

Introduction

When in 1969 I went to Besakih to see its great annual festival, I little knew that in years to come the temple would occupy so much of my attention. In 1969 I was a visitor on my first trip to Bali, travelling around the island trying to see as much as possible. I knew only that Besakih was the largest temple on the island, the 'mother temple', as the travel literature likes to call it. I thought the annual festival would be worth seeing, so I went.

I have been to Besakih many times since, but I never tire of its magnificent setting. At 3,000 feet on the slopes of a ten-thousand foot volcano, it lies hard up against the mountain on one side, and on the other it looks out over the whole of southern Bali, west to Mount Batukaru, south to Sanur and the Hotel Bali Beach. As one walks up to the main temple, Mount Agung looms above, its crater summit still bare from the ravages of the 1963 eruption. The temple is grand and expansive, and the rituals I saw that day in 1969 were in keeping with that grandeur.

I returned to Bali in 1971 for what was to be a long stay. At first I was a student at the provincial university, then a translator with the provincial office of the Department of Religion. The then head of that office, Drs I Gusti Agung Gde Putra, was much involved with Pura Besakih, while his wife, Nyonya I Gusti Agung Mas Putra, was the ritual expert of what might be called the temple's management authority. By 1977 it was almost certain that Besakih's hundred-year festival, called Ekadasa Rudra, would be held in 1979. With the encouragement of the Putras, I decided to document the annual festival of 1977 so as to better understand the complexities of the ten-yearly Panca Walikrama in 1978, followed the next year by Ekadasa Rudra.

Ekadasa Rudra is the greatest ceremony known to Balinese Hinduism. It can only be held at Besakih. Visually it was stunning. Erected outside the temple was a huge enclosure full of high altars and pavilions, decorated with colourful cloth banners and flags. Inside both the enclosure and the temple were an amazing array of offerings, some of them metres high and of beautiful design. High priests performed rituals and during the two months that the festival lasted, crowds of worshippers streamed to the temple to honour the gods in residence. It was the visual spectacle that dominated the book

'Once a Century' that I (and friends) made about the festival.

In choosing a subject for my doctoral dissertation, Pura Besakih seemed an obvious choice. I already knew something about it, and that was enough for me to realize that the topic deserved a full study. A major religious sanctuary of any people provides a unique vantage point from which to view their culture and religion. Pura Besakih, Bali's paramount Hindu sanctuary, provides such a point of entry into the intricacies of Balinese society and religion. Its location reflects symbolism of direction. Its layout and shrines show religious architecture in its fullest development. The range of rituals enacted there elucidates the meaning and structure of ritual as a whole. Relationships between sanctuary and the society that supports it, especially with the ruler and the state, lead to an examination of the history of society and political authority.

I conducted fieldwork at Besakih from October 1982 to April 1984. For most of this period I lived at Besakih. I made a point of attending all rituals at the public temples, no matter how small they were, for I needed a full description of the ritual cycles and of the temples where rituals were held. I made a study of the organization of the local village community. The temples' relationships with many villages of the region, with the former courts, and with government, took me all over the island. Between ceremonies at Besakih, I made many trips to trace some piece of information, mostly within the west Karangasem region where Besakih lies, or to Denpasar, the provincial capital.

Structure of the book

The structure of this study begins with the temple's village and regional relationships and ends with the temple's relationships with political authority from the time of the precolonial courts to the present day. Within this progression, however, this study may be divided into four parts.

1. Village and region

In the first part (Chapters I and II), I develop the concept of 'region' with regard to Bali. Within the west Karangasem region that I delimit for the purposes of this study, I examine Besakih as an adat or customary village in comparison with other villages. Such a regional comparative study illuminates the nature of the variation that is a hallmark of Balinese villages. Despite variation in such matters as communal temples, social organization and leadership, or in the nature of land tenures, certain patterns and similarities occur. From this data, I develop an historical and sociological hypothesis about the development of adat villages within the region, in which I charac-

terize Besakih as one of the region's old core villages. Ritual networks among villages, centred upon particular temples, are an important aspect of inter-village relationships. The most important of these is the ritual network, centred on Pura Besakih, among a set of villages known as the Prangunung Besakih.

In certain respects my approach is reminiscent of the work of V.E. Korn and other Dutch scholars, but whereas they devised an evolutionary theory of Balinese social development with Bali-wide application using data from villages scattered over Bali, I put forward an hypothesis applicable only to a single region and using data from all villages within that region. Methodologically, the regional perspective, rather than focussing on a single village or on Bali as a whole, has several advantages. It does not presume islandwide applicability, yet at the same time does not preclude the possibility that conclusions based on the regional study may have wider applicability, if further regional studies point in that direction.

Importantly, a regional study puts the individual village into a wider context, thus throwing into relief its unique features and those that are typical of the region. Comparative data also frequently help clarify problems encountered in the study of a single village. Furthermore, such a study draws out the inter-village relationships and regional networks that are essential elements of Balinese society.

2. Temples

Ritual networks among groups of villages and the role of the regional temple leads me into the second part of this study (Chapters III to V) which deals with the temples of Besakih. I begin, in Chapter III, with a discussion of temple hierarchy in Bali. Temples mark levels in the hierarchical structure of territory, descent groups, and irrigation organization. Starting from the adat village as the basic unit of territory, I discuss the regional temple as marking an intermediate level and the Balinese world temples as marking the highest level of the hierarchy of territory. Besakih, as the paramount temple of the realm, is at the pinnacle of this hierarchy.

In Chapter IV, after briefly classifying the 86 temples located in the area of the adat village of Besakih, I turn to an analysis of Besakih's public temples and the sets of relationships that link them. Rather as time in Bali is structured by interlocking cycles of varying duration (lunar months and weeks of different numbers of days), so is the Balinese world structured by number-based symbolic classification systems of varying magnitude. These systems, the important ones being those based on 2, 3, 4-5, 8-9-11, are themselves linked and ultimately are reducible to a unity or centre. Besakih's public temples are grouped in various ways according to these systems. Relationships derived from the dual system, I suggest, are comparable to those that

underlie the temple structure of the region's adat village. Not only do I argue that these symbolic systems cohere, but I put forward a case for what might be termed the historical development of symbolic paradigms. In the case of Besakih, the five-part classification system is a more recent development associated with the introduction of brahmanic rituals.

Chapter V deals with the second major group of Besakih temples, those associated with descent groups. Balinese descent groups are hierarchical in structure. Each level is marked by a temple honouring ancestors at varying genealogical depth, the greater the depth the larger the worship group of descendants. At Besakih there are temples at all levels: the house temples of the villagers, the *dadia* temples of local descent groups, and the *padharman* temples of islandwide maximal descent groups. Through a study of these temples and their worship groups, I discuss the dynamics of Balinese descent group formation.

3. Ritual

In my analysis of ritual at Besakih, which forms the third part of this study (Chapters VI to VIII), I begin with some ideas of Frits Staal, and develop a three-part analytical structure: the hierarchy of ritual elaboration, the idiom of ritual and the purpose of ritual. The first of these is a formal analysis of the building blocks or elements of ritual, which demonstrates the manner in which small rituals are fashioned into large rituals by addition and elaboration. By idiom of ritual I mean the sequence of ritual words and actions that together comprise a ritual, and which underlies ritual no matter what level of ritual elaboration is enacted. In discussing the purpose of ritual I examine the calendrical cycles and associated mythologies of place and additional ritual features that give meaning to ritual.

4. Besakih and the state

The fourth part of the study (Chapters IX to XI) deals with the relationship between the temple and the society that supports and maintains it. This part is essentially historical and sociological. In Chapter IX I discuss the organization and financing of the enactment of ritual, concentrating on the relationship among rituals, their levels of elaboration and their sources of funding and labour. These sources of support include the local village, the special regional group of villages called Prangunung Besakih, land-holdings, voluntary contributions, and the state. It is this state support that makes Besakih a 'state temple'. The important relationship between the temple and the 'state' has a long history, and in Chapters X and XI I examine the way this relationship has changed as the nature of the 'state' in Bali has changed from the traditional court to the modern colonial and post-colonial state.

My final chapter discusses the two great purificatory rituals of Panca

Walikrama and Ekadasa Rudra, in which the hierarchical structures of ritual elaboration, temple organization, and political authority culminate in grand ritual. These rituals reflect Besakih's status as the paramount Hindu temple both of Bali and of Indonesia.

Textual and historical sources

From the outset of my research, I was intent on combining a study of textual and historical sources with the fieldwork methods of the anthropologist. For many aspects of Balinese life, such an approach brings fruitful results. The combined use of texts and fieldwork tends to be a hallmark of much recent scholarship on Bali (dissertations by Guernonprez, Lovric, Schulte Nordholt, Vickers). My study of Besakih in the Balinese written tradition (the palm-leaf books are called *lontar*) concentrated on one key group of texts, the so-called Raja Purana Pura Besakih. There are two main versions of this work. Both must have been compiled no later than the first or second quarter of the nineteenth century (manuscripts and dating are discussed in Appendix 3). As a source of data on Besakih, the Raja Purana is of the utmost significance. Together with two fifteenth century inscriptions still kept at the temple, the Raja Purana provides crucial evidence through which the temple's historical development can be glimpsed. Since they contribute so much to the historical perspective that permeates much of this study, they require a brief introduction.

'Raja Purana' is not a title uniquely applied to texts dealing with Pura Besakih. A *purana*, according to its Sanskrit derivation, is a tale or story 'belonging to ancient times' (Zoetmulder 1982). In Indian literature the many Purana are predominantly mythological in nature. In contrast, *purana* is not commonly found in the titles of works in either Old Javanese or Balinese (Brahmandapurana is one example). From its title one would expect a text called Raja Purana to be a story about a king of ancient times, and in one or two instances that is the case (K.827 and K.1028). The Raja Purana Pura Besakih, however, are texts of a very different kind. They are neither stories nor chronicles, and as such are not of the *babad* tradition about whose nature and characteristics much has been written.

The Raja Purana Pura Besakih texts are essentially compilations of memoranda and ritual directives, which are grouped together because they all deal with Pura Besakih. Other than this, these texts lack an overall structure. There is nothing comparable to the genealogical framework, for example, that characterizes the structure of the *babad* or chronicle. This lack of unified structure left one copyist at some point in time so dissatisfied that he repeated certain passages at the end of the text so that the work ended in a curse,

which he must have thought was more suitable (I Wy. Warna: personal communication). In the management and organization of such a major religious sanctuary as Pura Besakih, memoranda and ritual directives of one sort and another would from time to time be necessary, and over a period of centuries might be quite numerous, and thus different collections could result, and additional memoranda or directives be added to certain manuscripts.

The Raja Purana texts, then, are best thought of in relation to the large corpus of Balinese memoranda literature, whether these be ritual or legalistic in nature. With such documents there is always the question to what extent directives were actually carried out, but other than this the texts can be taken pretty much at face value. Nineteenth century writers such as Van Eck, Van Dissel and Liefrinck, and twentieth century adat law scholars like Korn were much interested in such documents, but in the last fifty years they have been neglected.

Legalistic and memoranda literature has a long history in Bali indicating a tradition of regulated administrative organization. Rights and responsibilities are laid out, sometimes in the minutist detail. Such literature includes the ancient royally authorized edicts (*prasasti*) dating from the late ninth to the fifteenth century, regulations (*awig-awig*) of villages, *banjar* and other organizations (*sekaa*), treaties (*paswara*) between and among the precolonial states of Bali, and a great variety of memoranda (*pangeling-eling*), letters and just odd jottings (a man notes down the physical characteristics of his cows). Memoranda, especially, are important in understanding the role and extent of literacy in precolonial Bali, and it is a pity that such documents have rarely been collected. In Besakih area, I was surprised at how many documents and memoranda still survive.

Besakih's Raja Purana texts are memoranda, that typically lack the elegance and sophistication of literary texts. They are important, nonetheless, and as far as Pura Besakih is concerned, crucial to understanding the changes that have occurred there over the centuries.

Another part of my textual studies was to search out relevant lontar at Besakih itself, and to try to understand the extent and the role of literacy in the community. No lontar from Besakih had been recorded or had entered public collections, but in the course of my research I came across quite a large number. Often they were blackened from being stored in the roof above the fireplace. These lontar, many of them descent group charters, provided useful additional information.

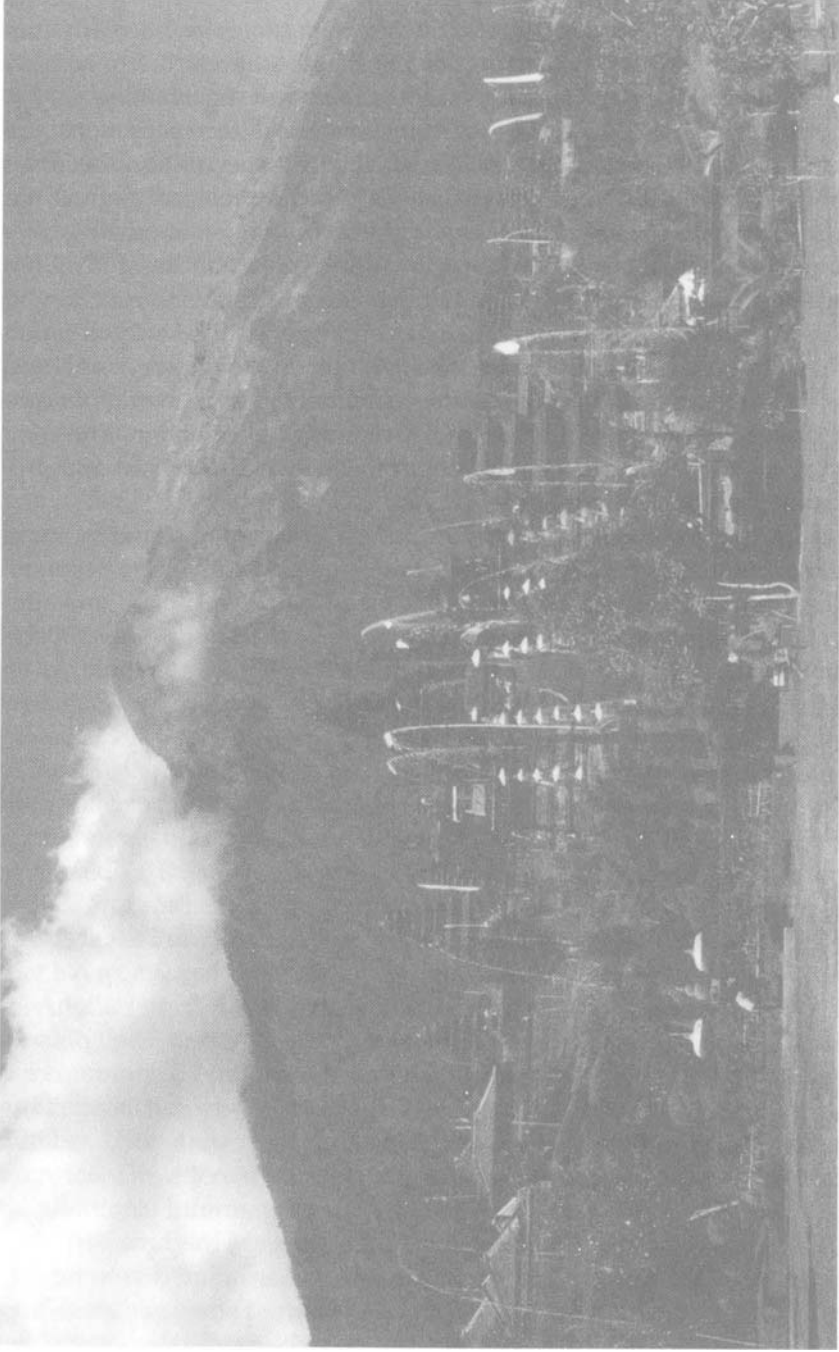
In this study of Pura Besakih, history is not relegated to an introductory chapter or two but instead permeates the whole work, although with greater prominence in some parts than in others. The subject virtually demands this approach. A significant characteristic of a great sanctuary, and one that contributes to its sanctity and importance, is its antiquity. There is a counterplay

between the sanctuary's past and present. The past still moulds the present while the present reinterprets the past. Such is even more the case with Pura Besakih, which possesses its own sacred text that is still referred to in making decisions affecting the sanctuary and its rituals and organization.

At times, for lack of satisfactory data, historical reconstructions can become rather speculative. Overdone historical speculation becomes counter-productive, but when the analysis is based on relevant data, it has powerful explanatory value. Historical origin is very often not recoverable – it certainly is not for the sanctuary that forms the subject of this study – but historical explanation gives direction to the process of changing function.

Although the historical perspective is pervasive in this study, it is not used in contrast but rather in conjunction with other techniques of analysis. I have tried to use data from many sources in a unified framework that constantly draws into its interpretation various kinds of explanation. The complexity of such interpretations gives depth to the overall analysis and provides a better understanding of the whole.

By examining Pura Besakih from a multitude of viewpoints and by using a variety of methods of analysis, I have endeavoured to develop interpretations that reflect the complexities of this great temple complex, and ultimately, I hope, provide a deeper understanding of the importance of Bali's paramount sanctuary, and of Balinese culture and religion as a whole.



Pura Penataran Agung celebrates its yearly festival (1987) (photo L.F. Brinkgreve)