From *Puiq* (Silencing) to *Politik*: 
Transformations in Political Action and Cultural Exclusion from late-1990’s

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**Abstrak**


**Translating the past in the present**

Human history is like paleontology. Owing to a certain judicial blindness Even the best intelligences absolutely fail to see things which lie in front of their noses. Later, when the moment has arrived, we are surprised to find the traces everywhere of what we failed to see.

Karl Marx, *Letter to Friedrich Engels*, 1868

It was July, 1999, and once again I was attending a Balinese cremation ceremony, only this one, I was about to discover, was somewhat different. A Balinese classmate of my wife’s had insisted that we attend the ritual for a reunion of sorts, between old school friends. When we arrived at the ritual I noticed that the family had placed painted portraits, and not
photographs, of the deceased on the wall above the offerings for the cremation. Something did not fit. When I inquired when the three men to be cremated had died, our friend’s mother replied, ‘1965. They were killed by the members of our village because of their involvement in the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI)!’ Her daughter’s face fell slack. ‘You said that grandfather and your brothers were falsely accused!’ ‘No, not really,’ her mother answered. ‘Your uncles were *Pemuda Rakyat* (PKI’s Youth Wing) and your grandfather was a member of the party.’ Her mother went on to say that even though she was only twelve years old at the time, she and her older sister were inspected, publicly, for the PKI brand on their bodies, a brand many Balinese nationalists thought made PKI women more powerful, more radical. Our friend didn’t understand and so, taking a seat between us and her daughter, our friend’s mother explained, ‘The nationalists thought that PKI women had branded the PKI insignia on the area just above their genitals. They inspected us to determine who was a *gerwani* (member of a PKI women’s organization) and who wasn’t. They built an inspection booth on the *banjar* community pavilion just for this purpose.’ Noticing the daughter’s puzzlement she said, ‘The booth was like the polling booths erected during the past election. The inspection booths were supposed to protect our privacy like the polling booths protect the secrecy of the ballot. They didn’t, though. People peeked and the women inspectors abused us.’ The daughter seemed to understand now. She never knew that her mother had been ‘inspected’. She never knew her family really were PKI and she never knew that many of the people attending the ritual that day were not just family but also were responsible for the deaths of the men being cremated that day. Our friend’s mother explained the political history of her family and, shifting between comparisons with the present and facts from the past, helped her daughter to comprehend the depth of their significance. When explaining the terror of 1965, the mother said: ...

‘...Sometimes people just disappeared. It was like the ‘*ninjas*’ killings in East Java last year (1998). The killers in 1965 sometimes acted secretly too. We never knew whether the victims were killed because they were suspected of being PKI or whether a village rival was just taking advantage of the opportunity to wipe them out. Even now we don’t know why the *ninjas* killed all those people in East Java, right? The same thing happened here, in Bali.’

The woman’s family had waited until July 1999, after Suharto had stepped down and a more democratic process was in place, to hold the ritual.

‘We are all PDI-P nationalists now. There are no political divisions between us and the killers. We (victims and killers alike) are family and so we all have an obligation to hold proper burials for the dead. If they don’t, the dead wander and the killers will risk bringing danger to their families,’ the mother told us.

The ‘risks’ of such a cremation had shifted. After the fall of Suharto, the deaths of these men were no longer the political property of the State. They had become the responsibility of the village, their extended family, their killers and kin. The meaning of their deaths, however, required some translation.

The mother’s efforts to explain the political backdrop to familial relations, a backdrop silenced by New Order stigmatization of the ‘leftist’, shattered the normative image her daugh-

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2 From October to November 1998, secretive mercenary killers called ‘*ninjas*’ attacked and killed hundreds of orthodox Muslims (*santri*) and traditional sorcerers (*dukun santet*) in Banyuwangi, East Java. Ninjas could not be caught and were suspected of being vengeful communists, conspiratorial military agents, madmen or even foreign agents.
ter had known as family. The man she had once thought to be a taciturn uncle turned out to be a man who had fled rather than prevent her grandfather’s death. The family’s cold relation to the village head became a political division between killers and victims. Sitting there in our friend’s home, we watched on as her mother whispered her family’s history to her daughter and pointed out the actors responsible for the killings that had haunted her family and forced them to postpone the mortuary ritual of her grandfather and uncles. Relations were fleshed out; personal characteristics (a grumpy uncle, an anxious aunt) became signs of long-standing betrayal and trauma. At the very least, our friend possessed the knowledge she needed to take a position in her family relations, a family whose historical traces she was only now beginning to grasp.

A whole generation of young Balinese remains in the dark about the events of 1965 and the pervasiveness of its effects on ritual, religious, village and familial life. The fall of Suharto in May 1998 ushered in a new sense of openness and, with it, a new spate of violence throughout the country, violence not dissimilar to the violence Balinese families suffered in 1965. Many members of Bali’s younger generation learned about the events of 1965 while watching the riots in Jakarta, Maluku and East Timor with their parents. Their memories jarred by familiar forms of violence, parents and elders identified family resemblances, selective resonances, between the past violence of 1965 and the contemporary conflicts of Indonesia’s present. In addition to the new atmosphere of openness, the media silence of the New Order was replaced by prolific and free media willing to air even graphic images of violent conflicts around the country. The meaning of the killings (past or present) were shared across generations, lost and rediscovered, as in any translation, in the in-between.

Sitting by as the mother unveiled her family’s past to her daughter, I realized that I, a student who learned most of what he knows of Balinese culture and history during the stifling years of the New Order, was in need of such translation. With the exception of a few histories of the violent conflicts of 1965 in Bali, there were no studies describing how the legacy of those violent events had transformed daily life in Bali. I had heard about the killings of 1965 from friends who had lost family members during the killings but, at best, they were described to me as glimpses of a forgotten past and not as a crucial piece of New Order Bali’s social landscape. Instead, tourism, clan-politics, ‘high religion’ and familial status games engaged my theoretical attention at the time where knowledge of recent Balinese history might have grounded them in locally conceived meaning. This paper will not attempt to expose the legacies of 1965 in Balinese society. Instead, I will, as in the above exchange between the mother and her daughter, show how examples from Bali’s New Order past help to flesh out events in its post-Suharto present. My paper will discuss the following developments: 1) the steady growth of Bali’s student movement and popular resistance to the New Order government from 1994–1998; 2) the rise of PDI-P nationalists in 1999; 3) the empowerment of village structures and Bali’s traditional pecalang vigilantes; and finally 4) the new forms of political and social exclusion of non-Balinese outsiders. Although each topic merits further description, for the purpose of this paper, I choose to string them together, paraphrased, in the way that Balinese explained them to me. Shifting between national events and local Balinese concerns, party tensions and ethnic unity, village-based issues and even the conditions of East Timorese refugees, these disparate topics will show how national, local and international events contributed to legitimate new forms of social exclusion and solidarity in Balinese communities.
As their parents before them, Bali’s younger generation also had their own set of political experiences. In 1994, Bali’s student body ran large demonstrations against Suharto’s business cronies and their use of the military to build hotels in Tabanan, West Bali. Balinese youth activists also participated in the successful dethroning of their despot, Suharto in 1998. During the resistance they, with Indonesia’s other students around the country, forged a new political movement called reformasi. Reformasi became the new rallying call for the next generation of Indonesian youth with ideals of removing not only Suharto but also the puppet elites Suharto had trained to do his bidding during the New Order.

In 1999, in a dazzling display of political support, Bali’s village and urban youth joined forces with the older generation to support the nationalist PDI-P party under Megawati Sukarnoputri, effectively replacing many of Suharto’s Golkar bureaucrats with a new crop of nationalist regional officials and leaders. Although very few young Balinese reformists were included in Bali’s regional government there was no lack of new faces. In 2001, under regional autonomy legislation passed in 1999, Bali’s new political leaders were allowed to draft regional regulations to empower Balinese traditional village institutions. After thirty years of being controlled by Jakarta, Balinese communities would have real say in the security and public life of their communities. Still, the legacy of thirty-four years of authoritarian governance continued to inform public conceptions, traditional or not, of what ‘security’ and ‘legality’ would mean in contemporary Bali. During the popular celebration of Balinese regional autonomy, Bali’s regional authorities empowered traditional Balinese institutions to the exclusion of Bali’s non-Balinese working class, the migrant minorities.

Reformist or not, there seemed to be a high degree of consensus among Balinese regarding the unwanted presence of the non-Balinese poor living and working in their communities. While during the New Order the relation between citizen and State, warga and Negara, was absolutely clear, non-Balinese Indonesians did not fit as neatly within the post New-Order Balinese village regulations. It appeared as if, in the process of writing up new village regulations, Bali’s New Order stigmatization of suspected communists and their families had been replaced by a new pariah category called wong tamiu or ‘non-Balinese migrants’. In January 2000, for example, Denpasar’s mayor issued regulations declaring that all migrants must pay a quarterly fee for permission to stay in the city (KIPEM) in addition to a mandatory down payment on a bus ticket to send them home if they ran out of money. In October 2002, Bali’s traditional institutions and village vigilantes (pecalang) were formally integrated in the surveillance of non-Balinese migrants in their midst. In the process of rediscovering politics, after thirty-odd years of control from Jakarta, the Balinese had reconstructed the traditional, to the exclusion of the national.

Bali’s new freedoms and semi-autonomous institutions had also intensified concerns regarding external threats to the Balinese political community. Whether under the New Order or during the economic crisis of 1997, Bali had prospered while other regions faltered. Bali’s tourism and export-based dollar economy grew while the devalued rupiah weakened markets throughout the country. Thousands of non-Balinese Indonesians had, during the 1990’s and most intensely during 2000, flooded Bali in search of employment. Instead of blaming the legacy of New Order policy-makers for the effective displacement of the country’s working class, Balinese communities targeted non-Balinese migrants and refugees as the source of crime, political disturbances, overpopulation and even disease. In the minds of many Ba-
line, Java and Indonesia’s other regions had become the sources of Indonesia’s demise, not Bali. Violent conflict in Lombok and Maluku, separatist movements in East Timor and terrorist attacks in Jakarta and elsewhere plagued other areas and, as though by contagion, endangered Balinese notions of self, community and progress. To many Balinese, conflicts experienced in other areas in Indonesia appeared to be the fault of lesser ethnicities and not the politically embedded legacy of thirty years of authoritarian rule. Even when conflicts did erupt in Bali, local politicians and intelligentsia portrayed the conflicts as the work of ‘foreign’ (non-Balinese) provocateurs, and not the Balinese involved in them.

In post-Suharto Bali, the positive empowerment of ethnicity and tradition replaced party-politics and nationalism as the primary means of expressing reform and identity. The dimensions for this new Balinese locality were prescribed not by party agents or the military but by the hamlet level *banjar* and village ordinances or *awig-awig*. The successful implementation of these new political forces of exclusion relied not upon the surveillance of ex-PKI, political dissidents or corrupt officials but of non-authentic, non-Balinese, resident migrants. The next section of this paper will discuss some of the political developments that contributed to the political sanctification of the Balinese village, a process that has come to legitimate the popular exclusion of the ‘dangerous’ non-Balinese interloper.

**Balinese new order history: the cult of uniformity**

Under Suharto, New Order cultural standardization initiatives permitted certain traditional institutions such as Bali’s sub-village *banjar* systems to exist as platforms for development programs and party campaign activities. Whether under the Dutch colonials, the Sukarnoist revolutionaries or Suharto’s military, the political powers of each era viewed Bali’s village institutions and seemingly contiguous cultural uniformity as a model worthy of instrumental preservation. After nearly a century of such positive recognition, Bali’s international fame and wealth has won Balinese the pride of the ‘chosen’ within a nation of lesser (Indonesian) equals. There are important silences in the Bali’s historical record, silences not unlike those faced by our aforementioned friend and her mother, which continue to represent Balinese cultural life as a reservoir for Golden Age themes and not as a reflection of Balinese engagements with the political and economic present.

Bali was, prior to 1965, among Indonesia’s most politically dynamic provinces. Publications and open debates split nationalist and leftists, reformists and reactionaries, pro-caste from anti-caste during Sukarno’s rocky reign over Indonesia’s theistic and revolutionary archipelago. From October 1965 to April 1966,
Bali’s experiment with revolutionary reform and grassroots politics ended in disaster and the death of 80,000 or more suspected ‘communists’ at the hand of neighbors, military officials and nationalist tameng thugs. New Order institutions and anti-leftist surveillance leached Bali of its earlier dynamism and replaced it with a style of public religiosity and political obedience quite dissimilar to Bali’s discordant and village-based ritualism prior to 1965. Behind public Balinese devotion during the New Order there lived an unspoken history of murder, inter- and intra-banjar terror and betrayal. After the killings, however, it was on only on rare occasions that mention was made of these horrible memories. The reasons for such silence were not exclusively cultural or personal. In post-1965 Bali speaking out against the killing was equated with rebellion and carried real risks. Under Suharto’s regime, silence was sanctified and mutism equated with consensus. To gather in large numbers, to criticize the government or even to insist on planting old varieties of rice was to challenge the National Personality (kepribadian negara) of Suharto’s State.

Bali had fallen off of the political map of Indonesia. The monetary rewards of cultural tourism and silent complicity with State development campaigns helped ease the pains of depoliticization and state terrorism for many Balinese. Rice was cheap, politics were calm and Balinese were becoming wealthy or at least much wealthier than they had been under Sukarno. Religious and cultural uniformity replaced politics in New Order Bali. For lack of political movement, cultural authenticity had become the measure of the Balinese commitment to nation. In part because of the national focus on political religiosity, Bali’s primary religious institution, Parisadha Hindu Dharma, acquired great authority during the late New Order. In 1992, for instance, ritual clothing was made uniform forcing Balinese families to buy special clothes distinguishing ‘temple-wear’ from ‘mortuary-wear’.

While, in the past, ritual holidays were performed according to sometimes village-specific calendrical cycles, during the New Order, Parisadha Hindu Dharma normalized island-wide holidays and ritual cycles. Bali’s diverse villages were forced to make mandatory donations for massive island-wide rituals such as the annual ritual, Bhetara Turun Kabeh, held in Bali’s mother temple.

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5 Tameng literally means ‘shield’. The Balinese use it to refer to Nationalist Party (PNI) thugs employed to fight leftists and, during the 1965 killings, gather or kill suspected communists.

6 Religious and cultural activities of a non-political nature were among the few public activities permitted by Suharto’s New Order. Even very small religious activities required police permits. Invariably an intelligence officer would be present for even the most insignificant shadow puppet play. This was partly due to the fact that many popular Balinese cultural performances such as shadow puppetry, Arja, and Jangger were formerly employed by political parties to push their party platforms in the 1960’s.

7 Even as late as 1977 Pangdam Udayana XVI military command ‘issued instructions on April, May and June 1977 to anticipate the resurgence of “Night” PKI or “New Style PKI”. These operations were productive and succeeded in arresting several military and civil servants linked to these movements’ (Atmaja 2000:77).

8 ‘Consensus out of the barrel of the gun’ to quote Clifford Geertz’s description of state oppression in Papua and East Timor during the New Order (See Geertz’s 2000:235).

9 A Balinese farmer told me how the military enforced the use of high-yield varieties of rice over hardier but longer growing local hybrids by force harvesting the farmer’s fields and serving him the bill for their labor.

10 Several families in the Ubud area confessed to me the shame they felt when each of the young men took turns wearing the same white blazer, white head scarf and yellow overskirt to the temple because they lacked the funds to buy the uniform recently made mandatory by local religious authorities.
Besakih. Even larger rituals ‘discovered’ in the libraries of Holland were conducted on a massive scale.  

The massive, island-wide *Tri Buana* ritual, for instance, was held in 1993 and mobilized nearly all of Bali’s communities to attend rituals at the Pura Mesceti in East Bali, Pura Jati of Lake Batur and Pura Besakih at the foot of Mt. Agung.

**Early signs of resistance**

In April 1994, almost exactly one year after the *Tri Buana* ritual, Bali’s students and farmers protested against the use of temple grounds for five-star tourism development projects in Tabanan, West Bali. Although the popular Balinese resistance to Suharto’s form of high-class tourism development reflected a growing Balinese awareness of State oppression, the content of the student resistance continued to appeal to cultural purity (a temple was being polluted) and not the violation of citizen’s rights (farmers were losing their land). The problem seemed to lie in what one of Bali’s students called the activist’s inability to communicate in a language that did not employ the same false promises normatively employed by the government. Roberto, the activist in question, said, ‘The student’s resistance against the State is always phrased in the State’s terms and not according to the conditions of the people we represent in our activism. When we try to run advocacy campaigns for everyday people (*rakyat*) they often respond that our efforts don’t sound any different than those of the government. What language are students to use if not the language of the institutions that govern and educate us? Do we know any other?’ Roberto asked rhetorically. While Roberto and Bali’s activists were eager to take the government to task over issues of land rights they realized that the only means of rallying mass support was to appeal to the preservation of a Balinese temple endangered by a tourism development project.

**PDI-P politics, student movements and populist satire**

Bali’s student demonstrations of 1994 were a local example of nation-wide fractures in Suharto’s dictatorial control over the political and economic conduits of the nation. Early signs of Suharto’s insecurity were revealed in his attacks on Indonesia’s Democratic Party for Struggle (PDI-P) and the People’s Democratic Party (PRD) activists two years later in Jakarta. In July 1996, state aggression against leftist PRD activists and PDI-P followers under Megawati Sukarnoputri backfired on Suharto, effectively galvanizing popular support for Megawati’s populist supporters and the activists of Indonesia’s universities. The critical NGO activists Suharto once derogatorily termed *tuyul-tuyul botak* (‘bald devils’), came...
to be seen in PDI-P strongholds such as Bali, not as trouble makers but as the heroic members of the popular struggle for reform.\textsuperscript{14} Partly due to the sudden popular support for the activist movement, in 1997 and 1998, new activists began to join the ranks of Denpasar’s seasoned demonstrators against Suharto with the support of Bali’s middle-class nationalists.

Popular discontent towards the government was not solely an urban, middle-class phenomenon in Bali. Since the early 1990’s migrant workers from the hills of Karangasem and East Buleleng introduced gegenjekan, a satirical singing genre sung over buckets of palm-wine, to the comparatively well-to-to youth of South Bali.\textsuperscript{15} The populist messages of these songs matched the sentiment of the period and the relative openness of popular protest against the government. While older gegenjekan songs such as ‘Pretty Sister’ (Adi Ayu) tended to deal with bluesy themes of lost love, as the reformist movement gained momentum so did the political satire of gegenjekan’s explosive rhythms. Gegenjekan songs such as ‘Snobby Bank Clerks’, ‘Transmigration’, ‘Dashed Dreams of the City’, Udin (a journalist killed for his ideals) and ‘Stress!’ filled the markets and public transport terminals as local studios mass-produced what were formerly considered ‘village’ tunes for popular urban consumption. Bali’s youth nationalists had discovered an opening in the seemingly impermeable cultural edifice of Suharto’s Bali. A cloud of falsity hung over ‘high culture’ when Bali’s youth sang out syncopated gegenjekan rhythms and lyrics enounced with a bitter refusal to comply with State programs and its discourse of progress.\textsuperscript{16}

**Populist vigilantism and the end of idealist activism**

In November 1998, however, things began to change at the level of the nation. Political resistance was slowly replaced by religious and party-based party campaigns. This was most evident when Jakarta’s student activists led demonstrations against Suharto’s successor, Habibie, only to face off with semi-organized security groups or pamswakarsa consisting of the same unemployed, downtrodden ‘masses’ their reforms were designed to assist.\textsuperscript{17} After several short clashes, the students regrouped and, over the next six months, their

\textsuperscript{14} The activist in New Order Indonesia, particularly during the late 1980’s and 1990’s, was acquainted with military intelligence, police beatings and alienation from their community. In fact, when the author spoke with several of these activists they reminisced that it was the ‘misfits’, the half-thug half intellectuals of their campuses who joined the ranks of activists. ‘Now all of the good kids (anak baik baik) are joining the movement and it isn’t anywhere nearly as fun as it used to be,’ said an activist from the early 1990’s.

\textsuperscript{15} Gegenjekan, popularly called genjek, was supposedly sung by male conscripts to the Karangasem courts during battles against Lombok and Goa, Sulawesi. War songs or not, young Karangasem men told me that gegenjekan is normally sung over palm wine drinking sessions held at wakes so that, under the effects of alcohol and death, people will avoid venting their emotions through anger at one another and instead pour them into the sad, bluesy topics of lost loves and dashed opportunities typical of gegenjekan lyrics. Gegenjekan is popular in the dry areas of North and East Bali where the nanao palm grows and produces an alcoholic, ready-to-drink, beverage called tuak or palm wine.

\textsuperscript{16} Nearly all gegenjekan singing sessions begin with a greeting where singers acknowledge that the reason for their gathering lay in their poverty. During several of the gegenjekan sessions I attended in eastern Bali the singers shot out jibes at one another as they drank their first glasses of palm wine pang kebus basange (to warm up their stomachs/get irate enough to sing).

\textsuperscript{17} This was partly due to the fact that many of these groups were mobilized by General Wiranto and thug-ring leaders with connections to fighting groups in Banten, Solo and Bogor. Still other groups such as the recently formed Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) in Jakarta saw the pamswakarsa movement as a cause to defend Habibie, their Islamic president, from what they called ‘communist’ students.
demonstrations steadily fizzled out. Demonstrations and secular resistance were slowly replaced by party politics and Islamist vigilance as forty-five new (and three older) Indonesian parties were forced to prepare for national and regional elections in less than six months. The election campaigns of 1999 were hastily organized. Poorly staffed and in need of warm bodies, political parties paid and fed many of Indonesia’s unemployed and otherwise politically disenfranchised youth.18 By May of 1999, the tides of party colors showing red (PDI-P), yellow (Golkar), orange (Republika), and many shades of green (Islamic parties) were filled with the youth who, during the demonstrations in 1998, had watched on helplessly as the heroic student elite of the country fought and died for them.19 The new generation of mobilizable masses consisted not of students but instead of young toughs capable of protecting campaigns from rivals and organizing the men in their community to do the same.20

Community security and the return to ritual labor

By October 1998 the reformist picture in Bali had lost much of its national relevance. Authoritarian developmentalism was as much a part of Balinese experience during the New Order as in other areas of Indonesia. Nevertheless, Bali’s Hindu-Buddhist religious traditions and its unique position as an international ‘cultural commodity’ set it apart as non-national. Now, in post-Suharto Indonesia, Bali had become an oasis of sorts less because of its cultural purity than due to its security. Unlike other areas of Indonesia, Bali had no history of strong anti-Chinese riots. Seen as a safe location, after the anti-Chinese riots of May 1998, thousands of Chinese Indonesians fleeing Java and other islands set up businesses and part-time residence in Bali, because of its safety and relative tolerance towards Chinese Indonesians and Christians.21 Bali’s dollar economy also brought thousands of Javanese and Sasak contractors and laborers to live in squalid, but more profitable, construction projects throughout Bali’s densely populated towns and suburban villages.22

18 During the elections, unemployed youth were given free t-shirts, a day’s wage and food, in exchange for their participation in Indonesia’s first ‘free and fair’ multi-party elections since 1955. Most of the youth who participated in these activities participated in several different party campaigns during the same period. They became part of a network of ‘mobilizable’ masses coordinated by field managers (korlap). These moveable masses became crucial to future mobilization under partisan, religious or even regional political causes.

19 Many of the student demonstrations in Jakarta, Central Java and other areas only allowed students with University ID cards to participate in their demonstrations. Even though these efforts to prevent provocateurs from infiltrating student demonstrations were effective, they also succeeded in alienating urban youth from involvement in the most important political movement of their generation.

20 Ciganjur group refers to the group of reformist leaders including Amien Rais of the political party PAN, Megawati Sukarnoputri of PDI-P, Abdurahman Wahid of PKB and Sultan Hamangkubuwono XI, the Sultan and Governor of Yogyakarta.

21 The author met with several of these safety-seeking Chinese families in Denpasar prior to the 1999 election. Each family asked me what kind of business opportunities existed for them in Bali seeing as how their children and elderly members of the family would live in Denpasar if riots struck the Javanese towns where their businesses were based.

22 During 1999, Denpasar experienced a 6.4 percent population increase with only 2 percent of the population growth due to new births. The 2000 Census was the first census to include the ethnic origin of Bali’s migrants. The census showed that majority of Denpasar’s new migrants were from East Java, and not internal Balinese migrants. This fact added urgency to already strong concerns felt by Denpasar’s municipal authorities. For more information see, ‘Results of the 2000 Population Census’ by the National Statistics Bureau in Bali.
Traditional thugs

As in the rest of Indonesia, Balinese created village-level vigilante groups (pecalang) to protect their communities from ‘external’ threats.23 In fact, pecalang were most dramatically displayed when, in October 1999, Sanur’s pro-PDI-P pecalang were employed to help protect the Congress from ninja and provocateurs believed to be running killing campaigns in neighboring Banyuwangi, East Java.24 The scope of pecalang expanded when, during the campaign of 1999, many of them took on unofficial party roles as party para-militaries (satgas partai) for PDI-P to control campaign marches and guard against potential Golkar aggression.25 Many able-bodied men, especially those renowned for their fighting abilities or sacred invulnerability (kebal), were double-enrolled as village security (pecalang desa) and party para-militaries (satgas partai). The double function of these guards appeared normal partly because party security posts often overlapped directly with community policing stands or pos siskamling activated during the New Order.26 Between community security duty and campaign security pecalang members were, like so many other militias and pamswakarsa members throughout Indonesia, getting the first dose of political authority they had ever experienced. More importantly, the combined emphasis on party and communal security from dangerous ‘outsiders’ became interwoven with the party-based goals of grassroots PDI-P supporters. The result was the transformation of Bali’s political landscape from an elite-controlled bureaucratic structure to an arguably more mass-based form of ‘community-oriented’ political mobilization. It was not long, however, before pecalang became identified less with party politics and more with the traditional surveillance of non-Balinese migrants in their midst.

Different parties common foes: golkar elite goes local27

Only a couple of weeks after the PDI-P Congress closed in Sanur and the thousands of loyal PDI-P-ites returned to their homes

23 According to National Police legislation No.28/article 3 passed in 1997, groups such as pecalang were categorized as voluntary community policing crews or pamswakarsa. Pamswakarsa were formed under the auspices of police legislation but, according to most pamswakarsa members in Bali or Lombok, they formed because the police were so ineffectual in maintaining order. See National Police legislation No. 28/1997.

24 One of the conspiracy theories behind the spree of mercenary killings or ‘ninja’ murders of Muslim clerics and traditional ‘sorcerers’ (dukun santet) in Banyuwangi and East Java in October 1998 was that it had been orchestrated to separate the growing alliances between Abdurahman Wahid and Megawati Sukarnoputri, both of whom possessed massive support networks in East Java.

25 Satgas partai refers to the men recruited to defend party campaigns throughout Indonesia. Usually armed with clubs and dressed in special military-style uniforms, satgas partai became the militant new image of Indonesia’s largest parties. Largely recruited from ex-thugs or gang members, satgas partai’s brutish bearing often obscured the reformist messages of their partisan leaders.

26 Siskamling or community policing was part of a multi-pronged military program called Kopkamtib which formerly focused on political threats to the nation in the form of former leftists. In the early 1980’s Kopkamtib military ideology came to absorb the threat of criminality as well as leftist or separatist threats to national unity and stability. The military’s public execution of criminals through an operation called Petrus marked the outset of what would become a much more community-based approach to national security (See Barker’s 1998:12).

27 Golkar refers to Golongan Karya, Suharto’s state party and winner of every national election since 1971. Civil servant participation in Golkar was mandatory during the New Order. In Bali, Golkar recruited many of the most powerful high caste families on the island to maintain firm footing in local power dynamics. PDI-P supported populist commoners but did not neglect local power bases such as Puri Satria in Denpasar and other historically nationalist palaces throughout the island.
throughout the archipelago, the Minister of Food and Horticulture, A.M. Saefuddin made an unfortunate statement. In an interview with *Pelita* magazine he was reported saying, ‘Megawati is just a woman and a Hindu’. Photographs of Megawati praying in Balinese temples during one of her visits to Bali prior to the Congress confirmed the Minister’s criticism in many people’s eyes. For the Balinese, this was a gross insult against Balinese religious identity. Meanwhile, Bali’s Golkar backers were quivering at the recently announced plan to hold a Golkar Party Congress only a month after PDI-P’s nationalist Congress had transformed Denpasar’s roads into a ‘sea of red’. Because many of Bali’s middle class, bureaucratic and high-caste elite were Golkar-ites, it appeared that they were in for a showdown with Bali’s populist PDI-P supporters. Fortunately, the statement of Minister Saefuddin provided a golden opportunity for Golkar-ites to join Balinese PDI-P supporters in the popular protest in defense of Balinese Hindu identity. The Balinese conservative elite portrayed Saefuddin’s discriminatory remarks against Megawati’s willingness to pray in Balinese temples as a strike against Balinese religious identity regardless of their party preferences.

In what was reported to be Bali’s largest public demonstration to date, tens of thousands Balinese collected in Denpasar’s municipal center of Renon to eat a catered meal together. They all sat there, PDI-P and Golkar alike, consuming huge amounts of donated rice, and then, without further ado, marched home to their respective villages. The men eating together that day in Renon were not the idealist activists of May 1998. These men wore sarongs, ritual gear and krises. They carried gongs and *bleganjur* symbol sets similar to those used in ritual processions. They walked to Renon that day as if to a ritual and returned, bellies full, having participated in possibly the largest *magibung* (collective meal) in Balinese history. Thirty-years of pent up tensions between Golkar opportunists and PDI loyalists appeared to dissipate beneath a much stronger sense of a new, politically engaged, Balinese identity.

The Balinese were lucky. All the signs had pointed to an explosive conflict between Golkar and PDI-P supporters until, as if by design, a Jakarta-based minister stuck his foot in his mouth. He became, in the words of Rene Girard, a ‘scapegoat’ for the tensions shared between Bali’s powerful and their nationalist lower classes. After the collective meal around the statue in Denpasar, there were very few incidents of party-based conflict between rival Ba-


29 At the time of the Congress, one had to wear a red shirt or have some PDI-P party attribute displayed prominently on one’s vehicle in order to pass through the crowds of PDI-P supporters. One politically ambivalent Balinese man at the time told the author, ‘I left my home in the morning with a closet full of white (office) shirts only to find that they had all been died red (PDI-P’s colors) when I returned home that afternoon.’ PDI-P euphoria was unavoidable at the time and posed a very real threat to entrenched pro-Golkar families who profited from their party’s dominance during the New Order.

30 During the New Order it was mandatory for civil servants to join the Golkar party. This meant that university professors, government employees and even village security (*hansip*) were forced to wear yellow (Golkar’s colors) during Suharto’s reign.

31 Girard developed a complicated theory showing how rivalries between the powerful and subordinate result in the identification of a surrogate victim for their otherwise catastrophic tensions. Girard’s basic definition for scapegoating is, ‘The age-old way of gaining release from the violence or potential violence that mimesis produces is through non-conscious convergence upon a victim’ (Girard 1996:292—293). In this case the tensions between Golkar elites and populist PDI-P supporters is effectively transferred to the distant minister who, by criticizing Hinduism as a whole, effected a holistic resistance from Balinese populists and elites alike.
inese communities. The hatchet had been buried and Saefuddin had assisted the Balinese in projecting their party-based tensions upon a distant political foe.

A return to home identity against national status

The sanctification of Balinese cultural identity was not only strengthened by mass tourism, PDI-P Congresses, and *Hindu Arise!* protests. The increased power of campaign-based and not elite-organized, party politics reinforced the importance of the village community for many of Bali’s bureaucratic elite. I wish to highlight here the return of political and middle-class involvement in ritual labor as an important indicator of how the community began to replace government-associated status as the new measure for political security in Bali. Balinese, cosmopolitan or not, high caste or low, are equally bound to leave their homes or places of work for days on end to attend weddings and funerals and to participate in the pre-ritual construction of altars, buffets etc. Not to do so would be, in the eyes of all of one’s future cremation tower bearers, to take a risk for which one would undoubtedly pay one day. More importantly, the absence of such ritual labor could also mean the absolute failure of any family’s ritual. The density of ritual activity on auspicious days (*dewasa*), particularly during confluences of holy days, often means that a Balinese family might attend as many as three to four rituals in a single afternoon. The burdens of ritual labor for the ritual holder (*sane madrue karya*) have been allayed somewhat by the presence of *tukang banten* or professional offering makers commissioned with preparing the most complicated offerings. Nevertheless, most urban Balinese are migrant laborers of sorts. Once or twice a month, usually more often, Balinese working outside of their home villages are called home to do *pro bono* work or, *ngayah*, for their family, home community or *banjar*.

This was not always the case. In many areas of New Order Bali, prominent officials, party members, or businessmen would, instead of participating in the actual ritual labor, send money home to replace their labor. In the mountain village of Banyuatis, a village famous for producing Golkar officials during the New Order, ‘official’ Banyuatis families would often send their departmental subordinates to village rituals as a sign of their power and influence in the provincial capital. At the time, this style of patronage was not scorned. In fact, it more often than not identified a conduit of patronage, the chance for village youth to become *anak buah* or subordinate ‘minions’ in Denpasar. During the New Order, to become *anak buah* in such a relationship was the first step towards becoming tomorrow’s ‘boss’.

As a result, such patron-client relations suggested the possibility of status and life in the city. Particularly during the heyday of New Order tourism development in the early 1990’s, life as a ‘boss’ meant money, power, and independence from direct involvement in what had become ‘lowly’ ritual labor. One of the benefits of modernity in Bali, particularly for the urban upper class, was to sub-contract ritual through this network of potential *anak buah*. There was some surprise in Banyuatis, when, in 1999, after Golkar began to slip beneath the populist...
cloak of PDI-P, the New Order officials who once used government staff to represent them at village rituals insisted on attending even the most insignificant rites in person. Was this a symptom of participatory politics or a return to the communal security of the village, one’s ‘basis’? At the very least, the Balinese community, its ritual politics and the invisible attendance roster for rituals imbued village life, its conglomerate security, with a new kind of populist significance.

The allure of the city, its promise of status, were less stable since the fall of Suharto had ushered in a multi-party system and, for Bali, PDI-P’s majority control of regional parliament. The village provided one of the only forms of social security available for Suharto’s former bureaucrats and puppet leaders.

**East Timorese refugees in Bali: containing the contagious**

As mentioned earlier, Bali had prospered as a tourist destination not only because of its historical position as an ‘authentic’ cultural enclave but also because national and international institutions had agreed that Balinese cultural harmony protected it from the political violence plaguing other Indonesian regions. Not a few of Bali’s ‘safety-seekers’ were Indonesia’s displaced refugees. Whether Chinese fleeing Jakarta in May 1998, Christians escaping Lombok in January 2000, or Malukans migrating to Bali between 1999 and 2001, there was no shortage of displaced Indonesian safety seekers on the island. Although usually only the wealthiest of Indonesia’s one million or so displaced peoples can afford to live in Bali, for some among the displaced Bali was not only a sanctuary from their conflict at home but also a place to hide from the Indonesian State. There were other, less clearly defined, groups seeking safety in Balinese reputedly peaceful communities. The event I wish to discuss concerns the arrival of some 1,200 pro-independence Timorese in Bali by air, land and sea after the scorched-earth campaigns of their soon-to-be nation in September 1999. At the time, East Timorese were neither tourists nor citizens. They became, in the eyes of Indonesia’s governmental institutions and Bali’s territorial military command, a group of dangerously ambiguous quasi-citizens. East Timorese were not yet independent of the residual military and militia based groups on their island and, as of September 4th 1999, they continued to be targeted by militia and ‘officials’ throughout the archipelago. As I was among the people trying to organize the placement and registration (for future repatriation) of Timorese at the time I was particularly anxious over how the largely nationalist Balinese would receive those ‘dis-nationalized’ Timorese.

My assumption at the time was that Bali would be, in light of tourism, the safest place for Timorese to take cover until their repatriation to Timor in October. When I called up Balinese friends to help find safe houses or indekost for Timorese families in their own communities, I was therefore surprised to hear a unanimous ‘no’. They said, ‘I’m sorry. People in my banjar would get the wrong idea and my family would run the risk of alienation (sepekang).’ I was not certain of what they

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34 During 1999 and 2000, I collaborated with Bali’s Legal Aid Institute to establish a small safe-house for Indonesians displaced by conflicts in East Timor, Maluku and Lombok. Although for the most part, the displaced were happy to be somewhere safe they also suffered alienation and religious persecution in ways neither they nor we could have possibly anticipated.

35 After the results of the UN-led referendum announced a victory for pro-Independence Timorese, military-backed militias displaced approximately 500,000 Timorese to areas throughout Indonesia and in the mountains of East Timor itself.
meant until friends starting reporting concerns over the hunt for Timorese and their ‘virus’.

Local Balinese government officials announced that all Balinese communities must report the presence of Timorese to the local health department for fear that their community be infected by virulent Timorese ‘malaria’. By late September the Denpasar Health Department had sent groups of personnel to spray open sewers throughout the city, inquiring after Timorese suspected of being carriers of the contagious malarial ‘disease’. Meanwhile, in a local Catholic community outside of Denpasar, priests were working hard to convince local authorities that the Timorese youth taking shelter with them did not need to be ‘quarantined’ by the police department. At the time the campaign was terrifying. It made no sense. We were, after all, in Bali, an area where malaria virus carriers and thousands of other ‘infected’ populations visited and left the island daily. The increasingly bounded quality of Balinese communities, the recent vigilance towards dangerous outsiders, the sanctity of Balinese cultural identity and the sanitary quality of touristed zones throughout the island provided an air of normalcy to the bio-politics of the hunt for pro-independence Timorese refugees. The East Timorese, the ‘contagion’, were fortunately repatriated to their new country in mid-October 1999, only a week after Abdurahman Wahid (a supporter of democratization in East Timor) was elected to be Indonesia’s new president.

Sanitizing Balinese localities

The hygienic exclusion of virulent East Timorese in September and October 1999 is an exaggerated example of the much more prevalent and deeply felt Balinese anxiety regarding the negative effects of ‘outsider’ nationals living in Bali. What has gone almost unnoticed in the long narrative of cultural exegesis of Balinese life on Bali is the very real presence of an integrated work force consisting of non-Balinese Indonesians on the island.36 Since the early 1990’s, government officials and Balinese entrepreneurs alike made efforts to ‘sanitize’ Bali of the unhygienic plethora of night markets and otherwise unprofitable non-Balinese enterprises.37 These sentiments were most evident in June–August 1994 when secretive and relatively small scale purges were carried out against non-Balinese suspected of vandalizing and stealing goods from Hindu temples in the Ubud-Tegalalang sub-districts of Gianyar. Whether such efforts to sanitize Bali from the non-Balinese masses were merely a part of a broader effort to win recognition from Jakarta based ministries, the social side-effect of such a strategy was the cooperative ‘purification’ of non-Balinese and the ‘disorderly’ from the tourist market economy. During the New Order such efforts were motivated by top down government officials. After the fall of Suharto and the elections of 1999, however, it was the community-level pecalang vigilantes who were responsible for the spatial and economic exclusion of non-Balinese.

Cultural conflict, reading riots:

Bali’s new pecalang guard now represents the new face of popular youth involvement in regional politics. With the student movement thus stagnant, Bali’s toughs have taken their place in the protection of the people and their communities. Only, unlike the students who struggled to protect the People (rakyat) from

36 From 1999–2000 Denpasar experienced 6.5 percent growth with 4.5 percent due to non-Balinese migration (See Badan Pusat Statistik Propinsi Bali 2000).
37 The Ubud night market (pasar senggol), where most poor non-Balinese in Ubud worked, was destroyed in 1994.
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the State (Suharto), pecalang exist to protect the community from the criminal and the economic impurities of migration. Pecalang were made official through regional regulations (perda) passed in January 2001 where their duties include community security for ritual and religious affairs. The pecalang regulations, Article 17 of regional regulation Desa Pakraman No.3/2001, describe pecalang as a traditional guard for traditional events. Nevertheless, pecalang may also be ‘borrowed’ (diperbantukan) by official bodies in need of the pecalang’s knowledge of a given community. From 2000 to the present pecalang have been involved in the intimidation and sweeping of non-Balinese residents without official residence (KTP) papers. Similar to other pamsuwakarsa or civilian militias organized around Indonesia, pecalang involvement in gambling rings (cockfights), ‘protecting’ brothel areas, or the removal of non documentoed non-Balinese from the island has made it difficult to distinguish them from the militias involved in conflicts throughout East Timor, Maluku, and other areas in Indonesia. East Timor, Maluku, East Java and Jakarta all called the militias in their areas ‘pamsuwakarsa’ or community policing units. It was only after conflicts and the foreign press used the term militia did the term make its way into Indonesian language press. Otherwise, Indonesia’s military has employed a number of terms to describe militias under their support.38 Where lay the difference? A Timorese activist, Ardo, attempted to answer this question when an Australian journalist asked him why he thought Bali was a safe destination for refugee Timorese. Ardo replied, ‘It is as if we Timorese are all lined up with the military on the other side and tourists milling around between us. They could never get a clear shot at us and, if they did, the tourists wouldn’t feel safe.’ The same answer could be applied to the Balinese ability to avoid large-scale conflict during the 1990’s.

Whether in the conflict areas of Culik in Karangasem or Banjar in Singaraja, inter-communal violence in Bali rarely signify economic inequalities or political rivalries. Deep community-level rivalries in Culik, Karangasem have resulted in the burning of over 30 homes in the village since 1994. Similar to the violence of Banjar, North Bali in December 1998 (claiming three lives) the normative refrain to traditional conflict depict economic and political tensions as secondary to the ‘hot tempers’ of North Bali and Karangasem residents respectively. The use of terms such as ‘tradition’ or ‘character’ to describe conflict not only tempered the language of violence in the media but also distinguished Bali’s violence from inter-religious or community-based conflicts unfolding elsewhere in Indonesia. Tourism loomed above Bali and the discourse of violence as a buffer to military intervention and a censor to fickle tourists who feared that ‘Bali was no longer Bali’. When political conflict did break out in Bali, Bali’s cultural elite were quick to proclaim that it was the work, not of the Balinese, ‘who are culturally artistic in nature’, but of leftist outsiders or provocateurs eager to subvert Bali’s appeal to international tourism.39

38 See ‘Defense Act of 1980 No.20’ for further descriptions of Ratih, Wanra, Kamra, Linmas, Hansip and Menwa civilian combatant categories. East Timor’s militias, Maluku’s cowok keren gangs and other semi-official para-militaries throughout Indonesia were recruited from semi-organized gambling rings (bola adil in Timor; ex-Jakarta thugs in Maluku) with experience in creating turfs and establishing money making ventures based in extortion (pungli).

39 According to Roberto Hutabarat, one of the major obstacles to the success of the student movement against the Bakri Nirwana Resort project in April 1994 was the fact that Balinese elite and military officials blamed the demonstrations on non-Balinese provocateurs and refused to identify the demonstrations as an expression of Balinese discontent (interview 1996).
Conclusion

The Balinese, their village institutions, its new pecalang guardians and popular political participation have undergone profound transformations over the past five years. The political uncertainties after the fall of Suharto, the euphoric support for the (part-Balinese) nationalist Megawati Sukarnoputri and the much awaited empowerment of Balinese to protect and order their own villages through institutions such as the pecalang have been as troubling as they were, at one time, inspiring. Although many Balinese fear that the presence of pecalang in their communities will reproduce a style of civilian militarism akin to the nationalist ‘tameng’ vigilantes of the 1960’s, few are willing to speak out or suggest alternatives to this new, and decidedly violent, development. To some Balinese elders the Balinese alienation of ‘outsiders’ is temporary while the real dangers will manifest themselves in conflicts between Balinese.

As powerful as the reformist movement once was, the composition of the ‘political’ in Bali’s present echoes against the chambers of the collectively shared, but still unspoken, memories of terror and violence experienced during the late 1960’s and New Order. While writing this paper I asked a close Balinese friend and contemporary to today’s Balinese leaders, why political discussion of oppression experienced during the New Order has been replaced by dry, and equally non-reformist, traditionalism. He answered:

People are traumatized by the past and so every new sign of uncertainty sounds alarms for them. It is like the kuluk bulus (the ‘alarm’ rhythm sounded on the community’s wooden slit gong if there is a criminal in the village). If people hear the kuluk bulussounding the alarm they grab a weapon because it means there is a criminal loose in the village. If another rhythm is sounded it means there is a death in the village and they put on their sarong. Politics sound rhythms for us too. The present situation sounds like 1965 to a lot of the people of my generation. That is trauma in Bali.

Of course not all forms of political violence or vigilantism can be reduced to 1965. Different generations hear different rhythms. Suffice it to say that there is a family resemblance, a sympathetic realism, between what Balinese youth are experiencing now and what their parents experienced in 1965. Nevertheless, the same historical resemblances cannot be denied their contemporary affinities to developments in other areas in Indonesia where similar groups, with similar titles, prowl for those who lie outside the dominant cultural, religious or party-based fold. The grounds for such resemblances lie not in the iron hand of the military, although they seem to have a hand in more than they are given credit for, but in the communal and national experiences of Balinese Indonesians whether villagers or vigilantes. Nor do the rules for engagement between outsiders and insiders, sanitized Balinese communities and disnationalized Timorese contagions, ninjas and pecalang, laborer migrants and authentic residents appear to be scripted by conspiracy or military programming. These new forms of delineating boundaries are, or at least appear to be, less modeled by a code than by a mixture of useable pasts and reflexes, memories and rule-of-thumb norms. For the student of Balinese culture, at least as far as I am concerned, the public meanings of Bali’s exclusive ethnicity owe as much to the legacy of remembered resonances with silenced pasts as they do to shared affinities with events unfolding in areas beyond Bali’s shores.

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40 This is taken from personal notes taken during my interview of an elderly Balinese priest who compares the present situation to the violence he experienced during the revolution, 1965 and the New Order period.
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