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Balinese Ritual Terra-cottas



Fig. 1. Modern roof finial in the shape of Garuda, a mythological bird-king who rules the sky and personifies power. Pengosekan, Bali. Late 20th century. Terra-cotta. H: 30" (76.2 cm), W: 20" (50.8 cm). Photo: author.

This paper discusses historic and contemporary ceramic practices in Bali, Indonesia, particularly ritual earthenwares, the eteh-ete padudusan (the elements of the world). It also describes the author's experience of mounting an art exhibit with local potters and religious offering experts in Ubud, the cultural and artistic mecca of Bali.

Although I was an anthropology major with a religious studies minor at Smith College, I am first and foremost a visual artist. While an undergraduate, I spent a year in Kenya working with local potters, an experience that inspired me to become a potter myself. My years after college working with collections at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography at Harvard University spurred an interest in ritual artifacts of other cultures. Since the intersection of art and ritual has long been of interest to me, Bali—where art, religion, and life are inseparable—was an ideal place for me to live and work. I went to Bali looking for the potters, the pots, and the roles they played in local religious life and found that earthenwares are inextricably bound to the ritual life practices of the Balinese. Because of my background and ceramic expertise, this paper focuses on the ritual earthenwares of Bali. Since I have had to constrain its limits, there is minimal discussion of Balinese religious beliefs and the history of ceramics in Indonesia. Readers wishing to learn more about these topics may refer to the sources listed in the endnotes.

The Balinese religion, Agama Tirtha (the Religion of the Holy Water), is a form of Hinduism (with some Buddhist elements) influenced by indigenous animistic practices such as ancestor worship and the belief in the spiritual forces of nature. Various deities are honored as manifestations of the Creator, the one Supreme God. In addition to the three main manifestations, Brahma, Visnu, and Siva, numerous gods, goddesses, and spirits are present in all aspects of the created world. Balinese culture and religious life are incredibly rich, involving a complex cycle of daily rituals, family life cycle ceremonies, and communal temple festivals (such as a temple's anniversary celebration). These rituals take place in family shrines, homes, and/or local village temples. None of these is complete without offerings—gifts to the gods and demons constructed mainly of food, flowers, and woven palm-leaf decorations. Often, bits of



Fig. 2. *Dulang* (incense burner). This is an example of a prehistoric grave offering from Gilimanuk, Bali. Pre-9th century. Earthenware. H: 12" (30.5 cm), W: 8" (20.3 cm). Courtesy of Balai Arkeologi Denpasar, Bali. Photo: author.

cloth and string, coins, and betel quid are included.

The collection of terra-cotta (red earthenware) pots and sculptures, the *ete-ete padudusan* (the elements of the world) featured in this paper is an elaborate, unusual offering necessary for high-level ceremonies such as the ritual purification of a temple (not a common occurrence). I was lucky enough to be a participant in the months-long preparations (including decorating the temple and creating offerings) for a temple purification ceremony and worked closely with priests, offering makers, and potters. Over the course of my fourteen months (divided between 1998 and 2002) in Bali, I attended and participated in numerous other ceremonies in private homes and public temples. During this time, my closest teachers were the high-caste (Brahmana) expert offering maker Ida Ayu Biang Widiastuti (D'Ayu) from the village of Pedang Tegal and the low-caste (Sudra) potter and *pemangku's* (low-level priest) assistant Made Renis (Ibu Jero) from the village of Bedulu. They welcomed me into their homes and tirelessly guided me through the complicated world of Bali. None of this would have been possible without them.

Ceramics have always been a part of Indonesian culture. In addition to the long history of trade in fine ceramics coming into Indonesia from China, Korea, and Vietnam, there is an even longer history of traditional, handmade, low-fire pottery



Fig. 3. Miniature Buddhist stupas and clay tablets. 10th century. Earthenware. Stupa, large, H: 4" (10.2 cm), W: 2" (5.1 cm); small, H: 2" (5.1 cm); tablet, Diam.: 2" (5.1 cm). Courtesy of Balai Arkeologi Denpasar, Bali. Photo: author.

used in daily life for eating, drinking, cooking, storage, and as building materials such as bricks, roof tiles, and finials (*Fig. 1*). Earthenwares recovered archaeologically point to a host of roles clay vessels have played in ritual

throughout Indonesia—from the prehistoric jar burials of Plawangan, Central Java, to the hundreds of terra-cotta statuettes and offering jars excavated at the Trowulan Majapahit site, West Java.¹ Archaeologists have found jar burials with pottery burial gifts such as incense burners (*Fig. 2*) and spouted vessels at prehistoric grave sites in Gilimanuk on Bali's western coast.² Farmers in Singaraja in northern Bali have unearthed hundreds of small clay sculptures of Buddhist stupas and tiny clay tablets with inscribed mantras (*Fig. 3*). These date from the tenth century and are evidence of early Hindu-Buddhist influences from India.

During the fifteenth century, the Hindu-Javanese Majapahit kingdom moved from Java to Bali, bringing with it new religious ideas and artistic traditions. As a result, there are striking similarities between Balinese ritual earthenwares and Majapahit-era clay pieces found in eastern Java. The relation between clay and religious ritual in Bali has its roots in Hinduism, which considers clay a sacred material and reveres earth deities. In India, potters are thought to be descendants of a god (the master potter, Lord of Creativity), and earthenware pots and sculptures similar to those found in Bali play an essential role in religious life.³

The Balinese are farmers, deeply connected to the earth (*Fig. 4*). The earth is worshiped as the deity Ibu Pertiwi (Mother Earth). Because clay symbolizes Ibu Pertiwi, it is an essential component of ritual life. In the Hindu-Balinese cosmology, the five elements—earth, air, fire, water, and ether—constitute the universe (the macrocosmos) of which the human body is simply a microcosm. The process of working with clay involves all five elements in a cycle conceived to be much like the life cycle of humans, and sometimes a clay pot even represents the human body itself.

Clay vessels are intrinsic to Balinese ritual. Indeed, Ibu Jero, the Balinese potter I worked with, told me, "There cannot be a ceremony in Bali without pots."



Fig. 4. View of rice paddies. Pengosekan, Bali. 2002. Photo: author.

I found this to be true. Every ceremony I went to in Bali, every temple I saw, from solitary roadside shrines to the Mother Temple complex of Besakih, made use of clay vessels. Yet, despite the many studies of Balinese art and religion and the ubiquity of earthenware in Bali, surprisingly little is known about these objects. This may be because most of the vessels on view in temples and shrines are so simple and plain. They do not command attention, as do so many of the more vibrant temple arts. Also, the most interesting and detailed earthenwares are used only seldom, and, when they are, after the ceremony they are hidden or destroyed—buried in the ground, wrapped in cloth and string, obliterated by piles of offerings, or ritually broken.

I based myself in central Bali, near Ubud, a thriving center of Balinese arts, crafts, and music. I worked with religious offerings experts (*tukang banten*) and made daily trips to the pottery village of Bedulu, just outside Ubud. Bedulu was an ideal place for me to study the production and usage of ritual earthenwares. When the rulers of the Majapahit Empire moved from Java to Bali in the fifteenth century, they established their first kingdom in Bedulu, building great temples that make the town an important religious center. I researched a grand temple purification festival at Pura Taman Sari in Ubud and an extensive cremation ceremony in Padang Tegal, in addition to conducting interviews with a wide variety of Balinese people including offerings experts, archaeologists, anthropologists, priests, ceramic artists, and traditional potters.



To have a complete understanding of ritual pottery, it was important that I learn firsthand about the pottery process. In the village of Bedulu, I worked with an older woman potter, Ibu Jero, who created a large number of finely detailed ritual vessels and sculptures and explained their use and symbolic meanings.

Ritual Pottery: Creation and Use

There are rich natural clay deposits in Bedulu, and many families produce clay vessels within their compounds. The soft red clay is dug from backyard pits, laid out to dry on the ground, and then pulverized with a large wooden pestle. It is sifted in a basket sieve to remove sticks, stones, and bits of trash, then mixed with water and sometimes sand. The terra-cotta pieces are made by a combination of hand forming and spinning on simple wooden wheels (*Fig. 5*) and then fired for two to four hours using wood for fuel in small brick kilns (*Fig. 6*). The fired wares are light brown, very porous, and very fragile. Occasionally, the pots are blackened by removing them while still hot and smothering them with dried grasses (*Fig. 7*). All potters make some ritual vessels, though many have focused their production on pieces for the more lucrative tourist trade (*Fig. 8*). Ibu Jero makes only ritual vessels, saying she is happier making pots to serve God than tourists.

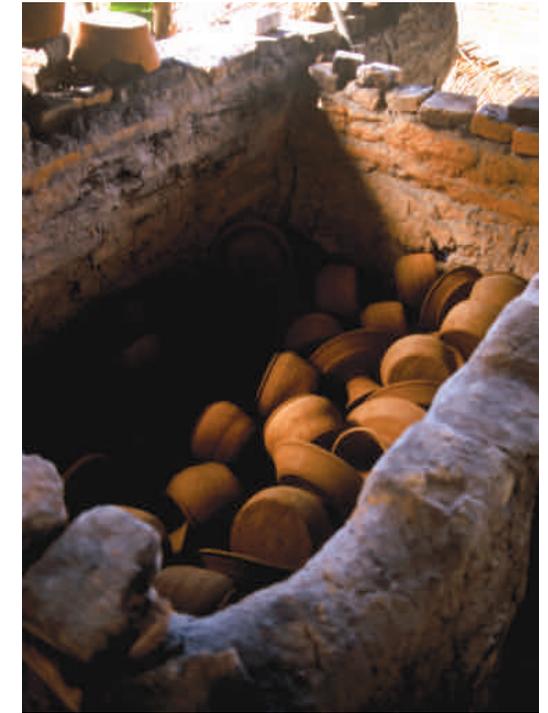


Fig. 5. Potter and lay priest Ibu Jero throwing on a hand-turned wooden potter's wheel. Bedulu, Bali. 2002. Photo: author.

Fig. 6. Small brick kiln in a family compound. The wares are stacked on top of one another and fired using wood, dried bamboo stalks, and old grass roof thatching. Bedulu, Bali. 2002. Photo: author.



Fig. 7. Ibu Made removing hot pots from her kiln with wooden tongs. She smothers them in dried grasses to produce an irregular black, smoky finish. The forms pictured here are used for serving satay in tourist hotels and local restaurants. Terra-cotta. Bedulu, Bali. 2002. H: 3" (7.6 cm), L: 6" (15.2 cm), W: 4" (10.2 cm). Photo: author.



Fig. 8. *Cili* (female fertility figure) incense burners and oil lamps for sale in a roadside shop. Such trinkets are popular among tourists and are for sale everywhere. Terra-cotta. Bedulu, Bali. 2002. H: 6" (15.2 cm), L: 2" (5.1 cm), W: 3" (7.6 cm). Photo: author.

Fig. 9. Balinese woman holding a large holy water jar at a temple ceremony. It is inscribed with eight divine symbols (weapons of the gods), and white cotton string with a loop of 200 Chinese coins is wrapped around its neck. Such vessels are filled with sacred waters from local wells, rivers, and springs and placed on a terra-cotta tripod base on the priests' altar, where it will be heated, scented, and blessed. These are also found in front of every temple entrance and are used for individual self-purification. Each worshiper must dip the *alang-alang* (holy grass) switch in the water and sprinkle over his or her head three times (as a cleansing ritual) before entering the temple. Terra-cotta. Pura Taman Sari, Ubud, Bali. 1998. H: 10" (25.4 cm), W: 8" (20.3 cm). Photo: author.

The most common ritual vessels are simple and bold in form: painted incense burners, pouring vessels, covered jars, miniature bowl and cup forms, footed pedestal trays, and the ever-present holy water vessel. Holy water is indispensable in Balinese religious life, and no Balinese ceremony is ever complete without it. Water collected from wells, lakes, and/or rivers (according to the needs/requirements of the ritual) is consecrated by the priest. He recites mantras, blessing the water, which is then perfumed with flowers, sandalwood smoke, and scented oils. Offerings, temples, and people are blessed and thereby symbolically purified with this water. After prayer, all people share in the consumption of the holy water. The vessels used to hold this water are most often made of clay (Fig. 9). Clay pots, necessary as containers for ritual feast foods and ritual offerings of all kinds, are often adorned with paint, brightly colored cloth, colored yarn, Chinese coins (chosen as a symbol of prosperity and for their practicality—the holes allow them to be strung together and tied around the necks of pots), and black line drawings of lotus flowers and religious icons. During cremation ceremonies, miniature clay vessels hold the holy water used to bathe the deceased. Large clay pots and pedestal trays are used to wash the bones and collect the ash that will later be taken to the river or sea. Occasionally, pots filled with items from the natural world and dressed in ritual attire are used to represent the body of the deceased when the body itself cannot be used. All of these vessels are broken at the foot of the funeral pyre after use to symbolize the reintegration of the physical being back into the macrocosmos.

The Eteh-Eteh Padudusan: Description and Analysis

The *padudusan* is composed of miniature terra-cotta vessels and religiously symbolic sculptures filled with offerings of food items (Fig. 10). This collection of objects is used by Brahman priests at high-level ceremonies to make holy water—a process necessary for cleansing and purifying the temple. Miniature carved wooden farming and weaving implements and offerings of food, flowers, sculpted rice dough, and woven palm leaves are also used in concert with the *padudusan* terra-cottas, but it is the final realization in clay that is necessary for high ceremonial purification. Fundamentally, the *padudusan* represents growth, and its presence at temple ceremonies gives honor and blessing to the earth. It can be thought of as a diorama representing the things most important for the continuance of life. By using the *padudusan*, the priest and people are in effect asking God for continued protection of crops, tools, instruments, and the food necessary for living.⁴

Two categories of terra-cottas make up the *eteh-eteh padudusan*—three sets of small vessels and one set of miniature sculptures. The smaller *padudusan alit* has three sets of five vessels and one set of fourteen sculptures; and the larger *padudusan agung* has three sets of nine vessels and one set of twenty-five sculptures. The *padudusan*



Fig. 10. This basket tray of *padudusan alit* is used at some of the lesser Balinese ceremonies, while the *padudusan agung* is found at only the highest rituals and is the focus of the present discussion. According to the type and level of ceremony, the *tukang banten* (offerings experts) will add more clay, wood, and woven palm-leaf elements to this collection. Pura Taman Sari, Ubud, Bali. 1998. Photo: author.

The three sets of *padudusan* vessels hold water and rice, and each set is held in a separate basket tray. The basket tray receives its own treatment. Stylized lotus flowers (*padma*) are drawn on the inside of each basket, and uncooked rice, white cotton string, Chinese coins, and fragments of woven grass are placed inside. All of that is covered with a square woven palm-frond mat (*taledan*). The vessels are placed on top of the mat.

Because this is the first time these objects have been described, the information is presented in the form of numbered lists.

Vessels Category

1. *coblong*: small flat-walled vessels that have a narrow bottom flaring up to a wider mouth. Each pot is filled with a different color of rice, dyed with chemical dyes, representing the nine colors of the deities or manifestations of God (blue: Sambu, red: Brahma, yellow: Mahadewa, black: Vishnu, white: Iswara, orange: Rudra, pink: Mahesora, green: Sangkara, and multicolored: Siva) (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11. Sets of *coblong* being filled with colored rice during the preparations for a temple ceremony. Terra-cotta. Pura Taman Sari, Ubud, Bali. 2002. H: 1" (2.5 cm), W: 2" (5.1 cm). Photo: author.

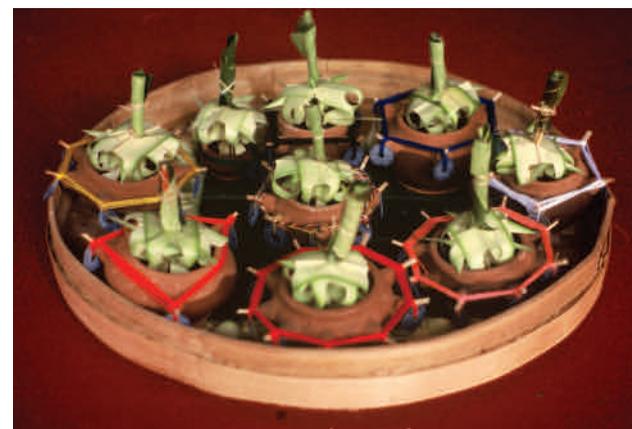


Fig. 12. Set of decorated *kumo carak*, complete with woven palm-leaf holy water sprinklers. Padang Tegal, Bali. 2002. Terra-cotta. H: 2" (5.1 cm), W: 3" (7.6 cm). Photo: author.

2. *kumo carak*: small, squat jars with varying numbers of nublike spouts and narrow mouths. Bits of thin bamboo sticks are put into the nubs and nine different colors of yarn are wrapped around each pot, securing a Chinese coin to each nub (Fig. 12). According to D'Ayu, these pots may be symbolic of mountain spring water that comes out of a "spout" in the earth.

3. *payuk pere*: small, flat-bottomed cylindrical pots with outflaring lips. These are also decorated with Chinese coins and nine colors of yarn corresponding to the colors of the deities (Fig. 13). Often these vessels are accompanied by specific types of coconuts and small pouring vessels with Chinese coins tied around their necks. D'Ayu believes the form of these might symbolize still or well water. Both the *kumo carak* and *payuk pere* are filled with water gathered from the temple well, sacred springs, or special shrines, and small palm-frond sprinklers are placed in them. The colors of



Fig. 13. Set of decorated *payuk pere*, complete with woven palm-leaf holy water sprinklers. Padang Tegal, Bali, 2002. Terra-cotta. H: 2 1/2" (6.4 cm), W: 2 1/2" (6.4 cm). Photo: author.

and directions are represented in many offerings (including the *padudusan*) in a high (*agung*) ceremony. It can be thought of as a sort of cosmological compass, indicating relationships between the deities being honored and the emblems, directions, colors, and numbers associated with them.

Sculpture Category

Along with these simple vessels is an elaborate set of miniature sculptures made of coils and bits of clay connected to small terra-cotta trays only two to three inches in diameter. These sculptures, like the sets of vessels, are placed in a decorated basket tray. While there seems to be some flexibility as to which vessels and sculptures are used in the *etehe-ete padudusan* and there is much regional variation in the sculptural details, it is essential that at least twenty-five terra-cotta sculptures be present for high-level ceremonies. The *padudusan* sculptures represent such things as edible and ritual foods, ritual objects, elements of the natural world, and objects related to certain Balinese beliefs. I have divided the sculpture list into general groupings of similar objects.

BUILDINGS (Miniature Representations)

1. *lumbung*: a place for storing *padi* (rice) in a traditional Balinese compound. It represents the “house” of the goddess of rice, Dewi Sri.
2. *bale gading*: *bale* means traditional Balinese structure, and *gading* means yellow. There is a female fertility figure (*cili*) inside a four-columned structure. It is likely that this acts as a symbolic place for the god/dess of beauty (Sanghyang Semara Rati) to rest and beautify him/herself.

rice and yarn as well as the compasswise placement of the pots on the priest's platform reflect the “*nawa sanga* system of symbolic classification [which acts as] a representation of the totality of the Balinese cosmos.”⁵ *Nawasanga* means “nine” in both Sanskrit and Balinese. Thus, all nine manifestations of God and the related symbolic

VEGETATION

1. *ubi* and *keladi*: root vegetables that symbolize growth. A small pointed coil is placed vertically in a small terra-cotta dish and a thinner coil is wrapped around it. This represents the way in which plants wrap around a tree for strength and sustenance. *Ubi* and *keladi* together are very important and are used in many different offerings. The Balinese refer to two main crops that are essential for living: crops from above (*pala gantung*) and below (*pala bunka*). As many varieties of each as can be gathered are present (as seeds or slices) in the actual contents of the *padudusan* vessels. As far as symbolic representation in clay goes, *ubi* and *keladi* are enough.
2. *lawat nyiuh*: *lawat*(t) means leaf (in ancient Javanese), and *nyiuh*, coconut. This represents the coconut tree and is very close in (clay) form to *ubi* and *keladi*. It is a tree symbol (made of coils laid flat) in which growth is represented as a vine curling up the front of a tree. The coconut tree is very important in the lives of the Balinese. It can live anywhere in Bali and for a very long time. The wood is strong and can be used for building, and the leaves, flowers, and fruit are used widely in both secular and sacred life.
3. *lawat buah*: *lawat*(t) means leaf (as above), and *buah* means *areca* (betel) nut. This is the same as *lawat nyiuh* in form but a bit smaller.
4. *ambangan*: dried grass used as roof thatching for traditional Balinese structures. In its green state, it is known as *alang-alang* and is extremely sacred. Holy water sprinklers are made from cut and bound pieces of *alang-alang*. Priests wear singles leaves of this plant wrapped around their heads during ceremonies and always in their hair during a purification or cleansing ceremony of any kind. Sometimes it is referred to as *lilit linting* and is usually in the form of a central stalk or pillar wrapped by a coil of clay.
5. *paku lulut*: *paku* is a type of green leafy vegetable, and *lulut* means “grown together as one.” This is a vegetable used for a special offering referred to as *peregambal*.
6. *papijitan*: one or two small, thin, pointed coils placed in a small terra-cotta dish. The coil with pointed ends is a foundation shape—the basis of all the sculptural offerings made of rice dough. It may be a symbol of the most basic, elemental form of growth.

TREES

1. *bingin*: a tree form laid down flat in a small terra-cotta dish, with sharp, pointed leaves, a bird at the top and well-defined roots at the base. The leaves of this tree are used for a wide variety of ritual offerings. It is generally considered one of the most sacred trees in Bali (*Fig. 14*, left).
2. *ancak*: a tree form in a small terra-cotta dish, with rounded, tear-shaped leaves and a bird at the top. This is possibly a symbol of the sacred *bhodi* tree. According to the offerings expert Ida Nyoman Dharma, the *ancak* is the female aspect of the *bhodi* tree, a “tree for the gods,” whose leaves are used for ritual and medicinal purposes. He

points out that the *Ramayana*, the ancient Sanskrit epic, refers to both the *ancak* and *bingin* trees (Fig. 14, right).

WATER LIFE

1. *mimi*: a fish or sea creature. I have been unable to obtain much more information about this animal other than that the bones of this sea creature are used to make the scented water that serves as the foundation of holy water. D'Ayu told me it is commonly sold in the markets, although few people are familiar with the actual animal. The anthropologist Jacoba Hooykaas describes the *mimi* as “two crablike figures [that] are considered inseparable and symbolize sexual union.”⁶ She adds that if they are found mating in the rice fields, it is a defilement equal in seriousness to that caused by the presence of a human or animal corpse, and an extensive purificatory offering must be given.
2. *padang pegulung*: the clay form consists of groupings of spirals (which D'Ayu believes are symbolic of waves) standing against a middle pillar. It is sometimes referred to as *ombak-ombak*.

NATURAL ELEMENTS

1. *taman*: This represents a garden or a place made beautiful by people in order to welcome the gods and goddesses. This sculpture (made up of small clay coils) may include some or all of the following elements: human figure, dog, lizard, snake, trees, flowers, grass, and a broom for sweeping. Many variations are acceptable.
2. *gunung-gunung*: This form symbolizes a mountainous region (possibly Gunung Agung, the sacred mountain of Bali). Numerous coils are put together to represent a mountain, tree, bird, snake, and lizard.
3. *ombak-ombak*: This form symbolizes the ocean. Two discs of clay are hollowed out and creased to represent waves. Two tiny balls of clay are placed on either side of the waves to represent sand.

OFFERINGS OF FOOD ITEMS

Each *padudusan* set has terra-cotta versions of only two or three food offerings. Many may be thought of as symbolic plates of food for the gods, since rice and a wide variety of foodstuffs consumed by the Balinese are present.

1. *penyenang*: An offering consisting of elaborate stitched palm-leaf construction about twelve centimeters (less than 5 in.) high with many different elements such as uncooked rice, Chinese coins, perfumed oil, and bits of white cotton string. It acts as a purification symbol at many ceremonies.
2. *peras*: An offering consisting of a square-stitched palm-leaf *taledan* (mat) with another round-stitched palm-leaf piece on top called *kulit peras*, which represents five

human figures in prayer. There are two small rice cones, fruit, cakes, roasted chicken, peanuts, *saur* (spiced shredded coconut), small fish, cooked egg, salt, and *sambal* (Balinese spiced tomato sauce). It must always be accompanied by the *ajuman*.

3. *ajuman*: an offering almost identical to *peras* but with two round flat rice balls (instead of cones), no chicken, and no *kulit peras*. The *ajuman* may be used on its own but is often seen in conjunction with *peras*.
4. *tututan*: This a collection of three different offerings, *sesayut nagasari*, *sesayut prayacita*, and *sesayut tututan*. Each offering consists of a round-stitched palm-leaf mat with varying numbers of shaped rice cones or balls, fruits, cakes, peanuts, shredded coconut, small fish, cooked egg, salt, and *sambal*.
5. *pengambian*: This term refers to all of the above offerings when they are used together in ceremonies.

OTHER

1. *buncul cili*: a small mountain-shaped mound with a *cili* head (symbolizing the female element) at the top. When made from dough, there is an egg inside. It represents the world, birth, life, protection. As a symbol of the world, it also indicates the macrocosmos (the known and unknown world).
2. *buncul kedis*: a slightly smaller version of the *buncul cili* with a bird's head (symbolizing the male element) instead of the *cili*. The symbolism of this sculpture is the same as the *buncul cili*, with an emphasis on the male aspect of the world.
3. *mata bulan* (literally, “eye of the month”): the moon. Underneath two strips of clay a *cili* figure is weaving cotton, an image that derives from a Balinese myth about the moon. The moon is an important marker for the Balinese, who present special offerings on the nights of the full moon and dark moon (*Purnama* and *Kajeng Kliwon*).
4. *mata hari* (literally, “eye of the day”): the sun. Underneath two strips of clay are nine *cecak* (a lizard the Balinese consider a manifestation of Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge and arts). Both the moon and sun are important symbols for the cycles of life and the earth and, as such, are rightfully honored in the *padudusan* so as to ask for continued protection of all growing and living things.
5. *tangkar iga*: the torso of a human body (the breastbone, ribs, intestines, spine). This symbol of the human body represents the microcosmos. It refers to the Balinese belief that all elements of the macrocosmos are present in the human body. The organs play an important role in their cosmology, and since the majority are concentrated in the torso, the *tangkar iga* symbol is a very important one (Fig. 15, left).
6. *pupuk*: a symbol of either the navel or the soft spot on a baby's head. The Balinese view both as vulnerable openings into a baby's body at a time of liminality (when the baby's spirit is thought to straddle the spiritual and earthly realms). Both areas are protected medicinally throughout infancy (Fig. 15, right).



Fig. 14. *Padudusan* sculptures, *bingin* (on left) and *ancak* (on right), and their rice dough counterparts. Many high-level purification ceremonies include versions of each sculptural element in terra-cotta, woven palm leaves, and colored rice dough. Padang Tegal, Bali. 2002. Terra-cotta. Diam.: 2 1/2" (6.4 cm). Photo: author.

7. *akit dua* (or *tiga* or *pat*): *akit* means close together or attached, and *dua*, *tiga*, and *empat* mean two, three, and four, respectively. These are flattened intersecting coils laid down in a terra-cotta base. Such forms are referred to as *akit* in Ubud but are labeled *marga* in various religious manuals for offerings experts. *Marga* is Balinese for street. D'Ayu explains that this form symbolizes intersecting streets. According to the Balinese, there is a high concentration of passing *bhuta* or *kala* (negative forces of the earth, evil spirits) at intersections, and they are often given offerings to assuage them. Sometimes all three *akit* are found in the *padudusan*, but sometimes one, or none at all.

HOUSE AND TEMPLE OBJECTS (in Miniature Form)

1. *keren*: a cylinder form with a small window cut in one side and three nubs on the rim for a pot to rest on. It is a traditional Balinese cooking stove, the firewood fed in through the front hole. It is also used, in the same manner, in temples to scent the holy water vessels.
2. *pengorengan*: the traditional Balinese cooking or frying pan. It is a shallow, round-bottomed bowl with handles and a cover. In the *padudusan*, it sits on top of the *keren*, just as it would in a traditional Balinese kitchen.



Fig. 15. *Padudusan* sculptures, *tankar iga* (on left) and *pupuk* (on right), and their rice dough counterparts. Padang Tegal, Bali. 2002. Terra-cotta. Diam.: 2 1/2" (6.4 cm). Photo: author.

3. *celengan*: solid, cone-shaped lump of clay with a slit cut in the side. It symbolizes a piggy bank and the saving of money. This could possibly be a reference to terra-cotta piggy banks from the Majapahit time, which were thought to be used for keeping money for ritual or temple use only. It represents a place for the god of money, Betara Rambut Sedana.
4. Four tiny *payuk pere* to hold four forms of colored *beras* (rice) each symbolizing a different god/goddess: *beras putih* (white), east, Iswara; *beras hitam* (black), north, Wisnu; *beras merah* (red), south, Brahma; *beras ketan* (sticky/yellow), west, Mahadewa.
5. *caratan*: a miniature version of the *kendi* (traditional drinking or ritual pouring vessel). Usually twenty-five Chinese coins are tied around the neck with pure white cotton string. Sometimes a *padma* (lotus flower) is drawn around the spout. It is a symbol of drinking water as well as a holy water vessel.
6. *pasepan-dulang*: This is a pedestal-tray form with a fancy cover (*kekeb*). It may represent a ritual vessel called a *pasepan* (used for the ritual burning of sandalwood), a *dulang* (footed offering tray), or a *tripadi* (pedestal form with a decorated cover that houses the ritual instruments used by the *pedanda* (high priest) while officiating at a ceremony).
7. *pemembean*: traditional clay oil lamp.



Fig. 16. Detail of *padudusan* vessels and sculptures with their contents. Pura Taman Sari, Ubud, Bali. 2002. Photo: author.

An assortment of rice, beans, peanuts, pits, seeds, spices, roots, and fish is placed randomly throughout the *padudusan* terra-cottas (Fig. 16). Some of these items are edible foodstuffs, while others are used solely for medicinal or ceremonial purposes. It is essential that all crops (from the mountains, sea, trees, and fields) are represented.

During the temple ceremony, the four sets (vessels and sculptures) of *padudusan* terra-cottas are placed in prescribed positions on the priest's platform (a raised seating area for the priests, their accoutrements, and special offerings). The priest conducts the mantra-giving process and mixes water from all the pots and coconuts together in a large clay jar—thus creating *Tirtha* (holy water). Offerings experts may then remove specific ritual objects and offerings from the priest's platform, including the *eteh-eteh padudusan*, a large holy water sprinkler, a duck, a piglet, and two large jars with holy water. These are danced through the temple area, and holy water is sprinkled on everything. All is now purified and suitable for presentation to the deities.⁷

Historic Eteh-Eteh Padudusan

Near the end of my first stay in Bali in 1998, I found an elaborate collection of miniature earthenware sculptures and pots housed in a temple shrine in Kintamani, in the north (Fig. 17). The local priests explained to me that these sculptures were unearthed during reconstruction of the temple and were thought to be about one hundred years old. It seems that at one time large numbers of terra-cotta wares similar



Fig 17. *Eteh-eteh padudusan* sculptures and vessels. Kintamani, Bali. Ca. 1900. Terra-cotta. Sizes vary. H: 3" (7.6 cm), W: 3" (7.6 cm) (approx.). Photo: author.

to those of the *eteh-eteh padudusan* were created and served a onetime ritual purpose (perhaps at the initial consecration of a temple) and were then buried in the floor to seek continued blessing of the temple and surrounding village. Elements of this collection closely resemble Majapahit terra-cotta figurines found at archaeological sites in Trowulan and Panataran in eastern Java. Most of the Kintamani terra-cottas were recognizable as *padudusan* elements, though some were unfamiliar, and many I had seen sculpted only in colored rice dough. Hundreds of such dough sculptures are found at the high ceremonies where the *eteh-eteh padudusan* is used. If the elaborate rice dough offerings are any indication of pieces once made in clay, then far fewer of the latter are being made and with much less detail than in the last century. I had hoped that on my return trip, I would learn more about this collection, but none of the Kintamani priests could give me any more information.

The most extensive document about the *padudusan* I have been able to find was written by Dr. Jacoba Hooykaas in 1961. She wrote in detail about the ritual purification of a Balinese temple in which the *padudusan* played a central role. While the basic shape and size of the *eteh-eteh padudusan* terra-cottas I was able to find are the same as those pictured in the Hooykaas documentation, they are fewer in number and significantly less detailed. Perhaps it is due to the infrequency of use and increased efforts of the potters to produce more marketable wares that the decline in quality and detail of the *padudusan* terra-cottas is so apparent. I was able to identify thirty different *padudusan* sculptures compared with the fifty of Hooykaas's time, and the ninety in



Fig. 18. Detail of ritual vessels decorated with acrylic paints. In addition to the *eteh-ete padudusan* terra-cottas, *Nuansa Bali* included a number of more common ritual vessels such as incense burners, large and small holy water jars and pouring vessels, offering stands or trays for cremation ceremonies, and placenta pots. Made by Ibu Jero Made Renis, Bedulu, Bali. 2002. Terra-cotta. Sizes vary. H: 3" (7.6 cm)–6" (15.2 cm). Photo: author.

the Kintamani collection. In addition to Hooykaas's book, numerous manuals for offerings experts contain information about the *padudusan* but generally only in list or descriptive form. There is as well an entire *Lontar* (ancient Balinese priest's manual inscribed on palm leaves) for the *Puja Madudus Agung* (*Padudusan Agung*) ceremony, consisting solely of mantras to be recited by the high priest at such a ritual.

While the majority of the offerings used for temple ceremonies (such as those made of rice dough and woven palm leaves) are made in the temples and

overseen by offerings experts, some are made outside the temple precincts by people known for their knowledge and skill. Occasionally, sets of *padudusan* terra-cottas are available for sale at local markets, although most often priests and offerings experts order them directly from the potters. Unlike the experts who make temple offerings, many potters who make *eteh-ete padudusan* sets often have little knowledge of what they are making. Unless (uncommonly), like Ibu Jero, they are also offerings experts, they may know only how to make very basic *padudusan* pots and crudely detailed sculptures. Such *padudusan* sets are often deemed adequate for low-level ceremonies. Perhaps as a result, the pieces have become less and less detailed. However, a potter such as Ibu Jero in Bedulu, who is also an offerings expert, can sculpt the elements of

the *padudusan* with a very high level of precision. Effectively, therefore, it is the potters who make decisions as to what constitutes a complete *eteh-ete padudusan*. Once the collection of terra-cottas arrives in the temple, it is usually accepted as is and put to use regardless of whether religious experts would consider it complete.

Many of the older offerings experts I spoke with were aware of the decreasing numbers of *padudusan* sculptures and perceived in them a loss of refinement. While some were saddened by this, in general there was little concern that the potency of the objects would be affected. They expressed this by saying "Tuhan mengerti" (God understands).

Nuansa Bali (*Perceptions of Bali*) Exhibition

When I first traveled to Indonesia in 1998 on a Fulbright fellowship, I focused on anthropological research of ritual terra-cottas. On my return trip in 2002, I wanted to concentrate more on the creative processes of working with clay and find a way for Balinese women to exhibit their ritual pottery to the public. While painting, batik, weaving, mask making, silversmithing, puppetry, and wood carving are viewed as artistic endeavors by both Balinese and tourists, pottery is far less valued. Ibu Jero Made Renis, the Bedulu potter and offerings expert, and I were invited to have an exhibition at Gallerie Déjà Vu, an Ubud gallery specializing in Balinese arts and crafts. *Nuansa Bali* (*Perceptions of Bali*) consisted of traditional ritual terra-cottas (Fig. 18) and a collaborative multimedia piece, *Gebogan Modern* (*Modern Balinese Offering*) (Fig. 19). The exhibition explored the (sometimes) difficult to discern lines between art, craft, ritual objects, and art as commodity. For the collaborative piece, Ibu Jero made more than two hundred miniature holy water containers (*payuk*), which I glazed with a low-fire white glaze and fired in a gas kiln at Eclipse Pottery, a ceramic factory in Pengosekan. Throughout the entire process, there was a high degree of loss owing to firing problems, glaze defects, cracking, bloating, warping, and so forth. We decorated the best pots with gold leaf and hundreds of commercial decals (Fig. 20). These were my Western analogs for all things Balinese: cocks, cows, goats, dogs, cats, fruit, flowers, fish, shells, ocean, praying hands, butterflies, insects, and gold.

Once the pots were finished, they were stacked in a towering column on a traditional wooden offering pedestal in the form of a Balinese fruit offering for temple ritual. The carved wooden offering stand, the bowl and cover on the top, as well as the woven palm-leaf pieces, all made by Balinese craftspeople, were found at local markets in Ubud. *Gebogan Modern* appropriates the structure of a traditional Balinese temple offering, the *gebogan*, usually consisting of fruit, cakes, flowers, and cooked chickens.

The opening of the show was attended by about thirty Balinese and two Australians. Most rewarding for me was the apparent joy of Ibu Jero and her daughter-in-law, Nyoman, seeing their traditional pottery forms viewed (and sold) as works of



Fig. 19. *Gebogan Modern*. Terra-cotta vessels, low-fire glaze, commercial decals, gold leaf, painted wood offering stand, bowl and lid, woven palm-leaf tray, and decorative top piece. Ibu Jero, Nyoman, and Rebekah Wostrel. Ubud, Bali. 2002. H: 48" (121.9 cm), W: 12" (30.5 cm). Photo: author.

Fig. 20. *Gebogan Modern*. Detail of decorated *payuk*. A house temple shrine can be seen in the background. All Balinese homes and businesses have personal shrines for daily prayers and giving of offerings. Ubud, Bali. 2002. Photo: author.

art. The collaborative piece generated much conversation and interest. The Balinese recognized the quintessential holy vessels and the form of the *gebogan*; however, seeing these pieces transformed by glaze, color, and gold and presented as art was a new experience for them. Reactions were varied: people were confused, amused, baffled, approving, embarrassed, concerned, and indifferent.

Many challenges arose during the process of preparing for this show: transporting pots in my backpack on a motorbike, lack of control over size of pots, quality of clay, glaze chemicals, and firings, absence of electric kilns for clean glaze firings, and so on. Everything took longer than I anticipated. However, despite much frustration, the experience was phenomenal. I transported this piece back to the United States and exhibited it at the Gallery of American Craft, Wheaton Village in Millville, New Jersey.

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NOTES

1. John N. Miksic and Endang Sri Hardiati, eds., *Legacy of Majapahit* (Singapore: National Museum of Singapore, 1995), p. 26.
2. Santoso Soegondho, *Earthenware Traditions in Indonesia: From Prehistory until the Present* (Jakarta: Ceramic Society of Indonesia, 1955), pp. 51, 59, 60.
3. For more on ritual terra-cottas in India, see Stephen Huylar, *Gifts of Earth: Terra-cottas and Clay Sculptures of India* (Middletown, N.J.: Grantha, 1996).
4. On the connection here to early Malayo-Polynesian practices, see J. Stephen Lansing, *The Balinese* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1995), p. 67.
5. Francine Brinkgreve, *Offerings: The Ritual Art of Bali* (Sanur, Bali: Image Network Indonesia, 1992), p. 148.
6. Jacoba Hooykaas-Van Leeuwen Boomkamp, *Ritual Purification of a Balinese Temple* (Amsterdam: N.V. Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1961), p. 29.
7. For details on the making of holy water and more information on other *ete-ete padudusan* elements—such as the holy water sprinkler (*lis*) and wood sculptures—see *ibid.*



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