

Sow Love Reap Affection: Social Generosity in the Oral Tradition of Dutch Plantation Workers in West Bali in the Early 20th Century

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Abstract. This study aims to explain the practice of social generosity that originates from oral tradition. This practice was carried out by Dutch colonial plantation workers in West Bali in the early 20th century. They were workers who were brought in from outside the island for special tasks and with contract worker status. This study uses a historical research method. The first stage of this method is the heuristic stage which is carried out using field observation, literature and interviews. The second stage is source criticism who collected data is codified. The third stage is interpretation who interpreted data into facts, then narrated. The fourth stage is historiography who delivered the argumentative narrative. The results of this study indicate that the practice of social generosity in West Bali between Dutch colonial workers with various cultural and religious backgrounds occurred through a long historical process. Babad Cendek is an oral culture that has not only been successfully written into traditional manuscripts, but has also been practiced as a historical consensus in the community in the region.

Keywords: Generosity, Oral tradition, Workers

1 Introduction

Now days, concern about the decadence of national and state life can be observed in a number of events. After the fall of President Soeharto, for example, several of these events can be considered a test of the mental toughness of the Indonesian nation [1]. The Sampit case, the Poso case, the Aceh and Papua separatist movements have the potential to make Indonesia the second Balkans. These events are signs that the ideals of the founding fathers in the past regarding the sustainability of Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia has the potential to stop in the middle of the road. The above case shows that the Pancasila consensus that binds various elements and elements of the nation is starting to waver. By looking at the social chaos that is happening, it can be concluded that the resilience of Pancasila is being disturbed by issues with SARA (Suku, agama, ras, dan antargolongan), terrorism, radicalism, intolerance and politic identity [2]. After a long vacuum due to political and economic ties during the Old Order to the New Order, ties of religious and ethnic primordialism are starting to emerge like mushrooms in the rainy season.

After the fall of New Order, the desacralization of Pancasila and the phobia shown by society towards everything related to Soeharto became a trend. The strengthening of primordialism post-Soeharto was caused by the repressive attitude of the New Order from 1966-1998 towards every socio-cultural upheaval that occurred. The Development Trilogy which required national stability which became the jargon of the New Order caused restrictions on cultural expression. After the collapse of New Order, the Reform Order as its replacement also seemed to have no clear blueprint regarding the management of cultural expression [3]. Thus, the birth of the phenomenon of religious and ethnic primordialism is a natural process towards cultural freedom which for 32 years of the New Order was constrained [4]. If these primordialism issues are not resolved immediately, it is not impossible that other provinces will have the same fate as the disintegration of East Timor in 1999. At that time, Indonesia was one year old after going through a severe monetary crisis and the turmoil of a bloody political transition from Soeharto who was overthrown by students to B.J. Habibie [5]. During B.J. Habibie's short leadership era, a referendum on East Timor was given. The result was that the majority of the East Timorese wanted to become an independent country [6]. The oral tradition that will be discussed in this article is a kind of analogy of Pancasila. Its position is as an agreement of the past. The community supporting this oral tradition consists of three ethnic groups, namely Bali, Madura and Java. The three can be considered as a representation of a miniature of a diverse Indonesia. They were Dutch colonial plantation workers in the 20th century who were brought in from various regions in Indonesia (at that time called the Dutch East Indies) (Kol, 1937). Because of their social status as workers, they became one of the parties most disadvantaged when the global political configuration had an impact on national politics in the form of land ownership transitions [7]

Oral tradition in the context of this research can be considered as one of the elements of Indonesian culture. Oral tradition can be in the form of folk tales, fairy tales, folk songs, poems, customary procedures, and myths. The content is a message or testimony that is passed down from generation to generation. Oral tradition is very closely related to the life and culture of the community. Oral tradition can be a valuable source for knowing the history, values, and philosophy of community life. In addition, oral tradition can also be a source of inspiration and innovation in the fields of art, culture, and education [8].

By linking the oral tradition in this study with various national phenomena such as the strengthening of ethnic sentiment and religious primordialism, efforts to explore inclusive local values are still relevant to continue. In addition to being an effort to strengthen national identity and at the same time provide confidence in a sense of self that is *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*. The hope is of course that foreign ideologies that try to tear apart the fabric of the nation called Indonesia can be minimized or even avoided.

2 Research Method

This study uses a historical research method. The stages of the study include ; First, the heuristic stage, namely finding or collecting historical sources scattered in the form of notes, testimonies and other factors that can provide an overview of an event concerning human life. Historical sources according to their materials are divided into two, namely textual sources and

untextual sources. The textual sources used in this study were obtained from colonial records such as MvO (*memorie van overgave*), travel notes of western indologists, journals, articles and books about West Bali plantation workers. While the untextual sources used are oral story from informants.

Data collection techniques in this study were carried out in three ways. First, observation which aims to see and examine the object being studied, so as to be able to describe the object of research well. In this study, observations were carried out by making direct observations of the settlements of plantation workers in West Bali. Observation data, especially forms of culture such as mentifacts, sociofacts and artifacts, will then be documented through photos and videos. Second, oral history. Oral facts in this study were obtained through exploration of information conveyed by informants. It is important to note that the first generation of these workers has died. Only the third or even fourth generation remains. Therefore, this oral data will be positioned as a secondary sources. Third, literature study. Information about textual datas from this study can be obtained through colonial archives, travel notes, memoirs, inscriptions, diaries, newspapers that are contemporary. The textual datas, especially those that are contemporary with the theme in this study will be included as primary datas. Meanwhile, data obtained through books, articles, journals and or scientific writings are positioned as secondary sources.

The second stage in this study is criticism. It is divided into two, namely external criticism and internal criticism. External criticism is useful for finding the authenticity of the data. While internal criticism determines the problem of data relevance. The final result of this criticism stage is the codification and cataloging of data into primary data and secondary data.

The third stage is interpretation. At this stage, the data that has been codified and cataloged at the criticism stage needs to be interpreted. Through the interpretation stage, facts will be produced in the form of a narrative. Next, the narrative will be delivered in an analytical and argumentative manner. Of course, referring to data that has been codified and cataloged.

The fourth stage is historiography. At this stage, data that has been transformed into facts is narrated analytically and argumentatively, then contextualized with various other events so that they appear relevant and comparative. In addition, the narrative is compiled and presented in the form of historical writings that are guided by 5 W (What, When, Where, Who, Why) + 1 H (How). The hope is to produce a complete historical writing.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 History of West Bali

Geographically, west Bali area is a culturally open area. West Bali is the gateway to Bali from the west. Socially, this area shows the social conditions of the community that depict the Balinese ethnic group as not being the majority (BPS Buleleng, 2001: 188). Traveling from Singaraja City towards Gilimanuk Harbor, when entering Gerokgak District a heterogenous communities atmosphere, minimalist houses, and ritualism are evident. Even the existence of traditional villages that represent Balinese culture does not appear as strong as other areas of Bali [9].

Before becoming a settlement of people coming from various ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, the West Bali area was quiet from community activities. The area is filled with a little forest, but is dominated by savanna and steppe. There are no large rivers, and their existence with a small discharge will dry up in the dry season. Approaching the 19th century, foreign European private parties opened coconut and kapok plantations in this area. Due to the difficulty of getting laborers from other areas of Bali, the private sector took the initiative to bring in laborers from Madura and Java (Liefcrick, 1969). Laborers from other areas of Bali such as South and East Bali were brought in only when the harvest arrived. This was because most of them had the status of casual workers, and were not based on contracts [10]

On the other hand, laborers from Java and Madura would be given heavier tasks. They were assigned to clear land, including digging soil and clearing forest. Female workers were given lighter tasks such as weeding plants and sowing seeds [11]. After the harvest, laborers from the southern and eastern Bali regions who were casual laborers would return to their home areas. Madurese and Javanese laborers who were given heavier tasks built settlements and settled permanently around the plantation areas.

The first settlement of Madurese people who were tasked with clearing the forests of West Bali was carried out in 1918. At that time, A. Willem Remmert as the owner of the plantation concession brought 65 forest clearers from Sapudi Island, Madura. They were the first generation of Madurese people in Sumberklampok village [12]

The mass migration of people from East Bali to west Bali began in 1963s when the eruption of mount Agung. The area, which was considered geographically safe and quite far from the lava flow of Mount Agung, became an alternative migration destination. In the New Order era, the arrival of people from South Bali only began in the mid 1980s along with the increasing need for labor on plantation lands in Sumberklampok village whose concession right were transferred to PT Dharmajati and CV Margana.

During the Old Order, the placement of farmers from South Bali in former Dutch plantations in West Bali had begun during the leadership of the Governor of Bali, Anak Agung Bagus Sutedja. He borrowed approximately 50 hectares of Sumberklampok plantation land for 89 farmer families in 1962. However, before he had time to issue a circular to recall the 89 farmer families, their existence disappeared along with the bloody events of 1965/1966 [13]. There are allegations that the 89 families were accused of being PKI sympathizers. The reason for this accusation was because at the time of the transfer by Governor Sutedja, they were members of the Indonesian Farmers' Front (BTI), which is one of the organizations that is said to be affiliated with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).

3.2 The Opening of West Bali Plantation

Entering the end of the 19th century, with the increasing demand for commercial commodities of plantation crops such as sugar, tea and coffee which also had an impact on the decline in the popularity of spices, the Dutch colonial government in Batavia issued an Agrarian Law or *agrarische wet* policy in 1870. This law was intended to accommodate the interests of European private companies who were making long-term investments. They rented unowned land or horseshoe land with either *eigendom* or *erfpact* status. The presence of this law was

warmly welcomed by European private companies and a handful of Asian private companies such as China, Japan and Korea [11].

Therefore, its implementation was expanded, not only on the island of Java but also on other islands that were considered to have the potential to be used as European private plantation land. The main content of the 1870 agrarian law was more or less a statement of land ownership by citizens or what is called *domein verklaring*. The cleverness of the Dutch political strategy so that in the end all kings in Java and other islands submitted, causing the Netherlands to become the sole ruler of the areas they controlled. Although it still gives certain privileges to the king and his family. In the context of land, ownership of it is regulated in certain laws, where the colonial state is legally and legitimately the master, unless the king and his family state otherwise with certain reasons and evidence.

The Dutch influence officially entered Buleleng after it was conquered in 1849. Jembrana kingdom area which was previously conquered by Buleleng kingdom automatically became subordinate to the Dutch as well. The Dutch colonial influences expanded after an assistant resident was placed in Buleleng in 1885 and a controleur in Jembrana in 1856. The first land lease in Bali was carried out by I Gusti Made Pasekan, Regent of Jembrana in 1860 to L.G.G.R de Mey van Streefkerk, a clerk in Banyuwangi with a rental payment of f 1500 per year and the transaction was written on palm leaves [9].

After Puputan Jagaraga in 1848-1849 with the defeat of the Buleleng kingdom, politically, Dutch penetration had succeeded in officially controlling the kingdom. On the other hand, the territory of the Buleleng kingdom, namely the Jembrana kingdom, automatically came under Dutch rule as well. Dutch control grew stronger when they placed an assistant resident in Buleleng in 1885 and a controller in Jembrana in 1856. Geographically, the position of the Jembrana and Buleleng kingdoms was very strategic to support the Balinese economy. This area consists of a long coastal plain, hills from the middle of the southwest coast to the mountains [14].

In the early 20th century, the benefits of opening plantations in Java spread to the island of Bali. There was a discourse on opening plantations, especially in the southern Bali region. The plan was rejected by the assistant resident of Bali and Lombok who was then held by F.A. Lieftrinck. According to him, opening plantations in Bali would have a negative impact on the sustainability of Balinese culture and religion. He argued that the opening of the plantation would have a negative impact on Bali's hydrology. If this happens, it could cause drought and have a systemic impact on the fulfillment of food for the Balinese people. Not only that, Balinese culture which is based on water civilization will gradually disappear.

The impact of the presence of plantations is not only on water problems, but also on social aspects. The presence of plantations also encourages the migration of workers from outside Bali. According to Lieftrinck, this is very dangerous, because plantation workers from outside Bali will affect the quantity of Balinese society, besides they also bring culture and religion from their home regions.

On the same occasion, the Dutch colonial government was launching the Baliseering program, namely a program to make Bali a living museum and protect Bali from outside

influences such as Islam, Christianity and modernity. Therefore, the opening of plantations must be interpreted as an effort to open Bali to people outside Bali.

Although the explanations given by Liefrinck seemed rational, the private sector remained firm in its stance to open plantations in Bali. through very tough discussions, it was decided that the opening of plantations in Bali could not be done in South Bali which was considered the epicenter of Balinese culture. In terms of population, the population was large so that they could become laborers on the plantations. However, the risks caused this plan to be canceled. Instead, the sparsely populated West Bali area was chosen. Moreover, the land had the status of a horseshoe, was unowned and was the boundary between the Buleleng Kingdom and the Jembrana Kingdom. European private companies that opened up plantation land in this area were allowed to use labor from outside the island.

The type of plantation chosen is a coconut plantation. This is based on the increasing market demand for copra in the late 19th century to the early 20th century. The copra produced was then exported to Singapore and distributed to other Asian regions. In his report, Liefrinck stated that coconut production in his area reached 10 thousand tons per year. In addition to its relatively stable production, liefrinck also reported that North Bali coconuts have good quality and are rarely attacked by pests, making them highly sought after by the global market. Because the activity of picking coconuts is done manually, plantation workers who are tasked with carrying out this activity are taken from Javanese and Madurese [15].

The phenomenon of opening plantations or in other words the privatization of state land in the form of plantations by European private companies pioneered since 1860 has had a significant impact on the social and geographical composition of the region. West Bali, which was previously a forest area and a horseshoe area between the Jembrana kingdom and the Buleleng kingdom, has turned into a busy and open area. This is due to settlements made by plantation workers brought in from outside the island. they came from Madura and Java. they were assigned to clear the forest that was known to be haunted [10].

In 1930, the world experienced a recession. this also had an impact on the sustainability of European private plantations in West Bali. The plantations declined, then went bankrupt and were abandoned along with the presence of Japan in Indonesia in 1942-1945. after independence, several plantation companies were bought by Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent and the Balinese regional government [14].

3.3 Oral Tradition and Social Generosity

Kawitan is something very important for Balinese people to legitimize the status of their ancestors in the past. It is important because it shows the social role of the ancestors and of course has an impact on their ideological position. If *kawitan* that they interpret as a reference in the past has clear information and social position in the memory of the community, it will then be passed down orally to the next generation in the form of oral tradition [1].

.One of the oral traditions that is quite popular in Balinese society is *babad*. Because of the important position of *babad*, *babad* is a way for Balinese people to view the past, present and future. Not only that, *babad* becomes a positive energy in building and reconstructing past narratives and making them more meaningful. The collaboration of *babad* and *kawitan* becomes

a link between ancestors who represent the pioneers of the past with the present and towards the future. Both are driven by the ideals of the future to realize what is called utopia.

In the context of social generosity in West Bali between the Balinese ethnic group and the Javanese and Madurese ethnic groups, the position of *babad* and *kawitan* in presenting the legitimacy of ancestors so that efforts to establish unity between the three find strength. Although the concept of *kawitan* and *babad* is popular and identical to Balinese society, in this context, both the Balinese, Javanese and Madurese ethnic groups have agreed to make both of them a historical agreement.

Babad Cendek is a historical agreement between the Balinese, Javanese and Madurese ethnic groups. This *babad* is the one that records orally the existence of these three ethnic groups in the Dutch Plantation area in West Bali since the early 20th century. However, this *babad* was finally attempted to be written in the customary village regulations which were formally formed since 1967.

The need for a long-term and pragmatic *babad cendek* grew stronger when the three entities were faced with agrarian conflicts in the area. Agrarian conflicts are routine problems faced by the newly independent country. This conflict occurred because of the unclear ownership of land when the newly formed country did not immediately map the land. The agrarian reform that was discussed by Soekarno since 1960 has been neglected until now.

The absence of legal regulations on agrarian issues in Indonesia is generally also experienced by the Balinese, Javanese and Madurese ethnic groups in West Bali. Although *de facto*, they have occupied the area since Dutch colonialism in the status of plantation workers, when Indonesia became independent, the status of land ownership was unclear. There is even an impression of an effort by the state to remove the three for reasons that are more or less related to environmental issues. In the midst of this uncertain situation, they often become political objects from certain individuals. Whether it is related to elections or political support that uses the promise of land acquisition as a tagline. Therefore, the presence of *babad* and *kawitan* as agreements in the past not only brings unity but also strengthens the sense of belonging because of the similarity of fate and the existence of the same enemies and ideals.

4 Conclusion

In the context of multicultural society in West Bali, and in an effort to maintain their existence, *babad cendek* has not only become an oral tradition that has succeeded in socially uniting ethnic groups of different religions and reducing social tensions, but on the other hand is also needed to provide moral legitimacy in the face of a state that is making them objects of power. Therefore, all efforts that the state may make to erase historical traces, for example by offering a transmigration program under the guise of social and environmental assistance, will only be in vain. Time has proven the resilience of the local community. That the historical process becomes a consensus that paves the way for realizing utopian ideals.

Therefore, in this context, the homeland is a non-negotiable price. An attitude of indifference to bloodshed will bring about irrational mystical impacts such as *kepongor*, *tulah* etc. Therefore, the homeland must be maintained, just like the efforts to maintain the consensus of the past in the form of *babad cendek*.

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