

# CONTESTED CULTURAL LANDSCAPE: CITY AND VILLAGE

*A Case Study of a Village Tourism Movement  
in Southern Bali*

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## Introduction

It is well-known that, in Bali, there are two different village institutions in one village at tandem: administrative village (*desa dinas*) and custom village (*desa adat*) since the Dutch colonial period. Although the reinforcement of administrative functions had started under the 1974 law, the 1979 Village Government law No. 5 had a stronger impact on the change of the meaning and functions of 'village'. It established the administrative village, an alternative to *perbekel* which was established under the Dutch colonial period, aiming to allow state administration to control closely its population (Nordholt, 1991).

In un-urbanized villages, this is called *desa dinas*. In relatively urbanized areas, it is called *kelurahan*. After the introduction of the 1979 Village Government law No.5, it is said that like other regions in Indonesia, the Balinese custom village has functionally weakened while administrative villages were strengthened through the process of centralization of the state under the New Order regime.

In Bali, *desa adat* is everywhere. Every head of family has to be a member of *desa adat*. So, in Bali, 'village' does not necessary imply a small scale community in remote rural area or periphery. It is a community which is tied together by the custom law called *awig-awig*. To control custom villages under the administration, functions of *desa adat* were defined under the 1986 provincial order No.6. This meant that a *desa adat* is no longer an independent

institution from the Indonesian state but it has come to be more and more incorporated within it (Warren, 1995).

Since then, various state policies were implemented to promote *desa adat* under state control (Kagami, 2000). Furthermore, this likely caused a slippage in people's understandings of the correlation between religion (*agama*), custom (*adat*) and culture (*budaya*). During the New Order regime, custom came to be understood from the point of view of religion, and consequently the main role of the custom village leader has become the smooth implementation of religious ritual events.

On the other hand, after the fall of Soeharto's New Order regime, political conditions surrounding both administrative village and custom village have dramatically changed due to the decentralization, namely *otonomi daerah*, under the laws in 1999 (effective since 2001). Due to the *otonomi daerah*, there emerged a number of *desa dinas* holding a kind of autonomy such as free election of administrative village head and control over the preparation of budget. However, relatively economically developed villages, *kelurahan*, remained as the lowest level of administration of regency: in a sense a 'village without autonomy'.

Furthermore, under the provincial order No. 3 in 2001 *desa adat* was redefined as *desa pakraman* which literally means 'area' and is considered to reflecting Balinese uniqueness. However, not every village followed this change. A number of villages still maintain the name of *desa adat*. Thus, in Bali there are mainly two types of village: a village which is constituted by *desa dinas* and *desa adat*, and a village which is consisted by *kelurahan* and *desa adat*.

Today, contrary to Soeharto's New Order, the function of *desa adat* (*pakraman*) has come to be re-evaluated. Custom village has come to be regarded as a fundamental and indispensable institutional body to protect social relationships and preserve culture: a ground for Balinese identity. For example, this year's theme of PKB (Pesta Kesenian Bali) was 'Desa (village), Kala (time), Patra (circumstances)'. It refers to the variation of custom village in Bali according to time, place and circumstances due to the principal of village autonomy and difference practices. This term is nowadays often used in order to express Balinese self-consciousness of relativity: every custom village has, as a matter of fact, uniqueness. So, it is plausible to argue that 'Balinese identity' is in fact a kind of sense of belonging to a place.

While Balinese identity is seen as a consolidated entity for outsiders, it is becoming a very obscure and uncertain sense among some Balinese. This view urges one to rethink the meaning and role of the village as a basic source of 'Balineseness'. Due to the rapid economic development both physical and nonphysical landscapes in villages are changing. Today, this rapid change is extending over the sub-urban area. In this area, people experience and feel it more visibly and intensely.

In the era of reformasi, *desa adat* is considered as an effective community to confront and solve social and cultural issues. This is why Badung regency set forth a village tourism plan to remedy the regional gap. In this paper, I will illustrate how a contemporary village is socially and culturally shaped based on village tourism movement. First, I will describe Badung regency's new village tourism plan from the perspective of macro level. Then, I will describe the socio-cultural conditions of Kapal village (Desa Kapal) and show the micro level village tourism movement.

## Emergence of Village Tourism Plan in Badung Regency

Bali is well known as an international tourist destination and in 2010 more than two million tourists visited the island. Located in the southern part of Bali, Badung regency is the regency which receives the highest benefit from tourism revenue. Regional development planning has been conducted through dividing the area into three parts: South area for tourism, Middle area for industry and North area for agriculture. Contrary to this development plan, due to the rapid tourism development in the Southern area the regional difference between the three areas has come to be seen a serious issue for Badung regency in regional planning.

Today, as it is already noted above, custom village is regarded as the most effective and bounded institution to carry out various programs which aim at social and economic improvement both by NGOs and regional administration. Badung regency's village tourism<sup>1</sup> plan is one of these programs. In 2010 Department of tourism of Badung regency announced that Badung

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<sup>1</sup> There are several terms for alternative tourism such as ecotourism, village tourism and community-based tourism. They are consistent in terms of appealing to ethics and sustainability. However, they are understood differently. It depends on the stakeholders' awareness of his surrounding conditions.

regency selected eleven villages to promote village tourism (SK bupati Kabupaten Badung 2010). While nine villages are located in the North and their economy is based on agriculture, the other two are located in the Middle.

Although the term 'village tourism' is not new, in fact, in the 1990s Bali province actually conducted a program to promote village tourism in Jatiluwih village of Tabanan regency, Sebatu village of Gianyar regency and Penglipuran village of Bangli regency; at that time, however, villagers and village landscape had become only an object to be watched and enjoyed by tourists and thus, in a way, excluded from tourism. However, village tours are now shifting toward an experience of life in a village with communicating with villagers rather than just watching the village as landscape. Today's village tourism programs require villagers to engage in tourist activities.

According to Badung regency's announcement, the ultimate goal is empowering the community though encouraging villagers to participate in tourist activities while tourists are staying in their village by hosting, guiding and offering their house as accommodation. They consider that this will provide both economic and social benefits for the village community. The community mentioned is identified according to the membership of *desa adat*. Therefore, while *desa adat* has become a real channel and organizer in the tourism program, *desa dinas* has become only a coordinator.

According to the Tourism Department official, in the selection of village, it has become a condition that *desa adat* already has a coordinating team labeled as 'a community based group which is conscious with tourism' (named Klompok Sadar Wisata). This group plays a key role in organizing members of *desa adat* when tourists visit their village. Sometimes they are well-known people in the village and sometimes not. Normally members have experience in working in the tourism sector. Consequently, they are considered to have more knowledge about 'what tourism is and what tourists want' and play a role bridging villagers and tourists.

Thus, Badung regency's plan can be seen as a challenge to compensate for the economic gap between the Southern area and the others (it is not certain whether it will succeed or not) involving *desa adat*. In the plan of Badung regency, it is seen that they consider *desa adat* something like an omnipotent entity. However, as I will describe and discuss, the internal of *desa adat* is also

dynamic. Their conditions are becoming more and more complicated and diverse. Especially, this tendency already appears clearer in examining urbanized settings. I will demonstrate this by illustrating the case of village tourism movement in Desa Kapal.

## Desa Kapal

Desa Kapal is a village of Mengwi district, located in the middle part of Badung regency. According to the statistics of village office, in 2010 its population was about 11.000 people. Desa Kapal is a type of village which consists of *desa adat* and *kelurahan*. With the implementation of the 1979 village government law No.5, Perbekel Kapal became *kelurahan*. While *desa adat* Kapal consists of eighteen *banjar*<sup>2</sup> *adat*, *kelurahan* Kapal consists of sixteen *banjar lingkungan*. *Desa adat* Kapal has a village *adat* head called *kelihan desa* and nine supporter of *kelihan desa* consisting of a board called *bendesa*. On the contrary, head of *kelurahan* is called *lurah* who is a dispatched officer from the regency.

The village developed along the trunk road which is linked to East Jawa. Desa Kapal is well-known for home industry among the Balinese. Along the trunk road there are numerous shops selling materials for Balinese style architecture. According to villagers, home industry in Desa Kapal has been developing since the 1980s. Since mid-1990s, more and more shops were opened along the truck road as more shops were being successful. Before that time, the economy of Desa Kapal very much depended on agriculture.

A fifty year old woman told me when she was an elementary school student there was a month-long holiday during harvest so that children could help their parents in the rice field. Today, it is difficult to meet villagers who have farming land and actually engage in farming. Most villagers work for the home industry, government office, private sector or as truck drivers. Because of the transition of the economy from agricultural to industrial, villagers believe that poverty in the village has been much reduced.

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<sup>2</sup> Banjar is translated as ward or hamlet. Desa is constituted by one or several banjars. The lower organization of *desa adat* is *banjar adat*, and *desa dinas* is *dusun* or *banjar lingkungan*. Because Desa Kapal is a *kelurahan*, the lower organization becomes *banjar lingkungan*.

Of course, it cannot be compared with economic conditions of more urban areas like the Southern part of Badung regency and Denpasar, however, Desa Kapal is seen as a relatively wealthier and more urbanized village among the others in the Badung's village tourism program. As a result, Desa Kapal has come to be seen as no longer a traditional type of village due to changes in its physical landscape by outsiders. On the other hand, interestingly, there are dual discourses about Desa Kapal among the villagers. Many villagers state that the village has come to be relatively economically wealthy and developed due to the rapid development of home industry.

Today, there are few families that objected to the social security system. In 1980s, before the development of home industry, not many villagers could study at a higher education institution. However, now many young people study at the universities. On the contrary, they talk about their village as '*desa tua*', which literally means 'old village' proudly. This is because villagers believe that their *adat* is still strong in spite of economic development.

Today, among the villagers, the village is conceptualized and understood only in terms of custom unless the person holds a post in the village such as *kelihan banjar* and *kelihan banjar lingkungan*. If an ordinary villager needs to use normal administrative service, he or she goes to see *kelihan banjar lingkungan* to deal with it. Like other villages in Bali, *adat* is increasing its importance in ordinary people's life in Desa Kapal. However, in the case of Kapal, this tendency is likely more remarkable since villagers do not have right of control in the administrative arena of village and they cannot but be passive recipients of state policies.

Different from an urban area like Denpasar, almost all heads of a family living in Kapal become official members of the custom village. This automatically indicates that the head of a family has rights but also responsibilities at tandem to his living community. In this sense, village has become something like a micro level 'imagined community (Anderson, 1983) towards village community because the villagers' life is regulated and tied by custom law which is called *awig-awig*. However, the custom law actually regulating villagers is not village custom law. It is custom law of their *banjar* which was established based on village custom law. Therefore, most villagers experience the village very indirectly but they see *banjar* as the central living community.

## Self-Cultivation of Village- *Kapal* Village Ecotourism

As I have mentioned above, like other villages selected for village tourism, Desa Kapal has a group which is called Kapal Village Eco tourism (hereafter KVE) to organize and coordinate village tourism. In Balinese, the organization corresponds to *sekaa*. KVE was established in December 2008 under the approval of both *kelihan desa adat Kapal* and *lurah Kapal*. The structure of the organization is as follows: four villagers are in charge of management of tourism related activities under the management body there are six sections<sup>3</sup>. In these sections, fourteen villagers are in charge of each specialty. On the other hand, KVE was initiated mainly by four key members in charge of the management body<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, except for these four key members, it cannot be denied that the others' participation in activities is very voluntarily and occasional.

In conducting village tourism, KVE set up package tours depending on tourists' needs and wants. There are five types of package tours: a tour of village, a tour of Hindu temple, a tour of traditional agriculture, a tour of water temple, and a trekking tour in the river side. Tourists can combine these packages and request extra activities such as cooking classes and dance classes. If tourists want to stay in the village overnight, villagers offer their house for their accommodation.

In setting KVE, the four members conducted a survey in the village area for mapping objects which can be used for village tours. Although KVE was established in 2008, the preparation had already started informally since 2006 when Mr Alit who is a proposer of KVE started working with one of the local environmental NGOs in Bali<sup>5</sup>. He adapted the techniques of mapping objects which can be used for tours from the way the NGO applied them. Interestingly, according to the key members, they did not know about the history and the meaning of traditions which they had been practicing in depth before they started activities for KVE.

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<sup>3</sup> They are: 1. Culture and Art, 2. Environmental preservation, 3. Carvings and home industry, 4. Preservation of Cultural Heritage, 5. Data and Information, 6. Farming and Agriculture.

<sup>4</sup> At the time of establishment there are four key members. However, today one of them has left organization and they have a new key member.

<sup>5</sup> The story of the relationship between Mr Alit and the NGO will be described and discussed in another paper.

Through the activity of mapping, they discussed with other villagers who seemingly knew better about their respective specialty. Consequently, various locations and objects were listed and divided into categories such as nature, everyday life of villagers and culture for tours. An effect of this process can be said to be a kind of internal development of knowledge. They say that this mapping process gave them new knowledge and ideas on life in Kapal. On the other hand, as it will be discussed below, this internal development of knowledge does not necessary mean a re-recognition of their everyday practices, but rather an exploration of knowledge.

## Motivation of Local Elites

Due to the establishment of KVE, the proposer, Mr Alit has come to be regarded as a person who deals with all matters related to tourism in Kapal today. Mr Alit, 40 years old, was born as the youngest child of a well-known wealthy family in Kapal. This placed him in a responsible position to succeed his family<sup>6</sup> since his brothers are all living outside Kapal. This fact possibly influenced his strong sense of responsibility to protect community order. He had worked as a manager at hotel in Ubud for a long time and a staff working for the house of parliament in Jakarta for about a year. During this period of his career, he widened his political and social connections outside the village. He is one of the people who believe that traditional Balinese life course and professions in the tourist industry are naturally incompatible.

‘If one works in the tourism sector, it is very hard to fulfill his obligation as a Balinese or the head of a family. When I worked as a hotel manager, I came back home at four o’clock in the morning almost every single day. One day I came back home from work and saw my small children were sleeping without any person to take care of them. Soon after that I quit my job.’

After he left his job in Ubud, he become more interested and active in eco-tourism through participating in NGO activities and meeting people at various kinds of seminars related to social, environmental and tourism issues. In other

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<sup>6</sup> In general, in Bali first male children or last male children succeed the family.



words, this process of participation made him aware of a sense of crisis. Then he came to think ‘why can’t we make ecotourism in my village?’ It was not seriously difficult for him to seek village *adat* members who would be willing to take up this challenge. This is not only because he belongs to the local elite but he is also one of the members of *desa adat*’s legislative organization. Moreover, he is very close to both *kelihan desa adat* and *lurah* Kapal. However, it was difficult to establish a consistent understanding of the concept of ecotourism because it is far from the concept of tourism which Balinese have seen since the 1970s until today.

According to his words, KVE is not actually for economic benefit of tourism but it is for social and cultural benefit: to preserve the environment and bequeath the social and cultural life of Kapal to the future generation. Due to this reason, he invited several young villagers to join the management body and collaborated with a young villager’s organization (*Karan Taruna*) to carry out a tree planting event. Mr Alit’s collaborator, Mr Agung also has a sense of crisis regarding the current condition of the village. Mr Agung was born as a youngest male child of Badung’s royal family. His father is a well known, disciplined high official and he went to Surabaya for his undergraduate studies. He says that Kapal is a village in the process of transition since the community is surrounded by plenty new things such as technology, information and life style, which separate people in a community.

## KVE as an Initiative for Internal Development

Mr Alit and Mr Agung share the idea that community is always dynamic: it cannot be unchanging. Apparently, as I have mentioned above, they are motivated since both have a sense of crisis toward their living community. In Kapal, there is a custom law which prohibits outsiders to buy land unless they become members of the custom village<sup>7</sup>. Because of this law, villagers believe that *adat* of the village is still strong and the condition of the village is immune to risks which may be brought about by outsiders. This implies that religious tensions are very scarce. On the other hand, members of KVE see that community can be broken from the inside, not from the outside.

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<sup>7</sup> There are two category of land in Kapal village: village land and privately owned land.

Here I would like to illustrate two cases of KVE's activities. As in other parts of Bali, waste management is the most serious issue in Kapal. It is said that environmental degradation in the river has deteriorated since the mid-1990s. Many villagers started throwing rubbish, including plastic, in the river. When people did not rely on plastics, this practice did not become a serious issue since rubbish was organic. As a result, although people conduct ritual prayer at the air temple next to river, one could see that there were heaps of rubbish by the holy temple.

Of course, I am not criticizing villagers' behavior here. This was partly because there was no other way to dispose of rubbish<sup>8</sup>. However, a possible reason may be that the value villagers place on the river has diminished along with changes in their lifestyle. For example, there are a few villagers that go to the air temple to bathe because they now bathe at home. Moreover, after the new road was constructed, the concept of back and front yard has also changed. Today, the riverside is viewed as a back yard. After the air temple was included in the village tour list, KVE appealed to the *banjar adat* around the temple and then the *banjar* has initiated a clean-up activity once a month. Until now, the area around the temple is maintained relatively clean. Of course, there are still many other places in Kapal where become places of rubbish disposal.

Another case is the revitalization and re-socialization of Tipat-Bantal war<sup>9</sup>. It is believed that the Tipat-Bantal war has more than 700 years of history. In fact, the Tipat-Bantal war is a part of an agricultural ritual and has been conducted as a harvest festival among the villagers who own rice fields. At the festival, the village is divided into the North part and the South part and then the two groups throw *tipat* and *bantal* at each other<sup>10</sup>.

Until 2009 Tipat- Bantal war had been carried out in a very small scale since with the reduction of farmers in Kapal. Although some villagers joined this ritual, a number of villagers had lost interest. A villager told me that she has been participating in this ritual occasionally but she had not known about the objective of this ritual for a long time. In the process of mapping by KVE,

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<sup>8</sup> Today, there is a small truck which is managed by custom village to collect rubbish. However, collection day is uncertain.

<sup>9</sup> Tipat is a kind of rice cake wrapped in palm leaf. Bantal is also a kind of rice cake made from sticky rice which is also wrapped in palm leaf.

<sup>10</sup> Although this is an agricultural ritual, according to elder villagers, it is for releasing tensions between the South and North part of the village.

members decided that the Tipat-Bantal war had to be preserved and revitalized to make people re-evaluate this ritual.

After KVE's appeal, the ritual has come to be better organized by *desa adat*, and both participants from the village and from outside the village have increased. In 2011, with the full support of both *desa adat*, the Tipat-Bantal war was conducted in front of village temple and was attended by the vice prefectural governor and the chairman of regional representatives. For the ritual, the truck road was closed for twenty minutes and on the next day many Balinese newspapers reported on the event.

## Rethinking the Cultural Landscape of the Village

While the village has become wealthier, the physical landscape of Desa Kapal changed rapidly. At the same time, the villagers' new lifestyle and the existing social and cultural life have started to drift apart. As we see in the case of the Tipat-Bantal war, there appeared some concepts and meanings of customs and practices which were no longer well understood by many villagers. Since it belongs to the domain of custom, many villagers still enthusiastically participate in events and rituals which were passed down from their ancestors.

However, they carry them out without connecting their meaning with their social and cultural life. Rather, it is better to suggest that it is because their social and cultural life is more scattered toward outside the village. That is, their activity space is expanded but their living place is still strongly fixed within village. It is seen that this divergence led some villagers to express a sense of uncertain crisis in their belonging community. As a result, they started the village tourism movement.

The concept of landscape is not only a term referring to the physical shape of a space but also a concept bridging time and space, which connects with people's identity in a space (Steward & Strathern, 2003: 6). Then, understanding of landscape depends on both collective and individual experiences of the space. That is, if villagers' life has become diverse, it is inevitable that its understanding also has become diverse both conceptually and visually. If there is no exercise of this kind, possibly villagers like Mr Alit and Mr Agung would not have opted to start the village tourism movement.

However, they are facing a serious issue: how to reconcile existing custom and culture in the village with emerging new social and cultural lifestyles. While the village is a fixed place for Balinese to establish a sense of belonging, surely people's ways of commitment to the place are changing rapidly. It is now defined by individuals' conditions and choices. Considering today's conditions in the village, Badung's new village tourism plan seems well suited to the age of re-evaluation of *desa adat*.

However, as we see in the case of *desa Kapal*, the villagers' social and cultural condition is becoming more and more diverse and individually differentiated. In reality, the village cannot be seen no longer a solid institution. In further research, I would like to examine how Badung's plan will be carried out and how it will influence on the activities of KVE and the village community.

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