



Reading the *Bali Post*: Women and Representation in Post-Suharto Bali

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1. For women and women's groups throughout Indonesia, the post-Suharto era of democratic reform [*reformasi*] brought with it the hope of new opportunities for changes to long-standing gender relationships and to social and political structural inequalities. At the national level, the increase in women's activism particularly at the grassroots level, the establishment of electoral democracy, the appointment of Megawati Soekarnoputri as vice-president in 1999 and then as President in 2001, and most recently the recommended 30 per cent quota for female candidates in the 2004 national election point the way to improved opportunities and political representation for women in Indonesia. Nevertheless, the gains for women have been largely rhetorical rather than practical and the political position of women has improved only marginally since 1998.[1] Viewed from a regional perspective, the outlook for women appears particularly bleak.
2. Just as in other parts of the nation, following the fall of Suharto, there was an underlying optimism in Bali that the problems faced by women generally in New Order Indonesia might now find solutions. As an editorial comment in the April 2000 issue of the cultural magazine *Bali Lain* proclaimed: 'When the hallway to democracy opened, it seemed women had found a vast arena in which to give voice to and struggle towards what for so long had been just a dream.' [2] For most Balinese women, however, these goals remain a distant dream. Throughout Indonesia decentralisation since the fall of the New Order has been linked with a rise in concern about regional cultural identities. The re-conservatism and the reinforcement of patriarchal values that stem from this new focus on regional issues have already had considerable repercussions for Indonesian women on whom the burden of restrictive practices falls most heavily. This impact has been striking in strongly Islamic areas, but is also true in Bali where issues of gender intersect closely with calls to regional identity.
3. In Bali, the nexus between the quest for a uniquely regional – Balinese – identity and the return to a nostalgic and neologistic traditionalism permeates contemporary representations of Balinese female identity. This re-traditionalisation is driven both by the force of culturally-conservative values in shaping the agendas of identity formation and by the extent to which these values are reiterated and reinforced in public discourse. This article seeks to explore the definition of gender, gender issues and the roles of Balinese women in post-Suharto Indonesia in the Balinese mass media in the period between April 1999 and October 2003.[3]

Identity Discourse in Bali

4. Decades of tourism and participation in wider global markets have marked Bali with both a distinctive national and international identity and a strong sense of regional identity and cultural uniqueness. Although the discussion of Balinese cultural identity has long been an integral part of mass media and seminar culture in Bali, the social, economic and political changes that have engulfed Indonesia since 1998, together with the rise to prominence of regional identities as a central issue in political and social arenas, have resulted in a shift towards more intense moral and social codification of Balinese core cultural values.[4] The downturn in the Balinese economy, particularly from reduced tourism revenues since the 1997 economic crisis and as a result of the 2003 SARS epidemic, but most importantly as a result of the Bali bombings of 12 October 2002, have all created moments of cultural crisis to which Balinese public intellectuals respond in the press and media, particularly in the Denpasar-based daily, the *Bali Post*, which reports on and highlights discussions of Balinese identity. While most contributors to the columns of the *Bali Post* are urban intellectuals, the paper's outreach to the wider community, especially through its sponsorship and reporting of the popular interactive media discussions on local TV and radio stations provides it with considerable hegemonic space in shaping

popular opinion.

5. Since late 2002, the media campaign to define Balinese identity has coalesced around the slogan '*Ajeng Bali*.' Literally, *ajeg* means 'strong' but it also implies tenacity and firmness; it encompasses all aspects of Balinese tradition, religion and culture [*adat*, *agama*, *budaya*], and represents a drive for stability and cultural certainty in a chaotic world. Discourse about *ajeg Bali* seeks to define a forward-looking agenda for Bali's future which in many ways ignores or at least marginalises broader national concerns. Implicit in this concept is the idea that Bali cannot rely on the central Indonesian government to protect its cultural and religious interests and that Balinese, and Balinese alone, are responsible for their own future. Just what that future might be is a hotly debated issue. For some, *ajeg Bali* is seen as a powerful tool in the fight for increased political and economic welfare for the Balinese community. For others, it represents a re-traditionalisation and the nostalgic retreat to a perceived authentic and unadulterated Balinese past.^[5]
6. While the terminology *ajeg Bali* is a clear example of a recently invented tradition, the concept of a culturally and morally distinct Balinese society is one of long-standing, fostered initially by Dutch colonial policy in the early decades of the twentieth century and by later post-Independence national and regional concerns.^[6] Bali's identity rests on its self-image as a mono-cultural, single-faith, geographically distinct part of the Indonesian nation; a monolithic identity that is largely treated as unproblematic, in spite of the increasingly pluralistic cross-section of Indonesians who make Bali their home. The *ajeg Bali* media campaign continues to define what Balinese culture *is* rather than what it is not, setting aside religious and other communal tensions.
7. In Bali, identity discourse is closely linked to an ongoing religious discourse that, since independence, has involved the redefinition and reinvention of Balinese Hinduism as a world religion in the national context of the modern nation state and as a mark of Bali's separateness and unique heritage at the regional level. Moreover, in the more conservatively-focused definitions of Balinese identity, indigenous, frequently anti-Western, values also loom large. For cultural conservatives, the 'West' and modernity are seen as inevitably antagonistic to fundamental Balinese values. In the current climate of uncertainty, conservative behaviours and traditional institutions are seen to support community cohesion. Thus, the ongoing clash between notions of Balineseness and expressions of secular modernity have resulted in a call to strong cultural and ethnic values that can serve as a defence against moral chaos and foreign invasion.

Gender Identity in Bali

8. The ongoing task of reshaping contemporary Balinese identities in terms of innate Balinese cultural traits involves considerable attention to gender issues and to the prominent role played by women in the definition and preservation of Balinese values. Cultural expectations ensure that the burden of the cultural conservatism that has become a defining characteristic of much Balinese identity discourse falls mainly on women. As Maila Stevens has recently suggested is the case in many parts of Asia, women have become a favourite site for the expression of tension and ambivalence about the cost of modernity and development.^[7] Calls to a nostalgic and authentic cultural past thus become an expression of anti-Western modernity, in which autonomous modern women represent a direct threat to traditional male and female roles.^[8] Gender-centred calls to Balinese identity thus parallel similar forces elsewhere in Asia such as Islamic revivalism and the reinvention of Confucianism.
9. Balinese tradition [*adat*] and ascribed gender roles have long been recognised both by outsiders and many Balinese themselves as the leading cause of women's daily burden and as the means of patriarchal oppression.^[9] A number of recent studies have documented the impact of the many institutionalised gender inequalities that Balinese women face.^[10] As Lyn Parker has shown in her book on nationhood and citizenship in Bali, Balinese women are still prevented from full participation as equal citizens because of inherently gendered kinship and *adat* practices. These *adat* practices disadvantage women in terms of both their personal freedoms and their access to public roles and rights. Balinese women continue to be excluded from participation in *adat* decision-making (only men sit and speak in the local village-level hamlet [*banjar*] councils), they do not enjoy equal inheritance rights (only men can inherit *sawah* [irrigated rice-fields]), and they lose custody of their children in the case of divorce.^[11] Women, particularly rural women, have also been shown to have more restricted access to employment opportunities outside the home, to have lower literacy rates as a result of decades of educational disadvantage, and to enjoy fewer benefits from tourism since access to tourist-related industries is also divided along gender lines that favour men.^[12]
10. Balinese women face the daily task of accommodating their many domestic, employment and social responsibilities, while at the same time conforming to the family-based ideological

framework that came to define the roles and responsibilities of women during the New Order period.[13] New Order gender ideology demanded that men and women play different roles, roles that were depicted as complementary and equal. Over more than three decades, domestic and family duties and roles were redefined as important national social programs and women came to be depicted primarily as mothers and as wives.[14] In Bali, the gendered ideology of the nation-state found an echo and was bolstered by parallels with Balinese patriarchal cultural and social institutions.

11. Like their counterparts elsewhere in Indonesia, Balinese women are responsible for the education and physical and moral well-being of their families, but local Balinese culture demands that they also have primary responsibility for the ritual concerns of the family—a role that involves them in an onerous cycle of ritual work which has a greater impact on women than on men. This never-ending burden of ritual work, which is often seen as an extension of women's domestic work,

contributes to the ongoing structural subordination of women in Bali.[15] Women's access to employment and independent income is directly affected by their ritual obligations, as they are obliged to set aside the domestic and employment spheres of their lives to perform the ritual work and communal tasks required of them.[16] These competing roles, centred around home, paid work and ritual, have been described recently by Ayama Nakatani as a 'triple burden' for Balinese women.[17] The unenviable position of Balinese women in juggling their multiple roles is highlighted in a recent cartoon by Balinese cartoonist, Surya Darma (Figure 1). Their reproductive roles epitomised in their inherent suitability as wives and mothers [*kodrat*] and their engagement as productive members of Indonesian society in the workforce [*karier*] in the new millennium must be performed beneath the burden of tradition [*tradisi*].



Figure 1. Surya Darma, 'A Balinese Woman's Balancing Act.' [18]

12. The intersections between Balinese cultural values and women's roles and responsibilities have emerged as themes of central importance in the mass media in Bali in the post-Suharto period. The following survey of media sources published in the *Bali Post* between 1999 and 2003 reveals that media discourse is predominantly couched in terms of definitions of female identity that perpetuate and reinforce the institutional and social restrictions Balinese women have faced for generations. Within this discourse, the realities of the impact on Balinese women of patriarchal social and religious norms are at best glossed over, at worst ignored, in favour of an idealised portrayal of Balinese women as key players in Bali's future. Within this media discourse, the realities of daily existence for Balinese women, which are so clearly documented in the longer-term anthropological studies already noted, are effectively silenced. Instead, coverage of women's issues resonates with broader definitions of the importance of traditional Balinese culture for creating and maintaining a harmonious, prosperous and just society, and the crucial roles of women within those wider processes.

The Coverage of Women's Issues in the *Bali Post* 1999-2003

13. The principal source for this article is the *Bali Post* Archive, an archive of 5770 articles on broad topics of culture and society published in the online edition of the *Bali Post* between April 1999 and October 2003. [19] The articles that have been incorporated into the *Bali Post* Archive comprise five major subject headings: Religion, Social Issues (including tourism, politics, education and environment), Culture (including language and history), Arts and Literature, and Women. [20]
14. Figure 2 shows the number of feature articles on women published in the *Bali Post* over a period of fifty-five months between April 1999 and October 2003. [21] An analysis of the number of articles dealing with women indicates major peaks in April each year, the month traditionally devoted to women's issues in the Indonesian media in the lead-up to the celebration of Kartini Day on 21 April. Peaks in September 2001 and August 2002 reflect the prominence of a single particularly newsworthy issue at the time: in September 2001, a number of short articles on sexuality, and, in August 2002, a controversy surrounding Balinese dancers who had been

duped into becoming hostesses in Japanese bars. The November 2002 peak reflects the publication of a number of stories concerning the plight of local women left widowed by the Kuta bombing.

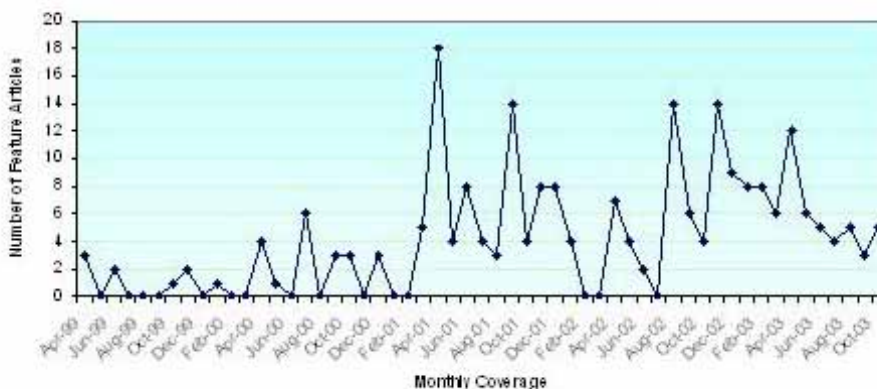


Figure 2. Number of feature articles in the *Bali Post* April 1999 to October 2003.

The overall coverage of women's issues is quite low, just 4 per cent, or 231 of the 5769 articles surveyed in the four and a half year period from April 1999 to October 2003.^[22] See Figure 3.

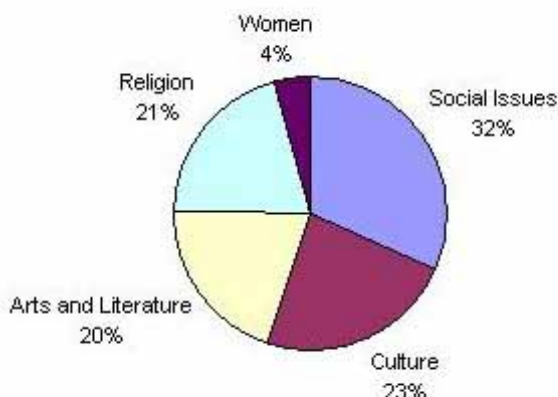


Figure 3. Percentage of articles in the *Bali Post* dealing with women.

- With the exception of 1999, when the data set is small, comprising only eight articles, and is therefore less indicative of trends in the coverage of women's issues, the level of coverage has remained fairly consistent with the number of articles on women falling in the range of 3.6 to 4.6 per cent of the total number of articles. Table 1 and Figure 4 show the percentage of articles dealing with women in each of the five years surveyed.

Year	Total Number of Articles	Articles on Women	Percentages
1999	91	8	9.9
2000	539	21	3.9
2001	1650	76	4.6
2002	1788	64	3.6
2003	1611	62	3.8
Total	5769	232	

Table 1. Percentage of Articles Dealing with Women

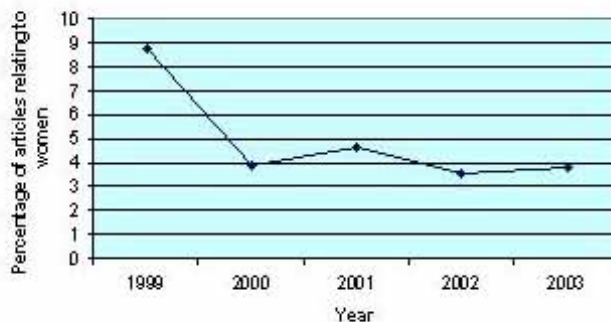


Figure 4. Coverage of Women's Issues as a Percentage of Total, 1999-2003

16. The *Bali Post* does not have a regular column specifically devoted to 'women's issues.' Articles on women are instead published in a broad cross-section of regular columns. The *Bali Post* publishes regular feature articles on women and gender issues. The majority of commentators on women are themselves women, except on matters of interpretations of scriptural religion, traditionally the domain of men. In many cases, the gender identity of the writer is not clear since *Bali Post* staff reporters are identified only by their initials. The regular *Bali Post* Monday to Saturday columns are listed in Table 2. The Sunday edition has the magazine and human interest focus common to most Sunday newspapers and its featured columns differ from the standard weekday coverage; these columns are listed in Table 3. The coverage of women's issues in each of the columns is shown in Figure 5. The largest number of articles concerning women are found in the regular 'Bali' column of the newspaper (53 articles, 25 per cent), although women's issues also feature prominently in the Sunday edition's 'Apresiasi' column (34, 15 per cent).

Column		Number of Articles on Women 1999-2003
Bali	Bali	53
Topik	Topic	16
Fenomena	Phenomena	15
Surat Pembaca	Letters to the Editor	12
Artikel	Article	9
Berita	News	9
<i>Tajuk Rencana</i>	Editorial	8
Nusantara	Archipelago	8
Sisipan	Section	3
Budaya	Culture	2
Pariwisata	Tourism	1

Table 2. Monday to Saturday Columns in the *Bali Post*

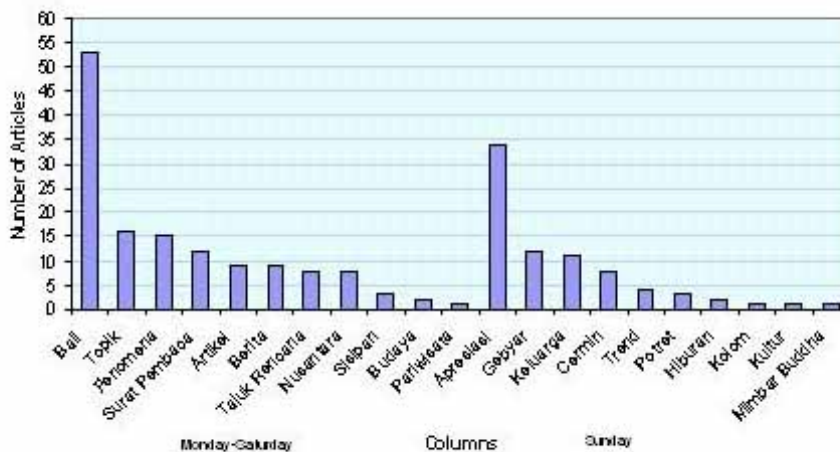


Figure 5. Coverage of Women's Issues in the *Bali Post* Columns

Column	Number of Articles on Women 1999-2003
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Apresiasi	Appreciation	34
Gebyar	Show Time	12
Keluarga	Family	11
Cermin	Reflection	8
Trend	Trend	4
Potret	Portrait	3
Hiburan	Entertainment	2
Kolom	Column	1
Kultur	Culture	1
Mimbar Buddha	Buddhist Viewpoint	1

Table 3. Sunday Columns in the *Bali Post*

17. Thematically, feature articles on women published in the *Bali Post* between 1999 and 2003 can be subdivided into five major groups. The most significant groups comprise articles dealing with general issues of women's rights in Indonesia (77 articles, 33 per cent), and those which make claims for specifically Balinese notions of femininity and gender roles (67 articles, 28 per cent). These two major thematic concerns represent 61 per cent of the articles on women in the *Bali Post Archive*. There is also considerable coverage of women as practitioners and audiences of literature and the arts (27 articles, 11 per cent), and of human interest stories (32 articles, 13 per cent). A diverse range of other issues including health, sexuality and tourism (37 articles, 15 per cent) also receive attention (see Figure 6). Because it is not possible to cover all these areas within a single article, in the following sections, I will focus on the first two groups of articles, those that are specifically concerned with gender and identity.

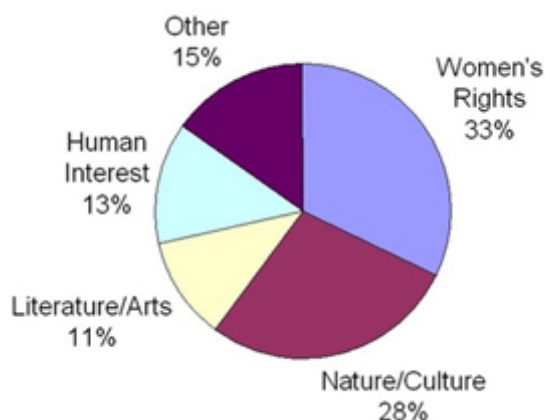


Figure 6. Major Thematic Concerns in Coverage of Women's Issues.

Defining Balinese Women in the Media

18. In March 2000, the newly-established Balinese cultural magazine *Sarad* devoted its third issue to the topic 'Who Says Balinese Women are Oppressed?' [*Siapa Bilang Wanita Bali Tertindas?*]. A month later another new magazine, *Bali Lain*, also focused its second issue on women, with its main feature article entitled 'Not Women's Fate' [*Bukan Surat Perempuan*]. Both publications presented themselves as being concerned with 'Balinese culture,' and the simultaneous appearance of two magazines devoted exclusively to gender issues underlines the central importance of the place of women in Balinese identity discourse at that time. [23] These two magazines represent concentrated versions of the coverage of women's issues more generally in the daily press since the fall of Suharto, and are indicators of the focus of Balinese media attention on women's issues in the context of cultural identity formation. *Sarad*, more culturally conservative than *Bali Lain*, was particularly concerned in its special issue with refuting any suggestion that Balinese women suffered systematic cultural oppression by demonstrating the open and democratic nature of Balinese culture, at least if viewed in its own terms. *Bali Lain*, on the other hand, hinted at other possibilities and choices for Balinese women, although such choices generally require women to turn their backs on the ('repressive') cultural practices in Bali and seek alternatives in national, and occasionally international, feminist models and arguments.
19. In their by-lines both *Sarad* and *Bali Lain* draw attention to the problematic nature of definitions of women and culture in Bali. Their cover stories highlight the often contradictory, almost mutually exclusive, nature of much of this media discourse which seeks to recognise women's rights to equality in the modern sense, and at the same time to restrict that equality to rigidly-defined, culturally appropriate and gendered spheres. Balinese gender values and roles are presented as supportive and nurturing, provided women behave in culturally appropriate ways,

although there is little that is able to reconcile the practices and attitudes advocated with the goals of personal freedom. Within this culturally-focused discourse, rhetorical questions about the repressive nature of Balinese culture such as that encapsulated in the *Sarad* headline questioning the truth of claims of oppression are invariably answered in the negative. This tendency is demonstrated in the coverage of regular seminars focusing on women's issues held in Bali and reported in the *Bali Post*. Articles which by their titles seem to suggest critique instead declare that Balinese culture does not oppress women.^[24]

20. The emphasis on cultural definitions of women in the media does not mean that Balinese writers do not hold or present alternative views. Appealing to Balinese traditional cultural values virtually precludes more secular forms of modernity. Nevertheless, certain media commentators recognise only too well the tensions for modern Balinese women in juggling the demands of domestic duties, participation in the work force, and the exhausting demands of full participation in the traditional religious and cultural *adat* responsibilities which provide social and family cohesion.^[25] On facing pages of the April 2000 edition of *Bali Lain* are two interviews with leading proponents of each side of the debate, one with the noted psychiatrist, Prof Luh Ketut Suryani, who declares '*Di Bali Tidak Ada Perbedaan Laki-laki dan Perempuan*' [In Bali There is No Difference Between Men and Women] and the other with the Singaraja-based academic Dra Luh Putu Sendratari '*Perempuan Bali Perlu Melawan Tradisi*' [Balinese Women Must Oppose Tradition].^[26] Suryani's role in the debates on gender will be discussed in detail below. Luh Putu Sendratari, a regular contributor to Kartini Day commemorations, is a persistent voice calling into question many of the normative views set out by culturally conservative writers like Suryani and critiquing their spurious arguments about the inviolable sanctity of traditions that continue to repress women.^[27]
21. Nevertheless, even writers who begin their essays by criticising Balinese social practices as repressive for women in similar terms to Sendratari, inevitably turn their arguments quickly away from the specifics of Balinese culture to external, national or international arenas. Thus, in the coverage of women's issues in the *Bali Post* in the last five years, there exists a clear division between articles that might best be described as concerned with broad issues of women's rights and social and political emancipatory needs and goals—a kind of 'secular view' of gender—and those that seek to define Balinese women in terms of their innate nature and the traditional cultural roles that dominate current Balinese identity discourses—an exclusively 'Balinese' religious-cultural view. This bifurcation suggests that the public media definition of a specifically *Balinese* female identity is not connected closely to ideas about emancipation but is instead tied to religious and cultural identities. Below I will examine in detail each of these two kinds of writing on gender.

'Secular' Views: Women's Rights and Emancipation

22. Regular articles appear in the *Bali Post* in support of greater human rights for women in Indonesia, and for reforms that will ensure greater equality. Editorial comment in the *Bali Post* specifically on women's issues is exclusively targeted at general issues of human rights and female participation rather than at Balinese culture, although only eight editorials [*Tajuk Rencana*] were devoted to women's issues in the four and a half year period covered by the *Bali Post Archive*.^[28]
23. Unflattering parallels with regard to female participation in political and cultural institutions are drawn between Indonesia and countries such as China and Japan ('*Soal Jabatan, Wanita Indonesia Ketinggalan dengan Cina*, [Problems of High Office, Women in Indonesia Beaten by China], 17 January 2002; '*Perempuan Bawah Tanah*, [Women Underground], 22 October 2000; '*Ibu-Ibu RT Sakura pun Menari*, [Even Japanese Housewives can Dance], 30 June 2003). Implicit in these articles is the notion that Indonesia as a nation must be on a par with other Asian (although pointedly not Western) countries in providing access to opportunities for women.
24. On the domestic political scene, the recommendation for the 30 per cent quota for female candidates in the 2004 national election attracted widespread support with a number of articles and comments between January and August 2003.^[29] Commentators who were less supportive of this measure, challenged not so much the principle but the practical implications of the new legislation particularly at the local level before the 2009 elections. During the term of the last DPR (1999-2004), female representation in regional legislative bodies nationally was less than 5 per cent, compared with 8 per cent at the national level. With just two female representatives in the national parliament, the DPR, one from Golkar and one from the PDI-P, and one representative from the Golkar party in the regional DPRD, Bali is included among the districts that have the lowest regional level female representation in Indonesia, characteristically districts with strong religious and cultural foundations.^[30]
25. There is widespread consensus in the media that Balinese women have the ability to fill high

level government and political roles, and that impediments to participation are institutional and cultural. There is a sense, captured satirically in two recent *Bali Post* cartoons by Gun-gun and Wied N commenting on the 30 per cent quota (Figures 7 and 8), that legislation and affirmative action initiatives to improve participation and access for women may not necessarily succeed in the face of institutionalised gender inequalities, and may even stifle or limit initiatives.



Figure 7. Wied N., 'Jeng' *Bali Post*.^[31] [1. 'To fill the 30 per cent quota, I want to become a candidate and represent women.' 'Don't do that!' 2. What! Do you doubt my ability? 3. 'No, it's not that. But are there any highly-placed men who'd be willing to give up their seat for you?']



Figure 8. Gun-gun, 'Brewok,' *Bali Post*.^[32] [1. Women only get 30 per cent. 2. What percentage do I get Dad?]

26. Frequent calls are made in the *Bali Post* for the reform of administrative structures to allow women to assume high office, as well as to prevent the automatic assumption that wives of high officials should hold high positions in women's organisations because of their husbands' positions—a cornerstone of New Order organisational structure within women's groups, as discussed in 'Perempuan Pimpin Parisada?' [A Woman to Head Parisada?]; 'Wanita Bali Perlu Berontak' [Balinese Women Must Fight]; and 'El Dukong Tampilnya Wanita Bali,' [El Supports the Rise of Balinese Women]. Arguments that Balinese women have held important public roles both historically and in the present are sometimes adduced to support claims to the 'high status' of women in traditional Bali for example by K. Margi, 'Sejarah Wanita di Balik Bendung Budaya,' [Women's History behind the Dam of Culture]. Counterarguments are also voiced to suggest that the success of a small number of exceptional women does not prove that problems of inequality have been overcome: Maria Febiola, 'Hentikan Kekerasan Pada Perempuan,' [Stop Violence Against Women].^[33] In reality in Bali, women in powerful positions, whether in traditional or in modern roles, remain an anomaly, and nearly all public offices are held by men.
27. The need for more participation by Balinese women is not disputed. The dilemma, however, is how this can be accomplished within the framework of Balinese culture. One recent article argues that Balinese women's unwillingness to enter the 'dirty' world of politics is affected by the nature of politics itself, an institutional culture that would violate their sense of femininity ('Wanita Bali Tak Tertarik ke Politik,' Balinese Women are Not Attracted to Politics, 19 July 2003), a vision of women that resonates loudly with pan-Indonesian ideologies about women's innate nature (*kodrat*). Although Balinese commentators on political participation draw on their local environment to exemplify and explain issues, in these debates, as well as in their pictorial representation in the cartoons included above, overall there is a sense that issues concerning political representation and participation are issues that belong to the national rather than the local agenda. In other words, without downplaying the importance of the issues themselves, they are rarely seen as impinging on fundamental notions and definitions of Balineseness.
28. Media comment on other contemporary issues that have an impact on women is uncommon. Domestic violence, for example, only receives an occasional mention, usually from non-Balinese writers, or in reports of interviews with activists from outside Bali.^[34] Similarly, the

only reports of demonstrations led by women activists are reports of campaigns by female activists in Java, underlining the absence of activist women's NGOs and groups in contemporary Bali.[35]

29. Employment issues are also rarely debated. The regional Balinese government's official response to employment issues for women in the formal sector highlights the conditions faced by women generally, which restrict their access to particular forms of employment. National and regional ideological intersections allow paternalistic policies to be invoked in order to protect women when moral codes appear threatened. In August 2002, for example, a major debate arose around the treatment of two overseas workers who, rather than gaining anticipated employment as dancers in Japan, were forced to become bar hostesses. In this case, a commission of enquiry eventually led to a ruling by the Tourism Department that entrepreneurs would no longer be able to send Balinese female dancers to work overseas.[36] The exploitation of male performers did not form part of the discussion.
30. Resonances with New Order gender ideologies, however, can also call forth national rather than specifically Balinese responses. Balinese women must still comply with the UU 1 1951 law that restricts women's participation in night work without permission from the Labour Department despite the demands of the tourist industry[37]—an issue that resurfaces intermittently in discussions about the perils of tourism for Balinese women.
31. There is little to separate the discussion of these 'secular' aspects of modernity and participation in national and international spheres in the Balinese media from similar discourses in the Indonesia press more generally. However, in the context of *ajeg Bali* and in the face of what appears to be widely held perceptions of the increasing burdens placed on Balinese women by the conflict between modernity and Balinese cultural values, the majority of recent media articles on women instead seek to describe and justify the special place which traditional Balinese culture provides for women, a position that even the benefits of modernity cannot displace.

'Balinese' Gender Ideals

32. In seeking to strengthen Balinese cultural norms and to counter the negative impact of Western influence on women, two major themes emerge in the writings of culturally conservative writers in the *Bali Post*: first, that of Balinese women as the bearers of tradition, caregivers and educators, and secondly the theme of Balinese women as already emancipated by their culture and religion. By supporting gender equality but labelling it a Balinese model, Western feminist models can be rejected as both inappropriate and inferior.[38] At their most extreme, many of these culturally-based arguments deny the existence of problems for women *because* the unique and supportive Balinese cultural context guarantees them all the respect, equality, social and economic support they could possibly need.
33. The strongest voice for conservative views in Bali in the last five years is that of Luh Ketut Suryani. She represents modern expertise on women's issues and is active in a number of social justice and welfare programs. Her multiple roles as highly educated medical practitioner, meditation guru, social activist and Balinese cultural expert allow her to 'speak for' Balinese women. Her cultural preservationist standpoint, however, is a powerful force in shaping the debate about women's rights. She has a weekly one hour program on Bali TV 'Perempuan Bali Kini' [Balinese Women Today] and has recently published a book with the same title which comprises short think-pieces relating to women, many of which had already appeared in the *Bali Post* and *Mingguan Bali Info*. [39] Her stated aim in this book is to urge Balinese women 'not to be drawn along by Western ways of thinking' [*jangan terseret oleh arus pemikiran Barat*]. In Suryani's view, there is no fundamental problem with associating with foreigners, or in studying with them in order to take what is useful from the West, but Balinese women must still strive to retain their Balinese identity.[40] As well as writing for the *Bali Post* herself, her prominence as a public speaker means that Suryani's views are consistently reported.
34. The prime focus of Suryani's perspective is on the responsibilities of women as mothers, particularly their roles as caregivers and principal educators of their children and supporters of the family unit. Echoing New Order gender ideology, Balinese culture is portrayed as giving prominence to work and family culture. Balinese women, for example, are expected to accept responsibility for the education of their children. Women must strive to take better care of their children to protect them from social evils.[41] In the context of the *Ajag Bali* campaign, Suryani recently called on women to pay earnest attention to their most important role in ensuring the production of each new generation of Balinese children of 'high quality'. [42] Just how this task should be done or what in fact might constitute 'better' care is neither discussed nor debated.
35. Her concerns are echoed by other contributors. As Hindu women, Balinese mothers must take a proactive role in teaching their children about religion. No matter what other daily pressures

they face, they are urged to balance ritual work, career and family. For example, they have an obligation to pass on the their knowledge of making offerings to their daughters rather than buying them ready-made and thus risking the loss of irreplaceable cultural knowledge.[43] There is a widely-held belief that ritual work has its own inherent value, that the take-away mentality of the modern sector cannot replace. The recent expansion of offerings 'catering,' that is the professional provision of ready-made offerings in order to decrease personal commitments of time, is regarded as something of an affront. A possible compromise is suggested in a recent cartoon by Ardi taken from a 2003 issue of the Balinese cartoon magazine *BogBog* edited by Jango Pramatha and Surya Darma which is devoted to humorous representations of Balinese women (see Figure 9).



Figure 9. Ardi, 'Modernity versus Tradition.' [44]

36. Women are by nature and duty obliged to preserve and safeguard Balinese religion according to Alit S. Rini, another frequent *Bali Post* contributor who takes a strongly conservative stance. [45] To women too falls the responsibility of preserving the holiness of Nyepi [Balinese New Year] by educating their children in religious and ritual matters. [46] It is striking that men, who form the formal voice of organised Hindu religion in Bali, appear to have no role in the religious education of the children of their own families.
37. A recurrent theme is the need for the external appearance of women to match their inner purity, a call for careful attention to women's nature, the *kodrat wanita* of nationalist gender discourse. This theme is reflected in comments such as those stressing the need to cultivate inner morality to deal with marital issues. Similarly, considerable importance is attached to the banning of inappropriate modern fashions, such as transparent blouses and short hair, from religious contexts, as well as calls to Balinese women to continue to wear the traditional bun to temple ceremonies, a favourite topic of—usually male—writers of letters to the editor. [47]
38. Balinese women are frequently reminded in the *Bali Post* that they should accept their cultural roles willingly and indeed should consider themselves fortunate to be able to live in a society that accords them such high levels of respect and honour for fulfilling their traditional roles. Rather than a place of subjugation, it is claimed the majority of Balinese women believe tradition brings respect and value it as something that sets them apart. [48] Arguments of this kind also invoke beliefs about the innate nature of Balinese women that both requires, and allows, them to accept passively whatever fate and life hands them, even if to their own disadvantage, as noted by Alit S. Rini in '*Kekeliruan Perempuan Menguasakan Pikirannya*,' [Women's Mistakes in Allowing Domination of their Thoughts] and NMA Anita Dewi in

'Apresiasi Perempuan Bali,' [Appreciation of Balinese Women].[\[49\]](#)

39. One manifestation of the burdens of Balinese gender roles is centred round the exploitation of Balinese women as manual labourers. This image is one of the earliest Western stereotypes of gender relations in Bali and one that is still prevalent in Bali. Nevertheless, the first Western description of the status of Balinese women, dating from 1817, was a positive one. It is an image that matches well the views of contemporary culturally conservative media commentators. Thomas Stamford Raffles noted that: 'Their women, in particular, who are here on a perfect equality with the men, and not required to perform many of the severe and degrading labours imposed on them in Java, are frank and unreserved. In their domestic relations their manners are amicable, respectful, and decorous.'[\[50\]](#) By the time the first Dutch account of Bali was published, however, this assessment had been reversed: 'The condition of women in that country is virtual slavery and most unhappy,' remarked the Dutch assistant-resident H. van den Broek in 1834, as he lamented the laborious physical toil expected of Balinese women as their men sat around gambling and talking.[\[51\]](#) Subsequent nineteenth-century Dutch and British accounts deplored the conditions under which ordinary Balinese women lived and worked, conditions that even today shock and remain the topic of comment, as depicted in this 2003 cartoon by Chuks (see Figure 10).

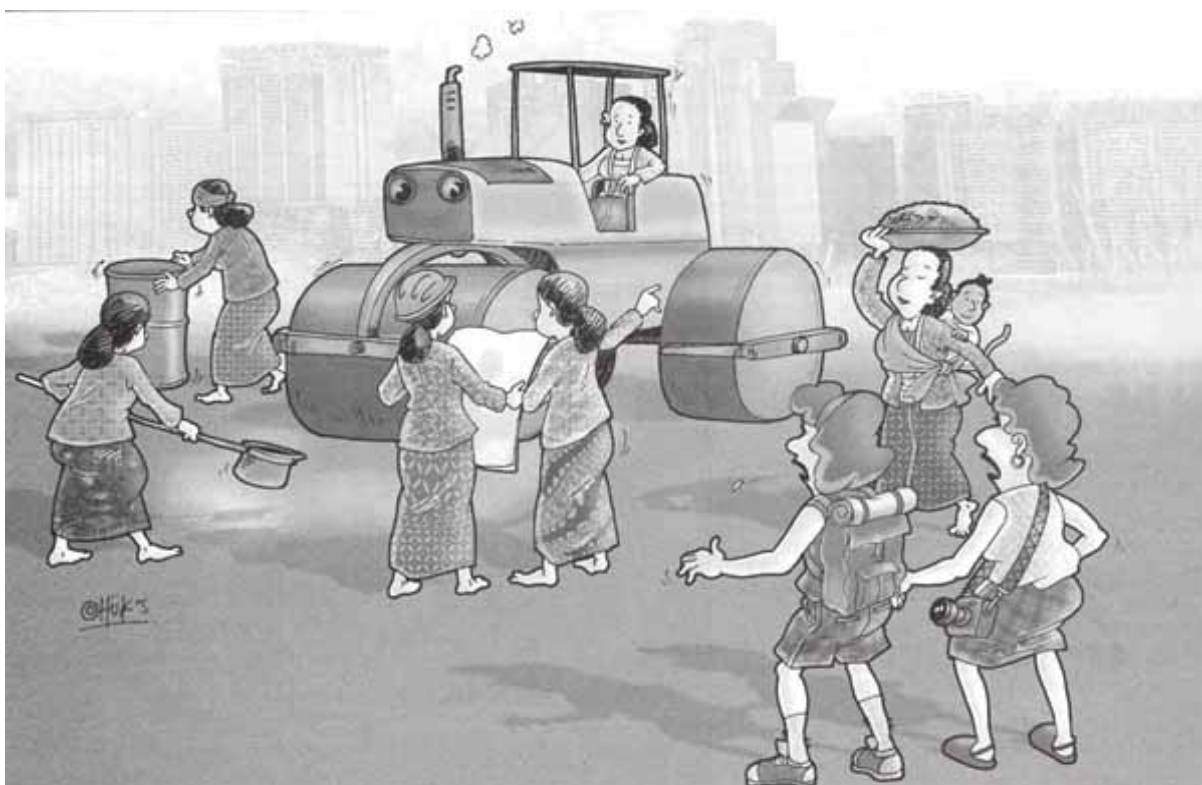


Figure 10. Panca, 'Modernity versus Tradition.'[\[52\]](#)

40. Balinese women have a reputation for being prepared to undertake gruelling physical labour deemed inappropriate to women more generally. While the recent anthropological studies discussed above show clearly that labouring falls only to those without income, contacts or other alternatives, arguments are presented in the media that insist Balinese women should be happy to undertake physical labour not just because of economic need but to honour the life-giving principle through their labour.[\[53\]](#)
41. Similar arguments are adduced for ritual work. However heavy the burden of their multiple roles may be, there is an onus on women to undertake laborious roles in religious ceremonies without complaint and with appropriate consideration for the proper functioning of society. Moreover, because Balinese women are said to gain a sense of pride in being involved in *adat* their toil cannot therefore be regarded as exploitation, as exemplified by Luh Ketut Suryani in '*Yadnya, Bentuk Keterpanggilan Orang Bali*,' [Ceremonies: A Balinese Calling].[\[54\]](#)
42. Although caste, a crucial determinant in the choice of marriage partners, remains one of the most formidable barriers to women's (and men's) personal choice, arguments that centre on tradition and religion allow issues of class and caste and socio-economic status to be set aside.[\[55\]](#) There is only one ideal Balinese 'woman,' and although urban intellectuals and contributors to newspaper columns are essentially middle class women whose daily activities are supported by domestic help and material resources, the heavier economic and domestic burdens of rural and poor women are not addressed in the media analyses. By contrast, a large number of human interest stories focus on women from the lowest socio-economic sectors as illustrative of the moral and social value of Balinese customary roles in spite of terrible personal circumstances. The moral being drawn is that Balinese women can always draw sufficient comfort from their religion and culture to rise above grinding poverty and adversity. This tendency has been particularly evident in the treatment of the social consequences for Balinese women of the Bali bombings. The only specifically gender-nuanced stories in the *Bali*

Post after the Kuta bombing were a handful of personal portraits that highlighted the plight of widows drawn from the lowest socio-economic groups and left without support by the deaths of their husbands.

43. Culturally conservative views of women stress the indivisibility of religion [*agama*], tradition [*adat*] and culture [*budaya*] in preserving Balinese identity. Since the 1970s, definitions of Balinese religious identity have drawn increasingly on the spiritual authority of imported Indian Hindu tradition, particularly as it is defined in Hindu texts such as the Vedas, the Mahabharata and Ramayana epics, the Bhagavadgita and the Puranas. There is an almost unquestioning acceptance of the truth and validity of religious instruction even though, in most cases, the Hindu texts that have become central to the documentation of religious identity were unknown in Bali before the second half of the twentieth century, so that the ancient, authentic, traditional bases for moral guidance are often of comparatively recent origin.^[56]
44. Ancient Hindu scriptures, including the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Manawadharmasastra, are replete with examples of women accorded respect for their femininity, devotion to their husbands and families, and for their attention to their religious and traditional duties. Hindu goddesses from the Vedas serve as models, as readers are reminded by Ketut Semadi, '*Memegang Konsep Rwa Bhineda*,' [Grasping the Concept of Rwa Bhineda].^[57] Through their actions, female deities illustrate the Hindu concept of Tri Kaya Parisudha [purity in thought word and deed] and the centrality of traditional family and female values that all modern Balinese women can, and should, emulate as discussed in: '*Mewacanakan Karakteristik Wanita Hindu*,' [On the Subject of Hindu Women's Character].^[58] I Made Prabaswara argues that traditional gender roles are exemplified by the consort of Siwa, Dewi Sakti in '*Kesadaran Puitis-Spiritual Kepada Ibu Sakti*' [Poetical-Spiritual Awareness of Goddess Sakti].^[59] while Nyoman Wirata draws parallels with folk tale heroines in '*Wanita Atas Debu Bernama I Lubang Kuri*' [A Woman in the Dust Named I Lubang Kuri].^[60]
45. Paralleling this scriptural support of women's position is another line of argument that denies inequalities exist at all because in Hinduism and, consequently in Balinese traditional society, men and women are equal partners as discussed by Alit S Rini, '*Emansipasi: Memperjuangkan Perempuan Sebagai Manusia*,' [Emancipation: Fighting for Women as Human Beings]. The view that Balinese women are already emancipated in traditional society is expressed in '*Wanita Bali Mandiri?*' [Are Balinese Women Independent].^[61] Hindu scriptures, the *wedas* [Vedas] do not nominate one gender as dominant according to the authors of '*Kesetaraan Gender Diakui Dalam Weda*,' [Gender Equality Acknowledged in the Vedas] and '*Salah Menganggap Wanita Umat Kelas Dua*,' [Wrong to Regard Women as A Second Class Group].^[62] These views are underpinned by the notion that in recognising the essential humanity of all humans, equality follows naturally as argued by Ni Desi ASA Gita, '*Emansipasi Khas Perempuan Bali*,' [Balinese Women's Special Emancipation].^[63] In Hinduism, women's roles are honoured and male-female relationships are set down as partnerships, justifying traditional views of hard work as right and fair, thus rendering unnecessary the struggle for equality as Ketut Semadi claims in '*Memegang Konsep Rwa Bhineda*,' [Seizing the Concept of Rwa Bhineda].^[64] Similarly, Alit S Rini argues that the Hindu concept of *ardhaneswari* [the divine couple Siwa and Uma in a single body] is both symbol and proof of this equality. Instead of dividing the sexes, the spirit of *ardhaneswari* serves as a counter to the materialism that threatens traditional values in '*Profesi, Perempuan dan Spirit Feminin-Maskulin*,' [Professions, Women and the Female-Male Spirit].^[65] In these interpretations of gender relationships, women's perceived natural talents are separate but equal to those of men. The complementary roles of men and women within family and social networks guaranteed by Balinese Hindu religion is a theme familiar from New Order definitions of family life and welfare.
46. In her interview for *Bali Lain*, Suryani argues strongly that rather than embodying inequality, Balinese traditional social structure is instead marked by the absence of the gendered division of labour. Evidence for this claim includes the fact that men cook the traditional ritual dish *lawar* and women are active in marketing; long-standing female emancipation in the economy can be seen in the fact that while it is true that for religious rituals women make the elaborate offerings [*banten*], men sacrifice the animals. Apparent inequalities, she suggests, result from misconceptions about gender relations in Balinese society. Arguments that women's voices are muzzled by *adat* because they have no formal role in community decision-making are countered with the response that women are represented by their husbands, and because *adat* is a direct reflection of the scriptures, apparent inequalities cannot be considered as social injustice. Other evidence brought forward to prove that Balinese women enjoy equality with men, include the practice of women not taking their husband's name at marriage but that of their children.^[66]
47. Women are urged to see their exclusion from inheritance rights and their lack of access to educational opportunities in terms of Balinese cultural values. Inheritance laws, which exclude women from inheriting land, might seem unfair but men have to carry on the family line so therefore the practice is both decreed by and justified by *adat*.^[67] Suryani dismisses claims

that Balinese women are denied educational opportunities. She notes that, although they may seem to be disadvantaged in terms of access to education, the most important parts of a girl's education take place in the informal context of the domestic household rather than in schools, thus Balinese society intrinsically equips them with skills that are equal to those of boys. In any case, she argues boys 'deserve' better treatment because they bear the responsibility of carrying on the family line.^[68] This failure to recognise the effects of social practice obviates the need for culturally conservative commentators to engage critically with issues of gender inequality. The possibility that home-based education for Balinese girls may not equip them for full participation in the modern world is captured wryly in Panca's cartoon from *BogBog* (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Panca, 'Modernity versus Tradition.'^[69]

Conclusion

48. Since the fall of Suharto in 1998, articles published in the *Bali Post* have engaged regularly with issues of regional gender identity in Bali. In the broader context, the gendered discourse concerning the roles and responsibilities of Balinese women that is observable in the *Bali Post* and other Balinese cultural magazines such as *Sarad* and *Bali Lain* resonates with the family-centred policy of the late New Order state. Although the representations of women's roles espoused in the Balinese media since the fall of Suharto in 1998 owe much to decades of New Order gender ideology, these views are redefined in the specifically Balinese cultural and religious terms that have been documented above. In articles on women published in the *Bali Post* between 1999 and 2003, there has been a marked focus on the inherent value for Balinese women of embracing the traditional roles accorded to them and on the importance of their central roles in preserving Balinese traditional values, particularly those authenticated by Hindu religious texts and practices and by Balinese tradition.
49. The media discussion and definition of women's roles in Bali takes place at two levels—one which evokes national issues and concerns for greater female participation in and access to public and political life, and the other which seeks Balinese cultural explanations and justifications for the place of women in society. The arguments presented in the media therefore cluster around two broad themes: secular, political calls for greater women's rights on the one hand, and an overwhelmingly non-political, even a-political cultural focus on the other. The latter contributes to the perpetuation of a reified and largely uncritical image of the innate value of being a *Balinese* woman. Moreover, these culturally-focused discussions of gender in the *Bali Post* mask the realities of inequality and lack of opportunity for Balinese women.
50. Although issues surrounding the 'burden' of culture are clearly recognised and point to the need

for change, no real solutions emerge. There is widespread acceptance of gender differences in Bali and questioning the fundamental 'truth' of *kodrat* and *adat* can be readily criticised as a rejection of the values that underpin Balinese identity. As Lyn Parker has recently argued Balinese traditional social structures are seen by some women as immutable and impossible to change.^[70] The force of culture thus continues to relegate the emancipatory needs of Balinese women to the margins of the debate.

51. Contemporary definitions of women's roles in Bali are arguably more conservative than in the past.^[71] In spite of counterarguments to conservative and traditional views of women's roles and responsibilities, the strongest voice in the media belongs to the cultural preservationists. Dissent and critique have been effectively muted by the renewed call to regional identity epitomised in the *ajeg Bali* campaign. The conflict between traditional Balinese culture and secular modernity will continue to present particular obstacles to female autonomy in Bali in the post-Suharto period, as the demands of modernity are marginalised in favour of cultural cohesion. This study of representations of women and gender in the *Bali Post* in the five years since the fall of Suharto suggests that in formal public discourse at least Balinese tradition and culture continue to constrain women.^[72] There seems little reason to conclude that greater democracy has led to changes in representations of Balinese women in Bali. It is perhaps to national rather than local agendas and initiatives that Balinese women will have to turn in their search for equality.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the artists and editors of *BogBog: Bali Cartoon Magazine*, Jango Pramatha, Surya Darma, Ardi, Panca and Chuks for permission to use their cartoons in this article, as well as *Bali Post* cartoonists Gun-gun (Wayan Gunasta) and Wied N (IG.N. Widnyana) for allowing me to use their creative work. I am also grateful to I Nyoman Darma Putra for rapid and helpful responses to my many questions on points of detail.

Endnotes

^[1] For example, sixty-one women (11.1%) were elected to the 550 seat DPR in the recent April 2004 elections, restoring the number of female representatives in the national parliament to the same level as in 1997-99. Female representation in the national legislature fell 3.4 per cent between the 1997 and 1999 elections. In 1997, women held fifty-seven of the 500 seats (11.4 per cent); in the last DPR, there were forty female representatives, just 8 per cent of the total number. According to Interparliamentary Union data as of 12 July 2004, in terms of female participation, Indonesia currently ranks seventy-first in the world (up from ninetieth place prior to the April 2004 election). The world average for female representation is currently 15.4 per cent. See Interparliamentary Union, '[Women in National Parliaments](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm).' URL: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>, site accessed 12 July 2004. See also Kathryn Robinson 'Indonesian Women-from Ordre Baru to Reformasi,' in *Women in Asia: Tradition Modernity and Globalisation*, ed. Louise Edwards and Mina Roces, St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 2000, pp. 139-69.

^[2] Editorial comment, 'Bukan Surat Perempuan,' *Bali Lain*, vol. 2, April 2000, p. 11.

^[3] Earlier versions of this article were presented at the Society for Balinese Studies Conference held in Denpasar in 2000 and at the Asian Studies Association of Australia Conference in Hobart in July 2002.

^[4] As early as the 1920s and 1930s, discussion and debate about the meaning of Balinese identity became an important part of public discourse in the print media. See I Nyoman Darma Putra, 'A Literary Mirror: Balinese Reflections on Modernity and Identity in the Twentieth Century,' PhD Thesis, University of Queensland, 2003.

^[5] See I Nyoman Darma Putra, 'Bali Pasca-Bom: Konflik, Kekerasan dan Rekonstruksi Identitas Budaya Menuju "Ajeg Bali",' Paper presented at the Kongres Kebudayaan V Tahun 2003, Bukittinggi, 19-23 October 2003.

^[6] See Michel Picard, *Bali: Cultural Tourism and Touristic Culture*, Singapore: Archipelago Press, 1996.

^[7] Maila Stivens, 'Theorising Gender, Power and Modernity,' in *Gender and Power in Affluent Asia*, eds. Krishna Sen and Maila Stivens, London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 1-34, p. 18.

^[8] For a brief historical overview of similar arguments pertaining to gender roles in Bali in the twentieth century, see Laura Bellows, 'Like the West: New Sexual Practices and Modern Threats to Balinese-ness,' in *RIMA* vol. 37, no. 1, 2003, pp. 71-106, pp. 72-79. As Bellows notes, Balinese women carry an unfair share of the burden to preserve Balineseness through their sexuality. She cites arguments put forward by Luh Ketut Suryani at a 1999 seminar calling on Balinese women to defend the Balinese nation against the threats of modernity and western culture by embracing child bearing in order to maintain a particular notion of traditional Balinese identity, ethnicity and Hindu religion. By disconnecting fertility and sexuality, women potentially become the destroyers of Balinese ethnicity traditional culture and nation, pp. 71, 87-91. Suryani's culturally conservative views are discussed in detail below.

^[9] Lynette Parker, *From Subjects to Citizens: Balinese Villagers in the Indonesian Nation-State*, Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2003, pp. 171-72.

^[10] See Parker, *Subjects to Citizens*; Megan Jennaway, *Sisters and Lovers: Women and Desire in Bali*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002; Ayami Nakatani, ' "Eating Threads": Brocades as Cash Crop for Weaving Mothers and Daughters in Bali,' in *Staying Local in the Global Village: Bali in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Linda Connor and Raechelle Rubinstein, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999; and Ayama Nakatani, 'Ritual as "Work": The Invisibility of Women's Socio-Economic Roles in A Changing Balinese Society,' in *Inequality, Crisis and Social Change in Indonesia: The Muted Worlds of Bali*, ed. Thomas A. Reuter, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003,

pp.118-42.

[11] Parker, *Subjects to Citizens*, p. 171.

[12] Lynette Parker's earlier research has shown clearly that in Bali, girl's education lags behind that of boys and also behind that of women in other areas of Indonesia. Balinese society discourages choice particularly in higher education where mobility becomes an important factor. See Lynette Parker, 'The Introduction of Western Style Education to Bali: Domination by Consent?' in *To Change Bali: Essays in Honour of I Gusti Ngurah Bagus*, ed. Adrian Vickers, Darma Putra and Michelle Ford, Denpasar: Bali Post, 2000; and 'Domestic Science and the Modern Balinese Woman', in *Love, Sex and Power: Women in Southeast Asia*, ed. Susan Blackburn, Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 2001, pp. 57-74. On tourist culture see Jennaway, *Sisters and Lovers*.

[13] Parker, *Subjects to Citizens*, p. 9.

[14] New Order gender policies have been widely documented in the past decade. See for example, Norma Sullivan, 'Gender and Politics in Indonesia,' in Maila Stivens (ed.), *Why Gender Matters in Southeast Asia*, Clayton: Monash Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991, pp.61-86. One of the pioneering discussions on this topic, Sullivan's essay remains a valuable study whose conclusions have been borne out by later work, including, the essays in Laurie J. Sears (ed.), *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1996, and Blackburn (ed.), *Love, Sex and Power*. See also Suzanne Brenner, *The Domestication of Desire: Women, Wealth and Modernity in Java*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998; Julia Suryakusuma 'The State and Sexuality in New Order Indonesia', in Sears (ed.), *Fantasizing the Feminine*, pp.92-119; Stivens, 'Theorising Gender,' p. 10

[15] Sullivan, 'Gender and Politics,' p. 81.

[16] Parker, *Subjects to Citizens*, p. 169; Nakatani, 'Ritual as "Work," ' pp. 119, 122.

[17] Nakatani, 'Eating Threads,' p. 222.

[18] Surya Dama, in *Sarad*, 3, March 2000, p. 7.

[19] The 'Bali Post Archive' contains 5770 html files of *Bali Post* articles, with an index of titles and subject keywords. Although this data set is sizeable, its limitations must be acknowledged. I began to compile this archive in the course of other research projects in April 1999 and stopped in October 2003. The archive covers articles on broad topics of cultural interest classified under major keywords of Arts, Culture, Religion, Language, History, Social Issues, Literature, Politics, Tourism, and Women. The collection was necessarily somewhat arbitrary, and because the underlying theme of my research was 'traditional' Balinese literature and culture, few articles concerning ongoing political process, economic and environmental issues, and tourism were archived, unless they made direct reference to cultural matters. A number of research assistants played a role in compiling the archive including, Rebecca Rimmer, Jo Sbeghen and Ashley Gill. Their input is gratefully acknowledged. I am especially indebted to I Nyoman Darma Putra who worked closely with me for nearly two years in compiling the archive.

[20] References in the text to archived files in the present article include author details (where available), Indonesian titles with English translations and the original date of publication in the *Bali Post*. Current issues of the *Bali Post Online* can be accessed at <http://www.balipost.co.id>. The *Bali Post Online* website has a search facility for access to back issues from December 2002.

[21] There is no data for July 2002, which was inadvertently 'missed' and is no longer available in electronic format even from the *Bali Post* offices in Denpasar.

[22] The limitations of the 'Bali Post Archive' may skew this result slightly. In compiling the archive, no articles were gathered from the regular Ekonomi [Economics], Mancanegara [Foreign News], Nusatenggara [Eastern Indonesia] or Olahraga [Sports] columns. Some columns towards the end of Tables 2 and 3, in which only one or two articles appear, are no longer in use. Problem pages in the *Bali Post* including those dealing with sexual and beauty advice were not included in the 'Archive', although these topics often deal with women's issues and appear regularly in the Keluarga and Trend columns of the Sunday edition. In her recent article, however, Laura Bellows fills this gap in my own research in her discussion of cultural preservation agendas in sexual practices in contemporary Bali, which includes discussion of some of the advice provided by the *Bali Post's* resident sexologist, Wimpie Pangkahila. See Bellows, 'Like the West.'

[23] The March and April publication dates were presumably designed to coincide with Kartini celebrations. Other recent Bali-based April publications have also featured issues on women. The tourist industry magazine *Bali Echo* devoted a number of related articles in its April/May 1999 edition to women's issues including its cover story 'Freedom Fighters: The Unique Struggle of Balinese Women' and feature articles entitled 'Bowling to Tradition' and 'Balinese Women in the Tourism Industry.' The theme of April 2001 edition of the magazine *Latitudes* was 'Women in Indonesia.' These magazines are not considered here as they are written in English with an intended audience of non-Balinese readers.

[24] For example, the report of a seminar on Balinese Women's Equality and the Conflicting Roles in Adat and Cultural Life' [Kesetaraan Perempuan Bali dan Konflik Peran dalam Kehidupan Adat dan Budaya] entitled 'Perempuan Bali Terkungkung Adat dan Budaya?' [Are Balinese Women Shackled by Adat and Budaya?], *Bali Post*, 7 January 2002, argues that because of the sense of pride Balinese women feel in being involved in *adat* and ritual, their labour cannot be considered 'exploitation'. Similarly the report of a seminar held a week earlier on Revitalising the Roles of Women in Culture, Tradition and Religion [Revitaliasi Peran Perempuan Bali dalam Budaya, Adat dan Agama] organised by the *Bali Post*, LBH Bali and Global FM 99,15, reinforces traditional gender stereotypes, and 'Kehormatan Perempuan Hanya Terselip di Kitab-Kitab Lama,' [Respect for Women Only Incorporated in Ancient Books], *Bali Post*, 20 April 2002, emphasises the complementary (and thus inherently equal) roles of male and female in Hindu thought and practice in the concept of *purusa* and *pradana* [male and female principles that together create life].

[25] See for example, Cok Sawitri 'Perempuan Bali Kini,' [Balinese Women Today] in *Sarad*, 3, 2000, p. 47; Putu Suasta, 'Pembangkangan Politis Kaum Perempuan,' [Women's Political Opposition], in *Bali Lain*, 2, 2000, pp. 24-25.

[26] *Bali Lain*, April 2000, pp. 14-15.

[27] Kartini Day Celebrations, '*Potret "Bopeng" Perempuan*,' [Portrait of Women's Injustice], 20 April 2000; '*Mitos Tentang Kepasifan Perempuan*,' [Myths Concerning Women's Passivity], *Bali Post*, 18 April 2001; '*Pria-Wanita Menuju Orbit Kemitrasejajaran*,' [Men and Women Moving into the Orbit of Equality], *Bali Post*, 21 April 2003.

[28] The editorials in the *Bali Post* dealt with the following issues: 'Menghargai Wanita, Menghargai Manusia' [Valuing Women Valuing Humans], 24 April 2000 in which it is argued that women's subordination will only end with the acknowledgement of their basic humanity; 'Posisi Wanita Dalam Masyarakat Kita' [The Position of Women in Our Society], 26 May 2000 dealing with the issue of female presidents, powerful women in history and women's fundamental political rights; 'Kontroversi Tentang Wanita Bukan Hanya di Indonesia' [The Controversy about Women is Not Just in Indonesia], 8 September 2000 on the universality of the problem of female representation in government; 'Wapres Tolak Baca Sambutan Presiden' [Vice-President Refuses to Read the President's Welcome], 1 June 2001 an editorial critical of Megawati's lack of leadership and her absorption of gender values regarding the secondary status of women; 'Seks Bebas Makin Meningkat' [Free Sex on the Rise], 3 July 2001 discussing the need for education in the face of rising abortion rates particularly among teenagers; 'Terlalu Banyak Prasangka Terhadap Wanita' [Too Much Prejudice against Women], 20 April 2002 discussing the under-representation of women in representative councils; 'Merombak Pola Pikir Wanita' [Changing Women's Attitudes], 29 April 2003 calling for women to change their thinking about their status as second class citizens in spite of cultural and religious impediments; 'Mendorong Perempuan ke Dunia Politik' [Supporting Women in the World of Politics], 11 August 2003 on the need for institutional support for women's political participation.

[29] 'Perempuan Masih Terpinggirkan di Parpol' [Women Still Marginalised in Political Parties], *Bali Post*, 9 January 2003; 'Porsi 30 per cent Perempuan di Legislatif,' [30 per cent Women in the Legislature], *Bali Post*, 20 February 2003; 'Pria tak "Legowo" Berikan Peran pada Perempuan' [Men Not Willing to Give Roles to Women], *Bali Post*, 21 February 2003; 'Dipertanyakan, Kemampuan Politik Praktis Wanita' [Querying Women's Practical Political Ability], *Bali Post*, 22 February 2003; 'Kuota Perempuan Sebagai "Affirmative Action"' [Women's Quota as Affirmative Action], *Bali Post*, 13 March 2003; 'Soal Wakil Perempuan di Dewan' [Problem of Female Representatives in the Chamber], *Bali Post*, 21 April 2003; 'Perempuan Diminta Ikut Kritisi APBD' [Women Asked to Criticise APBD], *Bali Post*, 2 June 2003; 'Bumerang, Pakasakan Wanita Penuhi Kuota 30 Persen' [Boomerang, Forcing the Women's Quota], *Bali Post*, 26 June 2003; 'Sistem, Pasung Perempuan di Dunia Politik' [System Repressing Women in the World of Politics], *Bali Post*, 8 August 2003; 'Pemilu 2004, Kebangkitan Politikus Perempuan' [2004 Elections, The Political Rise of Women], *Bali Post*, 8 August 2003.

[30] Statistics cited in 'Bali Masuk Kelompok Terendah' [Bali Among the Lowest Group], *Bali Post* 25 June 2003 give the figure of 1.8 per cent for Bali, the same level of representation as in Riau; only Maluku is lower with no female representation. I am grateful to Darma Putra for providing me with the number of Balinese women currently in the DPR and DPRD. Figures from the recent April 2004 elections for female representation in local legislative bodies are not yet available.

[31] Wied N., 'Jeng,' *Bali Post*, 21 December 2003.

[32] Gun-gun, 'Brewok,' *Bali Post*, 7 December 2003.

[33] 'Perempuan Pimpin Parisada?' [A Woman to Head Parisada?], *Bali Post* 5 September 2001; 'Wanita Bali Perlu Berontak' [Balinese Women Must Fight], *Bali Post*, 8 December 2001; 'EI Dukung Tampilnya Wanita Bali,' [EI Supports the Rise of Balinese Women], *Bali Post*, 4 January 2003; K Margi, 'Sejarah Wanita di Balik Bendung Budaya,' [Women's History behind the Dam of Culture], *Bali Post*, 23 April 2002; Maria Febiola, 'Hentikan Kekerasan Pada Perempuan,' [Stop Violence Against Women], *Bali Post*, 23 April 2001.

[34] 'Meningkat, Tingkat Kekerasan Terhadap Istri' [Levels of Violence Against Women On the Rise], *Bali Post*, 7 November 1999; 'Hentikan Kekerasan Pada Perempuan' [Stop Violence Against Women], *Bali Post*, 23 April 2001; 'Perempuan Selalu Menjadi Korban' [Women are Always the Victims], *Bali Post*, 9 September 2001; 'Tinggi, Kekerasan Perempuan Dalam Rumah Sasak' [High Levels of Violence Against Women in Sasak Homes], *Bali Post*, 29 September 2001; 'Perlindungan Perempuan Harus Diprioritaskan' [The Protection of Women Must be Given Priority], *Bali Post*, 27 May 2002.

[35] 'Suara Ibu Peduli' [Voice of Concerned Mothers], *Bali Post*, 20 January 2003; 'Ibu-ibu di Yogyakarta Berunjuk Rasa' [Mothers in Yogya Vent their Feelings], *Bali Post*, 18 January 2003; 'Ibu-ibu Demo Istana: Keluhan Harga Lipstik Naik' [Women in Palace Demo Lament the Rising Price of Lipstick], *Bali Post* 15 January 2003. The serious efforts of the Suara Ibu Peduli group are trivialised by the reporter highlighting the reference to the price of lipstick when the main purpose of the demonstrations was to protest against the socio-economic consequences for families of price rises in basic commodities; or the highlighting of the distraction of children for the demonstrators.

[36] '*Diparda Larang Impresariat Kirim Seniman ke LN*,' [Tourism Department Prohibits Impresarios Sending Artists Overseas], *Bali Post*, 9 August 2002.

[37] '*Bisa Dicidaduk, Wanita Pekerja Malam Tanpa Izin*,' [Able to be Arrested: Women Working at Night Without Permission], *Bali Post*, 25 September 2002.

[38] This point is made by Christine Campbell in her discussion of feminism in contemporary Malaysian women's fiction. The same arguments can also be harnessed in the Balinese case. See Christine Campbell, 'Contrary Visions: Women and Work in Malay Women-authored Novels after the Independence Period (1960-1995),' PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2000, pp. 168-69.

[39] Luh Ketut Suryani, *Perempuan Bali Kini*, Denpasar: Bali Post, 2003.

[40] Suryani, *Perempuan Bali*, p. x.

[41] Luh Ketut Suryani: '*Perempuan Bali, Maukah Berjuang untuk Bali*,' [Balinese Women, Will They Fight for Bali?], *Bali Post*, 19 December 2001).

[42] '*Penting, Peran Perempuan dalam Ajeg Bali*,' [Crucial, The Role of Women in Ajeg Bali], *Bali Post*, 25 December 2003.

[43] 'Perempuan Hindu Dituntut Transformasikan Nilai-Nilai Agama,' [Hindu Women Called on to Transform Religious Values], *Bali Post*, 18 April 2001.

[44] Ardi, in *BogBog: Bali Cartoon Magazine*, No. 16, 2003.

[45] Alit S. Rini, 'Menjaga Tradisi, Bertanya Pada Perempuan,' [To Guard Tradition, Ask Women], *Bali Post*, 23 December 2001.

[46] 'Strategis, Peran Perempuan dalam Pelaksanaan Brata Penyepian,' [Strategy, The Role of Women in Conducting Nyepi], *Bali Post*, 21 March 2001; 'Cara Perempuan Memaknai Nyepi,' [Ways for Women to Bring Meaning to Nyepi], *Bali Post*, 21 March 2001.

[47] 'Cegah Selingkuh: Bangkitkan Inner Beauty,' [Prevent Adultery: Increase Your Inner Beauty], *Bali Post*, 27 August 2001; 'Busana Transparan Tanda Degradasi Etika,' [Transparent Blouses A Sign of the Decline in Ethical Standards], *Bali Post*, 18 September 2000; 'Pakaian Ibadah Perempuan Bali,' [Balinese Women's Religious Clothing], *Bali Post*, 23 November 2002; 'Wanita Bali dan Makna Simbolik Sanggul Pusung,' [Balinese Women and the Symbolic Meaning of the Sanggul (Bun)], *Bali Post*, 14 April 2001; 'Mapusungan,' [The Sanggul], *Bali Post*, 14 April 2001 and 18 April 2001; Ni Putu Vivi 'Lestari: Dan Yang Bernama Perempuan...' [And Those Called Woman...], *Bali Post*, 8 April 2001.

More general and practical advice on how to keep a husband happy and on deportment and social etiquette is frequently dealt with in the *Keluarga* [Family] and *Cermin* [Reflections] sections of the Sunday *Bali Post* which did not form part of the collection of the 'Bali Post Archive.'

[48] Editorial comment, 'Tuah Wanita Bali' [Balinese Women's Respect], *Sarad*, 3, March 2000, p. 3.

[49] Alit S. Rini, 'Kekeliruan Perempuan Menguasakan Pikirannya,' [Women's Mistakes in Allowing Domination of their Thoughts], *Bali Post*, 17 December 2000; Anita Dewi 'Apresiasi Perempuan Bali,' [Appreciation of Balinese Women], *Bali Post*, 21 October 2001.

[50] Thomas Stamford Raffles (originally published 1817), *The History of Java*, 2 vols, reprint with a foreword by John Bastin, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. ccxxxi-ccxxxii.

[51] H.A. van den Broek, 'Verslag Nopens het Eiland Bali,' *De Oosterling*, 1, 1834, pp. 199-200.

[52] Panca, in *BogBog: Bali Cartoon Magazine*, No. 16, 2003.

[53] 'Yang Tuyuh Bekerja Demi Kemuliaan Hidup' [Those who Labour Hard for the Sake of Honouring Life], *Sarad*, 3, March 2000, pp. 14-15.

[54] Luh Ketut Suryani, 'Yadnya, Bentuk Keterpanggilan Orang Bali,' [Ceremonies: A Balinese Calling], *Bali Post*, 22 April 2002.

[55] By contrast the burden of caste is an extremely prominent theme in modern Balinese fiction, particularly in the work of Oka Rusmini. See Darma Putra, 'A Literary Mirror,' Chapters 6 and 7.

[56] For an interesting parallel on contemporary influence from Indian Hindism on discussions of sexuality and sexual practices in contemporary Bali, see Bellows, 'Like the West.'

[57] Ketut Semadi, 'Memegang Konsep Rwa Bhineda,' [Grasping the Concept of Rwa Bhineda], *Bali Post*, 23 May 2001.

[58] 'Mewacanakan Karakteristik Wanita Hindu,' [On the Subject of Hindu Women's Character], *Bali Post*, 23 May 2001.

[59] I Made Prabaswara, 'Kesadaran Puitis-Spiritual Kepada Ibu Sakti [Poetical-Spiritual Awareness of Goddess Sakti], *Bali Post*, 22 December 2001.

[60] Nyoman Wirata, 'Wanita Atas Debu Bernama I Lubang Kuri,' [A Woman in the Dust Named I Lubang Kuri], *Bali Post*, 23 December 2001.

[61] Alit S Rini, 'Emansipasi: Memperjuangkan Perempuan Sebagai Manusia,' [Emancipation: Fighting for Women as Human Beings], *Bali Post*, 11 April 1999; 'Wanita Bali Mandiri?' [Are Balinese Women Independent], *Bali Post*, 19 October 2000.

[62] 'Kesetaraan Gender Diakui Dalam Weda,' [Gender Equality Acknowledged in the Wedas], *Bali Post*, 7 January 2002; 'Salah Menganggap Wanita Umat Kelas Dua,' [Wrong to Regard Women as A Second Class Group], *Bali Post*, 15 March 2003.

[63] Ni Desi ASA Gita, 'Emansipasi Khas Perempuan Bali,' [Balinese Women's Special Emancipation], *Bali Post*, 18 April 1999.

[64] *Rwa bhineda* refers to the Hindu principle of opposing, but complementary forces which must exist in harmony and balance. It is used also to refer to gender relationships. See Ketut Semadi, 'Memegang Konsep Rwa Bhineda,' [Seizing the Concept of Rwa Bhineda], *Bali Post*, 23 May 2001.

[65] Siwa in his *ardhaneswari* form is half male and half female. The concept represents the union of male and female principles as essential to creation. See Alit S Rini, 'Profesi, Perempuan dan Spirit Feminin-Maskulin,' [Professions, Women and the Female-Male Spirit], *Bali Post*, 22 April 2001.

[66] Interview with Suryani, *Bali Lain*, 2, April 2000, p. 14.

[67] 'Tanah Pustaka Jangan Diwariskan,' [Sacred Land Cannot be Inherited], *Bali Post*, 13 July 2000; Gede Budiana, 'Wanita Dalam Hukum Adat Bali: Meski Lemah, Perlahan Ada Perubahan Menuju Kesetaraan,' [Women in Traditional

Balinese Law: Still Weak but Advances Towards Equality], *Bali Post*, 13 July 2000; Subagiadnya, 'Pembagian Warisan, Tergantung Beban Tanggung Jawab,' [Division of Inheritance: Dependent on the Level of Responsibility], *Bali Post*, 13 July 2000.

[68] Interview with Suryani, *Bali Lain*, 2, April 2000, p. 14.

[69] Panca, in *BogBog: Bali Cartoon Magazine*, No. 16, 2003.

[70] Parker, *Subjects to Citizens*, p. 170.

[71] Women's rights, particularly within the context of inter caste marriage, became a site for debate and contention in the earliest media definitions of Balinese modernity and identity, and were a major factor in the debate between acquired and ascribed status in Bali's caste-based social hierarchy. Strong views were put forward by women and women's organisations established to promote education and improved social conditions for women. In the twenty-first century, however, this pioneering fire seems to have gone out. See, I. Nyoman Darma Putra, *Wanita Bali Tempo Doeloe: Perspektif Masa Kini*, Bali: Bali Jani, 2003.

[72] It will be some time of course before an adequate and detailed analysis of the effects of *reformasi* on women's lives in Bali can be presented. In this context, it is perhaps worth noting that the anthropological studies on which the earlier discussion of gender identity in Bali was based are themselves based on field-work going back as far as the late 1980s. The advantage of a current, if necessarily somewhat superficial, analysis of contemporary media discourse lies in the fact that it does encapsulate immediate views, whose validity may be tested at a later time.

MAIN

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