

Globalizing Crafts and Localizing Globalization: Handicraft Production in Tampaksiring, Bali

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Abstract

Perdagangan internasional bukan merupakan sesuatu yang baru untuk masyarakat Bali, tapi pada zaman ini trend perdagangan mempengaruhi jauh lebih banyak orang secara jauh lebih mendalam. Makalah ini meneliti bagaimana interaksi antara ekonomi lokal dan ekonomi global mempengaruhi kehidupan satu komunitas di satu wilayah kecil, yaitu pengrajin kayu dicat di Tampaksiring, Bali. Dengan membuat kerajinan ini dan juga dengan membelanjakan pendapatan mereka, orang yang tinggal di sebuah desa sedang mengikutsertakan dalam proses “globalisasi” (atau kadang disebut “glokalisasi”). Berdasarkan penelitian yang dilakukan di Tampaksiring mulai tahun 2000, makalah ini melihat bentuk dan dampak partisipasi tersebut, termasuk bagaimana ekonomi informal dan hubungan berdasarkan hal diluar ekonomi (non-market relationships) memungkinkan mereka untuk mempertahankan hidup. Dengan melihat kenyataan globalisasi yang kadang tidak terduga oleh pembuat kebijakan ataupun aktivis internasional, antropolog bisa membuat kontribusi untuk debat internasional tentang globalisasi.

I. Introduction

Bali has for at least a century been viewed and promoted as an agrarian paradise of rice fields, beaches, and traditional ways of life. This embracing of the traditional as a source of pride and as a marketing scheme, on the part of both local people and power holders such as the Dutch colonial forces and the national government, has, ironically, brought Bali into closer and more intense contact with foreigners as individuals and with global market forces. While foreign trade is far from new to Indonesia or Bali, the current level of interpenetration between local and foreign markets is unprecedented. In Bali as in many places, more people's lives are more deeply intertwined with the flows of international markets than ever before.

In Bali, this interpenetration rarely takes the form of big factories or large-scale farming for export. Its most visible form is the tourist industry: the big hotels and increasingly vast malls, and then on down the line to the small “homestays” (rooms in family compounds available for nightly rent to tourists) and “artshops” (generally selling more craft and kitsch than art). This

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paper examines a second, related form that globalization (or “glocalization” as some call it to indicate the role of the local): handicraft production for sale and export.

Within Bali, specific villages are often known for specific crafts, with what seems to be an entire village active in making silver, or masks, or kites (although as Hobart points out, these specializations may be a fairly recent development) (1999:266). The area of Tampaksiring currently specializes in producing painted wooden handicrafts with no apparent connection to traditional Balinese forms. These crafts are largely intended for export rather than local retail and only a few (fish mobiles, for example) connect to images of Bali as tropical paradise. No crafts in this genre relate to traditional Balinese religious or cultural imagery, although other carvings made in Tampaksiring do. Producing these crafts has become such a dominant source of income that people when asked why they went into the handicraft business often answer that “there’s no other work.”

Tampaksiring is experiencing its own unique manifestation of globalization (or glocalization) as local historical, social, and economic trends and individual choices interact with global market forces as well as national policies and trends. The situation in Tampaksiring is different from many other sites of craft production described in the anthropological literature because the crafts produced are totally divorced from traditional forms and because craft production is no longer a niche providing work for a few people, but rather has become one of the most dominant segments of the local economy. A further distinguishing trait is that many of the producers researched for this paper work with an established, well-run Balinese fair trade craft NGO, which means that they are getting about the best deal possible out of their relationship to the global economy.

This paper explores the options that people in Tampaksiring have for making a living, and what leads them to choose handicraft production. It will examine some of the risks and benefits to the local participants from being part of this global exchange and the tactics that they use to mitigate this risk and to try to ensure as constant and sufficient a stream of income as possible, particularly by creatively combining a range of informal economic activities.



This paper is based on research conducted while living in handicraft-producing households in two different *banjar*² in Tampaksiring during the spring and summer of 2000 and during shorter follow-up visits in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005. Primary data was gathered through formal interviews, observation, and informal conversations, based on an anthropological, ethnographic methodology. Additional data and theory were drawn from both library research and discussions with Balinese and other Indonesian activists and academics, to whom the author extends her thanks.

This paper attempts to provide a field-based, nuanced view of one site of globalization, a specific nexus of global political economic forces and local preferences and assets, following in the footsteps of scholars such as Diane Wolf (1992) and Ching Kwan Lee (1998). Often, discussion of globalization is limited to heated debate and sketched, propagandistic descriptions of particular experiences, generally related to factory production or urban life. Generating descriptions of the complexities of how people at the grassroots level are experiencing globalization, including examples like this of globalization in out-of-the-way places that seem to be far off the path of global forces, is one contribution anthropologists can make to the heated international debate over globalization and development.

II. The Goods

The main street of Tampaksiring is lined with glass-fronted “artshops” selling carvings of coconut, bone, horn, and painted wood. In the past, Tampaksiring was known for producing “Balinese-style” wooden chess pieces and bone and horn carvings. Now, the biggest product is painted wooden objects featuring exogenous icons: American cartoon characters, animals and flowers never seen in Indonesia, and foreign cultural icons adorn pencils, mirrors, windchimes, mobiles, letter openers, and more. These crafts are produced in home-based workshops by young men and women. Women in Tampaksiring also have their own specialty: crocheted tablecloths, bikinis, hats, and garments, often made at home or while minding a shop.

Stephen has written that “the international market for crafts is built on an elite consumer ideology contrasting manufactured, mass-produced, internationalized modern objects with hand-produced, authentic local crafts” (1993: 26-27). This is not as true of these crafts as it is

² A *banjar* is the smallest social unit in both Balinese customary law and the Indonesian governance system as implemented in Bali.



of many others. There is an effort to make these crafts as identical with each other, and with the original pattern, as possible: to make them like machine-made products. For the craftsmen producing hundreds of the crafts (as opposed to the person who makes the original design), there is no room for innovation. Unlike many products sold on Bali (including Bali itself, “sold” as a tourist destination), the crafts do not display “markedness” or “authenticity” as Balinese or even as local or handmade. It is not related to traditional craft forms, and while it may be marketed as generally “exotic,” it is not specifically Balinese.

This type of “tourist art,” mass-produced by teams of relatively inexperienced artisans to meet consumer demand, is often viewed as low quality (Jules-Rosette 1984:16). The work in Tampaksiring ranges widely, however: some pieces are indeed quickly, shoddily done, while others are truly “export-quality,” with more complicated designs and high-quality production. It is easy to be trapped in aesthetic bias against these crafts, but as Steiner suggests, it is more useful to analyze these crafts as the result of new systems of mass production rather than in contrast to works of fine art or traditional craft (1999:95). The handicraft producers themselves see their work as discrete from other types of carving. For example, one producer whose father and grandfather carved intricate doors and other decorations hired an artisan to create similar work for his family home, and regretted that he was not carrying on that artistic carving tradition and hoped that his child would.³ His father and grandfather had also carved for then-President Sukarno, who had built a presidential residence near Tampaksiring, and for government officials and others who came as part of his entourage or for meetings. While these crafts were for external consumption, they were different in technique, intricacy, style, and volume of production from those created today. This producer was skilled and economically successful, but saw his work as categorically different from the carving done by his grandfather.

Cohen notes that exporters and mass tourists (rather than the “cultural tourists” who are also one of Bali’s markets) are looking for goods that are “useful, decorative, or otherwise suit their lifestyle,” rather than seeking elusive “authenticity” (2000:20). He writes that as craft production becomes oriented towards global markets, production is “dissociated,” as the “‘traditional’ spatial, cultural, and social nexus of craft production is broken up into parts. This leads to “displacement,” in which products are connected to the place they are produced

³ Interestingly, he was sending his younger brother to an art school to learn carving to carry on the family tradition; whereas before traditional carving was learned in the village, now the boy had to go to another town to learn in a more formal setting.



only by historical accident, and could be produced anywhere (22). As he writes, “involvement with exports makes possible the large-scale expansion of local craft production, but it also leads to radical ‘heterogeneization’ and to a total absence of any relationship between the cultural background of the artisans and their products” (20). This is clearly true in Tampaksiring. Where a generation or two ago there were a few skilled carvers, creating carvings in a local style for local use and a few visitors, now there are masses of craft producers making goods for export based on exogenous designs.

This change in the labor structure of the village and this unrooting of production from place are key to examining the way this craft production has tied people’s lives into the global market. As Jules-Rosette has written, the production of tourist art features two cultures imagining each other (1984: 18). Producers’ ability to provide food for their families has become dependent on their ability to read and respond to international trends which, given their lack of access to relevant information and buyers, often means that they are dependent on forces that they cannot understand and on middlemen who take their own considerable cut of the profits (19).

III. The Producers

People in Tampaksiring often said that they were working as craft producers because “there’s no other work” or “everyone here is a craft producer.” As mentioned above, though, craft production only became the primary income source for a large number of people relatively recently, probably within the last generation. In the past, craft production was more likely to be complementary with farming, as an additional activity or supplementary income source (Rutten 1990:33; Picard 1996:60). At that time, people produced crafts for local use and also for Dutch, Javanese, and other tourist consumption.

One older man said that the young people were becoming craft producers because there was “just a little land and too many people.” Bali is, after all, densely populated, and land distribution in Bali has historically not been equitable, with most land controlled by local royalty. Land redistribution efforts by the government have brought their own power plays and machinations, as have certification drives. In other parts of Bali, consolidation of land by foreign investors is a major issue; in Tampaksiring, this is not yet the case although some locals do buy up land for new homes, stores, and farming.



In Tampaksiring, land redistribution efforts were relatively effective. A relatively large number of people have land, and this is no longer controlled only by a family's historical standing: many people have sold their inherited land, while others have bought land, often using handicraft income. Still, with increasing population, expensive inputs for farming, low prices for agricultural outputs, increasing health care and education costs, and a wealth of consumer goods calling out to be bought, few people feel that the amount of land they control would be enough to meet their families' needs.⁴ This land is only enough to supplement families' food supplies, which can be very useful during economic downturns. In Tampaksiring, the land controlled by a family is likely to include some *sawah* (wet rice fields) and some *ladang* (dry land for planting fruit trees, flowers, etc.). Often, this land is tended by the older members of the family or young unemployed men, or farmed by extended family members or neighbors in exchange for some of the yield. The crops are sometimes sold but often only enough for family consumption.

Most young people would rather not be farmers, or see farming as something they will do when they are old and no longer have the keen eyesight and coordination needed for craft production (as their fathers and mothers do now). They try to find less physically demanding, more lucrative, and often more prestigious opportunities as either paid employees or entrepreneurs.⁵ Farming in Bali is way down the prestige ladder, while occupations that are "clean," "professional," and involve contact with tourists are at the top.

People are driven to handicraft production both because of "pull" factors such as these preferences and by "push" factors such as the shortage of land, low prices for crops and the difficulty of accessing more high-prestige job options. Tourism jobs, office jobs (including the civil service), and military/police positions are all examples of jobs that have higher prestige than handicraft production, and are often more lucrative and stable. However, these jobs involve selection processes that require capital, either indirectly (e.g., education) or directly (e.g., official and unofficial application fees, unpaid "training" or "probation" periods) (Warren 1993:94). Some handicraft producers aspire to save their money from their craft production so that their younger siblings or children can achieve these higher-prestige

⁴ For similar data from a different area of Bali, see Poffenberger and Zurbuchen 1980:107-108.

⁵ Similarly, in 1980, Poffenberger and Zurbuchen were already writing about smallholders deciding that they could make more money in off-farm employment than tending their small plots (111). This trend has continued across the island.



jobs. There are also low-skill formal jobs available that are not directly related to tourism, such as driving public minibuses, working at stores, minding public telephone kiosks, and so forth, which have lower but varying levels of prestige, income, and stability.

Many income-seeking options are outside the formal economy: unregulated, unregistered, and often uncounted. People sell crafts at kiosks at tourist sites, or sell fruit or crafts without a kiosk, walking around selling out of a basket or duffel bag. A surprising number of people set up small kiosks (*warung*) in front of their homes and sell detergent, shampoo, beer, instant noodles, other packaged necessities, and sometimes fruit or home-cooked snacks or drinks. Often, one person will take on a combination of several informal jobs in order to bring in income, which will be explored in greater depth below.

Within handicraft production itself, there is a range of different positions. Usually, one man will be the “boss” of a workshop: the one who negotiates with the buyer, coordinates the production and packaging process, and controls the money. He hires people to carve the wood, which is often done at their own homes or another separate site, and to paint, finish, assemble, and package the goods, which is often done at his own home. Painters are usually paid per piece, while assembly and packaging is often done by contract employees or family members without additional payment. Painters can be men or women, while carvers tend to be men.⁶

In Tampaksiring, it is clear how relations of exchange and labor are embedded in the shifting ground of social relationships (Hefner 1998:9, Szanton 1998:252). Within the community, resources are mobilized and connections established through friendship, neighborhood/*banjar*, and kinship lines, and in turn they affect these local relationships (Hart 2000:110-111). This will be further explored below, but one example of this is that there is often a type of patron-client relationship between the “bosses” and their employees. While the employees may not feel like they have a right to bargain over their wages, or even ask how much they will be paid for a given job, the boss is often asked to contribute when the employees’ families have an emergency or a religious ceremony.

This paper is focused on producers, but it is important to keep in mind that in many cases the exporters, artshop owners, or other (often multiple) middlemen derive at least as much profit

⁶ This is not a hard and fast rule, though; one woman explained that “women can’t carve, they never carve” while at the same time across the yard girls were carving chess pieces alongside their brothers.



from each craft as the producers and tend to achieve a higher standard of living (Warren 1993:200; Connor and Suasta 1999:111; Sukarsa and Bendesa 1980:39). Many of the producers interviewed and observed for this research worked with a fair trade craft NGO, which meant that they were getting a more constant flow of trade, better treatment, and a higher cut of the profits than most producers. However, in general in Bali, wealth is determined to a large extent by access by access to tourists, who are a commodity, often literally sold by guides to artshop owners at a given price per head. These producers, due to their location, lack of English, and other factors do not have this direct access to tourists and thus have a weak bargaining position and limited ability to predict what will sell. It is this that fair trade tries to remedy.

People's ability to access different kinds of jobs are circumscribed by the usual factors: gender, age, ability to travel, wealth, family connections, etc. Caste also plays a role at least indirectly as higher caste often indexes past wealth and connections that give the young generation a head start. These factors also affect division of labor within the family. While young women often work outside the home, women with children tend to take on work within the family that allows them to also take care of their children and meet their household responsibilities. These primarily include crocheting and minding a *warung* or artshop. Women also support home-based businesses in uncounted ways by, for example, preparing tea or food for producers in the workshop. Older women may take up some of the child-minding, cooking, and cleaning burden. Whether or not there is a conscious household strategy, roles in the household are complementary, covering all bases. There is often not a clear division between reproductive and productive work, or between work and home; for example, one workshop during its heyday had several workers from northern Bali who also lived in the family home and received food and drink as well as wages in exchange for their labor. This "reproductive" work of preparing food to support the "productive" work of generating income became part of the women's household duties. Members of the household who might be thought of as "non-productive" also pitch in, with children helping carve while learning the trade and, for example, a developmentally challenged brother helping pack crafts.

In examining these opportunities and decisions, it is important to remember that these are not only survival strategies but accumulation (and consumption) strategies. Bali has historically had excess rice harvests, which in part explain the expensive temple ceremonies that are such a key aspect of the community life of the island (and its draw to tourists) (Bateson 1970:392).



Today, families are unlikely to produce enough rice and produce for their own consumption, whether because they have limited land or because they have shifted their activities towards more lucrative jobs. Families in Tampaksiring have high expectations. They see fancy buildings, handphones, cars, motorbikes, and other consumer goods and want to have these things themselves, as well as feeling obligated to have elaborate temple ceremonies. They don't want to eat labor-intensive, low-prestige foods like cassava (often processed into a rice substitute), they want rice, and chicken, and other things that in their grandparents' time were luxuries. In addition, education costs are constantly increasing and higher education has become a requirement for more of the higher prestige jobs. Health costs are also increasing, in part because of a long-term shift from traditional healers who can be compensated with crops or other gifts to medical professionals who only take cash (Nakatani 1999:208-209).

During the first stage of this research, in 2000, orders were high and money was flowing. The handicraft industry had not been hit so hard by the economic crisis that began in 1998; the devaluation of the currency increased foreign buyers' purchasing power, which kept orders coming in and helped cushion the impact of the currency crisis (Connor and Suasta 1999:117). However, global aesthetic and economic trends were not to be perpetually positive for these families. By the first follow-up visit, in 2002, people were starting to feel the pinch of the global economic downturn and an inexplicable shift away from brightly painted wooden handicrafts to other decorations. They had saved up money during their high days, though, for cars and handphones, and were still enjoying these. Several families had improved their workshops or invested in new machinery so that they could more easily create clean, well-finished products. Some had partially finished renovations on their houses, often including not just simple plaster or paint but elaborate carvings and stone, and were scraping together the money to finish the redecoration. Over the last two years, some have sold their cars and motorbikes and others sit in their elaborate family compounds bemoaning the difficulty of finding money for gasoline and school fees as orders have fallen.

Families had also invested their accumulated wealth in ways that they hoped would ensure future income in ways other than handicraft production. Some bought or rented artshops to sell their own crafts and resell other goods, either at local tourist sites or in the retail area of Tegallalang. These were not doing well, sometimes going a month without a single buyer. In some cases the stores were left closed rather than waste time minding them. One family had changed a former artshop/showcase in front of their house, which lies on a road that few



tourists go past, into a convenience store, with a small selection of clothes, household goods, and packaged foods. They had also set up a juice stand, which was doing good business and had become a gathering place for children and particularly for young men, who would sit late into the night drinking juice and chatting. This endeavor was unique in its area and seemed to be doing much better business than those aimed at tourists, but another family had seen how well it was doing and opened up a similar convenience store just a few doors away, which was cutting into the first store's market.

There is significant variation in how economically successful people are in the handicraft trade in Tampaksiring, and to what extent they successfully reinvest these profits to ensure a more sustainable income. Different people have different levels of skill, creativity, diligence, luck, and countless other factors. However, there are at least two trends worth noting from these observations on handicraft production in Tampaksiring, which will be explored in the next two sections. First, people are more interconnected to the global market than ever before, both in terms of generating income (producing and selling their products) and purchasing the goods that they need and want. Second, individuals and households are combining a range of productive and reproductive, formal and informal, activities in order to meet their economic needs and desires. These two themes will be explored in the next two sections.

IV. The History and Political Economy of Balinese Crafts: Increasing Interconnection with the Global Market

Since this research began, the world has become increasingly accustomed to the idea that we are living in a new era of (neoliberal) "globalization," that we are all interconnected in many ways. It is important to see what of this phenomenon is new and what is not before going on to examine what it means for the people who are directly involved. This section will begin with a very brief economic history of Bali as context, and then discuss the implications of today's local-global economic interpenetration for the handicraft producers described in this paper.

Wet rice farming has historically been the predominant income source, with tourism playing an increasingly key role since the 1920s (Newson 1987:23). It is difficult to unravel other income sources from the historical record, because they are often not included in surveys and censuses or not disaggregated clearly (Alexander, Boombaard, and White 1991:2-3). In



addition, the role of the informal economy and the fact that many people engage in more than one income-generating activity makes it difficult to set categories and gather statistics to this day (Hart 1986: 60; Wolf 1992:51).

However, it is clear that handicraft production, gathering for use and sale, and small-scale trade have long played a role in Balinese households, in addition to farming.⁷ In terms of crafts, farmers and craftsmen would exchange crops for crafts, princes commissioned more valuable arts and crafts, and tourists as consumers have been part of the equation since at least the 1930s (Hobart, Ramseyer, and Leemann 1996:57; Covarrubias 1937:86). As described above, however, craft production was generally complementary with farming. It could serve multiple purposes, depending on the craft and the context: bringing in income, achieving prestige, or providing a service to the community.

Trade within Bali goes back to at least the tenth century and international trade with Bali to at least the sixteenth century, but trade increased dramatically in the nineteenth century (Poffenberger and Zurbuchen 1980:107; Hobart, Ramseyer, and Leemann 1996:59-60; Geertz 1980b:110). This has continued in the twentieth century. Total Balinese exports have increased dramatically since 1970, with non-agricultural products making up an increasingly large part of the whole (Picard 1996:59; Hobart, Ramseyer, and Leemann 1996:219).

Tourism began to increase rapidly in the early 1970s (Poffenberger and Zurbuchen 1980:92). It significantly changed Bali's economy, bringing in new sources of funding and changed the distribution of resources. Inequalities emerged between tourism and non-tourism areas and, within a given area, between families that derived income from tourism and those that derived income from agricultural activities (Sukarsa and Bendesa 1980:38, Connor and Suasta 1999:112).

For an island deliberately preserved by the Dutch as a "living museum" of picturesque pre-Muslim, pre-industrial Indonesian life (Picard 1996:20; Robinson 1995:39-40;52), this intensification of tourism and trade, as well as Green Revolution agriculture, have brought major changes. Geertz wrote in 1963 that the lack of capital-intensive agriculture in Bali had

⁷ Gathering included dry leaves and stems of coconut trees for fuel; frogs, eels, snails, and insects for food; wood and coral lime for sale (Hobart, Ramseyer, and Leemann 1996:58; Covarrubias 1937: 85; Lansing and Singer). In terms of trade, by 1818, farmers were raising livestock for export to Java; by the 1930s, they were raising commodity crops to sell to Chinese middlemen for export (Hobart, Ramseyer, and Leemann 1996:48; Covarrubias 1937:86,82).



led to less “monetization, proletarianization, and integration into the world-wide economy” than in Java (21). These processes have all progressed quickly in the years since Geertz wrote that, and had begun long before.

In terms of monetization, Balinese were once largely self-sufficient except perhaps for salt, spices, and some medicine and luxuries that could be covered by their rice surplus, which also went for religious ceremonies (Covarrubias 1937:73; Hobart, Ramseyer, and Leemann 1996:56). Since at least the 1930s, though, consumer goods such as mass-produced cloth and dyes, bicycles, flashlights, cars, cigarettes, plastic buckets, umbrellas, thermoses, and more have been tempting consumers (Covarrubias 1937:85,87; Poffenberger and Zurbuchen 1980:109). This has only increased over time, creating a desire for cash that is difficult to meet through farming. The levying of taxes by the Dutch, which had to be paid in Dutch currency, also forced Balinese to participate in the cash economy (McRae 1997: 132).

Thanks to these pushes and pulls, wage labor, virtually unknown in the precolonial era, has grown more and more common and gone from an occasional supplementary activity to a primary income source (Hobart, Ramseyer, and Leemann 1996:58, including footnote 25; Covarrubias 1937: 82,85-86; Geertz 1963b:21; Connor 1996:2003).⁸

These changes in modes of consumption and production mean that now more and more Balinese, including these handicraft producers, are further and further from self-sufficiency. Interaction with the global market has meant that they no longer have to be farmers, but can choose from different career activities, although some people have more choices than others. It also means that they have more choices as consumers, that they no longer have to eat the food produced in their community (if their community is even still producing enough food to feed its members), but can choose from food imported from other islands and other countries even at their local convenience stores. Through this combination of external pressures and individual choices conditioned by the political economic context, people are less and less likely to be producing the food they eat or producing something that can be used in their community and traded directly for food. The market for their goods is now far away, as is the source of the food that they eat and the objects they use, from Chinese plastics to Thai rice. Their income comes from outside the community and then flowing back out of the

⁸ It should also be considered that many small entrepreneurs or “petty producers” are so “constrained by external relations of dependency” that they are “little more than disguised wage workers” (Alexander, Boomgaard, and White 1991:12).



community; where once people traded with their neighbors and created offerings out of leaves, flowers, and fruits available locally, only buying the occasional plastic or piece of cloth from outside, now a much higher portion of their rupiah flow to Denpasar, Surabaya, and further afield. While, again, this increases choice, it also makes them more vulnerable to international fluctuations. It may also lead to more inequality within the village, as described above with regard to tourism.

In short, for Balinese, international trade is no longer the only purview of princes or professional traders, no longer simply a way to gain luxury goods and commodities. It is now basic to everyday life, to putting food on the table. Similarly, neither Balinese elites nor the national government can protect their citizens from the consequences of these relationships (although national policies and local leaders' decisions can affect distribution of resources and mediate risks).

This participation in the national and global economy allows them more choice in both selecting a career and selecting consumer goods, and allows more accumulation and investment for the future. However, it also makes their situation precarious. As international consumers' tastes, prices for inputs, exchange rates, foreign government tariffs, prohibitions on certain woods, and so forth all fluctuate, they can only watch and try to adapt. This often puts them in a position where they can only wait and see whether they get orders – potential marketing steps like setting up websites, attending international craft fairs, or opening stores abroad or even in Balinese tourist centers all seem far out of their reach in terms of capital, language skills, and capability. In 2000, when orders were flowing freely, this lack of control may have felt like a fair deal. As tourism and craft export have failed to recover from the repeated blows of terrorism, political discord, diseases, and international economic fluctuations, though, some families may be wise to be looking for businesses that cater to their own communities' needs, which they may be more able to predict. The next section will address families' attempts to earn a living and mitigate the risks of their reliance on the global economy by balancing many different activities.

V. Microniches and the Informal Sector

Dove, among others, has written about Indonesian peasants' attempts to balance production of staple food and production of commodities so that they guarantee subsistence but also have an opportunity to improve their material position (1988). Amidst various pressures, needs, and



temptations, they are seeking a way to participate in the cash economy that allows them to bring in cash without giving up all of their stability. Most handicraft producers in Tampaksiring no longer have the option of subsistence farming. They balance their risk and income in other ways, notably by taking on a range of jobs, often with very low income from each, simultaneously or within short periods of time.

One couple, for example, engaged in six income-generating activities between them within one two-week time span. In addition to child care and other domestic duties, the woman painted crafts, bought bananas to sell to tourists in the parking lot of a local tourism site, and bought jewelry in Denpasar to sell at Bali Bird Park. Her husband carved ashtrays and other simple carvings, sold his carvings and other carvings in the parking lot of a local tourism site, and helped with the family fields. Their son helped carve in the evenings. Some of these activities have their own time limitations; for example, the parking lot banana sellers have an association that regulates who can sell, and when, so that they do not flood the (already small) market. Beyond that though, the choice to engage in many simultaneous activities stems from their own desire to seek new experiences and profit.

Even the handicraft “bosses” generally only have orders reaching about a month or two ahead. As these orders have become less and less of a guaranteed income, they have increasingly tried to use their revenue to set up other businesses, as described above. Often it is the women who do the bulk of the labor for these supplementary businesses, such as minding artshops or *warung*.

However, many people are limited to opportunities that require very little capital. These jobs often also offer a very low return. Poffenberger and Zurbuchen have coined the term “microniches” for these jobs, which are labor intensive, require little capital, involve individual entrepreneurship, and have irregular, flexible working hours. They write that the primary categories for these jobs are marketing, food service, tourist trade, construction, and children’s jobs. Many of these niches are already intensely exploited, particularly since the economic crisis and what seems to be a fairly permanent dip in tourism. This competition further lowers profit margins for activities that already yield very minimal profit (1980:131).

These jobs allow people to fit together multiple income sources and household and ceremonial duties, and to eke out just a little more of a living. While they may in some cases



be accumulation rather than survival strategies, they are reminiscent of Chayanov's concept of "self-exploitation," in which poor peasants are competitive with larger, more capital-intensive endeavors only because they do not count the cost of labor and do whatever is necessary to meet their needs. It is also reminiscent of Geertz's concept of agricultural involution, of people being willing to invest more and more time into their land for small payoffs (1963a). It often seems that Balinese are willing to jump on any even remotely profitable activity, from rent-seeking behavior like local governments charging fees from passers by to the touts that offer transport and other services anywhere tourists are likely to appear. If people's income per hour engaging in activities like this were calculated and compared to the regional minimum wage, it would be very unlikely to measure up. Labor is not counted as an input; people expect little in return for their time.

There are also other uncounted inputs. No-interest loans, free rides or borrowed vehicles from relatives, free housing with family in other towns, and the uncounted labor of children and women are the only thing that make even minimal profit margins possible. If these inputs were calculated and paid, write Poffenberger and Zurbuchen, many of these microniche jobs would no longer be profitable at all.

The idea that the new global economy forces people to take multiple jobs to take ends meet, pushes women into the work force, decreases job security, and drives down wages is not new. These trends are usually imagined in terms of office and factory workers in urban centers, though; the idea that they extend into a small village in Bali is a reminder of how integrated we truly all are in the new global economy.

Ironically, what seems to be a "modern," formal, high-tech process of increasing global trade is predicated in this case on informal, non-market relationships. These are people who are trying to get in on the promise of prosperity from large-scale development, wide roads, sidewalks, tall hotels, jets flying into the well-decorated airport, credit card transfers zipping through new wireless internet access. However, their ability to derive their small amount of benefit from this mode of development and globalization is made possible by informal arrangements that do not figure in the calculations and planning of the development planners or global market players. It also depends on their being willing to accept very minimal growth possibilities, far different from the big, sometimes even guaranteed, returns promised to foreign investors.



As Poffenberger and Zurbuchen point out, these jobs exist at the interface of the traditional village economy and the Indonesian macroeconomic system (1980: 110). They require both the networks of the village and the capital and consumers of the modern economic system in order to work. As Keith Hart points out, these informal entrepreneurs cannot rely on formal systems such as loans or even law enforcement; their agreements and mutual support relies on personal trust relationships developed through experience (2000:110-112). The Indonesian state, in turn, is dependent on this “self-exploitation” and creativity, and on people being willing to take on these very low-prestige, low-return jobs. These informal jobs make it possible for people to be unemployed in a society without a social safety net without starving on the streets or becoming totally dependent on others (Hart 2000:154). This is particularly worth remembering as the Indonesian poor wait for the funds promised from the most recent increase in fuel prices.

The handicraft producers in Tampaksiring are far from being among Indonesia’s poorest citizens, but these people use some of the same tactics to stay afloat. As activist groups like the Urban Poor Consortium point out about informal workers in urban settings, these people are often despised and ill-treated by their respective regional governments with little recognition for the services they provide or the importance of their efforts to support themselves. However, as Scott points out, these informal activities are “symbiotic” with the formal economy (1998:130). If the informal economy were eliminated, as some regional governments and economists would like to see, or if exchange of labor for money became truly rationalized, these people would no longer be able to make a living, and the people who take advantage of their services (for example, cheap food) find it more difficult to get along. This would cast into sharper relief the number of people whose needs are not met by the national development strategy, by the international economy, and by social services.

VI. A Note on Policy and Other Interventions

Both Dutch and Indonesian national policy have adopted and promoted an image of Bali as a special, traditional place, but they have done so in very different ways. The Dutch tried to preserve Bali, deliberately underdeveloping the educational system and infrastructure and, in the words of one preservationist, declaring that there should be “no railroads on Bali; no Western coffee plantations; and especially no sugar factories!” (quoted in Robinson 1995:41,48-49). The Indonesian government, on the other hand, has pushed the development



of wide roads, sidewalks, luxury hotels and capital-intensive agriculture as a way to boost incomes and bring in foreign currency. The New Order has improved the transportation-communication infrastructure, including channeling foreign development money to Bali and to large-scale development projects, and opened the gates wide to foreign investors (Poffenberger and Zurbuchen 1980: 109). Local customary leaders and regional governments have also put money into capital improvements designed to lure tourists. The income from this development strategy has flowed not only to local Balinese but to wealthy Jakarta elites and political cronies. Even before the large-scale tourism push, government schools (made more attractive by the potential for jobs as civil servants) and clinics that require payment in cash were creating a desire for cash income.

National and regional development policies have been based on the premise of unlimited growth and the acceptability of increased inequality. This is quite different from the assumptions that have historically governed Balinese village economies, such as subsistence guarantees and limited growth (Poffenberger and Zurbuchen 1980:131). Whether or not one accepts the perhaps romanticized idea that Balinese social and economic structures are geared towards stability and “dynamic equilibrium” rather than maximization (Bateson 1970: 398-401), this idea is a helpful reminder that different economies have different rules and are geared to produce different outcomes. Poffenberger and Zurbuchen argue that there is a significant misalignment between the “new” and “old” economies, that “‘efficiency’ in the cash- and profit-oriented modern economic world may be inefficient in a labor-surplus, limited-resource peasant economy” (1980:103). It seems more than likely that the interests, goals, and experiences of policy makers, whether at the national level or, in the age of regional autonomy, at the district level, do not necessarily match with those of the handicraft producers and other local residents that their decisions affect.

Vickers wrote in 1989 that “the direction of social change in Bali is dictated now not by tourism but by the national economy and by the needs of the Indonesian government” (213). All too often, the image of Bali as island paradise, the developmental path Bali has taken, and also the general neoliberal economic model in which the whole world is now engaged are treated as natural processes, as trends that occur on their own, that could not have been avoided and cannot be changed. Vickers reminds us that there are interests at stake and decisions being made. He focuses on the national government, but this is true at the international level also: much of the money for the roads and other improvements that make



Bali so easy to export from came from international aid money, and many of the hotels that lure tourists to Bali were built by international investors. More broadly, the investment and development climate that facilitated this money flowing in was facilitated by an international economic political system that promoted the free flow of capital, sometimes with the Indonesian government's cooperation and sometimes over its objections. Similarly, the fact that education, health care, and other government services are not free, and that they require cash and not in-kind payment, is a result of domestic policy decisions, but also of pressure from the International Monetary Fund and other international forces.

If international political economic forces, in combination with domestic policies, created these opportunities and dictate to a large degree what role local producers will be able to have in exploiting them, a local NGO and the international fair trade craft network are trying to ensure that the local producers have get the fairest shake possible in the process. Mitra Bali, the fair trade NGO working with producers in Tampaksiring (and around Bali) serves as a broker between the local producers and international buyers, many of them motivated by the spirit of fair trade and bound by its principles. Just by treating the producers "fairly," by paying deposits and paying bills promptly, Mitra Bali is increasing the quality of treatment and stability of income that producers receive. By cutting out the middleman and pushing producers to treat their workers well, to eliminate gender discrimination, to put children in school, and so forth, it is creating real change in people's lives, even if there are no guarantees for how long this change or this income will continue. Mitra Bali has not done direct policy work, but tries to raise awareness of trade-related issues and the need for a more fair international trade system. Without Mitra Bali's work, the producers described in this essay would be in an even more precarious, and less profitable, position.

VII. Conclusion

Driving up to Tampaksiring from Ubud or Gianyar feels like leaving the world of tourists and urban life behind. Driving north, there are fewer restaurants, no hotels, no internet cafes, and after passing the main strip of Tampaksiring to get to the *banjar* where this research was done, almost no artshops. Everything gets smaller. Gas is sold in glass bottles not a pump, phones are few and far between, and everyone knows everyone else. It gets dark at sunset, with people chatting in their homes or men gathering at *warung* over beer or arak.



Nowhere in Bali, of course, is all that isolated, and Tampaksiring is no exception. However, its rural appearance is a reminder that people's lives even in these out-of-the-way places are being changed, for better or for worse, by increasing interpenetration between the local and global economies. The handicraft producers in Tampaksiring can describe exchange rates fluctuations and their impact on the business, and those who mind shops can explain the difference in how Americans, Japanese, and Taiwanese like to shop and bargain. They make their crafts as good as possible, as cheaply and quickly as possible, and sometimes try to innovate to attract new buyers (although most are more likely to copy others' designs or stores). With an occasional exception, they cannot speak English or (yet?) negotiate the world outside Bali, cannot cut the supply chain to sell their goods for a higher price, cannot seek out new buyers on their own initiative. They invest in the future by renovating their workshops, educating their children, and making temple offerings to express thanks for the good luck that has befallen them or ameliorate the bad.

There is an intermixing of local and global ways of thinking, of needs and desires that arise from both local and global conditions. Without applauding or decrying it, but also without falling into the Thatcherite trap of saying that "There Is No Alternative" to the patterns of power and profit that mark the current international economic system, it is important as global citizens and anthropologists to examine how "glocalization" is playing out in all kinds of areas and contexts. Seeing how normal people in different places experience globalization is one step in discovering what people need and want from the world economy, and perhaps one early step in figuring out how to create an economy that more equitably and reliably provides those things.

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