Lamak : ritual objects in Bali

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Chapter 1

Study of *lamak*

1.1 *Lamak* in Bali anno 2014 and 2016

It was the day of the new moon of the tenth month, Tilem Sasih Kedasa, 29 April 2014. We had completed the renovation of our little house in Budakeling, Karangasem, and the new moon was a suitable day for its inauguration (*mlaspas*).[1] Among the various forms of ritual decoration needed for the ceremony were seven small *lamak* (of a variety called *ceniga*), narrow rectangular hangings[2] made of the whitish leaves of the *lontar* palm, in which small motifs have been cut out and the parts fastened together with small bamboo pins and staples.[3]

Women of the village, who helped prepare the ceremony, 'dressed' our small shrine with a white cloth and attached one of the *lamak* so that it hung from the opening of the shrine. On the triangular-shaped upper part of the *lamak* the women placed offerings for the deity who looks after the land. Meanwhile, a group of men erected five temporary bamboo shrines, *sanggar cucuk*, in front of the permanent shrine on the lawn, one in the centre and four around it. Each of these five shrines was decorated with flowers in the five different colours associated with the cardinal directions and the centre, and with a *lamak*, which hung down from the small offering platform. The offerings on these shrines were associated with the *caru*, offerings for the *buta kala*, netherworld beings who have to be appeased as part of the inauguration ceremony. The main part of these *caru*, five chickens with different coloured plumage and legs, was placed on the ground under the bamboo shrines, in bamboo baskets on top of banana leaves.

Then Pak Ketut, who had supervised the renovation of the house, climbed up a ladder and he himself hung the seventh *lamak* from the eaves of the roof over the front porch. He explained that this *lamak* belonged to the offerings presented to the deities who will look after the house, who will descend to the roof to receive their offerings. In fact, since these offerings cannot be placed on the roof, the 'practical solution' is to place the offerings on a mat on the terrace, underneath the *lamak*.

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1 Spelling of Balinese words follows the 'standard' *Kamus Bali-Indonesia*, 2nd edition (1990). Balinese words in quotations follow the original spelling. Especially with regards to words of Old Javanese and Sanskrit origins, spellings can vary.

2 It is difficult to find a satisfactory gloss for the word *lamak*. Since it is an object that always hangs down, the expression 'narrow hanging' seems best. Elsewhere the term 'runner' has been used, but since at least in textile terminology a runner is used for a textile in a horizontal position, for example a cloth to cover a table, it is not really appropriate.

3 Indonesian or Balinese words in the plural are not given an additional 's'; the context should provide sufficient clarity.

After this *lamak* had been installed, there was some consternation among the women since there was no *lamak* left for the small *pelangkiran*, an offering altar inside the house. Fortunately, for this purpose they could use one of the textile *lamak* I had just bought at the market in Amlapura to become part of the *lamak* collection in the National Museum of World Cultures[4] in Leiden, where I am curator for the Indonesia collections (fig. 4.69). However, as this textile *lamak* could not fulfil its ritual purpose by itself, a small piece of banana leaf was placed between the textile *lamak* and the tray of offerings placed on its undecorated upper end. This leaf was so small that it was not visible. After the officiating priest had purified the house and by presenting the offerings and uttering mantras had brought the house to life, we prayed to the deities for protection and happiness for all who come and stay there. During our prayers, we held sticks of burning incense and flowers between our fingertips, to carry the essence of the offerings to their respective destinations. In return, we received from the priest holy water, *tirtha*, which we sipped, and grains of rice which had been soaked in holy water, to put on our foreheads. Afterwards, we also ate some fruits from the offerings which had been blessed by the deities.

The *sanggar cucuk*, the *lamak* still attached, and the baskets with *caru* offerings were all carried three times, anti-clockwise, around the house and the borders of the land, and finally buried in a deep hole which the men had dug in a corner of the land. The *lamak* on the permanent shrine and the one hanging from the roof stayed where they were, to wither away, while the textile *lamak* which had served its purpose on the altar inside the house I packed away again, to bring back to the Netherlands. I have kept this *lamak* in my study as a memory of the inauguration ceremony of our little house in Bali and as source of inspiration during the process of writing this dissertation.

Two years later, again on the day of the new moon of the tenth month, Tilem Sasih Kedasa, 6 April 2016, we celebrated another inauguration ceremony, this time of the shrine on our lawn. This shrine (*palinggih*), dedicated to the deity who looks after (or 'possesses') our land, Ida Betara Maduwe Karang, had to be rebuilt in the previous year. For this process, the deity had first to be moved to a temporary, living natural shrine, made of the sprouting branches of a sacred *dadap* tree, next to the original shrine which was then 'killed'. By means of the *mlaspas* ritual, the new shrine was brought to life (*urip*).

Before the ceremony, I bought new clothing (*pangangge*, *busana*) for the shrine, including a black and white checked *poleng* cloth which has protective qualities and an accompanying permanent *poleng lamak* (see section 4.4.1.6). Since this ceremony was smaller than the inauguration of our house, only one temporary bamboo shrine, *sanggar cucuk*, was erected, and the *caru* offerings included only one chicken. The shrine was decorated with a fresh *ceniga*, made of leaves of the coconut palm, hung on top of a banana leaf. After we had dressed the new permanent shrine with the textiles, a *ceniga* made of *lontar* leaves was put inside the shrine, hanging from the small plank on which the offering which would act as container for the deity was placed. Hanging down from the opening of the shrine, on top of the textile *lamak*, we put a beautiful *lamak* made of the leaves of the *lontar* palm, which were partly dyed green and red (fig. 1.1). This *lamak* was made by Ni Made Raka, a lady from the village who earns money by selling small offerings and ritual decorations.

After the ceremony was over, the *sanggar cucuk* with *ceniga*, together with the *caru* offerings, was thrown outside the gateway, whereas the *pelinggih* remained dressed and kept its offerings for three days. When after three days the shrine was undressed, the textile *lamak* was packed away together with the other textiles. But the *lontar lamak* became part of my collection in the Netherlands.

4 The National Museum of World Cultures (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, NMW), is the new museum formed in 2015 by the merger of three former independent ethnographic museums, the Tropenmuseum (TM) in Amsterdam, the National Museum of Ethnology (Museum Volkenkunde, formerly Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, RV) in Leiden, and the Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal. The first two mentioned museums have major Indonesia collections. The use in this study of the name National Museum of Ethnology always refers to the Leiden collection.

1.2 Subject and structure of the book

This introductory story about the different ways of using different types of *lamak*, both ephemeral[5] and non-ephemeral, summarizes the theme of this dissertation. But already for 40 years, from the summer holidays of 1974 when I witnessed my first temple festival in Bali, up to the present day when as museum curator I study the Indonesian collections in the National Museum of World Cultures, I have been "captivated" (as Alfred Gell (1998:69) would call it) by *lamak* and other forms of ephemeral ritual art in Bali. Especially on the early morning of Galungan (a kind of New Year festival recurring every 210 days) when thousands of *lamak*, fashioned from fresh palm leaves, decorate temporary shrines along almost every street in Bali, I enjoy immensely the wide variety of motifs and styles, the beauty of little details. And I admire the creativity of all the women who made these decorative objects, even more so because I realize their beauty will be gone by the next day and they have to be made all over again.

The beauty of *lamak* was already noticed by the famous artist Walter Spies who in the 1930s had planned to make a book about them, but after his tragic death during the Second World War, nobody has taken up his idea until this present study.

But there are also other reasons for this study. Bali is one of the best studied areas in the Indonesian Archipelago, and art and religion are well represented within those studies, and in museum collections. However, ritual objects made of palm leaves, for example the *lamak*, although they are indispensable in Balinese rituals, nevertheless have received almost no scholarly attention. This is undoubtedly partly due to the fact that they have hardly been collected, since ephemeral *lamak* (except for the types made of the more durable *lontar* palm leaves) could not be kept in museum storage.[6] Not only are the materials taken from nature and return to the earth after the ritual is over, but *lamak* are also 'short-lived', ephemeral, by intent, they may not be used again, they have to be made again and again and again. And probably because they were not found in museums, they were much less studied than other forms of ritual art. Palm leaf *lamak* can only be studied in the field. Also my general interest in gender studies added to my motivation to choose this subject, since the creators of *lamak* (and offerings in general) are mainly women.

Moreover, I found it intriguing that of all the different kinds of ephemeral ritual art in Bali which are made of such materials as palm leaf, flowers, rice dough and pig fat, the *lamak* is the only one that also exists in more durable form. These 'permanent' versions, mainly made of different kinds of textiles, are part of some museum collections, but since by far the majority of *lamak* is made of palm leaves, these collections do not give a complete image of the richness and varieties of *lamak*. And even these permanent *lamak*, in relation to the numerous collections and studies of Balinese textiles and other forms of ritual art like paintings or statues, seem to be an almost forgotten subject.

However, it is a subject that is indeed well worth paying attention to. Therefore, the main purpose of this anthropological research project is to contribute to filling these gaps, and to explore all the different aspects of this particular form of material culture used in rituals, the Balinese *lamak*. The study of all the different aspects of a *lamak* and their interrelations will finally give an answer to the question: 'Why do the Balinese make and remake lamak?'[7] This main research question is divided into a number of sub-questions which are discussed in the four subsequent chapters.

5 Ephemeral in the strict sense of the term is understood as "lasting or used for a very short time; having a very short life cycle" (Concise Oxford English dictionary, 11th ed., 2006). However, as this study will show, there are varying degrees of ephemerality.

6 Likewise, in her article "Not for collection: ephemeral art", Hauser-Schäublin states that "At least half the varieties of art produced by the Sepik cultures are not represented in the collections even of specialized museums and private collectors" (1985:27).

7 This research question was inspired by the title of a recent article by Richard Fox (2015): 'Why do Balinese make offerings?' As will be discussed throughout this study, a *lamak* can only be explained in its relation to offerings.

In Chapter 2, I introduce the *lamak* as ritual object. What is a *lamak*, what do Balinese do with *lamak* (and why), and what is the purpose of a *lamak* in ritual? After a brief introduction to Balinese religion, I present the different meanings of the word '*lamak*', and the different varieties of this ritual object. Then I describe what Balinese actually do with *lamak*, how they use them in ritual and why they do that. As examples of religious ceremonies in which *lamak* play an important role, I will present the Bali-wide Galungan festive period, and the *odalan*, or temple festival, which is specific for each individual temple on the island. Finally the question "What is the purpose of a *lamak*?" will be answered by presenting the viewpoints of informants and comments found in various Balinese publications.

In Chapter 3, I explore how motifs are related to the purpose of the *lamak*. What are the main decorative motifs on a *lamak*, and what do they look like? How are the motifs related to one another within the vertical structural frame of a *lamak*? The meaning of motifs according to Balinese makers, users and specialists, the way they classify the different motifs and relate them to cosmological structures, plays an important role in this chapter. Special attention will be given to the motif of the *cili*, representing human life and fertility.

In Chapter 4, I examine whether there also exists a connection between the ritual purpose of a *lamak* and the material and techniques with which it is made. I focus first on the materials that palm leaf *lamak* are made of and the details of the techniques used for making them, and then explore further whether the colours and the structure of the motifs resulting from the way the leaves are handled might be related to other aspects of Balinese culture. In the second part of this chapter I present an overview of the many varieties of *lamak* made from materials other than palm leaves, and investigate whether their ritual function differs in any way from that of palm leaf *lamak*. Finally, I discuss the relationship between 'ephemeral' and 'permanent' *lamak* in connection with the purpose of a *lamak*, mainly (as in the previous chapters) on the basis of the viewpoints of Balinese themselves.

In Chapter 5, I investigate the social-economic network of makers, sellers and users of *lamak*. First I focus on the different categories of *lamak* makers and entrepreneurs, their interactions and transactions. In the second part of the chapter I describe certain aspects of the regional diversity of *lamak* in relation to the individual creativity of the makers. And finally I examine to what extent changes in social-economic relations are reflected in this variation of *lamak* and in their developments and changes over time.

In the final chapter I make concluding remarks by interrelating all different aspects of the Balinese *lamak*. I analyse what is the relation between the ritual purpose of the *lamak*, its motifs, its structure and the ephemerality of its natural materials. I place the *lamak* within the framework of some material culture studies and compare the *lamak* with a number of other, related, ephemeral objects.

Finally, in an appendix, I present a catalogue of the *lamak* collection (and their collecting histories) in the National Museum of World Cultures, of which the oldest example, collected by W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp, is over 100 years old.

1.3 *Lamak* and western scholarship

Palm leaf *lamak*, especially the ones on display along the roads of Bali during the Galungan period, had already caught the attention of visitors as early as Crawfurd (1820), as will be referred to in Chapter 2, but it was the famous German artist Walter Spies who was the first to become really fascinated by them. Spies (1895-1942), accomplished musician and painter, lived in Ubud from the late 1920s until 1940, and became very knowledgeable about Balinese art. He was particularly interested in the wide range of *lamak* ornamentation. He collected hundreds of *lamak* patterns by making drawings of them, first drawing the motifs in pencil and then filling them in with black drawing ink, in a washed ink technique. He even planned a publication. In a letter to his mother dated 4 October 1932, he wrote: "*Es wird entlich mein Lamak buch ausgegeben werden*" (Rhodius 1964:310), but in the end this never happened. The greater part of these drawings have been lost; only two museums in the world are in the possession of a number of drawings that have survived. Museum Pasifika in Nusa Dua, Bali, recently bought at auction six drawings in ink on paper, each illustrating a *cili* figure, and the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna

has around 43 paintings in ink on paper, of motifs found on *lamak*, most of them published in an article by Werner Kraus (2010).[8]

In general studies on Balinese art and religion, especially those by Covarrubias (1937:170-175) and Ramseyer (1977:165, ill. 212-217), palm leaf *lamak* are mentioned but not extensively described or interpreted. However, palm leaf *lamak* are interpreted in a recent publication by Domenig (2014). Part of this study is an overview of what he calls 'spirit ladders' from many parts of Indonesia, and he includes *lamak* as one of the varieties he describes (Domenig 2014:4). Although I do not agree with particular details of his analysis of the *lamak*, his book is very useful as an overview of objects with a related purpose as the *lamak*, elsewhere in Indonesia.[9]

It is significant for the poor representation of the palm leaf *lamak* in western literature, that the only two articles by western scholars on *lamak*, by Langewis (1956) and Pelras (1967), do not have as subject the palm leaf *lamak*, but instead discuss examples in museums of a special variety of textile *lamak*. Both authors, following a structuralist analysis by Jager Gerlings (1952), claim that a *lamak*, as textile, belongs to the female domain (like textiles in other parts of Indonesia), complementary to the male *penjor*,[10] representing the male mountain Gunung Agung. The union between *lamak* and *penjor* is the same as between sacred lance and textile (Pelras 1967:272). Pelras in particular relates the Galungan celebration to the new creation of the world brought about by the union of male and female, earth and heaven, negative and positive, *lamak* and *penjor* (Pelras 1967:273-274).

Initially I followed this idea in an article about male and female in Balinese ritual decorations (Brinkgreve 2002), in which I stated that the relationship between the strong upright pole of the *penjor*, erected by men, and the more soft, supple, textile-like *lamak*, fashioned and attached to it by women, can be compared with the combination of male and female elements in many other parts of Indonesia. However, although the making of *penjor* is indeed the responsibility of men (even though the palm leaf artefact hanging from the top, the *sampian*, and the other palm leaf decorations are made by women) and the *lamak* mainly the work of women, there is no further evidence that the specific combination of *penjor* and *lamak* is related to the new creation of the world. As I will argue, in the different aspects of both *lamak* and *penjor* male and female elements are combined, and both objects are related to the regeneration of life.

Langewis, inspired by the fact that the *lamak* is always hanging down and that this is reminiscent of the tongue that sometimes protrudes and hangs down from the mouth of a sacred image, suggested that the function of the *lamak* might be to ward off evil influences (1956:39-40), but this was not confirmed by any of my Balinese informants.[11] Besides the special blue-white woven *lamak* which formed the subject of the articles by Pelras and Langewis, the other type of textile *lamak* which has received attention are embroidered *lamak* from the region of Jembrana, described by Fischer and Cooper (1997) and Fischer (2004). In some general books and museum catalogues on Indonesian textiles (for example Maxwell 1990; Campbell 2014) or Balinese textiles (Hauser-Schäublin, Nabholz-Kartaschoff & Ramseyer 1991) also other varieties of permanent *lamak* are described.[12]

One scholar, Mattiebelle Gittinger, a leading expert of both Indonesian and mainland Southeast Asian (especially T'ai) textiles, has suggested that the Balinese *lamak* is one of the manifestations of a "cultural complex", comprising certain textiles of Sumatra (notably the *tampan* of Lampung) and Lombok in Indonesia and textiles (particularly banners or *tung*) of various T'ai groups in Yunnan, Laos and Thailand. Her hypothesis is that these "complex visual assemblages" bear witness to a "significant communication of ideas and technologies at some time in the past" (Gittinger 1992:55, 140), which perhaps might be sought in the Buddhist kingdom of Srivijaya dating from the 7th-10th centuries (Gittinger 1992:53, 55). Other than the mention of a possible relationship of the *lamak* with this cultural complex, she unfortu-

8 See also Brinkgreve 2010b and Stowell 2012:144-145, 312 (nos. 52-53).

9 See Chapter 2 for my comments on Domenig's interpretation of the Balinese *lamak*.

10 A *penjor* is a decorated bamboo pole, erected besides the entrance to a place where a ritual is being held (see section 2.4.3).

11 I have reacted to both articles in Brinkgreve 1993. See also Chapter 4.

12 See Chapter 4 for more details.

nately gives very few details. And precisely because of the ephemeral nature of the material it is very difficult to determine what has been the development of the *lamak* in Bali.

In one important study by a well-known western scholar, Hildred Geertz (2004), the *lamak* is surprisingly absent. In her analysis of one specific temple, she writes about the importance of decorations in a temple in order to please the invisible (*niskala*) beings. In a chapter about the purpose of this temple, in which she discusses the yearly temple festival, she describes the shrines, decorated with beautiful carvings, as the most important part of a temple, the place to receive the deities. However, Geertz does not pay any attention to the additional, temporary decorations of the temple and its shrines for the duration of the ritual. There is no mention at all of the textiles that decorate or dress the temple for the special occasion, nor of any other ritual decorations, like *lamak*, whereas, as I will point out throughout this book, they are regarded by the Balinese as indispensable.

1.4 Framework and inspiration

When I started this research project in 1987, as a cultural anthropologist graduated from Leiden University, and supervised by Prof. dr P.E. de Josselin de Jong, I was mainly influenced by structural and cognitive anthropology which dominated the Indonesia studies in Leiden at that time. During my studies I had been especially inspired by the way Prof. dr A.A. Gerbrands, who supervised my MA thesis on Balinese offerings in 1984, combined structuralism with the anthropology of art and material culture, by paying much attention to the structural relationships between elements of material culture and cosmological concepts of the participants of a culture, for example in his inaugural lecture '*De taal der dingen*' [The language of things] (Gerbrands 1966). As variations on a theme, these central ideas and cultural values are expressed in different cultural domains, such as cosmology, mythology, ritual, social organization, architecture, material culture, performing arts, etc. The way the participants of a culture order their natural and social environment into classifications is the basis of the relationships between these different domains of culture.

In my first article on offerings and ritual decorations (Brinkgreve 1985), I made use of these concepts and interpreted the form of *banten*, offerings, as being a visual expression of Balinese classifications and cosmic ordering. My conclusion was that form and structure of offerings could be regarded as a microcosm (in Bali called *buana alit*), a representation or visualization of how the Balinese conceive the universe, the macrocosm (*buana agung*).

In the present study, I also pay much attention to the way my Balinese informants themselves classify the motifs, colours and materials of a *lamak* and how they explain them as part of a whole, a cosmic totality. However, although the Balinese system of classification and cosmic structure helps to explain the position of the motifs and the overall structure of a *lamak*, this is only part of the whole picture. It does not explain what people actually do with a *lamak* and why, neither what a *lamak* itself is supposed to do. In a ritual context, a *lamak* does more, is more dynamic than only to reflect or to mirror cosmic structure. In this dissertation I will discuss the more active role of a *lamak* and the effects *lamak* are supposed to produce in ritual. Following Gell (1998), this could be called the agency of a *lamak*, as will be discussed in the concluding chapter. In most recent studies of material culture, scholars have paid attention to the more dynamic aspects of things, rather than the structural aspects only. However, already in 1979 Forge was concerned with how in a ritual context all kinds of structured material objects and immaterial art forms reinforce each other in the effect they produce on the participants of a particular ritual (1979:285).

As regards the ephemerality of the *lamak*, the first publication that really inspired me was *The Art of the Balinese Offering* by David J. Stuart-Fox (1974). He was the first who paid attention to the beauty of this (what he then called) transitory art form. This beautiful little book gave me the idea for my own research on this subject. Another source of inspiration has been the publications of Stephen P. Huyler, an anthropologist and gifted photographer who worked for dozens of years in India and created such visually attractive books as *Painted Prayers* (1994) and *Meeting God* (1999). According to him, "the fundaments of Indian creativity is the ephemeral", because "In India all existence is believed to be in constant transition" (Huyler 1996:10).

These ideas and concepts, the most significant of those that have inspired and guided me, are discussed further in the different chapters in this study.

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Fieldwork: places and periods

As cultural anthropologist, my main way of collecting data for this qualitative research[13] project has been through doing fieldwork in Bali. In Indonesia the research was carried out under the auspices of Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI) and Universitas Udayana, Denpasar. My counterpart in Bali was the late Prof. Dr I Gusti Ngurah Bagus from the Fakultas Sastra.

Although in 1987 I was generously granted by the Programme of Indonesian Studies and Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek voor de Tropen (WOTRO),[14] a PhD research scholarship for three years, my research on this subject had actually already started in 1982, when I did fieldwork in Bali to obtain my MA (Drs) degree in Cultural Anthropology from Leiden University.[15] During that period the Museum Bali in Denpasar, under the directorship of Putu Budiastra, was my counterpart. After an initial research period of five months, I returned to Bali in 1983, to carry out additional fieldwork and to collect for the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden various kinds of contemporary ritual objects. Also in 1984, 1985 and 1987 I was in Bali for short visits, during which I always visited my former main informants.

Originally, the subject of this PhD research project was an expansion of my MA research on the subject of offerings and ritual decorations in Bali,[16] and the period of fieldwork in Bali was planned from November 1987 to August 1988. However, during the greater part of the years 1989 and 1990 I also lived in Bali, because my husband David Stuart-Fox was involved in a project there, and again in 1994 we were able to spend three months in Bali, together with our young children. After that period I have been in Bali for shorter visits, nine times between 2001and 2016. Although these periods were usually much too short to update my work on the offerings, I was able to continue to observe *lamak* in use and I always went to the markets to buy and document the newest varieties of *lamak*. For this reason, for this study I decided to focus only on the *lamak* and refer to offerings only in relation to *lamak* and not as a subject in itself.

But because I documented and collected *lamak* over a period of more than 30 years, a period in which Bali has changed immensely,[17] changes in materials, motifs and ways of production of *lamak* have become a more integral part of this study than originally planned. This added a dimension that otherwise would have been lacking. However, it should be noted that although during these shorter visits I was able to observe tendencies of change and development of *lamak*, I was not able to carry out systematic research.

In 1987 and 1988 I lived with the same Balinese family as where I had stayed during my MA research in 1982 and 1983, in the village of Sanur (the *desa adat* is called Intaran)[18] (*kecamatan* Denpasar

13 In contrast to quantitative research, in qualitative research focus is on understanding the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants (Bryman 2008:366).

14 PRIS project KA 130.

15 In fact my first 'fieldwork' was already in 1979 and 1980 when I documented the grand cremation and post-cremation ceremonies of Cokorda Gede Agung Sukawati in Ubud (Brinkgreve 1979, 1981). Attending these rituals I came to know another form of ephemeral art in Bali: the spectacular tower in which the body of the deceased was carried to the cremation grounds, the sarcophagus in the form of a black bull and other attributes of the ceremonies all went up in flames after dozens of artists and craftsmen had spent weeks to create them.

16 The original title was '*Jejahitan* and *sesamuhan*; ritual decorations in Bali.' One of my aims was to compare a number of very special offerings (*sarad*, *pulagembal* and *bebangkit*) and in particular the rice dough figurines (*sesamuhan*) as components of these offerings, with palm leaf artifacts (*jejaitan*), especially the *lamak.*

17 These changes, although partly due to political developments, especially since the fall of Suharto's Orde Baru in 1998, are mainly due to influences of the ever-growing mass tourism on the economy and the environment. Bali has no longer a predominantly agrarian economy; half the population lives in urban areas and 50-70% of the workforce depends on tourism (Schulte Nordholt 2007: 391).

18 For details about this village and especially its temple system, in relation to its history, see Hauser-Schäublin 1997.

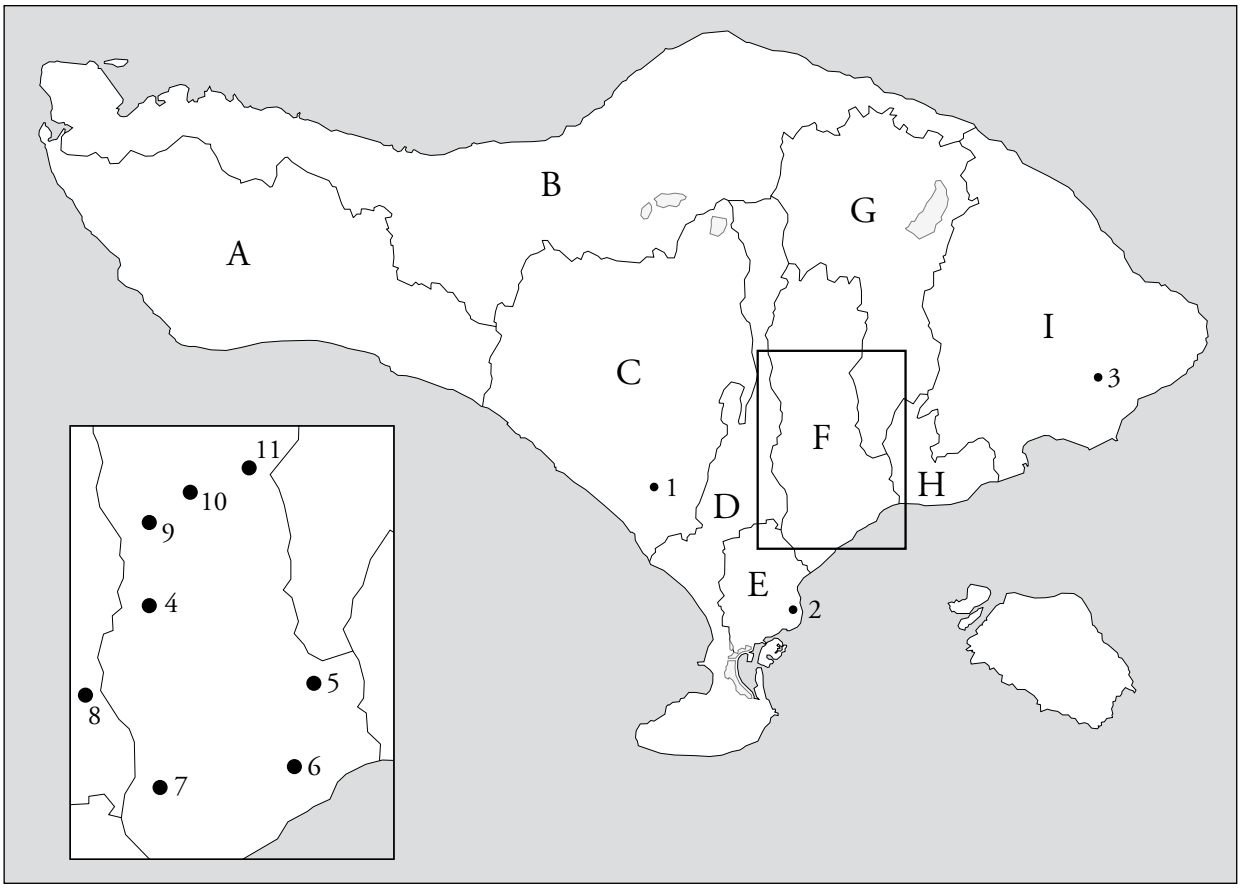

Figure 1.2: Map of Bali. A-I are regions (kabupaten); 1-4 are the villages where I lived during my fieldwork; 5-11 are the observed bounderies of the lamak nganten area (see chapter 2).

A: Jembrana
B: Buleleng
C: Tabanan
D: Badung
E: Denpasar
F: Gianyar
G: Bangli
H: Klungkung
I: Karangasem
1: Kerambitan
2: Sanur
3: Budakeling
4: Ubud
5: Gianyar
6: Keramas
7: Singapadu
8: Mambal
9: Kedewatan
10: Tegallalang
11: Tampaksiring

Selatan, *kotamadya* Denpasar), in the *lingkungan* or *banjar* Gulingan. The head of the family, I Made Windia,[19] had invited me to stay with his family when I first met him in 1979, as a taxi driver.

Since Sanur in the 1980s was already influenced by the booming tourist industry, which had consequences for rituals and the commercialization of their preparation, I once in a while spent some time in the more traditionally oriented village of Kerambitan, *kabupaten* Tabanan. My contacts in Kerambitan were mediated by Dr Hedi Hinzler of Leiden University. She kindly introduced me to I Gusti Ngurah Ketut Sangka, who had been a very important informant for the late Professor C. Hooykaas.

To investigate the *lamak*, I chose the village of Ubud (*kecamatan* Ubud, *kabupaten* Gianyar) as main site of the research. The main reason for this was that in the region of Gianyar, and especially

19 The Balinese naming system is complex, but in essence Balinese names consist of three main elements: the 'caste' or 'kin group' title, the 'birth order' term, and the individual 'given' name. Each of the four 'castes' (*warna*) and the many kin groups (*warga*), and subdivisions, have identifying titles (for commoners, it is most frequently 'I' for men and 'Ni' for women). 'Birth order' terms are based on a recurring four-part system: Wayan (Gede), Made (Kadek), Nyoman (Komang) and Ketut; a fifth child starts again with Wayan.

in the neighbourhood of Ubud, every 210 days at the festival of Galungan, special, very long *lamak* are hung in front of every compound where a wedding ceremony has taken place since the previous festival. When I was in Ubud, I always stayed in Puri Menara, the 'palace' of Cokorda Agung Mas, a specialist in the field of gamelan music. I was introduced to him when he was staying in the Netherlands in the late 1970s. His half-brother, Cokorda Ngurah, became my research assistant in the collecting of data about *lamak*.

Finally, the village of Budakeling in Karangasem became our second home during the years my husband and I lived in Bali and ever since, because we have a little house there. We have close contacts with many people in the village, in particular among the community of silver smiths, and the families of priests.

1.5.2 Participant observation

Participant observation is understood as a way of collecting data "in which the researcher is immersed in a social setting for some time in order to observe and listen with a view to gaining an appreciation of the culture of a social group" (Bryman 2008:369).

I myself have never been totally 'immersed' in Bali,[20] but I learned a great deal from living within the homes of Balinese families and experiencing how much religion influences their daily lives. Especially the decision to live in Sanur turned out to be a very good one. Bapak Made Windia was also head of the *banjar* (*klian banjar*), and he and his wife (Ibu Made Latri) not only looked after me as their adopted daughter, but also were important informants on all kinds of aspects of Balinese life. They introduced me to various important religious specialists and I visited many life cycle rituals and temple festivals.

This also happened in Kerambitan, where I stayed with Sagung Putu Alit, a lady who was very creative and talented in making offerings and ritual decorations. Although the creation of *lamak* was not her 'hobby', she was very good at making other palm leaf artifacts (*jejaitan*) and to invent new creations from palm leaves. She patiently tried to teach me how to make them myself, unfortunately without much success. She also introduced me to an offering specialist (*tukang banten*) who lived in the same street, Dayu Made Sapri, a very knowledgeable and helpful informant.

In Budakeling, being part of the village community, my husband and I participated in numerous rituals. Three ceremonies directly involved ourselves: a life cycle ritual for our baby daughter in 1990, and the inauguration ceremonies of our house in 2014 and our shrine in 2016. Especially both recent ceremonies and the fact that we have spent more time in Bali, has made me even more aware of what it means to the Balinese to live in this world together with inhabitants of the unseen (*niskala*) world.

Although I have participated in the making of offerings for the preparation of rituals, I was never very good in handling the knife to cut the palm leaves and in using little bamboo skewers as pins, so I have never been able to make a *lamak* or *ceniga* myself. But as a participant I have bought *lamak* to use on our own shrine for the Galungan festival.

Whether I was actually participating or not, in any case the main research techniques during my fieldwork periods in Bali were observation and interviewing. I made use of so-called 'purposive sampling' since for my research topic it was not possible nor necessary to sample research participants on a random basis. "The goal of purposive sampling is to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed" (Bryman 2008:415). To a large extent, my research was both dependent on the Balinese ritual calendar and on my host families who introduced me to relevant informants. In fact the *lamak* themselves lead me to my informants. For example when at Galungan I noticed the large wedding *lamak* (*lamak nganten*) hanging outside a houseyard, I photographed the *lamak* and noted down the address, went back to this address to identify the maker of this *lamak*, and then set up an interview with the maker.

20 My role was one of 'observer-as-participant', since little of my data collecting involved any direct participation (Bryman 2008:410).

1.5.3 Observation and photography

I have observed and documented the making and use of *lamak* in numerous different rituals. Since originally I had also included offerings as a topic of my research, I went to more major temple rituals, to study the large offerings in which I was especially interested, than I would have done otherwise.

But especially in the periods around the Galungan festival, which I have seen 13 times, when all streets are lined with temporary shrines with *lamak*, my research was only devoted to *lamak*. I have travelled all over Bali, documenting different styles in almost all districts of the island, except for Buleleng in the north. However, of course I have by no means been on all the roads.

My main method of registration and documentation was photography and making field notes. Altogether I made between 1982 and 1994 more than 500 colour photographs and 900 slides of *lamak* in their ritual context.[21] On the basis of prints of my photographs, the son of a well-known *lamak* maker, I Gusti Putu Taman from Padangtegal (near Ubud), made between 1989 and 1994 ink drawings of 170 different *lamak* patterns in different styles, to be used in this book. He made a number of these drawings on the basis of examples of *lamak* patterns especially made at my request by some of the *lamak* makers. In the particular case of the documentation and presentation of *lamak*, making photographs of *lamak* was indispensable, because of their ephemeral character. But in general the importance of photography (and filming) as a way of "registration of transient behaviour" during fieldwork was much promoted during my studies in the 1980s in Leiden (Gerbrands 1990:51). I always brought along photographs of *lamak* as a means of guiding the conversation during interviews.

1.5.4 Qualitative interviewing

I have conducted numerous interviews about all aspects of *lamak* with Balinese *lamak* makers, *lamak* users and *lamak* sellers, altogether more than 80 men and women. Sometimes these were unstructured interviews about a range of topics, more like a conversation, but mostly the interviews were semi-structured, with a list of questions or specific topics to talk about (Bryman 2008:436, 438).

My interviewees can be divided into four categories of informants:[22]

- 'Ordinary' Balinese, like housewives, who make or buy and in any case use *lamak*;
- Professional *lamak* makers or entrepreneurs (see Chapter 5);
- Religious specialists: priests (*pedanda* and *pemangku*), heads of *desa adat* (*klian adat*), specialists in the making of offerings (*tukang banten*), teachers at the then Institut Hindu Dharma, an institute of higher religious education;
- Sellers at markets and shops specializing in ritual paraphernalia (*toko yadnya*).

Many of these people, in particular my key informants, I interviewed more than once. One key informant, Ida Pedanda Gede Oka Timbul, the eldest son of one of the most important priests of the Sanur region, Ida Pedanda Gede Putra, was introduced to me by my family in Sanur. He was consecrated (*madiksa*) as a Brahmana priest in April 1987, a ceremony to which I was invited (Brinkgreve & Gijsbers 1987). Ida Pedanda Gede Oka Timbul became an important informant on religious and ritual matters, up to the present day. Between 1982 and 2016 I talked to him numerous times and he even answered my questions in letters after I returned to the Netherlands.

By the director of the Bali Museum I was introduced in 1982 to another key informant, Ny. I Gusti Agung Mas Putra. She had not only published many articles, conference papers and booklets, but she was also a teacher at the Institut Hindu Dharma and she gave courses on the making of offerings and ritual decorations on televi-

21 From 2005 to 2016 I made more than 2500 digital photographs of *lamak*, in Badung, Gianyar, Tabanan and Karangasem, especially at Galungan and some temple festivals (*odalan*).

22 A list of about 80 of my main informants in the first three categories is included as appendix. The last category, sellers of *lamak* at markets, I always talked to when I was buying *lamak* but usually did not note down their names.

sion. From the many conversations I had with her I have learned a great deal.

I always talked to the people in their own environment, at home or in their workshop or sometimes in a temple. I carried out the interviews in Indonesian. In case some informants, especially *tukang lamak*, only spoke Balinese, my research assistant in Ubud Cokorda Ngurah helped translate the conversation into Indonesian. I did not record interviews, but made quick notes in which I tried always to capture the informants' own terms and which I immediately worked out, in any case on the same day as the interview.

1.5.5 Written sources

I also carried out some research on Balinese written sources. I looked at some Balinese texts on offerings and ritual, in which lists of offerings and names of ingredients are given. However, I found almost nothing on *lamak* in these manuscripts, which are transcribed and kept in the University Library of Leiden. But I did make use of many Balinese publications written in Indonesian on the subject (see the bibliography), in the form of booklets and articles in newspapers and religious magazines. One of the main writers was Ny. I Gusti Agung Mas Putra, who was also an important informant during the earlier stages of my fieldwork.

For the interpretation of my fieldwork data, I used secondary sources of various kinds. Some publications (as mentioned above under Framework) helped me to develop ideas and concepts, some are of a more ethnographic nature, and others provided useful comparative data and material.

1.5.6 Study of museum collections

In 1983 I collected in Bali various kinds of contemporary ritual objects with the purpose of refurbishing the Bali gallery in the National Museum of Ethnology (series RV-5258) and to fill a gap in the museum's extensive Bali collections with this obviously 'forgotten art form'. I bought all objects at markets or shops specializing in these kinds of objects, or I ordered them directly from the makers, mainly Balinese women. Nine *lamak* (eight *lamak* and one *ceniga*), of various materials, are part of this series. During subsequent visits to Bali I continued buying the latest varieties of *lamak* at the markets and *toko yadnya*. Some of those also entered the museum's collection.[23]

As curator for Indonesia at the National Museum of World Cultures, I have ready access to the *lamak* collection in both Museum Volkenkunde and Tropenmuseum, now both part of the National Museum of World Cultures, and in Appendix 1 I present an overview of this collection. During my fieldwork period in Bali I studied the collection of Museum Bali in Denpasar, and within the framework of cooperation projects with Museum Nasional Indonesia in Jakarta I studied the *lamak* collection in this museum.

1.5.7 Presentation of the research data

I have already published four articles on various aspects of Balinese *lamak* (Brinkgreve 1993, 1996, 2010a, 2010b), a number of catalogue entries (Brinkgreve 2010a), and several publications on offerings (Brinkgreve 1985, 1987a, 1987b, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2003) in which *lamak* play a role.

Although this dissertation is far more than just a compilation of these publications, the material discussed in them is also used in various chapters of this book. Sometimes I re-evaluate my previous conclusions and I mention specifically when I quote from my own work. But this book is the first time that all available data on Balinese *lamak* are brought together in one coherent book. This material culture study has become, as Clifford Geertz (1973:10) would call it, a 'thick description', an 'ethnography' of the Balinese *lamak* in all its different aspects. The visual material, the many photographs and drawings, that I present in this study are not just illustrations but are an integral part of the book.

23 See Appendix 1.

Figure 2.1: Lamak nganten, made for Galungan. Peliatan, 6/10/1982.