

Workplace and Home: Understanding the Sai Baba Movement in Bali as an Urban Phenomenon*

Gde Dwitya Arief Metera**

Abstract

Since the transition to post-New Order Indonesia in 1998, new religious movements such as Sai Baba have become popular in Bali. In contrast with the New Order era when Sai Baba was under strict scrutiny, these groups are now warmly accepted by a far wider audience and especially from educated affluent urbanites. In this paper, I discuss several factors that make Sai Baba movement generally an urban phenomenon. I ask how change taking place in Bali regarding the economic and demographic context may have contributed to the people's different mode of religious articulation. The economic transformation from agricultural economy to modern industrial economy in Bali has changed people's occupations and forced urbanization. I argue that the transformation also creates two emerging cultural spaces of Workplace in the city and Home in the villages of origin. Workplace is where people are bound to modern disposition of time and Home is where people are tied to traditional disposition of time. These two cultural spaces determine people's mode of religious articulation. As people move from their villages of origin to the city, they also adopt a new mode of religious articulation in an urban context. I suggest that to understand the emergence of new religions and new mode of religious articulation in Bali we have to look at specific transformations at the economic and demographic level.

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Introduction

Recent studies on Balinese religion discuss the emergence of *Agama Hindu* as a new religion and the proliferation of new religious movements such as Sai Baba¹. Leo Howe, an anthropologist working on Balinese religion, stated that the proliferation of Sai Baba followers in Bali is a result of the introduction of various Indian religious traditions to the island by its intellectuals. A recent observation of the Sai Baba movement will clearly show that this movement is growing more popular especially since the transition to post-New Order Indonesia in 1998. In contrast with the New Order era when Sai Baba was under strict scrutiny, these groups are now warmly accepted by a far wider audience and especially from educated affluent urbanites.

The urban characteristic of Sai Baba followers is notable if we put it into perspective on current trends in Balinese religious life. According to Howe (2005) the critical questions posed by the Balinese today regarding current

¹ Howe, L. (2005). *The Changing World of Bali: Religion, Society and Tourism*. New York, Routledge. Howe argues that *Agama Hindu*, a form of modernized, state-sponsored Hindu which promotes orthodoxy, emerged as a response from Balinese intellectuals to fit state's definition of religion in Indonesia by producing a rationalized and theological version of its traditional religion. It was done by importing teachings of a version of Indian Hinduism to Bali. Another work by McDaniel gives accounts on the role of *Parisadha Hindu Dharma Indonesia* (Hindu Council) in the emergence of *Agama Hindu* as some sort of a new religious movement. See further McDaniel, J. (2010). "Agama Hindu Dharma as a New Religious Movement: Hindu Dharma Recreated in the Image of Islam." *Nova Religio the Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 14(1): 93-111. These two studies are actually in continuity with the discussion regarding symptoms of transformation within Balinese religion from ortopraxy to ortodoxy started by Clifford Geertz in the sixties. See Geertz, C. (1964). 'Internal Conversion' in *Contemporary Bali Malayayan and Indonesian Studies presented to Sir Richard Winsted*. J. B. R. Roolvink. Oxford, Oxford University Press, and Yamashita, Shinji (2003). *Bali and Beyond: Explorations in the Anthropology of Tourism*, NewYork, Bergahn Books.

religious life center on the efficacy of their traditional ritual actions. Is the time and money spent on such rituals worth all the effort? High expenditure makes the poor even more financially disadvantaged, relative to their affluent fellow Balinese who might still be able to afford expensive rituals.

Another issue that Howe points out is that as a consequence of the emergence of Agama Hindu and devotional movements such as Sai Baba, the financially burdensome *adat* as the traditional version of Hinduism is no longer the only existing religious system in Bali. As Howe rightly observed, the Balinese are currently living with these three competing religious systems and a compelling question is to see to which system the Balinese give their allegiance (Howe, 2005: 56).

A cursory response might be that the less-fortunate Balinese would choose to harbor their allegiance to devotional movements such as Sai Baba which put less emphasis on expensive rituals. This incentive-based thinking does not explain much of the reality I discovered in Buleleng, one of the poorest regencies in Bali besides Karangasem, where followers of Sai Baba were mostly educated, affluent urbanites. The poor in Buleleng, most of them villagers, are still bound to their traditional *adat* traditions, and still manage to articulate their traditional religion in the most basic format called *nista*². In term of demarcating these three religious systems; *adat*, Agama Hindu and Sai Baba, the Balinese are very likely divided along educational and geographical lines. There is also no direct correlation whereby the poor will prefer the less burdensome religious system such as Sai Baba. A few

² The family shrines of the poor are made from bare trees. There are three level of religious and ritual practices in Bali. Utama, meaning the greatest way which is very grandeur and expensive; Madya, meaning the midle way which is moderate in scale; and Nista, meaning the bare minimum which is very humble in scale.

questions to ask now are; why the followers of Sai Baba are mostly affluent urbanites? What specific condition that makes possible this allegiance to devotional religious system mostly found only in urban areas?

This paper will argue that Sai Baba movement is generally urban phenomenon which made possible by the economic transformation from agricultural to modern economy. The changing of occupations in the new economy has created: 1) Migration, as people move from their villages of origin to the new workplace in the city, and 2) two emerging cultural spaces of Workplace in the city and Home in the village of origin. The Workplace as a cultural space brought with it a new logic of time. Adapting to this new logic of time, Balinese urbanites find it hard to maintain their *Adat* religion which still uses traditional Balinese



A Ganesha statue at the front yard of the Sai Centre in Panji. Photo: author's archive

calendar. Strategically, they adopt a new mode of religious articulation in an urban context where Sai Baba movement is embraced due to its several features. I suggest that to understand the emergence of new religions and new mode of religious articulation in Bali we have to look at specific transformations at the economic and demographic level.

Sai Baba Movement in Bali

Sai Study Group is a congregation of followers of Sri Satya Sai Baba, an Indian guru born in Putthaparthi, India in 1926 and recently passed away in March 2011. Since childhood he is believed to have been performing miracles which meant that he gained a lot of followers. Nowadays, his followers have been spread all over the world with the establishment of 1,200 Satya Sai Baba centers in 126 countries³. This makes the Satya Sai movement a remarkable globalized phenomenon. The more so as its nature as a movement that does not come from the West as the center, but from a geographically marginal India makes it an alternative direction of globalization (Srinivas, 2010).

The popularity of this movement also reaches Indonesia in which there are 92 Sai Centers in 9 coordinating areas⁴. Coordinating area VII which includes Bali, East Nusa Tenggara and West Nusa Tenggara has 36 centers, with 32 of

³ Satya Sai Organization's website <http://www.sathyasai.org/organize/content.htm>, accessed June 8, 2011

⁴ Coordinating area I includes North Sumatra, Aceh, Riau, and West Sumatra with 4 Sai centers, coordinating area II includes Jambi, Lampung, Bengkulu with 13 Sai centers, coordinating region III includes Jakarta, Banten and Western Java with 4 Sai centers, coordinating centre IV includes Central Java, Jogjakarta, Semarang, Surakarta with 4 Sai centers, coordinating area V includes Surabaya, Malang, Blitar, Banyuwangi and Jember with 10 Sai centers, coordinating area VI includes Palangkaraya and Kalimantan with 2 Sai centers, coordinating area VII includes Bali, East Nusa Tenggara and West Nusa Tenggara with 36 centers, coordinating area VIII includes South Sulawesi and Southeast Sulawesi with 5 Sai centers, coordinating area IX includes Central Sulawesi, North Sulawesi, Manado and Gorontalo with 15 Sai centers. Data taken from <http://saicenterindonesia.blogspot.com> accessed June 8, 2011

them in Bali alone. This makes Bali the region with highest numbers of centers as well as followers. In Bali, there are approximately over 12,000 followers reported (Howe, 2005). Mostly the followers in Bali are the Hindus with a few Chinese members. The first Sai Baba Center was established in Denpasar in 1984 and recently in November 2010 another one was established in Panji village, Buleleng regency, North Bali, where I conducted my fieldwork.

Looking at the characteristic of Sai Baba followers, an obvious feature of their profile is the high level of education, urban-based and non-agricultural job. My informants are high school teachers, university lecturer pursuing his PhD in religious studies, NGO staff, a very successful entrepreneur who has been to Putthaparthi twice and university student at a prominent university in Java. Only an insignificant number of them are in low profile jobs. One informant told me that there are actually a few of them working as a parking valet and labourers. These findings are substantiated by Howe's work (2001) who conducted fieldwork observing Sai Baba in Bali. As the followers education and occupation will be an important part in my discussion later, this information deserves a considerable quotation:

Such educational qualifications provide entry into good jobs. Twenty eight of the fifty-three describe themselves as civil servant, professionals, private officials or entrepreneurs, with six more being students. The others are artisans, white collar workers, ordinary employees, labourers and a few unemployed (Howe 2001:171).

All my informants and the Sai Baba followers in general, work in the city of Singaraja; the capital city of Buleleng regency, and reside there. Only a few of them live in the outskirts. This makes the urban characteristics of the followers more obvious. This characteristic is also highlighted by Howe:

It is rare for a village to have more than a few individuals or families who belong to the Sai Baba movement. Center of worship are situated in the main towns and attracts devotees from the surrounding villages. Given their isolation from likeminded people, devotees often find it hard to maintain their membership in the face of opposition and criticism from suspicious villagers (Howe, 2005:107)

Economic Transformation and New Occupations

As mentioned above, the occupations of the Sai Baba followers are mostly professional, non-agricultural ones. New occupations is a characteristic of the economic transformation happened in Bali. The island known for its agrarian characteristic where most of the inhabitants are farmers and working in the field has been gradually shifting to modern economy. Comparing statistical data from the year 1950 with the latest one in 2006 shows the total area of wet rice fields has decreased to only half of the total area in the fifties⁵.

No.	Region	Total Area (1948)	Total Area (2006)
1	Buleleng	34, 429	16,301
2	Jembrana	15,016	10,924
3	Tabanan	62, 198	25,903
4	Badung	47,732	13,708
5	Gianyar	39,022	19,505
6	Bangli	7,937	4,569
7	Klungkung	11,952	4,027
8	Karangasem	19,975	9,641
9	Denpasar*	n/a	1,491
	Bali	238,261	106,069

* Denpasar was previously part of Badung before granted special status as a separated city.

** All data in Ha. The 1948 data is taken from Swellengrebel (1960:10), and the 2006 data is taken from *Data Bali Membangun* 2006.

⁵ Because rice in the main agricultural produce in Bali, for the purpose of this study only rice production is taken into consideration as agricultural commodity.

A glimpse on Bali's current regional GDP also mirrored the transition of its economy. While the early account of Bali's regional GDP is not available, description of its economy mostly mention the income from agricultural sector where 75 percent of the population are employed (Swellengrebel, 1960: 9-11). Nowadays, the agricultural sector contributes only 20.3 percent of the whole regional GDP. The tertiary sector of tourism industry and services has surpassed it and is now the most contributive by its 29.3 and 16.2 percent share respectively⁶. Below is the table of Bali's regional GDP 2003-2005.

No.	Type of enterprise	2003	2004	2005
1	agriculture, animal husbandry	5,666,835.82	6,011,427.77	6,887,173.89
	forestry, fishing			
2	mining and quarrying	176,964.87	196,471.79	225,485.55
3	Manufacture	2,384,661.40	2,610,131.31	2,950,807.40
4	electricity, gas and water supply	411,013.44	522,553.47	627,986.96
5	construction	1,051,150.30	1,132,719.56	1,368,305.14
6	trade, hotel and restaurant	7,439,345.43	8,452,944.75	9,968,548.41
7	transportation and communication	2,930,517.78	3,275,453.25	4,022,667.63
8	finance, renting and company service	1,725,224.41	1,969,622.09	2,399,259.06
9	services	4,382,130.74	4,815,272.68	5,496,233.48
	total regional GDP	<u>26,167,941.90</u>	<u>28,989,595.67</u>	<u>33,946,467.52</u>

*figures are in million rupiahs

**data taken from *Data Bali Membangun 2*

From the table we can see that the three top earners are those basically under the umbrella of tourism industry (trade, hotel and restaurant), services, and those under

⁶ Data extracted from *Data Bali Membangun 2006a*

the umbrella of traditional economy (agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry and fishing). However, if we divide the sources of regional GDP into traditional economy (agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, fishing) and modern economy (mining, manufacture and the rest of it), we can clearly see how Bali has been shifting away from the traditional economy. The classification holds relevance since the traditional economy, mainly agriculture, has different disposition of time with the modern economy that will be discussed later.

Following the transition to the new economy, there are changes in terms of people's occupations. Prior to the economic development of Bali, which is directed toward tourism industry since the 1970, most of the occupations are farmers, builders, smiths, priests, puppeteers, and craftsmen (*undagi*)⁷. Nowadays in the diversified and modern economy occupations are varied, especially when it is noted that the high education of the Balinese youth foster their high expectations for jobs outside the agricultural sectors.

Buleleng regency, where I conducted fieldwork, is one of the poverty stricken regencies in Bali besides Karangasem. In Buleleng, the agricultural sector is still significant with 44 percent of the active workforce working in agricultural sector, however the rest of 54 percent are well integrated into the modern economy. The composition are as follows: agriculture (44%), manufacturing (12%), construction (9%), trade (21%), communication (5%), finance (1%) and services (8%)⁸. This change is remarkable as it marks the movement away from occupations in agricultural sector.

Of the Sai Baba followers that I interviewed, none was working in the agricultural sectors. Their occupations are

⁷ See Howe, (2005: 73) and Swellengrebel, (1960:11)

⁸ The data is of the year 2007 taken from Kabupaten Buleleng dalam Angka 2009

mostly in business and education sectors. As an example, Pak Gusti one of my informants is a successful businessman with main income from multi level marketing. He makes quite a lot of money that enables him to travel abroad regularly. He has been doing *dharsan*, seeing Satya Sai Bhaba physically or paying a visit to Putthaparthi India, twice. Another one is Pak Suendra, a lecturer at a local university. He is now pursuing his PhD in religious studies.

New Occupations and Migration

While people's occupations in the traditional economy is based in their villages of origin, the new occupations forced them to leave their villages of origin to a new places usually in the cities. A life story from my informant illustrates this process.

Ibu Putu is a teacher at a local high school in Singaraja who I encountered during a *bhajan*, at a house of a devotee. She has been teaching mathematics for more than twenty years. Previously she has been posted in the city of Tabanan before moved to Singaraja in 1995. She is married to a lecturer and they have three sons. Ibu Putu was educated in a local university in Singaraja which made her leave her village of origin in southern Bali to study in north Bali. She met her husband during college and they both found jobs as teacher and lecturer respectively. Their career made them migrate from their village of origin and finally live in Singaraja for good. Even though they are still visiting their villages of origin for ritual purposes they are now registered as Singaraja citizens.

This is not an exclusive story for Ibu Putu alone as all my informants have similar stories of moving from their village of origin to pursue their career in the cities. It is also not a new phenomenon as we can find generally rapid urbanization marked by migration of people from

their villages of origin to the cities. However, in the case of the Balinese this is notable since the migration and the new occupations introduce people to a new logic of time in the workplace, and a distance from village of origin and its traditional logic of time.

Workplace and Home: Two Cultural Spaces

Balinese have special relation with their village of origin. Anywhere in the world they eventually live, they cannot cut off the link with their family in the village. This is because the traditional Balinese religion puts so much emphasis on ancestor worship and death ritual. All this ritual generally takes place at the original core family house in the village. As the Balinese are members of several temples' worships in their village, they are obligated to participate in any rituals take place there⁹. Another thing that keeps them tied is that the Balinese traditionally want to be buried and cremated at the village where they originally belong. They want to come back and be together with the ancestors in the afterlife. This means they have to maintain harmonious relationship with fellow villagers back home in order to be still considered members and thus entitled to use the graveyard.

Life in the village of origin has its own unique atmosphere to the urban Balinese. The most obvious is that they speak Balinese more often if not entirely everytime with each other in the village. This is because they encounter people of primordial ties such as elders, close relatives and fellow villagers from similar temple groups. This familiar social relationship in the village also forces them to recognize the specific language strategies utilized to address different people from different castes. The Balinese use different classes of language to address different people. More

⁹ Geertz, idem p. 288

refined Balinese to the higher caste, and middle vernacular Balinese to people of similar caste. This is in contrast with the situation in the city where they speak bahasa Indonesia more often than Balinese.

However the most prominent feature of life in the village of origin is its rituals and the logic of time regulating the schedule of this rituals. Balinese calendar is different to the modern Gregorian calendar in several ways. First of all, the Balinese use two parallel systems namely the believed indigenous *Pawukon* system and the *Sasih* or *Caka* system. The *Pawukon* system consists of 6 months and 35 days each month, which makes 210 days per year. The year is not counted as it mirrors the non-linear nature of its time philosophy. There are 10 different kinds of weeks in this calendar, from one day week to ten days week in which each day has its own name. Most of Balinese temple festivals are scheduled based on this calendar. Two big holy days Galungan and Kuningan are also scheduled using this calendar.

The *Sasih* or *Caka* system has something in common with the Gregorian calendar in that they have 12 months and they count each year. However, the *Sasih* system has invariably 30 days each month. This is because it is based on the lunar cycle of full moon and new moon. Each new month begin the day after the new moon. Several temple rituals are based on this calendar and also the silent day of Nyepi is the new year day of this calendar.

As life in the village is colored by endless rituals, very often I hear an elderly woman talk to her married daughter about offerings that have to be made to this ritual event at this specific temple "*Kliwon* (a name of a day in *Pawukon* system) is coming in two days, have you prepared the offerings?" This kind of conversation illustrates much about what happens in everyday life of traditional Balinese.

I would like to call this atmosphere in the village as a traditional sphere or Home. It is a cultural space in which the Balinese articulate their traditional identity marked by traditional disposition of time, Balinese language, and primordial ties.

The situation in the city is different in several ways. First of all the Balinese encounter people from more varied backgrounds in the workplace and rarely those of the same primordial ties. As a consequence they use more bahasa Indonesia or alternately with Balinese language. This language use of bahasa Indonesia is strategic as it promotes equivalent position with each other. The second feature of life in the city is that the logic of time is dominantly the modern Gregorian one. This is true since the modern life marked by modern economy uses the logic of Gregorian calendar. Students, workers, teachers and almost everyone start activities in weekdays and have days off at the weekend. They also share the same national holidays with others regardless of religious affiliation. In terms of identification the Balinese see themselves as “Hindus” in contrast to fellow Muslims, Christians and other religions they mingle with in the city. This is in contrast with what happens in the village where everyone is almost certainly Hindu so the identification tends to be directed towards clan, temple congregations and castes. This is to say that in the city life the Balinese adopt a modern articulation of themselves, including in religious life. They tend to identify themselves as Hindus and not by specific clan in encountering more people from diverse background in the workplace.

I would like to call this atmosphere in the city as modern sphere of Workplace. It is a cultural space in which the Balinese articulate their modern identity marked by modern disposition of time, involvement in modern economy, bahasa Indonesia as a national language, and non-

primordial ties.

The urban Balinese immerse themselves in these two cultural spaces while the agricultural villagers are relatively not very much exposed to the Workplace as a cultural space as they are still a part of agricultural economy. Life within these two cultural spaces has its own challenges which the urban Balinese found very much difficult and influences their mode of religious articulation. The challenges mainly come from the different logic of times in those two cultural spaces.

Arising Problems: Juggling between Work and Rituals

As has been mentioned above the logic of time in the traditional sphere is very much different from the modern one. The traditional calendar of Pawukon is used to schedule temple festivals and all the rituals in the village. This scheduling then collided with the workdays disposition of Balinese urbanites which uses modern calendar in the workplace. As a consequence the Balinese urbanites almost always cannot participate in the rituals in the village of origin. This is a dilemma as most of them want to participate in order to keep harmonious social and religious relationships with the fellow villagers and ancestors spirit. However, leaving their work will definitely jeopardize their career and in most cases their income. A Sai Baba follower that I interviewed, a journalist named Mustika, says:

Let us imagine, if we always leave our work for attending the temple festival, it means we miss our income for a day. This is serious for those who make a living from opening a shop or as construction workers. And the temple festivals are many, should we leave our work frequently? No wonder there are no one who wants to employ the Balinese. Exactly because we have too many holidays!

An observation on a Balinese household wall calendar will give a good illustration. A Balinese household wall calendar is different from other calendars as it has all the sytems that the Balinese recognize put together in the printed paper. So they have Gregorian, Pawukon, Caka and even Chinese one. The calendar will tell the Balinese when a temple ritual will be carried out as in each days there is information on the Pawukon feature of the day. However, most likely those temple festivals happen during weekdays when the color of the day is black, meaning workdays. Most of the day that colored red, meaning holidays, are national holidays and there is only one Balinese national holidays that is the Caka new year. This means the urban Balinese need to choose between going to work or skip a day to participate in the temple ritual.



Balinese calender (photos: author's archive)

The inability to participate in rituals has been a source for problems to the urban Balinese. It might be a trigger for social conflict between fellow villagers which has been discussed a lot in studies on Balinese traditional conflict or

kasus adat. Those who cannot participate are risking becoming socially ostracized by their fellow villagers in the village of origin and might be denied access to the village graveyard. This anxiety of being socially ostracized is a perpetual theme arising in my interviews when the discussion touches upon difficulties of not being able to participate in the rituals in the village of origin. An interview with pak Made, a lecturer, tells me a lot about this anxiety.

There was once my fellow lecturer passed away and his family had the death ritual carried out in his village. During his life he was a prominent figure and he contributed a lot financially to his village in order to compensate for his absence during ceremonies. However still he was less respected in his own village by his fellow villagers. It can be seen from the fact that the family need to pay people to shower his dead body because people from the village hesitate to do that. Shame to us that we treat our fellow Balinese like that. Just because he is unable to participate in the village ceremonies.

Modern Disposition and Religious Tolerance in Sai Baba

This situation of difficulties maintaining the traditional *Adat* religion in the village of origin forces the Balinese to adopt a new mode of religious articulation. They seek for a simplified version of religion that fits their modern disposition. This is also a theme that appears during my interview with my informants. They seem to talk about the financial burden of the ritual, but given their affluent financial status, they actually express their puzzlement why rituals should be that meticulously impractical. After all, if they still follow the logic of their traditional counterparts, carrying out an expensive ritual is actually a theatrical show to express status. But it is very unlikely, as they are actually very modern and educated. An interview with pak Made



The hall of the Sai Baba center in Panji where they usually carry out bhajan.
Photo: author's archive



A follower preparing the hall with equipment before bhajan. Photo: author's arch



Followers are gathering to have a discussion after bhajan at the Sai Centre in Panji. Photo: author's archive

info kegiatan :

DONOR DARAH

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Pelayanan Kesehatan

Pada Hari : Minggu

27 Pebruari 2011

Tempat : Centre Panji

waktu : 09.00 wita



and devotees observed by physically or (baba) have a marvelous power
 meaning. But even in general view there is a sense of eternal observation and reflection there
 with love and faith. These devotees were really prepared to be used for the religious worship
 of the Lord, to enjoy the bliss of that devotion, and to experience pain and sorrow. These baba
 also were prepared for the purpose of giving aid of ignorance and suffering right knowledge,
 the higher wisdom and eternal consciousness.

Sadhya Sai Baba
 Ramalinga Sarathi, May 1989

From Chapter II: A collection of Sri Sadhya Sai Baba's writings

01 Jan. Sai New Year	11 Jan. Sai Sai Baba's Cultural Night	18 Jan. Sai Sai Baba's
02 Mar. Sai Sai Baba's	18 April. Sai Sai Baba's	12 April. Sai Sai Baba's
14 April. Sai Sai Baba's	14 April. Sai Sai Baba's	04 Mar. Sai Sai Baba's
07 May. Sai Sai Baba's	14 July. Sai Sai Baba's	11 July. Sai Sai Baba's
22 Aug. Sai Sai Baba's	1 Sep. Sai Sai Baba's	1 Sep. Sai Sai Baba's
04 Oct. Sai Sai Baba's	04 Oct. Sai Sai Baba's	22 Oct. Sai Sai Baba's
10 Nov. Sai Sai Baba's	22 Nov. Sai Sai Baba's	27 Nov. Sai Sai Baba's
27 Dec. Sai Sai Baba's	27 Dec. Sai Sai Baba's	

*** is commemorated on 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

An announcement posted at the Sai Baba centre about their coming agenda. Photo: author's archive

the lecturer give me the following information on this non-traditionalist perspective:

The traditionalist still want to use a lot of *banten* (offerings) with the argument to preserve culture. They don't accept the fact that Bali has already imported all the resources to make *banten* like fruits, palm leaves and coconut. Bali is no longer able to provide all this resources in carrying out rituals. After all the *banten* is actually symbols that can be substituted by *mantras* (verses). For those who can perform *mantras* they don't need *banten*.

This need of new mode of religious articulation, I suggest, draws the Sai Baba followers to embrace the movement as it has specific features that fit their need.

Sai Baba movement has a very simple ritual of *bhajan* which is carried out every Thursday evening¹⁰. This schedule of doing *bhajan* every Thursday evening is important because it is aligned with the modern disposition of time. It is regularly carried out in the evening after work hours and it is not compulsory as the members can do *bhajan* at home. Also there is no sanction of being ostracized if a member cannot attend. It is flexible in nature. This simplicity of ritual

¹⁰ In Singaraja, the center is located in Panji village, an outskirt to the west of the city. The Sai center in Panji village was formally inaugurated on the 84th birthday of Satya Sai Baba on November 23, 2010. The approximately 5 acre land where the center is build is a donation from a local sympathizer who happened to be an influential politician named Rai Yusa. The center itself is moderate in term of its two storey construction. The hall to do *bhajan*, a singing ritual to worship Sai Baba, is upstairs while the first floor is a multifunctional room for the members. Outside the building at the yard is a statue of Ganesha and a Padmasana shrine.

Members come every Thursday evening to do *bhajan*. According to my informant, there are approximately 70 to 100 devotees come every Thursday. Once during my fieldwork, I counted the small mattress on which the devotees sit during *bhajan* and it counts up to around 73. Besides the center which devotees call Sai Study Group (SSG) there are also small congregations at devotees' home consisted around 5-7 devotees per group which they call Sai Devotional Groups (SDG). Members coming every Thursday to an SDG is around 5-7. There is also no strict dress code to come to do *bhajan* quite different with traditional Balinese custom which uses specific dress code.

is a strong feature that appeals to the urban Balinese besides also the religious tolerance that Sai Baba promotes

The religious tolerance can be seen from its inclusive teaching. Its inclusive teachings make Satya Sai movement a rather open organization which is easy to join with. Followers come from every religions as Satya Sai's teaching does not offer a new teology which might replace his followers' original one. Instead Satya Sai enforces the idea of oneness and demands his followers to ignore differences between religions. In his own words:

The main objectives of the Satya Sai Organization...is to help you organize the divinity inherent in you. So your duty is to emphasize the One, to experience the One in all your do (sic!) or speak. Do not give importance to differences of religion, sect, status or color. Have the feeling of oneness permeate all your acts. Only those who do so have a place in this Organization; the rest can withdraw (Satya Sai Speaks IX, 35, 187-88).¹¹

There is also no commitment to always participate as members come and go as they like. They can come to enjoy the religious atmosphere during bhajan and not come the week after. Another important thing is that the members are suggested to help each other who have difficulties. At the end of each bhajan there is usually a notification and news about members. The news can be good news or bad news in which there are members who happen to get accident etc. Other members are encouraged to give help as they feel like and according to their ability.

All these features of the movement which promotes religious tolerance, help each others who find difficulties, modern disposition of time in scheduling events, and

¹¹ Via Satya Sai Organization's website <http://www.sathyasai.org/organize/content.htm>, accessed June 8 2011

simplified rituals are exactly what the urban balinese need as their new mode of religious articulation in city context. The religious tolerance is important as the urban Balinese are anxious about their fellow villagers that being intolerant to them who cannot participate in village rituals. Helping each others and modern disposition of time are the demand of life in the city context. While simplified ritual is the perspective they adopt as a modern and educated who understand religion closely to its great tradition namely the Vedas.

Conclusion

The economic transformation from agricultural to the modern economy has made the Balinese change their traditional occupations and leave their village of origins to the cities. The migration and change of occupation introduce them to a more dominant logic of time in the workplace and city context. This new logic of time makes them difficult to participate in the traditional rituals taking place in their village of origin. However, the Balinese still want to maintain their relationship with the village of origin. This is true because of the obligation of ancestral worship and their need to be buried at home. As a consequence they are anxious about their situation and longing for a mode of religious articulation that fit their modern disposition. Sai Baba movement with its simplified rituals, religious tolerance, and modern disposition of time appeals strongly to be embraced as a shelter and a new mode of religious articulation.

Urban characteristics of the Sai Baba followers in Bali has been much overlooked by the previous study conducted by Howe (2001, 2005). Observation on Sai Baba followers tend to look at the relationship among followers which is non-hierarchical. This is so since the perspective being

used is the one that tries to understand Sai Baba followers in light of perpetual theme of caste antagonism in Bali. The theme of hierarchies in Balinese religion and religious life is a classic discussion that has been started since the early studies by the philologist and ethnologist. The researcher will be baffled by the fact that Sai Baba followers are not exclusively commoners only as there are also members from the high castes.

This paper suggests that to understand the new mode of religious articulation of the Balinese we need to look at the changes happening at the level of material infrastructure. The transformation from agricultural economy to industrial economy has changed also spatial dimension of social landscape in Bali. People are divided into those migrating to the city and involved in the modern industrial economy and those staying in the village and involved in the traditional economy. Involvement in different kind of economies affect the people's disposition of time which in turn change their cultural articulation. In this light we see change take places from economy to space and finally to cultural identity.

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