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CASTE IN INDIA AND BALI: LEVELS OF COMPARISON

ALTHOUGH Bali is often designated a caste society and although its religion is regularly referred to as 'Hindu', there is as yet (with the partial exception of Lekkerkerker 1926) no systematic analysis of the similarities and differences between India and Bali with respect to these social and cultural domains. Most Dutch writers have failed to address the question at all: the Geertzes devote one paragraph of their 1975 monograph to it whilst Boon discusses the problem in only two pages (1977: 147—9). It should be said, however, that Hobart (1979), though not treating comparison as an analytic question in his thesis on Bali, does draw explicitly on models constructed to deal with Indian data, and thereby emphasises the connection between the two cultures.

Since the regions with which the comparison is to deal are many thousands of miles apart, are enormously different in size and, for the last 1500 years or so, have shared neither a historical, political nor economic background, the purpose of the present essay should not be seen as an attempt to provide definitive answers to what are, obviously, very complex issues. Rather, it should be viewed as an exploratory incursion designed to register some tentative remarks concerning caste in India and Bali, in the hope of stimulating further debate. Another primary aim is to demonstrate that simple assertions that Bali is or is not a caste society are largely unhelpful, since different conclusions can be obtained by focusing on data drawn both from different aspects of the culture, and from different levels of abstraction. Consequently, the following analysis will concentrate in turn on conceptual, institutional and interactional data although, it hardly needs to be added, no hard and fast distinctions can be made between these different orders of abstraction, since in reality they interpenetrate in complex ways.

It is Dumont's opinion that the essential and defining feature of caste is the disjunction between status and power epitomized in India by the *brahman/kshatriya* relation (1972: 260). If this relation can be shown to exist in Bali, then perhaps it can justifiably be said that Bali possesses caste.

The presence of a status/power disjunction in Bali, however, is somewhat problematic because of the nature of kingship in that island. Certainly kings were all of the *satria warna* (these being the Balinese spellings) and did not themselves perform any religious ceremonies; these were conducted for them by *padanda* priests of the *brahman warna*. Moreover, *padandas* have long been very active in the traditional Balinese law courts, and as authorities on all religious matters (Korn 1960; Swellengrebel 1960). On the other hand the king was a divine king of the Southeast Asian variety (Swellengrebel 1947), and according to Geertz (1980: 126) priests are, or were in the nineteenth century, merely a part of the king's regalia. It remains then to ask whether Indian kings had magico-religious functions, even though they were representatives of temporal power. Dumont (1962: 61) contends that the developed relation between *brahman* and *kshatriya* was only attained when the magico-religious aspect was stripped from the notion of kingship, and Geertz (1980: 126) asserts that this did not occur in Bali. Moreover, Tambiah (1976: 83) argues that the Brahmanical formula of *rajadharmā* (in which the *brahman* sanctifies kingship) was transformed into the conception *dharmaraja* (in which *brahmans* serve as subordinate functionaries) in the states of Indic Southeast Asia which, of course, includes Java and Bali.

The position seems to be that the *brahman/kshatriya* relation, fundamental to Dumont's version of caste, is to some extent contaminated in Bali by the Buddhist notion of divine kingship. Against this it can be argued that in Bali *brahman* priests were never, at the normative level at least, subordinate to kings in religious and judicial matters. Furthermore, though Geertz denies the existence of the *brahman/kshatriya* relation in Bali, Boon (1977: 148-9) asserts that it is, in fact, present. In short, at this level of analysis the data is at best equivocal and at worst contradictory, and given the inadequacy of reliable and relevant information it does not seem possible, for the time being anyway, to resolve the conflict in the evidence. However, by focusing instead on village Bali a rather different picture emerges for, it can be argued, the *brahman/kshatriya* relation is only one manifestation of the status/power disjunction. In other words, it is not necessary to restrict the investigation to kings and priests in order to determine whether the relation is present; a case, no doubt disputable, can be made for examining the structure of ideas in more localised spheres such as the village.

Lowland villages in south, west and east Bali are inhabited by people possessing titles which, in specific but variable circumstances, can function as the basis for the formation of caste-like social groups. In such villages there are usually representatives of the *satria warna* with titles such as *cokorda*, *déwa agung*, *anak agung*, *pradéwa*, etc. Such titles (*soroh*) are hierarchically ranked, and usually the highest ranking family is glossed in the literature as that of the local princes or local lords. But I, at least, can find no information in the ethnographic record which ascribes to these lords any sort of magico-religious nature or function.

Often no *padanda* priests reside in these villages, in which case many family and village ceremonies must be conducted by *padandas* brought in from other villages. Other ceremonies are performed by priests of a different kind and standing, and I shall have something to say about them shortly. Such an organisation in no sense provides conclusive proof but, nonetheless, at the village level this is the kind of situation one might expect if the Brahmanical, as opposed to the Buddhist, definition of the *brahman/kshatriya* relation were present. There is other evidence, though, which is perhaps more interesting and more germane to the problem.

In Pujung, the village in which my own fieldwork was carried out, there is a significant and constant conceptual distinction between two important institutions, the *krama désa* and the *krama banjar*. Both are organizations of people and they have an overlapping membership. The *désa* is constituted by one man (and his wife or other female relative, such as mother, sister or daughter) from each of the compounds built on the consecrated village land (*karang désa*). In some sense these men have a religious authority over the ground on which their house is constructed, and they also have total rights of usufruct on its products. They do not own this land (it cannot be sold privately or in any other way alienated) and are allowed to live and build on it only by virtue of permission from the village gods, though in practice compound land is inherited without any undue fuss. The point to remember is that membership of the *désa* is defined by a religious criterion, to wit, the holding of authority, on behalf of the gods, of a piece of sacred village land.

The *banjar*, on the other hand, is composed of all married men in the village together with their wives (or other female companions, as mentioned above). On marriage a couple is compelled to join the *banjar*, though in practice, again, all those with whom I discussed this were enthusiastic to join. Now partly because of the acknowledged commencement of regular sexual relations, marriage is considered a stage in the life-cycle at which people are at the nadir of their ritual purity (cf. Howe 1980: ch. 6, for fuller details), and so it can be argued that marriage is a comparatively secular criterion for membership.

These two organizations have very different statuses and perform very different functions, and the main contrast, in keeping with their respective membership criteria, is that the *désa* is concerned with religious affairs whilst the *banjar* takes responsibility for secular, village affairs. For example, the monthly meetings of the *désa* association are held within the precincts of a temple, and the main point of the meeting is to engage in a communal meal with the god or gods of that temple. It is said that the god consumes the invisible essence of the food whilst the members eat what is left over ('what is asked back', in the local idiom). Members often have informal discussions about all sorts of topics, but these are not part of the formal proceedings. *Désa* business is generally conducted at the end of work periods, when the *désa* is engaged on temple repair work or preparations for a temple festival. Finally, formal *désa* meetings are held every full moon.

In contrast the *banjar* meets every 35 days according to a very different calendar, and it gathers in the *wantilan*, a non-religious building most regularly

used for cock-fighting, rehearsals and drama performances. At these meetings all outstanding local village issues are debated and government legislation is announced and explained. Whereas no overt politicking goes on at *désa* meetings, the *banjar* is the principal arena for such activity (Hobart 1975).

The distinction between the *désa* and the *banjar* is also strongly evident in the contrast between their respective officials and priests. *Désa* officials obtain office by virtue of holding certain hereditary titles; they are unpaid and serve for an indefinite period. *Banjar* officials are elected, paid by government, and serve for no more than five years in any one term, though they can be ousted before their appointment has terminated. The principal *désa* official must undertake a purificatory ceremony (*mawinten*), but this is optional for the *banjar* leader.

The *désa*, as I have already mentioned, is primarily concerned with temple affairs. Each temple has a resident priest. The *banjar* also appoints priests, but their status and functions are, in many respects, quite different. Temple priests must wear white and/or yellow, though all the priests I ever met wore white on the upper body. White is the pre-eminent symbol of purity and divinity and comes at the top, literally, of the colour hierarchy. *Banjar* priests may wear white but to wear all white is considered presumptuous, and it is thought far more appropriate to wear black on the upper body. Black is, in other contexts, associated with night, with witches and with the genitalia.

Temple priests conduct services to the gods, whilst *banjar* priests conduct life-crisis services for the living and for the partly purified dead. It is, in fact, polluting for a temple priest even to be present at life-crisis ceremonies. Moreover, whereas both types of priest have to undergo the purificatory ceremony or *mawinten*, the one for the temple priests is conducted at a higher level (i.e., with more offerings) than that for the *banjar* priests, and in a different temple. As a consequence temple priests are credited with a higher level of natural purity, and in funeral processions their remains take precedence over those of *banjar* priests. The superior status of temple priests is also indicated in language use. The Balinese language, as is well known, contains several lexical levels, hierarchically ranked, for about 1500 to 2000 key words. In general, it is always more appropriate to speak to all priests in a more refined version of the language than is used amongst equals. However, this injunction is expressed more emphatically for temple priests than for *banjar* priests, and indeed the latter should, and do, use higher levels of Balinese to address and refer to temple priests than to *banjar* priests. Such prescriptions apply more strongly in religious contexts than in secular ones. Finally, temple priests are selected by some form of divine revelation, and are therefore often young, whilst *banjar* priests are elected or appointed by the *banjar* after having shown themselves worthy, and they are thus almost always quite old.

That part of village law which has not so far been superseded by the national legal code is enshrined in books known as *awig-awig*, and in this particular village the *awig-awig* is kept in a temple shrine. The village legal code is based on religious values, and certain contraventions are considered an affront to the village gods, the place where the infringement took place becoming polluted. This legal code, enshrined in a *désa* temple, is also the legal code for *banjar* affairs.

Though far from complete, this evidence seems to point to the conclusion that there is an asymmetric conceptual contrast between spiritual authority and temporal power in the contexts described, and such a contrast, if not identical to the *brahman/kshatriya* relation, nonetheless appears analogous or, perhaps better, structurally equivalent to it. To bolster the argument slightly, evidence can be adduced from other parts of the archipelago where such a contrast seems to exist.¹ Ironically, the demonstration that such a distinction may have general relevance for eastern Indonesian societies, which no one would dream of designating caste societies, would seem to indicate the possibility that the relation between this distinction and caste is entirely contingent. Such a conclusion would appear premature, because it is not completely clear that the *brahman/kshatriya* relation is a simple derivative of the distinction between spiritual authority and temporal power. If the former is not merely a more concrete expression of the latter, but is essentially different it is, nonetheless, difficult to see in what this difference consists.

In concluding this section, which has used Dumont's criterion of the disjunction between status and power as a focus for comparison, it can be said that there are grounds for classing Bali as a caste society. Moreover, the adoption of such a standpoint enables us to see some of the significance of two central Balinese institutions. Unfortunately, the picture is more complicated than I have so far indicated, because Dumont's version of caste has been severely criticized in the last few years. Of course, *Homo Hierarchicus* has been at the centre of debate ever since it was published, but in recent years a number of books and articles have appeared which all bring into doubt some aspect of the theory. Thus Das (1977) bases Hinduism within a framework of relations (of equivalence, opposition and parallelism) between four major categories: *brahman*, king, *sanyasi* and a residual category of 'householders'. The relations between these categories are not determined solely by an opposition between the pure and the impure, which is what Dumont avers, but rather by this opposition in conjunction with the notions of rank and separation seen as independent of one another. Burghart (1978), on the other hand, atomises Hinduism into three incongruent systems personified by *brahman*, king and ascetic based on three independently and differentially coded hierarchies which in turn are embedded in three dissimilar domains of action. Both Fuller (1979) and Parry (1980) place doubt on the Dumontian version of caste by providing data on the relation of priests to god and priests to sin and pollution respectively, relationships which tend to subvert the clearly bounded categories which Dumont perceives. Finally, both Burghart (1978: 524) and Fuller (1983) contest Dumont's view that Indian kings had no magico-religious aspect.

A point has been reached, then, where depending on the level at which the analysis proceeds, it is difficult to decide unequivocally whether or not Bali exhibits the developed relation between *brahman* and *kshatriya*; and even if a

1. See van Wouden for eastern Indonesia generally (1968: 29-30, 63-5, 133-4), Schulte-Nordholt for Timor (1971: 371-4), Fox for Roti (1971: 40-1, 48), and Barnes for Kédang (1974: 89, 92).

decision could be made, there is the added complication that the so-called defining feature of caste is itself of doubtful use and validity. But the situation is perhaps worse still; for even if the complications should be ignored (though there is no good reason to do so), and Bali be described as a caste society, there is still sense in the following question: if Bali is a caste society in terms of Dumontian theory, why does it 'look' so different on the ground? Only a small number of relevant ethnographies have to be consulted in order to reveal just how different the two places are,² and it is worth pausing to examine some of these differences.

According to Dumont (1972: 81), Bouglé's three principles of caste structure can be reduced to a single 'true' principle, namely, the opposition between the pure and the impure. In Bali, though, the picture would appear to be somewhat different. To begin with, Bouglé's first principle, gradation of status or hierarchy, is obviously present in the Balinese *warna* scheme which, unlike the situation in India, does have a social, as opposed to a purely cultural, relevance. But the title groups which compose each *warna* are not nearly so preoccupied with status ranking as are the Indian *jat*. The upper three *warna* in Bali, collectively known as the *triwangsa* and constituting less than ten per cent of the population, are much more concerned with ranking than those title groups which make up the *sudra warna*, for most of whom ranking is largely irrelevant in most contexts. Secondly, and in accordance with what has just been said, rules concerning the separation of title groups (Bouglé's second principle) are few and lax for *sudras* but more restrictive for *triwangsa*. Next, the division of labour (Bouglé's third principle) is largely absent in Bali. Finally, even the opposition pure/impure is not as dominant in Bali as it is in India, for the simple reason that other conceptual oppositions are relevant for the analysis of stratification. Perhaps the most widely used is that of *alus/kasar* (refined/coarse) which, although it can substitute for the pure/impure distinction in some contexts, is probably appropriate in a wider range of circumstances than is the latter (cf. Howe 1984).

There are many other differences, some of the most important of which may be listed as follows:

1) The absence in Bali of the concept of untouchability, and the absence of any notion concerning the accumulation of pollution for those at the bottom of the hierarchy who, in India, have to deal with grossly polluting substances.

2) Whereas in India *brahman* priests rank lower than non-priestly *brahmans*, in Bali the situation is the opposite.

3) Balinese religion is perhaps more aptly described as an ancestor cult than a peculiar version of Hinduism (cf. Geertz and Geertz 1975; Boon 1977; Howe 1980).

4) While Balinese society does display patrilineal descent groups practising preferential endogamous marriage, by no means all Balinese are members of such groups. In general, kinship institutions and marriage practices in Bali are very different to those of India, which in any case exhibit such tremendous

2. On India, see as examples Dumont 1957; Mayer 1960; Parry 1979; on Bali, see as examples Geertz and Geertz 1975; Boon 1977; Hobart 1979.

variation that comparison at this level poses numerous problems.

5) Whereas in India sub-castes are generally corporate groups, in Bali people holding the same title form groups only under specifiable conditions (Geertz and Geertz 1975). As often as not those with the same title, even though living in the one village, are no more than aggregates of 'similar' kinds of people. The Balinese word for 'title', *soroh*, has the same range of referents ('kind', 'species', 'sort') as does the Hindi word *jat*.

6) The Balinese have a predilection for forming functionally specific, voluntary social groups, which persist for varying lengths of time, are open to all to join, and are, *de jure* at least, based on the democratic principle of one man, one vote. Organs of local government in village Bali are similar sorts of organizations, though membership is often compulsory and much more permanent. India, it would seem, does not possess social formations of this character.

There are, then, numerous differences between the two societies, and it is the substantial nature of some of these which should caution against any dogmatic assertion that Bali constitutes a caste society. Just as there is a good deal of disparity between the conceptual and institutional forms of the two countries, so there are also many reasons which account, in one way or another, for the dissimilarity. First, the available evidence points clearly to the fact that it was Sanskritic culture rather than Hindu social structure that was adopted by the Balinese and Javanese, and that this was brought to Java both by Hindu *brahman* priests and by Indonesians who travelled to India (Bosch 1961; van Leur 1967). Secondly, such a culture eventually arrived in Bali through Javanese intermediaries. Thirdly, it is probable that Bali already possessed a fairly well-developed ancestor cult and ranked status titles on which this suitable culture could settle, and it is worth noting the complete absence in Java of any kind of caste-like groups now and in the past. Fourthly, whatever was the nature of the culture adopted, there were significant strains of Buddhist influence within it. Fifthly, there probably existed in Bali, prior to the advent of Hindu culture, a system of family, village and regional temples with its associated ritual and ceremony. Sixthly, and most importantly, it is likely that there already existed the practice of wet-rice cultivation and the associated organization of irrigation (Swellengrebel 1960). All of these factors are undoubtedly crucial in providing Balinese hierarchy with its own particular flavour, and obviously none of them can now be researched in any depth because of the exiguous nature of the historical sources, whether documents or material artefacts.

Summarizing so far, it seems possible to conclude that 1) by focusing on conceptual criteria, for example the *brahman/kshatriya* relation, Bali could conceivably be characterized as a caste society; 2) concentrating on the institutional make-up of the island, at least one set of institutions, the *désa* and the *banjar*, seems to embody this notion at a fairly concrete level; but that 3) other institutions, such as those concerning marriage, the nature of title groups, the extent of ranking and the absence of a *jajmani* system, argue quite strongly against it; and 4) the emergence of recent critical assessments of Dumont's theory of the Indian caste system considerably complicates the picture.

So far, however, the argument has centred on criteria of either a conceptual or institutional type, and I have, in essence, been comparing forms, ideas and cultural products. There is, of course, a third way of tackling the problem, and that is by focusing on social processes. But before this can be done it is necessary to provide some further data on titles and ranking.

As has already been said, the Indian *varna* system is present in Bali, although there is no equivalent of the untouchable castes. All four *varna* are represented, but the major sociological divide is that between the *triwangsa* and the *sudra* titles. *Brahman* and *wesia* titles are only found in some villages, and the further north one goes in southern Bali the more the villages tend to be composed entirely of people holding *sudra* titles.

People who share a title form corporate groups only when they build temples for the communal worship of their cremated and deified ancestors. In such groups, known as *dadia* or *pamaksan*, endogamy is usually practised to a greater extent than within the uncrystallised title aggregate, and the members may often hold land in common (Geertz and Geertz 1975).

Ranking within the Balinese *warna* is really only important for *triwangsa*, especially for those holding *satria* titles, amongst whom marriage contracts can be fraught with relative status considerations. Preoccupation with ranking is, moreover, relevant in a number of other contexts, for example concerning the amount, type and level of ritual paraphernalia, language use, physical posture (in terms of relative head-height), restrictions on commensality, and so on.

As far as *sudra* titles are concerned, it is generally agreed that the *pandés* (smiths) rank highest and that the various *pasek* titles follow. Below that, little attention is paid to ranking and, in contrast to what Geertz (1966) has to say, I would argue that interaction between villagers in almost all contexts is quite relaxed. Thus, for instance, there is virtually no bar to marriage between holders of different *sudra* titles, and very little trouble, if any, concerning the giving and acceptance of food. The problems that exist concerning language use are related, not so much to relative rank, but to degree of acquaintance and to whether a person is a priest or other type of religious or respected public official.

On the other hand, interaction between members of different *warna*, especially between *triwangsa* and *sudra*, is much more restricted by rules like those found in India, in form if not in content. Hypergamous marriages do take place, but have some significant social disadvantages, and hypogamous unions result in the outcasting of the woman and, in previous times, even her death. Furthermore, relative head-height, language use and commensality are heavily standardized, and therefore limit freedom of interaction to levels more reminiscent of the Indian caste system. In short, it can be argued—although it is something of a simplification to do so—that ranking is a preoccupation only when *triwangsa* are involved, and it is this circumstance which lends Bali the appearance of an attenuated caste society.

The last remark is a simplification, not merely because the rules relating to ranking may be manipulated for political and economic ends (cf. Hobart 1979), but also because even in villages composed entirely of *sudras*, ranking may still be a significant aspect of social relations in certain contexts. In Pujung there are

only three titles (all *sudra*) represented—*pandé*, *pasek gelgel* and *pasek batuan*—but these account for only 24 of the 93 village compounds. Those who have no title, to whom I shall return below, are designated as *jaba* (outsiders). The status ranking of these aggregates is rarely a topic of conversation, but when questioned villagers almost unanimously place *pandé* at the top, *gelgel* and *batuan* just below on an equal level, and *jaba* at the bottom. This ordering is constant, irrespective of the title of the person providing the information. The only contexts in which status is a significant issue are a very small number of inter-title marriages (disapproved of by the family of higher rank), the types of ritual accessories at major life-crisis rites (tooth-filing, marriage, cremation) and the sorts of terms used to address and refer to other people, those of higher status being accorded respect by the use of terms from more refined (*alus*) levels of the language. What this seems to indicate is that this village, at least, displays a rank system rather than a caste system. According to Barth (1960: 113), 'caste...is characterized by the simplicity of its basic schema, and its comprehensiveness', while 'systems of rank, though single in the scale which each defines, are generally restricted in their fields of relevance.' In short, if status considerations are confined to a rather narrow range of contexts, as they seem to be in this village, then there is no need for elaborate rules to govern social interaction in other contexts, and to that extent it may be doubted that Bali has a caste system.

This argument is by no means conclusive because, as already mentioned, only a minority of the village's population acknowledge that they possess a title at all. The rest of the population either confess to possessing no title or, though having one, prefer not to divulge it because, they attest, titles are unimportant and the less said about them the better. Indeed, there is a significant body of opinion, from both title-holders and those without titles, which holds that an excessive interest in titles, and in the consequent inevitable disputes over ranking, would have a deleterious effect on the apparently egalitarian ideology of the village, which is well established in village origin myths, in rituals enacted during annual temple ceremonies, and in certain other contexts, all of which are avidly and proudly pointed out by villagers from different title groups (cf. Howe 1980: chs. 1 and 15). That being the case, it could be argued that the seeming suppression of titles and title-ranking is something of a deliberate strategy, and that therefore this village is inappropriate as an example on which to base the kind of arguments being advanced in this essay. In fact, there is some evidence that the situation here may be changing into one in which titles are likely to assume greater significance (Howe 1984). However, two points need to be added. First, the evidence for such a change is scanty and equivocal; and secondly, even in villages further south, although status ranking appears to be more important, it is nevertheless confined to the same kinds of context as it is in this village. In other words, granted that a change is taking place in the direction of a greater emphasis on status considerations, this does not necessarily imply that these will find application in a broader range of contexts than is at present the case; an intensification of the interest in ritual status will not inevitably signify a qualitative change in the character of the hierarchy. If these arguments are valid, then there is no reason to characterize this particular village as

exceptional. Indeed, many of the surrounding villages to the west, north and east appear to be even less interested in status and ritual ranking than Pujung. In villages such as these, while notions of rank order relations between holders of different titles in only a very weak way, ranking is nevertheless important in other contexts, such as the asymmetrical oppositions between right and left, *désa* and *banjar*, god and demon, above and below, etc. (cf. Howe 1980, 1981, 1983). In short, for some parts of Bali (the villages nearer the mountains), analysis in terms of rank seems most appropriate. In other areas (the lowland, more prosperous villages, in many of which live holders of *triwangsa* titles), analysis in terms of caste might prove more profitable, because the presence of *triwangsa* considerably increases the pressures towards more standardized forms of social interaction.

Perhaps it is possible to take the analysis a little further, at least as far as Pujung is concerned, by focusing on an institution which is not present in Bali, namely the *jajmani* system. Most writers who have had anything to say about caste in Bali and its relation to caste in India have made only passing reference to the absence of such a division of labour. Usually it is merely enumerated as one of several differences, and because it is not present it seems to be thought that there is little of interest to say about it. However, there would appear to be grounds for arguing that it is the absence of a *jajmani* system which has resulted, to some degree, in the lack of the kind of status differentiation which is to be found in India. Of course, an explanation of the absence of one phenomenon which is based on the absence of another is not the usual way in which anthropologists proceed, but in this particular case there are good reasons for following such a course. Bali does seem to differ from India, as far as caste is concerned, in terms of institutions and social processes which are curtailed or absent in the former but present or emphasised in the latter, and indeed this is why I have already referred to Bali as an attenuated caste society.

With regard to the *jajmani* system, part of the difference between India and Bali depends on land ownership. Villages in India are often characterized by the presence of a dominant caste of landowners. Some of these work their own land, others hire wage-labour, and still others let out their land to tenants. Landowners receive services from various other castes, some of whose members pursue traditional occupations. In return for their services they are paid partly in kind on an annual basis, and partly in cash. Ranking of castes is, to some extent, determined by such traditional occupations, since these are themselves ranked in terms of both purity and prestige (Mayer 1960). It should be added that in many cases members of service castes also own land, so that the degree of concentration of land ownership by the dominant caste varies widely over India (cf. Parry 1979: 57; Mayer 1960: 80).

The distribution and cultivation of agricultural land (mostly wet-rice land) in Pujung provides quite a contrast. Only six per cent of families own no land at all (though a majority of these are nevertheless well off), four per cent own a good deal (I do not have accurate data on the holdings of these families, as much of their land is scattered in different villages), and fully 90 per cent own between a half and 2½ acres. In short, in Pujung, and probably in Bali as a whole, land is

distributed far more evenly across the whole population than in India.

In regard to the occupations which people follow, while in India there is a strong ideological and practical link between traditional occupations and both *varna* and caste, in Bali the link is evident only at the *warna* level. In Bali, it is true that smiths generally pursue their particular trade, but many of them are also farmers. As far as can be ascertained, no other title group has a linked traditional occupation, although certain religious and public offices, such as *bendésa*, for example, do tend to be restricted to one or two title groups. In fact, the vast majority of Balinese are farmers. However, because of the relatively small amounts of land owned, farming does not consume too much time (except at certain stages of the rice cycle), and it is therefore in their interest for the Balinese to engage in other, money-making, activities. Indeed, most villagers are constantly on the look-out for such opportunities. It should also be emphasised that these undertakings are embedded in a cash/market nexus, and consequently individuals do not have a stable, traditional clientele. Services such as hair-cutting, basket-making, rope-making, production and distribution of palm and rice wine, carpentry, musicianship, tailoring, shop-keeping, bus- and taxi-driving, carving, building, etc. are therefore open to members of all and any title. So far, then, it is possible to conclude that neither the ownership and distribution of land nor the distribution of occupations, except in one or two isolated and untypical cases, is linked to ritual status as indicated by title.

Systems of rank may also be based on wealth and power, so it is worth pausing a moment to document some facts concerning the correlation of these with ritual rank. First, in Pujung at least, it would seem that land ownership is correlated with wealth and power only at the extremes of the distribution, and sometimes not even there. Thus there are a number of landless families which are poor and politically impotent. However, there are also a number that are quite prosperous, their wealth being founded on other, business, activities, especially statue-carving, transport services and retailing. Secondly, of those with large holdings of land only some are politically powerful in the sense that they have an organized faction active in village politics. Other families with equally large holdings, while powerful in terms of their ability to provide employment, tend to have little influence in village affairs. Moreover, certain individuals with small holdings have, for one reason or another (intelligence, integrity, accredited supernatural power, etc.), become prominent in these local arenas. Thirdly, the *pandés*, who are undisputedly at the summit of Pujung's ritual hierarchy, are nevertheless some of the poorest in the village and, as a group, politically insignificant. Finally, for only two families can it be said that large land holdings, wealth, and political patronage are united. These two families are respectively the heads of the *pasek gelgel* and *pasek batuan* title groups. In comparison to the rest of the village, they enjoy enormous wealth and with it a dominant role in village (and, in the former case, supra-village) affairs. Notwithstanding these two cases, however, the general trend is that ritual rank, wealth and political power are at the most only contingently related.

The point of this descriptive exercise is to show that whereas in India certain statuses and practices are combined and ordered in a particular way within a

single institution, namely the *jajmani* system, in Bali they are, to a very significant extent, independent of each other. The evidence seems to indicate that, for the Balinese, statuses associated with title-group membership, occupation, land ownership, wealth and political power are not closely correlated, nor do they cluster together in a manner reminiscent of Indian castes. In Barth's terms (1960: 144) these statuses are freely combined, and according to him this combination results in what he calls a complex system, quite different from a caste system, in which 'each position is characterized by a cluster of statuses relevant in different sectors of life and frameworks of organization', and in which 'incumbency of one status also necessarily implies incumbency of a series of other statuses forming the cluster....' In other words, in a caste system high-caste rank, wealth, land ownership, political patronage and prestigious occupation all tend to cluster together as do low-caste rank, poverty, possession of little land, political clientship and despised occupation. In India, then, caste status is all-embracing and manifests itself in a wide variety of contexts, whilst in Bali (taking the village of Pujung as an example) the influence of ritual rank is, generally speaking, confined to a relatively small number of contexts, and in particular does not appear to affect statuses determined by land ownership, wealth, occupation or political influence. However, it must be pointed out that whilst the ethnographic record on Bali is now very extensive, a great deal of it is not entirely relevant to the present discussion, and there is thus a pressing need for modern studies of village social organisation. In the absence of such comparative material it would be unwise to proffer any definitive conclusions concerning the relationship between the rank orderings based on the various statuses discussed above. The issue here does not so much concern the range of application or significance of ritual rank, which would appear, from available evidence, to be much the same all over southern Bali, but the extent to which these orderings are or are not correlated into clusters reminiscent of the Indian caste system. It could well be, for example, that in villages containing large concentrations of *triwangsa* title-holders strong positive correlations between the different rank orderings might be found, but even then it would still have to be determined whether such correlations were based on contingent and situational factors, or on ideological ones.

In conclusion, the principal finding to emerge from this essay is that the problem of whether Bali does or does not constitute a caste society is something of a red herring, since an answer to the question depends crucially on the particular aspects of the society one focuses on, and at what levels of abstraction the comparison is conducted—different outcomes result from different starting-points and from different perspectives. Moreover, within any one position it is still debatable as to whether it is an 'answer' that arises out of the analysis. More accurately, it may be said that the results produce only further questions, and indeed these questions are often far more interesting than the one which prompted the exercise in the first place. In other words, it is quite evident that societies (especially those, like India and Bali, which differ in so many respects and which, geographically, are so far apart) cannot be compared at such a global level without seriously distorting the data, and therefore general

questions of this kind must first of all be broken down into more specific, and hence more manageable ones. Once this has been done, however, the original question tends to lose its initial significance, as the analysis proceeds along paths which, while not at the outset well signposted, prove in the end to be much more fruitful.

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