Ritual Subordination to the Core-Line and Bali Aga Cultural Identity:
Some Preliminary Research Notes on the Kabayan of Gunung Batukau

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Abstrak

This paper discusses the implications of ritual bonds as a special cultural tool for becoming part of the Bali Aga society. Using a case study of a high-status origin group (Kabayan from Wangaya Gede in Gunung Batukau), the author argues that as an additional or alternative dimension to membership in an origin group, ritual subordination (ritual subordination) to the group leaders results in a hierarchical structure that contradicts the egalitarian ideology always associated with Bali Aga in general. The uniqueness of the Kabayan group lies in its hierarchical structure, with a central line (purusa line) around which the descent and kinship lines of the past leaders are extremely important. The presence of ordinary people who perform ritual subordination in the form of large-scale requests for holy water is a relevant criterion for membership in the group.

Based on the ethnographic background, this paper shows that far from being a sub-category of Bali Aga society that lacks a hierarchical structure, in fact it has a structure that is similar to the noble groups in general Bali society.

The myth of the Bali Aga as a democratic, autonomous and egalitarian sub-group of Balinese society has enjoyed a long and consistent career in Balinese studies. One reason is that it has long been contrasted with the caste-derived society which is either hierarchically structured in the case of the Tri-Wangsa caste system, or subordinated to that system in the
case of the ‘commoner groups’ or Sudra. In contrast therefore with mainstream Balinese society which acknowledges origin from prestigious Javanese forebears and is usually ritually subordinated to the priesthood of its Brahmanical caste, the Bali Aga represent the last bastion of true Balinese independence from foreign invaders. Not being part of the Brahmana-dominated ritual system, the Bali Aga are widely assumed to be free from any form of hierarchy. This view is supported by the fact that village administration in Bali Aga villages is often organized according to principles of seniority which give a priori any married member of the community an equal chance to accede to full leadership at one stage in his life. Much has been made of this so-called democratic system of leadership, held today to encapsulate some ‘quintessentially Balinese’ egalitarian traits which can profitably be contrasted with the ‘quintessentially Javanese’ hierarchical features of Majapahit-related Balinese society.

Apart from the sociologically problematic division of a society into two factions organized according to two different principles and arguably therefore with two different worldviews, this proposition buys into the current discourse held by Bali Aga intellectuals and activists—a new development in Balinese internal politics—which aligns itself with western values of democratic ideals based on the rejection of any form of hierarchy. In anthropological circles, the moral overtones of this discourse colour Reuter’s recent study of Bali Aga ritual networks (Reuter 2002). For him hierarchy as represented by the Tri-Wangsa is equated with the oppression and manipulation of the subordinate by the superior party, while the Bali Aga system, defined by the absence of hierarchy and the presence of a supposedly non-oppressive and non-manipulative system of ‘precedence’, enables its members to interact according to ideals of freedom of choice and voluntary cooperation. This rather naive view, which ignores the fact that orders of precedence are not incompatible with hierarchical systems, and that hierarchy is not expressed solely in caste, links the Bali Aga with a prestigious golden past of exclusively Balinese origins unpolluted by later contacts with the Majapahit Javanese invaders who introduced abuse, manipulation and, one presumes, decadence from that golden age. Reuter’s model of the Bali Aga recalls that of the abangan peasant which was used in Javanese millenarist movements to oppose the rise of modernist Islam and the presence of the Dutch in Java at the beginning of the twentieth century. It tends to transform the Bali Aga Balinese into a Rousseau-like ‘Noble Savage’ type, exhibiting essentials traits which prevent them from ever becoming Balinese tout court, and says more about the current resurgence of a ‘true Balinese’ consciousness in the wake of the social, political and economic difficulties opposing the Bali-

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1 This categorization is proposed by H. and C. Geertz in Kinship in Bali (1975). For a discussion of problems raised by it see Ottino (in press).
2 This is the gist of Reuter’s argument in Custodians of the Sacred Mountain (2002).
3 Although the author is keen to demonstrate the pervasiveness of ‘precedence’ (i.e. recursive asymmetric ordering based on temporal and spatial closeness to an origin point), his data actually do not fully support his theory. As described by him, the regional temple networks (banua) betray an inner structure of core-villages and peripheral villages, each with a qualitatively distinct type of participation in the yearly ritual, a structure recalling the core-line vs. clientele patterns commonly found in temple congregations everywhere in Bali.
4 On the complex issue of hierarchical systems and a review of the current state of research on hierarchy, see Quigley (2002).
Chinese and the Javanese, than about their eventual ‘Austronesian’ origins.⁵

As someone who has been engaged in the study of mountain villages both in Gunung Batukau and in Gunung Batur for the past eighteen years,⁶ the myth of the democratic and egalitarian Bali Aga poses serious problems which I propose to discuss here. For one thing the claim that the system of village administration based on seniority is egalitarian ignores the fact that it was formerly based on a qualitative distinction between those who were considered full members of the desa adat, the core-villagers who filled administrative and leadership functions, and secondary villagers, who were not allowed to take part in the decision-making process, although they did contribute to the expenses and work obligations involved with the ritual activities of the village. Usually, those secondary villagers worked on land belonging to the core-villagers.⁷ It is clear that full membership in the desa adat was linked to certain prerogatives held by a small elite, usually access to arable land, and it was accompanied by a number of obligations towards the owner of that land—either the village represented by its core-villagers if land was held collectively and rotated annually, or a specific origin group with primary rights to it if it was held privately.

Secondly, as Jan Breman has cogently argued for Java, this system in no way differs from the ancient Javanese modes of village administration which were dismantled by the Dutch during the Cultivation System (Breman 1980).⁸ It is therefore unwarranted at this stage to qualify the seniority-based system of ‘Austronesian’ in order to distinguish it from later Javanese influences. Thirdly the egalitarian stance presented by many mountain villages may well be a recent development, the consequence of the wide range of reforms undertaken by the Indonesian state since the Independence, from which no village in Bali may be said to have escaped. The best-known (but by no means the only ones) are the Land Reform carried out in Bali in the early sixties, and the reorganization of village administration known as the 1979 Village Law, which aimed specifically at dismantling the structures of traditional authority in order to open Balinese villages to national development. In Gunung Batukau where conversions to Christianity had raised the issue of the nature and extent of individual participation to the life of the village and the PKI had made a strong stand before 1965, the reorganization of the mountain villages began as early as 1967, being conducted systematically in order to weaken the hold on leadership and power exercised by an elite of prestigious origin groups.⁹ Following on the footsteps of the Land Reform which allowed tenant farmers to buy the fields they had worked for several generations for a nominal price, such

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⁵ To what extent ‘Austronesian’ may be applied to Balinese in order to distinguish them from Javanese as ‘non-Austronesian’ is a moot point which space unfortunately does not allow me to discuss here.


⁷ Apart from the villages in Gunung Batukau which I studied personally, the literature abounds with examples. See for instance Tenganan or Tihingan, a village of Pande Besi made famous by the Geertzes in their study on Balinese kinship. In his ‘Adatrecht’ Korn gives many examples of what he calls a ‘Bali Kuna’ type of organization, taken from all over Bali (Korn [1932] undated).

⁸ The same applies for the banua which is extensively analyzed by Breman. As with the Bali Aga version, the ancient Javanese banua were ritual networks linking together villages entrusted with the upkeep of a royal temple or other sacred place.

⁹ See Ottino (in press) for a discussion of those issues. I also refer the reader to Nagafuchi’s unpublished paper on the regu in Wangaya Gede for similar findings.
reorganization induced an appearance of ‘democracy’ as was sought by the state, which amounted to giving each family the right to vote for the election of their leaders and affording the state the possibility to tax each farmer as a private landowner. As a consequence however the local ruling groups lost a great deal of their former power, being administratively relegated to the ranks of ‘private citizens’ on the same footing as anybody else in the village, while many of their assets became public property. In particular the prestigious private temples with which they were associated and which they frequently took care of in the name of the puri, were transformed into public temples and entered into the category of ‘Kahyangan Adat’, the collective property of the community of their desa adat, thereby obliterating their former ties with the Tabanan kingdom.

Finally, the rejection of the legitimacy of the Tri-Wangsa caste-system by the Bali Aga does not necessarily entail their rejection of hierarchy in general.\textsuperscript{10} What is rejected is the legitimacy of one specific, recently-established hierarchical order as well as the criteria upon which the supremacy of that order is based. I have argued elsewhere in the case of Trunyan that certain prestigious origin groups in Bali Aga villages exhibit features similar to those of the Tri-Wangsa, such as food and marriage prohibitions, restrictions on space and interactions with the rest of the village population (Ottino 1994), and that these are not considered incompatible with other more egalitarian modes of interactions, particularly in the ritual sphere.\textsuperscript{11} Furthermore, although Bali Aga villages unanimously reject ritual subordination to a Brahmanical high-priest, we may have been too hasty in deducing from this that they rejected the entire caste-system. In fact many Bali Aga villages entertained close relations with Satria rulers of the Tri-Wangsa caste-system and even enjoyed a privileged status in the kingdom. Evidence from Trunyan showed the existence of an alliance between Trunyan and the nearby kingdom of Bangli in former times (Ottino 1998; Danandjaja 1980). Other examples abound of Bali Aga villages providing specific services for the puri. Tenganan is another case (Korn 1984), as well as the Pande village of Tihingan studied by the Geertzes (Geertz and Geertz 1975); and Schaareman has mentioned a similar relation between the village of Tatulingga and the kingdom of Karangasem (Schaareman 1986). What these relations have in common, indeed what differentiates them from relations between other Balinese villages and the kingdom, was the fact that they excluded the Brahmanical high-priest. This point, first noted by Guermonprez (Guermonprez 1986, 1987), was subsequently never taken up or developed further. For this reason, and in view of the resurgence of interest in the ‘mountain Balinese’, I propose to rekindle the debate here by providing the case of a prestigious origin group, the Kabayan of Wangaya Gede, who reigned as rulers of a mountain kingdom and high-priests of the state temple Pura Luhur Batukau with the agreement and cooperation of the two successive royal dynasties of Tabanan.\textsuperscript{12} Even today, although the Kabayan’s functions are now strictly limited to

\textsuperscript{10} This is valid for commoner groups in general. On such issues see Boon (1976), Howe (1989), Pitana (1997).

\textsuperscript{11} See also Danandjaja (1980) for a detailed ethnography upon which my analysis was based.

\textsuperscript{12} Although previous scholarship on Tabanan mentions only one dynasty (cf. Geertz 1980; Boon 1977), local informants acknowledge two separate dynasties. This is evidenced also in Pura Luhur Batukau as well as in the summit temple, where separate shrines to an early Arya dynasty and the contemporary Cokorda dynasty are found.
the domains of ritual and adat administration, their exceptional status as ex-rulers is still acknowledged by the puri of Tabanan. This case, to my knowledge unique in contemporary Bali although similar instances may have existed in the past,\(^{13}\) provides a convincing base for my argument that the purely ritual nature of Bali Aga identity today may be an artifact of the transformations which have taken place in Bali in recent times.

### The setting

The Kabayan reside in the mother-village of a region located on the southern slopes of Gunung Batukau, an ancient volcano nowadays believed to be extinct, which stretches from the mountain summit to Penebel in the east, Jegu and Penataran to the south and Betungsel to the west.\(^{14}\) Until recently the region was heavily forested, under-populated and turned over to the cultivation of dry-land rice. Irrigation was developed with the arrival of the Dutch and really took off only after the Land Reform. Wangaya Gede, whose former name was Kuta, is believed to be a very ancient settlement. Although the Kabayan identify themselves as belonging to the Bali Kuna (ancient Balinese), they do not profess to have been the first settlers of the place.\(^{15}\) They took over a region already settled and established themselves as leaders of an autochthonous population known as Bali Mula (first Balinese). Oral tradition has it that the first population were ‘tall, dark, people with sharp teeth’. Hence the name of Wangaya Gede or Wongaya Gede, which means ‘tall’, but also ‘great’ people. They were the self-appointed guardians of the temple which later became known as Pura Luhur Batukau. The Kabayan came at a later date, probably after an armed conquest, taking over the ritual control of the temple and reigning as kings (raja) of a small kingdom whose autonomy was acknowledged by the kings of Tabanan, until the arrival of the Dutch at the beginning of the twentieth century. Today the Kabayan provide the high-priest and nine of the eleven priests who perform in Pura Luhur. Until the Land Reform they controlled access to all arable land, gradually integrating newcomer families by granting them cultivation rights in return for services rendered.

Their fate as rulers mirrors that of the better known Balinese ruling houses after the arrival of the Dutch, in that they no longer wield actual political power. The region is now known as the ‘adat’ territory of Wangaya Gede, subjected to a number of regulations concerning the use of the land, the disposal of corpses and of discarded offerings. Cremations are forbidden, as is the burning of rice-stumps in the fields after the harvest—a practice commonly carried out everywhere else in Bali.\(^{16}\) In the same way, discarded offering woven shapes which are symbolically identified with the tem-

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\(^{13}\) See for instance Lansing’s study of the pamangku gede of Pura Batur in Priests and Programmers (Lansing 1991).

\(^{14}\) Data on which this paper is based was collected over a period of eighteen years. I am particularly grateful to the previous Jero Kabayan Lingsir for introducing me to the complex relation between his family and Pura Luhur Batukau, and to the present Jero Kabayan Lingsir and his wife for graciously inviting me to stay with them in 2002 to carry out research on the coreline. My thanks go also to the crown prince of Tabanan, I Gusti Ngurah Anom, for answering my queries with great charm and much humor.

\(^{15}\) The term Bali Aga is considered highly pejorative and is never used by the people concerned.

\(^{16}\) According to popular understanding this is because no smoke should rise higher than the volcano, seat of the ancestral deities. A more learned tradition among ritual experts however explains it in terms of allowing the four components of the body to return ‘naturally’ i.e. gradually, in accordance with the processes of decomposition over time, to the four elements in the natural world: earth, water, fire, air.
temporary body lent to the gods during rituals are also left to rot, in a spot especially reserved for them near the temples.\textsuperscript{17} Traditionally the use of only one level of language was allowed, a low to medium level of Balinese. High Balinese, associated with deference to the Tri-Wangsa, was banned (\textit{kulina basa}) and anyone using it could incur a sanction although this is changing. Nowadays, being able to speak high Balinese is highly valued by young formally educated villagers for its connotations of worldliness and modernity.

Throughout their history the Kabayan’s supremacy was threatened at least three times, first by Dang Hyang Nirartha, then by Panci Sakti and finally by the Dutch. Dang Hyang Nirartha’s visit is correlated in the oral lore with the granting of a ritual autonomy to the Kabayan’s kingdom. When the great Javanese Tantric sage visited Wangaya Gede, he met with the Kabayan ancestors who flatly refused to adopt his religious reforms. Whereupon Nirartha is said to have agreed to ensure that none of his descendants (the Brahmanical priests or \textit{pedanda}) would intervene in the performance of rituals over the whole of their kingdom. This explains why a taboo is placed even today upon having a Brahmanical priest ‘finish the ritual’ (\textit{muputin karya}) anywhere on the region formerly ruled by the Kabayan. Someone who broke the taboo could, until recently, be expelled from the territory. In such matters, the authority of the Kabayan appears to have been supreme.

The Panci Sakti invasion occurred more recently. Legend has it that, being attracted by the glow emanating from a precious stone (\textit{manik}) kept in the temple, the Buleleng king attacked Wangaya Gede from the north, driving a number of Kabayan families to escape to the western coast of Buleleng and causing the manik to fly away into the heart of the volcano where it is still presently hiding. Furious, Panci Sakti seized the candi and overturned them, burying them upside down in the ground. Fortunately he was stopped and forced to flee by a swarm of bees sent by the ancestors to sting him and his soldiers—not however the Kabayan’s own ancestors, but the spirits of an original population (\textit{wong alus}) who now resides in an invisible village located on the small lake (\textit{taman}) near the temple. Since then the manik may be seen each year during \textit{sasih kapat}, the fourth month of the Balinese lunar year, shining at night in the mountain—but only by the descendants of the local population.\textsuperscript{18} This tale points to the immense power attributed to the temple and the Kabayan, a reputation which contributes today still to their prestige throughout the whole of the island. The fact that this power is of divine origin and is protected by the ancestral spirits of the first inhabitants of the place rather than by the Kabayan’s own ancestors, encapsulates the ideology of exclusivity which is characteristic of Bali Aga in general. In this context, because of the appropriation of Pura Luhur by the Kabayan, it ratifies the group’s claim to unchallenged supremacy in Wangaya Gede, by placing the temple with which they are identified under the direct protection of the first owners of the space.

\textsuperscript{17} See Ottino (2000) for a full consideration of the cognitive implications of those prohibitions.

\textsuperscript{18} The story suggests that the \textit{candi} as we know them today are of recent construction. Indeed C. Hooykaas mentions the presence of three babaturan in the emplacement where three \textit{candi} now stand, when he visited Pura Luhur Batukau in 1964 (Hooykaas 1964). A piece of the previous \textit{candi} which was found during an archaeological excavation in the late sixties served as a model to build the three \textit{candi} we know today. It may still be seen as it was integrated in the new structure of the central \textit{candi}. 
Perhaps the greatest threat to the Kabayan has been the defeat of Wangaya Gede by the Dutch. The Kabayan fought twice against them, the first time in 1906 when the wife of the then king of Tabanan ran to Wangaya Gede to seek help when Dutch troops began threatening Badung and Tabanan. The Kabayan raised an army which met the Dutch in the ill-fated battle of Tuakilang, armed with their sakti weapons (mainly lances and keris) and a deep faith in their own invulnerability (kekebalan) to Dutch bullets, only to be defeated. The Dutch army razed Wangaya Gede, setting fire to the village and looting the temple. Nevertheless, probably thanks to the Ethical Policy in vigor at the time, the Dutch administration treated the Kabayan very much in the same way as other Balinese ruling houses, leaving them in charge of the territory they traditionally ruled, and transforming them more or less into regional administrators with a free rein to govern in the name of the colonial state. The Kabayan raised an army against the Dutch once more in 1945 to oppose their return after the Japanese occupation. Wangaya Gede lost many young men in the guerilla led by the resistance hero I Gusti Ngurah Rai, which ended in the defeat of Marga. The village was sacked and burnt down once again, and the members of the Kabayan core-line exiled, some to East Java, others to Aceh. After the Independence however, they were amply rewarded by the new government, young men from the core-line rising to important administrative functions in the government both in Bali and in Jakarta.

The Kabayan seem to have suffered most of all from the Land Reform during which they lost their hold over the land. Previously, as rulers, the Kabayan held a primary right over all land in their kingdom, granting cultivation rights to newcomers in return for services rendered. The Land Reform transformed the right to usufruct held by those tenant farmers into a fully fledged private property right. With the loss of their ultimate claim on land, the Kabayan lost a great deal of their authority in temporal matters. The subsequent events of 1965 probably contributed further to endangering their supremacy, all the more so as young Kabayan men, some of them holding priestly functions in Pura Luhur, began to take an interest in, and converted to Christianity. Little is said about what appears to have been difficult years. The crisis ended with the widespread departure of many men in the younger generation, eager to find a life-style more in keeping with the modern ideals of the Indonesian state and to leave behind what was now denounced in the politically correct discourse of the New Order, as the ‘superstitious ways of their own ancestors’.

Although there is strong evidence that the Kabayan leader was placed under the authority of the Tabanan puri by the Dutch, until recently, the Kabayan managed to retain a great deal of their former prestige and authority over the region. At least until the early sixties, the Kabayan ruled over all adat matters and could overturn any decision taken by the puri of Tabanan concerning members of the population residing on the territory of Wangaya Gede. Today, even though the administration of Wangaya Gede is nowadays entrusted to an elected board of leaders, the Kabayan leader is still considered the head of adat and as such must be consulted before decisions are reached. Similarly, at a regional level, the leaders of desa adat who still acknowledge the Kabayan’s supremacy continue to consult him regularly. This is congruent with the three functions which are traditionally attributed to the Kabayan leader: as a king, as a priest and as the head of adat.
The *kawitan* Kabayan Batukau

It is possible that the term Kabayan designated at first a village function held by an appointed official, who together with a Pasek, Tangkas and Panyarikan, was put in charge of the administration of Wangaya Gede by the early kingdom of Gelgel. Whether this was once the case is no longer known however. Today those functions are hereditary, being passed on from father to son in the core-line of origin groups or *kawitan* of the same name, and they are restricted solely to the ritual sphere. Nowadays the Kabayan form what they call a ‘*kawitan*’, although they differ from other *kawitan* found elsewhere in Bali in one important way. Among ‘commoner’ groups, the *kawitan* is a ritual association bringing together under the notion of a single origin, families having generally not much more in common than the fact that they share a name associated in a weak sense with a title and a specific ritual identity. It is related to an idea of ranking which, until recently at least, was activated purely in a ritual context, becoming particularly pertinent at death since it determines which, in the highly stratified Balinese ancestral heavens, is the rightful place for its members. Within the *kawitan* all members are treated as being identical in status and the *kawitan* tends to present an ‘egalitarian’ front to the outside.

This is not the case with the *kawitan* Kabayan of Wangaya Gede. A distinction is made between a hierarchically ordered center, or core-line (*garis purusa*), whose agnatically related members behave much like other gentry groups, and a broader, egalitarian, periphery (*warga Kabayan*) grouping distant relatives as well as other unrelated families. The *warga* Kabayan can best be described as clients and, for reasons that will seen presently, disciples (*sisia*) of the core-line, all its members being treated as similar in rank. The distinction between the core-line and the rest of the group is of the utmost importance to the group’s identity. It is spatially evidenced in the lay-out of the residential compounds. The *garis purusa* is an extended family of agnatically related close relatives (brothers, first-cousins, uncles and nephews) residing with their families in one compound called *Jeroan Baliran* whose lay-out is peculiar to Wangaya Gede. It is made up of two long lines of apartments resembling a long house, perpendicular to the main road, standing on each side of a central passage, the kitchens being located to the north while the sleeping and reception quarters are located to the south, together with the rice granaries. The lay-out of the core-line compound does not in any way differ from that of other traditional houseyards of Wangaya Gede, and given the supremacy of the Kabayan group locally, probably determined that lay-out in the first place. The group’s temples are located in the core-line’s compound, on the street side which is also the highest direction since Wangaya Gede is built on a ridge. Individual households do not have a separate family temple (*sanggah*). The core-line owns two separate temples: one on the north-western side, the *merajaan Siwa* whose membership

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19 For a discussion of the evolution of some *kawitan* into a translocal political organization see Pitana’s study of the *Maha Gotra Pasek Sanak Sapta Rsi* (1997).

20 Although space does not allow me to discuss this, again this hierarchical inner structure may be usefully contrast with the concept of ‘*warga*’ discussed by Pitana (1977, esp. chapter 3).

21 The use of elevated terms such as ‘*merajaan*’ seems to go against the local ideology of banishing all forms of hierarchical deference from the language. It may be a recent development, congruent with aspirations to wordliness among the younger generations. I must note
is restricted to the families of the garis purusa, and whose priest is the leader of the group. It is adjacent to his dwellings and is used for all family rites of passage. The other temple, located on the south side of the core-houseyard, is the merajaan Kabayan or temple for the warga Kabayan, whose priest is chosen from the garis purusa. Its odalan is set one day earlier than the merajaan Siwa, on Buda Kelion Matal.

The uniqueness of the Kabayan Batukau lies in that each member of the warga Kabayan is required to ‘masiwa ke garis purusa’, in other words to request tirta from the core-line rather than from the kawitan temple and according to a procedure which differs in some respect from what is generally the case elsewhere in Bali. Whereas, within the core-line, genealogical descent is the criterion according to which membership is reckoned, it no longer operates as a factor of membership in the context of the kawitan. Masiwa ke garis purusa is the prerequisite for membership in the warga Kabayan and the determining factor for deciding who does or does not belong to the kawitan. It is also known as ‘masiwa ke Siwa’, the Kabayan leader, who holds the title of Jero Kabayan Lingsir being considered the Siwa or ‘spiritual mentor’ of all the members of the kawitan. Tirta is not consecrated in the kawitan temple or the core-line temple but in an even more sacred place, the Bale Sarin Suci, an enclosed building located next to the merajaan Siwa and the leader’s living quarters, where the ritual implements and weapons of the core-line ancestors are kept and the spirits of those ancestors reside.

Forbidden to all but Jero Kabayan Lingsir himself and his wife, the Bale Sarin Suci is considered the purest, most elevated place in the whole compound, as well as the origin point and the source of the Kabayan’s spiritual and temporal power.

This method of consecrating tirta is of some importance as it implies that membership to the kawitan depends upon ritual subordination to the core-line, and more specifically to the long line of ancestral leaders of the group who ruled as kings and served as high priests in Pura Luhur. This point needs to be underlined. Whereas today this subordination is ritual in nature, for the major part of its history, the warga Kabayan acknowledged by such means their subordination to the Kabayan leader as privileged subjects to a king, closer to the royal lineage than other origin groups residing on Kabayan land, yet not quite fully integrated as members of the same family. Another significant feature is that it is clearly correlated with the rejection of the ritual supremacy of the Brahmanical priests. Anyone in theory may become a member of the kawitan Kabayan Batukau so long as he accepts to ‘masiwa ke garis purusa’. In practice this means that membership to the kawitan is open to anyone who acknowledges the spiritual authority of the garis purusa—something which in fact few people would accept unless they felt it was

22 By ‘weapons’ are meant the traditional weapons (keris, lance) of the ancestors as well as ‘senjata gaib’, the ‘subtle, spiritual attributes’ of the Kabayan ancestors, similar to the attributes which adorn the representations of certain Balinese deities and symbolize the nature of their activity. All those objects, material as well as spiritual, constitute the source of the Kabayan’s power (kasaktian).

23 Proof of this power is evidenced in the fact that the Bale Sarin Suci was never burnt down during the two great fires in Wangaya Gede, although the entire compound around it was reduced to ashes each time.

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accompanied by some other, more concrete connection. It is necessary to stress the importance of those facts which may throw some light on otherwise obscure mechanisms for determining membership to a kawitan more generally. Clearly stated in the case of the Kabayan Batukau, it is not unknown among other origin groups in the region of Gunung Batukau formerly ruled by the Kabayan. Field research which I undertook eighteen years ago in a nearby village, revealed the existence of congregations supporting a ‘pura Siwa’, many of which are still active today, whose membership regroups the descendants of individuals who had affiliated themselves to a spiritual leader, a ‘Siwa’ or guru, in the past, as well as his own genealogical descendants. In every instance, those ‘Siwa’ are remembered as having been hermits (dukuh) of considerable spiritual achievements. One feature which attracted my attention at the time was the clear distinction which was made between the descendants of those hermits (usually through an adopted son) who constitute a core-line in which genealogical descent is of the utmost importance, and the remainder of the group where the readiness to acknowledge the ritual ascendancy of the core-line through the requesting of tirta to its leader (known as masiwa ke Siwa) is the only apparent link drawing them together nowadays.

On the core-line and its significance for the Kabayan identity

The core-line or garis purusa designates all the current potential heirs of the previous Jero Kabayan Lingsir: his brothers, half-brothers and first cousins, as well as the next generation of sons, grandsons and nephews (sons of brothers and of first cousins). Membership is reckoned exclusively through men. Nyeburin, the reversed marriage in which daughters are elevated to the status of agnatic heir, is not practiced. Although nyeburin unions are found among members of the warga Kabayan and the practice generally constitutes a significant form of marriage in the region of Gunung Batukau, within the core-line a family without male heirs will always adopt a son. As I had the opportunity to check out when working on the genealogy of the garispurusa, two types of adoption are distinguished. In the first type, the adopted son is a member of the core-line, bringing with him his father’s inheritance. In the second the adopted son does not bring any inheritance, becoming his adopted father’s heir. Each type of adoption differs in its implications and consequences. In the first case, the adoption reunites what was divided earlier in the previous generation. Not surprisingly it is more highly valued than the second case in which the purpose of the adoption is to secure a male heir to a descent line which, for a number of reasons, does not possess one. Adoption can also be used to consolidate the core-line, in which case it may be carried out between two adult men. Four generations ago, one outstanding case of such adoption enabled

25 In the nearby village where I carried out an extensive kinship survey eighteen years ago, nyeburin unions formed more than 25% of all marriages. Yet it is always considered a reversed marriage, enabling a family without male heirs or without suitable male heirs to keep assets within the family, until a male heir is born in the next generation. Although nyeburin marriages may be reproduced over several generations there are always considered a last resort option within a strongly agnatic ideology. It is mistaken to treat nyeburin as a matrilineal marriage. For a full discussion on nyeburin and an analysis of Balinese ideas about it, see Ottino (1993 and 2000).

26 The dearth of male heirs has become somewhat problematic in the region. This is due to the loss of many men in recent history (the Revolution and the guerilla warfare in the forties, the massacres of 1965, conversions to Christianity which led automatically to the expulsion of the converts from their families and, more recently the departure of young men to urban and tourist centers in or outside Bali).
the then leader of the core-line to bring back to Wangaya Gede descendants of the *garis purusa* Kabayan who had fled to Busung Biu in North Bali, during Panci Sakti’s attack. After a ritual sharing of food proclaiming their equal rank, the leaders of the two *garis purusa*, from Wangaya Gede and from Busung Biu, pronounced themselves publicly to be siblings, precedence being given, of course, to Jero Kabayan Lingsir as the elder brother.

The importance given to the adoption of male heirs and the ban on *nyeburin* unions, is related to the fact that the core-line holds a title, the title of *mekel*, to which every man is entitled after marriage except the leader who receives the title of Jero Kabayan Lingsir. Here as is the case with Balinese ruling houses in general, whereas property may be transmitted through women, titles are an asset which may be transmitted only through men. All the married men of the core-line are called *mekel*, followed by their birth order name—for instance: *mekel Nengah, mekel Ketut*. In addition to this title which appears to be of relatively recent introduction, all the men in the core-line bear the title Gede and the women the title Luh, titles associated with certain high-ranking Bali Aga groups. Again this is strictly restricted to the members of the core-line. No one else in the *warga Kabayan* is allowed to use them. Children of women from the core-line who married out cannot bear those titles, whereas children of men from the core-line inherit the right to bear them regardless of their mother’s origin.

This shows that, like any other titles, Gede and Luh are not transmissible through women.

Another rule which governs marriage within the core-line is the obligation for a man to seek a wife outside the *garis purusa*. To ignore this rule would lead to a union with a patrilineal first or second cousin who is also a co-resident on the same houseyard and therefore almost a sibling—a marriage considered hot and dangerous. Thus, with the important exception of the Jero Kabayan Lingsir who, as befits his status as ruler, is expected to marry a woman from the *purusa* line and if possible a father’s daughter, one seeks a wife outside the core-line. In practice this means seeking a wife in one of the neighboring compounds where all marriageable women are considered suitable spouses. Outside the core-line marriage norms do not differ from the rest of the population, except for the fact that marriage with a woman of the same rank is strongly encouraged, as is finding a wife within the *warga Kabayan*. We may deduce from this a tendency to group endogamy which is characteristic of prestigious origin groups in Gunung Batukau. Marriage with the father’s daughter is strongly discouraged among the *warga Kabayan*. This gives added importance to the desirability, in the case of the leader, of a union which comes closest to marrying one’s own sister in the manner of the gods, suggesting that Jero Kabayan Lingsir is set apart among other members of the Kabayan as being of a different kind.

27 My Kabayan informants insist on the fact that their birth-order names are as follows: Wayan, Nengah, Nyoman, Made and Ketut. Made is relegated to fourth-born position with the Kabayan, whereas it is in second position before Nengah for members of the Pasek groups. Sometimes Gede is also used instead of Wayan to designate ‘firs-born’.


29 While this ideal ought to be respected, it is not observed by the present leader, a professional man who married a Muslim Javanese woman then, after her death and in order to be accepted as Jero Kabayan Lingsir, married the daughter of a *pamangku* from Tabanan town. Although the choice of a suitable wife was made by the tutelary goddess of Pura Luhur, the fact that she is not a ‘*garis purusa*’ wife is a moot point between his second wife and the other women of the core-line.
The Kabayan as a king and as a priest

That Jero Kabayan Lingsir, or hereunder Kabayan for short,\(^30\) conducts himself as a king is congruent with the fact that he is acknowledged as such by the royal House of Tabanan. According to the crown prince of Tabanan, I Gusti Ngurah Anom, the Kabayan is indeed considered equal in status to the king (sederajat dengan raja) and even slightly higher in rank, as the ‘elder brother (saudara yang tertua) of the king’, since the Kabayan was ruling over his small mountain kingdom long before the foundation of the kingdom of Tabanan. His precedence over the Tabanan king is ratified by the alliance prescriptions allowing the Kabayan to take as a wife a princess of royal blood, whereas the reverse was not permitted. The royal House of Tabanan could not take as wives women from the Kabayan core-line.\(^31\) It is also graphically expressed in the relatively lower position ascribed to the shrines of the two ruling dynasties of Tabanan, the Arya and the present day Cokorda, compared with the elevated position enjoyed by the shrine of the Kabayan, in the inner yard of Pura Luhur.\(^32\)

Tradition has it that the early Tabanan dynasty of the Arya negotiated access to the temple in return for accepting their ritual subordination to the Kabayan as high-priest of that temple, and that the agreement was renewed by the following dynasty of the Cokorda. This suggests that, although Pura Luhur Batukau nowadays functions as a state temple for Tabanan and Badung (a junior branch of the contemporary dynasty of the Cokorda Tabanan), such function is relatively recent in its history, being combined with earlier functions detained by the Kabayan previous to the foundation of the present kingdom of Tabanan, which were thought important enough to all parties to justify this arrangement.

Perhaps some light may be shed on this unusual situation by comments made to me by I Gusti Ngurah Anom to the effect that, in former times, the kings of Tabanan themselves were kings-priests in the same manner as the Kabayan. They celebrated their own rituals. His insistence upon this point, that the king used to reign supreme in the past and that, like the Kabayan, he held sovereign power over adat, jurisprudence (hukum) and rituals, Brahmanical priests being entrusted with the performance of rituals at a relatively recent date, is congruent with the reputation of Tabanan as a rebel kingdom which never quite submitted to Klungkung’s supremacy and where Brahmanical priests never enjoyed the prestige granted to them elsewhere.\(^33\) Given the small size of the mountain kingdom and the relative unimportance of Wangaya Gede as a political center, it is clear that the Kabayan must have enjoyed the assistance of the rulers of Tabanan or at least their implicit acceptance of the situation as it stood, in order to successfully press their claim for political and ritual autonomy. Further inquiry into the relation be-

\(^{30}\) Although the entire kawitan is known as Kabayan, according to some informants only the leader is properly entitled to be called thus. The better known title of Mangku Gede is never used, being of recent introduction and used exclusively by outsiders.

\(^{31}\) On this point my informant the crown prince was rather embarrassed, quickly adding that to his knowledge this kind of alliance between the two Houses never occurred, since ‘how can there be marriage between siblings?’ This remarks which ignores the fact that the children of siblings are first cousins for whom marriage is possible in royal lineages, points to the fact that the relation of siblingship between the Kabayan leader and the king of Tabanan is reproduced each generation. This suggests that reference to siblingship here is an idiomatic way of describing the appropriate format of relations between the two leaders, rather than a reference to putative kinship.

\(^{32}\) For more details on this see Hauser-Schaüblin (1997) and Ottino (2000).

\(^{33}\) See also Boon (1977:chapters 7 and 8).
between the royal House of Tabanan and the Kabayan would take us beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say here that the Kabayan’s privileged status as king and priest of the prestigious temple which was to become ‘state temple’ to the dynasties of Tabanan and Badung, rests upon an agreement between the two realms, the terms of and reasons for which may be made clearer if we consider from what source the Kabayan derives his legitimacy as a king and a priest.

The selection of a suitable candidate to the function of Jero Kabayan Lingsir may be carried out in three different but not incompatible ways. The father may designate one of his sons as his successor, then train him for the job. Or the full members of the desa adat (krama desa) can elect him from a number of potential candidates in the core-line. Or again he may be personally chosen by the tutelary goddess of Pura Luhur, via the medium of a trancer. Regardless of the means of selection, the aspiring Kabayan and his wife must then undergo a ceremony of investiture in Pura Luhur, at the end of which they are transformed into living ancestors (diketuakan). The couple spends three whole days and nights inside the Bale Singasari in the inner yard of the temple, during which time no-one except the members of the core-line who bring them food and drink are allowed to see them. The Bale Singasari is the counterpart in Pura Luhur of the Bale Sarin Suci in the core-line houseyard. This is where the spirits of the previous Kabayan leaders reside and where the goddess descends during ceremonies in Pura Luhur, at the end of which they are transformed into living ancestors. The rite expresses the fact that the goddess and the spirits of the past leaders become identified with the aspiring leader in such a way that he is then transformed into their living manifestation in this world. It is from this identification with the goddess and the past leaders, that the Kabayan derives his capacity to conduct rituals and in the past govern as a ruler. The fact that, unlike other ceremonies of investiture for priests of Brahmana or Pasek denomination where empowerment is obtained from a guru (see Pitana 1997:293–314) to whom the aspiring high-priest must affiliate himself, the Kabayan is empowered directly from the goddess, without any human intermediaries, has important consequences in the broader context of Balinese priesthood as it legitimizes his claim to superiority over any other priests, not only the Brahmanical high-priests but also the local Sengguhu priests with whom the Kabayan is in competition for the control of some parts of Pura Luhur, and who control the summit temple Pura Pucak Kadaton.

As befits their status of living ancestors and rulers, neither the Kabayan nor his wife

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34 To what extent the goddess may be considered distinct from the spirits of the previous Kabayan leaders is difficult to say and a discussion of this point would take us beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that the merging together of the deity and the ancestors is in my opinion a crucial element for legitimizing the Kabayan’s ritual supremacy today as well as his authority as a ruler in former times.

35 Again, although space does not allow me to develop this point, it is worth noting that the Kabayan’s supremacy is not unconditionally acknowledged. In particular they are in competition with groups associated with the very first inhabitants of the region who control the summit. Pura Pucak Kadaton is considered to be older and hierarchically superior to Pura Luhur Batukau, as male (purusa) to female (perdana). Priests from five different villages are in charge of it, all of whom belong to the Ngukuhin origin-group and view themselves as descendants of dukuh. Significantly Wangaya Gede does not provide a priest for that temple.
are affected by pollution arising from a death, whether in the village or in their family, and they may enter Pura Luhur any time. After the ceremony of investiture, they are expected to dress at all times in traditional adat clothing—all white for him. However the Kabayan is not a priest in the same sense as the other priests in Pura Luhur. His duties are strictly restricted to ‘finishing the ritual’ by consecrating tirta in the inner yard (jeroan) of Pura Luhur Batukau for private or ceremonial purposes, as well as in the Bale Sarin Suci at home for his own family and members of the warga Kabayan. Other than this, he merely oversees the eleven priests who officiate in the temple. Neither can he perform rites for a member of his family or anyone else in the village, for that matter. In this respect Jero Kabayan Lingsir cannot be compared to the Brahmanical high-priests or even to the local village high-priests (balean desa). Rather he is a king-priest in the ancient sense of the term, standing supreme at the apex of a kingdom defined in a spiritual as well as in a material sense, the embodiment of the goddess and the living representative of a long lineage of prestigious individuals, some of whom attained the highest spiritual achievements through moksa.

Origin and Kabayan identity in contemporary society

It is clear from what has been said previously that origin means different things for the garis purusa and the warga Kabayan. Origin for the core line is linked to the identification of the person of their leader with the goddess of Pura Luhur, upon which their claim to social, ritual and formerly political supremacy rests. For ordinary members of the warga Kabayan however, origin is derived from their ritual sub-ordination to the core-line, as is evidenced in the practice of masiwa ke garis purusa. Nowadays its relevance is limited to the ritual domain where it sets them out as being ritually superior to members of other local origin groups, but the practice itself has important social and economic consequences. The kawitan Kabayan of Wangaya Gede form a closely-knit group and it is not rare for the garis purusa to help out an ambitious member of the warga who wants to open a business or send his sons to university. This has made the Kabayan highly competitive on the local scene, all the more so as some men in the purusa line have held or still hold high-powered positions as wakil bupati and in the office of the camat. Ritual subordination to the core-line therefore not only ratifies the hierarchical superiority of the warga Kabayan over other local origin groups by setting them out as different in kind at the most intimate, ritual level, but it also enhances this superiority by allowing him access to privileges and support which would otherwise be denied to outsiders.

In this respect the relation between the garis purusa and the warga echoes the relation between Brahmanical priests and their clientele. As I mentioned earlier, it is not specific to the Kabayan. The same pattern is found among all high-ranking origin groups in Wangaya Gede, as elsewhere in the region. Ritual subordination to a core-line may be explained by reference to the spiritual tradition of the area. Indeed until the extensive religious reforms carried out by the Parisada Hindu Dharma put an end to such practices, all knowledge concerning rituals and the mystical practices designed to achieve spiritual proficiency in them, was the prerogative of the core-lines of prestigious origin groups, and considered

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36 For a description of the balean desa see Ottino (2000).
highly esoteric. With few exceptions, access to it was restricted to agnatic members of those core-lines who also held priestly functions in the village temples as well as in prestigious, (then) private temples in the forest.\textsuperscript{38} Such corpuses of knowledge, known as \textit{agama}, enabled their holders to exert full control over who did or did not participate actively in the ritual activities of the community and, since they were designed to lead the practitioner to the highest spiritual achievements, determined who could or could not rise to such lofty heights. In a setup such as this, where ritual knowledge is turned into a scarce resource and competition for it is fierce, spiritual achievements become a means of legitimating authority and power. This explains why the supremacy of the Brahmanical high-priests was rejected with so much intensity by the local populations. Indeed what is rejected by the local elite of ritual experts is not so much the fact of hierarchically structuring Balinese society in a system of castes, but the notion that birth in the Brahmanical caste is the sole determining factor for ritual and spiritual competence. In Gunung Batukau, in theory, anyone who had the capacity to study and to train could rise to the highest functions in the ritual domain. However this should not make us forget that access to the knowledge required to reach that level was restricted to a small elite of core-line members in prestigious origin groups. Therefore such apparently democratic attitude to status and prestige belied the fact that the reality of the matter lay in the reproduction of the existing structures of authority and power. This explains why Christianity which promotes equal access to spiritual knowledge was received locally with an enthusiasm which surprised even the missionaries themselves, and why many conversions were made among the priests of the prestigious regional temples.

The Kabayan’s supremacy as a leader and a priest should be examined in relation to this local tradition. As is the case with other prestigious origin groups such as the Pasek in Wangaya Gede, the Kabayan core-line is renowned for holding sacred texts which are viewed as one of the Kabayan’s main sources of power (\textit{kasaktian}), and has repeatedly demonstrated its proficiency in using them. At least several past leaders reached full spiritual liberation, as is evidenced in the peculiar shrine dedicated to them in the inner yard of Pura Luhur. A mere slab of stone to which was recently added a crudely made statue of the tiger spirit of the mountain crouching over it, this shrine is venerated as the emplacement where early Kabayan leaders achieved \textit{moksa} and their clothes are buried. Of recent date, a Kabayan leader who died in 1956 also reached that state. His corpse lay in a state for over a month without any sign of deterioration. On the day of his death, so his son recalled, black clouds gathered in the sky and a column of light of five colors emerged from it, standing over the roof for the duration a whole day.

This raises the issue of how, given the extent of the reforms undertaken by the Parisada Hindu Dharma over the last forty years from which even Wangaya Gede could not escape, one might ask how the Kabayan managed to retain their ritual supremacy in Pura Luhur. With such extraordinary ancestors to confirm his status and proficiency therefore, the Kabayan needs not refer to a foreign origin. Whatever prestige and authority he holds is derived locally and continually consolidated from the remarkable deeds of his own forebears and his identification with one of the most important deities in Tabanan. Indeed, although the goddess is part of a divine couple, her husband/

\textsuperscript{38} The very same which are now entered in the category of village public temples (\textit{Kahyangan Adat}) today.
brother residing in the remote summit temple Pura Puncak Kadaton, it is she who is actively involved in the welfare and prosperity of the whole province through the many rituals performed in Pura Luhur Batukau. As her representative in the human world—one could say as the physical manifestation of her elusive spiritual nature—Jero Kabayan Lingsir enjoys an unrivalled supremacy over the ritual dimension of every domain for which her participation is deemed essential, be it rice cultivation, the economic prosperity of the province or the welfare of its population. So long as her cult continues to be relevant to Balinese needs, one may assume that the status of Jero Kabayan Lingsir will remain stable and his authority unchallenged—at least for all those who request tirta from him or visit Pura Luhur to request it there.

Indeed, with the exception of two new rituals belonging to the category of ‘national rituals’, the Panca Wali Krama and Eka Dasa Rudra, for which the participation of Brahmanical high-priests is deemed essential, the ancestral privilege of ‘muputin karya’, which, according to the local tradition was bestowed to the Kabayan leaders by the goddess herself, has not yet been questioned. The reason lies, as I have just said, in the perceived efficacy of the rituals in the system as it stands, but also in the close relationship the Kabayan entertained (and still entertain) with the royal House of Tabanan, a relationship which has always been based on the exclusion of the Brahmanical high-priests from Pura Luhur. In this respect, the precedence granted to Jero Kabayan Lingsir as ‘elder brother of the king’ may well be a cultural idiom for acknowledging the spiritual achievements and ritual proficiency of this lineage of kings-priests, notwithstanding the fact that they may have then been placed in the service of the Tabanan kings. Indeed there is some evidence that in recent times the Kabayan core-line became clients of the Tabanan puri, as indeed the title of mekel, a title given to a regional administrator in Tabanan, would suggest, and the fact that by the time of the Land Reform various branches of the Tabanan puri owned a significant area of newly-cleared rice-land in the region, leads us to believe. The role of the mekel or perbekel in the administration of the state in Tabanan at the end of the nineteenth century, has been discussed at length by Clifford Geertz in Negara (Geertz 1980:54–68). His findings were confirmed by the crown prince of Tabanan who maintains that the title of mekel was granted to the Kabayan core-line by the Cokorda of Tabanan, perhaps on the advice of the Dutch who divided the Kabayan’s realm into several administrative sections which were placed under the tutelage of different branches of the Tabanan puri. They are also congruent with stories I collected eighteen years ago in neighboring villages from villagers who complained of an association between the mekel of Wangaya Gede and the king of Tabanan, leading to the abusive imposition of taxes on rice during the years of colonial presence. This points to the possibility that, whatever the terms of the initial contract between the Kabayan and the king of Tabanan, they almost certainly evolved over the centuries in order to adjust to changes in the political and economic situation, and may well have, as Schulte-Nordholt has argued in another context, be-
come more ‘fixed’ after the arrival of the Dutch (Schulte-Nordholt 1986). This raises the issue of the eventual transformations in the concept of ‘kingdom’ throughout Balinese history, an issue which unfortunately space does not allow me to investigate further here.41

Conclusion

The high achievements of its past leaders, the peculiar structure of the kawitan, the importance given to the core-line and the status of their leaders as divinely empowered rulers and priests, all those features set the Kabayan of Wangaya Gede out as unique in a Bali Aga setting.42 This raises the question of the nature of kingship as it is understood in the Kabayan’s case. Its most outstanding feature is that it is of divine origin and as such cannot be contested even today without rejecting at the same time the entire worldview from which it takes its legitimacy. The importance of the practice of masiwa ke garis purusa in maintaining such legitimacy must again be underlined here.

Another unique trait is that ritual and temporal power are conflated within the same person, a conception of kingship which has virtually disappeared elsewhere in Bali. Access to leadership in this case tends to stress individual capacities and personal achievements, a notion in line with the ideology of the populations of Gunung Batukau in general, which explains their rejection of a caste-based hierarchical system without necessarily implying the rejection of hierarchy as a whole. However, the fact that the king may only be chosen from a pool of potential candidates in the core-line also means that, as is the case with the royal dynasties of Tabanan, agnatic descent plays a determining role, a feature of the system which contradicts the local ideology. On this point the Kabayan core-line behaves more like one of H. and C. Geertz’s ‘gentry’ groups than like the commoner groups with which the Bali Aga are generally associated. For this reason, and until in-depth kinship studies are carried out on other specific Bali Aga origin groups, any argument to the effect that the Bali Aga are defined by the absence of any hierarchical principles is not receivable.

Loyalty to the core-line, as expressed in masiwa ke garis purusa and the network of services and privileges accompanying it, further suggest that within the kawitan, patron-client ties are given priority over actual kin ties, at least beyond the core-line where all the group’s assets such as titles, esoteric knowledge, ritual expertise and formerly access to land and other resources are concentrated, and whose members constitute a true local aristocracy in its own right. The case of the Kabayan calls to mind a picture of the Bali Aga as a society structured by relations of dependency which were undeniably better articulated in the past when concrete rights to land were at stake, in which a core-group of prestigious and closely-knit high-ranking families controls every aspect of their clients’ access to the local resources, be they material or spiritual in nature. Viewed from this angle, the Kabayan seem to have a lot more in common with ancient Javanese priyayi than with Eastern Indonesian tribe leaders.

41 However, see Guermonprez (1985 and 1989) for a discussion of related issues.

42 At least as we know them at present, I have to stress this point, since I have argued elsewhere that certain, high-ranking dadia in Trunyan actually exhibit identical features (see Ottino 1994).
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