

ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES
ON TWO OPERATIONS OF THE BODY
AMONG A COMMUNITY OF BALINESE ON LOMBOK

'It is...an axiom in anthropology that what is needed is not discursive treatment of large subjects but the minute discussion of special themes.'

N. W. Thomas

'...we really do not know much about what people actually feel.'

Rodney Needham

I

Hocart once wrote (1970: 11) that life depended upon many things, and that one of the things upon which it depended was food; few, surely, would take serious issue with this contention. Yet (as we shall see) there has arisen in the literature about the Balinese an interpretation about an aspect of their life which at first sight does not seem to accord well with the fundamental importance which food has in creating and sustaining life.

In *Naven*, Bateson contended (1936: 115) that 'culture standardises the emotional reactions of individuals, and modifies the organization of their sentiments.' It is not perhaps surprising, therefore, that in his later work about the Balinese in collaboration with Margaret Mead he should have tried to find out how the Balinese, by any standard a remarkable people, organise these aspects of human experience which are 'of such radical and pervasive importance...' (Needham 1971: lix).

Bateson and Mead came to the conclusion in their *Balinese*

Character that - among other slightly odd things which the Balinese are supposed to be doing when, for instance, they chew betel, or when they respond to children in different ways - when the Balinese eat they are doing something akin to defecation, for 'the Balinese cultural emphases...classify eating with defecation' (Bateson and Mead 1946: 116). Through a series of associations, Bateson and Mead further suggest (*ibid.*: 116) that defecation is classified with birth; that food is identified with faeces (*ibid.*: 120); and that the consumption of food during meals, but not as snacks, 'is accompanied by considerable shame' (*ibid.*: 112). Faeces, these authors suggest, 'are regarded with disgust', though urine has a 'very different psychological value' from faeces. While the latter are regarded with disgust by the Balinese, 'urine is unimportant and the act of urination is performed very casually and without conspicuous modesty' (*ibid.*: 119).

The aim of Bateson and Mead's book, which of course relies heavily upon series of photographs of Balinese from different villages, was to concentrate upon the way in which the Balinese 'as living persons, moving, standing, eating, sleeping, dancing, and going into trance, embody that abstraction which (after we have abstracted it) we technically call culture' (*ibid.*: xii). One can only applaud such openness on the part of investigators into the Balinese form of life, for these matters (among many others) are both important to the Balinese, and they reflect ideas and principles which are discernible in other, disparate areas of Balinese life (cf., for example, Duff-Cooper 1984a, 1984b, in press a, b, e).

I think that it is right to say that Bateson and Mead were the first scholars to suggest that the above was the case, and that their suggestions were not taken up by social anthropologists, either in connection with the Balinese or comparatively.

About thirty years after the publication of *Balinese Character*, though, it was suggested (Geertz 1973: 420; cf. Thomas 1983: 367 n. 8) that 'not only defecation but eating is regarded as disgusting, almost obscene activity...', because eating is regarded as animal-like, and that is behaviour which the Balinese avoid as far as possible. Covarrubias mentioned this in 1937, of course: 'The repugnance of the Balinese for actions characteristic of animals causes them not to permit children to crawl on all fours, and before the child is three months old he may not even touch the earth and is carried everywhere' (1972: 129).

Geertz's view of the matter is clearly authoritative. By the early 1960s, Geertz's many journal articles about Bali, and about Java too, were praised for their excellence (Du Bois 1961: 602), and Geertz had already attained 'a well-nigh towering stature...in the field of Indonesian studies' (Benda 1966: 1542).¹

¹ Not all, it must be said, have rated work by Geertz, in collaboration with H. Geertz, about Bali quite so highly: see, for example, Hooykaas's review (1976b) and his subsequent reply

It was not unexpected, therefore, that the eminent Oxford historian Keith Thomas, when making a comparative point about eating in his book *Man and the Natural World* (1983), should cite Geertz as the authority for the social fact that on Bali the consumption of food is regarded as 'a disgusting operation' (ibid.: 37; cf. Christie 1961: 108).

As it happens, though, neither the interpretation of Bateson and Mead nor that of Geertz accords well with the facts as they came to my notice while I was living closely with a community of Balinese on Lombok, the island immediately east of Bali.² The community with which I lived in Pagutan, western Lombok, it should be said, is entirely comparable with other communities of Balinese on Lombok and Bali and, I dare say, on Sumbawa. Western Lombok, where most of the Balinese on the island live, forms a part of Bali ideologically (cf. for example, Tan 1967: 443) though not administratively; and the Balinese whom I knew on Lombok consider themselves as much Balinese and where they live as much a part of Bali as do those who live there.³

The aims of this essay are essentially ethnographic, in particular to contribute to the ethnographic record in two ways - first, by reporting data which have not previously been published and by suggesting that the assertions of Bateson and Mead and of Geertz quoted above are, if not erroneous, then at least suspect in the light of the new data presented here about the Balinese; and secondly to suggest that Balinese ideas and practices concerned with eating and defecation from western Lombok contribute to our further understanding of the Balinese. This is so because, as has been demonstrated elsewhere (cf., for example, Duff-Cooper in press b, e), Balinese society is a totality. The many aspects (cf. Schärer 1963: 3) of this totality are replications of the high god of the Balinese, Ida Sang Hyang Widhi. Widhi is most simply expressed, in Western terms, as $[a/b]$, where a and b are two complementary entities which are juxtaposed (represented by the oblique) in various contexts (represented by the square brackets) (cf. Duff-Cooper in

(1976c) to C. Geertz's angry retort (1976) to Hooykaas's assessment of *Kinship in Bali* (Geertz and Geertz 1975); see also Barnes 1975, Needham 1976, and Hobart 1977.

² The fieldwork upon which this essay is based was supported by an award from the Social Science Research Council of Great Britain and by two awards from the Emslie Horniman Anthropological Scholarship Fund of the Royal Anthropological Institute. I am most grateful for the support of these bodies.

³ That the Balinese on Bali do not entirely share this view, to the extent that they are often unaware that any person from Lombok could be Balinese, and term them Sasak (Lombok Moslems) until they are put right, reflects more the ignorance of Balinese on Bali in this regard than anything else.

press c). This form, which is diarchic, is discernible in Balinese ideas and practices which concern eating and defecation. A number of social facts concerning these operations of the body are presented in some detail in subsequent sections. Thus in section II, situations in which food is consumed communally are described, and similarities and differences both among such situations, and between such situations and when one eats alone, are drawn out; section III then addresses the left hand and defecation. Once these social facts have been presented, it is then methodologically sound (cf. Needham 1981: 62) to ask whether the community in question feels about eating as reports from Bali tell us that people there do.

I should like to make one point before we begin. I do not take specific issue with Bateson and Mead's interpretation in this essay. Such an undertaking would be too vast for a piece of this kind, and it is any way not an undertaking which directly concerns the data which are reported here. In any case, although I happen to think that the method of interpretation adopted by Bateson and Mead is probably superfluous to an understanding of Balinese life - and, indeed, of any form of life - there are doubtless scholars and others who have profited, and will continue to do so, from a book co-authored by the man who wrote *Naven*, which is by even the highest standards a remarkable and admirable monograph.

In so far as the approach adopted in this essay is concerned, the method has received ample justification in the many monographs which I consider to be among the best which social anthropology has produced (cf. Duff-Cooper 1984a: notes 5 and 44). A method is to be judged, moreover, as much against the results which it procures as against anything else. The results to which the present essay leads at least have the virtue of being compatible, as Balinese metaphysics (*sarwa-surya*) suggests that they should, with the results of other enquiries into the same form of life.

Nor, further, am I bound to explain why Bateson and Mead, and later Geertz, fastened on to the notion that the Balinese consider eating to be a disgusting, fearful activity (cf. Bateson and Mead op. cit.: 123). Clearly among the assumptions upon which Bateson and Mead base their work is that Western psychology, in one guise or another, can provide a key to the understanding of people's behaviour, as recorded in series of photographs. I have already said that I think it is probably unnecessary to use such tenets to come to some understanding of the Balinese form of life; but, of course, as an essentially philosophical question, this is probably unsolvable. For our purposes, at any rate, it is enough that the assertions have been made, and by such luminaries.

Before we proceed, let us consider the word *disgusting*. According to *Chambers*, the word means 'loathing: feelings of sickness;' and continues '(O. Fr. *desgouster-gouster*, to taste)'. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* has it that *disgust* means 'repugnance, strong aversion, indignation (at, for)', and that the word derives as follows: OF *desgoust* from *desgouster*, or from

It. *disgusto*, from *disgustare* as *dis-*, *gusto*.

In Balinese, *ngrèsem* (Ind. *mengotori*), from **rèsem*, dirty, soiled, filthy, means 'to dirty'. In a number of other forms, *rèsem* refers to dirt, to menstruation, to faeces, and to refuse (cf. Warna 1978: 478, s.v. *rèsem*; Wojowasito and Poerwadarminta 1961: 114, s.v. *kotor*). In neither of these dictionaries is there any mention of disgust or disgusting in connection with these words and variants of them. *Rèsem* in connection with food means that the food is 'ritually polluted'. This occurs when, for example, food is sniffed by a dog or a cat, when a chicken flies over the food, when a sarong passes over it, or when the food comes into contact with faeces or money (cf. Hobart 1979: 423). Food which has touched the ground, i.e., food which is *dahi*, fallen, and food which is *rèsem* are not consumed.

Associated with *rèsem* and with *dahi* are *kumel* and *sebel*. *Kumel* and *sebel* refer to people who are ritually impure, so to say, through in the first case, the birth of a child, for example, and in the second case, death. In neither of these cases is there any evidence that the Balinese consider such people disgusting. Rather, as with words of approbation, such as *alus*, high, fine, *bagus*, handsome, and of derogation, such as *corah*, greedy, and *kaon*, ugly (cf. Duff-Cooper 1984a: 1-2), the words describe the state in which a particular person or thing stands. This standing is measured, so to say, by an assessment of how far the person or thing is close to an ideal. This ideal consists of a centre of reference. However far from the centre of reference a person or thing is assessed to stand, there is no evidence that the person or thing in question is considered by the Balinese to be disgusting. These remarks, we shall see, apply equally to eating and to defecation.

II

One may eat communally in situations which are of more or less formality - by which is meant the formality of one's dress, demeanour, and the language one is permitted by custom to use - and the way in which one eats one's meal, the contents of which are also variable according to the formality of the meal.

I have used the word *formal* to set the scene for the reader, but a more exact rendering of the Balinese word to which this formality corresponds - *alus* - would be a group of words such as high, northeast, fine, clean, right, handsome, and such like. We are, that is, discussing an aspect of purity, what the Balinese term *suci*.

I propose to begin our consideration of eating, like the Balinese view of the creation of the universe, with the most formal. This is when men (and women, separately) *megibung* in the course of a rite associated with the cremation of a corpse, for instance, or at a rite associated with the joining of a male to

a female.⁴

On Lombok, to *megibung* means more than 'to eat together at one serving (rice and side-dishes set on one dish)' (*makan bersama satu hidangan [nasi lauk pauk dalam satu tempat]*), as Warna (1978: 204 s.v. *gibung*) suggests. Indeed, it refers to one part of a process which could include the whole rite of which it is a part, from the decision upon which day the rite should, as it were, begin, to the point (perhaps as long as 210 days later, though this is exceptional; 14 or 21 days is more usual) when constructions erected for the rites are demolished three days after the last rite 'proper' of cremation, for instance in *melaiagin*.

The part of the process to which *megibung* refers is eating specially prepared rice and pork, and other foods to which I shall refer below, with other people of one's own sex (and, in days gone by, of one's own estate also). What is eaten must be prepared, of course, and this is done in the main by those who are to partake of the food.

In temple ceremonies, the food which men and women⁵ eat is food which has been offered to the gods, who eat the essence or germ (*sari*) of the food, and allow men what remains (*lungsuran* or *parèdan*). Howe has written (1983: 142-3) that 'in Balinese culture food represents gross material substance which is opposed to the immaterial essence of the purified spirits...' This seems to be confirmed by what has just been said, where what is immaterial is taken for sustenance by the gods, who are themselves immaterial beings without physical bodies (*sthūla sarīra*), and where what is material is taken to be appropriate to help sustain the lives of men, who possess physical bodies.

In cremation and other rites, large or small,⁶ the food is not as a whole offered first to gods. Portions of the food prepared are, however, given to the gods with other offerings, and before any others are served. The gods are present like the other guests; their status requires that they be served first.

Preparation of the food in these circumstances - and in so far as the meat is concerned, the killing of the animal - is always done by men. The killing of the animal - pig, ox, water buffalo, or chicken or duck - is a blood offering to those beings

⁴ *Pitra yadnya*, ceremonies for defunct humans, are the most important ceremonies held for humans.

⁵ Henceforth, 'men' and 'he' and such like should be taken to include 'women' etc., unless otherwise stated or made plain from the context.

⁶ Rites may be either small-scale (*nista*, low) or large-scale (*utama*, high), or else moderate in scale (*madya*, middle). It is the scale of the rites which differs, but not their meaning.

who are invisible, at least normally by day,⁷ and who could disrupt the proceedings (which the Balinese term *pegaén* or, in high Balinese, *pekaryan*, which both mean 'work') were they not suitably proffered to.

The rice which is prepared to be eaten in a communal meal is not an offering, but when it has been cooked, it is placed on a wicker table or bed in huge piles. The rice is then termed *Sri*, the goddess of rice. Offerings are placed at the head of the pile, i.e., to the east, where a *tumpéng* (a cone of boiled rice) has been placed. The offerings consist of salt and water, of different kebabs (*saté*), and of bottled drinks. The *tumpéng*, the salt and the offerings represent the head of the goddess, the pile of rice is a representation of the goddess's body, and the salt gives thought and emotions (*cita*) to both.

Women may do the humdrum cooking of the rice, but it is men who attend to the large pile of cooked rice which is made into the *tumpéng* (also by men), which, as we shall see, people eat.

The animal to be served is weighed, if it is a pig or an ox or a water buffalo. (I am not sure that ducks and chickens are weighed; I think not, for I do not recall seeing it done in the village, and anyway, most people can judge the weight of a bird by looking at it and by holding it.)

The animal is also fed before it is slaughtered. This is to ensure that the soul, if it happens to be a human being who was reincarnated as a pig, for instance, does not suffer hunger on its way to heaven (cf. Hooykaas 1976a): a reincarnation is released from this animal state by being slaughtered in sacrifice.

Meat is prepared by men, but by different groups of men according to the stage of preparation. The cutting of the meat is a task which is highly skilled, and it is usually done by men who have reached an age when they can reasonably be expected to know how to set about getting as much as possible off the animal in the proper way. Different cuts are to make different dishes, and each dish is as important as the others: one dish may not be skimmed in favour of another. Younger men of particular ability may be allowed to cut the meat, but most are responsible for other jobs.

It is important for a person to be seen to be present when he should be present, and it is always important that the young be diligent (*rajin*) in their tasks. Such diligence often compensates for excesses in other areas of social life: for example the Balinese are inveterate and most enthusiastic followers of the cock-fight, as Cool (1896: 102) long ago remarked. But one who gambles in a profligate manner and also works hard is often popular, whereas the heavy gambler who is also lazy is thought to be like a wastrel, a person who contributes little to life and who, like the blind, is rather like a

⁷ Except perhaps at those times of day, such as midday and dusk, which are particularly dangerous (cf. Howe 1981: 225-6).

pig, an animal which does little but sit, sleep, and eat (but cf. Forge 1980: 16).⁸

In this spirit, then, the young and old men who are, perhaps, close to the local descent group holding the rite, clean the meat either at springs or with water from wells.

Much preparation goes into the assembling of the ingredients for making the dishes which form the meal. Different combinations of meat (including the blood and the bones) are concocted, and cooked in various processes. Older, experienced men attend to the cooking and the combinations of the ingredients; the herbs, spices and other ingredients are prepared, some by older men, who cut up the herbs and spices, and some by the younger men, who pound them.⁹ (Pounding is usually women's work.)

Younger men also act as helpers to those doing the more skilled work, and bring coffee, cakes and biscuits to those who are working to help sustain them through the long hours. Copious flagons of palm wine (*tuak*; cf. Schaareman 1981, I: 188-93) are also served to those who are working.

It should perhaps be mentioned here that in the community with which I lived eighteen spices are used in this ceremonial cooking. The spices are either white, black, red, or green. There are eight white spices, seven red, two black, and one green spice. White, black, and red are the colours of Siwa, Wisnu, and Brahma respectively (cf. Wirz 1928: 526; Pott 1966: 134; Swellengrebel 1977: 89); green is the colour of Kresna, according to one friend of mine, an old and learned temple priest (Pemangku). The number nine is an important one for the Balinese, especially in the context of the *nawa sanga*, the gods which sit at the eight points of the Balinese compass, with Siwa at their centre. I was also told that each of the herbs or spices has a taste which, naturally, is classifiable as one of the *sad rasa*, the six tastes: *manis*, sweet; *pahit*, bitter; *asam*, acid or sour; *asin*, salt; *pedas*, sharp, hot; *sepat*, sour. I was not told that there are three herbs or spices of each taste, however, which would accord nicely with Balinese ideas.

Once the dishes which comprise the meal have been prepared, rice cones are made by pressing rice into bowls. This rice is turned out onto the centre of a low, circular table which reaches to about the height of the knees of a man sitting cross-

⁸ The pigsty in a Balinese compound, the anus of the compound according to Covarrubias (1972: 88), is always situated as far from the family temple, the head of the compound (*ibid.*), i.e. as far south, as possible. The south is associated with the low and with the impure (cf. Geertz and Geertz 1975: 50-1; Hobart 1978a: 9; Covarrubias 1972: 90, 91).

⁹ See Needham (1967) and Huntington and Metcalf (1979: 50-3) for a possible relationship between percussion, pounding, and transition.

legged at it. Salt is placed in small dishes made from palm leaf and these dishes are placed at the base of the cone, one at the north and one at the south. Later, the salt is emptied from the dishes onto the broken cone by people eating at four points which, in relation to one another, represent the direction towards the mountain (*kaler* on Lombok), towards the sea and other low-lying areas (*kelod*), and towards the east (*kangin*) and west (*kauh*). The cone represents the Mahameru of the Balinese on Lombok (see Duff-Cooper in press g, n. 5), or else Siwa; the salt represents the sea which surrounds the Balinese world.

The cone and the salt are then covered with a wicker basket as the sky (*akasa*) covers the middle world (*madyapada*), and, carried at shoulder height, are brought to the area where it has been decided that eating should take place. This site is often a compound courtyard (cf. Covarrubias 1972: 88; Hobart 1978a: 9), or else the pavilion of the village *banjar* (assembly). In any case, men and women eat separately.¹⁰

The tables are arranged in straight lines and mats are placed around their pedestals. Water and *tuak* in a hollowed-out coconut shell (*pideran*) are placed by each table. The guests may now be invited to take their places around the tables.

The invitation to eat, like all the language used while eating progresses, should be expressed in fine Balinese.¹¹ Indeed, ideally, anything concerned with a rite, and above all with cremations and with rites for the gods, should be expressed in high language - rather as dress should be formal, i.e., it should include a waist-cloth.

People are invited to eat according to distance from the local descent group which is holding the rite. A Brahmana high priest, or one who might, had circumstances been different, have been a king, are served after the gods, unless either is performing the rite, in which case he will not eat until his guests have done so. Distance may either be distance by *kawitan*, origin point (cf. Geertz and Geertz 1975; Gerdin 1981: 17; Zoetmulder 1982, II: s.v. *wit* I; Pigeaud 1938: s.v. *wit*; Duff-Cooper 1984b: 486-7), or by virtue of age and/or estate. This distance is, in Balinese social life, also expressed spatially, so that those who are more distant by *kawitan* and by estate are

¹⁰ A European woman who visited the village one night to watch a performance of an Islamic Sasak entertainment called *jepung* was given dinner by the most senior males of the local descent group holding the performance, but only she ate. *Jepung* are both entertainment and an offering to the gods, often in payment for a promise (*sot*) to hold the show if such-and-such a circumstance occurred.

¹¹ For Balinese language levels, see Swellengrebel (1950: 124, 127, 128) and Kersten (1970: 13-25). Where two Balinese terms are cited in this essay, the first is the fine (*alus*) form, the second is the coarse (*kasar*) form (cf. note 13 below).

most often those whose residences are further from the centre of reference (in this case, the local descent group holding the rite and issuing the invitation to eat through its spokesman) than those who are closer by *kawitan* and by estate. Those closest, of course, are those who comprise the local descent group hosting the event; these people eat last.

Men gather to be invited to take their places to eat near the tables, but it is becoming to hang back physically and to decline the invitation to eat, should it be extended to one early. Those who are asked first, however, are usually those who eat first, although they may appear to need some persuasion to take their places. Generally, once enough men of similar status have been asked to eat so that, perhaps, two tables could be filled, the men move as a body and take their places (beginning towards the north and east), and others may then follow after less, but still some, prevarication.

Eight men or eight women sit around a table; this group of people is called a *seluur*. Each person represents one point of the Balinese compass, while the table signifies the centre, the ninth point of the *nawa sanga*, as was mentioned above. The zenith (*keluanan*) and the nadir (*ketébénan*) are represented by the top of the cone and by its base.

People do not begin eating, once seated, but wait for the command to wash their right hands in water, which is passed round each *seluur* separately for the purpose. The cover on the table may now be removed. The rice cone is demolished so that the rice is spread more or less evenly over the top of the table, and a bowl of *komoh* (blood and herbs) is placed on the top of the rice, at the centre. At the command, people take rice and dipping it in the *komoh* begin eating. No food from one's hand should be allowed to drop back into the communal meal, and one shakes one's hand on the floor before taking more rice from the dish to make sure that this does not happen. Some consider that these droppings, rather like the left-overs from offerings and from the food served to a *Pedanda*, a high Balinese 'priest', have value as medicine.

The *gibungan* usually consists of nine courses, although these may be augmented to comprise eleven courses in important rites like *ngroras*, for instance, held twelve days after the actual cremation (*ngabér*) of a corpse, i.e., in second-level rites. The courses consist of various kinds of kebab (cf. Warna 1978: 503, s.v. *saté*), other meat from the pig, including the bones, and vegetables, usually plantains and bean-sprouts. Each course is placed in a certain and specified direction. Be it north-south, or east-west, or both, the head of the *saté*, which is the meat end, is always placed to the superior direction (north, east). The *saté* served in Baturujung number eighteen, i.e., one batch of four, and one of fourteen (5 + 9, perhaps). The various kinds of *saté* represent the trees and plants which exist in the Balinese world.

The courses are served to each *seluur* by a man (to men) or by a woman (to women) who approaches the table, crouching so as

not to tower over the people seated at the tables - a usual point of Balinese etiquette - and sits down outside the ring of eaters. He holds a covered basket in his right hand. He lifts the lid off with his left hand, and proffers the next course in the basket, usually to the senior man in the *seluur*. This course is arranged on the rice, extra amounts of which are liberally scooped onto the table as the fifth and seventh courses, and the eating continues. It is again becoming to be retiring in breaking into a new course and to offer first pick at the *saté* or whatever to a neighbour. In fact, there is more than enough for all (a point of honour for the hosts), and there is always food left over after the meal.

The end of the meal is signalled by all having eaten and drunk sufficiently and by acknowledging the fact to the person who issued the invitation to eat in the first place. All rise from the tables together; some collect the remains of the meal to give to a favourite dog; others help to shake the mats and clear the eating area for a subsequent sitting. If there is to be another sitting, the tables are replenished with another cone of rice and salt, and set out. This continues until all guests have been fed, when the local descent group is free to eat. Afterwards, men perhaps sit and drink, or return home, to come again to the place of the rite later - i.e. for the public witness of the events (*ngebening*) which, strictly, are what the rite is for. (There may be more than one such occasion in, for instance, a large cremation.)

This protracted (but still incomplete) account of what happens when the host Balinese eat communally has tried to convey the ways in which formality is expressed: that is, through dress, through language, through demeanour, and, very importantly, through making sure that everything down to the positioning of the *saté* on the table is as it should be. In these ways, the fineness and the purity of the occasion are established.

Less formal occasions are less rigorous and less complete, and are correlatively of a smaller scale.¹² Any number of *seluur* may, in principle, gather together to eat; how many will do so depends upon the occasion, but whatever the occasion, what is proper should be observed.

A good example of this is the communal evening meal, which in some compounds takes place at about seven o'clock in the evening, when people have bathed and changed after the work of the day, and have also in some cases - in every case on certain important days - done homage in the family or village temple. One is therefore clean. With others one is served rice and, in wealthier compounds, meat and vegetables.¹³ Sitting cross-

¹² The wedding of my friend I Wayan Care was reckoned small; about 320 people were given food on one morning.

¹³ Meat, *ulam* or *bé*, is a generic term for flesh, be it human or animal flesh. It is further used for all accompaniments to a

legged on mats round the food, one washes one's right hand in a bowl of water passed round for the purpose and helps oneself to rice and to small amounts of meat or fish and the other foods put there by women (for men, but not *vice versa*) for consumption.

One should try to eat the meal at the same pace as others: a healthy appetite is admired (and liked by those who cook), but excess in the form of greed or of eating very little are disliked. Greed is disliked in itself, as one of the *sad ripu*, the six enemies against which the three central upper and lower front teeth are filed, at puberty or at least before cremation; and eating little is taken as a mark of illness, perhaps, or of being angry, or distressed in some way. All of these destroy the proper, peaceful order of things. One tries to finish with all the rest, and to leave with them - or else sit on and drink and talk, often late into the night.

The communal meals described above have a formality about them. Other communal meals, when men move into a temple (*ngaturan*) for two or three days to make offerings and be with the gods of the temple, are more or less formal depending upon the temple involved, those who are present, and their material circumstances and aspirations.

It should not be thought, however, that it is necessarily the wealth or status of those who are eating together which is important in determining the formality of an occasion. I was invited, for instance, by an old but very poor man to take palm wine and eat duck he had killed and prepared for the purpose (this occasion is called *melagar*) with four other men. I drank and ate. Then, while others were still imbibing, and not in any obvious way trying to keep pace with one another, I started to roll a cigarette. This led to a discussion among the guests about whether I might properly do so, or whether I should wait until all had consumed enough duck, and were just drinking. That it was decided that I could smoke before all the duck had been finished can be put down to the Balinese being charming: my impression (which I acted upon) was that one should not do so.

Certain situations are thus more or less formal than others. In the Balinese case, this appears to involve the constitution of those taking part in the occasion, both in terms of their status (age, estate) and of their distance from or closeness to one another, in the senses mentioned above. It would be inappropriate, however, to posit a causal relation between the people present and the formality of the occasion. Rather, the people present and the nature of the occasion are correlated. When the gods in the family temple come out in the *piodalan* (temple festival, (person's) birth day), the gods and the people present, and the actions and events which occur, combine to create the *piodalan*. Relations between men and gods should be as

meal - rice, that is - which are not classified as vegetables. Thus, for example, peanuts, soya beans, and eggs are 'meat'. The term is used here to refer to meat.

alus as they can be. These relations (ways of thinking and of behaving) create the *piodalalan*, and in turn are demanded of men by it. Just as the gods could not exist without men, so man is totally dependant in the last resort (cf. Sukawati 1926: 426; Hobart 1978b: 74) upon the gods.

Even when two people of an age where informality might be encouraged¹⁴ eat together, formality still prevails; they should sit side by side or facing one another, and cross-legged or with their feet away from the other; the two do not share one another's food, but take food, each separately, from the (communal) food placed there for them, or from the stocks in the kitchen, where women prepare the food (cf. Howe 1980).

Seemingly even more informal is the gathering to drink coffee and eat fruit and cakes after one's rest in the afternoon (at about two o'clock), or in the evening after dinner, when coffee is often augmented, for the men, by alcohol. On these occasions, the people who congregate are usually so closely related by *kawitan* that they live in the same compound, and may even share sleeping places.

Even in these situations, however, men tend to sit near the other men present, and women with the other women, and the young with the young.

On all the occasions we have mentioned, the right hand is alone used for passing food and drink to the mouth. The right hand is used to perform these operations when a person eats alone. As a matter of frequency, eating alone is the norm in the village, people snatching a plate of rice and some nuts or vegetables when they feel peckish, eating it somewhere secluded, and eating it quickly. It would be wrong to think that this way of taking sustenance, however, should be the base-line, as it were, from which other ways of eating and drinking diverge. Rather, eating and drinking can be accomplished in more or less formal, i.e., *alus*, ways. The ways differ from one another in that the more *alus* is the more elaborate or complex. Similarly, the most *alus* person in Balinese society, a Brahmana high priest, is competent to know everything; a Resi, a kind of Brahmana priest from the Ksatrya estate, is lower than the Brahmana but superior to all others: he may know much of what the Brahmana may know, but not all; and the ordinary Balinese, the *anak Bali*, should know only what we might consider more practical matters - fighting, animal husbandry, construction, the preparation of ceremonial food and such like. A Brahmana priest should know this, and far more besides; the higher one is, the more elaborate one's existence, ideologically speaking. The highest, *Bindu*, the point from which all derives, is the most elaborate,

¹⁴ Among some young Balinese of different estates, Indonesian is frequently adopted as the language of communication. It does not possess language levels, and is taken to be a leveller by many Balinese.

containing and pervading all that exists.

In Balinese thought, the right hand is contrasted with the left hand as male is contrasted with female. They are complementary, and they are opposed. The right hand is *bresih*, clean. It is used for all operations which concern those parts of the physical body which are similarly *bresih* - that is to say, for eating, drinking, combing the hair, cleaning the teeth, and (most importantly) for anointing oneself and for imbibing holy water. One also always uses offensive weapons in the right hand. Defensive measures are exercised by the left hand.

III

The left hand is not dirty, or anything of the kind: it is merely less clean than the right hand, only the tips of the fingers of the left hand being *bresih*. The left hand is used for operations of the body which concern the lower region: anything such as urination or contact with another's sexual organs is done with the left hand. On no account should the left hand be used to offer something to anyone; in practice, the thought that one might use the left hand to do so is almost non-existent: people use the right hand automatically, having been trained since soon after birth to do so. The right hand, also, is never used to wash after one has defecated.

In the village, defecation involves finding a spot in one of the irrigation ditches which were (tacitly) recognised as places at which one might defecate. In the Gria Taman, people defecate in the part of the extensive gardens most to the west of the compound, and wash at the spring to the south. In either case, one makes it clear (perhaps by one's style of walking [cf. Duff-Cooper 1983: 72] in the village, or by raising one's sarong at the back) that one is going to defecate, and that one should therefore be left alone.

Finding a spot in the irrigation ditch, one steps down into it, adjusting one's sarong and any underwear as one does so. Having performed the operation, one cleans the anus by splashing it with water with the left hand, and on no account with the right hand.

The head and the lower regions of another's body should not come into contact. When I was digging a trench to start building a wall with two others, I was warned not to get too close to the person in front of me along the trench (one digs head-on to the line of the trench) who was bending, as my head might come into contact with his rear.

The allocation of primary and secondary values to the hands is just one example of the way in which opposites are used complementarily to establish relative value. Right and left (cf. Needham 1973) are analogues of up/down, high/low, male/female, elder/younger, and more besides (cf. Howe 1983: 157 n. 10; Duff-Cooper 1983: *passim*). It is little surprising,

therefore, to learn that those who are able to detect what is written in one's heart - i.e., character - by looking at one's hands deduce the better traits from the right hand, and the less desirable ones from the left hand.

There was doubt in some quarters that such things could be deduced from looking at the hands. I enquired of many whether there was anyone who could do so, but never received an encouraging reply. One woman, a known *lĕak* - witches who practise *pengiwa*, the black arts (from *kiwa*, left) - of advanced ability, read my left hand, though. Her conclusion, that I was mean and stingy, was generally taken to be true by those present. This, however, may have more to do with the characteristics which are ascribed to *turis* (tourists; Caucasians) than with the witch's ability to interpret the hands. Whatever, the left is associated with the low, the unclean, and the undesirable, while the right hand is associated with the high, the clean, and the desirable.

Defecation usually takes place in private for adults - only the very young defecate together - and so does eating alone, although not always. But I never heard anyone say that he thought defecation and eating were disgusting, let alone almost obscene, operations. It is true that defecation and solitary eating are conducted 'hurriedly' (Geertz 1973), but neither was ever in my experience (to which I shall refer again below) conducted with any of the demeanour which might suggest that they were found to be disgusting by people. Rather, both operations appeared to be among those which one performed naturally - i.e., as part of being what one was. This attitude is reflected in the following. I once asked a friend of mine whether he enjoyed ceremonies. He replied that it was not a matter of enjoyment or otherwise; it was merely something which one did as part of one's way of life (*dharma*) (cf. Gorer 1936: 59).

We have seen that one may eat privately or communally. However, if a Balinese is eating alone, and another passes or enters the place where he is eating, it is usual for the person eating to invite the other to join him. The inviter does not usually, I think, expect acceptance, but acceptance is clearly a possibility.

This is quite clearly different from when one is defecating. People then wish to be alone - they demonstrate the fact - and are usually left alone. Sometimes, the young make jokes with people of the same sex when they are defecating. *Pace* Bateson and Mead, and Geertz too, defecation and eating appear to be opposites, rather like the hands which perform the operations, and also rather like the orifices and the parts of the body in which they are located and via which the operations proceed.

In spite of the fact, however, that eating and defecation are opposites at the level of analysis at which I have been operating in this essay, it must be allowed that by other criteria the two operations may be classified together. Men and women, for example, are opposites, but they may be classed together as human beings. This category, *manusa*, is, however,

opposed to other categories of being (gods, *turis*, malevolent spirits, and so on) at varying removes.

Supposing, therefore, that eating and defecation are classified together, to what might they be opposed? In the first place, eating material food and defecation are attributes of men, but not of gods. They are also things which animals do, of course, but even so, it is seen once again that the operations are simply defining characteristics of one class of being (men) which because of what it simply performs the operations. (No need to impute disgust.)

It might be that the Balinese do not like the idea that they perform things which animals perform (cf. Covarrubias 1972: 129; Geertz 1973), and that when they do things which animals do, they are disgusted by such actions.

Two examples spring to mind: the taking of a partner, and sexual intercourse. *Béro buron* is 'incest', the taking of a partner which, as the name implies (*buron*, animal), is likened to the behaviour of animals, of which it is said that they couple with any of the right species and that they do not distinguish between prospective mates. The Balinese usually so distinguish (cf. Belo 1936; Covarrubias 1972: 159, n. 9), but when they do not there does not appear to be a reaction which one would confidently suggest was disgust at the breach. While I was in the village, a man in town was said to have had sexual intercourse with his daughter. People seemed to think that the man must have been off his head (*bodoh*), and dismissed the report, more, I should say, in puzzlement than in disgust. In the literature, also, there is no evidence that the occurrence of *béro* was found disgusting. *Béro* applied to a musical sound means that the sound is not harmonious, and this is essentially what the taking of a prohibited woman results in: mystical disharmony evidenced by the couple's chronic illness or poverty or childlessness - or by the infirmity or stupidity, for instance, of any children the couple may produce. In the days of the kings - before the Dutch abolished them, that is - those who created a state which was adjudged *béro* were executed as a sacrifice to the gods, and other rites were held to restore the proper order of things. Once again, no disgust as such is in evidence (cf. Needham 1974: 63-7).

In so far as sexual intercourse is concerned (cf. Duff-Cooper in press a), again, I did not come across anyone who thought the matter was disgusting. Young men sometimes made jokes about sex, and teased widows and divorcees about it, but I did not encounter anyone who seemed to feel ill at the thought of having sexual intercourse or when the subject was raised. Indeed, that men (and women with large breasts, at least) liked it, and that they wanted to perform the sex act often, especially when they had first taken a woman in marriage, was treated in my experience as an entirely natural thing. Men with large penises were admired as being, in this regard, strong and capable (*mampuh*), although men who showed no interest in sex were taken to be holier than those who did. Still, men who were

thought to have an active sexual life were not the objects of disgust, any more than were the acts themselves. These are normally performed, it is true, in the privacy of the sleeping quarters at night, but this shows merely that the Balinese have a strong sense of propriety and modesty, not that the acts are thought to be disgusting. As Howe (1980: 153) remarks, sexual intercourse should never take place within a temple of any kind, and it is seen 'as the absolute contrary to the gods outside of becoming a *leyak* (witch).' Once again, we see that sexual intercourse is merely thought to be associated with what is low, not that it is considered disgusting. Witches are people of whom one might be afraid or wary, whom one might respect, or by whom one might be fascinated or attracted, as the case may be, but I judge that they are not considered disgusting. They can make others ill, through the use of spells and charms, and they can be irritating (cf. De Kat Angelino 1921), but they are often talked about and even pointed out without any apparent trace of disgust.

A further point is that while sexual intercourse (and of course defecation) may not take place within a temple, eating often does, and at its most formal (*pinih alus*). It would therefore seem as though eating and sexual intercourse are also opposites, as was suggested above in relation to the two hands and their functions.¹⁵

IV

The linguistic and ethnographic evidence briefly presented above do not allow it to be contended with certainty that the Balinese on Lombok, at any rate, consider eating and defecation disgusting. Further, the data presented show that far from being classified together, eating and defecation (and sexual

¹⁵ Farting, *entut*, by an adult among adults was only ever taken to be rude, or embarrassing for the person who did so, or distressing (for the usual reasons) for others. To spit phlegm out in polite society is, by contrast, merely rude. Two further operations of mouth and bowel and anus are therefore contrasted, as one would expect from opposites. Rudeness (cf. Swellengrebel 1950) involves an offence against the proper order of things. Perhaps part of the rudeness attaching to farting and to spitting phlegm or clearing the throat noisily can be attributed to the fact that, in farting, air is expelled (whereas matter is the element proper to the anus for evacuation) and in spitting phlegm matter is expelled, whereas matter or air (*bayu*) are proper for the mouth to take in. Belching, however, is neither rude nor embarrassing nor distressing; air both enters and leaves the body through the mouth, and through the nose, another superior orifice.

intercourse) are opposites.

In my experience, neither operation was ever performed in a way which suggested repugnance for either of the operations or indignation at having to perform them. Speed and privacy are taken to be important by Geertz in establishing what Balinese people feel in the face of eating and having to defecate. But the same facts could be used to support other interpretations: that one might be, if not over-fond, then very fond of food, and that one had to be alone to consume lots, fast. Similarly, hurried, private defecation might be put down to the constitution of Balinese food and drink, especially coffee, and to a pervasive modesty in Balinese life. (Husbands, I gather, never see their wives naked; bathing men should conceal their genitals from one another; and so on.)

My time on Lombok involved me in living very closely with some members of the community, and at least once a day while I was there I ate either privately in a Balinese compound or else with others communally. I also had hepatitis while I was in the village, for the first fortnight or so of which even the smell of food, let alone food itself, made me want to vomit. That is to say, food and its smell disgusted me. One should not, of course, take anything for granted, but I find it hard to conceive that the Balinese feel as I did then - physically and mentally - every time that they eat, perhaps five or six times a day, and every time that they defecate. They certainly gave no recognisable signs of doing so (cf. Wittgenstein 1970: 2-4).

There are, further, many good reasons (cf. Needham 1981: 59-71) to make us sceptical about claims as to the inner states of other peoples. Since, further, it has been contended, most persuasively, that 'there are strictly speaking no inner states, as collectively recognized conditions of consciousness, that are universal' (ibid.: 69), the claimants for an inner state of another people with another linguistic tradition and other, alien, institutions must show the similarities and the differences between their own tradition and that of the people under consideration. This is an undertaking which neither Bateson and Mead nor Geertz have carried out convincingly.

For myself, I find it very hard to begin to conjecture about the inner states of Balinese individuals, even those I lived with most closely, in the same house. On the basis of my experience, however, I am led to the view that inner states as expressed among the Balinese are a social contrivance in which behaviour of a certain kind expresses certain attitudes to events and to the behaviour of other people. For example, a friend of mind who is aged was much feared by the young (as some young people told me) and by some older men for his strength of character and his knowledge. If he was 'angry' (*gedeg*), he might shout at people or weep. He admitted to me, though, that his behaviour was a performance to enjoin certain actions in other people; if he was truly angry, he said, then he would go quiet, silent even, and retire into himself and make himself physically small, and perhaps even refuse to eat.

One problem with taking even this old man's assertions at face value is that others may behave in much the same way - if they are shy or embarrassed, for instance, or are very tired, or ill, or have just got up. It is experientially easy enough to decide which of these situations is appropriate to an understanding of the behaviour - one can simply ask, for example - and hence to decide how to proceed. But I find it very hard now, as I did in the village, to go on to assert that the actions are evidence for an inner state which is adequately translated by 'anger', 'embarrassment', or 'disgust', say, and harder still to specify much, if anything, about the inner state in question. Indeed, it might be that a person's behaviour *is* the inner state; perhaps Balinese love (cf. Covarrubias 1972: 140-6), for instance, *is* sexual desire, being attentive to the one who is desired, suggesting that they run away together and marry, supporting the loved one and having children by her, etc. - rather as a person's mind can cogently be said to be merely chemical processes (cf., for example, Needham 1981: 39).

We are brought back to much firmer ground, though, by the social facts which have been reported above. Put shortly, the data presented in the present essay show that eating and defecation are opposites. They are opposed in the ways which have been described. Eating is a much more elaborate area of social life than defecation. Eating may be more or less formally conducted. The finest meals are those where the meal forms part of a series of activities which are most closely connected with the gods, in different aspects, and with rites. These activities are most often carried out in temples. Rites during which a large number of people are entertained over many days with great formality are most appropriately held by local descent groups of the Brahmana and Ksatria estates. They are also held in *gria* and in *puri*, the compounds of descent groups of these two estates respectively. The gods, temples, Brahmana and Ksatria and their compounds constitute centres in Balinese society. As mentioned above, also, what is closest to a centre of reference in Balinese life is concomitantly also finer than what is further away, physically or ideationally, from the same centre of reference (cf. Duff-Cooper 1984a: 36). Eating and its opposite, defecation, is one further aspect of Balinese life in which this principle of order is discernible. Neither activity, however, appears to be considered disgusting in Balinese ideology nor by individual Balinese people, of whichever estate. Whether individual Balinese really, as it were, feel disgusted by these activities remains to be established, if indeed it is possible to establish.

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