

‘A peaceful festival of democracy’: aristocratic rivalry and the media in a local election in Bali

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On 27 January 2008, Suharto, the second president of Indonesia, died. For more than three decades, he presided over an authoritarian regime known as the New Order. ‘Elections’ held ceremoniously every five years during this period were little more than pantomimes of dictatorship dressed up as democracy. Golkar, the state political machine incorporating the military and civil service, won them by a huge majority. The resulting parliaments duly reelected Suharto as president (Pemberton 1994:2–7).² For nearly ten years, since Suharto was forced to stand down, the country has struggled to find a path toward democracy. A central aspect of this transition has been, since 1999, a move toward *otonomi daerah* (regional autonomy) — a systematic decentralisation of power, budgets, and representation to lower, more local levels of government, especially *kabupaten* (districts). This has involved local governments and their leaders, long appointed from above, now being elected by popular vote. Elections of heads of districts (*bupati*) known as *pilkada* (*pemilihan kepala daerah*) began in June 2005, a year after the first direct presidential election. Since then they have been implemented progressively across the country.³

A few days before Suharto died, the *bupati* of *kabupaten* Gianyar in Bali was, for the first time, elected by *pilkada*. The vote was close: 49.33 per cent (134,527 votes) to 50.67 per cent (138,182 votes), split between the incumbent, Anak Agung Gede Agung Bharata, representing the PDI–P (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia–Perjuangan, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) and the successful candidate, Ir Tjokorda Oka Artha Ardhana Sukawati, commonly known as Cok Ace,⁴ who ran on the ticket of Golkar, the party that emerged out of the New Order’s state political machine. Cok Ace was not (until this

election) a professional politician, but an architect/academic, hotelier, and head the Bali branch of the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association (PHRI, Persatuan Hotel dan Restoran Indonesia). More importantly though, he belongs to the senior lineage of the palace (*puri*) of Ubud, a small Balinese town, not in modern times a centre of government, but culturally and historically significant, as well as very prosperous through tourism. His opponent, Agung Bharata, is likewise the head of the rival *puri* of Gianyar, the main town of the district of the same name. Thus *pilkada* Gianyar 2008 was in many respects, at least from a local point of view, a contest not between political parties, but between aristocratic houses (Arsana 2007).⁵

Members of aristocratic houses occupied prominent administrative and political positions in many parts of Indonesia, including Bali, throughout the New Order period. One feature of the post-New Order political scene in many parts of Indonesia has been the attempts of established elites, aristocratic or otherwise, to retain or even improve their positions, often using political parties as vehicles to advance these ambitions. Local elites, who appear to compete for office in elections, have colluded post-election across party lines to form political ‘cartels,’ maintaining what has been described as a nationwide ‘oligarchy’ of political and economic power.⁶ Our concern in this essay is less with the dynamics of such machineries of power, but more with the meanings, understandings, and representations that inform supposedly ‘political’ events such as elections. The evidence presented below, however, suggests, tangentially, that we should be wary of assuming that such collusion, cartels, and oligarchy are universal throughout Indonesia.

In Bali, the minority of aristocrats who held positions of power during the New Order did so essentially as private citizens, appointed from above by virtue of whatever personal connections they had built with the regime. Their roles as governors, *bupati*, *camat* (subdistrict head) or heads of government departments did not follow directly from their often somewhat faded, almost forgotten, roles as hereditary local rulers. Likewise, their appointments as individuals did not involve their *puri*, which often remained aloof from local public and community life.⁷

One of the largely unanticipated developments in the previous round of *pilkada* in Bali in 2005 was the reemergence of many *puri* into public life by way of their members, who often had no previous political experience, standing as candidates (MacRae and Darma Putra 2007).⁸ More significantly, they brought into the electoral arena elements of the discourse and trappings of traditional aristocracy, a form of political capital derived from the language of pre-colonial politics described by Clifford Geertz in his book *Negara* (1980).⁹ Their success (or otherwise) as candidates depended not on their aristocratic status as such, but on how effectively they mobilised this status along with other resources.¹⁰

The other significant new player in the new Balinese electoral environment was the media, especially the various outlets (print, television, and radio) of the Bali Post Media Group (BPMG). It was in these media that much of the language of traditional politics was most evident. Indeed, the BPMG itself used this language skillfully to elevate itself above the electoral contests, presenting itself in the image of a 'king' responsible for the well-being of the whole island (MacRae and Darma Putra 2007, see also Juniarta 2008).¹¹

Nearly three years later, in the 2008 round of *pilkada* in Bali, a similar array of elements and factors were evident, but combined in somewhat different ways. Gianyar, in the heartland of historic aristocratic dominance, where the electoral contest was between representatives of rival *puri*, provides a useful case for focusing on these historical and cultural dimensions of the electoral process. The aim of this paper is to examine this *pilkada* with a view to these dimensions: the ways in which the rival campaigns mobilised the political capital embodied in their aristocratic heritages; the ways in which local people read and interpreted the contest; the role of the media in managing public information about the campaigns; and an emergent focus on the personalities of the candidates and other key players.

We begin not from generalised debates about 'Indonesian politics,' but from our own experience, Balinese and ethnographic, that 'local politics' are indeed local and that elections are complex processes deeply embedded in local historical, social, and cultural contexts. We do



Figure 1. Cok Ace and Sutanaya campaign poster (photographs by Darma Putra)

pretend to in-depth political analysis, but hope to show some of the ways in which ‘political’ processes such as elections are understood by local people. Neither do we presume that any generalisations hazarded in this discussion necessarily apply to regions beyond Bali. If there is value in the kind of modest, localised, ethnographically based, culturally informed analysis we attempt here, or relevance to more generalised discussions of ‘Indonesian politics,’ we leave the task of making such connections to those better qualified to undertake it.¹²

‘A peaceful festival of democracy’: the campaign

Immediately after the 2008 election, two writers in the main local newspaper, *Bali Post*, celebrated the success of the election as a *pesta demokrasi* (festival of democracy) — a model of a peaceful and orderly democratic process — seen as proof of a maturing democratic sensibility at all levels of public and political life (although the terminology itself is ironically a residue of New Order political discourse) (Geriya 2008, Adnyana 2008).¹³ Wayan Geriya, a former lecturer in anthropology at Udayana University, wrote that:



Figure 2. Bharata and Yudha campaign poster (photographs by Darma Putra)

Signs of *pilkada* moving in a peaceful direction are becoming phenomenal. Since the Jakarta *pilkada* as a metropolitan example, it is the turn of Gianyar, as an example of an artistic district performing a safe and peaceful *pilkada*. In the context of Bali, previously, the districts of Badung, Karangasem, and city of Denpasar had also set this example. This chain [of peaceful *pilkada*] may be seen as important social capital for the approaching Bali provincial election in 2008, as well as the general and presidential elections in 2009.¹⁴

Such expressions of desire for a peaceful and orderly process were a dominant feature of public discussion during the 2008 campaign, as it had been in previous ones. A preoccupation with peace and order was a feature of New Order discourse, no doubt strengthened by collective memories of the traumatic events that gave rise to the regime. This discourse was much in evidence throughout Bali, especially in the Ubud/Gianyar area, but campaign rhetoric since then shows that it has survived the passing of the New Order. The bombings in 2002 and 2005 undoubtedly increased the voters' and media's commitment to an orderly campaign, in part because these



Figure 3. Cok Ace's helicopter over Ubud. (Photograph courtesy of Bali Post)

well-publicised acts of violence threatened to stain the image of the district in the eyes of tourists. Memories of outbreaks of violence on Bali in October 1999, after the failure of parliament to elect Megawati as president, and in October 2003 (prior to the 2004 general election) when two supporters of Golkar were killed in Buleleng, served to heighten this awareness.¹⁵

Despite the initial calls for and subsequent celebrations of peace and order, the campaign was marked by mutual accusations of dirty tricks even before it formally began. Bharata claimed that a 'black campaign' had been mounted against him. His wife is Javanese and Muslim, and the attacks against him, distributed mostly by means of anonymous leaflets and 'sms' (text) messages (on mobile phones), accused him of being too close to Muslims and even suggested that he had promised to build an Islamic centre in predominantly Hindu Gianyar should he win the election.¹⁶ The existence of this anonymous campaign was noted in the media, in reports funded by the Bharata

campaign (see discussion of the media below), but the details of it were not discussed because of national censorship of issues thought to have the potential to inflame conflict. Although Bharata and his team denied the accusations, they were calculated to strike a chord with Balinese voters, and especially with the culturally and ethnically conservative electorate of Gianyar.

The campaigns officially began on 29 December, 2007, two weeks before the election. Cok Ace opened his campaign with a large public rally, complete with popular comedians and singers, staged in the heart of his home territory, at the Ubud soccer field.¹⁷ The highlight was a helicopter that dropped leaflets throughout the district. In his opening speech, Ace claimed that he used the helicopter because he had been denied access to some villages by local leaders sympathetic to the opposition.¹⁸ Ace's detractors, meanwhile, observed that he was simply spreading rubbish and noise pollution.

From the start, Bharata's team was put on the back foot when their star attraction, the PDI-P national leader, former president of Indonesia, Megawati Sukarnoputri, failed to offer the support they had been led to expect. Several weeks before the campaign, Megawati came to Gianyar to warm up the PDI-P machine for the Bharata campaign. She has close links to Gianyar and she promised to monitor the campaigns and encourage all party cadres to endorse and aid Bharata.¹⁹ During the campaign, however, even when she was in Bali, she failed to support his candidacy publicly. On one occasion, she even attended a shadow-puppet performance in Tampaksiring, accompanied by Bharata himself,²⁰ yet did not appear at any of his campaign events, using her time instead to meet PDI-P contenders for the approaching election for governor. This reluctance was in sharp contrast to the enthusiasm that had marked her participation in *pilkada* Tabanan in 2005, when she appeared for the incumbent Adi Wiryatama, who went on to win the election.²¹ Bharata was able to muster high-level support only from Megawati's younger brother, Guruh Sukarnoputra, who appeared toward the end of the campaign in Balinese attire to emphasise his Balinese connections.²² Ironically, when the election was over, it was reported that Megawati was disappointed by the loss of her candidate and claimed the election had been unfair and undemocratic.²³

The reasons for her failure to support Bharata are unclear, but it seems likely that the local dominance of PDI–P in the 2004 general election led her to assume that he would win easily and that the coming gubernatorial election was a cause of more concern to her. Her behavior was, however, reminiscent of her presidency, during which she consistently puzzled observers with her disinclination to action.

The final days of the campaign were marked by escalating levels of tension between both the candidates and their supporters. These came to a head on 6 January, in a minor clash between supporters of the two candidates in Sukawati, an important secondary centre (and also the largest) within the *kabupaten*.²⁴ Leaders of tourism organisations warned that violence would tarnish the image of the district and discourage visitors, and electoral officials called on both teams for calm and order.²⁵ Cok Ace’s team immediately went to press, scoring something of a public relations triumph when it was reported that they had urged their supporters not to provoke further disorder and above all to maintain ‘politeness’ (*kesantunan*).²⁶

The next day, they went a step further, announcing that they would forego using the last day of the campaign period for a final rally, in the interests of public order and peace.²⁷ Bharata had scheduled a final rally in Blahbatuh, while Ace planned one in Gianyar at around the same time, and his team claimed that they feared a clash when rival supporters encountered each other en route to their campaign venues. Ace was highly and publicly commended by representatives of the tourist industry and electoral officials for this act of apparent altruism. At the same time, the news that the Sukawati incident was believed to have been sparked by an attack on Ace supporters by a prominent Bharata supporter, Kadek Diana, a PDI–P member of the Gianyar parliament, attracted wide media and public attention and undoubtedly damaged the image of PDI–P and Bharata.²⁸ Golkar supporters added fuel to the fire by demanding that police investigate and prosecute the perpetrator. All this may well have tipped the balance against PDI–P and Bharata at a critical moment.

A few days later, *Bali Post* reported claims and official complaints leveled by Ace campaign volunteers and Koalisi Rakyat Gianyar (KRG, Gianyar People’s Coalition) alleging ‘systematic

cheating' (*kecurangan sistematis*) that involved 'importing' ineligible voters from other districts.²⁹ The report did not go so far as to name the party responsible, but the implication was obvious. Immediately after Ace's win was announced, PDI-P responded with similar accusations and called for a recount of votes.³⁰

This consistent level of mutual hostility was not sparked by conflicting political ideologies or significant policy disagreements, for in fact the campaigns in Gianyar were notable, as were the previous ones, for a paucity of references to policy. Although both candidates took pains to demonstrate their past good works and promise future ones in popular social domains such as health and education, and economic ones such as agriculture, neither seemed to have, let alone be able to articulate, anything recognisable as a systematic policy. Instead, they worked to build political capital based on combinations of hereditary allegiance, past favors, commitment to worthy causes, track-records, and, no doubt, more or less empty promises.³¹ The only significant point of difference was a promise by Cok Ace, not echoed by Bharata, to increase job opportunities in the tourism industry, international as well as local, for people in Gianyar.³²

In the end, although the overall difference in votes cast for the two teams was small, there were some clear local patterns. Cok Ace won decisively in the *kecamatan* (sub-districts) of Ubud and Payangan, while Bharata won in Gianyar and Blahbatuh. In the district of Sukawati, where the campaign contest was fiercest, Ace won only by a micro-margin of three votes.

Sub-District	Ace	Bharata
Sukawati	27,266	27,263
Blahbatuh	17,418	20,143
Gianyar	20,004	30,645
Ubud	27,974	13,442
Tampaksiring	13,782	15,872
Tegallalang	16,723	15,561
Payangan	15,015	11,601
Totals	138,182	134,527

Table 1. Pilkada Gianyar 2008, Final Results³³

While the strengths and weaknesses of both candidates will be discussed further below, it is worth noting here that Bharata began with the incumbent's traditional advantage — control over the budgets of the heads of lower, more local levels of government (*camat, bendesa, kepala desa*) — and thus had privileged access to their loyalties. As we shall see below, Ace had to resort to other strategies to offset this initial disadvantage.

While the campaign and its result may be read by some as evidence of an emerging national maturing of democratic process and sensibility, and by others as a continuation of a national pattern of elite oligarchy, it is, at various levels of local understanding, only intelligible in terms of local social and political factors of long standing, as well as more recent developments in terms of public information. It is to these that we will turn, with the aim of illuminating both the historical depth and local specificity of this particular Balinese *pilkada*.

Gianyar and Ubud³⁴

For as long as most people can remember, the position of *bupati* of Gianyar has, with minor exceptions, been filled either by members of the *puri* of Ubud or Gianyar.

Prior to independence, the position of regent was held by the head of Puri Gianyar, who acted as indirect ruler on behalf of the Dutch and later the Japanese. Immediately after independence, AAG Agung (of whom more below) continued in this role, followed by his younger brother, AAG Oka. In the latter years of the Sukarno era, when aristocratic privilege was seriously contested, commoners began to take on senior positions throughout Bali, including that of *bupati* Gianyar. In the early 1960s, Sukarno was close to Cok Agung Sukawati, of Puri Ubud, and frequently brought state guests to the *puri*. His relationship with Puri Gianyar was less close and was, at worst, tainted by rumors of a plot by AAG Agung to assassinate him.³⁶ It is said that, following the coup and massacres of 1965, in which many leaders with communist sympathies, including the *bupati* of Gianyar, Made Sayoga, were killed, few people were willing to put themselves forward for such a risky position. In Gianyar, a commoner called Made Kembar Kerepun was (according to his own account) the only one prepared to

Years	<i>Bupati</i> (or equivalent post)	Status	Place of Origin
1945–47	AAG Agung	Aristocrat	Puri Gianyar
1947–60	AAG Oka	Aristocrat	Puri Gianyar
1960–63	Cok G. Ngurah	Aristocrat	Puri Ubud
1963–64	Cok Anom Pudak	Aristocrat	Puri Peliatan
1964–65	IM Sayoga	Commoner	Gianyar
1965–69	IMK Kerepun	Commoner	Blahbatuh
1969–83	AAG Putra	Aristocrat	Puri Pejeng
1983–93	Cok Raka Dherana	Aristocrat	Puri Ubud
1993–2003	Cok GB Suryawan	Aristocrat	Puri Ubud
2003–08	AAG Bharatha	Aristocrat	Puri Gianyar
2008–13	Cok OAA Sukawati	Aristocrat	Puri Ubud

Table 2. *Bupati of Gianyar, 1945–2008*³⁵

take on the post, which he then held for four years. Apart from this brief interregnum, all *bupati* have been aristocrats, mostly from Ubud or Gianyar.

This pattern reflects not only the historical dominance of the district by powerful *puri*, but also the uneasy balance of power between Ubud and Gianyar that goes back, depending on the depth of one's historical vision, for years, decades, or centuries. The most recent layer of this history developed during the tourism-driven boom, extending from the 1970s to 2002, during which Ubud emerged from poverty and came to surpass Gianyar in reputation and, eventually, in prosperity as well. While the center of government remains in Gianyar, the town and its environs, in effect, the whole eastern half of the district, remain relatively poor and underdeveloped. Ubud (and west Gianyar), meanwhile, has grown to preeminence in all respects except the political. The roles of the respective *puri* have likewise bifurcated; Puri Ubud is now closely involved in local affairs, as well as tourism, and retains a close relationship with the local people, while Puri Gianyar has become increasingly closed to the public, with the majority of its members engaged in politics or business elsewhere. The pattern that has been established, with members of Puri Ubud and Puri Gianyar alternating in the position of *bupati*, while not embedded in official policy, reflects this uneasy asymmetry.

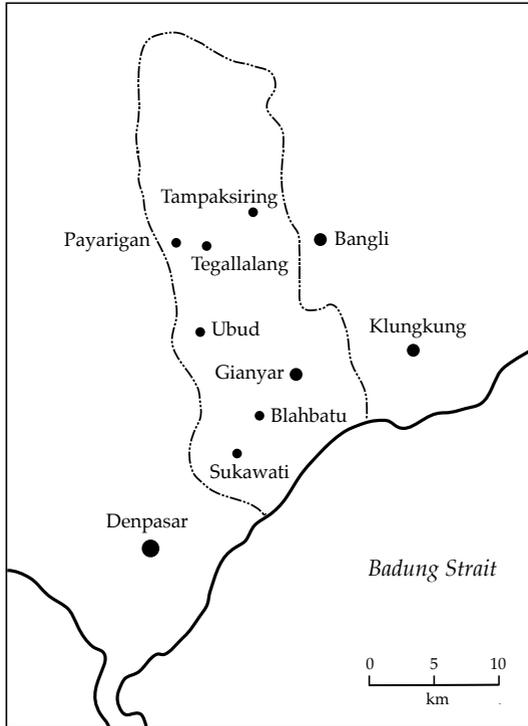


Figure 4. Map of Gianyar

The previous layer of this shared history goes back to the violence that accompanied the birth of the New Order in 1965. In Gianyar, this claimed the *bupati* himself, Made Sayoga, a member of the Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI), who was pulled from his car by a mob and killed in November 1965. The PKI were less strong in Ubud, where the majority of the *puri* remained staunchly PNI (Partai Nasional Indonesia, Indonesian National Party) and there were relatively few killings. One exception was the *camat* of Ubud, a non-local appointee and PKI member. The subsequent *bupati*, IMK Kerepun, made his anti-communist credentials known clearly from the start³⁷ and proved to be a strong and competent leader. Nevertheless, at the end of his term, the position reverted to the aristocracy.

A deeper layer of the district's political history had been laid down during the struggle for independence in the late 1940s, when Indonesia was divided between a nationalist republican movement totally opposed to the return of Dutch colonialism and those inclined to favor strategies of compromise or even cooperation with the Dutch. In Bali, the latter took the form, first, of a youth organisation, PPN (Pemuda Pembela Negara, Youth for the Defence of the State) and eventually led to the establishment of a new state of eastern Indonesia (NIT, Negara Indonesia Timur), sponsored by the Dutch. The organiser of both this organisation and this initiative, and indeed of the pro-Dutch movement in Bali, was the head of Puri Gianyar, AAG Agung, who was also a significant figure in national politics both before and after independence.

While Gianyar was the center of pro-Dutch sentiment and power in Bali, the majority in Puri Ubud supported the nationalist/republican side, and Ubud became a center of resistance to the Dutch-backed power of Puri Gianyar.³⁸ As a result, the district divided along lines of affiliation to their respective aristocratic patrons, which coincided roughly with the administrative subdistricts of the time. Skirmishes were fought along the border at the Petanu River, and the head of Puri Ubud, Cok Agung Sukawati, recalled leading a small army to attack Gianyar. Republicans from throughout the district were imprisoned and tortured by the Dutch/Gianyar coalition. Among these were members of Puri Ubud, including Cok Agung himself.³⁹ The *punggawa* (sub-district head) of Peliatan, from the senior ranking Puri Peliatan, was killed on AAG Agung's orders, a violation of respect that initiated a deep rift between the two *puri*, which a marriage in 1948 attempted to repair.⁴⁰ Arguably the most painful aspect for Puri Ubud was that one of its most senior, wealthy, and influential members, Cok Raka Sukawati, a political opportunist similar to AAG Agung, related by marriage to Puri Gianyar, joined forces with Gianyar against his own family, subdistrict, and the republic. When the republican side eventually prevailed, Cok Raka shifted his political interests to the national arena. (Several of his descendents have followed his example, and his branch of the *puri* has remained the least involved in local affairs.) The resentments stemming from this period, both within

Ubud and between Ubud and Gianyar, continue to rankle to the present. The public furore over a recent attempt by the Indonesian state to award (the now deceased) AAG Agung the status of 'national hero' attests to the depth of these wounds.⁴¹ Unfortunately for Bharata, this issue emerged at a critical point in the campaign, although it is hard to evaluate how it affected voters.

Before this, during the colonial period, Puri Gianyar was the centre of government for the district, with its head ruling as regent on behalf of the Dutch. Ubud was also associated with the Dutch but, apart from Cok Raka's move into the world of Batavia (Jakarta) colonial politics, Ubud was involved more through matters of art, culture, and tourism than politics. During the colonial period, the two *puri* pursued largely parallel paths rather than competing ones. Both, however, were closely linked to the Dutch by the manner in which Gianyar had entered the colonial era in 1900.

Through the nineteenth century, the kingdom of Gianyar was the dominant political power in the area, but during the latter half of this period it was increasingly on the defensive against neighbors who were growing stronger and less tolerant of Gianyar's ascendancy. In the 1880s, Ubud, which had been a small and insignificant *puri*, rose to prominence, largely as a result of the military prowess and political acumen of its leader, Cok Rai Batur. His son, Cok Gede Sukawati, continued this work, and by the 1890s, as Gianyar struggled to survive, it came to rely increasingly on the support of Ubud. Among other victories in defence of Gianyar, an alliance headed by Ubud defeated an uprising by Puri Negara (near Sukawati) and took possession of a huge area of land, which has provided the basis for the wealth of Ubud ever since. By the end of the century, not even Cok Sukawati could save Gianyar from inevitable destruction by hostile neighbors, but he brokered a deal with the Dutch that allowed them to take possession of Gianyar and leave both *puri* in relatively privileged positions within the colonial order. While Ubud was, at this time, at least nominally, an ally of Gianyar, it is uncertain whether that alliance would have held together had the Dutch not intervened. Certainly Gianyar and Ubud had causes for enmity going back even further in their history.

Puri Ubud is descended, via Puri Peliatan, from Puri Sukawati. Sukawati was the original kingdom in the area, founded around 1710 as a branch of the senior royal house of all Bali in Klungkung, and with a claim to at least spiritual jurisdiction over the land between the rivers Ayung and Petanu, from the sea to Mount Batur. In its second generation, the house of Sukawati fell into disarray. Brothers quarreled and mismanaged the kingdom and neglected their aging father, who was cared for by a young aristocrat called Dewa Manggis. When the old king died, his spiritual mandate to rule passed not to his sons but to Dewa Manggis, and thus from the house of Sukawati to that of Manggis, from which Puri Gianyar is descended. It is said that this transfer was to last for seven generations, a term now long expired.

The descendents of Sukawati, scattered in small *puri* all over western Gianyar, have thus had to live with the consequences of this unfortunate episode in their own history and submit to Puri Gianyar. Adding insult to injury, there is also, a 'delicate matter of rank' complicating relationships between these groups.⁴² The original Dewa Manggis was named, consistent with Balinese custom, for his mother, who came from Manggis in East Bali. According to most versions of the story, she was a village girl seduced by a member of Puri Klungkung while he was on a hunting trip in the area. According to the version of the house of Manggis, she happened also to be of pure royal Klungkung descent, and thus her offspring would be of the rank of (at least) Anak Agung. The more widely accepted story would assign the rank of Ngakan to the Manggis dynasty; at best a notch below their claim to be Anak Agung and two notches in rank below Cokorda of Sukawati descent.

So, given questions concerning the method and motivation of the initial takeover, the expiry of the seven generations, and the somewhat improbable basis of the Manggis claim to Anak Agung status, the descendents of Sukawati have reason to question Gianyar's right to rule over them. Puri Ubud, while not the most senior of Sukawati *puri*, can also lay claim to having saved Puri Gianyar on more than one occasion and to having backed the winning side at the time of independence, not to mention its more recent economic and cultural leadership of the district.



Figure 5. Genealogies in Puri Ubud and Puri Gianyar (simplified and partial, showing key players only)

These old questions continue to influence current local politics. Early in Bharata's term as *bupati*, a person well-connected in Gianyar political circles told one of us (MacRae) that Bharata's father, AAG Oka (younger brother of AAG Agung and himself also a former *bupati*) had on his back a birthmark the color of *manggis*, the mark of the true inheritance of the Manggis lineage, despite the fact that he was the younger brother.⁴³ This informant believed that the aim of Oka's son, Bharata, was to regain control of Gianyar and thus become the eighth Dewa Manggis, in defiance of the seven generations prophesy. As evidence, he cited two of Bharata's first steps as *bupati*: the celebration of the anniversary of the founding of the town of Gianyar at the *puri*, which was meant to re-identify the town with the *puri*, and, secondly, the staging of a huge *maligia* (a major post-cremation ceremony usually performed only for kings) to re-establish the royal identity of Puri Gianyar.⁴⁴

While these may seem rather fanciful and obsolete concerns in the calculus of modern political science, they are not so in Bali, least of

all in Gianyar or Ubud, nor in Sukawati, where Cok Ace's rally was couched and reported in terms of a triumphal return to his ancestral home.⁴⁵ Our point here is that historical (even mythological) factors of this kind play a real and significant part of electoral processes in Bali, and any adequate understanding of elections there needs to take them into account.

Puri Ubud

Cok Ace is the second son of Cok Agung Sukawati (himself the son of Cok Gede Sukawati), and thus second in line in the central sub-*puri* known as Puri Saren. This *puri* has, at least in the twentieth century, been regarded as the house of the 'king,' while other sub-*puri* have been the sources of his advisors, ministers, or military leaders. Translated into a contemporary political idiom, this is often taken to mean that Puri Saren is the house from which official leaders such as *bupati* should hail, while the head of Puri Saren Kauh should lead the customary and spiritual affairs of the domain. This division of labor, is, of course, also a division of power, and is the subject of some disagreement and occasionally contest. If one reviews the actual record, it becomes clear that previous *bupati*, including Cok Budi Suryawan, have been from sub-*puri* other than Saren. Neither contradiction nor contest, however, is sufficient to rob this model of the two sub-*puri*, and their roles, of its power in local thinking.

The chairman of the Gianyar branch of Golkar is Cok Raka Kerthiyasa, a second son of Puri Saren Kauh and of similar age to Cok Ace. Unlike Cok Ace, he has been actively involved in Golkar as well as other public affairs for some years and was seen as early as 2006 as the most likely candidate, both by residents of Ubud and members of Golkar, for the position of *bupati*. He was supported by the entire *puri* to take over leadership of Golkar in Gianyar, so that he could support Cok Suryawan at the provincial level. As head of Golkar Gianyar, Cok Raka Kerthiyasa also sat on the Gianyar Regional Parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, DPRD), which gave him additional experience and credibility as a candidate.

Early in 2007, a rumor began to circulate that Cok Ace would also contest the position. At this stage, he was neither affiliated with

any party, nor showing any inclination to do so, devoting his energy instead to raising his public profile through his Calonarang troupe and other visible public roles.⁴⁶ The electoral rule prevailing at the time required that a candidate who wishes to register must be proposed by a party that has won a minimum of 15 per cent of the vote in the previous election or by a group of parties whose votes add up to at least 15 per cent from the previous election. So Cok Ace's strategy was widely seen as the result of combined naivety and arrogance, or perhaps suggesting that he had a trick up his sleeve.⁴⁷

He had already tried to run for *bupati* in 2003, but he failed to get the support of either Golkar or PDI-P despite considerable popular support. Since then, he had flirted briefly with minor parties, such as Partai Indonesia Baru and Partai Demokrat, but declined to join either, preferring to maintain his status as civil servant. Eventually, he aligned himself publicly with (but never actually joined) Partai Demokrat, which, despite being the party of the president himself, was too small to contest the election without the complex and potentially time-consuming process of forming a coalition.⁴⁸

Cok Ace's candidacy not only posed potential difficulties for the party, it also intersected in complex ways with existing personal politics within Puri Ubud and threatened to trigger open conflict within the *puri*, a nightmare scenario the members would want to avoid at all costs. Some relatively senior and impartial *cokorda* attempted to broker a solution, even calling a meeting of the whole *puri*, but to no avail. In mid-2007, despite a widespread feeling that Ace's cause was at best quixotic, an unseemly showdown seemed inevitable.

At least two more meetings within the *puri* followed, in the last of which Cok Agung Suyasa, the (since deceased) elder (half-)brother of Cok Raka Kerthiyasa and head of Puri Saren Kauh, reminded members of the 'tradition' that Puri Saren should provide the *raja* (king), while Puri Saren Kauh should provide his chief advisor (*penasehat*) or minister. Cok Raka Kerthiyasa, while still the head of Golkar Gianyar, thus found himself without the full support of his *puri*; including the provincial head of Golkar, Cok Suryawan. Cok Raka Kerthiyasa was also told that a poll had shown him to be less popular by a small margin than Cok Ace.⁴⁹ Because of this and, no doubt, also

to avoid further destructive internal conflict, he resigned as a candidate the day before the Golkar convention that began 1 September, 2007.⁵⁰ In media reports, his withdrawal was interpreted as evidence of his noble or even spiritual qualities.⁵¹

Cok Ace's relationship with Golkar is complex. As a civil servant, he was not allowed to join a political party unless he first resigned his position as a university lecturer, which he declined to do. Despite not being a member of Golkar, he was somehow able to put himself forward as a potential candidate for the party and was accepted as such, with the support of other minor parties. At the convention, he was elected as the official Golkar candidate, and at this point he had to sign an agreement to support and develop the party.⁵² He immediately re-muddied the waters, however, by announcing that he was actually the candidate of Koalisi Rakyat Gianyar (KRG, the Gianyar People's Coalition), which, despite its populist-sounding title, was in fact sponsored by Golkar, nine other minor parties, including Partai Demokrat, Partai Pelopor, and PNI Marhenisme, and several major art galleries and museums in Ubud, as well as a 'people's forum.'⁵³ Ace further enraged Golkar stalwarts by wearing not the Golkar color, yellow, but white, the universal color of Balinese male ritual attire, with connotations of moral purity. Once established as the Golkar candidate, he proceeded to campaign with two teams, one based in the Gianyar People's Coalition headed by the secretary of Golkar, Gianyar Dauh Wijana (under the direct supervision by Cok Raka Kerthiyasa), the other a private one, sponsored by Puri Saren.

In this way, Cok Ace, the rank outsider, achieved what only weeks before had seemed impossible. His obvious weaknesses in terms of political experience and affiliation, as well as his flagrant flouting of convention, were initially offset only by his demonstration of a public profile, which he fostered through the kind of 'politics of reputation' for which Puri Ubud has long been famous. In the end, however, what leapfrogged him over the head of an apparently much better qualified candidate was less a matter of party politics, than of internal *puri* politics. Once into the second phase of the campaign — the *pilkada* contest itself — all these factors remained significant, as we saw above, but other ones came into play also. But first, one final twist to the story.

Inside PDI–P, or Ubud vs Gianyar again

This struggle for the Golkar candidacy had a parallel on the PDI–P side, but it was played out not within Puri Gianyar, but along the Ubud–Gianyar axis discussed above. Before becoming *bupati* of Gianyar in 2003, Bharata had been a senior officer at the presidential palace in Tampaksiring, Gianyar, which brought him to the attention of Megawati Sukarnoputri and led to his (successful) candidacy for the position of *bupati* in 2003.⁵⁴ Bharata's deputy during this term was one Dewa Gede Wardhana, who was (until recently) the head of PDI–P Gianyar, but who is also from Ubud, from a high-ranking family closely linked to the *puri*. This combination of alliances was obviously a factor in increasing this partnership's appeal across the Gianyar–Ubud divide and would have made Bharata–Wardhana an obvious team to contest the 2008 *pilkada*.

In mid-2007, however, Wardhana challenged Bharata for the 2008 candidacy. As his deputy, Wardhana chose Dewa Made Sutanaya, younger brother of the sitting governor of Bali, Dewa Made Beratha, and also a long-serving bureaucrat in Badung district, who had recently headed the Badung planning body (Bappeda). Their combined political credentials were significant, and, enhanced by Wardhana's Ubud connection, would have made them a very strong team. Bharata subsequently teamed up with Putu Yuda Thema, a PDI–P member of the Gianyar regional parliament, whose main asset, apart from his PDI–P affiliation, appears to have been his financial resources.⁵⁵ PDI–P eventually selected the Bharata–Yuda team, but the previous contest created considerable internal strain within the Gianyar branch of the party. The chief of their campaign team was Nyoman Parta, a leading member of PDI–P Bali. This appointment not only belittled the power of Dewa Wardhana as chairman of PDIP Gianyar but also intensified the internal rift. As became clear during the campaign, the Bharata–Yuda team was weakened in morale and solidarity as well as numbers.⁵⁶

A few weeks later, Sutanaya reappeared, now on the other side, as Cok Ace's running mate.⁵⁷ Together with his brother, the governor, Sutanaya had helped many people from Gianyar secure government positions, and these debts would have been called in during the

election. The Ace–Sutanaya team thus could expect to draw support from a combination of professional and bureaucratic, local aristocratic, and Bali-wide political networks. Wardhana meanwhile dropped out of the race, but was observed during the campaign lending support to his old friend and neighbor, Cok Ace and his erstwhile partner, Sutanaya. Shortly after the election, he was unceremoniously removed from his position in Gianyar by the national leadership of PDI–P.⁵⁸

The media coverage

One of the striking features of the previous *pilkada* in Bali (as in the 1999 and 2004 general elections) was the new and dominant role of the mass media, particularly the locally owned Bali Post Media Group (BPMG), in control of public information. Through their main print outlets (*Bali Post* and *Den(pasar)Post*), television (BaliTV), and radio (Global FM), they effectively dominated public information about the candidates and indeed the whole process of the *pilkada*. By giving scrupulously even-handed coverage to (almost) all candidates, they appeared to support all, but favor none. By their constant appeals to higher values of the good of all Bali, they also managed to position themselves above the political process and thus take on a role symbolically analogous to that of the traditional rulers of the island.⁵⁹

It is, however, also well-known that BPMG's 'editorial' policy is founded firmly on its business policy of charging fees for all but the most truly newsworthy of 'news' items. Consequently the apparent 'even-handedness' of coverage of candidates reflected the even depth of those candidates' pockets. The 2007 rate for *Bali Post* was Rp.1 million for an article of some 2,400 characters plus one photo, and eight times as much for an equivalent front-page story with a color photo.⁶⁰ Such items are either written or approved by the campaign teams themselves. Candidates are allowed to use these stories to promote their own campaigns but not to discredit other candidates unless the report is based on verifiable data and includes comment from the accused candidate's team. All these points, as well as details of methods of payment, are documented in Memoranda of Understanding between BPMG and the campaign teams. The aim of *Bali Post* policy, according to its managing editor, Nyoman Wirata, was

to prevent candidates from using the media as a battlefield. For example, *Bali Post* refused to publish an item from the Ace team that described Bharata's government as a 'nest of corruption' without supporting evidence provided by the team.⁶¹

The coverage of the campaigns by BPMG thus consisted, with the exception of a few independently 'newsworthy' events — such as the violence in Sukawati — almost entirely of what might be described as commissioned 'news' reports. In other words, while BPMG, on one hand, demonstrated a commitment to a kind of commercially based impartiality, as well as to a 'clean' campaigning, it also abdicated the role of providing independent critical commentary on the election.

BPMG outlets were not the only media providing commentary on this *pilkada*. Others included: *Radar Bali*, a special section of the national daily *Java Pos*; *NusaBali*, an independent local paper owned by the unlikely (except in Indonesia) combination of the Regional Military Commander and the Bakrie Group (one of Indonesia's largest conglomerates); the state-owned television channel TVRI Bali; and a newly established local station, Dewata TV, owned by a young local entrepreneur, Nyoman Artha. Indeed, we used these alternative sources for more independent commentary. Like the BPMG affiliates, *Radar Bali* and *NusaBali* managed their relationships with candidates via Memorandums of Understanding, and accepted somewhat editorial-looking advertising, but in addition they regularly published independent journalistic coverage of the campaigns. For example, on the opening day of the campaign, only *Radar* reported a call by prominent religious leaders for a peaceful campaign.⁶² But by far the overwhelming media presence and influence in Bali, especially among what might be described as the 'middle-Bali' population of the villages and small towns of Gianyar, was the BPMG pair of *Bali Post* and BaliTV. For BPMG, and indeed most of the other media companies, *pilkada* have become a recurring source of fresh income.⁶³

Despite this rhetoric of impartiality, in the 2008 *pilkada* the budgets of the two campaigns were much less equal and consequently the commercial dimension of the BPMG policy clearly resulted in a discrepancy in coverage. The majority of BPMG reports of the 2008 *pilkada* that we have studied focus almost entirely on the Ace team, and

indeed are written virtually from the viewpoint of that team. As the campaign wore on, the Bharata team became progressively less visible and eventually almost invisible in the pages of *Bali Post*. For example, on 6 January, 2008, the very day before the incident in Sukawati, *Bali Post* printed a glowing account of the mass ‘hysteria’ accompanying Cok Ace’s triumphal return to his ancestral home.⁶⁴ Ace also used the pages of *Bali Post* to counter ‘news’ released by the opposing team. In a similar manner, Cok Suryawan described an earlier announcement by Agung Bharata that his administration had provided free schooling as ‘a big lie’ and claimed that it was actually the Ace team that supported free schooling.⁶⁵

Of our (substantial but incomplete) collection of 104 ‘news’ items published in *Bali Post* about the campaign, 56 refer primarily, and in a positive way (at least at the level of the subjective impressions we gained from reading them) to Cok Ace and only 34 to Agung Bharata, a ratio of approximately 6:4. A further 14 items appear neutral. Among this latter group, one reports on the official disclosures of the wealth of the candidates. Its sub-heading is unambiguous: ‘Cok Ace the Wealthiest; Agung Bharata at the Rear,’ and it reveals the combined personal wealth of Ace–Sutanaya team to be almost twice that of the Bharata–Yuda team.⁶⁶ If we assume that the clearly partial ‘news’ reports surveyed are, in fact, paid, if disguised, ‘advertorial’ material, it is worth noting that the ratios between commissioned reports/news reports and disclosed wealth are fairly similar. In other words, there appears to be a (very rough) correlation between the wealth of the candidates and their coverage in a dominant media outlet. This ratio also corresponds, albeit even less precisely, to the votes they eventually gained.

While this is at one level a fairly unremarkable conclusion, we are aware that our arithmetic may be interpreted as speculation based on coincidences, and we have no way of proving otherwise. It is difficult to assess accurately the extent of the influence of BPMG or the media in general.⁶⁷ We would suggest, nevertheless, that there is more than coincidence involved. While ‘money politics’ of the traditional kind (outright vote-buying) may not have been absent in the campaign,⁶⁸ neither was it anywhere near as evident as in the past and,

indeed, in campaigns elsewhere in Indonesia.⁶⁹ What appears to be happening, at least in the relatively media-saturated environment of Bali, is that the old mode of direct vote-buying has begun to be replaced by a less direct process of 'buying' public opinion via a system of commodified access to the media. This may be seen as a shift in the relationship between candidates and the public: from 'money politics' to a 'politics of appearance,' on one hand indexed to 'languages' of traditional politics, and on the other mediated by commercial media outlets.

Finally, the profiles of their candidates that the two campaigns attempted to portray were somewhat different. Before and during the campaign periods, Bharata, as the incumbent, distributed regular press releases showing himself receiving awards from the central government for his achievements as *bupati*. Cok Ace's releases, on the other hand, tended to feature either his own local engagement as a sponsor of village cultural activities, or showed him hosting state delegations in Bali for the UN Global Warming Conference in early December 2007. Puri Ubud has long understood better than other *puri* in Bali the value of developing and exploiting both these levels of public relations.

What works in electoral politics in Gianyar?

While political parties still play a fundamental role in elections, as only they can put up a candidate, the real electoral contest depends on public perceptions of the candidates themselves. In the 2004 general election in Bali, Gianyar emerged as a PDI-P stronghold, a significant shift from the dominance of Golkar during the Suharto period. PDI-P won 45.80 per cent of votes in Gianyar, while Golkar won little more than half that number: 23.66 per cent. The remaining votes were shared by nine other minor parties, each with less than 7 per cent, including PPIB (Partai Perhimpunan Indonesia Baru, Party of Association for a New Indonesia, 6.46 per cent), PAN (Partai Amanat Nasional, National Mandate Party, 3.75 per cent), and Partai Demokrat (Democratic Party, 3.36 per cent).⁷⁰ On the basis of party affiliation, any PDI-P candidate might thus have been expected to win *pilkada* Gianyar 2008. That this did not happen is evidence of the secondary

role of parties in such elections. Policy was likewise not an important factor, as discussed above, with the exception of Cok Ace's promise to assist in finding overseas employment for citizens. While we make no claim to in-depth political analysis, our impressions of why the Ace team won, or perhaps equally important, why Bharata lost, reflect our understandings of both of the thinking of the Gianyar electorate and of the workings of the local media.

Factors contributing to Bharata's defeat

1. The incident in Sukawati and successive media reports tarnishing the image of PDI-P at a critical moment.
2. The failure of Megawati to support Bharata publicly, especially when she was known to be in Bali.
3. The internal rift within PDI-P Gianyar following the candidate selection process.
4. The (largely hidden) effect of the 'black campaign' against Bharata.

Factors contributing to Ace's success

1. Cok Ace's decision to cancel the final day of his campaign after the Sukawati incident.
2. Cok Ace's ability to portray himself as the underdog, even the victim of oppression, by claiming that his access to constituents was obstructed by village heads sympathetic to Bharata.
3. Public support of Ace by the Golkar hierarchy, ranging from Cok Suryawan, himself a former and successful *bupati* of Gianyar, to Yusuf Kalla, the national head, who came to Bali for the celebration of the anniversary of Golkar and used this opportunity to support Cok Ace.
4. In general, Ace's team was more effective in handling opposition attacks on Cok Ace. For example, when he was accused of extravagant and boastful displays of wealth, such as his expensive cars (members of Puri Ubud have long had a preference for

BMWs) and, especially, the helicopter, the team pointed out that Ace was using his own money for these purchases, unlike their competitors, who used government money. They also pointed out that Ace's supporters belonged to all classes, as evidenced by their modes of transport to his rallies, ranging from cars to feet.

5. It seems likely that the promise to channel local people into overseas tourism jobs boosted his votes among a limited but significant constituency.

A final and perhaps telling point is that while the Bharata campaign tended to be party oriented, the Ace campaign was more oriented to personality and populism. For example, Bharata's team failed to provide enough T-shirts for their supporters, and distributed PDI-P flags as substitutes. A report in *Radar Bali* suggested that a campaigner from the Central PDI-P, Sony Keraf, when speaking at a Bharata rally had more to say about 2009 general election than about how to help Bharata win. Meanwhile, Ace's team provided T-shirts, rather than party paraphernalia, which seemed to help supporters identify with the candidate personally, in a case of what Buehler describes as 'the individualisation of Indonesian politics.'⁷¹

Doing deals or accepting defeat: oligarchy or democracy?

Immediately after the election result was announced, Bharata's team declared that they would contest it via a legal challenge. During the preliminary hearing, however, his lawyers announced that they 'agreed to keep peace in the interest and aspiration of Gianyar people' (*Kita bersepakat damai demi kepentingan dan aspirasi masyarakat Gianyar*).⁷² On the same day, Bharata held a meeting at his *puri*, attended by his various supporters, including senior representatives of sixteen *puri* throughout Gianyar. Those attending the meeting were reported to have agreed that there was no need to prolong the tensions of the *pilkada* and that Bharata had accepted the result of the election. His decision was praised as demonstrating the qualities of a gentlemen and statesman (*bersikap ksatria dan negarawan*).⁷³ In fact, it subsequently became clear that this was what Bharata had wanted to do all along, but that he had been persuaded to mount the legal challenge by the PDI-P hierarchy.

Since this time, Bharata and Ace have met, although the substance of their conversation is not known. Bharata also attended Ace's inauguration ceremony in Gianyar, where the two men were photographed shaking hands. One of Ace's promises has been to promote tourism in east Gianyar, using the *puri* as a centerpiece.

Evidence from elsewhere in Indonesia suggests that behind façades of electoral contest, local elites often look after each other via various forms of collusion, in effect forming political 'cartels' through which benefits are shared among a cross-party elite, none of whom really loses.⁷⁴ The evidence above might be taken to suggest a similar process in Gianyar, but we see no reason to believe that any collusion is taking place.

Firstly, if there were collusion it was not between parties but between *puri*, and it would have been based not so much on short-term political expediency as on long historical precedent. Secondly, there is little in either this history or the events of the *pilkada* to suggest either reason for or inclination to collusion between Ubud and Gianyar. Thirdly, the inability of either PDI-P Gianyar or Puri Ubud to achieve high levels of internal cohesion renders pan-elite collusion, let alone oligarchy, a somewhat unlikely scenario. Fourthly, Cok Ace's lack of political experience and networks, as well as his radically individualistic approach to politics, suggest that collusion is not his style. In fact, his success in 2008 was seen locally as a kind of revenge for his failure in 2003. Finally, if there were collusion, one place we might expect to see it is in the distribution of consolation prizes in the form of senior administrative positions. This redistribution (*mutasi*) occurred on 1 September 2008, and it too provides no evidence of cross-party elite collusion. What evidence it does provide suggests, once again, the real political significance of *puri*, village and caste affiliations.⁷⁵

It might be argued also that the monopoly of aristocrats in the candidature of both parties is *prima facie* evidence of (continued aristocratic) oligarchy. It is true that the aristocrats in this region have long monopolised these contests, but to reduce this pattern to 'oligarchy' in the sense in which Robison and Hadiz use the term is to miss their point, as well as ours, about local variation and local

understandings. Aristocratic monopoly of the formal political process is, for most people of our acquaintance in the Ubud/Gianyar region, simply a self-evident fact of nature. While there have been non-aristocratic candidates in other *pilkada* in Bali, some of them successful, there have to date been none in Gianyar, nor have we heard anyone suggest that there should be — leadership at this level is seen as the proper business of the aristocracy. What is significant, however, is that the relationships between the *puri* of Ubud and Gianyar are, and historically have nearly always been, competitive rather than collusive, and that those between the candidates in this *pilkada* were exceptionally so. While we have argued that parties were not central in this *pilkada*, we are not suggesting that they are irrelevant. We would expect that they are likely to invest more heavily in the subsequent gubernatorial election, in which the *puri* of Ubud and Gianyar once again found themselves on opposite sides.

Conclusions

Our main conclusions regarding the earlier (2005) *pilkada* concerned the roles of two emerging forces in contemporary local politics in Bali: the various forms of political capital derived from old structures of meaning and social organisation dating back to precolonial times, and the dominant role of the media in managing flows of information that framed the electoral process, a role that gained the media considerable moral if not political capital. Three years later, in *pilkada* Gianyar 2008, both these trends continued, but they took on more specific local forms, grounded in both historical political culture and contemporary political economy.

The electoral contest between the *puri* of Ubud and Gianyar is not a case of old ruling families re-emerging, or even of a ‘traditionalisation’ of contemporary politics. It is a case of a contemporary political process being used, and indeed becoming a venue, for both the ambitions of individuals and for the continuation of an historical struggle between rival ruling houses. The roots of this struggle go back to the birth of the *kabupaten* itself. The contemporary struggle between these two houses is not merely a ‘political’ one, in the contemporary/secular sense of the word; it is also a struggle for moral,

even spiritual, ascendancy among a population and in a landscape imbued with moral and political meanings, old as well as new. Neither the campaigns nor the outcome of the election make much sense without this understanding.

As we have discussed above, neither party machines nor policies were irrelevant, and campaign teams played important roles in this *pilkada*. But what seems more than anything to have decided the outcome were the candidates themselves, their reputations, their public profiles (in which the media played a significant part) as well as their less public networks of affiliation. For both candidates, as we have seen, traditional loyalties played an important role, but the media also played an important part, but this media factor was to considerable extent correlated with the financial resources of the candidates.

And finally, while this *pilkada* may not have been quite the ‘peaceful festival of democracy’ its supporters like to claim, it was a relatively orderly and nonviolent affair, very different from disruptive, even deadly *pilkada* in other parts of Indonesia, such as Tuban, East Java, in 2006, and South Sulawesi in 2007–08, or even Buleleng in 2005.⁷⁶ If there is credit to be allocated for this civil behavior, it is perhaps due partly to the media, ironically because of the (at least political) impartiality of their editorial/commercial practice. It is also significant that, in this case, the loser accepted the outcome, if not especially gracefully. But underlying both these conditions was the deep value placed by all parties in Bali on the maintenance of peace and order, for the sake, if nothing else, of tourism revenues.

As to the larger question of whether all this should be read as evidence of emerging democracy, a perpetuation of oligarchy, or something else, it depends perhaps on the standards one chooses to apply. During the late New Order period in Bali, *politik* itself was a dirty word. ‘Politicians’ were appointees in a top-down system of patronage — middle-ranking participants and beneficiaries, in no way accountable to the public. Political criticism of any kind was tantamount to admission of communist sympathies. The 2005 and 2008 *pilkada* in Bali suggest that this is changing. Firstly, while people may not have great confidence or trust in the new breed of politicians, they at least feel

they have some say in their selection and the right to disagree with and criticize them. Secondly, while aristocratic candidates still monopolise the process in Gianyar, for reasons discussed above, they do not in the many other districts of Bali and will not necessarily continue to do so in Gianyar. Thirdly, while there is a discernable pattern and logic to the sequence of *bupati* elected in Gianyar, it is attributable more to local historical and socio-cultural understandings of political order than to collusion, the formation of cartels, or other manifestations of an emerging 'Indonesian politics.' While we have not referred here to *pilkada* in other districts of Bali, let alone further afield, we suggest that they too may usefully be understood in terms of such historically informed local logics.

A friend in Ubud, openly skeptical of the pretensions of *puri* and politicians alike, intended to express this by marking the names of both candidates on his paper ballot (*golput*) in order to render it invalid. He is, however, of *puri* descent himself, and when he went to vote, his nephew was there, in his capacity as a local official, helping to oversee the ballot. This nephew felt a filial obligation to support his *puri*, and our friend felt a similar obligation to his nephew, and thus he ultimately voted for Cok Ace in spite of his reservations. As he explained afterwards to his (Western) wife, 'tribalism runs deep,' and 'We are not ready for democracy yet.' Perhaps not, but on one hand, his words reflect the local, historically informed analysis that is the basis of our argument and, on the other hand, they demonstrate that there is at least the space for something like democracy to grow.

So, as the politics of the New Order, and now its architect, Suharto himself, begin to fade into the past, the slow, faltering process of developing a modern post-authoritarian political system moves forward in small, distinctively local steps such as this 'festival of democracy.' Indeed as we write this conclusion, the outgoing governor of Bali is announcing plans for the next 'party of democracy' — the forthcoming gubernatorial elections 'featuring Balinese culture, dances, and local parades that he feels are certain to be found interesting by tourist visitors.'⁷⁷ Politics, not long ago the *bête noir* of Balinese public life, may be destined, suitably repackaged as culture, to become its next tourist attraction.

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Notes

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2. Pemberton 1994:2–7.
3. *Pilkada* are conducted under regional government law No 32/2004, a revision of the original decentralisation law No. 22/1999. Under the earlier law, regional district heads were elected by regional members of parliament, but this was changed because of widely known, but difficult to prove, 'money politics'. The first rounds of *pilkada* in June 2005 were for 11 governors, 176 district heads, and 36 mayors throughout the country. For discussions of this see Schulte Nordholt 2007:69–70 and Vel 2005:83.
4. 'Cok' (or Ck.) is a standard abbreviation of Cokorda, an aristocratic title generally (but not universally) regarded as a notch above Anak Agung. Tj. is the abbreviation of Tjokorde, the old Dutch spelling still affected by some Cokorda, notably in *puri* with strong connections to the Dutch during the colonial period.
5. Arsana, *Bali Post* 5 October 2007.
6. On 'collusion' and 'cartels', see Slater 2004. On 'oligarchy' see Robison and Hadiz, 2004.

7. Geertz (1963:82–3) describes the ways in which Balinese aristocrats in the immediate postcolonial period shifted their attention from politics to business.
8. MacRae and Darma Putra 2007:171–89. A number of authors had already argued that the aristocracy has been gaining political power since *Reformasi* and the introduction of *pilkada*. These include Vel 2005, Cribb 2006, Klinken (forthcoming) and Buehler 2007b. Another argument, that the aristocracy never really lost their authority during the New Order was made earlier by Magenda 1991.
9. Geertz 1980. He also refers to the use of a similar *modus operandi* in developing their business interests, by Tabanan aristocrats in the 1950s (1963:105–6). Our use of the metaphor of (political) ‘capital’ is of course derived from Bourdieu (for example, Bourdieu 1994).
10. In fact the aristocratic candidates were not particularly successful, winning only three of the nine positions contested in the 2005 and 2008 *pilkada*.
11. MacRae and Darma Putra 2007. See also Juniarta 2008.
12. Neither of us is a political scientist. Darma Putra’s expertise is in Balinese literature, media and cultural identity. He is also a former journalist who knows the Balinese political scene and many of its key players well. MacRae is an anthropologist, whose main research has been in Ubud, and where he has had a long interest in the *puri* and local attitudes to politics.
13. Geriya, *Bali Post*, 30 January, 2008); Adnyana, *Bali Post*, 31 January, 2008.
14. The passage reads somewhat awkwardly in English, but we settled for a more or less literal translation (by Darma Putra). The original (also somewhat awkward) Indonesian is as follows: ‘Sinyal ranah pilkada bergerak ke arah damai tampak makin fenomenal. Setelah Pilkada DKI sebagai contoh daerah metropolitan, giliran Pilkada Gianyar sebagai contoh kabupaten seni menyuguhkan pilkada aman dan damai. Dalam konteks Bali, sebelumnya Pilkada Badung, Karangasem dan Denpasar juga mewujudkan hal serupa. Rantai ini merupakan modal sosial yang amat penting untuk menyongsong Pilkada Bali 2008, serta Pemilu dan Pilpres 2009.’
15. On New Order discourse, see Pemberton 1994:2–7. On discourses concerning peace and safety in Bali, see MacRae 2003. On this election, see *Bali Post* 5 December 2007; *Radar Bali* 29 December 2007; *Bali Post* 8 January 2008.
16. *Bali Post* 8 January 2008; see also *Ajeg Bali* 2008:4. The publisher of the tabloid *Ajeg Bali* is not noted; it should not be confused with publications by the Bali Post media group promoting the Ajeg Bali movement.
17. The campaigns were fought by pairs of candidates for the positions of *bupati* and deputy *bupati*. The deputies are frequently individuals whose caste

- status differs from that of their partners, the respective head candidates, presumably to broaden appeal to a wider sector of the electorate. In this case, Cok Ace's deputy was Dewa (a lower aristocratic title) Made Sutanaya, and AA Bharata's was Putu Yudha Thema. The names of the teams were abbreviated respectively as AS and BaYu, but for convenience we will refer to them here by the names of the head candidates.
18. *Bali Post* 30 December 2007; *Denpost* 31 December 2007.
 19. *Bali Post* 17 October 2007.
 20. *Radar Bali* 3 January 2008.
 21. *Bali Post* 19 June 2005.
 22. The grandmother of Guruh and Megawati was Balinese. Guruh is known as a lover of Balinese culture. He has studied Balinese dance, created a dance group, and used Peliatan village, next to Ubud, as a base for training. This was not the first time, and neither was it surprising, for Guruh to wear Balinese attire in a political campaign.
 23. *NusaBali* 20 January 2008.
 24. *Radar Bali* 7 January 2008.
 25. *Bali Post* 8 January 2008.
 26. *Bali Post* 8 January 2008.
 27. *Bali Post* 9 January 2008.
 28. *NusaBali* 9 January 2008; *Bali Post* 12 January 2008.
 29. *Bali Post* 12 January 2008. The system does seem to provide ample scope for this kind of cheating. Friends in Ubud report that they 'received voting cards not only in Ubud but also in T [where they have another house]?' Another reported, 'I am not a citizen so I shouldn't have received one [vote card] (much less two).' Yet another: 'Our Japanese daughter-in-law also received a voting card, and so did an elderly relative who died recently.'
 30. *Bali Post* 16 January 2008; *NusaBali* 16 January 2008.
 31. *Bali Post* 23 December 2007; *Bali Post* 18 December 2007.
 32. In his campaign in Blahbatuh subdistrict on 2 January 2008, Ace signed an Memorandum of Understanding with companies that channel Gianyar workers to overseas enterprises tourism enterprises, especially those that run cruise ships. Many skilled hospitality workers reside in Gianyar, and in Bali generally, and since the bombings diminished employment opportunities locally, a number of workers have sought higher paid work on international cruise ships. *Radar Bali* 24 January 2008.
 33. *Radar Bali* 22 January 2008.
 34. Historical material in this and the following section is, unless otherwise noted, drawn largely from MacRae's previous research (1977, 1999, 2005).
 35. Kabupaten Tingkat II Gianyar, 1994:5–6.

36. Robinson 1995:213–14. The rumors suggested that the CIA was complicit in this plot.
37. Robinson 1995:294.
38. Robinson 1995:103,170–3.
39. Hilbery 1979:32–3.
40. Robinson 1995:173.
41. AAG Agung officially became a ‘national hero’ on 11 November, 2007, on Hero’s Day (Hari Pahlawan), and there was an immediate chorus of protest via ‘letters to the editor’ in local media. See *Bali Post* 15 November 2007a; *Bali Post* 15 November 2007b; *Bali Post* 16 November 2007. There were also voices raised in support of the award *Bali Post* 23 November 2007.
42. Wiener 1995:243.
43. Manggis is a fruit of distinctive dark red color.
44. *Bali Post* 11 October 2007.
45. *Bali Post* 19 October 2007; *Bali Post* 6 January 2008; *Bali Post* 7 January 2008.
46. Calonarang is a traditional play performed at certain temple festivals and is especially popular with young men.
47. The law in question is Undang-Undang Nomor 32 Tahun 2004 Tentang Pemerintahan Daerah.. A subsequent revision (12/2008, especially Article 59, Points 1 and 2) to this law makes allowance for independent candidates as long as they are supported by at least 6.5 per cent to 3 per cent, according to the population of the district.
48. Partai Demokrat supported Cok Ace to run in the *pilkada*. Cok Ace and Puri Ubud appeared to have a close connection with Partai Demokrat through its local leadership. National President Susilo Bambang Yudhyono (SBY) has also made several visits to Puri Ubud, where he was welcomed publicly by Cok Ace. See *Pilkada Bali 2008*.
49. Cok Raka Kerthiyasa claims he was only shown the summary of the poll, not the detailed results, and he expressed reservations about its accuracy. Cok Raka Kerthiyasa, personal communication with Darma Putra, Denpasar, 31 December, 2007.
50. *Bali Post* 2 September 2007.
51. *Radar Bali* 19 January 2008:32.
52. Cok Raka Kerthiyasa, personal communication.
53. *Bali Post* 6 October 2007; *Bali Post* 8 October 2007. Also personal communication with a KRG PR officer, 6 April 2008.
54. The selection process used by PDI–P is widely considered to be undemocratic. Although candidates are nominated from the lowest levels of the party organisation, and elected by a local convention, in the end it has been the national leader of PDI–P, Megawati, who appoints the candidate.

55. I Nyoman Wilasa (a journalist who covered the Gianyar election for *NusaBali*), personal communication with Darma Putra, Denpasar, 20 January 2008.
56. *Radar Bali* 24 January 2008.
57. *beritabali.com*, 14 September 2007.
58. *Bali Post* 4 March 2008.
59. MacRae and Darma Putra 2007; see also Schulte Nordholt 2007:54–60.
60. I Nyoman Wirata, managing editor of the *Bali Post*, personal communication with Darma Putra, 11 January 2008. See also Juniarta 2008.
61. Wirata, personal communication.
62. *Radar Bali* 29 December 2007.
63. By mid-2008 however, a reaction to BPMG's policy seemed to have begun, as one of us (MacRae) observed significant numbers of people in Ubud shifting their daily reading to *NusaBali* or *Radar Bali* on the grounds that they were more 'independent' or more 'critical'.
64. *Bali Post* 7 January 2008.
65. *Bali Post* 31 December 2007. *Bali Post* did in fact check and confirm the factual basis Suryawan's claim before publishing it.
66. *Bali Post* 24 November 2007.
67. BPMG claims that *Bali Post* has a circulation of ninety thousand (in a population of slightly over three million), but informed observers believe this is hugely exaggerated. Literacy levels are likewise not well documented. Our own experiences, however, lead us to agree that the BPMG media outlets are preferred by most people, particularly in more conservative areas such as Gianyar.
68. *Bali Post* 31 October 2007; *Bali Post* 4 January 2008.
69. Vel 2005:83, Buehler 2007b.
70. *NusaBali* 15 January 2008.
71. Buehler 2007a:6. Slater (2004:62) makes a similar point about the career of SBY at a national level.
72. *Radar Bali* 7 February 2008.
73. *Bali Post* 8 February 2008.
74. Slater 2004:64, fn 8. Buehler (2007a) argues that there is 'fierce and genuine competition between the elites' in South Sulawesi.
75. Most of Bharata's senior staff were shifted sideways into 'expert staff' positions with some residual face-saving status but no real power. The one exception was the district secretary, Cok Nindia, from Puri Peliatan, a close relative of Cok Ace. Another striking promotion was that of a neighbour of Ace's, from another *puri* in Ubud to the position of head of Department of

- Program Planning, one of the more powerful departments. Also striking was the appointment of a significant number of officer of the Dewa caste, that of Ace's running mate, Dewa Sutanya.
76. DetikNews 2006, See also Kompas 2008.
77. Balidiscovery 2008.

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