TIME, RITES AND FESTIVALS IN BALI
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FOREWORD

Today, I sit in my house in Bali, savouring this beautiful book. Today, in Bali, is a day to honour Saraswati, goddess of knowledge. A day when even the busiest, most educated people stop what they are doing, and go to pray and offer thanks for learning and knowledge.

This book is different—a book we can truly learn from with our hearts, because it goes to the heart of what makes Bali special. You may ask: Don’t we know enough about Bali?

Well, I first came to Bali 50 years ago, still a student, very young. Here I met people who became my teachers for life. Later, as Minister of Tourism, Post and Telecommunication of the Republic of Indonesia, it was my job to bring dignitaries to Bali. I did this maybe a hundred times. And I kept learning each time. Now I have come to live here, and I am learning still.

This book, which explains how a fantastic myth is linked to the Balinese notion of time, and through that, to the whole complex of Balinese rites and festivals, demonstrates that there is no end to discovery of this world-famous island—and beyond.

Bali is unique, yet Bali is part of Indonesia. The story and concepts at the heart of the Balinese calendar are local versions of a narrative found across the archipelago, especially in Bali’s sister island of Java. Thus, they exemplify our country’s motto, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika—Unity in Diversity.

Although the calendar system is key to a true understanding of Balinese culture, little has been written about it, and no one until now has given due attention to the relation between the myth of Watugunung and the island’s ritual system. Even less is known of the peculiarities of the calendar and micro-culture of the village of Tenganan Pegeringsingan. By filling those gaps, this book significantly enhances our knowledge.

The book’s appeal is also artistic. As such, it owes much to the talent of its illustrator, who was, through the medium of drawing, one of the writers’ main informants. This collaboration between writing and illustration was made possible by the magic of a friendship grounded in a shared love for Bali and for Indonesia. A bond that enabled illustrator and writers, Indonesian and foreign, to “merge in spirit” and make an important contribution to the preservation of Indonesia’s cultural riches—which we must proudly carry forward into the future.

Learning takes time. No matter how little or how much you already know, you can learn a lot from this book. I hope you too will take the time to savour the rich knowledge offered within it.

Joop Avé Kuta, Bali
Preface

Jean Cooteau and Georges Bauguet

The texts of this book were written by Jean and were reviewed by the editors. The people illustrated in the text were interviewed by Jean, then reviewed by all three of us.

The book is structured into two parts, with four chapters each. Part I discusses the Balinese calendars and their contents. Part II then explores how the calendar system works in practice.

Chapter 1 provides a brief expository overview of the Balinese calendar system by Jean. It describes the main Balinese Hindu festivals regulated by the two calendars, including those that fall on conjunction dates in the Pawukon cycle, those that fall during the sacred 12-day period (Saka nirvana), and those that fall on or directly before or after the full and new moons in the Saka lunar cycle.

Chapter 2 offers an account of the rites of passage traditionally performed at each transition in a Balinese individual’s life—from conception to birth, death, and beyond—to guide the person, as a microcosm of the universe, to live in harmony with the principles of cosmic order.

Chapter 3 explains the workings of the two main traditional calendars in the book—Kliton and Pawukon. As the name suggests, the Kliton calendar is based on the calculated time of the stars (Kliton) to regulate the Bali calendar from past to present, and prospects for the future, while the Pawukon calendar, which consists of 12 lunar months, and, unlike the Pawukon, has numbered years.

Chapter 4 provides a brief expository overview of oneday-to-one-day “weeks”, including the seven-day weeks named after the deities of the Hindu God of Time, and those that fall on or directly before or after the full and new moons in the Saka lunar cycle.

Chapter 5 describes the calendrical and cosmogonical nature of the temples and their influence on the traditional calendar system by Jean. It explains how the calendar system applies in practice.

Chapter 6 is a complementary expository catalogue to the book, listing all the traditional calendars and their names and origins, as well as the main calendrical and cosmogonical features of each.

Chapter 7 provides a discussion of the relative and cyclic nature of time from a Balinese point of view, highlighting how Balinese ideas of time converge on the same cycle and in different traditions of time relative to natural and stellar cycles, cosmology, and beliefs about the transmigration of ancestral souls.

Chapter 8 gives readers a glimpse of Balinese divination and the Balinese “horoscope”, that is, the schemes and illustrated charts used to determine one’s “life mandate” at each transition in a Balinese individual’s life—from conception to birth, death, and beyond—to guide the person, as a microcosm of the universe, to live in harmony with the principles of cosmic order.

Chapter 9 concludes the book with a brief reflection on the evolution of Balinese spiritual traditions and a comparison with the myth of Oedipus. The interpretation of the myth is primarily that of the author. The second approach, which may be called descriptive, involves the depiction and explanation of the two calendars and their relation to the ritual life. It must be understood that this text does not pretend to exhaust the topic of the Balinese calendar or to reveal any global truth about Balinese culture. Balinese spiritual traditions consist of a blending of the ancestor cult, animism, and Hindu customs. The term “ancestor” relates to the Balinese calendar system by Jean.

This book is neither an academic work nor an art book, although it has a few features of both genres. It is rather a hybrid cultural offering that brings together the talent and work of several people who are united in their love and respect for the culture and people of Bali.

A note on the handling of Balinese terms in the book

The spelling of Balinese names and words in this book follows conventions now used in Bali for the transcription of Balinese script into Latin characters. However, nothing being stressed in this matter, one can read, in modern Bali, the word Klisron spell as Kliron, Some [Monday] spell as Çoma, and the word Redite spell as Radite. Except when quoted, words of Sanskrit origin are given in their modern orthography: for example, Saka rather than Śaka. When quoted, words of Sanskrit origin are given in their modern orthography: for example, Saka rather than Śaka.

When quoted, words of Sanskrit origin are given in their modern orthography: for example, Saka rather than Śaka. When Balinese names are used, no final “s” is placed on them to indicate the plural, as if they were English words. The plural marking is retained for clarity, a practice which is traditional in the Balinese language. Most names are used, no final “s” is placed on them to indicate the plural, as if they were English words. The plural marking is retained for clarity, a practice which is traditional in the Balinese language.

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PART I: TIME

"God, who is nothing but time..."

Friedrich Hölderlin
Does time matter? And which one?

Be patient and wait, wait! This is the recurrent challenge and fate of Westerners who spend a few years in Bali. Yes, time here lacks the rigidity and sense of scarcity that so often complicates Westerners and breeds anxiety in our busy lives.

Time in Bali may be upsetting for the opposite reason. Even if there is a regular rhythm—in fact there are several—to regulate rites and festivals and political upheavals. Such events serve as milestones rather than a year identified by a number. People are not so much to make time for the purposes of life that matter the most. From myth to history

When referring to the distant past, Baliinese time is mythical. It is personified as Kala, the god of the time, son of the Supreme God Siva. Kala was born from Siva’s fallen semen, as the latter was overcome by desire for his consort-cum-court (female counterpart), the goddess Uma. Like the Greek god Kronos, Kala is a man-worshiper. He must be placated by offerings and wayang (shadow puppet theatre) performances. Kala, and his feminine counterpart Karis, are also words that refer to Baliinese demone, and the term “disaster” is translatable by sangkala.

In terms of mythic time, the Baliinese also refer to the classical Hindu yuga cycles of the world (yugas), but apart from Brahman priests and wise men, the cycles are relatively unimportant in Bali, even though it is recognised in terms of the Saka calendar which begins in 78 CE, and was diffused to Bali from India in the second part of the first millennium. Far more important than linearity is the cyclical progression of time that is conveyed in the concepts of the wheel of life, which the Balinese use to account for the transitory nature of life. They distinguish between the human and spiritual worlds and the two realms are considered to be one and the same.

Another important time period recorded by the babad is that of the dissolution of Balinese unity at the end of the 17th century, when many of today’s Baliinese royal families came to power. Some dates are attributed to the events related in these chronicles. Sometimes the only date to be found is at the end of the palm-leaf manuscript (kertas or), when the chronicle is inscribed: the Bali year and Pajinengan day and week references are given, but this is usually the date of the completion of the manuscript. Thus these babad refer to times that are as much mythical as historical. Their key episodes are staged as theatre performances on the occasion of temple festivals and other ceremonies.

When it comes to more recent historical events, they are indeed dated historically, using the Gregorian calendar. Yet, it is interesting to note that elderly people, to depict such events, do not refer to a date, but to a situation or event of such magnitude that it takes on cosmic significance.
The separation
Siwa is shown here separating the incestuous mother, to the left, from the incestuous son, to the right—the action which institutes the notion of time in Bali. Siwa rides his godly vehicle, Nandini, and holds the ganitri rosary, symbol of time, as well as the pecut whip, symbol of punishment. Notice his hands, held in the position that denotes speech in Balinese dance.

Watugunung: Bali’s culture hero

If we analyze the myth of Watugunung from a psychoanalysis-slanted, anthropological perspective, a few things clearly stand out. The myth, at first sight, is a classically Freudian, neo-leanian incest story. The signs are found throughout the plot: The incestuous hero is separated from his father and mother at a young age. Like Oedipus, the tragic figure of ancient Greek mythology who kills his father and eventually marries his mother, Watugunung too defeats his father (Kulagiri/Giriswara/Ukir) and marries his mother (Sinta). In both myths, the hero’s transgressions throw the abode of the gods into chaos.

Symbolically, all of the alternate names for Watugunung’s father refer to mountains: Kulagiri, which means “mountain range”, Giriswara, which mean “lord of the mountain” and Ukir or Wukir, which means “mountain” in Old-Javanese. The mountain is a clear phallic symbol (lingam), which also associates Watugunung’s father with the god Siwa. Balinese commonly recognize both Giriswara and Ukir as symbols of Siwa.

Sinta hits her infant son on the head with a big wooden spoon, another phallic symbol. As for the long wound Sinta catches sight of on her adult son’s head, it is a classic vaginal symbol (yoni), as is the river in which the women whom Watugunung tries to rape are bathing. The name Watugunung itself, which means “stone mountain”, can also be seen as a phallic symbol. Finally, there is the presence of the god Siwa, who is the cosmic phallic symbol par excellence. In short, many elements of the myth allude to sexual symbolism in the Freudian sense.

One notices too, that the sexual transgressions of the hero do not go unnoticed. One of the principal characters of the myth is the “witness god” Sang Hyang Lumanglang (he who sees), who is said to be a form of the sun god Surya. So apart from its sexual symbolism, the story symbolically depicts the origin of Balinese society as it emerges into the light from the dark pit of the world before time.

Before the victory of the gods over Watugunung, the world is in chaos. The family as an institution is not yet structured: Watugunung’s mother Sinta is violent toward her infant son and badly wounds him on the head; Watugunung then leaves his mother; and previously, the father abandons his family. Sexual life is in total disorder, even wild; powerful men like Watugunung can rape women at will. Political life too is in turmoil; war is ubiquitous and a violent man like Watugunung can become conqueror of the world, including the kingdoms of his own parents.

The peak of these cumulative disorders is Watugunung’s act of incest with his mother, immediately followed by his mother’s awareness of the enormity of this act as a transgression of divine order. That is, only the gods are allowed to commit this kind of act. And Watugunung is not a god, but a human. What results from his transgression is nothing less than total cosmic chaos. Which translates into Watugunung’s subsequent actions: he feels that he has become the equal of the gods, and can wreak havoc on the world, rape women, and even provoke Wisnu, the ultimate guardian of the world’s stability.

Wisnu’s intervention re-establishes cosmic order and returns Watugunung to his original status. Yet, instead of being killed by the god, Watugunung is enlightened through an epiphany, and then made the master of the calendar and guarantor of the prohibition of incest. So he turns from destroyer, rapist and threat to the gods, into a tool through which the gods obtain stability in the world of men.

Stability is achieved through a set of transformations that are concomitant with the appearance of the calendar. The creation of the calendar by the gods after Watugunung’s defeat also corresponds to the onset of the prohibition of incest. This is the first enlightenment. The incestuous mother and son now occupy opposite ends of the Pawukon cycle. Sinta, is at the beginning of the cycle, while Watugunung is at its end. They are formally separated, and at the same time cleansed, by the epiphany at the apex of the cycle, which falls on the day of Saraswati, goddess of knowledge.

Saraswati does not symbolize knowledge in the narrow sense of the word, as mere “learning”. Rather, she symbolizes human “Consciousness”. The most deeply entrenched and universal manifestation of consciousness
Above:
Classic wooden tika
Hardwood with red and white pigments and gold leaf (perada).
On the pediment a carved and painted decoration shows two winged dragons holding a crown over a lotus flower symbolising the nawa sanga. The pediment crowns a classic engraved tika.
No decoration on the back.
58 x 28 x 2 cm.
Karangasem, East Bali.
Second quarter of the 20th century.
MHL collection (inv. 2473).

Opposite (below):
Classic wooden tika
Brownish-red hardwood, with an iron hook (4 cm) and bone fragments.
A geometric pediment crowns a classic engraved tika enhanced by bone fragments.
No decoration on the back.
44 x 19 x 1 cm.
Tabanan, Central Bali.
Second quarter of the 20th century.
MHL collection (inv. 2456).

Opposite (above):
Classic wooden tika
Hardwood with horn and brass fragments.
A stylised engraved tika crowned by a geometrical pediment.
On the back, an engraved nawa sanga (not illustrated).
29 x 12 x 1 cm.
Karangasem, East Bali.
First quarter of the 20th century.
MHL collection (inv. 2430).
Above:
Decorative wooden tika
Brown wood with iron hook (1 cm) and nails, red and white pigments, and gold leaf (perada). The pediment has a carved floral decoration (patera), with a demonic mask in the centre, flanked by karang type decorations on both sides. The engraved tika occupies a central place above two rectangles containing a thunderbolt bell (bajra) as well as an engraved Balinese text (left) and an incense burner (dupa) with another Balinese text (right). All the decorations are heightened with perada and pigments.

32 x 70 x 10 cm.
Nusa Penida, Klungkung, South Bali.
Third quarter of the 20th century.
Private collection.

Opposite:
Classical wooden tika
Brown wood with iron hook (3 cm), bone fragments, red pigment (kincu), and lime. On the pediment, a carved floral decoration (patera) heightened with lime. The pediment crowns a classic engraved tika calendar enriched by nails, bone fragments and lime. On the back, an engraved Balinese calendar with two triangular charts heightened with lime (left) and an incense burner (dupa) with another Balinese text (right). The decorations are heightened with pendants and alignments.

17 x 41 x 1 cm.
Buleleng, North Bali.
Second quarter of the 20th century.
Private collection.
PART II: RITES AND FESTIVALS
Temple Festival

This illustration shows the atmosphere of a temple during an odalan festival. The principal shrine is to the left, whereas to the right are two huge offerings, a sarad to the right, and a sate tunggal to the left. These offerings symbolise the cosmic mountain, hence the world. On their lower part one can see the cosmic tortoise Bedawang Nala. The higher levels correspond to the godly. Notice the Hindu swastika to the right. The woman in the middle is bearing offerings that she will later take back to be consumed at home. The people seated on the right are singing a kidung song.

Holy days of the Pawukon cycle

The Pawukon calendar comprises many pan-island holy days, or rerainan gumi. All of these days are determined by various conjunctions of the wuku and wewaran systems.

The two most important cycles of holy days are that of the Pawukon “New Year” and that of Galungan-Kuningan. To these should be added the most important days for temple festivals, including Buda Kliwon, Tumpek Buda Gembir and Anggrakasih conjunctions in particular wuku, as well as certain days consecrated to a particular divinity of the Hindu-Balinese pantheon.

This section describes all of the rerainan gumi and major conjunction days in order of their occurrence in the 210-day cycle, beginning with those related to the Pawukon “New Year”.

Pawukon “New Year” (wuku 28 – wuku 1)

The Pawukon “New Year” comprises a series of ceremonies that begins at least one week, and arguably two weeks before the end of the Pawukon cycle and continues until at least the third day of the new cycle.

The symbolism of the festival of Saraswati, as the day that marks the separation of the son and the incestuous mother, has already been discussed in the analysis of the myth of Watugunung in Chapter 2 and in the outline of the Pawukon calendar in Chapter 3.

As we shall see now, the ceremonies surrounding the Pawukon “New Year” follow, step-by-step, the process of purification and enlightenment experienced by the hero of the Watugunung story: from original purity, through purity defiled by incest, to defeat and punishment, enlightenment, and finally, purity restored.

Wuku Kulawu (28): State of original purity

The state of original purity is found on Wuku Kulawu, which is under the protection of Sedana, who is the god of material welfare and a manifestation of Wisnu.

On Wednesday—Buda-Wage-Kulawu—the god Sedana is worshipped, and no business many be done on this day.

Friday—Sukra-(U)manis-Kulawu (also a Kajeng day)—is consecrated to Sri, the goddess of rice. No rice may be processed or sold on this day.

Wuku Dukut (29): Defilement of purity

The incestuous defilement and insult to the gods, Wisnu in particular, occurs on this week, during which no important celebration is held.

Wuku Watugunung (30), days 1–3: Defeat and punishment

Watugunung’s defeat and punishment are recalled during the first three days of Wuku Watugunung.

Sunday—Redite-Kajeng-Kliwon-Watugunung—is called Pamelastali Labuh Watugunung, meaning “the day of the fall of Watugunung”.

Monday—Soma-(U)manis-Watugunung—is called Sandung Watang, meaning “the day when the body is thrown to the ground”.

Tuesday—Anggara-Wage-Watugunung (also a Kajeng day)—is called Paid Paidan. It refers to the day when Watugunung’s body is dragged on the ground.

During these three days Bali is in a state of maximum impurity. Sexual intercourse is forbidden. It is also forbidden to sweep the floor or to tower above anything, for fear of offending the gods. On the Tuesday, women are also forbidden to comb their hair, probably a reference to the scene with the comb from the Watugunung story.
Tooth-filing ceremony

The drawing represents a young woman looking in a mirror at her filed teeth. The sangging priest who has just finished filing her teeth still holds the file in his right hand. On a stool next to her head are some of the other implements used during the ceremony: a water bowl, a coconut with its upper part chopped off, for spitting; several files and a triangular kwangen offering whose shape and colour symbolise the Hindu trinity (trimurti) and lords of the directions of the compass. She holds another kwangen in her hands. On the ground is a penanjung offering to keep evil influences away during the rites.
Marriage marks the passage of the young man and woman to the second stage of life (grahasta) during which they will try to find a new balance between the three goals of life (triguna): desire (kama), wealth (artha) and virtue (dharma). They will fall under the influence of kama, but try to control it through dharma, so as to properly accumulate the wealth needed to raise a family. Only in the next stage (wanaprasta) the "forest stage" will they fully focus on dharma.

There are several ways to enter into marriage (pawiwahan). In the first, mapadik, the marriage is organised by the family, who always try to find their son or daughter a spouse from the proper caste and kinship group. In this case, there is a complex set of social procedures to follow before the wedding proper: a proposal or request to marry (mepadik) leading to engagement; the fetching of the woman (mejauman/mulih nelok) at her house, where she takes leave of her ancestors (mepamit); and the wedding ceremony proper (mesakapan), during which the bride is introduced (mapiuning) to her husband's ancestors in his family temple.

More common today is ngerorod or merangkat, the elopement of the girl, chosen either to circumvent the girl's family's objections, or to marry at cheaper cost. In this case, a respected intermediary informs the parents of the elopement. In the face of a fait accompli, they usually relent. The girl then takes leave of her ancestors only after the actual wedding ceremony.

Another traditional type of marriage is meglandang, or forced elopement. It has been banned by the authorities since Dutch times, but, in the case of ngejuk (taking), it cannot be totally ignored. This is when, after forcing a girl to have sex, that is, raping her, the youth takes responsibility for his act, and asks her to marry. She may refuse to accept her fate. Otherwise, shame and social pressure, accompanied by the proper mantras and the help of a reputed balian, compel the girls to yield to a marriage that often ends up in divorce or infidelity.

Yet another type of marriage is the nymtana, through which a family without any male heir (sentana) adopts the son-in-law as their son. The adopted groom must give up his bonds to his natural ancestors to look after his wife.

The actual wedding ceremony begins with a series of makabala offerings on the ground at various points in the house compound; these offerings are specially addressed to the earthly forces (buta). Then the bride and groom mimic several aspects of their future life as husband and wife, as well as to marriage as an economic institution. As prayers are intoned, the newlyweds circle clockwise three times around a group of offerings, the groom carrying goods hung on a shoulder pole, the bride, goods in a basket on her head. As they walk they break through a thread stretched across their path, and the bride stomps on a coconut. Then they enact a mock market scene in which the bride, squatting on a coconut, "sells" food and cloth to the groom in exchange for Chinese kepeng coins; then they eat together, feeding each other in public.

After this, the bride and groom retire to bathe and change into new clothes. In the past this involved bathing in the river and throwing away their old clothes. The second part of the ceremony then unfolds. The priest blesses the couple on the ceremonial pavilion, and they go into the family temple to pray and receive the blessings of the ancestors.
Adult life and ritual obligations

Just as Balinese individuals are considered to be fully incarnated humans only after their first otonan, they become fully adult only upon marriage. They then become “old” (tua), as people used to say, and as such, full members of a household (pekunungan), through which they also become full members of the village community (kerama desa).

A pekunungan is the union of male (purusa) and female (pradana), in conformity with the Rwabhinneda principle of generalised cosmic dualism—spirit/matter, day/night, male/female, tangible/intangible, good/bad. Bali is a patriarchal society, so when it comes to the distribution of roles within the couple and within the village, power rests with the male. Only men participate in the meetings of the banjar (sub-village level neighbourhood community), usually held once every lunar month or once every 35 days, according to the calendar of reference. At banjar meetings, community issues are discussed, mainly but not only pertaining to customary ritual matters. The work decided during these meetings is then divided up to be carried out by male and female work units, respectively. The men cut the wood and bamboo needed to make platforms, bamboo walls and other ritual implements. They also slaughter animals and prepare ritual kebabs and food and offerings made of meat. Whereas the women are entrusted with the preparation of all the other offerings—both those plaited of coconut leaves and those made of coloured rice flour dough—which accompany every ceremony. The activities decided by such meetings occupy a large proportion of available time. Further, all Balinese are part of interlocked communities that constitute as many congregations, each with its own temple and ritual paraphernalia. So banjar members are typically not only members of a larger village (desa) community consisting of two or more banjar, but also at least three, and sometimes more, village temple congregations. Additionally, villagers may also be members of irrigation societies (subak), and of a kinship organisation (merajan gede, dadia), and other royal and territorial temple congregations (such as pura penataran). They are enmeshed in a web of social relations and obligations that frames, but also extends well beyond, the fields of their economic activities.

This web of social links entwines the Balinese pekunungan in an unending cycle of ritual duties (ayahan) and other social duties. No week passes without a husband and wife participating in the preparation of a village temple festival here, being on call to the banjar to give a hand at a princely cremation there, or being a guest at a tooth-filing or other extended family ceremony somewhere else, not to mention having to prepare a village exorcism (rsi gana) ... In their own homes, they also must take care of daily offerings, full moons, new moons, and Kajeng-Kliwon offerings every 15 days, and attend ceremonies in their family temples every 210 days. As time passes the married couple have children, for whom they conduct all the relevant rites of passage: birth rites, storries, tooth-filing and weddings. At marriage, daughters “take leave” of their fathers’ ritual networks and are received into their husbands’. They lose all rights to their fathers’ properties as well. Male heirs on the contrary carry on with their fathers’ networks and duties as well as inheriting from the latter. People tend to spoil their male children, who will be the ones to finance and undertake their parents’ cremations.
Banjar meeting

To the right, a man strikes a kulkul wooden slit drum. It sounds “tong”, then from the opposite side of the drum, “ting”, followed by quickly repeated but weakening “tong-tong-tong-tong-tong”. These sounds summon the married male villagers to attend the meeting. They come one by one, each hanging their lontar-leaf summons (urak) on a decorated wooden hanger (lower left). After most urak are in place, the klian (banjar leader) fills two pierced coconut shells (ceeng) with water. When no more water drips from the hole of the smaller ceeng, latecomers will pay half a fine (dosa); those who arrive after the big ceeng is empty will pay the full fine. The meeting is inaugurated by untying the knot of the rope on the platter (in the middle), which lies next to some offerings addressed to the gods, as well as a betel kit. Offerings to the earthly forces (buta-kala) are on the ground. Upon closure of the meeting, the klian will store the urak in a box (visible in the centre) and disband the meeting while the men chew the betel.

A Rsi Gana exorcism

This drawing depicts a purification ceremony in a Rsi Gana exorcism, which usually takes place after an unexpected catastrophe or death, or other events attributed to intangible (niskala) forces. The god invoked for his wisdom and protection at this purification is Gana, Siwa’s elephant-headed son by the goddess Durga. Gana is better known in the West under his Indian name, Ganesha. Gana is drawn on the flag to the right, and an image of the Supreme God Atintya (Siwa in a protective function) on the other flag. Offerings addressed to the intangible forces are on the ground (right), while offerings to the Sun god (Surya) are on the bamboo shrine (middle). The standing woman (middle) carries a pejati notification offering to present to the gods. Another woman (left) holds a daily saiban offering basket. By her feet are three bamboo sticks that will be struck to scare the demons. The man squatting between the women strikes a bamboo bell. Other men (right) hold bamboo sticks, a broom and sanggah cucuk bamboo structure with a similar purpose. A high priest (pedanda) should be present to lead the rite, but is not visible here. The people will turn three times around the shrine counter-clockwise while striking bamboo and singing “Budal kala ngrauhang sesari” (go back home, demons, enter the offerings).
TIME, RITES AND FESTIVALS IN TENGANAN PEGERINGNSINGAN

Introduction

We have several times in this book emphasised the variation in ritual practices from one Balinese village to another. The greatest discrepancies are found between those villages that were Javanised in the wake of the Majapahit invasion of Bali (1343 CE) and those—mainly mountain villages commonly known as “Bali Aga” or “Bali Mula”—where the Javanised high culture of the lowlands had little if any impact. Sometimes qualified as autonomous “republics” they each have their own histories and cultures.

The most famous of such “Bali Aga” villages is arguably Tenganan Pegeringsingan, which is located in the district of Karangasem in southeast Bali. Set 7 km from the sea at an altitude of only 40 metres, the village is nestled at the foot of a natural amphitheatre at the head of a long valley ringed by hills that isolate it from its surroundings.

The village’s territory of 1,105 ha. consists of dry land (tegalan 600 ha.), irrigated rice-fields (280 ha.) and secondary forests. No member of the community may work the rice fields. This chore is handled by sharecroppers from neighbouring villages. The main crops are rice, tubers, corn, coconuts, fruits, sugar, and palm wine. Animal breeding is restricted to Balinese cattle (outside the village), and black pigs (at the rear of houses), as well as water buffaloes and fighting cocks (for ritual purposes).

What most strikes the visitor is the architectural unity of the village, which forms a large quadrilateral 500 metres long by 250 metres wide. This quadrilateral is divided into three wide parallel streets bordered by houses, oriented in the sacred direction running from the sea (kelod) to the volcano of Mount Agung (kaja). In sum, the village structure is comparable to a mandala.

As an “Old-Balinese” community, Tenganan is characterised by communal land tenure, government by a council of elders, and the absence of high-caste (triwangsa) status distinctions. It also produces a unique handwoven cloth known as geringsing (see box at the end of this chapter). Its religion too is markedly different from that of the rest of Bali: Batara Indra is their creator-god, and the Brahma-Siwa-Wisnu trinity is not worshipped. Rather than being cremated, the dead are buried facing the earth with the head pointing seaward (kelod), since the sea is considered the origin. Part of the ritual for the deceased soul involves a black boar that is sacrificed and eaten by relatives. After a succession of ceremonies the soul eventually merges with the ancestral souls of the heaven of Indra (Indraloka).

The origin of this community is the object of many debates. A bronze inscription dated 1020 CE, well before Majapahit, mentions it under the name of Tranganan. Based on its origin myths, its founders probably arrived by boat: contrary to other parts of Bali, the family origin shrines (sanggah kamulan) face the sea. Another source of evidence is the presence of genetic markers associated with India, so information carried by the genes supports the information transmitted by the myths.

Last, but not least, Tenganan has its own day cycle, calendar, and calendar-related rites and festivals, which are briefly presented here.

The Tenganan day cycle

Each morning, since time immemorial, when the light of dawn first strikes the hilltops west of the village, the village secretary (penyarikan) opens the new day with 21 beats of the mighty slit gong at the Bale Kulkul. Here, as in the rest of Bali, the day traditionally begins with the morning, and the night is part of the day before.

The task of the secretary, clad for this purpose in a ritual dress, is important and must not suffer any misstep. This is why, before beating this huge, 2.5 metre high gong, he touches it with the palm of his hand “to fetch the sound”. Then he grabs the handle of a square mallet and slams it with all his strength against the hollowed tree-trunk body of the drum.

The new day can only begin after exactly 21 strokes, at intervals of 10 to 15 seconds; a mistake in counting would be inexcusable. To prevent this from happening, a counting frame hangs from the roof beams with 21 spheres that are pushed from one side to the other after each stroke.
Sasih Kapat (fourth month)

On the full moon of Sasih Kapat, there is a three-day temple festival (odalan) at the Pura Dalem Panganiban, which is connected to the village of Bedahulu in Gianyar regency. As noted above, Bedahulu was the location of an old Balinese kingdom and shares some common (mythic) history with Tenganan.

Sasih Kelima (fifth month): Usaba Sambah

Sasih Kelima, also known as Sambah, is the most important month of the ritual calendar. Usaba Sambah, the ceremonies held throughout this month, mark the climax of the ritual year. During the concluding year of the three-year cycle, a special set of these ceremonies is held, called Usaba Sambah Murah.

As described by Ramseyer: Usaba Sambah is “a many-layered ritual of renewal which re-constructs the creation of the world, dramatically activates the settlement and its inhabitants every year, and [sic] with that makes them experience, temporally and spatially, the cosmos, and lets them understand and feel the metaphysical quality of their existence.”

New moon to full moon

On the third day of the waxing moon, rituals are held at temples to ask for the gods’ permission and blessings to perform Usaba Sambah. On the fifth day, an odalan is held at the Pura Puseh Sembangan, accompanied by selonding music.

On the ninth day, mati ombo Sanghyang—“the slaughter of the divine water buffalo” is conducted by Teruna Temu Kelod. Late afternoon, the Kerama Desa Luh and designated members of the Kerama Desa request the god Batara Sanghyang Raja Purana to descend to the Bale Agung for a three-day ceremony. Men from Ngis, a neighbouring village, dance abuang and present offerings.

The 12th day features closing rites and the departure of the god back to Pura Raja Purana. Then the Teruna and their associates set up the five ritual ferris wheels (ayunan).

Full moon

On the day before the full moon (Pebani), members of the Daha Cenik request holy water at the northwest spring and meet to prepare offerings. All TerunaHyman participate in majak-ajakan, a ritual to escort and carry new candidates of the youth organisations. In the evening, the ayunas are ritually purified and turned three times kaja, (mountainward), and three times kelod, (seaward). Later that night, Kerama Desa and Kerama Desa Luh members meet to throw food and drink to each other.

During the day of the full moon, the Daha groups get holy water and meet; all new Daha members participate in the majak-ajakan ritual and are seated on the ayunas. However, this is also a day of grief, because only one day after his arrival, Ida Batara Dharma Kamulan, the god of primeval law and order, passed away, and this unexpected death must be met with rituals of purification.

Full moon to new moon

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Full moon to new moon

The first day of the waxing moon is the day of the mulan saat ritual. In the morning, the Kerama Desa Luh go to the Bale Agung wearing goring-goring clothing. Some members remain nearby, while others go to invite high-ranking members of the Kerama Desa to join them and are invited into the latter’s homes for refreshments. The ritual leader of the Kerama Desa (tampingtakon) and the Kerama Desa Luh and their guests don ear ornaments made of betel chew ingredients. In the evening, they go kaja to kelod and ritually drink tuak and dance abuang at each meeting place (bale petemu).

Meanwhile, the Teruna of Temu Kelod, dressed in white uniforms, carry the selonding in nyangjang, a procession around the village that is linked to the cult of the dead god, but they do not overtake the Kerama Desa and associates, who go to awrting at the Bale Agung. The