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Local Autonomy, Local Capacity Building and Support for Minority Languages: Field Experiences from Indonesia

I Wayan Arka

The Australian National University

This paper discusses the complexity of language/cultural maintenance and revival, highlighting the significance of building and supporting long-term local capacity. These complex issues are discussed in the current context of rapid political change towards greater local autonomy in Indonesia. After some background on aims and regulations of decentralization, the Balinese in Bali and Rongga in Flores are compared and discussed based on the author's field experiences. It is argued that capacity building and support must include more than simply developing human resources. Strengthening, reforming, and/or restoring relevant institutions, particularly in relation to customary *adat* systems, are equally important. While a macro perspective must be adopted, priority must be given to a community-based approach and to long term capacity building and support at the most local level. The comparison of the Rongga and Balinese helps clarify how a range of inter-related socio-political and economic variables at the local and regional levels play a significant role in providing and/or inducing good conditions for bottom-up community-based initiatives in language/cultural maintenance and revival.

1. INTRODUCTION. The need for capacity building in maintaining and reviving indigenous cultures/languages has been highlighted recently (de Graff and Shiraishi 2004; Dimmendaal 2004; Foley 2004; Lastra 2004, among others). In this paper, I discuss issues of capacity building that might affect the wellbeing of local cultures/languages in Indonesia. This is done in relation to the rapid political change (decentralization) currently being experienced. I address the aims, regulations and current implementation of the current drastic decentralization laws. The description is based on field experiences from my current language documentation project of Rongga in Manggarai Flores Indonesia.¹

In order to give a more detailed appraisal, it is necessary to look at what has happened elsewhere in Indonesia. Comparing Rongga in Manggarai with other local languages across Indonesia is too big an undertaking for the present paper, and in this paper I focus

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on the comparison of Rongga in Manggarai, Flores Island, NTT (*Nusa Tenggara Timur*, or East Nusa Tenggara) province with Balinese in Bali. The specific reasons for choosing Balinese are elaborated on in subsection 5.2.

I wish to highlight the following points. Firstly, capacity support is as important as capacity building. Secondly, capacity related variables that support viable indigenous cultures/languages are complex, and capacity building and support must include more than simply developing human resources. It must also include strengthening, reforming, or restoring relevant institutions/organizations. In the Indonesian context, this also means reviving and strengthening the traditional customary *adat* system.

Thirdly, while capacity building and support must be approached from a broad or macro, perspective, with a top-down and bottom up approach at the same time, I argue for the significance of priority given to the capacity building and long term support at the regional/local level, particularly at the village level. It will be shown that the current climate of democracy in Indonesia with the introduction of new laws on regional/local autonomy has provided new promising prospects of revival of local cultures/languages. While this paper is drawn from Rongga and Bali experiences, I believe that the insights and recommendations formulated can be extended to minority cultures/languages in other parts of Indonesia.

This paper is organized in the following way. To provide the background, I present basic facts about Indonesia's geography, demography, government and political systems in section 2, followed by a brief historical context of the introduction of the new autonomy laws in section 3. After discussing the goals of local autonomy (section 4) and the significant changes in the new law (section 5.1), I discuss the implications of the laws in relation to the well-being of indigenous cultures and languages on the basis of field experiences in Balinese and Rongga cases (section 5.2). Section 6 provides the summary and final remarks.

2. BASIC FACTS ABOUT INDONESIA IN BRIEF

2.1 GEOGRAPHY AND SOCIETY. Indonesia is the largest archipelagic nation in the world with a total of 17,508 islands spreading between Asia and Australia. Among these, about 6,000 have names and around 1,000 are permanently settled. It has the world's fourth largest population after China, India, and the United States, totaling an estimated 225.3 million people in 2005 (UN, 2005).

Ethnically, culturally, and linguistically, Indonesia is highly diverse. There are an estimated over 350 ethnolinguistic groups in Indonesia. There are 731 local (Austronesian and non-Austronesian) languages in Indonesia (SIL International 2001), roughly one-tenth of all the languages in the world today. Some have large numbers of speakers, e.g. Javanese (75 million), Sundanese (27 million) and Madurese (nearly 14 million) (see, Steinhauer 1994; Sneddon 2003:198). There are other smaller languages with over 1 million speakers, e.g. Minangkabau (6 million), Buginese (3.6 million), Balinese (3.2 million), and Aceh-nese (2.4 million). However, there are also many small languages with speakers in the thousands, e.g. Rongga (5000 speakers).

The cultural and ethnic diversity has been in the past, and still will be, a challenge for any government to maintain a united Indonesia that is politically stable and economically prosperous across the archipelago. In addition, tension due to religious issues and terrorism further complicates the situation.

2.2. GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS. 1 shows the structural and territorial government of Indonesia within the new framework of regional/local autonomy. Indonesia is divided into autonomous provinces, which consist of districts or regencies (*kabupaten*) and city municipalities (*kota madya* or *kodya*). Districts and municipalities are technically the same level of government but they are distinguished by the location of government administration: *kota* (municipality) in urban area vs. *kabupaten* (district) in rural areas. Within districts and municipalities there are sub-districts (*kecamatan*), which are smaller administrative government units. Each sub-district is further divided into villages.

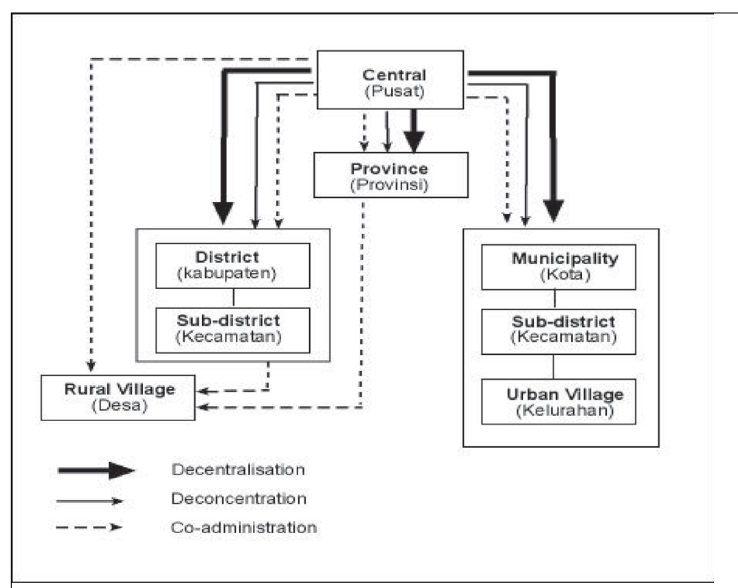


FIGURE 1. Structural government and administration of Indonesia according to the autonomy law 22/1999² (adapted from Usman (2002))

Villages in rural areas are called *desa*, while in urban areas they are called *kelurahan*. In Bali, however, there are two types of village units which may co-exist in the same areas: the government administrative unit of *desa dinas* and the traditional village unit of *desa*

² The new law for local governments (Law 32/2004) was introduced in 2004 to replace Law 22/1999 in response to the amendments to the 1945 constitution, especially with regards to direct elections and related issues emerging in 1999-2004. The structural hierarchy of administrative units with respect to local autonomy at the district level depicted in Figure 1 basically remains the same. Law 32/2004, however, appears to place the rural village (*desa*) in the same structural dominance as the

adat. The retention of *desa adat* has been critically important for the maintenance of Balinese culture/language even though the dualism has sometimes resulted in rivalry between the two (see, Warren 1993).

Currently there are 33 provinces, 370 districts and municipalities, 5,263 sub-districts, 7,113 *kelurahan*, and 62,806 villages in Indonesia. These figures will certainly increase because there has recently been a growing tendency of *pemekaran* (formation of new provinces and districts).

The Indonesian constitution of 1945 regulates separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The president holds executive power. The president is both chief of state and head of government. The 1945 constitution was amended in August 2002. One important amendment is a direct presidential election, beginning with the 2004 general election. Prior to the 2004 elections, the People's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*—MPR) chose the president and vice president. Under the revised election laws, governors (*gubernur*), mayors (*walikota*), and district heads (*bupati*) are also now directly elected. The *kepala desa* (rural village head) has been traditionally directly elected by the village community. However, the sub-district head (*camat*) and the urban village head (*lurah*) are civil servants appointed by the local district government.

At the regional/local level, the chief executives are provincial governors, district heads, mayors of cities, and village heads. Regional/local legislation is handled by provincial and district parliaments, called DPRD (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah*)

2.3. NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLITICS. Indonesia has enjoyed freedom and democracy in the post-Soeharto era, starting in 1998. There is now freedom of speech, including freedom of the press. There is no longer controlled political development as in the *Orde Baru* (New Order) era.³ As a result, there has been an explosion in the number of political parties. While there are numerous parties vying for power, none enjoys national majority support. The main parties include the Golkar (Functional Group), Party Crescent Moon and Star Party (PBB), Democratic Party (PD), Indonesia Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), National Awakening Party (PKB), National Mandate Party (PAN), Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), and United Development Party (PPP).

At the local/regional levels, especially in non-Muslim electorates such as Bali and Manggarai/NTT, Golkar and PDI-P are generally the two most popular parties. In recent developments, an independent candidate was allowed in Aceh and won the election for governor (Aceh is a special case, and an independent candidate is not (yet) permitted in other local electorates in Indonesia).

kelurahan. This change is a drawback to the spirit of traditional autonomy of *desa* (see 0).

³ The *Orde Baru* (New Order) era refers to the period of 1966-1998 when Soeharto was in power in Indonesia. This term was used by Soeharto to contrast his regime with that of his predecessor, Soekarno. However, it has come to be used pejoratively since it is associated with corruption, collusion and nepotism in Soeharto's authoritarian regime.

Money, politics, ethnicity and/or clan base, and religious affiliation often play an important role in national and local politics. There are mass campaign rallies as a show of force in the lead up to elections. Speeches by the candidates generally have no clear or fresh proposals that address national or local issues.

3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE NEW AUTONOMY LAWS. Indonesia's political system was highly centralized under the Soeharto regime. Since independence from the Dutch in 1945, the central government has struggled for decades to contain separatist rebellions. Soeharto, an army general, believed in, and therefore implemented, a highly centralized powerful system to maintain the unity of Indonesia, by force if necessary. During his *Orde Baru* (New Order) era, any measure was regarded as legitimate in the name of the Indonesian nation and development (*pembangunan*).

The negative impact of Indonesianisation on minority cultures/languages under the centralized and autocratic system in the Soeharto era has been well documented. Soeharto's style of governance has also produced a highly corrupt system, which was ultimately the cause of his downfall in 1998. The Indonesian economy collapsed following the economic crisis spreading in East and South-East Asia the preceding year. Soeharto's downfall closed his New Order era, and marked the beginning of the reformation era.

Since the fall of Soeharto in 1998, four Presidents have been elected: B.J. Habibie (1998-1999), Abdurachman Wahid (1999-2001), Megawati Sukarno Putri (2001-2004), and Susilo Bambang Yudoyono (2004-present). In response to public demand and the spirit of reformation, Indonesia has embarked on a decentralization program on a grand scale. Two laws adopted by the Parliament in early 1999 required the government to implement drastic measures for decentralization within two years. The Law of Regional Governance (Law 22, 1999) regulates political and administrative responsibilities for the local government. The Law of Fiscal Balance (Law 25, 1999) delineates, among others, new distribution of revenue sources including sharing of oil and gas revenues between central and local governments. The new policy of regional autonomy became effective on January 1st, 2001.⁴ There have been significant changes since then, especially the amendments of the Indonesian constitution of 1945 and the introduction of new laws related to political parties (31/2002), 12/2003 and on (direct) elections, etc. In response to these swift changes, law 32/2004 on local government was introduced as a revision of law 22/1999. The relevance and impact of this law is discussed in some detail in sections 4 and 5 below.

4. WHY LOCAL AUTONOMY FOR INDONESIA? There are historical, geographical, and socio-political reasons for the implementation of local autonomy in Indonesia (cf., Said 2005:78-88). Geographically, as described in §2, Indonesia consists of thousands of islands, and hundreds of ethnic groups with different languages and cultures. The population of over 220 million people is spreading in vast areas and often on remote islands which demands varying approaches and services in response to quite diverse needs. A

⁴ Decentralisation was in fact already initiated when Soeharto was still in power, e.g. decentralisation of education with the introduction of *muatan lokal* (*mulok*), or the Local Content Curriculum, which started in 1994 with discussions about it already taking place in the 1980s (Bjork 2004). This was encouraged by the International donors. It should be noted that decentralisation during Soeharto's time was not of the nature and scale proposed in the reformation era.

decentralized system of governance is naturally a logical system for such a geographic and demographic situation. It is hard to imagine how a centralized system could respond and offer satisfying services to the range of local needs across Indonesia.

Historically, the founding fathers of Indonesia, when debating the 1945 constitution and considering the country's geography and demographic diversity, came to the conclusion that a decentralized system was ideal for an independent Indonesia. Hence, article 18 of the 1945 constitution was formulated to recognize local diversity and guarantee that local needs would be well taken care of.

While local autonomy was already conceived, it gained momentum in 1999 when Soeharto was suddenly forced out of power, after the collapse of the national economy. The euphoria of reformation led to the reassessment of Soeharto, in particular his centralized system of government during his 30 years in power. Many believed that much of the problem was rooted in his centralized and dictatorial style of government. Hence, the new Law on Regional Governance (Law 22, 1999) was hastily passed (formally authorized on 4 May, 1999) with the high expectations that the law could fix the problems. The preamble (i.e. the consideration section) of the new law explicitly states:

- That the 1945 constitution guarantees local autonomy, i.e. the freedom of the local government to manage its local affairs;
- That local autonomy needs to be implemented to face new challenges nationally or internationally, with the principles of democracy, community participation and empowerment, equity and justice, recognition of diversity within regions;
- That the existing legislatures, namely laws no. 5 1974 on *Pokok-pokok Pemerintahan di Daerah* and Laws no. 5 1979 on *Pemerintahan Desa*, are outdated. The latter in particular imposed a uniformed local system in name and structure at the village level across Indonesia, against the 1945 constitution, and therefore had to be replaced.

Politically, the central government expects that local autonomy can address the long-term and deep regional discontents against the system that is (perceived as) too centralized by Jakarta. The political separatist agenda of those disgruntled regions (mainly outside Java) is expected to be accommodated and the breakup of Indonesia can hopefully be avoided.

In short, there are three aims of the new law of local autonomy. The first one is to correct and replace the past regulations for regional/local governments. The second aim is to bring about better delivery of government services to meet local needs, and to raise the level of local government accountability within the principles of democracy, community participation and empowerment, equity and justice, recognition of diversity and potential within regions. Finally, related to these two aims, local autonomy will address political discontent and maintain the unity of Indonesia as a nation.

5. WHAT DOES LOCAL AUTONOMY MEAN FOR THE LANGUAGE / CULTURAL MAINTENANCE? Theoretically, local autonomy would open an opportunity for the local government to take care of its own interests. In practice, however, the implementation

of local autonomy has not been as smooth as expected. The slow progress is due to a range of local and national problems, such as mediocre economic growth and other political concerns of separatism, terrorism and uncertainties of clear future directions (Turner *et al.* 2003:145). The readiness of the local governments to exercise new responsibilities with greater autonomy is also a factor. In addition, decentralization has not been implemented whole-heartedly due to inherent conflicts between the goals of decentralization policies and the interests of competing groups or factions within the (central) government (who then often actively resist the implementation of new autonomy measures) (see Bjork 2004).

Relevant for our discussion is the implication of the laws in relation to the well being of the indigenous communities, especially the maintenance (and possible revival) of indigenous cultures and languages. This prospect varies across Indonesia, depending on a range of factors at the regional/local level. This is discussed in relation to Balinese and Rongga in subsection 5.2, but significant changes in the autonomy law are first given in 5.1 below.

5.1 SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE AUTONOMY LAWS. Law 22/1999 contains 134 articles, and is intended to replace law number 5/1974 on local government. Included in 22/1999 are 19 articles as amendments of law 5/1979 regarding village governance (*Pemerintahan Desa*). In addition to this law, another law (Law 25/1999), which contains 33 articles, regulates the fiscal balance between the central and local governments. Law 32/2004 is the revised version of laws 22/1999 and 25/1999 in response to changes and related issues emerging in 1999-2004.

The first major change in the new laws is the change in the regional hierarchy. Districts (*kabupaten*) and cities (*kota*) hold equivalent autonomous status. Unlike in the previous system where they are hierarchically organized under the province (*propinsi*), districts and cities are an independent focus of regional governments with direct communication to central agencies in Jakarta. (The position of province is rather unclear in the current hierarchy, which creates problems in coordinating the district governments within their jurisdiction).

The second change is the acquisition of quite a wide range of autonomous functions awarded to the regional governments at the district and city level, but not with provinces. The functions and responsibilities awarded include public work, health, education and culture, agriculture, communication, industry and trade, capital investment, environment, land, cooperatives, and manpower affairs and the management of national resources. (Note that education and culture (with local language included) are now in the hands of the local government). The management of the wide range of functions needs to be backed up with good (local) financial support, human resources and infrastructure. Unfortunately, the necessary backup is not there (yet). We will return to the issues relevant for language/cultural maintenance below.

It should be noted that local autonomy laws also regulate the structure, autonomy, and democratic governance at the rural village (*desa*) level. The village officials who manage various aspects of rural governance, economic development, and finances consist of a village chief, a secretary, and the board of village representatives. The rural village head is elected directly. The board of village representatives is called BPD or *Badan Perwakilan Desa* (Village Representative Board) according to Law 22/1999. Its members are directly elected by the community, and the village chief must be accountable to the community via the BPD.

In 2004, however, this was changed in Law 32/2004: BPD stands for *Badan Permusyawaratan Desa* (Village Consultative Board); its members are appointed; and the village chief must be held accountable to the district head. This could be regarded as a setback, and against the spirit of democracy and local autonomy at the village level because it would mean that *desa* is the extension of the government and thus could be politicized and controlled by the district government just as in Soeharto's era. In order to assess the implementation and implication of the local autonomy, I now turn to Balinese in Bali and Rongga in Flores.

5.2 BALINESE VS. RONGGA. The Balinese language and culture is not in any way threatened or endangered. Balinese is a relatively large language, spoken by some three million people. It is used in a range of domains in daily communication in Bali, except in formal educational settings. (In this case, Indonesian is the language of instruction.) Balinese has had a literacy tradition for over a millennium (Arka 2006), and enjoys strong support from the Balinese community and local government in Bali, further discussed in 5.2.1 below.

In contrast, Rongga is a marginalized minority language (with around 5,000 speakers). It is increasingly under pressure not only from Indonesian, but also from the local regional language of Manggarai and its stronger neighbor Waerana. While Rongga is still relatively healthy in the interior part of its territory, e.g. in the hamlet of Nangarawa, it is increasingly threatened in certain areas in the northern part of Rongga areas along the Trans Flores road. Language shift to Waerana has been reported in these areas. Further discussions on the sociolinguistic situations of Rongga in Manggarai is given in Arka (2005).

Balinese is chosen in this paper for the comparative discussion of local autonomy and its implication for local cultures/languages for the following reasons. Firstly, Bali can be regarded as a model of a success story of local autonomy that has further enhanced local capacity for culture and language maintenance/revival. Secondly, Balinese contexts illustrate the complexity of supporting variables at the local level, in particular the significance of retaining the *adat* (customary) system at the village level. Third, I am a Balinese and therefore in a unique position for this study: I am familiar with the situation in Bali, and have also been doing fieldwork research on Rongga in Flores. Much can be learned from the Balinese case, and this comparison is expected to lead to a better understanding of the issues involved and the nature of challenges ahead in the context of new decentralized modern Indonesia.⁵

5.2.1 BALINESE IN BALI. Balinese enjoys strong support from the local communities, local government and local NGOs, and is backed up by good human and financial resources. Traditional social structures and traditional leadership are still mostly intact, providing good conditions for maintenance of tradition where art and language are a significant part of the Hindu-based cultural practices of the Balinese.

⁵ Ideally a comparison would be done with a minority language, having similar conditions as Rongga which has benefited and done well under the new autonomy laws. Such a minority language is to my knowledge not (yet) extant in Indonesia.

The reasons why Balinese enjoys strong support from the provincial and district governments are that it is spoken in all districts in the province of Bali, and that the governments at these levels are controlled by the Balinese. Hence, programs to promote Balinese can be well coordinated at all levels, from the provincial level to the district, sub-district, and even down to village levels.

A deliberate government program of reviving Balinese culture and language was in fact started in the 1980s when a Balinese anthropologist, Ida Bagus Mantra, became the governor of Bali. One of his programs which continue today is the annual Bali Art and Culture Festivals, generally for one month from June to July. In these festivals, there are exhibitions, workshops/seminars, competitions, and performances of different kinds of arts and cultural practices across Bali, including *lontar* (palm-leaf) reading or *makakawin/makabebasan*.

The festivals are intended to highlight the richness of Balinese culture, and to revive certain endangered cultural practices. Hence, these are occasions where rare or unique traditions from different parts of Bali are exhibited or performed. While these festivals are not mainly organized for tourist purposes, they are also good tourist attractions, generating income for the local government.

In the current local autonomy reformation era, support from the provincial and district governments for Balinese culture is continuing, and even improving. The districts of Badung and Gianyar are two rich districts in Indonesia. The revenues mainly come from tourism. The awareness of democracy (i.e. the local government to be elected by the local people to serve local needs) has led to a change towards a better distribution of government funding and services addressing local needs. In particular, there has been growing awareness of sustainable cultural tourism in Bali: in order to continuously benefit from tourism (and tourism-related industries), unique local cultures must be maintained and revived because these are the main tourist assets. For example, the district government of Gianyar provides extra cash to the traditional village units (*desa adat*) to support custom-related (*adat*) activities.

The provincial and district governments also provide funding for education and other activities to maintain Balinese culture and language. The Congress of the Balinese language held every five years also gets government support. Teachers of primary schools are given extra monthly incentives, in addition to their salaries. Teaching materials for Balinese are developed and funded by the local Bali government.

NGOs and wealthy Balinese entrepreneurs also provide important support. There have been local newspapers, radios and televisions – Bali TV in addition to the local government TV- with programs in Balinese, addressing local issues. Balinese gets support from Internet technology, e.g. computerization of Balinese scripts in unicode (<http://www.babadbali.com/aksarabali.htm>).

There has also been a new movement called *Ajeg Bali* ‘Bali First, Prosperous Bali’. This movement aims at maintaining and reviving Bali in its original culture by empowering the Balinese people. It includes a range of community programs including business training and it provides small credit loans for the Balinese so that they can start up new businesses. The idea is that if the Balinese are economically better off, they will continue practicing and will help safeguard the Balinese culture.

In fact, for centuries, the Balinese have been able to maintain their unique culture, which is based on Hinduism. Bali Hinduism is a type of Hinduism that originated in India, reaching Bali in the 8th century A.D. It has incorporated many local cultures, including the Javanese culture. The Balinese follow long traditions of tight Hindu-based social structures. Hindu-based rituals and other practices are part of the daily life.

The traditional Hindu-based social structure has proven to be quite a resilient shield against the influence or pressure of outside cultures. Java (west of Bali) and Lombok (east of Bali) are now both Muslim islands. While the people in Java, Lombok, and other parts of Indonesia have either embraced Islam or Christianity, the majority of Balinese are now still embracing local Hinduism. Christian missionaries attempted to spread Christianity in Bali in the 20th century, but were unsuccessful.

There is world wide evidence that the spread of Christianity and Islam has resulted in the endangerment and ultimate extinction of local beliefs, related ritual practices, and finally local cultures, e.g. the case reported in the Trobriand Islands (Senft 1997; to appear). Certain Javanese dances and ritual practices using old Javanese (*Kawi*)—a language already extinct in Java - are still alive and are performed in Bali because they are related to the Hindu-based rituals still practiced in Bali but abandoned in Java. Bali is indeed a living museum of Hindu-Javanese culture (Soedarsono 1974:136).

The strength and resilience against the spread of Islam and Christianity can be attributed to the functional existence of the traditional customary village units (*desa adat*) in Bali. These customary villages are still strong, even in highly developed urban areas like Denpasar and Kuta. The uniqueness of *desa adat* is that it is not simply a territorial unit, but more of socio-religious unit (Warren 1993; Surpha 1995; Imawan 2003). For example, a single *desa adat* is united by the existence of three community temples, known as *kahyangan tiga*, namely Pura Desa, one Pura Puseh, and one Pura Dalem. The socio-religious concept of *kahyangan tiga* introduced in the 11th century by Mpu Kuturan (a priest from East Java) succeeded in unifying all sects of Hinduism in Bali. Mpu Kuturan also rearranged the structural concept of various shrines at all territorial levels, including the family, village and island levels.

Customary villages are led by a committee of community elders, headed by a *kelihan desa* or *bendesa adat*. Each *desa adat* has its own *awig-awig* (customary laws), specifying among other things proper conduct and obligations of community members, conflict resolutions and sanctions. The *awig-awig* laws are in Balinese; the ritual and community meetings are also in Balinese. While the *awig-awig* laws do not specifically stipulate that the language used must be Balinese, Balinese is the language that has been used, and will remain functionally so in these traditional domains for years to come. This will remain the case as long as the Balinese continue living with their traditional social values and structures.

It is indeed a challenge how to live in the modern world without abandoning ones traditional value, culture and language. The local government of Bali has taken initiatives to protect the Balinese customary (*adat*) system. For example, there have been local laws (*peraturan daerah*, or *perda*) issued by the provincial government to regulate the co-existence of *desa dinas* (the Indonesia administrative village unit) and *desa adat* (the tradi-

tional village unit). *Perda* 06/1986, for example, specifies the consultation and coordination between both *dinas* and *adat* leaders at the village level (2). Note that this legislation, which still applies now, was in fact already in place during Soeharto's era.

The local community at large is also aware of the challenge to have the right balance between maintaining traditions and living prosperously in modern Indonesia. Evidence of this comes from the active participation of the community in the current movement of *Ajeng Bali* and local NGOs, as discussed earlier. In addition, innovative responses of the traditional *adat* institutions are also observed. The traditional leadership at the level of the village unit appears to adapt to modern challenges by extending their responsibilities beyond

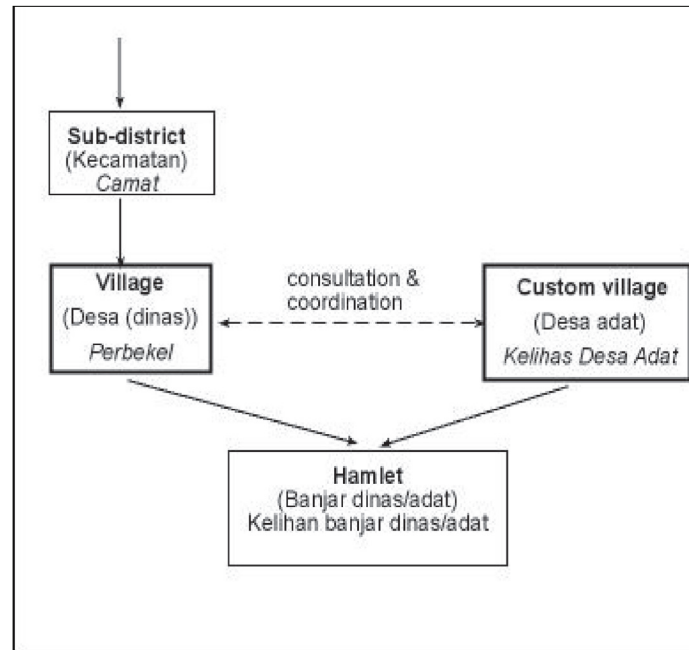


FIGURE 2. *Dinas* and *adat* village according to the Bali local law (*Perda*) 06 1986

adat matters, but still for the benefit of the *adat* community. While the village head (*kelihan adat*) and the members of the committee (*prajuru*) still exercise their traditional roles, they also give financial support to their local community. For example, many *adat* villages now run LPD (*Lembaga Perkreditan Desa*) or Village Credit Units providing loans and supporting businesses of the *adat* community members. Village cooperatives are also increasingly common now.

Certain villages, especially those in Kuta and Ubud, have done well, as they help manage tourism within their territories. The extension of this *adat* domain has resulted in the creation of jobs for the local *adat* members, and importantly good revenues for the *adat* village. The availability of self- and locally-generated revenues, autonomously managed by the village, allows the village to support local *adat* programs such as traditional rituals in temples, and public activities, and even to finance big village construction projects such as building community halls and village roads.

Excellent human resources also support Balinese. As mentioned earlier, the Balinese are in control of the local government in Bali from the provincial to village levels. There are tertiary institutions providing advanced studies on the Balinese language, art and culture: the Department of Local languages (Balinese and Old Javanese) at Udayana University, ISI Bali (Bali Institute of Arts), and Universitas Hindu Bali (Hindu University of Bali). Graduates of these institutions have worked for NGOs, local governments, and even have become independent business persons and artists that support and enrich Balinese arts and culture. As a result, creative arts and dances have blossomed in Bali in the last three decades or so.

There has also been a long tradition of literacy in local and modern scripts in Balinese. While traditional *lontar* (palm-leaf) writing and reading are still practiced, commercial books in Balinese in local and modern scripts are exploding in number, and available at local bookshops in Denpasar. In fact, a long time before the independence of Indonesia, the Dutch already set up Gedong Kertya in Singaraja (a town in northern Bali) which collected and documented Balinese *lontars*. Gedong Kertya has become the island's largest repository of *lontars*. In addition, the Faculty of Arts in Denpasar also has a special *lontar* library housing an incredible wealth of traditional knowledge.

To conclude, the provincial and district governments of Bali and the local community appear to have shown the capacity and experience necessary to manage their own needs, especially in relation to their local culture/language. The initiative of the local government to issue the local law (*perda*) regulating the *adat* village in 1986 is a genius move. Note that this came in the height of Soeharto's power and his campaign of Indonesianisation, dismantling or abolishing the traditional *adat* structures across Indonesia. It appears that Bali is now one place (if not the only one) where the local community (down to the village level) is ready for, has benefited from, and will continue to benefit from the new local autonomy granted by the central government in Jakarta.

5.2.2 RONGGA IN FLORES. My three-year ethnographic work in Rongga (2004-6) reveals quite a different situation. In contrast to Balinese, the local Rongga community suffers capacity-related problems. Discussion of these problems with reference to Balinese examples provides insights into the issues faced by disadvantaged minorities in modern Indonesia.

a. Regional/Local Government Support. Unlike Balinese, Rongga does not receive any support from regional and local governments. This is mainly due to regional/local politics in NTT (Nusa Tenggara Timur or East Nusa Tenggara Province) and in the district (kabupaten) of Manggarai where ethnic loyalty is strong. The total number of the Rongga people, which is around 5,000 compared with that of Manggarai (500,860),⁶ is too small to be meaningful in Manggarai's politics. Given that numbers are important in modern democracy (as this determines who wins elections and controls the government) and given ethnic loyalty in local politics in Manggarai, the Rongga people are disadvantaged because there has not been, and will perhaps never be, a local government controlled by the Rongga people. All of the seven bupatis (regents) of Manggarai since the introduction of

⁶ This is based on the figure in 2005 from Statistics of Nusa Tenggara Timur, <http://ntt.bps.go.id/pop/po01.htm>

the new administrative system in early 1970s have been Manggaraians, mainly from the Todo clan. The Todo people have traditionally dominated Manggarai since the seventeenth century when Manggarai was under the rule of the South Sulawesi kingdom of Goa (Erb 1999; Toda 1999). Moreover, there have been no Rongga people elected as members of the DPRD (Dewan Perwakilan Daerah, or Local Legislative Assembly). Even at the most local level, Kelurahan Tanarata (which is a Rongga village) is headed by a lurah who is not a Rongga. There is in principle nothing wrong with a non-Rongga person acting as the village head of a Rongga village if he can provide support needed for the local community. The fact is that, based on my observation in the field and discussions with the locals, the non-Rongga lurah does not live in the village, has no good knowledge of the local customary practices, and often cannot mediate or solve local problems.

In short, given the history of the local politics in Manggarai, any government controlled by the Manggaraian would not be expected to have any program with the best interest of the minority Rongga people.⁷

b. Social Structure: the Role of Adat at the Grass Roots Level. Balinese has its traditional *adat* structure intact, functional and dynamically responsive to new challenges. Rongga's traditional *adat* system, however, was demolished when Manggarai was turned into a district within the Indonesian administrative units in 1970. Subsequent changes at the village level including pemekaran (splitting into new villages) have further worsened the situation.

Historically, the district of Manggarai used to be divided into traditional unities incorporating around 39 principalities called *kedaluan*, headed by a *Dalu*. The old structure and its rough equivalence are presented in 3. The area of the Rongga community belongs to the traditional *kedaluan* of *Rongga-koe*. When the Dutch colonial government decided to take direct control over Manggarai in the early 20th century, the Dutch maintained the traditional *kedaluan* system and kept the political subordination of the Rongga people under the King of Todo. The traditional *kedaluan* system continued up to late 1960s, long after the independence of Indonesia in 1945. However, it was completely abolished when the New Order government of Indonesia introduced re-organisation to Manggarai in 1970, when Manggarai became a district. (Manggarai split into two districts in 2004.) There was also a change in the structure of village with the introduction of new Indonesian village administration (*desa gaya baru*).

As discussed in section 5.2.1, the introduction of a new Indonesian village administration in Bali does not result in the total replacement of the traditional *adat* village unit. Rather, it results in a dualism of *desa dinas* (Indonesian village administration unit) and *desa adat* (the traditional village unit). *Desa dinas* manages the official administration of the local government at the village level as an extension of the government structure,

⁷ However, this might change given the current development of the formation of new districts in Manggarai. Manggarai has been split into smaller districts. It was split into Kabupaten Manggarai Barat (West Manggarai District) and Kabupaten Manggarai in 2003. A further split of Manggarai into Kabupaten Manggarai Tengah (Central Manggarai District) and Kabupaten Manggarai Timur (East Manggarai District) was officially approved by the central government in early 2007. Rongga villages are now part of Kabupaten Manggarai Timur. It remains to be seen whether this new development could indeed benefit minority communities like Rongga.

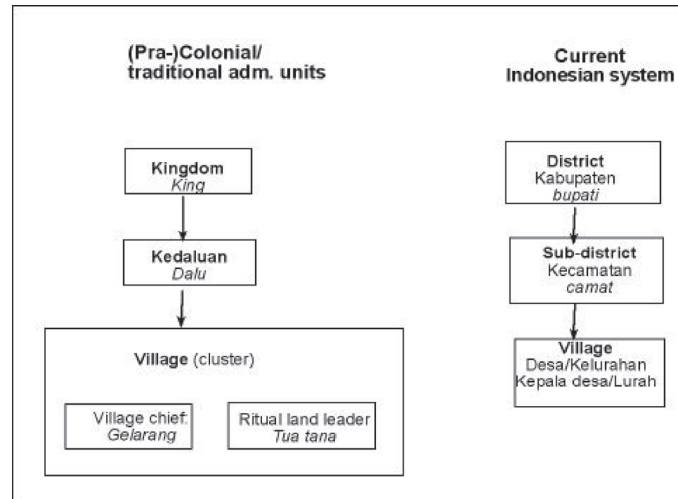


FIGURE 3. (Pre)colonial and current administrative units in Manggarai

whereas *desa adat* manages religious and other Hindu-based community affairs. Hence, the introduction of the new village administration does not have a negative impact on the local culture and traditional custom laws.

However, in case of Rongga, the introduction of new village administration turns out to have destroyed the traditional system that appeared to have worked well in the past in maintaining the integrity of the Rongga culture and language. In the past, there was a traditional system integrating or connecting groups of the Rongga scattered in the Rongga territories. This still worked under the *kedatuan* system, because Rongga was in one *kedatuan*, namely *kedatuan Rongga Koe*.

In modern Indonesia, however, the introduction of the new Indonesian administrative system has resulted in the collapse of this traditional local system. *Kedatuan* was totally removed. A number of *kedatuan* (which often used to be along the sub-ethnic grouping) were collapsed under a single new sub-district (*kecamatan*). An urban village administration system, particularly *kelurahan* (Javanese-based village systems), was introduced in the territory of Rongga. There has been a further split (*pemekaran*) or formation of new village administration units in the territory of Rongga. The traditional *adat* system and internal communication among the clans or groups of the Rongga people to address their own interests as a group has ceased to exist. Gone with the social structure is the traditional leadership, further discussed in (d) below. For example, when there was a dispute in 2003-4 between the local Rongga community and the local government of Manggarai regarding the status of land now owned by many Rongga families, the village officials (i.e. current *Lurah* and village heads) could not help. Mr. Anton Gelang, the former deputy of *Datu* in the *kedatuan* Rongga Koe, told me that the people asked for his help. With his knowledge about traditional land rights and experience in resolving land disputes and with his former

role in the traditional leadership of *kedaluan*, he managed to resolve the problem with the government. He went to see the *Bupati* (Regent) in the capital town of Ruteng. Backed up by his personal detailed knowledge about the history and the related documents of land distribution in Rongga territories, he managed to convince the *Bupati* not to take over the disputed land.

c. Human Resources. The Rongga ethnic group is small (5000 people), far smaller than the Balinese (3 million people). We cannot therefore make a valid comparison. Nevertheless, it provides us with a window to understand how ‘being small’ in modern Indonesia is indeed a real problem.⁸ Thus, the Rongga people do not control the local (sub)-district government, not even in their own village of Tanarata. Young Rongga people who have received higher education, generally at undergraduate level, are few. Most of them who do receive higher education do not go back home to their Rongga territory. When they do, they are often unemployed, or have to do small farming.

Few educated young Rongga people are committed to the maintenance, let alone revival, of Rongga. Only three community elders appear to have a strong desire to do something for their culture and language: two are retired teachers and one is a former deputy *Dalu* (all in their sixties). The two retired teachers have done some documentation of their own, collecting traditional stories and ritual texts written down in handwriting in note books. One of them also taught traditional Rongga songs and dances to primary school students. They admit that they cannot do much because of health and economic problems. They promised that they would help and were emotionally moved when they learned about the goals of my language documentation project. I have already recruited one Rongga person (my research assistant), and trained him to perform language documentation. These people seem to be motivated to do something for their language and culture. There are certainly not enough skilled people for a successful language maintenance program. In addition, it is a challenge to keep their motivation alive (for example my project is now over, and there is no more financial support for these activities).

d. Leadership. Traditional leadership of *kedaluan* (3) for the whole Rongga group is totally extinct now. While descendants of *daluh* (chief of *kedaluan*), *glarang* (village chief), and *tua tana* (ritual land leader) are still there, they are not functional. These traditional leaders can no longer exercise power to mobilize people or resolve local conflicts (particularly land disputes) as in the old days. Customary (*adat*) laws are generally no longer strictly practiced or socially imposed. Note that in Bali *adat* laws are generally still respected and enforced by the social structure.

Traditional leadership tied to the traditional social structure for the whole ethnic group is important for the survival of the culture and language of the ethnic group against external pressures or influences. This has been evident from the functionality of the *adat* village

⁸ However, it should be noted that ‘small numbers’ in other socio-geographical and political contexts may not be a problem and may not constitute a variable contribution to the language marginalisation or endangerment. It has been reported that a small number of 500 speakers may turn out to be a healthy number, e.g. in the context of Pacific languages (Grimes 1995). Other factors such as the speaker’s attitude and external or macro-level variables (i.e. national, regional and local settings) are also crucial (Grenoble and Whaley 1998).

in Bali. As discussed earlier, the traditional system provides a means or a mechanism for the local community not only to take care of their own traditional internal matters such as community rituals and land disputes, but also to consolidate collective efforts to safeguard their interests against other ethnic groups at the local or regional levels. Unfortunately, this is lacking with the Rongganese as a result of the dismantling of the traditional socio-structural system of *kedaluan*. The Rongga people now appear to have become too occupied in internal conflicts and rivalries among clans, and are not fighting for their common interests at the district or sub-district levels in modern Indonesia.

In addition, we have observed how the *adat* structure in Bali can be innovatively extended to achieve or fulfill common economic benefits. The abolishment of *adat* structure at the village level in Rongga has led to the unavailability of means for the local community elders/leaders in Rongga to function as well as the Balinese village leaders. While there are Rongga clan chiefs around, they are not in any way part of *adat* organization at the village level, nor are they elected by the community members, and therefore they have no authority in leading the community at the village level. Unfortunately, the current village chiefs, who are not clan elders, are rather passive (as is the case with civil servants in Indonesia generally). They are in a position to lead in the absence of functional *adat* structure in Rongga, and could play a key role. However, this has not happened (yet).

e. Funding Support, Local Economy and Poverty. Successful programs need good financial support. Therefore, a strong regional and local economy is an important factor for cultural and language maintenance or revival. It is not cheap to run and support long term language/cultural maintenance and revival programs. The costs include expenses for providing the necessary training of the local language workers and for building a local language and cultural centre. This centre also must have facilities that enable the local language workers to work with the local community. Maintaining the facilities and providing support for the programs run by the language workers (e.g. production of materials for literacy programs) may run to millions in Indonesian rupiah annually, which is expensive in local terms. The provincial and district governments in Bali, particularly the districts of Badung and Gianyar, could provide financial support to a range of local cultural and language programs including *desa adat* because of good local revenues based on local taxes and other locally-generated government revenues or PAD (*Pendapatan Asli Daerah*), under the local autonomy.

The regional/local economy in Flores and NTT (East Nusa Tenggara) province is a different story. NTT is one of the poorest regions in Indonesia. The local district government of Manggarai does not have much of a budget for cultural community programs for ethnic minorities like Rongga. While there is some funding from the central government, it is to support basic needs, e.g. distribution of *raskin* (*beras miskin* or rice for the poor) and cash for the poor. Even in this case, from my experience in Rongga, much of the money often does not reach the ordinary people who so desperately need it, as it encounters corruption along the way, even by the village head. It is well known that corruption is indeed a serious problem across Indonesia.⁹

⁹ Corruption of government assistance for the poor such as *raskin* (rice for the poor), JPS (*Jaring Pengaman Sosial* or social security net), BLT (*Bantuan Tunai Langsung*, or direct cash assistance) has been well reported in the media in Indonesia, e.g. the corruption case in Bogor (West Java) in

Recall that there is active community/private participation and support in cultural/language revival programs in Bali, e.g. the *ajeg* Bali movement, the launch of private Bali TV, palm-reading/singing groups for shows or competition on local TV stations. This active participation and support is made possible because the indigenous economies of Bali are strong. Ordinary people are by and large doing well economically in Bali. Only 6.8 % of Balinese are below the poverty line (base on BPS 2006).

In NTT, in contrast, 77% of the people are living below the poverty line. My field-work experience in Rongga villages suggests that the percentage is even higher than this official statistic. I noticed that most of the ordinary people struggled to have daily meals. Naturally, they did not enthusiastically participate in cultural programs since getting food was their priority. It is often the case that people expect to be paid for their participation in community programs. This can be perhaps partly be blamed on the common practice of the new order government, that if there is a government project, money from the government is involved, and they expect to have a share of it. In Bali, in contrast, people would be generally willing to donate and spend their own money for certain festivals/programs.

Thus, there is a clear link between the motivation for cultural/language maintenance and the state of local economies. Edward (2004) highlights the importance of indigenous economies in language maintenance. He points out that local business initiatives offer local communities opportunities, independence, and power to conduct their affairs in accordance with their traditional values. In addition, the local workplaces created by good local economies are a natural setting for using (minority) local languages. Comparing the local economies where Rongga and Balinese are used shows how minorities are disadvantaged, helpless, and not enthusiastic in cultural/language programs. In addition, it also points to the difficulty in empowering them, because getting rid of poverty, or alleviating it, is a complex issue that has no easy solution.

f. Literacy, Literary Tradition and, Language Teaching. Writing provides another means by which traditional knowledge and other cultural information can be stored and transmitted across generations. The written medium also enables creative literary work that in turn enriches the culture, and contributes to the viability of the culture and language. Teaching local children the ability to read and write in their local language, in addition to speaking it, is as important as the written tradition because it will ultimately enhance the capacity of the children to help maintain their language and culture.

Balinese also has a long tradition of literacy in local (palm leaf or *lontar*) and modern scripts. Short stories, novels and poems have been published in Balinese since the early 20th century. Rongga in contrast has no similar local script. While there has been some work on poems, they are not yet published, but only produced in a restricted context in church. The closest thing to traditional poems in Rongga is *vera*. However, *vera* is an oral verbal art performed simultaneously with dancing. *Vera* is never written or produced in written form.

the daily *Kompas* (<http://www.kompas.com/kompas-cetak/0505/04/metro/1726898.htm>). A detailed discussion of key aspects of wide spread corruption in Indonesia is given in Henderson and Kuncoro (2004).

The standard orthography of the local language is important in literacy programs. Balinese has long had an established orthography. Rongga orthography is, however, still in the process of being standardized. I have initiated this as part of the Rongga documentation project, however approval from the wider Rongga community is needed.

Including local language in the school curriculum is also an important part of a literacy program. In Bali, Balinese is the local language taught as part of the *mulok* (*muatan lokal*, or local curriculum content) to all students of primary schools in Bali, even to the non-Balinese who happen to attend public schools in Bali. In contrast, Rongga is not taught even at the primary schools in the Rongga territories. The chosen local language selected as *mulok* is Manggarai, the language of the dominant ethnic group of the district. Again this highlights the problem of how minority languages are disadvantaged even at the district level of local autonomy.

Developing teaching materials also poses a problem for minority languages due to cost and time constraints. Languages selected by the local government as *mulok*, such as Balinese and Manggarai, receive a special budget for this from the district government. Teaching materials are therefore generally well developed and made available to local teachers for free. In contrast, teaching materials for a minority language like Rongga are not available, and have to be personally developed and produced by the local teacher. It is often the case that he/she has not much time to do this.

Furthermore, there may be problems in teaching the materials at the local school. In collaboration with a local school teacher, I developed teaching materials in Rongga. However, there was a problem of finding the time slot in the already over-crowded schedule. In addition, there was another problem: the ‘no benefit’ problem with respect to student performance in the *mulok* test. Since the *mulok* test is in Manggarai, it makes sense to give Manggarai priority, not Rongga. While there is no evidence to support this, the primary school teacher I talked to was concerned that giving priority to Rongga would mean less time for teaching Manggarai. And, according to them, this might result in students’ poor performance on the *mulok* test.

6. FINAL NOTES. In this final section, I provide a brief summary, followed by discussions of capacity building, long-term support, and future prospects.

6.1 SUMMARY. The summary in Table 1 shows how Rongga (column 3) is disadvantaged in all aspects that are enjoyed by Balinese (column 2). This appears to be a typical picture of a small language of a marginalized minority ethnic group. Rongga lacks institutional, organizational and financial support at the regional/provincial level as well as at the district and sub-district levels. Regional and local politics do not help either. The function of the traditional *adat* structure is diminishing, and totally disconnected from the village (social) structure. This has long crippled the *adat* laws and has not been healthy for the maintenance of the culture and language. In addition, widespread poverty is a big problem. This has resulted in poor human resources and also the inability of the local people at the grass roots level to actively participate in programs organized by outsiders and/or to be independently engaged in programs they design themselves.

6.2 CAPACITY BUILDING: WHAT, WHO, AND WHERE? Given the complexity of cultural, socio-political and economic variables involved in the local levels in the maintenance and revival of local languages as discussed earlier, capacity building must address issues related to these variables at different levels. To be useful and realistic, it is important to adopt the view that capacity building is more than simply developing human resources. Capacity building must also include strengthening organizations and reforming institutions (cf. Grindle 1997). I suggest that these must be at national, regional and local levels. This is depicted in 4.

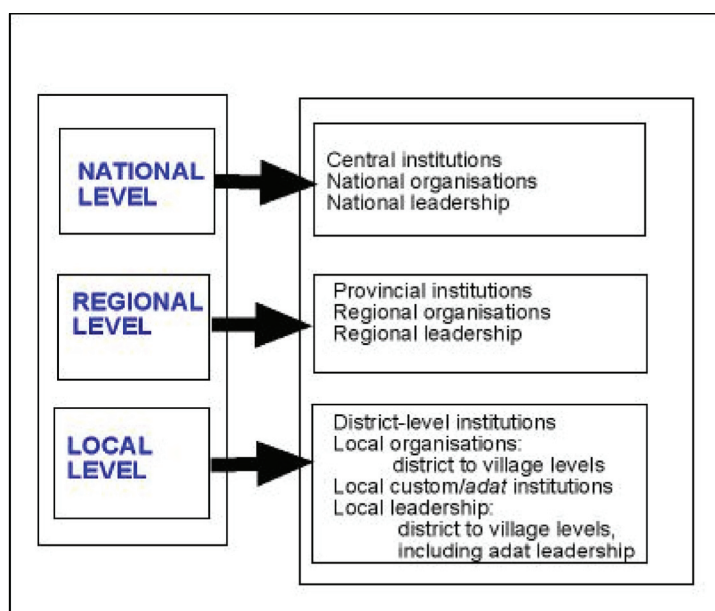


FIGURE 4. Targeted institutions, organisations, and groups in capacity building programs¹⁰

It is clear that the task of capacity building in this view is a huge one. However, there are certain things that a field linguist can do to help (discussed below). Of course, there are complex matters that are beyond the capability of an ordinary field linguist, e.g. alleviating poverty (see the cells with a question mark in Row 4 of Table 1 for a complete list).

A linguist can certainly help to develop human resources for language maintenance. Ideally, this must be done at all levels. However, the emphasis must be on developing human resources at the regional, district and village levels as these are the levels that actually matter and could make a difference. The options include short training courses, training of trainers, enrolment in academic programs, and consultancy services. The choice of programs depends on available funding. However, it is perhaps realistic that linguists and other faculty members of the regional/local university, e.g. those in Ruteng or Kupang in case of NTT are targeted in this capacity building program. These faculty members are

¹⁰ This model is inspired by Mera (2000).

respected and listened to by the locals. They are most likely to be consulted by the local government and are in the position to apply for grants from the regional and/or central government. Such grants then can fund research and community programs that include the local people at the grass-roots level.

My experience from Flores suggests that local teachers and *tokoh adat* (customary elders) may play a significant role and therefore must be targeted in capacity building programs. A capacity building program targeting mixed groups of Indonesians (university lectures, teachers, and language workers) from across the archipelago was initiated in 2006 in the form of a language documentation workshop, in which I took part (see Florey and Himmelmann 2008). As part of Rongga documentation project, I also organized two workshops (2004, 2006) at Udayana University in Bali targeting university lecturers from across Indonesia.

For the basis of the discussion in this paper, I suggest that capacity building must also include reviving the role of traditional customary (*adat*) laws at the village level. New autonomy laws 22/1999 and 32/2004 provide a legal basis for reviving and strengthening the customary system. From the foregoing comparative discussion of Balinese and Rongga, it should be clear that strengthening institutions/organizations (including *adat* ones) is as important as developing human resources. We have seen how the traditional social structure at the village level of *desa adat* in Bali is still intact, functional, and can adapt to new challenges, e.g. revising *awig-awig* (*adat* laws) and extending its responsibilities to include managing modern businesses to provide financial support for local community activities.

Reviving indigenous *adat* structures would not be an easy task for Rongga. *Adat* in Rongga is increasingly restricted to ceremonial or ritual affairs (*upacara adat*) in relation to *rumah adat* (the clan house) and the garden. There has been an attempt recently to form a committee of elders in Rongga headed by the former Deputy Dalu, Mr. Anton Gelang. However, this does not appear to go far enough to revive the social structure that used to be functional for the Rongga ethnic group. Modeling on the dualism or co-existence of Balinese *dinas* and *adat* at the village level, and forming another upper layer of structure of *adat* for the whole ethnic group could be an alternative to explore.

The significance of reviving (or maintaining) custom and customary leaders gets empirical support from other parts of Indonesia. In Kei (south-east Maluku), for example, traditional leadership within traditional local autonomy has proven to be able to stop Christian-Muslim fighting spreading from Ambon to the island (in 1999) and brought the community together again (Laksono 2002; Laksono and Topatimasang 2004). While the earlier law on village government (5/1979) had totally destroyed traditional village autonomy, one of the customary Kings of Waltar, Raja JP Rahai, succeeded in retaining customs in his territory which consists of several villages with different religions.

When the conflict broke out, using his traditional authority and prestige, he managed to stop the conflicts, not only within its territory but also in other villages as he succeeded in launching a movement of customary reconciliations with other traditional leaders. He inspired Kei Islanders with the idea that they belonged to one community long before the segregation created by the arrival of world religions (Islam, Catholic and Protestant), which often coincide with current Indonesian administrative units of villages, and that peace depended on community initiatives. This traditional concept of 'one-ness' played a significant role in ending the conflict in Southeast Maluku. Arguably, there always appears

to be a similar indigenous concept in other cultures, e.g. the concept of *krama* Bali (roughly, Balinese brotherhood) in Balinese. This traditional concept can be revived, not only to resolve local conflicts, but also to safe-guard local traditions, cultures and languages.

6.3 LONG-TERM SUPPORT. Capacity support is as important as capacity building. Institutions, organizations, and legislatures can be reformed, created, or strengthened at a particular point in time. However, long term support is needed to ensure that whatever has been reformed or created functions well and that the functionality is sustainable. Providing long-term support for local communities highlights the need for developing good human resources at the most local level, because they are agents of change who live with, or are geographically close to, the local community. Geographical proximity would enable them to have regular or constant interaction with the local community. In this way, support for the local needs can be delivered efficiently. This is critical since communication and traveling is generally a problem in eastern Indonesia.

The availability of local institutions, infrastructure and incentives for those who have been trained so that they can put their skills and knowledge into practice is important for long-term support. At the national level, international organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank have been working on the issue of capacity building (for purposes more broad than simply cultural/language maintenance).

However, young Indonesians who are highly trained overseas in advanced countries are unable to play a role in managing and advancing their own country because of lack of infrastructure, incentives and institutional/organisational support. The same is true at the local level in Flores generally. Young locals educated outside Flores (mainly in Java or Bali) are back home but they are unable to work in their field of training, or they are unable to participate in governance. There are at least three locals who have been trained for language documentation in my Rongga project. However, the unfortunate fact is that they have not been able to do language and cultural documentation without my continuous financial support.

Long-term support in terms of infrastructure and incentives is ultimately the responsibility of the local government. The officials of the relevant local government institution must therefore be targeted in any local capacity building program. Their awareness of the issues involved and their active involvement and support is crucial.

6.4 PROSPECTS. Both capacity building and support involves complex and inter-related variables as seen in Table 1. While there appears to be no easy shortcut to solutions, and the desired outcome can not be achieved in the foreseeable future, current political change towards decentralization in Indonesia brings about a good prospect for reviving the local cultures and languages. The challenge now is how to turn it into reality, especially for disadvantaged minority groups like Rongga. It should be noted, however, that the national and local politics in fast-changing Indonesia has led to uncertainties whether the central government and DPR would whole-heartedly implement local autonomy as in the spirit of reformation, and whether priority would be indeed be given to local language/cultural maintenance.

Generally speaking, an ethnic group that is big enough to control the entire district government has the opportunity to take full advantage of local autonomy in modern Indonesia because autonomy is given to the district government. Controlling the district government means controlling policies and resources, including those that benefit their local languages/cultures. There is now a growing trend for *pemekaran* (splitting administrative units) across Indonesia. In Flores territorial boundaries of newly formed district units often coincide with the territorial boundaries of ethnic groups. For example, the former district of Ngadha, which used to include the areas of Ngadha and Naga-Keo, now has been split into the new districts of Ngadha and Naga-Keo. In theory, this trend would benefit local cultures and languages of the controlling ethnic group in the district.

Unfortunately, it appears that small minority groups such as Rongga would still be disadvantaged because they are scattered in a couple of villages, too small in number to control the district government. The district government is, and will always be, controlled by the majority group, e.g. in the case of Rongga in Manggarai, by the Manggaraian. One way of getting around this problem is to revive and strengthen traditional customary (*adat*) autonomy at the village level.

As suggested earlier, the Bali model of dualism and co-existence of village social structures could be used as a model as this co-existence has proven to benefit local cultures/languages. However, this requires specific local legislation and therefore the good will and cooperation of the dominating ethnic group to pass such legislation. Reviving the local customary system would ensure that the minority groups can take care of their interests, and that there is no return to Soeharto's style of controlling and politicizing villages for the benefit of certain groups within the district government.¹¹

Fortunately, Indonesia appears to have reached a point of no return in terms of democracy. Ethnic groups (both large and small) have formed powerful alliances called AMAN (*Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara* or the National Alliance of Customary Societies) whose goals, among others, are to revive and empower the *adat* customary systems including the minority ones. Importantly, they have encouraged *tokoh adat* (prominent *adat* elders) to get actively involved in local, regional, and national politics, and to run in the election for the local legislative assembly (DPRD) and central legislative assembly (DPR). Their active participation within a modern democratic system would hopefully lead to a greater number of members of DPR(D) elected from educated ethnic elders. Then, hopefully bio-cultural diversity of indigenous people of Indonesia with the associated *adat*/customary rights would be well taken care of in New Indonesia. There is a downside of this, however. *Adat* could become a political commodity exploited for the personal benefit of the elders rather than the community.

¹¹ The return of 'centralisation' of the Soeharto's style under the guise of district autonomy is possible, given the fact that the district government is powerful under the new autonomy.

TABLE 1 - Balinese and Rongga compared: a summary of a range of inter-related variables involved in capacity building and support

(1)	(2) Balinese	(3) Rongga	(4) Notes; what to do?
Institutional/ organizational support:			
Local Government & Institutional support	Strong at provincial and district levels	Almost no support	Complex issues involved
Traditional social institution/ structure: customary (<i>adat</i>) system	Strong at the village level; co-existence of official (<i>dinas</i>) and traditional customary systems	The <i>adat</i> system almost ceased to be functional at the village level	Revive the customary system; local government legislations (<i>perda</i>) are needed
Community support	Strong Bali wide	Weak	Complex issues involved: increase awareness and empowerment of the locals
Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)	There are NGOs dealing with language and cultural matters	Available NGOs generally deal with poverty alleviation.	Encourage local NGOs to extend activities include cultural and language matters
Financial support:			
Regional/local economy	Good	Poor	Complex issues involved, almost beyond anybody's control
Government funding for cultural/ language programs	Good contribution by provincial and district governments	very little or none	The situation could be better in future under local autonomy

Non-government funding for cultural/language programs	NGOs, community, individuals	none	Help to set up local NGOs; help them apply for grants for local projects
Average income and poverty	Bali: 6,8% below poverty line	East Nusa Tenggara: 52% very poor 25% poor (in 2002); 27,86 % below poverty line	Complex issues: widespread poverty is a real problem in NTT
Regional and local politics	Provincial and district levels controlled by the Balinese	Disadvantaged: not in control of the local government, even at the sub-district (or village) level	Encourage local elders/leaders to run as candidates for local DPR? Seems not realistic at least now
Literacy and education	Long literacy tradition in local and modern scripts; Balinese taught as <i>mulok</i> (local curriculum contents) at schools; Department of local languages at Udayana University; commercial books in/about Balinese available at local shops in Bali	No literacy tradition in Rongga; Rongga is not taught as <i>mulok</i> even at local primary schools.	Help produce books, stories, teaching materials etc.; standardize orthography; lobby and work with the local education department to develop and teach <i>mulok</i> for Rongga

Literary tradition	Long literary tradition	Almost no literary tradition	Help publish books, stories, literary work by the local authors.
Human resources	Good	Poor	Short training; enrolment at local university; consultancy
Leadership:			
Traditional leadership	Functional at the village level; proven to be a crucial factor	Almost ceased to exist at the village level.	Help revive the local customary <i>adat</i> system; adopt and the co-existence model of official (<i>dinas</i>) and <i>adat</i> system as practiced in Bali
Current context of modern democracy and autonomy in Indonesia	Benefited: the Balinese are the majority at the Province and district levels in Bali	Disadvantaged: Rongga is a minority group even at the district level	Join the national alliance of <i>adat</i> societies (AMAN)

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I Wayan Arka
wayan.arka@anu.edu.au