

**New Dramas for the Theatre State:
The Shifting Roles of Ideological Power Sources in Balinese Polities**

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6/1/99**



Running title: Roles of Ideological Power Sources on Bali

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Accepted by the editors of an upcoming guest-edited issue on
“Ideology: Costs and Returns”
to appear in
Journal of Anthropological Archaeology

Abstract:

Geertz has described nineteenth-century Balinese states existing for and because of ceremony—an incomplete portrayal nonetheless pointing up the importance of ideology as a source of social power. But Bali has not been static; power strategies wax and wane as strategic choices respond to changes in a landscape of control opportunities shaped by multiple interacting ecological, economic, social, and perceptual systems. Ideological statements are made by village-level institutions, as well as by states. Reviewing textual, ethnographic, and archaeological evidence of power strategy changes over the last millennium provides a chance to discuss the causes and impacts of specific ideological messages being materialized in specific ways over time. As its focal case, this paper examines the ideological uses made of the Inscription of Manukaya at two different points in time. This stone demonstrates the co-option of forms and traditions: carved to serve the ideological aims of a king, it is now integrated into ceremonies that assert the autonomy and solidarity of local groups.

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- (1) Blessings. In the Saka year 884, on the full moon of the month of Kartika,
(2) on the market day of Wijayapura. At that time
(3) Raja Chandrabhayasingha Warmmadewa built/repared a tirtha at Mpul
(4) because the stone installed there was disordered and failing as a result of being
knocked down by floods every year.
(5) Because of this, Senapati Sarbwa Tuhanda commanded the building of a bathing place
at
(6)... by the king was built a dam... two ponds...
(7)... in the east... used... like a place of worship...
(8)... boundary of Maharan...
(9)... continue to make offerings to the inscription...¹



Introduction: Players, Props, and Stages

To start, I say what any but the most expert Balinese would say: For any inaccuracies, I ask forgiveness from the seen and unseen inhabitants of Bali.²

There is a particular story that is a perennial favorite among those who study Bali—a story that has been published numerous times (Stutterheim 1935: 28-29, Bernet Kempers 1991: 157-158, Dalton 1992: 282, Lansing 1983a: 148, Barth 1993: 335). It is a story about a stone. Today, this stone sits wrapped in white cloth in a small shrine in a temple in the village of Manukaya in the district called Tampaksiring. Some locals have said that it fell from the sky. Every decade or so, on the full moon of the fourth month, it is taken down the hill from its home in Sakenan Temple to a major ceremony at the temple of Tirtha Empul a kilometer away. There the rock joins other meaningful sacred relics and they are ritually washed in the spring-fed pools that are the focal features of the temple.

Upon this rock there is an inscription in Old Balinese, a language no longer in use. In the 1920s, the Dutch scholar Stutterheim deciphered the inscription and reported his

findings to the local Balinese, who had no knowledge of its contents. The inscription proved to bear a date equivalent to 962 A.D., and to tell of King Chandrabhayasingha Warmmadewa's construction or improvement of a bathing place at Tirtha Empul, complete with a dam and two pools (Ardika and Beratha 1996: 112-113; Goris 1954: 197, Stutterheim 1929: 68-69).³ The translation was somewhat partial because some parts of the inscription had been worn away, quite likely by the effects of hundreds of years of regular ritual washings on the day of the full moon of the fourth month—*the very day on which the inscription says it was issued*.

This is an extraordinary example of cultural continuity.

That's the endpoint of most accountings of this anecdote, but there is much more to be said. The inscription of Manukaya is and has been a *used* object, a product and playing-piece in ideological strategies used in political maneuvering. Made to aggrandize the accomplishments of a king a thousand years ago, by the time the Dutch conquered the principalities of South Bali in the first decade of the 20th century the stone had changed purpose and changed master. It was, by then, a part of the ritual paraphernalia supporting the social cohesion of a village concerned with maintaining local autonomy in internal matters.

In this essay, I will use the stone as an example to aid discussion of what DeMarrais, Castillo, and Earle have called the process of the materialization of ideology. This is the process of giving concrete form to an ideology (1996: 16), with the goal of communicating it to a population. They define four "means of materialization": public monuments, symbolic objects, written documents, and ceremonial events. To these I will add a fifth: cultural experts. All of these are linked by their ability to be deployed as "status markers," with "status" here taken both as "rank" and more broadly as "condition" (since materializations speak of the attributes of individuals and groups in both relative and absolute terms). Choices among the various material forms of ideology, and among all the varieties thereof within each of the major categories, are made on the basis of a cost/ benefit analysis that takes into account the unique characteristics of the

investment, the infrastructure available to support it, and the capabilities and resources of the investors (DeMarrais et al 1996: 17); the perceived costs and benefits will also be affected by the established patterns of the particular cultural milieu. In actual practice, integrated strategies that advance the interests of individuals or groups are formed by combining various forms of materialization with one another and with activities that create and use sources of military, political, and economic power (see Mann 1986: 2, 22-27).

Moreover, the *goals* of the creators must be considered, since not all political actors are after the same things. There are two kinds of ideological statement that are relevant from this perspective: statements of hierarchy and statements of solidarity. This fundamental divide between types of “point” correlates with the poles of a continuum of power strategies, with those used primarily to advance individual interests at one end and those used primarily to promote group benefit at the other. The overall ideology promulgated by any particular investing individual or group is constituted of a multitude of statements, with the ratio between the two kinds varying according to the goals being pursued. With a focus on their Mesoamerican expressions, Blanton et al (1996; cf. Renfrew 1974) have described and explained the inner workings of two major types of power strategy, the *exclusionary* (or *network*) strategy and the *corporate* strategy. In the ideological sphere, the former is characterized by a heavy emphasis on what I am calling statements of hierarchy, while the latter places more stress on solidarity. Even the most strongly corporate-oriented polity, however, will still need to make some statements about hierarchy—polities are, more or less by definition, *led* groups, and hence must include some form of inequality. (In Southeast Asia, where polities are characterized by “an extreme emphasis on ‘network’ strategies of political power relations and political economy” (Junker 1999), we certainly see no shortage of statements of hierarchy.) But what of congregations, guilds, clans, cooperatives, unions, village councils, secret societies and all the other groups, factions, and organizations operative within or between polities? Because seeking “power over” (DeMarrais this volume, Miller and Tilley 1984) is less

central to their goals, these groups perhaps have the freedom to stress solidarity instead of hierarchy to a degree impossible for a state. The cohesiveness gained through such strategizing is crucial when these non-polity social formations advance or defend their limited rights and resources against the predatory impulses of the polities within which they are embedded.

My general perspective on these issues grows from the conceptualization of 19th century Balinese social structure that I favor, an ethnographic synthesis built from Geertz's concept of "pluralistic collectivism" (Geertz 1963: 83-85, 1980: 48) and using elaborations drawn from Lansing's work on water temples (Lansing 1991, Schoenfelder 1998). This work stresses that most individual Balinese simultaneously owe allegiance to a state structure and also to a number of other function-specific groups or hierarchies of groups. On Bali, such groups, most importantly including physically and socially nucleated neighborhoods (*banjars*), shared-custom villages (*desa adat*), and irrigation societies (*subaks*), are usually realized (and materialized) as temple congregations. The ideological activities of the non-state groups are focused largely on the goals of maintaining civil order, mutual cooperation, and structured flows of information. Though their power is most often deployed defensively, non-state groups nonetheless tread the boards of the ideological stage as players, building temples, conducting ceremonies, and generally acting out power strategies that may well run counter to the interests of the extractive polities within which they are embedded. States, in contrast, must maintain *hierarchy* as well as solidarity, and are more predisposed to maximizing behavior. The negotiation of power relations between these parties is not new to Bali, either: many of the more than 250 known royal inscriptions issued between the 9th and 14th centuries record tax exemptions and other special rights granted to specific villages.

To pursue an analysis sensitive to competitive interactions, it is obviously very useful to know the identity of the factions. So who are the central actors in the history of the Manukaya inscription with which I started? First and foremost, we have the creator of the item: the relatively centralized (and putatively all-Bali) kingdom of what has been

variously called the Early Classic Period, the Early State Period, and the Hindu-Balinese Period (Ardika 1996: 70, Ardika 1987: 49, Stutterheim 1935: 29). Second, we have its inheritors of a millennium later: the villagers of Manukaya, organized into what some have referred to as a “village republic.” Finally, we must acknowledge a party that is conspicuous mostly by its relative absence from this story’s stage. This is the often-ephemeral polity form of late precolonial Bali, the “theatre state” (or *negara*) brought to fame by Geertz (1980). By the end of the pre-colonial era, the people of Manukaya were claimed by the lords of the *negara* of Gianyar, one of the eight last regional states.

According to the “village republic” view of Bali before the Dutch conquests at the beginning of the 20th century,

A Balinese village is a self-contained, independent community, a little republic ruled by a council of representative villagers (*krama desa*), in which everyone has equal rights and obligations. (Covarrubias 1986: 58)

This “closed independence” is said to mean that “the nobility is left devoid of voice where it concerns the inner affairs of the community” (Covarrubias 1986: 57, Agung 1991: 8-9). The village republic (*dorpsrepubliek*) theory of Balinese social organization was a darling of the colonial regime and where it conflicted with reality it was used as a template for “reforms.” It has come under fire from modern scholars for at least two reasons: it overplays the unity of the “village” (Geertz 1980: 45-53), and it underplays the linkages between the nobility and the common people (Schulte Nordholt 1991a: 11-12, 1996: 4, 149-151, 232-233, 240-243). It is surely a deeply flawed conception, but it just as surely reflects some tendencies that really did exist.

The pluralistic collectivism model draws our attention to the multiplicity of local institutions, but it is important to also note that the various kinds of institution are functionally interlocked, not just interlaced. The *desa adat* defines rules and asserts their value, while its constituent *banjars* are the communities that apply and make use of those rules: “It defines sociality; they produce it” (Geertz and Geertz 1975: 16). The *subak* joins the dance as a specialized corporation with its own specialized concerns, with its

members dependent on *desas* and *banjars* in the conduct of other areas of their lives. This being so, any *desa adat*, *banjar*, or *subak* has a vested interest in supporting the legitimacy and authority of at least one group of each of the other two types. This does not mean that we have the “self-contained, independent communities” of the village republic model, but it does mean that if this political order is “like chain mail” extending across the Balinese countryside (Geertz 1980: 48), it is rather knotty with local concentrations of inter-group allegiances.

Temples could be foci for such local constellations of groups, and still can be today. It was reported to me that ceremonial duties at Tirtha Empul are shared by a cluster of *banjar* defined as a single *desa adat* for the purposes of their relationship to the spring temple. For the purposes of their internal religious lives, the *banjars* comprise two *desa adat*, Manukaya to the west and Basangambu to the east, each with its own temples and codified social norms. Tirtha Empul lies at the south (downstream) end of the territory of Manukaya. The temple is also of import to two irrigation societies (*subaks* Pulagan and Kumba) that lie south of Manukaya in the territory of the village of Tampaksiring, and which receive their irrigation water from Tirtha Empul’s spring.

The *dorpsrepubliek* idea that the village scene was free from interference by the *negara* was also an exaggeration. Schulte Nordholt has shown that in the immediate pre-colonial period in his study area there were two forms of manpower mobilization used by the lords of the realm. The first of these, used in times of war and when palaces were in need of repair, linked followers to leaders via a hierarchy of lordlings and agents who commanded individual warriors rather than villages. In the second form, used for ritual and practical responses to natural disasters, for periodic ceremonies at *negara* temples, and for state rituals such as royal tooth filings, marriages, investitures, and cremations, the *negara* reached its subjects by informing the heads of the *banjars* (Schulte Nordholt 1991a: 8-9, 1996: 150-151). *Subaks* were also not without state recognition, since they were at least in some places treated as units for tax collection purposes (Geertz 1980: 68, Lansing 1991: 31).

So the voice of the state *was* heard in the assembly pavilions of the villages, but only in limited contexts. The village institutions did have a great deal of autonomy, and wielded power vis-à-vis their members, vis-à-vis other institutions of their type, and, I would suggest, vis-à-vis the state. Generally, each *desa adat*, *banjar*, or *subak* chose its own leaders. Within and by itself, a *banjar* or *subak* had the power to call its members to common labor, to own property, to settle internal disputes, to levy economic fines, to confiscate land, and to ostracize or banish; though it was less active as a corporation, the *desa adat* had similar powers in matters concerning its own ceremonies, temples, and property (Covarrubias 1986: 57-69; Geertz 1959, 1980: 47-53; Geertz and Geertz 1975: 12-20, Warren 1993: 7-22). When village-level institutions feel they have been wronged by others of their kind, they act against each other as corporate units either before adjudicating priests or government representatives, or through violence – even in the last 30 years, *subaks* have destroyed others’ dams, and *desas* have attacked each other with sticks and knives (Lansing 1991: 78, Schulte Nordholt 1991a: 29-30). As it is today, in the pre-colonial period the exercise of village power against the state would have been much more subtle, less a matter of confrontation than of passively defending rights by repeatedly asserting them and by demonstrating will and cohesion. For this as for power relations with members and with peer organizations, the creation of ideological statements of solidarity was crucial.

Five Means of Materialization

In both the tenth century and the twentieth, the Manukaya inscription played a part in power strategies that combined all five of the major forms of materialized ideology: monuments, objects, texts, ceremonies, and knowledge experts. Below, I discuss each of these forms and describe their uses.

First, the facilities mentioned in the inscription, described as a bathing place and a “place of worship,” were built, under orders, by a general (*senapati*) of King Chandrabhayasingha. No structures that remain at the site today can be attributed great antiquity, but from an analogous site discovered archaeologically (Goa Gajah: Patt 1979;

Bernet Kempers 1991) we can see that the bathing facilities were probably monumental in intent, designed to impress and to perpetuate images of power; similarly, the dam would have been a notable public work. Today, some consider Tirtha Empul to be the holiest of Bali's springs (Stutterheim 1935: 27) but lords and kings are nonetheless largely uninvolved in the goings-on here, and the ponds and temple are maintained by the citizenry of the village. That the structures have been replaced over the last millennium is perhaps testament to an ongoing investment in the monument as a symbol of their cohesive group. The stone, which is not inherently an expensive item, is enhanced in value by its association with these costly facilities even as the latter gain reputation and credibility through the presence of the former.

As objects, 10th century inscriptions were distributed to villages by the king, and were considered sacred. There is a fragmentary line (A.9.) on the Manukaya stone that reads "*masamahin manahura da pra(sasti)...*", which experts translate as "make offerings to the inscription" (Ardika and Beratha 1996: 112). It is clear that the king is here associating himself with the production of an object of a divine nature. A village that received such an item would likely have considered it a gift of great value, incurring a debt to the king. Subsequent events seem to bear out the importance of the object, since in the 20th century it is still treated as a sacred relic worthy of offerings.

Today, the regular trip of the Manukaya stone between Pura Sakenan and Pura Tirtha Empul symbolizes the links and overlaps between the congregations of the two temples. In its movements, the rock is similar to the myriad other relics, statuettes, *barong* mask costumes, holy waters, and other tokens of divinity that make regular and prescribed voyages between specific temples and sacred locales (cf. Covarrubias 1986: 272-273; Eiseman 1990: 239-242, 260-261, 312-313; Lansing 1991: 55-59; MacRae 1995). Such material objects play important roles in creating ties between the nodes of Bali's networks of power. As far as I know, however, there is no longer any acknowledged symbolic link between the holiness of the Manukaya stone and the power of any ruler, caste, or state institution—according to Stutterheim, before he read the

inscription the local belief was that it had fallen from the sky, as had many other stone relics in Balinese temples (1935: 28-29). Nor are the temples associated with the stone strongly linked to state power strategies; though in the colonial era local elites did still visit Tirtha Empul to worship (see Covarrubias 1986: 286), I was told there was no formal support arrangement (as existed elsewhere; cf. Schulte Nordholt 1991b: 155, 1996: 156) to establish a standing patronage.⁴ Pura Sakenan, the current home of the stone, is today considered to be a *Tri Kayangan* temple of Manukaya Let (Desa Manukaya 1987). As such, it is part of a set of temples that “symbolizes and celebrates a particular kind of polity” – the specific “custom village” (*desa adat*) rather than the exemplary *negara* (Geertz 1980: 52).

The boundary between monuments and objects can be blurry at times, but the distinction between mobile and immobile is a significant one in terms of a thing’s role in supporting power strategies. For example, it has been found that for tenth century Java, inscriptions dealing with the tax privileges of whole villages are more likely to be engraved on stone, while those dealing with the statuses of smaller, more privately held pieces of land are engraved on copper plates. Presumably this is because stone is better suited when needs for public ownership and public visibility outweigh desires for portability (Barrett-Jones 1984: 10). It would be difficult for a single person to carry the stone Manukaya inscription for any distance. It has certainly made many short journeys aboard the litters that are the customary conveyances of Balinese icons; even so, its weight has been a factor in symbolically and physically tying it to a single vicinity for a millennium.⁵

As a document, the Manukaya inscription aggrandizes the state by claiming credit for the improvements made at the spring on behalf of the king and the general through whom the king’s orders were relayed; it also lists officials in charge of several “places of assembly.” It is unusual among Balinese inscriptions in apparently setting out few or no tax laws and exceptions (Stutterheim 1935: 10, Ardika 1979, Barrett Jones 1984).⁶

By the start of the 20th century, literacy in Old Balinese had disappeared, and that aspect of the ideological value of the stone went with it. Still, other texts remain important in Balinese power strategies and many of these are written in more recent archaic languages (Friederich 1959: 16, Worsley 1975). Public reading clubs (Lansing 1983a: 79-80) perpetuate traditional literacy in the villages, meeting to read palm-leaf manuscripts aloud during ceremonies—I have seen them do so, in fact, at Tirtha Empul. This practice counters what would otherwise be a near-monopoly on (traditional) authorship, literacy, and interpretation by the elite inhabitants of the *puri* (palaces) and the *gria* (brahmanic compounds).⁷ Written documents include royal, clan, and temple histories, poetical religious texts, and charters that materialize the rules and regulations of villages and other self-governing groups.

On one level, facilities, paraphernalia, and texts are all of a kind—they are all objects, and therefore (given preservation) are directly subject to archaeological discovery. This is not true of ceremonies. While invariably involving the use of objects and spaces, ceremonies are at root structures of energy (labor) rather than structures of matter (property). This brings to light an easily missed nuance in DeMarrais et al.’s use of the term “materialization:” quite intentionally, they have crafted a concept that includes the production of *events* as well as *things*.⁸ Materialization is about display – to be effective, there must be a viewing context. Sometimes this context is mundane or passive, as when a Balinese farmer receives reminders of ideological messages when pausing at Tirtha Empul to take his evening bath. At the other extreme, some viewing contexts are carefully crafted to maximize the impact of the point. These are ceremonies: specific events designed to bundle, animate, and direct the other products of the materialization process – symbolic objects, public monuments, written documents, and, as we shall see, cultural experts. The annual festival at Tirtha Empul is attended by almost every inhabitant of the villages of Manukaya and Basangambu. Though not all would actually observe the washing of the stone when it occurs, that event forms an integral part of the swirling pageant that demonstrates the villagers’ reverence for their traditions and their gods.

The archaeological record gives us direct access to physical objects rather than to actions; even when we identify “activity areas,” we are still extrapolating from observed groupings of artifacts and features rather than viewing the “activity” itself. It is often noted that this limitation of our methodology has occasionally led archaeologists to favor theoretical constructs that rely upon overly-simplistic versions of materialism. We cannot afford this—we can only hope to understand the workings of past societies if we begin with realistic models. Thus, though it considerably complicates any effort to quantify labor investment, I see the inclusion of ceremony as crucial to the breadth and strength of the materialization concept. Events, like objects, can be controlled (or at least manipulated) by politically motivated agents. If we wish to discuss the costs and returns of the strategic use of ideology we must be willing to accept the existence of the full range of ideological investments that have real-world costs, no matter whether in proximate terms those costs be measured in energy, material, time, or a combination thereof.

By founding a place of worship, our 10th-century king essentially chartered a schedule of ceremonies—ceremonies intended to perpetually remind people of the association of the king with the place, and of the king’s ability to control ritual, labor, and space. Unfortunately for Chandrabhayasingha, while in the 20th century the inscription is still used in a ceremony, the tie to the ruler is long gone. The overall emphasis has shifted from the importance of the stone itself to the holiness of the water in which the stone is bathed.⁹

I propose to add knowledge experts to the list of means of materialization. Investments in “human capital” do not fit easily into the four categories of materialized ideology that DeMarrais et al define, but such investments have costs and returns that are as real as those associated with any monument. Training and support needs generate expenses when specialists such as ritualists, theologians, scribes, artists, and performers are fully attached (Brumfiel and Earle 1987: 5). The same needs are the ultimate source of the hiring costs when independent specialists are “brought on board” for shorter periods of time. The benefits derive from their ability to be “displayed” like other materials,

though living people are special in that they can literally do what other objects can only do metaphorically: they *speak* ideological messages! In analyses of either individual events or of entire political economies, a complete accounting of the role of humans requires that they be viewed both as manipulators and as manipulated, both as agents and as (material) objects. Their free will means that people, as objects, will never be as easily controlled as inanimate things. However, this same capacity for self-initiated action means that a well-controlled person will often be a more valuable asset than other material objects.

Inscriptions other than our Manukaya example make it clear that a wide range of specialists (both attached and independent) were employed in ancient Bali (Ardika and Beratha 1996). Both Buddhist and Hindu (Siwaist) priests are often mentioned as members of ruler's courts, and the inscriptions themselves were issued through scribes. Today, experts still play a role: the stone is washed under the supervision of the *pemangkus*, the part-time, locally chosen commoner priests of the temple at Tirtha Empul.

Package and Point

I find it useful to make a distinction between what I will call the *package* and the *point* of an act of materialization. At heart, the *point* of an act is its intended message or statement: the power of a ruler, the cohesion of a group, and so on. As DeMarrais et al (1996: 69) suggest, this can be broken down into two components. As they put it, "Materialization of an ideology communicates not only the specific *meanings* contained within the ideology but also the *capacity* of a dominant group to control and manipulate ideological expression" (DeMarrais et al 1996: 69). Much of the real-world cost of materialization stems from the effort exerted to communicate capacity so as to underline the statement that is being made.

Fig. 1:
Constitutive Elements of an Act of Materialization

<i>Package</i>	<i>Point</i>
Tradition	Meaning
Form	Capacity

The *package* is the vehicle of the point. It likewise has two components: the *form* (cf. Kubler 1962: vii), which is the object or action created, and the *tradition*, which is the paradigm or system of ideas that allows observers to grasp the point. My use of the term “tradition” here is influenced by Barth, who has suggested that the "cultural stock" of knowledge, concepts, and values that informs any individual's interpretations is contributed to by multiple traditions of knowledge, "each containing ideas with a distinctive source and history and held together as a body mainly through a distinctive social organization" (1993: 350, 173).¹⁰ Faced with "a surfeit of culture," individuals will choose to use a tradition (either in a specific case or more generally in their lives) that "resonates with their concerns" (Barth 1993: 347).

One of the most important returns that an investing leader (or group) receives for supporting a knowledge expert is the promotion, with favorable interpretation, of a tradition, since this allows for the ongoing reinforcement of the intended meanings of the investor's other ideological activities. Experts will be a society's leading advocates of interpreting the world in terms of the specific traditions of knowledge that they command, since the popularity of these traditions defines their worth as specialists (Barth 1993: 353).

As an example, consider the Balinese *pedandas*, the full-time professional priests of the present and recent centuries. These knowledge experts are highly revered by almost every Balinese, from the lowest to the highest, for their knowledge of what is regarded as a relatively “pure” form of Hinduism and for their role in blessing the most important temple festivals and life cycle rituals. They can generally be counted on to give favorable readings to royal ideological acts, because they are often in the employ of the courts and because their position as holy *brahmana* (brahmins) is derived from their position at the pinnacle of the same caste system that decrees that rulers must be drawn from the *ksatria* caste. A king’s particular pedanda (his *purohita*) “was not only a source of sacred knowledge; it was his task to confer legitimacy on the royal authority” (Schulte Nordholt 1996: 39, Geertz 1980: 125-6). He and other brahmana served kings and lords by officiating at royal ordinations and cremations, by supernaturally countering epidemics and crop pestilence, and by acting as counselors, historians, judges, tutors, and diplomats (Rubinstein 1991: 63-65, Schulte Nordholt 1996: 39-40). They were actors, but they were also props—a point brought home by an 18th century case in which a king treated an entire highly-ranked brahmana family as “war spoils,” moving it from a newly conquered district to a village near his palace (Schulte Nordholt 1996: 39).¹¹

The *pemangku* priests, on the other hand, are defined by their association with a specific temple and owe their posts not to their caste position, but rather to locally-based decision processes that usually give a determining role to community consensus. Accordingly, their ideological acts will tend to be geared to the defense of the rights and privileges of their individual temples and the local-level institutions (villages, irrigation societies, etc.) upon which they depend for support. At Tirtha Empul these specialists are the bearers of a tradition that proclaims the special holiness of the water from their spring. The use of various kinds of holy water (*tirtha* or *toya*) is an omnipresent feature of Balinese religion (Eiseman 1990: 51-62, Lansing 1991: 55). Such water is often prepared by pedandas, with the purest tirtha produced by the king’s own *purohita* (Schulte Nordholt 1991b: 156; 1996: 40, 154-5). According to Covarrubias, the making of

holy water “is the principal function and main source of income of the *pedandas*, who sell it to the people, often for exorbitant prices” (1986: 298)—though liquid rather than solid in a literal sense, this is ideology not only materialized and controlled, but turned into a commodity as well! The character and quality of the water flowing from Tirtha Empul, however, is so exalted that the presence of *pedandas* is held to be unnecessary. Some locals even went so far as to tell me that *pedandas* were not allowed to enter.

In addition to limiting the field of operation of the ideological defenders of court and caste, the *pemangku*-led argument in favor of the special status of the spring also seems to affect relations between water temples. Each *subak*, consisting of 50 to 400 farmers who receive irrigation water from a common source such as a dam, a spring, or a branch of a larger irrigation system, maintains one or more *subak* temples. In a series of books and articles, Lansing (1987, 1991, 1995, Lansing and Kremer 1993) has established that the *subaks* form but the lowest layer in a hierarchy of nested groups. Like the *subaks*, each larger group is also a congregation, and materializes its existence by maintaining a physical temple. The literal and figurative summit of the hierarchy is Pura Ulun Danu Batur, the temple of the holy crater lake that is believed to be the source of all of Bali’s rivers. *Subaks* from a large part of the Balinese countryside support this temple by delivering annual *suwinih* offerings that include rice and other commodities. Most of the *subaks* in the Tampaksiring area follow this practice, but on Bali there are exceptions to almost every generalization (Geertz 1959, Covarrubias 1986: xxiv-xxv). In this case the exceptions are Pulagan and Kumba, the two *subaks* watered by the irrigation channel fed by the spring at Tirtha Empul. These *subaks* give *suwinih* to Tirtha Empul rather than to Pura Ulun Danu Batur. It is hard to see what benefit Pulagan and Kumba gain by “opting out” of the temple hierarchy system, since Lansing has shown that the inter-*subak* communication fostered by the hierarchy actually increases crop yield by improving the coordination of responses to pest infestations and water shortages. Perhaps coordination is rendered less crucial by the small size, upslope location, and relative isolation of this irrigation system, but that is an issue that takes us well beyond the theme of this article.

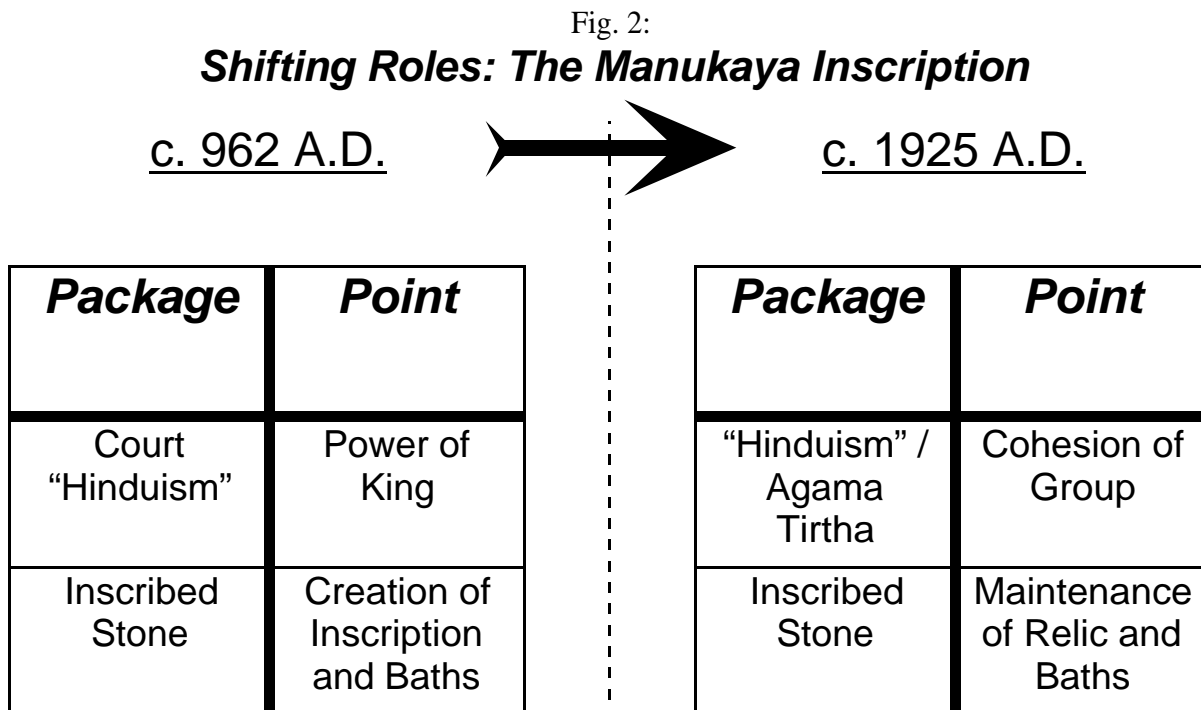
The point to be made here is that the temple, and the knowledge experts that operate within it, are once again marking and maintaining the autonomy of local institutions in the face of a larger external hierarchical system.

It has been noted that a lot of the work of the “Indianization” of Bali (likely starting around the 8th century) was done by another kind of knowledge specialist – performers (Lansing 1983a: 15-34, 1983b). Inscriptions repeatedly mention both court-sponsored and independent musicians and actors who traveled between the courts and the villages enacting stories from the Indian epics. Though the courts may have introduced these arts, it would seem they were quickly adopted by the commoners as well, who set about making them serve their own needs. This is a cost-effective method of co-opting a materialized ideology: *change the point, while re-using as much as possible of the package*. What the courts introduced was a *tradition* of ideas centered on the Hindu epics and a set of ceremonial *forms* (the performance genres). By these means, the elites were very successful in introducing ideas about the “proper” relations between rulers and subjects. Yet the very richness of this package, when coupled with the relatively low expense of the ceremonies, meant that non-elites were able to emulate their “betters” and modify the meanings, thus changing an ideological campaign into an ideological dialog. As Friederich reported in the middle of the 19th century, the epics “are to the Balinese a sort of pattern for princes” (1959: 17, see also Djelantik 1997), guiding as well as legitimizing their conduct. By sponsoring and taking part in performances of these “pointed tales,” villagers entered into a process of transforming messages so that they spoke of their own power and rights, as well as (or in contrast to) those of the ruler.¹²

Interpretations of the Manukaya inscription likewise shifted from messages in support of the ruler to messages in support of the village. In addition to the stone itself and the locality and facilities of Tirtha Empul, the *package* in this case included a set of ideas centered on the holiness of water—a set of ideas with ancient roots in both India and Indonesia (Patt 1979), and which has been operative on Bali throughout the last millennium. Though this tradition certainly underwent some changes between the 10th

and 20th centuries, there is every indication of a basic continuity in the development of what the Balinese now call *Agama Tirtha*, the religion of holy water.¹³

The more striking change is in the *point* of the veneration of the stone and the spring. In ideological terms, there has been a change in the *goal* in that statements of hierarchy are no longer a factor. The meaning now supports ideological statements of solidarity being made by local institutions, which prove their capacity (their ability to act) by maintaining the inscription and the temple. That they inherited these resources makes this a cheaper package, the costs of the initial outlay having been borne by Chandrabhayasingha.



Though the inscription clearly no longer functions in the exact ideological role for which it was originally created, it would be wrong to assert that the king failed in his attempt to link himself to the facilities at Tirtha Empul, or in his efforts to further his career by materializing ideology. Nine and a half centuries separate the two points in time about which we have the clearest information, and such a vast span of time provides much room for transformation and alteration. At the simplest, royal involvement at the

spring temple could have faded out immediately after the issuance of the inscription, or it could have continued for hundreds of years.

Around the 10th century, Balinese rulers began to build large “tombs” called candis. These were facades carved in deep relief on the cliff-sides of ravines, in form mirroring free-standing Javanese structures. Like the Javanese candis, these were similarly designed to serve as temples for the veneration of dead kings, but also like the Javanese candis, they probably never contained actual human remains (Bernet Kempers 1991: 68-72, Soekmono 1995: 80-83).¹⁴ The most impressive Balinese candis are the ten such structures (averaging over ten meters in height) cut into the living rock at the site now known as Gunung Kawi, just a kilometer downstream from Tirtha Empul (Adri and Rata 1990: 18-19, Patt 1979: 317-341). Here and at several other candi sites, a standing investment in knowledge experts was provided for by the construction of monastic cells carved into the rock adjacent to the “tombs.” Though links to specific archaeological sites are hard to establish, the inscriptions do include mentions of such enclaves. The impression of the existence of an ancestor-worshipping “cult of deceased kings” (Stutterheim 1935: 23) is also supported by references in written sources and by the prevalence of so-called “portrait statues” that combine symbols of royalty with symbols of divinity (re. Java, see Klokke 1994, Pigeaud 1962: 481, Soekmono 1971: 15-16, 1995: 7-9).¹⁵

The Gunung Kawi complex was probably constructed in the 11th century, and defines the pinnacle of efforts of its kind; the youngest known rock-cut complex was constructed about 300 years later (Bernet Kempers 1991: 147-8). Such structures were quite expensive, not only because of the physical labor involved but because of the need for specialists and because in terms of both form and tradition they represented a “package” that was new to Bali and must have required considerable explanation. Failure to fully control performance art may have been one of the factors that drove rajas to build—villages can easily copy the form of a *Ramayana* performance and change its messages, but it is much harder for such non-state institutions to gather the capital

necessary to “keep the package and change the point” if effectively keeping the package means matching the monument-building efforts of a determined king!

The Gunung Kawi candis were durable—much more durable than any structures at Tirtha Empul—but a long-lasting form is of little ideological use once the associated point has been forgotten. Materialized incarnations of ideological statements require maintenance if they are to carry their messages through time; like the offering ceremonies that Chandrabhayasingha commanded for the Manukaya inscription, the presence and activities of the monks at Gunung Kawi served to extend the king’s association with the messages of hierarchy and capacity created through the initial investment in construction. Eventually monasticism died out on Bali as a way of life, however, and Gunung Kawi had lost its religious and political importance by the time western researchers “discovered” the site in 1920. As ideological centerpieces, the candis had been an expensive experiment not only because of the sizable construction costs, but also because of the sum of the expenditures for the attached experts and repeated ceremonies. We can only guess as to why Tirtha Empul was more successfully co-opted and re-defined than Gunung Kawi. The villagers of Manukaya saved expense by making use of the facilities they “inherited” at Tirtha Empul to shape an independent establishment of wide-reaching fame; at the same time, Gunung Kawi slipped into obscurity down the hill in Tampaksiring. Perhaps the package at Gunung Kawi was too tightly wrapped, by which I mean that the form and tradition may have been too strongly associated with hierarchy and royalty (or with a specific dynasty) for villagers to use the site, either because they could not connect the site to the ideological messages that they sought to convey or because its use was forbidden by rulers who saw it as a threat.

Conclusion: A Fertile Decline

On Bali, Geertz has written, “the state created the village as the village created the state” (1980: 46). The sort of ideological co-option I discuss for performance art and the Manukaya inscription is and has been a common tactic. This is true in many societies, but it is characteristic of Bali to a remarkable degree.

It must be borne in mind, of course, that ideological acts are not the only route to power and that in overall power strategies they will usually be combined with economic, military, and political acts. All else being equal, though, successful ideological campaigns stressing statements of hierarchy tend to be more costly than those whose goals predominantly require statements of solidarity. Convincing people of their own inferiority and subordination is inherently more difficult than convincing them to work for the “common good” when it is manifestly in their own interest to do so. Moreover, once perceived inequalities have been created, leaders will find that they are faced with increased competition for the carefully defined positions at the top and will need to make further ideological statements to explain why *they* are the ones who should be there. All this creates motives, as well as means, for increased extraction. This is but one of the motors that drives polities to become more sophisticated—and more exploitative. If budget limitations cannot be overcome, hierarchy is tough to maintain, but solidarity can still be enduring.

Polities (even the most corporate) cannot exist without leadership functions, hence they cannot exist without some degree of hierarchy, and hence they cannot exist without employing ideological statements to assert the validity of the unequal order. Hierarchy is always there in states, though how much exists, and how much ideological emphasis is put upon it, varies greatly from case to case. But as the village pageant swirls around an unread inscription from a king of a nearly forgotten era, we are reminded that polities are not the only forces at work in complex societies, and that it is unlikely that they ever succeed in completely monopolizing the construction of ideological power statements. The pluralistic collectivism of Bali reminds us that people within polities—even the *same* people who support the central political hierarchy—can also fill other roles in other organizations. A consciousness of the importance of strife between classes and between factions is growing in archaeology (Brumfiel 1992); in different times and places, the contestants that challenge polities in these “heterarchies of power” (Crumley 1995) can range from informal groups barely cognizant of their own existence as

collective entities (Scott 1985, Cohen 1976) to the very formalized, very self-aware congregations of Bali. It might be argued that this is not a *competition* for *power* because non-polity groups do not traffic in inequality to any great degree. To this I offer two responses: first, they sometimes do; second, even when they don't, the solidarities they construct create demands on the labor and resources of individuals. Since what Smith called "the wealth of nations" is finite, institutions necessarily are to some degree in competition for the limited attention, energy, and products of the populace.

Paralleling diminishment in the temporal power of Balinese rulers (Lansing 1983a: 36),¹⁶ since the Classic Period there has been a marked change (and probably a net decrease) in their investments in the materialization of exclusionary ideology. Rulers in recent centuries could no longer afford grand gestures such as the construction of rock-cut memorials; instead, they expended their limited resources and energy on quick-return investment strategies that centered on mass ceremonies. I do not mean to imply that these rituals were anything less than extremely lavish—as is reflected in the accounts of early visitors, they were if anything more awesome than "stone tombs" as symbols of divine splendor and royal capabilities (Lansing 1983a: 34-37, Geertz 1980: 98-102).

The courts' focus on such events was so strong that Geertz found it plausible to argue that these were "theatre states" in which the state served ritual, rather than the other way around (1980: 13). Without denying that the desire for pomp was a cause as well as an effect in the course of Bali's history, for my present purposes it is useful to emphasize that ceremonies also happened because they gave immediate returns in terms of the transmission of ideological statements. As an obsession of a polity type incapable of amassing or sustaining great power reserves through non-ideological means, such ritual "quick fixes" were more appropriate than investments in dynasty-oriented monuments built to stand for ages—the *negaras* weren't exactly living hand-to-mouth, but they weren't buying a lot of T-bills, either. State temples seem to show the results of the same forces: while the construction of ravine-side *candis* died out, the temples that continued to be built had courtyards big enough to hold crowds and were set in accessible locations.

Like their village brethren, these are not monolithic buildings but rather are collections of dozens of smallish shrines that could be individually built or repaired as finances allowed.

I suggest that these developments are the result of interactions between the polities and other more “instrumental” social formations. These clashes had a strong economic dimension, with villages and irrigation societies motivated at least in part by a need to deal with changing ecological circumstances: an increase in agricultural density put pressure on the network of subaks to develop function-specific autonomy to organize to manage irrigation and pest control (see Schoenfelder 1998 for fuller treatment). But the interactions along the “court-village axis” (Lansing 1983a: 29) also were ideological, being characterized by a pattern of back-and-forth co-option in which each “side” sought legitimacy by copying and appropriating the ideological tools (inscription stones, holy sites, performance genres, complexes of religious beliefs, and so on) of the other. It seems clear, and not just for Bali, that much ideological action is co-optive in this way—taking existing packages or materials and bending them to new ends. Retuning to the specific case of Bali, it can be argued that over time this tendency towards mutual borrowing of power tactics and “packaging” has given rise to many similarities between the cultural actions of the courts and those of the villages and other collective groups. On the whole, the culture of Bali has been much complicated—and much enriched—as a result.

Meanings are “envehicled,” in symbols (Geertz 1980: 135), and many of these symbols are objects and events that are controllable. The concept of materialization invites us to examine the costs and consequences of such control. I suspect that whenever sufficient ethnographic or historical information on a complex society is available, it is unavoidable that we will discover that the materialization of ideology is not monopolized by the society’s most dominant group. Among others, there will be “ideologies of resistance” from workers aiming to slow exploitation by the elite, revisionist histories by those seeking to join the elite, and revolutionary manifestoes by those hoping to overthrow the elite. But more than all that, there will be materialization efforts that aim not to destroy, but to build. These campaigns (local in scope on Bali)

will seek to satisfy needs left unmet by the polity, whether they be economic, managerial, defensive, or otherwise. All these organizations will strive to invest in rites, relics, figureheads, and other materialized symbols as they try to attract and bind members. When they can, they will appropriate preexisting forms and traditions to avoid the costs of creating new ones.

It is clear enough that finding these groups in the archaeological record will not be easy, especially for prehistorians; unfortunately, this is just an exploratory essay. Ideological cues (with “ideology” defined broadly enough, as I have done throughout, to include messages of solidarity) will often be the only indicators that these factions existed as groups rather than merely as categories. The “signals” of non-polity groups will often be swamped by the grander materialization efforts of polities, but as we can see in the Bali case, it may sometimes be fruitful to search by wading into the deepest waters. Thus, state iconography, like texts, may talk of negotiations with autonomous groups or may reflect the outcomes of such negotiations, and facilities may include provisions for groups that the polity is courting. Special attention must be paid to the interpretation of re-used objects and sites. An old state-associated object in a younger depositional context, or younger objects deposited at an old state monument (especially if it also shows signs of repair), could be evidence of co-option by a faction with motives quite different from those of the creators. Such are the lessons we can learn in Manukaya.

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¹ This is an English translation by the author of lines 1-9 of the Manukaya Inscription, from the Indonesian interlinear translation by Ardika and Beratha (1996: 112-113) which in turn is based upon the transcription of the Old Balinese original by Stutterheim (1929: 68-69) as amended by Goris (1954: 75-76, no. 205). The text continues on in short fragments; it mentions several people and several “places of assembly”, including *Ma(nu)k(r)aya*. Saka 884 is 962 A.D.; the exact day given falls in October or November. This is the only inscription naming King Chandrabhayasingha, but he is of the Warmmadewa dynasty which ruled in Bali at least from the mid-10th through the mid-11th centuries.

² For graciously answering my questions at Tirtha Empul, I thank pemangku Dewa Aji Gde Sambut and the people of Manukaya. Nyoman of Sayan and I Gusti Ngurah Penatih assisted me in my efforts to gather information on current practices, and Stephen Lansing abetted this archaeologist’s dangerous foray into ethnography through his moral support, and by providing a video camera and then translating the stickier bits of the resulting interview tape! This fieldwork formed part of my dissertation research, funded by the Social Science Research Council and approved by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences. Dr. I Wayan Ardika has taught me much about Bali’s past, and cleared up a point of confusion in my English translation of his Indonesian translation of the Manukaya Inscription. I thank Elizabeth Brumfiel, Elizabeth DeMarrais, Richard Lesure, Richard Leventhal, Lisa Lucero, Rita Shepard, and John Steinberg for their excellent comments on earlier drafts.

³ Damais (1955: 225) has called into doubt both the name of the king and the exact date. For the name, he reads [Taba]w[e]ndra Jayasinha Warmmadewa; for the date, he reads 960 A.D. The explanations given for these interpretations seem well reasoned (see Patt 1979: 288, 310, 314), but in the main text of this article I will follow the most recent translators of the inscription (Ardika and Beratha 1996: 112-113).

⁴ When asked about the origin of Tirtha Empul, locals usually refer to variants of the *Usana Bali* legend, thus attributing the site to a king of gods rather than to a godly king. The story in question concerns a war between the god Indra and the demonic king Mayadenawa. As usually reported, at one point Mayadenawa creates a poison spring, and Indra’s army is killed upon drinking its waters. Indra then plunges a *kris* or a banner into the earth to create a new spring of holy water (Tirtha Empul) and uses this water to revive his followers (See Covarrubias 1986: 38, Eiseman 1990: 122-124, Budhisantoso et al 1990, Friedrich 1847: 292-293). The Desa Manukaya version of the myth elaborates on this incident to emphasize the power of Tirtha Empul by telling us that Indra only created the spring after his own priest (analogous to the *padandas* discussed below) failed to create holy water with the desired effect (Desa Manukaya 1987: 1-3). Interestingly, the Damais reading of the name of the king in the Manukaya inscription translates to “Indra Victory Over Lion” (Damais 1955: 225, Patt 1979: 288).

In the 20th century two new state powers have made ideological statements here, associating themselves with this site by quite visibly placing themselves on its periphery. In the years from 1957 to 1963, Indonesian President Sukarno built a vacation palace on a hill overlooking the temple, on a site previously occupied by a resthouse of the Raja of Gianyar (Soenaryo et al 1990). In this Sukarno was following a Dutch lead – in the 1930s, Covarrubias noted that “endless ill luck would follow whoever ignored the laws of rank and built a dwelling at a level higher than a temple. The Balinese have resented the building of a Government rest-house on a hill above the holy temple of Tirta Empul in Tampaksiring” (1986: 92).

⁵ Chandrabhayasingha’s text (23 lines in total) is written on both sides of “a big slab of soft grey tuff covered as usual with a thin layer of cement” (Stutterheim 1935: 29). It is reminiscent of a western gravestone in size and shape: about a meter in height, and half as wide (for photographs, see Stutterheim 1930, Figures 105 and 106, and Goris 1955 Figure 304). Though I viewed the stela in its shrine at Pura Sakenan, I was unable to obtain exact measurements. Stutterheim reported that it was taken to Tirtha Empul annually in the 1920s; since then, this has been reduced to about once every ten years.

⁶ As an example of an inscription that deals with tax laws (see Goris 1954: 193-201 for English summaries of other early inscriptions), consider this portion of Sembiran C (no. 621 in Goris 1954), issued in 1181 A.D.:

Paduka Sri Maharaja knows correct procedures and has heard the book of Manawa Kamandhaka. He is striving after virtue and is always concerned about the welfare of the state which he takes care of, as well as the stability of the state. It is the nature of the

supreme ruler/king with his wives to create the stability of the state. Therefore, Paduka Sri Maharaja gives an explanation. The village of Julah will have and guard the king's inscription. The inscription has to be guarded and kept as evidence that the village is an autonomous territory. It certainly will never intrude upon another village's business. The village of Julah must pay 4 masaka for taruh karung (tax on boar fighting?). Apart from that they do not pay any kind of tax.... [lines II.a.4 to II.b.3 as trans. from Old Javanese in Ardika 1991: 260-261]

The inscription continues on, enumerating the specific taxes that do and do not apply. This excerpt relates to several issues discussed in the main text: the king states a claim of his own virtue (based on his familiarity with an Indic text) and his value to his subjects, declares that the village will be autonomous, and declares that an inscription will be used to mark that autonomy. Taken as a whole, the inscription shows that though the king "ruled by decree," the decrees were negotiated to reflect a balance between his interests and the interests of specific villages.

⁷ Today, some training in indigenous languages and scripts also occurs in the western-style primary and secondary schools.

⁸ In this context, the words "actualization" or "realization" could be used as synonyms for "materialization," since they also evoke images of bringing ideas into the world. The prior uses of these words in other areas of theory would no doubt create complications.

⁹ One advantage of ceremony is that it can be to a fair degree self-financing. Though attended by hordes of people bearing offerings with real material value, late pre-colonial Balinese court ceremonies were not significant sources of income for the negara (Geertz 1980: 249). Despite this, these redistributive events were of ideological value to the courts, and much cheaper than if the ruler had had to "foot the entire bill." The collection of offerings of cash, rice, and other commodities similarly supports non-state temples (cf. Lansing 1987: 330); in the cases of these poorer institutions, the economic import of these offerings is (proportionately) greater than in the case of offerings collected by the states. The simple truth of it is that people in general (and not just archaeologists) will often gather for the sake of a party even if it's a "Bring Your Own Beer" party.

¹⁰ To illustrate, Barth identifies five such traditions that are active in the post-colonial era in an area in northern Bali that shares some but not all cultural features with the southern region in which I work; these are Islam, Bali-Hinduism, the "modern current" associated with national and international ideals, the caste system and other negara-related ideals, and the view of social relations inspired by the concept of sorcery. Except for Islam and Bali-Hinduism, these different models for conceptualizing the world are non-exclusive. Also, like so many other anthropological concepts, a "tradition," as I use the term here, is an analytical construct without absolute solidity in the real world. Culture is often context-specific; a definition of a specific tradition that is relevant for one chain of events or ideological statements need not be relevant for all others.

¹¹ In their own written histories, the brahmana naturally appear much more as actors than as props. These documents indicate that tension did occasionally mar the preferably harmonious relations between rulers and priests, and that on rare occasions this even led to physical battle. In these cases, the brahmana claim that the kings were motivated by their jealousy of the affection that the priests received from their subjects (Rubinstein 1991: 66-72). This very "affection" between the people and the priests was, of course, a large part of the reason that rulers normally sought their endorsement.

¹² Messages relevant to specific intra-village situations are also included in performances. 20th century shadow puppeteers consider "solving troubles" in their audiences to be a central part of their profession (Lansing 1983a: 80).

¹³ On the importance of water in Classic Java and Bali, and especially on the use of holy pools, channels, and water spouts at royal sites, see Patt (1979) and Soekmono (1995: 10-12). Almost every ethnographic account of 19th or 20th century Bali includes a discussion of *Agama Tirtha* (cf. Eiseman 1990: 51-62); Lansing (1987, 1991) details relevant aspects not treated in detail elsewhere.

¹⁴ The Indonesian government has recently built a free-standing candi (or *prasada*) on a small knoll adjacent to Pura Mengening, a small spring temple between Tirtha Empul and Gunung Kawi. This reconstruction is based on the excavation at the site of what is believed to be a candi foundation dating to the 11th or 12th century (Bernet Kempers 1991: 158, Sutaba and Seriarsa 1982).

¹⁵ Like many cultural phenomena in the Indianized areas of Southeast Asia, the deification of Classic Period kings is often portrayed as an outcome of interaction between imported Indian concepts and indigenous knowledge traditions; in this case, a fusion of Hindu funerary rites and autochthonic ancestor

worship (Stutterheim 1931, 1935: xiii, 21-25; Soekmono 1971: 16). The overall process of Indianization has been described as a “fecundation” of Indonesian cultural elements (arts, belief systems, social formations), encouraging them to develop in original ways (Bosch 1961; Ardika 1987: 50, 60-61; Sedyawati 1990).

Compared to Indian artists, the artists of Classical Southeast Asia approached the Indian models much more self-consciously, “rejecting or accepting what they wanted, as well as using them in contexts of their own creation;” this self-consciousness is seen as evidence that design, especially monument design, was controlled by a small elite that re-organized Indian ideas “to fit local notions” (Brown 1994: 17). It could be argued that the elites’ sensitivity to “local notions” existed because they were practicing the co-option tactics that I discuss in the main text, borrowing a “package” from India, then making modifications to redirect the “point.”

¹⁶According to the epic *The Nagarakertagama*, the rulers of Bali failed to resist invasion by the Javanese Majapahit Empire in 1284 and again in 1343. The second attack led to the installation of Javanese as lords; these asserted their independence from Majapahit, by stages, shortly thereafter (Bernet Kempers 1991:46-49; Pigeaud 1960: 48, 54; 1962: 526). Over the succeeding centuries, the core region of southern Bali seems to have become increasingly ungovernable as a single entity. By the middle of the 17th century (if not earlier) the once-supreme Balinese court at Gelgel had seen its realm effectively split into several rival principalities (Agung 1991: 7, Schulte Nordholt 1996: 23-25). Geertz suggests that the current “Balinese conception of their political development” centers on “a gradual fading from view of a classical model of perfection” (1980: 15) epitomized by the Gelgel court. Geertz points out that there never was a *perfect* center, but the archaeological and historical evidence does suggest that there once was a greater *degree* of centralization.