Expansion in the Shadow of the Company*

Concurrent Representations of Karangasem

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Abstract

The focus of this article is the political expansion of Karangasem, one of the micro-states of Bali, in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Karangasem leadership was able to expand into Lombok and large parts of northern and central Bali, while generally avoiding confrontation with the Dutch East India Company. They encountered a range of ethnic groups and endeavoured to play out the Dutch and the British interests against each other. In spite of its regional importance, prior to 1800 Karangasem is poorly documented. The article explores ways of reading different categories of European and indigenous sources against each other. Although fragmentary, they yield information about strategic concerns, economic underpinnings of expansion, ethnicity, and cultural and ritual issues. A combination of internal and external factors, including Dutch policies in the East Indies, enabled Karangasem to pursue a successful political expansion in the shadow of the Company.

Keywords

history – Bali – Karangasem – Lombok – VOC – *babad*

Introduction

‘What to do with these capricious princes?’ Thus complained an official of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company; hereafter

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'the Company' or VOC) in a letter to his superior written at the end of the eighteenth century (Cool 1896:235). The object of his worries was the ruling elite of Karangasem, one of several competing Balinese *negara* (realms), which was in the process of carving out a substantial realm on Bali and Lombok. From the viewpoint of the Company there were indeed reasons to keep an eye on this polity and its dependencies. Karangasem princes interfered on VOC-allied territory, received individuals the Company would like to apprehend, and, perhaps worst of all, entertained commercial relations with the grand rivals of the Dutch, the British East India Company (EIC). At the same time, the Karangasem leadership maintained a fine balance between courteous diplomacy and barely concealed hostility. For the VOC, the alternatives were not great: a blockade of the Lombok Strait was hazardous due to the wind, the land was well provided for with rice, and an expedition would be unable to pursue the Balinese up the mountains (Cool 1896:236).

The late pre-colonial states in Asia have a 'bad press' in much historiography, although this is currently under revision. In insular Southeast Asia, the end of the 'age of commerce' towards the late seventeenth century was followed by declining statecraft, staggering local economies, disruptive upheavals, and so on, partly caused by European encroachment that destroyed old political structures and commercial networks (Reid 1993). Nevertheless, a number of archipelagic polities were able to make the best out of the circumstances and even flourish. Palembang on Sumatra, allied to the VOC, experienced favourable economic development during the eighteenth century (Andaya 1993), while Wajo' in South Sulawesi, despite its opposition to the VOC, was able to undertake seaborne military and commercial expansion in the same period (Noor-duyn 1972). Karangasem's situation falls between the two. It stayed outside the contract system of the VOC and pursued a policy partly at variance with Dutch interests, but usually managed to avoid direct confrontation with the Company.¹

The aim of the present study is to identify patterns in the political expansion of Karangasem around the second half of the eighteenth century, and to find possible explanations for its relative success. While it was only one of several *negara* on Bali, Karangasem is interesting for various reasons. It entertained peaceful and warlike contacts within a wide geographic area and with a variety of ethnic groups, from the British of Bencoolen in the west to Sumbawa

1 The expansion of Karangasem has previously been touched on by Bijvanck (1894) and Cool (1896), both of whom utilized the VOC's archives. A judicious but brief history of Karangasem is included as an appendix to Adrian Vickers' thesis, *The desiring prince* (1986).

in the east. Its political ambitions were comprehensive considering its somewhat limited territory. Still, and somewhat surprisingly, it did not harbour a great historical tradition; its *babad* texts (loosely translated as ‘chronicles’) are arguably the least illuminating of all the histories of the Balinese minor kingdoms. Images of Karangasem in the past are spread throughout a wide array of sources: Balinese, Sasak, Sumbawan, and European. While the present study is mostly based on the VOC’s sources, it will also demonstrate how European and indigenous materials need to be read in light of each other, while avoiding the trap of the hierarchization of the sources (first-class archival data versus second-best indigenous historiography). This will enable us to draw some tentative conclusions about world view, mobilization, and room for manoeuvre in a minor polity of pre-modern Indonesia.

Anyone who has ventured into the resources of the Dutch colonial archives from the VOC period will realize their potential for elucidating the social, economic, and political history of maritime Asia. But there were vast areas of what is today Indonesia which were far removed from any trading post, places to which the Company paid little attention. Here, we only have scattered information from contemporary sources up to the nineteenth century. Such history has to be explored through a cumbersome triangulation of mostly late chronicular data, ethnography, linguistics, and archaeology, not unlike the methods devised by Vansina (1985) in an African context. Bali is rich in pre-modern manuscripts but offers problems for the historian. While the VOC officials in Semarang, Makassar, or Bima would make a note now and then on the usually turbulent conditions on the island—namely, when Company interests were at stake—the colonial archive only provides us with the barest fragments of Balinese history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That leaves us with local texts, especially *babad*, which are usually from the nineteenth or twentieth century in their present form. Whether reliable or not, they do give master narratives of the various small kingdoms and noble lineages (Tatu 2007:87–96). At the same time, there were multiple versions of the *babad* with perspectives that differed according to the position of the writer or the lineage he represented.²

All this raises interesting problems and possibilities for historical research. The colonial archive and the *babad* literature represent concurrent understandings of power and authority. A *babad*, concerned with genealogical his-

2 A comprehensive comparison between the variations is not attempted in the present article, which uses *babad* texts found in the Leiden and Dewa Gde Catra collections, and such as are available in published editions.

tory, had little reason to discuss an external entity, such as the Dutch. The Dutch, on the other hand, had equally little reason to map the intricate details of Balinese *negara* and society. In the following we shall see how different categories of materials can be critically read to fill out the broader picture. I will discuss the issues thematically, starting with an elusive but intriguing case from 1769 which points at Karangasem's increasing role on Bali. This is followed by sections that discuss its origins, its course and strategies of expansion, an early attempt to conclude a contract with the VOC, involvement in trade and shipping, and the height of its political status in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Pura Besakih and Balinese Diplomacy

While the VOC was little concerned with Balinese activities in areas where it had no direct interests, the case was quite different with regard to Blambangan in East Java, which had been under Balinese suzerainty since 1697. Due to an intricate chain of events, the Company rounded out its possessions by acquiring the Eastern Salient in 1767–1777, pushing out the dominant Balinese Mengwi kingdom in the process (Lekkerkerker 1923; Margana 2007). Part of the background to this was Dutch fear of the British, whose merchantmen were increasingly visible off the coasts not directly controlled by the VOC. A brief flurry of diplomatic activity followed in the wake of Mengwi's defeat, with letters being sent back and forth between the VOC positions and various Balinese kingdoms. Via these, we gain a fascinating glimpse of the political alterations that evolved in another quarter of the island.

In May 1769 two Balinese letters arrived at Governor Tol in Semarang. One of them was written by Dewa Agung Pañji, king of the small but prestigious Klungkung, who promised Tol that he would take measures to prevent 'smugglers' on his land. The letter provides a chronological anchor point for the history of Klungkung in this period. In particular, Dewa Agung Pañji is mentioned in the *babad* as a caretaker ruler. The second letter was dispatched by two rulers, Gusti Ngurah Jambe of Badung and Gusti Ngurah Agung of the recently defeated Mengwi, and deserves to be quoted in full translation:

The letter from the Noble Sir with the four [*illegible*] has been well received by us via Bijgend Mida, and we accept it as a sign of benevolent friendship; and to the highest degree considering the content and in reply to your letter, we most humbly ask to be excused with regard to the ships that have been stranded on our coast and their goods, since

the aforementioned ships have been wholly reduced to pieces and the goods have been pilfered by many coastal dwellers, and hope that Your Excellency will be able to exercise patience over this.

Meanwhile, as for ourselves we kindly ask that Your Excellency will continue in the so benevolently offered friendship, just as we on our side will not forget to reply to it.

We have forwarded the letter to Klungkung that Baggend Mida has put into our hands; we have also written to Bezoekit, but we must thereby say that this territory now belongs to Karangasem.³

The plundering of stranded ships was a Balinese custom that contributed to the infamous Dutch expedition of 1906, but at this early stage the Company could lodge little more than complaints. But what strikes the reader is the last paragraph, which clearly refers to the mother temple of Bali, Pura Besakih, in some texts spelled Basuki (Stuart-Fox 2001:272–4). David Stuart-Fox has analysed the historical references to this renowned sanctuary, of which there are few before the first published text naming the site in 1847. The letter testifies to the Bali-wide importance of Pura Besakih: the kings of Badung and Mengwi make a point of their willingness to deal with the Company by forwarding a letter to the formal supreme king of Klungkung and by writing another one to the famed temple. But who was the actual recipient of the letter? This is something of a mystery, for there was no lord or high priest of Pura Besakih that we know of. The closest likely persons would be the two foremost *pemangku* priests (Mangku ring Lor, Mangku Kidul) or the formerly dominant lord in the area, Anglurah Sidemen (Stuart-Fox 2002:34–40, 284–6).

Equally as intriguing is the laconic statement that Karangasem has taken over the ‘territory’ of Pura Besakih, apparently relatively recently, and that this acquisition seems likely to jeopardize some of the diplomatic work hinted at in the letter. The (certainly superficial) impression of the terse formulation is that Karangasem is an entity that stands somewhat outside the three central *negara* of Badung, Mengwi, and Klungkung, but has gained vital importance through its possession of Besakih. As will soon be seen, this is highly in agreement with the picture of the past provided by indigenous historiography.

3 VOC 3277 (1769), fols. 53–4, Nationaal Archief (hereafter NA). For this article, all translations from the original Dutch documents have been carried out by the author.

Competing Origins

We shall now turn to the rise of Karangasem as recounted by Balinese and European sources, and look for preconditions that may have facilitated its emergence. Karangasem was not an entirely novel entity to the Company officials in 1769. The name occurs from time to time in the decades after 1692, when a detachment from that region ravaged the Selaparang kingdom of East Lombok. The leaders of the mountainous Balinese micro-state stand out as generally successful in their enterprises against Sasaks, Makassarese, and Sumbawans.⁴ The predominantly Muslim Lombok, which had been loosely affiliated to the Makassarese sphere of interest in the seventeenth century, was gradually brought under Balinese authority in the period prior to 1748, when a number of local princes left their island and fled to Sumbawa.⁵ Although a large part of the Muslims followed a highly localized variant of Islam, the situation is somewhat unusual and reminiscent of Kashmir in the colonial era: a Hindu elite dominating a Muslim majority through the right of military conquest.⁶ The picture is even more complicated by the ambiguous position of the main Balinese representative on Lombok, Gusti Wayahan Tegeh (d. 1775), who according to Dutch information (but not Balinese genealogies) was the son of a Sasak father and a Balinese mother. If this is true, the Balinese caste hierarchy was not always as rigid as commonly assumed (Bijvanck 1894:137).

But what were the origins of this remarkable polity? By far the oldest dated account is curiously found in a secret Dutch report from 1783. Though perhaps based on hearsay, it is again worth quoting here:

[I]n former times the entire island of Bali stood under *one* grand prince who carried the name of Dewa Agung Klungkung, [in whose place] are now the regents of Badung, Gusti Ngurah Kayangan and Gusti Ngurah Kaleran. The reigning forebears of Gusti Made Ngurah Karangasem and Gusti Gede Ngurah Karangasem then detached themselves from the supreme rule of the aforementioned grand prince of Badung by fire and sword, and thereby became powerful. The [grand]father of the aforemen-

4 VOC 1637 (1700), fol. 67; VOC 1663 (1702), fols. 91–2; VOC 2029 (1725), fols. 11–2, NA; Coolhaas 1975:617–8.

5 VOC 2725 (1748), fols. 75–7, NA.

6 In the case of Kashmir, the conquest was effectuated by the British, who sold the land to the Hindu raja of Jammu. The rule of the Hindu maharajas of Kashmir lasted for a century; that of the Karangasem rajars over Lombok, for two centuries (Hägerdal 2001:4, 140).

tioned two brothers was also the one that snatched Selaparang (which now already carries the name of Lesser Bali) from the Sumbawans. After his death, these two brothers shared [the realm] [...] And now, under the supreme rule of these two brothers, Gusti Made Karangasem and his brother Gusti Ketut Karang govern [Lombok. Their] father also had authority over Selaparang until his death and was called Gusti Wayahan Tegeh [...] The Gusti of Karangasem and those of Selaparang are always inclined to expand their kingdoms and power further, and also strive to bring Dewa Manggis [of Gianyar] under their power. This Dewa [Manggis] is not inclined to this and is, according to the information I have gained here, the true reason for the prolonged war between Karangasem and Dewa Manggis. There is also a son or grandson (I do not know for sure) of Dewa Agung, called Dewa Gede. He has often been to Sumbawa in order to entice this nation to attack Lesser Bali or Selaparang, while he would come with his troops to assault Karangasem; and they would attack the Gusti, their common enemy, from two sides with full power, so that Sumbawa could once again take Lesser Bali, and [the Balinese enemies could obtain] Karangasem and its dependencies.⁷

We are confronted here with a number of names, most of which are readily identified in the indigenous *babad* literature: Dewa Agung of Klungkung, Gusti Ngurah Kaleran of Denpasar in Badung, Dewa Manggis of the recently created kingdom Gianyar, and a host of Karangasem princes (see figure 1 for the details). Judging from other sources the Dutch official heard a folksy version of the origins of Karangasem; this account places the traditional centre of gravity of Bali in Badung in the south and puts it on a par with Klungkung. Considering the trading geography of the area this comes as no surprise: Badung, with the anchorage at Kuta, was the centre of commercial transactions and the place where Dutch visitors arrived when they wished to approach the political leadership of the island—a leadership that collapsed in the years 1651–1686 and gave way to numerous minor states, including Karangasem.

With a view to this, the indigenous version of Karangasem's origins might seem disappointingly vague and uninformative. There is a *babad*, the *Pamañcangah Karangasem*, a version of which may date from the early twentieth century.⁸ However, it is essentially a genealogical catalogue which traces the origins of the ruling line from a minister family that unsuccessfully rebelled

7 Letter, Meurs to Reijke, 14 July 1783, VOC 3653, fols. 11–2, NA.

8 *Pamañcangah Karangasem*, Coll. Berg 118, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden (hereafter UB).

Gusti Ngurah Made
Karangasen Sakti
 king of Karangasem

Gusti Ngurah Made Karangasem died 1775 king of Karangasem	Gusti Ngurah Nyoman Karangasem	Gusti Ngurah Ketut Karangasem fl. 1775 king of Mataram	Gusti Ayu Nyoman Jelantik m. Gusti Wayahan Tegeh died 1775 king of Tanjung Karang/ Pagesangan and Selaparang
Anglurah Made Agung		Mataram Dynasty – 1894	
Gusti Ngurah Made Karangasem died early 19th century king of Karangasem, moved to Lombok	Gusti Gede Ngurah Karangasem died 1806 king of Karangasem	Gusti Ayu Karang m. Dewa Agung Putra I king of Klungkung	Gusti Made Karangasem died after 1792 king of Tanjung Karang
			Gusti Ketut Karang king of Pagesangan

FIGURE 1 *Genealogy of the Karangasem princes mentioned in the text*

against the paramount king of Gelgel in the sixteenth century.⁹ The only story expanded on in some detail is the Balinese takeover of Selaparang on Lombok during the time of a raja who appears to have come to power in the 1670s. While it was a long process marked by revolts and foreign meddling, it is here telescoped into one single event in which a recalcitrant Sasak chief invites the Balinese to come over to Lombok—a famous story retold in many versions in the Sasak *babad* texts.¹⁰ The rest of the history of Karangasem has to be pieced together from various indigenous texts and archival documents. Other *babad* suggest that Karangasem fought Badung with partial success in the late seventeenth century, at a time when the Bali-wide Gelgel kingdom was breaking up.¹¹ Apart from this incident, though, Karangasem interests were directed east of the Lombok Strait.

9 For the origins of Karangasem, see Vickers 1986:329 and Hägerdal 2001:26.

10 The history of Arya Banjar Getas, the minister of Selaparang who had a falling-out with his raja and invited the Balinese to invade, is discussed in detail in Hägerdal 2001:43–9.

11 *Pambeñcangah Dane Poleng*, Coll. Korn, Or. 435:253, Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (hereafter KITLV); *Babad Badung*, Coll. Dewa Gde Catra. As is well known, Gelgel was replaced by Klungkung as the titular supreme seat, governed by rulers with the title Dewa Agung (1686–1908) (Schulte Nordholt 1996:23–4).

From these brief and scattered references it is not possible to obtain an idea of the basis for Karangasem's political successes on Bali and Lombok. Thus it is necessary on the one hand to make a careful assessment of the 'traditional' structure of the polity, and on the other hand to see the area around the Lombok Strait from the larger perspective of Indonesian power relations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In his study of modern Karangasem Schaareman (1986:142) has argued that it differs somewhat in hierarchical relationships between centre and clusters of villages, compared to other former *negara*. In his view, Karangasem displays archaic features which somewhat resemble the structure of pre-modern polities on Timor, Rote, and Sumba. In the latter regions, rulers and ruled tend to be involved in an elaborated ritual structure. What role these perceived East Balinese peculiarities had in the recruitment of manpower for military expansion is a moot point which cannot be elaborated upon in this article. According to traditions gathered by Korn, the eighteenth-century rajas assisted some villages and minor nobles in local warfare, and acquired rights to certain rice fields, and the performance of *puri* (palace) service by the locals.¹² But the *babad* and VOC sources also show that Karangasem recruited manpower of external origin (Gelgel, Seseh, *et cetera*), like some other major *negara* did.¹³ Strategically, the sudden collapse of the Makassar empire at the hand of the VOC and its allies in 1667–1669 left much of eastern Indonesia contested and vulnerable, including Lombok. With its mountainous geography, Karangasem was relatively safe against foreign incursions, while the low-lying parts of Lombok were on the contrary easy to reach and lacked strong indigenous political structures.¹⁴ The VOC had no interest in Lombok in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in spite of complaints by its allies on Sumbawa and South Sulawesi about the behaviour of the Balinese. The situation therefore illustrates how independent local polities occasionally came out as 'winners' in the short term as a consequence of VOC victories against its rivals on the islands.

12 Balinese *pangelingeling*, Coll. Korn, Or. 435:167, KITLV; Korn 1933:91.

13 Cf. VOC 1783 (1710), fols. 137–8, NA, which mentions that the invaders on Lombok came from, among other places, the *negorijen* Karangasem, Culik (Tjoulik), and Seseh (Cessee).

14 Sasak tradition indicates the existence of numerous minor polities, which were plagued by internal squabbles; see Hägerdal 2001.

Expansion over Sea and Land

Next, we shall see how Karangasem stabilized its foothold on Lombok, proceeded to gain ground on Bali itself, and even harboured ambitions in East Java. Authority over the mostly Muslim population of Lombok clearly evoked resentment, although it is debatable whether religious differences had much to do with it—a large part of the population followed a heavily localized and non-orthodox brand of Islam known as Wetu Telu. A Dutch source from 1770 alleges that every Sasak family must pay 2 piastres and 400 bundles of paddy per year, which was considered excessive. There were also allegations of humiliating practices, such as Balinese people having the right to sleep with the wives and daughters of Sasak commoners at will (Cool 1896:226–7). Rebellions and conspiracies occurred on several occasions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. On the other hand, the system of Balinese suzerainty was viable enough to last until 1894, and only collapsed as a result of Dutch military intervention. There was migration in both directions across the Lombok Strait. Interestingly, Sasak servant families were transferred to Bali, where they settled in two circles of villages around the royal centre of Amlapura (Putra Agung 2001:104–5). A deputy dynasty was established in Tanjung Karang at the west coast of Lombok, headed by Gusti Wayahan Tegeh (r. c. 1740–1775) and his two sons, Gusti Made Karangasem (r. 1775–?) and Gusti Ketut Karang (r. 1775–?). Thanks to the extensive studies of Bijvanck (1894) and Cool (1896), we know something about the mindset of these persons, who display an interesting tension between Balinese and Sasak viewpoints in their communication with the VOC. To comprehend relations over the Lombok Strait in fixed ethnic categories is therefore problematic. In some respects, Karangasem on Lombok was a polity that acted autonomously from Karangasem on Bali. Geographical terms are equally fluid. Places on the west coast of Lombok were sometimes understood to be situated on ‘Bali’, while the Karangasem lord was referred to as *koning van Groot Baly*.¹⁵ According to the chronicles, the rich agricultural resources of western Lombok were developed by immigrant Balinese grandees, who dug canals and opened up *sawah* fields, and by doing so provided an economic base for further political expansion in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹⁶

15 VOC 8215 (1741), fol. 148r; VOC 3470 (1776), fol. 313, NA.

16 A report from 1771 characterizes Gusti Karangasem as the mightiest and most eastern ruler on Bali, with the rich and fertile Sasak rice land as a major asset of his (De Jonge 1883:143).

Expansion on Bali itself appears to have started in the mid eighteenth century. *Babad* stories speak of involvement in the affairs of Klungkung and Gelgel sometime after 1736. While successful against Gelgel, the Karangasem lords failed miserably against the Dewa Agung of Klungkung.¹⁷ Adrian Vickers has identified a number of *pangelingeling* (commemorative notes) which frame literary texts and tell of warlike events in 1738–1740, involving Karangasem and its western neighbours Sidemen, Sibetan, and Bangli (Vickers 1990:175–6). However, Karangasem authority is first documented in Buleleng, the once powerful *negara* on the north coast which had hitherto been dependent on Mengwi. A legal document from 1757, issued by two Karangasem rulers, announces a number of dispositions concerning Buleleng and makes clear that the land has been taken over from its previous ruler, Gusti Pañji Alit (Liefcrinck 1917:47). The idea of Karangasem expansion at this time is interestingly paralleled by a letter that Batavia received from the raja of Badung in 1755. The raja regretted that he could not heed the request to send Balinese auxiliaries to join the Company, presumably in connection to the disturbances that preceded the Giyanti Treaty on Java, which divided up the Mataram kingdom in that year. The reason was that he was ‘still at war with the hostile Balinese of Karangasem’.¹⁸ A *pangelingeling* from 1765, which is attached to the literary text *Wangbang Wideya*, mentions a new invasion of Buleleng in that year (Vickers 1990:170).

Karangasem ties to Buleleng are highlighted by two somewhat opportunistic letters that reached the Dutch camp in the midst of its bloody campaign in Blambangan in 1767. The first was dispatched by a certain Ketut Padang of Ratna Rosso on behalf of the raja of Karangasem: ‘Since the conquest is most pleasing to [the raja], as he has been at war with Gusti Agung Mengwi for some time, Your Excellency can be assured that I shall live with one in upstanding friendship’.¹⁹ The other letter was sent by Gusti Ngurah Jelantik of Buleleng, a prince also known in the *Babad Buleleng* as the functionary of Karangasem:

As Your Excellency has taken it upon himself to occupy the land of Blambangan, a beneficial action, I kindly ask him to execute this task sooner rather than later, since I have already prevented Mengwi from dispatching auxiliaries to Blambangan. I take it upon myself to deal with the Company

17 *Babad Wisnuwangsa*, Coll. Dewa Gde Catra; Warna 1986:109–10, 115–7.

18 VOC 2864 (1755), fol. 6, NA. The letter is also interesting for documenting kinship ties between Balinese royalty and those Balinese who served the Company in Batavia: the raja asked the Governor-General whether there were still living relatives of his senior uncle (*oud-oom*), the well-known Balinese Captain Lampidja.

19 VOC 3215 (1767), fol. 137, NA.

for as long as I shall live, nay, even in the grave. I say this to Your Excellency so that Gusti Mengwi may not live a life in peace; he has already been at war with Karangasem as well as with me for some time. Furthermore I very kindly ask him to allow my sloop, which lies at Blambangan, to be loaded with rice and to return, as we are very accustomed to [in need of?] this foodstuff here [...].²⁰

The sincerity of these statements will be discussed below. As usual in pre-modern, insular Southeast Asia, shared ethnicity was no uniting factor, and the Karangasem and Buleleng princes had no qualms seeing their southern compatriots worsted by the might of the Company. A subsequent document from 1770 confirms the subordination of the northern coast.²¹ However, these documents do not tell us anything about the background to the incursions by Karangasem. Later historiography agrees that the takeover was caused by a split among the Buleleng royalty, which was skilfully used by Karangasem (Van Bloemen Waanders 1868:385–6; Worsley 1972:175–81).

Even hazier are the circumstances which surround the acquisition of the Sidemen area, the mountainous region where Pura Besakih is situated. Sidemen and Sibetan are mentioned as separate little realms in the first decades of the eighteenth century.²² The extant historiography offers different versions of the coming of Karangasem. One document contains a story of the minor local nobleman I Krewed, who was promised a set of privileges in exchange of

20 VOC 3215 (1767), fol. 134, NA. According to the *Babad Buleleng*, two royal brothers, Gusti Ngurah Pañji and Gusti Ngurah Jelantik, had been co-rulers but had had a falling-out. Gusti Ketut Jelantik approached Gusti Ngurah Ketut Karangasem and his political adviser, Gusti Nengah Sibetan of Selat. A Karangasem intervention followed, Gusti Ngurah Pañji was killed, and his brother was allowed to govern under Karangasem supervision. When he passed away, the old Buleleng dynasty was abruptly forced aside (Worsley 1972:175–81). The version of Van Bloemen Waanders (1868:385) differs by placing the Karangasem intervention after the death of Gusti Ngurah Jelantik. *Añjang Nirartha* (LOR 12.691, UB) contains a set of dates of historical events, and mentions a 'defeat of Buleleng later on' in 1793, perhaps alluding to the second intervention (Hägerdal 2006:164).

21 Vickers 1986:334. The rulers of Mengwi and Badung were still at war with Karangasem in 1771, though it is not clear how the hostilities were related to the affairs of Buleleng (De Jonge 1883:142–3).

22 Sidemen fought Klungkung in 1721 (De Graaf, 'Chronologisch overzicht Bali', H 1055:8, KITLV), while Sibetan was threatened by Gusti Nengah of Karangasem in 1731 (Van Goor 1988:281). Moreover, the Madurese prince Cakraningrat IV asked a number of Balinese domains for military assistance in 1729, including both Karangasem and Sibetan (VOC 2129, fol. 60, NA).

supporting the Karangasem ruler against Sibetan, which he accepted.²³ Other stories tell of hostilities and intrigues involving a Brahmana family and the lords of Sidemen, Sibetan, Iseh, and Duda. As a result of this, the last of the Sidemen lords was killed in an ambush and the area submitted to Gusti Ngurah Made Karangasem, by implication some time before 1769.²⁴ Curiously, in spite of its Bali-wide importance, Pura Besakih is not specifically mentioned in the Balinese historical texts that describe these events. The implication is possibly that its functions and maintenance were not dependent on the political changes afflicting East Bali. However, the quoted letter from 1769 seems to suggest an alternative meaning.

The rapid changes of overlordship in the 1750s and 1760s illustrate the fluid nature of the Balinese *negara*, as analysed in the study of Henk Schulte Nordholt (1996). Rather than a state in the modern sense, the *negara* was a network of hierarchical power relationships which could be rapidly upset by political events and the capabilities of the political protagonists. Very little of this political expansion was mentioned in the voluminous VOC records, for the simple reason that it was of little concern to the Company. For the Company officials, Bali was a dangerous and unattractive place, which was best left to its own devices, quite unlike the ‘morning-of-the-world’ image of modern times. Karangasem was far from Java and did not possess many sailing crafts; it was therefore not considered a threat as long as it remained on Balinese soil (De Jonge 1883:143).

The matter was quite different for Lombok. The fate of this island had long been a non-issue for the VOC, but new threats to the Dutch position affected this situation. After the Seven Years War, a global conflict which involved a humiliating Dutch defeat against the British in Bengal, British merchantmen were increasingly active in the East Indian Archipelago, while ‘smugglers’ brought merchandise to the British outpost in Bencoolen on Sumatra. Ships were dispatched to places where the VOC had little or nothing to say, such as Borneo, Sumbawa, and Bali, to identify new possibilities for trade (Kathirithamby-Wells 1977:153). The deputy raja on Lombok, Gusti Wayahan Tegéh, allowed Tanjung Karang on the west coast to develop into a port that tied different parts of maritime Asia together. Local traders brought spices from Seram, which

23 Balinese *pangelingeling*, Coll. Korn, Or. 135:167, KITLV.

24 Vickers 1986:333–4; Stuart-Fox 2002:291–2. According to Anandakusuma (1989:28, 67), Gusti Nengah Sibetan of Selat approached Gusti Ngurah Made Karangasem and then unexpectedly attacked the Sidemen lord, who was killed in the battle. For versions of these events, see Stuart-Fox 2002:291–2; *Babad Keramas*, LOr 15.014, UB.

were traded by the Britons and their dependants for textiles and opium.²⁵ A key person was the half-brother of the English governor of Bencoolen, Calla Bangkahulu, of Bugis-Lampung descent, who regularly visited Lombok and maintained a network in the eastern part of the Indies (Bijvanck 1894:301–2). This could only increase Dutch Anglophobia, which had been among the causes for the bloody VOC intervention in Blambangan in East Java. This concern caused the dispatch of cruiser ships to keep watch for ‘smugglers’.

The Dutch feared that Balinese realms such as Mengwi might cooperate with British auxiliary troops.²⁶ However, Karangasem was also an active component of the British threat. In spite of the above-mentioned devoted letters from 1767–1768, the king seems to have entertained plans of his own. The VOC envoy Bappa Mida, who visited Bali in 1766, shortly before the invasion of Blambangan, found that there were plans for a Karangasem intervention in Blambangan with the assistance of Tabanan, Badung, and the British. Calla Bangkahulu had a hand in all this by preparing the way among Madurese and Chinese traders.²⁷ This is at least partly confirmed by a British report. An English seafarer, who met the ruler of Karangasem in Buleleng in 1766, understood that the Karangasem invasion was in an advanced stage of preparation, but tried to persuade the raja to postpone it (Bassett 1964:216–7). The enterprise never actually got under way, but the contrast between the plans and the subsequent congratulatory letters to the VOC highlights the rather opportunistic stance that a minor archipelagic polity saw reason to take in this turbulent era. In sum, the course of events illustrates the capacity of the leadership as operators of note. The securing of Lombok in c. 1748 was soon followed by the invasion of Buleleng in c. 1757 and 1765, and the plans for interventions on Java in 1766, while carefully avoiding confrontation with the Company. Interestingly, these activities coincided with another political adventure, to which we shall now turn.

Incursions on Sumbawa and Ethnic Ambiguity

In this section I will show how the ambitions of Karangasem stretched even further to the east, to the Muslim island of Sumbawa, and how this enterprise put a strain on the multiethnic nature of the Karangasem realm. What brought the VOC into closer contact with warring Balinese from Karangasem was in

25 VOC 3653 (1783), fol. 12, NA.

26 VOC 3215 (1767), fol. 141, NA.

27 VOC 3186 (1766), fols. 394, 447, NA.

fact events on Sumbawa, which had been under VOC suzerainty since 1669. Of the six states dotting the island, Bima in the east was considered first in importance, and a Dutch Resident was consequently placed close to the sultan. The second in rank, Sumbawa proper on the western side, tended to mind its own affairs and was ethnically different from the five eastern states. Both Bima and Sumbawa were closely interrelated with the Makassarese royalty in Gowa and Tallo' on Sulawesi. The sultans of Sumbawa had claims on Lombok, or at any rate on the old eastern kingdom of Selaparang. This, however, was soon reversed through a new spate of Karangasem expansion, which, interestingly, took place at exactly the same time as the incursion in Buleleng.

When the Selaparang raja fled to Sumbawa in 1748, the raja of Karangasem was inclined to pursue him there, even sending a preposterous request to the VOC to approve the planned invasion!²⁸ Balinese incursions over the Alas Strait commenced by 1755 and the sultan of Sumbawa complained bitterly of his lack of power to stop the marauders.²⁹ The political structure of the sultanate was weak, with a number of autonomous satellite princedoms in the west. There was moreover severe discord among the court elite. The throne was contested by two princes, called Datu Jerewe and Datu Taliwang, the latter of which had abducted a wife of the Karangasem ruler during a raid (as elsewhere in the East Indies there was a thin line between prince and pirate). In 1763 Datu Jerewe sought assistance from Karangasem, whose lord wished to avenge the humiliating abduction. Thus a large army, implausibly estimated at 12,000 men, went over the Alas Strait and laid siege to the stronghold of Datu Taliwang. While it departed from Karangasem on Lombok, the raja in the Balinese heartland appears to have had a strong hand in this and later incursions. There is no need to go into the details of this complicated conflict, which continued until 1766. Suffice to say that it involved a brief clash with a minor Dutch expedition and a swift realignment of alliances, at which point Karangasem was suddenly found to be fighting on the same side as the VOC.³⁰ The rapid changes indicate the opportunism of the parts involved; shared ethnicity was no unifying factor in the face of foreign threats, and religious affiliation did not stop a Muslim prince from calling in Hindu troops against his compatriots.

28 VOC 2725 (1748), fols. 75–7, NA.

29 Held, 'Sumbawa—geschiedenis', H 1220:28, fol. xxxiv, KITLV.

30 Eerdmans, 'Geschiedenis van Celebes', II:269, KITLV; Bikkers Bakker, 'Memorie van overgaaf', ANRI Makassar, 376:8, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI). I am very grateful to Bernice de Jong Boers for arranging a transcript of the last-mentioned document.

A few aspects of the invasion merit attention. First, the detailed Dutch reports give some information about the style of warfare. From their point of view, the Balinese-Sasak ravages of West Sumbawa were far from efficacious: 'The Balinese are in general not capable of taking a fortification that is well defended. The allies have no heart to fight and must be repeatedly asked to do so'.³¹ On the other hand, the strategy to avoid pitched battles was logical from the Karangasem point of view, as noted by the Sasak commander Sang Tombong:

That is the custom of the Balinese. When we besiege a *negeri* we surround it, attack those who go outside and starve out those inside. Thus we stood there to watch and take action if those inside tried to escape. If they had, we would have assisted [the VOC troops].

BIJVANCK 1894:150

Another aspect, hinted at in the quoted remark, is the ethnic ambiguity of some of the protagonists, which was somewhere between Balinese-ness and Sasak-ness. The Selaparang aristocrat Sang Tombong had the ear of the raja of Karangasem and was the supposed catalyst of the invasion of Sumbawa. When Sang Tombong passed away shortly after the campaign, the raja was reportedly disheartened and felt as if his right hand had been chopped off.³² Other stories suggest another side to him. During the war in 1764 Sang Tombong made a deal with Datu Taliwang to turn against the Karangasem lord and bring Selaparang under the control of Sumbawa again. The lord nevertheless got wind of the plans and pushed Sang Tombong to continue the campaign (Bijvanck 1894:149).

A similar ambiguity pertains to Gusti Wayahan Tegeh, who governed on behalf of Karangasem for more than 34 years, yet occasionally plotted with the VOC to get rid of the supposedly oppressive Balinese—one abortive idea was to call in the British with Calla Bangkahulu as middleman.³³ Ethnicity appears as comparatively flexible, and the role of religion might also have been of secondary importance. The largely non-orthodox Sasaks were able to mix and ally with the Hindu Balinese, whose caste system was not always rigid. Apart from the case of Gusti Wayahan Tegeh, it is known from a Dutch source that the minor raja of Kadiri in West Lombok, Anak Agung Nyoman Rai (d. 1805), had a

³¹ VOC 3137 (1765), fol. 165, NA.

³² VOC 7948 (1770), fol. 209, NA.

³³ VOC 3186 (1766), fol. 393, NA. Calla Bangkahulu, moreover, married the adolescent sister of the sultan of Sumbawa in 1766, adding yet another dimension to the intricate and volatile political network in the region.

Sasak father (Lekkerkerker 1926:335). In both cases, the later Balinese pedigrees seem to have covered up an awkward genealogical situation by including these persons in the Karangasem dynasty.

Balinese intervention in the convoluted affairs of Sumbawa came to an end in 1766, when the troops withdrew. The king of Karangasem may have secured his somewhat shaky authority on Lombok by appointing a brother as the vassal raja in Mataram at about this time.³⁴ Mataram wielded power over the east coast of Lombok, guarding the authority of Karangasem against trouble from the Sumbawan quarter.³⁵ Otherwise, it seemed as if the Balinese were intent on keeping to their side of the Alas Strait. Dubious Balinese designs surfaced from time to time,³⁶ but the Balinese kept the peace until 1788, when they intervened briefly and unsuccessfully in the internal troubles of Sumbawa.³⁷ In sum, the enterprise on Sumbawa was the culmination of a long history of Balinese-Sumbawan rivalry, but reinforces the impression that expansion could only take place outside the Dutch 'radar'. The episode underlines the rifts in the Karangasem realm, where ethnic identity fluctuated along a continuum.

34 This is Anglurah Ketut Karangasem alias Anak Agung Bagus Jelantik, the maternal uncle of the Lombok vassal raja Gusti Made Karangasem. A VOC source mentions him in 1775 (Bijvanck 1894:328). The *Nota* by Sandveldt from 1903 (Coll. Korn 435:99, KITLV) asserts that Mataram was established around 1767. The reliability of this is, of course, debatable. The name Mataram indicates the inclination to emulate the Old Javanese world of kingship, shortly after the division of the Islamic Mataram (1755). One may note, however, that the other Balinese *negara* on Lombok also resorted to using Old Javanese names.

35 Lekkerkerker 1926:334–5. The rest of Lombok was shared between sub-dynasties which governed Pagesangan–Tanjung Karang (the family of Gusti Wayahan Tegeh), Pagutan, Kadiri, and Sengkongo. Some Sasak inland areas had their own rajas, such as Sakra, Kopang, and Praya.

36 These designs involved an activist princess called Gusti Ayu Ngurah. In 1770 she visited Tanjung Karang when her brother Gusti Wayan Ngurah Karangasem married. During the festivities she learnt of the plans of Gusti Wayahan Tegeh to give a grand ceremonial feast on Sumbawa, and prepared a contribution. The *nakhoda* (captain) Bapa Marta was dispatched with 700 *ganting* (a weight variously fixed) of rice and a buffalo, and an accompanying letter from Gusti Ayu Ngurah. After arriving in Sumbawa he handed over the items to Tagal, one of Gusti Wayahan Tegeh's trustees. The *nakhoda* was later apprehended by a VOC functionary who interrogated him about the affair, assuming that the feast was a sly way of paving the way for a new invasion. Bapa Marta pleaded ignorance and was eventually allowed to return to Tanjung Karang with a warning; see VOC 7948 (1770), fols. 208–9, NA.

37 Held, 'Sumbawa—Geschiedenis', H 1220:28, fols. xxx, xxxv, KITLV.

The Mystery of the Contract

How the VOC and Karangasem tried to use each other in diplomatic deliberations is the theme of the next section. The Sumbawan adventure, with its rapid changes of alliances, made the VOC authorities distrustful of Karangasem and its Lombok satellite. Reports complain about the princes and their lack of trustworthiness. After the conclusion of the last Sumbawa invasion a flurry of diplomatic activity nevertheless took place between Gusti Wayahan Tegeh and the VOC representatives in Makassar and Bima. The raja seemed inclined to bond with the Company in order to get rid of his Karangasem suzerains, but was never able to carry this out. The governor in Makassar showed interest in detaching the fertile Lombok from Bali. On the other hand, the Governor-General in Batavia focused on securing East Java for the Company and preferred maintaining good relations with Karangasem rather than engaging in an adventure on Lombok (Bijvanck 1894:326).

After the demise of Gusti Wayahan Tegeh in 1775 his two sons, Gusti Made Karangasem and Gusti Ketut Karang, wielded power on the island, which was divided by their rivalry; the former was the spokesman of the Sasaks, while the latter headed the Balinese—or at least, this is how the Dutch understood it. In this tense situation the Resident of Bima, Alexander Lecerff, undertook a first Dutch diplomatic mission to Karangasem itself, which impressed him. It seemed to be a kingdom on the rise and the main settlement (today's Amlapura) supposedly housed 20,000 inhabitants. Lecerff noted the presence of elite troops armed with muskets and even cannonry (Bijvanck 1894:330). A contract was prepared by Lecerff but was turned down in the end by the ruler, Gusti Ngurah Made Karangasem. The raja stated his wish to live in friendship and encourage trade with the Company but did not wish to sign a contract since the Balinese were not keen on the idea of written treaties with foreign nations, 'since the Balinese are not used to such thing'.³⁸

For the VOC, written contracts with East Indian polities of consequence were vital for its position as a leading power in this part of Asia. The two centuries of VOC history abound with contracts with rulers across the archipelago. A prime goal was to strengthen the monopolistic endeavour of the Company and keep foreign ships out. In practice, the contract would usually reduce the indigenous polity to a subordinated position. The Karangasem elite may have comprehended the possible danger of such an arrangement and thus declined to sign the written document. Nevertheless, the concept contract was evidently

38 VOC 3470 (1776), fol. 314, NA; Bijvanck 1894:333.

kept by the Karangasem rulers over the years. In 1787 they surprisingly asserted that a contract had previously been signed with the late Lecerff. The rajas and their successors after them were to honour this contract, just like their forefathers had done.³⁹

Two years later the issue of the supposed contract came up again. The two rajas stated their intention to renew the contract that was accepted by 'our grandfather Gusti [Ngurah Made Karangasem the elder, d. 1775] who ruled Bali Karangasem and has gone to heaven'.⁴⁰ The originally Malay-language contract was appended in abbreviated Dutch translation and included five paragraphs. The introduction and first paragraph read:

First, the signs and proofs of love and friendship that are dispatched by the Governor-General and Council of India to Gusti Ngurah Made Karangasem, King of Bali Karangasem, and Gusti Wayahan Tegeh, King of Selaparang, of which God and the prophet Moses bear witness, are as follows:

Paragraph 1.

That there shall be an eternal friendship and brotherhood between the aforementioned princes and the Company; that their highnesses shall not conclude any friendship or alliance with any other Europeans; the Company and Bali shall be one, assisting each other in the confirmation of this contract.⁴¹

The following paragraph concerned shipwrecked Company vessels off the coast of Bali. The Balinese undertook to salvage goods, artillery, and crews, and to assist cruising ships. To cover all eventualities, the text added that the Balinese were free to expel or capture the crews if they behaved brutally towards the inhabitants of the coasts and harbours. The third paragraph regulated visits by Company ships. When white or 'black' seafarers sold their merchandise to the Balinese they were not supposed to sell on credit or be exempted from tolls. The same applied for *pangkalang* (large Malay sailing ships) and *padewakang* (large Bugis-Makassar trading ships) travelling from Bali to Batavia or other VOC posts. In times of need the Balinese could apply for munitions *et cetera*,

39 VOC 3742 (1787), fols. 689–93, NA.

40 VOC 3821 (1789), fol. 635, NA.

41 VOC 3821 (1789), fol. 638, NA.

on the condition that they did not enter into relationships with other Europeans. Paragraph number 4 made it clear that the Balinese lords were free to sentence criminal Company servants; they could even apply the death penalty if necessary. The fifth and last paragraph regulated obligations to sell rice and livestock to visiting Company ships. The paragraph ended with a reaffirmation of the military bond: the external enemies of Karangasem were the enemies of the VOC, and the Balinese were thus entitled to assistance. Conversely they should assist the Company if necessary.⁴²

Judging by the assertion of the Karangasem ruler, this would be the first Balinese–Dutch contract, preceding the nineteenth-century contracts by several decades. The detailed *dagregisters* (daily registers) from the missions of Lecerff do not suggest that a contract was actually signed, but in the 1780s the local elite accepted the concept contract as fully valid. The document may have been perceived as a token of friendship and alliance rather than a set of exact stipulations. Cases from other parts of the East Indian Archipelago strongly suggest that contracts tended to mean very different things to local elites than to the Dutch authorities (Andaya 1993:xvi). At any rate, this episode gives interesting details about how Karangasem leaders sought to use Dutch diplomatic institutions to their advantage.

The Maritime World of Karangasem

The issue of the contract raises the question as to what contemporary sources say about Karangasem's involvement in trade and shipping. The outlook of the indigenous *babad* or *geguritan* (sung poems) literature is decidedly not oriented towards the sea. It normally deals with the exercise of power within the *negara*, or competition with other aristocratic lineages. This may be related to the disinterest for seaborne activities described in the ethnographic literature about the Balinese (Geertz 1980:87–8). However, royal letters to the Dutch authorities in Batavia and elsewhere, and fragmentary reports, provide us with a somewhat different perspective.

The letters show that the regional aristocracy had access to at least some trading vessels. In 1786 Gusti Ngurah Made Karangasem and his subordinates prepared to send no less than six vessels to Batavia for diplomatic and commercial purposes. They were captained by a Muslim and a Chinese, and appear to have departed from Lombok. The aristocrats themselves were more than pas-

42 VOC 3821 (1789), fols. 638–40, NA.

sive bystanders. The expedition to Batavia, which carried a characteristic cargo of *kapas* (cotton), rice, local textiles, and slaves, was headed by a Gusti Made Abian, perhaps of the Sibetan clan.⁴³ A Raja Pambadilan, uncle of the king, owned a ship and purchased cloth on Bali in order to sell elsewhere.⁴⁴ One of the rajas on Lombok, Gusti Made Karangasem, even tried to arrange for the construction of two *pancalang* in a shipyard on Java, to use for trade between Batavia and Bali.⁴⁵ Functionaries similar to those found in the Malay world were placed in the ports. A Chinese harbour-master seems to be mentioned in one of the referenced letters, and another piece refers to a *pagter* of Labuan Padang (Padangbai) who was also Chinese and carried out diplomatic duties.⁴⁶ A *pagter* was the person who collected the fees from the trade goods that came through the port.⁴⁷ As a well-protected inlet on the south-east coast, Padang attracted a number of traders, although it was probably far behind the commercial centre of Kuta in Badung.⁴⁸ Within the Karangasem realm, Ampenan and Tanjung Karang on the west coast of 'Bali Sasak' are described as significant ports, again highlighting the economic significance of Lombok for the rise of Karangasem. Buleleng, too, was important, and the Bencoolen-Sulawesi connection also played a role. English components for firearms were imported from Bencoolen and Penang (British since 1786) by Makassarese, Mandarese, and Bugis. Muskets and small cannons were manufactured in Buleleng itself. Conversely, by the early years of the nineteenth century trading ships from Bali went to the British strongholds.⁴⁹ Slaves were still a significant part of the export. In a letter from 1792, one of the rajas excused himself for not sending an envoy the year before; this was due to the fact that the Chinese trader whose ship he would have used was busy transporting a human cargo of 100 people.⁵⁰

43 VOC 3742 (1787), fols. 689–93, NA. The name element Abian is common in this lineage.

44 VOC 3742 (1787), fol. 699, NA.

45 VOC 3821 (1789), fol. 637, NA.

46 VOC 3821 (1789), fol. 641, NA. In 1783 the *syahbandar* (harbour headman) of Padang was one Pamangallung, apparently of Sulawesi descent. He raised two Chinese seafarers in his household, adding to the ethnic diversity; VOC 3653 (1783), fols. 19–20.

47 In 1829, W.H. Medhurst wrote that the Chinese staying on Bali were usually *pagters*, who managed the Bali-Java trade and made large profits (Medhurst 1858:200).

48 Medhurst (1858:216) noted in 1829 that Padang and Badung saw much more trade than Buleleng. This, however, was written after a period of political turbulence in Karangasem and, in particular, Buleleng.

49 Van Wikkerman 1805, 'Beschrijving van Bali en Banjoewangi', Coll. Van Alphen en Engelhard 19B, No. 149, NA.

50 Schulte Nordholt (1996:41) has pointed out the predatory aspects of a Balinese *negara*, referring to a statement by the *patih* (first minister) of Karangasem in 1808: when lacking

The same letter mentions *dendeng* (jerked meat), calf hides, sapanwood, and birds' nests as royal export products, much of it probably originating from Lombok.⁵¹

While the Karangasem princes usually took a humble stance in their correspondence with the VOC, there were incidents which soured the tone. Unsurprisingly these were related to what the Dutch considered to be illicit trading. British traders were occasionally the catalysts for these events. In 1768 a cruiser from Dutch Makassar visited Bayoang, a coastal place under Gusti Tegal, a vassal under Karangasem. Most probably it was Bayan in North Lombok. The VOC servants spotted a British vessel by the shore. However, before they had had a chance to inspect the trading goods, they were attacked by the enraged locals and had to abandon their intent.⁵² The hostility of the locals is maybe understandable in the light of some other incidents. In 1786 Gusti Ngurah Made Karangasem complained to Batavia about three ships belonging to himself or his kin, which had been captured by VOC cruisers off Padangbai and Buleleng. The cargo included textiles, *pitis* (tin alloy coins), lances, *lebieng* (?), keris, and *badi* (small daggers). Two of the ships were returned after some time, but not the third. If the Company was really his friend, the king argued, it should quickly bring the vessel back to Karangasem.⁵³ These actions were however no more than minor encroachments. A report from 1805 indicates that Bali had developed a considerable 'smuggling' trade by this time.⁵⁴

A further strain on the relationship was the choice of the Karangasem realm as a place of refuge for people in trouble with the Dutch. These include Batara Gowa, former king of Gowa, who stayed on Lombok in 1766–1767, and the

money, they would attack the weakest of their neighbours, taking prisoners by the score for the slave market.

- 51 VOC 3951 (1792), fol. 331^a. The letter was sent by Gusti Ngurah Made Karangasem and a Lombok vassal. The king was based in Singhasari on Lombok. A local *babad* credits him with issuing a *piagem* (charter) which divided up the lands under the rule of the descendants of Arya Banjar Getas (Hägerdal 2001:149). Putra Agung (referred in Hägerdal 2001:56) understands his situation as that of regent (*wakil*) of the Karangasem kingdom on Lombok, with Raja Mataram as his *patih*, and the minor rajas (Pagutan, Pagesangan, Kopang, Sakra, *et cetera*) as *manca* (local vassals).
- 52 VOC 3244 (1768), fol. 135, NA.
- 53 VOC 3742 (1787), fol. 699, NA. The same or a similar incident is recorded in a letter from 1788: a Karangasem vessel was assaulted by Company servants at Buleleng (VOC 3772, fols. 2942–3, NA).
- 54 Van Wikkerman (1805), 'Beschrijving van Bali en Banjoewangi', Coll. Van Alphen en Engelhard 19B, No. 149, NA. Many British ships visited Lombok over the period 1797–98 (Cool 1896:238).

Javanese aristocrat Raden Haji, who resided at Padangbai in the 1780s, where he and his retainers constructed a *benteng* (fort).⁵⁵ The autonomous legal status of Bali and Lombok was attractive for outcasts on the islands, but in both cases the stay was brief. The local rulers were unreliable and did not provide unconditional safety, as seen by the hasty departure of Batara Gowa in 1767 (Bijvanck 1894:302–4; Hägerdal 2001:156).

In sum, Karangasem on Bali and especially on Lombok offered opportunities for trade and shipping to a range of ethnic groups with whom the Karangasem aristocracy had vested interests. Chinese immigrants began to settle in the archipelago in large numbers in the mid to late eighteenth century and helped the Malays, Bugis, *et cetera* to build up commercial power independently of Dutch influence (Trocki 1997:97). Bali and Lombok fitted well into their pattern of activities. Seafarers from Sulawesi and the British possessions were important players in the Bali-Lombok waters, who had little regard for Dutch attempts to regulate the flows of trade. The Sulawesi peoples were perceived as a major nuisance to the Company interests, not least in eastern Indonesia, and their activities increased over the century.⁵⁶

Karangasem at its Peak

By the time that Karangasem attempted to revive the contract, the VOC was already in a process of irrevocable decline following the strain of the Anglo-Dutch War. Renewed war with the British and the demise of the Company in 1799 were not conducive to the creation of reports about areas where the Dutch had few direct interests. However, scattered European data and the indigenous chronicle traditions indicate the continued strong expansion of political authority in the years before and after 1800—but also the roots of fragmentation. We shall now scrutinize a number of aspects of this.

The most obvious advance was into the old heartland of Balinese political culture, Klungkung. The *Babad Ksatria* relates that the Klungkung heir Dewa Agung Putra ended up in Karangasem, where he grew up with the two princes who governed as rajas after 1775.⁵⁷ When he reached adulthood he obtained their help to regain Klungkung and staged an attack with a detachment of

55 VOC 3772 (1788), fol. 2962A; VOC 3551 (1792), fol. 3311A, NA; Cool 1896:236.

56 VOC 8330 (1737), Dagregister Kupang, sub 24, June 1737, NA.

57 In c. 1776 it is noted that the *susuhunan* (overlord) of Klungkung did not take any effort with governmental affairs but let the lesser princes handle matters their way (Cool 1896: 233).

Karangasem troops. The caretaker, raja Dewa Agung Pañji, took fright and left his *puri* (palace) for safety in Gianyar, around 1790 or later.⁵⁸

The *Babad Ksatria* reverently praises Dewa Agung Putra's 'position as king, ruling all the land of Bali' (Warna 1986:121), a statement not confirmed by the *babad* of other *negara*. In fact the chronicle also admits that he alternated between Klungkung and Karangasem, and married the sister of the two king-maker brothers, suggesting his dependence on them. Sometime later the Karangasem brothers accompanied Dewa Agung on a successful expedition to the Nyalian domain that killed the lord of that place and placed Temuku under Karangasem rule (Warna 1986:122). While the chronicle extols the god-like connotations of Dewa Agung Putra, it also implies that the king was an instrument of Karangasem expansion, in much the same way that Selaparang, Sidemen-Sibetan, and Buleleng had been subjugated by the strategic use of claimants in internal squabbles.

A comparison with European records from 1805 to 1812 confirms some of the outlines of the *Babad Ksatria* account and indicates that the position of Karangasem at that time was very strong. Half of Tabanan was under the rule of Karangasem and its vassal Buleleng; likewise, the Tamanbali and Bangli domains were partly under the suzerainty of their powerful eastern neighbour (Lekkerkerker 1926:324–5). In 1803 the raja described himself as the ruler of Karangasem, Bangli, Buleleng, and Tabanan.⁵⁹ Dewa Agung Putra was strongly under the influence of his Karangasem consort, who even ventured to assassinate her co-consort, a Badung princess. The ruler was unable to stop this deed which, as could be expected, provoked a state of hostility between Badung and Karangasem (Lekkerkerker 1926:318).

Next, something extraordinary occurred. The younger Karangasem brother, Gusti Gede Ngurah Karangasem, proposed to the Dutch in 1805 that he could become emperor (*keyser*) of Bali with European assistance; in return, he would hail the Dutch as his suzerains.⁶⁰ In other words, it seems he was prepared to

58 Namely around the time of the second Dewa Manggis of Gianyar who, according to Van der Broek, in 1818 had ruled for 30 years (that is, since about 1790) (Mahaudiana 1968:33–4; Van der Broek 1835:177).

59 Wieringa 1998:402. How the subordination of Bangli, Tamanbali, and Tabanan came about is not clear from historical sources. The *Babad Ksatria Tamanbali* speaks of a defeat of Tamanbali at the hands of Kiyayi Anglurah Made of Karangasem, although this may have happened long before 1800 (Sueta 1993:32). The Tabanan *babad* speak of interior trouble in the 1790s, though Karangasem is not mentioned (Darta 1996:106–10).

60 'Carang Assam' (1805), Coll. Van Alphen en Engelhard, 19B, No. 148, NA; Lekkerkerker 1926:319.

stab his brother-in-law in the back and abrogate the old ritual supremacy of the Dewa Agung line. The idea was reportedly triggered by the recent hostile stance of Badung, and would have upset Balinese political theory such as we know it from the texts. *Keyser* apparently corresponds to *susuhunan*, the title by which the Dewa Agung was known (at any rate, outside of Bali). With eastern, northern, and part of central Bali under his thumb, the Gusti embarked on a quest for power which had not been attempted for a long time. Genealogical texts assert that the Karangasem lords ultimately descended from the ancient Javanese kingdom of Kadiri that preceded Singhasari and Majapahit, a claim that would have given them a potential rationale in case of usurpation.⁶¹ The age of these claims is not known, but the link could very well have been constructed with the rise of the polity.

This also returns us to a speculative point raised at the beginning of this article. Would the acquisition of the area of the mother temple Pura Besakih shortly before 1769 have excited ambitions of supremacy? In his study of the South Balinese *negara* Mengwi, Henk Schulte Nordholt has emphasized the importance of a ritual axis of sanctuaries for the symbolic authority of the Mengwi rajas. Judging from the comprehensive investigations of David Stuart-Fox and Margaret Wiener, Pura Besakih was not linked with such an axis in spite (or because) of its paramount importance, but was rather considered the 'head' of Gelgel. There was an association between Gelgel kingship, the god Mahadewa (Śiva), and Pura Besakih (Wiener 1995:122). The *babad* tradition rather emphasizes the link between the dynastic Pura Bukit in Karangasem and Gunung Pengsong on Lombok, whose *bhatara* (deity) had allowed the Balinese to invade Lombok in the first place (Hägerdal 2001:143–5).

Whatever the reason for it, the Karangasem initiative was short-lived. The proposal was deemed unacceptable by the Dutch authority on the turbulent island.⁶² Moreover, the Karangasem lord soon backed out of the enterprise, since he feared that information about his intentions would leak out and infuriate all the other Balinese lords (Lekkerkerker 1926:319). Old hierarchical structures were not dismissed that easily.

This may very well have been the peak of Karangasem ambitions. Through a series of strategical interventions and the manipulation of symbolic institutions, it had subordinated a considerable portion of Bali. So far the dynastic

61 *Pamañcangah Karangasem*, Coll. Berg, 118, UB; *Babad Arya Kapakisan*, LOr 9819, UB. From a VOC source from 1787, it is known that the Karangasem and Lombok elite considered themselves descended from the Majapahit kingdom (Bijvanck 1894:303). Kadiri and Majapahit origins were thus not mutually exclusive.

62 'Carang Assam' (1805), Coll. Van Alphen en Engelhard, 19B, No. 148, NA.

core line had been spared from the bloody fraternal struggles that had wrecked Klungkung, Tabanan, Buleleng, and Mengwi. The raja position was sometimes shared between sets of brothers without recorded commotion. Around 1800, however, the unity of the core line eventually broke down. A document from 1805 explains that Gusti Ngurah Made Karangasem had established his base on Lombok but rose up against his brother Gusti Gede Ngurah Karangasem, who is described as the dominant one of the partnership.⁶³ From this point up to 1849 a series of convoluted military clashes afflicted the dynastic domains of Lombok, Karangasem, and Buleleng.⁶⁴ Most of the ruling members of the three regions were killed or deposed, which eventually led to the takeover of the Karangasem homeland by the Lombok raja after the third Dutch expedition in 1849.

Conclusions

The points made in this article are based on texts, often of a fragmentary nature, and may bring up new questions rather than answering the old ones. It is possible that the collusion of an art historian, philologist, anthropologist, and archaeologist would find new windows to the past, but such broad team studies are still rare in the humanities. Such as they are, the findings about the political ascent of Karangasem suggest a few rationales for its political trajectory. Being a hilly territory without good harbours it seems ill-suited to a career of expansionism. These geographical features, however, also prevented attempts of domination from South Bali, Makassar, or Batavia. A rough chronology of the period 1650–1800 indicates the geopolitical circumstances: first, clashes with the South Balinese area which were partially successful; then a generally successful series of incursions and petty wars on Lombok; then subjugation of the other East Balinese domains; and, finally, the acquirement of large territories in North and Central Bali, crowned by the domination over the dynastic centre in Klungkung. The VOC provided the preconditions to expand across the narrow Lombok Strait by defeating Makassar and depriving it of its overseas realm in 1667. The post-conquest construction of waterworks in West Central Lombok is described by probably reliable historical tradition and was accompanied by migrations in both directions across

63 Van Wikkerman (1805), 'Beschrijving van Bali en Banjoewangi', Coll. Van Alphen en Engelhard 19B, No. 149, NA. Cf. Van Hoëvell 1851:223.

64 See Van Hoëvell 1845:172–8, 1851:223–7; Medhurst 1858:196–7; Van Bloemen Waanders 1868:384–403.

the strait. This gave the leadership access to agricultural resources comparable to the South Balinese rajas, which paved the way for further expansion. The actual capabilities of the Balinese rulers to control local society has been a hot topic since Clifford Geertz's seminal text *Negara* (1980), and it has often been asserted that the villages, *banjar*, and *subak* depended on local organization rather than royal supervision. This has recently been qualified by Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin (2003), who has pointed out that preserved decrees show the rajas regulating local agricultural matters to an extent. At any rate historical tradition asserts that trustees of the Karangasem lord were sent to Lombok with the explicit aim of carrying out the waterworks.⁶⁵ Concurrently with this, the leadership took advantage of the opportunities for trade which involved archipelago-wide economic currents and migrations, in which the local elite had an important stake. The multi-ethnic connectivities of the realm are striking.

To this is added a sometimes quite astonishing ability of strategic allocations. VOC sources suggest an ability to strike at the right moment during the contest for Lombok. Clever use of internal dissent is repeatedly mentioned in the *babad* literature as the cause of the subjugation of Selaparang, Sidemen-Sibetan, Buleleng, and Klungkung, and it is tempting to compare this with the endeavour to play out the British against the Dutch. While little love was lost between the Karangasem leaders and the VOC, they normally avoided confrontation as Karangasem kept out of areas of vital Dutch interest. The leaders of the late eighteenth century were also able to coordinate their campaigns. The invasion of Buleleng in 1765 occurred at the same time as the campaigns in Sumbawa in 1763–1766, and the latter episode was immediately followed by the preparations to invade Blambangan in 1766. A degree of military organization apparently played a role, as is suggested by the presence of elite troops armed with muskets and the manufacturing of firearms in Buleleng. While Karangasem-Bali and Karangasem-Lombok were partly separate entities, the leadership of the former maintained a degree of cohesion until it broke down with a vengeance around 1800.

The significance of Karangasem's acquisition of the mother temple Pura Besakih is not very clear. However, the use of cultural and ritual symbols to underpin the socio-political community is apparent; it is well known that a large number of Kawi texts from Java and Bali were brought over to Lombok at some point to anchor the cultural discourse of the Balinese elite (Vickers 1990:176). One may once again stress the forging or emphasizing of the

65 *Pambeñcangah Dane Poleng*, Coll. V.E. Korn, Or. 435:253, KITLV.

genealogical tradition. The Dutch report from 1783, quoted above, may give reason to suspect that there was more than one version of the origins of the ruling house, but the master version of the *babad* sets the record straight: it competes with the Dewa Agung line by claiming descent from ancient Kadiri and the venerable Airlangga. It was certainly no coincidence that the sub-kingdoms on Lombok received names such as Kadiri and Mataram.

Perhaps a further point can be made. That the literary and (semi-)historical accounts that flourished in higher circles on Bali had connections with the modes of action of Balinese leaders has been observed by several scholars (Vickers 1989; Schulte Nordholt 1996). Like in any cultural setting, cultural ideals and political practice reinforced each other. The paradigmatic *Babad Dalem*, which describes the exploits of the forebears of the Dewa Agung line, extols a sixteenth-century king who held sway over a vast area from East Java to Lombok and Sumbawa. The *Babad Dalem* appears to have been composed at about the same time as the period under scrutiny.⁶⁶ Incidentally or not, the ambitions of the Karangasem leadership covered the very same lands, and even strove to replicate the Bali-wide position once held by the kings in the *babad* text.

To my knowledge the Balinese historical tradition does not say a word about the Dutch in connection with Karangasem, before events that occurred far into the nineteenth century. The same more or less goes for the peoples of South Sulawesi, who are rare guest players in the historiographical records. The highly compartmentalized view of the Balinese texts, and the rather utilitarian and one-sided outlook of the Dutch texts, is frustrating, but is also the driver behind our motivation to compare concurrent claims of reality. From the fragments a picture emerges of a minor polity, which in the course of a century or so gathered a territory many times its original size and bridged ethnic and religious boundaries. It did so by using structures which were partly set in motion by the early colonial dispositions in the archipelago, avoiding direct confrontation with the white strangers while finding means to expand in the shadow of the Company.

66 Written after the last related events in the 1680s, but before the first preserved manuscripts in the early nineteenth century (Wiener 1995:98).

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