CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF BALI PROVINCE: COMMUNITY-BASED CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE MAKING

Paisaje Cultural de la Provincia de Bali: creando una turismo cultural basado por la comunidad

Wiwik Dharmiasih (1), Yunus Arbi (2)

(1) Universitas Udayana, Bali, Indonesia and wiwikd@unud.ac.id
(2) Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia and yunusarbi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Cultural Landscape of Bali Province (CLBP) is a UNESCO World Heritage Site inscribed in 2012. The site consists of four clusters located in five districts on the island of Bali. It represents the ancient Balinese philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana*, or the three sources of prosperity, manifested through the irrigation system of rice paddy planting. The designation was proposed in an effort to preserve traditional agricultural practices amidst the rapid growth of the tourism industry in Bali. One alarming indicator for example estimates that almost 1,000 hectares of paddy fields are converted for other uses every year, mostly to support tourism facilities and new human settlements. Five years after UNESCO inscription, the site faces development pressures from an increasing number of visitors and the facilities created to accommodate them. Growing demands to build tourism infrastructures has led to land conversion of productive paddy fields in and around the site. In mid 2015, these changes resulted in conflict over plans to convert paddy fields to build a parking lot. Traffic congestion and limited parking space has caused villagers to convert paddy fields into parking space. Although parking lot plans went unrealized, this became a key example of conflicting tourism management priorities within the World Heritage Site. In response, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture with UNESCO support initiated the establishment of a Sustainable Tourism Strategy to manage the cultural landscape. The ideas was to preserve the site according to its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) while providing opportunities for local people, particularly paddy farmers and villagers to have an active role in visitor management of the site. The hope is that local cooperation in managing the site as a tourism destination will provide opportunities for economic benefits while allowing for continued traditional cultures practices. The involvement of other relevant stakeholders such as various government agencies and non-governmental organizations also play an important role support in making the CLBP World Heritage Site a single destination for visitors that help to build understanding about the site and experiencing the subak system in Bali.

KEY WORDS: Community-based Cultural Tourism, Cultural Landscape, Single Destination, Subak, World Heritage Site

RESUMEN

El paisaje cultural de la provincia de Bali (CLBP) es un sitio del Patrimonio Mundial de la UNESCO inscrito en 2012. El sitio consta de cuatro grupos ubicados en cinco distritos de la isla de Bali. Representa la antigua filosofía Balinesa de Tri Hita Karana, o las tres fuentes de prosperidad, que se manifiesta a través del sistema de riego de la siembra de arroz. La designación fue propuesta en un esfuerzo por preservar las prácticas agrícolas tradicionales en medio del rápido crecimiento de la industria del turismo en Bali. Un indicador alarmante, por ejemplo, estima que casi 1,000 hectáreas de arrozales se convierten para otros usos cada año, principalmente para apoyar instalaciones turísticas y nuevos asentamientos humanos. Cinco años después de la inscripción de la UNESCO, el sitio también enfrenta estas presiones de desarrollo de un número cada vez mayor de visitantes y las instalaciones creadas para acomodarlos. Las crecientes demandas para construir infraestructura turística han llevado a la conversión de tierras de campos de arroz productivos dentro y alrededor del sitio. A mediados de 2015, estos cambios provocaron un conflicto sobre los planes para convertir campos de arroz para construir un estacionamiento. La congestión del tráfico y el limitado
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espacio de estacionamiento han causado que los aldeanos conviertan arrozales en un espacio de estacionamiento. Aunque los planes de estacionamiento no se realizaron, esto se convirtió en un ejemplo clave de las prioridades conflictivas de gestión turística dentro del Sitio del Patrimonio Mundial. En respuesta, el Ministerio de Educación y Cultura de Indonesia con el apoyo de la UNESCO inició el establecimiento de una Estrategia de Turismo Sostenible para administrar el paisaje cultural. Las ideas eran para preservar el sitio de acuerdo con su Valor Universal Excepcional (OUV, por sus siglas en inglés) al tiempo que brindaba oportunidades para que la población local, en particular los agricultores de arroz y los aldeanos, tuvieran un papel activo en la gestión de visitantes del sitio. La esperanza es que la cooperación local en la gestión del sitio como destino turístico proporcione oportunidades para obtener beneficios económicos, al tiempo que permita prácticas continuas de culturas tradicionales. La participación de otras partes interesadas relevantes, como varias agencias gubernamentales y organizaciones no gubernamentales, también desempeñan un papel importante para hacer que el Sitio Patrimonio Mundial CLBP sea un destino único para los visitantes que ayuden a generar comprensión sobre el sitio y experimenten el sistema subak en Bali.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Turismo cultural comunitario, Paisaje cultural, Destino único, Subak, Patrimonio de la Humanidad

1. INTRODUCTION

The Cultural Landscape of Bali Province (CLBP) was inscribed as a world Heritage Site in 2012 to preserve the subak system, which shapes traditional agricultural practices in Bali. The subak system is also the manifestation of broader cultural and spiritual practices of the Tri Hita Karana philosophy that is so central to the Balinese way of life. The designation also aims to protect against some of the rapid development and tourism pressures on the island.

As Bali has grown as a tourism destination with increasing international attention and investment, new land and development pressures have emerged. More and more tourists visit Bali every year and tourism has expanded into new areas and activities. Land uses are shifting to accommodate tourism growth and have surpassed agriculture as the largest footprint on the island’s economy. Available and coveted employment opportunities are also increasing shifting to the tourism sector. Overall, these changes are having a major impact on agricultural and customary practices.

When the site was initially designated, management plans focused heavily on the agricultural aspects of site management, such as addressing the major impacts of the green revolution and working to restore traditional and organic farming practices for agricultural sustainability. More recently however, various key stakeholders responsible for managing the site have realized the importance of addressing the major impacts that tourism has had on the subak system and the site as a whole, and have taken greater interest in developing a sustainable tourism strategy (STS).

This paper describes the impetus behind the creation of the STS, the growing awareness of land pressures that convened various groups, the conflicts that have been brought on by tourism. Furthermore, this paper also details the approach and various stages for the STS, concluding with some initial thoughts on STS implementation.

2. ABOUT THE SITE

The full title of the site is The Cultural Landscape of Bali Province: The Subak System as a Manifestation of the Tri Hita Karana Philosophy. Tri Hita Karana is a Balinese philosophy based on three parts that underpins goals of prosperity, negotiating human relations with the realm of the spirit (parhyangan), environment (palemahan), and between people (pawongan). Parhyangan is evident in the complex set of rituals that are performed at various levels, including the individual, community, and among larger institutions. Palemahan, guiding the system of environmental management is evident through upstream forest and water protection, takes shape in the rice paddy terraces, and guides the complex division of irrigation water, among others. Pawongan upholds the institution of the subak, in which decisions are
made collectively. Each subak is led by a *pekaseh*, who are elected democratically by subak members. Subaks work within their institutions and with neighbouring subaks to determine agricultural practices, like when to plant and harvest, as well as collective decisions about how and when to conduct rituals. Although there are rice paddy terraces all over the world, the subak institution that upholds the Tri Hita Karana philosophy is the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) that was inscribed by UNESCO (Royo, Dharmiasih, and Arbi, 2016).

The CLBP is a large site that includes four clusters and is located in five districts. The site covers an area of 19,519.9 hectares and includes buffer zones of 1,454.8 hectares. These areas include forests, lakes, springs, villages, water temples, and rice fields. Although subaks are located outside the boundary of the world heritage site, the sites selected for designation were done so on the basis that they were still intact.

There are four important sites within the broader protected landscape (Figure 1). The first is the Supreme Water Temple of Ulun Danu Batur and Lake Batur located in Bangli regency (Figure 1: A1, A2). This site consists of the upper watershed areas and indicates the important sources of water that irrigates the subak system. Balinese also believe that the lake is the home of the goddess of the lake, Dewi Danu, and is the site of an important annual ritual festival that takes place during the tenth full moon. The second site is the Subak Landscape Pakerisan Watershed in Gianyar regency (B). The site includes 11th century archaeological evidence of the longstanding continuity of the subak system and its connection to ancient Balinese kingdoms. The third site is the Subak Landscape of Catur Angga Batukaru located across two regency jurisdictions of Tabanan and Buleleng regencies (C). This site shows the ecological complexity of the subak system, connecting mountains, forests, lakes, streams, rice terraces, villages, and temples. The fourth site is the Royal Water Temple of Taman Ayun located in Badung regency (D). This site was selected because of its connection to the royal family and their role in bringing together upstream and downstream areas in the interconnectivity of subaks. Many of these sites are already famous tourism destinations. Less understood among visitors however, are the interconnectedness between the sites and their designation as a World Heritage Site.

![Figure 1 Map of the CLBP Nomination for Inscription as developed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Government of Bali Province in 2011](image)

### 3. MAJOR THREATS TO SUBAK
In the 1970s the green revolution dramatically impacted rice farming in Bali (MoCT and GoBP, 2011). The government introduced the use of chemical inputs and herbicides changed affected various aspects of subak management. Soil erosion, fertility loss, polluted waterways, labour changes, and financing requirements for rice paddy management remain some of the key challenges for maintaining the vast network of subaks. More recently land and labour pressures have created additional challenges.

The perception of farmers and farming is that it is hard work for low income. One study mentioned by Professor Windia from the Subak Study Center of Universitas Udayana often recount that beggars could earn a higher income in Denpasar than working rice fields in the rural areas (persn. comm.). Furthermore, strictly adhering to subak prices are also increasing in costs. Farmers need to do rituals that require significant preparations and also have associated costs. Farmers are also burdened by increasing land taxes that have risen alongside increasing real estate markets. The Subak Study Center of Universitas Udayana has also proposed easing such tax requirements by shifting valuations based on productivity rather than parcel. In the current system, when a patch of rice field is converted into commercial uses, the land tax for the surrounding areas can increase exponentially. Finally, development pressures have led to an increasing number of farmers converting their lands into other uses or releasing it to investors because of the high burden of taxes. The Subak Study Center of Universitas Udayana, which also tracks land use change indicate annual losses of up to 1,000 hectares of rice paddy lands in recent years.

In addition to the political economy of land and development impacting the subak and rice paddy land, Bali is prone to natural disaster. In 2017 and 2018 the repeated volcanic eruption from Mount Agung required mass relocations from upstream areas, impacting broader landscape and watershed dynamics. Furthermore, climate change has been responsible for more intense rainfall events that result in landslides and floods, as well as water shortages in upstream lakes and reservoirs, and extended droughts.

4. TOURISM GROWTH

Alongside historical agricultural policies, changing land and labour dynamics, and natural disasters, much of the development pressures stem from the rapid growth of tourism. Statistics specific to the entirety of the CLBP are not systematically collected, making it difficult to track various trends. Data may be collected at each various tourism destinations across the CLBP, but has not been compiled for analysis about the overall World Heritage Site. Therefore, this paper looks to the overall tourism data statistics from the island of Bali to provide one approach to analyzing the impacts of tourism. Figure 2, compiled from the Central Statistic Agency of Bali Province (BPS), highlights tourism growth trends between 2015-2016. The table on foreign tourists shows the growth from 2016 (series 1, blue line) to 2017 (series 2, orange line), which indicates a near 20% growth from one year to the next. Domestic tourism on the other hand, shows different growth trends that are likely associated with seasonal holiday periods. The most recent data presented below highlights a change from 2015 (series 1) to 2016 (series 2), which experiences a large spike in the months from July-August.

![Figure 2 Tourism Growth in Bali for Foreign and Domestic Visitors](image-url)
With a significant rise in visitors, and seasonal tourism trends, several developments are evident in relation to the World Heritage Site. The additional tourism numbers means additional activities and tourism operators are always seeking new attractions. In Bali, the World Heritage Site, in and of itself, is not yet a popular tourism destination. Although the World Heritage Site is becoming known to visitors, however, the current tourism approaches are marketing the landscape views of rice terraces. As explained above, the World Heritage Site was designated as a much deeper engagement of the Tri Hita Karana philosophy, which combines a traditional agricultural system with ecological and human relations, a breadth of rituals that are manifested within the subak.

Some of the sites that are part of the World Heritage Site were already popular destinations in Bali. The misconception of the World Heritage Site, results in the already popular sites receiving an influx of visitors, especially with the increasing tourism trends noted in Figure 2. Therefore, stakeholders focus on the development of these particular sites rather than planning for the sustainability of the interconnected sites.

For example, in Subak Landscape of Catur Angga Batukaru, there are 20 subaks, integrated as a network of temples, forests, water sources, and villages. However only one subak, the lookout at Jatiluwih, receives most of the attention. Due to the increased number of visitors at Jatiluwih, the other subaks from the surrounding region feel that they have not received the benefits that come with World Heritage status. There is a perception that these benefits are only incurred by Subak Jatiluwih. On the other hand, members of Subak Jatiluwih feel that they have been exploited by the increased amount of visitors. They have seen a dramatic increase of visitors over time and feel that the income generated from tourism largely goes to the tour operators and local government offices.

The change in tourism dynamics has also affected local government interests and responses. Particularly the site at subak Jatiluwih, where scores of visitors now come to look out at a vast network of rice terraces, the government is much more concerned with developing facilities and programs that help to manage tourism rather than supporting the subak institutions that underpin the values of the site. In particular, the government supported the creation of a local agency called “The Local Management Agency for Jatiluwih Destination Tourism” (Badan Pengelola Daerah Tujuan Wisata Jatiluwih). This local organization helps to collect entrance fees, coordinate local traffic, and also conducts small projects that respond to visitor interests. This institution and its new role for managing the site at Jatiluwih shows that government development plans are evolving to prioritize tourism at the site, rather than the original intent to support the preservation of the subak system across a vast region.

Alongside increasing visitors and changing priorities also creates the impetus for physical changes, particularly in the form of tourism facilities. Infrastructure priorities respond in the form of parking spaces, rest areas, restaurants, hotels, hiking trails, restrooms, and specially tailored programs, such as trendy experience to enjoy luxury experiences within the rice fields with expansive landscape views. Although the amount of change has not yet been quantified, infrastructure development in recent years have resulted in a notable footprint to the site, and construction activities of new tourism facilities are always visible.

The WHS was intended to preserve the Tri Hita Karana philosophy and to showcase the subak heritage to the world. However, the current form of tourism experiences to the WHS are unlikely to confer the Outstanding Universal Value that the site was originally designated to protect.

5. CONTESTED PARKING SPACES

In 2015 a productive rice field within the Jatiluwih subak, part of the core zone of Subak Landscape of Catur Angga Batukaru, was converted into a parking lot. At the time, the community (represented by the head of Jatiluwih village) argued that the increasing visitor traffic since World Heritage Site designation had created undue congestion in the area. Indeed, access to the increasingly popular Jatiluwih lookout, is only accessible by a small road. Visitors also tend to line up on the roadside and larger vehicles have created traffic congestion. To address these concerns the village proposed constructing a parking lot. However, the subak community was not consulted as part of the development process.
Parking lot construction went ahead, resulting in several key consequences. The first is that an area of productive rice fields in the core zone had been lost and converted to a non-agricultural function. The second is that construction took place in the core zone, changing the overall integrity of the landscape. As the subak rice terraces are a network that shares a complex network of irrigated water, the conversion of one spoke within the system, can have severe disruptions throughout the landscape. Thirdly, the village received support from the local government to proceed with construction plans without fully consulting other partners in site management, particularly the subak.

Rice fields are under private ownership but the subak coordinate land use functions. The subaks determine planting, harvest, rituals, irrigation maintenance, division of resources, and other key functions that interact across a vast network of farmers. Therefore, the unilateral decision to build a parking lot for tourism interests has created tension among communities responsible for managing the site. After parking lot construction, the land parcel was further developed into a restaurant by the landowner under the justification that free parking is still provided on their land. As other farmers begin to observe the profitable ventures that provide tourism services in and around the site, other landowners have also begun thinking about converting their lands to benefit for increasing tourism, creating new internal threats to the site. Farmers that are told they are not allowed to convert their lands have also begun to resent those that benefit from tourism, while their roles are to continue to harvest lands in traditional ways that are far less economically profitable. As a result, complaints arise over fairness about who gets to benefit from tourism associated with World Heritage designation.

6. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE MAKING: A STRATEGY

The rising tensions, potential for conflict, and threats to the integrity of the site resulted in the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) convening stakeholders to discuss potential site management solutions. UNESCO, during the inscription in 2012, had already identified the potential challenges associated with tourism growth, and in an ICOMOS/ICCROM advisory mission (2015) provided some additional recommendations about how to proceed. Overall, the recommendations sought to engage in a comprehensive review of tourism impacts, identify pathways for sustainability, ensure active involvement of local people that provides benefits to them, and also provides visitors more accessibility to gaining an appreciation about the spiritual and cultural importance of the site.

These identified priorities led the MoEC and UNESCO Jakarta to initiate plans for applying UNESCO toolkits on sustainable tourism created by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Together with local stakeholders, plans were initiated to develop a Sustainable Tourism Strategy (STS) for CLBP. The STS emerged as part of UNESCO’s regional efforts to incorporate priorities for community based tourism management at cultural and natural heritage sites in Southeast Asia. Regional workshops were held in Malaysia and coalesced into more deliberative planning processes at the CLBP directed at providing practical solutions to identified local tourism challenges. Outcomes of the discussions at the CLBP site in Bali also provided lessons learned that helped shape discussions for other regions.

The series of workshops began by identifying related stakeholders in the management of the World Heritage Site. First, the government took the lead and attempted to create a process whereby relevant stakeholders could continue to sit and work together, and coordinate with each other on possibilities for incorporating community based tourism approaches that would be mutually beneficial for the subak institutions.

The first workshop included academics, policy makers, subak representatives, and other influential people in the community to define an appropriate vision for sustainable tourism at the CLBP. Discussions explored a broad-ranging set of topics based on values and principles. The second workshop thereafter focused on action planning to address the more practical aspects of policy implementation, including exploration of potential budget sources and allocations, as well as other mechanisms that would support a reorientation towards more sustainable tourism approaches. The third and final workshop sought to implement action planning measures and opened up participants to a more wide-ranging set of stakeholders. From the series of workshops, the STS was drafted. Representatives from the CLBP STS
planning process also had the opportunity to present their work to a regional audience from across Southeast Asia, which also allowed for further input. The STS states (UNESCO Office Jakarta 2016, p. 8):

"The resulting strategy presented here includes a shared vision for tourism, strategic objectives and an Action Plan to be implemented by a diverse and inclusive set of stakeholders. It ensures tourism development supports the authenticity of the cultural landscape, minimizes negative environmental impacts, and strengthens site management and monitoring through collaborative and participatory efforts. In order to do so, it is essential to take a destination approach, which coordinates and links the components/clusters of the inscribed property as a holistic site, especially those with significant tourism activities, and communicates its historical background and its OUV. This will provide a whole experience to the visitors to appreciate and learn about the subak system as a living heritage."

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMITTING TO IMPLEMENTING THE STS

After the STS was published in 2016, follow up activities were conducted to introduce additional stakeholders to the strategy. Publication of the STS was also accompanied by a guidebook, which seeks to more clearly highlight the single destination aspect of the site. The guidebook is a map of the different sites that makes up the World Heritage Site and provides a narrative about the interconnectedness of the Bali Landscape.

Momentum from the STS helped to bring stakeholders together, but the keys to its success are contingent on commitments to implementation. At this juncture, there is a gap between government plans to implement activities and community expectations. Both sides are waiting for each other to initiate STS programs. The government expects the community to take the lead in implementing programs. Local community institutions however, believe the government should help to initiate and support community-based programs. Bridging this gap will require various approaches. Achievement of STS goals must involve engagement at different governing scales, from the subak and village level, to other stakeholders that provide support in the management of the site.

Tour operators, hotels, restaurants, and other tourism agencies will need to respond to the call to educate on the broader importance and interconnectedness of the site, developing tour packages and visitor experiences that are more sensitive to single destination tourism. Furthermore, defining and continuing to refine the meaning of community based tourism, connecting tourism activities with local priorities, will require a process to determine appropriate site-specific programs.

Site management must continue to listen and respond to village and farmer concerns, at once providing greater opportunities to involve them in the tourism planning process, but also providing support programs on agricultural extension and other pathways to supporting value-added projects that empower the subak. The expansion of tourism has served to undermine the important role of the subak and reorienting attention toward the subak as tourism plans move forward will better serve to respond to local interests. Engaging the NGO community will help to bridge these concerns.

Academics and researchers from agricultural and tourism backgrounds should continue to partner in joint research to help balance sustainable farming and sustainable tourism for the CLBP. Research should also fill the important role of monitoring and evaluating the environmental-related dynamics within and beyond the site, such as climate change, water use, forest management, waste, chemical inputs, disaster management, and others. These environmental concerns underscore various aspects that not only affect the integrity of the site, but also highlight the role that the CLBP has had on mitigating environmental and land use changes taking place across Bali. Finally, continued regional engagement with other World Heritage sites will help to provide forums for raising mutual concerns and sharing feedback to facilitate the necessary support interventions across sites.
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