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Original Citation

Rajendra, Anom and Temple, Nicholas (2016) Religious ceremonies in Balinese society: a case study of a cremation ritual in Tabanan. *International Journal of Indonesian Studies*, Spring. ISSN 2203-4692

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RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES IN BALINESE SOCIETY: A CASE STUDY OF A CREMATION RITUAL IN TABANAN.

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ABSTRACT

This paper considers the cremation ceremony in the context of the life of the inhabitants of a Balinese community, tracing relationships between ritual itinerary and topography, and highlighting tensions and conflicts that have emerged between these ritual traditions and recent developments in tourism. The unique feature of the cremation ceremony is not only its procession, and particular architectural forms, but also the accompanying festival events that parade from the house of the deceased to the cemetery. In the investigation I will explore the historically important site of the Tabanan Palace that forms the geographical and symbolic focus of the ceremony and the route of the procession in the context of the cremation service with its community of participants/onlookers. The processions, and their related rituals, have long been recognised as an integral part of the civic life of the community, which is increasingly being jeopardised as a result of the impact of commercial use. The investigation asks if the preservation of these ceremonies can exist in harmony with these recent developments, without undermining the still vibrant traditional practices of Balinese society.

Keywords: *Religious ceremonies, cremation ritual, Tabanan Palace*

INTRODUCTION

Balinese society today is intimately connected to the long historical development of Hinduism in Bali which was first identified in the eighth century along with the visit to Bali of Rsi Markandya, a Brahmin Hindu saint from India (Wikarman, 1997: 14-6; Ardhana, 2002: 59-60). The Hindu religion has inspired people to live in organised and harmonious communities, backed up by their own laws and creeds. Traditional communities still exist within this social structure, which are of three types: *desa pakraman*, *banjar*, and *sekehe*. *Desa pakraman* denotes a village in which a local community is defined by a sacred and political space and governed by certain taboos, ritual protocols, and laws, whilst *banjar* refers to a social community/ organisation within the village based on mutual needs especially in religious activities (Sutjaja, 2009: 37). Finally, *sekehe* denotes an organised group, possibly derived from one or more villages with a specific social function and distinct professional roles and responsibilities. Clifford Geertz (1980: 47-8) argues that these social structures were clustered as non-political entities which were specifically focused on rituals, public life, kin groups, and voluntary initiatives. Whilst the civic and religious organisations of these groups are supported by laws and religious obligations, the essence of Balinese society is commitment to a symbiotic relationship to communal (civic/religious) participation. This attitude has historically developed from three basic principles of Hindu philosophy, called *tri hita karana*. This threefold principle advocates that serenity and happiness results from harmonious relationships between individuals and the gods, between humans, as well as between humans and their surroundings. The root of *tri hita karana* can be found in the Hindu scriptures: the *Bhagavad Gita*¹ which states:

- Article 10: When he created creatures in the beginning, along with the sacrifice, Prajapati said: 'May you be fruitful by this sacrifice, let this be the cow which produces all you desire.'

¹ See the *Bhagavad Gita* (III. 10-12) translated by Johnson (1994: 15-6).

- Article 11: ‘You should nourish the gods with this so that the gods may nourish you; nourishing each other, you shall achieve the highest good.
- Article 12: ‘For nourished by the sacrifice, the gods will give you the pleasures you desire. ‘The man who enjoys these gifts without repaying them is no more than a thief.’

These three basic principles of social organisation influence Balinese religious activities. The participation of family members in *banjar*, *desa pakraman*, or the majority of *desa pakraman* really depends on the level of ritual activity. Various rituals can be broadly categorised under three main conditions; the divine, the human and the environment. The essence of rituals in Balinese society is similar to Hindu rituals in other regions of Asia such India and Sri Lanka; differences arise however in the implementation, setting and contexts which are influenced by culture, traditions and customs. In addition to these differences, the Balinese have specific and unique ritual practices, in which processions are an integral part of religious festivals, supported by both *banjar* and *desa pakraman*. One of these rituals is the cremation ceremony. According to Hindu philosophy, death entails the release of the soul from the body, in which the body will disappear whilst the soul will stay in the spirit world awaiting the next life through reincarnation.² But in the Balinese tradition, death signals the *beginning* of the life cycle in which it is based on most anthropological descriptions (Lansing, 1995: 32). A cremation in Balinese language is called “*pelebon*” or “*ngaben*” (*pelebon*=cremation, *ngaben*=great effort). The ceremony in Balinese society in part constitutes a form of domestic ritual overseen by the family of the deceased, which carries great responsibility. Indeed, it may be said that this ceremony is *owned* and *practised* by the Balinese family members.

² The *Wrhaspati Tattwa*, article 52, states that ‘dead’ is the release of the soul from the body in which the body will be disappeared, on the other hand the soul will still be there in the world awaiting the next life cycle into reincarnation.

Cremation is also a great public event, a distinctive ritual procession in which the soul of the deceased is expected to return to the creator through ritual acts. This culminates in the corpse being burnt, in a way that returns it to the original source from which it came. According to Balinese Hindu belief, the origins of the body derive from five main substances, or elements; ether/*akasa*, light/*teja*, air/*bayu*, water/*apah* and soil/*pertiwi* called *panca maha bhuta*. The purpose of the cremation ritual is to return all substances that constitute the human being to the universe or its creator. Besides paying full respect and thankfulness to the creator, this ceremony is also part of an ancestral homage, in which there is life after death, forged by an intimate relationship between the ancestors and descendants as mentioned in the scriptures of *Manawa Dharma Sastra*.³ If the ancestors have achieved the heavenly world, they will not abandon their descendants in this world, and therefore will maintain their health and prosperity. On the other hand, the reverse is also possible; descendants may have bad experiences in their lives, as a result of their ancestors being poorly located in the universe. For this reason, the family of the deceased must prepare the rituals of the cremation 'with great effort', in order to achieve the best outcome for the soul of the deceased as well as their family.

In the cremation procession, the body of the deceased is placed in a casket and then is placed in a deceased building, called *bade/ wadah*, which is sited in an auspicious location (Suastika, 2008). The form of *bade/ wadah* varies depending on the family's ancestry and decorated with distinctive ornaments that give the site its shrine status. The timing of the procession can be determined in two ways; firstly the family of the deceased can arrange a cremation ceremony by requesting a date for the ceremony from the Hindu priest; secondly the family can choose to bury the body initially, and then after some time the body is exhumed and the cremation held as the next stage. However the auspicious day of all ritual processions is ultimately determined by the Hindu priest, since he will lead the rituals and will be responsible for addressing both

³ The scripture of *Manawa Dharma Sastra* (III.82) stipulates that that cremation ritual is a form of respect and thankfulness to the ancestors since we are in the world because of them, see Pudja (1983:78).

good and bad omens through offerings made during a special ceremony. The symbolic meaning of this ceremony is based on the scripture of *Pamarissudha Alaning Dewasa* .⁴ The priest offers several dates as options for holding the ceremony, responding appropriately to the family's time and financial circumstances. The length of time normally requires completing all ritual acts in the ceremony within three weeks, but may in certain circumstances be up to three months.

As the case study for this investigation, Tabanan is a town located in the southern part of Bali and is the capital of the Tabanan Regency (Figure 1). The town has a long history which is closely related to the royal palace of Tabanan. The first royal palace was built in 1352 in the village of Buahan, and then moved further south-west to Tabanan, later serving as the new royal palace (Tabanan kingdom). From this complex of buildings developed a flourishing village. Throughout its history, the Tabanan has formed an integral part of the original site of the palace and the territory of the royal household. Today, remnants of the original village can still be seen within an enclave of an expanded Tabanan town. The village comprises 23 *banjar*/social communities, with around 30,000 inhabitants (Bappeda, 2006). The inhabitants have a large cemetery to facilitate their cremation rituals, located at the southeast of the central area. This area is approximately 35,000 square metres in area, making it one of the largest cemeteries in Bali. Even though the cemetery was relocated following the period of Dutch colonialism, the ceremony follows essentially the same route and adheres to the same ritual protocols. The only variation to the route is an additional 200 metres that extends to the more elevated relocation of the cemetery which is more demanding for the bearers.

We will explore the historically important site of the Tabanan palace that forms the geographical and symbolic focus of the ceremony, and the route of the procession in the context of the cremation service and its community of participants/onlookers. The

⁴ The scripture of *Pamarissudha Alaning Dewasa* regulates about kinds of ritual to solve any bad omens during a special ceremony, see Anom (2002:46).

processions, and their related rituals, have long been recognised as an integral part of the civic life of the community, which is increasingly being threatened by the impact of the changes of land ownership and the adoption of western models of commercialization. Hence, the investigation asks if the preservation of this ceremony can exist in harmony with this 'modernisation', without the latter undermining the still vibrant traditional practices of Balinese society.

THE SITE OF THE TABANAN PALACE AS THE GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS OF THE CEREMONY

The history of the Tabanan palace starts with the invasion of Bali by the Majapahit empire in 1343. After the invasion, Sira Arya Kenceng, one of the troop leaders (*ksatryan*), remained in Bali and built his royal palace in Buahan village as a part of Tabanan region (Darta et.al. 1996: 12-6).⁵ He had two sons, Sri Megada Prabu (Dewa Raka) and Sri Megada Natha (Dewa Made), both of whom continued this royal dynasty, whilst two other sons (by another wife) made their royal residence elsewhere in Badung. After Sira Arya Kenceng passed away, the younger brother (Sri Megada Natha) succeeded his father as the second King of Tabanan (the older son did not want to be the King). According to legend, Sri Megada Natha heard a voice which told him to move and build a new palace in a certain place, signalled by the release of lightning in the middle of the night. He found that place and then built a new palace located approximately 4 km to the southwest from the original site. However, Sri Megada Natha did not reside in this palace, but instead became a hermit and lived in isolation. The oldest son of the king (Sira Arya Ngurah Langwang) then became the third King in the new palace with the appropriate title of Sira Arya Ngurah Tabanan, the name given to the palace in the fifteenth century (Anonymous, 1960; Darta et.al. 1996: 16).

⁵ The sources of information about Tabanan Kingdom can be found at the inscription of Babad Arya Tabanan. Gedong Kertya Singaraja No. Va 1792/13, published by Yayasan Parisada Hindu Dharma Kabupaten Badung, dated 17th March 1974, and the inscription of Babad Arya Kenceng, owned by Kantor Dokumentasi Budaya Bali Propinsi Daerah Tingkat I Bali, translated by I Putu Mertha (1995).

After becoming king, Sira Arya Ngurah devised a state structure which consisted of king/*raja*, spiritual adviser/*purohito* or *brahmana*, prime ministry/*werdha menteri*, head of defence/*mahapatih*, generals/*patih*, treasury officer/*manca*, and head of village/*prebekel*. The persons, who held these positions, commonly had family relationships with the king/*raja*, except the village head (Arnita et.al, 1997, 15-6; Geertz, 1980:57-9). From historical investigations, it is clear that the titles conferred on each member also constituted key elements of the political system (Table 1). But in time, there was a modification of the state structure, when two kings ruled the dynasty of Tabanan (the first and second king/*raja pemade*); the southern territory was under the first king/*Puri Gde*, whilst the northern part was under the second king/*Puri Kaleran*, located only about 100 metres from the northern side of *Puri Gde*.⁶

Table 1: The initial state structure: name of position and household

No	Name of position	Name of living	State structure
1	King/ <i>Raja</i>	<i>Puri Gde</i>	
2	Spiritual Advisor/ <i>Purohito</i>	<i>Grya/Dalem</i>	
3	Prime Ministry/ <i>Werdha Menteri</i>	<i>Puri</i>	
4	Head of Defence/ <i>Mahapatih</i>	<i>Jro Gde</i>	
5	Generals/ <i>Patih</i>	<i>Jro</i>	
6	Treasury Officer/ <i>Manca</i>	<i>Jro</i>	
7	Head of Village/ <i>Perbekel/Mekel</i>	<i>Umah</i>	

As mentioned above, the site selection of Tabanan palace and royal households was foretold by a lightning strike, believing that the lightning originated from a deep well

⁶ Deep interview with I Gusti Ngurah Agung is one of Tabanan nobles on 17th July 2013

located in a small temple called Puser Tasik. This temple was eventually incorporated into the Tabanan royal household complex. The selection of this site by supernatural means reiterates Joseph Rykwert's argument about the role of founders of settlements in antiquity, in which the selection of a suitable site was determined first and foremost by mythical signs rather than by considerations of economic benefit, fertility of land or defence purposes (Rykwert, 1976: 33). Nevertheless, in the case of the Tabanan royal palace, the location had several practical advantages (relating to defence and fertile terrain), since it is bounded by two rivers to the east and west, and is located at the highest point. Though this region has high levels of humidity, with the dominant east-west winds, outdoor thermal comfort can be ensured since vegetation along the rivers is able to mitigate the high levels of humidity. These factors remind one of Aristotle's four recommendations when choosing a suitable site for settlement; sloping terrain, healthy ambiance, east facing, and good for supporting civil and military activities.⁷ These criteria are further echoed by Vitruvius who proclaimed that a 'healthy' site (on account of orientation and prevailing winds) should be the first recommendation.⁸

Meanwhile, the initial arrangement of terrain of the Tabanan royal palace was in the form of a 'cross pattern', based on a motif that was synonymous with royalty in the Majapahit era, called *catuspatha*. The word derives from Sanskrit, meaning that four main directions define the centre of a territory (Putra, 2005:61). According to this principle, the cross pattern gave rise to four zones that are utilised in the layout of the palace, temple, market and adjacent open space, whilst the intersection of the cross becomes an essential location for ritual activity. Significantly, the four zones in the cross pattern arrangement derive from a nine zone concept familiarly known as the '*sanga mandala*' (*sanga*=nine, *mandala*=within a defined space), in which the zones refer to the nine wind directions called *nawa sanga* (Gelebet, 1982). The zone of the Tabanan palace, in the south-west quadrant of the cruciform layout, is however

⁷ Aristotle, *Politic*, VII, 11, 276, 1330a, in J. Rykwert (1976:41).

⁸ Vitruv., I, 5, i. Vitruvius's insistence on the importance of wind follows classical doctrines on the subject as set out for instance in the short Hippocratean book 'on winds' in J. Rykwert (1976:41).

different, since other royal palaces in Bali are typically located in the north-east quadrant (Figure 2&3).

The central royal territory of the Tabanan is bounded by two rivers, at the east and west ends. The rivers are named Tukad Dikis and Tukad Empas, both of which may have served defensive purposes. The king's palace is surrounded by a series allied houses associated with the king's families that collectively formed part of the state ceremonial structure. The cemetery, which served as an important facility for the state, is also located in this area on the west side of the river Geertz, 1980: 56). The royal household of Tabanan, and its allied properties in the centre of the Tabanan village, can be seen in the schematic plan below (Figure 4). From this image, it seems that the north-south axis in front of Puri Gde and Kaleran is the main access to accommodate ritual activities in which this axis passes through three processional junctions (one is located between the palaces and two junctions are outer side of the palaces) that originally framed the Tabanan palace complex. Though using a different history and time period, this layout has some similarities with the village of Marzabotto in the province of Bologna, Italy, an example Roman era site dating back to the beginning of the sixth century (Rykwert, 1976:80).

Furthermore, the initial site of the Tabanan palace is approximately 4 hectares, and consists of 33 zones. This is substantially more than most other royal palaces in Bali which commonly consist of between 9 and 21 zones. For instance, Puri Kaleran, the second king of Tabanan, controlled only 9 zones. Hence the Tabanan royal palace is one of the biggest palaces in Bali (Figure 5).⁹ The royal household was surrounded by a main ceremonial access, except this access was separated by the king's family house (Jro Subamia) at the rear of the site, appropriately adorned with embellishments in accordance with the traditions of Balinese traditional architecture. The bayan tree referred to earlier is located at the north side of the Palace, and in front of the Puseh

⁹ The documentation photo derives from Bappeda Kabupaten Tabanan, *Laporan RTRK Tabanan tahun 2006*, Ibid, p.III-24.

Temple and serving as a key stopping point in the ritual itinerary of the ancient ceremony. As Mircea Eliade (1959: 12) states, the adornment of trees gives their sacred status and their worship reinforces their hierophany (holy quality). This hierophany, moreover, reveals in the tree an order of reality that is wholly different from the “natural”.

Unfortunately, the Puri Gde, the central part of the royal residence, was partly destroyed in 1906 and became a ruin when the Dutch colonisers defeated the king of Badung and Tabanan. It was eventually demolished by the Dutch, during a revolt after the initial defeat. The images (figure 6 & 7) taken in 1906 show the Dutch troops in front of the Tabanan palace and the partly destroyed palace’s wall is on the north side.¹⁰ Hence, under Dutch colonial rule, the central power of the king practically disappeared, and the palace, as a centre of spiritual, culture, economic and politic life, significantly declined. In this era, one of the royal family houses, located at the northern side of the palace, was extended to the south by incorporating the main access to the Tabanan palace, thereby closing one direction of the cross pattern. This resulted in a significant change from the initial route of ritual processions in the centre of the village. During this period, the Dutch also built a bridge to connect the west and east sides of the river. Because of this strategically important connection, the cemetery on the east side of the river (previously owned by the former Malkangin kingdom), became the main cemetery for the Tabanan village. Indeed, the Dalem temple and its cemetery have served the Tabanan village inhabitants for centuries, especially the Balinese Hindu.

After the period of colonialism, the areas controlled by the Dutch came under local government ownership. What was left of the palace changed dramatically, since most of the area had changed to public and commercial use, such as shops, government offices, a town garden, and public access. The remaining area of Puri Gde in the

¹⁰ The documentation photo derives from Bappeda Kabupaten Tabanan, *Laporan RTRK. Tabanan Tahun 2006*, Ibid, p.III-23-4.

Tabanan royal household is only approximately one fifth of the original total area that was settled by the royal family. The house of the king's priest was relocated to the north, about 500 meters from its original location. In contrast, the Puri Kaleran (the palace of the second king) still remains relatively intact, although several building changes have occurred over time. Today, the historic site of the royal palace forms part of the central area of Tabanan town, whilst the former cemetery on the west side of the river has become a local government office and electricity service facility. Besides the relocation of the cemetery and street intersection, the physical changes to the Tabanan royal palace, and its surroundings, have significantly impacted on the ritual setting and its urban contexts. The changes in land use of the royal household, after colonialism, can be seen in figure 8 below.

These changes in ritual setting, and their urban contexts, have also taken place as a result of other developments in the town itself. Reconstruction of temples, for instance, has led to changes in the form and performance of rituals, whilst rivers and wellsprings, as the source of body purification, have also been altered as a result of river bank developments. Recently, the local government prohibited the disposal of body ash and ritual waste into rivers, thereby necessitating disposal exclusively by sea. At the same time, the bayan tree is traditionally a key part of the cremation ritual, planted as long ago as the fifteenth century as part of the sacred landscape of the royal palace in Tabanan town. Besides the existence of the bayan tree, the village temples still serve the community with several renewals in the use of building materials due to life of the buildings, weathering, and other factors (Figure 9).

In regard to ritual festivals, relating to the cremation ceremony, there are several important sites associated with the ceremony that have their roots in ancient forms of philosophical ethics that form part of their religious beliefs. These places serve as key locations in the ritual itinerary, as follows:

- 1) The village temples (the places to take holy water for purification of the deceased);
- 2) The street intersection of the village (the route of ritual procession);

- 3) The Hindu priest's temple (the place where holy water for purification is used);
- 4) The wellspring (for purification of the corpse and related ritual equipment);
- 5) The cemetery (the area of cremation);
- 6) Sacred bayan tree (bayan's leaf for ritual after the cremation ritual); and
- 7) The rivers (for transporting the ash after the cremation to the sea as an option to the offering ceremony).

The levels of intensity, among the important places highlighted above, can partly be determined by the number of rituals occurring in the places of Tabanan village (Figure 10). The village temples (Dalem, Puseh & Bale Agung temple) and the priest's temple have high levels of activity, since the ritual of collecting holy water for purification takes place before, during and after the cremation. At the wellspring, rituals take place before and during the cremation ceremony, whilst at the cemetery, the street intersection and the sacred bayan Tree, the ritual only takes place once; the day or so after the cremation. The rivers, on the other hand, could not be used anymore after the prohibition referred to earlier, resulting in the community of mourners using the sea as a medium for transporting the ashes of the deceased. The location of the coast from the cemetery is approximately 9 km to the south-west. Significantly, the banning of the use of rivers by local government did not provoke resentment, on the part of the local communities, since there was general recognition of the urgent need to avoid polluting the rivers and preserving their environmental balance.

THE ROUTE OF THE PROCESSION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CREMATION SERVICE

The uniqueness of the cremation ceremony, in relation to the historically important site of the Tabanan palace and its larger geographical location and symbolic importance, persists today. The vibrant religious festivals of the cremation ceremony continue to give communal identity and continuity. These and other festival events typically derive from the families of the king and the priest, whose social status ensured the continuation of the 'ancestral line'. We can see how the relation of the rituals to the

route of the procession and its social/cultural purpose are defined by the three stages of the procession: pre-cremation, cremation ceremony and the post cremation ceremony. These rituals, which take place in the Tabanan area, are a special case in point on the basis of their dependency on the presence of royal and priestly families. This can be summarised as follows:

1) **Pre-cremation Day**

At this first stage, there are two main rituals that take place in the dwelling of the deceased, comprising the ritual bathing of the deceased's body called *melelet*, and the purification and cremation preparations called *Mereresik*. Both rituals require holy water from the village temples, the priest's temple and the wellspring. The involvement of the *banjar* community to participate in this ritual typically commences on the day after *melelet*. Meanwhile, *mereresik*, as the day before the cremation ceremony, could be construed as an independent ritual event which takes place in the house of the deceased as well as outside, from early morning to the middle of the night. Moreover, the routes of the procession for the *Mereresik* ritual can be described as follows:

- In the morning, members of the family and the *banjar* community have to collect holy water from different places. The first place to collect the holy water is at the wellspring, and then it is carried to the priest and the village temple respectively. In the course of the procession the holy water is paraded in the streets and concludes with a performance by the traditional orchestra of *angklung* and *gong*.
- The second parade takes place in the afternoon to collect the holy water at the wellspring for the purification of the deceased (Figure 11&12).

After the second collection of water at the wellspring, another event takes place which is called Mamios. This event is a unique ritual not found in other places in Bali. It entails walking around the inner enclave of the town, parading ritual 'equipment' such as; Saji (small offering with rolled pork), purification tools, bandrang (a complete javelin and umbrella), a miniature of the corpse tower, etc.

followed by Baris Dapdap (ritual dancers), Ratu Gde Tanah Pegat (as a demon to protect the ritual), angklung and gong (traditional orchestras). This only occurs in the presence of the king and the priest's family. It indicates that the ancient culture and customs of the royal household still persist. The main purpose of this tradition is to announce to the families and society in generally, that the cremation ceremony will take place the following day.

2) Cremation Day

On the final day, the ritual does not occur in just one place (i.e. the cemetery), but takes place across a number of locations, as highlighted in the following sequences of events:

- The route of the procession begins by collecting holy water for the final purification at the same places and the using the same formation of the parade as the previous ritual.
- After the final purification at a pavilion, the body of the deceased, which is placed in the casket, is ceremoniously left in a tall structure, called *bade* or *wadah*. This structure is then carried by family members and the *banjar* community to the cemetery. The formation of the parade is headed by the traditional orchestra of *Angklung*, followed by the ritual equipments and special offerings, *trajang/stair*, *lembu/singa/petulangan* (a giant in the form of bull/lion used as the sarcophagus for cremating the corpse of nobility), *bade/tower* and the traditional orchestra of *gong* serve as the last row of the parade formation. The route of the procession goes through the street intersection to the cemetery as the final ground of the cremation ceremony. At the main street intersection and nearby funeral ground, the three building structures (*trajang*, *lembu/singa*, and *bade*) are circumnavigated three times in opposite directions, as a symbol of the funerary ritual (Figure 13&14).
- After finishing this parade to the cemetery, the sarcophagus is then placed in the funeral ground; the bull's backbone is opened and the sarcophagus is removed and placed in the burning procession. After the burning ceremony, the

remaining ash is then blessed and placed in an urn (a yellow coconut), and wrapped finally with white cloth, called a *bukur*. This cloth is carried by family members to the coast and delivered into the sea, a ritual undertaking called *nyukat/nganyud*. As members now use private cars, to travel to the coast, there is no longer a parade by road as existed in the past.

3) Post Cremation Day

The post-cremation stage does not entail a reduction in ritual activity. Indeed parades still take place to designated locations. But there are different options for the deceased's family to arrange these rituals which depend, in the main, on their personal preferences. In some cases, the family can choose to perform a continuous ritual event, which normally takes a whole day to complete. The royal family of Tabanan usually choose the 11th and 12th days after the cremation for offering the post cremation rituals, though they are also required to perform smaller rituals on the 3rd and 5th days after cremation. In regard to the route of the procession, those rituals on the 11th and 12th days entail the following:

- The ritual of removing the leaves from the *bayan* tree (*ngalap don bingin*) takes place on the 11th day. The *bayan* tree is a symbol of condescendence, in which the soul is expected to obtain protection from the new world, and the ancestors are able to give 'condescendence' to their descendant. In this ritual, a parade is held on the road to the Bayan tree, accompanied by the traditional orchestra of *gong*. The *bayan* leaf is used in relation to the next day ceremony, called *ngerorasin* (*ngerorasin* means ritual of the 12th day). Other names of this ritual include *mamukur*, *nyekah*, or *ngelanus* (Suastika, 2008:38).
- The ritual ceremony then returns to the sea in order to call back the soul from the dead, through offerings to the goddess of the sea. The soul, is then brought back and symbolically placed in the family temple which is in a specific shrine called *rong tiga* (containing three spaces; the right side for the men, the women at the left side, and the centre space as the inner 'sanctum' of the divine (from where immortal originate). As was the previous case, the procession to the

coast is undertaken by private car; a short parade then takes place after the family members park their cars and 'process' to the sea.

From the various rituals mentioned above, there are several routes of the procession which have been carried out by family members of the deceased to symbolically important places. In spite of significant physical changes to the area, as a result of tourism etc., the routes of the procession reveal only minor changes over time, with the relocation of the residence of the royal priest to the north from the initial Tabanan royal palace. In addition, the Dalem Temple and its cemetery were relocated further east. The imposition of a one way system at the street intersection, however, may have had a significant impact on the essence of the historical rite. With a new intersection located near the initial site, the sacred nuance may be slightly different. However, some royal family members still use the historic intersection as the route of the procession, whilst other members do not. As a consequence, the routes of the procession have become longer with different paths introduced toward the cemetery (Figure 15).¹¹

From the route of the procession it can be recorded that the three main access points from Tabanan town have become the busiest routes for cremation ceremonies which pass along Gunung Agung, Pahlawan, and Gajah Mada Street. Even though Tabanan inhabitants have a different method for collecting holy water, when compared to royal members or the king's priest family, they follow the same direction towards the village temples. Since the location of the sacred *bayan* tree is in front of Puseh and Bale Agung temple, this area is one of intensive ritual activity when the cremation ceremonies take place. The concentration of people, in relation to the route of the procession, is apparent both before and after the cremation. Another interesting aspect of this area is that the locations of the temple and tree have not changed from the beginning, serving as enduring evidence of the historically important role of the palace and temple in the life of the town.

¹¹ The source of basic map is from *Laporan RTRK. Tabanan Tahun 2006*: p.III-6.

Even though the ancient Tabanan village has become the centre of the expanded town, most routes of the religious cremation festival still have a dynamic relationship with the urban fabric which has persisted over time. Another important urban feature of these ceremonies is their relationship to the 23 *banjar* communities, highlighted at the beginning of this paper, which forms an integral part of the village community and the larger civic life of the town. These communities further support the continuity of Balinese society, and form an essential component of the traditional community that sustains the meaning of every cremation ritual. The basic concept of the *banjar* community is *sukha-dukkha*, from Sanskrit meaning 'pleasant-unpleasant' (Monier-Williams & Cappeller, 1889: 483, 1220-21). The term conveys the respect and sympathy for each community even in difficult and challenging times. Without this, it is unlikely that the family of the deceased would be able to prepare the cremation ceremony and use the cemetery in a meaningful way.

From what I can ascertain there is no evidence of a conflict or friction in the use of the cemetery or other facilities in Tabanan village today. *Banjar* community members participate in the cremation rituals, and the onlookers are still eager to witness the route of the religious festival and cremation ritual processions, treating these as a part of their culture and life. The members still carry the tower/*bade*, *sarcophagus* and stair/*trajang* on their shoulders toward the cemetery, though in other places these ceremonial structures (the 'ritual equipment' I referred to earlier) are transported on wheel-bearing floats rather than being carried. Because of the extension of the Tabanan village area, the distance between the deceased place and the cemetery has increased by more than 1 km. The use of wheel-bearing floats for these parades in Tabanan helps the participants to more efficiently transport the sarcophagus, even though it may be less spectacular for the onlookers.

THE RELIGIOUS PROCESSION IN RELATION TO THE CIVIC LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY

The symbolic meanings of sacred arts, their ethical dimensions and the respect for nature, are basic principles for Balinese life in actualising their religion, culture and traditions. For instance: a festival procession to collect holy water in the place of a wellspring, the priest temple and the village temples for purification of the dead body, does not reveal the totality of the procession, but merely pays homage to the gods and the power of nature at these specific places. In addition, as I have already indicated, three traditional orchestras participate in the cremation rituals and festivals in Tabanan namely; *angklung*, *gong* and *gambang*, whose names contain syllables that invoke sacred symbols.

As Banded (1986) argues, every tone of Balinese traditional music has its own character and place, such as; *dang*, *ding*, *dung*, *deng*, *dong* or *ang*, *ing*, *ung*, *eng*, *ong* that relate to the cardinal directions; east, west, north, south, centre. The sacred Hinduism symbol of 'OM', or 'ONG', signifies the universe and is derived from three letters; *A*, *U*, *M* or *Ang*, *Ung*, *Mang* (in Bali). These letters also symbolise three worlds; mother, father, and heaven world, and the sounds emanating from the orchestras derive from the words *ang*, *ung*, *mang* and *ong*, each of which has symbolic connections to the deities Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva (Bangli, 2005: 104). The *angklung* orchestra consists of two words; 'ang' and 'ung', meaning that this orchestra is only used for cremation and temple ceremonies. *Gong*, on the other hand, derives from 'ong', a word which is used in most kinds of rituals. *Gambang* contains 'mang' and is the orchestra that direct the soul to the heavenly realm which consists of five players, placed near the pavilion of the deceased. Bangli (2005: 114) also argues that the purpose of these orchestras in the cremation ceremony is to direct the soul to the heavenly realm. Based on these symbols, only *angklung* and *gong* participate in the festival procession of the cremation, whereby *angklung* is in the front line and *gong* in the back.

The groups of the orchestras are called *sekehe*, professional groups who mostly come from the *banjar* community. If the cremation ritual takes place among the *banjar*

themselves, then the *banjar* members do not perform in the orchestra, as they must be directly involved in the ritual and festival activities. As a result, the family of the deceased will be required to use groups from other places. Due to their laws, all families become members of *banjar* community, and males and females in one family must be involved in the cremation ritual from the initial purification rituals of the deceased to the final day of the cremation. This involvement is an essential part of the '*sukha-dukkha*', to the dead and the living family. If members are absent from this ritual, they will get fines according to the law. In exceptional cases, *banjar* organisations, in a final meeting called '*sangkep banjar*,' can decide to evict one of members from their home and the community, if a family does not participate in the rituals of the '*sukha-dukkha*'. Though it seems harsh, it may be a strategy to secure a unity of the community. So far, there have been no cases of evicting a citizen in Tabanan for this misdemeanour.

As mentioned earlier, the eagerness to carry the tower/*bade* without using wheels might indicate that the *banjar* community members are still strong enough to handle the ritual cremation festivals as before. The involvement of the community in the festival procession emerged during the time of *mamios*, involving ritual walking around the inner Tabanan village carrying ritual equipments. This festival is mostly supported by the younger members, while the elders handle activities to construct temporary buildings for cremation and the priest worship (*Bale Pemasman* and *Bale Pemujaan*) at the cemetery. They work at the cemetery from morning to afternoon, organising the serving of refreshments and food which are provided by other members. On the final day of the cremation the young and the old (both female and male) come to the funeral ground of deceased to fully support the ceremony, that takes place from morning to afternoon. In the festival procession, the men carrying the tower/*bade* attempt to hold the load on their shoulders on the uphill slope of the route, whilst women carry the ritual equipment and ceremonial materials.

Recently, a big dilemma has confronted the *banjar* communities in Tabanan village, who not only carry the deceased's *ceremonial structures*, but also must bear the increasing economic costs of the event. Even though Miguel Covarrubias and others have demonstrated clearly that the expenses of a cremation are enormous there is generally no regret or concern on the part of the Balinese, as they believe the cremation represents the accomplishment of the most sacred duty (Covarrubias, 1937:359-60).

Besides the enormous expenses, there is also consideration of time and labour in the preparation of these events; labour migrants from other islands who build their own houses, places of worship and cemeteries have contributed to transforming the town during these occasions. There are now Muslim communities in Banjar Lod Rurung and Pasekan Delodan, located at the southern and northern part of the town centre. This transformation has also led to the development of new laws and a different sense of unity of the village and *banjar* community. For instance, *banjar*, as the lowest level local organisation, has faced some difficulties in implementing laws and regulations for new residents who have different religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds to follow the principles of '*sukha-dukkha*', even in the ritual cremation activities. The different treatments of, and particular laws relating to, immigrants have resulted in some claims of a degradation of social unity. Intensive migration followed by changes of the law, setting and context of settlement, should be considered in parallel to the significant impacts of tourism development on the island.

Related to these pressures is the growing competition between Balinese and non-Balinese members of society in all aspects of life. Non-Balinese residents, particularly from other parts of Indonesia, have traditionally struggled to secure employment, which has given them greater motivation in an increasingly competitive job's market. The Balinese, on the other hand, may not have the same level of incentive, partly a result of a different philosophy of life guided by Hindu beliefs. Today, Javanese and Lombok labourers have been harvesting rice in southern parts of Bali, whilst

agricultural land has decreased rapidly due to reuse of land for tourist facilities and other commercial initiatives (Pringle, 2004:9).

Related to issues of economy, fines imposed by non-attendance to ceremonies and competition in the commercial market are other conflictual challenges faced by the Balinese community in achieving a balance between the increasingly strict time management in working environments and the need to conform to traditional religious practice. As government employees those Balinese involved in such ceremonies and festivals may have less resistance than residents employed in commercial organisations, since local government must be seen to respect the local culture and traditions. Indeed there is growing evidence that private companies are increasingly resistant to allowing their staff to participate in such events, by providing more flexible shifts and periods of works. These challenges sometimes give rise to conflicts in the workplace, in regard to adhering and respecting ceremonial protocols and traditions. The situation is usually more problematic if the owner of a company is not Balinese and does not respect – or understand- the Balinese culture and way of life. As there are many ceremonies that traditionally take place in Bali, this can lead to a negative image of the society, in regard to what is perceived by some as unduly long holiday periods against the increasing priority on commitment to employment and commercial competitiveness. More specific to this investigation, such issues have a bearing on the nature and meaning of a civil society in Bali, and how traditional ceremonial practices can sustain a sense of the civic realm against a backdrop of encroaching commercialization.

Whilst Tabanan is not located close to Kuta and Sanur, the main centres of growth in tourism in Bali since the early 1970s, the regional government has introduced wider investment in the tourist sector of this area which is impacting on socio-cultural, economic, political, and environmental aspects of Bali as a whole. Indeed, the central government in Indonesia, in conjunction with regional governments, has identified the island of Bali as the main centre of tourism in the country. A number of corporations

in tourism are playing a significant role in encouraging the government to continually develop tourist areas, without proper consideration of the needs of the local community. Land purchases and sales are inevitable and will continue, as well as the conversion of agricultural land for tourism and housing which has seen a major expansion in recent years.

Existing laws and regulations seem powerless to prevent such land conversion; largely due to abuse of power, corruption, vested interests and nepotism. According to the chairman of the Regional *Subak* Society of Bali the rate of conversion of rice fields to residential dwelling is approximately 750 hectares per year (Windia, 2009:9). Previously, the Tabanan region was well known as the rice barn of Bali, having the largest area of rice fields on the island, a situation that is under threat by rapid (unchecked) development. This also relates more specifically to the expansion of Tabanan town centre, which is now up to four times the size of its original area 100 years ago (Figure 16)¹², further contributing to a significant decrease of rice fields in this area.

In recognition of these changes, the Balinese provincial government has attempted to protect religious areas through the implementation of the Regional Land Use Planning policy (No. 16/2009). However most of the regency governments have rejected this planning regulation, believing that it will not hinder further development of tourism in new areas. In any case, with the National Law (No. 32/2004), the regency governments have an authority to manage their territories without considering provincial regulations. This inconsistency in the formulation and implementation of planning policy in Bali is further exacerbating the problem of unchecked tourism and commercial development.

It is perhaps not surprising that religious ceremonies in Bali, such as the impressive cremation ceremonies examined in this paper, have become key spectacles in the

¹² The figure is reproduced from the source of Bappeda, 2006).

tourism sector, and therefore contribute in a positive way to sustaining (and even enhancing) the tourist economy on the island. The challenge facing all stakeholders on the island is to ensure that the Balinese are able to continue to participate actively in the religious life of their community, and that such religious events, and the cremation ceremonies in particular, are protected and preserved for the benefit of future generations.

CONCLUSION

This article has investigated the traditional cremation ceremony in Bali as a significant and memorable event that continues to be performed during a period of significant change on the island in the era of globalisation. The investigation has focused on the historically important site of the Tabanan palace, which forms the geographic and symbolic focus of the ceremony, and constitutes a historically essential element in the civic and religious life of the community.

The ancestral relationship between the descendants of the Tabanan king, and other members in the *banjar* community, still exists as the main support for the cremation rituals. Participation in these rituals demands much time and manpower and the tradition is sufficiently strong to maintain a continuity of funeral practice, without any obvious internal conflict between participants and stakeholders. However, several external factors are beginning to have a negative impact on securing the future for these important public events, as highlighted below:

- The arrival of migrants from other islands in Indonesia, who become residents in the *banjar*, have created some tensions in the otherwise harmonious relationship among community members.
- The lack of proper employment laws means that taking time off work, to participate in these ceremonies, is becoming more difficult.
- Since openness and accessibility of land is a fundamental aspect of Balinese Hindu culture, the conversion of agriculture land to commercial use is leading to an unbalanced environment.

- Globalisation and the impact of modern lifestyles continue to impose new challenges on the culture and traditions of the Balinese people.

Though tourism has been the prime driver of economic growth in Bali, most tourist businesses are actually owned by non-Balinese. This fact has made it difficult to claim that tourism in general has empowered the Balinese, in terms of maintaining or enhancing their culture and traditions, as well as their environment. The government and other stakeholders, responsible for protecting and maintaining these vital assets of Bali, remain focused on enhancing government revenue through unchecked development of the tourism industry, without considering the carrying capacity of the island. The case of the cremation ceremony and its role in Balinese society today, highlights the fragility of the situation, and the need to identify policies that will secure its survival as a lived tradition.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The majority of this article derives from a historical and empirical study. We would like to thank Tabanan Government for supporting additional documents. Also special thanks to the School of Art, Design and Architecture, and School of Human, and Health Sciences at University of Huddersfield for their Writing Retreat Workshop Programme to encourage the completion of this article, as well as the Directorate of High Education of Indonesia Republic for their support.

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