

Bali and Fryslân:
aspects of their vernaculars

Bali and Fryslân:
aspects of their
vernaculars

Rients Aise Faber

Cover picture (2008): At the end of the Frisian world, below the seawall in the Westhoek, the Indonesian owner of the inn sells Balinese wood carving and other products. It shows how open modern life can participate in other cultures.

This text was previously published in:
It Beaken 70, 2008, 1/2, 105-142.

Cover design: Rients Aise Faber
ISBN: 9789402146059
© Rients Aise Faber 2020

Contents

1. Introduction	7
2. The historical place of the Balinese language	11
3. Variety in Balinese language	15
4. Dictionaries and standardisation	25
5. The vernaculars in educational systems	35
6. Ethnolinguistics: society structure and language	41
7. Indirect address and intimate language use in Frisian	48
8. Individual marking and social space	55
9. The current language attitude and lifestyle	63
10. Concluding remarks	76
Bibliography	82



Woodcarving on Bali. A statue of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of knowledge, music, art, wisdom, and learning.

1. Introduction

During my visits to Bali (Indonesia), I was impressed by the specific culture of the isle. It is not surprising that the richness of this culture has enchanted many cultural anthropologists, artists and tourists. My own Frisian background and interest in Frisian culture led me to want to explore and comprehend how this local culture on the other side of the world could maintain its special quality in a quickly changing world, with its trends towards westernisation and globalisation. That is why, when offered the opportunity to contribute an opinion piece for publication in *It Beaken*, I chose to write on this subject. It means that my paper will have the character of a journey of discovery, a voyage to find familiar ways in which human beings are dealing with their cultures. My Frisian background will sometimes be the lens through which I view the Balinese culture. I will make comparisons, looking for areas of resemblance and of difference. This way of considering things may even lead to my revising the way in which I view my own culture. In writing this paper I discovered how impossible it would be to bring all my knowledge of Frisian culture to bear upon a comparison with the Balinese. So I hope it will not bother the reader should he miss some obvious details concerning Frisian culture; its language development, dictionaries, education and sociolinguistics.

In Bali as in Fryslân, the typical, old, regional cultural situation may be defined as a minority culture in relation to the national state of which they are part. In both regions, typical cultural manifestation finds its origin in unique,

circumstantial development. However, some remarkable differences may be observed in the way primary identity was forged and founded in Bali and in Fryslân. A particular difference is to be found in the roles of religion and language: in Bali, religion and tradition constitute primary cultural identity, while in Fryslân, language and history are the most important identity markers. Nevertheless, in this book I will focus mainly upon the appearance of local languages (vernaculars) in both societies, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the place and function of minority languages in traditional and modern society, and the social values interwoven with them. In both cultures people are taking a stand for the future of their cultural identity. Because of the totally different circumstances pertaining in these two cultural regions, it is logical to expect their developmental paths to diverge. Bali and Fryslân each have their own developmental time-scale. In the course of my research I contacted Mr Darma Putra, a Balinese scholar, who was kind enough to contribute to this subject in a paper entitled *The Survival of the Balinese Language*.

I will start with a short historical overview of the position Balinese language has adopted within its indigenous society. In Section Three I will address the traditional Balinese language, with its complex system of speech levels.

In Section Four I will examine the possibilities of standardisation for the languages. Initial dictionary compilation in the nineteenth century was an important step in this development. In Section Five I will suggest that the position of the vernaculars in the Balinese education system followed its own course of development and flourished only

after 1900. In the next section I will consider the connection between social structure and typical language use, i.e. an ethnolinguistic approach. Section Seven introduces the indirect and intimate character of language use in Frisian. In Section Eight I deal with individual marking and social space. I go on to consider more closely current language attitude and lifestyle, basing my observations in part on interviews with Balinese people. In connection with this section, Darma Putra will offer a closer look at present-day Balinese language attitudes in a separate article.¹ Finally, in Section Ten this essay-article is brought to a close with some concluding remarks. It will transpire that languages are not only instruments of communication, but also represent a way of life within which the values of the local culture grow and flow. On the one hand traditional language behaviour is generated by this social-cultural context, on the other, modern conscious language behaviour is a resource for vital and meaningful local cultural life.

¹ Darma Putra, I Nyoman, "The survival of the Balinese language", in *It Beaken* 70 (2008) 143-154.