

Bali

A Great Place to Visit

Mel Borins M.D.



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Foreword

By Professor Luh Ketut Suryani, MD, Ph.D

Professor of Psychiatry, former head of the Department of Psychiatry at Udayana University Bali Indonesia, Founder & Director of the Suryani Institute for Mental Health

I am honoured to write a forward for this book. After I read the entire book and the accompanying photos, I was shocked and saddened. Life in Bali was so beautiful. Everyone who visited was considered to be a friend or relative or family. Life was very harmonious and the focus was on loving each other, respecting one another and needing one other. In the old days most houses in Bali did not have gates. The houses were often connected to other houses through a door opening from the side. If we wanted to visit or meet with people, we would usually call from the outside and if no one answered, then we would enter by calling out the names of the people we were looking for. When you met someone on the street, you would greet that person and ask, “Where are you going?” and use other warm and familiar questions. Everyone was treated like family. In general, people would walk where they wanted to go or ride a bicycle if it was far. It was common to visit or meet someone without making an appointment because there were no tele-phones at that time.

When I first met Mel Borins, he felt like an old friend and he felt like family. We were both physicians and had children in the same stages of life. They were interested in learning about the life and the culture of the Balinese people. We both had received a Western-style education and we were both interested in mind, body and spirit in the practice of medicine. They observed how the Balinese welcomed all new people as friends, brothers or family.

Bali has changed. In some areas of Bali it seems like no one smiles, or says hello or asks where are you going. Some streets are very busy with cars, buses and are full of motor-bikes. The concept that “time is money” seems very pervasive in people's hearts. Hospitality still exists in restaurants, hotels or recreational areas. But friendliness seems to only exist between friends, within families and among people linked by profession.

The Balinese have experienced many traumas. Many Balinese have died from the plague, dengue fever, and malaria. Many also died in the Communist mass massacre in 1965, the reformation era in 1998, in the first Bali Bombing in 2002 and in the second one in 2005. The life of the Balinese people cannot be separated from the

MAGICAL BALI

government in Jakarta. We must follow the rules established by the central government without being able to protect our traditions. Many Balinese have also been transmigrating outside the island of Bali. It is hard to know how many Balinese people died because the places they went to were not fit to live in or from deaths because of malaria. Balinese were also forced to do family planning and only have a maximum of 2 children. If they did not follow the rule then they would have been punished by social sanctions of the Banjar (the smallest community).

When the Balinese had to transmigrate, other residents from Java and others from outside Bali came to Bali with their families to look for jobs. They freely built mosques and churches without necessarily considering the feelings of the Balinese. In a sense it was like an invader to the peaceful island of Bali. People from the outside were aggressively developing Bali with little regard to the Balinese people around them. The Tourist Industry has grown very rapidly. They are free to develop Bali tourism by selling Balinese religious ceremonies and Balinese arts.

In daily Balinese family life, religious ceremonies are quite elaborate. People practice religion in markets, in schools, in offices, and in businesses. Many people become priests, high priests and traditional healers. On one level the belief in Hinduism is getting stronger. Unfortunately, it seems that now they carry out their beliefs more ritualistically rather than spiritually. Although some people complain about the extensive nature of religious ceremonies, they still do them because they believe it will bring happiness to their lives.

I hope Balinese children will read Dr. Borins's book and realize how Bali has changed with the influence of outsiders. We must always remember that our Balinese ancestors passed down a soothing, calming and energizing energy to be one with nature, one with the environment, one with God and use our spirit Atma to do what can be done. I know we can bring back the magic of Bali, and return the Balinese smile and spread the concept of Balinese people loving each other, respecting each other and needing each other. We can also learn from those who come to Bali, and learn about what is good for the continuity of the Balinese generation by adapting our culture. We can continue to restore Bali tourism by developing spiritual tourism so that we can maintain Balinese culture, and the principles of Tri Hita Karana - love each other, respect each other and need each other.

I would like to thank Mel Borins for wanting to write about his experiences of enjoying Bali. I hope that the Balinese generation who never experienced life in the 1970's can appreciate how our great Balinese ancestors gave us the principles for achieving life's happiness. I hope they will remember Balinese spirituality and the community-based concept of life, mind-body-spirit. I know you will enjoy this well written book about Bali and I hope you will visit our Island with respect and consciousness for our religion, culture and way of life.

Thank you for choosing to read my book about Bali. If you have not had the good fortune of visiting this magical place then I am hoping this book will entice you to take a journey of discovery. I have known people who visited Bali on a cheap one or two week guided tour. They liked the beautiful scenery, the inexpensive food and accommodation and were able to purchase some precious local art, artifacts and clothes but they did not really have a chance to understand the culture, religion or way of life of this unique island. They did not meet anyone personally, did not participate in any ceremonies or festivals or religious gatherings and did not have a transformational experience. My hope and dream is that after reading this book you will better understand the magic of Bali. Indeed, you will be persuaded and convinced to book your flight, hire a guide and take the time to immerse yourself in the culture of this remarkable place.

The Republic of Indonesia is made up of a series of islands sprinkled across the Indian Ocean. It is the world's largest archipelagos, and one of the largest predominantly Moslem populated countries in the world. Bonnie and I have been fortunate to visit the islands of Indonesia many times but of all the places in the world, the island of Bali remains our favourite. It keeps drawing us back.

Bali is located just south of the equator. It is a small island, only 140 km by 80 km. The majority of the inhabitants are Hindu and it is the only mostly Hindu island in Indonesia.

Bali has been a special place for us. Green terraced rice fields, volcanic mountains, groves of coconut palms, endless beaches, and exotic flowers are only a part of the island's spectacular natural beauty. Mesmerizing music, dance, puppet and live theatre are commonplace. The quality of the paintings, woodcarvings, handmade jewellery, batik textiles, and Ikat weavings, make me want to buy everything.

But the amazing artistic life and the natural beauty are overshadowed by the spiritual consciousness of the people. Celebration is part of daily life. Blessing, prayers and ceremony go hand in hand with births, deaths, vacations, rice planting and harvesting and well digging. Every event is a spiritual event. Over the years we've taken part in temple festivals, cremations, weddings, tooth-filing ceremonies, building blessings and full-moon celebrations. Based on the old adage that you can never step into the same river twice, Bali is no exception. Each time I have been there, the experience has been different but always magnificent.

Very often vacations can be a way of tracking how you've changed and grown over the years. They are markers that can help you to take stock of your life. Many travelers believe you can't go back to a place you've been because it won't be the same.

When we visited Bali in 1975, Bonnie and I felt that this was our paradise. We had a community of friends and there was a warm, open spirit about Kuta Beach that was unique. People would smile as you passed by, everyone would say hello and there

was a feeling of camaraderie among travelers. There was a sense of community of shared joy. The Balinese were genuinely friendly and almost innocent in their interactions with tourists. Their lives were animated by spiritual rather than material pursuits.

Bali was tremendously romantic for us in 1975. We did not yet have children. The weather was beautiful, the beaches idyllic and the food was inexpensive and remarkably tasty. Bali had a spiritual way of life that we had searched for in various countries but with limited success. It was like our second honeymoon.

Before going to Bali, we traveled through Australia. When we visited the emergency room of one of the hospitals to get a gamma globulin shot to protect us from hepatitis, coincidentally the nurse who gave us the shot had just come back from Bali. She told us a little about Bali and recommended we stay at a small homestay in Kuta Beach called Losmen Sareg. We followed her advice and never looked back.

In those days the Balinese airport was fairly primitive. When we exited the terminal there were hordes of guides crowding around us, all wanting to take us to their establishments. Out of all the men who were shouting at us to come to their hotel, we chose a smiling, polite, relatively quiet man to whom we were somehow attracted. Synchronistically, this man whose name was Alit, turned out to be from Losmen Sareg.

Losmen Sareg was a small pension run by an elderly jeweller and his family. All members of the family took part in the upkeep and the care of the place. We quickly felt at home with this family and got to know them as well as anyone could after three weeks. We lived in a fairly Spartan room that had a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling, two single beds with white sheets, our own washroom complete with a seatless toilet and a hose on the wall that served as our cold shower. Tea was left in a tall thermos on the porch and we were welcome to as much tea and bananas as we wanted all for a grand total of \$2.50 per day!

Across from our room was the family compound where we could see the manager's young wife, preparing meals, cleaning house, feeding her child and conducting rituals. As though part of the family, we were included in their ceremonies and they helped us with all our problems and requests.

We also fell into a community of friends: some Americans, Floriano an Italian artist, a couple of Aussies and a few British travelers. They became our second family. It felt like "Woodstock" was alive and well in Kuta Beach. Free exchanges of traveling tips and a mellowness of spirit permeated everyone.

Just as the Hindu artists, musicians, mystics, dancers and intelligentsia from Indonesia fled to Bali during the Moslem invasion in the 14th century, the last of the Hippie generation with ideals of peace, love and brotherhood still dancing in their heads seemed to flock to Kuta Beach in the early '70s.

The streets were so quiet you could hear the whisper of bicycles passing on the main road to the beach. From Bemo corner, the first crossroad up from the beach, the narrow roughly paved road was dotted with a few small homestays, restaurants and stands selling clothes and crafts. A few more pensions and restaurants were scattered along the few other roads running right angles off the beach and along

unpaved paths. The town was small. Indeed, you could learn where all its restaurants, banks, money changers, shops and places to stay in just a few days.

The sunsets were spectacular. Everyone would meet on the beach around 5:00 pm to watch the sun fall into the ocean, lighting the sky in reds, yellows, oranges, and blues. I was constantly amazed that nature could create so many different shades and tints and hues. If I had seen a painting with the colors in these sunsets I would have thought it was just the artist's imagination. After watching the evening escapade on Sunset Beach, I soon realized that no artist could ever capture these colors on canvas.

After the sunset show we would wander off for a supper of freshly prepared rice, noodles, shish kebob, and fish. We could stuff ourselves for anywhere from three to six dollars — for the two of us. Fruit stands were set up on corners and the Balinese would squeeze mangosteens, salaks, papaya, bananas, and mangoes with crushed ice in a blender and sell it for about 20 cents a glass. The taste was worth the risk of a Bali-belly. Thankfully, we always remained healthy.



1975 Monkey Forest Road Ubud



1975 Main Kuta Beach Road from Bemo Corner to the Beach



2019 Photo Taken from the Exact Location as the Previous

EVERYTHING HAD CHANGED

In 1975 the pace in Kuta was leisurely, the people gentle and everything was a celebration or ceremony. Six years later, Kuta was no longer recognizable. When we returned in 1981, with our three-year-old son, we mourned the loss of our innocence. We had changed and so had Bali. Since the building of the International Airport on the island of Bali in the 1970's, there has been a continual destruction of the culture. Land that had been ancestral homes for hundreds of years was bought up by large international conglomerates and business interests and taken away from the hands of the Balinese people. Golf courses have been built where rice fields once stood. Water has been diverted away from their traditional farming and used for the benefit of mass tourism. The streets were now lined with stores, restaurants and hotels, many of them bearing international branding.

Understandably, like everywhere in the world, with the onslaught of tourism comes change. In 1975 most people dressed in sarongs. It was not uncommon for women to appear still bare breasted in public spaces. Nowadays most Balinese go out in public and to their jobs wearing Westernized clothing. Topless Balinese women are now rare. Balinese dances, temple festivals, and cremations are attended by throngs of tourists and it has been a tremendous struggle for the Balinese to maintain their spiritual way of life and their Hindu religion.

Most of the money generated by tourism leaves Bali and does not reach the common people. There are situations where there are large five star hotels built next to Balinese villages and the Balinese villages remain impoverished and lacking even basic amenities, like fresh water and sanitary toilet facilities. The conspicuous pollution of rivers, beaches and the oceans with toxic chemicals, effluents and disposable plastic packaging has become common place and the destruction of their way of life is ongoing.

Over the last number of years, with the political unrest and natural disasters like Tsunamis and earthquakes throughout the islands of Indonesia, many refugees from other neighbouring islands, like Timor, Java, and Aceh have fled to the safe haven of Bali and sought refuge and employment there. This transmigration has further destabilized the Balinese culture. The absorption of hundreds of thousands of immigrants with very different histories and religion coming to Bali has proven challenging for an island of about three million Hindus.

Some of the once secluded beaches were crowded with hawkers continually haranguing tourists to buy carvings, clothes and cold drinks. The Australian Pub culture was creeping into town and the streets were noisy with hundreds of motorcycles with Balinese teenagers in blue jeans chirping "Hello mate", in a heavy Australian accent. In 1975 there were few cars; almost everyone traveled by bicycle.

By 1981 there were so many vehicles it was actually dangerous to cross the streets and the air and noise pollution was bad.

Since we now had our three year-old son, we were concerned that Losmen Sareg would no longer be suitable for our stay. The rooms did not have overhead fans, and we were worried that with the intense heat we would need some form of air conditioning. For Larry's comfort, we wanted to upgrade our accommodations slightly, so we sought out a fancier place closer to the beach that offered us the luxury of an overhead fan. At the Kodja Beach Inn our room was almost twice as big and was in a classier location.

After a few days, we decided to visit Losmen Sareg and speak to the family that had hosted us in 1975. We had written to them a few times but did not let them know that we were returning to Bali. When we walked into the compound and embraced Sareg and his family, I was struck by the fact that they did not seem to have changed in the six years since we had been there. Even the compound and lodging looked the same except for a few trees reaching closer to the clouds. Although his children had grown up and his grandchild was now a little boy, Sareg and his family were still the same smiling, friendly people we had last seen six years earlier.

We tried to explain why we weren't staying at their pension this time. I wanted to be honest and said we needed a fan in the room and that we were concerned about Larry and wanted a better accommodation and hot water. They could not understand why we didn't want to come back to their homestay. The whole scene saddened me and suddenly I began to cry. When they saw the tears streaming down my face, they didn't know how to respond. They didn't understand that I was crying for the loss of our innocence, and for the way things used to be.

I was no longer carefree; I had responsibilities. I had a son, a house, a car and a medical practice. It was as if I had abandoned their friendship for my own comfort and convenience.

They were still the warm, gracious, easy-going, friendly people that I remembered, but it was not the same Bali. Our Kuta friends were no longer there. The people seemed to have become more materialistic and the invasion of tourists and Indonesians from other islands had dramatically changed not only the way that Kuta Beach looked but the way it operated. The lost dream would never return. We were no longer footloose and fancy free. We learned you can't go back. So we mourned the old way for a few days and then began to enjoy ourselves in a new and different way. We still loved the place so much that we stayed a whole marvellous month. We made new friends, found new favourite restaurants, and watched Larry frolic in the waves for hours.

The sunsets hadn't changed a single, solitary hue. The best things in life were still free.



Larry Building Sand Castles at Sunset Kuta Beach 1981



Playing Catch at Sunset at Kuta Beach 1989

BALIAN USADA, URUT AND KETAKSON

When we returned to Bali on subsequent visits I was interested in exploring the way traditional healing is practiced. I was lucky to have mentors at the Faculty of Medicine at Udayana University help me understand the ancient traditions. When ill, many Balinese would seek out a Balian, or traditional healer. There are certain medical problems such as infections for which they seek a medical doctor's care. However, there are other conditions for which the Balinese turn to traditional healers. In addition, it is less expensive and more convenient to go to a Balian.

There are three main types of healers. The first, called a Balian Usada, uses herbal remedies that were often written in ancient books, or Lontar. These books written in Sanskrit on dried palm leaves contained recipes or formulations to treat a wide array of medical problems and were passed down from one generation to another.

The second category of healer is called bonesetters or Balian Urut who specialize in problems of the musculoskeletal system. These healers massage and manipulate patients who have arthritis, sprains, pains and related physical complaints.

Finally, there are spiritual healers who believe that people get sick on a spiritual level and that their physical bodies were then affected. One type of spiritual healer is called a Ketakson, whose practice involves entering into a meditative state and there receiving messages about their patients and their appropriate cures.

The first healer I visited in Bali was a 73 year-old Balian named Pekak Mangku. He was a chubby, toothless, old man whose face and body were covered in black moles. He wore a black and white checkered sarong and sat on a bed covered with a woven straw mat. To one side was a small prayer altar with burning incense.

His first patient came to him with a sore wrist. Apparently, four days earlier, the man had fallen on his outstretched arm and since then his wrist had been sore whenever he moved it. Few words were spoken. First the healer touched the man's wrist and while exploring all parts of his wrist, he massaged different points on the hand and forearm. These points, surprisingly enough, corresponded to the acupuncture pressure points used in Chinese acupuncture. After working on the wrist he went up the forearm to the elbow and finally massaged points throughout the upper arm. After a few moments the man could move his wrist without any pain.

The treatment did not stop there. The man removed his shirt and the healer massaged his neck and shoulders. Then the healer gently manipulated and cracked the man's neck and shoulders, much like a chiropractor. He believed the man's problem was not focused just in the wrist but was closely connected to his neck, back, shoulders and upper arm.

Pekak Mangku took three years of formal training from various healers in Bali

when he was young. After that he learned his craft through experience. He confided in me that after 50 years of healing, he felt he still did not know enough and was still continually learning.

After he massaged and manipulated the stiff neck of the Balinese medical doctor who brought me to this healer in the first place, he took me to his one inpatient. In another part of his home lay a 10-year-old-boy who had been in a motor vehicle accident two weeks earlier in a town called Singaraja. The boy had suffered a fractured femur and had been brought for treatment by his family.

The boy's left leg was in traction, tied to the end of a bed by a stretchy piece of long cloth. A piece of cloth soaked in a kind of plaster was tied around his thigh; bound around the cloth were bamboo sticks about four inches in length that circled his thigh. The plan was to keep the boy like this for about a month and then he would be able to walk. His parents had chosen Pekak Mangku over the local hospital and sent his older sister along to look after him



Balian in Front of Taman Ayun Temple in Mengwi

SPIRITUAL HEALER

A few days later I traveled down a dirt road in search of a famous spiritual healer named Wayan. A line up of cars and motorcycles snaked along the outside of his brick-walled compound. Wayan was a busy man. Apparently he saw more than 100 people a day. He blessed babies, consulted on personal problems, and even saw people in groups. In this kind of group therapy Wayan took people with similar problems and brought them together. He sat behind an altar lined with flowers, a single naked light bulb hanging over his head and preached to the people.

My medical doctor translator said that his patients fell into three groups: those who were sick because another person had cast a curse on them; those whose food was being poisoned by someone else; and those who apparently became ill because someone hid metal objects in their rooms to drain their strength.

The Balian removed curses, instructed his patients to go back and search their rooms for nails, knives and other metal objects, and warned them about the food they were eating. People came from all over Bali to hear his advice and benefit from his wisdom. Some even came from other Indonesian islands.

How did this spiritual healer get started? Simply, he was walking down the road in a northern part of Bali about four years earlier, when suddenly a "vision" came to him. In this vision he was told to go to the village of Sukawati and there he would help people. He was told what house to visit and he stayed there three days praying. Soon people began to come to him for help. I thought to myself that this would be a rather unique way for a medical doctor to launch a new practice.

With my translator's help, I told Wayan that I wanted to learn more about spiritual healing. He invited me to spend three nights with him at his home and he would teach me what I needed to know. I explained that it would be difficult to leave my wife and three-year-old son. Besides I could not speak Balinese.

He mulled over my predicament and finally said that if I went home and slept in my hotel room, for the next three nights spiritual healing would be taught to me in English in my dreams. Alas, three nights passed and nothing came to me in my sleep other than a few mosquitoes. When I awoke, I was not enlightened.

I was simply groggy.

On a later visit to Bali while staying in the town of Munduk, I went on a trek with two of my sons to visit a healer, Ketut Wesi. We woke up early and our guide, Gede, took us on the voyage to meet the Balian.

We began by walking out to the panoramic rice fields where we saw an incredible view of not only the rice fields but the ocean in the far distance as well. We climbed down a series of slopes, crossed many rivers, clambered up a whole bunch of hills, jumped across rocks, slipping and falling along the way. It was quite an arduous journey and I felt fortunate that we left my youngest son behind because we were having trouble keeping up with Gede.

While jumping across one of the fast flowing streams, I fell in, cutting my hand, soaking my sarong and getting my feet wet. I was dressed in a ceremonial sarong because there was a special ceremony going on in Munduk, a special 10 year cremation, and I wanted to dress respectfully when I visited people's homes. This experience taught me how difficult it was to walk in a tight skirt. After about an hour of walking across rivers, up hills and up mountains, all the time past coffee and clove trees, with hundreds of blue flowers by the road, past poinsettias, red flowering trees and every imaginable kind of tropical plant, we came to our first waterfall. There were beautiful cacao trees there as well. Our guide stopped at one house and we got a chance to see how coffee was processed. We also had an opportunity to hang out with the chickens.

Finally we got to the home of our healer, Ketut Wesi. At the age of 18 he realized he had a special power and he helped his father and brother with their respiratory illnesses by massaging them. He then practised this shiatsu-like massage and people started coming to him for help.

Ketut welcomed us into his house, served us Bali coffee along with rice cakes and cookies. His massage spanning all the tender points all over my back, legs and thighs, lasted about an hour. He spoke no English whatsoever, and my sons and I found it hilarious to hear him talk non-stop throughout the whole massage. He was twisting and turning me in places where I knew human limbs were not meant to go. All the time he gave an ongoing Indonesian commentary. Afterwards we laughed our heads off at how funny it was that this man was torturing this middle aged doctor with his sons just smiling and watching. I was not at all healed by the experience and was a bit disappointed that this was not transformational.



Rice Fields in Munduk



Lotus Flowers (above) Sayan Ridge Ayung River (below)



Dragon Fly in Lotus Pond

BALIAN EXPLAINED

After my experiences with the healers, I had the good fortune to speak to Dr. Denny Thong, a psychiatrist who was once the director of the psychiatric hospital in Bali. The Balinese people, he said, are peaceful, contented, and non-aggressive. They seldom show hostility and most people suppress their negative emotions. Their only overt expression of aggression is on the roads. In traffic, everyone competes ruthlessly for space and power. It's a frightening experience to drive in Bali. Not surprisingly traffic accidents are one of the island's major causes of death and disability.

Dr. Thong believed that the Balinese channel their aggressive feelings through dance and other art forms. They also used trance as a catharsis. For example, many ceremonial dances performed regularly in the community tell simple stories of good versus evil. The people watching identify with both sides and often go into a trance along with the dancers and actors. It is all right for people to express anger, shriek and fight with masks and costumes on. This is an acceptable and valuable outlet for otherwise suppressed feelings.

The Balian serve as healers for the people, Denny said. They are a stabilizing influence on the community, acting in a sense like a community psychiatrist. Many spiritual healers used trances, magic and voices to convince people what path they should follow. Speaking from a trance absolves them of any personal responsibility for what they advised so they could make judgments and suggestions that they might not ordinarily say. Also, because they went into trance or used magic, their advice was so dramatically given that people tended to pay more attention and heed the advice.

Take the example of a man who comes to a Balian with a headache. Most headaches are not brain tumours or serious infections but are caused by stress or other psychological causes. The spiritual healer might go into a trance and take the patient along with him. Then he might, using a magic sleight of hand, might pull a nail from the patient's head, pronouncing this the cause of the pain. The nail would be visible proof that something had really been wrong and to Balinese patients this magic seemed to cure the problem. Maybe this was more effective than telling them their problem was psychological.

Dr. Thong believed that healers still had a great power over people and that a lot could be learned from them. He and his colleagues were trying to work with Balian to educate them about hygiene and preventive medicine practices. He wanted Western-trained medical doctors to study how the healers practiced so that their tools could be used by them to advance the common good. He viewed the trance state as a powerful healing tool and believed it was important to study and understand how we might use it in modern medicine.

The Balian also speaks the language of the people he treats and structures his treatment in ways that the average person understands. Sometimes on my travels around the world I felt that the medical profession was not being clearly heard or understood because their spoken language and their body language was alienating them from their patients. Sometimes Western trained physicians have trouble translating the medical language and way of seeing things into language that their patients understand. Many Balian seem to have a talent for intuitively assessing a person's nature and their problems. I often wonder how we could teach these aptitudes in medical schools in the West.



Ulun Danu Temple Bedugul

BALI SPIRIT

It is thought that **Hinduism came to Indonesia** via India and from there spread to Bali by nomadic mystics and teachers. Hinduism then blended with existing beliefs; the spirits of animals, inanimate objects, human ancestors and the reification of good and evil.

Many Balinese believe there is a supreme god called Ida Sanghyang Widhi Wasa who has many manifestations. The three principle Gods are Brahma, the creator; Shiva, the destroyer; and Vishnu, the protector.

Bali is unique in the way prayer, worship and celebration are part of every aspect of daily life. Hindus are supposed to pray three times a day: sunrise, high noon and sunset. Ostensibly most people just pray in the morning.

The woman of the household first prepares the food for the day. Small offerings of rice, flowers and incense are then placed throughout the home and elsewhere to bless the spirits who take care of people during their day. An offering might be placed, for example, on the dashboard of a car, on the steps of a house, in the temple that is part of every home and in the surrounding streets, business shops and tourists' doorways to bless and make life safe.

The number of temples in Bali is truly remarkable. To start, every home has its own temple. This is the most important temple; it preserves the Balinese way of life. Since the temple is part of the home, it makes religion and worship more personal and integral to family life. In the past, family homes in Bali could not be sold, but were passed on from generation to generation. It is believed that every family's ancestral spirits inhabit the family temple. Since these spirits watch over day-to-day life and protect and guide the family, it is extremely important to care for, honour and maintain the family temple.

Every village also has at least three communal temples. The "Pura Dalem" or temple of the dead is located near the graveyard or cremation area. This is the place for Durga (Shiva God) and Shiva's wife (Prajapati temple). The "Pura Desa" is the temple for the spirits who take care of the village community. This is the domain of Brahma the protector. The "Pura Puseh," or temple of origin, is for the ancestors and lords of the soul. It is dedicated to the village founders and is where Vishnu resides.

Eight special Balinese temples are considered so important that they are said to be temples for the whole island. They are located in important strategic locations or power points surrounding Bali. Besakih temple, the "mother temple", is located on the slope of Gunung Agung, an active volcano and the largest mountain in the country. The seven other temples radiate from the island center like spokes of a wheel to protect all sides of the island from negative influences.

In addition to these three types of village temples, there are clan temples for groups of families with similar descendants and temples for different organizations like the rice growers co-operative and fishing societies. These are dedicated to the

spirits who protect these industries. Then there are offerings placed on shrines or thrones, which aren't really temples, in rice fields, at crossroads and bends in the roads, beside special trees and anywhere there may be spirits lurking. That, by the way, is everywhere.

Not only do the religious pray three times a day in Bali, but they visit the temple every five days, every 15 days, every full moon, every dark moon and particularly every 210 days on the anniversary of the founding of each individual temple. The Balinese have a seven month calendar so everything is celebrated about twice a year. There are also many other holidays and special days when visits to the temple are important.

Ceremonies celebrating the cycle of life are held in the family temple. The birth of a baby, marriage of a young couple and illness of a relative, all draw the family to the temple for prayer. Often family members from all over Bali and Indonesia will return to their Bali homes to pray together during special ceremonies. The focus on ritual and ceremony in daily life ensures that families remain strong and close knit. Even though many young people have been influenced by the worst of Western culture, there is still a universally strong respect for tradition and custom.

Not a day would go by in Bali that I didn't see women dressed in temple dress with huge baskets laden with fruits, flowers and food, balanced on their heads, marching single file to a celebration. The celebrations, whether store openings or temple anniversaries, were filled with Gamelan music, prayer and gifts for the gods. If we were lucky, there was also a show of traditional dance and enactment of a centuries-old play.



Elephant Cave Temple of Goa Gajah Near Ubud

A TEMPLE FESTIVAL

Once while staying in Candidasa, a small beach resort in eastern Bali, our son Larry was invited to a temple festival by Made, one of the young men who cleaned the rooms at our hotel. His family temple was celebrating the 210-day anniversary of its founding. I was cautious about letting him go out by himself at age 11, especially by motorcycle at night, so I asked if I could come along.

A motorcycle driver picked us up around 5 p.m. and took us to Tanah Ampo, a village about five kilometres from our hotel. There, in Made's home, we were treated to biscuits, tea in a glass (as is customary) and introduced to his family. We were dressed in sarongs, a piece of cloth two and a half metres long wrapped around the waist. A rectangular piece of cloth, or sash, was tied on top, around our waist.

When visiting any temple, everyone must wear a sarong and sash and obey temple custom. Anyone who has an open wound or is menstruating cannot enter the temple. People who have recently lost a relative cannot enter until three days after the cremation.

Larry and I were warmly included in the temple ceremony which took place with us all sitting cross-legged on straw mats on the ground. The priests, dressed in white, sprinkled holy water, distributed flowers, chanted and rang their hand-held temple bells to announce a time for prayer. Much of the prayer was said silently and was intended to be a personal prayer.

In the middle of praying, Made turned to me and asked if there was a problem for me praying in this Hindu ceremony. I replied, "Sin Ken Ken", which means "No problem."

He replied, "Of course there is no problem, because there is only one God who is all the same all over the world. Only the form and structure of prayer is different." I agreed.

The ceremony was light, easy-going, and seemed almost festive. We were later introduced to grandfathers, uncles, and cousins and we were reminded that Made was related in some way to the hundred or so people in this family temple.

When the prayers and blessings ended, the women picked up their huge baskets of fruit, food, and flowers, balanced them on top of their heads again and paraded home. After being served rice, peanuts, coconut, tuna, coconut milk mixed with meat and bananas, we were returned to our hotel by the same motorcycle driver.

Yet again we had been touched by the welcoming openness of Balinese culture.

SARASWATI

In addition to temple festivals, or Odalan, there are special celebrations called Tumpek. On these special days inanimate, secular objects are honoured. For example, on certain days offerings are made to weapons such as swords, daggers and spears. Other Tumpek honour trees, musical instruments, masks, puppets, jewellery and objects made of gold, silver and precious stones. Cars, motorbikes and even smartphones are also objects of garlanded celebration.

Twice I was fortunate to be in Bali on a day devoted to Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge. Special prayers dedicated to learning, education and books are recited. On this day people are not supposed to read or write; instead students gather at temples to ask Saraswati for success in their studies and special ceremonies are held at schools and libraries. Everyone offers thanks for the books they own and for the privilege of learning.

On my first visit to Bali on Saraswati, I met Ketut Liyer in Pengosekan, a village outside the city of Ubud. Ketut would later become famous by the book and movie *Eat, Pray, Love*. Ketut was a Balian Usada, a healer who relies on healing texts called lontar. These lontar are manuscripts etched on elaborately carved palm leaves in Sanskrit or Kawi and contain the religious knowledge that has been handed down from one generation to another. There are specific lontar that are dedicated to healing and these are considered sacred possessions as they contain the wisdom of ancestors.

Ketut's grandfather was a famous healer and teacher of lontar. He prophesied that Ketut would also be a healer. But Ketut had always wanted to be an artist, so he started off down that path. But while he was still young, he became quite ill. He went to a Balian Ketakson, a Balinese healer who goes into an altered state or trance to receive messages from spirits. As I mentioned previously this kind of Balian has the power to foretell the future and discover what is wrong with people who are ill. The Balian told Ketut that he was ill because he was not following his real calling, which was to be a Balian.

Ketut went home and began reading his great grandfather's lontar. He started healing himself and soon others came to him for help. He continued to read lontar daily and administered the leaves, flowers, roots and bark of medicinal plants to people who were sick. The lontar helped him to diagnose and treat illness and provided mantras and incantations, to ward off evil spirits and assist with spiritual problems. People came from all over Bali to receive Ketut's advice.

Before entering Ketut's home, Bonnie and I put on the appropriate sarongs and sashes so we could visit his home temple. Ketut was dressed entirely in white, with a white scarf around his head. His wide smile bulged with teeth as he welcomed us into the area of his home compound that contained the temple. All the books of the household, as well as his collection of lontar, were piled high in the centre on the wooden altar. Everywhere there were offerings of flowers, fruit and palm leaf decorations. Incense sticks were sticking out

of every nook and cranny filling the air with a sweet fragrance.

Throughout the day members of the community and all his patients came to his temple, bringing gifts and offerings and placed them on the platform next to the books. Ketut rang his temple bell and chanted prayers while ceremonial gamelan music played on his tape recorder in the background.

People were squatting on their knees facing the altar in lines as Ketut came around and sprinkled holy water on their heads, all the while chanting a prayer. Holy water was also poured into people's palms. They drank the holy water while saying prayers silently to themselves. There was a steady stream of people all afternoon and a festive atmosphere in his home. Meanwhile similar ceremonies were taking place all across the Island.

On another visit to Bali on Saraswati, I was invited by my good friend, the Vice Rector, Dr. I. B. Tjitarsa, former dean of the medical school, to visit Udayana University and say special prayers at the temple at the newly built campus. We sat in front of the altar, lit incense and then with flowers in our hands uttered a series of three prayers. Afterwards holy water that had been blessed by a priest was sprinkled over us. Offerings were then placed on the altar to the Goddess Saraswati.

Afterwards we went to visit the Vice Rector's administrative office, and on the way we passed another temple just outside the administrative building. Dr. Tjitarsa proceeded to tell an amazing story which occurred on the first day he was on the job at the new campus. As he entered the building on that first day, a man approached him saying they needed his help. A man had died a day earlier in one of the third floor offices across from the main building. Apparently he was the fourth person to die from that third floor in a very short span of time. The employees in the building were very upset and no longer wanted to work in that building for fear of their lives. The vice rector thought it was odd that four people all died in such a short time and decided to investigate.

He walked over to a large room where the upset employees were gathered and noticed a woman crying in the middle of the room all by herself. As he approached her she went into a trance and began speaking in a man's voice. The vice rector was astounded but listened carefully as the voice began to tell him about the ancient temple that was adjacent to the building. Evidently it was not being properly maintained. The voice lamented that it was run down and no one was bringing offerings to it any more. The spirit warned that if things were not improved then up to eleven people would die.

The vice rector was concerned and asked what could be done. The voice gave instructions on how to avoid the calamity. A washroom had been built facing the temple and this was disrespectful. A wall must be built around the temple separating it from the washroom and everything else. Secondly new sacred cloth should be wrapped around the temple statues because the old holy cloth had holes. As well offerings and holy water must be brought to the temple on a daily basis. Finally the new temple that had been built on campus was not maintained and people were not praying there and bringing offerings. This had to change. The voice said that child

creatures from the underworld lived under the new temple and that candies should be brought to appease them. The vice rector had all the instructions written down and made sure they were all carried out.

To his amazement once the recommendations were taken care of the atmosphere on campus changed. Up until that time there had been much unrest. People were quarrelling and students were organizing marches and protests almost every week. After the instructions were carried out, the protests stopped and people seemed happier. It was interesting to hear this story with spiritual dimensions being told by a conservative Western-educated medical doctor.

Dr. Tjitarsa then took us back to his house where we participated in the Saraswati prayers at his home temple. Books were placed on the altar and special prayers were said. Afterwards we watched a ceremony to honour Dr. Tjitarsa's new car. It seems that before you drive a new car a Balinese must perform a special rite giving offerings, making prayers and blessing the car with holy water. Then the car becomes like a living thing with a soul. From that day forth, every six months there would be a day honouring all metal objects including cars and the car would be blessed.

By setting aside a special day twice a year to honour books and learning, the Balinese show their respect and high regard for knowledge and literature. Aspects of life that are often taken for granted become special and are treated with reverence. They take the mundane and elevate it to a level of celebration, giving thanks for every aspect of their life.

Many argue that the attention to ritual, the strong family orientation and their spiritual awareness, will help the culture to survive. Bali, more than any place I've been, keeps the spiritual aspect of existence a vibrant part of daily living.



Dragon's Back Walking Path in Ubud

BALINESE CREMATION

In 1989 we were living in Ubud, then a small town known for its incredible painters. A fellow traveler, Karen, mentioned she was going to a cremation and we asked if we could tag along. So around 11 am Bonnie and I, our three children, Karen, our host Agus, his wife and child jammed into a small car and traveled seven kilometres along a narrow road to the tiny village of Deng where the cremation took place.

In 1975, during our first visit, Bonnie and I had attended a simple cremation in Ubud where there were only a few tourist faces in the crowd. It was disheartening to return six years later to find that there were cremation tours, organized by professional companies, taking busloads of camera-laden tourists in short shorts to cremations. These companies were charging exorbitant prices to go to a private funeral.

I have always been amazed at the inclusiveness of the Balinese people. Many countries throughout the world distrust foreigners or anyone who looks different. But the Balinese welcome foreigners, even at the time of their ceremony for the dead. Can you imagine yourself at the cemetery burying one of your close relatives when a busload of tourists in thongs, singlets, sunhats, sunglasses and video cameras come marching up to the grave site and begin taking photos, talking and laughing, oblivious to the solemnness of the event? This was exactly how it felt in 1981 when cremation tours were popping up everywhere.

On this day, however, we were extremely fortunate. We were almost the only foreigners at the cremation, which celebrates the life of the deceased rather than mourning their passing. At cremations the Balinese are solemn but not unhappy.

The Hindus believe that humans are composed of two parts -- the body and the soul. When the body dies and is burned, the spirit is released to be reincarnated in paradise, or heaven. Those with good karma or who have performed the right deeds and actions will be released from the cycle of birth and death to join the cosmos and be part of god.

If your karma is good but not perfect, your spirit will return to earth to be reborn as another human being and you will have another opportunity to work on unfinished business. If your actions in life have not been good, you might be reincarnated as an animal.

Most of the time, the cremation is seen as a release of the soul to a higher spiritual plane and freedom from the world of pain and suffering in which we all live. So the Balinese do not mourn. The man who was being cremated at this ceremony was in his 60s. He had been sick for 17 years. He had been married but childless. His wife was the only person who looked sad, and even she didn't shed a tear. In Balinese society tears are not acceptable, even from young children. It is considered especially bad for the spirit if tears fall on the body during the ceremony.

It is customary for family members to return home to see the dying person before they pass away. Close relatives will fly in from all over the world to bid a final farewell and be present when death occurs. The hundred or so participants at this cremation came to the home of the deceased laden with offerings and the day was spent gathered around the family temple.

Balinese homes are actually compounds surrounded by a wall. Inside the wall there is always a garden and separate buildings for each household activity. There would be, for example, one building for cooking, one for washing, another for personal hygiene and another for sleeping. Traditionally most of the buildings have no walls but are open on all sides and covered with a roof. The family temple can be found in one corner of the compound, usually facing the mother temple on Mt. Agung. Most of these compounds are home to the entire extended family.

When we arrived, the women were sitting in front of the bedroom on an elevated area made of concrete. Here the body lay resting behind a curtain. They were busy folding palm leaves to make small trays and decorations for the offerings for the cremation ceremony. Other women were in the temple itself arranging food on trays, lighting incense and preparing for the meal and ceremonies that were to follow.

The men were dressed in sarongs with a sash tied at the top. Most also wore a headband. They sat cross-legged around the porch. Tea and cigarettes were passed around as everyone chatted. Some of the men were busy chopping wood, digging holes for posts, building bamboo platforms, roasting pigs, sacrificing chickens and helping prepare the funeral pyre.

Behind the kitchen about 20 men, each with a black and white checkered cloth around his waist and a white headband, sat cross-legged in front of Gamelans. The Gamelans are musical instruments from Indonesia, similar to a xylophone. Throughout the entire day they played these, as well as gongs, drums and flutes. Their music gave the ceremony a festive yet meditative spirit.

Around one o'clock, we were called to a buffet lunch. Plates of satay (shish kebab), rice, lentils, cooked vegetables and other special Balinese dishes were set on the table behind the kitchen. The women served themselves first, then the men. After taking food everyone then took seats on the floor to eat their food.

The Balinese do not use forks and spoons. Our son Marc, who was three years old at the time, had great fun smearing rice over his face and clothes. We had taught him so well how to eat with a fork and spoon that he did not know how to eat with his hands. After twenty minutes of practice, however, he mastered the practice of shoving rice into his mouth.



Balinese Cremation-Carrying the Body Through the Streets

PREPARING FOR THE AFTERLIFE

At about three o'clock the body was brought from behind the curtain and placed on a homemade bamboo platform. The family gathered around gently touching the deceased, who lay uncovered on the platform. Older men chanted a lament while priests' assistants washed his face and head, combed his hair, clipped his nails, and laid flowers around him.

It was a moving moment. Everyone's attention was on the dead person and they were so gentle and caring it almost seemed to give the body life. After the preparations were finished, the body was draped in white sheets and placed in a basket made from palm leaves.

In the West, dead people are usually avoided. Even the act of identifying a dead body is repulsive to many of us. Few would think of touching and caressing a corpse. In Bali, the cleaning, combing and touching of the deceased gives everyone an opportunity to say good-bye. There is nothing abhorrent or unclean about the dead person. The deceased person is treated with love and respect, and everyone is given an opportunity to pay their last respects with reverence.

In contrast, here in the West we distance ourselves from death, which creates problems for people who have lost loved ones. Many times the funeral is over so quickly and may seem so impersonal that mourners are left with the feeling that the person really didn't die or that they haven't really said good-bye. As a doctor, I have seen some patients who as children were not allowed to attend their parents' funerals and who feel angry and have unresolved grief about their loved one's death. During the restrictions of the Covid 19 pandemic, many times people could not be with the deceased, have a meaningful funeral or receive the comfort and support of relatives and friends. This makes the grieving process so much more difficult.

UP IN SMOKE

The priest, regal in his long black beard and white robes, sat cross-legged on a high platform overlooking the body. The ceremony he performed took several hours. There were prayers and blessings, interspersed with chiming bells and the sprinkling of holy water on all of us gathered below.

Hindus believe that humans are composed of five elements: Pertiwi (earth), Bayu (wind), Teja (fire), Akasa (ether) and Apah (water). When a body is burnt it returns to these five elements. First it becomes fire and the ashes fall to the earth. The smoke

then becomes vapours or ether, which is blown away by the wind. Finally the ashes are collected and thrown into the sea.

Just after sunset, when the prayers were finished, the women softly gathered the offerings and piled them high on their heads. The men lifted the huge bamboo platform crowned with the funeral tower on top. The size of the platform and the number of tiers on the tower varies according to the caste of the deceased. The higher the caste and the wealthier the person, then the higher and more elaborate the tower.

We all marched from the house, up alleyways, through the main street of the town and to the cremation field. The procession was followed by the whole orchestra playing gamelans, gongs, drums and flutes. Members of the village lined the streets and watched as we marched past, stopping traffic in all directions.

At the cremation field, torches were lit and the body was ceremoniously removed from the tower and placed in a casket. Again the family brought food and drink, and said prayers. Finally a propane torch lit the platform and the body went up in flames. We saw the parts of the body burning, but it went very quickly compared with a ceremony I witnessed fourteen years previously when propane wasn't used. Still, the smell of burning flesh permeated the air.

We were tired. We were driven back to our hotel by Agus and his wife. The family of the deceased waited until the fire was out, then they headed for the nearest sea to spread the ashes. This custom is the final purification, the washing away of all uncleanliness. A number of days after the cremation, the Balinese held a second funeral, which releases the body from all thought and feeling still clinging to it.

I was hesitant at first to have my three sons attend this all-day cremation. I was concerned how they would react to death and was also worried they would get restless sitting around for eight hours. Surprisingly, the experience was a valuable one. By witnessing the dead body and the way everyone related to the deceased without the tears and wailing that sometimes goes on in the West, they could see the normality and acceptance of death as a natural part of life. They could look at the corpse without fear and seeing other people touching it made it less scary. They became very curious, asking questions about where the brain goes after dying and about why we bury people in the ground. Allowing them to think of their own mortality helped put into perspective how lucky we were to be alive.

Larry, eleven at the time, was more disgusted when he watched one of the men sharpen a bamboo stick, slit the neck of a live chicken, and then drain the blood. David, who was seven, was fascinated by the fire and how the body burned. My three year old son Marc was surprised to see the naked body of the dead person.

The Balinese cremation is a time for the family to come together to honour the departed. Everyone is busy with preparations. The immediate family is supported and comforted. The home, rather than the funeral parlour or cemetery, becomes the central meeting place. Ritual and prayer is performed and everyone is touched in the process. For the one day at least, time stands still.

In Western countries, we are always fighting death, sometimes forgetting that everyone must die. We in the medical profession, through our desire to help, sometimes even keep patients alive with respirators, intravenous lines, and drugs long after the essence of the person is gone. Families sometimes suffer for weeks seeing their loved ones reduced to the "living dead" or are left feeling guilty that more could have been done.

Many people are comforted to know that their parent is buried in a grave they can visit. They don't like the idea that there is nothing left of the body. The Balinese feel the opposite. They believe that the soul lives on and resides in their family temple, and so they can communicate with and feel the presence of their loved ones every day.

I left the cremation on a high. The energy of the ceremony calmed me and offered me a chance to slow down and contemplate death. There were no black costumes at that time, but music, color and festivities. The Balinese's whole attitude toward death still seems so much healthier in every way than ours



Burning the Body

MASS CREMATION

A few years later we were fortunate to take part in a mass cremation. Usually a cremation takes place as soon as money can be collected to pay for the festivities. However, if a family does not have the money, or there are not enough family members available to organize the event, then a mass cremation might be performed about every five years.

More than a month's work went into the extraordinary mass cremation I attended in Kedewatan, a village about five kilometres outside of Ubud. Included in the preparations was construction of huge bamboo platforms that touched the top leaves of the village palm trees and elaborate wooden bulls, adorned with masks, standing 20 feet high. Baskets overflowing with mango, dates and orchids were also made for each of the 30 people being honoured at the cremation.

In the old days, the remains of these people would have been dug up from the ground, placed in a basket and carried in huge, wooden statues perched atop the elaborate bamboo platforms. However, the village council decided many years ago that the graves could only be dug up symbolically and a symbol of each dead person would be used in their place.

The festivities began near dawn. My wife Bonnie, our three sons and I arrived four hours later to see the huge wooden bulls lining the road, peering down at us from their elevated platforms. Traffic was directed around these platforms and bamboo baskets were placed in the front. Hundreds of other baskets filled the entrance-way to the temple.

Everyone was dressed in a black top and a black hat. Flashes of color came from the bright sarongs worn by both the men and women taking part in the celebration. Hundreds of villagers were crammed into the temple, weaving banana leaves and coconut palms that they would use in the ceremony.

We waited patiently for the festivities to begin, mingling with the crowds until finally at one o'clock the gamelan orchestra arrived: 20 men displaying special ceremonial cloth wrapped around their waists and heads. They sat cross-legged in front of their instruments filling the air with the sound of music the entire day. After the first few songs, the priest, bearded and dressed in white, blessed everyone present.

After the prayers, about 15 men carried each of the heavy platforms two kilometres to the Pura Dalem, Temple of the Dead, on the outskirts of town. The pallbearers were in a light-hearted mood, turning and twisting the huge platforms, spinning them around and shouting as they walked along the road. Finally, the platforms were taken into the temple field and lined up on pyres. Hundreds of villagers flowed by in a long procession bearing offerings and making their way to the particular bull pyre where their kin were to be cremated.

The villagers walked around and around the pyre, symbolically feeding the spirit of the dead, making offerings and generally hovering by the platform. At four o'clock

sticks and wood were put under each platform, and then soaked with kerosene. A match was struck. The platforms went up in flames.

Men with large poles were standing by, turning the fire over. It was amazing to see this whole field full of burning pyres, filling the sky with smoke and bringing tears to our eyes. When the flames died down, relatives gathered around the ashes and searched for coins and other trinkets that had survived the flames. The ashes were later taken to the river and, in another ceremony, thrown into the water.

Years later we were fortunate to attend another mass cremation in the town of Munduk for all the villagers who had not been cremated in the past 10 years. There were some people who were not cremated, because of lack of money or because family members could not be organized in time. The bodies were put in the ground and then years later, the village would have a mass cremation. This time they had 37 people who were being cremated and each family had a little basket with a small piece of sandalwood on which a picture of the person would be drawn and they might even have a photo of the person who died and this would symbolically represent the dead person. All the things that were done to regular bodies were done to this little basket. We took part in the four day celebration, watching the amazing care that people had for their symbolic dead relative.

Although many of the deceased had died a number of years earlier, they had not been forgotten. The communal funeral was an excellent way to ensure that everyone, including people who had no money and few family members, would be honoured. Funerals in North America seem rushed in comparison. It was another experience we will never forget



Terraced Rice Fields

GALUNGAN - HERE COME OUR ANCESTORS

After giving a lecture at the International Congress on Traditional Medicine and Medicinal Plants, we decided to stay on to take part in one of the country's most important celebrations, Galungan.

On Galungan the deified ancestors of every family descend to their former homes where they must be welcomed with prayers and offerings. Since every Hindu household in Bali has a family temple, everyone returns to their family home to honour the spirits of their deceased relatives.

Putu, a waiter we met in Ubud, invited me to attend an early-morning ritual slaughter on the day before Galungan. I woke up at 4:30 A.M. to the sounds of a gentle rain, put on my sarong and walked up Monkey Forest Road in pitch blackness to meet Putu.

A large, sad, pig lay tied to a bamboo pole as 10 men gathered around. They were the caretakers of the gamelan and had purchased the pig together. Once slaughtered, it would be divided equally among each man's family. First, the pig's mouth was tied with a piece of bamboo to muffle its screams. Next, while the 10 men held the pig down, a man with a large knife slit its throat and spilled its blood. Afterward, ashes saturated with kerosene were spread over the pig's body and set on fire to kill any germs and clean away any dirt. Then, the pig was scrubbed clean with bricks and water before it was cut up into equal shares.

The Balinese believe that their ancestors' spirits come back on Galungan to offer them guidance and protection for the upcoming year. The spirits stay around all week while special ceremonies and prayers are performed in their honour.

On the day of Galungan special food was prepared and we were invited to join Putu and his family for their mid-day meal. We also wanted to honour the spirit of this holy day in our own way, so we went to the small temple in our rented home and summoned the spirit of our own ancestors. We talked about my dead father, uncles and aunts and Bonnie's grandparents. We tried to give our three children a sense of these relatives as unique individuals who touched all our lives.

Bonnie and I have often thought of writing a spiritual will, not listing our material possessions but explaining to our children the values and beliefs we hold dear. We want to share with them the importance of family, honesty, compassion, God and other spiritual issues. This would be our real legacy.

We used our time at our compound's temple to share these beliefs. Our children listened without interruption. They seemed to respond to the special nature of our communion.

BLESSED AND HEALED

Ten days after Galungan, everyone visits their village temple and brings offerings as part of a celebration called Kuningan. On this special day the spirits are ushered back to the spirit world.

We were driven by our dear friends, Dr. Luh Ketut Suryani and her husband Dr. Tjok Alit, to Klungkung, a city that was once the centre of the Gelgel Dynasty, one of the most powerful kingdoms in Bali. Here we participated in a purification ceremony performed by one of the high priests.

As part of the ceremony we were sprinkled with holy water, bathed from the waist up, and blessed with flowers and prayers sung by the high priest. This delightful, smiling, bald-headed elder sat on a platform, cross-legged for hours, performing the ceremony on hundreds of followers.

After we were purified, Dr. Suryani took us to a traditional healer named Wayan Genah, who specialized in removing black magic curses that made people sick. He examined me and diagnosed that I had been possessed by some minor spirits. With a metal object wedged painfully between my fingers, Genah drew out the bad spirits from my body. He seemed to enjoy watching me squirm with pain. I'm not sure if he was a masochist or just happy that the bad spirits were leaving?

To finish off this amazing day, we went to Timbrah Temple in Klungkung to observe a special trance ceremony. Ancestral spirits are housed in thatched, wooden, spirit boxes and returned to the temple to enable them to make their way back to the spirit world. These spirit boxes rested on platforms supported by huge bamboo ladders. Each of the 10 heavy platforms was carried by about 10 shirtless male villagers. They led a large procession from the temple to the river and then, after a special ceremony, from the river back up to the temple courtyard.

There was a problem though. Apparently the spirits had been having too good a time among the people and having a mind of their own, balked at the thought of re-entering the temple. Each time the men carrying these long bamboo platforms approached the temple entrance, some of the men carrying the ladder were prevented from climbing the stairs by agitated spirits. The other men struggled and tried to force the platforms up the steep, narrow stone steps. In the chaos that followed the spirit boxes were spun around and around the temple courtyard by the men who put themselves into trance for the special occasion.

The atmosphere was frenzied for about an hour while the men, pushed, pulled and dragged the platforms around, seemingly out of control, knocking over anyone who got in the way of the whirling bamboo structures. Finally, amid the shrieking crowd and the throbbing music, ceremonial swords or keris were brandished driving the spirits up the stairs and through the temple door.

Dr. Suryani, then a Professor of Psychiatry at Medical Faculty at Udayana University in Denpasar, explained that the Balinese are very controlled individuals

and rarely show emotion in public. The trance, which is part of many ceremonies and dances, allows their pent-up emotions to surface. While in a trance men cry out, fall down, run amok and appear to act crazy, but not in a dangerous way. They feel like they are overtaken completely by the spirits and therefore are not responsible for their behaviour. But it is rare for anyone in a trance to be hurt or harmed by another person. The goal is to release the stresses and strains of everyday life.

I know that even as an observer to this emotionally charged ceremony, I felt relieved and refreshed afterwards.



Trance Dance-Biting the Head Off of a Chicken



Blessing Ceremony on the Beach



Farmer Tilling the Soil Before Planting in the Traditional Way

CAN BALI PRESERVE ITS CULTURE?

It is the culture and way of life just as much as the cheap prices, beautiful beaches and sublime climate that attracts tourists. Anyone who is interested can take part in ceremonies, festivals, and religious events. The Balinese welcome visitors. But something gets lost in the sharing. What is the price tag on Balinese culture? Can a country sell its culture and still maintain it?

The Balinese believe in the concept of Tri Hita Karana. It is a philosophy or a way of looking at the world that originates from the Hindu religion. This philosophy talks about man's three relationships. The first is Parahyangan, the relationship between a person and God. This is the basis for all the wonderful rituals held by the Balinese. The creator gives bounty to humans, and humans express their gratitude by honouring the gods through various rituals. The second relationship is called Pawongan, or the relationship between a person and his fellow man. The Balinese

believe that having a harmonious relationship with their fellow humans is essential for prosperity and success. Traditionally the banjar, the local community government and various societies of farmers, and fisherman and other interest groups make sure that the Balinese look after each other. Having good ties with other people is very important to Balinese life.

Lastly Palemahan, is the relationships between a person and nature. In olden days the Balinese deeply respected nature and were concerned about the environment. Unfortunately this has broken down lately with the destruction of the forests, pollution of the oceans and beaches and the destruction of the rice fields. However there is a movement back to adhering to this age old concept of Tri Hita Karana and many Balinese are attempting to instill this philosophy to their young people. I am hopeful that there will be a movement back to honouring this way of operating in the world. The Balinese can be an example for the way we may all live in harmony with God, our fellow man and our environment.

In their dances, paintings, shadow puppet plays and in their religious life, there is a balance between good and evil. The Balinese constantly work to maintain this balance between the life-giving and the destructive forces. I was raised to believe that good would win out in the end. The Balinese don't expect either to triumph. Both demonic and heavenly forces are catered to and accepted as part of the cosmic order.



Bicycles Carrying Aquatic Plants From Nearby Pond

So it is with tourism. Tourism brings employment, capital investments, material improvement and more opportunities to stimulate community prosperity and their creative genius. However, I tend to see the down side. As each region of Bali is touched by foreigners, the community turns away from traditional paths to more commercial and secular pursuits. This reorientation plays havoc with family and village life. Young Balinese, in particular seem attracted by the more negative aspects of Western cultures. Violence, drugs, blue jeans, and loud music are just some of the contaminating influences.

Bali is a communal society that is held together by a sense of collective responsibility. Sharing permeates everything. This collective responsibility puts considerable

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Barong Dance

pressure on individuals to conform to traditional customs and values. If Bali is to retain its culture and unique quality of life in the midst of thousands of tourists who visit every year, it will be because of its adherence to the traditional values of family and community.

The struggle for balance continues. Although many times there has been an attempt to conquer Bali, the Balinese have withstood external aggression and have been trying to keep their customs and religion intact. I was told that when Islam came to Indonesia and converted the great majority of the population in the 13th century, many mystics, priests, artists and religious Hindus fled to the island of Bali as the last stronghold of Hinduism in Indonesia. Bali withstood rampant Dutch colonialism from 1882 to 1942 and the Japanese occupation that took place from 1942 to 1945. Now it is facing its greatest challenge. Can it preserve its culture and way of life in the face of the hordes of tourists looking for cheap beer, surfing and an escape from the urban jungle? Can it maintain its unique culture with the influx of refugees from other parts of troubled Indonesia?

The commitment to spiritual awareness, attention to ritual, and their acknowledgment of God in every aspect of life is a firm foundation. The deeply embedded respect for their elders, and reverence for their ancestors helps maintain the social order. Lastly, their connection to nature and their creativity helps preserve the richness of their culture.



Fishermen Boats on the Horizon-Sunrise at Amed



Fishermen Coming in During Sunrise in Amed



East Coast Bali

BALI IS ONE OF THE BEST PLACES TO VISIT IN THE WORLD

Bali is my most favourite place to visit in the world. The island has a spell on me and keeps drawing me back. I have been there many times and I never get tired of its beauty. The moment I arrive, I get a sense of coming home. I truly believe the people of Bali are the friendliest, most welcoming people I have ever met.

Some people who travel to Bali stay at the resort area of Nusa Dua. Others stay in the beach towns of Kuta and Legian. Nusa Dua has wonderful luxurious first class hotels but is far from the “real Bali”. The town of Kuta tends to attract a younger crowd who favour pubs, massage parlors and touristy shops. When you plan your

trip to Bali I suggest you avoid Nusa Dua and the Kuta Legian area. However a trip to Kuta Beach at sunset is worth the journey.

I recommend starting the tour staying in the inland town of Ubud, considered the heart of Bali’s arts, traditional dance and music culture. From Ubud you can travel out to visit the various regions in the north, east and west.

I still get a kick of watching the monkeys doing their monkey business in the Monkey Forest in the heart of Ubud located at the end of Monkey Forest Road. You get a chance to see their habitat and can watch the monkeys up close. Be cautious not to openly carry food or bags that might attract their attention. Too many times I have seen the monkeys climbing onto tourist’s shoulders and grabbing their bags looking for food. Don’t forget to take photos of these human like creatures.

You can visit the vibrant Ubud Market, which has a wide range of food, clothing, souvenirs and art work. I suggest you also go shopping in the many beautiful shops along Monkey Forest Road. Please remember to attend the night-time performances of various Balinese dances performed in venues in and around Ubud. We usually attend the dances performed at the King’s Palace and are never disappointed. Our favourites are the Barong and Kecak dances. There are nine traditional Balinese dances that have been recognized by UNESCO as part of the world’s intangible cultural heritage. Our favourite place to watch the Barong Dance is at the early morning performance at the temple in Batubulan, a town which is known for its stone carvings.



Monkey Forest Ubud



Monkey Forest Ubud

Truly excellent meals are served at Murni's Warung and the Lotus Café on Main Ubud Road. I also suggest eating at Café Wayan and Ibu Rai on Monkey Forest Road. The prices are reasonable and the menus are varied. While staying in Ubud you can take day trips to visit some of my favourite sites of Gunung Kawi, Yeh Pulu, the Bat Cave and the Elephant Cave.

Ubud is surrounded by villages where families of artisans have pursued their crafts for generations. I highly recommend visiting the artist villages of Mas for wood carving, Batubulan for stone sculpture and Celuk for jewellery. Other villages specialize in the manufacture of musical instruments, shadow puppets and other traditional crafts. In these villages I am sure you will find something precious to take back home to remind you of your holiday.

If you want a luxurious hotel located in the midst of rice paddies located a 20 minute ride outside of Ubud, then I suggest staying at Furama Resort and Villas and take the shuttle ride into Ubud to eat, visit the sites and explore the shopping.

If you want to get away from the hustle and bustle and do some snorkeling then Permuteran and Menjangan Island, in the northwest is a good place to go. Stay at Amertha Bali Villas or Taman Sari Bali Resort and Spa in Permuteran and take a sunrise boat trip aboard a traditional fishing boat and maybe even see dolphins. Later in the morning rent a boat at the West Bali National Park and go to the famous



Tirta Gangga - King's Water Gardens East Bali

snorkelling spots at Menjangan Island where you get to snorkel over the "wall" area where the tropical fish used to be numerous and varied. Bring along a boxed lunch and relax on the island overlooking outstanding scenery.

Another get away place in East Bali in Karangasem is the Jasri Bay Hideaway Villas. This property is set on a black sand beach with dramatic views of Gunung Agung, Bali's tallest mountain and still active volcano. The rustic-chic villas offer a place to rest, relax, rejuvenate and reconnect.

If you want a sense of what it is like in rural Bali then visit Mengwi. Stay at Puri Taman Sari in Umabian village of Tabanan. The hotel is nestled in shady coconut groves, surrounded by rice fields and rivers. Visit the nearby Taman Ayun Temple which was founded in 1634 by I Gusti Agung Putu. From Mengwi I recommend an afternoon day trip to witness the sunset at Tanah Lot, an incredibly beautiful temple built on the water. After sunset see the Kecak or Monkey dance performed before heading back to Mengwi.

We usually like to end our trip on the beach and I recommend going to stay in Sanur to complete your visit. It is much quieter than Legian or Kuta and has its own charm. Although we have visited Bali in October and February, if you wish to avoid

the rainy season, then planning to be there sometime between April and September is the best idea. Bali is rapidly changing and tourism and the Internet are eroding the idyllic nature of the people and the island. However, there is still some of the “real Bali” left and it just takes a bit of planning and determination to immerse yourself in the culture. I recommend that you explore the internet and hire a guide who comes highly recommended and can take you to see the off the beaten path locations. When you visit stay open to the possibilities and take every opportunity to attend a ceremony, or a temple festival or a cremation. Be willing to alter your plans and experience the culture and religion. I have always feared writing and talking about Bali because I was afraid that promoting tourism to this unique island would further hasten its destruction. I hope after reading this book you have a better appreciation of this special destination and when you visit you will respect and love this magical place.



Tanah Lot Temple in Tabanan



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