

BALINESE DANCES AS A MEANS OF TOURIST ATTRACTION : AN ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

By : Lie Liana

Dosen Tetap Fakultas Teknologi Informasi Universitas Stikubank Semarang

ABSTRACT

Makalah ini menguraikan secara ringkas Tari Bali yang ditinjau dari perspektif ekonomi dengan memanfaatkan Bali yang terkenal sebagai salah satu daerah tujuan wisata di Indonesia. Keterkenalan Bali merupakan keuntungan tersendiri bagi pelaku bisnis khususnya bisnis pariwisata. Kedatangan wisatawan asing dengan membawa dolar telah meningkatkan ekonomi masyarakat Bali, yang berarti pula devisa bagi Indonesia. Bali terkenal karena kekayaannya dalam bidang kesenian, khususnya seni tari. Tari Bali lebih disukai karena lebih glamor, ekspresif dan dinamis. Oleh karena itu seni tari yang telah ada harus dilestarikan dan dikembangkan agar tidak punah, terutama dari perspektif ekonomi. Tari Bali terbukti memiliki nilai ekonomi yang tinggi terutama karena bisa 'go international' dan tentunya dapat meningkatkan pemasukan devisa negara melalui sektor pariwisata.

Kata Kunci: Tari, ekonomi, pariwisata,

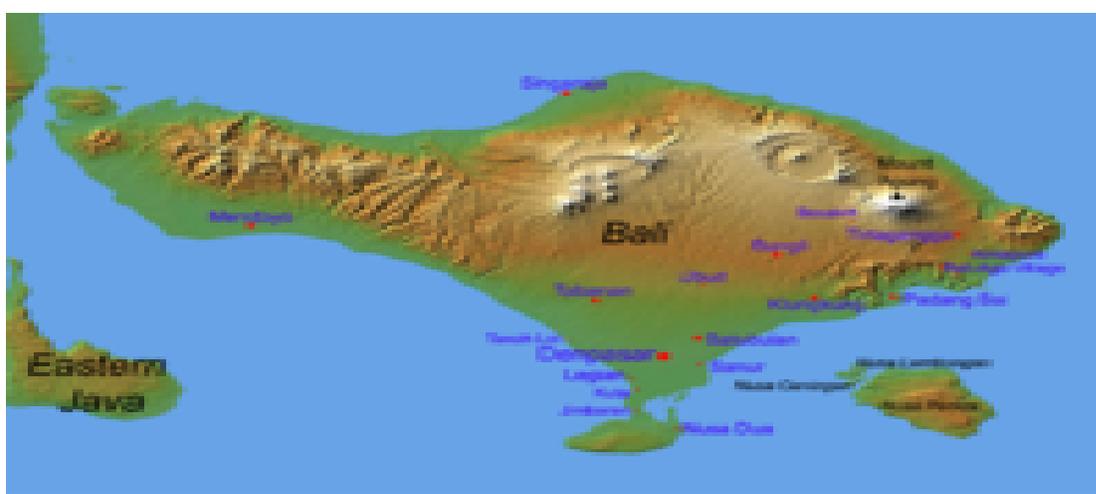
A. INTRODUCTION

It is commonly known that Bali is the largest foreign and domestic tourist destination in Indonesia and is renowned for its highly developed arts, including dances, sculptures, paintings, leather works, traditional music and metalworking. Meanwhile, in terms of history, Bali has been inhabited since early prehistoric times firstly by descendants of a prehistoric race who migrated through Asia mainland to the Indonesian archipelago, thought to have first settled in Bali around 3000 BC. Stone tools dating from this time have been found near the village of Cekik in the island's west.

Most importantly, Balinese culture was strongly influenced by Indian, and particularly Sanskrit, culture, in a process beginning around the 1st century AD. The name Balidwipa has been discovered from various inscriptions. It was during this time that the complex irrigation system subak was developed to grow rice. Some religious and cultural traditions still in existence today can be traced back to this period. The Hindu Majapahit Empire (1293–1520 AD) on eastern Java founded a Balinese colony in

1343. When the empire declined, there was an exodus of intellectuals, artists, priests and musicians from Java to Bali in the 15th century.

Three decades ago, the Balinese economy was largely agriculture based both in terms of output and employment. Tourism is now the largest single industry and Bali is as a result one of Indonesia's wealthiest regions.



Topography of Bali island

B. BALI : A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Bali lies 3.2 km east of Java and approximately 8 degrees south of the equator. East to west, the island is approximately 153 km wide and 112 km north to south (95 by 69 miles, respectively), with a surface area of 5,632 km². The highest point is Mount Agung at 3,142 m (10,308 feet) high, an active volcano that last erupted in March 1963. Mountains cover centre to the eastern side, with Mount Agung the easternmost peak. Mount Batur (1,717 m) is also still active. About 30,000 years ago it experienced a catastrophic eruption — one of the largest known volcanic events on Earth. In the south the land descends to form an alluvial plain, watered by shallow rivers, drier in the dry season and overflowing during periods of heavy rain.

Bali is one of the country's 33 provinces in Indonesia. The province is divided into 8 regencies and 1 city : Badung, Bangli, Buleleng, Gianyar, Jembrana, Karangasem, Klungkung, Tabanan, and Denpasar (city). The principal cities are the northern port of Singaraja, the former colonial capital of Bali, and the present provincial capital and

largest city, Denpasar, near the southern coast. The town of Ubud (north of Denpasar), with its art market, museums and galleries, is arguably the cultural center of Bali.

There are major coastal roads and roads that cross the island mainly north-south. Due to the mountainous terrain in the island's center, the roads tend to follow the crests of the ridges across the mountains. There are no railway lines.

The island is surrounded by coral reefs. Beaches in the south tend to have white sand while those in the north and west black sand. The beach town of Padangbai in the south east has both: the main beach and the secret beach have white sand and the south beach and the blue lagoon have much darker sand. Pasut Beach, near Ho River and Pura Segara, is a quiet beach 14 km southwest of Tabanan. The Ho River is navigable by small sampan. Black sand beaches between Pasut and Klatingdukuh are being developed for tourism, but apart from the seaside temple of Tanah Lot, this is not yet a tourist area.

Bali has motto : *Bali Dwipa Jaya* (Prosperous Bali Island). The languages are Indonesian and Balinese. Balinese and Indonesian are the most widely spoken languages in Bali, and like most Indonesians, the vast majority of Balinese people are bilingual or trilingual. There are several indigenous Balinese languages, but most Balinese can also use the most widely spoken option: modern common Balinese. The usage of different Balinese languages was traditionally determined by the Balinese caste system and by clan membership, but this tradition is diminishing. English is a common third language (and the primary foreign language) of many Balinese, owing to the requirements of the large tourism industry. Japanese is a prominent language on the island, learned by its inhabitants and used on signs. Staff working in Bali's tourist centres are often, by necessity, multilingual to some degree, speaking as many as 8 or 9 different languages to an often surprising level of competence.

C. BALINESE DANCE

Bali is famous for many forms of art, including painting, sculpture, woodcarving, handcrafts, and performing arts. Balinese gamelan music is highly developed and varied. The dances portray stories from Hindu epics such as the Ramayana. Famous Balinese dances include pendet, topeng, baris, barong, kecak (the monkey dance), and legong.

Nine years old Bali-dancer adorned in silk and gold. The headdress worn is indicative of the *Arja* traditional dance. In Hindu the dance is an accompaniment to the perpetual dissolving and reforming of the world. The creative and reproductive balance is often personified as Shiva's wife, Durga, sometimes called Uma, Parvati, or Kali. This has significance in Balinese Hinduism, since the common figure of Rangda is similar in many ways to Durga. In Bali there are various categories of dance (i.e. barong, legong, kecak) including epic performances such as the omnipresent Mahabharata and Ramayana. Bali dancers learn the craft as children from their mothers as young as age 4 (see a nine years old dancer on the right). In Balinese dance the movement is closely associated with the rhythms produced by the gamelan, a musical ensemble specific to Java, Bali and Malaya. Multiple levels of articulations in the face, eyes, hands, arms, hips, and feet are coordinated to reflect layers of percussive sounds. The number of codified hand positions and gestures, the mudras, is higher in India than in Java or Bali. It has been speculated that they have been forgotten as the dance was transmitted from India to Java. Hand positions and gestures are nonetheless as important in Javanese and Balinese dance as in India.

(1) Pendet

Pendet is a traditional Balinese dance, in which offerings are made to purify the temple or theater as a prelude to ceremonies or other dances. Pendet is typically performed by young girls, carrying bowls of flower petals, handfuls of which are cast into the air at various times in the dance. Pendet can be thought of as a dance of greeting, to welcome the audience and invite spirits to enjoy a performance.

(2) Topeng

Topeng is an Indonesian form of dance drama in which one or more dancers wear masks and perform ancient stories, often concerning semi-mythical kings and princes. It has origins in the 17th century. The dancer is usually accompanied by music from one of the many forms of gamelan. It is believed that the use of masks is related to the cult of the ancestors, which considered dancers the interpreters of the gods. The traditional masks are those of *Topeng Kras* (a violent, authoritarian character representing the power) and *Topeng Tua* (an old character representing the ascetic ideal). They're usually accompanied by the *Penasar* (buffoons), *Dalem* (a sovereign) and some comical masks symbolizing the people. In the Topeng theater, there's a permanent alternation between the sacred and the profane,

beauty and ugliness, refinement and caricature. Topeng dances are most prevalent in Bali and Java but are also found in other Indonesian islands such as Madura (off the coast of East Java). The word "topeng" means mask in Indonesian.

(3) Baris

Baris is a traditional dance of Bali, in which a solo dancer depicts the feelings of a young warrior prior to battle. Originally, Baris was performed as a religious ritual. The dancer may bear a kris, a spear, a bow, or other weapons, depending on the variant performed. The word *Baris* literally means *line* or *file*, and referred to the line of soldiers who served the rajas of Bali.

(4) Barong

Barong is a character in the mythology of Bali. He is the king of the spirits, leader of the hosts of good, and enemy of Rangda in the mythological traditions of Bali. Banas Pati Rajah is the fourth "brother" or spirit child that accompanies a child throughout life. Banas Pati Rajah is the spirit which animates Barong. A protector spirit, he is often represented by a lion, and traditional performances of his struggles against Rangda are popular parts of Balinese culture. The lion barong is one of five traditional Barong. In Bali each region of the island has its own protective spirit for its forests and lands. Each Barong for each region is modeled after a different animal. There is a boar, a tiger, a dragon (or serpent) and the traditional lion. The lion is the popular one as it comes from the Gianyar region where Ubud (the home of tourist viewed ritual) is located. Within the calonarong, the dance drama in which the Barong appears, the barong responds to Rangda's use of magic to control and kill her to restore balance.

(5) Kecak

Kecak, a form of Balinese music drama, originated in the 1930s and is performed primarily by men. Also known as the Ramayana Monkey Chant, the piece, performed by a circle of 100 or more performers wearing checked cloth around their waists, percussively chanting "cak", and throwing up their arms, depicts a battle from the Ramayana where monkeys help Prince Rama fight the evil King Ravana. However, Kecak has roots in sanghyang, a trance-inducing exorcism dance. In the 1930's Wayan Limbak worked with German painter Walter Spies to create the Kecak from movements and themes in the traditional sanghyang

exorcism ritual and the portions of the Ramayana. This collaboration between artists worked to create a dance that was both authentic to Balinese traditions but also palatable to Western tourist's narrow tastes at the time. Wayan Limbak popularized the dance by traveling throughout the world with Balinese performance groups. These travels have helped to make the Kecak famous throughout the world.

(6) Legong

Until today some Balinese think that legong is any non-dramatic dances performed by woman. One of the cause is the popularity of kebyar dances that become so popular in Bali after legong era. Instead, the word Legong Kraton, means 'legong of the palace', is often used by the Balinese referring to all repertoire of legong.

Despite the fate of legong that fade in popularity many decades ago, after it peaks in the beginning of this century, recently, slowly but quite encouragingly, legong regain it's popularity and dignity once more. This is partly caused by tourism industry and also by the work of individual, organization, or local government, who have special interest to the renaissance of this type of dance-drama. But one thing is certain, the beauty and charm of this delicate and feminine dance is indisputable. It's not easy to find any dance in Bali and in other places that comparable to the grace and beauty of the legong. Beside the dance it self, many of musical compositions that accompanying it is among the sweetest and most beautiful on the island. Original music for legong accompaniment is *gamelan pelegongan*, a kind of percussion instruments with bronze keys, cymbals, and drums, although it can also accompanied by *gamelan gong kebyar*, the modern gamelan of Bali. The dancers start dancing for public at a very early age. Traditionally they are selected among little girls in the village for their suppleness and beauty. They will go on dancing legong until the age of puberty, before they start dancing other type dances. Usually excellent legong dancers are respected as master dancers at older age and some of them also become respected dancing teachers.

'Stage' of the legong, as for many other dances and dramas in Bali, is called *kalangan* in Balinese. This is an open space with a kind of horse shoe half circle created by the spectators. With a big tree, usually an enormous banyan tree, overshadows the stage, and an elevated beautiful carved *candi bentar* gate as the back drop, from where the dancers emerge, the stage is complete. Watching legong performance in such a place under a moonlight at night is quite an

experience, for some, this also means a revelation. Up to now, at least eighteen forms of legong had been recorded. Some of them successfully revived only recently. And the others are quite popular that almost in par with kebyar dance. The legong are, *lasem*, *kupu-kupu tarum*, *jobog*, *kuntul*, *legod bawa*, *smaradhana*, *andir*, *condong*, and many others.

Some villages in Central and Southern Bali are considered home of the legong. They are, Peliatan, Ubud, Saba, Bedulu, Sukawati in Gianyar area, Binoh in Badung area, Kerambitan in Tabanan area, among others. These villages possess long legong traditions, and most of them still own high quality legong troupes today.

Some of Balinese dances are now labeled as 'classic'. This classic label only presented to an arts form that possesses exceptional quality and endurance to survive for many generations, and legong is considered as one of them.

Meanwhile, story of the birth of the legong is no less intriguing than the legong itself. In early nineteenth century, a prince in Sukawati was in a coma condition caused by his illness. In his coma he saw two beautiful nymphs dancing a feminine and delicate dance. Not only he saw the dance, he heard the sound of music that accompanying it as well. Struck by the mysterious and beautiful sight and sound, later after his health revival, together with artists of the village, he transformed his imagination into reality. So, born the legong, another performing arts form, as a gentle touch of the arts to the already arts fertile island.

At first legong, as well as other dances at the time, allows only male dancers. Many decades later, female dancers take place, brought legong dance to the new height as we see today.

D. ON ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

Three decades ago, the Balinese economy was largely based on agriculture both in terms of output and employment. However, Tourism is now the largest single industry and Bali, resulting in one of Indonesia's wealthiest regions. Although in terms of output, tourism is the economy's largest industry, agriculture is still the island's biggest employment, most notably rice cultivation. Crops grown in smaller amounts include fruit, vegetables and other speedy-cash generating crops. A significant number of

Balinese people are also fishermen. Bali is also famous for its artists who produce *batik* and *ikat* cloth and clothing, wooden carvings, stone carvings and silverware.

Although significant tourism exists in the north, centre and east of the island, the tourist industry is overwhelmingly focused in the south. The main tourist locations are the town of Kuta (with its beach), and its outer suburbs (which were once independent townships) of Legian and Seminyak, Sanur, Jimbaran, Ubud, and the newer development of Nusa Dua. The Ngurah Rai International Airport is located near Jimbaran, on the isthmus joining the southernmost part of the island to the main part of the island.

With the presence of globally known dances, Bali has become one of the most frequently visited regions in Indonesia, next to Yogyakarta, Solo, Prapat and many other tourist destinations. Balinese dances have gone international. Many dances have been performed by graceful Bali dancers all over the world as a means of introducing Balinese cultural heritages to many countries of the world. This is what is referred to as tourism representatives. Therefore, Balinese dances have positive economic contribution to Indonesian foreign exchange, particularly in Bali.

There are two ways that Balinese dances contribute economically. First, to the dancers themselves; it is logical to assume that Balinese dancers will be wealthier and wealthier, especially those who have gone international. One can imagine how much money they will receive for dance performances, more significantly when they perform the dances overseas. Secondly, Balinese dances will attract many domestic and foreign tourists to visit Bali; thereby becoming income-generating machines for Bali.

Therefore, it goes without saying that Balinese dances have to be preserved and if possible further developed and promoted. Most importantly, it at all possible, Balinese dancing schools be established for those who want to learn dancing. This is because nowadays many foreigners want to learn Balinese dances.

E. CONCLUSION

From the above short discussion on Bali, it can be concluded that Bali is the largest foreign and domestic tourist destination in Indonesia and is renowned for its highly developed arts, including dance, sculpture, painting, leather, metalworking and music.

The arrival of foreign tourist is increasingly important source of income for Bali, so every Balinese is responsibility for the preservation of Balinese cultural heritages.

It has been somehow discussed that Balinese dances contribute significantly to Indonesian economy in general and Balinese economy in particular. Therefore the following recommendations are proposed:

- (1) Balinese dances have to be preserved, developed and promoted at international level.
- (2) Balinese dancing schools have to be established to generate new dancers for both domestic and foreign interests.

Finally, I can justify that in economic perspective Balinese dances have significantly positive contribution. Therefore, it is undeniably our responsibility to maintain their existence without resere.

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