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Hauser-Schäublin's demonstration of royal involvement in the management of Bali's sophisticated irrigation system is a useful corrective to any tendency to underemphasize or exclude the political influence of kingship in the "theater state" and "democratic irrigation" models put forward by Geertz and Lansing, but it does not detract from the contribution of these two models to an understanding of precolonial Balinese society.

One aspect of debates surrounding the Asiatic-mode-of-production thesis that remains salient is its focus on the relationship between ideal-typic "village community" and "centralized state" as one of complementary opposition (Godelier 1969). If the Balinese case has something to contribute to an understanding of class/status relations in the social formations we call "states," it is through examination of how hierarchic and communal forms of property, identity, and organization accommodated one another.

It seems to me that complementary oppositions between local and centralized, village and state, egalitarian and hierarchic frames of reference in Balinese culture arose from different sources and over time produced pervasive interpenetrations between the poles of meaning reflected in these models. The numerous variations on hierarchic-egalitarian themes across the Balinese landscape and the extraordinary elaboration of structural rules and symbolic expression make sense in the context of a broader understanding of Bali as a "contest" society. But that contest is not only between competing elites. As Hildred Geertz (1975:167) expressed it, "*Homo hierarchicus* and *Homo aequalis* are engaged in Bali in war without end."

The weak-state concept, however relative, is important to this argument. Kinship structure, demography, and ecology have been analysed in support of the view that Southeast Asian classical kingdoms were tenuous propositions (Winzeler 1976). Power was contingent, contested, and circumscribed by other competing houses and by the subjects they sought to rule. The state's dependence on proliferating ritual to draw these localities into the "state-as-imagined community" points at the same time to powerful alterities in Balinese society and culture.

The resistance of whole villages and kin groups to the use of Brahmana priests and the rejection of aristocratic "caste" titles by many "Old Balinese" communities (Guermonprez 1990; Reuter 1996, 1999), the autonomous sources of spiritual knowledge and authority accessed through trance and worship of ancestral deities,

and the practical power of popular disruption of ritual (Connor 1979; Warren 1993*b*, 1998) are not encompassed by the hegemonic ordering of king or high priest. Efforts at incorporation through state ritual were indeed “more or less”—contextual, partial, and ambiguous. The description provided by Hauser-Schäublin of rituals at the state temple of Sakenan, where kin groups worship their own ancestors at their own shrines, is a good example of symbolic statements open to counterinterpretation on the extent and limits of hegemony.

With respect to the analysis of local customary institutions generically discussed under the rubric of *adat*, it is not correct to say that “priests became the unchallenged leaders of the newly created” *adat* domain or that “most ritual came under their exclusive control.” Customary practice and ritual in most parts of Bali are controlled by councils (*krama*) which rely ultimately on the authority of deified ancestors, expressed ideally through consensual, ritually validated decision-making processes. On rare occasions the deities may be consulted through trance performed by a medium (*balian*) who may be chosen by the council or by the ancestral spirits themselves. Councils take advice and delegate authority but are not controlled by kings, priests, or village heads (Geertz 1983; Warren 1993*a*).

It is difficult to see why the “imagined community of the kingdom” achieved through ritual mobilizations of the kind described in this study should be regarded as incompatible with the metaphors of (more or less) powerful “theater states” attempting to superimpose themselves through ritual and practical means on (also more or less) “democratic” local communities—*desa*, *banjar*, *subak*. We should not expect the “democracy” or “egalitarianism” of Balinese local customary institutions to fit contemporary Western models any more than their traditional forms of state authority do.

These binary frames may be inadequate to express the complex ways in which centralizing authority works through and is reworked in popular culture. They remain, nevertheless, valuable points of reference for ethnography’s comparative and interpretive efforts.