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DANCING *REJANG* AND BEING *MAJU*?¹

Aspects of a female temple dance in East Bali and concepts of national culture in Indonesia

Anette Rein

The *rejang* dance of East Bali, a sacred dance performed by girls and women, expresses both the gender specific roles of Balinese women and their significance in a ritual context. Although in Bali there are many situations in daily life and ritual praxis which express the principle of equality through the exchangeability of the male and female participants, male and female stand in an hierarchical relation to each other which is associated with geographical spaces and social qualities. Maleness is linked with the realm 'above', 'mountain', and 'power', and femaleness with 'under', 'earth', and 'beauty'. In ritual dances, intended to maintain and contribute to the fertility of the land and the community, male and female dance groups are given distinctive ritual tasks. Selected men in a village demonstrate above all defensibility and combativeness in their ritual dances (for example, *baris gedé daratan*, *karé*), whereas women perform predominantly 'graceful' offering dances (for example, *péndét*). The first part of this paper presents ethnographic data about the sacred female dance, *rejang*, within the social and religious context of East Balinese villages. The second part discusses the influences of national culture on ritual practice in Bali, including the ritual role of women.²

The word *rejang* denotes both a sacred girl's (woman's) dance and the costumed girl (woman) performer (*rejang* [from *reja* — beautiful girl; *ang* — dancing]). The verb *merejang* or *ngerejang* designates the execution of the ritual movements. The sole defining criterion for *rejang* which appears to be valid for the whole of Bali is the fact that *rejang* is danced by girls and (unmarried) women although the whole dance event is organized together by men and women of one religious community.³

The villages of East Bali recognized different types of *rejang*, named after the group of participants (*rejang anak-anak* — *rejang* of the children; *rejang daa* — *rejang* of the virgins); after a type of crown (*rejang kompol*); after the time those performances take place (*rejang lemah* — morning *rejang*; *rejang sanya* — afternoon *rejang*; *rejang mombongin* — evening

rejang); after a choreography (*rejang rénténg* — *rejang* of participants tied to each other); or after a ritual (*rejang dewa* — *rejang* for/of the gods).

Participation in *rejang* is subject to strict regulations. Choice and decoration of the dancers follow the example of the rice goddess *Déwi Sri*, from whose body springs the rice that she subsequently gave to mankind. According to the Balinese, the 'souls of the rice' have such a highly volatile nature there is great danger that the souls might lose their orientation after harvest time and leave the community, leading to starvation. Elaborate rituals during the harvest festival, of which the dance *rejang* is a part, prevent this.

In the course of my research in the District of Karangasem in East Bali, I talked with the dancers, with female and male priests who accompanied the rituals, musicians, with village chiefs (*kelihan désa*) and traditional leaders (*kelihan adat*), with spectators, and the families of the dancers.⁴ During the interviews I came to realize that while I was given free and ample information about technical details, every question about a conceptual meaning for *rejang* was met with silence or an admission of ignorance. The mainly young *kelihan désa*, for example, used their youth (*masih mudah*)⁵ as an excuse. A *kelihan adat* on one occasion would not allow me to ask further questions when I asked about sacred songs which were sung at the end of every *rejang* dance by the leaders of the dancers (*kelihan daa*). During the course of my research it became clear that knowledge of the religious meaning of *rejang* was a kind of secret knowledge, attached to certain ritual positions within the hierarchy of a village such as the *penyarikan* (secretary) or *pemangku* (village priest). The dancers may not really understand the purpose of *rejang* from a religious perspective but perceive participation as a duty to the community they live in. Whenever I asked girls about the reasons for their participation they kept quiet or told me that they would dance because their best girlfriend would dance too.

After insistently asking about the meaning of *rejang* without success, I came to realize that my analytical style of questioning and my intention to verbalize religious concepts did not fit my informant's manner and style of expressing the cosmological principles linked with this sacred dance. The idea that the religious sphere requires different ways of communication and forms of expression than everyday conversation became evident to me through two experiences. First of all, I was not allowed to be present at some events in connection with the dance when religious leaders (female as well as male) wanted to keep special sacred acts veiled from documentation by an outsider. Secondly, through countless Balinese rituals I observed several ways of

performing transcendental beings. This was the context in which the special role of dance movements was explained to me. It became obvious that sacred acts, beyond technical details, cannot be analysed verbally with regard to their outcome. Like dance movements, religious acts have their effect mainly on a non-verbal level and appeal to the imagination of the participants within a ritual (see also Forge 1979:282-285). Furthermore, in order to make the presence of transcendental beings credible means performing the ritual in a special way which is different from everyday-style communication — otherwise nobody would accept the presence of a transcendental being and the magic of acts could not be imagined. To perform the communication act between humans and non-humans the Balinese use special mediums of volatile quality (*upakara*) such as offerings, prayers, music and movements. This paper concentrates on the choreography of dance movements in this regard. The following illustration focuses on differing definitions of 'dance' concepts in connection with aspects of the socio-cosmic world view.

In general it seems that *rejang* for the Balinese in East Bali is not a dance (*tari*) but a ritual act which must be completed by a temple ritual. In this context, the Indonesian word *tari* is not used by the Balinese, because the concept of *tari* does not correlate with the Balinese concept of a stimulus for the execution of ritual movements. The meaning of the Indonesian word *tari* corresponds rather with the Western idea of dance in that dance movements are learned, and repeated identically each time. From the Balinese point of view, the so-called sacred Balinese dances need no training (*latihan*). They believe that being in the presence of gods during a ritual gives the impulse for the movements of sacred dances and that the movements performed are a sign of the presence of gods. Contrary to the so-called profane dances (*tari*),⁶ the single movements do not have names. Generally they are characterized as *polos* (pure).⁷ This is a term which signals the closeness to gods and a certain impossibility of the movements being taught in an earthly sense.

This differentiation between ordinary human movements and those which may characterize transcendental beings illustrates the Balinese notion of a socio-cosmic order constituted by two realities: an ordinary reality or material sphere (*sekala*) and an alternate reality or non-material sphere (*niskala*). According to this concept not only are rituals meeting points for humans but for transcendental beings. All religious praxis enables the community to get in touch with an alternate reality. To ensure the presence of transcendental beings during a ritual, a combination of choreographic

elements are necessary; time, space, choreographed acts and a selected group of participants contribute to this function.

CRITERIA OF *REJANG*

For a dance to belong to the group of *rejang* performances in Karangasem the criteria discussed below have to be met.⁸

Times of performances

The performances of *rejang* are connected with ritual events. They take place less frequently than 'profane' dances like *légong*.⁹ The rituals *usaba kasa* or *usaba sumbu* are dedicated especially to the rice goddess *Déwi Sri* and the god of material wealth *Rambut Sedana*. Through the temple rituals the congregation will thank the gods for a good harvest and at the same time pray for the future fertility of land and people (Schaareman 1977:165; Rein 1994a:106). During rituals in the dry season of the year (October) they pray and dance to honour the god of water *Bhatara Tirta*.¹⁰

A second important festive season for *rejang* is the pan-Balinese ritual time of *Galungan-Kuningan*. The main event during this festive time is the imagined return of the worshipped ancestors into their former homes, where the families welcome and entertain them. The main symbol of *Galungan* is the *penjor* — a high bamboo stick, decorated with several local fruits and leaves. This symbol of fertility recalls the old meaning of *Galungan* as a harvest ritual. After the end of *Kuningan* the ancestors leave the houses in order to return to their home, the holy mountain Gunung Agung.¹¹

One can divide the structure of a Balinese ritual into three phases: the invitation of transcendental beings; the hospitality granted them; and their parting. The *rejang* takes place during the second and the beginning of the third phase (Rein 1994a:109). The exact beginning of a performance is not clearly marked within the duration of a ritual, nor is the beginning set at a particular hour. Only the section of the day is indicated. So, *rejang* takes place early in the morning before sunrise (4.00 a.m.), after sunrise (between 6.00 and 8.30 a.m.), in the afternoon until the beginning of sunset (between 2.00 and 5.00 p.m.), and in the evening after sunset or at midnight. The actual beginning of a performance depends on the appearance of the musicians and the set up of the instruments. The duration depends both on the choreography and the decision of the musicians.

Locations

Rejang is performed predominantly in the *pura balé*, *agung* or *pura désa* (central temple in a village or great-council temple), which is associated with all aspects of the fertility of the surrounding fields (Geertz and Geertz 1975:15) and the *pura pusèh*, the 'village origin temple' of the ritually cleansed and godly ancestors of the founders of a village. Further, the dance takes place in the *pura subak* (temple of the water organizations), the *pura melanting* (market temple), *pura segara* (temple of the sea), and in the *balé banjar* (the 'hamlet' council meeting hall). Because a *rejang* performance is only staged within *dewa yadnya* rituals (for gods and godly ancestors), the *pura dalèm* (the '[village] death temple' of the souls of the deceased not yet ritually cleansed) is never used.

Choreographies

Among the *rejang* performances which I observed, one can discern two kinds of dance formations: the circle (open and closed) and parallel rows. The position of individual dancers, in particular in the arrangement of a circle is determined by the social position of the family the dancer represents. Although there are several forms of *rejang*, I could not determine a relationship between a particular socio-political organization of a village with the specific choreographies.¹² The musicians and the village priests who supervise the ritual take an active part in the formation of a *rejang* performance.

The shortest form of a *rejang* performance, about fifteen minutes, consists simply in circling a courtyard three times (observed in Sengkidu and Nongan). The longest stagings are executed in those villages where the virgins position themselves in rows next to each other. Such *rejang* forms can start in the morning (from 7.30 until 10.30 a.m.) with intervals of approximately ten minutes or longer, then start again in the afternoon after 2.00 p.m. and last until the sun sets (as observed in Asak).

Conditions of participation

The girls and young women who participate in *rejang* are chosen according to socially based selection criteria, and groups of dancers form on the basis of these criteria. The dancers represent the following groups:

- Those families who belong to the descendants of the founders of a village are entitled to receive a section of the community grounds (*ayahan désa*) and to supply a dancer for a *rejang* performance in a

village ritual. Consequently all *rejang* dancers are descendants of the members of a particular village (*krama désa*).

- A second group joins the ritual with other members of a *banjar* (hamlet).
- Apart from the organizational subdivision of a village into *banjar*, they are also divided into labour groups (*témpék*). Because such groups often consist of a large membership, two member families usually take responsibility for the costume of a dancer.

Only members of a village can be represented by their female descendants in this kind of ritual to display their social position in public. Members of the so-called village aristocracy, such as those who carry the titles of *pasèk* or *pulasari*, are free from the obligation to have their daughters participate in *rejang*, while other members of the village have to pay a fee if a daughter refuses to participate. Also excluded from *rejang* participation are those members who bear the title of *triwangsa* (the three pan-Balinese noble title groups *brahmana*, *satria*, and *wésia*).¹³ These facts were explained to me in the following manner. First, members of the title groups would not participate in an equal way with the other village people in the traditional *adat* hierarchy because they regard themselves as being in a socially and ritually higher position than 'normal' village people, for example by having a closer relationship to the *raja* (royal) family in Karangasem. In addition, I was told that these title groups do not share this part of the *adat* which is owned by the families of the ancestral founders of the village. However, those who want to participate in *rejang* need more than the right ancestors.

ASPECTS OF SEX, GENDER, AND THE REJANG

In contrast to most of the sacred dances, which can be performed by groups of both sexes,¹⁴ participation in the *rejang* dance is restricted to special groups characterized by female sex: young girls (from the beginning of the second dentition to the first menstruation, 'children'), maidens (from the first menstruation to their marriage, unmarried girls, 'virgins', *daa*) and old women (those who have passed menopause). The combination of sex, gender and socio-political aspects (like descent; see Rein 1993, 1994a) makes the definitive selection of the participating dancers possible.

In the following section I describe the interpretation of femaleness from a religious perspective, using the groups of *rejang* dancers as a concrete

example. The Balinese division of the *rejang* dancers into groups corresponds with the Balinese classification of the biological periods of human life.

The child

According to the Balinese world view, the first life period starts with birth and lasts until sexual maturity. During this time (especially before the appearance of the second dentition) children are considered to be ritually pure (*suci*) and still free from human passions. From the beginning of the second dentition (which means a further approach to the earthly sphere) the children can be entrusted with special ritual tasks, for which an adult is not suitable (unless they have undergone special purifying rituals beforehand).

There is a clear relationship between the little girls and the prosperity of the land when one looks at the example of the *rejang* group in the village Bungaya. During the ritual *usaba kasa*, two little girls participate in the *rejang* at the end of the row of the dancing virgins. Together with the maidens (*daa*) the two girls perform the dance. Otherwise, it is believed the rain could fail.

The virgin

The state of virginity for both male and female persons implies that they have had no sexual intercourse. However, in the context of the heterosexual continence required before marriage, this social-biological fact becomes a symbolically charged social fact.

According to the Balinese world view, the second period of life for the maidens begins with first menstruation, for they are now of marriageable age. With the onset of menstruation the special state of childhood purity is finished. The denial of legitimate heterosexual intercourse for young unmarried people forces them to remain symbolically in the condition of 'sexual innocence'. In contrast to active heterosexuality determined by sexual urges permitted later, the condition of virginity is another form of symbolically ascribed purity. This state qualifies the virgins to take care of special ritual and religious tasks within their village.

The tooth-filing ritual, which should enable the control of passions, marks in a painful way the change within the story of life. Like the ritual of marriage it marks the end of the participation in *rejang* for the maidens. In a transcendental sense, the girls have arrived on earth.

The wife and mother

The third period in the life of a woman consists of her marriage and motherhood. According to the Balinese view of the world, the status of marriage and motherhood marks the apogee of ritual impurity, and serves as a criterion for exclusion from the *rejang* dance. Even if motherhood creates and nurtures life, it is connected with the beginning of sexual activity. Earthly, human sexuality, which implies the coming together of both sexes in the context of fertility, is not intended to be expressed through *rejang*. As we will see later, there is another idea of procreation expressed in this performance.

*The old woman*¹⁵

The last period of life for women starts with the end of menstruation. Many old women as well as old men slowly retire from daily routines and devote themselves to religious tasks, like working in a temple as priest or priestess. Their proximity to death connects them with the non-human sphere. To a large extent freed from human passions, they approximate a condition of ritual purity which resembles that of a child. Indeed, several old women compared themselves with the children's stage of purity.

Summarizing, we may say that special conceptual closeness to powers of the non-human sphere is ascribed to the female life periods caused by specific biological facts.¹⁶ Consequently, female persons can actively mediate between the spheres of human and non-human beings. Little girls, as well as marriageable young women, are considered to be prospective mothers who have not yet used their life-giving power. Before their first menstruation, little girls are suited to represent the 'pure idea' because of their imagined closeness to gods. In a *rejang* performance of maidens the aspect of marriageability is more important. In some villages a performance of *rejang* is even interpreted as 'a presentation on the marriage market'. While dancing, the young women have the opportunity to present themselves in their best costumes in public. The group of old women who dance *rejang* represents the aspect of fertility in yet another perspective. After the period of fecundity they personify (together with old men) the highest position in terms of spiritual power and wisdom within the gerontocratic system.

From a religious perspective, in a *rejang* performance, two groups¹⁷ of participants can be distinguished. In most *rejang* dances I was able to observe the little girls form a closed dancing group by themselves. I found just one exception in the village Duda, where the children's group danced together with a group of three old women who led the circling row of dancers in the

front as *rejang pengarep* (those who dance in the front). These women represented the traditional (*adar*) village leaders who held the most important political positions: *pasèk* (distributor of land), *kabayan* (supervisor of traditional matters), and *penyarikan* (administration).¹⁸ I was told the dancing old women could be wives of the leaders but this was not necessarily the case, because in this village it is usual to borrow a substitute from another family for the dance. In the other group of *rejang* dancers, maidens (virgins) participate until they marry.¹⁹

Having depicted the structure of participation, one last choreographic element remains to be introduced: the costumes of the dancers.

Costumes of the dancers

Within a village ritual, the *rejang* dancers can be recognized by their special clothing. This consists of a robe, a crown, heavy silver bangles and a long scarf or a string of pearls. Their bodies are tied with several long cloths, so that they can walk only with little steps. Only their bare arms are able to swing freely, and it is the arm movements that mainly characterize the dance. The outfit of the dancers is prescribed and within a village may differ only in minor details.

The design of human dress, while adapting to natural materials and function, serves also to express social values. For example, from the design of the garment, the tying of some parts of the body, and through the choice of special materials or combinations of colours, the observer is able to gather information about gender, social status, the ideal of beauty and even to which ethnic group a person belongs. Clothing as a medium of expression is always created with an 'ideal vision' in mind. In the case of the *rejang* dancers, the design of the dresses expresses aspects of fertility, particularly motifs of the rice goddess *Déwi Sri*. To mention just a few, in some villages (like Tauka and Bugbug) the clothing is characterized by several colourful scarves tied around the hips which hang down to the knees. In contrast to the narrowly tied body, these loose scarves emphasize the bellies and the backsides of the girls. Because the central part of the body is connected with notions of sexuality and fertility, pregnancy is symbolically demonstrated. The shape of the costumed dancers invokes the shape of the rice mother *Nini Pantun*, or of the 'pregnant' rice goddess *Déwi Sri* before the harvest of the rice fields.

The crowns are mostly decorated with flowers. Only in one village (Nongan) were fruits used as a sign for a rich harvest. Especially for the young girls, triangle-shaped motifs are used on their crowns. The triangle, which points downwards, can be identified symbolically with the shape of the female

pubic area representing the female element in the world, meaning the womb which gives birth. The male element is represented by the triangle pointing upwards which is also a symbol for the holy mountain Gunung Agung. In figurative representations of the rice goddess (*cili*), we find both forms of triangles. Apart from the emphasis on the female element in a *cili* figure, the male element is always present as well. This equal representation of both sexes corresponds with the concept of fertility in the Balinese world view which understands the creation of human life in terms of equal contribution of female and male components (through white and red semen).

More involved is the special process of creating the rice through the goddess. In Balinese mythology *Déwi Sri* created the rice grain from her body (parthenogenesis) and made it available on earth without participation of a divine or an earthly male person.²⁰ This is consistent with the biological capacity of the traditional rice plant for self-pollination (see Ramseyer 1988:73).

For Hindu-Balinese people rice means more than just food. It is considered to incorporate a spiritual essence which guarantees life (*amerta*) (Howe 1980:33) which is also food for the gods. This essence (rice soul) is considered to be always striving to leave earth in order to get back to heaven, after having lost its material body during the harvest. To keep the rice soul on earth the Balinese offer it special treatment, and various material objects along with ritual events, so that it will stay together with them. The rice goddess *Déwi Sri* represents the rice soul and is sometimes called *manik galih* (the essence of rice).

Furthermore, as a mediator between the different spheres, *Déwi Sri* belongs to the group of *widadari*,²¹ who are all connected with rice. Whereas *Déwi Sri* brought rice to mankind by embodying it, the *widadari* function more like guardians of rice which they can use for their own purposes (Rein 1994b:137ff.). The mythologically formulated close connection between the group of *widadari* and the creation of rice and mankind is enacted through several rice rituals which must accompany the cultivation of rice in social reality. In some villages, after being dressed as *rejang*, the *kelihan daa* (leaders of the maidens) are regarded as embodiments of *widadari* (*dedari*) and they are addressed and honoured as such by the villagers.

The ritual dance *rejang* represents a basic aspect of the living religion of East Bali. It is connected with concepts of creation and maintenance of life in a social and cosmic sense. Although the religious background for their participation in the dance cannot be verbalized by the young girls they like to

dance it and they are proud of being dressed up and publicly admired for their beauty. To participate in *rejang* means, not only from the perspective of the girls and women, to accept the traditional way of living. As I was told by young bachelors (*taruna*) watching the dance: 'a *rejang* dancer will become a good bride'.

However, in the last years many things have changed and the influence of governmental programmes intended to develop a national culture in Indonesia can be observed in various aspects of the Balinese way of life. So far, this exposition has been predominantly written in the 'ethnographic present' presenting a rather static image of an unchanging 'tradition' of the *rejang*. But, like any other cultural phenomenon, the dance is subject to continuous alteration. In the last section I will consider the influence of national cultural programmes and contemporary changes in the traditional socio-cosmic world view. In what ways can another way of life be combined with dancing *rejang*? The background of such changes in recent years can be seen from five perspectives: the creation of a national culture; the influence of the religious organization Parisada Hindu Dharma; the effects of the national tourist policy; modern conditions of labour; and the state ideology of gender.²²

NATIONAL CULTURE AND *REJANG* DANCE

Fundamental to his 'New Order' (from 1967), President Suharto introduced a new economic programme which included a systematically organized cultural and tourist policy. Suharto's efforts to build a national culture and a national identity is characterized by the creation of regional traditions. They are to become part of 'unity in diversity' (*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*) after the completion of a standard national education programme. As far as *rejang* is concerned, the unified policy entails a severe infringement of the traditions of the villages. The government's programme to unify the diverse peoples which constitute the Indonesian nation was supported in Bali by the Institute of Religion, Parisada Hindu Dharma, founded in 1959. The representatives of this institution formulated a new dogma of Bali-Hinduism in the context of the recreation of Balinese religion as local manifestation of a world religion which is recognized by the government as being of equal value to the monotheistic religions Islam and Christianity, in accordance with the national ideology *Panca Sila* (Bakker 1993:230) which promotes the belief in one god as a cornerstone of Indonesian identity. In addition to the government's

programme to unify the organizational structure of the villages, the Parisada Hindu Dharma defines matters such as how a Hindu-Balinese temple and the ritual forms should look — matters previously the concern of local groups. These two powers trying to standardize Balinese 'culture' are joined by a third force which supports the unification and clarification of Balinese traditions which have hitherto seemed so bewilderingly diverse: the national planning of cultural tourism. Since 1986, this policy has set out to make the 'whole' of Bali accessible to interested, well-paying foreigners. To relieve the traditional tourist centres in the south of Bali, the governor decided in 1988 to establish fifteen tourist zones spread over the island (Picard 1996:193). Regions like North and East Bali, which had partially resisted these measures (Ramstedt 1987:111), were now seized by the standardization programme through the mandate of the government's representatives in the villages.

In connection with new economic policies, programmes and an ideology aimed at creating an Indonesian citizen in step with the 'modern' world, the state planners insisted that women's primary contribution lay in their roles as nurturing mothers (*ibu teladan*) and supporting wives.

According to the state directive that forms the ideological core of all state programmes geared to women's 'needs', a woman has five major duties: to be a loyal supporter to her husband; to be caretaker of the household; to produce future generations; to raise her children properly; and to be a good citizen ... It is the duty of the wife to see to it that her household is in order so that when her husband comes home from a busy day he will find peace and harmony at home. The children, too, will be happier and healthier ... This statement emphasizes the separation of a domestic sphere from a public sphere where the husband operates. It asserts that women have primary responsibility for the domestic sphere (Blackwood 1995:135, 136).

Indonesian officials were convinced of the dichotomy of domestic and public spheres and the male as head of household as the backbone of development. This new ideology of gender roles, curtailing the female role to the domestic sphere, ignored the traditional role of women as producers and as participants in ritual leadership together with their husbands (Blackwood 1995:136).

Changes originating in the national ideology can be observed in the context of religious activities and the *rejang* dance. I take up those aspects already discussed in the description of *rejang* above: time, location, choreography, participation, costume, and gender.

Times of performances

By publishing a timetable of rituals, a tourist agency can now include those of the mountain villages of East Bali in its programme. Formerly rarely visited by large groups, widened roads now make possible the quick coming and going of large buses. The law requested by the Balinese since 1971 and granted by the governor in 1973, which prescribed that all dances characterized as *tari wali* (sacred dances) should not be performed outside ritual times, is conveniently circumvented. If the dances cannot be exported, the tourists come to the dances.

While ten years ago the duration of a ritual was only vaguely predetermined, now some villages issue printed programmes which strictly prescribe the course of the ritual events. The new structures of the rituals are compatible with modern ideas of time management. The traditional ritual heritage, which is still managed communally, threatens to be reorganized in favour of a higher efficiency.

Locations

As a result of the reorganization of villages, traditional ritual places in the centre of a village have given way to modern administrative buildings. Consequently, ritual activities have become concentrated in one central location which leads to new ways of staging the ritual. This has also been influenced by changes in temple architecture. Previously, the main location for a *rejang* performance, the *pura balé agung*, was an open and publicly accessible place associated with a wooden *balé* (pavilion). In two villages the site has been surrounded by a temple wall following the South Balinese example. Also, a solid and higher *balé* was constructed and the whole area decorated, a practice which was hitherto customary mainly in the palace at Karangasem. The courtyard of the temple is now closed off with a grille whereas previously part of ordinary daily life took place there.

A dance which is called *rejang* can now take place outside ritual times and ritual places. Against the background of creating a national culture, since 1986 Denpasar (the provincial capital) has organized an annual art festival (*Pesta Kesenian Bali*) where selected music and theatre groups perform. As early as 1986 there was a *rejang* performance. Its choreography, however, was characterized by a strongly academic style of dancing. On the whole the *rejang* dance is becoming more and more fashionable. In 1991 the dance was even introduced in a South Balinese village where there had not been any *rejang* before, with the argument that a complete ritual had to have a *rejang*.²³

At least since 1990 many tourist shops offer postcards with different motifs of girls dancing *rejang* or being dressed for the ritual.²⁴

Choreography

In the last ten years, the new way of praying, Tri Sandhya,²⁵ which was introduced by the national Hindu organization Parisada Hindu Dharma, became more common religious practice in Karangasem. As a result of this joint praying of a community, in one village the choreography of *rejang* was changed as follows. While in the earlier ways of *rejang* the whole courtyard of the temple was used for the dance and the praying began after the girls had finished, in 1997 both religious activities happened at the same time. In this new version the maidens had to dance at the back in one row close to the temple wall, because the prayers needed more space in the *pura balé agung*. Contrary to the earlier version, where *rejang* was performed as a highlight with its own time and space during the whole ritual, now it could hardly be seen.

The influence of traditional ritual dances and of the dance academies is mutual. Not only was a *rejang* form created for performance outside the temple, but the dance academies (ASTI and KOKAR)²⁶ brought this new form back into the temple, where it was performed within the ritual context by the same *rejang* dancers who still dance the traditional *rejang* forms.²⁷

Conditions of participation

The conditions of participation have also changed considerably. It was mentioned before that the so-called village aristocracy was not obliged to participate. In one village these regulations were altered in 1990 by a young village chief causing vehement debates, as the members of this title group would not obey the authorities of the village. The regulations were not only changed in respect to the daughters of the village aristocracy but also in respect to the first menstruation as a criterion of inclusion or exclusion. In connection with the general compulsory attendance at school and the rationalization and unification of village organization, many villages have decided to abolish the shedding of teeth and menstruation as qualifications for entrance and introduced the differentiation according to school classes for participation in *rejang*. In this way traditional rules were adapted to the contemporary conditions of life. Little girls can now begin with *rejang* at elementary school (class 1 of SD, Sekolah Dasar) and also the older ones who have started secondary school (class 1 of the SMP, Sekolah Menengah

Pertama). This decision doubled the group of *rejang* dancers in one village from only twenty participants in 1987.

Costumes of the dancers

Modern materials are now commonly used in the head decoration, because it takes less time to make. For example, colourful papier mâché is used instead of painted pith, and paper flowers instead of fresh ones. In villages, where *rejang* was introduced more recently, the costume of the dancers is similar to the dress of *légong* dancers.

Gender

An ideal religious career for a Balinese woman born in a small village in Karangasem can start at the age of five. If the girl and her family fulfil several criteria (especially those of appropriate descent and of ritual purity), a girl is chosen by the village for a special religious task until she starts menstruating. The next step in her religious career would be participation in *rejang*, then becoming one of the leaders of the *rejang* dancers. Unlike the young *rejang* girls, in some villages the maidens are organized in a corporate group (*seka daa*; for example, in Asak and Bungaya). The members of a *seka daa* will be introduced to ritual obligations which they have to fulfil as female members of a village.²⁸ If the maiden decides not to marry she can become a virgin priestess. On retiring, she will be supported for life by her village. While following this religious career, the woman is honoured and respected by the whole community and she has to be addressed in High-Balinese with the title *jero mangku*. However, combined with her high religious position she has to comply with several taboos which influence her whole way of life. These include neither moving from nor sleeping outside the village, the avoidance of eating special food, and using special soap and dishes.

This traditional concept of an appropriate female role is in conflict with the concepts of the Indonesian government, directed towards renovation of female roles in the service of modernity and development. Mainly through their school education, young women are subject to the influence of concepts of modernity which in Indonesia is a construct of three connected ideas: of progress (*kemajuan*), of development (*penangunan*), and of individual achievement (*budi*) (Vickers 1996:6). Influenced by modern secular education, the girls develop their own aspirations which may include modern careers to guarantee greater financial independence and the possibility of an independent lifestyle. While studying and working in Balinese towns and even

in other parts of Indonesia, young women develop their own network of social relations and alternative ways of living. The girls I interviewed no longer identified themselves with the ritual duties which they are traditionally obliged to fulfil. The ties of the traditional village, mainly the expectation to fulfil time-consuming and expensive traditional obligations, hinders them in their personal aspirations. In regard to the *rejang* dance, the groups of virgins are especially affected. If they are following a training course or have a job outside the village, they have to take leave to participate in the dance. This is often difficult, if not impossible. However, this new life situation does not mean that they totally cut their roots in their villages. They still try to dance *rejang* at least once within a longer ritual. As an expression of their multiple identities it is possible for the young women to combine *dancing rejang* and *being maju* (progressive).

CONCLUSION

The question is whether the *rejang* dance will develop into a pure folk event due to a continuing modernization in the lifestyle of the dancers and villagers, and the influence of government cultural policies. The choreography of *rejang* has been influenced by governmental programmes in an indirect way because of the changes introduced according to the unifying ideology of Pancasila. As Greg Acciaoli (1985:158) has pointed out, there exists the danger of 'a particular sort of symbolic violence [in] the imposition of an officializing account that circumscribes the very principle of the construction of reality, or of culture'. He goes on to suggest that this is 'but one variant of the aestheticization and dedoxification of the *adat* of indigenous societies that official policy has spawned in its emphasis upon culture as performance and display' (1985:158).

Although village-bound precepts and state regulations prohibit commercialization and performance of ritual dances outside the ritual period, this law has been evaded for years. The *rejang* dance is increasingly a showcase for, if not pan-Balinese, then certainly East Balinese culture. The conditions surrounding its performance increasingly are adapting to the government regulation of culture. A further threat comes from the changes in the lives of young women who have increased lifestyle choices which can take them away from the villages. The question is, how much longer participation in *rejang* will characterize the lives of young women in East Bali.

NOTES

¹ The Indonesian word *maju* means: go forward, be progressive. This article is a revised form of a paper presented at the 3rd International Bali Studies Workshop in Sydney, July 1995. I want to thank A.A. Mad, Djelantik, Peter Kistler, Susanne Rodemeier, Angela Francais-Simbürger, Hildred Geertz, Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, Hedi Hinzler, Reiner Zapf, and the participants at the SBS-Conference in Denpasar 1994 for their critical comments.

² The material which forms the basis of this article was collected during twenty-two months' field research in Bali (May 1985 — April 1987) and regular longer stays until 1997. The survey was carried out within the district of Karangasem in the following *kecamatan*: Karangasem (thirteen villages), Abang (seven villages), Manggis (six villages), Bebandem (two villages), and Selat (one village). In the district of Bangli, *kecamatan* Rendang I visited one village.

³ The structure of participation and the occasions for the performances may be completely different in other parts of Bali.

⁴ The analysis presented here is the result of my interviews and I must emphasize that the form it takes is my construction. Most of the Balinese do not know the *rejang* dance of neighbouring villages, nor are they familiar with the structure of participation outside of their own villages.

⁵ Within the gerontocratic system of Bali, the conveyance of knowledge is connected with age and social position. Just as 'sex' and 'gender' is a biological and social fact, so is 'age'. An eighteen-year-old widow, for example, is considered 'older' than an unmarried twenty-two-year-old. The reply '*masih mudah*' can signify both 'young of age' and 'new on the job'.

⁶ In response to the official policies, the categorization of the 'arts' in Bali was discussed during a conference 'Seminar Seni Sakral dan Profan Bidang Tari' in 1971, in order to prevent the feared sell-out of native culture. It was decided to create a distinction between 'sacred' and 'profane' arts (Picard 1992). This differentiation into sacred and profane sections is in no way in accordance with the Balinese world view. The participants of the conference felt forced to adopt a Western concept of art and religion as an aid in the decision about which areas of Balinese culture should be 'protected' and which should be given over to commercial marketing.

⁷ The word *polos* has several connotations. It is used for things as well as for human beings in order to signify special qualities like 'being pure', 'being empty without any design'. In the context of the dance movements, *polos* means that the movements are not 'filled' with human intention or creativity but that they can be used (filled) by transcendental beings with their spiritual energy.

⁸ The criteria used here to characterize the different ways in which *rejang* performances are staged are a recapitulation of all those aspects found in East Balinese villages in multifarious combinations. I was very much aware of the problems concerning the generalization and summarizing of the multiple and varied kinds of appearances of *rejang*. It is not my intention to create a definition of *rejang* which visualizes an uniform image of an East Balinese tradition. However, in order to make a statement about a phenomenon that can be observed in many villages under the same name, and is thus part of a shared

reality (see Barth 1993:4ff.), it is necessary to collect and compare aspects which are known and regularly repeated.

⁹ Contrary to *rejang* stagings which are bound by ritual times, *légong* performances can be ordered. Although the time factor, which makes a *rejang* a seldom seen performance, has thus far not been mentioned in the literature about *rejang*, it is in my opinion a major reason for it not having been researched earlier. A person doing research about *rejang* will need at least two years to observe and document a sufficient number of performances. I was able to document and photograph *rejang* performances in thirteen villages during my stay in Bali together with Reiner Zapf. It enabled me to observe different forms of dance in five villages more than once. Generally a village stages a *rejang* once every 210 days.

¹⁰ According to the Hindu-Balinese calendar these rituals happen every 355 days around the new or full moon.

¹¹ According to the *uku* calendar this festive season is celebrated every 210 days. In East Bali four *rejang* performances happened on *Galungan* and sixteen in the context of *Kuningan*.

¹² Both little girls and virgins in Bungaya dance in circles, while the virgins in Asak, Bugbug and Timbrah stand next to each other in parallel rows. The virgins in Tenganan dance in both parallel rows and circles.

¹³ An exception is made in the village of Bungaya which stages a form of *rejang* every fifteen years, within the ritual of *usaba sri*, in which all virgins, independent of their origin, are allowed to participate.

¹⁴ Apart from ritual dances for both sexes (*mabuang*, *péndét*), there exist other dances which are reserved for either the male (*karä baris*) or female sex (*sanghyang-dedari*).

¹⁵ I mean the biological age between ca. 47-67 years — after menopause but before 'old age'.

¹⁶ The ritual qualities that are explicitly associated with the female sex in regard to purity and the power of life, are equally applicable for the male sex. The exclusion of men from *rejang* is based on the biological given that women can bear children.

¹⁷ There is another group of little girls who take part in the *rejang* before their second dentition. However, their participation is more or less spontaneous or is connected with a vow by the parents, for example for a sick child. After she has recovered the child takes part in the next *rejang*. This happened in Duda where the children, accompanied by their mothers, walked at the end of the circling row of dancing old women and girls. Their participation expresses the gratitude of their parents for the divine support.

¹⁸ Interview with the *kelihan désa* in Duda, 4.2.1987.

¹⁹ However, if they are twenty-five years of age and still unmarried, they normally stop dancing *rejang* in favour of a younger sister.

²⁰ The staging of the motive of parthenogenesis is in my view ritually restricted to the *rejang* dancers, while the performance itself can only happen with the cooperation of musicians and priests of both sexes. In addition, all symbolic presentations and other performances, where images of the rice goddess or the mother of rice are used, include a male figure: *Rambut Sedana* (the god of wealth and prosperity). He 'fertilizes' the mother of rice, who is carried ahead of him in procession in the form of white palm wine (*tuak*), at the end of a special harvest ritual.

²¹ In this context I do not refer to the *widadari* of the Arjuna Wiwaha which belong to a different concept of female beings or spirits (see Appel 1991:31; Rein 1994b:136).

²² The following interpretation should not give the impression that the dance existed in the same form until 1985 and changes have only taken place during the last decade. In my analysis, I refer only to the period of 1985-1997 because up to this time the dance was not sufficiently documented. When asking questions concerning alterations, the information I received was very sparse. I mainly refer in my discussion to two villages in Karangasem where certain changes were particularly striking.

²³ Unfortunately, I was not able to see this new *rejang* which happens at night. However, from the information I received about it I assume that this dance has nothing in common with the *rejang* forms known in Karangasem. Mainly its funny character was mentioned by people talking about the dance. Furthermore, the dance happens in a temple which is owned by the *brahmana* family, who decided to introduce the new dance into the ritual. The most obvious difference from East Balinese forms is the place where the new *rejang* happens. Whereas in Karangasem it is unthinkable to perform a *rejang* in a temple (*pura dalèm*), where the not yet ritually cleansed ancestors reside, the South Balinese *brahmana* family decided to introduce this dance in the biggest ritual of their *pura dalèm*. The dance, after being 'discovered' by scientists and the tourist industry, serves as a good medium to invent a new tradition in a Balinese traditional style.

²⁴ Within this context it can happen that a postcard with a photographed *rejang* girl has the wrong name of a village on it. The ritual context is not important for the producer of the postcard but the beauty of the girls and 'Balinese tradition'.

²⁵ This new way of praying has to be analyzed in the context of the stronger influence of Islam. The choreography of *Tri Sandhya* resembles very much an Islamic way of praying. The beginning of the prayer is announced through a microphone and the members of the community are called, joining in the temple yard. In front of the prayers, close to the altar, a representative of the Parisada Hindu Dharma leads the praying community while using a microphone. During the prayer nobody is allowed to stand up and leave the temple. As a result, the former short and individual prayer has become a long, complicated ritual activity and traditional priests of both sexes are more and more substituted by male representatives of the Institute of Religion which follow an officially valid way of religious practice.

²⁶ ASTI — Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia (1967); KOKAR — Konservatori Karawitan Indonesia (1960).

²⁷ ASTI — Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia (1967); KOKAR — Konservatori Karawitan Indonesia (1960). This mutual influence is also known from the offering dance *péndét*. During the fifties this dance was performed separately from the ritual context. At the end of the sixties, altered slightly, with a new choreography and a new name (*panyembrama* — greeting dance), it became a national symbol. Later, this new form was brought back to the villages by dancers trained at the conservatory and replaced the traditional offering dance *péndét* in a few rituals (Picard 1990:52).

²⁸ Whereas the membership in such a *seka*, as in Tenganan, is an obligation for each girl before she marries, in other villages (for example, in Asak and Bungaya) only one daughter (normally the oldest one of a family) has to participate in the organization.

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