Balinese religion in search of recognition

From *Agama Hindu Bali* to *Agama Hindu* (1945-1965)

Bali is commonly depicted, by foreign observers as well as by the Balinese themselves, as an island of Hinduism in a sea of Islam.¹ Yet, such a cliché, which differentiates the Balinese from other ethnic groups in Indonesia, is misleading. It raises two problems. The first one has to do with the predicament one faces when attempting to establish the extent to which the rites practised by the Balinese actually fall within the scope of Hinduism. As my purpose is not to assess whether the Balinese are Hindu – nor even whether they are becoming Hindu – I will not deal with this problematic issue here.

But there is a second problem, which stems from the claim that the Balinese have been successful in defending their religion against the encroachment of Islam. Yet, by implying that they faithfully adhere to their religious traditions, one fails to take into account the deliberate movement of Hinduization in which the Balinese have been engaged since the incorporation of their island into the Dutch colonial empire at the turn of the twentieth century. What is more, the recognition of Balinese religion as *Agama Hindu* is the outcome of a contentious history, which appears to have been erased from the memory of most Balinese. Besides, some foreign observers have tended to imply that, despite the highly volatile situation on the island in the 1950s, the threat posed by Islam was deemed serious enough for Balinese leaders of different political persuasions to close ranks in defence of their religious identity (Bakker 1993:225-30; Robinson 1995:183-4). Yet, research into contemporary written evidence provides a different picture, one that reveals sharp disagreement among Balinese reformers, not only about the strategy to be pursued but even more as regards the very conception of their religion. Hence the

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importance of retracing processes through which and contexts within which the Balinese religion came to be construed as *Agama Hindu.*

After Indonesia’s proclamation of independence, the question of the foundation of the new state came rapidly to a head, pitting the ‘Islamic group’ (*golongan Islam*) against the ‘nationalist group’ (*golongan kebangsaan*). The former, confident that they represented an overwhelming majority of the Indonesian people, wanted to establish an Islamic state (*Negara Islam*), whereas their opponents, concerned that such a decision would alienate Christians and other religious minorities, argued in favour of a state in which religious and secular affairs would be kept separate. This confrontation resulted in a compromise: the Indonesian state placed ‘belief in the One and Only God’ (*Ke-Tuhanan Jang Maha Esa*) first among its founding principles (*Pantjasila*), without making Islam an official or even privileged religion. As a concession to the Islamic group, however, a Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia (*KAGRI, Ministry of Religion*) was established in January 1946. Initially set up to advance Muslim interests, the KAGRI was expanded from the start to include separate sections for the Protestant and Roman Catholic faiths, thereby acknowledging Christianity as a legitimate religion of the Book (Boland 1982:105-12; Howell 1982).

Whereas the 1945 Constitution guaranteed Indonesian citizens the freedom to profess and to practise their own religion, the KAGRI endeavoured to restrict the legal acceptance of acknowledged religions, according to the Islamic view of what constitutes a legitimate *agama.* While the word *agama* in Indonesia is commonly translated as ‘religion’, it is actually a peculiar combination of a Christian view of what counts as a world religion with an Islamic understanding of what defines a proper religion – divine revelation recorded by a prophet in a holy book, a system of law for the community of believers, congregational worship, and a belief in the One and Only God.

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2 Although there have been a few publications by both Balinese and foreign academics about the efforts of Balinese intellectuals to reform their religion and make it acceptable to their fellow Indonesians, none provides enough historical evidence to allow the reader to grasp the full implications of this movement (see Anandakusuma 1966; Bagus 1972; Suaryana 1982; Diantari 1990; Subagiasta 2009; Wijaya 2009; as well as Swellengrebel 1960; Geertz 1964; Forge 1980; Rudyansjah 1986; Bakker 1993, 1995; Howe 2001; Ramstedt 2004).

3 At the proposal of a representative from Bali, I Goesti Kegoet Poedja, the Malay word *Tuhan,* meaning ‘Lord’, was chosen rather than the Arabic name *Allah,* in order to avoid the latter’s Islamic connotation (Boland 1982:37).

4 Article 29, section 2, of the 1945 Constitution reads as follows: 1. The State is based upon the belief in the One and Only God. 2. The State guarantees the freedom of each inhabitant to embrace his/her respective religion and to worship according to his/her religion and belief. The interpretation of the notion of ‘belief’ (*kepertjajaan*) and the way it related to ‘religion’ (*agama*) was to be the cause of much controversy, as opinions on the matter diverged widely: in the eyes of the Islamic group the Constitution only recognized *agama,* while to the group of nationalists it distinguished *agama* from *kepertjajaan* and recognized the legitimacy of both.
So much so that, even if Islam failed to establish itself as the official religion of Indonesia, its proponents succeeded in imposing their own conception of the relationship between religion and the state, by framing and shaping all debates about religion.

According to the conditions stipulated by the KAGRI, the Balinese did not profess a proper ‘religion’ (agama) but possessed only ‘beliefs’ (kepert- jajaan), which were not only limited to their island, but also did not even form a coherent and unified ensemble valid for the whole island. As a result, like other ethnic minorities who still practise their traditional religion, the Balinese were classified as people who ‘do not yet have a religion’ (belum beragama), a label associated with primitive backwardness and parochialism. Consequently, if the Balinese did not want to become the target of Muslim or Christian proselytizing, they had no other recourse than to reform their religion in order to make it eligible for the status of agama.

In fact, the movement to reform the Balinese religion had been going on since the colonial era, when an emerging intellectual elite educated in Dutch schools began to question the foundations of their identity. They set up organizations and published periodicals, mostly devoted to issues pertaining to religion and social order. In these publications, written in Malay, the Balinese construed their identity – which they called their ‘Balineseness’ (Kebalian) – as being based on agama and on adat. The very fact that the Balinese resorted to these terms to define their identity testifies to the conceptual shift occurring on their island after its takeover by an alien power.

Although agama is a Sanskrit loanword, it has acquired a signification in Indonesia that is different from the one it has in India. According to Jan Gonda, ‘In Sanskrit agama [...], designates “a traditional precept, doctrine, body of precepts, collection of such doctrines”; in short, “anything handed down as fixed by tradition”; it is, moreover, the name of a class of works inculcating the so-called tantric worship of Śiva and Śakti. In Old Javanese it could apply to a body of customary law or a Dharma-book, and to religious or moral traditions’ (Gonda 1973:499). Surprisingly few authors appear to have wondered how a Sanskrit loanword so laden with Indic references could have come to designate an Islamic conception of what ‘religion’ is about.

It seems that, in the manner of what occurred to the notion of dharma in India, the legal and religious components of agama became dissociated in Indonesia when, through its adoption by Islam and later on by Christianity, agama took

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5 The use of Malay, rather than Balinese, to address Balinese topics destined for a Balinese readership, indicates that the intelligentsia were conscious of being an integral part of a larger entity, due to the integration of their island into the colonial state. Thus, the same process which prompted the Balinese to question their identity was dispossessing them of their own words, by inducing them to think about themselves in a language which was not their own but one used by their fellow countrymen and colonial masters.
on the meaning of ‘religion’. By appropriating this term, proponents of both these faiths shaped new associations for it, namely an emphasis on a supreme being, the requirement of conversion to a foreign doctrine whose teachings are contained in a holy book, and an ideal of social progress. Thereafter, Muslims and Christians imposed their own doctrines on prevalent practices, rejected as ‘paganism’, as a set of false beliefs scorned as superstitions.

By taking on the meaning of ‘religion’, agama was not only dissociated from ‘law’ but also from ‘tradition’, which is rendered by the Arabic loan-word adat. For the Indonesian peoples, adat refers both to a divine cosmic order and to the social order established accordingly by their ancestors, at once describing the ideal order and prescribing the behaviour required to sustain that order. This significance of adat was fragmented by Islam – followed by Christianity – which strove to curtail the religious dimension of adat by confining it to the customs of a people. Specifically, the word adat entered the language of Islamized populations to refer to indigenous ‘customary law’ as opposed to Islamic ‘religious law’.

In Bali, the use of the words adat and agama in the sense of ‘tradition’ and ‘religion’ dates back to colonial times. The term adat replaced a diverse terminology for customs that varied locally, customs which govern the relationships between social groups and sanction the sense of communal solidarity in the villages (Warren 1993:4). As for the word agama, it has retained its original polysemy, referring at once to ‘religion’ (agama), ‘law’ (hukum) and ‘customs’ (adat-istiadat) (Warna 1990:7). Thus, in the catalogue of the Kirtya Library, established in 1928 by the colonial government in Singaraja to collect Balinese manuscripts, the entry agama refers to legal and political literature related to the Indian Dharmashastra and Nitishastra (Kadjeng 1929). There is no entry corresponding to the category ‘religion’ – nor is there one for adat.

On the other hand, in Balinese publications of the 1920s and 1930s, the word agama was constantly used in the sense of ‘religion’, as authors and commentators attempted to place their own religion on an equal standing with Islam and Christianity, in order to resist their proselytizing (Picard 1999, 2008). Confronted with Muslim schoolteachers and Christian missionaries, the Balinese were challenged to formulate what exactly their religion was about.

Debates about the nature of Balinese religion and calls for its reform were to continue unabated until the Japanese invasion of the archipelago in 1942. Yet, while a number of changes to Balinese religion had been advocated during the colonial era, no consensus had been reached on the direction that reform should take. Once their island had become part of the Republic of Indonesia, the social pressures under which Balinese reformers had initiated their religious inquiries grew into an undisguised threat, lending a sense of urgency among the intelligentsia about the polemics surrounding their religion.

The first question to be settled among the Balinese was agreement about
the name of their religion. Following a protracted controversy, leaders of competing Balinese religious organizations resolved to name their religion *Agama Hindu Bali* (Balinese Hindu religion). Once they had reached an agreement among themselves, the Balinese still had to convince the KAGRI of the legitimacy of their religion. It would take them years of lobbying before the *Agama Hindu Bali* was finally established within the KAGRI. While the name *Hindu Bali* implied a recognition of the distinctive ethnic component of the Balinese Hindu religion, it would eventually be replaced by the more inclusive name *Agama Hindu* (Hindu religion).

**In search of a name**

The controversy over the proper name of their religion, which for years divided the Balinese intelligentsia, reveals profound divergences regarding the main points in debate, that is, how *agama* is related to *adat* on the one hand, and how Balinese religion is linked to Hinduism on the other. It further evinces a contest between the rising elite of educated commoners and the conservative nobility – especially the *Brahmana*, eager to preserve their monopoly on initiated priesthood – in their attempt to hold sway over the religious life of the Balinese people.

On 22 April 1945, a delegation of 17 *pedanda* from all over Bali, calling themselves the *Paroeman Pandita Dharma*, gathered in Klungkung under the aegis of the Japanese authorities and in the presence of the rajas to discuss the name of the Balinese religion and to strengthen its foundations. The *pedanda* resolved to name their religion *Agama Siwa* and to choose as their highest deity Siwa Raditija, that is, Siwa as the Sun God (Sanghjang Soerja) (*Bali*

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6 In the past, the Balinese had no generic name to designate what would later on become their ‘religion’, as they did not regard it as a bounded field demarcated from other aspects of their life. Once they had adopted the word *agama*, they started referring to their religion simply as *Agama Bali* or *Agama Tirta*, which in the latter case refers to the holy water required for most religious rites. When a number of Balinese converted to Islam or Christianity the expressions *Hindu Bali* and *Bali Hindu* became customary, in order to distinguish the Balinese Hindu religion from *Islam Bali* or *Kristen Bali*. One also encountered *Agama Siwa* and *Agama Buda*, pertaining to the two categories of *pedanda*, the initiated *Brahmana* high priests – the *pedanda Siwa* and the *pedanda Buda*. The appellation *Agama Siwa-Buda* pointed more specifically to the Tantric fusion of Shaivism and Buddhism in East Java in the late thirteenth century, from where it spread to Bali. *Agama Trimurti* was occasionally advocated with reference to the Hindu triad, Brahma, Wisnu and Iswara. Finally, there is *Agama Hindu* which refers either to the religion practised in India or to the religion of the Balinese. But even the Balinese who called their religion *Agama Hindu* were aware that the word ‘Hindu’ only became known in Bali in the twentieth century (Picard 2004).

7 The Balinese nobility is composed of the *triwangsa* (literally, the ‘three peoples’ – *Brahmana, Satria* and *Wesia*), as opposed to the commoners (*jaba*, literally the ‘outsiders’, that is, those who are outside the sphere of the courts), who make up the bulk of the population.
Sinbun, 22-4-1945). It seems that this was a manoeuvre to affiliate the Balinese religion with Shintoism, by way of assimilating Tirta with Sindu, and Sindu with Shinto (Wijaya 2009:338-42).

After the capitulation of Japan, the power elite of the triwangsa attempted to reassert the prerogatives they had managed to safeguard during the colonial era, and especially to uphold their customary authority in religious matters. On 31 January 1947, an association of pedanda was founded in Singaraja, the Paruman Para Pandita (PPP), chaired by Ida Pedanda Made Kamenuh. With the backing of the Dewan Radja-Radja (Kings’ Council), which had been established as a political counterweight to the Republican administration, the association, initially limited to Buleleng, widened its scope and subsequently became the Paruman Para Pandita Bali Lombok. The aim of this organization, officially established on 6 November 1948, was to unify the Agama Siwa-Budha while adapting the adat prevailing in Bali and Lombok to contemporary social conditions (Kamenuh 1978).

On 16-19 November 1949, the Paruman Para Pandita Bali Lombok held its first congress in Singaraja, in the presence of most of the raja. The main point on the agenda was the name of the Balinese religion, about which no less than two days of debate were necessary to assess the respective merits of Tirtha, Siwa, Siwa-Budha, Hindu Bali and Hindu, before a majority of pedanda and raja finally settled for Agama Tirtha, all the while asserting that only the pedanda Siwa and Budha had the authority to ordain candidates to the priesthood.9

8 In 1938, the power of the eight former Balinese raja had been restored by the Dutch colonial government, and their principalities were recognized as zelfbesturende landschappen (self-governing states). Paroeman Negara (Advisory Councils) were set up within each state, while a Paroeman Agoeng (Great Council), consisting of zelfbestuurders and their advisers, was established in Denpasar in an attempt to facilitate concerted action in matters of common concern. In August 1945, the island of Bali became a daerah (region) within the Propinsi Sunda Ketjil (Lesser Sunda Islands) established by the Republican government, with its capital in Singaraja and with Goesti Ketoet Poedja as governor. In March 1946, when the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA) resumed control of Bali and re-established the Residency of Bali and Lombok, the Paruman Agung was reinstated. In December 1946, Bali became part of the Negara Indonesia Timur (State of East Indonesia), set up by the Dutch to hold off the Indonesian Republic based in Java and Sumatra. In February 1947, the Paruman Agung was replaced by two distinct bodies: a Dewan Radja-Radja (Kings’ Council) and a Dewan Perwakilan Rakjat (People’s Representative Assembly, which retained the name Paruman Agung). The powers entrusted to the assembly were extremely limited, and the government was headed by the raja, under the supervision of the Dutch Resident. In March 1949, the Residency of Bali and Lombok was abolished and civil authority transferred to the Dewan Radja-Radja. On the political situation in Bali during these years of turmoil, see Propinsi Sunda Ketjil 1953:32-64; Last 1955; Pendit 1979; Agung 1985; and especially Robinson 1995.

9 Notulen PPP 1949. The question of priesthood in Bali is complex, the more so as it is contentious, owing to its link to the hierarchy of the title groups. One can distinguish two categories of priests, according to the conditions governing eligibility for membership. The first one, which requires only a purification ceremony (pawintenan), comprises mostly priests who serve a particular temple (pemangku), puppeteers (mangku dalang), as well as mediums and healers (balian). The second category, reserved for those who undergo an initiation (padiksan), is monopolized...
While the *pedanda* were buttressing their authority, young Balinese studying in Java and Sulawesi sent delegates to a conference (Konperensi Peladjar Seberang) that took place on 14-17 July 1950 in Denpasar. A Badan Kordinator Usaha Peladjar (BKUP, Coordinating Committee of High School Students) was set up in Malang, which addressed a series of demands to both the Balinese authorities and the PPP: that they come to an agreement regarding the name of the Balinese religion; that the ceremonies be simplified in order to reduce their cost and be standardized throughout the whole island; that the *pedanda* instruct their flock on the meaning of their ceremonies and publish didactic brochures on religious matters; and that customary laws which are no longer in keeping with the times be abolished (*Keputusan Konperensi 1950; Suariyana 1982:34-7*).

In September 1950, after the proclamation of the unitary Republic of Indonesia, the Dewan Radja-Radja and the Paruman Agung were abolished, to be replaced by the Dewan Pemerintah Daerah (DPD, Regional Government Council, the executive authority on the island) and the Dewan Perwakilan Rakjat Daerah Sementara (DPRDS, the Provisional Regional People’s Representative Assembly, endowed with legislative authority). Shortly thereafter, a Provincial Office of the KAGRI (Kantor Urusan Agama Propinsi Nusa Tenggara, KUAP) was established in Singaraja, while a Regional Office of the KAGRI (Kantor Urusan Agama Daerah Bali, KUAD) was opened in Denpasar. Both these offices dealt exclusively with *Agama Islam*. The Balinese religion was consequently left in a vacuum, now that its former patrons, the raja of yore, had been replaced by the Republican government.

The Dewan Pemerintah Daerah – in the case in point, I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa, a scholar who was in charge of religious and cultural matters (Sugriwa 1973) – formally requested the KAGRI to recognize the Balinese religion on a par with Islam and Christianity. In response, a delegation from the KAGRI, led personally by the Minister himself, paid a visit to Bali on 26 December 1950, to inquire about the religious situation on the island. The Minister asked about the name of the religion professed by the Balinese, that of its God, of its prophet and of its holy book, the purpose of its ceremonies and the theological tenets of its creed.

Sugriwa replied that Balinese religion is called *Agama Hindu Bali*. He explained that ‘Hindu in Bali refers to Siwa Buddha, that is, Hinduism of Brahma priests (*pedanda*). This privilege has been challenged by the main *jaba* title groups (mostly, *Pasek, Pande* and *Bhujangga Waisnawa*), who have endeavoured to abrogate the monopoly of the *pedanda* over the ordination of priests with the aim of imposing the use of their own priests – *empu, bhujangga, resi, bhagawan* and *dukuh* – alongside the *pedanda* (Pitana 1999; Setia 2001).

The DPD’s chairman became the regional head (*kepala daerah*) of Bali. Chosen by the central government from the nominees of the DPRDS, the first incumbent was Anak Agung Bagus Sut-edja, a *Satria* from the Jembrana ruling house. Representative assemblies and executive councils were established in each of the former principalities, headed by their respective raja. 
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the Siwa sect and Buddhism of the Mahayana sect, merged with the Balinese religion, which explains why there are priests of Siwa, priests of Buddha, as well as numerous priests of the Balinese religion’ (Sugriwa 1973:8). He denied that the Balinese were polytheists as, in conformity with the Pantjasila, they worship the One and Only God (Sanghjang Tunggal). In return, Sugriwa demanded that the KAGRI take over the religious obligations which were formerly the responsibility of the raja (Guru Wisesa) and, in particular, that it maintain the Pura Penataran Agung in Besakih and finance its rituals; fund the translation of Old Javanese religious manuscripts into Indonesian; support the pedanda as well as the pemangku; and establish representation for the Balinese religion within the KAGRI, not only in Jakarta but also in its provincial and regional offices. In the end – and despite some conciliatory promises – only a contribution to translation costs was granted by the Minister (Anandakusuma 1966:84-5; Sugriwa 1973:6-8).

A few days later, on 31 December 1950, the Madjelis Hinduisme was founded in Klungkung by I Gusti Anandakusuma and Ida Bagus Toegoer. The aim of this council was to adapt the Hindu religion (Agama Hindu) in Bali to the conditions of the time, to purify adat from customs that had become obsolete, and to remove any trace of ‘animism’ (animisme) from Balinese religious practices.11

On 6 February 1951, the Panti Agama Hindu-Bali (PAHB) was established in Singaraja, under the leadership of Ida Pedanda Gede Ngendjung and Wajan Bhadra, with the following aims: unifying the Agama Hindu-Bali by deepening and spreading the knowledge of its philosophy, simplifying its ceremonies and reducing costs, and getting rid of outdated customs (Anggaran Dasar PAHB 1951; Ngendjung 1951). Although a pedanda presided over the PAHB,12 most of its members were commoners (among them were Ketut Kandia, Ketut Widjana, Njoman Kadjeng, Putu Shanty, as well as Gusti Bagus Sugriwa). They adopted a ‘progressive’ (progressief) stance, aimed particularly at the pedanda assembled in the PPP, whom they accused of being diehard ‘conservatives’ (conservatief).13 They denounced the prohi-

11 Anggaran Dasar Madjelis Hinduisme 1950. This initiative succeeded the Trimurti organization, which had been set up by the same individuals in 1939 (Djatajoe 1940, 4/9:292-4). As indicated by the name, the organization advocated that the Balinese religion be called Agama Trimurti.

12 Even though he was a pedanda, after his passing in 1955 Ida Bagus Gede Ngendjung was said to have been a communist since the 1930s (Dumai 1955, 3/1:18). And some members of the PAHB later became associated with the Lembaga Kebudajaan Rakjat (Lekra), the cultural organization affiliated with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).

13 Shanty 1951. Here is how a member of the PAHB described the opposition between the two organizations and their respective names for the Balinese religion: ‘In Bali, there are two views regarding religion. One group which consists of conservative people holding on to bygone opinions call the religion Tirtha, whereas the new generation who have a broader view and full awareness have already protested that the religion in Bali be called Hindu-Bali.’ (Shanty 1952a:7.)
bitions (adjawera) that the pedanda placed on access to religious knowledge contained in the Balinese manuscripts (lontar). Above all, they challenged the traditional vision of the ‘castes’ (kasta) as a hierarchy of title groups based on birth, and advocated a conception founded on merit and competence. For them, status should no longer be ascribed but achieved (Shanty 1952a). Yet, by promoting the name Agama Hindu Bali, they were clearly not intending to radically transform the religion of Bali to conform to Indian Hinduism.

A few months later, an association devoted to the study of religious texts, Wiwada Sastra Sabha, was founded in Denpasar, under the leadership of Ida Bagus Raka Keniten and I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa (Anandakusuma 1966:78).

Thus, shortly after the incorporation of Bali into the Indonesian state, there were four main religious organizations on the island, representing a wide spectrum of opinions held by various Balinese elites on the nature of their religion, the orientation its reform should take and its links to Indian Hinduism. The first one, the Paruman Para Pandita, was the most conservative, staunchly adhering to Balinese particularism and anxious to defend the authority of the pedanda and their monopoly on religious knowledge. The Wiwada Sastra Sabha represented the literate tradition, attached to the Balinese cultural identity, from which religion was seen as being inseparable. As for the Panti Agama Hindu-Bali, its leaders carried on the progressive struggle of those Balinese intellectuals who wanted to modernize and universalize their religion without cutting it off from its indigenous roots. Finally, as its name indicates, the Madjelis Hinduisme aimed to reform Balinese religion to conform with contemporary Indian Hinduism.

On 10 June 1951, representatives of the abovementioned religious organizations decided to send a written motion to the Minister of Religion, Balinese Members of Parliament and the Governor of the province of the Lesser Sunda Islands, with the following requests: that the Balinese religion be represented in the KAGRI’s central, provincial and regional offices; that a committee for the writing of a textbook of Agama Hindu Bali, to be used in schools, be funded by the government; that the pedanda and the pemangku be supported by the KAGRI’s budget; and that a subsidy be granted for the maintenance of the main temples as well as of the artistic manifestations which accompany religious ceremonies. On 23 August 1951, the KAGRI rejected all these

14 Traditionally in Bali, knowledge was perceived as dangerous, inasmuch as it concerned the mysterious powers of the world beyond the senses (niskala). Hence, manuscripts dealing with religious matters were shrouded in secrecy and protected by prohibitions. Their access was restricted to those who had been duly purified and had acquired the appropriate skills to study them, which made them immune to supernatural forces.

15 ‘The Panti Agama Hindu-Bali will not bring about radical change, but will endeavour to guide its followers toward one direction, that is, God – without losing the original foundations. You do not have to worry that with such change the foundations of our culture in Bali will be lost.’ (Shanty 1951.)
requests and instead insisted on an official name for the Balinese religion (Anandakusuma 1966:85-8).

In Singaraja, a special committee was set up with the aim of complying with the KAGRI’s requirements, consisting of Pedanda Made Kamenuh from the PPP, Wajan Bhadra and Njoman Kadjeng from the PAHB, as well as the Dutch Orientalist Roelof Goris (Shadeg 1989). Eventually, in order to reach an agreement on the Balinese religion, on 25 May 1952 the KAGRI’s Provincial Office (KUAP) convened a meeting in Tampaksiring with representatives of the four main religious organizations. At the conclusion of this meeting, the Balinese religion was officially given the name Agama Hindu Bali.16 The holy books of the Balinese were defined as: Shruti (the sacred knowledge of the Vedas revealed to the primordial seers); Smreti (orally transmitted religious literature, not included in the revelation); and Yadnja (Balinese manuscripts providing instructions on the correct execution of the rites). Furthermore, a Balinese profession of faith (sahadat, an Islamic term) was chosen: Om tat sat, ekam ewa dwityam (We believe in the One God, almighty and eternal) (Suara Indonesia, 26-5-1952). Shortly thereafter, a Hindu Bali section was established within the KUAP, under the leadership of Wajan Bhadra, for dealing with day-to-day matters. But all this did not imply that the Agama Hindu Bali was recognized by the KAGRI in Jakarta.

The recourse to India

On 2 February 1951, the Balinese daily Suara Indonesia published a ‘letter from India’ entitled ‘Soal Agama di Bali’ (The problem of religion in Bali). It was signed by a Balinese student from Visva-Bharati, the famous Hindu university founded by Rabindranath Tagore at Santiniketan, in Bengal. This student, the very first Balinese to obtain a scholarship through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, was a Brahmana by the name of Ida Bagus Mantra. He was working on his PhD thesis, which he completed in 1955 entitled Hindu literature and religion in Indonesia.17

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16 It is significant that only the representative of the PPP opposed the name Agama Hindu Bali and maintained his preference for Agama Tirtha (Suara Indonesia, 26-5-1952). In the months following this meeting, Pedanda Made Kamenuh lectured extensively throughout Bali. He also delivered lectures to Balinese students in Java in defence of the name Agama Tirtha. But on 2 July 1953, at the time of a lecture which he delivered in Jakarta to the Persatuan Siswa Indonesia Bali (Association of Balinese Students) – headed by his opponent Njoman Suwandhi Pendit – Pedanda Made Kamenuh agreed to the name Agama Hindu Bali. On that occasion, he specified that the holy book (kitab sutji) of the Agama Hindu Bali was the Asta Dasa Parwa (Mahabharata) and that its prophet (nabi) was Bagawan Biasa – the mythical compiler of the Vedas and the Mahabharata (Bhakti 1953, 2/23:20-1).

17 Mantra 1955. Mantra would go on to become Rector of the University of Bali and then Director General of Culture in Jakarta, before being appointed Governor of Bali and ending his career as Indonesian ambassador to India.
Deploring the ritualistic propensity of the people of Bali, Mantra described their religion as ‘primitive’ (primitief). He was of the opinion that the present religion in Bali should be called Bali Hindu, as it was actually a haphazard mixture of Balinese and Hindu elements. He attributed this unfortunate state of affairs to the fact that Indian religious influences had reached the archipelago and combined with archaic Balinese customs at a time when Hinduism was still at a rudimentary stage of its development. Later on, the arrival of Europeans would entail the severing of links with India, in a period when Hinduism blossomed with spiritual riches. So much so that, in the ensuing centuries the Balinese were barred access to the source of their religion, with the result that they had become spiritually impoverished. Accordingly, Mantra appealed to the Balinese to regenerate their religion by renewing contact with their spiritual mother country India, so as to make it a true Agama Hindu. He also suggested sending Balinese scholars to India, with the mission of studying the sacred texts of Hindu literature and translating them into Indonesian to fulfil the spiritual needs of their fellow believers. This open letter made a great impression upon Balinese intellectuals at the time and convinced many of them to look to India for a solution to their religious predicament. Its influence on the PAHB was patent, as evidenced by the lecture given by Wajan Bhadra at the PAHB’s first meeting, in which he took up many of the arguments put forth by Mantra (Ichtisar rapat 1951).

A few months later, a senior high school student in Singaraja, Ida Bagus Oka Punyatmadja, addressed a letter to Raghu Vira, an eminent Indian scholar, founder of the International Academy of Indian Culture, who at that time was carrying out research on the cultural history of Bali in the Kirtya Library. Punyatmadja was a pupil of Wajan Bhadra and had met Raghu Vira on the occasion of his guest lectures on the cultural and religious links between Bali and India. The Indian scholar had suggested that one of Bhadra’s promising students should go to his country to study the origins of the Balinese culture. Punyatmadja wrote in his letter: ‘I thought it was the chance of my life to learn our culture in your country, where our glorious doctrine and the essence of our (Bali) high culture was born in former time’ (Vira 1978:73-4). Throughout his letter, he expressed his love and admiration for the religious legacy of India, all the while bemoaning the fact that his fellow believers were ignorant of the teachings of the Hindu scriptures:

I feel unhappy because of the weak point of the faith of Hindu Bali devotees who do not practise their dharma, who only perpetrate the ritual of our religion and some men who will abandon their ancient high culture. Perhaps this weak point is

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18 The International Academy of Indian Culture was established first in Lahore in 1932, then shifted to Nagpur in 1946 and finally to New Delhi in 1956, where it is still run by Raghu Vira’s son, Lokesh Chandra.
caused by the fact that there are not enough educators to educate the Hindu Bali devotees, to ameliorate them, according to the teachings of our scriptures, and to educate Bali’s youth [...] to love their culture. (Vira 1978:79.)

Thanks to the intercession of I Gusti Bagus Oka, vice-governor of the province of the Lesser Sunda Islands, Punyatmadja was granted a government scholarship to study in India in 1953, at the Banaras Hindu University and the International Academy of Indian Culture. In 1954, he was joined by Tjokorda Rai Sudharta, a Satria from the Ubud ruling house, who had also been recommended by Raghu Vira. During their stay in India, Mantra, Punyatmadja and Sudharta drew up plans to establish a council of Hinduism, with a view of unifying and institutionalizing the Balinese religion.19 When they returned to Indonesia, all three of them pursued a high profile political-cum-academic career.20

At the time when Balinese students in India were urging their fellow believers to renew the age-old links of their island with Indian Hinduism, an Indian man living in Bali acknowledged the Balinese as fellow Hindus. Shortly after Mantra’s letter had appeared in Suara Indonesia, a booklet was published under the title Dasa Sila Agama Bali (The Ten Principles of the Balinese Religion) (Shastri 1951). Its author, who signed as Prof. Narendra Dev. Pandit Shastri, had paid a visit to Bali in 1949, where he eventually took up residence, married a Balinese girl and became an Indonesian citizen. Citing the names of some of the foremost religious leaders of the time, he claimed that in its fundamentals the Balinese religion was no different from Hinduism as found in India. He stated that the Balinese were monotheists, as they venerated the One and Only God, Sang Hyang Widhi.21 Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva (which is not the usual Balinese spelling) were but manifestations of Sang Hyang Widhi. He asserted that the Vedas were the most important sacred books (kitab sutji) of the Balinese religion.22 Finally, he ended his bro-

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19 Interview with Tjokorda Rai Sudharta, Ubud, 1-6-2006.
20 Punyatmadja was elected vice-president of the World Hindu Federation from 1988 to 1992, and he was ordained a pedanda in 1998.
21 It was not Shastri who first came up with the name Sang Hyang Widhi to designate the God of the Balinese. This name had long been known among the literati and was popularized in the 1920s as being equivalent to the word Tuhan, before it was officially adopted as the name of God in the Balinese religion. Sang Hyang (‘the divine’, in Old Javanese) refers to the souls already purified in cremation (pitara). According to Jan Gonda (1975:23), ‘in modern Bali Vidhi (Viddhi) – the Indian designation of “rule, destiny” which is also applied to some individual gods – denotes that principle which, representing the unity of the universe, is beyond all plurality and acts as the guardian of the cosmic and moral order’. The polysemy of that name concurs with the conception of a personal God characteristic of the religions of the Book, as well as with the notion of dharma, which implies the prevalence of the cosmic law over the gods and that of the gods over humans (Ramstedt 2004:11).
22 The idea that the Balinese knew the Vedas goes back to the report published by the German Sanskritist Rudolf Friederich (1849-50), who had been sent by the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences with the first military expedition against Bali in 1846 to collect manuscripts and other artefacts. Had he been allowed to have a look into the manuscripts that the pedanda called Weda, Friederich would...
chure with the *Puja Tri Sandya*, a compilation of Sanskrit *mantra* which was to become the official Balinese ‘Three Daily Prayers’.

It is difficult to assess Shastri’s influence on the contemporary Hinduization of the Balinese religion (Kapoor 1958:33-42; Somvir 2004:258-9). But it is certainly significant, if one considers that he was the first Indian Hindu to have settled in Bali after the war and to have propagated Hinduism there. Yet, contrary to what has been reported by several authors (Bakker 1993:57, 227; Ramstedt 2004:11), Shastri himself contended that he had never been sent to Bali by the Árya Samaj with the aim of Hinduizing the people of Bali. He claimed that he had come to Bali by chance and that, to his surprise, he had discovered that the Balinese were Hindus like himself, even though they had forgotten most of what Hinduism was about, a result of being kept in ignorance of religious matters by their priests. Thus he decided to bring the Balinese back into the fold of Hinduism, for fear that if they persisted along their natural inclination, which is animism, they would become an easy prey to proselytizing, not so much by Muslims but by Christians – and worse, communists.

It seems that Shastri was reluctant to admit his affiliation to the Árya Samaj because his intention to Hinduize the Balinese religion had met with criticism and opposition from various quarters – from the *pedanda* in particular – not to mention the fact that his contribution to the recognition of the Balinese religion had never received the acknowledgement he thought it deserved. Be that as it may, his writings clearly bespeak the influence of the Árya Samaj. Furthermore, it was Shastri who laid out the theological framework of what would become the official canon of the Balinese religion as *Hindu Dharma*, the so-called ‘Five

have found out that these were not the Indian *Vedas*, but for the most part prescriptions for rituals, interspersed with *mantra* and hymns. The myth of the Balinese *Vedas* persisted long after other scholars had ascertained the real state of affairs. In Bali, the word *weda* refers to the *mantra* contained in ritual manuals and uttered by the *pedanda* during their office (*maweda*).

23 An article by Njomn Pendit, a Balinese student in Jakarta who later pursued his studies at the Visva-Bharati University, testifies to Shastri’s influence. Quoting liberally from his brochure, he urged his fellow believers to forsake the instructions of the *pedanda* and the contents of the *lontar* in exchange for the teachings of true experts, that is, Hindu theologians from India. And he urged Balinese authorities to engage in relations with India, ‘where one can seriously study further what we call the Hindu religion’ (Pendit 1952:7).

24 Interview with Narendra Dev. Pandit Shastri, Denpasar, 3-1-1994. Yadav Somvir – an Indian lecturer of Sanskrit and Indian culture at Udayana University in Denpasar, and himself affiliated with the Árya Samaj – confirmed in an interview that Shastri was indeed a member of the Árya Samaj (Denpasar, 26-6-2004). This was corroborated by the Director of the International Academy of Indian Culture, Lokesh Chandra, who informed me that Shastri had been a student of his father, Raghu Vira (New Delhi, 20-12-2005). The Árya Samaj is a Hindu reform movement advocating a return to the *Vedas*, founded in 1875 by Dayânanda Sarasvatî.

25 Shastri eventually received some recognition, albeit posthumous, when a few articles were published in the *Bali Post* at the time of his passing in 2001. One of them was signed by Pendit (2001), who acknowledged Shastri’s contribution in the official recognition of the Balinese religion by the KAGRI.
Beliefs’ (Panca Çraddha). Besides publishing several brochures on Hinduism, he was instrumental in the development of religious education in Bali, involved both in the Perguruan Rakjat Saraswati and the Jajasan Dwidjendra. And he managed to obtain scholarships from the Indian government to send Ida Bagus Mantra and other promising young Balinese to study in India.

While Shastri was actively engaged in Hinduizing Balinese religious practices, the Dutch Orientalist Roelof Goris put his erudition to the service of Balinese intellectuals by substantiating their Hindu credentials. In 1933, Goris had opposed the presence of Christian missions on the grounds that religion and social order in Bali form an inseparable whole. So much so that, by deliberately assaulting the religion of the Balinese, missionary work would inevitably bring about the demise of their entire culture. He claimed that the Balinese religion – which he called ‘Hindu Balinism’ – should be considered a genuine part of Hinduism, and he was of the opinion that its regeneration lay in renewed contact with India (Goris 1933).

In July 1953, Goris again came to the rescue of the Balinese when he published a scholarly article in a Balinese magazine Bhakti, which stated that the Agama Hindu Bali – as a legitimate branch of Hinduism – was indeed a proper religion and not an incoherent mixture of archaic traditions and mere beliefs. Among other erudite points, he asserted that every religion worthy of the name comprised three components: a creed (sjahadat), a code of ethics (kesusilaan) and a liturgy (ibadat) (Goris 1953). This was not lost on Balinese reformers, who began to emphasize the dogmatic contents and moral prin-

26 Shastri 1955. The Panca Çraddha are the beliefs in Sang Hyang Widhi, atman, karmaphala, samsara, and moksha (Punyatmadja 1970).
27 The Perguruan Rakjat Saraswati was opened in Denpasar by I Gusti Made Tamba in 1946, with a curriculum inspired by the Taman Siswa and the educational principles of Rabindranath Tagore. The Jajasan Dwidjendra was established in Denpasar by I Wajan Reta and Ida Bagus Wajan Gede in 1953. Named after Danghyang Dwijendra, the sixteenth-century Javanese priest considered to be the ancestor of the pedanda Siwa, the Jajasan Dwidjendra opened a religious high school (Sekolah Menengah Hindu Bali ‘Dwidjendra’).
28 After having authored a doctoral thesis on Hindu Javanese and Balinese theology (Goris 1926), Goris was posted in 1928 as a language official in the colonial administration on Bali, where he became the scientific adviser to the Kirtya Library and chief editor of its journal Bhawanagara. Although he was a staunch anti-Christian in the 1930s, Goris converted to Roman Catholicism in 1939. Back in Bali in 1947, after having been a prisoner of war in Java during the Japanese occupation, he became an Indonesian citizen in 1949 and was the head of the Lembaga Bahasa dan Budaja (Language and Culture Institute) in Singaraja.
29 Bhakti was published three times a month in Singaraja from September 1952 to September 1954, under the heading Madjalah untuk Umum – Non Party (Magazine for the Public – Non Party). It included a supplement entitled: ‘Ruangan Kebudajaan: Seni, Sastra dan Filsafat’ (Cultural Space: Art, Literature and Philosophy). Wajan Bhadra and Njoman Kadjeng were the editors of the cultural section, while Putu Shanty and Njoman Pendit were among the regular staff. Thus, although Bhakti was not politically affiliated, most of its main contributors were members of the PAHB and openly leaning to the left of the Balinese political spectrum (Darma Putra 2000:137-9).
One case in point is a brochure published in September 1953 by Wajan Bhadra, under the somewhat pompous title *Treaty tentang Agama Hindu Bali* (Treaty on the Balinese Hindu Religion) (Bhadra 1953). Referring to Goris’s article in *Bhakti*, Bhadra expounded the similarities and differences between *Agama Hindu Bali* and Indian Hinduism, before concluding that what he qualified as *Hindu Balinisme* was not inherently different from Hinduism as found in India and, therefore, it should be acknowledged as a true religion, of the same calibre as Hinduism and Buddhism.

There is a discrepancy when one compares Goris’s public stand with the opinion he expressed shortly before the Tampaksiring meeting in May 1952. I found the latter in notes in the Widya Wahana Library, set up by the American Catholic priest Fr. Norbert Shadeg, SVD, in Tuka. Goris claimed that what most prominent Balinese intellectuals knew about Hinduism came from him. In the 1930s, he had warned them that their religion would soon disappear if they did not reform it. Since Indonesia’s independence, the pressure of Islam and Christianity had become more insistent, and it was probably too late to rescue the Balinese religion. All the more so since the Balinese remained incapable of agreeing on a uniform conception of their religion, its name and its creed. He was of the opinion that the only possible name for the Balinese religion was *Agama Hindu Bali*. As for the Balinese notion of God, he contended that it amounted to the Christian conception of the One Almighty God, which he had explained to his Balinese friends back in the 1930s. In his notes, Goris concludes by summarizing his impressions of Balinese reformers: ‘We Hindu-Bali are fearing that our religion will not be accepted by Islam! And thence the stress on mono-theism.’ (Goris 1952.)

Goris reasserted the poor esteem in which he held Balinese intellectuals and the misconceptions they professed of their own religion with reference to a lecture delivered on 19 October 1953 by Gusti Bagus Sugriwa (1954) to Balinese students in Denpasar. After having reminded his audience that, at the time of his youth, the Balinese called their religion simply *Agama Bali*, Sugriwa explained that, in Bali as in Java, the teachings of Shaivism and Buddhism had merged to constitute what is now being called *Agama Hindu Bali*. Among the various points touched on in his lecture, he was adamant in refuting the prevalent opinion that the Balinese people are polytheists.

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30 The fact is that in 1937 missionaries had adopted the name Sang Hyang Widhi in order to translate the Christian conception of ‘God’ into the Balinese language. Nonetheless, Shadeg (1989), who had been Goris’s close confidant since his assignment in Bali in 1950, doubtlessly grants Goris too much credit when he alleges that it was him who suggested Ida Sanghyang Widi as a fitting Balinese equivalent of Tuhan Yang Maha Esa – rather than Batara Siwa or Sanghyang Batara – as if it had been the Balinese Christians who had first come up with that name.
In his comments, which can be found in the Widya Wahana Library, Goris did not hide his contempt for Sugriwa. Besides pointing out his numerous mistakes, he contested Sugriwa’s claim that the religion of Bali was directly derived from Hinduism (which is what he himself had asserted in his Bhakti article). In his view, the present Balinese religion was a mixture of 80-90 per cent primitive religion and 10-20 per cent Shaivism and Buddhism. He was of the opinion that at least 60-80 percent of the Balinese were polytheists. They believed in a multitude of spirits, good ones and evil ones. The religion of most Balinese pertained to a prehistoric – ‘animist’ or ‘dynamist’ – conception of the world. The main bulk of their beliefs and ceremonies concerned ancestor worship. Of all the ceremonies, the only one of Hindu origin was cremation; all the others, rites of passage, temple ceremonies, were Old Balinese, with the sole exception of the tirta of the pedanda, which was in fact an external addition to the ceremonies. Most Balinese had acquired their vague notions of Hinduism from Old Javanese literature and through the theatrical repertoire, the wajang in particular. It is only with modern education introduced by the Dutch since the 1930s that Balinese have been able to acquire some information about Hinduism. And Goris (1954) concluded his commentary by asserting that all the philosophical ideas manipulated by the Balinese intellectuals were only superficial and ill-digested notions, because, unlike the Indians, the Balinese were incapable of abstract and speculative thinking: they ‘are always “concretizing” abstract ideas: their “phase of thinking” is quite “allegorical”, substituting “statues” (material images) for “ideas”’.

The struggle for the recognition of Balinese religion

In July 1952, a few weeks after the main Balinese religious organizations had agreed to name their religion Agama Hindu Bali, an article published in the Indonesian newspaper Merdeka announced that the KAGRI had stipulated the following conditions for the official recognition of the Agama Hindu Bali: that it must be monotheistic, have a codified system of law for its followers, possess a holy book and a prophet, enjoy international recognition and, furthermore, its congregation should not be limited to a single ethnic group (Merdeka, 4-7-1952; Peraturan Menteri Agama No. 9/1952). These stipulations provoked widespread public outrage in Bali. Faced with such a rebuttal, Balinese leaders held diverging views as to how best they ought to respond to what they perceived as a Muslim provocation. Whereas a majority of them were resolute in pushing for the KAGRI to recognize their religion, some were of the opinion that the Balinese had no need to seek such recognition.

The first reaction came from a Balinese member of the national parliament in Jakarta, Ida Bagus Putera Manuaba, who questioned the legal bases of the
KAGRI’s conditions, while reminding his Muslim opponents that the *Agama Hindu Bali* was not a new religion but went back to Sriwijaya and Majapahit, and thus had been present in Indonesia centuries before Islam took hold over the archipelago (*Mimbar Indonesia*, 10-7-1952).

In response to Manuaba’s protest, a Muslim author, Muhammad Dimyati (1952a), published in the Indonesian weekly *Siasat* an article denouncing the danger of anarchism in religious matters. He made clear that in his view the Balinese religion did not belong to a proper *agama* but pertained to *adat*. It consisted basically of remnants of traditional *kepertjajaan* (beliefs), which might be acknowledged as such, provided that they remain circumscribed to their region of origin and that their propagation is prohibited (Dimyati 1952a). To which Putu Shanty (1952b) retorted in the same periodical that all religions were true and respectable, as in the end they were all the same. Indeed, they all were acknowledged by the Constitution, and Islam had no right to take advantage of the sheer number of its followers to impose its views on other religions. This brought a rejoinder from Dimyati, in the form of rhetorical questions: What was, in fact, the religion which the Balinese would like to see recognized? Was it the religion actually practised in Bali (paganism), or the one practised in India (Hinduism)? In case of a theological controversy in Bali, which authority was in a position to resolve the matter? Would the Balinese look for an answer in the *Vedas*, just like Muslims refer to the *Koran* whenever a point of dogma is debated among the *ulama*? And Dimyati concluded his reply by asking whether Indonesians wanted to progress by rejecting the remnants of archaic beliefs and customs and accept monotheism, or whether they wanted to regress to the time when their ancestors worshipped statues in Borobudur or in Prambanan (Dimyati 1952b).

Shortly thereafter, Wedastera Suyasa (1952) – a Balinese student who had founded the Angkatan Muda Hindu-Bali (AMHB, Balinese Hindu Younger Generation) in June 1950 in Jakarta and who would soon after become one of the Balinese leaders of the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI, Indonesian Nationalist Party) (Lane 1972) – published in *Bhakti* an article entitled ‘*Agama Hindu Bali terantjam***’ (The Balinese Hindu religion threatened). In the name of the Pan*ṭṭasila*, he denounced the conditions put forward by the KAGRI and appealed to the government to protect all religions, as well as to keep religion separate from political matters. He urged the Balinese to close ranks under the banner of the *Agama Hindu Bali*, instead of wearing themselves out seeking its recognition from the KAGRI. A similar stance was taken by several authors in the same periodical (Dirgahayu 1952). A case in point is the article by a member of the PAHB bearing the explicit title ‘*Agama adalah soal kepertjajaan, bukan soal pengakuan***’ (Religion is a matter of faith, not a question of recognition) (Sutrisna 1954). According to Sutrisna, the proclamation of the freedom of religion in the Constitution sufficed as a guarantee
for the continued existence of the Balinese religion in Indonesia, which was therefore not in need of any formal recognition. Resenting the dominance of Muslim and Christian religious conceptions over the definition of their religion by Balinese reformers, he claimed that Balinese religion had no need of a prophet or of a holy book, which were distinctive features of Islam and Christianity not found in such religions as Hinduism and Buddhism.

On 10 October 1952, the KAGRI’s secretary-general gave a lecture in Denpasar, in which he reiterated that the Agama Hindu Bali did not fulfil the conditions laid down for official recognition (Sugriwa 1973:8). Furthermore, following a meeting of the KAGRI’s secretary-general with the DPD and the DPRDS’s chairman, the Agama Hindu Bali was classified on 14 February 1953 under a newly created section ‘H’, together with other aliran/gerakan agama (religious currents and movements) not acknowledged as proper religions (Peraturan Menteri Agama No. 9/1952; Sudharta and Surpha 2006:26).

On 14 November 1952, taking into account the KAGRI’s repeated refusals to open a section for the Agama Hindu Bali, the DPD sent a letter to the DPRDS requesting the establishment of a Djawatan Agama Otonoom Daerah Bali (Autonomous Regional Service for Religious Affairs in Bali) (Suara Indonesia, 28-11-1952). This was granted by the DPRDS on 24 March 1953, after further unsuccessful negotiations in Singaraja between the KAGRI’s secretary-general, the governor of the province, and the DPD (Pengumuman resmi DPD Bali 1953; Suara Indonesia, 24-3-1953). This decision was not approved unanimously in Bali, as some religious leaders were of the opinion that, instead of establishing their own Service for Religious Affairs, regional authorities should continue their effort to obtain official recognition for the Balinese religion. In any case, the Dinas Agama Otonoom Daerah Bali, which was exclusively in charge of the followers of the Agama Hindu Bali, was eventually established in Singaraja on 1 November 1954, under the leadership of I Putu Serangan, and with branches in all former principalities. It was not recognized by the KAGRI. In retaliation, the DPD severed all institutional links with both the KUAP and the KUAD, which caused a serious disruption of their operations.

On 27 January 1953, President Soekarno delivered a speech at Amuntai in Kalimantan, in which he criticized the attempt by some Muslim parties to establish a state based on Islam and warned that it would be the end of the national unity of Indonesia, as regions whose populations were not Islamic – such as Bali and the Christian Eastern islands – would secede. While this speech created a considerable stir within Muslim circles, it was greeted with approval by the Balinese, both in Bhakti and in Damai31 (Shanty 1953; Sugriwa 1953a).

31 Damai was a new monthly magazine published by the Jajasan Kebaktian Pedjuang Bali, which had been established on the DPD’s initiative on 14 January 1951 in Denpasar as a forum for Balinese veterans of the war of independence. It was published by Gusti Bagus Sugriwa from March 1953 to June 1956, under the name Majalah Umum untuk Rakjat (General Magazine for the People).
On 26-27 May 1953, an important conference (Pesamuan Agung) was held in Denpasar on the initiative of the DPD. For the first time, members of the regional government, officials from the KUAP, pedanda, and delegates of the main religious organizations gathered to discuss the predicament and problems faced by the Agama Hindu Bali. Debates revolved mostly around the reforms which should be applied to rituals, as well as to the ordination of the pedanda (Suara Indonesia, 1-6-1953; Sugriwa 1953b:733-4; Kandia 1954). Even though nothing much came out of these debates, the PAHB continued to actively promote religious reforms. Thus, in October 1953, its chairman, Pedanda Gede Ngendjung, enlisted the help of representatives of other religious organizations to set up a committee to compile a textbook of the Agama Hindu Bali (Panitia Penjusun Kitab Peladjaran Agama Hindu Bali) (Suara Indonesia, 29-10-1953).

While pushing ahead with religious reforms, Balinese leaders persisted in pressing the KAGRI for the recognition of their religion. They were granted some concession on 30 June 1955, when it was decided that the Agama Hindu Bali would be officially represented within the KUAP in Singaraja, by endowing the Hindu Bali section with three divisions: Urusan Agama (Religious Affairs), Penerangan Agama (Religious Information), and Pendidikan Agama (Religious Education) (Kandia 1957). But this concession did not imply that the Agama Hindu Bali would be represented at the national level, where it was still classified under aliran/gerakan agama.

In September 1955, the first general elections – for Parliament and for the Constituent Assembly – were a serious disappointment for the Islamic parties, which obtained only 43.5 per cent of the votes. This setback marked the failure of the political struggle of Islam in Indonesia and resulted in a deadlock in the Constituent Assembly, pitting the advocates of Negara Islam against the proponents of Negara Pantjasila. Needless to say, the Balinese were active advocates of the latter (Tadjuk Rencana 1955; Suyasa 1956). This was particularly the case for the younger generation of Balinese students, who appeared impatient with what appeared to be indecision on the part of their elders. Thus, the youth movement Gerakan Kumara Bhavana (GKB), which had been founded by Wedastera Suyasa at the time of the fourth conference of the Badan Kordinator Usaha Peladjar on 25 May 1955 in Denpasar, set up the Badan Kontak Gerakan Kumara Bhavana (BKGKB) under the leadership of Putu Wirja on 12 November 1956. The purpose of this organization was to initiate contact with Balinese members of the Constituent Assembly so as to urge them to pursue the struggle for the recognition of the Agama Hindu Bali (Laporan Dewan Pimpinan 1957).

On 28-31 July 1957, the Gerakan Kumara Bhavana organized a conference of the Angkatan Muda Hindu-Bali in Denpasar. Among the resolutions passed by the conference, the participants demanded: that a Hindu Bali section be established within the KAGRI; that a representative organization of
the Agama Hindu Bali, comprising all officials and experts concerned with religious matters, be instituted to replace the existing organizations; that the Dinas Agama Otonoom Daerah Bali instruct the Balinese in simplifying their rites and educate them on their meaning; and that the Constitution be based on the Pantjasila, with specific provisions guaranteeing religious freedom and the protection of all religions by the state (Suyasa 1957; Kandia 1957).

This conference marked the final stage of the struggle for the recognition of the Balinese religion – from then on, it would become much more coordinated and determined. What triggered off the decisive push was the KAGRI’s demand in early 1958 to Balinese authorities to disband the Dinas Agama Otonoom, all the while continuing to refuse the establishment of a section for the Agama Hindu Bali.

On 14 June 1958, a movement demanding the establishment of a Hindu Bali section within the KAGRI (Gerakan Aksi-Bersama Menuntut ‘Bagian Hindu-Bali’ Dalam Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia) was launched on Wedastera Suyasa’s initiative (Suyasa 1958). Suyasa called on all the religious organizations and concerned individuals to put pressure on the KAGRI by petitioning the Minister of Religion, the Prime Minister, the President of the Republic, and the main political authorities at the central, provincial and regional levels. Besides reiterating the demand to establish without further ado a Hindu Bali section within the KAGRI, the petition stated that not only should the Dinas Agama Otonoom remain open, but also that the KAGRI should be abolished, or at least thoroughly restructured so as to ensure equal treatment for all the religions of Indonesia, as proclaimed by the Pantjasila. A few days later, a delegation led by I Gusti Ketut Kaler, an official at the Dinas Agama Otonoom, was sent to Jakarta to convey the demands of the Balinese.

On 26 June, representatives of eight religious organizations met in Denpasar to debate the situation confronting Agama Hindu Bali (Pertemuan Kerdja Sama Organisasi Agama Hindu Bali Tentang Kedudukan Agama Hindu Bali Dalam Organisasi Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia). They came from: Satya Hindu Dharma Indonesia32 (I Gusti Anandakusuma, Denpasar), Jajasan Dwidjendra (Ida Bagus Wajan Gede, Denpasar), Partai Nasional Hindu Bali33 (Ida I Dewa Agung Gede Oka Geg, Klungkung), Madjelis Hinduisme Bali (Ida Bagus Toegoer, Klungkung), Paruman Para Pandita (Ida Pedanda Made

32 The Satya Hindu Dharma Indonesia organization was founded on 1 January 1956 in Denpasar, under the leadership of Ida Pedanda Gde Wajan Sidemen and I Gusti Anandakusuma, with the aim of promoting Hinduism in Indonesia (Anggaran Dasar Satya 1956; Anandakusuma 1985). By advocating the name Hindu Dharma, its proponents were defending an Indianized vision of the Balinese religion. This put them in the camp opposing the name Agama Hindu Bali, which was supported by other religious organizations.

33 The Partai Nasional Hindu Bali was founded in February 1954 by Ida I Dewa Agung Gede Oka Geg, the raja of Klungkung, which aimed to promote the interests of the Balinese Hindus in the national elections – in which it fared very poorly.
Kamenuh, Singaraja), Panti Agama Hindu-Bali (I Ketut Kandia, Singaraja), Angkatan Muda Hindu-Bali (Ida Bagus Gede Dosther, Denpasar), and Eka Adnjana (Ida Bagus Gede Manuaba, Sempidi) (Pertemuan kerdja sama 1958). They formally adopted a resolution demanding that the Agama Hindu Bali be recognized on an equal footing with the other religions represented in the KAGRI, while insisting that Balinese authorities should ensure that the Dinas Agama Otonoom remained for as long as this demand was ignored. The resolution was addressed to the same political authorities as on 14 June.

On 29 June, this resolution was presented personally to President Soekarno at his Balinese residence in Tampaksiring by a delegation of representatives from five organizations: Ida Pedanda Made Kamenuh, I Gusti Anandakusuma, Ida Bagus Wajan Gede, Ida Bagus Gede Dosther and I Ketut Kandia. They were accompanied by the DPRD’s chairman, I Gusti Putu Merta. The delegates reasserted that the Agama Hindu Bali was monotheistic and thus in accordance with the first principle of the Pantjasil. Soekarno appeared to have been receptive to the Balinese plea, and he instructed the Minister of Religion to come to Bali (Anandakusuma 1966:101-6).

The support of Soekarno – whose mother was Balinese – proved to be decisive: on 5 September 1958 a Hindu Bali section was officially established within the KAGRI (Surat Keputusan Menteri Agama tanggal 5 September 1958 No. 2, tentang Bagian Hindu Bali pada Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia). A few days later, the Balinese government appointed three officials to the KAGRI’s Hindu Bali section: I Gusti Gede Raka (a former government minister), I Njoman Kadjeng (an official from the provincial government), and Upasaka Oka Diputhera (a Buddhist student in Yogyakarta, member of the Angkatan Muda Hindu-Bali). On 1 January 1959, a Bagian Urusan Hindu Bali (Section of Balinese Hindu Affairs) was finally opened within the KAGRI in Jakarta. The fact that the section was named Hindu Bali ‘Affairs’ (Urusan) rather than Hindu Bali ‘Religion’ (Agama) indicates that the KAGRI was still elusive about the status of the Balinese religion as a true agama.

Meanwhile, on 14 August 1958, Bali had become a full-fledged province of the Republic of Indonesia, with Anak Agung Bagus Sutedja as governor.

From Agama Hindu Bali to Agama Hindu

On 7 October 1958, Anak Agung Bagus Sutedja appointed a planning committee for the preparation of a Hindu Bali congress (Panitia Perantjang Hindu-Bali Sabha), whose task was to establish a Dewan Agama Hindu-Bali (Council for the Agama Hindu Bali), in order to assist the Hindu Bali section within the KAGRI. Chaired by Ida Bagus Mantra, this committee comprised representatives of the Dinas Agama Otonoom (Gusti Ngurah Gede, Putu Serangan), the
Dewan Nasional34 (Gusti Bagus Sugriwa), and the main religious organizations (Wedastera Suyasa, Pedanda Made Kamenuh, and I Ketut Kandia). The planning committee met in Bedugul on 12 October, and then again on 6 December with a delegation of Hindu Balinese from Lombok (Panitia Perantijang 1958).

On 21-23 February 1959, the Hindu-Bali Sabha was held, under Mantra’s chairmanship, at the Fakultas Sastra Udayana, with representatives of the Balinese government, the Dinas Agama Otonoom and all the religious organizations, during which a decision was made to establish the Parisada Dharma Hindu Bali (PDHB).35 The Parisada was to substitute both religious organizations and the former raja whom the government replaced in 1957 with bupati. It was charged with the task of coordinating all the religious activities of the ‘Balinese Hindu community’ (umat Hindu Bali), by ‘regulating, fostering and developing the Balinese Hindu religion’ (mengatur, memupuk dan memperkem-bangkan Agama Hindu Bali) (PHD 1970:11).

With the backing of the provincial government, the Parisada undertook the compilation of a theological canon (Panca Çraddha), publication of a Hindu catechism (PHD 1967), standardization of temples (pura) and religious rites (yadnja), formalization of the priesthood, and provision of religious instruction to the population – all this amounting to a ‘scripturalization’ of Balinese religion, a shift of focus from ritual to text. Unlike the raja, who merely interceded on behalf of their subjects, the Parisada now told the Balinese what to believe as well as to how to practise their religion. In the words of Margaret Wiener (1990:15): ‘It is in assuming the power to interpret texts – to establish doctrine – and to standardize its interpretations in the form of ritual procedures to be followed throughout the island of Bali as a whole, that Parisada’s hegemony differs so radically from the earlier one’.

Parisada’s hegemony was to enable the Balinese to further advance the cause of their religion in Indonesia. Thus, in 1962 the Minister of Religion opened negotiations with the Balinese government and representatives of the Parisada, KUAP, KUAD and Dinas Agama Otonoom. On 10 July 1963, the last three organizations were finally closed and replaced by a Kantor Agama Daerah Tingkat I Bali, headed by Tjokorda Rai Sudharta, with a section for Islam and Christianity in Singaraja, and a Hindu Bali section in Denpasar (Anandakusuma 1966:116-7). That same year, the Hindu Bali section within the

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34 The Dewan Nasional was an organ of government under Guided Democracy. It was established in May 1957 by Soekarno and charged with the responsibility of deliberating on broad policy matters and issuing recommendations to Parliament.

35 This Sanskrit terminology bears the hallmark of Ida Bagus Mantra, who decided on the name of the new organization (interview with Tjokorda Rai Sudharta, Ubud, 11-5-2007). The word dharma, used in India by Hindu reformers in order to convey the normative idea of ‘religion’, was deemed preferable to agama, due to its Islamic connotation. As for the term parisada, it is derived from the Manava Dharma Shastra, the canonical foundation of the Hindu society.
KAGRI became the Biro Urusan Agama Hindu Bali (Bureau for Balinese Hindu Religious Affairs), thereby acknowledging the Balinese religion as a true agama.

While the name Agama Hindu Bali implied a clear recognition of the distinctive ethnic component of the Balinese Hindu religion, it would subsequently be replaced by the more inclusive name Agama Hindu. The change from Agama Hindu Bali to Agama Hindu has not been documented, unfortunately, and today opinions diverge as to how and why it came about. Some of my Balinese informants assumed that the KAGRI had put pressure upon the Parisada to universalize. The fact is that the national Parliament had specified in 1960 that only acknowledged ‘world religions’ deserved government legitimation (Ketetapan MPRS No. 2, 1960). According to others, on the contrary, it was not the KAGRI which compelled the Balinese to replace Agama Hindu Bali with Agama Hindu, but Balinese reformers themselves who pressed the KAGRI to recognize Agama Hindu as a universal religion.

Be that as it may, in the early 1960s, the growing presence of Balinese communities outside of Bali enabled the Parisada to extend its influence to other regions in the archipelago. Cut off from their temple networks as well as from their deified ancestors, these Balinese migrants needed a delocalized religion which they could carry away with them. Furthermore at that time, besides the Balinese, there were other Indonesian ethnic groups practising their traditional religion and whose rites bore the mark of Hindu-Buddhist influence. In these circumstances, a debate emerged among Balinese religious leaders as to the proper name for their religion. Ida Bagus Mantra – endorsed mostly by Balinese who had studied in India and by those living in Jakarta, such as Tjokorda Rai Sudharta, Ida Bagus Oka Puyatmadja and Ida Bagus Gde Dosther, as well as I Gusti Anandakusuma – advocated giving up the exclusive ethnic flavour of the label Hindu Bali in favour of the more inclusive Hindu Dharma, in order to bring together the whole umat Hindu Indonesia within the Parisada and to strengthen the position of the Agama Hindu vis-à-vis Islam and Christianity in the KAGRI.

This move was opposed by prominent Balinese religious leaders – issuing mostly from the PAHB – led by I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa. In his view, the Agama Hindu Bali was the result of a historical combination of Agama Hindu and Agama Bali, hence differing from Hinduism as practised in India. But the Agama Hindu Bali was not limited solely to the Balinese, as it was in fact the true ancestral religion of all Indonesians, complemented by Shaivism and Buddhism. Thus, in the syntagm Agama Hindu Bali, ‘Bali’ does not refer to an island, nor to an ethnic group, but it signifies ‘offering’ (banten). In this respect, the Agama Hindu Bali is the religion of those who make use of offerings to worship Sang Hyang Widhi and His manifestations (Sugriwa 1968).

In the end, Mantra’s standpoint prevailed over Sugriwa’s. Consequently, taking into account the fact that ‘the Parisada is present not only in Bali and
is not limited solely to the Balinese people’ (Dana 2005:6), during its first congress (*mahasabha*), in 1964, the Parisada Dharma Hindu Bali changed its name to Parisada Hindu Dharma (PHD), thus forsaking any reference to its Balinese origins. And when, the following year, President Soekarno named the religions that were to qualify for official recognition, it was *Agama Hindu* and not *Agama Hindu Bali* that was retained (Surat Penpres No. 1 tahun 1965).

**Epilogue**

Thereafter, *Agama Hindu* was no longer the sole property of the people of Bali, who had to make it accessible to other Indonesian ethnic groups. Consequently, in 1986, after having opened a branch in every province in the country, the Parisada Hindu Dharma became the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI).

However, the contention over the Balinese religious identity was far from over. After having been muted for decades, it would re-emerge in 2001, at the time of the PHDI’s eighth national congress, with the Balinese branch of the Parisada splitting into two contending factions. One faction, composed mostly of commoners, aimed at universalizing *Agama Hindu* further by severing it from *Agama Bali*. The other faction, whose leaders came from the nobility, withdrew from the Parisada, reproaching their opponents for having renounced their Balinese identity. Eventually, in 2007, the seceding faction was determined to revert to *Agama Hindu Bali* and renamed itself the Parisada Dharma Hindu Bali, thus reversing the process of globalization of the Balinese religion by relocalizing it (Picard 2011).

This relocalization of the Balinese religion might be interpreted as a return to the original significance of *agama*, untainted by its Islamic and Christian interpretations, when *agama* had not yet been separated from *adat*. One could say that the Parisada Dharma Hindu Bali is re-appropriating the power to identify as *agama* that which pertains to *adat* for the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia, just as the latter had claimed the power to designate as *agama* that which the KAGRI had classified as *adat*.

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