Baliseering as Reductionism Project: Vandana Shiva’s Ecofeminist Approach

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Abstract

Bali is one of the cultural tourism destinations in Indonesia. As a well-known tourism destination, tourism industry in Bali has generated huge economic benefits for the Balinese people. The development of Bali tourism industry is started in the Dutch East Indies era. The colonial government attempted to prevent another bloody war with Bali’s local kingdoms to preserve the law and order in Dutch East Indies. To improve their relations with Bali’s local kingdom, the colonial government introduced the Baliseering policy as a pro-local culture policy to preserve Balinese culture from a foreign culture. However, the colonial government used Baliseering to isolate Bali from Indonesian nationalism movement in Java. Another agenda behind Baliseering policy is to develop Bali as a new tourism destination in Dutch East Indies. To encourage the development of Bali's tourism industry, Bali is promoted as a culturally rich island with bare-chested women, these promotions created the idea of a hidden paradise. This study aims to explain Baliseering as a reductionism project from Vandana Shiva’s ecofeminism approach. Baliseering has exploited Balinese culture and environment and destroyed the ideal relations between Balinese people. With Vandana Shiva’s ecofeminism approach, Baliseering is seen as another patriarchal-capitalist reductionism project. Reductionism in Baliseering policy foundations perpetuates epistemic injustice in Bali. This study is philosophical research on actual problems with a descriptive approach. This research uses the philosophical hermeneutic method with methodological elements consisting of description, historical continuity, and critical reflection.

Keywords

Baliseering, feminist epistemology, reductionism, ecofeminism, Vandana Shiva

1 Introduction

Bali is known as the island of thousand gods that offers eternal beauty, this concept is the main attraction for the Bali tourism industry. Over the years, tourists have constructed a charming image of Bali. The image of charming Bali is the result of the Baliseering policy, a new colonial policy to tame Balinese people under Dutch rule. In the nineteenth century, Balinese people were still considered backward and barbaric people (Vickers, 2012, p. 17). In the name of law and order, the Dutch launched their final invasion phase to fully conquered Bali (Sendra, 2016, p. 98). The brutality of the 1906 and 1908 invasions triggered international condemnation which contributed to the implementation of the Baliseering policy (Picard, 2006, p. 26).

Baliseering was designed by the colonial government as a large-scale project to preserve Bali as a living museum (Robinson, 2006, p. 55). Behind the cultural preservation agenda, Baliseering was designed to prevent the Indonesian nationalism movement from Java and build a foundation for the Bali tourism industry (Robinson, 2006, pp. 32-36). To preserve Bali as a living museum, the colonial government have the authority to teach pure Balinese culture to the Balinese people (Picard, 2006, p. 27). Baliseering policy demands Balinese people to wear Balinese traditional clothing, live in a house with Balinese architecture, and learn Balinese culture (Robinson, 2006, p. 75). Baliseering was considered by Dutch as a great colonial policy to protect their precious colony from modernization (Noorwatha, 2020, p. 488). The implementation of the Baliseering policy allows the Dutch to dictate Balinese culture according to their interest.

In Vandana Shiva's ecofeminism theory, reductionism is the limitation of reality according to the patriarchal-capitalist interest (Swer, 2020, p. 120). The ontological foundation of reductionism is uniformity with only one truth, one approach, and one method (Shiva, 1997, p. xxiii). Reductionism neglect the holistic local wisdom that preserves nature to promote a modern science with patriarchal-capitalist
interest (Shiva, 1997, p. 20). The implementation of the Baliseering policy is a large-scale reductionism project that intends to shape Balinese culture according to the patriarchal-capitalist interest. This study tries to discuss the problem of Baliseering as a reductionism project with Vandana Shiva’s ecofeminism approach.

2 Methods

This research is a literature study with the philosophical hermeneutics method. This study aims to explain the problem of Baliseering on Balinese local wisdom. This research is qualitative research with a descriptive approach to the actual problem (Bakker & Zubair, 1994, p. 107). The result of this research was analyzed using methodological elements as follows (Bakker & Zubair, 1994, pp. 110-112): description, historical continuity, and critical reflection.

3 Baliseering

3.1 A Brief History of Baliseering

Bali in the pre-colonial era was an island ruled by various local kingdoms. Before the Dutch invasion, Bali did not have a united leadership over the island (Robinson, 2006, p. 30). As a result of intense rivalry between kingdoms, civil wars occurred very frequently in Bali (Robinson, 2006, p. 33). In the mid-seventeenth century, Bali was involved in the slave trade with European traders which brought huge profit to the Balinese kingdoms (Vickers, 2012, p. 31). The Dutch’s huge demand for slaves to support their global trade routes led to the Balinese economy’s dependence on the slave trade.

After the Dutch abolished the practice of slave trading, Bali rejected this policy because of their economic dependence on the slave trade (Vickers, 2012, p. 43). The rejection of the slave trade abolition reinforced the European view that Balinese and non-Western people were barbarians (Vickers, 2012, p. 44). In response to the intolerable savagery of Bali, the Dutch believed they had a moral obligation to enforce civilized laws in Bali (Robinson, 2006, pp. 40-41). The Dutch invasion in 1908 succeeded in conquering and uniting Bali into the Dutch East Indies.

After the invasion, the puputan war represents the end of old savage Bali and marks the beginning of new civilized Bali under Dutch control (Vickers, 2012, pp. 56-57). The 1908 invasion with a high number of casualties triggered international condemnation for the brutality of the Dutch invasion (Vickers, 2012, p. 56). To improve their image on the international stage, the Dutch government prepared a new major project for Bali: The Baliseering project (Juliantara, 2021, p. 16). The Baliseering policy was designed as Balinization to turn Bali into a living museum (Picard, 2006, p. 26). Behind the cultural conservation agenda, Baliseering became a policy to create new European domination on Bali through the tourism industry (Vickers, 2012, p. 57).

Baliseering encourages Balinese to become genuine Balinese, a person with an artistic mindset (Picard, 2006, p. 29). The transformation of Bali’s image from a wild island tamed by the Dutch to a potential tourism destination shows how the Dutch formed a new Bali according to their interest. Balinese culture was exploited as a living museum for a foundation in the tourism industry (Pageh, Kumbara, Wirawan, & Sukardja, 2015, p. 110). Baliseering was seen as a successful colonial policy to improve the image of Bali under Dutch control. Vicki Baum in A Tale from Bali (1937) as quoted by Picard (2006, p. 26) expressed her views on the success of the Baliseering policy:

I want to believe that the sacrifice of the Balinese people has a deep meaning because it makes the Dutch understand that they must rule these brave and friendly people with special care, as they have done, and thus preserve Bali as a paradise.

Baliseering was created to enforce Dutch domination over the Balinese. The Dutch domination in enforcing law and order was manifested in their interpretation of authentic Balinese culture. The colonial government have the authority to decide the definition of authentic Balinese culture and establish this definition by teaching Balinese how to be true Balinese (Picard, 2006, p. 27). The Baliseering policy was a Dutch effort to reduce the rich Balinese culture into one ‘true Balinese culture’ according to Dutch colonial
interpretation and interests. According to Vickers (2012, p. 57), the Dutch and other European visitors reduce Bali’s image to ‘female Bali’ (the island of bare-breasted smiling women) and then to ‘cultured Bali’ (the island where everyone is an artist). The Dutch government was eager for the world to think about Bali in terms of positive images, and tourism was the best way to present those images – that is, the best way to wipe away the bloody stain of imperialism (Vickers, 2012, p. 130).

### 3.2 Baliseering Policy

The implementation of the Baliseering policy is based on the main narrative of Balinese culture preservation against foreign elements. The Director of the Bali Instituut G.P. Roufaer as quoted in Picard (2006, p. 27) provides an overview of Baliseering policy implementation:

> Let Balinese live their own beautiful native life as undisturbed as possible. Their agriculture, their village-life, their own form of worship, their religious art, their own literature – all bear witness to an autonomous native civilization of rare versatility and richness. No railroad on Bali; no western coffee plantations, and especially no sugar factories. But also, no proselytizing, neither Mohammadan (by zealous natives from other parts of Indies), no Protestant, nor Roman Catholic. Let the colonial administration, with the strong backing of the Netherlands (home) government, that the island of Bali as a rare jewel, that we must protect and whose virginity must remain intact.

Baliseering policy was seen as a pro-Balinese policy because it opens cultural development. However, Baliseering only benefited the Dutch because Baliseering isolated Bali from the rest of the Dutch East Indies (Santosa, 2019, p. 77). Baliseering implemented a regulation that obliges Balinese people to live the ‘true Balinese culture. The act of using Bahasa Melayu by Balinese people was seen as a subversive act and the speakers can be punished (Santosa, 2019, p. 78).

One of the implementations of the Baliseering policy can be seen in the major restoration of traditional buildings after the 1917 earthquake. The 1917 earthquake that hit Bali caused many victims and damaged traditional buildings (Noorwatha, 2022, p. 75). To repair the traditional buildings, the colonial government launched a pilot project to set new aesthetic standards for traditional Balinese architecture, this pilot project served as an illustration of Dutch concern for preserving traditional Balinese culture (Noorwatha, 2022, p. 76). The colonial government assigned Pieter Moojen as the restoration supervisor, the first policy he introduced was to limit the creativity of Balinese artists who used European or non-Balinese styles on traditional Balinese buildings (Noorwatha, 2022, pp. 77-78). In leading the restoration project, Moojen applied strict criteria which he believed represented the interests of the Balinese people (Noorwatha, 2022, p. 82). The new Moojen’s aesthetic criteria were set as a rule, where violators will be punished (Noorwatha, 2022, p. 84).

Baliseering seeks to revive local traditions that present Balinese culture with South Asian Hinduism style (Noorwatha, 2020, p. 488). The Dutch government promoted the architecture of the Kingdom of Gianyar or gegianyaran style as the Balinese architectural style at Paris Exposition Coloniale Internationale in 1931. Gegianyaran style was chosen to enhance Bali’s image as an exotic island with rich culture. The problem that arises from the decision to choose the gegianyaran style is the creation of a single architectural style that is seen as a representation of Balinese culture, even though each region in Bali has its own architectural identity (Noorwatha, 2020, p. 489). Baliseering encourages gegianyaran style domination over the diversity of Balinese architecture (Noorwatha, 2020, p. 489).

To promote the Baliseering policy, the colonial government used educational institutions to support the Baliseering agenda. The Dutch educational policy aimed to create an illusion that made the Balinese people not aware that their lives had been dominated by Baliseering (Pageh, Kumbara, Wirawan, & Sukardja, 2015, p. 111). Capitalism was introduced to Balinese culture through education that supports the Baliseering agenda. The colonial government implemented curriculum reform that focused on preserving Balinese traditional culture (Pageh, Kumbara, Wirawan, & Sukardja, 2015, p. 112). By creating awareness for the younger generation about the importance of preserving traditional culture, the Baliseering policy can be preserved as a good policy for Bali.

The Baliseering policy was an attempt by the colonial government to convince the Balinese of the Dutch’s concern for preserving Balinese culture. The most deceptive policies were the ban of Christian missionaries in Bali and the Dutch’s support of Balinese conservative groups, this trick made it easier for the Dutch to dominate Balinese culture (Pageh, Arta, & Pardi, 2021, p. 3). The Dutch efforts to oppress any criticism prevent the rise of the Indonesian nationalism movement in Bali. In
the end, Baliseering opened the door for capitalism in Bali, the colonial government saw Bali's potential as a smokeless factory through exotic tourism (Pageh, 2017, p. 898).

### 3.3 Baliseering Impact on Balinese

The impact of Baliseering on the Balinese can be seen in the construction of Bali's image as an exotic island. In 1908 the Vereeniging Toeristenverkeer (VTV) was formed as the Duct East Indies tourism bureau. VTV launched Bali’s tourism promotion in 1914 (Sunjayadi, 2019, p. 206). To promote Bali’s tourism, VTV uses the image of Bali as an island of shipwreck looters and savage people that displays exoticism (Picard, 2006, p. 30). In a promotional poster in 1929, VTV used a picture of a bare-chested woman in front of a temple with the title *Bali Das Märchenland*, or Bali the magical island (Sunjayadi, 2019, p. 207). A similar promotion was also carried out by Gregor Krause who published a book containing 400 pictures which were dominated by images of bare-chested Balinese women in public baths (Picard, 2006, p. 39). In this promotion pattern, Bali’s image was reduced to a wild island tamed by the Dutch.

Promotions by VTV resulted in the rapid development of tourism in Bali. In 1926, Bali was visited by 445 foreign tourists, and in 1936 Bali was visited by 2,880 foreign tourists (Sunjayadi, 2019, pp. 244-246). During the Second World War, Bali remained a busy tourist destination visited by Japanese officers (Picard, 2006, p. 57). The tourism industry that developed in that era was motivated by the thirst of Western society for exoticism. The massive promotion that emphasizes the exoticism of Balinese women is seen as an escape from reality in Europe after the First World War and the Great Depression (Vickers, 2012, p. 139). Although tourism brings economic benefits, there is a dark reality in Baliseering.

Dutch domination caused chaos for the Balinese people who lost control over their island. This condition encourages the Balinese to consider a new strategy to overcome this problem (Vickers, 2012, p. 202). Although the Dutch tried to create an apolitical and traditional Bali, Baliseering actually created political and cultural problems for Balinese people (Robinson, 2006, p. 198). Tourism domination of Balinese people’s livelihood led to a transition to capitalism. Miguel Covarrubias (1940) as quoted by Sunjayadi (2019, p. 280) states his concern for Balinese culture:

Bali is no longer pure, the Balinese are no longer the native inhabitants. Bali has become a spectacle (with lots of advertisements) to satisfy desires for profit, and perversion, whose purpose is to attract large numbers of foreigners and their money. The Balinese have started to get used to this situation. A *ngaben* ceremony which was a sacred event was made so that tourists flowed in. In this age of tourism, one or more bodies had to be provided for the *ngaben* ceremony. If there are enough foreigner, there will be enough money, then they will dance and play.

Cultural exploitation for the sake of tourism is the impact of Baliseering on Balinese people. The Baliseering policy was not completely abandoned after Indonesia's independence. Indonesian government policies that prioritize tourism as a driver of Bali’s economy prioritize the preservation of Balinese culture. The Bali Lestari program implemented by the New Order regime placed Bali as a little girl, this girl needs protection from a wise father from any foreign influences that might damage her (Ningtyas, 2018, p. 124). This policy will develop into the Ajeg Bali movement which seeks to maintain the purity of Balinese culture from foreign elements (Ningtyas, 2018, pp. 124-125).

The implementation of the Baliseering policy creates a new culture for Bali: a tourism culture. In tourism culture, *Tri Hita Karana* as local wisdom has been replaced by capitalism (Picard, 2006, p. 290). *Tri Hita Karana* teaches the balance of human relations with God (Peters & Wardana, 2013, p. 136), nature (Peters & Wardana, 2013, p. 142), and fellow human beings (Peters & Wardana, 2013, p. 140). The value in *Tri Hita Karana* is removed because it is conflicting with the development of tourism development (Picard, 2020, pp. 236-237). Michel Picard (2020, p. 237) expresses his concern about the removal of *Tri Hita Karana*:

According to rumors, Bali’s history was over, at least, not like it used to be. Balinese traditions have been engineered to meet tourist expectations, while religious ceremonies have been transformed into commercial performances. In short, Balinese people have perhaps allowed themselves to be corrupted by the lure of profit and everything on the island is for sale. Tourism will inevitably take over the culture.

The destruction of Balinese culture due to Baliseering creates a tourism industry that perpetuates the oppression of Balinese people. In the name of tourism interests and tourists’s thirst for Balinese exoticism, values that obstruct tourism are removed. Balinese culture with religious values is damaged and used as
'Balinese art' for tourists show. Folk dances such as the *Joged Bumbung* are also exploited as erotic dances that satisfy tourists (Winyana, 2015, p. 69). The problems from Baliseering are still faced by the Balinese people to this day. The unequal power relations created through Baliseering create an unhealthy tourism industry that damages Bali.

### 4 Vandana Shiva's Ecofeminist Approach

#### 4.1 Reductionism Project

In her ecofeminism, Vandana Shiva criticizes the reductionism foundation in modern science. Modern science is seen by Shiva as a Western patriarchal project to dominate third-world countries (Shiva, 1997, p. 20). Reductionism has caused modern science to narrow reality down to a single perspective. The problem of reductionism in modern science according to Evelyn Keller (1985: 7) as quoted by Shiva (1997, p. 21) is described as follows:

> A particular group of middle-class white men produces modern science. The founders of modern science heavily relied on gendered language, they sought a masculine philosophy, the ability to bind nature to their own interest and enslave nature.

Modern science which is built on reductionism will shape the complex natural reality through capitalist-patriarchal interest (Swer, 2020, p. 122). The ontological foundation of reductionism is uniformity in one truth, one approach, and one method (Shiva, 1997, p. xxiii). As a result of the ontological foundation that promoted epistemic injustice, reductionism justifies the destruction of alternative knowledge. The impact of reductionism is the oppression of women and nature (Swer, 2020, p. 123). According to Shiva (1997, p. 34), reductionism can lead to violence in four forms:

a. Violence against women, reductionism changes the definition of skills that separate women from the skill they master  
b. Violence against nature, reductionism undermine the integrity of nature through the scientific justification of the nature exploitation  
c. Violence against those who benefit from traditional knowledge, reductionism displaces traditional knowledge that is considered unscientific  
d. Violence on knowledge, reductionism undermine facts and creates myth that justify Western domination

Reductionism domination in modern science is embodied in developmentalism. In developmentalism, economic development and modernization will gradually lead to one ultimate goal: the domination of capitalism (Abdoellah & Mulyanto, 2019, p. 22). To achieve the ultimate goal of developmentalism, traditional society must evolve into a modern society (Abdoellah & Mulyanto, 2019, p. 23). The process of evolution into a modern society requires traditional society to abandon their traditional culture (Abdoellah & Mulyanto, 2019, pp. 24-25). In developmentalism, modern Western countries are seen as an ideal example of a modernized society (Abdoellah & Mulyanto, 2019, pp. 43-44).

In developmentalism, a new definition of poverty was created. Poverty is no longer interpreted as a weak economic condition, instead, simple life and freedom from modernity are interpreted as new poverty (Shiva, 1997, p. 13). In developmentalism, people that live independently and do not participate in the modern economy are seen as poor groups that must be assisted (Shiva, 1997, p. 13). The new definition of poverty has succeeded in encouraging people to leave their traditional life and pursue a consumptive lifestyle. In the end, developmentalism ruined the sustainable traditional lifestyle (Shiva, 1997, p. 14).

Reductionism in developmentalism uses Gross National Product (GNP) as an indicator of global economic growth. GNP growth is seen as an indicator that fails to represent reality. GNP only calculates economic activities without considering the impact of these activities on nature and society (Shiva & Mies, 2005, p. 79). Reductionism has a devastating impact on women’s lives. The involvement of Western women who view non-Western women as a group that must be empowered by developmentalism is a form of reductionism of Western feminist who fail to see reality (Shiva & Mies, 2005, p. 73). In developmentalism that view itself as a savior, it turns out to be the oppressor through their assumptions (Shiva & Mies, 2005,
The false assumption in the developmentalism approach is a form of ignoring the long history of Western domination (Garrity-Bond, 2018, p. 186). Vandana Shiva introduces Prakriti as an entity that represents local knowledges that displays respect for nature (Garrity-Bond, 2018, p. 188). Modern science with the Cartesian approach ruined the power structure between nature and humans, as a result, Prakriti is reduced to superstitions that need to be abolished for the sake of modern society (Garrity-Bond, 2018, p. 187). The main problem with developmentalism is the lack of respect for the feminine principle embodied in Prakriti (Garrity-Bond, 2018, p. 187). To repair the damage from developmentalism, it is necessary to restore feminine principles such as Prakriti (Shiva, 1997, p. 62). Restoration of the feminine principle requires the principle of ahimsa which eliminates violence that has so far dominated modern science (Shiva, 1997, p. 19). Restoration of the feminine principle is urgently needed as the antithesis of reductionism which exploits nature and women.

4.2 Reductionism in Baliseering

The Baliseering policy has a reductionism foundation which results in the expulsion of Balinese culture and knowledge. Reductionism in Baliseering damages Tri Hita Karana, even though Baliseering policy promotes the image as a protector of Balinese culture. Reductionism in Baliseering shows the Dutch failure to see Bali as a unique society. From a reductionist point of view, Tri Hita Karana is seen by Baliseering as a capital for Bali tourism. Tri Hita Karana is a local wisdom with a big influence on the Balinese people. Tri Hita Karana’s influence in Balinese society regulates all aspects of Balinese people. The destruction of Tri Hita Karana has a dangerous impact on Balinese people lives. Baliseering undermined Tri Hita Karana to realize the Dutch colonialism agenda to create total domination over Bali. Reductionism in Baliseering has led to the creation of Western male domination by ignoring Tri Hita Karana (Shiva, 1997, p. 21).

The implementation of reductionism in Baliseering reduced Bali’s natural and cultural wealth to the extent that the Dutch could exploit it. Reductionism in Baliseering prioritizes economic interests and eliminates the socio-cultural impacts of Baliseering policy. As a resource, Bali continues to be exploited and destroyed through the Baliseering policy. The exploitation carried out by Baliseering continues to be preserved through the tourism industry. The images of Balinese women as an attraction for exotic tourism causes Balinese women to be trapped in the stigma of exotic sexual objects (Winyana, 2015, p. 65). The impact of reductionism in Baliseering results in the exploitation of women and nature.

Baliseering can be interpreted as a reductionism project carried out by the Dutch towards Bali. Baliseering removed the ontological roots of the diversity that exists in Tri Hita Karana. To repair the damage from Baliseering, the approach offered by Vandana Shiva is the restoration of the feminine principle. With the restoration of the feminine principle in Tri Hita Karana, there will be a transition from reductionism to the complete reality (Shiva, 1997, p. 19). Restoration of the feminine principle will bring appreciation to life which is the antithesis of the exploitation by Baliseering.

5 Conclusion

In summary, the Baliseering policy reduces the life of the Balinese people as a resource that can be exploited. Although Baliseering is promoted as the protector of Balinese culture, Baliseering has a hidden agenda to dominate Bali. To achieve domination, the Dutch reorganized Balinese culture according to the interest of capitalism. In the end, Baliseering replaces the Tri Hita Karana in the name of development. So Baliseering is a reductionism project carried out by the Dutch East Indies colonial government.

In Vandana Shiva’s ecofeminism approach, Baliseering destroys the lives of Balinese people by exploitation. The destruction of local wisdom ultimately causes the Balinese people to be separated from their cultural roots and fall into the trap of capitalism. To repair the damage caused by Baliseering, Vandana Shiva emphasizes the importance of reflection on the restoration of the feminine principle against exploitation. By restoring the feminine principle, the damage caused by Baliseering can be repaired and Tri Hita Karana can be placed as the center of Balinese people.
References


