

Some personal remarks about the history and concept of Ciliks Beach Garden

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Since 1983 I live mainly in Southeast Asia. The fascination of this region, especially Indonesia and Bali, its impressive nature and culture have made my desire to have a permanent place here. Together with some Balinese, German and Swiss friends and partners I have successively built up the small, very private resort since the beginning of the nineties in order to create a beautiful place of peace and relaxation for ourselves and our guests and a sustainable income for the Balinese.

At the very beginning there was no 'tourist object' at all. There was a young Balinese family and a beach property that stimulated the imagination of the German friend of the family. And slowly the fantasy was spun into a plan and implemented from the mid-eighties together with the Balinese friends. Gradually more German and Swiss partners joined, and so the very private beginnings unawares turned into a small guest resort.



*Two historical pictures: The beach in front of our property in Air Sanih in 1983
and a ritual Baris dance during a Melis ceremony in 1995*

What makes this place unique

As a result of the beginnings described above, a style has established itself that breathes more individuality, privacy and family atmosphere than is possible in conventional commercial hotels.

The years of partnership with Balinese friends have led to a close connection of Balinese traditions, Balinese lifestyle with Western dreams and desires for a tropical retreat. We, the western partners, enjoy this during our annual stays and are pleased to see that our guests also appreciate this special quality.

Often our not quite everyday concept leads to misunderstandings, on the side of the Balinese as well as on the side of the foreigners. While Indonesians first and foremost ask about the number of rooms and houses and, in a kind of belief in size, regard all numbers under twenty as a reason to smile sympathetically, Western questioners assume that the German or Swiss counterpart is the owner and « boss » of the complex. Our CBG project therefore has to be explained to both sides again and again, sometimes even further.

We are a community of partners, currently two Balinese, two German and one Swiss partner. A German couple retired a few years ago because they could no longer travel to Bali due to age or health reasons and were replaced by the Swiss partner. We have all brought something into the community and continue to do so: The Balinese provided land first and foremost, as well as their Balinese know-how, their untiring work commitment and their trust in our community. The foreigners provided financial investments, their Western know-how, a good portion of idealism and confidence in the functioning of the community too.

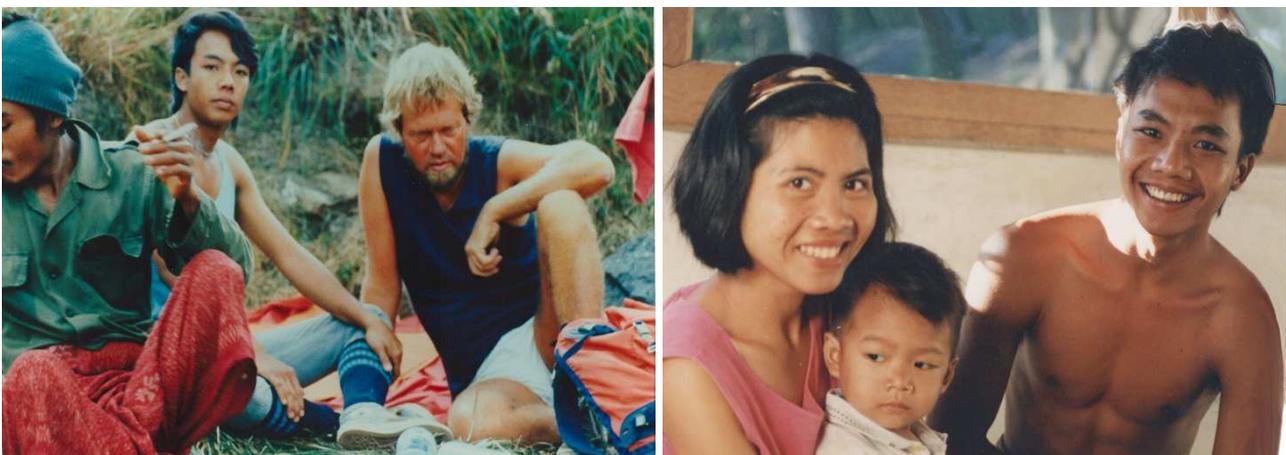
The owners of CBG are without ifs and buts our Balinese partners. We Westerners are guests and have no intention of owning anything in Bali. But while tourists usually book and pay for house, catering and services for their respective holiday stay, we have teamed up with our Balinese friends and invested in the long term to create something together that did not previously exist - Cilik's Beach Garden.

The „profit“: A beautiful place has been created, which the Balinese, we foreign partners and our guests can enjoy equally. The Balinese partners were able to build something that would not have been possible without us. And we, the guests, have reached an almost familiar position: we feel familiar and at home when we "come home" to Bali every year. The astonishing fact: This friendly-family atmosphere has also been transferred to our guests, as numerous enthusiastic guest comments testify.

For our two Balinese partner families, for 12 employees and their families, CBG is their life and economic basis. We have devised a sophisticated system to secure them financially more generously than is customary in the region. Every year we foreign partners live in "our" houses for a longer period of time and feel very comfortable doing so. Out of pleasure in the project and friendship with our Balinese partners, we continue to provide services and help in management and marketing. This is not a "business" in the usual sense, it is an idealistic project, but if it is to be sustainable, it has to be "paid for".

How it started

In 1983 I came to Air Sanih for the first time. Along the north coast of Bali I was on my way from Java to Lombok to avoid the south of the island, which was more touristy already at that time, and got stuck here unplanned. An idyllic coastal spot and a surprising friendship to Cilik and his family were the reasons.



Two photos from the eighties and nineties:
Rüdiger and Cilik at the Rinjani in Lombok and the young family: Cening, Cilik and son Jersan

At that time I worked as a guest lecturer at a state university in Bandung, West Java. I then came back every year during my time in Java and during the following working stays in Thailand, Vietnam and China and finally also after my return to my second home of choice, Valais in Switzerland.

The friendship with Cilik soon led to the plan to create a beautiful place together, where western wishes and dreams and Balinese traditions complement each other. Cilik's first house was built, in which he lived until 2007 with his wife Cening, and which then became the supply unit of the slowly growing resort. Villa West was the first house that we rented to acquaintances and then to guests. Slowly the garden formed into a well-kept palm- and beach park. And slowly our guests became more numerous. Among them Dr. Oldenbruch and his wife, who joined our "project of the beautiful place" after several vacation stays. The Villa Ost was built. And economic reason found its way into our project, which until then had been completely improvised and spontaneous.

With a double plot of land, with two villas and its own Gamelan orchestra CBG "consolidated" and quickly became known among insiders as a particularly beautiful and well-kept resting place on the northern coast of Bali. "The real gem in the area" the „Rough Guide to Bali" wrote as early as 1994. The renowned "Fodors Guide to Bali and Lombok" praises Cilik's Beach Garden in the same year next to a few selected accommodations on Bali's north coast. Since then you can find recommending descriptions in many Bali guides: "The Lonely Planet", "Footprint Handbooks Bali", Peter Rumps "Travel Know-How Bali", Hans Hoefers "The APA-Guide Bali", Stefan Looses "Bali und Lombok", "The Online Travel Guide to Bali" from 1998 and many more. Since 2002 we are listed in the excellent Bali map of the Nelles publishing house Munich and in the map of the "Insight Guides", and in 2009 the new edition of Polyglott "APA Style Bali" even included us in its list of the "TOP-TEN" accommodations in Bali.

Then the above expansion pattern was repeated: A guest of several years, Inge Croè, fell in love with our place, which, like all earthly paradises, of course also has its scratches, and decided to participate in our project: Two more houses were built on the neighbouring property: the Oktagon and the Lumbung, a little smaller, but in a similar architectural style and with the same guest service as the two villas, but with a new ownership structure, since the balinese family of Gede Putu was included as further partners. And finally, the Oldenbruch couple were replaced at the beginning of 2012 by the Swiss Zbinden family and their children, which is a welcome rejuvenation of our community.

Changes and rejuvenations will continue. They are the prerequisite for further sustainable development. Recently Bettina Bergmann has taken the place of Inge Croè, who is getting trouble traveling by now, and Bettina, with great energy and the unspent attitude of the younger generation, has updated our aging Internet presence and taken care of it, as well as our guest contacts.



The "kampung" of our Balinese partners



and the spacious beach garden of our guest villas

You will quickly feel the special of our place: Already when you arrive at Ciliks Beach Garden and from the entrance you first enter the part where the Balinese partner families live, work and from where our guests and we ourselves are looked after; when you then walk through the spacious palm garden, when you enter the villas and bungalows at generous distances, which are individually designed and furnished; and finally, during your entire stay, whether at a table tennis match with a Balinese partner, on a trip with one of our outrigger boats, while watching in the kitchen, dreaming in the garden, or relaxing in the very private and personal atmosphere of your house at jazz or a classical concert:

You have not landed in one of the usual commercial "rental cottages", but you have arrived in a very individual and highly personal place. And we hope that you will enjoy this as much as we do!

First of all, we have realized our own dream with this facility, creating something that we like ourselves and from which we assume that others must like it too. Beyond that we try to realize a tourism concept, which should consider the interests and interests of the Baliese, reduce negative effects of the tourism and promote a development that is as sustainable as possible. Finally, in addition to recreation and relaxation, we would also like to offer our guests foreign cultural experiences. These considerations may be illustrated by a few following examples.

Sustainability towards nature and the social environment

This effort began even before the construction of the first house, when we, together with some villagers, worked for the preservation and protection of the coast, which was endangered by years of sand mining. Meanwhile a balance seems to be possible again: by a strict and largely enforced ban on commercial mining of sand and pebbles, by the construction of a stable protective wall and by a revival of traditional use structures of coastal properties, favoured by the now larger number of private, small holiday resorts and restaurants in the area. Even in the wider area, there are no large hotels, but only manageable private resorts committed to sustainable development.

In the construction and maintenance of our houses, we use only local raw materials and supplies. In addition, we have of course been striving for energy savings and environmentally friendly waste disposal for years.



The Villa Ost in the early evening from the pavilion and the very personal interior of Villa West

As already described, the resort is a cooperation between Balinese, German and Swiss partners. The profit from the lettings serves first and foremost the economic security of the Balinese partner- and employee families and the maintenance of the facility. In addition to the two partners, we offer a further 12 Balinese permanent and 2 temporary employees from the immediate vicinity employment and thus economic



security for them and their families. We grant - rather unusual in the Indonesian context - our employees child benefit, training allowances, health insurance and old-age provision.

As with planning and construction, we now share responsibility with our Balinese partners for the maintenance and further development of the facility. In contrast to our model, in the usual cases a foreign investor leases a property, takes over the entire planning and operational responsibility himself, hires dependent local employees and claims a maximized profit for himself. At the end of the lease period, the property and the plant will then revert to the ownership of the local landowners, who, however, have not previously been able to acquire any experience and responsibility for the management and maintenance of such a plant. Countless sad examples in Bali bear witness to the fact that houses, gardens and services in such cases quickly deteriorate and no longer attract visitors.

The responsibility that has been shared from the very beginning in our project and that has been established in constant mutual exchange, the dialogue between traditional Balinese thinking and Western ideas and desires, is clearly recognizable in CBG. Reaching a consensus is sometimes a lengthy and laborious process, but it creates motivation, a special atmosphere and leads to results other than a "purely Western" managed facility.

A further level of effort for social compatibility and integration is our principle of awarding all purchases and work orders to members of the village community with whom there is a close network of cooperation. Thus the close relationship between Pak Cilik's family and the village community has not been disturbed by the social changes caused by the construction and success of the plant, but rather intensified (although there are always some envious neighbours).

In 2004 and again in 2008 Pak Cilik was elected 'Kelian Desa Adat', the head of the village ritual community. Within the 'Desa Adat', the traditional rural Balinese structures, this is an extremely honourable and responsible function, which Pak Cilik gave up after two four-year terms in 2012, in order to concentrate again with full force on the care of our guests. Since 2015, his eldest son Jersan, who holds a BA in Tourism Management from Denpasar, has taken over our management with great energy and empathy, and Pak Cilik has been elected Kelian Desa Adat in Air Sanih for the third time.

A wide range of cultural experiences

For many years the gamelan players of the village practiced traditional Balinese music on a set of instruments financed by Oldenbruchs on our premises. For practical reasons, they moved into the community hall of the village, but on request they can perform in front of the sea in our beach garden and show, together with young dancers, their skills at Babi Guling dinner in the evening.

On Sundays at the suggestion of Pak Cilik the children of the village practice traditional dances and gamelan. Nyoman, our service manager and boatman, is also the head of the Gamelan group. Several of our staff members are members of the Gamelan Orchestra, and one of Nyoman's brothers is Dalang, the shadow playmaster of the village.

Members of the village community are to be found daily in the houses of our Balinese partners in the central part of the resort, who, in addition to their functions for our resort, are closely involved in everyday Balinese village life. This also creates contact opportunities for our guests. You can watch the wives of our employees making artistic offerings. At your request, Cilik can take you to his parents' homestead

or to the sacrificial and cleansing ceremonies of the family or the village. And Gede Putu, the landlord of our two bungalows, is 'Pemangku', the village priest of Air Sanih since several years.

Although you can be very private as a CBG guest in your house, in the Balés, on the terraces and in your large, largely secluded garden and enjoy your peace and quiet, there are also contact possibilities that facilitate individual encounters and a natural contact with the village population. Since until now the numbers of tourists in the north of Bali are not large (apart from the regions Lovina and Tulamben) the rituals and ceremonies here are still more uninfluenced by tourism than in southern and central Bali. The already mentioned possibilities for cultural contacts in the village and our surroundings may be summarized here in a few examples to your suggestion.



A dancer at an evening performance



and the village's gamelang group in our garden.

In the immediate vicinity: The daily offerings and their production, the participation in ceremonies of the family or the village, the practice of the Gamelang group and Sunday dance exercises of the children and dance groups in the village hall. Nearby: a visit to the Dalang (shadow play master) and one of his Wayang performances in ritual context at family- or village ceremonies; the spinning and weaving of bebali and ikat fabrics in Pacung; making Wayang Kulit (shadow play) figures, paintings behind glass or a visit to a young, allied wood carver who, in addition to normal carpentry, makes small, fine utensils and teak masks.

Visit one of the forges in Sawan village where gongs and other traditional gamelan instruments are produced; visit silversmiths in Singaraja, visit an Odalan, a temple festival or a Ngaben, a burial ceremony, where unlike in southern Bali you will hardly meet any other tourist; the unique experience of a Wayang-Wong performance with old masks and robes that are not allowed to leave the village temple of Tejakula; observing the deep sea fishermen who use rare traditional kite-fishing methods for tuna fishing or the very special way of fishing Marlins, veritable big fishes - remember Hemingway's "The old man and the sea"... As you can see, this is more than you can "pack" into an even rather long holiday time.

How far you get involved with such possibilities and opportunities, or whether you prefer a more secluded, quiet relaxation time, depends solely on your wishes and preferences.

At our resort, you will be invited to relax in the tranquillity and aesthetics of our gardens, by a variety of reading and classical music, shady resting places and sun loungers on the sea terraces. You can also order our external staff for massages or yoga lessons on your house terrace or under the open sky in front of the sea scenery in the garden.



And if waves and currents are too strong, then dive into our new pool, where you can also meet the guests of the other houses, have a drink together or enjoy a snack.

With Ciliks Beach Garden we try to create a synthesis of Bali Hindu tradition and Western expectations and aesthetic demands. Enjoy the familiar, but also get involved with the unknown! This will intensify your experience, and with a little luck a "just" exotic holiday will become a culturally enriching experience that will broaden your perception.



Above: coconuts are harvested

below: our pool or the sea to your choice