

THE PATH OF THE SOUL: THE LEGITIMACY OF NATURE IN BALINESE CONCEPTIONS OF SPACE¹

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Space is highly ordered in Balinese thought and its use is organised according to definite rules. Within this framework, ritual position and movement possess a complex significance. In the closed cycle of life, death and rebirth, for example, the location of ceremonies varies with changes in status and provides a tangible expression of the fate of the human soul. The basic dimensions are defined by reference to terrestrial and empyrean phenomena and are identified with processes in nature which are perceived as changeless: the course of the sun and the downhill flow of water. From this, there emerges a connexion between the interpretation of space and the traditional political order, founded upon a theory of caste. For the main directional axis is associated with ritual purity, which also constitutes the ideological principle underlying the system of ranking. Through the medium of the spatial grid, purity - or innate religious difference which justifies political inequality - is represented as a natural and unquestionable quality. This is strikingly reminiscent of Cohen's view of political systems that: 'the stability and continuity of the régime are made possible through a complex system of symbolism that gives it legitimacy by representing it ultimately as a "natural" part of the celestial order' (A. Cohen 1969: 221).

This argument raises two more general issues. One of the approaches to the study of Balinese society has stressed the importance of a conceptual order based on organised dual classification, in which the indigenous dimensions form fundamental pairs of complementary opposites.² Such a system may, however, have two aspects. The directions have often been reduced to a series of exclusive binary oppositions; whereas in some contexts it would be more exact, and useful, to adopt instead a model based on a continuum between polar extremes (P. Cohen 1975: 620-22). Applied to space in Bali, a formal analysis in terms of dualistic categories tends to be static and incomplete, as it ignores the problems of relative position and mobility.

On a different theme, the increasingly sophisticated studies, which demonstrate the ways societies classify and structure the natural world (Douglas 1957; 1966; 1970; Leach 1964; Lévi-Strauss 1962; 1966; Tambiah 1969), sometimes create the impression that anthropologists adopt a position of cultural relativism which overlooks Lévi-Strauss' point that man may desire 'objective knowledge' of the properties of the universe (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 2-3). This emphasis on the cultural bases of classification is not incompatible with the view that there is a

world 'out there'. In some features, nature possesses an observable order (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1966: 9-10), which may be of symbolic significance precisely because it appears to be intrinsic, immutable and independent of society. In Bali, it is interesting that the natural events underlying the spatial system are distinguished by being conceived of as part of a universe largely beyond human control. At one level, the socialisation of nature seems to be reversed, and society is presented as linked to the natural order.

In his survey, principally of the work of Dutch scholars on Balinese religion, Swellengrebel provides a useful discussion on what he terms 'cosmic antipodes' (1960: Chapter 3). In common with certain other societies in the Indonesian archipelago, the Balinese recognise an antithesis between the direction of the interior, *kaja*, and the sea, *kelod*.³ This forms the primary axis, in which the mountains are identified with the sacred, purity and goodness, whereas the sea is the complete reverse. There is a secondary axis, running from east, *kangin*, to west, *kauh*, which tends to emerge as less important, but reflects a similar dichotomy of qualities. Associated with this classification are a series of further binary oppositions, which include: sacred:profane; gods:demons; male:female; safety:danger; waxing moon:waning moon; day:night; life:death; and even *désa:banjar* (the so-called religious and secular village communities respectively). There is another common system, partly related to the one mentioned, but of less immediate relevance. This is the division of the universe into ranked worlds, above and below the island of Bali, comprising: *akasa*, the upper world, *madyapada*, the human world, and *neraka*, the underworld (Swellengrebel 1960: 37-46).

Initially, Balinese directions may be considered then as defined by reference to two spatial axes. These differ in character, however, for while the east:west line is fixed, the one linking mountain and sea describes a radius round a roughly central point to produce a circle. Unfortunately, the exact location of *kaja* raises difficulties. According to some authors, it seems to be correlated with the highest volcano, Gunung Agung, rising over 3,000 metres to the eastern end of the central mountain chain (Covarrubias 1937: 76; Mead 1960: 201), although in the west of the island it is apparently replaced by lesser, but more visible, peaks. In a fascinating study of the geometrical considerations in temple orientations, James has demonstrated the significance of topography, but that particular identification is questionable (James 1973: 148-9; Swellengrebel 1960: 39). For much of the lowland area, the reference points of *kaja* and *kelod* commonly adopted appear to correspond roughly with upstream and downstream, from the volcanic lakes and springs of the interior to the sea, or with the course of water. This view receives some support from a scrutiny of detailed early maps of the plains where the paths run in a similar direction, rather than radiating out

from the mountains. The relevance of this should become evident in due course.

As the lake:sea axis is theoretically radial, it bears little relation to the compass points, and varies from place to place around the coast-line. In the narrow belt to the north of the mountain range, *kaja* lies towards the south, so that the most propitious direction is to the south-east. It is at the lateral extremities of the island that difficulties occur. For the few villages in the remote west, the direction of the lakes and east coincide; but correspondingly, in the eastern tip they stand opposed. From a brief survey of settlements there, *kaja* seems to predominate for many purposes.⁴ Thus, by inversion, reduplication or suppression, the system can be made to work.

As the majority of the island's population and its historical centre are in the southern lowlands, the line connecting mountains (or lakes) and the sea runs approximately from north to south, so these terms will be used in what follows to prevent unnecessary repetition of unfamiliar words. The result is that the two axes mentioned intersect at a centre, to produce a five-part model, or classificatory scheme, which includes other sets, such as deities, colours, numbers and days (of the Balinese five-day week), known popularly as the *Panca Déwa* (five gods). Hooykaas (C. Hooykaas 1974: 2-3) gives an account of the myth in which this complex, referred to as the *Panca Kosika*, is created. This arrangement is related to a more elaborate nine-part system, the *Nawa Sanga*, in which the intermediate directions are ascribed with a prominence similar to that of the cardinal points (Pott 1966: 134-5; see also fig. 1).

This ritual grid has wide application. Apart from furnishing the basic frame of reference, in attributing differential value to the directions, it organises the use of space in a wide range of matters, from the proper orientation while sleeping (with the head to the north or east) to the location of temples and shrines (Goris 1960a; 1960b: 106). Relative position may be relevant. Norms influence the arrangement of seating at public meetings (Grader 1937: 112-14; cf. Hobart 1975: 72-3), or the contact between castes (Belo 1970a: 93-4; Mead 1960). They also affect religious observances such as the mortuary pollution obligatory for neighbours, *pengapit*, of an afflicted household, so that compounds to the north recognise shorter mourning periods than those to the south. There is an interesting connexion here between ritual purity and the flow of water; for, not only is the prescribed length of pollution on death diminished the higher the caste, but also the terms used for the directions in these circumstances are *luan*, upstream, and *tebènan*, downstream.⁵

This system also underlies the framework in terms of which social space is structured to correspond with, and reduplicate, the putative form of the cosmos (cf. Barnes 1974; Cunningham 1973,

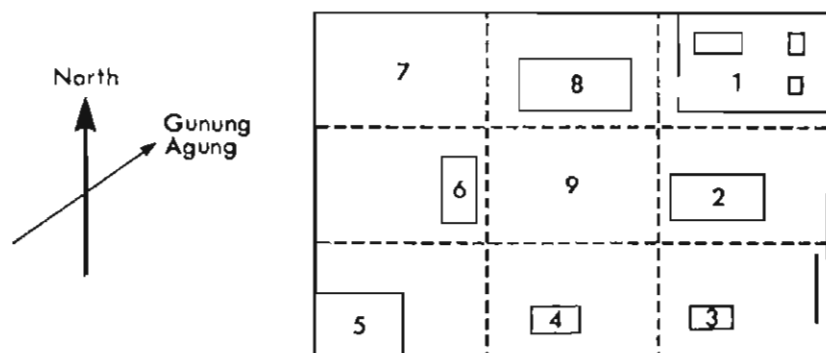
for instances from other Indonesian societies). It is to be found, for example, in the ideal form of the village and compound discussed below (Tan 1966), in the ritual setting for the enthronement of a prince (Swellengrebel 1947) or the layout of the shadow-play, *wayang kulit*, and its orientation (for the *mantra*, or invocations, used by the puppeteer in linking the stage to the encompassing order and the directions, see Hooykaas 1973a: 76-7). In this scheme, the human body may be seen as a microcosm, *buwana alit*, and its parts identified with the divisions of the natural world (Weck 1937: 237-44) and the directions (Wirz 1928: 67), rather than as forming a component of the universe, *buwana agung*. On many occasions, the body must be oriented according to the requirements of the spatial rules, so that distinctions of right and left become subordinate. It is possible that this is not unconnected with the problem of the essential motility of human beings.

For the more detailed examination of the use of space, it will be convenient to adopt the arrangement found in the settlement of Tengahpadang (a pseudonym) in the southern Balinese kingdom of Gianyar, where my field-work was carried out. In its general features, it fits well with the accounts in much of the published literature.⁶ However, as there is variation in local customs, the possibility of regional differences should not be ignored. The Geertzes, for instance, describe a number of different compounds, but the directions are, unfortunately, not always clear (Geertz & Geertz 1975: 50-52).

The attributes of the spatial grid are evident in the ordered layout of the houseyard and village. Instead of a central building surrounded by land, Balinese compounds normally consist of several pavilions in a roughly square territory, bounded by high walls often in an advanced state of dilapidation. According to Tan (from whose useful discussion the following is partly drawn), this residential area may be divided conceptually into nine smaller squares, each with its appropriate function defined by the directions. The resulting pattern reduplicates the *Nawa Sanga*, in which the interstitial segments can be seen as an elaboration on the major axes.

The sections of an idealised, low-caste compound are represented in schematic form in Figure 1, omitting garden land which may lie around the perimeter. A high proportion of residences in Pisangkaja, the main ward studied, approximates this model, including those on which the ethnographic account below is based. The main deviations are in multiple household yards, where the junior branches tend to reiterate the arrangement in part, in most instances, significantly, to the south and west (cf. Geertz & Geertz 1975: 50-52). Families which have recently built a new compound often start with the essential structures and ancestor shrines, with the intention of filling the gaps later. Long-established, but poor, households seem generally

Figure 1 Scheme of a simple compound in Tengahpadang
(Not to scale)



(The continuous line represents the wall and the broken one the theoretical internal divisions)

Direction :	God in the Nawa Sanga :	Part of Compound :	
1. N.E.	Sambu	Sanggah	House shrines
2. E.	Iswara	Balé dangin	Eastern pavilion
3. S.E.	Mahèswara	Lumbung	Rice granary
4. S.	Brahma	Paon	Kitchen
5. S.W.	Rudra	Badan Cèlèng	Pigsty
6. W.	Mahadéwa	Balé dauh	Western pavilion
7. N.W.	Songkara	—	(Variable)
8. N.	Wisnu	Metèn	Northern pavilion
9. Centre	Siwa	Natah	Ground

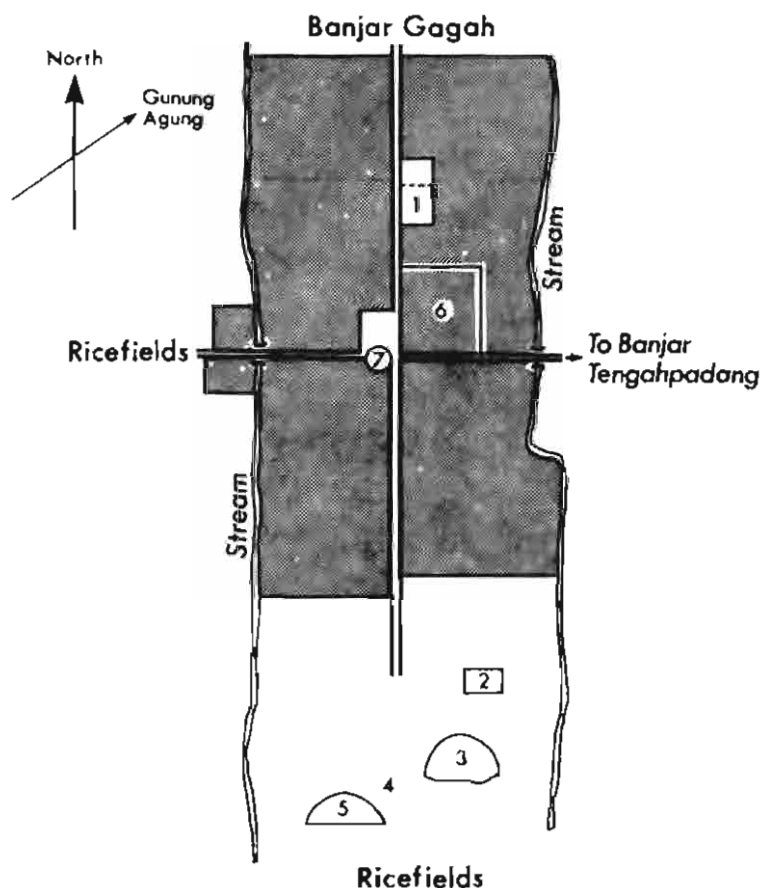
to attempt to maintain the standard, either by using inexpensive materials or simply by allowing the pavilions to fall into a lamentable condition. The most variation is often in the large yards of wealthy extended families, where buildings proliferate on available garden-land. A striking illustration of this occurred in the *purī*, palace, of the local minor prince. In building a small shop, he was forced to relocate the pigsty in a space on the eastern side of the compound, but still south of the shrines. The complaints to which this led from both the villagers and the senior branch of the royal house provide some indication of the importance attached to correct form.

The structure of the pavilions parallels the tripartite division of the world, discussed above. The raised stereobate corresponds to the underworld and is avoided, except as the site for offerings to demons, *buta*. The open area, enclosed by a variable number of walls (Tan 1966), is used for sleeping and secular activity; while the roof area supported by pillars is reserved for offerings to relatively pure spirits associated with the upper world. The prescriptions for the proper and auspicious measurements of each building are laid down in the manuscript, the *Asta Kosali* (Soebadio 1975). In addition, I was informed that not only the size and form of these, but also the purity of the species of tree used as timber is graded according to caste status.

Similar principles underlie the territorial organisation of the village, although the variation due to topography and historical accident is greater. In Pisangkaja, which both inscriptions and local tradition state to be the original settlement in Tengahpadang, the ideal is followed closely. The ward is divided into four quarters by two paths, running at right-angles to one another in accordance with the main directional axes (Figure 2). The cross-road forms the centre of the village and is a ritually ambiguous place, which is protected by a shrine and a sacred *waringin* tree. This is believed to be haunted at night by villagers possessing *kesaktian*, magical power usually obtained by supplicating the goddess Batari Durga, otherwise known as Batara Sakti, and hence often associated with witchcraft (Belo 1949; Covarrubias 1937: 320-58). To the north-east lies a large complex, the *Pura Désa*, which combines a temple for the founding ancestors, *Pura Puseh*, with one for village meetings, *Pura Balé Agung*. Outside the settlement, and *désa* boundary¹ to the south stands the *Pura Dalem*, often translated as the temple of death or the underworld, and near it, to the south and west, are the cremation mound and cemeteries. Appropriately, the burial site for the three high castes, *triwangsa*, lies slightly to the north-east of the commoners' graveyard, to the south of which a small group of Chinese tombs faces open ricefields. (Apparently, this satisfies both Balinese ritual and Chinese geomantic requirements simultaneously!) Finally, the palace of the local prince, already mentioned, is located immediately to the north-east of the cross-

Figure 2 Outline of the Major Sites in Pisangkaja

(For simplicity, only the places mentioned in the text are shown.)



indicates residential land currently within the boundaries of the désa (adat)

1. Pura Désa, with Pura Balé Agung to the south
2. Pura Dalem
3. Triwangsa cemetery
4. Low coste cemetery
5. Chinese cemetery
6. Palace (Puri) of local prince
7. Waringin (bonyan) tree with shrine underneath

road. This pattern accords closely with the model given by Tan (1966: 471-2).

So far, it has simply been shown that space may be conceived as a series of bounded units, within which the parts are ordered with some sense of direction, so that north and east are purer, or more propitious, than south or west. By combination, the north-east emerges as superior to the south-west. There are a number of shortcomings in the existing arguments as they stand. First, the two axes effectively reduplicate one another; second, the significance of the coordinates remains somewhat vague; finally, in stressing the dual classification of space, there are difficulties in interpreting movement and relative position.

A certain amount of light may be shed on these problems by a closer examination of the ethnography on Bali. In native exegesis, the poles of the sacred directions are identified with points in the external world; and, further, the axes connecting them are associated with the appropriate natural processes. Each of these exhibits a distinct type of motion, which is governed by laws *independent of cultural conceptions*. These are, namely, the rotation of the earth and the force of gravity. It is to particular aspects of these, observed and recognised culturally by the Balinese, that symbolic value is attached. This is not, however, to imply that there is a necessary connexion.

The referents of east and west are fairly obvious, as the places at which the sun rises and sets (cf. Swellengrebel 1960: 38). Moreover, on occasions, villagers explicitly equate these with life and death, and the course of the sun with the ageing of man. On the second half of the cycle, informants were less clear, but tentatively related the sun's return to the east by the morning to the equally mysterious means by which the soul moves in death to be reborn. At certain points, there is a formal terminological parallel between the position of the sun in the sky and the stages of human maturation. Afternoon, or *lingsiran*, derives from the high Balinese word *lingsir*, old, used of a senescent person (van Eck 1876). Dusk is designated *sandé kaon* or *sandé kala*. *Kaon* refers, among its other meanings, to evil or misfortune; while *kala* may be either a class of demonic spirit associated with death, or the word for time, manifest in its destructive aspect as the god, Batara Kala. The relatively invariant track of the sun suggests a reason that the east-west axis should be fixed in Balinese thought.

From the introductory discussion, it will be recalled there was evidence to the effect that the poles of the other main axis were the mountain-lakes, or springs, and the sea. In mortuary observance, *kaja* was terminologically correlated with upstream, while downstream was a polluted direction. In Balinese thought, an analogy is drawn between the relative cleanness of river water before it enters the village to be dirtied by washing, excretion



2. A priest (*pamangku*) officiating at the washing of rice by a spring for a temple festival.



5. Taking the effigy of a temple deity to a pure water source for lustration

and garbage, and the purificatory effects of holy water, *tirtha* and *toya penglukatan* (C. Hooykaas 1973b: 10-11). For ritual purposes, water is taken from a source declared to be pure and is converted ceremonially into a holy state. It may then be used in lustration, through which the various forms of impurity, including *kumel* and *sebel* referred to below,⁸ are washed away symbolically towards the sea, *kelod* (C. Hooykaas 1973b: 6; J. Hooykaas 1961 esp. 16-18; also Belo 1953). This is so general that, as Hooykaas has pointed out, the Balinese may describe this entire system as *agama tirtha*, the religion of holy water, (C. Hooykaas 1973b: 11). Significantly, ritual purity, *kesucian*, is linked to the flow of water in the context of caste relations. One of the manifestations of the caste hierarchy is the acceptance of holy water only from the temples of clearly superior groups. Some high castes still refuse to join in receiving *tirtha* from the local *Pura Puseh*, on the grounds that the deities might include ancestors of inferior status. The same may apply to holy water made by a village priest, *pemangku*, of lower caste than the supplicant; for, as one man put it: water does not flow upwards.⁹

There is some indication of the existence of a shadowy third vertical axis, overlapping in part with the previous one, which may be read as diagonal, but nonetheless analytically distinct. This may correspond to the sky and earth, or the ranked worlds, already discussed, of gods, men and inferior beings - animals like snakes and ghosts such as *tonya*, the spirits of men who have suffered bad deaths, by falling into ravines where they remain in perpetuity in separate villages. This dimension appears to be connected to the system of relative status ranking, one expression of which is the formal differentiation of head height (Mead 1960). For instance, in the consecration of a *Brahmana* high priest, the central rite, *napak*, of submission to the teacher consists in the latter placing his foot on the pupil's head (for full details, see Korn 1960: 146). In palaces, certain pavilions may be raised so that the prince can stay physically superior to lesser mortals (cf. van der Kaaden 1937). In contrast, where men sit on the same level, this may be an explicit statement of status equality. This inferred distinction is not a part of the *Panca Déwa* system, but the terms used are still interesting. Below, *betèn*, is opposed to above, (*di*)/*duur*, which is related to *luur* and *leluur* (or *leluurur*), the high Balinese words for high and ancestor, respectively. As status and purity tend to be correlated in Bali, it is logical that the lake:sea axis may be seen as oblique.

There are grounds, then, for suggesting that the indigenous spatial grid provides a framework within which a putative relationship of particular natural phenomena to social concepts or values may be formalised and affirmed. Nor is this selection apparently arbitrary in a society which practises irrigated rice agriculture and is dependent upon water and sunshine for the successful harvests of its staple crop. The associated ideas

of maturity, purity and rank may further be linked to distinct types of status. The east-west axis is related to the socially recognised stages of human life, to bio-social status or, in one sense, social identity; the lake:sea coordinates to religious purity or ritual status; and the partly separable continuum of high and low, to rank and prestige (C. Geertz 1966a: 23-41).

The question remains of the extent to which the proposed model assists in the interpretation of the Balinese use of space. In the compound, some aspects of the ideal pattern become clearer. The north-eastern corner generally consists of an elevated platform for the *sanggah*. This is the site of the shrines to the normally benevolent, purified ancestral spirits, who are expected to guard the welfare and lives of their subordinate descendants. There is also a customary order in the arrangement of living-quarters in Tengahpadang, even if it is not always observed. Of the pavilions, the northern, or *metèn*, is raised the highest and is the appropriate place for the senior generation who will return shortly, by a circuitous route, to ancestral status and already enjoy a degree of purity (C. Geertz 1966a: 15). The heir should reside in the *balé dangin*, to the east and lower than the *metèn*; while any remaining married sons ideally occupy the low *balé dauh* to the west, or other buildings preferably on this side. This would appear to correspond with the superior status of the heir, and his responsibility for the material provision and continuity of the descent line. While this order fits the account given by Covarrubias (1937: 92-4), it differs from the example cited by Belo (1970b: 357-8), as the anticipated positions of the inheriting son and his mother are reversed. On enquiry, however, I was told that this is a common practice at a certain stage in the developmental cycle, as the *balé dangin* is associated with life, and hence may preserve the health of the ageing.

In Pisangkaja, the shrines in the amalgamated village temple to the protective ancestors of the *Pura Puseh* are sited to the north and east of those forming the *Pura Balé Agung* (see fig. 2). In contrast, the graveyard lies beyond the village boundary to the south-west, the combined directions of pollution and death. Immediately to the north-east is located the *Pura Dalem*, the temple for the dead who are 'just purified' (Goris 1960a: 84). Obviously, in some settlements contingent factors may affect this neat layout, but the model still illuminates the features of the preferred arrangement.

The structure of space emerges most fully, however, from the analysis of religious ceremonies, in which relative position and mobility become critical. Briefly, the Balinese generally classify their vast body of rituals into yet another five-part scheme, known as the *panca-yadnya* (or *pañca-yajña*). This comprises: *déwa-yadnya* and *b(h)uta-yadnya*, offerings to gods and demons; *manusa-yadnya* and *pitra-yadnya*, offerings for the living and for the dead; and finally, the somewhat obscure *resi-yadnya*,

offerings said to be for the priests or the pious (Hooykaas 1975: 246-259). For the present purposes, the life-cycle and mortuary rites provide a convenient example, in which the function and symbolic significance of the spatial axes is evident. For the various stages of human spiritual development are paralleled by successive shifts of ritual site *in strict accordance* with the values implied by the directional grid. Thus, there is a congruence between the location of ceremonies and the changes in status of the person or soul, elaborated in indigenous philosophy. A detailed investigation not only confirms these statements of belief, but also suggests that there is a coherent pattern in the selection of places used in rites of passage. Within this system, the movement of the body and then the soul in religious performance serves to communicate messages about the changing qualities of men in Balinese society.

Traditional eschatology contains an involved and sometimes contradictory set of theories, perhaps partly as a consequence of differences between the various literary and folk traditions (cf. J. Hooykaas 1956). For example, the high priests of whom I enquired either denied the possibility of reincarnation, or declared its workings unknowable. In popular thought, however, there appear to be discrepant versions of the fate of the soul. On the one hand, through mortuary rites, the impure soul, *pirata*, becomes a partly purified *pitara*,¹⁰ and eventually coalesces into a remote collective ancestral deity; but it may also become an ancestral spirit, to some degree personalised (Boon 1974), responsible for its descendants. On the other hand, the soul is thought to be judged and sentenced according to its deeds to a period in the after-world, from which it returns to be reborn, on occasions almost immediately, into its original agnatic extended family.¹¹ In Gianyar at least, attention is paid to this last possibility. On the birth of a child, a spirit-medium, *balian tetakson*, is consulted for its welfare may depend on the correct identification of the lineal antecedent. Thus, in common belief, which is the concern here, the path of the soul forms a closed cycle.

In Tengahpadang, it is widely held that, prior to birth, the embryo's soul is still pure, as it retains vestiges of ancestral qualities. This carries over, in ever-decreasing degrees, into the first months, or even years (up till puberty), of life, but is largely masked by the pollution, *kumel*, of parturition. It is progressively diminished through rites, culminating effectively in the ceremony of *nelubulanin*, performed on the 105th day, upon which the child attains a normal state and may enter temples for the first time. Apart from incidental impurity of various sorts, a more or less constant religious condition is maintained until about the time of female menopause, or grandparenthood (Mead 1960: 198; cf. C.Geertz 1966a: 25), when the person is thought slowly to become pure again. This trend is abruptly reversed on death, which marks the onset of intense

pollution, *sebel*, gradually alleviated in a long series of ceremonies to convert the shade into an ancestor. At a secular level, a person's social status is increased after marriage by the appearance of successive generations of descendants, only to slump rapidly in death. It is fitting that, at its nadir, the spirit is termed a *patela* (the word may literally mean: earth: van der Tuuk 1897), and finally rises to be a *lelangitan* (*langit* = sky, heaven) or *leluar* (see above) in high Balinese.

This cycle of status changes is reflected with some precision in the performance of rites of passage. In what follows, the implications of the directions, should, by now, be clear, so I shall not repeat them unnecessarily. The proper place for birth, the rebirth of an ancestral spirit, and its attendant ceremony of *pekamel* is in the *metèn*, even if this is not always practicable. As the descent group deities are worshipped from the *sanggah*, this implies a movement of the soul downwards and to the west, as divine essence is incarnated in humble and perishable human form (for an outline of these stages: Figure 3). The site for the subsequent rituals - *lepas aon*, held on the fall of the umbilical cord; *ngerorasin*, the twelfth-day naming ceremony; and *kambuhan* on the forty-second day, which terminates the mother's impurity - is moved due south and down again, as the pollution of birth sets in. From the 105th day onwards, the location is shifted yet again to the *balé dangin*. This coincides with the child's release from *kumel*. Only at this stage may a village priest, *pemangku*, officiate, for previous ritual is the duty of the less pure birth-specialist, *balian manakan*. The remaining ceremonies in life occur here, to ensure individual welfare and the reproduction of the group, through birthdays, *oton*, tooth-filing, *mesangih* and marriage, *mesakapan*. The more subtle distinctions of status are expressed in the secular use of living space mentioned.

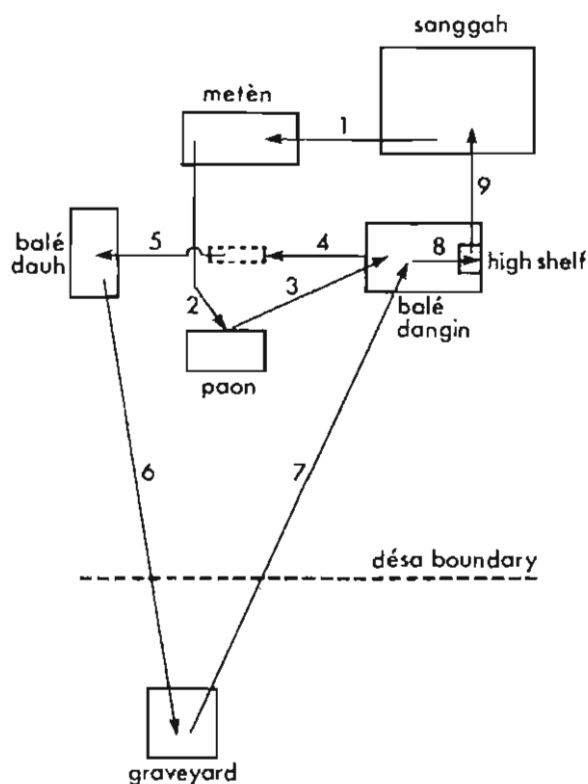
Death should also take place in the *balé dangin*. As has been noted, this apparent deviation is perhaps explicable as an attempt to prevent death. If it fails, mortuary rites begin as soon as possible afterwards, when the cadaver is promptly carried due west to the centre of the compound, where it is washed and prepared for burial on a waist-high temporary platform. All the ingredients used in lustration are passed over the body from east to west and thrown on the ground there. By this point, a reversal has occurred, for in ceremonies during life the body is normally oriented towards the east; whereas in death the head of the recumbent corpse is propped to face west. Next, the body is carried further towards the west, where it is honoured for the last time before its final rejection from society. This consists of *mepamit*, a prayer requesting permission to leave the dead (held once more as the cortège enters the graveyard), and *nyumbah*, paying homage by stooping to pass under the litter, which may be performed only by genealogical juniors (but normally including the wife), with the exception of great-grandchildren, *kumpi*,



4. The preparatory cleansing of the corpse with holy water
(from head to foot)



Figure 3 The Movement between Sites in Rites of Passage

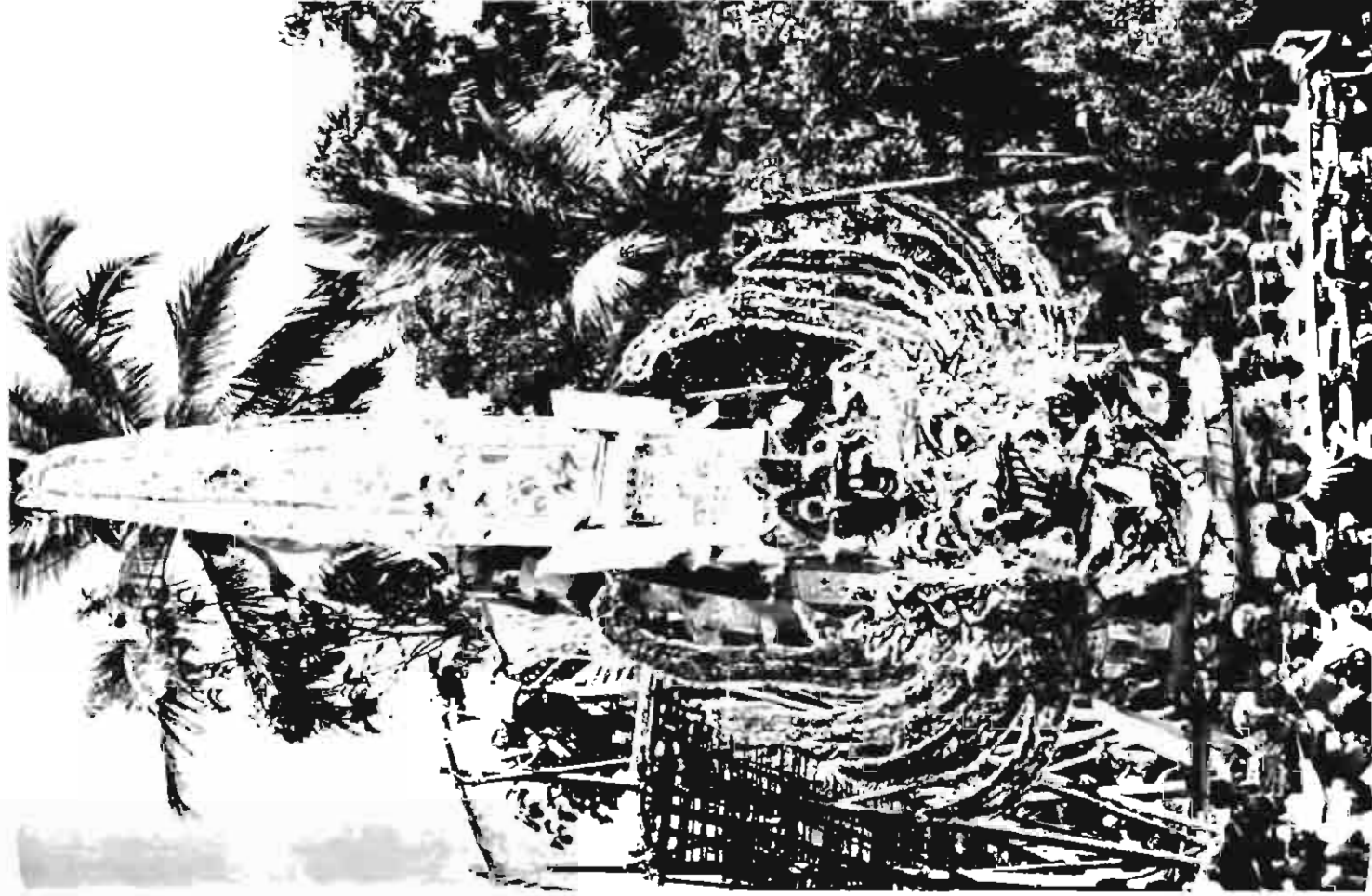


1. On rebirth
2. For lepas aon (about three days after birth)
3. For nelubulanin (105th day)
4. Following death
5. After preparation for burial
6. For mepasah
7. After ngurugin
8. After ngabèn
9. Following ngerorasin among low castes

who rank as equals (Geertz 1966a: 20-22). The corpse is then often laid in the *balé dauh*, while the mourners prepare for the journey south-west to the cemetery, where burial takes place to the south of the cremation mound. In fact, there may be two stages: an immediate burial, *mepasah*, when a bamboo tube is left to connect the corpse's face to the air, until one of the rare propitious dates for the further rites, *ngurugin*, when the tube is removed and the remains sealed in. This is the period of greatest degradation, as is indicated by south for the pollution, west for the state of death and underground for the humiliating lack of respect for the shunned relics. It is worth noting that high castes and even commoner families of substance are loth to bury their dead, while for priests interment is strictly proscribed. In each case, the appropriate, if costly, alternative is direct cremation (for early accounts of mortuary customs, see Crucq 1928; Wirz 1928).

Ritual now centres on the reintegration of the soul into society. With formal burial and the cleansing of the compound, offerings may be given to the impure spirit on the bed of the *balé dangin*. For low castes in Tengahpadang, the complete return of the soul is only possible after cremation, *ngabèn*. The body is disinterred, in whole or part (depending on descent group rules, as does the direction of the head in burial). It is then carried north towards the cremation mound and raised onto a prepared funeral pyre. Afterwards, the ashes are committed either to a river or the sea, in a final disposal of the mortal remains to the south. From this moment, offerings to the spirit are made from a high shelf in the east of the *balé dangin*. Among commoners, the cycle is considered closed by the ceremony of *nyerorasin*, held twelve days later (hence the identical term to the earlier life-cycle rite, which is, however, quite distinct). The soul is then thought to be sufficiently purified to be worshipped from the *sanggah* (for the ideal stages, see Goris 1960a: 84). The equivalent high caste rites are properly more complicated and provide an opportunity for some to engage in the conspicuous display of wealth and support. For instance, members of princely families may be carried on elaborate biers, suitably borne on the shoulders of the client populace. Following cremation (*pelebon* in high Balinese), there are a series of possible additions of increasing scale - successively *ngasti*, *meligiya* and *ngelower* (rarely, if ever, performed) - for the further purification of the soul, which reaffirm the superiority to low castes.

Although this is of necessity a brief account, the ethnographic evidence tends to support the argument that there are distinct values associated with each direction and suggests a possible means of interpreting some aspects of ritual orientation. Movement of ceremonial site marks changes in status and at the same time constitutes a series of signs, generally clustered to correspond with the link between status attributes, through which this may be expressed or communicated. It seems reasonable from this



6. A minor prince's bier, emphasising his elevation above the low caste bearers



to suppose that the tri-axial system provides a basic framework for the conception, evaluation and use of space in Balinese thought, which may be applicable to other realms of ritual activity.¹²

Up to this point, the discussion has been concerned largely with the internal logic and expression of religious ideas, rather than with the analysis of the covariation of social elements (A. Cohen 1969: 216-8). There is another side to the issue, however, which refers to the relationship between spatial conceptions and Balinese social structure; although, in the absence of detailed historical data, the results must remain partly speculative.¹³ The problem arises from the fact that one of the main directional axes is associated with ritual purity, which also happens to be a value important to beliefs about rank in Bali.

In what sense the Balinese may be said to have a caste system is a definitional question (see the debate in de Reuck & Knight 1967), which cannot be dealt with here. Various different views have been advanced;¹⁴ but relatively little attention has been devoted, however, in the published literature to the ideology of relations between the constituent title, or descent, groups which are classified with some dispute into the ranked categories of *Brahmana*, (*K*)*satriya*, *Wèsyā* and *Sudra*, or commoners (cf. Geertz & Geertz 1975). For instance, marriage and sexual relations between members of different castes (except sometimes unions between commoners) are subject to formal regulations which prohibit hypogamy, *nyerod bangsa*, traditionally punishable by death (Lekkerkerker 1926: 70). Similarly, food offered to ancestors or descent group deities might be given away to lower castes, but not the reverse. Breach of these rules constitutes an offence which results in the permanent pollution of the higher ranking caste member and demotion to the level of the party responsible. In another interesting example, the Balinese language contains vocabularies of respect, the proper level, or at the least the key terms, being obligatory in communication between castes. Infringement requires the payment of purificatory offerings, *perascita*, to neutralise the pollution so caused. Underlying these institutions is the fundamental principle that castes are graded by differences in innate purity, so that contact between them must be regulated accordingly.

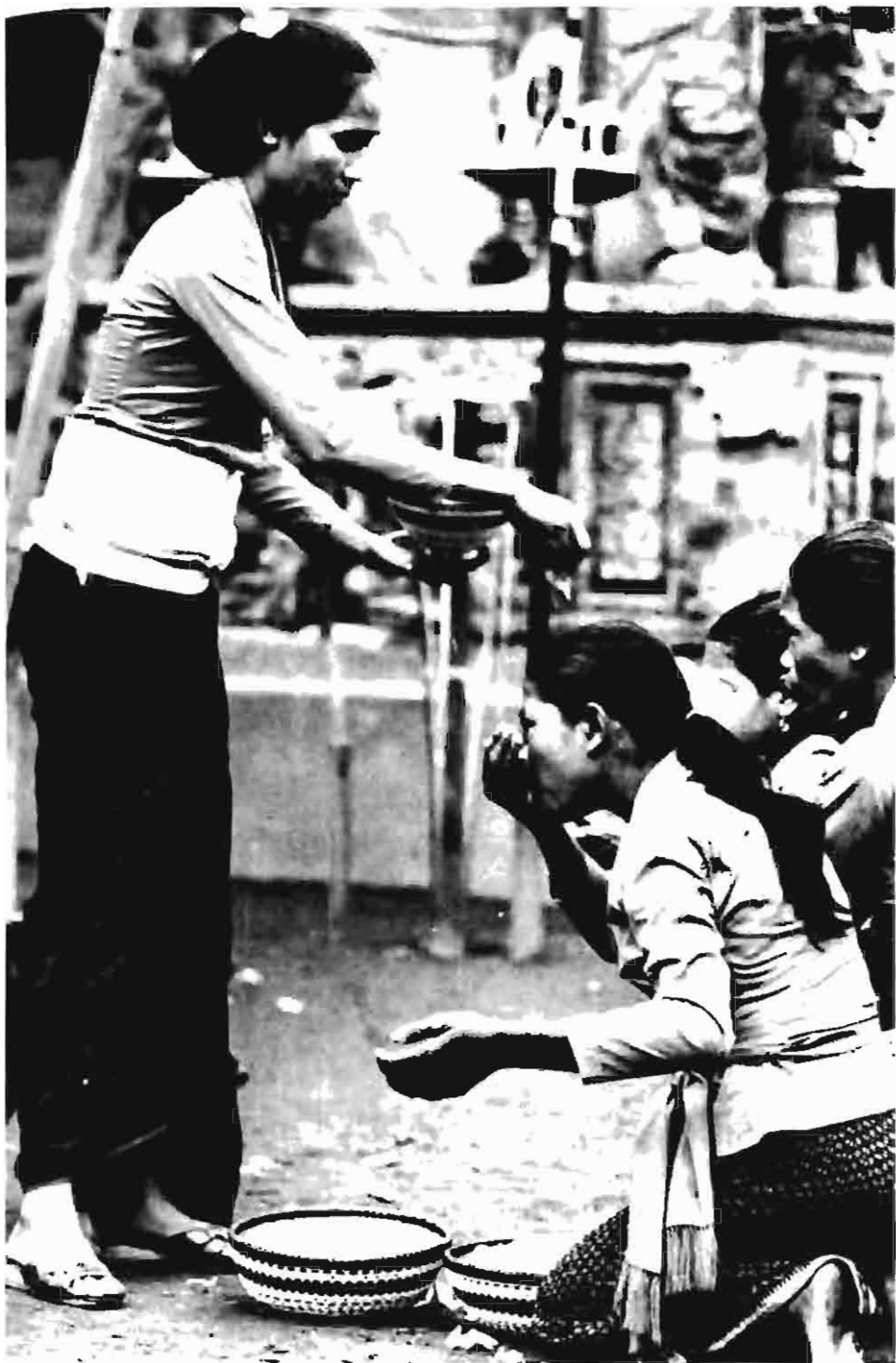
These ideas of religious grading also underpin the distribution of political power in the traditional system. The classification of castes into four *wangsa*, or *warna*, is linked to an ideal division of labour which is almost identical, in some versions, to the Indian theory of *varna* (Dumont 1970: 67-9). In others, the duty, *darma*, of the *Wèsyā* resembles that of the *Satriya*, perhaps because a number of princes are commonly assigned

to the former category (not always with their approval). Here, Bali seems to fit closely with Dumont's view of the character of the caste system in India; for the overarching principle of hierarchy is based not on distinctions of wealth or power, but on religious values (Dumont 1970: 65-79). In theory, religious authority is also absolutely separated from secular and encompasses it (Dumont 1967: 32-4; 1970: 65-79) for Bali, see Lekkerkerker 1926; Korn 1932: 140-48). As priests, *Brahmana* rank clearly above *Satriya* who possessed a theoretical monopoly over political office, which was justified by the theory of caste purity. Ultimately, however, this legitimacy rests on the cultural belief, in reality false, that some men are *actually* purer than others.

Granted the currency of beliefs of this sort, they may be made to seem factual through elaboration in myth and symbolism, and Geertz (C. Geertz 1966b) has suggested how this may be achieved in religion. The difficulty remains that certain social institutions are founded upon premises which may either be untenable in principle, as Cooper has argued for the Azande (Cooper 1975: 244-6) or are demonstrably misrepresentative (Bloch 1975a and in press). To the extent that beliefs justifying economic or political inequality are open to question or negation, this may pose a threat to the acceptance of the established system. It also raises the question of how these assumptions are validated and protected from doubt or denial.

One possible solution is to represent such principles as part of the perceived natural order, and hence place them beyond question. It appears that this, in fact, happens in Bali. For, through the axial system a relationship is postulated between a set of social values and natural phenomena. This is strengthened further by imputing an identity of process. Thus, the cyclical motion of the sun is linked to human life and the irreversible flow of water to ritual purity. The effect is to make purity seem not as a social belief of dubious validity, but in some ways similar to, or as will emerge even identified with, a natural entity.

This conjunction is reinforced by an attribute of formalisation, through which disparate elements are presented as possessing a putative unity. It will be recalled that the two principal axes form equal parts of a more elaborate construct, the *Panca Dêwa* system. However, even a cursory examination shows there to be a fundamental difference between them which is obscured through the equation. Whereas the east-west axis links a natural process to a biological (and cultural) one; the other relates a natural process to purity, *which is in no sense a natural condition*. One axis proposes an arbitrary, even if evocative, connexion between two events in nature; the other makes a similar association between dissimilar qualities. By this obfuscation, purity and pollution are presented as realities of the same order as life and



8. The dispensation of holy water (*tirtha*) during a temple ceremony

death, with a legitimacy conferred by appearing as natural. In the generation of complex conceptual schemes, such as the *Panca Déwa* and *Nawa Sanga*, emphasis is shifted from the heterogeneous components to the form itself, which has the appearance of being an integrated and consistent system. By concentrating attention on the order inherent in the manufactured model and by investing it with special significance, the discrepancies are hidden. Through this formalisation, a synthesis is produced which is effectively beyond dispute and controversy. There may be a parallel here with Bloch's arguments about the implications of formalisation in language (1974; and 1975b).

The discussion above suggests that, in certain circumstances, water may be more or less identified with ritual purity in Balinese thought. The ethnography lends some support to this view. First, water is the most general and perhaps the most important agent of ritual purification (C. Hooykaas 1973b; J. Hooykaas 1961) and, to the best of my knowledge, is required in all ceremonies for the removal of pollution. It may range in sort from ordinary collected rainwater, *yèh ening*, to the different forms of *tirtha*, prepared with special additives and formulae (Belo 1953: 23-6). This is generally conceived of as flowing downwards from the relatively pure to the impure and is exemplified in the holy water known as *banyun cokor*, water of (i.e. used to wash) the feet (of the gods), drunk by the congregation during temple festivals. The quality of *tirtha* also varies, as was noted earlier, according to the purity of the deity invoked, and even of the ritual officiant. There is a further connexion between water and caste. For, in some contexts, the differences between humans are represented as substantive, although, in contrast to India (David 1973), these may be expressed in terms of water rather than blood.¹⁵ It will be remembered that sexual relations with a woman of higher caste are forbidden. The correct relationship of sexual, or marital, partners is of a man with a woman who is his junior by age, genealogical position or caste. In miscaste liaisons, the woman is thought to be polluted by the male's sexual emission. Now, in traditional Balinese theories of physiology, *semen is regarded as water* (Weck 1937: 45). Just as water flowing uphill is unnatural, so is semen ascending from a lower to a higher caste.

It may be worth touching for a moment on the wider problem, in symbolism, of the place of nature. Anthropological theories of religion have tended to stress the ways in which it is socialised. So, it often seems to be regarded as unordered matter upon which structure is imposed exclusively by society. Some of the data from Bali suggest otherwise. Nature may provide convenient objects by which to represent social values, or society itself (Douglas, 1970), but its symbolic significance may stem also from the fact that certain aspects are in no way dependent on society. Water, after all, does not flow downhill because some collective representation states that it must. Particular

schemes of classification permit the recognition, or encourage the elaboration in thought, of these features. In some instances the relevance of the external world in symbolism may reside in observable properties, which for most purposes are intrinsic. In so far as these are seen as "objective" or "natural", they may furnish social values with a semblance of naturalness.

In conclusion, it has been suggested that it may be helpful to view Balinese notions of space, not as series of binary oppositions, but as continua between polar extremes, in which ritual movement parallels changes in social status. The association of natural phenomena with social values, through the medium of spatial axes, is one means of imbuing a dubious principle with verisimilitude, by presenting it as part of an unchanging order. This obfuscation is reinforced by formalising the arbitrary associations into more abstract, and ostensibly coherent, systems. In traditional Balinese society, the distribution of political power is portrayed, inaccurately, as stemming from position in the caste hierarchy. This rests in turn upon an unsubstantiated theory of the innate differences between men, the assumptions underlying which are themselves obscured.

NOTES

1. The fieldwork, on which this article is based, was conducted in Bali between November 1970 and August 1972. I am grateful to the Leverhulme Trust Fund, the London-Cornell Project and to the Horniman Anthropological Scholarship Fund for financial support, and to the Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia for their sponsorship. My thanks are due to M.R. Kaplan, Professor A.C. Mayer, Professor G.B. Milner, Dr M.C. Ricklefs, Miss B.E. Ward and Dr J.L. Watson for their helpful comments on the original draft, and to Dr C. Hooykaas for being so kind as to check my interpretation of the Balinese material and terminology.
2. This was found, for instance, in the publications of such distinguished scholars as Goris, Grader and Korn. Some of the wider methodological considerations have been discussed in Needham (1960; 1973), and specific criticisms of the work on Bali by Geertz (C. Geertz 1961). A fuller evaluation occurs in an interesting thesis by Howe (1976).
3. The spelling of Balinese follows the official Indonesian system introduced in 1972. Pronunciation is straightforward apart from (c), which is (ch) in 'child'. In addition, it is convenient to distinguish (ɛ) and (é), as in French, from (e) the central vowel. The Balinese language possesses a number of speech levels (Kersten 1970: 13-25; for Java, cf. Poedjosoedarmo 1968), but where possible here ordinary, or low, Balinese has been used.
4. The problems are reflected in temple orientation. Thus, in

Culik and Kubu in the extreme east, the main temples face Gunung Agung lying to the due west. Within these, however, difficulties arise over the position of the *padmasana* which commonly appears to be sited in the corner indicated by the most propitious combination of directions (Covarrubias 1937: 268), but as these are directly opposed here, there is an apparent confusion. In Culik, for example in the Pura Pandé the *padmasana* lies on the east side, but in the nearby Pura Banjar Datah it is to the west.

5. For each caste category (see below), the appropriate periods in Tengahanpadang were given as:

Brahmana	9 days
Satriya (Dalem)	11 "
Wesya	15 "
Sudra	42 "

Of the two types of consecrated *Brahmana* (see C. Hooykaas 1973b and 1973c), the *Siwa* priest follows the standard nine days, but the *Buddha* priest only five. Among low castes, both the courtyard of death and its neighbour downstream are polluted for forty-two days, in contrast to upstream where it is thirty days. If high caste compounds are affected by lower in this manner, they just observe the time laid down for their own caste which is shorter.

6. Apart from the works already cited, there are references in Belo 1953; Covarrubias 1937; J. Hooykaas 1961.
7. There is some disagreement over the precise character and significance of the *désa (adat)*, roughly the local religious community (but see C. Geertz 1959; 1961; 1967).
8. Several different categories of pollution appear to be recognized; not just *sebel* (Geertz & Geertz 1975: 10-11).
9. Colloquially: *yèh jeg sing menèk*. Some of the more philosophically inclined villagers pointed out that the sea is ambivalent. While it is the direction towards which pollution flows, by virtue of this, it can be argued to be capable of absorbing all the impurities of the world.
10. On the relation between these terms, see Goris (1960a: 377, n.11).
11. There is an equally complicated set of beliefs concerning the effects of *d(h)arma*, duty defined either according to caste position or general moral obligation, and *karma(pala)*, the consequences of previous actions.
12. Howe (1976) has reanalysed the ceremonies accompanying the birth of twins of opposite sex in Bali, *manak salah*, using this interpretation with suggestive results.
13. Reliable sources on pre-colonial Balinese history are thin. More recently, although the island has been incorporated into the Republic of Indonesia, political institutions and

social values at the village level have remained in many ways remarkably distinct, despite sporadic disturbance (H. Geertz 1959). To some extent, this may be due to the persisting importance of village assemblies in local government. In these small-scale systems, ideological continuity and distinctiveness are maintained in part through forms of public oratory, which serve not so much as a means of cultural brokerage (C. Geertz 1960) but rather to reinterpret in traditional terms the formal relations with the "encapsulating" state (Bailey 1969).

14. Some of the more important contributions include, in chronological order: Lekkerkerker 1926; Korn 1932; C. Geertz 1963; 1966a; 1967; Boon 1973.
15. It is interesting, whether general or not, that the villagers disputed the view that blood was linked to caste. Instead, on more than one occasion, informants pointed out expressly that it did not vary in appearance when spilt. This suggests an alternative possible mode of representing, or explaining, social relations, in terms which deny differences.

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This chapter was originally published in 1978 in
 Natural Symbols in South East Asia. ed. G.B. Milner,
 London: SOAS, 5-28.