meanwhile, campaigns for the national elections of 2004 started in Bali as early as July 2003 and caused violent confrontations between PDI-P and Golkar. Supported by its own militarized youth organization AMPG, Golkar made a modest but self-conscious come-back in the political arena after the devastating defeat of June 1999.<sup>35</sup>

In many places throughout Bali, tensions between PDI-P and Golkar or between PDI-P and its dissident offshoots increased. Especially in Tabanan, Jembrana and Buleleng numerous small incidents were reported.<sup>36</sup> Towards the end of October tensions increased even further when Golkar planned to hold its 40th anniversary in Bali, while PDI-P announced it would celebrate the national commemoration of the 'Youth Oath' with large parades and other manifestations. On Sunday 26 October 2003 a PDI-P parade near Singaraja in Buleleng was attacked by Golkar supporters. Not long afterwards a PDI-P mob retaliated and lynched two members of the youth organization of Golkar. Violence continued during the next two days around Singaraja and consisted mainly of attacks on Golkar offices (*Jakarta Post* 27-10-2003; *Bali Post* 27-10-2003, 29-10-2003).

These incidents caused a lot of concern among party leaders in Jakarta. If the pattern in Bali was to set the tone for the national elections, what would happen in other parts of Indonesia? Both government officials and party bosses put pressure on the local branches of their parties in Bali to refrain from further violence. They succeeded, but many people feared violence might flare up when the real campaign would start in April 2004.

### *Ajeg revisited*

Lack of administrative coordination, violent *adat* cases, internal party turmoil, confrontations between parties, immigrants, *preman* and other aspects of 'Indonesia' illustrate that the old dichotomy between an isolated Bali and its fragile culture on the one hand, and the evils of the outside world on the other, no longer held true. Bali has of course always been open to outside influences, and has long been an inseparable part of Indonesia. But since regional autonomy was set in motion the moral dichotomy between Bali (innocent) and the outside world (evil) was difficult to maintain. For it could

<sup>35</sup> Golkar hijacked the slogan 'Bali aman, turis datang' (When Bali is safe, tourists will come), and changed it into 'Golkar menang, turis datang' (If Golkar wins, tourists will come).

<sup>36</sup> *Sarad* 44, 2003; *Bali Post* 28-5-2003, 4-8-2003, 27-8-2003, 5-9-2003; *Denpost* 28-8-2003, 8-9-2003.

no longer be denied that 'evil' was now part and parcel of Bali itself (Connor and Vickers 2003). However, the main sources of the evil forces within Bali were still located in the outside world: globalization and, after the terrorist attack in Legian, international terrorism. The threat of globalization – in the guise of a free movement of trade, capital and labour as well as the demoralizing impact of drugs and decadence – motivated concerned urban intellectuals to participate in countless seminars. A telling illustration of these gatherings was a prestigious symposium held in July 2000 on cultural heritage conservation, which was sponsored by the World Bank and Unesco. Here old discourses about the uniqueness of Bali (commonplace since the nineteenth century) and efforts to preserve Balinese culture (since the 1920s) resurfaced in empty 'newspeak'. Since the uniqueness of Bali, its environment and cultural traditions were under challenge, the recipe for sustained development should consist of the empowerment of governance of local communities, the revitalization of historic towns, the adaptation of tradition and the renewal of the cultural fabric by keeping living cultural practices alive.<sup>37</sup> It was along these lines that 'Balinese move into the future by returning to their past, and embrace modernity by re-acquainting themselves with old traditions', as Leo Howe observed (Howe 2001:83). This approach was both inward-looking and conservative.

It was in this context that the new leader of the independent Bali Post Group, Satria Naradha, launched his *Ajeg Bali* campaign in 2002. The son and heir of Ketut Nadha, founder of the *Bali Post* in 1948 and its chief editor until his death in 2001, Satria Naradha became the self-appointed leader of a moral movement that claimed to protect and strengthen Balinese culture.<sup>38</sup>

During the late 1990s and especially under Satria Naradha the *Bali Post* became a powerful provincial media concern which now includes a local TV station, four radio stations, the well-respected newspaper *Bali Post* itself, the daily *Denpost*, which covers primarily criminality, and several other newspapers and magazines. Although the Bali Post Group has no monopoly – *Jawa Pos* with its imprint *Radar Bali*, *NUSA* and commercial TV stations are alternative sources of news – Satria Naradha is well-equipped to determine to a large extent the political agenda. If necessary, he is willing to impose censorship.

In an interview Satria Naradha claimed that he received his inspiration to launch the concept of 'Ajeg Bali' already in the 1980s, as he was meditating as a high school pupil. 'I received the idea, but I could not yet give it a

<sup>37</sup> Announcement of the symposium in *H.SEASIA* 6-6-2000.

<sup>38</sup> The *Bali Post* is one of the oldest independent newspapers in Indonesia. It started in 1948 as *Suara Indonesia* (Putra Dwikora and Wayan Supartha 2000). Ideologically the newspaper has always been close to PNI and PDI(-P).

name, but when in the 1990s I saw large billboards in Bali mobilizing people to safeguard Bali, I suddenly knew what it should be'. Others think that the modernist Muslim and Hindu movements of the 1990s, when he was studying journalism in Surabaya, formed important sources of inspiration for his later activities as a cultural activist.<sup>39</sup>

Ajeg Bali was launched at the opening of Bali TV in May 2002, when the governor of Bali, I Dewa Made Beratha urged his audience to *mengajegkan* Balinese *adat* and culture (I Nyoman Darma Putra 2003). *Ajeg* stands for strong, upright, and is in a way a stronger version of the notion of *kebalian*, or 'Balineseness' (Picard 1996). Related terms like *ajeg-ajeg* and *ajegang* refer to village regulations and locate the term in the centre of Balinese culture (I Nyoman Darma Putra 2003). The notion of *ajeg* consists of a loose category that offers different groups of people a comfortable way to talk about Bali. Although many of my middle class intellectual friends dislike the conservative tone of the *Bali Post*, the dull programmes of Bali TV, and the post-New Order nature of the Ajeg Bali discourse, many ordinary Balinese like the concept:

'*Ajeg* means that we should go back to the origins. Back to the pure and peaceful Bali, when things were orderly and true.'

'*Ajeg* means that Bali is safe and can resist terrorists.'

'Ajeg Bali offers us an answer to modernization without substance.'

They also like the way Ajeg Bali is communicated on local television. Local news and the prime time live horror show *Sekala dan Niskala* address familiar topics, and Balinese soap series offer a welcome alternative to the Jakarta-based *sinetron* situated in an air-conditioned upper class world largely unfamiliar to many Balinese. Although the rather folkloristic formats of talk shows on Bali TV look rather clumsy and guests are expected to appear in full *adat* dress, the messages have an impact. Especially in the talk show *Ajeg Bali* Balinese culture is presented as a homogeneous and relatively static thing, which is essentially religious and rooted in village *adat*.

Balinese culture is also increasingly presented as exclusively Hindu. This is achieved by emphasizing contrasts with Islam and, ironically, by imitating Islamic formats at the same time. In contrast to the Islamic salutation *assalam'alaikum* anchormen, reporters and talk show hosts start with a solemn *Om Swastiastu*, and conclude with *Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om*, while they bring their hands together in front of their face. When most national

<sup>39</sup> Couteau 2002. Whereas Satria Naradha claims the sole 'authorship' of Ajeg Bali, others (Agung Alit 2004) argue that the leader of puri Satria and mayor of Denpasar, A.A. Puspayoga played a major role in conceptualizing the idea. Helen Creese informed me that the term *ajeg* was already used in 1993 in the context of the conservation of Balinese culture (Nyoman Sukartha et al. 1993:4).

networks broadcast the Islamic evening prayer (*adzan magrib*), Bali TV broadcasts a Hindu prayer (*puja trisandya*) at six o'clock that follows the Islamic format and uses phrases derived from Protestant prayers. A televised series of 285 episodes imported from India reminds the Balinese that they are part of a huge civilization that is much older than Islam.

One of the most popular programmes is the daily talk show *Dharma Wacana* (sponsored by Toyota) presented by Ida Pedanda Made Gunung – chairman of the conservative Parisada Campuan – who discusses religious topics and their practical moral implications. He is a witty man and his audience often laughs about the points he makes. Although he is not openly hostile to immigrants the following message is clear enough:

'Many Balinese sell their land in order to eat lots of *sate*, but don't forget that many immigrants sell *sate* in order to buy a lot of land'.

Although many public intellectuals supported the notion of Ajeg Bali, a minority criticized the top-down character of the campaign and compared it with the compulsory Pancasila courses from the New Order period. They feared that Ajeg Bali, because of its vagueness, could be used to silence critical voices, while the magazine *Sarad* warned against the return of 'feudal' attitudes (*Sarad* 43, 2003).

Satria Naradha's prime intention was to unify Bali through his Ajeg Bali campaign. His political agenda was focussed on various issues. He was anxious to prevent the spread of political violence (*Bali Post* 12-9-2003). He was also concerned about the absence of administrative coordination and urged district heads to cooperate more closely with the governor. At the launching of Bali TV he invited these administrators to together hold one torch, symbolizing the unity of Bali. In order to gain support and legitimacy for his campaign Satria Naradha invited administrators and high-ranking guests to sign so-called *prasasti*, stone inscriptions through which they endorse the intentions of Ajeg Bali. In doing so he 'revived' an ancient royal tradition of issuing stone inscriptions and continued a New Order habit of commemorating official events with an inscribed signature of a state authority. All senior administrators of Bali, national politicians and the sultan of Yogya signed these *prasasti*, which were gathered in the *Bali Post* headquarters. In January 2005 Satria Naradha proclaimed ten Ajeg Bali Heroes, while the Ajeg Bali campaign targetted schools and became part of the curriculum, including competitions for the best *ajeg* teacher, *ajeg* pupil, *ajeg* performance, *ajeg* prayer etcetera.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile the term *ajeg* appeared almost everywhere, in newspaper articles, on banners during public meetings, and in casual '*warung*

<sup>40</sup> *Bali Post* 5-1-2005. The heroes included freedom fighters, nationalist and religious leaders, a dancer, a painter, an architect, an environmentalist and one foreigner, the American Catholic priest Shadeg who was honoured for his study of the Balinese language.

talk'.<sup>41</sup>

The Ajeg Bali campaign is instrumental in emphasizing an exclusive ethnic profile of Balinese culture and religion. Ethnic unity was in turn based on religion.<sup>42</sup> When I met Satria Naradha he talked about Ajeg Bali in terms of a 'cultural renaissance', but when my assistant asked him casually what this meant in practice he immediately put the sweeping of immigrants on top of the agenda. This reveals, despite the flexible vagueness of Ajeg Bali, its rigid ethnic agenda. Since the position of the aristocracy is weakened and caste hierarchy is contested, Ajeg Bali offers urban intellectuals and middle class officials an opportunity to represent Bali as a homogeneous culture able to face external threats. At the same time the Ajeg Bali discourse erases conflicts concerning class, caste, religion and ethnicity, while it legitimizes violence (by *pecalang*) in the name of culture.

#### *Gubernatorial elections and Ajeg Bali*

The connections between the *Bali Post*, politics and the Ajeg Bali campaign became visible during the re-election of governor Dewa Made Beratha in August 2003. The election showed how party politics and media interests were closely intertwined and how the Ajeg Bali campaign was used to cover up corruption within the PDI-P.

The election of the governor should be understood within a broader context of national politics. President Megawati and her PDI-P sought to strengthen support among governors and district administrators, who were expected to help her win the presidential elections of 2004. A series of controversial elections – in Jakarta, Lampung, Central and East Java – occurred during which local PDI-P candidates were ignored in favour of strong 'non-cadre' favourites of party headquarters in Jakarta. Alerted by the stubbornness of local party branches in Buleleng and Jembrana, PDI-P leaders in Jakarta approached the provincial leaders of the party in May 2003 to 'synchronize' the strategy for the upcoming election of the governor of Bali.<sup>43</sup> It turned out that party headquarters preferred the re-election of governor Dewa Made

<sup>41</sup> During the commemoration of the Puputan Badung on 20 September 2003 a banner had the slogan: Dengan semangat puputan kita kokohkan persatuan dan kesatuan demi ajegnya Bali (With the spirit of the *puputan* we reinforce the totality and unity for the sake of the strength of Bali).

<sup>42</sup> Bali's police chief Mangku Pastika stated in this respect that 'Ajeg Bali has to be Ajeg Hindu' (personal communication Ngurah Suryawan).

<sup>43</sup> It is interesting to see how terms like 'synchronization', 'anticipation', 'coordination' and 'operation', which formed the military grammar of the New Order bureaucracy, are still practiced.

Beratha and rejected the local PDI-P candidate Cokorda Ratmadi. Ratmadi was district head of Badung while his brother, A.A. Puspayoga, was mayor of Denpasar. Both come from puri Satria Denpasar, an old and respected PNI/PDI(-P) stronghold. Megawati preferred Made Beratha, who had a Golkar background, because he had facilitated the founding PDI-P congress in Bali in November 1998. Megawati's counted on the loyalty of 'her' people in Bali and tried to gain extra support in Golkar circles by choosing Made Beratha. This was a serious miscalculation.

When rumours leaked out in May 2003 that PDI-P headquarters did not support the local candidate, panic spread in party circles in Bali. In late June all PDI-P members of the provincial assembly were invited to Jakarta where they were told to support Mega's candidate. For the time being the provincial PDI-P decided to support two candidates: Cokorda Ratmadi and Dewa Beratha.<sup>44</sup> On 21 July party headquarters ordered the provincial PDI-P to drop the candidacy of Cokorda Ratmadi and to vote for Made Beratha. This letter caused a revolt among party cadres, who screamed that the ideals of the party were crushed and that it was now an all-out fight between them and Jakarta (*Bali Post* 22-7-2003, 24-7-2003; *Denpost* 23-7-2003). Three days later Megawati visited Bali and told Cokorda Ratmadi 'If you want to disgrace me, go ahead'.

Emotions ran high, confusing conflicts erupted over procedures, and pressure on Ratmadi increased. Eventually on Monday 28 July Ratmadi announced in front of weeping supporters that he had withdrawn his candidacy.

From then on the *Bali Post* played an active role as a reconciling mediator. Instead of presenting Cokorda Ratmadi's withdrawal as a defeat, he was praised as 'Sang Pahlawan Ajeg Bali', the Hero of a Strong and Unified Bali, who had sacrificed his personal interests to serve a higher public cause. In order to emphasize harmony Satria Naradha staged a reconciliation ceremony in puri Satria, which was directly broadcasted on Bali TV and received front page covering in the *Bali Post* (29-7-2003, 3-8-2003). Reconciliation was underlined by signing yet another *prasasti*, which symbolized the peace between Made Beratha and puri Satria and the pledge of all parties to support Ajeg Bali. The demonstrations by PDI-P supporters against Dewa Made Beratha which took place outside the frames of the cameras were not mentioned, but large scale riots did not occur.

Although the leader of the *Bali Post*, Satria Naradha, had been close to puri Satria, he had his own reasons to support Made Beratha. His television

<sup>44</sup> *Radar Bali* 29-5-2003; *Bali Post* 24-6-2004. The running mate of Made Beratha was Alit Kelakan, a young PDI-P cadre who had actively supported Megawati when she was expelled from the PDI in 1996.



station was in jeopardy because it had started broadcasting before the new law on local television (Law no. 32/2002) was in operation. Therefore Bali TV was strictly speaking illegal, and Jakarta could close the station down. Satria Naradha needed Made Beratha's mediation in Jakarta to stay on air, which eventually succeeded.

The role played by the *Bali Post* illustrates that the local press is not always the best agency to reveal background information about local conflicts and other sensitive issues because of their proximity to the issues. On the contrary, often these agencies become involved as interested parties, either by taking side, or by playing an active role of their own.

It seemed as if most of the tension was over after the withdrawal of Ratmadi and the public reconciliation in puri Satria. On the 3rd of August the PDI-P members of the provincial assembly went on pilgrimage to the temple of Besakih and the next day they were locked up (*dikarantina*, quarantined) in Hotel Bali Cliff where they would stay till the election of the new governor on 6 August.<sup>45</sup> The *Bali Post* then covered the re-election of Dewa Made Beratha as governor with 31 votes (out of 55 assembly members), as a 'victory of Ajeg Bali'.<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile other media revealed that bribery had occurred on a large scale shortly before the election (*Tempo* 18-8-2003; *Radar Bali* 19-8-2003; *Jakarta Post* 23-8-2003, 29-8-2003). Two PDI-P members had confessed they received Rp 50 million from a representative of PDI-P headquarters, who had visited them in Hotel Bali Cliff. Another amount of Rp 100 million would be transferred after the election. The *Bali Post* only reported that allegations about bribery were denied by provincial party leaders (*Bali Post* 13-8-2003). The fact that Bali Corruption Watch, the Legal Aid Foundation and the Pemuda Hindu Bali demanded an investigation and lodged a complaint with the Administrative Court in Denpasar was silenced by the *Bali Post*. The court rejected the allegation.

When Dewa Made Beratha was inaugurated on 28 August, the building of the provincial assembly was heavily protected by police, army and PDI-P militia. No incidents occurred. The re-election of the governor was decided in favour of 'Jakarta' and marked the defeat of regional autonomy. But it had a price. According to a detailed reconstruction by the magazine *Sarad*, 38 PDI-P members of the provincial assembly had received Rp 5.5 billion from their party.<sup>47</sup> Bali's police chief Mangku Pastika stated however that no bribery

<sup>45</sup> *Bali Post* 4-8-2003, 6-8-2003. Mobile phones were collected to guarantee that the 38 PDI-P members were isolated from the outside world.

<sup>46</sup> *Bali Post* 7-8-2003, 11-8-2003. Apparently seven PDI-P members had defected.

<sup>47</sup> *Sarad* 41, 2003. Money from the office of the governor was first transferred to PDI-P headquarters in Jakarta and then distributed among PDI-P assembly members. Taken together the assembly members have probably received a total amount of more than Rp 13 billion from all the candidates involved.

had occurred because the case had not caused a loss to the state. Moreover, he added: 'There is no term for "money politics" in our laws' (*Jakarta Post* 29-9-2003).

*Beyond Ajeg Bali: trans-national challenges*

Decentralization has resulted in administrative fragmentation, which undermines regional autonomy. A paradoxical development is that Balinese middle class intellectuals tend to stress their regional authenticity and deny their Indonesian identity, but they do both in a very Indonesian way, because throughout the archipelago differences are increasingly expressed in similar terms.<sup>48</sup> Therefore one may wonder how Indonesian the whole *ajeg* campaign actually is.

The dilemma of Bali as an open fortress cannot be solved because an open economy and a closed cultural identity are not compatible. In contrast to the dominant view that defines Balinese culture as essentially Hindu and anchored in village *adat*, Degung Santikarma (2001b:22) wrote:

Living in the midst of the trans-national traffic jam that is Bali can be an exhausting experience. For gloBALization has not just shipped bamboo wind chimes and leering wooden cats out to the boutiques of Berkeley and Brisbane, or seen Bill Clinton and Bay Watch battling for television airtime in the *banjar*, but has opened new markets for that most precious commodity of the new cultural capitalism: authenticity.

The problem with concepts that express hegemonic ambitions like Ajeg Bali is that they are based on post-colonial models that refer to closed and homogeneous societies and cannot incorporate notions of change and agency. Perhaps the need to discuss these issues will fade away as soon as an increase of tourism brings renewed prosperity to Bali, but it seems that growth will slow down. Therefore one of the biggest challenges of Balinese administrators and intellectuals will be to develop a more dynamic idea of their culture, which offers room for hybridity and trans-national dimensions. For how long and to what extent can a concerned urban middle class emphasis on authenticity and a rigid defence of an exclusive ethnic profile of Bali be compatible with the ongoing formation of a new trans-national urban corridor stretching from Bangkok, through Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Jakarta, and Surabaya to Bali?<sup>49</sup> It is challenging to imagine what an open-minded, self-confident and well-regulated Bali, as a cultural counterpart of business metropolis Singapore, would look like in the future.

<sup>48</sup> I borrow this phrase from Bayly 2004:2; See also Vickers 2002:94.

<sup>49</sup> Dick 2005; Connor and Vickers 2003:168.