

# Socio-Political Aspects of Ancient Julah

*I Ketut Setiawan*

## Introduction

This paper deals with Julah's culture based on the evidence of the Sembiran copperplate inscriptions dated between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century (see Hauser-Schäublin and the literal transcription and translation into Indonesian this volume).

Julah Village is a village as old as its name. Brandes (1889) and Goris (1954) discovered that the village was already called Julah on the inscriptions kept at the holy places in Sembiran and Julah. These old inscriptions were carved on sheets of copper. The highly sacred inscriptions, the work of men of letters, refer to various events that took place in the past, and can give detailed information about the life of Balinese people at that time.

It is impossible to describe Julah's entire history since there are almost no written sources available. These inscriptions are therefore unique historical documents that cover a period of 200 years. An inscription was a royal edict issued by a king or another authority containing the decisions he made. Some were issued to certify that a piece of land had been allocated or belonged to a village because there was a holy place in that specific area, and that the village had the right to achieve the status of a *perdikan* (freehold) village.

As a royal certificate, an inscription had a legal and magical religious power. The legal power of an inscription consisted of the king's orders and the conse-

quences of disobeying them. The inscriptions mention fines to be paid, for example in the form of gold and silver. The magic religious element of such an edict was shown by the process of its implementation. It was determined by a religious ceremony in which praises to the gods were recited, and *sapatha* (curses) were made on those who violated what was determined by the inscription.

Both the legal and the magic power of an inscription made it authentic and binding (Darmosoetopo 2003). The advantage of such an inscription was that it functioned as a guideline to be consulted in case royal advice was needed. These legal aspects contribute to their value as historical documents.

Considering that an inscription was an official certificate from a king, or another authority in a kingdom, we may regard it as an authentic document reflecting true conditions of life at that time. For this reason, an inscription can be seen as the main source for understanding the rights and obligations of a person, a village, or a holy building (monastery, temple etc.), sometimes including the reasons why such rights and obligations were provided. Various facts can be revealed related to the political, social, economic, and cultural life of a community in the past (Wibowo 1992:63).

## The Individual Inscriptions

In Julah several inscriptions are kept issued by the kings of Old Bali. They have survived more than 1.000 years because they were written on sheets or plates of copper (*tamra prasasti*) which are generally 30 cm long and 11 cm wide. The inscriptions relating to Julah were called by Goris "Sembiran Inscriptions" since all of them were kept in Sembiran in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when they were discovered by Dutch scholars.

The individual inscriptions are as follows:

### Sembiran Inscription A I, dated 922 AD

This inscription consists of four pieces written in the Old-Balinese language and characters. On pieces Ib, IIa-b and IIIa-b six lines are carved and on piece IVa only two lines are carved. The inscription starts with the words "*yamu pakatabu*" ("you shall know"), followed by three royal authorities mentioned. Those are *sarbwana*, *dinganga* and *manuratang ajna* who received orders from the king. The main content of the inscription is that robbers (probably pirates) had destroyed Julah and captured many people. Due to these events, the village was freed from taxes. The village was given the right to keep canoes, boats and ships which had been washed ashore (*tawan karang*). Taxes were contributed to the holy places existing around the village. In addition, the rights and obligations of the villagers and Julah's boundaries according to the four points of the compass are mentioned. Inhe-

ritance patterns were also determined by the inscription, especially for childless couples. If a couple had children, two thirds of their wealth was inherited by the son and one third by the daughter. If both spouses had died, all wealth was submitted to the village after deduction of funeral expenses. The king issuing the inscription was King Ugrasena.



Photo 1: Ten sheets of the copperplate inscriptions still kept in Sembiran. Photo: Jörg Hauser 2003.

#### Sembiran Inscription A II, dated 975 AD

This inscription consists of two pieces of copper and is a continuation of the inscription of Sembiran AI.

It starts with the word “*punah*” (“once again”) and was issued in the month of *cetra* (March), one of the five dark months, at a place called *wijayamanggala* (Goris 1954: 77). The king issuing it was Sri Janasadhu Warmadewa. The inscription contains the determination of various kinds of taxes and demarcates the firm borders of Julah in all the directions of the compass. If there was a plantation, a public bathing place, a holy place or a monastery that had been damaged, the villagers, supported by Bondalem village, had to repair it. In addition, this inscription contains the rights and obligations of Julah and the statement that if there were robbers who dared to destroy the monastery located at Dharmakuta, all the villagers were obliged to defend it.

At the end of the inscription a number of royal authorities functioning as witnesses during its presentation by the king are also mentioned. Their titles are *senapati*, *sangat*, *nayakan*, *caksu*, and *manuratang ajna*.

### Sembiran Inscription A III, dated 1016 AD

This inscription consists of three pieces of copper carved in the Old Balinese language and characters. It was issued by Raja Sri Sang Ajnadewi, a woman who governed Bali and replaced Raja Udayana Warmadewa and his wife Gunapriya Dharmapatni. As the inscription of Sembiran AVII, it starts with the word "*punah*" and was issued on the sixth day of the bright half of the month *asuji* (September) on the market day at *nijayakeranta* (Goris 1954:95).

The main content of the inscription is that the people at Julah village informed Raja Sang Ajnadewi that their village had been destroyed again and many people had been killed while the survivors had fled to other villages. Before, Julah had been inhabited by 300 families; afterwards only 50 families were left. Therefore, they asked to be freed from taxes. In the end of the inscription the royal authorities who were present as witnesses are also mentioned. Their titles are *senapati* (*senapati dinganga*, *senapati tunggalan*, *senapati kuturan*), *samgat* (*samgat juru wadwa*, *samgat mangireniren*, *samgat prah*, *samgat manurang ajna*, *samgat pituba*), *caksu* (*caksu kearanapura*, *caksu karankeranta*). In addition, the inscription notes some Siwaist and Buddhist priests attending the issuing as well.

### Sembiran Inscription A IV, dated 1065 AD

This inscription consists of six pieces of copper carved in the Old-Javanese language and characters. The main content of the inscription which was issued by Raja Anak Wungsu clarified the rights and obligations of the Julah community which had been determined in the previous inscription. On the other part the inscription mentions a number of the village leaders such as *dbikara*, *juru gusali*, *banjar*, *rama kabayan*, *sabaya* and *panulisan* who met the king and reported various problems to him. Raja Anak Wungsu seemed to lend an ear to his people's complaints. He asked the village authorities to take part in finding solutions to the problems faced by the people in Julah, especially those related to their heavy obligations.

Furthermore, the inscription arranged and determined the social aspects of community life as well. If there was a group of artists such as mask dancers, clowns and traditional music players that came to the village, taxes could be levied. However, regular groups of artists should be distinguished from those who came from the palace.

Some species of domestic animals such as cows, goats, chickens, ducks, buffaloes and pigs were also mentioned on the inscription. If robbers came to Julah, all the people should face them with the weapons they had. At the end of the inscription, magic sanctions to be imposed upon those going against what had been determined on the inscription are listed. In addition, the inscription refers to certain authorities who were present when the inscription was presented to the people at Julah.

## The Kings Who Issued the Edicts

As the Sembiran inscriptions described above show, they were issued in different periods and by different kings. The inscription A I was written by the king Sri Ugrasena. He governed Bali from 915 to 942 AD. On the evidence of other inscriptions bearing his name, a number of important royal policies can be ascertained. Some of them related to a decrease in the taxes payable by the villagers, because they had not recovered from the damage done by the robbers. King Ugrasena seemed to pay attention to the condition of his people in the villages. This inference can be drawn from the information contained in the inscription of Babahan I, in which the king stated that he had visited Bubunan and Songan. During his visit, he permitted the community to carry out ceremonies for those who had died an unnatural death. Furthermore, closely related to the aspect of religious life, King Ugrasena permitted the people in Parcanigayan to widen the rest house for pilgrims and the sanctuary (temple) Hyang Api that was close by.

In addition to the Sembiran inscription A I and that of Babahan I, King Ugrasena also issued the inscription of Srokadan A, the inscription of Pengotan A I, the inscription of Batunya A I, the inscription of Dausa A I, the inscription of Serai A I, the inscription of Dausa B I and that of Gobleg Pura Batur A. They are all written in the Old Balinese language starting with the word *yumu pakatabu* ("you shall know"). At the end of the inscriptions the place where they were issued was also mentioned, namely *panglapuan Singhamandawa*.

In 975 AD, Bali was governed by King Sri Janasadhu Warmadewa. This name is inscribed on Sembiran A II as mentioned above and is the only existing inscription he issued. The inscription stated that the people from Julah who returned from their place of exile were permitted to renew the content of the earlier inscription. Then, what was laid down in the inscription was to be obeyed and was not to be changed any more. It was determined that if there was a temple, a cemetery, a public bathing place or a street that had been damaged, it should be repaired by the people at Julah and Buwundalem (Boudalem) at their own expense. If the monastery at Dharmakuta was attacked the villagers at Julah were requested to go out with weapons to protect it (see above).

The history of Queen Sang Ajnadewi can be explained as follows: she was crowned to replace King Udayana Warmadewa. However, there was no clear relationship between her accession and the king being replaced. In order to obtain clear information, the inscription of Pucangan issued by King Airlangga, the ruler of East Java, needs to be considered. In this inscription it is mentioned that in 1016 AD the Dharmawangsa kingdom in East Java was attacked by King Wurawari probably from the Shailendra Dynasty (Sumatra) resulting in destruction (*pralaya*). While the wedding ceremony of Airlangga and Putri Dharmawangsa took place the attack was perpetrated at the same time. It is stated that Java Island looked like an ocean of fire and that many people and royal authorities had died. Airlangga, who was 16 years old at that time, was able to save himself by fleeing to

a forest accompanied by his faithful follower named Narottama (Sumadio 1984:173; Semadi Astra 1997:67).

During the year of *pralaya* the name of Queen Ajnadewi who governed Bali appears in the historical sources. Regarding this fact it can be assumed that Udayana (Airlangga's father) who apparently was present at the marriage ceremony of his son in East Java was killed, resulting in the throne in Bali being suddenly vacant. To fill his vacancy, the royal family may have appointed a relative named Sang Ajnadewi as Queen of Bali. On the inscription of Sembiran A III (the only inscription issued by this queen), it was stated that Julah was attacked by enemies. Many people died, were captured by the enemy or fled to other villages. Previously, the village had been inhabited by 300 families, out of whom only 50 families survived. The queen therefore lowered certain taxes and other obligations relating to mutual cooperation.

The history of King Anak Wungsu can be explained as follows: Anak Wungsu was King Udayana Warmadewa's youngest son who was enthroned in Bali to replace Marakata Pangkaja, his older brother. From the inscriptions he issued, it can be stated that he governed Bali for a long period: indeed he was the longest-lived of the kings in the Old Bali era, reigning for 28 years (1049 – 1077 AD). Not less than 30 inscriptions were issued during his reign. The long period of government and the inscriptions issued can be seen as a sign that King Anak Wungsu governed wisely and that the kingdom was stable.

Some inscriptions give evidence of the fact that King Anak Wungsu was a king who always thought of his people's and the realm's well-being. In addition, this king highly respected welfare, since he was symbolized as the reincarnation of *Dewa Dharma* (God of Welfare). He always paid attention to the complex of the holy places such as Gua Gajah and Candi Padas at Gunung Kawi, Gianyar Regency. It was probably he who initiated the establishment of these holy places. He may even have promoted the coming into existence of the *subak* (a traditional farmers' irrigation organization). *Subak* still exist; their members build weirs used for damming up water flowing from big rivers so that the water can reach the rice fields through specially built channels. They have also been able to build tunnels for proposes of irrigation.

It is interesting that during Anak Wungsu's government, a classification of the community into two groups came into being: one was the *catur warna* and the other was the group of those who were excluded from *catur warna*. *Catur warna* consisted of four social strata, probably associated with a distinct division of labour, similar to the caste system in India. The *brahmana* took charge of religious ceremonies, *ksatria* comprising those who were empowered to lead and defend the rulers, *wesya* comprising those who were empowered to run business and *sudra* comprising ordinary workers. There also existed slaves. The inscription of Buyan stated that if there were slaves that fled to Buyan, they could not be caught, arrested or beaten.

There are various reasons why slavery existed. One, at least as far as we know from later times, relates to those who were convicted for crimes and could not pay the fines imposed. They could become the slaves of the king or work for those of whom they were debtors. The masters were permitted to sell their slaves for which they would receive cash or would use the slaves as guarantees for the money owed. It is stated in the inscription that:

*"Kunang ya tan abarḥ sumabura hutangnya srahaknanya ikang rarai hulun irika sang pradhana"*

Meaning:

*"If they are not able to pay their debts, they have to give a young slave to the person to whom they owe the debts".*

## Social Groups and Communities Described

There seems to be no doubt that the site of Old Julah is identical with current Julah. As a harbour town, Julah was frequently visited by traders coming from different regions, even outside Bali.

In general, the Balinese communities differed according to their location: those that lived in the hinterland and who generally earned a living from agriculture, and the others that resided close to the coast and generally earned a living as fishermen or as traders. The people who lived in the hinterland produced rice abundantly and needed salt and sea fish from the coast. In contrast, the people who lived in the coastal areas needed rice and vegetables from the hinterland; in this way the two groups were interconnected through an exchange of produce. The differences in what they produced promoted trade. The products they traded can be classified into four kinds: food, clothing, general equipment and animals.

The food included onions, garlic, rice, sugar, salt, ginger, areca nut, various kinds of fruit such as mango, coconut, papaya, pine apple, mangosteen and various kinds of fish, both sea fish and fresh water fish. Clothing included cloth, colouring materials, cotton and thread. The general equipment included precious stones, bronze, baskets, tools made of copper, iron, ornamental things, lead and clay crockery. The animals included buffaloes, cows, goats, pigs, ducks, chicken and birds. Half the things mentioned above were transported by horse, cart, and boat and were carried on the shoulders (Jones 1984:56-61).

Based on the information obtained from the inscriptions found at Sembiran, we can conclude that the traders could be divided into two groups. The people who belonged to the first group were members of the Balinese community. Their scope of trading was limited to their own region (local traders) or to a number of villages or towns and was possibly restricted to goods for everyday life such as

rice, vegetables, fruit and the other needs which did not last long (Raharjo 2002:299).

The people who were classified as foreign traders were foreign citizens who traded up to Bali; some of them came from the Indonesian archipelago, others came from Asia, especially India, China and Cambodia. The exact origins of the traders who came from the Indonesian archipelago were not explicitly mentioned (Sembiran AIV), but in any event they came by boat, ship, and canoe and anchored at Manasa (*banyaga sakeng sabrang, jong, babitra, cumunduk i manasa*). Manasa Site played an important role in revealing information related to trade between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century. This site is mentioned in the inscription of Sawan A I (1023 AD) issued by King Marakala Pangkaja. Manasa, which is located in the northern coast of Bali, used to be an important harbour and attracted many traders, both local and foreign. The inscription of Kintamani E issued by King Eka Jaya Lancana (1122 saka) also mentioned that Manasa; the cotton traders from Kintamani regularly visited Manasa to sell their products.

This shows that trading developed well during that era. This is proved by the fact that there were groups of merchants called *wanigrama* (male merchants) and *wanigrani* (female merchants), that lived in the villages. They had leaders called *juru wanigrama* who looked after their needs.

One of the inscriptions kept in Julah contains the information that trading practices had already developed and that money had already been used as a means of payment. The data in the inscriptions revealed that the currency units used were marked by the abbreviations *su* (*sumarna*), *ma* (*masaka*) and *ku* (*kupang*). In the inscriptions of Old Bali, a market was referred to as *pken*.

Julah, as a village and a harbour town, had already developed since the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Several social groups are mentioned in the inscriptions based on, territorial units, professions and the positions and roles in areas of government. The territorial units were referred to as *wanua* or *thani* ("village area"). Based on these territorial units, the inhabitants were *anak wanua* or *anak thani* meaning "villagers". This term referred to those who resided in a village, who had land possession rights and who could be elected as village leaders.

Among all the villagers, there were a number of people who were considered senior and capable of solving problems faced by the village. They were supposed to represent the villagers in presenting their problems to the authorities. Those who were considered senior in the inscriptions of Julah were called *tuba-tuba* or *karaman* (Sumadio 1984:200).

Another type of social group to be established was based on economic life. Among them were farmers. The inscriptions mention *sawah*, *parlak*, *gaga*, *kebwan*, and *huma* meaning rice fields, dry fields, rice, and plantations. The farmers grew rice, coconut, taro, onions, garlic, ginger, carrot, areca nut, oranges, soy beans, chilli, bananas, cotton and so on (Sumadio 1984:200). In addition to farming, the



people also made a living by raising animals such as cows, ducks, goats, pigs, chickens, horses and buffaloes.

Some members of the group also had skills in craftsmanship commonly called *undagi*. It was mentioned in the inscriptions that they worked as carpenters, bricklayers, house builders and workmen building tunnels and canoes or constructing market halls.

The smiths constituted a particular social group: *pande tembaga* (coppersmith), *pande besi* (blacksmith) and *pande kangsa* (bronzesmith).

Further social groups consisted of artists such as royal artists and folk artists who used to go around the villages. The performers usually received financial rewards for their services, which in the inscriptions were called *patulak*. However, no information is available concerning the number of performers, the themes performed or the uniforms worn.

The last social group to be mentioned is that of the political elite, that is, those people who played an important role in government; they seemed to come from different social strata.

At village level there was one institution called *karaman* consisting of the older villagers and the local religious leaders such as *sang ma thani* and *manuratang*. They had the function of village head and village secretary. To control the government at village level on behalf of the king, a person was appointed who bore the title of a *caksu*. *Hulu kayu* was an authority whose function was controlling forestry and who played an important role in the government. Furthermore, *hulu kayu* frequently led the village's representatives to visit the king informing him about their needs and worries. There was another position called *Sang admak akmitan apigajib* whose function was to collect taxes for the king at village level. The religious leaders included the head of the monastery, religious teachers and the priests responsible for the ceremonies at the holy shrines around the village. When needed, *karaman* could hold a meeting attended by the village leaders, in which important things related to the problems faced by the village were decided.

## Religious and Political Aspects

The archaeological findings show that the settlements of the community spread over the valleys, the mountains and the coastal areas. These regions were so thinly populated that many villages had large areas of forests and rice fields that belonged to the common people. The king and his relatives had particular pieces of land cultivated by his servants. In addition to the community of farmers, there was another community whose members were the traders and the handicraftsmen. Those had the right to reside in a particular area. There were also other small communities whose members worked as craftsmen making clay pans, mats and the like; however they did not live in a separate settlement (Kartodirdjo 1993:35).

As with the other agricultural societies in Bali, religion played an important role. As a result, a feature of the civilization in Bali was the presence of religious leaders of different denominations such as Siwa priests, Buddha priests, Waisnawa priests and so on. The leading positions were held by the priests at central, regional and village level.

In their capacity as religious leaders at the highest level they were in a powerful position - they had the right to attend audiences with the king in which also political problems were discussed. They also had the right to be present as witnesses when an inscription was granted to the village representatives.

One of the essential characteristics of Bali Kingdoms was that honour should be paid to the royal ancestors in order to maintain the cosmic system. During Old Bali, the honour paid to the king's ancestors was conducted at the same time as when the king was glorified at the temples both Siwa and Buddha. The appointment of priests as higher royal employees was intended to maintain the religious system as part of the power system.

The religious leaders usually lived under the guidance of a high priest in holy places located in freehold territories such as *mandala*, *sima* and *wihara*, for example. They were free from taxes and from the intervention of the king. However, they needed to maintain a good relationship with the palace and were faithful supporters of the kingdom.

Social life at that time was not free from conflict. There apparently were periods when the social norms were frequently broken and many crimes occurred. Such crimes could cause unrest and spread to other social groups, and violate generally acknowledged ethics and morality. Poverty led to hatred and jealousy which finally contributed to immorality. Conflicts could then not be avoided.

The inscriptions found at Sembiran contain the information that there were many social conflicts at Julah. As a town harbour, it attracted traders, both local and foreign. The village was frequently visited by pirates who killed villagers and made many others flee to the other villages to take refuge. According to the inscription of Sembiran A II the king asked the refugees to return to their village to face the enemies who intended to destroy the Dharmakuta monastery. The Sembiran inscription A III, as stated, mentions that only 50 out of 300 families survived an attack by pirates.

As a harbour, Julah received various kinds of taxes and duty. It can be concluded therefore that the living standard of the people living at Julah at that time was quite good. However, since the society was clearly stratified we can assume an inequality in the standard of living as well. These differences certainly led to social jealousy and, hence, to conflict.

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