

THE PRACTICE OF FUNCTIONALLY CONVERTING THE IRRIGATED RICE FIELDS IN SOUTH DENPASAR DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This present study is intended to explore the phenomenon of the practice of functionally converting the irrigated rice fields in South Denpasar District. The present study focuses on the process of functionally converting the irrigated rice fields, the ideology leading to the phenomenon, and its implication on the local people. The data were collected through observation, in-depth interview and documentary analysis. The data were analyzed using the theory of hegemony, the theory of social practice and some other theories which were used eclectically based on the problems analyzed.

The result of the study shows that the functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields resulted from the farmers' marginalized socio-cultural structure. The process started from the government's hegemony. The government treated the farmers as the subaltern. Then the dominated farmers got trapped by fatalism and pragmatism. The entrepreneur and government strengthen their hegemony. Then they negotiated with the local government such as the traditional village 'desa pakraman' and the administrative village 'desa dinas' and the land owners as individuals. The farmers were too weak to resist; they failed as they did not have the capital needed for that. Such a condition could not be separated from the capitalistic ideology as the government and entrepreneur collaborated to legitimate the converting process. In addition, the local people were also trapped by the consumptive way of life. As a result, they considered that functionally converting their irrigated rice fields was a proper solution. That affected the infrastructural order. Their infrastructural order changed. Their social structure also shifted from communalism into individualism. Their ideological, legal, governmental, family and religious superstructures changed as well, causing the South Denpasar community to be getting far from the agrarian cultural root which used to be their initial characteristic.

Keywords: irrigated rice field functional conversion, irrigated rice field, South Denpasar District, marginalization, hegemony

INTRODUCTION

Every development taking place in Bali has widely affected every aspect of life. The growth of the number of population, the urban planning, technologies and tourism have made Bali not only labeled as "Bali the Last Paradise" (Powell, 1930) and "The Morning of The World" (Vicker, 1996:5) but also as a highly popular tourist destination. The development of

tourism has widely affected every aspect of the Balinese people's life. One of the aspects is the functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields. More and more land has been needed to fulfill the needs for accommodation, restaurants, streets and so forth. The functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields has also affected the existence of what is locally referred to as 'subak', the one unity system of traditional agriculture in Bali, as stated by Sutawan (2008:18). The continued constructions of infrastructures, facilities, offices and tourism have logically been responsible for the conversion of the irrigated rice fields, causing the agricultural land to be getting narrower. This is in line with what is stated by Nasoetion (2003: 71) that the increased number of population, the government's policy, and natural factors have been responsible for the functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields.

The invisible globalized ideology and government's policy referred to as hegemony by Gramsci (1971) has also led to the functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields. Hegemony does not refer to the relationship of domination using power, but to the relationship of approval using political and ideological leadership (Barker, 2009: 62). Furthermore, Gramsci (1971) uses the term hegemony to refer to the way in which the dominating class in society obtains support from the dominated class through the moral and intellectual leadership. The process of hegemony can be seen from how meaning is established and how the dominant values are produced through different media (Piliang, 2009: 136). In the current Balinese society there is an impression that farming is not promising; therefore, it is not good to wrestle with; it is the parents' profession; it is dirty and low income generating. Bourdieu (1983) considers such a view leads to the creation of a new habitus; the agricultural habitus as a marginalized profession; therefore, it is not wrong to neglect it. Moreover, the phenomenon of the social practice performed by the Balinese society shows that the Balinese people keep being enmeshed in the globalized culture with a lifestyle of hedonism-consumerism. They idolize the ownership of modern symbols such as hand phones, luxury houses, and cars. The ownership of such objects legitimize that selling land is not wrong, causing the irrigated rice fields to be more massively functionally converted.

The phenomenon is interesting to be explored as it cannot be separated from the fact that the globalized ideology has also been responsible for the functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields in South Denpasar District. It is also the contestation of the society's social structure involving the government, entrepreneurs and the farmers as the marginalized group of people. Therefore, it is necessary to further explore the process of the functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields by confronting different globalized ideologies through the

development of tourism legitimated by the government and approved by the farmers. It is also necessary to investigate what roles are played by the globalized ideologies which have interfered with all aspects of the society's life from the highest structure to the lowest in accelerating the functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields. As well, the impact resulting from the functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields in South Denpasar District also needs to be identified.

RESEARCH METHOD

This present study uses the qualitative approach with the paradigm of cultural studies. The data were collected through observation, in-depth interview, and documentary study. A guide of observation and interview were also prepared. The object of the study was observed in South Denpasar District. The farmers, head of the traditional irrigation organization 'subak', the local government, the investors, and the agents of tourism in South Denpasar District were interviewed. The data were also completed with the documentary study result, including the on-line data which were obtained from the reliable authentic sites. All the data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1992) and critical theories leading to a description of the specific data of cultural studies.

DISCUSSION

The development of different aspects of life has changed the human life orders, which can be ideological and physical. One of the physical changes is the functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields in South Denpasar District. One of the things which has been responsible for the functional conversion is tourism. Tourism needs the supporting facilities such as hotels, restaurants, streets and so forth. The stakeholders, namely the government, entrepreneurs, and farmers touch one another in order to fulfill the facilities. The government and entrepreneurs synergize to dominate the farmers with the developmental ideology. The farmers, as the subaltern, are marginalized as they have no capitals. Furthermore, hegemony is strengthened with repressive domination. Gramsci (in Barker, 2009:62) states that hegemony is a situation in which there is a historical block and the faction of the dominating class undertakes its social authority of leadership over the subordinate class through the combination of strength and approval. Gramsci states that the state, as the ruler, is the historical block or the dominating class which undertakes its authority over the farmers who belong to the subordinate class using the combined strength (power). Furthermore, Scott

states that the farmers spend what they produce from the irrigated rice fields on what they need for life; the rest is spent on the other needs such as salt, fabric, and other claims (Scott, 1981:4-5). In this context, the strength of hegemony has legalized that selling the irrigated rice fields is not wrong. Then, the government motivates the entrepreneurs to convert the function of the irrigated rice fields. The negotiation with the ruler to convert the function of the irrigated rice fields has certainly needed a lot of money in order to be able to buy the "power". Then the negotiation is held with the formal and informal or traditional leaders. If the negotiation fails, then the personal negotiation with the land owners will be held using the financial capital that the land will be bought at higher prices. The negotiation is essential in order to be able to undertake policies well (Brassers, 2004:31). Therefore, it is not surprising that the areas of Sesetan and Pamogan, which used to be labeled as the rice ban, can be used as the areas of residences and other commercial purposes. However, the farmers have made an effort to maintain their land through the counter-hegemony (Tilaar, 2003:77). Unjustness causes the farmers, the subaltern and marginalized class, to show their opposition or resistance. They, as the farmers living in South Denpasar, resist that the government and capital owners accommodate their interest by reducing the taxes they should pay, creating job opportunities, and subsidizing their economy.

The process of the functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields above cannot be separated from the ideology which has inspired it. Tourism is one of the things which has been responsible for the development of tourism in South Denpasar. Tourism needs financial capital which gives opportunities to the entrepreneurs who cannot be separated from the capitalistic ideology in order to obtain as many profits as possible. They collaborate with the ruler to perpetuate that. Foucault (in Latif, 2005:39) states that power is everywhere; power is in the hands of the entrepreneurs and government, and the farmers belong to the subaltern class or a different and lower class of people (Ratna, 2013: 463). The government and the capital owners do not only collaborate in the lower and middle levels but also in the high level in order to strengthen the political and economic hegemony as spread by the mass printed and electronic media (Hisyam, 2003: 197). The collaboration between the government and the entrepreneurs to dominate the farmers has also been responsible for the functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields. That is considered a solution to supporting development.

The farmers are made to be either in the position of maintaining or selling their land in order to be able to fulfill their daily needs. Such a situation makes the farmers submit to

their fate that selling their land is a thing which is to be accepted. That is referred to as a fatalistic decision in which what happens to someone is considered a fate; therefore, there is no resistance (Priambodo, 2009:21). If fatalism is related to the present study, it is the powerlessness of the farmers towards the domination and power of the investors (the capital owners) who collaborate with the government. In addition, the higher life style marginalizes the existence of the farmers. O'Donnell (2003:22) states that materialism and consumerism degrades environment and drain the society's motivation and values. As the farmers are doubtful about whether they will sell their land or not, and being known that they intend to have a higher life style, they are offered with hegemony that their land will be bought at a higher price which seems to cause them to be able to fulfill all their needs. As a result, the farmers allow their land to be taken by the capital owners through financial transaction and without any resistance. Such an attitude can be stated to be a fatalistic one towards a situation resulting from the modernization which offers obsession of the world. Fatalism also takes place through the capital owners' hegemony in which they promise good jobs to the farmers if they leave their land being functionally converted. The farmers' pragmatic attitude to choose what can be easily and quickly done without wisely taking into account what it will lead to causes them to sell their land in order to fulfill what they desire. The hedonistic attitude of the farmers has also accelerated the functional conversion of their land. After selling their land, they feel that they are rich and can fulfill their needs. However, they have lost what they have inherited from their ancestors. They have also lost their identity as the Balinese people who are well-known for their strong farming culture. Actually, pragmatism has caused the Balinese people to forget that having land is essential for performing socio-cultural activities. Hedonism has caused the Balinese farmers to forget everything. They sell what they have inherited from their ancestors in order to fulfill their needs for materials which tend to be consumptive.

It cannot be denied that the functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields in South Denpasar District has affected every aspect of life. The first implication can be observed from the change in infrastructure. Business centers, office buildings, schools, markets, and health infrastructures and facilities such as hospitals, public health centers, and accommodations have been constructed. However, many cultural and Hindu religious infrastructures have disappeared. The disappearance of Ulundanu Temple is one example. The change in infrastructures has also affected the society's social structure in the area where the irrigated rice fields have been functionally converted. As explained by Utomo (2014:86) that the functional conversion of land can be defined as the partial or entire functional change of an

area. It has been planned to be an area which is functionally different from what it used to be. The functional conversion usually negatively affects the environment of the area and the potential it has. The rural people who initially lived in the agricultural area were close to one another. That is a social asset which can be used as an important basis for establishing social networking. Such a social asset will get extinct as they live far from one another, causing new heterogeneous and individualistic societies to appear, which also indirectly change the supra structural level. The reason is that infrastructures, social structures and supra structures are basically interrelated and affect one another. The supra structural change in South Denpasar District can be observed from the ideological, legal, governmental, family and religious aspects after the irrigated rice fields were functionally converted into the area of residences, offices and accommodations.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields in South Denpasar cannot be separated from the changes taking place and globalization which have marginalized the farmers, causing them to be the subaltern class. Marginalization is legitimated with the government's hegemony through the ideology of development. The dominated people finally consider that being the dominated class is a matter of fate (fatalism). They have become pragmatic in order to be able to fulfill the consumptive and hedonic life style. The functional conversion of the irrigated rice fields has been considered an instant solution to fulfilling their needs which are getting more complex. They are now aware that the functional conversion of their land has changed the Balinese people's life order which cannot be separated from the agricultural culture. Therefore, all the society's components, especially the policy holder, need to synergize to maintain the Bali's land. The traditional village 'Desa pakraman' and the administrative village 'desa dinas', as the lowest elements of the governmental structure need to identify and revitalize the Bali's land so it will not entirely functionally converted. It is important to do that as the functional conversion of land will not only change infrastructures but also the social structure and supra structure of the Bali community as a whole.

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