

RITUAL AND WORLD CHANGE IN A BALINESE PRINCEDOM

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Pamela J. Stewart
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Andrew Strathern
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RITUAL AND WORLD CHANGE IN A BALINESE PRINCEDOM

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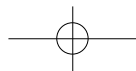
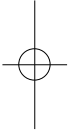
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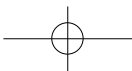
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CONTENTS

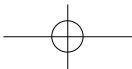
List of Figures	XI
Acknowledgments	XIII
Series Editors' Preface	XVII
Chapter One Introduction	3
Prelude: An Heirloom Dagger and Two Ancestral Ceremonies	3
The Jero Gede Sidemen, Balinese Kingship and Princedoms	12
Precolonial Kingship Debated	16
Colonial and Postcolonial Kingship	22
Maligya Ritual: Symbolism, Sociogenesis, and Social Action	25
An Integrated Approach to Ritual	27
Emotion and Reflection	28
History and Current Events: Mediating Connections	30
Ritual, Risk and Resistance	33
Not Just a "Showcase" Response	38
The Perspective from the Sidemen Maligya	40
Positioning of the Anthropologist	43
Balinese Caste and its Terminology	46
Plan of the Book	48
PART ONE THE PERFORMANCE OF A PRINCEDOM	53
Chapter Two A Ritual Unfolds in Historical Context: The Sidemen Maligya	55
The Maligya Ritual and Deification of the Ancestors	57
The Maligya Ritual and Worldly Status	60
The Sidemen Maligya from Inception to Creation of Ritual Spaces	65
The Progression of the Maligya Ritual: Ancestral Time and National Politics	73
Climax in Ritual, a Princedom, and the World	90

VIII CONTENTS

Photo Plates: The Sidemen Maligya	95
Chapter Three Mobilizing the Structures of a Princedom	119
Mobilizing Invisible Relationships:	
Setting in Motion Mandalas of Prayer and Holy Water	120
The Raja-Bagawanta Priest Relationship	128
Mobilizing Connections to Followers	133
Historical Connections	138
Discussion of the Categories of Historical Follower Connections	143
Villages with Historical Connections	145
Conclusion	157
PART TWO RECASTING BALINESE HIERARCHY	161
Chapter Four Land Matters: Obligations to the Source and the Ancestors	163
Princes, Pacatu, and People	165
Pacatu in the Sidemen Princedom	167
Dutch Colonial Policy to Dismantle Pacatu	170
Postindependence Land Reform	171
The Jero Gede Sidemen's Relations in this Period of the 1960s	177
The Role of Population Expansion and Bartering with the Lord	181
The Land Embodies a History: Ongoing Material Proof	185
Ancestral Oaths and the Risks of "Forgetting"	186
Chapter Five Populist Princes: The Hard Work of Hierarchical Privilege	193
Divine Kingship Revisited	193
Characteristics of the Ruler: Leadership of the Sidemen House	197
Working the People: Populism and Philanthropy	202
The Everyday Work of Maintaining Hierarchical Privilege	207
Roles of Other Men of the House	218
Women of the House	222
The Role of the Jero Gede Sidemen in	
Village Temples and Agriculture	225
Conclusion	229
Chapter Six Circumscribed Royal Power	233
Divinely Imbued Powers of the People	234
Contemporary Examples of People Power:	
The Rise of Megawati and the Threat of Mob Actions	244
Historical Shifts and Conscious Strategy	252

CONTENTS ix

PART THREE	WORLD CHANGE	259
Chapter Seven	The Keris, The Princedom, and the Nation State	261
	Megawati in Sidemen: Not Politics; A Ritual Coup	262
	The Sidemen Heirloom: A Remarkable Claim	267
	Assessing the Claim to Ownership of Keris Bangawan Cangu	271
	Endorsement of President and Princes	273
	Reestablished Connection between Sidemen and Klungkung	278
	Counter-Government Strategy: For the Common Good	280
	Ritual and World Change	289
Chapter Eight	Conclusion	295
	Accommodations and Appropriated Discourses	296
	A History Object and Displaced Agency	301
	Ritual and Status Elevation through a Power Vacuum	304
	Revival and Escalation versus Reformist Trends in Ritual	306
	Indigenous Political Form in the Twenty-first Century	310
	World Renewal	316
	Glossary	319
	References	325
	Index	341



LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1

1. Map of Bali
2. Map of Bali and the Court of Majapahit within Indonesia
3. Genealogy: Core Family Members of the Jero Gede Sidemen

Chapter 2

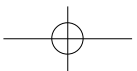
4. Payadnyan Layout—Sidemen, Bali 1998
5. Map of The Sidemen Princedom with Global Connections

Chapter 3

6. Map of Prayer Trip
7. Map of Holy Water Trip
8. Map of Villages in the Local Princedom of Sidemen

Chapter 7

9. Genealogy: Rulers of Gelgel according to Klungkung Babad Dalem
10. Genealogy: Rulers of Gelgel according to Sidemen Babad Dalem



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XIV ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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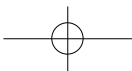
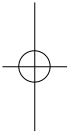
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With all of the assistance and guidance that I have received, responsibility for the shortcomings of this book lies with me alone. I present it to the Jero Gede Sidemen and their followers as my humble offering, with apologies for all of its imperfections.



SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE

— Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern

We are very pleased to include Lene Pedersen's *Ritual and World Change in a Balinese Princedom* in the Ritual Studies Monograph Series. The work presents a lively ethnographic account of a Balinese princedom, informed by the historical positionality of a range of actors, e.g. the Balinese themselves and the Dutch colonial personages. Through an exploration of ritual performativity the contemporary political context of the study arena is detailed in relation to the agency and motives of the persons involved. Also, important questions of how local constructions of identity and power relations are sustained in conjunction with the nation-state are examined.

Pedersen's work is written in an accessible and lively manner while addressing topics of interest to researchers in a range of disciplines (e.g. Anthropology, Religious and Ritual Studies, History, and Southeast Asian Studies). This study exemplifies the ways that people cope with structuring their political and ritual lives at the local level while balancing influences from the nation-state and other outside forces. This approach is of particular interest in terms of the study of globalization, transnational flows of ideas and practices, and glocalization (the local appropriation and transformation of globalizing influences and their incorporation into local sets of practices).

The processes by which people create a place with identities of a particular sort are numerous. In our researchwork in Scotland (see Strathern and Stewart 2001) and Ireland since the mid-1990s we have seen that a proliferation of local and regional festivals that celebrate traditions, crafts, food, dancing, recitations, and re-enactments have been taking place. These activities are all centered on specific places where particular local identities are being emphasized. The Ulster-Scots movement in Ireland that we have described in our writings is an excellent example of the local re-imagining of identities which are both transnational and local in character (see Stewart and Strathern 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c; and Strathern and Stewart 2003, 2004a, 2005a, 2005b). History is a vital component of these studies.

XVIII SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE

The relationship between history and anthropology is clearly represented in Pedersen's work. Her research fits neatly with the growing trend in which anthropological work has become much more historical in character as researchers have become more aware that what they observe and discuss as customs or structures are in fact elements in history. Everything has a history, and everywhere customs, practices, and structures are in processes of change; sometimes these changes are large but sometimes they are small and gradual. A concern with the dynamics of these changes is fundamental in research work nowadays. Anthropologists at one time argued that one could not take history into account where it was not known. But ethnohistory, the history of a people as they themselves recount it, is always available, since universally people do have their own accounts of history. And when we are working in the midst of peoples with long written histories and traditions of scholarship it is obvious that history must be a large part of our knowledge basis. Every anthropologist, then, must be to some extent a historian. We have found this true in our fieldwork in Scotland and Ireland. But it is equally true for our work in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, where much can be learned from studying the people's own ethnohistory and from taking to heart the fact that they do not make the distinction between history and myth in the same way that anthropologists have tended to do.

For example, in the Duna area of the Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea, stories of the founding of groups among these people are important for understanding their patterns of social structure today, since they define the structure of authorized leadership in local groups (see Stewart and Strathern 2002; and Strathern and Stewart 2004b). But these same stories have gained a renewed importance in dealing with mining companies in the late nineteen nineties, since the people have used the geographical basis of their stories to make claims for compensation for environmental pollution on the companies. The Duna also mix pre-colonial ritual practices with introduced Christian ones to recreate and emphasize relationships with the local environment, its fertility, and the cosmos at large.

The use of ritual practices to balance the emplaced relations of persons within their cosmological worlds is aptly demonstrated by Pedersen's study. She encapsulates this by stating that "through these chapters [of the book], a combined theme of fertility and power has wound, like the snake of the *keris* [a long dagger], the cosmic object that embodies both male and female characteristics, the symbol that binds together the realm. The ritual of *maligya* [a post cremation ceremony to purify and deify deceased ancestors] is about the recycling of souls and regeneration at all levels of existence."

Pedersen's study tackles and provides new solutions to some fundamental problems in the analysis of early state forms in South-East Asia, particularly those arising from Clifford Geertz's work on the 'theater state' in Bali. While stressing the effective roles of ritual and ceremony, she also notes the importance of charisma and violence in maintaining the ruler's powers, and the significance attributed to magic in the spheres of both ritual and charisma: a significance well exemplified in the symbol of the *keris*, dagger and snake, male and female. The *keris* can be seen as a transform of the python symbol, which carries potent associations throughout Eastern Indonesia (Strathern and Stewart 2000).

Pedersen's work is also a valuable contribution to the theory of ritual generally. She reviews the ideas of Valerio Valeri on Huauilu rituals, and of Maurice Bloch on the Merina circumcision rituals, and concludes that Balinese rituals are complex and multi-centered, that ritual meanings change because of flexibilities in their symbolism, and that over time they become the object of contests over power and resistance to power: all conclusions that are paralleled by investigations we have made into Taiwanese ritual practices centered on Mazu, a powerful female figure who is thought to protect those who fish for a living from shipwrecks at sea (Stewart and Strathern 2005). Pedersen's argument thus not only illuminates her own ethnographic materials but also provides suggestive pointers in the direction of cross-cultural comparative studies in the wider Asia-Pacific context.

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xx SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE

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