

Jero Tapakan: Balinese Healer **an ethnographic film monograph**

**Linda Connor
Patsy Asch
Timothy Asch**



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an ethnographic film monograph

Revised Edition

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Los Angeles: Ethnographics Press

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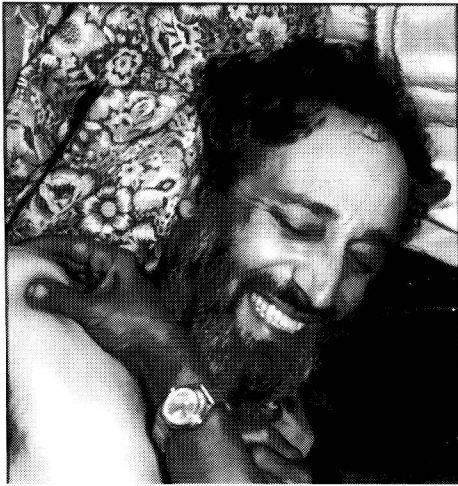
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To Jero Tapakan's grandchildren



Preface to the second edition

Timothy Asch being massaged by Jero Tapakan, 1980

When this book was originally published, in 1986, as a companion to our four films about the Balinese healer Jero Tapakan, we considered the project an innovative attempt to provide mixed media materials for teaching anthropology in universities. In the decade since that time, there have been many new developments in information technology. It is now possible, with sufficient capital investment and technical expertise, to produce digitized databases which combine print, film and sound materials. Computer-based learning modules using this technology are increasingly found in a variety of educational contexts, from pre-school to university. In anthropology departments, such as those at University of Southern California and The Australian National University, there are projects underway to develop teaching materials for anthropology students using digital technology.

Although we are in the process of making an interactive, computer-based program in collaboration with faculty at the Center for Visual Anthropology, University of Southern California, it seems to us that there is still a place for the current book to be used in conjunction with the films/videos. Despite the tendency for electronic information specialists to appropriate the term "interactive", our materials were originally designed to be used interactively by students and teachers, for classroom and individual study. It is by no means clear that books will be superseded by electronic formats; we believe there is still a high demand for materials that can be used with no technology or relatively simple machines such as VCRs. It may be a long time before many tertiary teaching institutions make the capital investment to provide adequate access to the necessary hardware for all their students; moreover, the considerable time, expense and expertise required to adapt multi-media materials to "interactive" digitized formats that are suitable for student learning, may mean that these programs will not rapidly usurp other teaching methods.

The 2nd edition of this book has kept the same basic structure and format as the original, but the text has undergone considerable revision, both with regard to correcting errors or ambiguities that we found in the earlier edition, and changing anthropological terminology and glosses of Balinese words in line with the general development of our thinking on these matters over the last ten years. The information in the book, both about specific persons such as Jero Tapakan and her clients, and about Bali and Indonesia more generally, has been updated wherever possible.

In October 1994, while the manuscript for this edition was in preparation, Timothy Asch died after a long illness. For some years before his death, he had planned the reprinting of this book and its distribution in an inexpensive edition with a videotape of the four films. Although Tim was not able to participate actively in the revision of the manuscript, he consistently encouraged and supported our efforts. In his long career as an ethnographic filmmaker and teacher, Tim had a significant influence on the more integrated and sophisticated use of audiovisual materials as a pedagogical resource in anthropology. With the publication of this revised edition, and the distribution of the films in video format through Documentary Educational Resources and The Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, we hope to have furthered Tim's goals, which we share.

Acknowledgments.

As well as the people mentioned in the preface to the first edition, we would like to express our gratitude to Gary Seaman for the encouragement and institutional support he has provided for the 2nd edition and for the generous contribution of his time to assist with layout of the manuscript and the addition of more photographs. We also wish to thank Mae Horie for her assistance with wordprocessing and Barbara Holloway for skillful copyediting.

Jero Tapakan has continued to maintain her support for and interest in this work, for which we are deeply grateful.

April 1995
Newcastle, NSW

Linda Connor
Patsy Asch



*Preface to
the first edition*

Jero Tapakan massaging Ida Bagus during filming

This book was written to provide detailed information on Balinese healing and to complement four films on a particular healer, Jero Tapakan:

A Balinese Trance Séance, 1979

Jero on Jero: "A Balinese Trance Séance" Observed, 1981

The Medium Is the Masseuse: A Balinese Massage, 1983

Jero Tapakan: Stories from the Life of a Balinese Healer, 1983

[A fifth film, *Releasing the Spirits: A Balinese Cremation*, 1991, includes footage of Jero and was shot in her village in 1978.]

We hope to demonstrate the value of having an anthropologist, who is familiar with the participants, their society, and their language, examine a filmed event. Films that try to present an overview of a society tend to be superficial and usually incorporate lengthier narration than the images can bear. We feel that it is more useful, for both research and teaching, to film specific events or interactions in detail and to complement the film with thorough written documentation than to try to present a general ethnography within the film itself. Because the final products provide a new type of teaching resource, we welcome critical comment.

Our book and films represent collaborative ethnographic documentation that involved both filming and writing. Jero Tapakan is the most important person in this collaboration: Her life and work are the focus of this project, and her skills as a healer and her enthusiastic support were necessary. Linda Connor, Jero's friend and a researcher of Balinese healing, provided the written ethnographic content and a translation of recorded dialogue and action. She also recorded most of the sound. I, Timothy Asch, stubbornly committed to integrating film and written materials in anthropology and ethnographic film, initiated the project, found the

necessary funding, and shot all the footage. Patsy Asch, besides editing and producing the films and monograph, provided much of the energy necessary to complete them. We could each be assigned a title—subject, anthropologist, filmmaker, editor—but that was not the way it worked. Ideas, suggestions, and questions flowed from one of us to another, and it is no longer clear (or important to us) who is responsible for what.

The Anthropology Department of the Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University, has been our most generous benefactor, providing salaries, equipment, and a studio, as well as funding for research. Documentary Educational Resources and its donors provided funds for production and a film distribution network. The Anthropology Department of the University of Sydney supported Linda Connor's fieldwork and, with the Anthropology Department of the University of Southern California, contributed to our production costs and allowed us the use of their film-editing facilities. The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research also contributed, particularly to our return to Bali in 1980, and the East-West Center, Hawaii, has supported Linda's final work on this monograph. Shelley Schreiner drew the diagrams; Judith Wilson struggled with our clumsy prose; Ria van de Zandt, Ann Buller, and Ita Pead helped prepare the manuscript and the many versions of the subtitles. The staff at Cambridge University Press—Susan Allen-Mills, Michael Gnat, and Barbara Palmer—provided invaluable assistance in the final editing of the manuscript.

There are many others who deserve our thanks: among them, Douglas Miles, Linda's supervisor at the University of Sydney; Nyoman Suweta, who transcribed many of our tapes; Anak Agung Gede Muninjaya, a Balinese doctor and friend who looked at early versions of the films and helped Linda subtitle some of the more obscure dialogue; E. Douglas Lewis, who put up with our interruptions of another filming project when we dashed off to Bali to film *Jero on Jero*, and our many friends who suffered through version after version of both the films and this manuscript—particularly Nick Higginbotham, who provided constant encouragement.

We thank Jero's daughter-in-law, Men Toko, who frequently cooked for us and gracefully put up with our erratic comings and goings. We thank, too, the many Balinese in the films, particularly Ida Bagus and Dayu Putu. We especially record our gratitude to Jero's son, Wayan Data, whose generosity, intelligence, and kindness we shall cherish all our lives.

Los Angeles

Timothy Asch



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Jero Tapakan, Dayu Putu and Patsy Asch

PART I: INTRODUCTION

ONE : The monograph and films

PATSY ASCH

A. Organization

We envisage this monograph and the four films on Jero Tapakan as a resource for students of anthropology and related disciplines. Rather than a book that should be read in chronological order or a single, long film that must be viewed in its entirety, from the outset we intended to create an integrated set of materials that different people could use in a variety of ways, depending upon their particular interests. Some will want only to view a single film once; others may want to see all four films, perhaps studying a particular passage by repeatedly viewing and examining shots in detail. There will be those who want only to read the film synopses, others who want to read Linda Connor's chapters on healing without reference to the films, and still others who wish to study a film in relation to our written documentation and analysis. We suggest that our materials—films and monograph—may be used to optimal advantage in teaching by projecting one or more films as an integral part of a lecture, with appropriate reading assigned, and by making this book and video-cassettes of the films available in libraries for independent study.

This monograph has been organized into four parts: an introduction and three parts related specifically (and respectively) to the films on séances, massage and traditional Balinese medicines, and aspects of Jero Tapakan's life.

Part I includes, in Chapter 2, a brief introduction to Indonesia and Bali intended for people who know little about the region. Others may wish to turn directly to Chapter 3, an introduction to Balinese healing, which provides background on social organization and religion for all four films and helps to place Jero Tapakan's life within her social world. In Chapter 4, Timothy Asch discusses how and why we made these films, giving an account of the history of this particular endeavor and how it fitted into his goals and experiences as an ethnographic filmmaker and anthropologist. Some technical information is included. It is in this chapter that the rationale for the project lies and our goals are most clearly articulated. The project has been a collaborative effort and would not have been possible without the particular combination of our individual experiences and training and that of Jero's.

Part II, on the films *A Balinese Trance Séance* and *Jero on Jero: "A Balinese Trance Séance" Observed*, is the most detailed in the monograph because it grew out of part of Linda's doctoral dissertation. Synopses of the two films are followed by Linda's ethnographic notes (Chapter 5), which provide background on such topics as offerings, sorcery, death ceremonies, and linguistic usage. Viewers of *The Medium Is the Masseuse* and/or *Jero Tapakan: Stories from the Life of a Balinese Healer* may want to read about several of these topics, since the information is not repeated later when these two films are discussed. In Chapter 6 there is a brief discussion of the circumstances that led to the filming of *Jero on Jero* and of the way it was edited. This is followed by a detailed shot list of *A Balinese Trance Séance*, in which the subtitles and narration of that film are juxtaposed with the comments Jero and Linda made as Jero watched the séance film for the first time; it was from this dialogue that we edited *Jero on Jero*. Also included are comments about the content and significance of each shot as well as notations about our editorial decisions. The chapter concludes with excerpts from the discussion Jero and Linda had after viewing the séance film. In Chapter 7 Linda provides an annotated translation of the complete recording of the séance (not just the segments included in the film).

Part III pertains to the film *The Medium Is the Masseuse: A Balinese Massage*. Again a synopsis is followed by ethnographic background (Chapter 8) that focuses on Balinese concepts related to the human body and the symptoms, causes, and treatment of illness. We have placed emphasis on information collected from observations Linda made of Jero's practice as a masseuse and dispenser of medicines as well as discussions she had with Jero and her patients; many quotations from the film are included. Chapter 9 is a brief discussion of the editorial decisions made and includes specific notes about each scene from the film.

Part IV provides background on *Jero Tapakan: Stories from the Life of a Balinese Healer*. A synopsis of the film is followed, in Chapter 10, by a discussion of Jero's life, with information to help the viewer interpret Jero's words. There are long excerpts from the translations of recordings of Jero's account, many of which were not included in the film. In Chapter 11 each scene in the film is discussed briefly, and the reasons behind our editorial decisions are given.

We have compiled a bibliography on Bali. With one exception (Weck's *Heilkunde und Volkstrum auf Bali* [1976], a major work on Balinese healing), we have not included the many important works on Bali written in languages other than English.

B. Relation to anthropology

We have not tried to write (or film) an ethnography of Bali or even a definitive account of Balinese healing. We began by filming particular interactions that were of interest to Linda in her research on possession, sorcery, and healing, and we have tried to make these interactions comprehensible to others. We focus on one particular Balinese woman (whom we have called by her title, Jero Tapakan) because Linda knew her well and Jero was an able and eager teacher. Of all the healers Linda

studied (58 were observed and interviewed, and intensive work was undertaken with 12), Jero was the one with whom Linda developed the warmest friendship. Her practice, incorporating as it did skills as both spirit medium and masseuse, was one of the most interesting. She was also one of the most popular balians (healers) in her district. We found Jero's practice fascinating and became involved in a friendship that grew more and more important to us.

In our most confident moments we conceived of the monograph and films as a model of one way to balance what film can do best—present visual, sound-synchronous, ethnographic data of particular events involving specific people—with the analytical, generalizing capabilities of print, which permit one to bridge temporal and spatial constraints in order to juxtapose and interpret with flexibility.

In editing these four films we have frequently sacrificed image quality for continuity in dialogue, but we have not included everything said. We have cut scenes when we felt the conversation was represented fairly without including all the dialogue. We began by editing the sound track and worrying only marginally about the images. Where we felt that to cut the sound, even though we did not have synchronized picture, would violate the meaning of the dialogue, we used cutaways (in our case, pictures of the same event but taken either before or after the sound that is heard). We did have to be realistic about the limits of editing based on conversation. For instance, we decided to cut out the long dream sequences in *Jero Tapakan: Stories from the Life of a Balinese Healer* (see section 10-D) because we did not have sufficient film of this segment. In our writings we have also paid primary attention to what people say rather than to their other behaviors.

Frequently there is a cleavage among anthropologists between those interested in looking at what people actually do and those interested in the symbolic content of what people say and in their stated beliefs. Film is generally thought to be best suited to the former. We have attempted a synthesis because we feel it is a false dichotomy: speech is action, and evidence of people's beliefs can be found in many other kinds of action. In *A Balinese Trance Séance* the viewer sees the event from a distance, as though through a window. There are times when it seems appropriate to sit quietly and observe without participating; this séance was such an occasion, and so the presence of the filmmakers is not made explicit in the film. *Jero on Jero: "A Balinese Trance Séance" Observed* was filmed, while Jero was watching the séance film for the first time, in order to convey her reflections about her own behavior as well as her explanations of whatever she felt was problematic. Certainly Linda asks Jero questions, and the long history of their relationship and Linda's research interests strongly influence Jero's comments, but it is clear, particularly when Jero ignores many of Linda's gestural and facial clues, that Jero herself is determined to make certain things explicit. In commenting on what she is seeing, Jero chooses to explain not the particular séance but rather her own experiences as a medium for deities and spirits: what seems to be at issue, for her, is her right to be a medium at all.

In the film *The Medium is the Masseuse: A Balinese Massage* the viewer watches a massage while listening to Jero, her patient, and Linda discussing the history and