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**A PROMISED LAND
THAT DEVOURS ITS INHABITANTS**
A study on Balinese Witchcraft in a Catholic Village

By:

Benediktus Deni Mary

THESIS

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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University of Durham

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Abstract

A Promised Land That Devours Its Inhabitants:
A Study on Balinese Witchcraft in a Catholic Village

Benediktus Deni Mary

This thesis seeks to develop a close examination of the belief in witchcraft and sorcery (*léyak*) in the Balinese Catholic village of Palasari, West of Bali. Belief in the study of religion is often treated as unproblematic and generic. If anthropologists tend to show the ‘how’ belief, this thesis argues for various kinds of belief. If anthropologists studying Bali often fall into the trap of essentializing, exoticizing, and generalizing Bali, the success of this thesis lies on showing us the different versions of Bali through the lens of witchcraft and sorcery.

Beginning with the “sorcery” of making, Palasari becomes the battlefield of several agencies who put their spell of ideology and representation on the village. The spell of a promised land which sells its beauty and uniqueness have attracted outsiders and tourists. The spell of witchcraft, as the main focus of this thesis, has been imposed by the locals as a counter-narrative. This thesis tries to trace the aetiology of that narrative of *léyak* from India to Bali ending in Palasari as a process of demonising women. Despite the absence of religious rituals or objects that could support one’s belief in *léyak*, the Palasari people maintain their imaginations through stories, gossips, rumours and testimonies. *Léyak*-stories always emerge in the context of illness narrative, folk-healer’s diagnosis and treatment. Trance-possession as the source of ‘*léyak* making’ information is mixed with the culture of storytelling and fills the imagination of Palasari. This thesis concludes with a discussion of the contributions narrative theory could make for future research on belief.

Declaration

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Preface

A place like home

“Should I write about being paralysed in Wanzerbe? Should I describe how a priestess sent spirits to attack me?” asks Paul Stoller in his memoir about apprenticeship among the Songhay of Niger, *In Sorcery’s Shadow* (1987: xi). He wrote during the time when ethnographic discourse should be sanitised from personal and bizarre accounts. Whether it is appropriate to expose the texture of our hearts or the uncertainties of our “gaze” could be considered problematic. Often appropriation is discarded when we come to story. Moreover, scientists are a storyteller in science.

LÉYAK – the Balinese witch and sorcerer¹ – came to my life as a story or a narrative. I have never seen a monstrous witch in my life but was often told by Balinese that they could harm and kill people. The closest I have ever come to seeing one was the dogs crying at night, which for Balinese people is a signal of the presence of *léyak*. Like most of my fellow Balinese, I could often see the barking animals but failed to see any *léyak* present. On a few occasions, I have seen people go into trance and they believed they were being possessed by *léyak* during the healing treatment in a healer’s practice. They were unconsciously acting like *Rangda* (the queen sorceress in *Calon Arang* Balinese Drama) with her claws lifting and moving their hands ready to attack and to scratch while roaring with a shrill voice.

I have watched *Rangda* on many occasions when I attended ritual *Calon Arang* drama in temple ceremonies since I was a child. *Rangda*’s appearance is always shocking and terrifying. Her huge eyes protrude, her large breasts are pendulous, and her long red tongue hangs down her body almost to her knees. She has a mouth full of big teeth and curving fangs, her fingernails are extended to pointed claws, and her unkempt mop of grey hair hangs down her back. According to her reputation, she likes to eat children, cause disease and pestilence, and leads a horde of witches (Leeming 2005: 335). She is identified as an evil and vicious demon queen (figure 0.1).

Although I have never encountered any of those *léyaks* in my life, however, I heard so many stories, testimonies and gossips about *léyaks* from my informants ‘similar’ to the ones I heard from my parents and friends when I grew up. The similarity of their plots, characters, or actions

¹ In every villages in Bali, there are people who are suspected of obsessive wholesale slaughter. These villagers, who may be either men or (mostly) women, are said to have gained the magical power to change their bodily form and roam about at night in search of prey. Called *léyak*, a term that has been vaguely translated into English as ‘witch’ but is more properly rendered as “sorcerer”, these persons inflict suffering only on people they know well. *Léyak* are sometimes said to have a burning desire to eat the flesh of their victims, especially that of foetuses, newborn babies, and small children. Miscarriages, stillbirths, and infant deaths (until recently very common) are routinely attributed to *léyak* (H. Geertz, 1994: 70).

are very obvious. Phantasmagoric experience is one of typical common tales people shared, such as the one shared by a writer and ethnomusicologist, Colin McPhee:



Figure 0.1 *Rangda*

It was perhaps a week later that I awoke again, late in the night, with the same strange feeling that someone had called. It was unusual warm night, and I went outside onto the veranda. I could not believe my eyes.

Across the valley, halfway down the hillside, a row of lights glowed with a soft pure brilliance. They seemed to move over so slightly, floating up and down as though anchored. Suddenly they went out, as suddenly went on again, but now to shine in a perpendicular line, one above the other. They merged slowly, until only the central one remained, which now began to float slowly up the valley. All at once it vanished. But within a minute the lights were shining in a row once more, far to the north.

I went to rouse Durus and Sampih, who were sleeping in the next room. Look! I said. What lights can these possibly be? They are too pale for lamps, and besides, there are no paths where they are moving.

The *léyaks*, said Durus, softly almost inaudibly. They must be from Bangkasa (the village across the valley) ... or from somewhere in the north, he added after a while.

We stood silently watching this magic display. The lights glowed and died, came close together, spread rapidly out in a long line. Slowly they floated back once more to where I had first seen them. One by one they went out until only a single light remained. But all at once it was gone. The valley was in darkness.

All the next day I was haunted by the weird beauty of the scene I had witnessed the night before. It was as if the stars had descended. If it had not been for Durus and Sampih I should have been unable to believe it had not been part of a dream. But when I mentioned it to Cokorda Rai, and later to the *perbekel* in Pliatan, they were not surprised. Had I awoken out of an uneasy sleep? With a feeling of suffocation? There was only one explanation. Sorcery was in the air once more. It had only begun, and no one knew what was to follow (1946:227-8).

“Azande believe that some people are witches, [...] believe also that sorcerers may do them ill,” Evans-Pritchard started his first page of *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* (1937 [1976]). It was February 2015; I was in the Dun Cow Cottage listening to Jonathan Miles-Watson lecturing on Magic and Witchcraft in a seminar on the study of religion. I was not so sure of whether it was the Africanist’s words, or the way Miles-Watson narrated it, however, those statements have attracted me into witchcraft studies. While anthropologist and

historian have debated a cross-cultural use of the terms of witchcraft and sorcery, rarely, if ever, have discussed belief about witchcraft. Bosco Bae (2015) shows recent growing discussion on belief in the study of religion, but could belief in religious studies be applied in the study of witchcraft, since witchcraft falls under the register of religious studies? One of the pieces of advice to be taken into fieldwork in order to immerse oneself, a researcher has to suspend 'dis(belief)'. But, what does it mean by belief in the study of witchcraft?

The word 'belief' becomes a generic term unquestioned in the academic study of witchcraft and sorcery. From the early years of its emergence, anthropologists of religion and others have tried to make belief as their object (Lopez, 1998: 21). This thesis tries to contribute to that discussion by bringing narrative onto the table from the lens of the study of witchcraft.

It examines a story of one family's relationship to a "village" (*desa*). The family in question is my own. My parents met in 1965 and were married a year later and have lived in Singaraja, North of Bali-Indonesia, ever since. My father came from the island of Flores and worked in the army (the green man) for the most of his life. During the dictatorship of Suharto's New Order (*Orde Baru*), I experienced how it felt to be a son of a "powerful local man". My mother on the other hand, is from Singaraja, however, her parents were not originally Balinese. In early 1961, she went to a convent boarding school in *Desa Palasari*. From my dad's stories and her tales of Palasari, based on her four-year experience of living there, I heard a lot about it during my childhood. A legacy that I was reminded of in one rainy morning in Durham, when I was in one of the seminars listening to Miles-Watson talking about Evans-Prichard and other founding fathers of the anthropology of witchcraft. An 'eureka' moment that I could describe like an invitation to come home in order to trace my own memories and family stories.

My initial thesis proposal was to draw an image of chosen people in a Balinese Christian community which has survived from various kinds of pressure and trial since its outset. In the words of a theologian, Balinese Christians have escaped from "double marginalisation": being marginalised as a minority (approximately 30,000 from 3.2 million Bali population) and as Balinese who have no right to their own culture (Sudhiarsa, 2000). *Desa Palasari* historically has been considered as a place of refuge, a promised land for new Balinese Catholic converts. Located in the mid of forest in the West of Bali, Palasari became the only predominantly Catholic village in the a predominantly Hindu Island. My interest, however, changed from seeing Palasari as a promised land into seeing it as a land that devours its own people. To do that not only would I have to travel back to Palasari but also I would have to retrieve all past memories of a dazzling range of subjects and stories. I would need to trace the people mentioned in those stories, and also recall the narratives of my parents. They were the best storytellers transporting us, their children, into another world which was sometimes humorous,

sometimes scary, but always developing our inquisitive minds. These helped me to carve the representation of Palasari, with its mixed Gothic and Balinese style Church from the colonial era as the sanctuary but at the same time as a coalesces with all the eerie stories of *lèyaks*.

When I informed my auntie, a distant relative of my mother who lives in Palasari that I needed to do a year of fieldwork and needed to find accommodation, her answer was: “*Please come home. We miss you!*” (*Mai mulih, raga suba kangen*). I was invited to come to a place that I had never called home, yet in those utterances from my auntie who subsumed her individuality into “we”, became a transcendental voice that was *calling me home*. Put another way, it seemed that this place was calling upon me to redress my parents’ stories and desired me to stake a claim upon it as home. In another uncanny twist, the conversation was in Balinese, the native language of Palasari people, and not in Indonesian, our national language. My auntie said, “I am proud that you still can speak Balinese”; referring to the fact we have not met for few years.

When I mentioned, however, that I am researching “*léyak*”, she suddenly became anxious and concerned: “Can’t you study anything else? It’s a dangerous thing. We don’t talk of those things in this village?” Suddenly I felt distant and left out, as an outsider who did not know the life and customs of this village. Although I had felt my auntie’s voice as a powerful agent sufficient to draw me to a place that I spent years specifically avoiding as a research site, her concern became an early warning of the danger I could face in the future. As I was drawn into the place and the stories that eventually unfold in this thesis, it was the force of intellectual attraction and gravitation that revealed to me a sensitivity I had not anticipated. This “calling” might be ascribed to the ghosts and spirits of the dead of the founding fathers of Palasari. Important to this writing is the fact that these were not the dead of the putative *Other*, that might have been easier to think of as an object of study and analysis. These were my own living and dead ancestors too, and I wondered, on many occasions, if it were possible to disinter who was claiming whom. What kind of ethnography emerges from the deep familiarity of kin ties that are, at the same time, encountered as strange? How does one come to recognize the voices of the dead speaking to them as in the case of trance possession in Balinese culture?

At the time I did my fieldwork, Indonesian politics and social media were massively filled with fake news, conspiracy theories, and hoax stories which have divided the country until today; the Indonesian version of Trump or the Brexit phenomena. The incumbent of Jakarta’s governor, Basuki Tjahja Purnama, better known as Ahok was matched against Anies Baswedan supported by the Muslim hardliners. Ahok did not just lose in this gubernatorial election, but also on 9 May 2017 was found to have legitimately conducted a criminal act of blasphemy, and because of that two years of imprisonment was imposed after a trial widely seen as a measure

of religious pluralism in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country. The blasphemy charge related to Ahok's reference to a passage of the Qur'an during his re-election campaign in September, which hard-line Islamist groups said amounted to insulting the holy book. He insinuated that his opponents had used a Qur'anic verse to trick people into voting against him. An edited version of the speech went viral, sparking outrage. A series of protests against him drew hundreds of thousands on to the streets of the capital during my fieldwork.

Ahok, like any Balinese Christian, is a Christian with ethnic Chinese roots, therefore, is a "double minority" in Indonesia. He had lost his bid for re-election in an April run-off to his Muslim rival. The vote was the most divisive and religiously charged in recent years. Many political commentators had predicted that Ahok's phenomenon would become the new trend in Indonesian politics which divides the secular-pluralist groups from the religious-conservative. The two camps faced each other in the 2019 presidential election through their candidates, the incumbent Joko Widodo against Prabowo Subianto. During the pre-election campaign both camps of supporters, using social media, were attacking each other. Black campaign, fake news, hoax, gossip and rumour were circulated through *Whatsapp* groups, *Twitter*, *Facebook* and *Instagram*. To respond to this situation, the current administrative government under Joko Widodo had strictly applied the 2008 Law on *Electronic Information and Transactions*. This law prevented the dissemination of any information that included prohibited content. Prohibited content, as described in the 2008 law, included material thought to violate decency; promote gambling; insult or defame; extort; spread false news resulting in consumer losses in electronic transactions; caused hatred based on ethnicity, religion, race, or social group; or contain threats of violence (Law No. 11, 2008, arts. 27-29). The decision which has been criticised by many as an abuse of power aimed at restricting press freedom.

As one of the critics argued: "social media is the extension of the Indonesian culture of chattering and gossiping. How could we penalise and criminalise the gossipers?" In many cases, however, fake news and hoax, underlined the problem of trust. What to believe and whom to trust? This is addressing the problem poses in this thesis. How to understand belief in the context of narrative, testimonies and gossip of witchcraft? When philosophy tries to reduce belief into a statement of assent, it is the work of social science, especially anthropology, to give us a more descriptive account. I heard those voices: "just come home!"

Chapter 1

Introduction

What is truth? A moving army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphism, in short, a summary of human relationships that are being poetically and rhetorically sublimated, transposed, and beautified until, after long and repeated use, a people consider them as solid, canonical, and unavoidable.

(Fredrich Nietzsche, *Werke*, 1956, Vol. 3:311)

When I tell people in Indonesia and particularly in Bali that I am working on witchcraft (*pengléyakan*) in the Catholic village of Palasari in the West of Bali, they commonly respond with a surprised snort. The typical Hindu responses would spring out from the assumption that *pengléyakan* are their belief, so why are these Balinese Catholics still believing and practicing witchcraft? While some pious Catholics and Christians would object to the validity of that belief. It is followed, after the briefest of pauses, by a short question: “So, is there really [a witch]?” (*Jadi benaran ada [léyak di sana]?*). The chortle I read as emotional shorthand for: “that is ridiculous,” or possibly “that is not a proper topic (for a Christian like myself)”; an emotional bundling of the complicated (post)colonial history and xenography that attends any study of witchcraft. The follow-up question “*jadi benaran ada?*” counters the initial surprise with a challenge to solve a riddle that we now seem to have in common: “So, did you find any *léyak* in Palasari?” Some of my most interesting and, in spite of what one might think, also most hilarious conversations in Indonesia have come out of discussions about this question with those who asked it.

One evening in August 2016, during the funeral of one of the elders, the first generation of settlement in the Palasari forest, I overheard some people chatting, almost whispering, that Dong (Grandma) Ari died because of *léyak*. One of them said that it ‘appeared’ during the treatment by a healer (*balian*). Later on I knew that what they meant by ‘appeared’ was revealed through the trance-possession. It has been an intuitive response of people in Palasari to a chronic illness or disability to have an alternative treatment from the traditional healers.

On 24 September 2016, I was invited to present and share my work on Palasari *léyak* to the Catholic clergy of the Denpasar Diocese. Around 40 people attended this presentation and came up with various commentaries. Most of the priests who have served in the village admitted that they heard so many tales, gossips, and testimonies from their parishioners, however, *léyak* is rather absent from their personal experience. They testified that one of the most frequent and

demanding aspects of their pastoral work in Palasari is the anointing of the sick. Some of the many significant notes I gathered from that seminar, came from two priests, the former one is a Balinese, the latter a non-Balinese.

Fr. Wayan : Ask every single person in Palasari and they would tell you that they have consulted *dukun* (B. *balian*: healer/diviner) regarding their sickness. Information about *léyak* or magical harm always comes from *dukun*; it can't be from medical doctor. The more people talk about *léyak*, it means that more people visit *dukun*. There are problems with our health-care system. It is unaffordable for common people, especially for the farmers in places such as Palasari.

Fr. Nano : I have been in Palasari from long before you were born, people just gossip, chattering about their relatives or neighbours out of their jealousy, have caused harm to others using magical tools or witchcraft, but I have never seen one. So, what are you going to research? Telling stories is part of Balinese culture. If you start asking people who really has the ability to be a witch (*bisa ngaléyak*), you will divide the community. It is a sensitive thing, it will drive accusations toward the innocent, which you cannot prove to be a *léyak*."

These remarks from both clergy have been the recurrent feature in various stories I heard during my fieldwork.

So, is there *léyak* in Palasari? This question implies two things in Palasari. The first one, are there "so-called Catholic" people practicing *léyak*? The second one, do the people really believe in the existence of *léyak*? Unfortunately, until I finished my fieldwork and three-month apprenticeship in learning to be a *léyak*, I could not find one. What I did find were *léyak* stories which were told, retold, reinvented, recreated, or replicated by the Palasari people intra-generations. They took the form of hearsay, loose-talk, gossips, and testimonies. Some of them were also familiar to me and became part of our family episodic memories. My fieldwork shows that those stories emerge in the context of chronic disease and its diagnosis, while the knowledge (information) of the existence of *léyak* always originates from the *balian* (and their healing ritual/performance). This thesis tries to answer the basic questions posed by so many people I encountered: ***why do the Palasari people believe in witchcraft? Why do their beliefs take the form they do?***

Aim

For years ‘belief’ has been a perennial topic of interest for philosophers and social scientists² alike. Within their respective fields, discussions have reached a point of maturity where a constructive conversation is worth pursuing. The following thesis aims to contribute to such a dialogue from an ethnographical study of witchcraft in a Balinese Catholic village. As an interdisciplinary endeavour, the thesis engages belief as narrative in juxtaposition with sociology of knowledge of illness and the anthropology of witchcraft.

Belief in witches and sorcerers has been the classical object of anthropology from its outset. Sterility, illness, death, rainstorms, burnt-down houses, bald spots, attacks from wild animals, lost foot races, lost reindeer races, the puzzling behaviour of a friend or spouse – the enigmatic, the impactful, the bothersome – all can spark suspicions of neighbours using magic and dark powers; all can precipitate violence. The suspects are sometimes normal humans, learned in dark magic, but other times, rumoured to be odious and malign. They devour babies, fornicate with their menstruating mothers, and use human skulls for sport. They become bats and black panthers, house pythons in their stomachs, and direct menageries of attendant night birds. They plot the destruction of families and then dance in orgiastic night-fests.

Humans in nearly every documented account believe that some illnesses and hardships are the work of envious or malignant group friends. Hutton (2004; 2017) reviewed ethnographies from three hundred non-European societies and documented pervasive beliefs in sorcerers, witches, the evil eye, and aggressive shamans. Singh (2018) shows that of the 60 societies he investigated, 59 believed in some form of human-induced mystical harm, the only exception being the Kogi of Colombia.³ European societies have historically held similar beliefs, embodied in the Roman *strix* (Oliphant, 1913; Oliphant, 1914), the Saxon *striga* (Cohn, 1976), and most famously, the witches of the Great European Witch Hunt (Cohn, 1976), and colonial New England (Karlsen, 1987).

Beliefs about harmful practitioners are profoundly similar among vastly distant societies (Needham, 1978; Kluckhohn, 1959). The European witches of the late modern period were said to eat human flesh, engage in obscene activities, and assemble in conspiratorial, orgiastic night-time gatherings (Cohn, 1976). Similar behaviours were suspected of witches among the Yamba

² By “social science,” in this thesis, I am referring particularly to the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and psychology.

³ Manvir Singh designed the Mystical Harm Survey (MHS) to systematically capture beliefs about mystical harm from a representative sample of the world’s societies. The dataset covers the 60 societies of the Probability Sample File of the Human Relations Area Files (eHRAF), a pseudo-random sample of well-documented cultures that were selected to make inferences about humanity more generally. The full dataset is available at osf.io/492mj and includes beliefs about 103 malicious practitioners (or practices) from 58 societies.

of Cameroon (Gufler, 1999), the Santal of South Asia (Archer, 1984), and the Navajo of the American Southwest (Kluckhohn, 1944), and among many other societies (Hutton, 2017; Mair 1969). Just as people worldwide believe in sensational and atrocious witches, they also often suspect that sickness and death are the work of ordinary people secretly practicing dark magic (e.g., Trobriand Islanders: Malinowski, 1922; Tswana: Schapera, 1952; Niimípuu: Walker, Jr., 1967). In this study, I refer to people who are believed to use magic or supernatural powers to injure others as practitioners of *mystical harm*.⁴ *Magic* refers to occult methods with instrumental ends, such as spells, curses, rites, manipulated objects, and everyday superstitions. Magic can be used⁵ to produce socially justified ends, such as healing people or succeeding in gambling, as well as less acceptable objectives, such as inducing illness. I use *sorcery* to mean harmful magic. Methods of sorcery include cursing, stabbing voodoo dolls, and placing charmed poisons in people's paths.

Sorcerers (balian) are people who use magic for malicious ends – that is, people who use sorcery but also could produce amulet and talisman. *Witches (léyak)*, on the other hand, exhibit up to three sets of characteristics: (1) They are existential threats, such as by conspiratorially plotting to harm society. (2) They have supernatural powers, such as invisibility, flight, and animal transformation. (3) They are morally repugnant, engaging in acts such as cannibalism and the desecration of corpses. Some societies believe more in the practice of witchcraft than others. Some practitioners qualify as both sorcerers and witches, such as those who use rites and spells, conspire in secret meetings, transform into shadowy owls, and eat corpses.

Researchers struggle over whether beliefs about harmful practitioners are similar around the world. Many have emphasized the commonalities (e.g., Mair, 1969; Kluckhohn, 1959), but others have criticized drawing these comparisons; one scholar commenting that mystical harm beliefs are so dissimilar that “anthropologists have committed a possibly grave error in using the same term for other cultures” (Crick, 1973:18).

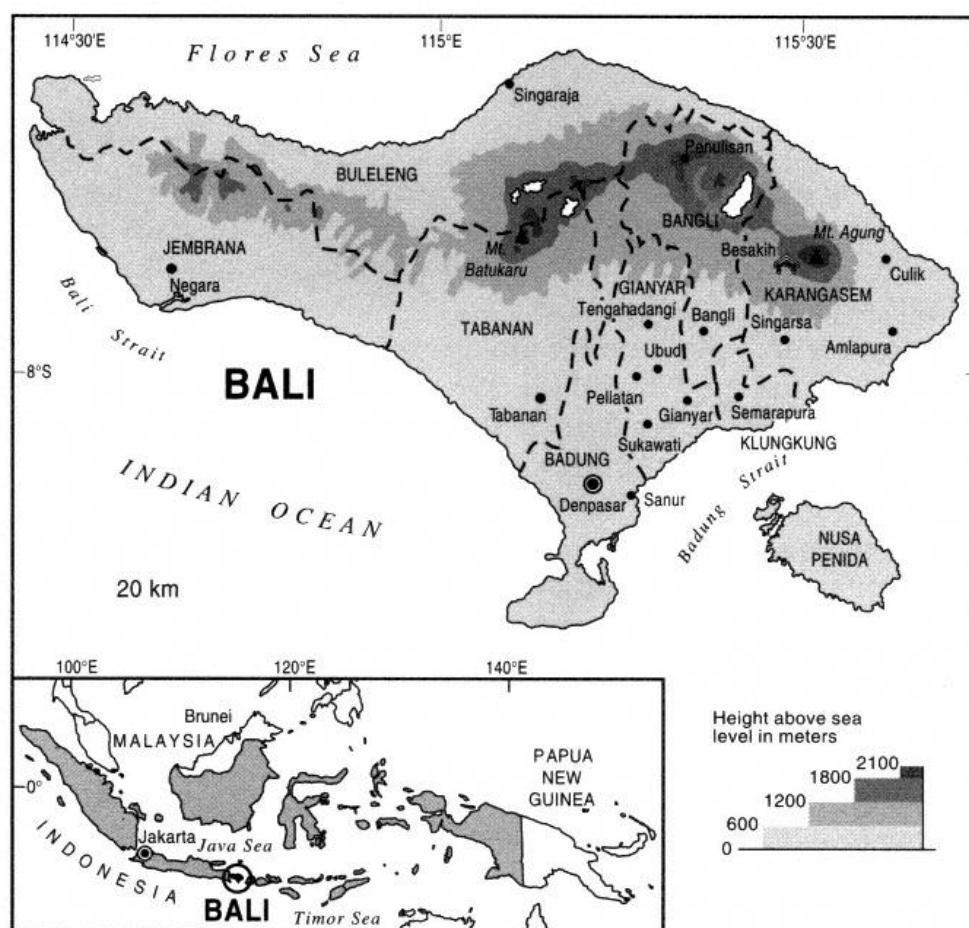
Nevertheless, the fact that these “harmful practitioners” have been the object of bountiful study, very little attention being paid to the narrative nature of this belief. Anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and historians have provided a bounty of “relatively isolated ethnographic observations” which are actually based on the form of narrative. The original

⁴ I choose the term *mystical* to refer to harm that is transmitted either through magical means (e.g., spells, buried poisons, voodoo dolls) or supernatural powers (e.g., transforming into an animal and attacking someone, inflicting misfortune through an inadvertent envious stare) following similar uses by Evans Pritchard (1937), who contrasted *mystical causation* with *natural causation*, and Needham (1978:26), who defined a *witch* as “someone who causes harm to others by mystical means”, corresponding closely with my term *practitioner of mystical harm*.

⁵ Whenever I refer to the effects of magic (e.g., producing illness) or the features of a malicious practitioner (e.g., flying and eating corpses), I refer to *beliefs* about those traditions rather than actual consequences or traits.

contribution of this thesis lies in its attempt to demonstrate that the beliefs of *léyak* among the Balinese Catholic of Palasari take a form of narrative and storytelling. It will investigate the origin of this belief by analysing the social practice of storytelling.

The further contribution of this thesis is that it aims to portray Bali from a perspective that is different to the one so often essentialised by Western commentators i.e. a Hindu island. Within this “island of Hindu gods”, there is a small community which considers itself as Balinese although they are Catholic. Throughout 80-years of its existence it has never been studied or appeared in the scholarship of Bali. Therefore, this study would enable to the people of Palasari to have their voice to be listened to.



Map 1.1. The Island of Bali in Indonesia

A Place of Refuge in the Paradise Island

Bali has a certain renown as the only island with a predominantly Hindu population in Indonesia, a diverse and polyglot country that is also the world's largest Muslim nation. The history of Hinduism in the area that is now identified as Indonesia is complex and already well-documented (Ramstedt, 2005; Ricklefs, 2008; Vickers, 2013; Pollock, 2006; Coedes, 1968; Bakker, 1993) from a variety of perspectives. The Hindu presence in the region dates from as early as the second century. Indic texts rendered from Sanskrit into Old Javanese-based languages have been translated into English and demonstrate that Hinduism as practised in Java and Bali was already a well-developed written culture, one that was actively interpreting, reimagining and localizing Hindu scriptures and practices in significant ways by the ninth to tenth centuries and possibly earlier (Monaguna, 2013: 3; Supomo, 1993: 2).



Map 1.2 Palasari on the map of Bali, google satellite image.

In the contemporary context there are three different layers of Balinese Hinduism. The first is the contemporary *Agama Dharma Hindu Indonesia*, a form of Hinduism that aligns itself with the criteria set out by the nascent Indonesian national government in the 1950s. This features a unified, single God (with other gods and deities demoted to the rank of angels or

other aspects of the almighty God) and an equivalence between Hindu scriptures and the revelations recorded in the Qur'an or the Bible. The second is *Agama Tirta Hinduism*, a Balinese syncretic rationalization with its own story of origin, involving representatives from the nine Hindu sects in Bali, in which Brahma, Visnu and Siva are the primary gods, and all rituals require holy water (tirta) which can only be sanctified by priests. The third is *Balinese*



Map 1.3 Palasari location from the google satellite

folk Hinduism in which traces of the early syncretisation with folk stories and local spiritual practices have persisted into the present allowing some Balinese chthonic figures to retain relevance in the Balinese Hinduisms of today (Picard, 2011; McDaniel, 2010 and 2013).

The representation of Bali as a Hindu island in the sea of Islam shows only one version of Bali, in my view, which according to Vickers ([1989] 2012) has a long historical root. The truth is, there are always pockets of religious diversity spread throughout the island. In the most recent national census, 83.46% of the population self-identified as Hindu.⁶ Islam claims the

⁶ Badan Pusat Statistik, "2010 Population by Region and Religion (Indonesia)," accessed May 8, 2017, <http://sp2010.bps.go.id/index.php/site/tabel?tid=321&wid=0>.

second highest percentage at 13.37%, and, Christianity, which has had a difficult time making inroads on the Hindu island, now makes up 2.2% of Balinese.⁷

Briefly, Christianity came to the island officially in the beginning of 20th century, although there is evidence of it dated long before that. As witnessed by many elders in Palasari, becoming Christian among the majority of non-Christians in the early period for them was fraught with difficulties economically as well as socially. It was hard for a single Christian family to make a break with the former religion, because it automatically meant a breakup with the local community and no possibility of receiving an inheritance from their ancestors, so it was almost impossible for an individual Christian (Webb, 1986:37). Most of them had to face the enmity of the *banjar* (village council) and were forced to leave their village and build a Christian village. “To remove these ‘troublemakers,’ the colonial administration made over a large tract of desolate and lonely forest on the dry western side of Bali, ‘out of sight, out of mind’ being the first consideration” (Webb, 1986:35; Mastra, 1974:394; Swelengrebel, 1948:84-6). The primary concern for them was for their survival. Many of those who refused to leave their village had to adjust themselves to their suppressive and discriminative society (Webb, 1990).

To avoid those conflicts, the colonial administration at that time offered the Protestants a piece of forestland in West Bali. It was known among the people as frightening *Alas Rangda*, the forest of the evil-witch *Rangda*, which was a still ‘virgin territory’ of wild jungle. The Christians started to build their community (30 November 1939) with initially 39 families. In this area, they found a lot of star fruits, ‘*blimbing*’ in Balinese – the village was then called Blimbingsari, the essence of the star fruit.’ In 1940 some Christian families from Gianyar, East Bali, came to join them. They were forced to leave their villages due to their being Christians. They were driven out of their villages into ‘exile’ in the western part of the island, which was in the Balinese point of view the worst, lowest and least holy part of the island.

On September 14th, 1940, Simon Buis and his men seized the opportunity to start a Catholic village in the forest vicinity of Blimbingsari. With a few supporters he opened a part of the ‘*pala*’ (nutmeg) forest in West Bali, ‘a place of refuge’ (Sudhiarsa, 2001:147). This *pala* forest was transformed with a lot of struggle into a new village, which they called Palasari (the place of the nutmeg trees), around 120 km west of the capital city of Denpasar. With 24 young men as pioneers, 18 from the village of Tuka and the other 6 from Gumbrih, he began to live in this new residence, a new model of a Catholic community in Bali, a dwelling-space as well as land for rice cultivation. These two Balinese Christian Communities had been established primarily

⁷ This number includes both Protestants and Catholics. The Indonesian government officially considers these movements as two separate religions, and Protestants outnumber Catholics on Bali.

to save their faith, but also to avoid a conflict within the Bali-Hindu community who did not want the Christians among them. In the beginning these communities practically needed a lot of financial and moral support from friends and sympathizers both at home and abroad.

In one of his letters, Simon Buis wrote: “This new enterprise, however, demands support from the main station, since the poor Balinese people, who transmigrate [sic], do not possess anything, and hence must be supported while they clean the woods. [...] I am often wondering where the money will come from, because since May 1940 Holland is locked with a steel door. Of course, the missionary always gets enough to live on, but don't forget, the missionaries are not in the field just to live, but to work and to have others working for them. Next to the supernatural assistance, the main thing in most of the missions is to have others working; namely our catechists. [...] But unless we can find some proper persons to present us, our charity does not help much. Our Balinese catechists are poor, and they depend upon us for their support. This is what costs ... and costs heavily!”⁸

Precisely within this wild area of *Alas Rangda* – a location of frightening forces, a belief long held by the Balinese – the first Balinese Christians started to live and build their community. It was doubtless a very challenging life and faith experience, even for a committed Christian. Surprisingly, around five decades later (1989) both communities are very much on the map and have become ‘prosperous hives of industry, with schools and well-tended successful *sawah* and gardens.’ According to Paul Webb’s eyewitness, the villages “stand in marked contrast to the adjacent Bali-Hindu desa of Nusasari, where the ‘work-ethic’ is less evident.”⁹ Among the people themselves can be felt the solidarity of joy and sorrow, which the founding generation shared: the desire to own a piece of land, which their native *desa*, could not offer and the escape from the pressure of Bali-Hindu law (*awig-awig*). Beginning with 24 families, Palasari now has become a Catholic village with 388 families and a population of 1,350.

In the case of Palasari, the place has become the pilot project of a successful Catholic mission that despite being Catholic, nevertheless, they maintain their local culture. Under the

⁸ S. Buis’ letter (Tuka, 6 March 1941) to the Seminarists in Techny Mission Club, USA, in Shadeg-bundel: 1950 Bali (I, 3, p.11), PAS, Teteringen. S. Buis writes: “In dit thans zo bloeiende katholieke dorp is men nu volges de laatste berichten begonnen met de bouw, die aangepast zal worden aan de heerlijke balische bouwtrand. We vragen daarvoor uw medewerking” (“Palasari 1938-1949,” p. 6). See also S. Buis, “Palasari, een katholiek modeldorp op Bali,” *KM*, Steyl-Tegelen, September 1956, pp. 146-7; October 1956, pp. 176-7; November 1956, pp. 208-10; January 1957, pp. 242-3; February 1957, pp. 302-3; March 1957, pp. 340-1.

⁹ P. Webb, “Rural Development and Tradition: The Churches in Bali and Flores,” working paper, Monash University, Australia, 1990, end note 35. In his book Webb writes: ‘Whether the Dutch missionaries, Catholic and Protestant, had deliberately or unconsciously imposed on both villages that sense of worthy direction and hard work commonly designated the ‘Protestant work ethic,’ the result was vastly different to the nearby non-Christian Balinese villages” (*Palms and the Cross*, p. 110). Cf. W. Mastra, “A Contextualised Church,” pp. 12ff.

global trend of so called *inculturation*, Palasari has been well-praised in Indonesia, particularly, as Bali has been a popular vacation spot for Australian and Asian tourists. Palasari also has a reputation for Catholic tourists from various places to visit its Shrine of Our Lady. Several Catholic programmes at either national or international level have been held in this small village.

Despite all these facts, however, the locals often express their concerns on the difficulties of living in Palasari. From irrigation problems to the standard of living, changes of setting in economic and social spheres, global materialism and secularism become their concern just to show that living in this land of refuge is not without cost. Among other issues which are often raised in Palasari is its high rate of morbidity and mortality. The poor standard of healthcare drives people to seek for an alternative. This has become the context for the belief of *léyak* in Palasari.

***Léyak* and Illness**

Three days after I set my foot in Bali to do my fieldwork, I met I Gusti Ngurah Harta in his house which also functions as the training camp for his pupils who train in martial art. A well-known spiritual guru not only among the Balinese, but also among Indonesian socialité and celebrities, Turah Harta (as he used to be called) is the founder and also the chairman of the Sandi Murthi Martial Art Association (*Paguyuban Pencak Silat Sandi Murthi*) which has its branches not only in Bali and Indonesia, but also in Australia, Holland and Bulgaria. Having heard of my intent to research Balinese *léyak*, he contends “*léyak* is one of the Balinese ancient religious heritages (*‘agama warisan leluhur orang Bali’*) which need to be preserved”. Whoever is familiar with the story of the malign potency of *léyak* would be surprised by this assertion. At least, a dozen novels, paintings or movies about *léyak* will readily help someone to imagine ‘witches who instil anxiety and even terror in villagers’ (Hobart, 2005:103).

The problem is how to relate this salient belief of *léyak* as a malign power that needs to be exorcised with ‘Balinese ancient religious heritage that needs to be preserved’ as believed by Turah Harta? This ambivalent belief in *léyak* has been the subject of study by many. As Lovric wrote, the art of healing and the craft of sorcery, or witchcraft, recall the great Tantric mystery of ‘each in both’: this implies that ‘any entity (for example, sleep, death, female) contains within itself its logical opposite (awake, life, male)’, that is to say, ‘unity of apparent opposites’ (1986:71).

Any terrible happening in Bali, including serious illness and disease, is attributed to an intentional act of malevolence or rage on the part of some being – human or nonhuman. To find out the cause of such an event, one goes to a diviner/healer (*balian*) or priest (*pamangku*

or *padanda*). Their methods of discovery vary from allowing spirit to speak through them as spirit mediums to consultation of books of the occult. These diviners give oracular diagnoses whose ambiguousness allows the sufferers to match them to their own suspicions.¹⁰ In cases of serious trouble it is common to visit several diviners, searching for one that satisfies. A particular diagnosis usually implies a particular therapy. Curing strategies include eating an herbal concoction containing magical ingredients, carrying a specially made talisman, putting offerings in certain places at certain times, or carrying out a major ritual, such as a cremation for a neglected dead kinsman. Any of these actions may be understood either as protection or as counterattack.

Léyak is surrounded by myths of its negativity and dark power to harm people. The line between the world of myth and the real world is never clear in Bali. Actual encounters with demons and sorcerers, miraculous cures, strange deaths, and mysterious visions in the night are the stuff of daily hushed conversations, as are unexpected prosperity and sudden poverty. Any disaster or sudden good fortune immediately becomes food for speculation about its cause. A chronic, wasting lung disease is thought to be the work of mean-hearted neighbours helped by sorcerers who pretend to be kindly healers. An unusually rich harvest might be explained by the prior discovery of a ring in a rice field, placed there perhaps by a benevolent spirit. The Western notion of “fairy tales” as merely delightful or scary fiction about never-never lands where the impossible can happen would be very strange to most Balinese.

Many western ethnographers, writers, and anthropologists who originally came to Bali as tourists were gradually drawn by this myth of *léyak* into their research. To trace their colonialist ethnologies as Boon puts it, “requires attending to both central arguments and digressions. In the digressions lapsed stigmas may linger and suggestions of glorification emerge. In the digression’s creeds of control trail hints of ambivalence, occasionally even of self-doubt. In the digressions unsettling reputation of different cultures become rumoured, whether or not the reputations are ever confirmed. This play of rumour and insinuation has a power, sometimes a force, of its own” (1990:30).

Descriptions of *léyak*, for instance, do not fit into the category of witch as found in those ethnologies. Balinese believe that *léyak* can be inherited from their parents or ancestors, as understood in anthropology as witch, in addition to being taught and practiced understood as sorcerer. There are others also who buy magical tools (*pakakas*) for various reasons and motivations and then transformed into *léyak*. Craft implies an activity such as work, profession,

¹⁰ The dialogue between the spirit speaking through the medium, Jero Tapakan, and her clients is a good example of the process of mutual construction of increasingly specific explanations of the causes of the death of a young boy. See Connor, Asch, and Asch 1980, chapter 7.

pursuit, job, business that involve skill in making things by hands, but it could also mean skill used in deceiving others (trickery). *Balian* can function as healers as well as sorcerers, who do not consider their *balianess* as a profession but often more as a vocation, or part time job. They do not charge their client a fee but expected a donation. As sorcerer and healer, *balian* possess the skill of black art as well as white magic. In this context, the difference between a sorcerer and a witch is obviously the former could teach or help others to gain or provide the magical power (*sakti*) in the forms of magical tools or amulets.

For some decades, the role of *balian* as a healer has been studied by scholars in anthropology and related disciplines who have aspired to an inductive approach (e.g. Weck, 1937[1976]; Belo, 1949, 1960; Connor, 1982 [a,b], unpublished; Connor and others, 1986; Napier, 1986; Lovric, 1986, 1987, 1990; McCauley, 1988; Nala, 1993; Ruddick, 1989; Sukantra, 1992; Suryani, 1984; Wikan, 1990; Jansen and Suryani, 1996; Emigh, 1996). The works produced are mostly concerned with the therapies of these diversely skilled Balinese practitioners, and their interface with delivery of the national health system.

The greatest concern for the people of Palasari is their fear of *léyak*. “I am so scared!” (*tityang nyeh sajan*) is the common expression they use constantly in their everyday conversations. For them *léyak* could harm and kill. Every serious and prolonged illness would be considered to be the work of *léyak* and death its consequence. Finding a cure for illness and disease, therefore, becomes the main concern of the people in this community especially when the conventional medical diagnosis and treatment is perceived to have failed. As the direct consequence of this fear, the majority of people in Palasari consult a *balian* whose diagnosis is that *léyak* is the cause of their problem. The identification of *léyak* as a source of illness and death inevitably leads to the question of how communal knowledge of *léyak* is acquired.

Stories, gossip and testimonies



Figure 1.4 Bale banjar in Palasari

*It was a humid and pleasant April afternoon in Palasari. We sat on a wooden bench, worn with use, under the shade of a huge mango tree. I was interviewing an elder, Pak Nyoman, as part of my project on contextual theology in 2009-2010. Nyoman was a “retired catechist” in Palasari, a man of seventy-plus years who was trained in a seminary and left two years prior to his ordination. He taught Catholic Religious Education for most of his life at local high schools, preached publicly during any liturgy without a priest and brought holy communion to the sick on Sundays. He was very involved in the parish council, and as an individual was very knowledgeable about his culture. In my desire to learn, I bombarded him with questions, many of which I now realise were rather naive. He was patient with me up to a point. After a battery of questions, he held up his hand and pointed to a Balinese building (*Bale Banjar*) some fifty yards away. It housed every village meeting, formal or informal activity, sports such badminton and table tennis, and also, a place of leisure time where people could chat, and any kind of information is transmitted.*

*"You see that *Bale Banjar*?" Nyoman asked. "It's like our culture. You can sit back here and describe it, but it's not 'til you go inside, listen, feel it, see from the inside looking out, that you really know what it's all about. You've gotta go inside!"*

The lessons of the "*Bale Banjar*" were taken to heart. Several years have passed since we sat under that mango tree. When I returned to Palasari to conduct fieldwork for this project, I had come to realise that each of the lessons Nyoman had so patiently and poignantly shared with me comprise, in fact, points of access as well as primary defining characteristics of a rich and vibrant oral story, a story vital to Nyoman and to so many other Palasari people. I was convinced that, in the oral story of the Palasari people, we were availed of a wonderful opportunity to enter the "*Bale Banjar*" to know better the world of Palasari.

The intent of this thesis is to offer something of the dynamics and structure, something of the vitality and life of the oral stories and storytelling of the Palasari people through gossip, rumour and testimonies. This journey through stories of *léyak* would follow the path suggested by Nyoman.

See from the inside looking out. Observe what is being said from the perspective of those inside. I first had to listen carefully for the meaning within and avoid my own preconceived ideas and biases. What I had imagined within the "*Bale Banjar*" while standing from afar was not, in fact, what I found once I was inside. The folklorist Alan Dundes (1966) has suggested that an interpretation and appreciation of any people's oral literature involves the clarification of the three significant elements of that literature: the text, the texture and the context. The text refers to the meaning embedded within the actual narrative of the story, what is being said, the

cultural themes, and the literary characters and motifs represented in the story. The text focuses on some of the prominent cultural themes and literary motifs embedded within the stories, always attempting to ground them from the perspective of the Palasari people. This brought me into the world of *léyak* a central part of which is the narrative of illness. This world was continually being constructed by their narrative through the medium of gossip, rumour, testimonies, jokes, hearsay, and loose talk. The people of Palasari, therefore, are active and vital participants in the on-going construction of this world of *léyak*. The practice of storytelling becomes the cultural embodiment of Palasari people.

Feel it. Appreciate the format and style of that which you seek to understand, sensing how it is being said. I would agree that how something is presented is invariably related to what that something means. This is particularly apparent in the telling of oral literature. For Dundes, the texture refers to how the story is presented, the techniques of the telling and the interactions with the listener's response as well as the linguistic components and structures of the story. Such components include the particular phonemes and morphemes, the intonation and pitch, pauses, and any "colouration" within the text of the story. Following the discussion of cultural values and literary motifs, I will explore some of the elements of the presentation style and format of the literature, some of the key techniques of storytelling. I will also highlight many of the salient characteristics of the oral tradition and the creative power of words. It is through songs, words, and in telling the stories that the world of *léyak* is brought forth, made meaningful and maintained.

You've gotta go inside. Engage in and participate with that which you seek to understand, in this case the narrative of *léyak* and illness. To experience is to know, to stand back from is to remain uninformed. For Dundes, the context refers to whom, when, where and for what purpose the stories are told. A comprehension of the context calls for an understanding of the entire cultural configuration from which the story comes. As I discovered, both the text, the what, and the texture, the how, of oral stories ultimately coalesce in a singular focus, that of participation. As I had first experienced with the *léyak* stories and, subsequently, with the illness narratives, to know the oral stories is to have been an active participant within it.

Keplerer once said that "magic, sorcery and witchcraft are at the epistemological centre of anthropology. They embed matters at the heart of the definition of modern anthropology, and the critical issues that they raise are of enduring significance for the discipline. But the questions these phenomena highlight expand beyond mere disciplinary or scholastic interest. They point to matters of deep existential concern in a general quest for an understanding of the human forces engaged in the human construction of lived realities" (2001:1). The narrative of *léyak* in Palasari is the cultural response to the existential concerns of illness and death which

are constructed through the narratives. To understand these concerns by going inside those stories, engaging in the daily conversations, gossip and testimonies.

Methodology of Fieldwork

During the year I lived in Palasari I stayed with my auntie. She was in her eighties. She went to a convent and became a Catholic nun in Java when she was eighteen. She left after three years as the result of the strict discipline. She remains single to this day. She never allowed me to do any housework since she wanted me to concentrate on my research, but I knew that it was more because she indulged me like her own son.

I began my research by visiting houses in the most convenient neighbourhood, the one in which I lived. On each visit I asked who had been ill, what the problem had been, what kinds of treatment had been tried, why those choices had been made, what they thought of the care they had received, and how much it had cost. How often they had consulted the *balian*, and what kind of *balian* they had consulted. When I knew of an on-going illness, I visited the household frequently and tried to follow the progress of the illness on a daily basis. In addition to information about health care I carried out an economic and demographic survey on the entire village of 388 households which included names, ages, education, occupations, residence histories, marriage, land and animal ownership, crop share arrangements and mortality.

As the health survey neared completion, it became obvious that the Palasari people used modern medicine as their first choice. Their choice created a pattern such as this: if one is sick, she or he would go to the clinic to get the generic tablets and vitamins, or they would consult a medical doctor (a general practitioner). If their symptoms persisted, they would go to the hospital for further diagnosis and treatment. Sometimes they would consult other doctors for a second opinion. If they thought that conventional medicines had failed to help, in the very last resort they would consult the *balian* who inevitably diagnosed that the source of their illness was *léyak*. The reason given for consulting the *balian* tended to be expedient or eclectic, and nothing to do with religious belief and their perception of the ability of the healers. They just wanted to be cured.

Given my acquaintance with the village, at first, I thought that it looked a lot easier to collect data and information regarding *léyak* from the villagers. I did collect so many narratives and stories of those who claimed to be the victim of *léyak* or happened to ‘experience’ (to see and dream of) them. To my surprise, it was difficult to get any confession from those accused through circulated rumour and gossip about them as *léyak*. Not one single person would confess. I tirelessly visited people, who since my childhood had gained some notoriety as a result of being gossiped about as *léyak*. Despite my various strategies aimed at enticing them

to talk, none of them personally claimed to be *léyak*. The reason perhaps was that, in a closed society such as Palasari, ‘the activities of ritual experts in charms, healers, practitioners of harm and protectors against these’ and activities of consulting them are seen as ‘subversive and wrong and so are prohibited by the state and the Church’ (Stewart and Strathern, 2004:2). The farthest I could get was just gossip, rumour and testimonies. People would talk of *léyak* in the third person, and never in the first person. This talk was often originally in private and then became public, passed down from generation to generation. Although most of the younger generations in Palasari gain their higher education from outside and finally get their job and live there, many of them work overseas on the cruise-ships as carpenters and builders in the Middle East or Maldives; but the stories of flying witches that can do harm to their neighbours never die. Despite ‘undergoing rapid change, modernisation and also having access to scientific medicine’ (Hobart, 2003:1); and despite the fact that their earnings could cover the expenses for the best medical treatment, the Palasari people still believe and reproduce the stories or testimonies that their parents or relatives died of *léyak*. Belief in *léyak* has always remained integral to the life of the people and deeply embedded in a network of social relations that extends far beyond their village. My observation that most of the people in Palasari frequently come to *baliangs* for consultations and health treatment pointed me towards a new direction for my research; towards a study of the healing practitioners called *balian* (Hindu), or *dukun* (Muslim) and *pendoa* (Christian or Catholic). I collected lots of data from these healers from the various religious backgrounds, including those whose names I had heard the most in Palasari. This new direction included my studying for a period of three months as an apprentice with a *balian*, following the advice of Greenwood, “if an anthropologist wants to examine ‘magic’ then she or he must directly experience the otherworld” (2000:12).

In addition to collecting data in Palasari, I decided to become an apprentice to a local *balian* in the neighbouring village for three months so that I could have a first-hand experience of *léyak*. Unfortunately, I had no personal experience throughout this period. It absorbed most of my time with no useful outcome. The only thing I was able to learn from this training was that practicing *léyak* required mastering certain techniques of yoga-meditation, ritual-offerings, and memorising mantras without any apparent meaning. The *balian* informed me that it was only those who were born with a gift who could practice *léyak*, and I was not one of them. I decided to end my training and to concentrate on collecting fieldwork data.

Going native to Palasari, is like experiencing, what Jackson calls, “the oscillation between moments of association and dissociation” (2012:2). My association with this village came through my mother who went to school there for 4 years, and also through the time I spent during school breaks staying with my aunty. I felt an affinity with the village and its inhabitants.

At the same time, I never felt that Palasari was my home. I was aware that the accent, the culture and tradition were very different to my own. In a way, this study is a kind of autoethnography, where my personal experience can be considered as data to describe, analyse, interpret and understand cultural experience (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015). It is a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context (Reed-Danahay, 2005:15). But at the same time, I felt as outsider who needed to decode the cultural meaning of my fieldwork experience. This experience of oscillation between association and disassociation, as insider as well as outsider, described how I felt during my stay in Palasari. It may be, as Bateson and Mead suggest, that in Bali the ‘state of dreamy-relaxed dissociation’ becomes the basis of trance and thereby is assigned a positive social value that it may not attain in the West, where children are discouraged from daydreaming and told to snap out of it – though prayer, meditation, days of rest (Sabbath), fasting (Lent/Ramadan), and remembrance, or moments of silence for the dead, may be compared to the Balinese silent and trance state (1942:47).

It is the task of an anthropologist to undergo a “process of possession and ‘depossession’: of letting go of the familiar, prejudicial orientation – or familiar personality – in order to allow an empathic merger of the self with the unfamiliar other, before returning to the familiar personality where the experience is reflected upon and interpreted” (Huskinson and Schmidt, 2010: 10).

This study is based on fieldwork and participant observation during my stay in Negara, the capital city of the Jembrana regency (21 km Eastern Palasari) from 2012-2014 and in Palasari 2016-2017. It utilises interview techniques for the study of affective reaction and generally direct observation of the activities. This method is applied in order to enter the context and inner experiences of the individual. I tried to understand what their behaviour means in terms of their inner experience. I did not interpret or assume how the person felt in the situation or try to derive their feelings primarily from observations of their behaviour; on the contrary, I asked the subject how he felt, what he believed, and what the meaning of the experience or situation was for him. Questions were also asked to get the individual’s ideas of the rules of the culture, the socially acceptable and unacceptable aspects, and how people reacted to them overtly and covertly (see LaVine, 1932: 305).

My method included both systematic and anecdotal observations and interviews with people in many areas of Bali, especially Palasari. The majority of the interviews came about as the result of my engagement with the storytelling, gossips, rumour and testimony which were part of everyday life in Palasari. Interviews with Balinese were conducted primarily in the native language of the individual, either Balinese or Indonesian. The average length of an interview was approximately an hour and half and some individuals were interviewed repeatedly.

Informed consent was obtained for interviews, but for reasons of courtesy the names are made pseudonyms and the use of photographs of the persons are not available. In addition, after each interview I checked everything with the interviewee to ensure that I was recording accurately what they had said. Although my interviews involved my aunty, she was not the main source of any of my data, and therefore there was no necessity to disguise her identity with pseudonym. Moreover, it was well-known she was my aunt. To protect those involved, in what follows, the names, places, and contexts have been deliberately (and quite extensively) anonymized and obscured.

The Outline of Thesis

This thesis begins with a theoretical discussion of belief as narrative to place it into a wider context within the academia (*Chapter 2*). It focuses on the ethnography of *léyak* in the small community which although Catholic considers themselves as Balinese, settled in the centre of the West of Bali since 1940. The transmigration from the South of Bali was due to their conversion to Catholicism which resulted from persecutions and trials from their Hindu relatives. The new village became a land of refuge. For the official Church, however, it was perceived as the promised land, but for the locals they often spoke of it as the land that devours its inhabitants. The stories of malignant *léyak* that brought sickness and death are the stuff of daily hushed conversation. Palasari became a battlefield (*Chapter 3*), not just between the hierarchy with its authority to produce formal knowledge and the commoners with their counter-narratives, but also how of the non-Catholics marginalise the Balinese Catholic as being betrayers of their ancestors and tradition. This chapter also tries to answer the question of ‘why Palasari’. There have been many works on Balinese Hinduism and Islam so far, but few possibly none on the Balinese Catholics. This work tries to fill that gap.

Chapter 4 shows the master narrative of Balinese *léyak* by outlining the journey of the Goddess Durga from India to Java, then Bali, finally ending up in Palasari. While her dominant image in India was as a preserver, her image in Java and Bali is dominated by the malign as a destroyer. The worship of Durga in her temple in a graveyard is an important mean of inheriting her power. Rangda, *léyak*, and any kind of black art are believed to be associated with Durga’s mystical power (*sakti*). The anomaly of *léyak* in Palasari is that there is no place of Durga. The embodiment of Durga in Palasari is not one of power, but of demonization of independent women.

Gossip and conversation in Palasari often mention it as “the Second Sanur”. People tend to relate Palasari with a powerful place such as Sanur, considered as the most popular village in the East of Denpasar among *léyak* practitioners. There are several films depicting the story of

Sanur. *Chapter 5* tries to elaborate the conversation on *léyak* in the daily interaction of people in Palasari. *Léyak* in Palasari is always a form of reinvention or assemble, hybrid, import from outside like buying the magical object from Sanur. This chapter tries to show how belief in *léyak* always come from outside. There are aspects of rupture and continuity of the story of the Palasari *léyak*.

In the Palasari's context the talk of *léyak* always emerges surround chronical illness where the modern hospital is considered to have failed to cure. In *Chapter 6* I will show that traditional folk-healers become the alternative for health care. Their methods of discovery vary from allowing spirits to speak through them as spirit mediums, to consultation of books on the occult. These diviners give oracular diagnoses whose ambiguousness allows the sufferers to match them to their own suspicions. In cases of serious trouble it is common to visit several diviners, searching for one that satisfies. This information is the source of all *léyak* stories in Palasari.

Chapter 7 tries to elaborate how that information is circulated in the forms of gossip, rumour, testimony or urban myth in Palasari. The cultural habit of chatting and gossiping triggers the image of Palasari as an eerie place.

Chapter 8 gives a conclusion.

Chapter 2

Belief as Story

The universe is made of stories, not of atoms (*Speed of Darkness*, Muriel Rukeyser).

Hilde Geertz in the *Images of Power* (1994) famously says, “the line between story worlds and the real world is never clear in Bali” (65). In this world, we know that some worlds are held to exist independently from representation, especially verbal or artistic. They belong to the order of existential experience or to the realm of extraverbal being: they are the “real” worlds. Other worlds depend on having an image for their existence: they are “imaginary.” Permeability between worlds, past and present or present and future, on the one hand, and formed according to different rules of admission, on the other hand, is the necessary basis of all narrative as well as the key to its repetitive-reproductive fate. Throughout this chapter I will demonstrate that the imaginary or story (*narrative*) world plays an important, even essential role in our understanding of reality and ourselves. We constantly hear that we experience the world as narrative and communicate our experiences by it; that our memories of the past, our explanations of the present, and our plans for the future take the form of a story.¹¹ The great story of our time is story itself.

The story-in-mind is what people are referring to when they say they have certain beliefs about things like meaning, value, purpose and significance. Or they will say, “This is the way I look at things” or “This is what I think the correct view is” or “There ought to be a law about that” or “I don’t think government is taking this in the right direction” or “That was the right thing to do in that situation.” Every statement like these is informed by an understanding of the way people believe the world actually is. It is their belief system. If they did not have a basic story in their minds, they would have a difficult time making any of the important decisions people are faced with in life.

This chapter will engage story and belief and their connection to witchcraft (*léyak*) in Palasari in the context of illness. Causality between illness and witchcraft has been represented through communal and personal accounts taking a form of storytelling, gossips, and testimonies. The theoretical background of narrative, belief, witchcraft and illness and their relationship in Palasari will be presented in the remaining parts of this chapter.

¹¹ I will use the terms *narrative* and *story* interchangeably.

Narrative as mode

Development in the study of narrative from a conventional text-type view to a more recent one of narrative as *mode*, *epistemology* and *method* has been celebrated in what is called the *narrative-turn*. Scholars such as Bruner (1986, 1990), Hymes (1996), Ricoeur (1990), MacIntyre (1981) have proposed that narrative is a mode of thought, communication and apprehension of reality which is both super-arching and fundamental to human cognitive makeup. This view of narrative has inspired many of the proponents of the *narrative turn* in the social sciences, a movement which Bruner (2010) traces back to the publication of two issues of *Critical Inquiry* devoted to Narrative in the autumn of 1980 and summer 1981. The contributors to these issues (social scientists such as Hayden White, Jacques Derrida, Frank Kermode, Nelson Goodman and others) set out to “explore the role of narrative in social and psychological formations, particularly in structures of value and cognition” (Mitchell 1980: vii, quoted in Bruner 2010: 47). Bruner himself is amongst the early proponents of narrative as mode. He sees narrative as a way of apprehending reality and as a primary means of communication. In his famous 1986 paper “Two models of thought,” he opposes the narrative to the “logico-scientific” mode, which he calls “paradigmatic,” arguing that although both are fundamental human paradigms, and that their products (stories and arguments, respectively) are “natural kinds” (p. 11), the logico-scientific mode has been privileged as an object of investigation and as a tool in the pursuit of knowledge. Both modes have their own objects, methods and validation criteria, but while the paradigmatic mode is based on the confirmation or rejection of hypotheses through their testing against empirical data, the narrative mode is not based on truth, but on verisimilitude. Its value does not lie in the ability to describe reality, but rather in the capacity to give meaning to human experience. In Bruner’s words (1986: 13), the narrative mode “leads to good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily ‘true’) historical accounts ... and strives ... to locate the experience in time and space.” In the narrative mode logic can be used, but it is also often violated, as many narratives bring about ruptures in expected patterns. Human intention and emotion predominate over reason and objectivity, and the worlds of action and consciousness are presented as parallel but separate universes. At the centre of the narrative mode are human vicissitudes and drama, and the particularities of human existence rather than its general patterns receive the greatest attention. Thus, for example, while the play *Hamlet* may be instantiating the old scheme of Oedipal love, it does so in a unique way and through the mind and action of unique characters. Also, in the narrative mode, meaning is not presented in terms of definitive truths, as, for example, in scientific writings where the results of experiments are reported, but as ambiguous and open to

exploration. This is particularly clear in fiction where stories lend themselves to multiple interpretations and re-readings. In that sense, according to Bruner, narratives operate through presupposition (by creating implicit meanings) and subjectification (1986: 25), i.e. by presenting events through the point of view of a character and by leaving multiple perspectives open. In sum, both modes are tools that allow humans to know the world, but also reveal the way the human mind works. As Bruner concludes:

In the end, the narrative and the paradigmatic come to live side by side. All the more reason for us to move towards an understanding of what is involved in telling and understanding great stories, and how it is that stories create a reality of their own – in life as in art (p. 43).

The idea that narrative is not merely a genre but constitutes a mode of thought and knowledge connects the work of scholars from a variety of traditions and disciplines. Hymes (1996), for example, embeds his reflections on narrative in a more general discussion about ethnography. He expresses deep concern over the loss of a tradition of narrative ability in modern societies, as for him narrative is a way of understanding and conveying experience and knowledge which maintains a sense of the particular and of the essentially human. However, unlike other scholars whose interest in narrative as mode is purely academic and philosophical, Hymes is interested in the concrete social implications of the dichotomy between narrative and non-narrative forms of discourse and knowledge. He argues that oppositions such as those between narrative and scientific or scholarly discourse rest on ideological assumptions. Amongst these, for example, is the identification of the narrative mode (particularly the use of personal narratives) with oral, spontaneous, unplanned, concrete uses of language and of the scientific mode with written, carefully crafted, planned and abstract discourse. These oppositions artificially divide human communication and knowledge modes into higher and lower, prestigious and non-prestigious. Also, by associating non-narrative modes with cognitive superiority, they deny the centrality of narrative forms of understanding. Thus, such ideologically driven dichotomies end up setting the stage for social discrimination in education and other social settings. In Hymes' terms:

If one considers that narrative may be a mode of thought, and indeed that narrative may be an inescapable mode of thought, then its differential distribution in a society may be a clue to the distribution of other things as well – rights and privileges having to do with power and money, to be sure, but also rights and privileges having to do with fundamental functions of language itself, its cognitive and expressive uses in narrative form (1996: 114).

In Ricoeur's work ([1983–5] 1990), the narrative mode is connected to a philosophical reflection on the role of time and memory in human life. In his view, narrative has the fundamental role of registering human time, which he opposes to the phenomenological inner time of individual consciousness and to the cosmic time of the universe. Through the telling of

stories, humans keep the memory of their experiences, the history of their communities. At the same time, the narrative mode imposes order on the heterogeneity of experience and therefore does not merely reflect it but constructs it. The idea of narrative as a fundamental mode of knowledge also resonates with Polkinghorne's (1988 and 1991) concept of emplotment as a basic sense-making mechanism. Emplotment is defined as:

A procedure that configures temporal elements into a whole by "grasping them together" and directing them towards a conclusion or ending. Emplotment transforms a list or sequence of disconnected events into a unified story with a point and a theme (Polkinghorne 1991: 141).

In all the above views, the narrative mode is seen as basic to human understanding of the world.

The Power of Narrative

Becoming immersed in a story, or transported into a narrative world, can have powerful emotional and persuasive consequences (Green & Brock, 2000, 2002; see also Gerrig, 1993; Slater & Rouner, 2002). After being immersed in a text, readers often change their story-relevant beliefs and attitudes in response to the story (e.g., Escalas, 2004; Green, 2004; Mazzocco, Green, Sasota, & Jones, 2010; Vaughn, Hesse, Petkova, & Trudeau, 2009). For example, Strange and Leung (1999) found belief change from a story about the societal issue of high school dropout rates, whether the story was labelled as fiction or a news item. Green and Brock (2000) found that after reading about a young girl attacked by a psychiatric patient ("Murder in the Mall"; Nuland, 1994), participants changed their story-relevant attitudes, including assessments about programs that furloughed mental patients.

A psychological perspective on persuasion via fiction rejects the literary assumption of a "willing suspension of disbelief" and, instead, presumes that readers automatically believe every assertion they read (e.g., Gilbert, Tafarodi, & Malone, 1993; Prentice et al., 1997). Individuals must have the motivation and ability to engage in effortful correction processes to reject false information. Labelling a narrative as fiction does not typically motivate individuals to correct story-influenced beliefs (Appel & Richter, 2007; Green, Garst, Brock, & Chung, 2006). Furthermore, individuals often respond to stories on the basis of their plausibility rather than their truth status, so if a story presents convincing characters or situations, individuals may not care as much about whether the events actually took place, real or not (e.g., Bruner, 1986; Oatley, 1999). All of this inevitably leads to an analysis to what it means to express belief in something or someone.

Problematizing Belief

Needham in *Belief, Language and Experience* (1972) explores the problem of cross-cultural translation of “belief”. The acquisition of a concept of belief and its translation creates concerns not only for cross-cultural comparative research but further problematizes investigations within the English-speaking world because of the semantic variability of certain concepts. In this case, “belief” covers a wide range of meanings and, for Needham, there is no “central or essential meaning” provided in its definition (1972: 40).

The dilemma of cross-cultural translation prompts Needham to trace the etymology of “belief” in the English language. He finds a convergence of “lexical forms in the Indo-European family of languages” with the “religious history that combines Jewish, Greek, and Christian concepts” (1972: 50). Similarly, anthropologist Malcolm Ruel (1982) traces the etymology and illustrates four particular periods of Christian history¹² and their respective impact on “belief.” Initially, Ruel states, the term expressed confidence in the gods or an oracle to promote welfare and further denoted a sense of obedience in “acknowledgement of their power to determine human fate.” However, in the New Testament, the Greek use of the term, *pistis*, acquired a “technical use” and was “often used in the sense to be converted to become a Christian” thereby representing a “common conviction, a shared confidence that both distinguished and united them as a community” (101-102). In other words, “belief” shifts from a verb to a noun distinguishing a religious community and a social identity. A second shift occurs when the concept becomes associated with the declaration of “confessing Christ,” “something that is explicitly affirmed where the act of affirmation has its own functional value” and establishes the “church as the community who believe in his resurrection” (103-104). The third shift happens when the term is associated with a body of doctrine that would become part of the “authority structure of the church.” Needham notes the Council of Nicaea and the patronage of Constantine (105). At this point, “belief” is a mode of distinguishing true and false Christians by exercising religious authority and power. Lastly, for Ruel, a fourth shift occurs with the Protestant Reformation: “belief” becomes an object of acquisition, an object of possession, synonymous with faith (106-107). In this regard, Christianity’s history renders “belief” problematic. Jean Pouillon (1982) further demonstrated the equivocality of “belief” for English, German, and French, which conjoin three different uses of the term. The first notes the existence of someone or something, often in terms of a cognitive, subjectively committed, fact. The second is the internalization of a statement as true, which is commonly discussed in

¹² “(1) the critical, initial phase in which Christians, the Nazarene sect, emerged as a distinctive religious movement, a community of believers; (2) the immediately succeeding period leading to the Council of Nicaea that witnessed both the developing formal organization of the Church and the establishment of orthodox creeds, sanctioned by the Church councils; (3) the Reformation and in particular Luther’s reformulation of what it means to believe (i.e. to have faith); and finally, since we cannot leave ourselves out, (4) the present period, which might be characterized in both Christian and secular contexts as belief diffused” (Ruel 1982: 101).

terms of knowing or having knowledge. The third usage, a “believing in,” designates the “qualification of a bond” by placing confidence, trust, or faith in the object of belief and often pertains to an emotional than a cognitive act (Lindquist & Coleman 2008: 5; Pouillon’s distinction is re-iterated by Robbins [2007] in distinguishing “belief in” and “belief that”). In this regard, Needham, Ruel, and Pouillon illustrate that “belief” is not a straightforward concept; “belief” conjoins various semantic possibilities and becomes subject to historical discursive practices (Asad 1982; this article is no exception).

The semantic variability of “belief” not only makes translation difficult, but it has prompted persons of various cultures and religions to question and think through what it means to “believe” (Carlisle & Simon 2012). For example, the Minangkabau Muslims in Indonesia will often exploit the multiple possibilities for interpreting “belief” in order to reconcile a subjective state of conviction with “ambiguously Islamic experiences and practices” (Simon 2012: 222). Similarly, evangelical Christians in the United States will reflect on what it means to be authentically Christian (Bielo 2012) and while Thai Buddhists claim that belief is a non-issue or irrelevant, Thai Christians discuss what it means to have belief (Cassaniti 2012). Contrary to what Needham might suggest, these accounts do *not* suggest that “belief” should be abandoned but rather enforces the view that language, as a mediator of thought, is inadequate for the discernment of belief. This renders the use of questionnaires and asking what one believes during interviews problematic.¹³ The cases above illustrate how people *think* about “belief” rather than what they “actually” believe. As Charles Lindholm (2012) notes, much work has cantered on *how* beliefs are justified and practiced and how persons convince themselves that their beliefs are true rather than investigating *what* it is that is being justified and practiced.

Over the decades, in the study of religion, “belief” has moved from a propositional declaration and intellectual assent to a behavioural and performative account. Talal Asad noted that “it is a modern idea that a practitioner cannot know how to live religiously without being able to articulate that knowledge” ([1982] 2002: 120). Not all religious practitioners will have a systematic understanding of their religion. To live religiously, instead, is argued to comprise of an ethos and habituated practices. The participation in rituals and the significance of ritual artefacts are often represented in the simplest of terms and a matter of unreflectively following convention and tradition (Hicks 2008; Mircea Eliade [1963] noted the justification of “following the ancestors” in the Australian Arunta, the Kai of New Guinea, the Navajo, Tibetans, as well as “Hindu theologians”). Peter Collins, in his discussion of the United Society

¹³ Although the interpretive ambiguity can be a methodological advantage to consider what persons *think* about belief, which was demonstrated in Abby Day’s study of *Believing in Belonging* in North England (2011).

of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing (the American Shakers), argued that "practice *is* belief" (2012: 265). A similar position was argued by Thomas Kirsch (2004), in his study of Gwembe Tonga of southern Zambia, as well as Abby Day and Gordon Lynch (2013) in their discussion of belief as "cultural performance." This marks a performative turn—from an emphasis on cognitive propositional assent to a behavioural performative approach.

Textures of Belief

The division between belief as intellectual assent and belief as performative in ritual can be traced back to a division between E. B. Tylor (1871) and William Robertson Smith (1889). The former emphasized religion as belief in supernatural entities while the latter focused on the participatory actions in rituals. Both views have been characterized as "belief." However, conjoining propositional statements and performative dimensions into a singular category conflates the concept as an analytical tool. This flattens "belief" and includes any and all statements and behaviours made within a religious context. Qualifying both as belief, and providing a taxonomy of different types of belief, without discussing the relationship between cognition and behaviour provides little assistance and clarity to the epistemological and methodological questions. If "belief" is, indeed, to be maintained as a conceptual tool for analysis and a critical category for the study of religion, not only should the concept be capable of congregating propositional as well as performative dimensions into a coherent framework (Mair 2012), but it must also account for the degrees and textures of "belief." In other words, not only does "belief" require an understanding between cognition, language, and behaviour to accommodate the complexities between propositional statements and ritual activity but it must also account for views of scepticism, implicit bias, and forms of prejudice that may be motivated by religious institutions and structures.

Scepticism and reluctance to systems of practice and meaning have been documented, at the least, since the time of Evans-Pritchard's account of Azande witchcraft (1937). More recently, David Hicks (2008), in his account of sacred artefacts in East Timor, illustrated the degrees of beliefs and attitudes persons can have with respect to their religious tradition. Hicks argues that sacred artefacts, in this case a sacred house known as the *uma lulik* and various sacred treasures, can serve as an index to belief in the existence of ancestral ghosts. The *uma lulik* is associated with a "descent group or family" as the sacred houses serve as "reliquaries for the heirlooms of long-deceased ancestors" and are the "sites for ritual activity and the centre of spiritual devotion for those who identify themselves with them—a convergence of ideas from the realms of kinship relationships and rituals, past and present, that impart a moral valence to the artefact" (2008: 174). The ancestral ghosts are considered "a source of fertility

and life” and the Timorese “maintain a mutually satisfying relationship” with them through the performance of rituals. However, Hicks reports that the *uma lulik* also provokes a range of attitudes: a belief in the existence of ancestral ghosts as a certainty and the maintenance of the *uma lulik* as “beyond belief,” agnosticism of the ancestral ghosts, an atheism but still participating in rituals for social or political reasons, and an atheism that disparages the sacred houses and considers them as a “symbol of cultural backwardness” (177-178). Such attitudes to the *uma lulik* convey a range of beliefs about ancestral spirits and the importance of the *uma lulik*. More importantly, Hicks notes that the participation in ritual activity does not necessarily entail a corresponding belief in the reasons for the ritual.

The discrepancies between propositional statements and participation point to a range of attitudes and motivations. Moreover, the issue of discrepancy further opens up the cognitive space of implicit biases; not all statements or behaviours are accurate reflections of our beliefs, thoughts, values, or motivations nor is it the case that we are necessarily aware of them. The investigation and discussion of implicit biases have been duly noted in the philosophical (Saul 2013; Frankish 2010; Frankish 2012; Wylie 2011) and psychological literature (Newell & Shanks 2014; Smith et al. 2014; Stanovich et al. 2013; Casper & Rothermund 2012; Greenwald et al. 2009; Jost et al. 2009). In the psychology of religion, Ralph Hood Jr., Peter Hill, and Bernard Spilka (2009) provide an overview of the relationship between religion, morality, and prejudice, which pertains to the relationship between beliefs, morals and emotions. Implicit biases and various forms of discrimination further point out inconsistencies between explicitly stated positions of equality and incongruent behaviours and practices. For example, in a study (Wright et al. 2015) investigating the receptivity of Christian churches in the United States email inquiries were sent to 3,113 churches from a fictive person moving to the area and looking for a new church. The person’s name was manipulated to represent white (Scott Taylor), black (Jamal Washington), Hispanic (Carlos Garcia), and Asian (Jong Soo Kim)-sounding names. Not surprisingly, “Christian churches, as a whole, responded more frequently and more fully to inquiries with white-sounding names.” Mainline Protestant churches exhibited the most variation by race in their responses: “most frequently and most welcomingly to emails with white-sounding names, followed by black and Hispanic names, followed by Asian names” (199).¹⁴ The study presents a pattern of discrimination, explicitly or implicitly, despite official positions of racial equality and inclusion.

¹⁴ A similar study was conducted by Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan’s study (2004) of the U.S. job market. After responding to over “1,300 employment ads in the sales, administrative support, clerical, and customer service job categories” with “nearly 5,000 resumes”, they report a 50-percent gap in call returns with “White-sounding-names” receiving significantly more calls than “African-American-sounding names.” They further note that “the gap between Whites and African-American applicants widen with resume quality” (2004: 992). In other words, despite having the

Discrimination against women and persons of colour have also been issues within academia. A study by Mathew Guest, Sonya Sharma, and Robert Song (2013) investigated the gender imbalance of Theology and Religious Studies (TRS) departments in the United Kingdom. While women are the majority at the undergraduate level, the figures drop dramatically when considering the gender distribution across academic staff in TRS departments; a trend also noted in philosophy departments across the trans-Atlantic (Wylie 2011; Beebe and Saul 2011). In TRS departments, which have historically fostered Christian theology, the “most evident” of reasons attributed to this discrepancy was the “nature of religious communities on which Christian theology has historically drawn.” For instance, one interviewee stated:

[O]ne reason might be the relative conservatism of faith communities. Insofar as the sector recruits scholars who come out of faith communities or from faith communities and are motivated by their faith to study Theology or Religion, then that might have something to do with it.

[. . . the gender balance] is made worse in theology because of the general attitude towards women in Christianity as a whole that affects how seriously women’s work is taken by academics in theology....¹⁵

Yet, the ambiguities around “belief” have seemingly deterred the discussion of implicit bias; the cognitive phenomena are seldom discussed directly in the study of religion. Instead, studies either utilize statistical methods to note discriminatory practices or descriptively discuss the prejudices against particular demographics in various regions: gay Muslims in Indonesia (Boellstorff 2005), tensions between Christians and the Hindutva in India (Menon 2003), the migration of Ethiopian Beta Israel members seeking citizenship (Seeman 2003), Southern Italian converts to Pentecostalism (Di Bella 2003), and the discrimination against “Black” in England (Hall 1992; Toulis 1997), all of which imply an implicit bias within their respective contexts. To illustrate this further, sociologist, Samuel Perry conducted a study (2014) demonstrating that, in the U.S., “whites who express a desire for their children and their children’s spouses to share the parent’s religion tend to be less comfortable with their hypothetical daughter marrying someone who is black, Latino, or Asian [which further suggests that] for whites, religious heritage is infused with racial meaning” (216). In this regard, the intersections between race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, law and religion with regard to implicit bias, prejudice, and discrimination must be investigated further within the context of belief. As psychologist Gordon Allport states, “The role of religion is paradoxical. It makes

same resume, there is a prevailing bias against African-Americans or an outright explicit practice of discrimination in the U.S. job market which worsens with resume quality.

¹⁵ Guest, Sharma, and Song (2013: 15); the report further notes differences in styles of discussion, academic behaviour, and the alienating and patriarchal environment of conferences.

and unmakes prejudice. While the creeds of the great religions are universalistic, all stressing brotherhood; the practices of these creeds are frequently divisive and brutal” (1954: 444).

In the study of religion, one issue at stake is the discrepancy between, and within, language and behaviour—those who explicitly declare one thing, such as a non-sexist or non-racist position, yet behave in a sexist or racist manner—and how to discern belief through the available methods and evidence. The range of beliefs for participating in rituals and the degrees and textures of belief, illustrated through the biases noted above, creates a demand for a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of “belief” that can accommodate both performative and propositional dimensions, as well as implicit and explicit forms, in accounts of various religious traditions and lived experience.

Belief Perseverance

Several decades of research on belief perseverance suggest that individuals frequently retain newly created beliefs even if they are informed that the initial information on which those beliefs were based was incorrect, particularly if they have integrated those beliefs into their knowledge structures (e.g., Anderson, Lepper, & Ross, 1980; Gilbert et al., 1993; Johnson & Seifert, 1994; Loftus, 1979; Schul & Burnstein, 1985; Skurnik, Yoon, Park, & Schwarz, 1995; Wegner, Coulton, & Wenzlaff, 1985; Wyer & Unverzagt, 1985). Work by Gilbert and colleagues (1993) suggests that believing information that one reads, even if that information is explicitly labelled as false, occurs automatically and requires effortful correction to reject the falsehoods (see also Gilbert, 1991). Other studies in this domain suggest that even providing individuals with adequate time to correct their beliefs is often not sufficient (e.g., Anderson et al., 1980). However, little previous research has focused directly on the moral dimension of information discounting; rather, typical studies of belief perseverance simply inform participants in a relatively neutral way that some of the information is incorrect or unreliable. In contrast, intentional deception (of the kind employed by authors Frey, Glass, and others) sparks anger and outrage, particularly when the goal of the deception is a self-interested one—to gain fame or wealth. Readers’ negative reactions to this type of moral transgression may be particularly powerful motivating factors to correct impressions or beliefs changed by a narrative. A goal of the current study was to explicitly test a case of moral violation (intentional lying for personal gain), which also provides insight into how robust the perseverance effect may be under conditions that more closely mirror real-world author deceptions.

Moral Reasons for Discounting and Belief Perseverance

Two related lines of research suggest that the reason for discounting should affect the extent to which individuals correct or attempt to correct their beliefs: studies of information encoding under contexts of suspicion, and studies of when jurors will discount inadmissible evidence.

First, prior research suggests that information processing is sensitive to conditions of trust versus suspicion. Distrust appears to lead people to automatically activate alternatives to the communicated information, most likely as a protective mechanism (e.g., Schul, Burnstein, & Bardi, 1996; Schul, Mayo, & Burnstein, 2004). These studies focus on contexts where deception is likely to be present. Our study extends this research by investigating confirmed deception rather than the possibility of deception.

Second, studies of juror decision making have examined the conditions under which jurors are willing and able to ignore evidence that is ruled inadmissible. For example, Kassin and Sommers (1997; Sommers & Kassin, 2001) found that jurors disregarded inadmissible evidence when the reason for discounting was that the evidence was unreliable (e.g., a wiretap that was very difficult to hear), but not when it represented a procedural violation (e.g., an illegally obtained wiretap). These and similar findings suggest that jurors are motivated to reach a fair and just verdict and, thus, may use inadmissible evidence when they believe it will help them find the truth (see Steblay, Hosch, Culhane, & McWethy, 2006, for a review). This research demonstrates that moral factors can play an important role in the extent to which individuals attempted to correct their beliefs. Our study extends this work by examining a somewhat different type of moral goal; readers of deceptive narratives may wish to restore a sense of justice by punishing the author and by eliminating the influence of the deception on their beliefs or attitudes.

Structural Factors Inhibiting Successful Correction

The research discussed above suggests that the moral violation caused by intentional deception by the author of a narrative may be sufficient to motivate attempts at belief correction. However, although previous research has typically used nonnarrative communication (e.g., lists of behaviours for a target individual; feedback about one's own performance on a task), findings from these studies imply that the ability to correct beliefs in response to deceptive narratives may be impaired.

Narrative structure and engagement. Narratives may be especially likely to lead to belief perseverance for several reasons. First, narratives present information in a causal structure, which may be more likely to be retained (e.g., Anderson, 1983; Johnson & Seifert, 1994), and encourage integrative processing, which increases the difficulty of correction (e.g., Schul & Burnstein, 1985). Narratives can also evoke transportation into a narrative world, an immersive

mental state which inhibits counterarguing and epistemic monitoring (Green & Brock, 2000; Slater & Rouner, 2002; Richter, Schroeder, & Wohrmann, 2009). Acceptance of the reality of the narrative is often a default state, with readers only questioning the validity of the story if some problem disrupts their ease of processing or breaks them out of their engagement with a narrative (Busselle & Bilzandic, 2008; see also Vaughn et al., 2009).

Finally, attachments to or identification with characters in the narrative may be a particularly influential aspect of narrative persuasion. If readers still show liking of these characters even after the deception is revealed, the influence of the story may be more likely to persist. The question of whether moral condemnation of an author also reduces liking for or connections with a story's characters (a spill-over effect) has not been previously investigated and will be tested in the current study.

Timing of deception announcement. The timing of the deception announcement also inhibits correction processes. Studies suggest that correction or protection against misinformation is more likely to be successful when a warning precedes rather than follows a communication (e.g., Schul, 1993; Wegner et al., 1985). In real-world cases of deceptive narratives, the admission of lying typically follows exposure to the narrative. For example, thousands of people likely read Frey's autobiography or Blair's articles before the falsehoods in them were discovered and publicized.

Difficulty in constructing an alternative. When a reader discovers that a narrative is false, it may be difficult to generate an alternative true scenario. Correction or negation is more likely to be successful when a clear alternative exists. For instance, there is a clear alternative to the statement "George owns a television," so if a person is informed that this statement is false, he or she can easily create a new mental image of George (Hasson, Simmons, & Todorov, 2005; Mayo, Schul, & Bernstein, 2004). In contrast, in typical narrative deception scenarios, the reader may not have experience with the world described in the narrative (e.g., drug treatment centres), so if a narrative description is erroneous, the person has little ability to fill in the blanks with a more accurate opinion. Furthermore, corrective information may often be vague about which specific points in a narrative were untrue. All of these factors increase the difficulty of successfully adjusting one's real world beliefs.

Narrative is repeatedly claimed to be our most fundamental form of processing, organizing and communicating information about real world belief. For instance, the cognitive scientist Mark Turner states in *The Literary Mind* (1996) that "most of our experience, our knowledge, and our thinking is organized as stories." For him, "narrative imagining—story—is the fundamental instrument of thought. Rational capacities depend upon it. It is our chief means of

looking into the future, of predicting, of planning, and of explaining. It is a literary capacity indispensable to human cognition generally” (4–5).

There are countless forms of narrative in the world. First of all, there is a prodigious variety of genres, each of which branches out into a variety of media, as if all substances could be relied upon to accommodate man’s stories. Among the vehicles of narrative are articulated language, whether oral or written, pictures, which are still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all those substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, drama [suspense drama], comedy, pantomime, paintings. Stained-glass windows, movies, local news, and conversation. Moreover, in this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed, narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, and has never been anywhere, any people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their stories. and very often these stories are enjoyed by men of different and even opposite cultural backgrounds. Narrative remains largely unconcerned with good or bad literature. Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural (Barthes, 1975:237).

In the late twentieth century, *homo narrans* joined various other anthropological concepts defining the human being as a rationally gifted and speaking creature. The concept goes back to two texts published by the communication theorist Walter Fisher (1984; 1987). Meanwhile the concept has been taken up as a book title. See for example John D. Niles (1999). According to Fisher, human beings relate to their various environments and to themselves less through pure observation and rational deliberation than through the narrating of believable stories.¹⁶ “Human beings are inherently storytellers,” weaving their image of the world from the stories they tell, he argues that storytelling thus reflects:

“a natural capacity to recognize the coherence and fidelity of stories [humans] tell and experience.” “I suggest,” he continues, “that we experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, as conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends. The various modes of communication – all forms of symbolic action – then may be seen as stories, interpretations of things in sequences” (Fisher, 1987:24).

To cite Alasdair MacIntyre’s somewhat different way of putting it: the human being is a “storytelling animal” (1984:216).

¹⁶ “I propose (1) a reconceptualization of humankind as *Homo narrans*; (2) that all forms of human communication need to be seen fundamentally as stories – symbolic interpretations of aspects of the world occurring in time and shaped by history, culture, and character; (3) that individuated forms of discourse should be considered as ‘good reasons’ – values or value-laden warrants for believing or acting in certain ways; and (4) that a narrative logic that all humans have natural capacities to employ ought to be conceived of as the logic by which human communication is assessed” (1987:XI).

Insight into the *verbal* constitution of the human relationship to the world extends back to the eighteenth-century's linguistic thinking, to Vico and Herder. It was deepened by Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and other thinkers and manifests itself as a paradigm in the linguistic turn of twentieth-century humanities. Since then, it has become common currency that human beings are, in an elementary sense, symbol-using creatures dependent on this symbolic usage – that they do not move within the world as it is but through a field of sign systems and discourses.

What does it mean to supplement and render precisely the idea of the ineluctably verbal nature of human access to the world through a model of *narrative* organisation? What do we gain by underscoring the aspect of narration? What are the consequences of tying the idea of a genuinely narrated relationship to the world, as manifest in the concept of *homo narrans*, with Barthes' approach to narrative as a culturally universal phenomenon running through all epochs, peoples, social strata, and media? What qualities allow narration to supply, embrace the most varied possible circumstances, and to do so usefully in every possible way? How does this function, and what functions does narration fulfil?

Often, anthropological efforts at an explanation have recourse to definitions of myth – just as work on narrative in general has taken up and developed older research of that sort. The approaches that have emerged here can be grouped around a few key categories: overcoming anxiety, creating meaning, and orientation.

“Stories are told,” we read in Hans Blumenberg's *Work on Myth*, “in order to ‘kill’ something. In the most harmless, but not least important case, to kill time, in another and more serious case: to kill fear” (34). If telling stories is really a universal cultural activity, then narrowing its scope to the two motifs of diversion and overcoming angst is hardly satisfactory. In addition, the motif of primal conquest of anxiety contains the questionable premise, stamped by the colonial-period ethnography, of a primitive human developmental stage: one on which human beings, still full of terror, encountered a universe of opaque natural forces that they had to fantasize away as gods and spirits.¹⁷ It is doubtless the case that an important psychological spur for stories – for instance children's stories – is the ability of their sound to illuminate the world. Narration's task, however, of alleviating angst by furnishing it with names and forms is by no means universal. Likewise, narration only sometimes represents a response to a need for

¹⁷ This anthropological evolutionary schema still has its echo in a foundational text of the Frankfurt School. “What the primitive experiences as supernatural is [...] the complex concatenation of nature in contrast to its individual link. The cry of terror called forth by the un-familiar becomes its name. It fixes the transcendence of the unknown in relation to the known, permanently linking horror to holiness. The doubling of nature into appearance and essence, effect and force, made possible by myth no less than by science, springs from human fear, the expression of which becomes its explanation” (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002:10).

security or solace; entire genres specialize in spreading insecurity, horror, and desolation, and they do not always serve a therapeutic purpose.

Another anthropological motif, related to that of overcoming angst, centres on an effort by human beings to embed the reality of their lives in a comprehensible broader context through storytelling; an effort grounded in the unbearable nature of simply being delivered to either haphazard or iron law without any deeper relation to their existence. (The modern catchphrase for this effort is coping with contingency.) In this framework narration brings meaning into the world, supplies its course with goals and intentions, populates it with anthropomorphic actors, and renders it into an intelligible form in the first place, thus transforming human beings, who are obliged to find their place in the world not only practically but also symbolically.

As important as this function of storytelling is, it does not exhaust the range of possible cases. As we will see, narration can just as easily be placed at the disposal of *dismantling* efforts at making sense, for example hegemonic semantic edifices. As an activity that is to a large extent formless, narration can correspondingly play out precisely the quality of formlessness in the process of cultural semiosis – whether through *deformation*, or through the *dissolution* of solidified patterns of meaning. In many narratives, contingency is not expelled but rather called on.

Finally, we can raise a similar objection against an adjacent anthropological approach ascribing narration with the task of furnishing human beings with indispensable symbolic orientation. This as well involves merely half a definition, failing to take account of the phenomenon of narratively generated *disorientation*. Since the onset of storytelling, laments have circulated over the misleading nature of their fabulation, the invitation, the activity extends toward denying reality, its creation of nonsense and disorder. Repeatedly this complaint had served as a source for discrediting storytelling as a cultural practice, and this with good reason, as it reveals a basic ontological deficiency. For within its realm narration rules uncontrolled and omnipotent; it does not have to care about any congruency with outside reality; it takes the liberty of declaring each and every possible thing an object in the world. Like thinking and speaking in general, narration does not have a sufficient intrinsic truth-sign at its disposal (Koschorke, 2018:4). As in a vortex, mixed within it are elements of truth, semblance, hearsay, ignorance, error, lies. Stories can slide back and forth between the two possible extremes, commit themselves to faithfulness to reality in a way that suits them or else entirely cut their relationship with it; but neither alternative touches on their inner constitution. For this reason, those speaking of *homo narrans* are conceiving of human beings in their capacity to say both yes and no to the reality in which they live. Put morally, this is the capacity to lie, or more precisely to annul or cancel the difference between real and unreal, true and

false; to play with the difference. In actuality, narrations are in a certain sense *story games*, guided by a system of combinatory rules, whereas despite the sometimes-high stakes most of the game's moves are free.

Homo ludens and creativity

Emerging at this point is the affinity between *homo narrans* and *homo ludens*, a preceding twentieth-century anthropological figure made common currency through a famous book by Johan Huizinga, *Homo ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, first published in 1938. In his book, Huizinga argues that the “great archetypal activities of human society,” verbal communication, a mythic interpretation of the world, the creation of community within the cult – “are all permeated with play from the start”(4). Although for Huizinga all culture is thus grounded in play. He defines social play precisely in terms of its removal from the context of everyday life. Huizinga sees play as representing a temporally and spatially framed activity, one following a voluntary but binding order and forming an autonomous world, a world free of the weight of reality. His definition is thus aimed at the form-side of the playful arrangement:

Summing up the formal characteristics of play we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside ‘ordinary’ life as being ‘not serious,’ but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means (10).

The deciding features are thus freedom, inauthenticity, singularity, adherence to rules, community formation, festivity, and a collective feeling of pleasure emerging from all of this. This framing of the situation allows construction of “an absolute and peculiar order” within the play: “Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection. [...] The profound affinity between play and order is perhaps the reason why play [...] seems to lie to such a large extent in the field of aesthetics. Play has a tendency to be beautiful” (10). It would appear inviting to follow up on this train of thought, developing parallels between art and social play. At least according to classical criteria, one of the artwork's essential qualities is its closed or self-contained nature. Huizinga himself suggests interconnections with poetry, which he understands as a metrical, rhythmic play of the spirit emerging from song, dance, and music (*idem*). In distinction to other cultural forms, poetry, he argues, has remained true to its playful roots, “for while in the more highly organized forms of society religion, science, law, war, and politics gradually lose touch with play, so prominent in

the earlier phases, the function of the poet still remains fixed in the play-sphere where it was first born”(119).

The same would basically apply to narrative art, aligned with poetry as a form of imaginative literature. As just cited, Huizinga’s definition of play refers to “a free activity standing quite consciously outside ‘ordinary’ life as being ‘not serious,’ but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly.” Narration, like play, “proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space.” In shared moments of storytelling it grounds a sense of community and is at the same time a source of extraordinary, namely aesthetic, pleasure.

As is the case for play in general, narratives are not only present in ceremoniously framed performances, but rather often step out of that framework and mingle with profane life. From a certain point onward, Huizinga’s categorical separation between social activities involving forms of play and “the sphere of necessity or material utility” is untenable (132). For many “serious” occupations also contain rituals, which are themselves such forms, and take place on -separated “playgrounds,” to use Huizinga’s own term (10). Formal self-containment through the establishment of spatio-temporal hurdles, internal order according to rules of behaviour not in force in any other context, a special dress code, outward secrecy and a feeling of affiliation shared between the “players.” All these features of social play characterize bureaucracies and other institutional formations as well, their ideally smooth procedures perhaps even furnishing the well-trained eye with some aesthetic pleasure. There is as much “play” in politics and the courtroom as on the stock exchange, whose calculations are the province of game theory, emerging from the analysis of fictive situations of social play. Those demanding social participation have to “bring themselves into play”: in the sense of Latin *in-ludere*, from which the word *illusion* emerged, a word consequently signifying a readiness to *believe* in the game being played, in its importance and rules.¹⁸

Huizinga himself contributes to our understanding of the transitions, mixed forms, and transformations between “play” and “reality,” “inauthentic” and “authentic” action. More precisely, he operates with two different concepts of play, one being part of the dichotomies he uses, the other encompassing them. We see this most clearly in his reflections on the character of religions as play. Where for participants, to fulfil its function religious worship has to be

¹⁸ “Each [social] field produces its specific form of the *illusio*, in the sense of an investment in the game which pulls agents out of their indifference and inclines and predisposes them to put into operation distinctions which are pertinent from the viewpoint of the logic of the field, to distinguish what is *important* (‘what matters to me,’ is of *interest*, in contrast to ‘what is all the same to me,’ or *in-different*). But it is just as true that a certain form of adherence to the game, of belief in the game and the value of its stakes, which makes the game worth the trouble of playing it is the basis of the functioning of the game, and that the *collusion* of agents in the *illusio* is the root of the competition which pits them against each other and which makes the game itself. In short, the *illusio* is the condition for the functioning of a game of which it is also, at least partially, the product” (Bourdieu, 1996:227-228).

“seriousness at its highest and holiest” (18), a “consciousness, however latent, of ‘only pretending’” is, he indicates, an element in many magical ceremonies (22). According to the reports of ethnologists, we are informed, those engaged in primitive magical rituals, whether actors or spectators, are ambiguous in their behaviour, and probably in their state of mind as well, on the one hand sceptical and on the other hand believing, “knower and dupe at once”(23) Here the concept of play applied by Huizinga does not point to the other, inauthentic side of earnest piety but reaches beyond the alternatives to define the opposition’s hovering nature as such – a “play” of the second power between the two approaches of seriousness and non-seriousness. “The unity and indivisibility of belief and unbelief,” writes Huizinga, “the indissoluble connection between sacred earnest and ‘make-believe’ or ‘fun,’ are best understood in the concept of play itself” (24). In another passage: “We are accustomed to think of play and seriousness as an absolute antithesis. It would seem, however, that this does not go to the heart of the matter” (18).

Illness Narrative

The traditional use of the term ‘narrative’ lies in the field of narratology, which arose out of literary theory in the 1960s and 1970s. In these early studies, the focus was restricted to textual analysis of written fictional literature (Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001). The definition that is predominantly used today extends narrative out of the world of literature and makes it central to our everyday lives:

Narrative is a culture-specific and contextualized mode of interaction, which, through its construction, has the function of creating realities and negotiating the identities of all involved in the interaction (Gounder 2015: 1).

There are three major strands of narrative research. The first two are based on Polkinghorne’s (1995) divisions. Narratives can either be produced as data (*analysis of narratives*) or they can be reconstructed as a means of making sense of different data (*narrative analysis*). A third area is the situated context of the interaction in which the narrative is performed (*narrative performance*). I will look at each of these research areas in turn.

Analysis of narrative involves analysing data acquired in the form of narrative. Here, research is interested in the narrative’s internal structure and content. The aim is to find underlying themes to understand how the narrative is part of a teller’s agency and identity. In most research, the narrative’s structural components are based on Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) seminal work as well as Labov’s later works on the structure of narratives of personal experience (1972, 1997, 2003, 2011, 2013). The delineation of the story world is through the structural elements of orientation, complicating action, resolution and coda. The orientation

provides information on the characters, and where the action takes place, both temporally and spatially. The complicating action, or the main action of the narrative, may be followed by the optional elements of resolution, which contains the narrative's dénouement, and the coda, which provides the cultural moral of the narrative. The narrative also contains evaluative elements, which encode the discursive performance of the narration. Labov's deconstruction of a well-formed narrative of personal experience into its relative components has been adopted and adapted to suit different narrative genres (for instance, see Bury 2001; Frank 1998; Robinson 1990 for the illness narrative genre).

Nash (2013) applies Labov's narrative structure to the mythical narrative and relates narrative to collective identity construction. The paper explores the collective memory of a people through the commemorative practice of codifying a significant myth within their topological landscape, which allows the community to 'remember'. Nash investigates these relationships by analysing how the myth of the Mutiny on the Bounty has been codified into place names on Norfolk Island.

A second area of study, *narrative analysis*, is the researcher's construction of narrative out of data, which do not necessarily take the form of narratives (participant observations, diary entries, notes, reports, interviews, field notes), but when brought together, can be used to produce a coherent narrative, as seen in Kearney's research into the reconstruction of Scottish and Irish identities within a New Zealand context. Kearney's study brings an interesting dimension to the multi-layered ways in which we answer, "who am I?" and "who do I want to be?" In Barkhuizen, Hiratsuka, Khan and Mendieta's study, the analysis of data as narrative is done from the perspective of applied linguistics. Drawing on their respective research situated in Japan, Pakistan and Columbia, the authors exemplify how Barkhuizen's (2013) framework provides a method of reconstructing data as narrative within the multidimensional web of influences beginning from the interaction between the teller(s) and listener(s) to the wider societal aspects that play a role in determining the content and function of a story. The framework plays a crucial role for the researcher and the ongoing research process. By analysing the dimensions along which the research is located, the framework serves a reflective purpose to determine one's process and influences in the reconstruction process.

A third area of analysis is narrative performance, where the research emphasizes the situated *context of narrative production*. The research takes a closer look at narrative as a performed interaction such as gossips, testimonies, visiting *balian* (dukun), consulting doctors and priests. Research under narrative performance seeks to answer the question 'Why is this narrative told and why is it told in this way?' Research may involve analysing one narrative telling. Hydén (2010), for instance, focuses on the performance of telling illness narratives by persons with

dementia. Through an analysis of the evaluation component of narrative, Hayden discusses the strategies narrators use to claim identities through the illness narrative.

Research may also involve analysing how the same events can be narrated by the same narrator in contexts altered through one or more of the following factors: time, place and different interlocutors, resulting in a changed narrative. In an oft-cited study, Riessman (2003) analyses the performance of two thrice-told personal narratives about multiple sclerosis, told by two men, who use the narratives to reconstruct their versions of masculinity. Riessman demonstrates the importance of taking into consideration social structures (in this case, gender and class), as well as the narrator's and audience's historical contexts. The intersection of the social structures and contexts shape the narrative's topic choice; what is made explicit, which is determined by the shared knowledge between narrator and audience; the audience's knowledge and understanding about multiple sclerosis and what the illness's effects entail for the teller in the social world.

Narrative co-construction is another important area for interactional narrative analysis. In their study, Lee, Hunter and Franken analyse the interplay between participants' and researchers' roles in story sharing. In another study, Sakellariou, Boniface and Brown (2013) analyse the co-construction of narrative coherence and meaning between individuals with motor neuron disease and their careers in an interview situation. The findings of both studies demonstrate that while there are multiple perspectives from which a narrative can be told, what determines the perspective is the contextual and cultural knowledge that the tellers bring to the narrative. In addition, the narrative's structure and content is shaped through the language choices of the narrators, and through the use of contextualization cues, such as gestures (see Aaltonen 2010 and Phoenix 2013 for similar findings).

Vaiolenti (2006) discusses the importance of co-construction between researcher and participants within the Pacific setting. In presenting the *talanoa* framework, he argues the need for narrative methodologies that are heuristic, grounded within the context and culture of the participants and which are mutually beneficial for the researcher and participants. The study is the only one in our collection that focuses on the interrelationship between narrative and culture within the indigenous South Pacific context. The importance of this article lies in its demonstration of the contribution that Pacific-centred research can make to narrative analysis.

A final area of performative analysis is the study of the embodied narrative, where the researcher places emphasis on the body as narrator. Hydén's (2013) focus is on the bodily movements, such as gestures, voice, silence, gaze and the positioning of the body in both narrative telling and listening such as trance-possession in healing ritual. Langellier (2001), in her study on breast cancer, tattoo and narrative performance, analyses the narrated body as a

performance of resistance. Langellier demonstrates how the narrative is situated within an interactive setting, largely populated with medical professionals. The narrative progresses from the un-agentive position of the narrator getting tattooed through radiation therapy to agentively getting a tattoo. The narrative focuses on others' reactions towards her tattoo. These reactions are situated within their perceptions of what 'tattoo' symbolizes. Through her narrative, the narrator demonstrates her tattooed body as a site of contest and resistance, where she gives new meaning to 'tattoo', and in the process, reclaims power and agency over her body.

A dominant theme in all three strands of narrative research, as seen in the articles in this collection, is the interrelationship between narrative telling and identity construction. As Lumsden emphasizes, the narrative approach provides an integral means of analysing the interdependence of identity at a time and identity through time. The identity construction may be of the tellers and also of the researchers, who bring their own narratives to their research and are also influenced by the narratives of their participants. The rest of this article demonstrates the interrelationship between narrative and identity through the analysis of the evolution of the illness narratives and how these narratives govern our perspective on how we see the world, our attitudes and behaviours, and are therefore, central to our identity construction.

Narrative perspectives

In relation to narrative's correlation with identity at the individual and wider societal levels, narratives change with our changing attitudes about how the world should be. Our narratives can either conform to societal norms and expectations or they can question what we consider to be normative and may lead to a change in the way we frame our narratives.

The manner in which we 'story' the world is directly linked to our perceptions and behaviours and are quite often informed by the societal "master" narratives (also termed grand narratives, cultural narratives, big narratives (cf. Bamberg 2005)) such as the *Calon Arang* drama or the myth of Durga-sakti, which are themselves not immutable. We can illustrate the evolution of societal master narratives by looking at the illness narrative genre, an area that has recently become important in the field of narrative inquiry (cf. Gygax and Locher 2015). Illness narratives can be organized under three types: biomedical, structural and health behavioural. I look at the three narratives in turn to discuss how they play an important role in shaping societal behaviours.

The biomedical narrative

Historically, biomedical narratives were the dominant and authoritative narratives, Medical notions of diagnosis, treatment and intervention pervaded our discourse on health and wellbeing.

Research has detailed a wide and varying range of activities that have become increasingly medicalized over the years, These include childbirth (Oaklye 1984), breastfeeding (Auerbach 1995), menopause and the use of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) (Froehle 2013), the increasing medicalization of behaviour classified as madness (Foucault 1965), hyperactivity in children, mental illness, alcoholism, opiate addiction (Conrad and Schneider, 2010), pornography (Clarkson and Kopaczewski 2013), and other somatic problems (Fainzang 2013). The dominance of the biomedical narrative is not solely due to the medical profession wielding greater control over a passive lay population. Research has demonstrated that the public can also actively promote the extension/utilization of the biomedical narrative, through seeking specific treatments for ailments (Williams Martin and Gabe 2011), seeking medical interventions (Riessman 1983), as well as lobbying for their experiences to be classified as a medical conditions, such as chronic fatigue (Dickson, Knussen and Flowers 2007) and repetitive strain injury (Newton, Southall, Raphael, Ashford and LeMarchand 2013) in order to legitimize their experiences.

On the other hand, research also demonstrates areas that are moving outside the jurisdiction of the biomedical narrative. These include the declassification of homosexuality as an illness by the American Psychiatric Association, which has led homosexuality ‘to be seen in many affluent countries as neither disease nor deviance, but as a lifestyle choice’ (Ballard and Elston 2005: 235), the changing viewpoints of obesity through the 20th and 21st centuries from a marker of an inability to exercise restraint, to a sickness and finally, to today’s politically correct acceptance of larger bodies (Lupton 2012), the demand for childbirth to be seen as a natural process without the need for medical monitoring (Ten Hoope-Bender 1997).

The dominance of the biomedical narrative has not remained constant over the years. As we have seen above, the influences of the biomedical narrative depends on ‘macro-historical process, socio-structural systems and the phenomenological experiences of individuals’ (Clarke 1992: 288), with shifts in viewpoints leading to the increase or decrease of the popularity of the biomedical master narrative in any given area of human activity. At the same time, concern has been expressed over the influence of the biomedical narrative on society and its encroachment on the social functions of traditional institutions, such as religion and law (Illich 1977).

Parallel to the growing dissatisfaction with the widespread dominance of the medical discourse (cf. Illich 1976, 1977; Zola 1972, 1983) is the division of ill-health into the three

categories of disease, illness and sickness. Disease is the presence of pathogens or abnormalities, which deviate the body from a biological norm, and which can be medically diagnosed. On the other hand, illness and sickness are sociocultural constructs, with illness being an individual's feeling of unwellness, which may or may not be accompanied by disease and sickness being a society's acceptance of the person's status as being unwell, generally when they are medically diagnosed with a disease (Kleinman 1978).

Once the distinctions were made between disease, illness and sickness, the medical narrative's dominance was challenged. Moreover, health and wellbeing were no longer seen as being the sole responsibility of an individual; rather, the wider societal response to health became important. Hence, as society made distinctions between disease, illness and sickness, narratives in the structural and health behaviour frames also became critical in discussions of illness management.

The structural narrative

The structural narrative of health is a broad category that encompasses the relationship of social structures, such as class, caste, gender and ethnicity with macrolevel social, economic and political developments that govern people's health and wellbeing status and determine their access to biomedical and ethnomedical healthcare. The perspective is a reaction to the biomedical narrative's lack of consideration of these socio-structural contexts of illness and healing.

The structural narrative draws on three major fields of investigation. The first explores the relationship of class structure and capitalism in relation to medical access and takes into account the historical developments that have brought about the changes. Such research analyses the intersection of social structures of class, race, gender and sexual orientation and how this determines access to medical health care (Carlson 1996; Li, Holroyd, Li and Lau 2014; Singer 1994), and the impact of society's moral panic on those infected and affected by HIV (Lieber, Li, WII, Rotheram-Borus and Guan 2006; Parker and Aggleton 2003; Wagner, Hart, Mohammed, Ivanova, Wong and Loutfy 2010; Kheswa 2014). Secondly, studies demonstrate how medicine can become an instrument of social control leading to and even promoting socioeconomic inequality. An example is Kayal's (1993) study on the impact of stigmatization and scapegoating of homosexuals on their access to medical care. Thirdly, studies analyse the causal relationship between how biomedical advancements in the developed worlds lead to underdevelopment in third world countries (Altman 1999; Lee and Zwi 1996; Shadlen 2007). As seen from the examples cited here, studies on structural narratives can be locally situated and focus on the dynamics within a country's geopolitical structure and how

they impact the local people or they may be macro-analytical and examine the impacts of global interactions on a country's access to healthcare.

The health behaviour narrative

The health behaviour narrative focuses on individuals' likelihood of undertaking adaptive health practices around a particular illness. The health behaviour narrative derives from the interconnections between individuals' beliefs about the perceived likelihood of suffering from an illness, the perceived severity of the illness, the desire to avoid or overcome the illness, the confidence that undertaking a recommended course of action will reduce their likelihood of suffering from the illness and the self-belief in one's ability to carry out the recommended course of action. A large number of studies have analysed the intersection of HIV and health behaviour.

Studies into health behaviour narratives of illness response can be at the macrolevel or at the individual level of personal experience, an example of macrolevel narrative focus is the impact of media narratives on society's knowledge, beliefs and practices around illness. Studies have looked into the impact of media on HIV beliefs and knowledge about HIV transmission (Hertog and Fan, 1995; Romer et. al 2009). Other studies have demonstrated the positive correlation between media access and exposure with increased HIV awareness and knowledge about protective sexual practices and treatment (Agarwal and de Araujo 2014; Hirose, Nakaune and Ishizuka 1998; Muli and Lawoko 2014; Oyekale and Oyekale 2010; Shulla and Pradhan 2013).

On the other hand, health behaviour narrative research may focus on individuals' personal experience in illness coping or prevention. Studies include 1-11V disclosure narratives (Moskowitz and Roloff 2008), local conceptualizations of HIV through the lens of personal narratives, anchored within the local moral and social order and encoded within customary practices (Thomas 2008), Haitian American adolescents' conceptions and misconceptions about transmission and prevention of HIV (Mercelin, McCoy and DiClemente 2006), traditional healers' false knowledge about HIV prevention, diagnosis and treatment and gender difference in the lay population about HIV knowledge (Chomat, Wilson, Wanke, Selvakumar and Isaac 2009), direct correlation of patients' ART response on both their attitudes towards their illness and environment and their health-seeking behaviours (Siril, Fawzi, Toddy, Wyatt, Kilewo, Ware and Kaaya 2014), short and longterm attitudinal and behavioural trauma responses of women diagnosed HIV positive (Stevens and Hildebrandt 2006), high religiosity correlated with lower risk behaviour (Shaw and El-Bassel 2014; Kudel, Cotton, Szaflarski,

Holmes and Tsevat 2011) and the use of religious belief as a coping mechanism for individuals with HIV (Bernstein, D'Angelo, and Lyon 2013).

The health behaviour narrative's emphasis is on prevention of illness. Being ill or well is the responsibility of the individual, with illness being the consequence of poor lifestyle choices. The individual is, therefore, seen as being able to make changes to one's habits and to have control over one's ability to prevent illness, or a reoccurrence of the illness. The inability to make beneficial/constructive behavioural and attitudinal changes to enhance their health is seen as a flaw in the individual's character (Clarke 1992).

Narrative and identity construction

Through this overview of the three dominant illness narratives, we can see how these societal narratives alter our conceptualizations of health and wellbeing. Under the medical narrative, illness is positioned as an individualized concern, where the emphasis is on diagnosis and medical treatment, the health behaviour narrative also sees illness as an individual's concern but emphasizes prevention. The structural narrative moves to position illness as a societal issue. The three competing narratives differ in emphasis on causes, treatments and prevention of diseases. Therefore, the dominance of any one of these narratives on how we think about illness and healing has far-reaching consequences on how an individual and a society responds to their own and others health and wellbeing; what they consider to be areas of concern regarding health matters; the criteria for measuring oneself as healthy or unhealthy, well or unwell; the policies that are put into place to govern health related behaviours, the allocation of funding for "research, treatment, prevention and health promotion" (Clarke 1992: 291); and the (de) establishment and enforcement of laws around what is considered normal and deviant behaviours (Conrad 2008; 2013; Conrad and Schneider 1980a, 1980b, 1992; Foucault 1965; Lowenberg and Davis 1994).

One of the most salient domains for the occurrence of master narratives is as media narratives. Research on health-related narratives has shown journalists' awareness of these three dominant narratives and the influence of the narratives in governing which issues are considered suitable health topics and the related information given to the general public via the mass media (Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Scammell, Karapu and Nikora 2008). Furthermore, the dominance of the medical, structural and health behaviour narratives of illness has been found to be different in different societies. For instance, in the presentation of HIV in media narratives, the structural narrative, which makes HIV a societal concern, is found to be predominant in the Pacific region (Gounder Unpublished manuscript), while in the USA, the medical and health behaviour narratives, which individualize the illness' response, are more

predominant (Clarke 1992). The findings underscore the cultural specificity of narrative construction and provide an area for further research.

The impact of media narratives on audience has been well documented. Kahneman and Tversky (1984, cited in Entman 1993: 53—54) demonstrate the power of news stories, through the narrative's selective presentation of a topic, in directing audience's attention towards, and therefore, away from other aspects of reality around an issue. Research has also demonstrated the impact news story perspectives have on audience's interpretations (de Vreese 2004), recollections (Valkenburg, Semetko and de Vreese 1999), attitudes (Shen 2004), evaluations and decision-making (de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2003) on national issues and policies. Given that our attitudes, perceptions and behaviour are major components of our identity, the narratives that we tell and hear have a significant impact on who we are both individually and as a community

Disease and illness

Words are powerful conveyers of concepts (Smart, 2001). Using a standard definition of terms facilitates communication and understanding of what each term implies. The term disease is derived from the *medical model*, which refers to changes in the structure or function of body systems. The medical model focuses on the treatment and elimination of symptoms. The term illness refers to individuals' perception of their symptoms and how they and their families respond to these symptoms (Morof Lubkin & Larsen, 2002). It is important to understand both concepts. Professionals working with individuals with chronic illness or disability must understand the symptoms, limitations, and progression of a condition in order to facilitate individuals' adaptation to their condition and to maximize their potential for functioning. Insight into the medical nature of a condition helps guide professionals in assessments and interventions, as well as in understanding the physical consequences the individual is experiencing (Dudgeon, Gerrard, Jensen, Rhodes, & Tyler, 2002). It is also important for professionals to have insights into individuals' perception of their condition and the personal relevance and meaning it has for them so that interventions can be directed toward meeting specific needs (Shaw, Segal, Polatajko, & Harburn, 2002). There must be an understanding of individuals' strengths, resources, and abilities as well as of the symptoms and limitations associated with the condition if one is to effectively assess the impact of the condition on their daily lives and goals in relation-ship to the tasks they perform at home, at work, and in their social environment.

Other terms helpful to understanding the impact of chronic illness or disability on individuals are *acute* and *chronic*. Acute refers to the sudden onset of symptoms that are short

term and that incapacitate individuals for only a short time. Chronic refers to symptoms that last indefinitely and that have a cause that may or may not be identifiable. Some conditions that begin acutely but are not resolved become ongoing and chronic. A chronic condition requires individuals to reorient their overall lifestyle to accommodate manifestations of the condition. It requires them to adapt to the realization that life as they previously knew it has changed. They are then faced with the task of reorienting values, beliefs, behaviours, and goals to adapt to that reality.

The course of an illness over time, including the actions taken by individuals, their families, and health professionals working with them to manage or shape the course of the condition, is called a trajectory (Corbin, 2001). The concept is important to professionals working with individuals with chronic illness and disability because it implies a continuum and emphasizes the social and environmental impact on the condition.

Chronic illness and disability produce significant change and consequently stress because individuals must deal with a change of customary lifestyle, loss of control, disruption of physiological processes, pain or discomfort, and potential loss of role, status, independence, and financial stability. When individuals have confidence in their ability to maintain control over their destiny and when they believe that changes, although inevitable, are manageable, stress is less pronounced. When their perceptions of the changes associated with chronic illness or disability seem insurmountable or beyond their ability to cope, stress can be overwhelming.

Coping style and strategies of Palasari people deal with chronic illness is by visiting the *balian*. They use this mechanism to manage, tolerate, or reduce the stress associated with significant life events and to attempt to restore psychological equilibrium after a stressful or traumatic event.

In the most significant of Balinese ritual participants are the clouds of invisible beings of various degree of power, whose many varieties resemble the diversity of the population of Bali itself. These many spiritual beings are present at every ritual, partaking of food offerings, listening to the mantras and the music, watching the dance-drama performances along with the humans. They also help or hinder the human effort to attract the attention and beneficence of the high deities.

These spirits are invisible and intangible, and their attitudes toward humans unpredictable. They are known by the suffering of their people. Their numbers are incalculable. Each temple is dedicated to specific deities, whom the congregation periodically invites to descend among them to be feted, worshipped, and supplicated for aid. Every invited deity is always accompanied by a huge entourage of lesser gods and demons who must also be feted, placated, and worshipped.

There are many other kinds of local spiritual beings who inhabit every neighbourhood. Some of these spirits have small temples or shrines of their own, while other lesser ones inhabit crossroads. During a temple festival, some of these local spirits are also invited to attend and share in the festival, while others are asked to go away through propitiatory offerings set outside the temple. The high and most distant deities are also invoked in prayers, but invited to witness the proceedings from afar, as for instance, the god Siva, for whom a tall temporary altar is usually erected for the duration of a temple festival.

To call the spiritual beings who visit the human world during a temple festival “god” and “demons” as we must when writing in English, seriously falsifies Balinese ideas about them, since it implies that each one is either consistently “benevolent” or “malevolent”. Any so-called god or demon in Bali is capable of being both helpful and harmful to people. A deity’s beneficent act for one group may hurt another. For instance, when a festival is in progress, a ritual may be performed to prevent rain during the days of the ceremonies. The consequence, however, may be that a rainstorm moving toward the locality will simply be diverted toward another community, drenching their offerings and their performances. A more serious example is that of contagious disease: The demon Ratu Macaling brought cholera epidemics every rainy season to most of south Bali. In Batuan in 1930s a famous healer was said to have made a pact with the demon to pass by Batuan. As a result, Ratu Macaling’s destructive entourage went to neighbouring villages instead.

The demonic look of a being does not necessarily mean that it is malevolent. In many pictures, the great dragon figure, the barong, has a huge fierce mouth, fangs, and popping eyes; but for all his ferocious appearance, the barong is not at all dangerous, at least not to those who show him the proper respect. In fact, the barong is protective of his followers, and many people have personal tales of how a barong has come to their rescue, even as far away as Jakarta. In the act of protecting his followers, however, the barong can harm other people who might desire to hurt them. There are cases in which lingering illness and death have been ascribed to the action of a barong seeking revenge for earlier misdeeds by the suffering person.

Sometimes, as in the example of the death dealing Ratu Macaling, the element of malevolence is the primary attribute of the being, but even he can be placated with offerings, dances, music, and spells and rendered harmless for a brief time. Other deities, such as those of a village temple, are usually benevolent because of the regular respectful attention paid to them by the villagers. Only in extreme cases, as when a member of the congregation commits a particularly sacrilegious act, is such a god likely to transform momentarily into a wrathful destructive demon.

The capacity of spirit beings not only to change from a well-wishing attitude to destructive anger and back but also to take many different shapes at whim, has important implications for Balinese conceptions of truth. It implies that humans may not always know what form a being will take, nor can they know from the form of a prepared vessel what being may have taken his seat in it. Therefore, an artist who wants to portray such a being can use his own fantasy at will. Normally these beings are formless, and only when they manifest themselves do they take specific shape. Temple congregations provide physical objects (small figurines, even bowls of water) for deities to inhabit during their visitation in the human world. Certain masks, and occasionally people, perform the same function of being a material vessel for the spiritual being.

To speak about this metaphysical volatility, the Balinese make a distinction between what they call *niskala*, or “invisible” and “intangible”, and *sakala*, or “visible” and “tangible.” The spiritual beings and powers of the cosmos are *niskala*, yet they must take *sakala* forms to be efficacious in the world and to have material effects. Higher deities, when moved to action, take lesser demonic forms, which then may make themselves visible to human beings. To represent the visible world is to show only minor *sakala* aspect of experience.

Many Balinese today stress that their religion is at base monotheistic, that the greatly varied gods and demons are, in fact, all manifestation of the one God, who sends out *avatars* as numerous as the rays of the sun. No present-day Balinese religious leader, however, has succeeded in establishing doctrinal uniformity on this or other matters. Not only is every locality different from every other in the modes of worship and ways of speaking about it, but different social groups, too, cannot agree. There is, no doubt, a central core of principles to which all Balinese adhere, but no one, Balinese or Westerner, has yet been able to explicate these adequately. This is in part because, as everywhere, people in actuality have quite diverse beliefs. The pervasive inability to make firm generalisations about “Balinese religion” is largely due to the Balinese conviction that the beings and powers that govern their universe take many forms, require many sorts of ritual recognition, and are known to human beings only partially and fitfully. They believe, what counts is what people do, not what they say.

As Geertz cited above says: ‘the line between story worlds and the real world is never clear in Bali’. Actual encounters with demons and sorcerers, miraculous cures, strange deaths, and mysterious visions in the night are the stuff of daily hushed conversations, as are unexpected prosperity and sudden poverty. Any disaster or sudden good fortune immediately becomes food for speculation about its cause. A chronic, wasting lung disease is thought to be the work of mean-hearted neighbours helped by sorcerers who pretend to be kindly healers. An unusually rich harvest might be explained by the prior discovery of a ring in a rice field, placed there

perhaps by a benevolent spirit. The Western notion of ‘fairy tales’ as merely delightful or scary fictions about never-never lands where the impossible can happen would be very strange to most Balinese.

Any terrible happening is attributed to an intentional act of malevolence or rage on the part of some beings – human or nonhuman. To find out the cause of such an event, one goes to a diviner/healer (*balian*) or priest (*pamangku* or *pedanda*). Their methods of discovery vary from allowing the spirit to speak through them as spirit mediums to consultation of books of the occult. These diviners give oracular diagnoses whose ambiguousness allows the sufferers to match them to their own suspicions.¹⁹ In case of serious trouble, it is common to visit several diviners, searching for one that satisfies. A particular diagnosis usually implies a particular therapy. Curing strategies include eating a herbal concoction containing magical ingredients, carrying a specially made talisman, putting offering in certain places at certain times, or carrying out a major ritual, such as a cremation for a neglected dead kinsman. Any of these actions may be understood either as protection or as counterattack.

Illness as relationships breakdown

The single most important factor contributing to health, is relationships. Balinese as most of the indigenous people throughout the world are very clear on this. Ill health is viewed as representative of a breakdown in relationships. This breakdown may be within relationships between the person and the environment, the person and others, or their relationship with their own sense of identity. Regardless of the nature of the relationship, healing will not occur until the breakdown is addressed. This view of illness as being something that is essentially social rather than exclusively physical is in stark contrast to the Western biomedical model of health and illness. The two perspectives are not mutually exclusive however if both stories are heard.

Stories are inherently about relationships, and as I have said, relationships are central to health. Matthew Lieberman argues in *Social* that our brains are actually wired to be concerned about our social relationships at the default level. In other words when we are not actively focused on something else, our brains automatically switch to thinking about social relationships. We wonder what someone in a recent interaction thought of us, we go over an embarrassing moment and wonder how differently we might have played out the scene, we remember making someone smile, or we worry that someone ignored us. When we are not engaged in carrying out cognitive, motor, or visual tasks the default network directs us to think

¹⁹ The dialogue between the spirit speaking through the medium, Jero Tapakan, and her clients is a good example of the process of mutual construction of increasingly specific explanations of the cause of the death of a young boy. See Connor, Asch, and Asch 1986, chapter 7.

about other people's minds: their thoughts, feelings and goals, and how they relate to us. This is why all our stories are ultimately about relationships; and why our experienced sense of health and wellbeing is less about our physical bodies and more about our relationships.

Our capacity to form relationships with one another, and with our environment, is what makes us human. Our brains have evolved such that they are wired for connectivity, for reaching out and interacting with others. The ways in which we mediate relationships, form the fundamental basis of our sense of health and happiness. We cannot be happy if our relationships with ourselves, with each other and with our physical environment are dysfunctional, and there is no longer any doubt that the quality of our social relationships impacts upon our health.

We are social animals. We live in clusters and we depend upon one another for survival and fulfilment. Consequently, the story of our evolution is one of collectivity. Cooperative alliance became a successful adaptive strategy for humans very early in their evolutionary development. In order to survive, as a relatively frail species physically, we needed to work together. The lengthy time spent nurturing our young and teaching them: contributed to the development of our brains, our ability to imagine, produce and use tools, and our capacity to form strong and enduring emotional bonds to the group. These bonds and the capacity for co-operation contributed to our success for many hundreds of thousands of years. Our brains have evolved for connecting with others and for creating and sharing stories about this interaction.

Many scientists argue, that the neo-cortex area of our brains grew large, so that we could live successfully in social groups. The advantage of large social groups has included protection from predators, but perhaps even more importantly, sharing: of labour, resources, knowledge and ideas. Story is the vehicle through which sharing takes place. There is so much more that can be achieved by a group, than by an individual working alone. Through social relationships new skills and technologies can be shared across large groups and between groups through trade and ceremony and through story, all our accumulated skills, knowledge and ideas can be shared across groups and time. Stories about relationships are passed on over generations and even millennia.

From birth, our very survival depends upon the commitment of others to our care. Being socially connected and cared for is a fundamental basic need. Generally speaking, without connection to others, humans fail to thrive. Positive emotions are triggered through our social interactions: it feels good to know we are liked by others, it means that we will be included when resources are shared and we will not be alone if we are injured or ill.

Relationships are so fundamentally important to our survival that neurobiologists now have evidence from brain scans that being rejected by others causes activity in the exact same area of the brain as is activated by physical pain. To our brains, there is no difference between

physical pain and emotional pain. Being rejected by others, hurts – literally. This has been further substantiated through clinical trials showing that taking two aspirin can be just as effective in relieving pain from a ‘broken heart’ as it can in relieving a headache. What is even more surprising is that simply observing someone else in pain can cause the same area of the brain to be activated. Something many people have always known intuitively has been proven scientifically. We feel the pain of others.

Part of our adaptive success has also been our emotional attachment to the physical environment. This ensures that natural resources are sustained for future generations. Access to natural resources through occupation of large territories of land was always something of value to humans, as rich resources of food and natural shelter meant an easier life. There would always have been territorial skirmishes over land carried out between groups who believed they had some particular right over others, to a prized tract of land. Some cultures responded to this need to manage access to resources, by continuing with a collectivist approach to territorial boundaries, and developed organizing structures to minimize disputes. These structures included stories handed down orally from generation to generation, over many thousands of years, that validated the link between certain extended kinship groups and the land that sustained them. Reciprocal relationships with other groups would allow them to travel across large tracts of land to trade and ensure ongoing supply of a variety of resources. This scenario is the one that describes the culture of Australian First Nation Peoples until a little less than 250 years ago.

Australian First Nation Peoples, like many Indigenous cultures, see themselves as part of the land, connected to the land and connected to each other through the ancestors and the ancestral spirits who participated in the creation of the universe. Within Aboriginal cultures, everyone and everything is connected, no individual exists in isolation of the whole. The individual only has a sense of self in relation to place (where they were born, where their parents were born), and kinship (who they are related to, and how). There is no sense in which an individual can perceive of self, separately from this relational context.

When a member of the community is ill, the whole community is ill, if a member is grieving, the whole community grieves. Similarly, if the land is distressed, the community share the distress, they feel it physically, emotionally and spiritually. This is also true for the sea and sky. Animals are directly related through the ancestors to particular groups, and the distress of animals is also felt emotionally and physically. Animals are hunted only for food, and their numbers are managed through strictly enforced rules and ceremony.

In general, Australian First Nation Peoples living in remote, rural or urban areas share a fundamental underlying sense of ‘Oneness’ with the natural environment and with others in

their communities. Their worldview derives from a collectivist standpoint, whereby the good of the community is valued over the needs of the individual. This is not to say that individuals do not behave in ways that are destructive to the community, but when they do, the whole community feels the pain.

The ancestors of Western societies, when they began to live in settled communities, developed structures that were based on the power of individuals to accumulate control over large tracts of land and the resources contained in them. This structure developed in contexts where groups began to establish agriculture and stayed in one place year-round, storing resources and becoming specialized in their production of whatever was required. People were dependent on their relationships with others to be able to access all the things they needed. Sharing of resources was carried out through trade. As a consequence, people who controlled access to the most highly valued resources held power over those with less access and consequently less trading power. The ability to be able to manipulate social connections in order to carry out more advantageous negotiations increased an individual's access to power.

In contrast to the collectivist worldview of Indigenous cultures, our Western culture is derived from an extreme individualist standpoint. The individual is paramount, competition is the norm, and success is measured by the extent to which an individual excels above his/her peers. There is a strong sense of "I" as separate from the group, and this sense of self comes with an accompanying set of entitlements such as in, "I deserve more". The entitlement of the individual to "more" may come at the detriment of the group, or of the environment. Social connection is just as important to success, however different sets of social skills are required in the individualist structure. Being skilled in competition is highly valued as is having one voice heard above the others. In the collectivist structure it is more important to have skills in consensus, being able to blend in with the group and foster harmony. These cultural structures do not only operate on the larger scale of populations. They provide the framework for our personal relationships. Far too often, in the individualized West, our personal relationships are marked by competition: Who works harder? Who does more? Who is smarter, more desirable, or a better person? It is commonly highly prized to be right rather than to live in harmony with others.

Regardless of the group structure, humans everywhere live in large groups, and as we make the transition to a global world, the importance of social connectivity becomes more obvious. Cultural groups with their own structures and their own collective stories are coming together. We all have an individual story, and we share in collective stories. These are complex and intertwined, and we cannot escape them. Certain aspects of our collective stories become simplified and familiar and these are so much a part of our culture that they cease to be apparent.

They are experienced as simply ‘the way things are’. Awareness of this is healthy because it allows us to make room for listening to the stories of others. Once we acknowledge that what we consider reality is in fact only one story, we can more effectively listen to the stories of others, and more easily accept them as valid.

Commonly in the West, we see ourselves in competition with others, and so survival depends upon keeping others at a distance. Our stories are fearful ones that keep us separated from the rest of the world for our own protection. Our stories sustain a sense of ‘us’ as separate from ‘them’. Our cultural stories are important to our sense of identity. They help us to have a sense of who we are and how we fit in to an incomprehensibly complex world. However, through truly listening to the stories of others, we can really understand each other’s pain and joy. The problem arises when we become fiercely attached to a particular fearful and isolating story and protect ourselves using the value judgments we place on the stories of others. Many authors argue that particularly in our Western culture, we have lost the ability to truly listen to other people’s stories, we don’t acknowledge them unless they serve to validate our own story (Mehl-Madrona,2007).

If we let go of our attachment to a particular story about ourselves, we are free to experience humility and acknowledge the value in other people’s stories. For example, non-Indigenous Australians commonly ask why Aboriginal people won’t let go of their stories about the past and ‘just move on’. The Aboriginal history of Australia has been one of systematic dispossession, oppression and marginalization of First Nation Peoples. The period of colonization from 1770-1870 was a brutal period resulting in the dispossession of Aboriginal people from ‘country’ and a systematic process of massacre and violent retaliation. The following period of protectionism (1880-1950’s) saw Australian First Nation Peoples forcibly removed onto missions where every aspect of their lives was controlled by the State and the Church. The Assimilation policies in place from the turn of the twentieth century until the 1980’s, led to the removal of thousands of children from their parents to be raised by White foster families and created generations of stolen children distanced from their culture, their identity and a sense of belonging. This period is popularly known as the “Stolen Generation”. White Australia’s question about why Aboriginal people won’t let go of their story, implies that White Australia does not have a story themselves that they claim as true. Aboriginal people might well ask, why do White Australian’s keep telling their story about colonization carried out in the interests of progress.

Australian First Nation Peoples keep telling the story of dispossession, because they belong to a ‘narrative culture’, a culture in which people have always expressed how they feel in terms of story. This comes from a long oral tradition, the oldest in the world in fact, interrupted only

some 200 years ago. The misunderstanding is not that Aboriginal people express themselves through story. The problem is, that in our Western culture, we have lost the skills of listening, valuing, and interpreting the stories of others. We cling on to our own stories so tightly and fearfully, that we cannot afford to accommodate an alternative.

Australian First Nation Peoples also tell the story of dispossession because they belong to a culture where health and wellbeing is acknowledged as dependent upon connectedness; it is not an individual matter. The story of dispossession is one of disconnection. During colonization and the policies that followed; relationships were fractured, disruption occurred, and these things are yet to be restored. When we ask Aboriginal people why they think they are unwell they consistently tell a story about colonization, marginalization, disempowerment and hopelessness. This story is not meant to 'blame' White Australia. It is a persistent attempt to explain to White Australia that illness is a result of fractured relationships. This is not a story about the past. It is a current story. It is not a story about individuals. It is a collective story. The fractured relationships to which Australian First Nation Peoples refer are not only causing them pain, they are contributing to the pain carried by all Australians. If White Australia could properly listen to the stories of others, they would be able to acknowledge this. The problem is that they would have to let go of some parts of their own story about colonization.

The sad truth is, that across cultures, the stories we make up about our lives too often trap us in a life replete with pain. We cling to the painful parts of our stories more determinedly than any other aspect. It seems absurd to claim that we choose to hold on to pain, however this certainly seems to be the case.

Our Ego becomes defensive when it feels our story needs defending. Teresa of Avila, a Christian mystic from the sixteenth century says, "It is a perfect misery to be alive when we have always to be going about like men with enemies at their gates, who cannot lay aside their arms even when sleeping or eating, and are always afraid of being surprised by a breach of their fortress in some weak spot" (Peers,trans.,2004 p36). This misery derives from defending our stories.

Story is arguably the single most important factor that influences our health. An illness is not simply a biological entity to be identified with pathology and eliminated through chemical or surgical intervention. We all have our own stories about health and about any illness, condition or disease we may carry. These stories are the result of a complex mix of experience and the culture within which we belong; and they carry within them great potential for the power to heal or harm.

Scientific experiments show that it is our perceptions of the world around us that will cause hormones to be released, effecting how we feel. Adjustments are made within our cells to

respond physiologically to the information. It is not only through understanding the biological pathways of disease that we will find effective ways back to health, but also through understanding our stories about health and illness. The medical approach to health tends to view it as the absence of disease, taking a purely physiological perspective. Yet everyone coming into the medical encounter comes with their own stories.

We learn to put labels to how we feel from the people around us. Whether we feel ‘good’ or ‘bad’, ‘healthy’ or ‘sick’ we have learned these labels and the meanings ascribed to them from our families, friends, schools, entertainment media and other parts of our social environment. We have been learning them since we were born. While we may receive some information from doctors and other health professionals, the majority of our beliefs will be formed on the basis of information from a much wider range of sources. When we experience illness, we draw upon all these collective sources to create a story. This story will frame what we believe about our ill health, what we call it, what we think caused it and what we think will fix it. This story, and our belief in it, is integral to the effectiveness of any given treatment. If a proposed treatment does not match our story, we will not fully comply with the treatment and it will not be effective.

While patients draw their beliefs about illness from a whole range of sources and experiences, doctors and health professionals generally work within the parameters of biomedicine. As the story of biomedicine is directly linked to science in Western cultures, it shares the same claim to truth as does science.

Doctors work from the assumption that the things they know about our health, are the ‘truth’ things. All we need to do is follow the advice of medicine and all will be well. On the other hand, we are all aware of many experiences when individuals have followed the advice of doctors and things didn’t go well. From the perspective of the layperson, there are many different stories about health and illness. The particular ‘truth’ a person chooses to trust will depend to a great extent upon their cultural beliefs.

There is no doubt that science of medicine and its wondrous technological advances has improved our life expectancy and reduced the burden of disease. Yet, as Mehl-Madrona points out in *Narrative Medicine*, “it its seeming rush to separate itself from culture and tradition, conventional medicine has eliminated much of the art of healing”. In our reliance on technologies such as laboratory testing and medical imaging, we have lost the ability to tune in to others and connect their stories.

Mehl-Madrona believes that the central to the art of healing are two skills: the skill of effectively listening to the stories of others; and the skill of storytelling. Western medicine is

itself a collection of stories, useful stories in some contexts but not necessarily superior to the stories of other cultures.

Conclusion

The dependence on story (narrative) is fundamental to us as human and our understanding of the world. It is a primary source of belief and the mode through which beliefs are expressed and handed on. Through story and narrative, belief about witchcraft has continued to exist throughout centuries, in spite of and alongside the belief of major religions. Stories associated with witchcraft have provided an explanation to the problems of illness when conventional medicine has been perceived to fail.

Chapter 3

Palasari: An Arena of Sorcery

In a commonly cited passage, Walter Benjamin presents history as an important site of political struggle:

To articulate the past historically . . . means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it. [1969:255]

It is precisely the way that history may become a “tool of the ruling classes” that is suggested by references to Palasari as a “Balinese Catholic” village, a “promised land”, an “exile” of Hindu converts who betrayed their ancestors and religion, or a “land of *léyak*” that devours its own people in the post-colonial public culture. By “public culture” I mean the complex cosmopolitan forms of intentional cultural production at the intersection of globalization and state formation in post-World War II nation-states. As Appadurai and Breckenridge (1988:6) have noted, public culture involves, among other things, elite and metropolitan efforts to appropriate and transvalue local traditions and significations. In such forms of public culture, claims about identities and declarations of values are both made and contested. Not uncommonly, these entail assertions about the past.

Post-colonial Indonesia has continued to essentialise Bali as a Hindu island to preserve its uniqueness for global economic purposes, so called mass tourism. As voiced by many critics, the contemporary Bali has been gripped by fear that their unique culture is about to be destroyed by contact with outsiders and tourism itself. Central to these fears is a curious notion of culture as at once aestheticized in dance, art and religion; and reified, industrialized, packaged and peddled in almost every conceivable form.²⁰ In short, it is a full-blown bourgeois vision of culture as a commodity. The struggle to rescue Balinese culture from ‘culture’ is in danger of

²⁰ Indeed, some were until recently inconceivable, for example the market in *taksu*, which is not restricted to gullible foreigners (<http://www.yahayoga.com/BALI%20RETREAT%2008.html>) but Balinese and Indonesians as well (<http://www.balidiscovery.com/messages/message.asp?Id=2683>). Quite how Balinese are going to reclaim religion and spirituality now that it has become a major export industry is far from clear.

being self-defeating because it relies on a concept of culture-as-commodity which erases what it seeks to preserve.

In this context of contested Bali, I try to place the Palasari village by recognising the various voices which try to cast their 'spells' on it. To do so, I will show how the Catholic Church perceives Palasari, how the members of this community portray themselves, and how the outsiders view this community. How Palasari is, in fact, messier and muddier than an ideal image of a Catholic community. As highlighted by Schmidt, "categorisation in ready-made boxes might help to structure new observations and experiences, but it also conceals mixture, change, diversity and polyphonic readings within one context, let alone between different cultures" (2010:99). The other alternative I propose, therefore, is to see how Palasari is a blend of various contested representations and articulations. In many of the stories I heard in Bali, the powerful people (*anak sakti*) used to take part in demonstrations of power, for example when *dalang* or puppeteers performed the *wayang calon arang* and challenged local people of power to duels, often to death. Such contests are marked, according to Balinese with whom I have discussed such things, by strange lights in the night. In Palasari, however, I have never heard of such a contest. What happened was, a contest of representations and articulations between various agencies and actors who attempted to impose their authority and power on Palasari. This chapter tries to show that contest by showing who were involved and the nature of their involvement.

Reality-making sorcery

The story of Palasari is an account of what happens when different ways of knowing, of ordering the world, of making sense of the unusual and the uncertain, confront each other within the disciplined, highly structured world of social representation. As a result of my contact and interviews with various agencies in Palasari, I came to the conclusion that there are at least two representations of Palasari, but they have little in common. The first Palasari is a promised land, a place of refuge, a success story of the Catholic Church that celebrates the non-Western culture. A land of smiling people where almost everyone is an artist. They are heirs not just to this worldly paradise but to its anticipation in the otherworld because by living their faith as Catholics, they will inherit their eternal salvation.

The second Palasari is quite different. It is a place where life has to be earned and work is essential, where the constant shortage of water endangers their land. The young mostly work in the city and have no interest in working as farmers. They are more interested in selling the land in order to support their lifestyle in the city. Slowly, the land in Palasari has changed

ownership to the Hindu who are outsiders. Crucially, Palasari is the land haunted by witches who are always ready to devour the people.

These two representations remind me of Harry West's, *The Ethnographic Sorcery* (2005). In his account of sorcery on the Mueda plateau in northern Mozambique, he suggests that both sorcerers and counter-sorcerers (and a host of others: villagers, local leaders, but also anthropologists, missionaries, colonial authorities, FRELIMO, and most recently neoliberal reformists) are drawn into a never-ending game of *kupilikula*, through which they temporarily transcend the material, everyday world, in order to envisage, articulate, and remould it "in accordance with their own visions of a world reordered" (West 2007: x, 2005).²¹ West argues that anthropologists too make "transcendent manoeuvres" that "reorder the world," and hence ethnography is a kind of sorcery, albeit (one hopes) without the malevolence normally associated with witchcraft.²² Here in this story of Palasari, which can be read as a decidedly "postcolonial," "multicultural," and "multireligious" encounter, between different epistemologies, and perhaps even ontologies (Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007)—between commonplace but diverse and inevitably contested representation of Palasari. The story of Palasari filtered through the determining space of public culture can appear like arenas for sorcery in West's sense, constructing a transcendental position in order to enforce certainty upon an otherwise "inescapably inchoate world" (West 2007: 69).

The Catholic Church's representation of Palasari as a Balinese Catholic village that maintains their belief alongside their Balinese culture would pose the questions of how Balinese is Palasari or how Catholic is Palasari? Who has the right and authority to impose those labels and identities? Prior to become Catholic, the majority of Palasari's population were commoners, only seven families were from the nobility. None of them, however, were considered to be scholars in Balinese Hindu literature. So, their understanding of Balinese culture and identity would only be based on a popular knowledge – a knowledge that is non-formal, non-literate, based on folk religion. Moreover, most of the later generations were trained in the Catholic schools and seminaries, with very little knowledge of Balinese Hinduism. Stating that Palasari is a "Balinese Catholic" community (village), therefore, is most

²¹ According to West, *Kupilikula* literally means "to invert," "to overturn," "to negate," "to annul," and "to undo." He describes how Muedan sorcerers transcend the everyday by "rendering themselves invisible," "producing and inhabiting an invisible realm from which they gain powerful perspective on the visible" enabling them to reorder it in such way as to "feed their insatiable appetites." But they "do not go unchallenged," and different figures of authority, as "sorcerers of construction," "transcend not only the world inhabited by ordinary Muedans but also that of "sorcerers of ruin," fixing the latter in *their gaze* . . . unmaking sorcerers" acts, and remaking the world in accordance with their own visions of a world reordered" (2007: x).

²² As one reviewer noted, for some anthropologists "West's insistence on seeing ethnography as sorcery is unwise" because while anthropologists do "re-order the world," they "do not cause misfortune" or "kill as sorcerers are said to do."

likely a statement of a norm, a description of a state of affairs that ought to be true in (unspecified) optimal circumstances. Such norm-as-fact statements are quite common, for example:

Bali is a Hindu island in the Indonesian sea of Islam
Balinese are very polite and welcoming
Palasari is a Balinese village

These are expressed as factual generalisation but obviously express a desirable norm rather than a general observation. Those who make that statements know all too well that there are Muslim Balinese as there are Christian Balinese in Bali, that Balinese also could cheat and often easily get angry especially towards the migrant workers from neighbouring islands, and that supposedly there are non-Balinese too in Palasari. Indeed, it is against a background of such reality that people feel the need to reassert the norm by rhetorically presenting it as a fact. This norm, however, fails to recognise that Palasari is a more complex blend of various representations, articulations, votive practices, and interests of so many actors – “sorcerers and counter-sorcerers” in West’s terms.

An arena of entanglement

Palasari is a Catholic village in a predominantly Hindu island. The Hindu *pura* (temple) and *sangghah* (household shrine) are the pervading features of this island. Every Hindu house compound consists of around at least five, and often more, shrines – ranging in importance and size from the three section *kemulan* to the inconspicuous *sangghah paon* (kitchen shrine). That is why Bali is often called an island of a thousand temples. The Balinese also call a shrine *pelinggih*, which simply means “place,” or “seat”. This refers to any sort of permanent or temporary place in which devotions and offerings are made. Fred Eiseman, in *Bali: Sekala and Niskala*, notes: “in fact, although specific types of shrines are required in every compound, it is often not clear – even to the Balinese who set offerings there every day – exactly to whom and for what purpose the shrine has been erected. In no case is the shrine itself considered sacred, rather the shrine exists or is built as a residence for sacred, or holy, spirits – either ancestors or Hindu deities.” (2011:271).

One of those shrines is normally located in front of the house close to the fence, on the roadside called a *tugu* or *panunggun karang*, or *tugun karang*. It is usually a low and roofless shrine, situated in the *kaja-kauh* (northwest) about 90-degree anti-clockwise west from the north, toward the mountains on the corner of the property. The Hindu believes that the spirit abides in the *tugu* and watches the property. This shrine is so important because it is dedicated to *Kala Raksa* or *Bhatara Kala* – a divine demon. That is why every government initiative to

expand the roads will be discouraged because of the high cost of compensation including the Hindu ceremonies for *sangghah* translocation. Eisman mentions that this ceremony is expensive and has to be taken seriously (277). Michel Picard (1990) who has put Balinese tourism under his scrutiny for decades has predicted that the narrow roads, traffic jams, and overpopulation would become the major obstacles for the future of Bali's tourism. Similar to Picard, Shinji Yamashita's *Bali and Beyond* (2002) argues that Balinese tourism creates an ongoing tension between being modern and traditional, where the necessity to preserve the 'pure' Bali with its traditional culture has to meet the challenges posed by modernity. Not surprising the famous writer of *Island of Bali* (1937), Miguel Covarrubias lamented the lost paradise on his second visit.

Three days after a 22-hour trip from Heathrow to Doha and arriving in Bali, it was time for me to immerse myself in my work. We drove west from Denpasar to Palasari, the place I have chosen to carry out my fieldwork, escaping from Durham with its exotic Cathedral and university life. I was so excited thinking of this fieldwork, identifying myself with the great work of Edith Turner (1993, 1999, 2006) from my first year in Durham who had advocated the fieldwork methodology as one of immersive participant observation. I was reading some books about witchcraft mostly plundered from my battle with various people I visited during my recovery from jetlag in Denpasar. Some were my old friends and relatives, but some I just met for the first time. They initially tried to convince me of the risks and dangers of my research. Even for the most Balinese or for people who live in Bali, *léyak* is still considered to be dangerous. Yet, on my insistence eventually, they lent me their books, shared information or referred me to certain people who could provide any assistance including university professors, healers, and *léyak* practitioners. I had also contacted some Palasari people who live in Denpasar to share my fieldwork plan with them.



Figure 3.1 The Sacred Heart Church of Palasari

Suddenly all the vivid memories of Palasari from the past occupied my mind (figure 2.1). A colonial place of refuge and shelter for the first Balinese Christian converts who experienced hardship and social punishment from their local origin in the South and transmigrated to the forest in West Bali. It is undoubtedly an isolated village. From the time my mother went to high school there and from my childhood until 25 years later, it has not changed much. In recent years, Palasari has become central for the Catholic diocese of Denpasar's activities either at local level or national level. There are about 6,700 original Balinese among the 30,000 Catholic population in Bali, and about 1,500 reside in Palasari. The local Church proudly shows to the outside world the successful mission not of proselytism but rather of the amalgamation of Christian message and culture called inculturation. *The Federation of Asian Bishop Conference* (FABC) launched their enduring agenda towards a 'truly Asian' Church. Palasari is promulgated as an ideal example of this view of what it means to be an original Balinese Christian.

In normal days Palasari is a very quiet setting surrounded by rice fields and coconut trees, forests, and hills. It is undeniably a kinship village, where everyone is related to the others because of marital relationship, whereas gossip, rumour, fear of *léyak* and taboo are their everyday conversation, and where church activities blend with *adat* (village custom). All that is ordinary and normal has become extraordinary and exotic in the eyes of her prodigal son who returns to crack down her normality. Negotiation theory of insider and outsider, home and

away anthropologies, internal and external, subjective and objective discourse were spinning around in my head.

As a Balinese Catholic village, Palasari has a unique Dutch colonial period landscape which consists of three '*banjars*' (hamlets) with its autonomous residential group and social life as if emerging from a giant Balinese gothic Church building situated at the epicentre of the village. Schools, clinic, orphanage, convent, football courts and *Bale Banjar* (meeting court served as multi-function purposes building) attached to the Church creating one big compound. It shows that all public and private matters are connected to the life of the Church. Expanding from this compound is "*Pelinggih Ida Kaniaka Maria*" (the shrine of our Blessed Mary) of Palasari which was built in 1962 but then renovated and consecrated in 2008 by Mgr. Leopoldo Gireli, the Vatican Ambassador in Indonesia at that time. About 1 km in the East is the Palasari reservoir and Dam established in the 1980s and marks the post-colonial period on the landscape. These three suffice to transform the village as one of the tourist destinations in the West of Bali. Seeing the passers-by on the roads in Palasari becomes the recent phenomenon. It has turned Palasari, from an isolated and quiet village into a favourite place to visit. I recall my stay in this place from 1995-1996, when after six o'clock in the evening, it was hard to find people on the streets, it seemed like a cemetery. Now, nearly every day local people from neighbouring villages, cities or even other islands come to visit this place. Weekends and holidays are the most crowded periods. The orphanage has been expanded to become a homestay for tourists who want to stay over a weekend or on retreat. From being a place of colonial exile and refuge, Palasari has turned into a post-colonial tourist place.

Many Catholic groups came to visit Palasari either to attend mass at the Church or to pray the rosary at the Shrine of Our Lady. I witnessed that many non-Catholics also came to pay a visit to the Shrine of Our Lady. While the interest in visiting the Church was to take a selfie photo in front of the building, many non-Catholics also prayed in the grotto. Some local villagers informed me that the Hindu people love to bring their *canang sari* (a Balinese traditional hand bucket) and *dupa* (stick incense) to be presented to the Blessed Lady. While some Protestants, Muslims and Buddhists recognize the shrine as a peaceful place that could help them to be calm or to pray. They all believe that the Blessed Lady could help their pleas. I met a young Hindu couple who were dating and came to the place seeking help because their relationship was not approved by their parents. They claimed that the girl's parents have used the *guna-guna* (magic spell) with the help of one of the *balian*s in order to separate them.

On 13 October 2016, the Catholic feast of Our Blessed Lady of Fatima, as I was blending together with other pilgrims in the Shrine, in the silence of the prayers, suddenly I heard a loud voice from speakers, a Muslim call for prayer from neighbouring village. "This new

phenomenon was from a few years back. They were the only couple of Muslim families but the government gave them money to build a *mushola* (a small mosque) with a very loud speaker,” Fr. Bartolomeus Bere as the parish priest explains, “but even then, we respect them, they call our God with a different name!” Suminah, a member of this Muslim community whom I visited, told me that her parents came to Bali from East Java and had lived in Palasari since the 1940s, long before the government built the Dam, or even before the roads were constructed in asphalt. She went to the Palasari Catholic school until finally becoming a teacher there, and just retired last year. She told me that as a Muslim she has no problem in honouring the Blessed Mary since she is also honoured in the Koran. At difficult moments in her life she came to pray asking for help from Our Lady. She used to clean the church or the grotto if she found out that nobody had cleaned them.

From the early period, when Palasari was the only place in the region where people could find schools, the Hindus, the Protestants and Muslims from neighbouring villages had come to Palasari and learnt of Catholic beliefs and practices (Sudhiarsa, 2000). Moreover, Palasari also provided boarding for those from far off places, such as my mother who studied there for four years. “Some of those non-Catholics have married our people, on the other hand, they took some of our women too,” says I Nyoman Winarta, a retired catechist. “The current generation still come to Palasari just for sightseeing at the Dam or taking selfie picture with the Church in the background,” he contends, “but many of them also pay homage to the Shrine of the Blessed Lady”. This remark demonstrates how Palasari became an entanglement of multireligious and multicultural practices of various people specifically in relation to the shrine of Our Lady.

A land for spiritual seekers



Figure 3.2 Palasari dam and reservoir

Like many other sacred places in Indonesia which attract thousands of pilgrims, or spiritual seekers, Palasari has been promoted as a spiritual tourism site in recent years by the Palasari people who currently work in the tourist industry in the city. Located 3.5 km from the village, *Taman Wana Villa Resort* has advertised the Palasari Dam and Village as its unique attraction (figure 2.2). The serenity and tranquillity of the Palasari forest and hills are coupled with pious and social activities such as visiting the Church and orphanage. Visiting a traditional Balinese village is included in the package offered to the guests. Some Catholic travel agencies have also included Palasari as one of the seven Shrines of Our Blessed Lady in Bali as their package tour. Frequently hosting several national events of the Indonesian Bishop's Conference, Palasari gains its fame from the ongoing media coverage. Having survived as a Balinese Catholic village amidst the dominant image of Bali as a Hindu island, Palasari offers a distinctiveness which attracts many people. This has been enhanced by the media coverage of major Christian feasts such as Christmas and Easter in Palasari. On these occasions the Catholic rituals are celebrated in a specifically Balinese way, namely using gamelan (Balinese traditional orchestra), Balinese hymns and language, and wearing traditional dress. The Matahari Beach Resort, a popular resort among the German and the Dutch in Pemuteran-Buleleng, about 50 km North of Palasari has also included a visit to Palasari in their tour package. The involvement of Dutch and German missionaries in the past is one of the reasons for attracting tourists. This

shows that Palasari became a tourist attraction more as a result of location and history rather than as natural process where advert and social media play an important role.

Other than the *Pelinggih Ida Kaniaka* Maria, there are other sacred locations in Palasari such as a Church, five chapels, the Forest ‘*Bungas*’ Spring and religious cemetery. However, it is the Shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary which is the most important for Catholics and non-Catholics. For local Catholics in Palasari, who easily relate their memories to the priests or bishops, visiting their graveyard is more important, than for Catholics from outside Bali. This explains what is categorised as sacred in the first place according to the Balinese or Indonesian perspective. Right in the very first lines of its introduction, *The Encyclopaedia of Sacred Places* (2011) states:

[p]laces dedicated to sacred memories are a part of all the world’s religious and spiritual traditions. In these sacred places, the seeker encounters the holy and, through rituals, meditation, and revelation, experiences a call to move beyond the self(xiii).

It highlights ‘thought or memories’ associated with those places that make them sacred. While in the Balinese context, the account is based on what Eliade (1957) calls “hierophany”, which is an experiential existence of spirit or supernatural beings through an object, be it big stones, trees, or a water spring. A place is considered sacred (*suci* or *sukla*) as opposed to profane or secular in the context of religious ritual; while it is numinous (*keramat*, *angker*, *magis*, or *tenget*) in the context of supernatural beings dwelling in that location. Eiseman (1989) contends that the Balinese tend to raise a *tugu* shrine if a place or an object manifests the energies, mystical powers, or the presence of a ‘spirit’ in the first place (274).

A part of Catholic popular tradition is to set up shrines where the apparitions of the Our Lady, angels, or saints have been reported, e.g. Lourdes, Fatima. Catholic piety in Indonesia, however, is mostly dominated by a trend to establish a shrine which is already considered to be *keramat* or *angker*, as the dwelling of the spirit or supernatural. Places such as Goa Maria (the grotto of Blessed Mary) Sendangsono, Goa Maria Kerep, or Candi Hati Kudus Yesus (the Shrine of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) Ganjuran in Central Java previously considered to be *angker* by the local people subsequently became places of Catholic piety. Later on, the church transformed them into 24-hour shrines opened for all people regardless of their religious background. Kak Made, one of the Palasari founding fathers, informed me that the location of the current Palasari Church was believed as *tenget*. He recalled that some frequently experienced being disturbed by ‘spirits’ when they were working there. Fr. Simon Buis, a *Divine Word Missionary* (SVD) from Holland and the founder of the Palasari village, eventually decided to have the Church built on that site which is clearly higher than other places

in the area. When building the Shrine of Our Lady in 1962, another Dutch missionary, Fr. Ben Blanken SVD also chose the place which was seen as *tenget*.

During my fieldwork, I discovered several popular television programmes during prime time about ghost stories, supernatural game shows, or travel features to the spirit world just to show how the Indonesians are fascinated by the supernatural. This supernatural industry has become a source of income for many who appear also in recent national movies. This does not include shaman and paranormal services and supernatural tours raking in millions which have appealed to the hearts of all segments of society. Thousands of sacred places in Indonesia have been praised for years as the place where people seeking help or economic gain, matchmaking, good fortune, and health. These sacred places, however, be it a cave on a cliff or the mountain top, waterfall, a deserted island, etc., are always related to the presence of the spirit as the place of miracles, apparitions, or other forms of divine intervention. People come to devote themselves to ritual, prayer, or meditation with various motivation. Rather than rely on intermediaries as in many organised religions, they now emphasise the direct access to the sacred through ritual mediation with objects and in spaces that engage the senses. Palasari has been transformed recently into a place where people from various walks of life, individually or collectively find spiritual comfort and peace.

The shrine in the balian's surgery

While many outsiders find their spiritual comfort at the shrine in Palasari, the local people in addition to visiting the shrine love to visit the *balian* for healing. Accompanied by one of the locals, I took a chance to visit one of the *baliens* in Melaya which is about five kilometres from Palasari. He is from a Hindu background as was obvious from the religious symbols he was using such as the shrines to decorate his traditional clinic and also the offerings I was obliged to present such as a *canang sari*, *dupa* and a fifty thousand rupiah note. After shortly explaining about my research in Palasari, I told him of an uneasiness I felt in my right shoulder, to which then he gave me a bone-setting treatment taking around 15-20 minutes. Brought up on this island, I was used to massage which includes torture, pain or any physical treatment. As a result, I did not find any peculiarity with this one. After touching and rubbing my shoulder, eventually, he explained what I had been through in the past such as a motorbike accident in 2003 which injured my head, caused concussion, and recurring vertigo. Surprisingly, I had never met him before, but he seemed to know every detail of the medical problem in my body only by touching it. He emphasised certain kinds of food or the sport that I should abstain from. His ability and expertise to read my past health record was remarkable. Patients came not only

from around Melaya but also from Denpasar and other regencies seeking his help. At least, I met some of them waiting to see him on the same day as I came to see him.

I noted that his surgery was a room without chairs, where the floor was covered with a green carpet and where we all sat cross-legged. Right in the corner was a large altar table with various Hindu symbols. The usual procedure before the treatment was, to offer the *canang sari* and *dupa* that I brought to that shrine which was located above the place where he was hosting me. He asked me to pray according to my religious tradition invoking *Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa* to help through this treatment while he was chanting his prayer in *alus* (high) Balinese language which I was not able to catch clearly. Instead of praying as requested, I tried to concentrate on hearing his words. I noticed also there were some cakes, rice, or fruits being offered on the shrine that had become my distraction, knowing that those were offered by other patients while I had only brought *canang sari* and *dupa*. Nevertheless, my companion assured me, that if I could not bring any food other than *canang sari* and *dupa*, I could give money instead. This was the standard requirement regardless the religious background. The *balian* functions as an intermediary of the client's needs or pleas as well as the bridge between the seen (*sekala*) and the unseen (*niskala*).

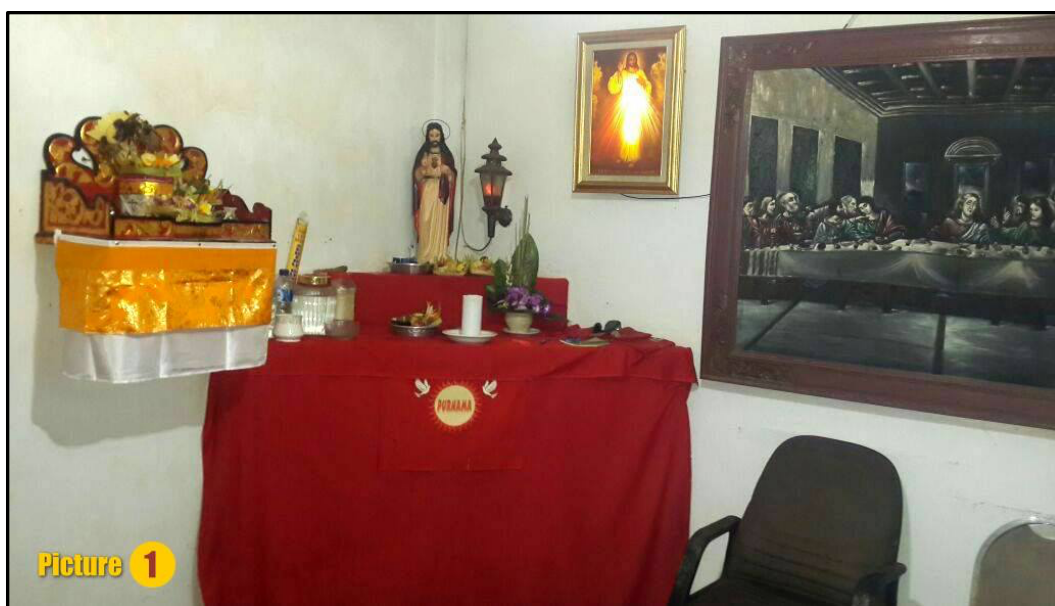


Figure 3.3 Surgery of Made Windia: the Sacred Heart and Hindu plangkiran side by side

Through my research, I found that in every *balian*'s house a shrine could be seen at the centre of their surgery. Having a shrine or an altar, with various religious symbols such as pictures, art paintings, and writings or statues is a salient feature of every *balian*'s surgery. There are trends in having those religious representations in one place to make those seekers comfortable under the blanket of their religious formal identity. Speaking to a villager from Palasari, I noticed, that visiting a Hindu or a Muslim *balian* for him was not really problematic since his

Catholic symbolism was also there. Moreover, “we can’t localise God into our own comfort,” he refers to the Bible, “God is a spirit who could work through everyone He chooses, regardless their religion!” This justification is very common among the Christians who consulted the *balian* about their problems. It is interesting to note that several Christian healers that I studied refused to be called *balian*. This is because, for them, the word *balian* is often associated with the Hindu healer, as much as the word *dukun* is with the Muslim healer, while a Christian healer is often called as *pendoa* which simply means an intercessor. I discovered, however, that there was not much difference between them in their procedure and ritual. Referring to his healing and consulting room, Made Windia, one of those Christian healers, maintains: “by putting a “*plangkiran*” Hindu shrine in my practice (figure 2.3), the Hindu clients could invoke their own God in their own way. For the Muslims, I provide a place to pray with their own tradition. For *nyama kresten* (Christian brethren), they could pray to Jesus or to Our Lady.” He adds, “as a Christian, I will pray in my tradition by lighting the candle, while as a Hindu, they could pray by offering the *canang sari* and *dupa*.” Sometimes he sings one of the Christian hymns popular among the Charismatic groups before healing despite the fact that his patients are non-Christian. As a Christian healer, he does not impose certain Christian skills on other non-Christians to accord to his healing or exorcism procedure. It does not involve any religious doctrine or teaching of eternal salvation or damnation; it is only dealing with practicality.



Figure 3.4 One stop shop shrine

This practice of consulting a *balian* is far from being interpreted as a dual belief practice which competes and falls into a grey area of cognitive dissonance, or even what is called religious bricolage. It is rather like, as one of the *baliangs* says, “one-stop shop, with a collection of powerful gods or saints from various religious traditions who could provide help for everyone” (Figure 2.4). Moreover, *baliangs* occupy socially acceptable and morally neutral all-purpose roles, where any *balian* may have mastered a number of specialties – bone-setting, midwifery, massage, healing, the purveying of spells, divination, exorcism, herbalism, sorcery, and so on. In no sense can these general ritual experts be construed as “gangsters of the supernatural,” to use Stephen’s (1987:7) evocative description of African sorcery.

It is clear, that an altar is so central to this practice which functions as the shrine of deities or spirits who initiate help for those clients or patients through *balian* as intermediaries. It

seems that the religious rituals practiced by these *balian*s are not subject to the mediated spirits in their shrine. In one of the rooms of a Hindu *balian* in Singaraja-North Bali, I saw a big square sized picture of Divine Mercy, a Catholic devotion. He told me that he got that picture through a dream and he found out from a friend that it was one of the Christian Gods. As told in the dream, he put that picture as one of the shrines in his room. In spite of the fact that he knew that it was a Christian God, he still worshipped the Divine Mercy with his Hindu's way, offering Him daily offering such as *canang sari*.

The endurance of this practice throughout history shows the fact that people find it helpful and the efficacy is inevitable. Certain people might have a favourite *balian* whom they consult regularly especially for healing although they also consult with modern medical doctors about their health. They would consider going to see a *balian* as seeking a second opinion on their sickness, or the other way around to consult a medical doctor as the second opinion.

The religious symbol has been the subject of many studies in Indonesian scholarship. The country suffers from unrest and religious tensions in many parts of the archipelago. Between the years of 1996-2000, thousands of churches, schools, and convents were destroyed and burnt down. The permission to build the Church or place of worships will always be an issue in places where Christians are in a minority. In an "isolated" place such as Palasari during Christmas last year, a large number of police and the armies guarded the Church against so-called Islamic terrorist attack. This has been a tradition for years that the Christian communities officially declared the minority needed protection from the state. How necessary and urgent is this security 'ritual'? In fact, "every year the police would warn of the possibility of a terrorist attack!" says Fr. Barto, the parish priest of Palasari. A long queue of people from his congregation had to pass the x-ray security gate before entering the Christmas service. The church is always identified as a Christian symbol. Instead of targeting the Christian houses, attacking the Church is clearly seen as abolishing Christian identity and existence. The fluidity of votive practice at the grassroots level as shown by visiting the sacred places or *balian*s is the opposite of the political practice in Indonesia which tends to intensify the religious identity through religious symbols.

An Arena of Sorcery

As shown in Palasari, visiting the sacred places such as a shrine, an altar, or a memorial is indeed a salient practice among the Balinese or Indonesians in general. What is primarily regarded as sacred in this context is the experiential existence of spirits (deities) before any view of the sacred place as being a memorial. From being a colonial refuge for a small group of new converts, Palasari has been turned into a post-colonial tourist site in countless ways in

which the various facets of human life intersect with one another. Not only popular among Catholics, Palasari's shrine offers an extremely rich and complex inter-faith practice where a deep religious and spiritual search for god and self exist alongside the more mundane need for the therapeutic effects of travel and tourism, where a strictly pious activity for obtaining God's blessings intersects with a complex framework of cultural or religious fluidity. What unifies these pilgrims is their votive practice which is far from doctrinal or formal religious teaching. As shown earlier, votive practice is an *ad hoc* practice which also appears in the practice of consulting with *balian*.

Since the advent of modern tourism in Bali at the beginning of the twentieth century foreigners have been drawn to the island for its unique and dynamic mixture of traditional practices (known as *adat*). A palpable reverence for the ancestors, and, perhaps most notably, a myriad of artistic practices that appear to effortlessly blur any distinction between human aesthetics, daily life, and the broader cosmos. The formation of the modern Indonesian nation state – of which Bali is a part – coupled with a relentless and ever-growing stream of tourists and increased transmigration to Bali by mostly Chinese and Muslim Indonesians, have contributed greatly to the desire amongst many Balinese to delineate the outside from the inside, essential for those who truly belong to the ancestral lineage of the land from those whose ties to the island are perceived as superficial. A widespread and easily identified marker of such membership is one's adherence (or not) to the rites and ritual practices associated with Balinese Hinduism. Over the course of the twentieth century this modern religious construct has become a nearly undisputed indicator of one's true "Balineseness." It is therefore not surprising that to convert to another religion was and still is regarded as the most radical rejection of self and community. Converting to Christianity as in the case of the Palasari people, for example, is tantamount to treason, and as Clifford Geertz has noted: "[the] occasional individual who is converted is still considered, even by the most tolerant and sophisticated, to have abandoned not just Balinese religion but Bali, and perhaps reason, itself" (1973:181).

Moreover, Balinese Hinduism and all of its temples are strictly related to the spirits of the ancestors. Thus, being a Christian is regarded as betraying the spirits of the ancestors. In view of this concept, it is not easy for a Balinese to be a Christian. Wayan Mastra explains as follows:

"In worshipping Jesus, who does not belong to their clan, he is considered to be worshipping the spirit of another clan. So, the Hindu Balinese consider Christians to be people who leave their own ancestors and worship the spirit of another ancestor" (1983:242).

My postgraduate thesis in Durham investigated the different ways in which Bali has been portrayed in the anthropological canon, from colonial time until present day.²³ Over the years Balinese have displayed their artistic accomplishments – particularly music, dance and drama, often in truncated and impoverished forms – for the delight of tourists. They also willingly invite tourists into their homes and temples to witness a variety of colourful ceremonies such as cremations, weddings and tooth-filings. Most Balinese accept that it is this rich and sumptuous spectacle which brings tourists, both foreigners and other Indonesians to Bali. People come to see Balinese culture, and therefore it must be accessible and tailored to tourist requirements. This orientation to tourist desires, which goes back to late colonial Bali, has encouraged Balinese to develop what to anthropologists appears a rather narrow concept of culture (*kebudayaan*, Ind.), consisting solely of these artistic and material productions. While many performances are part of everyday life and would be enacted whether or not tourists were present, others are specifically designed for an exclusive tourist audience, performed in special arenas – often hotels, having no religious significance, and are organised by entrepreneurs, businessmen and state tourist agencies for profit. This has fostered the notion that *kebudayaan* is a kind of object which Balinese possess but over which they no longer have sole control, because it is being shaped partly to suit the interests of the market and foreign investors. The Balinese are the authors of this culture and are proud that others are willing to pay to experience it, but by putting it into the marketplace sole effective control is relinquished. If this culture has to some extent become a commodity, it implies it can be bought and sold, and even that it can be stolen.

On December 19, 1999, a local television programme called “*Sendratari Kelahiran Ida Sang Hyang Yesus*” (a Balinese traditional drama and dance about the birth of Jesus) was recorded in the Catholic Church at Tuka and was broadcasted on December 25, 1999. Throughout the following days all the media in Bali responded to that programme. Hindu organisations and institutions responded with bitterness and anger stating that the Catholics had stolen their culture and mixed it with Catholic elements.

Their main response, as reported in the *Bali Post* on December 29, 1999, was that Balinese culture belongs to Hindus alone. In other words, for them, culture is their religion and vice versa. It is impossible to separate religion from culture.

“Although not all the Hindu leaders had the same opinion regarding the matter, most of Bali Hindu religious leaders claimed that ‘Bali is Hindu and Hindu is Bali.’ Since religion and social life are intimately blended in Bali, some traditional Hindu leaders stated: “The relation between religion and culture in Bali is analogous to the relation between a tree and its leaves, flowers and fruits. Religion is the trunk of the Balinese society while culture is

²³ *Narrating Bali: Representation, Image and Identity* (2015).

the leaves, flowers and fruits of the tree. Whoever does not care for the tree has no right to share its leaves, flowers and fruits.”

This problem raises the questions of who has the right to claim the culture for the Hindu side, and what culture should be considered for possible inculturation by the Catholic side? It is helpful, therefore, to start by asking what sort of knowledge is involved, how is it promulgated in such a case. Treating Balinese, particularly the Palasari people, as heirs to some ancient unchanging tradition presumes, they are passive pawns imprisoned by a reified culture as opposed to imaginative, creative, critical part-agents, if not under conditions of their own choosing. Representations, such as “Balinese Catholic” village, “promised land”, “exile” of Hindu converts who betrayed their ancestors and religion, or a “land of *léyak*” that devours its own people, do not exist as free-floating timeless truths, but as claims made under specific conditions. Who represented what *as* what to whom, on what occasion, for what purposes? Fairly obviously broad terms like tradition, history, culture and so on cannot be applied with much precision to millions of people over centuries. Humans are too diverse, inventive, awkward and often inscrutable in their daily lives to conform conveniently to sweeping generalities. So, who claims the right to enunciate on their behalf? In other words, what are the circumstances under which an extraordinary complicated and partly unknowable actuality comes to be articulated? In so doing, what is disarticulated and who silenced?

What then do we reliably conclude? Vickers’ review of historical sources (2012) has dismissed many myths, Western and Balinese. Picard has examined how mass tourism has impacted on Balinese culture (1996). Hobart has analysed how the concept of Balinese culture became reified (2000). And Fox has shown how Indonesian mass media, like television, has changed how Balinese religion is articulated (2011). To date though we lack critical analysis of the class and political interests of the Indonesians or foreigners who do the enunciating. Rigorous inquiry into who represented what as what to whom, when and why has barely begun. Here *Cultural Studies*²⁴ becomes relevant, because it aims to analyse the conditions under which articulations have been made, counter-articulations marginalized and whole categories of people disarticulated. Such a study upsets cosy clichés about the continuity, harmony and unity of Balinese society.

²⁴ The phrase culture as a ‘site of struggle’ is widely attributed to Stuart Hall (e.g. Grossberg 1996: 158). What Hall actually wrote was: ‘Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged’ (1994: 466). Note how this echoes Vološinov: ‘Class does not coincide with the sign community, i.e., with the community which is the totality of users of the same set of signs for ideological communication. Thus, various different classes will use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of the class struggle’ (1973: 23). Class difference and concomitant inequalities are, of course, antagonisms neatly sutured by an imagined culture-for-all.

To go back to the beginning of this chapter, the way that history, representations and references have become a “tool of the ruling classes” is evident in Palasari. The sorcerers and the counter-sorcerers have cast their ‘spells’ to make Palasari a “Balinese Catholic” village, a “promised land”, or an “exile” of Hindu converts. The truth is, the locals cast their own spell to make Palasari a blend of entanglement or even a “land haunted by *léyak*” that devours its own inhabitants. How this spell works will be elaborated in the following chapters.

Conclusion

The argument of this chapter portrays Palasari as an ‘arena of sorcery’ where various interests and representations are entangled. This entanglement involves ‘sorcerers and counter-sorcerers’ – to use West’s terms – such as the Church (local or global), non-Catholics especially Hindus, local Palasari people and tourism. These groups, as West suggests, “are drawn into a game of *kupikula* through which they temporarily transcend the material, everyday world, in order to envisage, articulate and remould it in accordance to their own visions of a world reordered’ (2007: x). They all cast their spells on Palasari, but which of these is the most influential? The answer depends on the interests of all involved.

The hegemony of the Church’s representation of Palasari as a ‘Promised Land’ dated back to the colonial time when the new Catholic converts experienced trial and persecution from their fellow Balinese Hindu. The counter to this representation came from the Hindu institution that saw Palasari as an ‘Exile Land’ for the betrayal of Balinese ancestors and tradition. While the most recent representation of Palasari came from those working in the tourist industries who saw it as a tourist site. This representation coalesces with the new programme launched by the Church which makes Palasari the pilot project of a successful Catholic mission based on Western colonial guilt by celebrating the Balinese culture as a new way of being a Church. Under this gaze of tourism, Palasari has attracted so many pilgrims flocking to their shrines. The blend and entanglement as evident in Palasari show the fluidity of votive practice.

To return to my earlier paragraphs, I can now give a provisional answer to the problem of the two Palasaris. The former is imaginary. The latter is the mundane actuality of Palasari. The relationship between the two is complex but would seem that the more anomic that social institutions become and the more dystopic most people’s lived reality, the more fervently its proponents advocate instantiating the Imaginary in the – rather forlorn – hope that it will ameliorate the actuality. Furthermore, there are more than two Palasaris, the blend of the two, the imaginary and the actual. It is the work of the sorcerers and counter-sorcerers to intermediate between the two worlds, the *niskala* (invisible, unseen) and the *sekala* (visible, seen).

Chapter 4

The Journey of *Durga* to Palasari

“There are many *léyak* and *rangda* in Palasari!” said one of the parishioners in the Catholic Cathedral Parish whom I met in the seminar that evening. “When my daughter was attending the ‘camping school’ of the diocesan programme in Palasari last year, she heard the earie cries of *rangda* at mid-night!” he tried to give as supporting information. Every year more than one thousand teenagers from twenty-three parishes in the Catholic Diocese of Denpasar (figure 3.1) attend this camping school. Other than issues of health and safety, suitability and basic facilities in the village, parents had also raised concern about the existence of the evil witch *rangda* and *léyak* in Palasari. Among the many tales brought home as souvenirs by their teens after the summer camp was the story of this monstrous *léyak*.

“How could Catholics still believe and practice *léyak*?” asked many of the people I met. The answer to that question came from Nyoman Winarta, the son of the first generation who came and settled in Palasari. He was born in Palasari not long after the village was opened in the centre of the Western forest of Bali. He argued that those witchcraft powers were brought in when they converted to Catholicism.”



Figure 4.1. a five-day annual youth camp during school holiday attended by more than one thousand children.

In this chapter, I am going to show briefly the journey of Durga from India to Java, to Bali

and then to Palasari.²⁵ To do so, I will investigate *Rangda* and her role as a chthonic and mythological figure in Bali and her connection to *léyak* in Palasari, particularly the way in which *Rangda*'s identity has intertwined with that of the Hindu goddess Durga—slayer of buffalo demons and other creatures that cannot be defeated by Shiva or other male Hindu gods.²⁶ Images and stories about Durga in Bali are significantly different from those found in Hindu contexts in India. Although she retains the strong-willed independence and decision-making capabilities prominently associated with Durga in India, in Bali, especially for Catholics in Palasari, the goddess Durga is primarily associated with violent and negative attributes as well as looks and behaviours that are more usually associated with Kali in India. While both deities are known to be among the manifestations of the same *shakti*, in this case the female energizing force of Balinese *Śiwa*, worship of Kali is not common in Bali. The combination of positive and negative attributes within one manifestation lends an ambiguity to the construction of Balinese Durga that is not generally found in the Indian contexts of Durga. This reconstruction of the Durga in Bali over time, in particular the integration of Durga with the figure of the witch *Rangda*, reflects the local importance of the dynamic relationship between good and bad, positive and negative forces in Bali (*rwa bhineda*). According to Michele Stephen (2002), however, these pairs are not merely polar opposites to be kept in balance with one another. Instead, these Balinese representations of *Rangda* and Durga reveal a constant flux and transformation between good and evil, or 'ritual purity and impurity', not simply one side of a binary opposition (Weiss, 2017). Following Ariati (2009), I will argue that in Palasari, *Rangda*, *léyak*, and *pangiwa* (left hand magic) have been used to demonize some categories of women, particularly independent women considered as having a strong or dominant role in the family or in social life.

In Indian Hinduism, it is understood that Durga is one manifestation of the *shakti* or female energy of Shiva. An embodied goddess with her own characteristics and experiences, Durga is aligned with both Uma or Parvati, the benevolent consort of Shiva and the ruthlessly violent Kali (among many others). In Bali, the interrelationships between these manifestations of the *shakti* of *Śiwa* (as Shiva is more commonly transliterated in Bali) are rearranged. Unlike depictions of goddesses in other Hindu contexts, or indeed in many other goddess traditions around the world, in Bali, Durga is always depicted as gruesome and frightening with lolling

²⁵ For most part of this chapter, I drew from the archaeological work of Pasek Ariati (2009) and many discussions with colleagues in Faculty of Letters of Udayana University-Bali and Airlangga University of Surabaya; literary work of Sarah Weiss (2017); correspondence and discussion with Michelle Stephen (2002), Toety Heraty Roosseno, and Hariani Santiko and hours of interviews with so many scholarly healers and magic practitioners from various sampradaya and spiritual groups in Bali and other parts of Indonesia.

²⁶ Here, I use the spelling "Shiva" when referencing Indian Hinduism and "Śiwa" when referencing Balinese Hinduism.

tongue, bulging eyes, coarse features and unkempt hair. But it was only during the decline of the Majapahit period (late Hindu Java, from the fourteenth to the early sixteenth century) and in Hindu Bali during and after that same period that Durga began to be represented in such a grotesque manner.

The gradual decline of the Majapahit empire and period began after the death of one of its greatest rulers, Hayam Wuruk in 1389 CE. It lasted through the rise of the Sultanate of Malacca (1400–1511 CE) and ended with the collapse of Majapahit by the early sixteenth century (c.1527). There was migration from East Java to Bali throughout this period, with a more intensive influx to Bali after Majapahit Empire finally fell following a series of defeats in its western regions in Sumatra, and at home by Muslim forces from Demak, the first Islamic sultanate in Java (Creese 2000; Hägerdal 1995; Ricklefs 2008). Prior to that tumultuous period, even while landing the final, eviscerating blow against the enemies of the gods, the goddess Durga is depicted with a beatific and voluptuous demeanour on Hindu temples in the region; her face is calm, and her body relaxed and sensual as is evident from the image (see Figure 1) of Durga Mahishasuramardini from Candi Singasari in East Java, created just at the beginning of the decline of Majapahit around 1300 CE.

Extensive work on the archaeological, Indological and historical aspects of the arrival, existence and modification of Hinduism and Buddhism over the millennium from 600–1600 CE in insular Southeast Asia, in particular Java and Bali, has been ongoing for more than a century with the work of Ariati (2009) and Dowling (1992; 1994) being among the more prominent recent studies. How Durga in present-day Bali came to share features primarily associated with Kali in Indian Hinduism and with those of the chthonic witch *Rangda* remains unclear. The fact that these similarities exist suggests that the rich and productive ambiguity represented by Balinese Durga is significant to local understandings of the goddess. In an effort to understand the localization of Durga especially in Palasari's context, I will first introduce images of *Rangda* and her "foe", the lion Barong. I will then outline some of the historical and mythological narratives associated with *Rangda* by examining the Javanese/Balinese story of Calon Arang which features Durga as an advisor and helpmate to *Rangda*. I will then mime the Hindu *purana* text, the *Devī-Māhātmya* (alternatively identified as the seven hundred verses on Durga), noting details for understanding the Balinese interpretation of Durga (as well as Uma, Parvati and Kali among other incarnations). I will interpret the binary-straddling aspects of Durga in Bali arguing that while Durga has come to embody primarily negative forces, in the Balinese context those forces are necessary in order to initiate the process of the "return to a pure state"—known as *marūpa somya*—that lies at the heart of Balinese ritual practice. Finally, I will show that in the Catholic village of Palasari, the absence of Durga is replaced by

dominant women, food-stall holders and coffee-stall owners.

Rangda and Barong

Piercing, shiny black pupils—concentrically enhanced by rings of bright yellow, blood-red, black and creamy white—stare insistently from bulbous crazed eyes. Hair spouts voluminously from the centre of her head, cascading down past both shoulders to dance and tremble just above the ground. The blonde-white, almost-human hair is equally repellent and enticing; “feathers” made from the same material emerge from a hidden neck and stream waist-ward. Golden flames quiver where eyebrows might lurk. A red tongue tumbles to the ground, the long leathery course of it interrupted periodically by ornamental spurts of fire. Thick cotton, horizontally striped cords in black, white and red plunge from non-existent ears. Fierce, prominent front teeth protrude from red and visible gums while porcine tusks curl around towards white cheeks and vicious canine teeth descend menacingly. Dewa Made Karthadinata notes that the image of Rangda is that of a human whose face is stylized into a horrific form symbolizing the negative and evil elements embodied by Rangda (see Figure 3.2).²⁷



Figure 4.2 *Rangda*, the queen of sorceress

²⁷ “[B]entuk rangda merupakan perwujudan dari seorang dewi, sehingga bentuk topeng mendekati bentuk wajah manusia yang distilisasi menjadi bentuk yang seram sesuai pula dengan simbol negatif yang disandang oleh rangda” (Karthadinata 2007: 8).

This colourful and intentionally frightening mask represents *Rangda*, the ambiguous and powerful Balinese witch who engages in ritual battle with the supernatural Barong, a powerful force for good often appearing in the lion-esque form of *Barong Ket*. In his lion form, Barong is equipped with benign fangs, a snapping and toothy grin, bulging, decidedly non-human eyes with a mane and crown of golden flames— features more similar to those of *Rangda* herself than humans (see Figure 3.3).



Figure 4.3 *Barong Ket* as personification of *Śiwa*

While performances depicting an epic, irresolvable battle between “good and evil”, embodied as *Barong* and *Rangda* respectively, are ubiquitous around Balinese tourist destinations, comparable performances featuring similar images and characters serve ritual functions in temple celebrations and at moments of ritual cleansing. The battle is embodied and enacted when calamitous events call for some kind of human redress and intervention. The simple binary relationship suggested by the terms good and evil is belied by some of the iconography associated with *Rangda* and *Barong*. *Rangda* is clearly understood to be a human and the word *rangda* is connected to the Balinese word for widow or, sometimes, childless woman. Barong on the other hand is decidedly a fierce beast—a lion-esque creature that could easily tear a human from limb to limb. Yet the beast represents good and the humanoid character represents evil. *Rangda*’s face is (usually) white, traditionally the colour of nobility in Balinese iconography, while Barong’s face is (usually) red, which is traditionally the facial colour for angry and unpredictable characters. The eyes of both *Rangda* and Barong bulge out coarsely and look almost directly (with eyeballs set usually slightly wider than straight on) at the viewer as those of the most terrible of ogres do, referencing a Balinese iconographic scale where small, almond-shaped, downward-looking eyes suggest refinement, wisdom and nobility. The chiasmic oppositions captured in this brief overview of the visual characteristics

of *Rangda* and *Barong Ket* suggest that these representations and their meanings are well beyond what can be expressed through the simple binaries with which *Rangda*'s battle with *Barong Ket* is most often interpreted in contemporary Balinese performances. It turns out that the tension between good and evil is more important than the mere existence of either good or evil. This dynamic tension disrupts fixed interpretations of the polar nature of the binary and signals the importance of the process of the interaction between good and evil rather than the poles themselves.

Battle between *Rangda* and *Barong* in the *Calon Arang*

Once *Rangda* and *Barong* were sacred symbols among Balinese Hindus performed only during religious rituals, nowadays it is available too for tourist performances called *Barong Ket*, rooted in the story of Calon Arang. This story is recorded in the manuscript known as Calon Arang dating from the Majapahit period in Java (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries). The manuscript is primarily written in Old Javanese language but has some Middle Javanese words (Poerbatjaraka 1926: 110–11). Written in Balinese script, it was translated into Dutch by R. M. Ng. Poerbatjaraka and published in 1926. The Calon Arang manuscript recounts events from the reign of King Airlangga in the eleventh century, including both the story of the sorceress Calon Arang and the division of Airlangga's kingdom.²⁸ The sage Mpu Bharada is instrumental in imagining resolutions for the problems confronting the historical characters described in the manuscript and through his actions he serves to connect the events in the two different sections. In its fusing of documentable history and mythical elements the Calon Arang is similar to the much earlier retellings of the Indic epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Like those traditions, it can also be considered as a form of *itihasa*, a ritually significant historical narration that is augmented by mythical elaborations. *Itihasa* usually describe moments during which the separation between gods and humans, the magical and the factual, is minimal—a narrative technique found not only in Indic oral and written transmissions but also in the

²⁸ The mother of Airlangga, Mahendradatta (961–1011), was married to King Udayana of Bali. Her son, Airlangga, may or may not have been the child of Udayana. Airlangga was sent to Java to become the ruler of the Javanese kingdom and later became king of Bali, aiding in the process of the arrival of Tantric elements of worship in Bali. Mahendradatta was a worshiper of Durga and a practitioner of Tantrism. The historical elements of Mahendradatta are fused with the magical in Balinese folk traditions that claim a strong similarity in the narrative arcs of the respective stories about Rangda and Mahendradatta. As the folk story goes, both women were exiled from their kingdoms due to some kind of transgression involving black magic. They were both forced to live in the forest without their families. As the story is told, Mahendradatta decided to take revenge on her dead husband's kingdom; she did so by killing half of the population of the kingdom with a plague before she was subdued by a holy man. Compare the details of this narrative with the story of Calon Arang outlined below. I have heard this version of the Mahendradatta story from I Wayan Gandra in Sydney in the early 1990s and read it at the Durga temple, Durga Kutri near Gianyar in Bali.

traditions of the *Odyssey* and *Illiad*. The Calon Arang manuscript is a primary source for the outline of the story used in the performances in which Rangda and Barong battle with one another. As might be expected the story recounted in the manuscript is more complicated and nuanced than that depicted in performances of the Calon Arang story in Bali in either the touristic or ritual performed versions of the tale. I include this synoptic retelling of the narrative because the story is not readily available in English translation, although Pramoedya (2002) retells the story in his *The King, the Witch and the Priest: A Twelfth-Century Javanese Tale*. The following synopsis has been crafted from events detailed in the Dutch translation (Poerbatjaraka 1926).

Calon Arang, also known as *Rangda*, was a powerful and dangerous sorceress. She was a widow living in Girah and she had an extremely beautiful daughter named Ratna Manggali. Despite being widely acknowledged as beautiful, Ratna Manggali was unsuccessful in finding a husband, primarily because people thought her mother performed evil deeds. On discovering this, Calon Arang's heart became embittered and she decided to exact revenge on the human population of the area. She took her special book, gathered her students and headed to the cemetery at midnight to beg for a favourable destiny with the goddess Durga also known as Bhagawati. They all danced in the graveyard. The goddess appeared and, after greeting Calon Arang in a friendly manner, asked why she had brought such a tribute and so many of her students. Calon Arang performed a *sembah* by placing her hands together and raising them up above her forehead and bowing toward the goddess. She stated that she wished for permission to destroy the population of the kingdom. Durga agreed to the request but cautioned that Calon Arang was not to allow the attack to reach too far into the centre of the city. Calon Arang agreed. She and her students departed from the cemetery. The *kamanak* and the *kangsi* (musical instruments) sounded and they danced together at the crossroads. These actions were observed by people who then reported them when illness began to strike the villages.

People soon fell ill all over the country but, as advised by Durga, not too many in the city near the palace of Airlangga. The king learned of the deaths in the outer reaches of his kingdom and also that it was likely to have been Calon Arang who caused the plague. He decided to send soldiers to kill Calon Arang. A small band of soldiers approached Calon Arang's house and entered it in the dead of night when everyone was asleep. They found the sorceress in her bed and approached her with their weapons drawn. Suddenly, one of the soldiers grabbed Calon Arang by the hair and attempted to stab her with his dagger. His hand was instantly too heavy to move. Calon Arang startled awake, and suddenly an intense heat, flaming and furious, poured forth from her mouth, nose and eyes. Two of the soldiers were burned to death. Those who had not approached too closely were able to escape. With the bodies of their colleagues,

they returned to the palace and reported to Airlangga what had happened. The king was very angry and stated that he had no idea what to do before he departed the audience hall.

In the meantime, Calon Arang was herself angry. Bringing her special book, she called together her minions once again. They paraded into the sacred place in the cemetery and gathered under a tree to discuss their plans. Her students debated and argued with one another. Some said they should confess to a great sage to seek forgiveness; others said they should increase their efforts to bring the plague and death to the city. They decided to embark on the latter plan. The students danced furiously one by one and then in a group: some swung their arms wide, turning around and around in their clothing; others moved in a manner similar to a tiger on the prowl, ready to attack; their eyes red and bulging, their hair hanging loose, jumping and leaping, bent and naked; tongues protruding and vibrating. After they danced, Calon Arang divided the area where they were meeting under a banyan tree into five cardinal points (north, south, east, west and centre) and assigned each student to spread death and destruction in one quadrant of the kingdom.²⁹ Calon Arang then went to the middle of the cemetery and selected a corpse that had recently died. She breathed life into it. Just as the ex-corpse began to thank Calon Arang for allowing it to return to life, one of the students cut its throat with a machete. Blood sprayed into the air and Calon Arang washed her hair in it. Calon Arang placed intestines around her neck as ornaments and the whole body of the recently revived and murdered corpse was prepared as an offering to the goddess Bhagawati Durga.³⁰ The goddess appeared once again. Thanking Calon Arang for the offering, she queried what was being sought. The widow of Girah asked permission to bring the epidemic into the city because the king had become angry and ordered his men to kill Calon Arang. The goddess Durga permitted this but warned Calon Arang to be careful. With more dancing at the crossroads, the plague is then spread throughout the land.

Airlangga sought help from all the Saivite and Buddhist holy men in the land.³¹ They made copious offerings as a form of worship to the sacred fires. The Four-Armed God³² appeared

²⁹ The imagining of the kingdom in sections that are oriented along the cardinal points intersecting at the centre is typical Indic kingdoms within the Sanskrit cosmopolis described by Sheldon Pollock (2006).

³⁰ In Indic mythological traditions, the washing of hair in blood and the draping of intestines around the neck are both signs that the woman concerned has moved beyond the feminine norms for behaviour and an indication that she has made a vow to reach a particular, usually violent, goal. For instance, after he humiliates her during the famous gambling scene in the *Mahabharata*, Draupadi vows that she will not tie or cut her hair again until she has washed it with blood from Dushasana's (also known as Dursasana) chest, an event which comes to pass in the final section of the *Mahabharata*, the *Bharatayuddha*.

³¹ While the mixture of the advisors listed here is reflective of the religious activities in the region at the time, it also signals the desperate nature of the situation such that Airlangga would call on any and all advisors for help with the intractable situation in his kingdom.

³² The Four-Armed God refers to the Hindu Vishnu. But Vishnu has nine incarnations and the Buddha is understood to be one of them.

and instructed them to seek the sage Mpu Bharada, saying that he would have the solution for the prosperity of the country. The god vaporized immediately after delivering this information. Airlangga instructed his men to find Mpu Bharada. They eventually found him in the hermitage that he had built in a cemetery where his wife, the mother of his daughter, had been buried. On hearing the story, Mpu Bharada explained that one of his students, named Bahula, was the man who would marry Ratna Manggali and annihilate the plague affecting the kingdom.

The story continues with details regarding the approach of Bahula to Calon Arang, her delight at the idea that someone wants to marry her daughter, their discussions about a bridal dowry and everyone's general good will regarding the wedding. The wedding itself is mentioned but with little detail. Instead, the author jumps to the happy and loving life being led by Bahula and Ratna Manggali. Despite her daughter's happiness and the removal of the original cause of her fury, Calon Arang continued to meet with her students in the cemetery where they danced furiously and made offerings in order to keep the plague going. Bahula observed this behaviour and eventually asked Ratna Manggali about it. He said he was worried by and interested in these actions, and especially the little book Calon Arang always carried with her to the cemetery. Ratna Manggali explained what it was that her mother was doing, describing the effects of the resulting plague. Ratna Manggali noted that it was better that Bahula did not know or do anything about the actions of her mother, but she agreed to help him to examine the book. He read the whole book and then asked permission from Ratna Manggali to show it to Mpu Bharada who also read the whole book and committed some important details to memory. Mpu Bharada sent his student Bahula back to his wife at Calon Arang's house with instructions to wait there.

The sage Bharada then set off to walk to the palace. On the way, he rekindled life in any of the corpses he met, at least in those that had not yet begun to decay. He arrived at the cemetery where Calon Arang and her students had been doing their work and met several of the students who requested to be freed from their sins. The sage denied them this boon and instructed them to find Calon Arang. The widow had just been making an offering to and communicating with the goddess Bhagawati Durga. During her meeting the goddess had informed Calon Arang that her doom was imminent. Calon Arang noted this prophecy but continued with her plans.

Calon Arang was willing to speak to Mpu Bharada when he asked for her. He addressed the problems she was causing, the sadness and destruction in the country that she herself had committed. He explained that she could not escape the sins she had accrued in her life except in death. Calon Arang asked for mercy from Mpu Bharada, but he could not give it without her death. Calon Arang became furious and they engaged in battle. Calon Arang danced with her hands and arms flopping loosely around her and her eyes bulging. She threatened to kill Mpu

Bharada and ignited the sacred banyan tree in the centre of the cemetery using only her ferocious, searing eyes. Mpu Bharada was unmoved by this display. Having read Calon Arang's secret book, he knew how to combat her magical powers. The tree was immediately protected and restored. Then Calon Arang turned her powers on Mpu Bharada himself; he skilfully rebuffed the attack and stated that her fate was that she would die at this moment.

Calon Arang does indeed die at that moment, but Mpu Bharada remembered that he had not offered Calon Arang a chance to cleanse her soul. He subsequently revives Calon Arang who awakes still fuming. By bringing her back to life, however, Mpu Bharada provides the means to expiate her sins, for Calon Arang has no chance to commit any more karmic crimes before she dies once again, this time with an unblemished soul. Her body was then cremated. Calon Arang's minions gathered and prostrated themselves at the feet of Mpu Bharada to seek the cleansing of their own souls as well, but they were not allowed to die in a similar way. They had to await their natural deaths, which condemned them to suffer from their sins as followers of evil in their lives to come. Mpu Bharada then returned to Girah where he met with Bahula to tell him the news. He asked Bahula to travel to the city to inform the king, who received the news of Calon Arang and her minions with delight. The King vowed immediately to pay a visit to Mpu Bharada in Girah. He departed with elephants and chariots, gongs and flags and most of the rest of the inhabitants of the city. Mpu Bharada greeted them all but said he would only return to the city after making a purification sacrifice in the cemetery.³³ Mpu Bharada is the architect of the solution to the problem caused by Calon Arang/Rangda but he is also the source of her expiation—an act that might also allow her to return to the human realm. It is important to realise that even though Rangda's soul is cleansed in her second death, we do not know if she will ever return to her evil ways. Indeed, the dynamic tension between hope that evil forces (represented by Rangda) will not return and the knowledge that evil is always present and sure to return to plague the human world is one of the elements that is recapitulated whenever the Calon Arang story is performed whether as tourist entertainment or ritual act. That Barong is invariably the victor in the performances represents movement, a temporary return to a state of ritual purity in the human world, even though that state is certain to decay in the future.

Durga in the *Calon Arang*

The *Calon Arang* narrative is an indigenous Javanese/Balinese story. Most of the connections with Hinduism lie underneath the narrative details reflecting centuries of engagement with Indic political and religious hierarchies and societal structures without adopting many surface

³³ Mpu Bharada's return to the city, subsequently described in detail, is actually more important to the second story conveyed in the manuscript and so my synopsis stops here.

details from either of the Indic epics. That said, the Hindu goddess Durga is featured prominently, but she is a more limited Durga, representing only a few aspects of the many Durgas found in India at the time or in the present. Durga's primary role in the story is to serve as an advisor to, and boundary keeper for, *Calon Arang*. Her physical attributes are not described in any particular way; neither her beauty nor her ugliness is mentioned in detail, but we do know that she is powerful and fearsome and that she inhabits a cemetery. Specifically, we know that Durga can control *Rangda*'s access to human victims and hence she is dangerous to humans. She can choose to wreak havoc or not. In order to gain permission to pursue her endeavours, *Calon Arang* must make progressively greater sacrifices and propitiatory offerings of crazed dance and fresh blood to Durga. In this text, Durga is consistent in permitting *Rangda*'s requests, making Durga also a negative force with respect to humans. Although her power is not greater than that of destiny, she does know the future since she first warns Calon Arang not to get too grandiose in her plans for the demolition of Airlangga's realm and then she notifies Calon Arang of her imminent demise. Durga is somewhat monochromatic in the *Calon Arang* story. While her affiliation and advice are available to anyone who will make her an offering of the required sort, she is primarily focused on those societal malcontents and evil doers who are powerful enough to call on her. The *Calon Arang* presents a single-focused depiction of Durga, one that is rather narrowly defined. While this ferocious dangerous element is certainly an important one for Durga in Hindu cosmology in general, it is an aspect that is usually found coexisting with many other personality traits in the myriad manifestations of Durga in Hinduism elsewhere in the world and it is not usually one that is turned against either humans or the gods.

Hariani Santiko notes that there were two aspects of Durga co-existing in Hindu East Java/Majapahit era, the Durga-Kali goddess tradition similar to that found in India and represented on most of the early Javanese Hindu temples and the Durga/Devi or Batari Durga/Ra Nini—an incarnation of Uma who is cursed to live in a cemetery after being caught engaging in shameful activity. Santiko suggests the former representation was associated with court life and power structures, while the latter was more popular outside the court walls (Santiko 1997: 220–22). She points out that Shaktism, or the worship of the grand activating force of the universe which is gendered female and known as Shakti—and with which most female goddesses in Hinduism are associated—was never an important element in the Hinduism practised in Java and Bali. She then suggests that this might be one reason why the more benevolent (at least with respect to humans) aspects of Durga in India were not as prominent in Java.

Shiva's Radiant Shakti

Shakti can be understood as the idea and personification of divine, feminine creative power in Hinduism. Shakti is a primordial, cosmic energy force understood to animate the universe, a source without which the male gods, and the world in general, would become enervated. Most male gods have a particular incarnation of shakti contained within them and that shakti is personified as the consort or wife of the individual god. While Parvati is the wife of Shiva, she is also the goddess Uma, the goddess Durga, the goddess Ambika, and many others. Individually and together these goddesses are understood to be the shakti of Shiva. There are multiple stories for each name by which a Hindu deity, male or female, is known. But it is not the case that every Hindu person is necessarily aware of all of the images and stories. Further, the practice of Hinduism around the world is varied and decentralized. That said, most Hindus would recognize that there are multiple manifestations of the goddesses, or *devi*, and that they can be understood, both singularly and collectively, as the Great Mother or simply as the Goddess or the Mother Goddess, terms that co-opt and unify the many female Hindu deities as well as their various traits and habits.

In many of the stories associated with Parvati, Uma and Durga, the dominance of the goddess over Shiva is manifested in some way. Shiva is aloof, unpredictable, impenetrable and often unavailable or unable to attend to the needs of his devotees, at which point the associated goddess either steps in or is summoned by him. The acknowledgement of the dependence of Shiva on Parvati and the world-sustaining power of their generative interaction as a couple is commonly represented in the form Ardhanarishvara: an image in which the right half is Shiva and the left half is Parvati.³⁴ The Ardhanarishvara image is often described as androgynous which suggests, at least in English, a blurring of masculinity and femininity, the possibility of a third, hybrid gender. But there is no blurring in the imagery of Ardhanarishvara. Each gender is vigorously present. It is precisely the joining together of the two distinct—identifiable as separate—entities that ensures their efficacy.³⁵ There is no gender confusion contained in an Ardhanarishvara image, rather both sides of the binary must be present (see Figure 3.4).

Parvati is Shiva's primary consort. She is a girl from the mountains who is associated with love, devotion and nurturing motherhood, even as she is a force to be reckoned with in her

³⁴ The right side of the statue is understood to be more powerful than the left, hence there is a subtle hierarchy implied in the imagery. However, there is at least one rare instance where Parvati is on the right as in this image from the early eighteenth century, Western Punjab Hills: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ardhanarishvara#/media/File:Shakta_Ardhanari.jpg.

³⁵ Shiva is the only Hindu god who is regularly represented in a conjoined image with his Shakti. According to Pal (1967: 45), the Vaikuntha Kamalaja is a conjoining of Vishnu with his Shakti, Lakshmi. But she suggests that this image is a rare phenomenon, found primarily in the Nepal and Kashmir region of India and likely to have been constructed in imitation of the Shiva/Parvati image tradition.

relationship with Shiva. When in the form of Durga, Shiva's shakti is fierce-willed, cagey and ruthlessly independent. Like many of the Hindu deities recognized across different sects and traditions of practice in Hinduism, the goddess Durga has materialized through the gradual coalescence of various strands of mythological traditions and religious practices from different ethnic groups around India as they interacted with one another over centuries. In some cultural contexts Durga is a dangerous, devouring goddess but one who can be propitiated; in other contexts, she is an agricultural goddess who dwells in the forests and who is worshipped in outdoor shrines with no roofs or at the foot of trees identified as her dwelling (McDaniel 2004: 209–14). According to June McDaniel,

Durga is a goddess with several important aspects: the folk dimension of fertility and threat, a military and royal aspect, a Sanskrit side, and an ethical dimension. There are many types of devotion associated with Durga. In her modern and urban aspect, Durga is the goddess of courage and strength who remained pure when tempted by demons and was able to conquer them, restoring the power and dominion of the Hindu gods (2004: 210).

It is in her martial form that Durga is most commonly recognized and depicted. In this manifestation, Durga has the name Mahishasuramardini, a title she earned by winning a battle against a foe that had vanquished all the gods of heaven. Here is a synopsis of that story.



Figure 4.4: Shiva and Parvati as Ardhanarishvara

The Tale of Durga Created and Victorious

The story of the creation of Durga is well-known and so it is not necessary to recount the details in full. The following outline will suffice. Indra, the ruler of Heaven, and Mahishasura, the ruler of the demons, were engaged in a war. The demons won and Mahishasura became “Indra” or the ruler of heaven, after which he promptly exiled all the gods. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva were outraged because none of them and no combination of their forces could defeat Mahishasura. They fumed and argued about what to do; anger emanated from their bodies and gradually coalesced into a female form (Coburn 1991: 40). In their co-creation of this goddess, individual gods provided particular body parts and/or particular gifts or weapons. Shiva contributed her mouth and gave her a trident; Yama her tresses; Vishnu her arms, Soma her two breasts; Krishna a discus; Indra gave her a thunderbolt; the Sea of Milk provided a flawless necklace and other adornments; Himalaya gave her a lion as a mount (Coburn 1991: 40–42).

The newly created goddess bellowed with laughter and a great, overwhelming noise arose, reaching Mahishasura and making him angry. The ensuing battle had many phases; in each Durga was the victor. In the final battle Mahishasura is trapped in his own shape-shifting form as a bull and Durga slices his head off, rendering a return of Heaven as the abode of the gods. As they heap praise and thanks upon Durga, she states that whenever she is properly propitiated and then called upon for help, she will appear—a dictum that many remember and call upon in times of duress (Coburn 1991: 39–52).

This story is told in exquisite detail in one of the three parts of the *Devī-Māhātmya*, or *Glory of the Divine Mother*, written in Sanskrit circa 400–500 CE. The text, part of the *Markandeya Purana*, is attributed to the Sage, or Rishi, Markandeya. As a *purana*, the text is considered to be an important secondary Hindu scripture. The text is also known as the *Durga Saptashatī* (700 Mantras/Verses on Sri Durga) and it is a principal text for Shaktism, the form of Hinduism in which the primary focus is on Devī, the collective female deities. While the aims of the *Devī-Māhātmya* are debated to some extent, most scholars agree that in its creation, the author of the text wove together the various mythic, cultic and theological elements relating to multiple popular female deities into what is today understood as the crystallization of the Goddess tradition (Coburn 1991; Jagadiswarananda 1953; Brown 1990). Coburn and Brown focus on the significance of the idea that the *Devī-Māhātmya* witnesses an important moment in which worship for female deities moves from an entirely oral to a mixed oral and written process and as such it allows the cultural analyst a glimpse into the world of the writer and his context. For my purposes here, I am interested primarily in the construction of the goddess at the moment of the creation of the text as a contrast to the later constructions of Durga in Java and Bali.

The representation of Durga in the *Devī-Māhātmya* is complicated. She is simultaneously as inspiringly beautiful and voluptuous as she is terrifying and vicious. The prayers uttered to

her make it clear that she is to be worshipped not only as benevolent and as a source of succour and prosperity, but also as capable of enforcing mortal calm on evildoers by physical force and sheer overwhelming power. Importantly, even in her ferocious forms she is not arrogant, cruel or gratuitously violent. This is demonstrated by the fact that, while her sword sliced her enemies' heads off, she declined to pulverize them completely, an act that was within her rights as victor. Nevertheless, her power was so overwhelming that, as those heads lay on the ground, their eyes were inadvertently destroyed as they gazed at the beauty of her face that was as radiant as a portion of the moon (Coburn 1991: 50). Here, Durga is not a fertile, maternal figure, other manifestations of Shiva's shakti; rather she is fierce, pure power, physically overwhelming to her enemies. Apparent dissonances aside, the latent possibilities of fertility and maternal nurturing in Durga are coexistent with her ferocious aspects because they are found in other manifestations of Shiva's shakti, all of which are persistently present and known to be both interconnected and separate Indian Hindu contexts.

Durga Creates Kali as She Herself Has Been Created

The third portion of the *Devī-Māhātmya* Durga reveals an independence and a creative power similar to that of the male gods. At a time of extreme duress in battle against the seemingly indefatigable Sumbha and Nisumbha, she is able to draw from within herself a terrifying, also female, shakti of her own in the form of Kali, appropriating a male-gendered capability in the process but without diminishing her own feminine force after the other gods have called for her help and provided the appropriate propitiations. In a demonstration of the fluidity of form between the shakti of Shiva, Durga assumed the form of Ambika, one of her most beautiful and enticing incarnations, and travelled to the Himalayas to bathe and entice Sumbha and Nisumbha to her. Declaring that she can only give herself to someone who has bested her in battle, the ruse finally works after Durga/Ambika has defeated all the emissaries sent to bring her to Sumbha and Nisumbha. Ultimately thousands of the attacking demons are slain by Durga/Ambika her lion mount. After multiple defeats, Sumbha and Nisumbha summon their best warriors, Canda and Munda, who approach Durga intent on binding her. In response Durga/Ambika creates Kali.

7.5 [f]rom the knitted brows of her forehead's surface immediately came forth Kali, with her dreadful face, carrying sword and noose. 7.6 She carried a strange skull-topped staff and wore a garland of human heads. She was shrouded in a tiger skin, and looked utterly gruesome with her emaciated skin, 7.7 her wide gaping mouth, terrifying with its lolling tongue, with sunken reddened eyes and a mouth that filled the directions with roars (Coburn 1991: 61).

Kali then makes short work of the rest of the demons enraging Sumbha and Nisumbha who then come out and engage in battle themselves. When they hurl their worst weapon at her, the monster Raktabija whose blood droplets multiply into fresh warriors as soon as they touch the earth, Kali simply laps up the blood with her long tongue and at the same time ingesting the great danger. At the end of the *Devī-Māhātmya*, in one of the only times she speaks to the gathered gods, Durga/Ambika predicts the various battles she will win in the future on behalf of the gods, explaining how she has/will have achieved her various names. Importantly she explained how to use her text in which these stories are recounted, noting in particular that she should be summoned so that calamities may be calmed, bad dreams turned to good, children seized by evil spirits released and returned (Coburn 1991).

Given the violent, yet-gentle-hearted, all-knowing and capable force for good that is Durga as described in the *Devī-Māhātmya*, composed in 400–500 CE, and certainly known to scholars and practitioners in the region, why is it that she is seemingly so reduced in the Calon Arang story found in these fifteenth-century East Javanese and later Balinese contexts? This complicated issue has been explored extensively by scholars working since at least the middle of the twentieth century, most notably, Willem F. Stutterheim (1956), Hariani Santiko (1997), and more recently Ni Wayan Pasek Ariati (2009). They do not agree as to why this shift has occurred, but they do agree that it has happened. Stutterheim identifies and describes the change, while Santiko interprets the shift as having emerged through a gradual combining of indigenous, chthonic mythologies with Indic ones inspired by folk interpretations of local court culture, a process that replicates the multiplication of Durga myths and images among Hindus in India. Ariati locates the change from warrior goddess to cemetery-dwelling, demon-controlling horror in the political and religious concerns of the Majapahit nobility in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries CE and signals the shift as indicative of changes in the construction of women in the region culminating in an analysis of the demonization of women involved in Gerwani, the Indonesian women's movement (1945–1966). These scholars read the archaeological records, interpreting both physical manifestations and manuscript renditions of tales incorporating Durga, in compelling, albeit different, ways. For my purposes, the work of these scholars helps to explain the elision of the indigenous Rangda with a muted, monochromatic but empowering Durga, suggesting interpretations of the productive ambiguities in their representations, both visual and embodied, of powerful female figures in Balinese cosmology.

Marūpa Somya: Enacting a Return to an Original Benign State

Most scholarship about Balinese religious beliefs and the rituals that accompany them has been “dominated by images of balance, harmony, and order” (Stephen 2002: 61–62). Noting that gods and goddesses in the Balinese pantheon regularly take on terrible forms and wreak havoc in both the cosmological and lived worlds of the Balinese, Michele Stephen suggests that one of the primary functions of Balinese ritual might actually be the restoration of Balinese deities to their original and beneficent forms rather than a representation of a balanced and orderly world where beneficence and evil are simply suspended in balanced harmony.³⁶ She argues that, “in Balinese belief, all the destructive and negative forces present in the cosmos originate from creative, positive powers and, furthermore, possess the potential to return to their original positive state” (2002: 61), a process that is called *marūpa somya*. The word *somya* is derived from the Sanskrit *samuya* meaning gentle, mild, benevolent. The phrase *marūpa somya* appears in numerous Balinese *lontar* texts (Stephen 2002: 61 n. 1). The idea of an orderly and balanced system that occasionally needs recalibrating through ritual action suggests a normative state that is in stasis, one that generally prefers immobility. What Stephen is proposing instead is that the Balinese cosmos is better understood to be in persistent flux, engaged in a constant cycling of transformations that “move between positive and negative poles, liable to switch at any moment” (Stephen 2002: 61–62). In the Balinese sources, Śiwa and Uma are frequently in need of *marūpa somya*. One way or another in Bali, “all destructive and dangerous forces in the world originate from the divine pair themselves and the aim of human ritual is primarily to cause these two destructive forces to return to their own benevolent condition” (Stephen 2002: 64–65).

In trying to understand the primarily demonic representations of Durga in Bali, it is instructive to consider two parallel stories from Javano-Balinese mythology in which *marūpa somya* is the desired end goal. Note that neither of these stories appears in the Indian stories about Uma and Shiva. In both stories, the fidelity of Uma to Śiwa is brought into question. The punishment in each story is that Uma is forced to inhabit her demonic form as Durga. She is exiled from the realm of the gods and cursed to live in the cremation grounds of humans in the middle world (earth) for a certain amount of time in order to atone for her misdeed.

One story tells of Giriputri, a girl from the mountains, referring Uma’s origins but in a form, that is not common in Hindu India.³⁷ In the story, Giriputri is craving milk and she asks her husband, Batara Guru (an epithet commonly used for Śiwa in Indonesian sources) for permission to go to the middle world—that is, the realm of humans—to seek some. Batara

³⁶ Stephen follows Hildred Geertz (1995) in suggesting that balance, harmony and stasis are not as productive for interpreting Balinese culture as process and transformation.

³⁷ Stephen has multiple references to this idea, in particular in Stephen (2002). Pasek Ariati has a similar discussion in her dissertation for Charles Darwin University (2009: 242–54).

Guru gives her permission to leave. But when it takes her a long time to find a cow, Batara Guru follows her to earth to test the faithfulness of his wife. He appears to her as a cowherd with milk to sell, but he refuses to sell any milk to Giriputri unless she makes love to him. After resisting for a long time, Giriputri's desire for milk is so strong that she finally gives in to him. Before making love to him, however, she creates a vagina in her leg, an action that suggests she is not really engaging in sex with the cowherd, but which still allows her to obtain the milk that she craves. When Giriputri returns to the abode of the gods, her son Gana (Ganesha) queries where she has been and how she got her milk. Instructed to use a divination book by Batara Guru who has also returned home, Gana already knows the truth. When it comes out that Giriputri was not entirely faithful, Giriputri is infuriated and magically burns the divination book for she feels she has been tricked, which in fact is the truth. Gana then curses his mother and condemns her to live in her demonic form as Durga in the cremation grounds of mortal beings. Batara Guru, the Supreme Deity and Uma/Durga's husband, agrees with the sentence but then gives Durga the power to control a variety of different demons or *bhuta* amongst whom she will live and who become her servants. He also gives her the ability to cause and cure illnesses, in particular smallpox.³⁸

Ignoring the act of entrapment that is the catalytic element in the story, and which is recognized by Uma in her fury, the assumption here is that women who head off to fulfil their own desires and do their own things are likely to cheat on their husbands.³⁹ The details of this story represent a marked reduction in the independence and agency of a Śiwa shakti compared to that enjoyed by Parvati or Ambika in India, immediately suggesting one kind of localizing. It is dangerous for Uma to be independently solving her own problems and fulfilling her own desires. The danger is not only to herself, but more particularly to the men of her own family and their descendants and by extension to society in general; Uma needs to be controlled and "protected" as much as the society needs to be protected from independent female characters.⁴⁰ This is not the Uma/Parvati whose meditative powers are great enough to disturb Shiva's own meditative concentration or the Uma whose determination to marry Shiva persists through all hardships and setbacks until she succeeds, which is found in Hindu mythologies in India. This is not the Uma who as his wife is the generative force that keeps Shiva focused on the world,

³⁸ This particular version of the story is from the Balinese *lontar* or palm-leaf manuscript entitled *Tutur Anda Bhuwana* as quoted by Ariati (2009: 241–45).

³⁹ One is tempted to ask whether it is likely that a cowherd, other than one who was actually Shiva, would have insisted that the only way for a goddess like Uma/Giriputri to obtain the milk would be to have sex with him?

⁴⁰ In some ways, this analysis resonates with interpretations of Sita and her culpability for the troubles in the forest as they were generated by her desire for the golden deer, once again an entrapment but from an outsider not a member of her own family. But these are not issues normally associated with Uma in other non-Javanese or Balinese contexts.

preventing him from returning to his yogic, nihilistic existence. Instead, in the Balinese contexts the active and empowered Uma is suspected and faulted for precisely the elements that demonstrate her value in other interpretations of Uma.

A second Javano-Balinese story focusing on Uma is told in the *Sudamala*, found in the *Kidung Sudamala* composed in Java near the end of the Majapahit period, likely before 1406. According to the three great deities—Sang Hyang Asihprana, Sang Hyang Runggal and Sang Hyang Wisesa—who were visiting Batara Guru/Śiwa, Uma was said to have “shared her beetle-nut quid and face powder” with Sang Hyang Brahma. The three great deities accuse Uma of having had an affair with Lord Brahma. On hearing this Batara Guru/Śiwa becomes irate and he curses Uma, rendering her as Ra Nini/Durga. Her beauty destroyed, she is transformed into a demonic figure with long dishevelled hair; her eyes are like burning twin suns; her mouth like a cavern with protruding fangs; her two nostrils like the holes of twin wells; and her entire skin is covered with spots and blemishes. In this demonic form, Ra Nini/Durga is condemned to live in the cremation grounds called Setra Gandamayū for twelve years (Ariati 2009: 11, 153–68). After that point, Batara Guru will exorcize her with the assistance of Sadewa, one of the twin sons of Pandu and Madri, who are two of the five Pandawa brothers from the *Mahabharata* epic. Through a long and reticulated narrative, Sadewa ends up tied to a tree in the cemetery ready to be sacrificed. He is asked to release Ra Nini/ Batari Durga from her curse. Sedewa refuses because he has no idea how to do what is asked of him. Batara Guru/Śiwa is alerted to the situation, arriving in time to enter into the body of Sadewa to protect him. With Batara Guru inside, Sadewa is able to counteract the curse—as he was the one to cast it upon her—and Batari Durga is returned to her original beautiful and pure form as Batari Uma (Ariati 2009: 155–56).⁴¹

The role of Uma in these two indigenous Javano-Balinese stories is strikingly different from anything found in Hindu India where she is usually described as kind and loyal, if strong willed. In India, Durga is a powerful incarnation of Uma, but one who is generally also a force for good and whose representations, while fierce and empowered, are beautiful and inspiring. In each of the preceding stories, it is not possible for Durga to be both demonic and benign, Durga and Uma, at the same time. Instead, she must occupy the roles consecutively, she must be released from the curses and then returned to her original state, *marūpa soṃya*. The demonic force replaces the benign one and then is itself replaced by benign force in the transformation process. The demonization of Durga in her representations in Bali align her most closely with the ferocious creature she herself has the capacity to summon, that is, skull-bedecked and long-

⁴¹ This synopsis is gathered from retellings of the story found in Ariati (2009) and Schaareman (2013).

tongued Kali. Santiko notes that the fusion of Durga and Kali might well have to do with an “erroneous understanding of the essence of secret Tantric rituals and the role of Durga-Kali as the goddess worshipped therein” (1997: 222). She cites the *Panca-Mā-Kāra-Pūjā*, which involves male-female pairs engaging in secret otherwise forbidden activities as a means of preventing disorder outside of the ritual context, to be perhaps one local ritual that might have suggested the cultural misinterpretations over the following centuries. Santiko notes similarities between the *Panca-Mā-Kāra-Pūjā* and the actions of Rangda and her disciples, postulating that the ritual and rumours about it may well have been one of the inspirations for the development of Rangda’s ritual offerings to Durga described in the *Calon Arang* text (Santiko 1997: 221–23).

In India, Durga is not the same as Uma precisely. They are actually different goddesses, different manifestations of Shiva’s shakti. They can be independent and autonomous and simultaneously coexistent. While Durga is not a mother, she is a warrior who can, like the male gods who created her, give “birth” to an even fiercer creature from within herself. There is no dissonance in the simultaneous existence of Parvati, Uma, Durga, Kali, Ambika, and the rest of the many incarnations of Shiva’s shakti. The many do not have to be united in any kind of linear or binary relationship. In Balinese representations of the goddess, Batari Uma cannot be present and active at the same time as Batari Durga. They are unified and connected; one must replace the other in the process of the stories as told and the representations created on stage or architecturally on temples. This alternation recalls the flow between positive and negative orientations of the gods and spirits described by Stephen above. The public shaming, castigation and exiling that renders Uma as Durga in a Kali-esque form can only be changed back after a certain period of years. This element is of primary importance in these Indonesian interpretations of the Durga story. Although her behaviour is bestial and she is associated with graveyards, the Indian Kali is never exiled. Her violence is understood to have efficacy and she is revered for it, not exiled, for being capable and able to perform her duty in the cosmos.⁴²

In India, Durga can be summoned and she is empowered to make things happen, to solve problems that others are not able to overcome. In Bali, however, Uma has desires and emotions and the drive to do things, but these very elements render her a dangerous entity of ambiguous intentions. The same aspects that empower Durga in India are clear signs that she is likely to be duplicitous in her family and community contexts in Bali. Perhaps because the ambiguity of multiple representations co-existing is problematic in Bali, when Uma—the mother—asserts

⁴² That said, exile to an untamed, inhospitable location is common in the Indian epics. In both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* the main characters must endure an exile from their homes for between twelve and fourteen years, a time period similar to that endured by Batari Durga in the cemetery.

her independence, she is cast into the role of Durga who is the opposite of beautiful and malleable, and therefore evil.⁴³

Although created by them at a time of crisis, in India Durga is an independent helpmate for Shiva and the rest of the gods. When they have no other recourse and their own resources are spent by the vicissitudes of a particular situation, through being in the right mind and calling her many epithets they summon Durga and she assumes her ferocious persona to get the job done. But there is no sense of her ever being evil towards her own. This is the element that has been added in the Balinese/Javanese context. In Bali Durga is a negative force who must recover and reorient towards her benign manifestation in each of these stories. *Marūpa somya* is the key to understanding why Durga and Uma or Durga and Giriputri cannot exist at the same time. In each case the negative manifestation must be turned back towards the positive, readjusted and reoriented away from being a danger to human life. Durga is a symbol of the negative forces in the world of Bali. A Durga who is independently capable of male feats such as summoning Kali out of her forehead, a goddess who is ferocious and takes pleasure in competing with and dominating the various demons whom she confronts, does not reflect a binary aesthetic of the ebb and flow from positive to negative orientation and back again. Unlike in Indonesia, in India Uma/Durga's loyalty and fidelity is never in question. She undertakes whatever actions are required by the situation and is praised for it. It is expected and understood that her goals are the same as those of the male gods who once created her and regularly summon her help. In the context of the world of Balinese gods, however, independence in a female deity is understood to be dangerous and a sign of an imbalanced world.⁴⁴

The intentions of the independent female deities and spirits are ambiguous. They are constructed as unreliable and dangerous, as argued by Ariati (2009) and others, in order to enshrine a set of ideological precepts regarding appropriate female roles and behaviour. In her study on Balinese women, Megan Jennaway (2003) suggests that Balinese belief systems – at the level of both formal religion and everyday folk belief – do not adequately accommodate female desire. Consequently, the desire of some categories of women – particularly independent women, with indeterminate marital status – has no place in which to reside. Wieringa contends that this cultural construction prescribes that women should be 'meek,

⁴³ The idea that goddesses generate havoc on earth or in the realm of a particular sovereign is paralleled in another Javano-Balinese story, that of Nyai Lara Kidul, the Goddess of the Southern Seas. See Weiss (2006); Jordaan (1984) and Becker (2003) for discussion and analysis.

⁴⁴ The implications of this idea with respect to Balinese gender relations have not been explored in my research. I make no claims regarding life lived in Bali in either present or past contexts.

passive, obedient to the male members of the family, *sexually shy and modest*,⁴⁵ self-sacrificing and nurturing, and that they should find their main vocation in marriage and motherhood' (1998: 148). Similar prescriptions regarding appropriate roles for women still prevail in many parts of Bali, particularly in the rural environment like Palasari.

The flux of transformation between Durga and Uma or good and evil (*mrupa somya*) is foreign to the Western Christian cosmology. How do Catholics in Palasari reconcile these differences? Commenting on this issue, Nyoman Winarta concludes: 'it is just a story!' He confirmed that in story everything is possible. People in Palasari like the story and performance of *Rangda and Durga* and never bother about its moral or ethical aspects. For the people of Palasari, the whole cultural script and beliefs around *Rangda, Durga and léyak* is a significant way in which they feel connected to the past perhaps in a similar way to the Ewe in Ghana to the phenomenon of spirit possession (Meyer, 1999).

The Missing Durga

As in other parts of Bali, in Palasari people believe that *Rangda* and *léyak* are the followers of Durga. They gain their magical power (*sakti*) from the Goddess of Death by practicing tantric yoga called *sandanga* yoga in the Durga temple located in the graveyards. My experience during a three-month apprenticeship informs me that it needs lots of work in order to acquire *sakti*. Failure rather than success makes people withdraw from this practice. What makes it impossible also is the fact, that there is no temple of Durga in Palasari other than the Shrine of Our Blessed Lady. In every house I visited, I was unable to find any syllable drawings called *dasaksara* (ten sacred letters) and *ongkara* (O) as the core equipment in practicing *sandanga* yoga in order to acquire mystical power.⁴⁶ What I did find were the statues and pictures of Our Blessed Lady and the Sacred Heart, and Carmelite scapulars in almost every house.

Lorvic, Hobart, and others who work on Balinese healing highlight the significant of the *Calon Arang* drama as cultural script that informs belief in *léyak*, *Rangda* and *pangiwa* (black art). When television was still a luxury, watching a *Calon Arang* performance was one of the

⁴⁵ My italics.

⁴⁶ The word *léyak* comes from the words *linggih* (place) and *aksara* (letters). Several western scholars have described the *dasaksara*. Hooykaas (1964, p. 37), for example, stresses their pervasive importance in Balinese ritual and religion but provides little detail. Rubinstein (2000, p. 43) has coined the term 'alphabet mysticism' to refer to these practices which she discusses at some length. Hobart (2003, pp. 215–19) examines the *dasaksara* in the context of healing. Zurbuchen (1987, p. 53) refers to 'linguistic mysticism'; however, she is concerned with the whole concept of language as a mystical entity or force, observing that 'while the study of language and written texts is not exactly the same as the study of mystic truth in Bali, the two are very closely related' (1987, p. 61). Lovric (1987), like Hobart, discusses the *dasaksara* in context of healing. Stephen describes the *dasaksara* as featuring in Balinese 'yoga texts' (Stephen 2005, pp. 86–87), and the role they play in death rituals (Stephen 2010, pp. 429–32). These studies all indicate that the *dasaksara* are part of living ritual and continue to have relevance to Balinese life.

few entertainments in Balinese rural villages. Unlike Hindu villages in Bali which perform a *Calon Arang* drama on every anniversary of their village temple or any other ritual calendar event, in Palasari it is very rare they could watch this drama. During 80 years of Palasari, it has only been performed twice. The last *Calon Arang* was performed in December 1989. Lorvic (1987) shows that *Rangda* is pictured devouring new-born babies or stillbirth in order to enhance her power. At the time I was conducting my research, the last baby to die in Palasari was 25 years ago. So, where is this *léyak* and *Rangda* coming from? Like Nyoman Winarta, most of Palasari people would answer: “they inherit it before they converted to Catholicism”.

When asked how he knew that someone is a *léyak*, Winarta told me that *léyak* in Palasari is always a woman. That assertion that reminded me of Mada Subagia, a *léyak* practitioner from Banjar Samer who told me once that ‘*léyak* is female magic, centred in the vagina’. From the list of the names of those commonly suspected in Palasari, I concluded that their characteristics were mainly independent, strong, industrious, businesswomen seen as more capable than their husbands. They were the first converts from Hinduism to Catholicism who came to Palasari to run the coffee stalls (*warung*). There were a number of coffee stalls in Desa Palasari where people bought a cup of coffee or tea and sat and watched the passer-by. It was a place where people sat around and chatted almost every day and they stocked drinks, candy and cookies, sugar, chillies, matches, cigarettes, and instant noodles. Most of those accused of being “*léyak*” are coffee stall owners who simultaneously serve their customers. Sitting in the coffee stall is against the ethic of hard-working farmers and considered lazy. The work of trading is often seen as not sincere since it always looks for profit which is against the traditional mentality of helping each other (*gotong royong*). Traders do not fit with the perception of being good Catholics in the life of the village which is centred on community life such as prayer meetings or choir practice. The owners used to work all night long to prepare the next day stocks. There is a cultural belief that the owners normally use spells and charms to attract customers to their *warung*. The using of these magical spells then makes the owners into *léyak*. They were the first generation of *léyak* in Palasari.

I came across one from this group when I was in the final year in high school. She was the grandmother of my friend. During the Christmas break, I went to visit her house. My uncle who lived in the village was very concerned and warned me not to take anything offered in her house because of public knowledge that the grandmother was *sakti* (magically powerful). All these first generation have died. The people believe that *léyak* cannot die before they pass their *sakti* either to their daughter or close relative.

The Palasari people believe that *léyak* power from the first group has been passed on to the second generation although most of them did not run a food-stall anymore. I gathered many

stories and rumours about this group and their relationship with the first generations. Included in this group are daughters, close friends, and relatives, but also those who were rumoured to have bought *pangijeng awak* (protection of body: to overcome, resist and prevent black magic) from outside Palasari. The Palasari people believe that buying the protective amulets, at the end, will turn the owner or holder into *léyak* too. Balinese women from outside Palasari who married Palasari men, were believed to be equipped by their parents with a protective amulet, which in turn make them a *léyak*. They were the third and current generation of *léyak*.

This process of demonization towards ‘independent women’ as *léyak* continues to the present day in Palasari. According to Nyoman Winarta, around late 1970s, the great exorcist priest from Philippine, Fr. Jesus Giron, SVD came to Palasari to cleanse the Catholics from black magics. All magical tools, amulets, talisman were taken to be destroyed. However, *léyak* is believed to be still around, although it is so difficult to find one. It is easier to find women who fit the criteria of being more independent and more capable than men.

Conclusion

The line of the argument of this chapter shows the journey of Durga from India to Java/Bali and Palasari. In India, Durga is described as the “remover of darkness, unexcelled at destroying the might of all evildoers”. And through the recitation of the *Devī-Māhātmya* text “comes the destruction of demons, ghosts, and goblins”. These glorifying statements about Durga do not reflect her position in Bali. It is possible to see Balinese Durga as reduced or simplified or poorly understood, but to do so misinterprets important localization processes that are part of what makes Hinduism in Bali unique. Many of the elements of Durga in India are present in Bali, but they have been rearranged and redistributed to other powerful female figures. Durga has been exiled to the temple in the cemetery. In that place, however, she controls all the demons, ghosts and goblins. She can be called upon by anyone who says the proper prayers and provides appropriate offerings. Once these are given, Durga will grant boons, provide advice and protect supplicants, as is evident when *Rangda* twice seeks her permission and advice. In Bali, Durga has taken on the physical characteristics of Kali, the goddess that she herself created, as the gods created her. *Rangda* the witch is the embodied but still magical connection between Durga and the human population she serves.

In the story contained in the *Calon Arang*, *Rangda* calls on Durga for permission to wreak havoc in the kingdom. Once it is given, *Rangda* begins her devastating plot. The spirits and goblins, *Rangda*’s disciples who are resident in the cemetery where *Rangda* meets Durga, help out with the spreading of chaos. By doing *Rangda*’s bidding, the demons and spirits known as

léyak in Bali, are also kept closely under her control and by extension the control of Durga. This same drama is recapitulated when the ritual dance is performed by humans in a temple.

When *Rangda* comes on stage or to a temple courtyard to fight against the forces of good as represented by the lion *Barong*, she also serves a more benevolent purpose. Beyond entertainment for tourists, the battle between *Rangda* and *Barong* is performed when troubles arise in the human world. These troubles are “understood” to be caused by *léyak* spirits who have become troublesome, naughty or downright dangerous. The masked dancer performing *Rangda* calls out to the *léyak* in a gravelly and fearsome voice urging them to come and show themselves. This enrages the *léyak* who cannot bring themselves to ignore such taunting and they flock to the temple courtyard where the ritual is being performed. The dancer who embodies *Rangda* draws the powers of the angry *léyak* to “her”, thereby deflecting their intentions from the local inhabitants. Once distracted and “defeated” by *Rangda*, the evil spirits retreat until such a time as they begin their campaigns against human communities once again. In the ritual that features her and which (according to the *Calon Arang*) recounts her desire to inflict pain and death on many humans in the kingdom, *Rangda* is also understood to be working for the good of the community. Empowered by Durga, *Rangda* vanquishes the evildoers by gathering them to herself and then distracting them from their original human prey. This act recalls the way in which fearsome Durga chases down and then slays the Mahishasura, the Buffalo Demon, or the way in which Kali, after the slaying of Canda and Munda, imbibes the blood of Raktabija, drawing his evil into herself to rid the world of his presence. As with the gods and their request to Durga, and Durga’s own parallel request to Kali, the desired result is the expulsion of evil and malevolent forces from the environs of the community. When they have been expelled, the request has been granted. If Kali is the extension of Durga in the Indian manifestation of this process, *Rangda* serves that role in the Balinese context. *Rangda* is neither purely good nor bad; instead she aids in the return of evil spirits to a state closer to ritual purity. As Clare Fossey notes, “*Rangda* is not only the destroyer of order but of the forces of chaos as well” (Fossey 2008: 40). The ambiguity in the representations of *Rangda* and Durga in the narratives recounted here, in particular their permutations from benign to malevolent and back again with respect to the human world, reflect a Balinese cosmos that is best understood to be in persistent motion.

In the Palasari context, the dangerous and unreliable image of Durga or *Rangda* is surprisingly missing. What I could trace is the manifestation of Durga as a cultural construction to demonise certain categories of women. It enshrines a set of ideological precepts regarding appropriate female roles and behaviour. Amid the absence of Durga and *Rangda*, in Palasari some categories of women, particularly independent and industrious are seen as dominant over

man. This domination is seen as dangerous and unstable. The demonization of women continues to this present day in Palasari.

Chapter 5

The Second Sanur

“The difference between violence waged with weaponry or with black magic is that in the former case the battle is circumscribed; there is a battle arena, you know you are being attacked, and you can defend yourself. Black magic is so much worse for it strikes at any time and catches you unprepared ... When Iran and Iraq fight as they do now, it is only because they don’t know about black magic. Black magic would be a much more efficient way.”

(Wikan, *Managing Turbulent Hearts*, 1990: 89)

The first time I heard the epithet that Palasari is the “*Second Sanur*” was from Fr. Guido Fahik and Br. Wayan Sugarwata. Both are members of the Catholic Divine Word Missionary (SVD, *Societas Verbi Divini*) who have been working in Palasari for years. Fr. Guido, a Timorese who worked in Palasari from 1986 until the early 1990s; while Br. Wayan, a Balinese from a transmigrant family of Sulawesi, worked in Palasari from 1999 until 2014. Among the Palasari people, Br. Wayan, apart from his main work in the Church carpentry workshop, was recognised as having supernatural healing power. He had been a great informant for this study until he died in 2018 of the dengue fever. The assertion of the “Second Sanur” has been popularised since the 1960s among many seminarians from Palasari⁴⁷ when they were telling the tales and stories about *léyaks* to their colleagues from other places. I have heard all about Sanur since I was a little child. Some of my informants for this project were in fact, the famous sorcerers and healers from Sanur.

Some locations in Bali are more infused with black magic than others (Eisman, 2012). Certain villages, Sanur among them, are known to be *angker* – unusually strange or fearful – or *tenget*, containing great supernatural powers, “hot earth village” (Lorvic, 1987; Ariati, 2009). Before 1970 if one heard the name of Sanur, the immediate and horrifying thinking would be of black magic. The whole of Bali knew this, that Sanur, especially certain people in the village were practitioners of strong magic (*anak sakti*). During certain seasons the rumour among people that a magic war (*siat peteng*) existed between the magic masters of Sanur and those of Kamasan village in Klungkung regency was not uncommon. People only claimed to see round glimmering fires swept above houses, or among trees that collided and broke into flakes of fires or slowly flying red lights diminishing into the dark. Phantasmagoric experiences as witnessed by McPhee and mentioned in the *Preface*, had attracted many tourists to Sanur.

⁴⁷ Interview with Nyoman Bagiya, August 2018. Over 75 years, Palasari as a Catholic community has produced so many Catholic priests and religious sisters. The number has been decreasing due to urbanisation and better education which creates many options.

Until recently Sanur has been so popular for those who want to see demonstrations of power that several novels and films have been produced based on the stories of *léyak* in Sanur. Lorvic (1987) explained that her decision to make Sanur the focus of her field research ‘was influenced largely by its reputation as a centre of literature and magic’.

Sanur was also popular for those who want to acquire *sakti* for self-protection, healing and harming others not only for demonstration of power at night. Stories from the 1960s have mentioned that the first generation of *léyak* in Palasari, unsurprisingly, bought their magical power from Sanur. The Balinese believe that apart of being inherited and handed over, magical objects also can be transported and traded. One day in his spiritual camp (*padepokan*), when I informed Ngurah Harta, renowned guru of black art, that people referred Palasari as the *Second Sanur*, he was amazed for he has never heard that a Catholic village had become so frightening like Sanur. In Palasari, people claimed to see fireballs, animals, etc. but there is no “Sanur-like” contest of power between *léyak* practitioners to challenge the most powerful in the village. According to Ngurah Harta and Made Subagia⁴⁸, in order to reach a powerful stage such as *Rangda*, one needs to consume nine foetuses, new-born babies or stillborn babies. I have never heard stories of *rangda* consuming babies in Palasari. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the last new-born baby to die was in 1997. Is this more rhetoric than reality which circulated only among the Catholics? Nyoman Winarta, one of the elders in Palasari, informed me that the Palasari people love to exaggerate when it comes to *léyak*. This chapter tries to investigate this label of *Second Sanur*. To do so, it will demonstrate the continuity and discontinuity of the belief of *léyak* in Palasari, by comparing the image of *léyak* in Sanur and other places with the one in Palasari, I will show what is so unique in Palasari.

‘Bought it from Sanur’

As mentioned in many *lontar* manuscripts, there are several ways to acquire *sakti* from Durga. The most common one is by worshipping Durga in her temple (*Pura Dalem*) in the graveyard. *Lontar Aji Pangleayakan*⁴⁹, for instance, lays out detailed rules and requirements for attaining power from the goddess Durga including the proper time and place for worshipping the goddess, i.e. in the cremation ground, or burning ground, which is called the *Setra Gandamay* in the text.⁵⁰ For there is no such place like *Pura Dalem*, *Barong* and *Rangda* mask (*jro*

⁴⁸ Made Subagia’s specialty is to collect many magical goods from various places using magical skill. I went to visit his warehouse in Br. Semer, Kuta Utara.

⁴⁹ The *Aji Pangleayakan* contains guidance on how to practise black magic, complete with descriptions of the proper offerings and the procedures for performing rituals of this type.

⁵⁰ I have used the term “cremation ground” in this section to translate *setra*. In some Balinese communities a distinction is made between the *setra*, where the bodies of the deceased are cremated, and the *sema*, where they are buried, but for most communities the two terms are nearly synonymous, since there is no clear

tapakan) for a *Calon Arang* performance with paraphernalia such as magical drawings, sacred syllables (*rarajahan*), or magical tools (*pakakas*). The people believe that the *léyak* in Palasari acquire their power and skill through buying from the sorcerer (*anak sakti*) and in particular from the sorcerer in Sanur.

Another issue I often heard of in Palasari was connected with poison (*cetik*) that people bought from *balian*. All suspected illness caused by *léyak* were delivered through food poisoning. *Cetik* could make the target sick for a period of time and if there was no cure, could cause death. In Palasari, like in Bali generally, sharing food or inviting people for a meal is a daily habit even without a formal appointment or invitation. In Bali, sharing food and accepting an invitation for a meal is a sign of what Geschiere (2013) calls “intimacy of trust”. Refusing an invitation, therefore, is considered a slight to the host. Fear of *cetik*, however, often makes people cautious to take foods offered by others. In Ngurah Harta’s place I saw various kinds of *cetik*. In Palasari, people believe that the practice of *cetik* aims to harm (kill) others as a ransom (*caru* or *tumbal*) to feed the (protective) spirits or to acquire more mystical power (*sakti*): “if you are offered food or drink, do not take it!” I still can remember vividly my late uncle’s cautions when I was visiting my friend’s house during the Christmas break. Years later when I came to the village doing my fieldwork, my auntie kept reminding me not to eat in people’s houses. One of the common assertions, is to be cautious of any food or meal offered by people. My observation about Palasari people, however, is that *cetik* is a consequence of illness, and not the other way around.

Many anthropological works on Balinese ethno-medicine examine “the village community, or the extended family” as the chief locus for the ailments (usually some conventionally inexplicable sickness or misfortune) that cause people to seek out healing. Drawing especially on the work of Lorvic (1987) and Unni Wikan (1990), Angela Hobart paints a fraught portrait of individuals and communities attempting to maintain a precarious balance and harmony in their lives against the odds. The rules of Balinese social etiquette maintain that ‘uncivilised’ passions, primarily the unadulterated expression of anger, but also greed, envy, pride, desire, fear and ignorance, are tantamount to a kind of ‘rot’ that “should be kept in the belly” (*berekan di basang*) but which, like faeces, also originate in the belly and must be discarded in order to ensure health in the person (pp. 38–39). Conflict within the family or between village members is often ascribed to unseen or *niskala* forces, such as an insult (whether deliberate or inadvertent) against any number of invisible beings or against a human being who is versed in

separation of space between the area where the deceased are cremated and the area where bodies that are temporarily buried due to a lack of funds for the cremation rituals or the availability of an auspicious day for *śmaśāna*, a Sanskrit term for a cremation ground.

the magic arts (a sorcerer or witch). These slights might include behaviour that is deemed inappropriate for one's social standing, or negligence in the making of a particular religious offering and can result in familial conflict and strife; economic disaster; physical or psychic ill health; even death in extreme cases. Relatively unskilled in the navigation of the seen (*sekala*) and unseen (*niskala*) domains, and in balancing the constant tension between the binary, but entangled, worlds of 'darkness and light', the villagers of Hobart's study seek out the help of those who are educated and talented in such matters; the healers. In Palasari, I found no evidence of serious conflicts, accusations or visible antagonism toward each other.

Geertz (1973) and Wikan (1987, 1990), two prominent figures in the study of Balinese construction on interaction could help to shed light on understanding the Palasari context. Despite very significant differences between their accounts there are also underlying similarities. Echoing Bateson and Mead's conclusion that the Balinese character is based on fear (1940: 47), both Geertz and Wikan continue to stress, though in quite different ways, the centrality of fear as the main organising principle of interpersonal behaviour. The emphasis on pervasive fear, however, results in a corresponding neglect of other important aspects of interaction. The consequent collapsing of diversity into a single common form effectively produces essentialist descriptions of the Balinese people. While this is fairly clear in Geertz's case, the failing is immediately obvious in Wikan's, for she sets out to do the opposite (1990: xciii). Nevertheless, worried about the general tenor of the analysis, elsewhere she writes that 'the Balinese of my [1990] account... seem so plain and ordinary, so nonexotic. ... Why was my study lacking ... in exotic features?'. Concerned not to essentialise the Balinese, she is troubled that she has made them insufficiently exotic. At the end of a discussion about translation and fieldwork practice, she comes full circle and wonders if she has instead 'portrayed them as more exotic justified' (1992: 460-1, 476). Can the processes of essentialising and exoticizing be decoupled in this way?

Wikan approaches the issue in terms of simple differences: the Balinese differ from 'us' in some significant way, therefore, this is an exotic feature. Describing something as exotic carries costs. It cannot be merely a matter of identifying differences as such, since differences exist everywhere. The problem lies in transforming differences into essential defining features of a category of people conceived of as a collective bound, and then counterpointing this 'culture' to a hypothetical other ('us') treated as equally homogenous and defined by an opposite set of features. Exoticizing the other implies an equivalent exoticisation of 'us'. Despite not wishing to essentialise, Wikan frequently collectivises 'the Balinese', attributing to a totality a set of similar ideas and concepts which produce similar behavioural outcomes.

Essentialist constructions usually involve several interconnected moves. One is the often unstated but still framing assumption that a society ‘has’ a (cohesive, integrated, etc.) culture (Keesing 1987). A second is the selection of specific kinds of material, deemed significantly different, from a much wider domain, by filtering out what is similar, presumably because it is of little analytical interest (Keesing 1989). A third is the comparison with a largely unexamined ‘us’, usually ‘Euro American’ culture. This returns us to the point of departure because the comparison involves two ‘cultures’. Carrier (1992) points out that this third move is itself a form of essentialising which he dubs ‘Occidentalism’, both to differentiate it from, but also to show the parallels (formal rather than political) with, ‘orientalism’ (Said 1978). The ‘other’ is constructed dialectically by opposition to a reified ‘us’; each generates the other, but, as it were, reversing all the terms. This is an exercise in topologizing since differences are mapped onto whole societies, conceived of as integrated cultures.

Following Howe (1999), this essentialist construction which views Bali as exotic and collective fails to recognise its variety, such as Balinese Catholic Palasari. As Eiseman (*Bali Sakala and Niskala*, 2011: xiv) says:

“Anyone who purports to write about “the way it is in Bali” is either ignorant or a liar. One would think that local variations in culture on such a tiny island would be insignificant. That is not the case. One of the first things a careful investigator learns is the principle of *desa kala patra*: that whatever one learns in Bali is largely determined by where he is, when he is there, and the circumstances under which the learning occurs.

The unique nature of the story of *léyak* in Palasari relies on the fact that it was not learnt but bought from outside, particularly from Sanur. It is often associated with cetik or food poison. In my view, it is more a consequence rather than the cause of illness. Unlike previous studies of other places in Bali, my study of Palasari shows that there is no serious visible conflict that could attend any cause of illness.

Constructions of Balinese interaction

Geertz’s interpretation of Balinese interpersonal behaviour (1973), building on Bateson and Mead (1940) and Bateson (1970), symbolic systems based on privilege over the concrete and varying practices of individual actors (cf. Asad 1983). Through a single-minded focus on concepts of time, the calendar, the naming system, pervasive ceremonialism, and rules of protocol and etiquette, he concludes that Balinese cultural patterns ‘depict virtually everyone ... as stereotyped contemporaries, abstract and anonymous fellowmen’ (1973: 389), rather than as ‘consociates’, that is, people who have immediate face-to-face relationships and whose life courses constantly impinge on one another. Balinese are thus presented as concerned with the aesthetics of action rather than its morality. In their relations with others individuality is

suppressed while a standardised identity is projected; as contemporaries, rather than consociates, Balinese share a community of time but not of space, and have, often very attenuated, social relationships with one another, but they do not – at least in the normal course of events – meet. They are linked not by direct social interaction but through a generalized set of symbolically formulated (that is, cultural) assumptions about each other's typical modes of behaviour. (Geertz 1973: 365-6)

Consequently, Balinese are not frightened of each other, because there is nothing to be frightened of. They may be in awe of their gods, and they can be afflicted by ancestors and spirits, but the main controlling emotion of interaction is 'stage fright' (*lek*), the ever-present possibility that their polished, socially distant and standardised public identities will crumble. If the etiquette of public performance is botched, the personality of the individual breaks through and then 'the immediacy of the moment is felt with an excruciating intensity and men [are] locked in mutual embarrassment' (Geertz 1973: 402). It is themselves the Balinese are afraid of, their own inability to perform on the public stage to an adequate standard.

Hailed as a classic of cultural analysis when it was first published in 1966, the essay *Person, Time and Conduct in Bali* is considered fundamentally flawed by Wikan (1987, 1990). Balinese may indeed be concerned about their relationships with gods, ancestors and spirits, but what really troubles them is their 'social interaction' with precisely those whom Geertz describes as 'contemporaries' rather than as 'consociates'. According to Wikan, "Balinese personhood is precarious and constantly dependent on the moral and emotional approval of others and conceptualized by the North Balinese themselves in a rich imagery dominated by the spectre of illness caused by sorcery and/or mental confusion. Behind a surface of aestheticism, grace, and gaiety, we found social uneasiness, great concern with the individual thoughts and intentions of others, and ubiquitous fear. Fear, not so much of the gods or the demons, but of fellow human beings, individual ones at that" (1987: 338).

Thus, sorcery and black magic are the sources of fear, and the usual suspects are kin, friends and neighbours. Wikan does not dispute Geertz's description of Balinese interaction as highly stylised. Whilst for Geertz the outward form is the substance, for Wikan the distinction between outer appearance and inner disposition is of paramount significance. Etiquette provides an inscrutable public facade concealing inner thoughts. Interaction is choreographed not to prevent individuality seeping through its casing of protocol, but to avoid giving offence to others, offence which might trigger retaliation by sorcery. Balinese thus school themselves to hide their real feelings, and instead put on a 'bright face' and laugh (Wikan 1990: 49-55). Anxiety about others' real intentions generates turbulent emotions in oneself (Wikan 1987: 338), which therefore requires precautionary action to guard against causing displeasure. Wikan says these

fears and dangers are ubiquitous, diffuse and pervasive: 'Balinese seem, to live perpetually on the verge of disaster' (1990: 32).⁵¹ Wikan's methodological stress on the activities of everyday life provides many brilliant insights into Balinese behaviour and allows her to pinpoint the weaknesses of Geertz's highly formal symbolic analysis. Nonetheless, her own account is not immune from some of the same failings. Geertz does not qualify 'Balinese' at all, not even along gender lines. Wikan appears to do so by confining herself to material from a small number of villages in north Bali. In arguing that it is differences in theoretical approach between herself and Geertz which produce differences in interpretation, rather than because they carried out research in different areas and at different times, Wikan presents her account as a general one which has 'captured broad commonalities' (1990: xxiii).

Other similarities exist between these two apparently different accounts. They agree, but for different reasons, that the nature of Balinese social interaction is fragile, both representing Balinese as living on the edge of a precipice. This is because, echoing Bateson and Mead (1940), Bali has a culture of fear, Geertz singling out stage fright, Wikan emphasising fear of others. Both therefore stress the negative and threatening qualities of interpersonal behaviour, and both assume that complex etiquette mediates social interaction to much the same extent. In these accounts the investment in a single, defining difference conveys exaggerated and one-dimensional portraits of Balinese people.

Geertz reduces Balinese interaction to a single type whose precise delineation derives from a contrast with an equally flat western type (we have consociates, they have contemporaries), a strategy characteristic of much of Geertz's analysis of Bali (Thomas 1989: 25-27, 1994: 93-94). Wikan also explicitly argues for Balinese 'otherness' on the basis that they differ from 'us' in critical ways. For example, Balinese make no distinction between 'thinking' and 'feeling' and thus have a monistic conception of the self (Wikan 1990: 35); they fashion 'feeling-expression body-soul into a coherent conception' (1990:151, her emphasis). This may be true in certain contexts, but equally distinctions are often made between the body and the 'spirit' which flows through it and animates, it, or between the material body and the invisible 'soul'. In criticising similar essentialist constructions of the Hindu self, Parry makes the important

⁵¹An interesting ambiguity exists in the way Balinese figure the relationship between inner disposition and outer appearance. In the iconography of masks, and in the representation of characters in drama and shadow theatre, there is often a direct link between inner nature and external appearance and deportment. In real life kings reputedly rejected otherwise beautiful women if they had some physical defect or deformity since they would not be faithful. Some believe that high status is associated with refined behaviour, certain facial features and light skin, while low status is associated with coarse behaviour and dark skin. On the other hand, Balinese have many proverbs and sayings indicating the difficulty of determining a person's inner thoughts and motives from their outward appearance, and paradoxically it is a metaphor of 'masking' which is often at work here. While some people are open and sincere, others are full of cunning; 'his words are sweet, but who knows what his thoughts really are' ('*munyinne luung nanging sing tawang kenehne*').

point that the assumed 'emphatic contrast between their monism and our dualism does little justice to the real complexities of either conceptual world' (1989: 513).

According to Wikan, Balinese postulate monism, and so 'we' cannot understand the profound healing properties of laughter. Balinese are regularly told not to express grief in public since it weakens the self and lays it open to attack; it is also contagious, thus making others vulnerable. Balinese should put on a 'bright face' and laugh. Laughter, Wikan tells us,

'works' in ways it would not do with us, ... We do not seek out situations that would make us glad when we are sad, nor do we like people to laugh and joke in the face of our distress. We do not recognise the sweetness of the taste of laughter as something soothing as sun to a freezing body; it is not appealing to our senses as a tonic that can 'take sadness away' or make one 'forget' one's sadness. We tend to be sceptical of such connections, for ours are differently constituted body-selves (1990:151).

The imputation of difference between 'the Balinese' and 'us' works by positing variation only between the two societies and not within them (though attention is drawn to gender differences amongst Balinese). English has a veritable battery of maxims and clichés encouraging people to put on a brave face and laugh in the face of pain and distress; even among 'us' laughter is supposed to be the best medicine. The assumption of a common Balinese conception counterposed to an assumed common western one implies both are natural, stable and timeless, and thus, in the Balinese case, unrelated to broader political issues of hierarchy, a subject Wikan mostly ignores.

Anak sakti and léyak

For Wikan fear is generated by the possibility of unwittingly causing offence to others. These 'others' should therefore be part of the analysis but often they are not, implying that all Balinese are equally capable of eliciting fear. When they are mentioned they are kin, friends or neighbours. In Palasari, in the West of Bali, villagers also specified rulers, priests, high castes, officials, healers, etc., as figures of fear, whom they referred to as *anak sakti*, 'powerful people', categories that rarely appear in Wikan's account.

Core-line descendants of Bali's nineteenth-century ruling families, many of whom occupy crucial local government positions, are credited with an inherently greater amount of *sakti* ('supernatural power', or 'effectiveness' [H. Geertz 1995b]) than those born into less prestigious groups. Because of their high status, their initiation ceremonies, their ritual and textual knowledge, and their ability to curse, brahmana priests (pedanda) are also assumed to have great power. These two classes are potentially lethal to those who displease them, so they must be treated with caution. Elaborate rules of language, etiquette and deference (Zurbuchen

1987) enable ordinary Balinese to maintain a safe social distance from rulers and priests while interacting with them.

Other Balinese, gentry and commoner alike, can increase their store of potency by becoming specialists in magical lore: temple priests, puppeteers, healers, spirit mediums, and so forth. Some undergo purification and initiation ceremonies. They are all credited with a knowledge of spells, medicines and poisons with which they can both cure and afflict. Others become powerful inadvertently. Illness may lead to the acquisition of a spirit helper providing access to the 'unseen worlds' (*niskala*), the zone where hidden connections between apparently unrelated events in the 'visible world' (*sekala*) stand revealed. Sometimes a person, near death, may pray all night in a temple and be given a blessing (*ica*) by God which can then be used in various ways. Occasionally people with congenital disabilities such as dumbness or deafness may be credited with powers enabling them to repel witches, and safeguard others in grave danger from witches. Moreover, any Balinese can purchase medicine, talismans and amulets, and love magic, or perform various ascetic activities to make themselves strong (*kuat*) and invulnerable (*kebal*).

Healers and priests almost always claim to use their power to help those bewitched by others, but stories abound that, clandestinely and for a price, they are also willing to initiate attacks. *Sakti*, then, is essentially a morally neutral power (Anderson 1972). It makes no difference that a priest is supposed to serve the gods, because the powers that a priest accumulates are identical to those a witch uses. Balinese therefore are ambivalent about priests, healers and others, because their 'inner intent may not be outwardly apparent' (H. Geertz 1995a: 23). The powers that are unleashed are the same, but the intentions are different. This is as it must be because 'to defeat an enemy one uses a superior form of his own power' (Wiener 1995:199).

Witches (*léyak*) act out of envy, greed and arid revenge, by using the powers they have learned or bought to attack others against whom they have a grudge; but some claim that witches attack anyone, because it is their nature to hate or to tease⁵² people, and some add that witches like to attack other witches to test their powers. The other possibility is that *léyaks* attack to get sacrifices (*tumbal* or *caru*) to increase their power.

Witches acquire their capacity to cause harm and death either through the study of magical texts (read back to front, or upside down) or by the performance of diabolical night-time rituals in dangerous places, such as the graveyard, where they summon up gods in their demonic forms and pledge obedience in return for supernatural power. By such means they derive the ability

⁵² It is called *aji wegig* from the word *ugig*, means itchy or restless

to change their bodily form and attack the unwary and the vulnerable, and they are most active at night. The forms witches take can be either animal, particularly pigs, monkeys and bats or more bizarre forms. If witches take the form of animals, they are not identical copies since there is always something strange about the form, such as large teeth, oversize genitalia, or protruding intestines which identify the animal as a witch. A friend told me a story in which a group of men were returning from a neighbouring village late at night when they were assailed by a vagina as large as a jackfruit, and they fled for their lives. Another friend said that a particularly dangerous form is a square of white cloth which hovers horizontally above the ground and can cut you in half if you do not crouch down under it in good time.

In short, both men and women, of high and low status, may develop powers of one kind or another and in varying amounts, and these may be legitimate or illegitimate. Some important questions then emerge. Are 'powerful people' prey to the same fears as those less powerful than themselves? Do the former all elicit the same intensity of fear in others, and more or less than do witches?⁵³ What resources, if any, do Balinese individuals have to repel attacks? Many Balinese are sensibly concerned about priests, healers, and others, but does this ambivalence mark all their relationships? The short answer is that even in one village not only do different categories of Balinese inspire different degrees of fear in others, but also even among ordinary commoners (the majority of Wikan's informants), there is significant variation in the extent to which they respond with fear to the possibility of witchcraft and sorcery. They also have weapons with which to fight back, and witches are not considered equally dangerous by everyone. Both Geertz and Wikan in fact under-estimate the degree to which Balinese have trusting and intimate relationships with friends, kin and neighbours over long periods of time. They are not paralysed by a pervasive fear of sorcery and can successfully suppress feelings of anxiety concerning what others think and might do (Jensen & Suryani 1992: 78, 88, who specifically repudiate Wikan's assertion that fear is pervasive and ubiquitous; Bateson & Mead 1940: 261). Is such ordinariness invisible or analytically superfluous?

Is the public face of etiquette and protocol always conditioned by fear? Wikan is reluctant to look beyond the fear of sorcery for other reasons why Balinese may wish to avoid giving offence. The lack of any analysis of political and economic relations blinds her to the fact that deference is necessary to gain access to patrons and the desirable resources they control. Deference and etiquette are also practised because priests and high castes demand it. This may be grudging, refused, ironically exaggerated or accepted as legitimate. Deference and etiquette

⁵³ Another question is whether 'fear' is always the correct translation. Wikan translates *takut* as fear, but this term has a wider range of meanings and can indicate 'worry' or 'concern'. Balinese has other words which may be used in these contexts such as *nyeh* meaning 'worried', or a feeling of revulsion, and *jerih* which can mean 'hesitant' or 'diffident'.

may involve fear, but it depends on who the actors are, and what the context is. There are also many occasions when the aesthetics of interaction are important. At public meetings, life-crisis rites, and marriage negotiations, speeches have to be made, and groups use their best orators to score points by the quality of their speech and command of the language. Commoners speak high Balinese to superiors not merely to show respect, but to elicit it in return. Behavioural and linguistic etiquette may be a safeguard against offending people, as Wikan says, but my friends rarely if ever mentioned sorcery as a possible consequence of offending another villager through the breach of such rules. Several high castes were mortified by the immoderate and coarse language sometimes used towards them by commoners, but I never came across a case of witchcraft for which this was given as a cause. Even if it were possible to argue that individuals present themselves in a uniform manner, the intentions may be diverse and so there are different kinds of events. In fact, Balinese present themselves in many ways conditioned by status, wealth, power, gender, age, attitudes to the hierarchy, etc. Similarly, preserving emotional equilibrium and composure may be motivated by a wish to avoid shock and confrontation, thus reducing vulnerability to illness and sorcery, but the same behaviour also demonstrates inner potency and thus the capacity to control others. Keeping face, the avoidance of giving offence and fear of sorcery are not necessarily implied by each other; nor does one have to decide between an aesthetics and a morality of action to characterise Balinese behaviour, since both are important.

Geertz conceives of fear only as 'stage fright' located within the individual, and thus misses the significance of the dynamics of interaction that Wikan so eloquently brings out. Wikan correctly appreciates that fear is a significant facet of relations with others, yet she ignores trust, circumscribes 'others' too narrowly, construes fear only in terms of witchcraft and sorcery, and says little about degrees of fear, means to defend oneself or sceptical attitudes. They both illuminate one aspect of Balinese interaction but at the cost of playing down other, equally important, aspects.

Léyak, anak sakti and the night

A common attitude of many Balinese is to be vigilant in one's daily life: monitoring where one eats, where one goes, whom one befriends, when one moves about the village, to whom one divulges information, and so forth. It is irresponsible to cause unnecessary offence, particularly to those assumed to be powerful, or to attract unwanted attention from them. The degree of fear demonstrated and the nature of responses to the possibility of attack are highly variable in both incidence and intensity.

Like many other villagers Kadek Suar (23-year-old, male, unemployed gentry) was very deferential to those of superior status and to priests and village notables. On several occasions we visited the house of a renowned healer (*balian*) in Melaya so that I could interview him. Kadek Suar was unhappy about this because healers are dangerous, and others might attribute unsavoury motives to our visits. He therefore wanted to keep our excursions a secret. When I suggested visiting him in the evening when it was dark, instead of the afternoon when people could see us, Kadek Suar flatly refused because during darkness the *balian* would be more dangerous and we would be more exposed. At one point we stopped going and Kadek Suar became agitated thinking the healer might be offended at our unexplained absence and take punitive action. He demanded that we either carry on going or take him an expensive present and formally ask to take our leave (*mapamit*).

While in theory there are potentially many people one might be concerned about, in practice things are rather different. A small but significant number of men, but some women also, asserted that there were no villagers who could properly be described as *sakti*, even if some existed in the past. There were more high castes than commoners in this group. Men, who are supposed to be 'brave' (*bani*) in comparison to women, are also less afraid (*takut*) to move around the village at night by themselves than are women. Other Balinese were only worried about those villagers whom they, individually, considered to be dangerous, and who these were varied a good deal. Certain individuals were thought powerful by some but not at all by others. Many considered the three high priests (*pedanda*) to be unambiguously *sakti* and therefore potentially lethal though, so far as I could gauge, they were not thought to be a real danger. Some of the descendants of the nineteenth-century rulers were also placed in this category by many, but by no means all. The majority of commoner temple priests, with one notable exception, were thought pretty harmless. Villagers are often very ambivalent about healers (*balian*), and some I asked said they were very frightened of them. Others, particularly those of high status, were not.

Priests, healers, officials and the like cannot be avoided since their services are often essential, and therefore Balinese are extremely punctilious about their dealings with them. One does not contradict a high priest or seek to correct him. When visiting a healer or priest one should always dress appropriately, make sure the offerings and payments are sufficient, and humble and belittle oneself so as to avoid any imputation of arrogance.

At one extreme then were those, like Kadek Suar, who were scared of many villagers. By contrast, Nyoman Ari (33-year-old, male, gentry, working in a clinic) said no one was *sakti*, and found my question amusing. For several days he and a female neighbour kept up a running joke about how Nyoman Ari himself was very *sakti*. Gus Rai, Nyoman Ari's older cousin, was

of the same mind. ‘How do you know if someone is *sakti*. You have to have proof; it’s got to be apparent. If you see someone who is dead, no pulse, no breathing, and someone can heal the wound quickly, this is proof’. Since Gus Rai had never seen anything like this, he remained agnostic.⁵⁴ His view was that one had to take simple, sensible precautions to avoid unwanted encounters with powerful forces (Jensen & Suryani 1992: 988).

While it is possible to discern a correlation between fear of others and specific categories of Balinese, such that for example, women evince more fear than men, commoners more than high-castes, and younger people more than older ones. Apart from the first example these are relatively weak, and the variation within the categories is often much greater than that between them. Rich, influential and high-status men seem less prone to admit that others can harm them because they are themselves powerful, but some nevertheless worry that their success may provoke the witchcraft of envy. Much of the time, therefore, one has to speak of differences in relation to specific individuals and their biographies.

The night is when witches and other malevolent forces are most active, yet not everyone displays concern. Encountering an animal or strange object at night can be frightening so few people make unnecessary journeys at night and alone. Some people evince only mild uneasiness about such night excursions, which suggests either that they are foolhardy or that witches are not necessarily so troublesome. Seemingly, for some witchcraft is a real problem, for others it is a mild inconvenience; it is difficult to detect any consistent pattern.

I occasionally played cards with several other men and women at a friend’s house until after midnight. When the game broke up, while I was cautioned to hurry home, others exhibited little fear of the night. On no occasion did anyone admit to being so frightened about going home alone that they would not play again until so late or tell me the following day that something peculiar had happened. Even so, whenever I left my own house late at night, I was frequently asked who was going to accompany me, and sometimes a younger member of the family was ordered to go with me. Having returned late at night, the following morning I would be asked who had brought me home; but it was always the same one or two people who were concerned about my reckless disregard.

Whilst some individuals will brave the night, the company of others is preferred. Loud talk and laughter generate a safety zone keeping fear at bay, and witches are said to be reluctant to

⁵⁴ Some Balinese, however, are through and through sceptics. A long-time friend from Negara told me in 2013 that he did not believe in witches at all. At night what he is afraid of are snakes and dogs, not any pig or monkey which might be a witch. He has never seen a witch. Though he has heard plenty of stories about them, he asks where the proof is; and he means things such as actually seeing someone change form or experiencing ‘action at a distance’. He doesn’t believe ancestors can affect the living. They are dead, they have been cremated, and so have no body, so what serious means do they have to harm the living?

assail groups. Several villagers described what it was like to be alone at night: trees seem to move, noises emanate from the undergrowth, the moon produces peculiar reflections, ordinary things take on unusual appearances, and so you get scared; it might be nothing, but it might be a witch or the angry spirit of a dead person not yet cremated. Some friends seemed more afraid of snakes and packs of dogs. My uncle, now old and perhaps a bit senile, frequently goes out in the dead of night and sometimes wanders quite far from the village, but nobody has ever thought of him as a witch.

None of this means that unusual things do not occur during the night. Balinese often say they have heard or seen strange noises and sights, and they wonder about the causes. Flashes of light or fire may be attributed to contests between sorcerers, and the sighting of a pig or monkey at night may in reality be a witch. Unfamiliar sounds and sights are often dismissed as relatively unimportant. Sometimes the noise or sighting is so singular that it attracts collective attention. Twice in the village of Sombang, eastern Palasari, men heard very bizarre noises, so strange they could not be identified, and which made them frightened. Each time a meeting was called the following day to discuss it, and to find out if anyone else had heard it. On both occasions the noises were said to be 'unique' and a ceremony was held in a temple.

While many Balinese seem capable of quieting the fears they may feel when alone at night in the streets, others surprised me by the evident terror that they experienced. Young unmarried women are particularly reticent to move about the village after sunset, except in groups of three or more, because they are scared of being molested by witches (or less supernatural beings - rape is a real danger). I have, however, seen older women on their own at night, but they may get a bad reputation as a witch or as a woman of loose morals. Men too can sometimes be almost paralysed by fear. One evening I accompanied a friend (young, commoner male) to watch a performance of the shadow theatre in the middle of the village. Usually these finish about 3 am, but at about 1 am he decided to go home. Twenty minutes later he was back. Having reached the village cross-roads he took fright at the very dark road he had to negotiate to get to his house, and which at one point goes within a hundred yards of the village cemetery. I wouldn't lend him my torch since I needed it to keep the dogs at bay as I went home. In the end I had to take him home. His was not a fear of specific individuals whom he thought bore him a grudge, but rather of anonymous forces such as the spirits of the newly dead which wander along dark roads and which are very capricious.

It is also a generalised fear of the night, and the creatures who inhabit it, which encourages Balinese never to sleep alone. Children always sleep in groups with or without an adult, and young unmarried men and women almost always have sleeping partners; I was often asked why I did not request anyone to sleep with me: was I not afraid and lonely to be on my own?

One of Wikan's main points is the high degree of fear which Balinese evince towards their co-residents, friends and neighbours, since in theory any of these can become a witch or purchase poison, and any of them might bear a grudge which propels them along this course of action. I simply did not perceive Balinese relationships in this way. For the most part everyday behaviour is very relaxed. With friends and family, Balinese work, joke, play, bathe, gamble, and so on. They swap food, razor blades, combs, clothes and a myriad other thing. Members of the same sex are extremely intimate; they hold hands, drape themselves over each other, playfully hit one another, and eat and sleep together. There are many intimate friendships which cut across caste boundaries and which are characterised by only the most rudimentary forms of linguistic etiquette. These are people one has grown up with; trust is taken for granted unless there is some specific reason to doubt it. Indeed, Jensen and Suryani (1992: 90-1) argue that typical patterns of child rearing induce a sense of trust rather than fear; can one really live a whole life constantly suspicious of everyone else? While some villagers admitted that close kin (especially women who marry into family and then sow dissent between brothers) can be dangerous because they are most likely to hold a grudge. Others argued that it is precisely your close kin who protect you. Moreover, judged by the frequency with which my friends interpreted others' behaviour; Balinese are adept at reading their intentions. While standardised, public identities are clearly on display with acquaintances and strangers, they are virtually absent with close friends and kin. Some people are also much more transparent than others. Many of my friends, especially in the heat of the moment, did not maintain composure but were quick to show resentment, anger or disappointment. Some of my classificatory 'mothers'⁵⁵ in Palasari were exceedingly formal towards me, using very elevated language, but others almost entirely dispensed with such formality. This describes a world very different to that portrayed by Geertz, in which Balinese are depicted as 'contemporaries' who have 'attenuated social relationships' and who rarely 'meet'. His account is accurate if confined to strangers, priests, healers, and those at very different positions in the hierarchy, between whom elaborate forms of etiquette and deference are often required. It is also different from Wikan's portrayal of paranoid Balinese for whom the fear of others is always uppermost in their minds.

While the poison of witchcraft may hover in the background it only becomes a possible cause (amongst several others) after someone falls ill or dies.⁵⁶ People involved in conflict with others never enter their enemies' houses, accept food from them, or speak to them. If they do

⁵⁵ As the case in Asia, in Palasari people use to call the older women mother to show respect and closeness.

⁵⁶ Witchcraft is usually only diagnosed when an illness drags on and does not respond to treatment. A festering wound may eventually be attributed to sorcery. Illnesses which are characterised by diffuse symptoms such as general bodily pains, lethargy, fever, and the like, and which others cannot treat, can also be ascribed to witchcraft, as can sudden, unexpected deaths, although other causes may be revealed, such as ancestral wrath. Witchcraft therefore tends to be a residual category.

not fall ill witchcraft is not mentioned. Of course, people take these evasive precautions so that they do not 'fall ill'. Although witchcraft is always a possibility, fear varies in intensity from person to person, and in whom or what triggers it off, and it is held in check, sometimes even effaced, by the many exigencies of ordinary, everyday living, and by the normal precautions that common sense dictates.

There is also great variation concerning which places are considered to be dangerous. I do not mean graveyards, banyan trees, crossroads, village boundaries, and so forth, which are areas of spirit concentration. I mean that some entire villages are thought to be especially fraught with danger for the unwary. One evening I was asked if I was going to watch the shadow theatre in Nusasari, a nearby village. If I did, my friend (male, gentry, ambulance driver) warned, 'don't eat there, eat here before you go!'. When I asked him naively if the food was not very good, he said that was not the problem. 'The people in Nusasari are evil; the place is broken apart. It's not safe to eat there as you might get hit by "black magic"', so 'don't buy anything there in case you get hit'. I was told it was safe to drink from an as yet unopened bottle and the like, but 'don't eat snacks' and 'take your own cigarettes'.

Another friend (male commoner, cock-fight specialist) said he too would never eat anything there: 'It might not be the merchant who sells you the food, but the person you are sitting next to who puts something into it'. Why would anyone do this to me, I asked? 'Because maybe they are trying out their power'. Why in Nusasari? 'Because it's a small village, and the people have narrow thoughts. They only think of eating and gambling, and they fill their spare time by practising sorcery against each other. They are at each other's throats and like to poison each other and test their skills against one another'. Someone else said that because they were lazy and had nothing better to do, witchcraft was their 'obby' ('hobby').

Many gentries in Palasari sneer at the all-commoner village of Nusasari, saying the villagers are unbelievably *kasar* (rough, uncouth) and use very coarse language; but some commoners from Palasari were equally adamant that it was a dangerous place. While such attitudes suggest that commoners have access to illicit forms of power and knowledge with which to subvert the power relations of the normal hierarchy, higher status groups can retaliate by contemptuously dismissing them as rude and ignorant. For example, there are several shared bathing places in the valley that separates Palasari from Nusasari. One is a cave, difficult to access and considered magically dangerous (*tenget*), but where the water is said to have health-giving properties. In the cave the water is channelled through pipes so that a shower can be taken by candlelight. I was told that those in a state of pollution (*sebel*) should not bathe there, on pain of being bitten by the snake which lives in the pipe. It was asserted that people from Nusasari were so stupid that they did not know whether they were polluted or not and hence were

regularly bitten. Needless to say, those whom I asked in Nusasari had never been bitten by the snake, though some said that indeed it was there.

Others repeated the same injunctions about Nusasari and sometimes extended the list to include other villages. By contrast, others told me not to worry. When I visited these villages, usually to watch cockfights, I often found people from Palasari buying food. Was it safe to do so? Yes, so long as you trusted the seller. It is interesting that it is phrased in this way since it implies, again, that Balinese can divine others' attitudes to oneself, and that much of the time it is trust rather than suspicion which is the dominant orientation.

Cockfighting and football were the main topics of conversation in my house, and witchcraft was rarely mentioned. At a friend's house (gentry), in another part of the village, this was all we ever seemed to speak about. It was serious stuff, full of macabre stories (almost always second or third-hand), and about what precautions to take to stay healthy. The fact that he lived in a very badly lit house where the black night seemed impenetrable, that he had spent time in Lombok, an area thought to be saturated with black magic, and finally that he lived across the road from a retired senior policeman whom locals suspected of being a regular practitioner of black magic, might account for this. At my local coffee stall in the evenings, by contrast, talk about witchcraft amongst young men of all statuses was often light-hearted. Here it was often directed specifically at me, perhaps to scare me. Or was it because, not having personally witnessed anything dramatic, they were uncertain whether witches existed, and wanted to test their scepticism, or my gullibility?⁵⁷

These coffee-stall discussions always opened with the stock phrase: 'have you ever seen a witch?' (*taen nepukin leyak?*). I responded by asking for details about witches. What do they like to eat? They like what ordinary people detest: they enjoy vile smells, and like to eat excrement, babies and human flesh. They always do their work at night and appear in various guises. They are present in the house of someone dying, waiting for them to die or hastening

⁵⁷ I collected many stories about witchcraft. Most of these were of sick people revealed by mediums and healers as poisoned by sorcerers. Tales of actual encounters with witches were almost entirely second-hand. For example, one man told me that one evening several men were playing cards at one of the village guard stations late at night so as to keep awake. One of the players turned around and saw a monkey and a dog sitting next to each other watching them. The men fled in terror. I checked this story with a friend who lived very close to this station, but he had no knowledge of the encounter at all. Most Balinese have a fund of such stories, which probably grow in the telling; they are very similar to those reported by Covarrubias (1937: 322-325). Not all of them concern witches but relate also to the miraculous powers of people and other creatures. For example, a policeman who occasionally came home to Palasari told me of a case he had heard about recently. Three Balinese caught a Madurese man robbing a shop in Kuta, a famous tourist resort. He was chased down to the beach where he was stabbed repeatedly in the head and the body 'but no blood came out'. Seeing that he was invulnerable in this way they tied him up, weighted him with rocks and drowned him in the sea. A sometime drinking companion once asked if I dared to enter one of Adnyasari's more famous and potent temples at midnight. If I did, he said, I might see a huge serpent (*naga*) which guards the temple. He had once seen it. It unwrapped itself from the shrine around which it usually sleeps and reared up above his head. He was so scared he fainted and has never since entered the temple.

their death. They can fly, emit fireballs and shoot these through the air. Ghosts (*tonya*) are almost as bad and inhabit the cross-roads, dark places and big trees and pounce on passers-by. Spirits of the uncremated dead hover around the graveyard and in the general vicinity, howling, crying and sometimes attacking the unwary.

On these occasions young men tried to show bravado by saying that if they encountered a witch at night, they would kick it up the backside or set it a light. Others dared me to accompany them to the graveyard at midnight. If I agreed I was taken by the arm and walked twenty yards down the road, only for my partner to burst out laughing and turn back. At other times someone would blurt out that the girl who often served at the stall was a witch (she was a timid young woman whose name, 'Sak Raka, was often twisted into Raksasa, meaning 'demon'), or that I was sitting next to one, but it ignored me because it did not find me 'tasty'.

The bravado, the fooling around and the nervous laughter bespoke a fear of witches which the jokes may help to allay. The banter, the scepticism of some people about witches and powerful people, the fact that men do move about at night, and the existence of numerous conflicts not involving witchcraft, suggest that anxiety may be neither deep-seated nor pervasive, and that therefore there is no single, consistent response.⁵⁸ Individual Balinese may also change their views as they mature. What frightens a child may be dismissed as childish by an adult. I have even heard the word *léyak* used by an angry parent to discipline an unruly child. As people grow older, they may take a less literal perspective. Several friends assert witches cannot change form; it is the spell that distorts the observer's perception. Some believe witches are real, some talk as if they are symbolic; are symbolic witches as frightening as real ones? While Balinese may be prey to both general fears, and to fearing particular individuals, they also know that there are many ways in which trouble can be avoided and that witches may themselves be vulnerable.

Avoiding *léyak*, dealing with *léyak*

So far, my discussion has concentrated on powerful people, witches and the night. I comment now on two forms of sorcery: poison and the appropriation of bodily exuviae; and on defences against witches and sorcery.

⁵⁸ This recalls Gilbert Lewis's fine evocation of the activity surrounding a curing rite amongst the Gnaou of New Guinea. He captures the flux of conversation that accompanies the making of an image of the offending spirit, the joking and teasing, complaints of errors, scepticism, attention to detail or indifference, and concludes: 'Different people show different attitudes and levels of concern, as you would expect. It would not be much good trying to make out a case from this for saying they all believe the same, or that they mean all they say literally' (Lewis 1986: 428).

Wikan stresses the importance of the magical use that Balinese can make of another's hair and other bodily exuviae to cause harm, although she gives few concrete cases. In the villages I am familiar with this form of sorcery created little concern. In both Adnyasari and Palasari people regularly have their hair cut by barbers who set up their stalls in the market or elsewhere. Others have it done at home by friends or neighbours leaving the cut hair on the ground to be swept up later. I always cut my nails in the open, as did most of my friends. Nobody ever warned me that it was foolhardy to leave them on the floor for others to pick up. This lack of concern was in stark contrast to warnings about poisoned food.

As indicated in the previous section one of the fears that loomed large in the imagination was the possibility of being poisoned. To 'poison' (*nyetik*) someone requires the insertion of a magically powerful object (*papasangan*) into the body of the victim. It does not matter what the object is so long as spells are pronounced over it. Since the spell includes the name of the victim it is tailored to him, and so is neither detectable by, nor harmful to, others. The most common means of poisoning someone is to insert it in food or drink. Balinese regularly eat snacks and take drinks outside the home, and such occasions are potentially hazardous.

Leaving aside those specific situations I have already described, most villagers showed little concern over what might be in their food when eating at home, at their friends' houses, or at stalls where they regularly took meals. They conscientiously rake through rice for foreign matter, but whether to detect poison or to prevent their teeth being damaged by stones I do not know. They rarely treated other food in this way. On the other hand, several people regularly looked closely at their glass of coffee and it is conceivable they were inspecting it for poison. One old man told me that you should always put the palm of your hand over the top of the glass for a few seconds. If no condensation appears on your palm, then it is best to throw it away. I have never seen anybody actually do this. Friends told me that you were not completely safe even at your local stall, so you should always check to see who is there. You might be among friends, but everyone has enemies, and so you must weigh up the situation. While theoretically there is always a threat of being poisoned, in practice many villagers ignored it.

One omission in Wikan's analysis is any account of the resources Balinese can use to repel attacks; another concerns the fact that witches are not themselves immune. According to Wikan, the only source of help Balinese have recourse to is their healers, without whom they 'would feel (indeed, be) entirely powerless and vulnerable' (1990: 84). Of course, it is often their healers whom they are afraid of. Some of my friends, all men I hasten to add, told me that attack is the best form of defence. Should you meet a witch disguised as an animal the best thing to do is hit it with stones or a big stick, and that might be sufficient to get rid of it. H. Geertz reproduces a Balinese painting in which a demon who is attacking a farmer is itself

being beaten by several other peasants with their farm implements; and another in which a man confronts a woman in witch form and, when she does not reply to his questions, jumps on her back and starts hitting her (1995a: 66,91).

If a witch is wounded in such an attack it is imperative for the witch to approach you the next day to request something personal: a cigarette, a piece of clothing, some food, or the like. If it cannot get this its wound will fester and the witch will die; but it is bad policy to refuse since *karma pala* will intervene and you will suffer for contributing to a death. It is much better to surrender the item on condition the witch does not disturb you again. In short, witches are themselves quite vulnerable to people.⁵⁹

The story of *léyak*, Basur (Hooykaas 1978), is quite illuminating in this regard. Basur wanted to marry his son, Tigaron, to Sukanti, but because he was ugly, she refused, and got her father to marry her off to another man. Tigaron was very upset and beseeched his father to intervene. Basur went to the graveyard and called on Durga⁶⁰ to assist him. With her blessing he was able to change into the witch Rangda and then make Sukanti sick. Sukanti's father called on a healer to help him. The healer appears to think the matter is none too serious because he simply prepares some medicine and Sukanti quickly recovers. The healer explains that a sorcerer has been the cause of the girl's sickness, and points Basur out as the culprit. Basur in turn pleads with the healer not to kill him, and all the latter does is scold him and tell him to find another girl for Tigaron!

Villagers also said that some Balinese are stronger and more powerful than others; their blood is 'hot' (*panes*), or they have 'hot' hands, and witches are frightened of them. Rulers were often more powerful than sorcerers and so could protect their followers, consequently commoners subordinated themselves to powerful people to gain this protection. It is women, the very young, the old, the weak and the sick, and those who are asleep, who are vulnerable to attack. Those who are themselves powerful are also less scared of possible encounters because they have further means to ward off attacks. They can tell at a glance whether there is anything wrong with their food. At night they can distinguish a real animal from a witch in animal form. They know spells which immobilise a witch, rooting it to the spot. Then they can

⁵⁹ A friend told me that one evening a high-ranking village official had gone out to bag some bats at a big tree in a wooded part of the village (such bats being good for making certain dishes). He shot a few but one that he hit just disappeared. The following day, a man with a head wound came to him begging to be given something that belonged to him. He was given an old shirt and sent on his way.

⁶⁰ Durga is one name of the powerful deity that controls the death temple. Deities are thus not unambiguously benevolent, and they can be moved to delegate their power to those who wish to use it for evil ends. The 'gods' of temples both protect and afflict the villagers who worship them. For the Balinese 'acts of sorcery are hardly distinguishable from acts of worship, except in intent and consequences. They are all mobilizations of shakti' (H. Geertz 1995a: 81).

force the witch to reveal its name and the witch is impelled to tell the truth. Once the name is known the witch becomes powerless, and the following day the witch will be extremely shy towards its captor. Some men say they are just too strong and too tough to be struck by witchcraft (Ruddick 1986: 148). Even though witches may disguise themselves as dogs, dogs can warn that witches are around. Being like witches, dogs can see them and hence bark at them (Wiener 1995: 293).

Another line of defence against supernatural attack, in this case a very general prescription, is to live a moral, upstanding life. Despite the purported powers of witches, it is difficult to 'hit' someone with witchcraft if that person gives no cause. Theoretically, kind, generous and tolerant people have strong bodies and souls because they are protected by God and their ancestors. If one is 'hit', part of the problem is that this protection has already been withdrawn (Wiener 1995: 287). Those who are mean, arrogant and aggressive lay themselves open to attack by others, not only because they make many enemies but because their own stock of power is diminished by the way they behave.

Today, the martial arts, *pencak silat*, are a favourite sport for young people. Regular practice increases physical prowess and inner potency, teaches discipline, and leads to a healthier lifestyle, and consequently reduces vulnerability to all attackers, human or otherwise.

Balinese may display fear in a variety of situations, but it is usually not very acute, and in many contexts, it is trust rather than fear which characterises relationships. The causes of fear are as various as the responses, and often fear is not the driving force behind polite interaction. Moreover, Balinese are able to deflect and cope with anxiety by taking precautionary steps of many kinds; and there are many ways to repel witches, scope to fight back, and a rhetoric of bravery and defiance in the face of danger. Of course, such defences constitute a double-edged sword since they keep alive ideas about the potential danger of witches and sorcerers. My point is that it is very difficult to generalise about Balinese behaviour as it relates to these issues because there is a dynamic involved, some Balinese being able to transform fear and timidity into courage and defiance.

Emotional disturbance, illness and laughter

Attack by witches, sorcerers and spirits is more likely the weaker one is. Weakness may be a function of age, conscious state, gender or general disposition. Just as sorcery induces illness and confusion, so these states also open one to attack.

A significant behavioural consequence flows from this. To remain healthy many Balinese, strive to maintain emotional equilibrium by avoiding shock, unpleasantness and confrontation. This general characterisation must be qualified though. Many young men drink alcohol and

seem to enjoy inebriation; many also are 'hot-tempered' and like to fight; and in some contexts, direct and candid speech is welcomed. Nevertheless, because strong emotions are contagious, others admonish their friends and kin to laugh and be happy, so that they are not themselves rendered vulnerable to attack by the sadness which the troubles of others generate. To put on a 'bright face', to laugh and to ignore one's distress is a defence mechanism which not only protects oneself, but also safeguards those who are close. While Wikan (1990) analyses in some detail connections between sorcery, emotional disturbance and the role of laughter there are two issues which she does not address.

One of these is that there are many forms of response to emotional disturbance, illness and physical violence. During fieldwork I have observed several extremely serious incidents between close kin, often eventuating in blows and occasionally in severe injury. In none of the situations that I came to know well was sorcery ever mentioned, and not in any serious sense were the combatants enjoined to laugh. Laughter, as a form of healing, is much more appropriate when it is an individual's personal grief, and of little use when the situation involves the complex entanglements of close kin in enduring relationships.

Indigenous explanations for extreme forms of violence and personal turmoil usually devolve both on the well-known structural problems that exist between co-resident kin and affines (who ideally should cooperate but whose interests often diverge), and also on the ancestors and spirits that are frequently found, through a spirit medium's revelation, to foment such trouble. Ancestral wrath is visited on families for a variety of reasons, often manifesting itself in quarrelling and fighting between members of the afflicted family, and sometimes in their illness or even death.

Balinese may also explain violent behaviour in terms of spirit invasion of the person. The class of spirits known as *buta-kala* is often said to cause hatred, jealousy, anger, confusion, fright, and so forth. Balinese are 'invaded' by these spirits and then behave abnormally. To keep their activity to a minimum, offerings are provided for them at regular intervals and at certain particular locations.

Responses to interpersonal violence are varied. A family might go to a medium to determine the ultimate cause of the problem. Merely knowing this cause, and thus placating ancestors and spirits, is not usually sufficient to solve problems, because words have been uttered and blows have been exchanged. Serious disturbances usually lead to a change in existing arrangements: husband and wife may divorce, mothers-in-law may insist their 'insubordinate' daughters-in-law toe the line, brothers may separate their living accommodation and disentangle their material interests so that they no longer need to co-operate (Howe 1989).

A further and additional response to events of this kind, and also in relation to those who have suffered a severe shock, fainted, had an accident or fall, or who feel generally very run down and exhausted, is to perform a small ritual called *ngulapin*. This 'recalls the soul' which has temporarily left the body or restores the components of one's body to their correct relationships.

There are other explanations as well. One is that the person is burdened with the sins of the soul which has reincarnated into him. Sometimes this can be alleviated by a presentation of offerings and a change of name. More usually this form of explanation is used for children who are frequently sick or behave abnormally. More and more today one hears Balinese ascribing misfortune and poor behaviour to the action of karma, an imported Hindu doctrine now taught in schools as part of religious education.

Balinese Hindu concept of reincarnation is different to other religious traditions which hold that the spirit of a dead person returns (brought back) to life in another body or form. Balinese believe that the spirit of the ancestors (deceased relatives) would descend to their living relatives to borrow their living body. So, there is more than one soul/spirit in those bodies. On certain occasion the living relatives have to remember their spirit protectors and pay attention to them by feeding and offering a meal to the ancestors' soul.

Illness may also be conceived of as a 'natural' event and treated with a wide variety of herbal remedies and concoctions. A large range of indigenous tonics (*jamu*) are readily available and a particular class of healer specialises in herbal medicines, many of them based on restoring balance to a body that has become too 'hot' (*panes*) or too 'cold' (*nyem*). Market days often see a travelling salesman setting out his weird and wonderful collection of ointments, medicines and aphrodisiacs, made by soaking bones, teeth, skins and other parts of animals in water or oil. They are said to cure or prevent anything from back ache and impotence to rashes and deformities. The first recourse of many who get ill is to go to a western-trained doctor, not to a medium.

Finally, one way to respond to illness is to repair to one's natal village for that is where one is safe and where a cure is most likely to be affected. Most Balinese I know extol the virtues and curative properties of their spring water and the rice grown on village land. Several people told me how they were cured once they had come home. One young man who worked as a tour operator in Denpasar came down with acute stomach pains. After several fruitless visits to doctors, he became very weak and returned home. His family took him to a temple considered magically potent and there asked for a blessing (*nunas ica*) from the god. After several days of drinking Palasari water he began to feel much better. Another told me he too used to live in Denpasar, where he had a floundering trucking business. He became very ill and it was not

until he returned to Palasari and took traditional medicine and drank the local water that he recovered. Neither attributed their illnesses to sorcery.

The second issue concerns Wikan's penetrating analysis into the point of laughter. I was myself frequently admonished to laugh and joke more and told not to ask too many serious questions. Laughter helps to keep grief private, so that it does not upset others, and it is a means of dissipating it in a safe and controlled manner. When I did begin to laugh more friends would often remark, quite ingenuously: 'oh, look, he can laugh', or 'oh, you know how to laugh then'.

I think the matter can be probed a little deeper, if speculatively. Wikan never attempts to see what light an analysis of laughter may shed on political relations. Injunctions to put on a bright face or laugh in the face of suffering could encourage the acceptance of loss without complaint because it is caused by invisible forces, angry ancestors, capricious spirits or evil witches, outside of their control.

In this regard a point of possible significance that Wikan fails to note is that a linguistic representation of laughter sees it as a gift from god. Balinese received gifts and blessings of various kinds from their deities and political overlords (the gift of a miraculous cure, the blessings associated with holy water, magically powerful objects, the gifts of land and food which a lord provides for subordinates, and so forth).

The word which most commonly describes such blessings is *ica*.⁶¹ Those who request holy water, beseech god for a blessing, or beg a boon from a lord, all *nunas ica*. *Ica* denotes both a 'gift' and 'laughter', or 'smiling with favour'. To *nunas ica* is to ask for a favour, for grace, or a gift, which are bestowed on one by a person of superior status (van Eck 1876: 8; Hunter 1988: 330). Health, happiness and laughter, even rice and life itself (Howe 1991), in some sense come from above, from deities, ancestors and lords. In this representation, if not in others, lords and

⁶¹ *Ica* come in many forms: the bestowal of sakti which empowers the recipient, an object such as an unusual stone, amulet, dagger or palm-leaf text, and so forth. A young man in Mealaya, ill for many months, took himself to the graveyard to die. But he heard a voice in the sky ordering him to go to the 'death' temple. There he was cured by a gift from God. A priest in Negara had a source of holy water in his family temple. In the past it had been necessary to replenish it periodically. After leading a devout life, however, no matter how much the water was used it now never diminished, and this was an example of *ica*. The original inhabitants of Adnyasari possessed a gun which was said to be a gift (*ica*) from the gods. It had miraculous powers such that, for example, it only needed to be pointed at birds and they would fall out of the sky. It became a sacred heirloom of one of the village's temples and was only ever brought out and fired during a ceremony. A final example concerns high-caste friend in Palasari who was plagued by misfortune in his business dealings. He was convinced that the cause was sins from a previous life which had not yet been expunged. He took to praying in the family temple every night, and one evening an ancestor appeared and spoke to him. It told him that his grandmother had failed to carry out a vow. He must therefore take certain offerings to a village temple. When he did, part of the money that was a constituent of the offering disappeared and, in its place, he found hair-like strings of gold. This, he said, was a gift (*ica*) which could be used as medicine and as a repellent of witchcraft.

high priests do not so much exploit those below them as act as the very sources, or intermediaries, of health and happiness.

Conclusion

Geertz and Wikan aim to bring into sharp relief certain apparently characteristic features of Balinese interpersonal behaviour in part by recourse to a comparison between Balinese and Euro-American 'cultures'. Since this involves homogenising both, the method is deeply flawed. It is less an analytical strategy than a rhetorical and stylistic device. As such the differences 'discovered' are to some extent a fiction, an artefact of the procedure. Emphasising difference, suppressing similarity and collapsing variation produce a flat and uniform picture given apparent weight by its juxtaposition to an unexamined and equally uniform 'us'; it creates a caricature.

Balinese people, even in one village, cannot be typified in terms of a set of beliefs and practices concerning either the intensity of interaction or its apparent lack of substance, because there is considerable diversity among them in how they conceive of witches and powerful people, and how they respond to these. Balinese differ in what they believe and in the conviction with which these beliefs are held. Some consider themselves vulnerable to powerful forces, others possess methods of defence. Balinese may change their views over time and as experience and circumstance dictate. Gender, age and status qualify the texture and strain of interaction. Stage fright, shyness and elaborate etiquette may well characterise the commoner's visit to the high priest's house, but these are absent with neighbours, gambling friends and work mates. For a variety of reasons, one must be on one's guard with strangers, healers, employers, officials and others, but fear is not the only or even dominant emotion characterising these relationships, and among friends and kin trust is as significant as suspicion.

However subtle and brilliant her analysis of Balinese interaction is, and however delicate her interpretation of their responses to fear may sometimes be, Wikan nevertheless portrays Balinese as essentially prey to the same set of fears and as essentially making the same responses to them. Similarly, despite the illuminating insights Geertz achieves, Balinese people still end up as ciphers reflecting nothing more substantial than the symbolic webs of significance, they are themselves said to weave.

In Palasari there is no demonstration of power such as one would find in Sanur and other places in Bali. What people did talk about was the competition of magical power in the form of magical tools (*pekakas*), amulets or body protection (*pasikepan*) or food poison (*cetik*) that were bought from famous places.

Chapter 6

He was possessed and talked

“What can you expect when you consult a *balian*?” I asked Made Joni in his *bale bengong* (a Balinese traditional gazebo) that evening. “Your experience will be very public, with all the other clients watching avidly. The healer may make magic, create fire, use *mudrahs*, draw patterns on your body, spit wads of chewed herbs on your skin, apply scented oils, poke you with sharp sticks and/or give you a deep tissue massage or manipulation that will be very painful indeed. You will probably howl; most people do. But you will probably feel better,” he told me.

Made Joni was 58 years old, born in a Balinese-Hindu family and then adopted by his barren Auntie who lived in Palasari and became Catholic when he was about 7-year-old. He had been diagnosed with epilepsy by doctors from the hospital for the last three years. When he was still young, he developed an epileptic symptom. The symptoms disappeared, however, especially after he got married when he was 23. Every village in Bali has at least four *baliangs*. There are about 8,000 practicing in Bali, which has about four times as many *baliangs* as doctors. Unfortunately, there is no *balian* in Palasari. Since the opening of the village some 80 years ago, the people have been relying on modern medicine supplied by a European mission. The modern clinic has been opened to support the life of community. Unlike the traditional village that makes the *balian* at the forefront of the community health, the Palasari people will visit the *balian* as a last resort after a conventional doctor or hospital treatment cannot cure them. Therefore, Made Joni and Men Yuni, his wife, have consulted folk-healers in the last three years outside Palasari:

“...the first doctors I consulted diagnosed me with epilepsy; the second one told me that I have developed brain vessel abnormalities, which I don’t understand the meaning at all. I was treated with medicine and diet, but it keeps coming, pestering me. When it comes, I won’t be able to control the jerking movement of my arms and legs. I lose my consciousness and get so confused. Finally, I went to hospital in the city. I was given prescription and guidance, things I should, and I shouldn’t do to minimise the frequency and symptoms... Until one day, one of my family suggested that I should consult the *balian* in Denpasar.”

He had been treated by 13 *baliangs*. The nearest was in the next-door village and the furthest was in Denpasar. I had the opportunity to accompany him with his family on several occasions to see some of those *baliangs*. Even I submitted myself for treatment by one of the *baliangs* who checked my right shoulder. After several minutes, he said that my symptom was a medical one, so he advised me to see the medical doctor instead. It is common that *baliangs* will refer a client to a doctor, hospital or pharmacy and doctors may discreetly suggest a visit to a *balian* if

mainstream medical treatment is not effective. The dichotomous systems of healthcare exist in symbiosis, catering to a large and sometimes overlapping clientele; many Balinese make use of both facilities, depending on circumstances and the particular illness.

Many scholars have studied different aspects of the Balinese traditional medical system, such as different kinds of *balian* and their techniques and procedures. They have focused on their specialty, vocation and personal lives which are pervasive of Tantric ideas to Balinese thought, including different aspects of ailment and its cures; and from the locus of ailment on domestic and village interaction; self-consciousness and balance. This chapter tries to view Balinese healing from the perspective of the Palasari people who although they consider it as important, do not make their first option.

In his discussion of *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture*, Kleinman (1980) has criticised anthropologists for an exaggerated interest in the exotic and spectacular aspects of folk medicine at the expense of the more every-day and mundane. Anthropologists are said to have focused excessive attention on shamanistic and ritual healing, whereas popular health care – what people do in their everyday lives to further health and prevent illness – has been neglected and poorly understood. This despite the fact that an estimated 70-90 percent of all illness and afflictions never enter the domain of the folk practitioner or professional medical personnel, but are diagnosed and attended to by lay people, mainly women, in the home or community network. This predominant interest in ritual healing fosters the misplaced impression that sickness is what preoccupies people when surely health is the major concern of everyday life (Kleinman, 1980:51-53).

This chapter seeks to redress some of this imbalance by analysing aspects of Balinese popular health care in the broadest sense, especially the role ascribed to emotions in nurturing or inhibiting health.

The man of hope

The realm of *baliangs* is different to that of medical doctors, and in the West of Bali there seems to be a peaceful co-existence, even collaboration, between these different kinds of practitioners of health care. *Baliangs* treat illnesses connected with mystical forces that afflict a person's life force or soul. Medical personnel treat the body, but because the body and soul are not separate in Balinese cosmology and their thoughts on health care, *baliangs* also treat the body. It is the medical profession that is left with a kind of residue: ailments of a pure physical nature, of which there are only a few. Moreover, when illness occurs, it afflicts people who *experience* pain in mental-emotional imagery and feel their life force to be affected also by ailments such as broken bones or back pain. As a third qualification, Balinese expect to find multiple

causation in many illnesses and misfortunes. Thus, for most kinds of problems and pains, Balinese consult *balian*s in addition to doctors.

It is also cheaper to consult a *balian*. In the Jembrana, ideally one pays according to one's means. In reality, payments of approximately fifty to one hundred thousand rupiah (approx. £3.5 – 7.5) seem to be the standard, but there can be variations either way. The *balian* should refrain from asking for a specific sum and accept whatever his client, referred to as 'guest,' offers him. It is said that otherwise he will lose his power to heal – his *sakti*. Doctors, on the other hand, demand generally two hundred to two hundred and fifty thousand rupiahs for each consultation, and they prescribe medicines for the majority of these which are very expensive.

Considerations of trust, informality, and the give-and-take of information further enhance people's preference for *balian*s. With the doctor there is, for most people, a great difference in status, and he treats by prescribing a cure, not by explaining things to his patients. The *balian*, by contrast, elicits symptoms and complaints, and listens to his guests. He also explains to them what has gone wrong and takes time and effort to make sure that they understand. Understanding is of the essence, for healing requires a joint effort on the part of the *balian* and the family of the afflicted.⁶² He receives them in his house, and this is located in an ordinary neighbourhood, not set apart in a mercantile or posh area of the town. The *balian* usually is no better off than most of his guests; socially he shares the same position as them, although an aura of power is attached to him by virtue of his command over mystical forces.

Another important difference between *balian*s and doctors is this: as the relationship between the doctor and patient is defined, the patient need not commit himself and harness his spiritual energies to the cure. He presents his body, or a part of it, for examination, treatment and procedures, if his family has money and believes in the doctor's diagnosis, buys and takes the medicines. At issue is not his trust in the doctor, though some doctors emphasise how their first duty is to induce hope and trust: "if a patient feels sick, who can make him well?"

With respect to the *balian*, absolute trust is essential. Without it, there is no hope of healing. The sick or troubled person must believe in the *balian*, but more than that, he must be *cocok* with the *balian*. This means he must be in harmony or agreeable with the *balian* in a way that spouses must also be *cocok* with each other or a name must be *cocok* with the person. Without *cocok* there is no hope of recovery or relief.

Fortunately, *cocok* is established *ex-post facto*. It means there is always hope. If relief was not obtained, the *balian* and the afflicted were clearly not *cocok*. The afflicted or the family acting on his behalf must continue their search for someone *cocok*. For Men Yuni, it took three

⁶² M. Hobart (1986: 6): "Healer work in conjunction with the patient or their family. Should they not, they invite suspicion of being the agent of some other, most likely malevolent, agent."

years and visits to more than a score of *baliangs* all over Bali to find healing for her husband. I met a medical doctor who was afflicted by a prolonged bout of neurasthenia.⁶³ His wife and mother-in-law engaged him with *baliangs*. It took visits to only two *baliangs* for him to be cured. This was after medical colleagues had proved unable to cure him. The first one provided some, but not complete, relief. I asked him why he then switched to another one to which he replied, “Because I had hope, I might get well.”

My question, I now realised, had been framed in terms of a culture-specific assumption of how best to obtain a cure. In my home in Bali, sick people tend to remain with the doctor who provides some measure of relief in the hope that continued treatment will ameliorate the condition. In Bali relief should come speedily if not instantaneously, and if it does not, something is amiss in the relationship between healer and guest or doctor and patient. The tendency is to read imperfect relief as a sign that the diagnosis is improper or that the *balian* and afflicted are not properly *cocok*. So, the doctor pained with neurasthenia moved on in search of a suitable *balian*, and experience proved him right.

His realisation that his own patients act in terms of similar suppositions with him and do not feel healed except when they have also seen a *balian* who has soothed their soul made him remark: “even when the medicine may have provided relief, the *balian* is usually given credit for the cure.”

The doctor needs, of course, to see the patient whom he would cure. That is often not necessary for the *balian*. “The manipulation of mystical powers,” which, as Connor asserts, “is the very foundation of [*balian*] therapy” (Connor 1986:37), implies that a diagnosis may be made, and aetiology ascertained in the absence of the suffering person. This again is a condition conducive to hope. Men Yuni’s husband would not hear of her seeing a *balian* on his behalf, but she did not need his consent. She could go on her own. Even for him to take the medicine, she did not need his consent. *Baliangs* are skilled in devising ways in which medicine can be given to unsuspecting persons (in bathwater soap, coffee, etc.), as this is a problem, they daily face: how to help the person who does not see themselves as sick but create havoc with the lives of others.

The *balian* provides an island of hope and encouragement in a sea of fear and distrust. It is true that *baliangs* are also feared, and some intensely so, for they control forces that work evil in the world. But without *baliangs* where would the Balinese go with their intimate problems and the sicknesses that afflict their souls? That somewhere there is someone who has the answer to any riddle, the formula for any problem, is a basic Balinese premise of life. What matters is

⁶³ For a discussion of neurasthenia, see Kleinman, 1987.

to find the particular *balian*, or one of the many who might each grasp a portion of a many-faceted problem. There is no doubt among Balinese that such *baliangs* can be found.

Understanding is not enough, as *baliangs* are up against mystical forces of awesome powers. Healing is the outcome in many cases of a contest between the mystical power of the *balian* and that of other agents. This belief, however, harbours hope. To find a *balian* with power strong enough becomes the focus of one's efforts. Made Joni to this day is still struggling with his illness.

Various *Baliangs*

Baliangs are of several kinds, and they cater for different sorts of illness and problems. They employ various techniques and come to their calling by different experiences or routes. Their relationships with guests vary in terms of considerations of secrecy and familiarity (Connor 1986:23-4).

Roughly 50 percent, according to Connor (1986: 33) are literate medical specialists – *balian usada* – whose practice is founded on the possession of classical texts about healing (*usada*) and who acquire their skills by a formalised learning process. *Balian usada* specialise in transcribing and interpreting old palm leaf manuscripts (*lontar*) inscribed in old Javanese or high Balinese that deal with “medicine, magic and mysticism” (Connor 1986: 22-4), or as the *balian usada* with whom I worked explained to me:

The *lontar* contain *tenung* [predictions, horoscope] for all kinds of problems and sicknesses, as well as recipes on how to perform black magic. For instance, on how to protect your house so that the thief will see it like an ocean and be scared; to protect yourself from being burned by fire even when it strikes your house; to capture the thief within the gate; to make your daughter not marry except the man of your choice; to create harmony and peace between a man's several wives; to make the husband always wants to be close with the wife always; to determine the sex of your child; to cure childlessness; to find lost children. For every conceivable illness, there are also remedies for impotence and madness, etc.

Balian usada dispense advice and medicine after eliciting the symptoms or problems of the afflicted. They then consult the holy texts for diagnosis and therapy. There are different systems for producing remedies. Some *balian usada* cannot read the *lontar*. Their claim to efficacy rests on their possession of these manuscripts – thought to have mystical power in themselves – and the holy water they turn into medicine by bringing it into contact with texts.

All *balian usada* are males. I doubt that in the Jembrana there are nearly as many of them as Connor reports from South Bali, but on this point, I only have an impression. The *balian usada* with whom I worked had been an apprentice to his father, a yogi, and began his training

proper in his late thirties. This was no coincidence he explained to me. There are stages in a person's life. The ability to acquire high-level holy knowledge requires remove from worldly pleasures. At fifty, he would withdraw from marital sex to develop the purity of body and spirit needed to attain the heaviest, most dangerous knowledge (*pelajaran berat*).

To acquire partial knowledge does not work and to have incomplete knowledge is dangerous. It unbalances the soul and makes for instability in feeling-thinking and acting. This belief is one which should not be probed and questioned too much – “that's like you don't have faith and trust in the ancestors” – works against laypeople who acquire bits and pieces of mystical knowledge and bolster the efforts of the specialists once they have embarked on their course.

Balian usada are highly esteemed members of their communities, although status depends also on personal reputation and biography. The man I was privileged to work with, Made Taros, had a sensational reputation as being brave beyond measure. Once when a man in his neighbourhood had gone amok (*ngamuk*) and was ranting outside his brother-in-law's house, waving his Kris (dagger), waiting to kill his brother-in-law before an audience frozen with fear, as a last resort people sent word to Made Taros. He changed into sarong and said to his weeping wife: “If I die now, mine will be a holy death.” Then he went calmly up to the man who was swinging his Kris and cornered him bluntly: “What are you doing, you crazy man, making yourself a murderer? What of your children, your wife? Well, if you're set on killing somebody, then kill me, here I am!” He bared his chest and presented himself weaponless to the wild man.

The latter fell to his knees and kissed Made Taros's feet, his consciousness regained. “So Made Taros has a large following in Melaya,” concluded the man who told me this story.

He was also widely renowned as uncompromising and ruled by his instincts, but that did not detract from his stature although it had made it impossible for him to retain a secular job and earn a reasonable income. He would not bow to people whom he did not respect, and that meant all whom he considered materialistic, self-serving, or dishonest. His wife had to support him so that he could devote himself to his *lontar*. All *baliangs*, and indeed most ordinary humans, have their peculiarities. I heard of only children, who quibbled about Made Taros's lack of *polos* (innocent) manners.

Most *baliangs* in the Jembrana neither possess nor are literate in classical texts. They come to their calling by a process of divine inspiration, apprenticeship with a teacher, and/or inheritance of a practice. The therapeutic techniques they variously use are regarded as efficacious on account of the *balian's* “mystical power” known as *sakti* or *ilmu*. *Baliangs* should use this to relieve suffering by mediating between the realm of mystical forces and their clients' immediate concerns.

Common therapeutic techniques include producing and dispensing holy water, ointments, potions, amulets, and charms, performing massage, and – an essential part – performing rituals on behalf of the guest and/or divining what rituals they have to perform to propitiate angry deities, ancestors, or demons. Prescription of foods may also be important.

In the West, as in the South (Connor 1986:25), midwives (*balian manak* or *balian kampong*) and bonesetters (*balian tulang*) are also referred to as *balian*; this is indicative of the mystical power they are ascribed and lay claim to. In the case of midwives, this power (*sakti*) is said to enable them to change the position of the foetus and ensure a moderately painless delivery. Unlike in the South, however, masseurs and masseuses (*tukang ururt* and *tukang pijet*) are not commonly designated *balian*, but rather *tukang*. *Tukang* are craftswomen or men with important functions in curative and preventive medicine, but without the *balian*'s mystical or spiritual power. For this reason, as a woman explained to me, “The *tukang* gives medicine and cures, but she does not say what is the cause of an illness. For she was not a *balian*.”

Most *tukang* are indeed females, whereas *balian*s are mainly males. A considerable proportion, however, are females, and no assumption seems to exist that males are more powerful. The most common type of *tukang* in the Palasari area is, beside masseur/masseuse, the *tukang sambet*. She is a specialist in healing illness from fright or soul-loss, commonly called *kesambet*. All the *tukang sambet* I met were females.

One type of healer is not easily designated as either *balian* or *tukang*. This is the medium with a *jinn* – a Muslim (super)natural spirit (*orang alus*). When the medium goes into a trance the *jinn* emerges and speaks. He diagnoses illnesses and problems, identifies their causes, prescribes treatment, occasionally performs massage, and produces holy water and ointments as medicines. “Taking therapy” is a vital part of his function. When the *jinn* has left, the medium claims not to remember anything of these conversations.

Both males and females can “have” *jinn*. One woman I know has nine, though commonly only one or two emerge. One is Husnan, an old man of eighty, toothless and limpid, who smokes a lot and loves delicious red Australian apples (not the Balinese sour green ones) and chocolate, preferably of an imported brand. The other is Abdullah, a lively, playful little boy of nine, whose greatest delight is ice cream and who loves to ride a bicycle. Because Abdullah is so young, he cannot identify the cause of an illness, but he can heal and give medicine. *Jinn* can see things which we do not, and they have mystical power, *sakti*. Balinese talk of them and act with respect to them as if they were genuine beings.

Because it is the *jinn* who heals, and not the possessed person, a girl was visibly annoyed when another referred to her aunt as a *balian*: “My aunt is not! She can do nothing! It is Husnan who does it all!” She proceeded to have her mother confirm that it was true, her aunt was not

a *balian*. She explained to me how much more efficacious is a jinn than a *balian*: “With the jinn you can communicate directly, whereas with the *balian* you have to go through a *balian* intermediary to establish contact with the healing power.”

At stake was the ambivalent nature of the word *balian*. Because (some) *baliangs* work black magic as well as white magic, the generic term *balian* (as well as its Muslim equivalent, *dukun*) is loaded. “We must say, ‘Bali, *balian*,’” whisperers Suriati to me one day as we were walking in the street talking of such matters. “They might hear, and be offended.” Another was frightened when in the early stage of fieldwork, I committed the blunder of referring to a man simply as *dukun*, when he might hear. “Had we done so; it would have been very dangerous!” The proper appellation is to use the prefix *syeh* (an abbreviation for Sayyid) with Muslims, or the honorific title with Hindus. *Dukuns* are also commonly referred to as *baliangs*; Balinese may say “*Dukun Ali*” or “*Balian Ali*.” In fact, *dukuns* and *baliangs* are the same except that a *dukun* is Muslim, a *balian* Hindu; *dukuns* do not go into trance, while *balian* sometimes (by no means always) do; and *dukuns* consult The Koran, *baliangs* Hindu, writings. Hindus consult Muslim, just as Muslims consult Hindu *dukuns/baliangs*.

Balinese *baliangs* are presumed to be able to control all manner of (super)natural forces, solve every conceivable problem, and heal or inflict any kind of illness or misfortune. Some have a wide range of expertise, but others are more specialised. Particular *baliangs* can stop or cause rain, storms, droughts. Others are experts at locating runaway children. Others again are particularly skilled at finding lost or stolen things and identifying thieves. Yet others can insert magical prowess (*susuk*) into a person, rendering her or him invincible and securing for her or him position, fame, fortune, or bewitchingly good looks.

A few *baliangs* command *belerong* – white magical mice – which can sneak through walls and locked doors and steal money and possessions from people while they sleep. They render their owners rich beyond all reason but demand in return a heavy sacrifice: one should give up what one loves the most. Suriati’s father was promised incredible wealth if he would sacrifice his son, and yet *belerong* thrive.

A final type of *balian* – *balian matuunan* – is of the utmost importance. He can be possessed by the souls of the dead, and it is to him that people go when they want to meet their dead and are given this option. For family problems in particular, one’s best option may be to consult the ancestors who can apply their wisdom and authority. The father can also reduce pain from longing and loss, and they can still trouble minds grappling with the question of certitude: Why did a beloved one die? The dead are a part of the lives of the living, and one cannot exaggerate the important role that they play.

Balian matuunan attack clients from afar, as there is a certain scepticism about the authenticity of their trances, and this is more easily gauged when the medium can have no prior knowledge of the soul for which he is asked to serve as a medium. West of Jembrana lives a *balian matuunan* who attracts people from all over Bali. He is entered by the souls of some ten dead people almost every day.

Multiple Causation, Last Resorts

I came across a Muslim woman from Palerejo who was suffering because her husband was seeing another woman, as a last resort she contacted the soul of her deceased father-in-law through a *balian matuunan*. She bared her heart to him and implored him to apply his influence with her husband, which he did. The move was successful, the husband reformed. That she was a Muslim and that Muslims do not “believe” that one can obtain contact with the souls of the dead constituted no great obstacle in this case. As a last resort one will try anything. She thanked her father-in-law profusely by performing a great ceremony in his honour – also of a kind Muslims “do not believe” in.

I also met her cousin, a very traditional Muslim which was evident from the way she dressed. She also had great problems with her husband. After having tried a multitude of options – Chinese doctors, Balinese doctors, Muslim dukuns (and I suspect also some Hindu *baliangs*) – to little avail, I went with her to a famed Hindu *balian*. He alerted her to the complexity and triple causation of her problem. First, there was black magic involved. Secondly, there were the *jinn* in their backyard whom they had disturbed. Thirdly, there was the oath which her husband’s ancestors had given long ago to present offerings in “the Muslim holy place” once they became prosperous enough to travel there; but they had not kept their promise, and this constituted a great mistake in the eyes of God.

My heart sank as I listened. Knowing she was what she and her community considered with pride a traditional Muslim. I was distraught to think how she now would have her worst suspicions confirmed. She had warned me before we went there that it was probably useless. The *balian* would treat her as if she were a Hindu and prescribe treatment in accordance with his religion. She, therefore, had not gone in earnest, with the offerings needed to request the *balian*’s help and with the right commitment of spirit. She had only accompanied me and chatted informally with the *balian*. When now he spoke of oaths and offerings in the Muslim holy place (presumably Mecca), he did indeed apply notions pertinent to the Hindu religion and meaningless, I thought, to Muslim Balinese.

I was wrong. On our way home her face was luminous and her voice buoyant with hope as she spoke of the perceptiveness of his insights. All that he had said was true. The magic, the

jinn which her daughter had recently seen in the shape of a beautiful long-haired woman in the backyard and particularly the oath, she had failed to recognise till now. She would remedy the fault of the ancestors. She would make a promise to God to take upon herself the burden of carrying it out in practice, once she had the money to go to Mecca. She did not say, but I knew, that she did not think of placing offerings there; she interpreted the *balian's* message metaphorically, not literally. She would however pray and give evidence of her faith and commitment. Understanding between Muslim and Hindu had been as good as need be: “You see, it is the law of *karma pala* which asserts itself,” she said to me, “but because I am a Muslim I say *taqdir* [fate, destiny], it’s all the same”

In terms of religious doctrine, they certainly are not, and she should know – she is skilled in religious learning. *Karma pala* is the doctrine of holy retribution founded on the premise of reincarnation: one’s present fate is the result of actions in a previous life and God’s almighty justice. *Taqdir* or *nasib*, by contrast, implies accepting one’s fate as ordained by God according to a rationale human cannot comprehend. It refers to this life only, for there has been no previous one.

And yet *karma pala* and *taqdir* could be accommodated to a common experiential frame. Might not Muslims be punished for the sins of the forefathers, just as Hindu suffer the mistakes of their reincarnated souls? I am not implying that this is how she thought. I think the connection she made was intuitive, not the product of cognitive reasoning. Exposure to common predicaments in everyday life and intimate friendship across religious boundaries creates a fund of shared understanding regarding such experiential realities as ‘fate’, ‘justice’, ‘responsibility’, and ‘oath’⁶⁴ and removes much of the difference which exists in religious doctrine.

The Muslim woman had to go back to the *balian* in the right spirit. On departure from her home she must invest her trust and faith in him, and he would be able to give medicine for the magic next time and it happened. She received holy water to pour into her husband’s coffee and odourless oil to apply to his soap. A part of the *balian's* mystical power was also entrusted to her by his grasping her firmly around the wrist while praying to his god to give her power. In the evening she would grasp her husband’s wrists and transfer the healing power to him.

⁶⁴ Indeed, a Muslim doctor explained to me that the very concept of *sumpah* – oath – was also meaningless in terms of Muslim ideology, because of its built-in assumption of supernatural retribution. However, due to the acculturation of society, Muslim use it as much as Hindu, as if the logic of *karma pala* applied also to them.

The third part of the problem, the *jinn* in the backyard, she could handle herself by asking their forgiveness for the disturbance caused by presenting them with some special foods, including a many-coloured chicken.⁶⁵

Two days later she reported that her husband was already better, and when a few month later he fell seriously ill, another cause was diagnosed, and help provided by another *balian*. The adequacy of the above diagnosis and the efficacy of this treatment were not questioned.

Trance-possession

Made Joni was treated by a *balian usada* in Denpasar who specialised in problems caused by evil spirits or black magic which causes *bebainan*. *Bebainan* is an illness which the Balinese believe to be caused by the possession of the soul of the ill individual by a malignant spirit called the *bebai*. The term *bebai* (meaning evil spirit in old Balinese) refers to both malignant spirit and its material representation. The latter is an embodiment of Balinese belief in the supernatural characteristics of the newborn. In Balinese religion, it is believed that at conception the ‘soul’ of the mother and that of father intermingle to become the foetus (*rare ring jeroning garba*) which assumes the quality of supernatural human being (*manusia sakti*). This quality remains with the foetus until the newborn reaches the age of six Balinese months, i.e., about 210 days. Belief in the power of the newborn has inspired some Balinese, who seek to practice sorcery or black magic (*ilmu pangiwa*), to capture those powers and transform them into those of a *bebai* (Weck, 1937).

Bebai may be made of different raw materials such as an aborted foetus, a baby which has died before or during delivery, a placenta, a bud of the banana tree, which is still very young and is commonly used in ceremonies (*pusuh*), an egg of a black hen, the water which has been used for bathing the corpse, or the brain of a murdered person. The type of material used determines the power of *bebai*. For instance, a *bebai* made from an aborted foetus of a female high priest (*padanda istri*) would be much more powerful than another made from the foetus of an ordinary woman. A very powerful *bebai* is called ‘king of *bebai*’ (*raja bebai*).

Having found the material needed, the sorcerer then proceeds to treat the object as a baby. Like a real new baby, the *bebai* undergoes the normal series of ceremonies, performed for it immediately after ‘birth’, after one (Balinese) month and seven days, at the age of three months, and finally at the end of six months. Unlike a human baby, after the last ceremony the *bebai* is taken to the cemetery where a special ceremony is performed. At this ceremony, the sorcerer makes offerings to the gods, entreating them to bestow on the *bebai* the greatest power possible.

⁶⁵ The ritual is called *pangulapan*.

If the request is granted, the sorcerer then gives the *bebai* a name, usually simply ‘human baby’ or *bayi wong*. Afterward, back at home, the sorcerer prepares rice and other dishes, especially for the *bebai*, which is now truly treated as a precious and precocious child. The next period lasts until it reaches the age when a normal child begins to talk. During this period, the *bebai* is not only fed regularly but is also given special offerings on *kajeng kliwon* (an important Balinese religious day which comes every 15 days). Finally, now that the *bebai* can ‘talk’ and ‘understand’, it is regularly consulted by the sorcerer to ascertain its ‘maturity’. Only when it is fully mature is it ready to be used. At this stage, it is said to have acquired 30 powers or to have become 20 *bebai* in one. These powers can be used either by the sorcerer-owner, rented out, or sold.

Each of the 30 powers or manifestations of the *bebai* has a particular name and produces a particular symptom through the person it possesses. For example, *I Bebai Bongol* makes its victim unable or unwilling to talk. On the other hand, *I Bebai Sebarung* makes the person in its possession very talkative and rude. Another example is *I Rejeki Gumi*, presumed to have 108 *buta* (evil spirits) under its command and therefore known as the king of *bebai*. This *bebai* attacks its victim violently in the pit of the stomach, making the victim enraged before rendering him or her unconscious. The victim is likely to die unless help is quickly obtained. Although each power or manifestation of the *bebai* has a distinct name and a distinct mode of attack, the various manifestations are supposed to be very co-operative, and to be ever ready to help one another to subdue victims.

Not every hated person can be attacked or possessed by *bebai*. The impervious individuals are those who are free of sins, who are wise, or who have powerful amulets. The vulnerable persons are those who are believed to be weak either in mind or body and those who are sinful.

Most commonly, a person falling into the possession of the *bebai* is reported to experience a sudden sense of blankness, loss of desire or will, and confusion. These feelings are accompanied by a stomach-ache or headache and ringing in the ears, followed by a loss of vision and a feeling of cold starting from the feet upward to the pit of the stomach. Finally, the victim loses all control and either cries uncontrollably, shouting and screaming, or incessantly talk angrily to himself or herself. Sometimes, the afflicted person becomes violent, exhibiting unusual strength.

Once in control, the *bebai* is believed to be capable of harming or even killing the individual. Usually, however, its power can be mitigated and overcome by a traditional healer (*balian*). Sometimes a spiritualist (*ahli kebatinan*) or a Balinese Hindu high Priest (*padanda*) is consulted. But since the illness is considered to be impure (that is, affliction by a lower form

of spirit), help can be obtained relatively easily only from the *balian*. The high priest is usually reluctant to come into contact with this illness.

The *balian* wore large rings inset with big stones on each hand. A ring with a very large, carved evil spirit's head on it – the head of *Boma*, which looks somewhat like *Rangda* – was placed on a shelf above his head in view of his clients. This was one of his two 'test' (*panued*) objects. If a client sees this ring and it appears bigger than it is in reality, it indicates that the client is possessed by an evil spirit. Another test object is a metal cylinder which appears to be a pewter saltshaker about two centimetres in diameter and four centimetres long. Testing with this involves placing it on the forehead of the client and holding it there firmly for several minutes. Patients who are diagnosed by him to be possessed by an evil spirit or black magic, perceived to be the cause of the complaint or illness which they present, fall into trance with eyes closed, shaking their body, sometimes screaming and crying, and stiffening their extremities, as if they are experiencing considerable pain. The metal cylinder is pressed against the client's forehead for about 3-5 minutes more, and the client then comes out of the trance if the black magic has been caused by an evil spirit from the island of Lombok or from East of Java. If the evil spirit originates from West of Java, the trance lasts about 10 minutes. If the evil spirit is from Bali, the trance may last up to 3 hours, which, according to him, indicates that the Balinese black magic is exceptionally strong. During the time that the client is in a trance, the family may witness concrete evidence of the black magic in the form of hair or a large beetle protruding from the clients. During the trance, the client's verbalisations, crying and yelling are regarded as those of the evil spirit who possesses them. Following the trance, the client may have complete amnesia regarding the episode. The experience of feelings of relief or calm, come presumably from being relieved of the problems or symptoms.

That evening when Made Joni was treated by this *balian* in Denpasar, he fell into trance-possession, crying and yelling. The *balian* started asking:

"Who is this?"

"Where are you from?"

The *balian* tried to press his forehead harder with the metal cylinder repeating the same question. The procedure took a while until Made Joni or the 'spirit' who possessed him finally revealed 'her/himself.'

"I am your neighbour in Palasari!"

"Which neighbour?" Men Yuni, Made Joni's wife asked joining in the interrogation.

"I am on the Western side closed to your house." Men Yuni and other relatives who accompanied her husband looked at each other with meaning as if they could have predicted who this culprit was.

"Why did you harm my husband?" she asked again.

"I don't like to see your family is so successful, you have a harmonious family not like mine."

This treatment took almost two and half hours, it seemed like torture to Made Joni or the spirit who possessed him. It was watched and heard also by other clients who were waiting for their turn. It was ended with the “spirit” surrendering and asking for forgiveness from the family and mercy from the *balian*, with a promise that he/she will not dare to harm again.

On the way home, we discussed this spirit-possession. How they could be sure that a ‘spirit’ who claimed to be their neighbour was actually the one they suspected so far. Their explanation was another narrative worth mentioning.

The ‘evil’ neighbour

According to Men Yuni and several others in Palasari, the suspected neighbour had bought a protective amulet from a Hindu lady who used to buy agricultural produce from Palasari such as bananas, coconuts, rice and any kind of fruit to be sold in the city. This lady told other villagers, so it became public knowledge. As previously mentioned in chapter 4, Men Yuni like most of the people in Palasari, believed that this protective amulet would turn its owner into a dangerous *léyak*. She was convinced that the ‘spirit’ who possessed her husband cannot be other than this neighbour. I heard that Men Yuni and her other relatives who came with us to see the *balian* had shared this story with other villagers. Briefly, that explained why the private talk had spread around the village.

I took a chance and paid a visit to this neighbour. I was sure she had also heard what her neighbours were saying about her. Desa Palasari is not a big compound and is one where people could hear others. When finally, I brought up the matter, she was not too surprised or upset. She admitted that she bought a magical tool for protection from her in-laws years back. She had, however, burnt this a long time ago with the help of another healer. She confessed that she did not know how she could cause harm to her neighbour. When I mentioned about jealousy and envy she had towards her neighbour, she replied with a snort: “and why do you think I should envy them? I could see and hear them every day falling out with each other.”

Then, like so many conversations I had with other accused and suspected *léyak*, she said: “if people want to believe in what they are saying, it is up to them. I cannot force them to. But if someone has the power or ability please check my body or in my house, to see whether they could find anything to help them believe.”

She did not want to take any legal action against this accusation, because she said that it was no use. She believed that one day people would stop talking about it, and she believed there was *karmapala* (divine retribution) for everyone.

When Men Yuni was searching for a way to heal her husband's ailment, she first went to a doctor. He diagnosed him with epileptic symptoms, gave him medication and a reference to the public hospital for further examination and treatment. As he did not show any signs of improvement, she tried to bring him from one doctor to another, from the district hospital in the town to the central hospital in the capital city. So, she had set out on a long round of *baliangs* and alternative therapies for the last three years. The condition of her husband was fluctuating.

The generic term *balian* is generally translated as "traditional healer", though as Connor alerts us:

The significance of *baliangs'* activities extends beyond this sphere: They are consecrated practitioners who perform many priestly functions, and they are often highly esteemed people, (as the honorific title 'Jero' indicates) with some influences in the affairs of Balinese rural communities. There are probably several thousand *baliangs* working in Bali today (Connor 1986:21).

A Double Set of Cosmological Forces

Hindu Balinese and Muslim Balinese live together in a world where, in a sense, everything is possible, and no options remain untried when pain afflicts. *Jin* and *memedi* (*demit* in Javanese) are analogous powers, two names for the same kind, as are Muslim death magic, *sihir*, and Balinese *pasangan*. People believe that Balinese witches (*léyak*) are all Hindu but they afflict Muslims too. Muslim ghosts of the dead (*jerangkong*) scare the wits out of Hindu Balinese, not to speak of the dreaded illnesses from Lombok, the neighbouring Islamic community in the east, which are said to have spread through Muslim dukuns but afflict everyone. Agents of illness and misfortune thus abound in this multicultural universe. The acculturation and syncretism of society render West Balinese vulnerable to a larger population of demons, ghosts, and spirits than would have afflicted them had they lived in a religiously homogeneous society. Perhaps it also entails a greater availability of remedial options. It is hard to gauge the balance.

It is beyond doubt that Hindus and Muslims acknowledge each other's' supernatural powers and treat them with proper awe. The following case illustrates this: the family of a Hindu mayor of a Jembrana kampong daily appeases and presents offerings and food to a whole family of Muslim *jinn* who live on the lower level of their house-yard temple (*sanggah*); their Hindu deities live on the two upper levels. The *jinn* have resided there since they obtained permission from the mayor's grandfather two generations ago. When occasionally a family member steps on or bumps into one these *jinn*, she or he falls sick, and to get well has to pray like the *jinn*, that is like a Muslim. At the five daily Muslim prayer times, when *jinn* flutter about to the bathroom for their ritual ablutions before prayer, the human Hindu family hardly moves about their house, so as not to disturb the *jinn*. This also happens on Fridays which are particularly busy day for the *jinn*.

A reverse case: A Muslim boy was chronically sick until a *balian* diagnosed the cause as anger on the part of his Hindu ancestors (of three generations ago) because he had not performed the tooth-filling ceremony! Probably the diagnosis was done by a Hindu *balian*, but it made sense to the afflicted; they performed the requisite ceremony, and because the treatment was effective the diagnosis was proved right.

Hindus and Muslims use *baliangs* of either religion, even when the preference may be to consult first one of one's own kind. Because people can be afflicted by deeds done by *baliangs* of the other religion, one's best option may indeed be to contact one of them. Essentially one tries one's luck where significant others, and particularly the old women in the neighbourhood, who are especially experienced in such matters, advise one to go. A visit to any *balian* quickly demonstrates that middle-aged or elderly women are in the great majority among visitors, as they often take it upon themselves to go on others' behalf.

There is nothing accidental about Balinese sickness, as we have seen everything is caused.⁶⁶ Though illness is recognised as stemming also from dietary imbalance or harsh climatic exposure, the ultimate agents of causation are supernatural beings who 'are not under direct human control but may be approached through ritual specialists and offerings' (Connor 1986:30). Thus, when a boy broke his leg in traffic accident and after three operations the fracture did not heal, his mother came to a *balian* asking "why my son?" and "why is every operation unsuccessful?" She was informed it was on account of the boy's *karma pala*. An ancestor who was reincarnated in him had committed a serious ritual mistake. The boy actually improved when the mistake was remedied.

These categories (Table 5.1) help determine which type of specialist a person will consult. Illness that are believed to derive from the seen world arise from natural or self-evident causes. For these a scientifically trained practitioner is consulted – that is, if one can afford it. For example, if an elderly person suffers from weakness, rheumatism, or failing eyesight this is probably because of his age.

Table 6.1 **Indigenous Explanatory Model of Illness Experiences**

<i>Illness form the unseen world (niskala)</i>	<i>Illness form the seen world (sekala)</i>
Punishment by the gods or ancestors (<i>batara</i>)	Self-evident causes, e.g. old age symptoms such as failing eyesight
Neglect of the demonic spirits (<i>bhuta/kala</i>)	
Neglect of the four spirit siblings (<i>kanda mpat</i>)	Some infections. These come either from other humans or because the body is unfit
Sorcery/witchcraft, including the use of magical 'tools', <i>pakakas</i> .	Not having eaten correctly. This may lead to aches and pains or a cold.

⁶⁶ Also, there is no concept of self-limiting disease. Every illness must be "taken out" by some kind of remedy, or the person's condition will deteriorate.

Due to *karmapala*, the laws of cause and effect.

Unlike the Hindu and Muslim, since becoming Catholic the Palasari people do not believe in any spirits as the cause of their illness. In Palasari, there are no stories of the angry ancestors (*batara*), the upset demonic spirits (*bhutakalas*) or spirit siblings (*kanda mpat*). During a session of trance-possession in the *balian*'s surgery, they would believe only in possession by *léyak*. As Men Yuni told me: "we are Catholic, we don't believe any other spirits such as ancestors or *bhutakala* can cause illness to us when we forget or neglect them!"

The Concept of Sakti

What was it that enabled the *balian* to diagnose the cause? It was his *kesaktian*, a condition of being spiritually full of *sakti*.⁶⁷ *Sakti* equips *baliangs* with the personal power to intervene on behalf of guests with a variety of mystical forces.

More humble practitioners are cautious in acknowledging that they have such power. They may deny that they are *baliangs*, although they work as healers. Many people are reluctant to use the term *balian* in describing others because *sakti* can be used for good or evil ends; it is a morally neutral force. Thus, it is not necessarily a compliment to describe someone as *sakti* (Connor 1986:27)

Once I was with a *balian* who was treating a relative who had come to her from Java. He was suffering from weakness and frailness of the limbs which completely disabled him, and he could not walk. After two treatments he had improved but was still weak. She diagnosed the cause as anger on the part of the gods because he did not acknowledge his own *sakti*. He had worked as a healer since people spontaneously started coming to him for help, because word had spread of his healing powers. He did not acknowledge himself as a *balian* and so guests did not bring him offerings. For this the gods were angry, for they were denied nourishment from inhaling the smell of incense and flowers. In turn his energy diminished, as did the sources of his mystical power.

The cure consisted in asking forgiveness of the gods and performing retributive rituals. The *balian* was able, through massage, to transfer strength to the man by leading it through her right forefinger to his forehead. Holy water was also essential. Later the man would return to Java and acknowledge his status as *balian* (or *dukun*, as they are called in Java).

Sakti, as mystical power, has two aspects. It is a quality immanent in the natural world, as an aspect of certain places, objects, substances, or persons. It is also "supernatural" in the transcendent sense, as a force at the command of deities, ancestors, and demons. It is morally

⁶⁷ M. Hobart (1986: 21) observes that *sakti* is often glossed as "mystical power", but as it is established by results, it indicates above all effectiveness. See also 1986: 26; and M. Hobart, 1985: 10, 13).

neutral and may work good or evil. H. Geertz interprets *sakti* as “a diffuse divine or cosmic energy, which is formless, spaceless, personalityless, timeless, and intangible, but which can fragment or refract and take lesser manifest forms and move about in limited spaces. When manifested *sakti* is very tangible. Human beings know *sakti* by its effects in the immediated world of experience (*sakala*). ... Sakti can be harnessed both for morally good and morally evil purposes, for healing and for causing suffering... [It] is, most often, spoken of as a weapon in an interminable war among those who have it. Whoever has access to *sakti* has an instrument of enormous potential power over others ... As far as I know, the term *sakti* used to refer to cosmic energy when it is used under the control of human beings, but as cosmic energy it is also an attribute of, or perhaps even the substance of divinity. In fact, according to mythic stories, those humans who can said to be *sakti* share divine or demonic qualities” (1989: 28).

Sakti occurs in the natural world at certain kinds of places such as wild woods and particular trees, springs, or streams referred to as *angker* or *tenget*. To trespass on these without uttering the proper apologetic formulas (in high Balinese) causes illness. Children particularly often fall victim to this. *Sakti* is also an essential quality of many kinds of objects such as *lontar*, Kris daggers, Koranic script, offering batik sarongs, old Chinese coins, some stones, etc. Many people are afflicted because they have picked up some stones or pebbles that caught their eye and placed them carelessly, not realising that these were *sakti*. *Sakti* pertains also to substances such as the brass of the *gamelan*, the powder used to decorate the bride or purify the body at death, the Lalang leaves used to thatch roofs and also to purify the bereaved after death and also for many medical purposes. If the *jangu* leaves were not fresh, the guests would fall ill, as Balinese commonly experience.

The powder (*boreh*) of the bride is used to cure illness, (after a wedding, when many of the guests are usually sick, they flock to the bride to obtain some powder to cure illness from magic by wrong address); the brass dust of the *gamelan* (*rajun*) is used to inflict poisonous illness. Thus, *sakti* may be activated for good or bad ends, and it abounds in the world of the Balinese where the fates of humans and (super)naturals are intertwined. The “supernatural” pervades the “natural” world, not least in the form of *sakti*.

Sakti, as the mystical force or spiritual power which *bali*ans possess, is a quality of which ordinary humans too have ample experience. They sense it; they perceive it; they fall sick from it or are miraculously and blessedly cured by it. *Sakti* is thus very different from a Christian congregation’s perception of their priest’s charisma. *Sakti* is not an abstract quality, for it is also tangible and close. It is not otherworldly, for it is also a prominent facet of this world. Like the miracles that convince believers in famous Christian curative centres of divine powers, or the evil that stands as proof of the devil’s doing, *sakti* evokes both good and bad power in

manifest form. It does more; it is itself a manifestation of these powers, combining them in one concept or force. The separation of good and evil, inherent in Western cosmology, is foreign to Balinese thinking. Mystical power may be used for both ends. As a quality suffusing every aspect of the world, *sakti* is both of and for this world. It both shapes people's experience and is itself shaped by it. It is morally neutral.

For a person to refer to himself or herself as *balian* is to lay claim to public recognition as someone who is *sakti* (Connor 1986:27). Connor notes, and we have also seen, that some may be reluctant to do so, preferring to practice as healers without calling themselves *balian*. That is because *sakti* is multivalent in its connotations and can be employed for morally evil purposes as well as good. This may go part of the way to explain why, in their reference to this mystical power, I find that even recognised *baliangs* do not use the word *sakti*, but subsume it under *bayu* – the vital energy or life force which is also ordinary people's reference for their state of being in the world: their embodied inherence power of resistance. Just as ordinary people speak of the need to have a good heart and be calm to foster strength, so the *balian* speak of the need to have a good heart and be calm to foster strength. *Baliangs* stress the necessity of cultivating power (*bayu*) by good feeling-thinking.

I think the reasons for this speech usage may be even more profound and reflect experiential realities with methodological and epistemological consequences for an understanding of indigenous healers and cosmologies.

Much anthropological insight into ritual and cosmology is the outcome of efforts to probe the minds of particularly knowledgeable individuals with the ability to explain things to an outsider.⁶⁸ In negotiated encounters between the interrogator and the interrogated deep knowledge is tapped – and produced – and pinpointed onto patterns of sometimes formidable symbolic dimensions. Such encounters are removed from the context of everyday affairs, and it is unavoidable that many of the interviewee's experiential connections with this are broken in this concerted effort to probe words and meanings.

I speak from experience. Toward the end of a fieldwork that had been orientated toward the everyday and mundane, I engaged in just such an effort in collaboration with two brilliant men with exceptional explanatory powers. One was a (Hindu) *balian usada*, the other a Muslim medical doctor who was an apprentice to him. A world opened up to me of deep knowledge and understanding of a kind I had never come across in ordinary everyday life; but because I had this background, I was a sceptical apprentice. When they told me things that did not fit with what I perceived to be ordinary people's understanding, I would counter them, saying,

⁶⁸ For a cogent critique of this pitfalls of this approach, see Keesing, 1987, 1989.

“but people say,” “but people think...” And thus, a world of “misconceptions” (*salah kaprah*) was laid bare, a world of partial, at times “wrong”, understandings. Yet these were wholly appropriate signposts and guidelines from the points of view of people I knew! Were they then to be relegated to secondary standing or denied validity?

This was not the perspective of the men who instructed me. While they were at times surprised to hear of the extent of people’s “misconceptions,” they had little problem understanding why these occurred. Moreover, they could explain to me the rationale behind people’s views, being themselves part of a world in which family and friends acted in terms of just such conceptions. The literally embodied, physically felt, references people use to interpret the world around them was also an experiential frame for these two men. I suspect that had I begun at the other end – with the experts – and then moved on to the world of everyday affairs, I might not have learned these discrepancies, for I would have read other meanings, other cosmologies, into people’s action. By being something of an “expert” myself, or having this as my orientation, I might have subtly induced people to play “my” game and engaged them in rather farfetched, remote understandings.

As it was, I was not keen to play the experts’ game because I felt committed to those who had first taught me. I was fortunate in having as collaborators men who were humble enough to come part of my way in laboriously explaining to me the sources of everyday (mis)understandings, as they saw them. Thus, I came to understand better why people think they lose their vital life force (*bayu*) in soul-loss, when it is actually their ethereal aspect, the *atma* (soul) that they lose. But how would I have understood the experiential meaning of *bayu* if I had not for a long time “believed” and taken in earnest what people said, that they actually lost their *bayu*? A contrary (and, by the scriptures, truer) understanding, that it is the *atma* they lose, gives an entirely different perspective on things and has epistemological implications.

If you think without your heart, you will have no moral guidance, say the Balinese, nor can you appreciate any situation or gain knowledge. If we apply this to the fieldwork situation, it entails that one must apply feeling and thought. The *bayu* has palpable, embodied quality for people and *bali*ans alike that neither *atma* nor even *sakti* possess; hence *bayu* emerges as a daily tapped resource of understanding for them, uniquely experience-near. But it is also of the essence for the anthropologist to tap the sources within oneself which enable one to share in some people’s experience. “Feeling along with” is the term John Leavitt coins for this perspective (1985: 10). I find it a felicitous term which evokes precisely the betwixt and between position of the anthropologist, straddling worlds and trying to bridge between them. Nor is this so different from what we all do in our ordinary, everyday encounters when we struggle to understand other minds, other hearts, aware of their ultimate elusiveness.

“Feeling along with” evokes separation yet closeness, unattachment and compassion. It invokes embodied understanding and attests to the nature of knowledge that is filtered or refracted through the body as a privileged means of creating resonance between another and oneself. For ourselves, the body functions as a crucial source of knowledge about the world and its essential features (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

So *balian*, while they may know that they have *sakti*, feel it through the *bayu*, often as an electrical charge, a surge of vital energy. *Sakti* is real, just as is the *atma*; but compared with the *bayu*, both become ephemeral and transcendent. Of importance in understanding why *baliens* use such a humdrum term for such a mystical quality is that most come to their vocation midway in life. They have a background of ordinary living and have for a lifetime already orientated themselves with reference to *bayu*. Moreover, because *bayu* is itself spiritual and has an ephemeral as well as a physical quality, it may indeed emerge as the experience-near reference for *sakti* in a world where even the *atma*, the person’s godly aspect, is relegated to second place, experientially subsumed into *bayu*.

The model of life as war is understood through what Hildred Geertz (1995) once called her ‘*sakti* conjecture’, explaining that

the term *sakti* cannot properly be translated as ‘power’ if taken as merely the capacity to control other people’s actions, as in the usual Western political sense of the word. Rather, *sakti* is the capacity to join in the mortal combat of the competing forces of the universe in order to secure an envelope of safety around oneself and those near one (Geertz 1994:2)

She went on, moreover, to note that,

War, in this view [...] is the normal state of the cosmos, and the human world. Conflict is not evidence of chaotic breakdown of the cosmos, but the fundamental characteristic of life. The Balinese world is one in which the many elements are never harmoniously united, in which there is no single all-encompassing principle, no way of comprehending the whole. It is a universe of fluctuating, flowing, shifting forces, which can sometimes be commanded by certain human beings, the masters of *sakti*, who momentarily and precariously can draw some of these forces together into a strong local node of power, which will inevitably later dissolve again (Geertz 1994:95)

Powers of Darkness, Power of Light

The *balian* should use his *sakti* on behalf of the community to mediate between ‘this-worldly’ and ‘other-worldly’ powers. Or, to be more correct, he should allow himself to be used by it (McCauley 1984: 170). Refusal to follow the god’s calling may cause illness to the person or members of the family and is often a way for the gods to alert people to their *sakti* and force them to use it as a community resource.

The world of everyday, manifest affairs is referred to as the realm of light (*lemah*). The realm of darkness (*peteng*), by contrast, is comprised by mystical forces beyond the capability

of ordinary understanding. It encompasses, among other things, white and black magic and their physical manifestations in such creatures as the bird *kuntilanak*, white mice (*belorong*), witches (*léyak*), demons (*butakala*), ghosts (*jerangkong*), and orang *alus* (such as *jinn*, *desti*, *memedi*), the souls of the dead, both unpurified (*leluhur*, *arwah*) and purified (*dewa*), and the gods (*bhatara*), such as Siwa, Brama, and Visnu. We have seen that the realms of light and darkness are not actually everyday affairs and are very much a part of people's experience of the natural world.

Balians should deploy their spiritual powers (*sakti*) to relieve the fear, suffering, and pain of community members by mediating between the realm of mystical forces and their clients' immediate concerns. Occasionally, to this end, some will go on evil errands. The rain that falls when least expected and at maximally inopportune times, as well as many other misfortunes, illness, and death, testify that such evil work is being done. I never met a *balian* who admitted to working black magic – all emphasised how they work white magic only – but what is white and what is black may be a question of perspective. A famous dukun was proud of his skill at working love magic (*guna-guna*): “Of course, it is good to create love!” said he, with a broad, toothless grin. Others would emphatically disagree.

Balians should manipulate mystical forces for the benefit of the afflicted, and those who do not are said to think only of the here and now and to be unconcerned with their *karma pala*.

Balance or Power

We have seen that in everyday popular health care the notions of “guiding one's feeling-thought or managing one's heart” and “not caring” are crucial. The *balian* operates in terms of another formula, but one that is compatible with this. He also urges clients to keep good hearts, for in so doing they bolster their vital energy (*bayu*), making an effective resistance against attacks and onslaughts.⁶⁹ The *balian* will tell people to concentrate their power (*satukan jiwa*) and to strengthen their spirit (*besarkan jiwa*), appealing to broad, popular notions. In tune with this, his first concern is always to instigate hope. I have seen people arrive very ill at a *balian's* and be told with a bright smile how easily their illness will be cured, provided they do what they need to do to help themselves. That the illness is dangerous is never communicated to the sick person or the family, who need all the hope they can muster to bolster their efforts.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ A good heart is a calm heart, and calm is essential to counteract a magic assault. Hence a man told me: “Sometimes at night I get very cold, then warm and nervous, and suddenly I am accosted by an attack as from a flesh of lightning. I instantly try to keep calm! If I am not, if I remain worried, nervous, or cold, I am bound to lose (Wikan, 1990).

⁷⁰ On the vital importance of faith and hope as resources also for Western medicine, see Jerome D. Frank, 1975. H. Benson, 1975, R. R. Ryneason, 1978, and Arthur Kleinman, 1988.

The assumption of *balian* and populace alike seems to be that if a person harnesses their spiritual energies, and the family also properly fulfils their ritual⁷¹ obligations, they perform vital preventative functions. If they also fulfil social obligations, such as treating others with proper deference and respect, they have done what they can to protect health and welfare.

The *balian* takes over where these efforts have failed, and illness or misfortune indicates that something is amiss in the world. The balance which should pertain between good and bad powers is upset, either because of ritual omissions or mistakes which provoked the wrath of deities, ancestors, or demons; or of predestination, whereby the living pays for the sins of the dead; or of evil action grounded in sorcery. The *balian*'s function is to restore the balance on which health and happiness depend.

This aspect of balance is fundamental in Balinese cosmology and receives its elaboration in the *lontar* texts. Between the "small world" (*buana alit*), as the person, and the "great world" (*buana agung*), as the whole of existence or cosmos, balance should pertain. The "small world" refers to the "human body" as an anatomical structure which is also a vessel for the manifestations of supernatural forces. Each element of the body also corresponds to features of the natural universe, as we have seen in the *lontar*'s prescriptions of where the parts of the body go upon death, e.g. the eyes to the moon, the head to the mountains (p. 166). The two structures are further defined by a constant flow of energy between them and both are suffused with mystical power. In their healing ceremonies, *baliens* attempt to influence the condition of their patients by deploying spiritually powerful elements of the "big world", such as medicines, offerings and mantra syllables. People with great spiritual power may also effect changes in the natural universe by the correct manipulation of mystical forces within their own bodies.... Knowledge of the correct way to manipulate natural objects allows control over their corresponding cosmic elements and thus creates and defines the person of power (*wong sakti*) (Connor 1986: 28).

She also notes how the principles of correspondence are known by ritual specialists only. "For ordinary folk, uninitiated into the mysteries of cosmic correspondences, offerings (*banten*)

⁷¹ I emphatically disagree with Bateson when he notes: "In regard to the offerings which are taken to every temple feast, there is no purpose in this enormous expenditure of artistic work and real wealth. The god will not bring any benefit because you made a beautiful structure of flowers and fruit for the calendric feast in his temple, nor will he avenge your abstention. Instead of deferred purpose there is an immediate and immanent satisfaction in performing beautifully, with everybody else, that which is correct to perform in every particular context" ([1949] 1972: 117-18). This does not square at all with my evidence, which supports H. Geertz's interpretation: "A ritual is, above all – at least in Bali – a series of tasks which are task-oriented, pragmatic interventions which aim to change the state of affair in this world, which aim to bring about material well-being and to prevent suffering, however diffusely understood. The possibility that it can accomplish this is based on a set of assumptions which are entirely different from many Western views" (1989: 37).

are the means by which they can influence the supernatural determination of their fate” (1986: 28).

My own fieldwork indicates that the ordinary person’s conception of correspondence seems to be summed up in the notion *seimbang* – balanced – as the condition of harmony which should pertain between a person and all aspects of the universe. A world in balance is one where good and bad powers hold each other neutralised, or the good dominate the bad. “Balance” applies also to personal situations and experiences. Excessive happiness may be dangerous: ‘We believe it will be followed by something bad so there will be balance.’ So is the photography of an uneven number of persons: it is believed one person will become sick or even die. Names must be in balance with a person’s vital spirit (*bayu*), and name change because a name turned out to be too light or too heavy is common. Physical or mental handicap is also assumed to highlight critical imbalance, in this case between a person’s parents and their social environment. It is taken as evidence that they have mocked or ridiculed someone with a similar defect, and thus a handicapped person is referred to as *cacad*, from the word for scoff or mock (*nyacad*). When the balance which should pertain between a person and all aspects of the universe is obviously upset, the *balian* is called upon to restore it.

While “balance”, however, may be said to be an underlying assumption and a condition for health and order in the universe, it is rarely invoked in everyday discourse. People feel-think along other dimensions, and when things go wrong, anger is assumed: anger of the gods, the ancestors, demons, fellow beings, or what have you. It is feeling-thoughts which are presumed to move the universe, just as it is feeling-thoughts which are presumed to determine the actions of people. Meanwhile in Palasari context, it is not balance which people are concerned with, through the discipline necessary to acquire such balance, but with the power of the *balian* that can over-rule the power of *léyak*.

Conclusion

The role of different kind of *baliens* is very significant in Balinese healing practice, but in Palasari it is perceived as the last resort after the conventional medicine has failed. The people of Palasari prefer the kind of treatment from the *balian* which involves trance-possession of the guest/patient. The nature of ostensive detachment, that it is not the patient who speaks, guarantees them that the treatment is not fake. The other consideration is what kind of spirit is involved in this process of possession. Because of their Catholic faith, Palasari people only acknowledge the existence of the spirit of a witch (*léyak*) as the cause of their affliction. Anger, sadness, or any kind emotional imbalance which are considered as the source of illness are quite remote from the mentality of Palasari people who often seek help from *balian* only to

remove their illness. In other word, illness for Palasari people is not the absence of balance or harmony within oneself or community, but the power that overpowers one's feeling-thought, *bayu* or body. As H. Geertz (1994:2) maintains that the mystical "power", which is, in Balinese thought, a capacity to harm, at the same time can heal, protect, or benefit individuals or communities.

Chapter 7

The witch is not a witch

What I cannot do is see the words I now choose to utter in that light, for I cannot at one and the same time see it as up to *me* what I shall say and see my choice [. . .] as determined or constrained by facts about my own nature.

(Ross 1986: 73)

One of the boys in Palasari told his friends that he saw *léyak* in the form of a fireball last night on the crossroads close to his house. It was flying above the bamboo trees for a while then disappeared in one of the houses nearby. It was the house of *Men Bekung*;⁷² an elderly widowed woman who had been living in the village on her own. Some people knew that her last relatives had left the village for Sulawesi on a government programme of transmigration some thirty or forty years ago. Her husband had died about 5 years earlier. She lived by collecting firewood in the forest and sold it to the villagers. The proceeds from this sale were used to buy rice and cooking oil. She was one of those who received a package of 20 kilos of rice, instant noddles, one-litre cooking oil, soaps, toothpaste and toothbrush, and some used clothes as donations from the parish or a convent-run-orphanage every year before Christmas.

Suddenly the story that *Men Bekung* had the power and ability to be a witch (*bisa ngeléyak*) spread throughout the village. No one challenged the story, instead, many versions of it appeared, not just the story of a flying fireball, but in another version of the story it became a giant monster. I was so sure that people were reproducing the same story but with different forms of the object. People started to connect *Men Bekung* with the sickness and death of some people in the past. After this no one in the village wanted to buy her firewood, because of the fear of being bewitched. In addition, because the government programme to popularise the use of gas stove, her life was becoming more difficult. The local government programme of subsidy for the poor never reached her wooden shack on the edge of the village. She cooked the *cangkring* (*erythrina fusca*) leaves for vegetables and dragonfly larva (*chilasa clytia*) for her meal which she collected from her farm and forest and ate it with rice every day.

One day someone from the village discovered that she had died in her bed, most likely several days before. She was buried in the village cemetery and her land was taken as village land. I did not have a chance to know her more closely since this event happened not long after

⁷² *Men* is the abbreviation of the word '*memene*' which means 'the mother of'. The Balinese used to address someone by his or her eldest child's name. *Bekung* means barren, has no children. So, because of barren, she is called *Men Bekung* simply means 'the mother of no one'.

I arrived in the village. At her simple funeral I gathered stories of *Men Bekung* from the villagers, and found in fact, that they did not hate her but were more in fear of her bewitching them. Her miserable life story had not finished with her tragic death. The villagers had connected her with another woman who lived near to her house. They believed, so to speak, that *Men Bekung* has passed down her power and ability to this woman before she died. The source of this accusation came from the testimony of some locals who happened to see *Men Bekung* with this woman together on the dam several days before they found her dead body. They believe that the witches (*léyak*) cannot die before they pass their innate power to someone else. So then, the same story of village predation and vulnerability of women would be repeated.

Léyak (stands for *linggih* (place) and *aksara* (letters), so literally means the place of the sacred syllables) is obviously part of the Balinese religious knowledge of sacred text surrounded by concept secrecy and only available for those specialists such as priests (*pemangku*), puppeteer priest (*dalang*), exorcist priest (*senguhu*) and traditional healer (*balian*). This knowledge would be guarded and protected with the ethic of *aja wera* from the lay people or commoners. That is why the *léyak* stories are always produced and stored in communal memories through gossips and rumour. They always become the path for the lay majority to access the realm of *léyak*. This reminds me of the study of secrecy among Brazilian *Candomblé* by Paul Johnson (2002). Like the *Candomblé* which transforms from a secret society to become a public religion but maintaining their secrecy and secretism, the *léyak* practitioners and community in Bali has gone public. There are many schools and house of training advertising and promoting for new recruitment, meanwhile the secrecy and secretism of *léyak* still the target of gossips and rumours in small community or even on the mass media. Johnson's study would shed a light for the study of *léyak* from this view of secrecy. The lack of space and time would not allow me to go into detail.

This chapter tries to analyse the knowledge production of *léyak* in Palasari through stories taking the form of gossips, rumour and testimonies. It is always some misfortune that triggers accusations. Whether someone is a witch or not does not matter until people cast around for explanations of misfortune. When they have suffered some setback, people at once begin to generate or to tap into the mills of gossip. Sickness (physical or economic) in particular may set these mills rolling in the absence of other convincing explanations of it, or even in spite of them. The same human envies and jealousies feed into gossip generally and witchcraft accusations in particular. Stewart and Strathren argues that 'even when particular notions of witchcraft and sorcery are not involved, rumour and gossip themselves may act as a kind of witchcraft, projecting guilt on others in ways that may cause them harm' (2013: 29).

Gossip Lovers

I love gossip as much as the Palasari people I encountered during the fieldwork. I must say that I spent most of my fieldwork involved in some kind of gossiping and chattering with them. There were many topics that they gossiped about, particularly around the practicality of their lives. I do not believe that gossip is (of necessity, invariably, or mostly) a bad habit, pointless, or a sin. It can at times be the first two of those (I remain agnostic, in every sense, on the third); however, the bad reputation of gossip, as in many cases such as that of *Men Bekung* above, leads to much of the scholarship on gossip to be trivializing or minimizing in nature. While scholars from many fields (literary criticism, philosophy, history, psychology, sociology, communication) study gossip, anthropologists typically produce the most interesting accounts of gossip. I suspect this is the case because gossip is a necessary tool for anthropologists. For them to do the kind of interpretive work their field requires, they cannot simply rely upon direct observations within a culture. Max Gluckman makes this case elegantly in 1963. Cultures have subcultures; people can dissemble (or simply have multiple motivations); loyalties can be divided; communities face challenges and divisions. Consequently, what can seem like simple, direct, public observations and conclusions can often miss the mark, and widely, because of what is unstated, or simply unknown. Apparently, straightforward testimony is not always straightforward; being able to “read” a culture’s gossip is a sign that one has demystified the relations in the community.

Stewart and Strathren (2003) through their study on the historical and processual events of witchcraft and sorcery accusation showed how the predominant patterns crucially involve the *emergence of gossip and rumour* between people as steps to the crystallization of suspicion into accusation. According to them,

whether someone is a witch or not does not matter until people cast around for explanations of misfortune. When they have suffered some setback, people at once begin to generate or to tap into the mills of gossip. Sickness (physical or economic) in particular may set these mills rolling in the absence of other convincing explanations of it, or even in spite of them. The same human envies and jealousies feed into gossip generally and witchcraft accusations in particular (2003: 29).

Because it is a tool for doing their work, anthropologists take it seriously of necessity. Substantial scholarship occurs on gossip in other fields as well, including history, literary criticism, psychology, philosophy, and organization studies. Too often, scholarship on gossip replicates assumptions about the practice. It is true, but trivially or idly so (relevant only for personal or psychological illumination); true, but malevolently or unethically so (the spreading is not worth the cost to one’s ethics or reputation); or false or exaggerated (of no epistemic

value whatsoever). Of course, the person who gossips, not just the act of gossiping, is too often connected with stereotypes—gossips are women, gay men, servants. Gossips gets ostracized, and its practitioners isolated. Minimizing, or typing, gossip in this way misses crucial parts of its existence and value. If gossip really was only, or mostly, how it is described in much of literature, it should stagger the imagination that we not only indulge in it so regularly but also make use of it. Surely, we have better things to do with our time.

My most basic contention in this chapter is that gossip is a path to knowledge for the people in Palasari. Not on its own, it gets combined with information we seek and assess in more traditional, and public ways. While other philosophical accounts of gossip have argued for its role in how we come to knowledge (most notably Code [1995]), I want to extend these arguments by articulating specific ways in which gossip works to help us think about the world. First, gossip functions *selectively*; in doing it, we sort through information to figure out what we want to pay attention to, think more about, or sort the epistemic wheat from the chaff. Secondly, when we gossip, we *synthesize*; we combine disparate bits of information (often that do not intrinsically appear to belong together) into a story or explanation for some sort of dissonant behaviour, act, value, or person. Part of what is distinctive (and distinctively troublesome) about gossip in this role is that it demonstrates the ways in which knowledge is more than simply propositional. As many philosophers of knowledge have demonstrated, classically William James and recently José Medina (2013), ideas do not simply come to our attention and receive our reception neutrally. We understand them against a backdrop of our previous ideas, beliefs, and sometimes prejudices. This process is further complicated because of the fact that we are sometimes unaware of our background ideas or beliefs (and particularly our prejudices). We may think we are receiving an idea neutrally or thoughtfully when in fact we are prejudging it; but that may be a best-case scenario. At times, an idea will not be literally or publicly even intelligible to us (we can't recognize it as an idea, or an idea worth entertaining).⁷³ Gossip can be a liminal space in which the publicly unsayable, or unthinkable, gets said or thought—ideas can be tested in gossip.

Robert Paine saw gossip as “a genre of informal communication” and also “a device intended to forward and protect individual interests” (1967: 278). Paine mentions also that the imputed role of gossip in social control “is near to that which has been recognized for wizardry [witchcraft]” (ibid.). He points out that such hypotheses tend to depend on an idea that information is shared sufficiently for people to make judgments: an idea that we have already seen is negated by evidence, since gossipers do not have equal power and knowledge, and those

⁷³ Jennifer Saul (2012) and Claude Steele (2010: 76–98) explain some of the ways in which unconscious stereotypes and biases negatively affect thinking and performance.

gossiped about are at the disadvantage of not even knowing exactly what it is that is being said about them. If they do by chance get to know this, they may be able to confront the gossipers and refute their words, thereby turning the tables.

Paine recognizes that gossip is a catalyst to social process, whether it avoids conflict or exacerbates it. He also notes that gossipers gossip to obtain information from one another as well as to plant thoughts or narratives in others' ears. They tell their listeners information that will be valued when they themselves want valued information in return. (The information may not be correct, but it does not have to be correct to be of value or use; indeed, the opposite may be the case so long as the information is never passed to unsympathetic hearers who might expose it or retell it back to the person who is its object.) So, the gossip is involved in a series of more or less calculated prestations or gifts with others, and gossip "can be a powerful social instrument" for those who learn to manage and direct it (p. 283; see also Rosnow, 1974). Coincidentally, it might support social values. Indeed, to be effective it may have to be presented as doing so. But this is not its main aim, which is to secure results the gossipers seek by participation in the network of storytelling.

This argument about the contribution of gossip to our thinking brings along with it two secondary arguments, which will run throughout this chapter. The first is that gossip's transgressive nature—its spanning of public and private—means that it can add chaos to normal workings of structures and institutions of power. Gossip is often viewed one-dimensionally with respect to power; either it is a tool for the socially dominant to surveil and manage the rebellious (Gluckman 1963: 313) or it is a "weapon of the weak" (Scott 1987). I want to suggest that gossip is not only both of those things but also has a third dimension, a combination of gossip's bad reputation and its aim at power relations meaning that it becomes hidden and redirected, depending on the position of those doing the gossiping. As many cases of gossip indicate, when we examine them, gossip is interesting because it is often a marker for boundaries of power—their emergence, reification, undermining, or crisis. Access to information, even in this age of electronic saturation, is far from democratic. Controlling information, whether directly, or indirectly, by affecting the reputation of those holding or seeking information, gives one power. Fights over what we know, or claim are often fights over real resources: money, authority, status. These fights, of course, are often divided along lines of race, gender, class, or other social markers. Those in subaltern positions—women, people of colour, people who identify as LGBTQ—are often and disproportionately targeted as gossips or gossip, carrying with it a corollary condemnation of being less rational, less logical. Thus, gossip is often an important tool in marginalized communities, and we have seen examples of gossip of *léyak* in Palasari that have marginalized and demonised independent women (*Chapter*

4). Gossip has value for marginalized people both because their perspectives and credibility get diminished or undermined and because much conventional viewpoints or theories ignore or minimize alternative viewpoints. Because gossip is a tool that is most powerful when used subterraneously, it has a specific (and insidious) value for those in socially and epistemically empowered positions. We see examples of empowered gossip repeated invisibly, because it circulates without the label of gossip: it can be a report on a blog or anonymous sourcing in the *New York Times*. In other words, because gossip thrives at the nexus between public and private, and often criticizes or debunks power, it can function in very different ways for the powerless and the powerful. The knowledge viewpoints in which gossip emerges often clash around precisely the ideas that are at the source of the gossip. Gossip is often a political early warning system, heralding changing beliefs about status or authority of communities or asserting power for those previously denied it. Following José Medina, I call this tendency *epistemic subversion*. In particular, we can see a deep inconsistency when utterances and claims are labelled gossip; unpopular or minority positions are often promptly tarred with the label of gossip, and thus dismissed as irrational, probably wrong, and said out of resentment, as in the case of the Church's authority in Palasari. By contrast, we will see many examples of what I call "invisible gossip," where those who already have public authority and credibility use the tools of gossip to demean and diminish their critics, but what fits the rhetorical markers of gossip goes unrecognized as such, being instead labelled "news," "reports about the profession," or anonymous sourcing. In the case of Palasari, the source of information of *léyak* is not the patient (guest) or the *balian* but the spirit who possessed. In other words, gossip's entanglement with power means that we are selective and self-serving, even about recognizing its appearance and our uses of it.

The second sub-contention about gossip falls directly from the claim about power. We are deeply hypocritical about our recognition and use of gossip, and I think this hypocrisy does not serve public conversation or thought well. Dismissing unpopular views as gossip means we listen poorly. We fail to consider that there may be a connection worth pondering, a consequence of an action or a policy that we have ignored, or a whole group of people whose experiences are being dismissed or marginalized. By contrast, permitting those who already have public soapboxes to use gossip to undermine the credibility or authority of those who would challenge their positions further limits the range of ideas and positions we consider. Following the arguments of Miranda Fricker (2007), we grant unjustified credibility to those who already enjoy a surfeit of credibility. But more than that, we essentially give permission to those who have a surfeit of credibility to abuse that credibility by taking it away from others.

Striving for some consistency even in recognizing gossip as such, and its pervasive presence in our public and private dialogues, would rebalance the scales of credibility somewhat.

Getting told, being believed

During my fieldwork I came across some of the ways in which various forms of telling things to others, in particular about *léyak* which came under moral or epistemic suspicion. Recent scholarship on gossip and rumour has moved from the functionalist strand to the epistemological analysis; how to count the gossip-based knowledge, for instance, as in the case of *léyak* in Palasari. Since I'm considering this against the background of what is (according to me) our very deep reliance upon testimony and the associated trust in others that accompanies it, then I am thinking of these ways as pathologies, in that they present as distortions of or diseases of the normal case of telling and relying on what is told. As we shall see, they have very different morphologies and there is a real question about how much of a distortion they might be. In particular, there is a question whether they deserve (all of) the moral and epistemic odium or suspicion that is their usual lot.

The phenomena I shall discuss are gossip and rumour in particular relation to *léyak* in Palasari. Gossip and rumour are significant in their relation to the truth and the position of the speaker with regard to truth. Gossip is often seen as sincere and may be true and known to be true. Rumour may be true and believed to be true but the justificatory base for speaking it is weak. Coady (1992) tries to distinguish rumour from urban myth, as the latter is more legend than rumour — it is more frozen and immune to refutation, but it can function in a similar way to more ephemeral rumours. Initially, I shall treat these phenomena as though they involved mere transmission of propositions, but of course this is a considerable simplification and even abstraction from the reality. Gossip and rumour are highly narrative in form as in many stories I heard in Palasari. The chronic illness and disability, the failure of conventional medicine, ambiguity of diagnosis, the consultation with *balian*, trance-possession, these are the context of narrative around gossip and rumour of *léyak* in Palasari. They are presented in a dramatic mode, sometimes even in song or poem, and they often contain, explicitly or implicitly, strong interpretive and evaluative elements. Here, as elsewhere, the picture of transmission as the passing on of a lump of information in a single line of transference from individual to individual is misleading. Nonetheless, the misleading picture reflects something right, namely, the fact that testimony begins with some form of witnessing. This need not be a perceptual encounter though that is a primary case of witnessing. It can also consist in a proof or an expert judgement, as argued by Coady (1992: 48, 51–62). Here I mention the point only to deal with one claim

about gossip that seems wrong. It is made by Laurence Thomas who gives the following example as a clear case of gossip:

Austin: I can't believe that they are awarding her the Nobel prize in physics. Must be because she is a woman.

Lee: To tell you the truth I have been thinking the same thing myself.
(Thomas 1994: 47)

Thomas thinks this is "surely gossip" (Thomas 1994: 48), but I suspect Thomas treats this exchange as obvious gossip because he thinks that gossip, as in the example, must express negative feelings about the subject of the gossip. As we shall see, this negativity need not be a feature of gossip. I would regard this as malicious speculation. And the exchange between Austin and Lee makes no pretence of being a testimony transaction. Austin's "message" is a speculation; he has witnessed nothing relevant in even the most extended sense of "witnessing". These are points to return to.

Thomas might reply that he does not think of gossip as a form of testimony. It is true that there are usages of "gossip" that are wider, and perhaps looser, than the use I am interested in, uses in which any casual exchange or conversation about anything whatever may count as gossip. Sometimes people think this way when they talk of a "gossip session" or "shooting the breeze".⁷⁴ Just chatting about one's own exploits or commenting, speculating, and guessing about aspects of the known exploits of others could then be gossip; but in the sense of the term that interests me you cannot gossip about yourself and conveying guesswork and so on does not count as gossip. There is then a degree of stipulation about my approach, but any initial characterization of the topic will involve some stipulation and will express particular theoretical interests. I claim on behalf of my account that it captures a great deal of what people normally mean by gossip (and of rumour and urban myth) and illuminates significant moral and epistemological scenery.

Gossips

As mentioned earlier, there is quite extensive literature on gossip including literary criticism, philosophy, history, psychology, sociology, communication and anthropology. There are disputes about how to define the topic, as we have already seen, so I will not offer a tight definition, but rather give some necessary indicators of the concept of gossip as I understand it. I shall take it that gossip has the following features: it is usually conveyed by those who

⁷⁴ Tom Campbell tells me that there is a Glaswegian phrase for this: "having a good thing".

believe it to be true, it can be the transmission of perfectly justified beliefs, it need not be malicious though it sometimes is. Its subject matter is invariably personal, though of course it can be about persons who represent or are thought to typify groups. It is also transgressive, in at least the sense that the transmission of the information can be presumed to be unwelcome to the subject of it. Some theorists claim that gossip is distinguished by the triviality of its subject matter. It is, they say, essentially “idle talk”. It is understandable that this should be said, but it remains contentious. After all, gossip about someone’s job prospects or manoeuvrings, about their adulterous conduct, about a political leader’s financial dealings are all matters that may have momentous consequences for the individual concerned and for others affected by his or her actions. Acknowledging this, Rosnow has amended the claim to make it more plausible by concentrating on the style of communication rather than its content. It is the setting and context of the conversation that must have at least the appearance of the casual. As he puts it, the exchange should be “characterized by a kind of *belle indifférence*”. The talk should be “packaged” to appear as idle (Rosnow 2001: 210). This is indeed more plausible and seems to capture something typical of gossip. It is reflected in the casual, bantering tone adopted by many newspaper gossip columnists. One philosopher agrees that an idle tone is characteristic of gossip but takes this to be a moral defect of it. She says, “It is characteristic then of gossip to fail to give matters their due regard; gossip often involves a mismatch between the tone and substance of the discussion. Such a mismatch may simply reveal superficiality, or it may constitute a failure of empathy and moral understanding” (Holland 1996: 203). I shall deal with this criticism later, but it is worth noting at this point that much of the literature on gossip is concerned with its moral status. Most of the criticism of gossip is moral rather than epistemic. This suggests that gossip exhibits no essential epistemic difference from ordinary testimony; there is no reason why gossip should be less reliable than ordinary testimony. In what follows, I shall try to assess the moral objections to gossip, but also raise some points about its possible epistemological deficiencies. There is one more indicator of gossip that needs to be mentioned, namely, that there is something essentially restricted or intimate about at least the initial range of gossip. This point is hard to make clearly, but the basic idea is that the natural home in which gossip begins is that of a small group, though, of course, the information may spread from small group to another small group until the news becomes widespread. Someone is not gossiping who shouts the information from the rooftops for all and sundry to hear.

The debate about the moral status of gossip (sometimes cast as a debate about its positive or negative social impacts) is basically between those who think that gossip violates some significant moral constraint, such as respect for persons, and those who think that gossip has an important social role. The latter sometimes ignore the supposed violation, but sometimes

acknowledge it and think that it is outweighed by the good effects.⁷⁵ In the field of anthropology, the debate between Gluckman and Pain could be seen from this view (Stewart and Strathern, 2003).

First, the moral objections to gossip. Some of these proceed as though gossip must always be malicious. If this were true, then there would indeed be a black mark against it from the beginning. But it is clearly not true, at least if the malice in question is seen as stemming from a motivation to do harm. Many gossips have no interest in maligning the object of their talk, they are just interested in the buzz of the topic and the status their communication gives them. Indeed, gossip need not retail anything disreputable about its object. I may gossip about something you are doing that is either neutral or positive with respect to your reputation, as when I retail some confidential facts about your soon to be successful house sale or the secret that you are about to be elevated to the peerage. What seems true is that there must be something unwelcome to the gossipee about the revelation you are conveying. The subject of the gossip must at least be presumed not to want the information in question conveyed either generally or to that particular audience.⁷⁶

I shall proceed as if this unwelcome aspect is essential to gossip, though there are in fact several counter examples to an unqualified version of this claim. Some very trivial newspaper “gossip”, about, for example, a society wedding may totally lack the unwelcome aspect, but for this very reason we may not want to treat it as gossip, or not as paradigmatic gossip. It is more like advertising or public relations offered under the pretence of news. More interestingly, there is a range of cases where the subject of the gossip may positively welcome the spreading of the information, and may indeed be the source of it, yet the information maybe both significant and somehow transgressive. Consider the case of academic gossip about who is to be offered a new position. If we think of the successful candidate as either the source, or as least the cheerful subject, then the unwelcome thesis seems imperilled.⁷⁷ There are two possible responses here. One is to shift focus on the subject of the gossip so that the gossip is about the actions of the appointments committee, and only secondarily about the status of the successful

⁷⁵ A few are positively euphoric about the merits of gossip, most notably Ronald de Sousa (1994: 25 – 33). He seems to me far too dismissive of the downside of gossip and he exhibits a sort of romantic exaggeration of its benefits. He says “If all truths became public we would approach utopia” (1994: 31). This blatantly defies the fact that there is sometimes a significant value in privacy and confidentiality.

⁷⁶ What I am calling the “unwelcome” aspect of gossip might be captured in other ways. It might be thought that my criterion turns too much on the psychology of the gossipee or on what the gossips know of that psychology. David Rodin suggested instead that the information should be “unauthorized”. That might do, though there are then problems about who or what does the authorizing. I prefer to stick with “unwanted” and I note in the text and try to deal with some of the difficulties this choice raises. I suspect that there may be other ways of making the transgressive point that would demarcate a closely similar conceptual territory for our discussion.

⁷⁷ This objection was put to me by Margaret Coady.

candidate. Members of the committee will find the gossip unwelcome — either in reality or by the conventions of confidentiality to which they are obliged to adhere. Another alternative is to say that the candidate may actually welcome the spreading of the news but must take the stance of finding the transmission unwelcome. To adopt a useful test for gossip, we should ask: would the conversation stop or suffer embarrassment if the candidate suddenly entered the room? If the answer in the present case is, “Yes” then there seems a sense in which the candidate must be viewed as finding the transmission unwelcome whatever he privately thinks.

It is this unwelcome feature of gossip that provides one significant purchase for the moral critic. Granted that gossip need not be retailed with the aim of damaging the subject of it, might it nonetheless count against any proposed good in gossip that it must run counter to the subject’s desire that the information remain confidential or at least restricted? One philosopher has argued that, because of this, gossip violates the Kantian injunction to treat others as ends in themselves and not merely as means. *Prima facie*, there is some plausibility in this. The gossipers need have no regard for the good of the person whose fortunes they report, the facts about them are recounted (at best) merely for the pleasure it gives the speaker and the audience, and possibly for the regard the gossipers achieve by reason of his/her knowledgability. Does this violate the Kantian injunction? This is one of the points at which the injunction is hard to interpret. Am I treating someone only as a means if I drive tourists by their fine house to show them a fine example of the sort of Victorian architecture typical of the area? Suppose I know that they do not want their house to be the object of tourist gazing? What this suggests is that the test of “failing to treat someone as an end” cannot rule out all cases of acting against their wishes, even where these wishes are concerned with their privacy. Perhaps we can only allow such disregarding where the disregard is aimed at achieving some good, and the fact is that gossip has no such purpose.

There are two problems with this. The first is that gossip arguably does have such a purpose, or purposes, and the second is that, even if it does not, the subject’s desire for privacy, confidentiality, or secrecy may be unreasonable. The social psychologists that give a positive account of gossip often stress that it has a role in solidifying social norms. The idea seems to be that gossip about the behaviour of others takes place in an explicit or implicit context of norms and the evaluation commonly invoked (Oooh, she didn’t! Gosh, fancy that! . . .) has the effect of reinforcing those norms. As Rosnow puts it: “the consequences of rumour and gossip also reflect the extent to which social norms can be enforced on individuals who ostensibly threaten or violate them. In small groups, for example, gossip may be a way of shepherding the herd by saying ‘These are the boundaries, and you’re crossing them’” (Rosnow 2001: 224). Rosnow here seems to be running two different things together. On the one hand, the effect of

reinforcing the norms for the group involved in the retailing and hearing of the gossip, and on the other, the enforcing of the norms on the person gossiped about. The latter will not be the direct effect of the gossip since that person, in the first instance, at any rate, doesn't hear it. The former may well take place and lead to the latter.

The reinforcement thesis raises two further puzzles. The first concerns the generally favourable attitude of social scientists to this reinforcement (of either kind), and the second concerns the empirical claim itself that the attitude rests upon. On the first, it is strange (as Holland has pointed out) that the cementing of existing norms is simply taken for granted as a positive outcome. Perhaps this reflects the persistence of the simple-minded cultural relativisms that have been so influential, and so damaging in the history of anthropology and related studies. Whatever the explanation, it is obvious that existing social norms may be either good, bad, or indifferent from a moral perspective. The reinforcement provided by gossip may be to solidify widespread immoral prejudices against blacks, women, homosexuals, foreigners, immigrants, or whatever, and where this is so, it constitutes an objection to the role of gossip not an endorsement of it. As to the second, the role of gossip may just as easily be the breaking down of social norms as the protection of them. In societies with rigid public codes, gossip may serve to show the hypocrisy of those who proclaim and enforce it, thus leading to the destruction of respect for those elites and even of the codes themselves. Gossip about the sexual behaviour of various influential leadership groups may lead to the erosion of strong sexual censorship regimes, and gossip about the perks and lifestyle of Communist leaders may have played a part in undermining public confidence in the professed values of fraternity and equality. It is also possible that both reinforcement and subversion can occur together (though directed towards different prevailing norms). Pre-Revolutionary France provides a case in point. In a society in which formal news outlets were stereo-typed and tightly controlled by those in power, the primary source of information about the King and the ruling elites came from gossip and rumour. As Robert Darnton has argued in his fascinating book, *George Washington's False Teeth*, gossip and rumour about the French Court not only provided a rare source of personal and political information but thereby possibly played a part in preparing the ground for the Revolution (Darnton 2003: ch. 2). It did this by exposing the hypocrisy of the Court and the unworthiness of the King and his dependence on the intrigues of others. Some of the underground transmission was classical gossip retailed at selected sites such as the Tree of Cracow in the grounds of the Palais-Royal. Other was more rumour, though sometimes beginning as gossip, and other again was song and coded poetry circulated by paper notes or memorized word of mouth. Again, as with the reinforcement story, the question of whether the undermining is good or bad requires independent adjudication. More broadly, the question

whether gossip has good or bad outcomes cannot be given a global answer. It all depends on the context and the actual outcomes. We cannot, however, rule out in advance the possibility that the outcomes will be good.

Another good outcome claimed on behalf of gossip is the way gossip can improve individuals' self-regard. By a process of what some have called "downward comparison" we may come to think better of ourselves by comparing our behaviour or character to that revealed of some other person by gossip (Suls and Goodkin 1994: 173; Ben-Ze'ev 1994: 19). The revelation that some famous person, for instance, has feet of clay may reassure us about the normalcy of our own feet. The two questions posed earlier arise again regarding this claim. First, it is not clear that bad information about others is a particularly sensible or healthy way of achieving a sound understanding of one's own worth. Self-congratulation can result in self-delusion. Second, the deflating information about the worth of others may equally well give rise to the sense that one should lower one's own standards rather than take pride in maintaining them. Either way of course there may be some solidifying effect of the gossip exchange; the deluded may be mutually bound by their delusions and a group may find some agreeable cohesion in mutually endorsed lowering of expectations of self and other. One possible connection of gossip with norms is that whereby the conveyors of gossip may be led to reassess their moral views by finding that their audience is not as shocked by the gossip as the speakers had expected. Gossip may therefore assist in what could be a useful form of self-criticism.⁷⁸

A further potentially positive feature of gossip that is perhaps too obvious to be remarked upon by social psychologists is the fact that many people find the telling and receiving of gossip enjoyable. Most people are curious to know the truth not only about the physical world or mathematics but also about the deeds and misdeeds of other people. Sometimes this curiosity has a functional point in orientating us towards the people with whom we are going to interact: this is the idea that social psychologists are getting at with their somewhat simplified talk of norm reinforcement and the like. Sometimes the satisfaction of curiosity is simply fascinating in itself, even if it can also be useful. We are interactive social beings who spend a great deal of our lives in conversation, much of it about other people. News about their journey through life with its pitfalls and triumphs is intrinsically interesting to most people, and it is often even more interesting when we know or believe that we are not going to hear it from them.

I have claimed that gossip is pleasurable for many of us, but there are those who find gossip of any sort uninteresting, even distasteful. They inject a chill of disapproval into the gossip room and often produce a cessation of the activity until they depart. Thereafter, the gossip

⁷⁸ I owe this point to Ruth Zimmerling.

resumes and often expands to include them as subjects! It would be interesting to explore this difference in attitude and some of its nuances, such as those who are happy to hear gossip but not to retail it, but I shall not pursue this matter here. Of course, it is necessary to stress that when I refer to the pleasure of gossip as good, I do not mean that it is an unqualified good. Pleasure is at best only one good among others; it can be outweighed by other goods or harms, and some pleasures may be inherently illicit, as are those (to take an extreme case) of paedophilia.

This leads us to the claim that there is something intrinsically bad about gossip that may preclude consideration of the good outcomes (if any) or at least may need to be weighed against them. Here, we should consider two of the issues raised earlier. First, there is Holland's claim that "It is characteristic then of gossip to fail to give matters their due regard; gossip often involves a mismatch between the tone and substance of the discussion. Such a mismatch may simply reveal superficiality, or it may constitute a failure of empathy and moral understanding." Gabrielle Taylor makes a similar claim, though less forcefully. "Gossipers", she says, "trivialize experience by ignoring the impact with which the author of the experience will in some way have to cope. Thus, they distort and belittle that person's experience" (Taylor 1994: 46). On the face of it, both claims seem excessively high-minded. Gossip is not always concerned with matters of moment, and, even where it is, the requirement that tone should match subject matter smacks of puritanism. The idea that serious subjects should only be addressed in a solemn tone of voice presents an affront to the complexity of human communicative intercourse, especially to the dimensions of humour, irony, satire, and playfulness that are rightly characteristic of much of it. Of course, tone may reprehensively mismatch content, as with some sneering discourse, and this may well exhibit superficiality or moral failure of some sort. My only point is that, contrary to Holland, the characteristic tone of much gossip need not display moral fault, nor need it trivialize what should not be so treated.

Second, there is the issue, already briefly discussed, that gossip is standardly unwelcome to the gossipee. It is natural to think that this shows it to be in violation of respect for persons, and hence immoral. As mentioned above this depends to some degree on why the conveying of the information is unwelcome. There is no absolute right that information about oneself be withheld from others. Respect for privacy cannot reach that far. Perhaps my not wanting facts about myself to be made known to others creates some presumption against doing so, but it may be rebuttable in a variety of circumstances. Nor need these circumstances require some very great good to rebut the presumption. To give a personal example. I was once in a group of philosophers who were criticizing another more famous philosopher in ways that seemed to me to impugn his character as well as his philosophical standing. I had discovered from his

publisher that the author under attack had actually assigned all his royalties from a very successful book to charity and proposed to do so again for the second edition. When I mentioned to the author my knowledge of this fact and my respect for his decision, he asked me not to tell anyone about his altruism; but in the company of his somewhat carping critics, I thought it right to do so and did. I think I was justified in acting in this way, and, if so, the example shows that the gossipee's desire to keep the matter secret need not be determinative of the moral status of the gossip. It also shows that Bertrand Russell was wrong to claim that "no one gossips about other people's secret virtues" (Russell 1994: 50). It further suggests that it does not require the prospect of some overwhelming good to validate the gossip transaction, since the author in question is fairly unconcerned with what people think of him.

Another interesting phenomenon is that of what might be called remedial gossip. By this I mean that phenomenon where B gossips about A to C, D, and E and then E tells A that B has been telling them about A. We might be reluctant to call E's transmission "gossip" because it is aimed at alerting A to the gossip about him or her; but it may well be offered in the characteristic tone of gossip. E may be well aware that B, C, and D would be unhappy to have the matter relayed back to A. Nor need E's motives be particularly noble.

I said that gossip is usually conveyed by those who believe it to be true and who may well be justified in their belief. This feature makes it seem that gossip is not, from the point of view of epistemology, a "pathology" of testimony at all. This idea is worth closer examination. One problem with it is that some of the motives typical of gossip may be fragile with respect to truth-transmission. The desire to titivate, or to show one's "insider" status as someone with access to otherwise unavailable information is not the sober background we expect of solid testimony. Bertrand Russell is thinking in this way in the section from which the earlier quotation was taken. He says, "The widespread interest in gossip is inspired, not by a love of knowledge but by malice: no one gossips about other people's secret virtues, but only about their secret vices. Accordingly, most gossip is untrue, but care is taken not to verify it. Our neighbour's sins, like the consolations of religion, are so agreeable that we do not stop to scrutinise the evidence closely. Curiosity properly so-called, on the other hand, is inspired by a genuine love of knowledge."

I have argued that gossip is not necessarily malicious. If it were, then the epistemic objection would carry some weight since an informant who is inspired by malice will be seeking to put another's behaviour in a bad light and this may well bias their testimony. Even gossip that conveys negative information about a person need not be inspired by emphatic malice; it may be mere excitement at discovering the faults or follies of another and an interest in being the one to know and convey such information. Curiosity can be as lofty a disposition as Russell

claims, but it need not be. It can be more earthy without becoming positively malicious and it may still retain an orientation to knowledge. Leaving aside malice, a disdain for other common motives for gossip faces two problems. One is that various forms of legitimate testimony, even of formal testimony in courts, may be subject to similar motivations. Witnesses conveying information that has no taint of violation may nonetheless be moved by the desire to cut a figure in great events and may delight in the excitement their news will create. They may also be moved by a concern to get things right. Any account of what inspires reliable testimony must allow for the existence of mixed motives. Second, even if the motivations associated with gossip are not of the loftiest, they need not be destructive of a concern for the truth. The desire to impress may indeed make one *more* scrupulous in conveying accurate information since one's status as a reliable informant may be crucial to the positive appreciation one seeks.

Another epistemic objection to gossip is that it excludes by its very nature an important source of epistemic reliability, namely, confirmation, falsification, or correction by the subject of the gossip.⁷⁹ If we accept that absence of the subject is a necessary concomitant of gossip then it is indeed true that the gossip situation deprives the gossipers of an additional direct checking resource for the information. I doubt that this is as drastic an epistemic flaw as it initially seems. In the first place, where the information originates from the subject, and our informant is known to be close to the subject and a generally reliable witness who has no particular stake in lying, it may simply be redundant, verging on the neurotic, to insist on checking with the subject. (Consider the parallel with those in the grip of mild obsessive-compulsion who need to return home to check by perception their firm memory that they have turned off the iron or locked the back door.) There are always further checks one can do on testimonial information, just as there are with observational or remembered information, but it is epistemically redundant to do so in many cases. In the second place, there will usually be little reason to believe that the subject of the gossip can be relied upon to provide valuable confirmation or disconfirmation. After all, since the subject does not want the information spread at all, he or she is most likely to deny it or refuse confirmation, whether the facts are as reported or not. In the third place, where the gossip does not originate from the subject, it may well be that the subject is in no position to confirm or deny the information. There is an interesting range of cases here. Consider the case where information is that you are to be awarded some honour and the source is an "insider" in the conferring process. You may know nothing of the fact at the relevant stage, or you may know only that there is some prospect of

⁷⁹ I owe this perceptive objection to John O'Neill of Lancaster University.

the honour. So, your exclusion from the gossip circle creates no epistemic problem for the reliability of the information.

This example is also interesting as a problem for the unwanted criterion of gossip since it is presumably the people in the honouring process (or most of them) who don't want the information spread, even though it is information about you. Nonetheless, you are likely to want to know about it before the gossipers and audience get to hear about it. If, however, you are so unusual as not to care about that, then you would not be discomforted at being present during the gossip session. This, I take it, counts strongly against the transmission being gossip, at least about you. It may count as gossip about the honour process and honour bestowers.

I conclude that this epistemic objection to gossip fails as a general objection, though there may indeed be occasions on which closing off access to the subject's own testimony has epistemological disadvantages. More generally, gossip as I have defined it is not a pathological form of testimony but a normal form of it. Whatever its moral standing, and I have argued that this may be less dismal than usually thought, its intellectual status is reasonably respectable. In epistemic terms it may be likened to whispered information rather than openly spoken word of mouth.

Rumour

Gossip and rumour are often seen together in the way they are treated by social science, but they are basically different in kind though there are some areas of overlap. Studies by social psychologists have tended to concentrate less on gossip and its putative "functions" and more on the characteristics of rumour as a mode of communication. Gordon Allport and Leo Postman published their study on the psychology of rumour in 1947, shortly after World War II. Their research was closely related to the problems of the U.S. government with rumour control and public fears during the war itself, starting with rumours surrounding the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and public distrust of news put out by the administration. They noted (1947: 2) that "rumour travels when events have importance in the lives of individuals and when the news received about them is either lacking or subjectively ambiguous." This kind of context for rumour is quite different from that which starts with the putative wrongdoings of individuals in communities. In both contexts, emotions are involved, but in the context Allport and Postman deal with large-scale events have already impinged on people's lives, causing them to speculate further about their meanings, scale, and implications. In the gossip and rumour mills of small communities, rumours may rather be attempts to guess at events that may not have occurred at all. Similar rumours may gather around large-scale events themselves, especially by way of exaggeration or narratives of secret contributing causes of them. Allport and Postman

specify the categories of “bogy” rumours and “wish” rumours in this context. They cite also (p. 10) “hate” or “wedge-driving” rumours, for example, about categories of people allegedly evading the military draft in wartime, and provide a table of 1,000 rumours reported in the United States in the summer of 1942, in conjunction with the entry of the United States into the Pacific war. And they discuss the methods adopted by government to erect defences against rumours that might undermine confidence in the project of war. Implicit in this applied focus is the notion that rumour is not only unverified but also perhaps unverifiable or in large part simply inaccurate.

At any rate, I shall treat them as differing in the way suggested at the outset, namely with respect to the justificatory base of the information conveyed. Gossip may be true and known or justifiably believed to be so, rumour has by (my) definition no strong justificatory base. The typical way to introduce a rumour is to say, “Have you heard . . .?” whereas the typical introductory mode of delivering gossip is, “Did you know . . .?” The gossipier may, of course, convey false information and be mistaken about the strength of the justification he has for the information. He must present himself as being in an authoritative position with respect to the information. Must he always believe that he is telling the truth and in an epistemic position to do so? Can’t there be deliberately deceitful gossip? Sissela Bok thinks so, indeed she lists “gossip that is known to be false”, as one of the three main categories of gossip (Bok 1983: 98). But she, like many others, makes no real effort to distinguish gossip from rumour. To my ear, the phrase “lying gossip” does not ring true; the more accurate description of the activity is just “spreading lies”. In any case, it is untypical of gossip. Rumour-mongers, by contrast, may well deliberately create false rumours. In wartime, the spreading of false rumours can be a crucial political weapon, as can be the combating of damaging rumours. Moreover, rumours may well begin in sheer speculation, though they will usually mimic testimonial transmission by conveying the idea that *someone* somewhere is a witnessing source.

A further difference is that rumour is not restricted by topic to the personal. It may be about institutional, political, religious, or physical events. You can spread a rumour about an earthquake, but you cannot gossip about it. A further difference is that gossip is normally quite restricted in its circulation. A small group may get together to gossip about a colleague or a boss or whomever but have no desire to spread the information further. (Gossip columns in newspapers are an exception to this, though even here there lingers some element of the closed group point, inasmuch as the readers of the column are meant to have a sense of being inducted into a privileged, if rather a large group.) Rumour, however, seems essentially prone to run abroad, “to spread like wildfire”. Of course, one area of overlap is that something that begins

as gossip may well continue as rumour. This is probably one of the reasons for the widespread failure to distinguish between the two.

Given rumour's indifference to a secure basis for its reports, can anything positive be said on its behalf? Tamotsu Shibutani added a number of sociological observations to the work of Allport and Postman, as well as investigating in considerable depth World War II-related rumours, usefully seen from both American and Japanese perspectives. Shibutani does not start from any proposition that rumour is unverified, unreliable, or false. He characterizes rumour as "improvised news" and stresses that it is in "constant construction" (1966: 9) and that transformations in its content are not just distortions but a part of the process of arriving at a consensus (p. 16). He suggests that "it might be regarded as a form of problem-solving" (p. 17), and that "the reality to be studied, then, is not distortion in serial transmission but the social interaction of people caught in inadequately defined situations. To act intelligently such persons, seek news, and rumour is essentially a type of news" (p. 17). Shibutani thus takes his approach from political sociology and treats rumour more as a form of rational action than as an expression or projection of emotions. Clearly, it can in fact be either or both of these two things.

Even raising this question may seem perverse, in the face of the bad reputation so widely enjoyed by rumour. It should be remarked that the enemies of rumour sometimes have an agenda that is not itself entirely respectable. I mentioned earlier the attempt to control and counteract rumours during wartime. The American psychologist Gordon Allport, for instance, was one of those who set up rumour clinics to help curb the spread of rumours in Massachusetts during World War II. He was later the co-author of an influential study of rumour (Allport and Postman 1965). Allport was helped in the anti-rumour campaign by his doctoral student Robert H. Knapp who defined rumour as "a proposition for belief of topical reference disseminated without official verification" (Knapp 1944: 22). This definition would count every newspaper expose' of government misdeeds or secrets that met with official silence or denial as rumour even if they were true and thoroughly justified. This makes nonsense of our ordinary understanding of rumour and reflects an ideal of official control of information that is, to put it mildly, undemocratic. It is not surprising that it might arise in a climate of war, but those of us who believe that war is frequently unjustified can hardly take consolation from this. Where governments are bent upon the suppression of information, for whatever reason, then "propositions for belief" unendorsed by the authorities will assume greater significance.

One thing that might be noted as an epistemic merit is the power of rumour in providing hypotheses for further exploration. By itself a rumour may be a poor epistemic coin but

investigating it may lead to expanding one's knowledge in direct and indirect ways.⁸⁰ The direct route is that of confirmation or falsification of the rumour's contents. The indirect route may be the discovery of interesting information that explains the rumour's genesis, or it may be the discovery of a genuine truth that the rumour misleadingly presents. So, we may discover that a rumour to the effect that a rogue politician is selling nuclear secrets to North Korea against his own government's policies and desires is false, but also discover the related truth that a respected senior scientist is selling the secrets with his own government's connivance. Dismissal of reports because they are "mere" rumours can sometimes block opportunities for discovering important truths. One of the most striking instances of this was the rumour emanating from Tokyo in 1941 concerning an impending attack on Pearl Harbour. The US Ambassador Grew reported in January 1941 from Tokyo a rumour that the Japanese Navy was planning a surprise attack on Pearl Harbour. It was attributed to the Peruvian Embassy which was regarded by the ambassador and others as "a not very reliable" source. The rumour was dismissed by one and all, including the Ambassador, as fantastic. As it turned out, the date the rumour began coincided with the inception of the Yamamoto plan for bombing Pearl Harbour (Shibutani 1966: 73 – 4).

In light of these positive aspects to rumour, it might be claimed that those who spread a rumour are not so dastardly as they are usually thought to be. Indeed, with all its faults, the poor coinage of rumour may often be the only information currency available. Some social scientists exploring rumour argue that it commonly arises in response to alarming situations where reliable information is cut off, either deliberately by censorship or repression, or accidentally by confusion or disaster. In such situations, rumour tends to be a focus of high social interaction. The "news" conveyed is not simply passed on from one voice to another, like the passage of a "brick" of information. The item is often speculated upon, criticized, amplified, compared with other related items of rumour, and with what pieces of hard news or testimony are available. In addition, the originator of the rumour, if indeed there is only one such source, need not have had anything like observational access to the supposed fact that is spread. He or she may have produced the information as a speculation in the absence of any reliable testimony or observation. Even so, the rumour mill will usually present the rumoured facts as something that is somehow sourced in someone's observations, though it will usually be vague about who that is. Shibutani's discussion of the World War II rumours about the reduction in training and furlough time for US troops in Georgia in late 1944 exhibits this sort of pattern. The rumours were fuelled by the hard news of the increased German counter-

⁸⁰ Somewhat similar points could be made about ordinary lies.

offensive in Europe and the absence of any real information about the effect this might have on these newly inducted troops (Shibutani 1966: 9 – 14).

Psychological investigations of rumour tend to divide between those with an individualistic and rather static picture of transmission and social psychologists, like Shibutani, who see the picture in more dynamic and social functionalist terms.⁸¹ The former tend to be hostile to rumour and the latter more sympathetic. The former proceeds by setting up highly artificial experimental scenarios in which a piece of information is to be passed on to specified others (often the experimenter) and changes in the literal form of the message are noted for inaccuracy. This way of proceeding is open to a number of objections, some of which I have raised elsewhere (Coady, 1992). The artificiality of the experimental situations rules out many of the standard ways of confirming, sifting, and interpreting the original informational setting. The emphasis on the literal preservation of a sentence or set of sentences is an unnecessary restriction on the conveying of information. The message in question often has little significance for the witness, and so on. By contrast, the social psychologists emphasize the fluidity of real-life situations, the need for information in information-starved settings, the relation of rumour to practical thinking and decision-making rather than speculative reason and abstract truth. Indeed, they are inclined to minimize the issue of truth. So Shibutani says: “rumour is not so much the dissemination of a designated message as the process of forming a definition of a situation” (Shibutani 1966: 9). These emphases are no doubt important for the empirical study of rumour, but it should be recognized that the dissemination of a designated message is perfectly compatible with the forming of a definition of a situation or mirroring social psychology. The interest in realistic social settings should not be seen as excluding the concern for the relation of rumour to truth or to epistemic justification. Jean-Noël Kapferer’s study of rumour picks up from Shibutani’s observation that rumour is, intrinsically, not a deviation from the “truth” but an effort to arrive at a consensus of opinion about what is the truth. The context involved, Shibutani wrote, is one in which “demand for news is positively associated with intensity of collective excitement” (1966: 164). Rumour expands to meet the demand. Kapferer writes (1990: 3) that “rumours do not take off from the truth but rather seek out the truth.”

So, is rumour pathological testimony? It seems that it *is* a form of testimony because it involves the transmission of propositions from one or more persons to others, but it often lacks what I have elsewhere claimed to be definitive of testimony. There are sometimes no original

⁸¹ For the more static picture see William Stern ‘Zur Psychologie der Aussage’, in *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Strafrechtswissenschaft*, 22 (1902) discussed in Neubauer (1999: 157 – 8) and see also Allport and Postman (1965).

sources in even the attenuated senses that I noted in my thesis since rumour can arise from the merest speculation. Furthermore, the speaker of rumour will often have no competence with regard to the “information” conveyed and may be well aware of that. If we think some degree of authority or competence, no matter how minimal, is a precondition for giving testimony then quite a lot of rumour will be disqualified as testimony. There is a very amusing Australian radio show called “The Coodabeen Champions” in which several witty and very well-informed people comment on sporting events, especially Australian Rules football. In one segment of the show there is a “talk-back” session in which members of the public (in fact, the commentary team with disguised voices) raise topics for discussion. One regular always rang with a rumour, this being the show’s acknowledgement of the fact that sporting culture is rife with rumours about secret injuries, the sacking of coaches, the transfer of players, and so on. “Tony, have you heard the rumour”, he would begin. When pressed on his credentials, it would emerge that his brother’s wife’s uncle knew a bloke who had a neighbour who heard someone in his dentist’s waiting room say he thought he’d heard that if St Kilda suffered one more loss, the coach would be sacked. With credentials as thin as this, we may well want to treat such rumours as not testimony at all.

Nonetheless, they have at least the superficial appearance of testimony. They are not completely unrelated to it, so if we decide that rumours are not *really* or *fully* forms of testimony, we will be treating them as what J. L. Austin called “misfires” rather than “abuses” of the speech acts of testifying. Austin’s early discussions of “performative utterances” identified a range of infelicities to which they could be prone in contrast to their failing to be true or false. The idea of infelicities carried over to his more sophisticated discussion of illocutionary and other speech acts. The concepts of misfires and abuses were forged to show different ways in which speech acts could be infelicitous. Misfires make the purported speech act go wrong in a way that nullifies it, whereas abuses constitute real but irregular performances of the act. To use one of Austin’s examples, it is a plausible precondition of successfully marrying that there exists an institutional framework within which the words “I do” serve to effect a marriage. If, for example, you are already married (in a monogamous society) or the officiating officer is not really a licensed clergyman or appropriate civil official then you have merely gone through a form of marriage. The act has misfired, the marriage is void (Austin 1961: 223 – 8). By contrast, if you utter the vows of fidelity in the appropriate circumstances with no intention of keeping them you are still married, even if you are a genuine cad and the marriage hardly a paradigm of what it should be. Similarly, an insincere promise may not be the best sort of model for promising, but it is still a promise and your commitment can be held against you when you fail to perform. Later, in *How to Do Things with Words*,

Austin elaborated the distinction and produced sub-groups within misfires and abuses. Similarly, we might say that the rumour-monger's lack of credentials makes his testimony void, as testimony, but he has nonetheless gone through a form of testimony; compare the marriage ceremony performed by a bogus clergyman or official. This case of misfired testimony would count as a misinvocation in Austin's terms (Austin 1962: 14–20).

Conclusion

There are several things have been drawn from this chapter. The first is that whether some communication is a degenerate form of testimony cannot be simply read off from the form or content of its telling, though either may give clues to this fact. A communication may have the usual hallmarks of an urban myth, for instance, and we may be wise to treat it as such, but it may turn out to be a case where truth is stranger than fiction and there is a reliable testimonial path to that truth. It seemed like an urban myth, but it was not. The second is that a pathological testimony need not be altogether worthless. The communication may rightly be judged unreliable but turn out to be true, as with certain rumours or lies. Liars can accidentally say what is true while meaning to say what is false and our knowledge of the background to the liar's performance may enable us to spot this and profit from it. Somewhat similarly, a rumourmonger can hit upon the truth without being entitled to any confidence that it is true. This may indeed have been the case with the rumour emanating from the Peruvian Embassy about the planned attack on Pearl Harbour. The ambassador could have been right in his assessment of the general reliability of sources in the Peruvian Embassy. On the other hand, it might have been his assessment of their credibility that was at fault and the communication may not have deserved the title 'rumour'. Once we have reason to characterize some communication as rumour, then equally we have reason to treat it as lacking credibility. It may, nonetheless, deserve further investigation, if the stakes are high enough, just in case it is true, or with the prospect of discovering some truth that it distorts. Once we establish that some communication is urban myth then we can be sure that it is false (with the minor qualifications noted earlier) but it remains possible that it is a revealing fiction. The matter is different with gossip. Once we have established that some communication is gossip, the question of its reliability and truth is much the same as that of any other piece of testimony.

The reason why rumour and gossip are so critically important in many historical processes is that their appeal to people's predilections and sensibilities itself provides the grounds of their verification in people's minds. Put simply, people tend to believe what they want to believe, and if you call someone a witch enough times, they become a witch in the eyes of society. *Léyak* testimony as in the case of Palasari, where evidence and assurance only go as far as

gossip and rumour, it is important to see how these two forms of telling could help us to highlight the knowledge production in such a context. *Léyak*-making reality around the chronic illness and its relationship to traditional healing, e.g. trance-possession as the source of information, in fact, involve such a complex process.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Fear and I were born twins (Hobbes)

All epistemology begins in fear – fear that the world is too labyrinthine to be threaded by reason; fear that the senses are too feeble and the intellect too frail; fear that memory fades, even between adjacent steps of a mathematical demonstration; fear that authority and convention blind; fear that God may keep secrets or demons deceive. Objectivity is a chapter in this history of intellectual fear, of errors anxiously anticipated and precautions taken. But the fear objectivity addresses is different from and deeper than the others. The threat is not external – a complex world, a mysterious God, a devious demon. ... Objectivity fears subjectivity, the core self (Daston and Galison 2007: 372-374).

I was born to this “culture of fear”. To study this “fear”, at least in my case, is like going back to childhood world, even to its pre-existence, the world of my parents. Their world was retold and remoulded through storytelling. As I traced back these episodic memories as part of my journey to study Balinese *léyak*, there is always a desire to unveil this fear. Geertz, Wikan, Lorvic, Stephen and many scholars before and after them have argued of how Balinese construct their fear. Sickness and death have been constructed culturally and creatively on the various forms of arts, dance, stories and drama, rituals, traditional medicine, and image of monstrous and grotesque forms of half human and half animal or flying fire that could harm and cause death.

As in the case of tourists who tend to exoticize and romanticize Bali, the anthropologists of Bali could not often escape from those traps of essentializing. Their works on particular and remote places tend to collectivise Bali as one entity and to claim Bali as the island of the Hindu. Language such as “Balinese are different from ours” is a very common saying and a constantly repeated one. Several strategies have been launched in order to portray different versions of Bali. As Lorvic, Hobart and Wikan advocated, the Balinese witchcraft and sorcery (*léyak*) always have two sides, benign and malign power that can cure and harm. It depends on the motivation of those who practise or acquire it. Apart from dealing with my personal fear, my motivation to take this journey is to show a different Bali from the perspective of a Balinese Catholic community on witchcraft and sorcery.

The work of a social scientist such as anthropologist of religion is not to prove the existence of witches or spirits in one place, but to understand how the belief of the people in that place have developed throughout the continuum. Palasari people have historically been Catholic for

more than 80 years (the first convert was in 1935, the instalment of the village in 1940); but their belief in *léyak* has persisted alongside their Catholicism. Why do they believe in *léyak*? Why do their beliefs take the form they do? These questions have been answered throughout the preceding chapters in this thesis using several strategies.

The thesis begins with a theoretical background for the main claim it puts forth. Narrative (story) link to the belief, witchcraft and illness (*Chapter 2*). The similarity of witchcraft accounts in every locality is their narrative form which is often being overlooked as ethnographers focus more on explaining belief as what indigenous believes. Firstly, it interrogates several players or actors who perceive Palasari in their own way, agenda and interest (*Chapter 3*). Using the metaphor of sorcery advocated by West (2005), I view those players as sorcerers and counter-sorcerers. Sorcerer in West's analysis is one who could render "themselves invisible, they transcend the world inhabited by ordinary people, producing and inhabiting an invisible realm from which they gain a powerful perspective on the visible—a platform from which to elaborate and bring to fruition ghastly visions of carnage that feed their insatiable appetites" (x). The Church's vision on Palasari as a land of refuge for new converts persecuted by their fellow Balinese Hindus was challenged and checked by the Hindu elite (government, politicians, or intellectuals) whose vision of Palasari as a land of exile for prodigals and betrayers of their ancestors and tradition. Recently, Palasari has become an arena of entanglement of various interests and agenda. The inculturation project for making Palasari as a non-Western face of the Catholic Church by embracing the local culture has been charged by the Hindu elite as a strategy of proselytism. An imputation based on the claim that Balinese culture belongs only to the Hindu. The project, however, meets with interest of another player, so-called tourism, with their multi-million dollars investment to transform Palasari into a site for tourists, spiritual or leisure, domestic or foreign. The votive practice as shown in Palasari goes beyond the boundaries of formal and doctrinal religious institution. Meanwhile, the locals often seen as passive recipients of those visions, ideologies, representations and articulations maintain their own vision of Palasari as the land haunted by *léyak*. This game of *kupilikula* – to borrow West's term, between the Church, Hindu elite, tourism and the locals has made Palasari an arena of sorcery.

In *Chapter 4*, I investigate the aetiology of *léyak* from India to Bali and then to Palasari. In the common knowledge of Palasari people (none of them are scholars or literate in classic Hinduism prior to becoming Catholic), *Rangda* and *léyak* are understood as the followers and devotees of the Goddess Durga who has been granted a formidable magical power (*sakti*) and the ability to transform (*ngelekas*), to harm and kill others. The irony is that there is no single trace of Durga as there is in most Balinese villages. The local knowledge indicates that *léyak*

in Palasari is not the result of training or practice but rather inheriting before their conversion to Catholicism or buying from outside for body protection. My observation of so-called first generation of *léyak* in Palasari was in fact of housewives who run the coffee-stalls (*warung*). There are several interpretations of why they had been accused. First, their lack of commitment to community (village and Church); secondly, trading is considered insincere compared to the social action of sharing and solidarity; thirdly, their ability and competence in trading were seen as a form of domination over their men; fourthly, there is a popular belief that links the owner of *warung* to the use charm to attract their customers, and this charm (often in the form of magical tools) would turn the owner into *léyak*. Following Ariati (2009), I argue that Durga, Rangda and *léyak* is a social construction to demonise women seen as independent and more capable than men. The power of *léyak* has to be passed down to their daughters or close relatives. This group made the second generation of *léyak* in Palasari.

Another belief in *léyak* linked Palasari with famous places of black magic in Bali such as Sanur (*Chapter 5*). The epithet that Palasari is the “Second Sanur” did not intend to compare them. Unlike Sanur, there was no magic war at night (*siat peteng*) or demonstration of power in Palasari. What I could gather was that people related *léyak* in Palasari with buying magical tools from famous places. This became the reason why the (chronic) illness recurred or persisted (*Chapter 6*) even after treatments by several *balian*s. The failure and cost of conventional medicine and ambiguous diagnosis, and enduring treatment resulted in the Palasari people turn to *balian* as the last resort. Different to most of the study on Balinese traditional healing and health care which localise the ailment on the domestic and community interaction, such as hiding one’s feeling, anger or detrimental emotion, my observation of Palasari indicates that it is not the case. In Palasari, illness is seen as being conquered by magical power of *léyak*. Finding the right (*cocok*) *balian* or *dukun* who are more powerful is what matters most.

The information about *léyak* always comes from the trance-possession as part of the treatment in *balian* surgery. The Palasari people would selectively believe this information depending on the kind of spirit who possesses someone. Being a Catholic they do not believe in ancestors, *bhutakala* or *kanda empat* as believed by Balinese Hindu as the cause of their illness. The only possible cause for them is by *léyak*. Their belief in the possession by *léyak* (in recent Hindu belief, it is called *bebai*) would depend on the outcome, either healed or not. This belief would define the course of the information about the accused *léyak* which spread through gossips, rumours or testimony (*Chapter 7*).

Unfolding the narrative of *léyak* in Bali is not easy. Genuine practitioners or gurus are very often bound by secrecy. The true knowledge of this belief and practice centred on the idea of

gift and power/hierarchy. Given my experience as an apprentice for 3 months probably was not enough in order to investigate the salient of this belief in Bali. Or perhaps léyak belief would always be kept in secret, and it would provide a path for future research to study the cultural secrecy of Balinese *léyak*.

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Glossary

A

ABRI

Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia; the Indonesian Armed Forces.

adat

Tradition; local customary law and institutions.

agama

Religion; in contemporary Indonesia the term is officially restricted to those religions claiming to be monotheistic and universalist.

Agama Bali Hindu

The "Hindu Balinese religion"; the name of Balinese religion promoted by the periodical *Surya Kanta*.

Agama Hindu Bali

The "Balinese Hindu religion"; the name of Balinese religion defended by the periodical *Bali Adnjana*.

anak jaba

"People outside"; Sudra or commoners as opposed to the *triwangsa*.

ASKI

Akademi Seni Karawitan Indonesia; the Academy of Indonesian Music.

ASTI

Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia; the Academy of Indonesian Dance, founded in Denpasar in 1967.

ATBM

Alat Tenun Bukan Mesin; a treadle loom (the term is Indonesian).

B

babad

Historical/genealogical text.

Bali Adnjana

Periodical published in Singaraja between 1924 and 1930 by the Santi organization; it became the mouthpiece of the aristocrats after the establishment of *Surya Kanta*.

Bali Aga

See Wong Bali Aga.

banjar

Residential village ward.

Baris

Male warrior dance.

barong

Term for a range of large masks, often in dragon, lion, or human form, animated by spiritual beings.

batik

Cloth printed by applying wax in a desired pattern to seal it from the dye.

Bhawanagara

Periodical published in Singaraja between 1931 and 1935 by the Kirtya Liefrinck-Van der Tuuk, a Dutch foundation dedicated to the preservation of traditional Balinese literature.

BHISMA

Balinese Historical and Instructional Study Material Archive.

Bhujangga Waisnawa

A prominent *jaba* clan.

bisama

Sacred ancestral message; religious stipulation of PHDI having moral force for Hindus.

BNR

Bali Nirwana Resort.

bos

Boss.

BPPLA

Badan Pelaksana Pembina Lembaga Adat; Agency for the Development of Customary Institutions.

budaya; kebudayaan

Culture; *kebudayaan* is a neologism of Sanskrit origin whose root (*budaya*) pointed to the development of a person's reason or character before taking on the meaning of "culture."

C

cagcag

Traditional backstrap loom.

camat

District head.

cokorda

Title of the aristocratic Satria Dalem clan, the highest Satria grouping.

D

dalang

Shadow puppeteer.

Depdikbud

Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan; the Department of Education and Culture.

desa

Village; customary (*desa adat*) or administrative (*desa dinas*) unit.

Dikti

Direktorat Jenderal Perguruan Tinggi; the Directorate General of Higher Education.

dinas

Service, official, agency; from the Dutch *dienst*, "service."

Djatajoe

Periodical published in Singaraja between 1936 and 1941 by the Bali Darma Laksana organization.

DPRD

Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah; the Provincial House of Representatives.

dwifungsi

"Dual function" (of the army) in civil and military action.

dwijati

"Twice-born"; refers to a *sulinggih* priest.

E

endek

Single-weft *ikat* made on treadle looms.

F

FCHI

Forum Cendekiawan Hindu Indonesia; the Indonesian Hindu Intellectuals Forum, established in Jakarta in 1991.

FMHB

Forum Mahasiswa Hindu Bali; the Forum of Balinese Hindu Students.

G

Galungan-Kuningan

Main festive period in the Balinese calendar.

Gambuh

Classical dance-drama.

Golkar

Golongan Karya; the government's Functional Groups party.

GWK

Garuda Wisnu Kencana; the "Golden Garuda Monument" project.

H

hukum

Law; religious (Muslim) law as opposed to customary law (*adat*).

hukum adat

"Customary law"; Indonesian rendering of the Dutch word "*adatrecht*"; the etymology of these two words originally placed them in opposition to each other.

I

ICMI

Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia; the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association, established in 1990.

ikat

Cloth made using a tie-dye technique.

ISI

Institut Seni Indonesia; the Institute of Indonesian Arts.

J

jaba

See *anak jaba*.

K

Kabupaten

Regency; administrative division of a province.

kamben

Wraparound cloth worn by both men and women.

kamben bek

Two half-pieces of cloth, with gold supplementary-weft thread running the full length, which are sewn together to make a wrap-around.

Kebalian

"Balineseness"; the Balinese cultural, ethnic, and religious identity.

Kebangkitan Hindu

"Hindu Awakening"; refers to the recent upsurge in Hinduism evinced by the Balinese intelligentsia faced with the growing assertiveness of Islam in Indonesia.

kebiar

A style of dance and accompanying gamelan music.

kebudayaan daerah

"Regional culture"; the acknowledged cultural manifestations deemed representative of a province and expected to contribute to the building of the national Indonesian culture; see also *budaya*.

kerajaan

Kingdom; the domain controlled by a palace.

kesaktian

Invisible spiritual power or efficacy.

keterbukaan

"Openness"; a phrase used since 1989 to refer to a more liberal climate of political expression.

KKN

Kuliah Kerja Nyata; compulsory community service internship for tertiary students in Indonesia.

KODAM

Komando Daerah Militer; Regional Military Command. The chief commander is called Panglima KODAM.

KOKAR

Konservatori Karawitan; the Conservatory of Traditional Music, founded in Denpasar in 1960.

L

Listibiya

Majelis Pertimbangan dan Pembinaan Kebudayaan Daerah Propinsi Bali; the Consultative and Promotional Council for Balinese Culture, founded in Denpasar in 1966.

M

mabakti

(Voluntary) devotional acts.

Majapahit

An East Javanese Hindu empire from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries from which Balinese nobility claim descent.

Margapati

Kebiar-style dance depicting a character study of a young man.

MPLA

Majelis Pembina Lembaga Adat; the Council for the Development of Customary Institutions, established in 1979 under the aegis of the governor's office to reinforce and reform the role of customary institutions in the province of Bali; the steering committee of BPPLA.

Mpu Dwijendra

Fifteenth-century Javanese priest and progenitor of Bali's Brahmana clan.

N

nabe

Priestly consecrator.

Negara

State; term used by Clifford Geertz to denote the nineteenth-century Balinese state constituted by ritual dramaturgy rather than orthodox technologies of power.

niskala

Invisible, subtle, of the spiritual world.

nyepi

Lowland festival of the new year (*nyepi pemerintah*) with many local variants (*nyepi desa*).

P

Pancasila

The Five Principles of official Indonesian state ideology.

Pande

A prominent *jaba* clan.

Panyembrama

Modern dance used to welcome guests.

papanen

Warp beam.

Parisada

See PHDI.

pariwisata budaya

"Cultural tourism"; Bali's official tourism policy, which utilizes Balinese culture to attract tourists while employing the revenues generated by tourism to preserve and promote Balinese culture.

Pasek

A prominent *jaha* clan; there are several branches of this clan, such as the Pasek Sapta Resi.

PDI

Partai Demokrasi Indonesia; the Indonesian Democratic Party.

pedanda

Brahmana priest.

pemangku

Temple priest.

pembangunan

Social and economic development.

Pendet

Ceremonial dance for females.

Pesta Kesenian Bali

Ball Arts Festival; an annual event launched by the governor in 1979 to preserve and promote the Balinese "cultural arts."

PHD; PHDI

Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia; the Indonesian Hindu Council, founded in Denpasar in 1959 as the official liaison body between the Balinese Hindu congregation and the Indonesian Ministry of Religion.

PKI

Partai Komunis Indonesia; the Indonesian Communist Party.

PKK

Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga; the Family Welfare Movement of Indonesia.

plaspas

Inaugural purification ritual.

PNI

Partai Nasionalis Indonesia; the Indonesian Nationalist Party.

PPP

Partai Persatuan Pembangunan; the United Development Party.

PRD

Partai Rakyat Demokratik; the Democratic People's Party.

punggawa

District chief during the precolonial and colonial periods.

puputan

"Finishing" through willed death of ruler and retinue; act of resistance to colonial rule, as in Puputan Badung (1906), Puputan Klungkung (1908), and Puputan Margarana (1946).

puri

Royal palace; noble house.

pusaka

Heirloom regalia.

R

Repelita

Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun; the five-year plans.

rsi bhujangga

Priest from the Bhujangga Waisnawa clan.

S

saput

Short wraparound cloth worn over *kamben* by men.

Sarjana Ilmu Seni

Bachelor of Arts.

Satria

One of the three status groups of the nobility; see *triwangsa* and *warna*.

SDSB

Sumbangan Dana Sosial Berhadiah; the state-sponsored lottery.

semangat

Enthusiasm, energy, spirit.

seni budaya

"Cultural arts"; culture as art.

seni; kesenian

Art; the root word "*seni*" meant "fine," "refined," before becoming understood in the modern sense of "art."

seniman

Artist, performer.

seniman alam

Village artist; "natural" artist.

slendang

Waist sash worn by women.

SMKI

Sekolah Menengah Karawitan Indonesia; the High School of Traditional Indonesian Music, founded in 1979 to replace KOKAR.

songket

Supplementary-weft *ikat* using golden threads; brocade.

sri mpu

Priest from the Pande or Pasek clans.

stabilitas

(Political) stability.

STSI

Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia; the College of Indonesian Arts, founded in 1988 to replace ASTI.

Sudra

Commoners, one way of referring to non-*triwangsa*; see also *anak jaba* and *warna*.

sulinggih

"Twice-born" priest.

Surya Kanta

Periodical published in Singaraja between 1925 and 1927; also the journal of the eponymous commoners' association.

T

Taman Mini Indonesia Indah

Beautiful Indonesia-in-Miniature Park, located on the outskirts of Jakarta, opened in 1977.

tirta

Sanctified water.

topeng

Improvised dance-drama based on historical incidents.

Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi

The Threefold Tasks of Tertiary Education Institutions.

triwangsa

The "three peoples"; the Balinese nobility made up of the three upper casts (Brahmana, Satria, Wesia) as opposed to the commoners (*anak jaba*).

U

udeng

Headdress worn by men.

ulu apad

Village assembly of mountain communities ranked in order of seniority, with a council of paired elders at the head.

W

warga

Jaha clan organization.

warna

Status categories; Balinese hierarchical system comprising the Brahmana, Satria, Wesia, and Sudra (*anakjaba*).

Werdi Budaya

The Art Center founded in Denpasar in 1976.

Wong Bali Aga

Bali Aga, the Balinese people of the mountains; the "original inhabitants."

Y

YLBHI

Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia; the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation.