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Organization of the Balinese *Subak*

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Bali

Bali is Indonesia's most famous island. As possessor of the only explicitly Hindu culture remaining in the archipelago, its temples have been photographed, its rituals described, its art analyzed, its psychological depths probed, and the beauty of its women praised by a long series of gifted ethnographers until today the anthropological literature on it is more developed than on any other part of the country.¹ But, for all this, aside from Korn's monograph on Tnganan (1933), a community as atypical as it is interesting, and a few scattered papers on so-called Bali Aga mountain settlements, detailed and systematic descriptions of particular villages from a sociological point of view are still lacking. It is toward the filling of this gap that the following brief description of a South Bali gong-making village is intended to contribute. Though something will be said about religious and artistic life, as breathing here as elsewhere on the island, the main emphasis will be on political, social, and economic structure.

Environment, House Land, and Field Land

In 1957-58, the year in which my wife and I studied Bali, the island's population was about 1.7 million, of which some 80 percent or so was concentrated in the southern heartland of Tabanan, Badung, Gianjar, Bangli,

Klungkung, and Karengasem.² Geographically, this heartland consists of a sloping, volcanic hill mass running down from a complex of huge fifteen-hundred- to three-thousand-meter cones in the north center of the island and leveling out to a flat piedmont only within eight to sixteen kilometers of the southern coast. The whole area (some 3,450 square kilometers) is striated lengthwise by dozens of narrow, very deep-cut river gorges a few hundred meters apart, spreading out from one another like the ribs of an opened fan as they run downward to the sea. Settlements are strung one below the other down the slope, along the spurs between these gorges, separated by wet rice fields and coconut gardens. North-south—or up-down—relationships between settlements have consequently always been much closer than east-west ones, and each spur, drawing water from a common source, has tended to form a natural ecologic unit. The main traditional (i.e., pre-1906) court centers tended, in turn, to be located toward the lower ends of the more important of such spurs, but still well back from the coast at about the place where the hills begin to level out into plains, from which vantage points they vied ceaselessly with one another for control of peasant communities both above and below them. Some seven kilometers mountainward from Klungkung, one of the most illustrious of these ancient courts but today a sleepy small town and regional (*swapradja*) seat, lies Tihingan: population 720.

You cannot see Tihingan until, coming upward along the road from another settlement a few hundred meters across the rice terraces below it, you are already in its midst, for it is wrapped in a blanket of coconut trees. Even then you will not at first see very much—the people live concealed behind high brick and mud walls, which, lining the narrow, crisscrossed streets and pathways, give the forbidding effect of a repeating labyrinth. Halfway up the north-south road the monotony is relieved momentarily by an open-sided, vaguely Polynesian-looking meeting house (*balé bandjar*), a few temples (*pura*) also largely concealed by walls, a towering waringin tree, a small cleared space for petty trading, and a ramshackle bamboo-shed coffee stand. And then the unbroken walls—unbroken save for narrowed, screened-off doorways—begin again. A further climb of a few hundred meters and you are out of Tihingan as suddenly as you came into it; another few hundred and you are in another settlement, physically (but not socially) its twin. Except for a few people moving self-absorbing along the roadway, grooming fighting cocks in the shade of the meeting house, or chatting indolently at the coffee stand (and if it is midday, even these may not be present), you would hardly know, despite the frenzied yapping of the emaciated dogs, that you had been in a village.

Actually, whether or not Tihingan *is* a village depends upon how you

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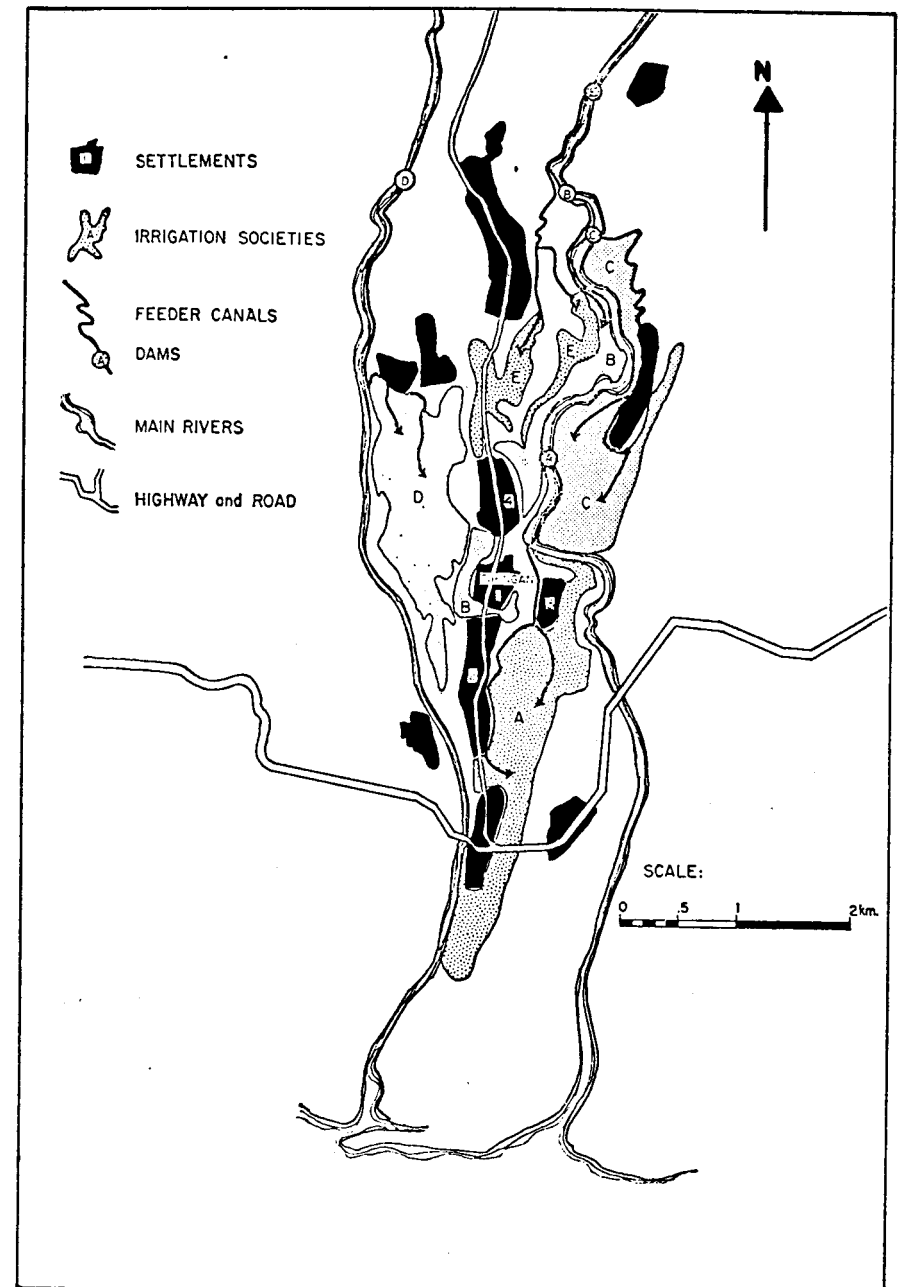
1. For references, see Kennedy's bibliography (1955, II, 544-67).

2. These estimates are based on 1954 election statistics data as given in I Gusti Gde Raka's monograph (1955, 10). Our study was supported by a grant from the social sciences section of the Rockefeller Foundation, administered by the Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

choose to define the term, for, as I have tried to show in more general terms elsewhere, the notion of a single, uniform social referent for this word (*desa*) cannot be defended when actual social relationships and not merely ideal cultural conceptions are considered (C. Geertz, 1959, 991-1012; 1961, 498-502). Tihingan has an origin temple and a death temple of its own (Pura Puseh, Pura Dalem), but it shares its third main temple (Pura Balé Agung) with the settlement below it; it is the headquarters of a man the government (and, on occasion, the population) refers to as a "village head," but his bailiwick includes three other settlements besides Tihingan; the rice fields of its inhabitants are scattered around among several nearby irrigation societies (*subak*), mixed in with those of people from dozens of other communities; and so on. But the people of Tihingan call it a village, as do their immediate neighbors, and for practical purposes this will perhaps suffice. It must not be assumed, however, that the social entity referred to as a village in other Balinese communities will necessarily be the same sort of entity Tihingan represents. For all the visual monotony of its settlements, Bali's social structure is a complex of contrasts, a tissue of irregularities.

The definition of the "village" of Tihingan (or of any Balinese "village") is further complicated by an odd, peculiarly decisive structural fact: unlike peasant communities in most parts of the world, there is not in Bali any simple enfoldment of both house land and field land into a single corporate or semicorporate unit. On the contrary, a sharp distinction is drawn between the settlement unit, the *bandjar*, or hamlet, and the agricultural unit, the *subak*, or irrigation society. The organization and regulation of daily social life is severed from the organization and regulation of cultivation; though the hamlet and irrigation society are built on similar principles, they are built separately and function autonomously. We have two sorts of customs, the Balinese say: dry ones for the *bandjar* and wet ones for the *subak*.

This division can be seen in ecological terms if one looks to Map 4.1, which depicts a segment of the Tihingan spur running from about 75 meters above sea level to around 300. The various *subak* line either of the bounding river gorges, growing generally larger as one moves down the slope—a simple function of topography. The various *bandjar* are strung up the center of the spur along a dirt, but usually passable, road branching off from the main east-west Dutch-built highway which now connects the main court-center towns. Though there is a natural tendency (but only a tendency) for the land of people living in any particular *bandjar* to be located in the more near-at-hand *subak*, there is no unique or well-defined tie between any given hamlet and any given *subak*. From the hamlet side, land is spread out through a number of different irrigation societies; from the *subak* side, land is owned by members of a number of different hamlets. To get a perspective image of Balinese "village" life one must take, therefore, a stereoscopic view, looking at it on the one hand through the lens of the *subak* and on the other through that of the *bandjar*.



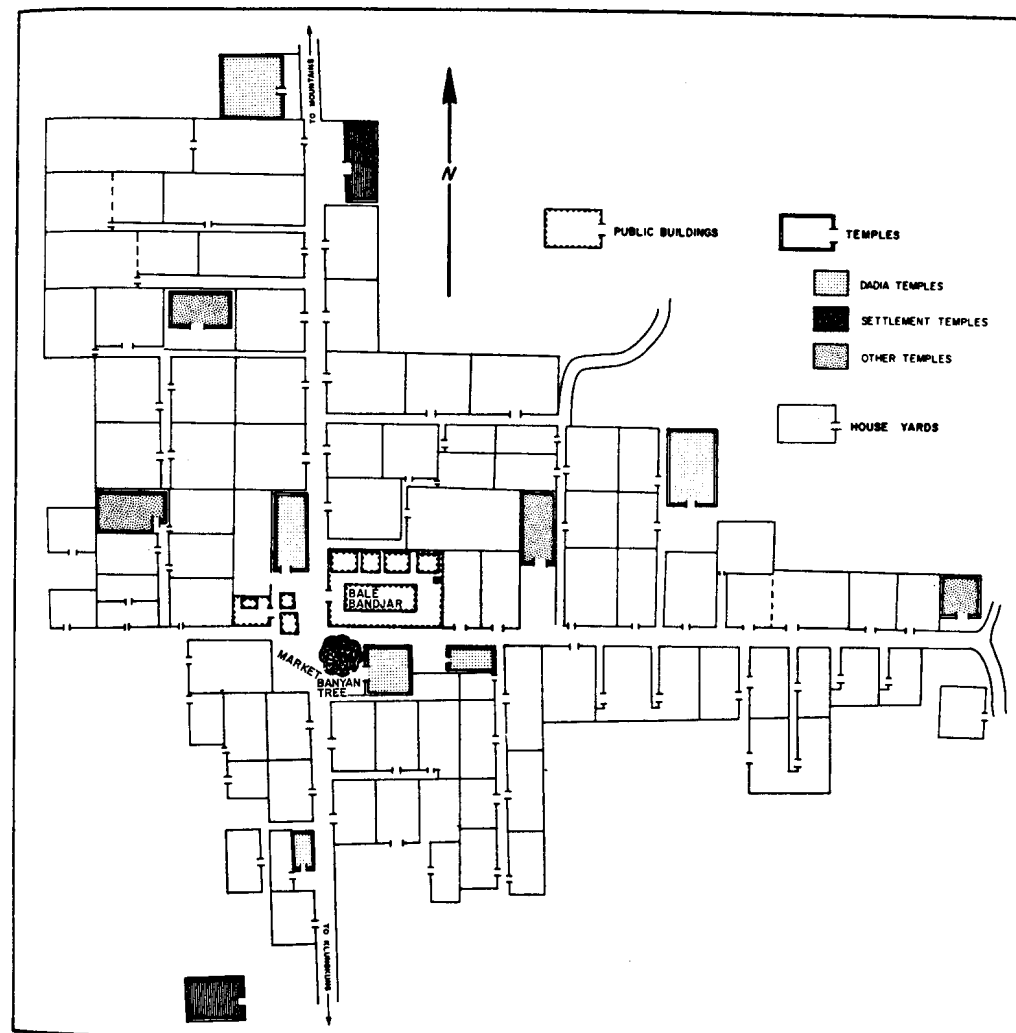
Map 4.1. *Bandjar* and *subak* in the Tihingan area (simplified). From Peta Pengairan, Swapradja Klungkung, Djawatan Pengairan, Den Pasar, Bali.

The Settlement Unit

In consisting of only one *bandjar*, Tihingan (see Map 4.2) is somewhat atypical for a Balinese settlement cluster. The cluster to the immediate south consists, for example, of three; that to the immediate north, of four. As a public corporation, the *bandjar* is centered in the *balé bandjar* meeting house, where once in every 35-day Balinese month a meeting of the male heads of all the independent families of the hamlet—some 138 people—is held. All such family heads must attend (or, if ill, send a substitute) on pain of fine, and all official policy decisions for the *bandjar* are taken at such meetings, entirely by unanimous decision. The meeting—and the *bandjar*—is led by the *klian bandjar* (literally, hamlet elders), of whom there are here five, chosen also on a consensual basis by the meeting for five-year terms, at the end of which they may not be reelected but must nominate their successors in order to avoid electioneering. The rights, responsibilities, and limitations of the scope of the meeting's authority are strictly defined in a written "constitution" (*awig-awig bandjar*) inscribed at some forgotten time on palm leaves (*lontar*).

As a social institution, the *bandjar*, or the *bandjar* government, is but one corporate unit among many others in the village, and its powers, though great, are neither unbounded nor all-pervasive. Its major powers focus around collective worship, public works, and civil order. The *bandjar* as a whole is responsible for maintaining and repairing the origin and death temples and for carrying out the elaborate ceremonies which are performed in them every 210 days. The *balé bandjar* must also be kept up by the hamlet, as must various other public facilities: the house in which the statues of the gods are kept, the sheds in the small market place, the graveyard, the roads and paths, and so on. In 1957-58 a school building—located in the next settlement southward—was built by hamlet labor and money in cooperation with several neighboring *bandjar*. The hamlet membership is responsible for night guard and must respond to alarms for fire and theft. If any hamlet member is holding a cremation (an increasingly rare, but still occurring, event), each family unit must give ten days' work toward its preparation to the family involved, and at death itself the hamlet as a body is responsible for making the death litter, digging the grave, and sitting all night with the bereaved.

All land in the *bandjar* belongs to it as a whole, and when house sites or coconut groves fall vacant they are allotted by the meeting to certain families, the rules and regulations concerning such matters being very precise and very complex. The *bandjar* owns a *gamelan* orchestra, as well as some dance costumes, which members of the *bandjar* may use, contributing a fixed share of any income gained from performances to the hamlet treasury. It also has the right to plant and/or harvest, as a group, the fields of any member of the village, the one-twelfth of whatever crop-share payment for this work becom-



Map 4.2. Settlement pattern of Tihingan.

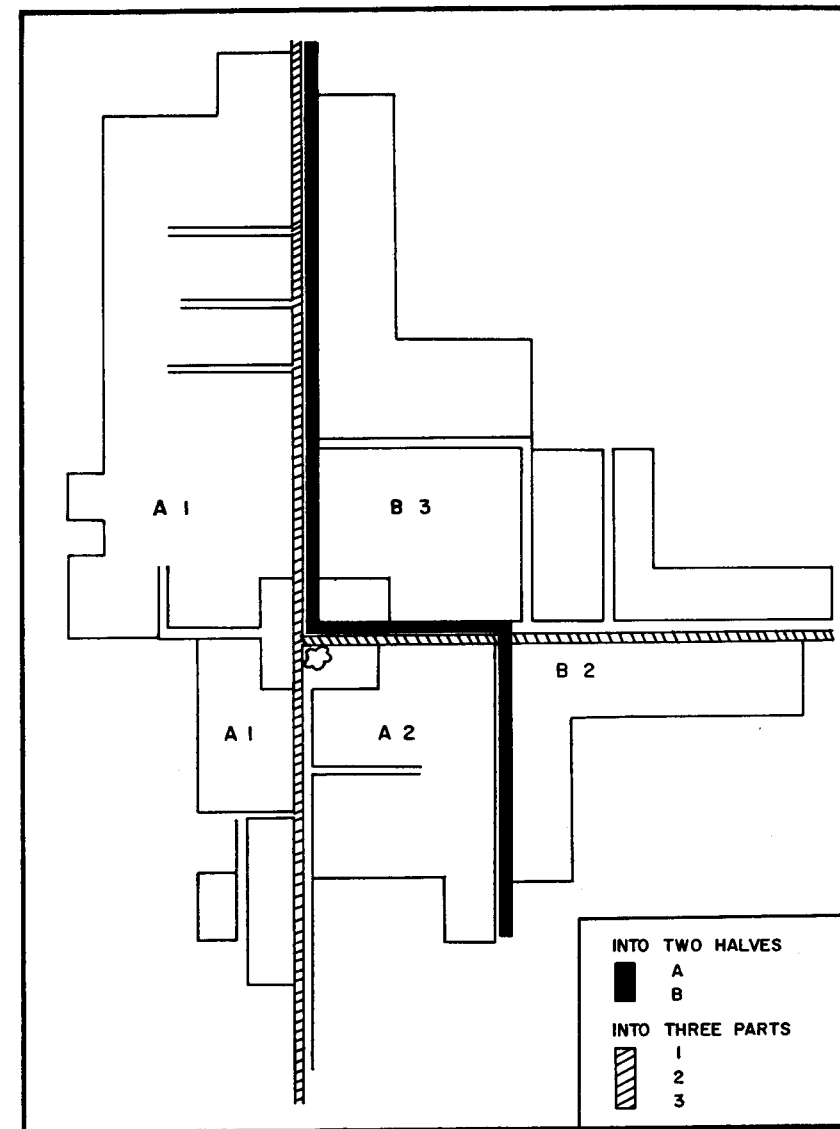
ing part of the public fund also. It even owns a one-third interest in a hand cart (the other two-thirds are owned by a private coconut-picking group in the village and by a single rich man), which is rented out to whoever may need it for transporting goods.

All important legal matters are made official by being announced to the assembled household heads: marriage, divorce, inheritance, transfer of property (except rice land), and so forth; and oaths—a very serious matter—are sworn before the same body. It has important sanctions with respect to crimes,

ranging from fines all the way up to total exclusion from the hamlet. (A few years ago, in a hamlet a few kilometers from Tihingan, a man was even stoned to death at a *bandjar* meeting for certain improprieties.) And finally, the *bandjar* sponsors dance and drama productions, hiring outside groups from the public treasury, holds cockfights, and conducts special purification rituals in the case of epidemics, social upheavals, crop failures, or other disasters. All in all, the Tihingan *bandjar*, like most of those of Bali, seems hyperactive. It is always planning something, building something, debating something, performing something.

Actually, this heavy burden of public duty is somewhat lightened so far as the individual family is concerned by dividing the *bandjar* on the one hand into two halves and on the other into three thirds on a simply territorial basis (see Map 4.3). For very large jobs—for example, repairing the road or building a new wall around a temple—the whole hamlet will be used as a unit in a mass attack on the task. For others—such as preparing offerings for the origin temple—only one ‘half’ will be used, the other ‘half’ being used the next time around. And for smaller, more routine tasks—grave digging, for example—only one of the thirds will be activated, in a similar rotation system. The result is a very complex and shifting pattern of almost continual public activities regulated by the several *klian* under the general policy direction of the meeting. And as these territorial divisions coincide, as we shall see, with no other social grouping in the hamlet, but have been in fact deliberately designed to crosscut them, they act, as does the *bandjar* government in general, as an important integrative mechanism in this otherwise faction-prone village.

Citizenship in the hamlet (or, as the Balinese put it, in the *adat*—roughly, the legal community) always involves an adult man and woman, bound together as an indivisible unit, because there are two kinds of work to be performed: men’s and women’s. Usually when a young man has been married for about a year he and his wife ‘go down into the *adat*’ (*tedun ke adat*) per decision of the hamlet meeting. At divorce or at the death of one of the pair, those involved will usually leave the *adat* because, now only a half person, so to speak, they are no longer competent to carry out the duties involved. However, several other arrangements are possible for adults who, for one reason or another, lack spouses. Unmarried adult brothers and sisters, a widow and her son (if he is at least adolescent), even two unrelated people living, for some reason, in the same compound, may pair up to enter the *adat*. When a couple’s youngest son is married and enters the *adat*, they may, if they wish, leave it—a process called *ngarepan panak*, ‘pushing one’s child forward.’ But even though this means an escape from a good deal of labor and other obligations, most people are reluctant to take advantage of it; ‘to leave the *adat* means to lie down and die,’ and there is therefore a tendency to stay in as long as physically possible, even though the work is explicitly not



Map 4.3. Divisions of the *adat bandjar*, Tihingan.

lightened in deference to age or infirmity—a social policy toward senescence upon which a good many of the aged seem, indeed, to thrive. In any case, the parents' remaining in the *adat* does not prevent their married youngest son from entering himself.

Beside the five *klian*, there are a number of other officials chosen by the hamlet (secretaries, messengers, etc.), but the administrative apparatus is in general quite rudimentary and the *klian* follow the public will rather more than, at least as *klian*, they lead it. The actual political process, here a very lively one, revolves more around kin groupings, "caste," class, and, latterly, education and national parties than it does around the formal governmental structure. The hamlet is a legally very carefully defined arena (the "constitution," a sacred as well as a secular object, runs to more than 6,000 precise words), within which the political factions of the hamlet compete rather fiercely for influence, wealth, and, especially, prestige.

Finally, superimposed over the top of this whole, very localized, political system (Tihingan is 70 percent endogamous, the three neighboring settlements 77, 80, and 95 percent) is a central government-appointed "village" bureaucracy headed by a salaried official called *perbekel*.³ His domain (called a *perbekelan*) includes not only Tihingan but the immediately surrounding settlements as well (numbers 2, 3, and 4 on Map 4.1). In each settlement there is a *pengliman* appointed to assist the *perbekel*. (In Tihingan this is at the moment one of the present *klian*, but such a coincidence is not inevitably, not even usually, the case.) The main function of this miniature bureaucracy is to relay information, regulations, exhortations, and commands from the central bureaucracy to the populace—that is, to talk rather more than to listen—and its role in village life remains, as a consequence, rather limited.

The Agricultural Unit

Each major drainage of Bali—running again lengthwise from the mountains toward the sea—is considered by the population to be a single self-contained ecological unit. This unit, a long, narrow strip centered around a larger river, is called a *sedahan*, after a traditional tax collection official now transformed into a government functionary, and over all such units in the general region where once a local court held sway and today a regency (*swapradja*) government does, there is a *sedahan-agung* (great *sedahan*), a chief tax collector. Each *sedahan* is broken down into a large number of *subak*, and these are the fundamental elements of the whole system. The term *subak* is commonly translated as "irrigation society," because of the central role this institution

3. In making comparisons I will, for the sake of simplicity, compare Tihingan, in which the *bandjar* and the settlement happen to be identical, with settlements (i.e., nucleated residential units) rather than neighboring *bandjar*, though the latter sort of comparison would be more proper technically.

plays in the regulation of water supply. But the *subak* is in fact very much more: an agricultural planning unit, an autonomous legal corporation, and a religious community. Aside from house gardening, virtually everything having to do with cultivation lies within its purview. Effective power with respect to agricultural matters lies and seems always to have lain in the *subak*; it is thus not a mere appendage of the larger order units, which as political entities are hardly more than tax districts. Theories of "hydraulic despotism" to the contrary notwithstanding, water control in Bali is an overwhelmingly local and intensely democratic matter.

A *subak* is defined as all the rice terraces irrigated from a single dam (*empelan*) and major canal (*telabah gde*). All individuals owning such land (with some minor exceptions, it is all in freehold tenure) are citizens of the *subak*, or *krama subak*, just as all those living on the land of a *bandjar* are its citizens, or *krama bandjar*. As there are *klian bandjar*, so there are *klian subak*; as there are *bandjar* meetings, so there are *subak* meetings; and as there is a *bandjar* legal code, or constitution, so also there is a *subak* one. Public obligations enforceable by fines, regulations concerning land use, legal transactions having to do with land transfer, collective ritual for group ends (such as fertility)—all these fall within the domain of the *subak* government as their counterparts fall within the domain of the *bandjar* government.

The ecological and engineering details of the *subak* irrigation system are far too complex to be described in any fullness here. The main feature is the one-dam-one-*subak* relationship. As can be seen from Map 4.1 the dams are arranged one below the other down the river canyons, a single canal, usually of some length, carrying the diverted water to the *subak*, often with the aid of overhead aqueducts or long tunnels. After the water arrives at the *subak* it is successively partitioned by an extended series of carefully graduated bamboo water dividers distributed over the whole area in such a way that what was a single broad incoming artery veins out into dozens—in larger *subak*, even hundreds—of small rivulets directly feeding one terrace or a small group of them. This final unit of water, and the amount of land it irrigates and the amount of rice seedlings needed to plant that land, and the amount of (unthreshed) paddy harvested from it are known as one *tenah*. Thus, the sum total of *tenah* in a *subak* adds up to its total water supply, to its total area, to its total rice-seed demands, and to its total rice production—depending upon whether you interpret the *tenah* in its water, areal, seedling, or rice-harvest meaning. For any one *subak* the number of *tenah* is fixed by the concrete pattern of successive water division whose form is determined by the *subak* as a corporate group (for the most part relatively few changes in the established pattern are introduced, however), but between various *subak* it will of course, differ. *Subak* B in map 4.1 contains 160 *tenah*, making a single one about 0.45 hectare in areal terms; *subak* A has 530, making a single one about 0.30 hectare areally. Also, as the total water supply varies from *subak* to *subak* according to ecological factors (in gen-

eral, higher ones tend to be better off), the size of a *tenah* in water also varies. The number of cubic feet per year in a *tenah* may—and commonly will—differ between two *subak* even if their number of *tenah* is the same.⁴ The *tenah* is fundamentally a water unit, sliced out of the entire water supply available from the *subak*'s main dam and canal by a fixed pattern of successive divisions of flow, and thus varies as that supply and that pattern vary. It is a maddeningly irregular system for one who wants to make any sort of analysis, but a remarkably ingenious, just, and effective one so far as the peasants are concerned.

The *tenah* becomes, then, the basic unit for *subak* taxation (labor or monetary), agricultural planning, and land transfer. Though quite aware that metric units are more comparable between *subak* than *tenah* ones, the peasant nonetheless thinks of his landholdings entirely in *tenah* terms. Inheritance divisions and tenancy grants are expressed in *tenah*, agricultural wealth is calculated in terms of *tenah* (though, naturally, with rule-of-thumb adjustments with respect to their location, etc.), one's rights and obligations within the *subak* are expressed in *tenah*. The one exception is in voting. In determination of *subak* policy and election of *subak* leaders, each owner is legally entitled to a single vote no matter how many *tenah* he holds. In fact, of course, large holders tend to carry rather more weight for the usual economic and social class reasons. In the majority of cases, however, what is remarkable is not how much wealth differences account for but how little. If anything, the *subak* organization as such tends to act against the interests of the well-off rather than in their favor; to counter the political forces, real enough in themselves, stemming from economic inequality. Like the *bandjar*, the *subak* is deliberately blind to any other basis of social status but membership in itself, and like the *bandjar* it is ultimately sovereign.

As mentioned, the *subak* head, elected by all the members of the *subak*, is called, at least in Tihingan, the *klian subak*. Under him are a series of (also elected) *klian tempek*. A *tempek* is a territorial (that is, water) subdivision of the *subak* but is in no way independent of the whole; its role is merely administrative. In *subak* A there are four such *tempek*; in *subak* B, seven. Below the *klian tempek*, and under their direction, are a large number of men called *pekaseh*, a term that in some parts of Bali is synonymous with *klian subak* but in Klungkung denotes a member of the "water group," the *seka jeh*. In *subak* A, 160 of the 455 members are *pekaseh*; in *subak* B, 60 of 222. It is this group that, as its name implies, performs the actual tasks of water regulation and irrigation system upkeep.

4. Owing to intrasubak ecological differences, custom based on assumed precedence in clearing, and other factors, the areal extent of a *tenah* may vary slightly within a single *subak* also. And as field fertility naturally varies somewhat, a *tenah* as a volume of rice also, of course, varies—but generally not too widely.

These tasks range from the constant clearing of the small field canals and minor repairs on the water dividers, and the daily, even hourly, shifting of channels of flow that is necessary to make the whole system work, to the guarding of the fields at harvest to prevent theft. The members of the *subak* as a whole are taxed, according to number of *tenah* owned, for these services, the rate differing from *subak* to *subak* but being, in any case, far from nominal. (In *subak* A, for example, it is 30 *rupiah* a season, in *subak* B, 20 *rupiah*.) The proceeds from this "water tax" (*pengot*) are first applied to general *subak* needs, and then any remainder is divided among the *pekaseh*, who are, in any case, excused from one *tenah*'s worth of tax. For performance of the unending everyday tasks, the *pekaseh* usually serve a daily "watch" in pairs. Thus, in a *tempek* in *subak* A, for example, where there are twenty-four *pekaseh*, each *pekaseh* is "on duty" with a fixed partner one day in every twelve. Once every two weeks or so the entire twenty-four are mobilized for some piece of heavier work, and for even larger tasks—such as the clearing of the main canal or repairs on the main dam—all the *pekaseh* of the whole *subak* may be mobilized. Finally, if the task involved is very heavy, the whole *subak* membership may be called upon, but this is quite rare. The role of the *pekaseh* is so great that people often refer to them as the "subak members" without qualification, although everyone is aware that legally this is not the case and in important policy decisions (e.g., adding new terraces to the *subak*) all owners, *pekaseh* or not, have a right to participate and usually do so.

There are a number of other important aspects of *subak* organization, but they can only be mentioned here in passing. On the one hand, there is the obvious problem of intersubak coordination. By and large this is accomplished through a process of collective bargaining among the various *subak* themselves, under the governance of an explicit code of customary law (*adat*) to which all in one drainage adhere, and not by any administrative dictation from above. Rules for the amount of water that must be allowed at all times to bypass any dam, patterns for the borrowing and lending of water rights, and ritual systems regulating the order of planting (higher *subak* plant earlier than lower ones so as to stagger peak water requirements over time) are all firmly established and strictly observed. On the other hand, there is a complex intrasubak ritual pattern centering around two sorts of temples, one (*pura mastjeti*) set in the midst of the field and dedicated to the goddess of fertility and one (*pura ulun suwi*) set near the main dam and dedicated to the god of water. In addition there are the usual Malaysian rice-mother rites carried out by individual farmers, seasonal-round ceremonies for each stage of (rice) cultivation usually carried out by all the *pekaseh* as a group for the whole *subak*, and occasional mass processions down to the sea by the entire membership to cure a crop epidemic or relieve a mice plague, for example. This

developed ritual pattern, matching with fine precision the actual flow of agricultural activity, is one of the major regulating mechanisms in the whole, marvelously intricate ecological system the *subak* represents.

The extent of the intricacy is perhaps most clearly dramatized by the so-called *masa* (roughly, month, time) system of planting in effect in the various *subak* around Tihingan. There are four such *masa*—the “eighth,” “sixth,” “fourth,” and “second,” named after the Balinese months (how *those* are determined we had perhaps best ignore here)—in which rice is planted in each system. Table 4.1 compares the four systems (in a very oversimplified form). Now, within any one *subak* some *tempek* will, per *subak* decision, follow the “eighth” system, some the “sixth,” some the “fourth,” and the others the “second,” though all of these may not be in force at once. The point of this arrangement is, again, to stagger the peak water demands, this time within one *subak* rather than among a set of them. In *subak* A, for example, there are seven *tempek*, one of them on the “second” system, two on the “eighth,” and three on the “sixth”; the seventh *tempek* alternates from year to year, as a sort of wild card, among the “sixth,” “second,” and “eighth” systems, depending on what the water situation happens that year to be. *Subak* B, on the other hand, is divided right in half, two of its four *tempek* being on the “fourth” system and the other two on the “eighth.” The details of all this—how it is determined who will follow which system, the means of enforcement, comparative advantages of the various systems from the ecological point of view, and the ways in which compensations are made—need not be pursued here. But it should be clear that the control of cultivation around Tihingan is fairly exact. In fact, as—somewhat in contrast to most parts of Bali—the *subak* as a whole often decides even which dry crops are to be planted at which times, the control is exact indeed. To call the *subak* merely an irrigation society is thus to underestimate its scope rather seriously.

Turning to the social composition of the various *subak* around Tihingan, the first point that has to be reemphasized is the lack of any straightforward correlation between the place of a person's residence and the location of his rice fields. Of course, most of his fields will be somewhere reasonably nearby, but they will not as a rule be confined to one, or often even two, *subak*. Thus residents of the *bandjar* of Tihingan own land in significant amounts in five different *subak* lying both to the north and the south of them, as well as having scattered holdings in several others more distant. “Large” landowners (i.e., those with between 1.5 and 3.5 hectares) all have land in more than one *subak*, and most have some in three or four. *Subak* A (see Map 4.1), in which more Tihingan land is located than any other, only contains 47 percent of the total land owned by residents of the *bandjar*. And, to put the matter the other way around, this land accounts for only 5 percent of the total land in that *subak*. Altogether, no fewer than thirty-eight *bandjar* are repre-

Table 4.1.
The *masa* system

Masa system	Month											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
“Second”		plant rice					harvest rice	plant dry crops				harvest dry crops
“Fourth”		harvest dry crops		plant rice					harvest rice	plant dry crops		
“Sixth”				harvest dry crops		plant rice					harvest rice	plant dry crops
“Eighth”	harvest rice	plant dry crops				harvest dry crops		plant rice				

Table 4.2.

Location of land owned by members of
Tihingan *bandjar*

<i>Subak</i>	Percent of land
A	47
B	21
C	7
D	13
E	10
other	2

sented in the membership of this *subak*, and the *bandjar* with the largest amount of land in it owns only about a quarter of its total. This dispersive pattern is summed up in Tables 4.2 and 4.3, in which the scatter of holdings is depicted from both the *bandjar* and *subak* perspectives.⁵

As Tihingan is basically an artisan *bandjar*, its relations with the realm of the *subak* are actually somewhat anomalous. In the first place, the proportion of its members holding wet rice land is comparatively low: of the total 138 family heads, only 46 or 30 percent own rice land, as compared to 47 percent, 67 percent, and 72 percent in settlements 2, 3, and 4 respectively. In per capita terms, this works out to 0.19 hectare in Tihingan, against 0.24, 0.32, and 0.53 hectare for the neighboring settlements; so that, in gross terms, Tihingan is not in any sense a land-rich village. So far as rice land *per owner* is concerned, however, Tihingan is around, or even slightly above, the local average: 0.61 hectare against 0.50, 0.59, and 0.73—a fact that indicates, of course, that in Tihingan one tends either to have a significant amount of land (though the term “significant” is a most relative one: even the largest holder has only 3.3 hectares) or to have none whatsoever, in contrast to the more graded distributional patterns characteristic of the other settlements. And finally, those Tihingan people who do own land—mostly the more accomplished smiths—tend not to work it themselves but to give it out in various sorts of tenancy arrangements, mostly to members of surrounding *bandjar*. In Table 4.4, which compares the percent of *bandjar*-owned land worked by members of the *bandjar* as against the percent worked by nonmembers, Tihingan's role as a “landlord village” is quite apparent.

The tenancy patterns through which the relations between landholder and tenant (*sakap*) are actualized (wage labor in agriculture is very rare around Tihingan) are, again, complex in the extreme. There are four main sharecrop systems found in Bali: *nandu*, under which the tenant receives half the crop; *nelon*, under which he received two-fifths; *ngapit*, under which he receives one-third; and *merapat*, under which he receives one-quarter. In the Klungkung

5. Were the percentages to be adjusted to *bandjar* population on the one hand and *subak* areas on the other, the picture would be even more striking.

Table 4.3.

Distribution of land ownership in *subak* A

<i>Bandjar</i>	Percent of <i>subak</i> A land
Most-represented	24
Tihingan	5
36 other	71

region the *ngapit*, or one-third, system is standard; but, as Balinese only maintain standards so as to be able to vary them, the actual arrangements differ almost from case to case. Social relations between the contracting parties, location and quality of the land, type of crop involved, current economic conditions, source of such capital as seeds and cattle, and sheer love of complication combine to produce a range of tenancy institutions whose adaptability to particular circumstances is endless.

Aside from the basic two-to-one crop-sharing pattern, three other institutions regulating access to land ought to be briefly mentioned. The first is the pawning or *gadé* system. Under this practice the owner of a piece of land surrenders it to another man for a cash sum, but the title is not transferred. Instead, the pawn taker works the land until the owner is able to repay the loan, at which time the land returns to the control of its proper owner. The amount of the repayment is the same as that of the original loan; the lender's interest is considered to consist of the returns from the land while he has it in his possession. In many cases (about 80 percent of those in Tihingan and the three surrounding settlements), the owner will only consent to pawn his land with the express understanding that he will be employed as a *sakap* sharecrop tenant on that land for the duration of the pawn, in which case the amount of cash involved is much smaller. Again, as a relatively well-to-do *bandjar*—or rather, as a *bandjar* with a number of well-to-do individuals in it—Tihingan is primarily a giver of money and a receiver of land in *gadé* transactions. Over all, it shows a net gain of seventeen *tenah* of land (or about 12 percent of the total amount of land owned by its residents as such) by means of the *gadé*

Table 4.4.

Owner-tenant percentages

	Percent of owner-worked land	Percent of tenant-worked land	
		Inside <i>bandjar</i>	Outside <i>bandjar</i>
Tihingan	11	36	53
Settlement 2	73	26	1
Settlement 3	57	36	7
Settlement 4	63	27	10

process, as against net losses of fifteen, seventeen, and nineteen *tenah* for settlements 2, 3, and 4.

Second, there is *plais*, a kind of key-money system with respect to tenancy. The man who wishes to become a tenant must "lend" a fixed sum of money to the owner at the outset of the relationship. Usually this sum is returned in full to the tenant when and if the tenancy is ended; less often the principle slowly depreciates over time until after a number of years the owner's debt is liquidated entirely. Owners claim that the *plais* system—particularly the nondepreciating sort—protects the tenant's rights, for the owner will not usually wish, or often even be able, to repay the loan, as he must do if he displaces the tenant. Tenants claim it is mere extortion by landlords. As land is short, the landowner may accept a higher *plais* from another bidder, expel the tenant already on the land, and pocket the difference between the old *plais* and the new one. This can be a quite vicious system once it begins to roll; but such auctioning happens less often than one might expect, in part because it is so universally disapproved of and in part because the reaction of the tenant may well be violent. In any case, not all tenancies involve *plais* (from the government's point of view, it is illegal), for one does not demand such payments from relatives or close friends; and the degree to which it is protective or oppressive so far as the tenant is concerned varies a good deal from case to case.⁶

Finally, there is a very popular system in the Tihingan area—and particularly in Tihingan itself—called *melanjain*, in which the tenant is responsible for growing dry crops but not rice. He receives one-half of the dry-crop product, but after harvesting it he must prepare the field—plot it, etc.—for rice. The owner then takes over, and the tenant receives no share of the rice crop at all. The *melanjain* system is considered to be more a "worker" than a "tenant" system, for what you are really doing is hiring a man's labor and, especially, his cattle for the preparation of one's rice field, giving him half the dry-season crop as payment. Only poor men will accept *melanjain* contracts, and the system is generally regarded as a means by which people who are not themselves farmers can nevertheless avoid sharing their rice returns with a tenant. In fact, as planting, weeding, and harvesting are all commonly done by *seka* of one sort or another—*bandjar*, kin group, voluntary—one can, by using the *melanjain* system, "cultivate" a rice field without ever actually doing any serious work in it oneself. For Tihingan smiths, busy in their forges, such an arrangement is very attractive; though many Tihingan people do themselves farm and some of the poorer ones even serve as tenants or *melanjain* workers.

6. The very existence of *plais* might be held as evidence for the fact that share rents are, in purely economic terms, "too low." And, to maintain perspective, it must be remembered that a landlord here will be a man holding one or two hectares of land and may well be himself a tenant on someone else's hand.

All these patterns, and a large number of others, are combined in various ways to yield a dense network of land rights and labor obligations that is, of course, at the same time a social network. Sharecrop arrangement, *plais* payment, pawn contract, *melanjain* relationship—all have different meanings in terms of what they imply with respect to economic class, mutual obligation, and social alliance. In the context of "village" life generally, the ties between economic patron and economic dependent growing out of the structure of productive organization in agriculture entwine with those growing out of residence, age, title, kinship, and personal friendship to join *subak* and *bandjar* together, not into a single, bounded, self-contained unit but as strands in a web of social interconnections that spreads out in countless crisscrossing lines and in all directions over the entire countryside.

The Temple System and Social Integration

The begetter of order in this otherwise rather particulate social field is the temple system. Arguments from functional potency to functional necessity are both empirically dangerous and logically suspect, but it is nonetheless difficult to see how a social system of the Balinese sort could possibly operate without something very much like the temple system to give it form and outline. A society consisting of a multiplicity of overlapping groups, each directed to a distinct and fairly specific end—a pattern I have called elsewhere "pluralistic collectivism"—would seem to need some ritual expression of the elemental components of its structure in order to maintain a level of conceptual precision sufficient to permit its participants to find their way around in it. The temple system provides both a simplified model of Balinese social structure and a schoolroom in which the kinds of attitudes and values necessary to sustain it are inculcated and celebrated. Without it, it seems certain that Balinese society would be a good deal less intricate and a good deal less interesting.

On the other hand, all Balinese temples are pretty much alike. The architecture—the split gate, the walled courtyard, the small altars to various gods and godlings—is about the same from one temple to the next; only the scale and, to some extent, the particular altar vary. The ceremonies—the invocation of the appropriate gods of the temple's "birthday," the presentation of offerings, the performance of obeisance rituals by the (usually hereditary) temple priest (*pemangku*)—differ mainly in their degree of elaborateness and in the number of people caught up in them. But yet, for all this outward similarity, the temples differ sharply with respect to the purposes to which they are dedicated and the social composition of the congregations they serve. There are house-yard temples to honor direct ancestors; descent-group temples to proclaim the importance of the patriline; *subak* temples to ensure fertility and an adequate water supply; "state" temples to legitimize tra-

ditional patterns of political loyalty; "title" (or "caste") temples to uphold the privileges of rank; and special "voluntary" temples to mark a holy place, commemorate a historical event, or fulfill a personal vow. Each of these temples marks out the boundaries and stresses the significance of one or another sort of tie, whether of kinship, ecology, status, or whatever, and taken together they sketch out a general map of the social terrain through which, in his secular life, the Balinese moves. In these terms, perhaps the most important landmarks of all are the so-called "Three Great Temples" (Kahyangan-Tiga)—the origin temple (Pura Puseh), the death temple (Pura Dalem), and what can be translated, a little awkwardly, as the great council temple (Pura Balé Agung).

In Tihingan, the origin temple is located at the extreme northern edge of the village, the death temple at the extreme southern edge (see Map 4.2), a pattern that is, however, in no way standard. In the every-210-day ceremonies (called *odalan* and falling at different times for the two temples), the entire *bandjar* participates, for the origin temple commemorates the first settlement in the area and is dedicated to the general welfare of the inhabitants, and the death temple is concerned with honoring the dead and appeasing the divinities of evil and destruction. It is not always, however—not even usually—the case that the congregations of an origin or a death temple coincide with the citizenry of a single *bandjar*, or even with one another. In most cases, several *bandjar* are included in one congregation, and sometimes congregation lines actually cut across *bandjar* lines, dividing the citizenry with respect to temple allegiance. The ceremonial pattern carried out in such temples has been described several times in the literature, and the Tihingan pattern shows no significant deviations from the norm—there is the same joyous reception of the visiting gods, descendent from the holy mountain, Agung, in the center of the island; the same Hindu-style ritual obeisance under the leadership of the *pemangku*; the same sad, muffled-drum departure of the gods after three days; and so on. The famous ritual combat between the witch Rangda and the dragon Barong which is associated with death-temple *odalan* in many places in Bali is absent here, because, the villagers say, the king at Klungkung took their Rangda and Barong paraphernalia away at some distant time in the past for rebellious activity; but in settlement 2 there is such a combat, known over much of Bali for its fervency, which virtually all Tihingan people attend.

As for the third of the great temples, the great council temple, it is, as noted in section 2, shared with settlement 2 and is, in fact, located midway between them. This temple has an *odalan* not every 210 days but only once in a lunar year and is, rather vaguely, dedicated both to the fertility of the fields and the vigor of the *bandjar*. (Not only members of the two *bandjar* which "carry" it participate in its *odalan* but, secondarily, representatives from the various surrounding *subak* as well.) It thus relates, in symbolic terms, the, in

structural terms, disjunct entities of hamlet and irrigation society and expresses the general unity, or at least the continuity, of what I referred to as the extended field of village life.

From the social point of view, what is perhaps most important to emphasize is the extraordinary preparatory effort that goes into the making of an *odalan*. The Pueblo Indians of the southwestern United States have often been remarked as considering the really crucial part of a ritual the extended and meticulous preparations leading up to it; and, though the Balinese do draw great rewards from participation in the ceremony itself, the same sort of thing is true of them. For literally weeks ahead of time, the members of the congregation are preparing offerings, repairing and decorating the temple, discussing who will do what, and practicing *gamelon* pieces, so that by the time the ritual itself comes it is something of an anticlimax, or at least hardly more than the final phases of preparation. During the period prior to the *odalan* proper, the intense cooperation among female members of the congregation (who make most of the offerings) and male ones (who do most everything else) clearly acts to bind them together into a whole. In fact, given the great number of temples in the area (all of whose *odalan* usually fall at different times), Tihingan people seem to be always either preparing for a temple ceremony or cleaning up after one, and the integrative force of this continual collective effort, as it moves from one social context to another, is the linchpin of the entire system.

The Balinese Village

Tihingan shares with the other "villages" of Bali not so much a specific concrete form as a set of characteristics, general principles of social organization, which, though they work out variously in different places—even, as we have seen, in immediately adjoining settlements—are nonetheless common over the whole southern heartland area. Among the more important of these are the following:

1. There is a marked tendency to perform particular social activities in groups specifically designed for those activities and for them alone. The view of a peasant village as a functionally diffuse, all-purpose social form does not, whatever its value may or may not be elsewhere, apply at all in Bali.

2. There is a related and equally marked tendency to deny all other bases of social demarcation save those immediately relevant to the situation or task at hand. In a *gamelan seka* it doesn't matter what your title is; at a *bandjar* meeting it doesn't, at least legally, matter what your kin group is; in a *subak* it doesn't, or at least shouldn't, matter where you reside.

3. As a corollary, social activities tend to be relatively "pure" in nature: status (or, better, rank) relationships are a matter of pure prestige; economic

relationships of pure wealth; political relationship of pure power; religious ones of pure ritual. The various systems interact and influence one another significantly, but they never (or almost never) fuse.

4. There is a very sharp line between the worlds of private life, conducted behind the house-yard walls (and which I have not been able to describe in any detail here), and that of public life, which goes on outside of them. Public obligations are heavy, unevadable, but nonetheless strictly limited, and there are specific mechanisms (also not described here) for adjusting between them.

5. Activity and elaborateness are valued for their own sake. A Balinese "village" is a very busy place, and the complexity of the ways in which people are, even in formal terms, related to one another is staggering. If one were to apply stylistic categories to social structures—probably not too good an idea—the Balinese would surely be classed as rococo.

6. The crisscrossed maze of specific, strictly defined, highly autonomous, and largely collective social ties that all this subtlety and industry produce is held within a general form by the temple system, in which the elements that make it up are both expressed and strengthened.

There is much more to Balinese village structure than this, to say nothing of the actual processes in terms of which it functions. But in a microscopic examination of what is really only one, in no sense independent, part of a much larger whole, perhaps some starting points for a more thorough analysis can be located. And knowing where, in the whole mass of overlapping alliances, to begin is half the battle in any effort to lay bare the underlying form of Balinese social organization. In Bali, the term "village" is perhaps best reserved (as the Balinese themselves often reserve it) not for a particular social body but for the entire plexus of discrete interpersonal and intergroup relationships that honeycombs the whole island from Djembrana on the west to Karangasem on the east. Properly conceived, the Balinese village is not a circumscribed community but an extended field.

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