



## IDENTITY OF BALI IN THE FACE OF THE RUSH OF TOURISM FOR THREE DECADES

Hendro Prabowo<sup>1</sup>, Sang Putu Adi Sanjaya<sup>2</sup>, Mahargyantari Purwani Dewi<sup>3</sup>, Henny Regina Salve<sup>4</sup>, Aski Marissa<sup>5</sup>, Mu'minatus Fitriati Firdaus<sup>6</sup>, Nur Aziz Afandi<sup>7</sup>, Astri Nur Kusumastuti<sup>8</sup>.

*<sup>1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, Fakultas Psikologi Universitas Gunadarma)</sup>*

*<sup>3 Badan Penanggulangan Bencana Provinsi Bali)</sup>*

*<sup>7 Prodi Psikologi Islam Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Dakwa IAIN Kediri)</sup>*

### Abstract

Tourism has begun to expand to Bali since 1914. At first, the Balinese people were not aware of being used as a tourism object, even though they began to interact with tourists. The appeal of Bali lies in the religious and cultural forces that come together very strongly in every facet of the daily life of the Balinese people. Foreign tourists visiting Bali increased from what initially only amounted to 86,067 people (1969) has changed to 16,106,954 people (2019). The development of the tourism industry in Bali has implications on the issue of cultural identity. This research is a literature review related to how the Balinese struggle to maintain their cultural identity in the face of the rush of tourism for three decades. The results show that there are three big themes, namely Balineseness, Ajeg Bali and Bali after the reclamation of Benoa Bay.

**Keywords:** cultural identity, Bali, tourism



### **Background.**

The island of Bali and the Balinese people are known to be interesting and unique. Bali is also one of Indonesia's proud icons that has brought many tourists and foreign exchange to Indonesia because of its beautiful natural and cultural environment. These two things are Bali's attraction to bring in tourists (Suwardani, 2015). Since the beginning, Bali tourism has existed since the early 1900s (Anom, Suryasih, Nugroho, & Mahagangga, 2017), when the concept of tourism had emerged during the Dutch colonial period but was not yet referred to as the tourism industry (Wijaya, 2015). At this time, the Balinese people did not realize that they were the object of tourism. They have not yet realized the tourism potentials in Bali. Balinese people just felt strange and naively began to interact with tourists. However, in certain areas of Bali, the culture, nature, innocence, and innocence of the Balinese people perceived by Europeans actually made many Europeans interested in coming to Bali (Anom, Suryasih, Nugroho, & Mahagangga, 2017).

Picard (2006) notes that the first steps of Nusantara archipelago tourism began in 1908 when Batavia became the center of the monopoly of inter-island routes. The Dutch colonial government also opened an Official Tourism Bureau in charge of pioneering cooperation with representative offices throughout Java, which in 1914 expanded to Bali which was included in a brochure called "Pearl of the Nusa Tenggara Islands". In 1914, Bali was already reachable by ship from Surabaya. However, tourists started to arrive in Bali in 1924 after the opening of a weekly shipping line between Singapore, Batavia, Semarang and Surabaya to Buleleng and to Makassar.

Another note written by Suryawan (2011) where in the development of Bali tourism there is the name KPM (Koninklijk Paketvaart Maatschappij), which in the 1920s promoted Bali as a tourist destination. But before that came a Dutch parliamentarian, Heer H. van Kol, who visited Bali on July 4, 1902. Kol is considered the first tourist to come to Bali. After visiting Bali, Kol wrote the book *Uit Onze Kolonien* which was published in Leiden, Netherlands in 1902. In the 826-page book, 123 pages tell about Bali (Pitana, 1999 cited in Suryawan, 2011). It was through this shipping trading partnership that Bali's tourism promotion became institutionalized. Practically after that KPM began to attract its passengers to offer tourist visits to the island of Bali.



Menurut Triguna (2011) Bali juga sebagai lokus kehidupan yang unik memiliki banyak cerita yang dinamis sebagai pola kehidupan yang humanis-religius. Keunikan budaya Bali dilandasi oleh nilai-nilai yang bersumber pada ajaran agama Hindu. Menurut Malik (2016), daya tarik Bali terletak pada kekuatan keagamaan dan budaya yang bersatu sangat kuat dalam setiap sisi kehidupan masyarakat Bali sehari-hari. Tampaknya tanpa disadari, orang Bali seperti menampilkan kesenian dalam kehidupan sehari-hari mereka, meskipun sebagian di antaranya adalah ritual keagamaan. Makanya, dengan pertukaran antar manusia karena pariwisata, kesenian Bali lalu dapat tampil dalam pertunjukan internasional.

According to Triguna (2011) Bali is also a unique locus of life that has many dynamic stories as a humanist-religious pattern of life. The uniqueness of Balinese culture is based on values sourced from the teachings of Hinduism. According to Malik (2016), the appeal of Bali lies in the power of religion and culture that unite very strongly in every side of Balinese daily life. It seems that without realizing it, Balinese people like to perform arts in their daily lives, although some of them are religious rituals. Hence, with the exchange between people due to tourism, Balinese art can then perform in international performances. Not surprisingly, the number of foreign tourists visiting Bali has increased over the past six decades (table 1), where the number of foreign tourists that originally amounted to only 86,067 people (1969) has turned into 16,106,954 people (2019).

Table 1

*Number of Foreign Travelers to Indonesia and Bali, 1969-2019*

Year	Indonesia		Bali	
	Total	Growth (%)	Total	Growth (%)
1969	86 067	-	11 278	-
1980	561 178	11,92	139 695	16,28
1990	2 051 686	26,18	489 710	12,23
2000	5 064 217	10,09	1 412 839	4,21
2010	7 002 944	10,74	2 576 142	8,01
<b>2019</b>	<b>16 106 954</b>	<b>1,88</b>	<b>6 275 210</b>	<b>3,37</b>

Source: BPS Provinsi Bali (2019)

With the increase in the presence of foreign tourists, it is inevitable that the need for hotels to accommodate tourists while traveling has also increased. The Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of Bali Province, noted the rapid growth of hotels and hotel rooms in Bali. In



2006, there were only 147 star hotels in Bali, by 2015 the number had reached 281 star hotels. While overall, both star and non-star hotels reached 2,079 hotels, whereas in 2006 the number was only 1,635 hotels. This has the consequence of reducing agricultural areas that turn into hotels and other tourism support facilities (Suryawan, 2011).

In addition to the implications of land and spatial issues, the development of the tourism industry in Bali also has implications on the issue of cultural identity. The problem that arises is how the Balinese struggle to maintain their cultural identity amidst the onslaught of tourism. Balinese are at the border of society where global forces converge to exploit natural and human resources for the sake of tourism with Balinese indigenous culture. Some Balinese are beginning to lose their historical connection to Bali as their own land has been sold to outsiders (Suryawan, 2011).

This paper aims to provide an overview of how the identity of Balinese culture and society when faced with the onslaught of tourism. Data was obtained from several literatures from the 1990s to the end of the 2010s.

### ***Balineseness***

'*Balineseness*' is a term that means that Balinese people have lost their "Balinese". This term was originally proposed by Picard (2008). Picard (1995) had previously started to question this. According to Picard, since the 1970s there have been pros and cons regarding whether tourism has a beneficial or detrimental impact on Balinese culture. Through a term in academic discourse called "the sociocultural impact of tourism", on the one hand you will find writers who claim that tourism can preserve Bali's cultural heritage, on the other hand, others accuse tourism of destroying Balinese culture because it will turn it into a commercial commodity. Picard did not want to answer this dilemma, instead he wanted to solve the problems faced by Bali's tourism industry with the concept of "sustainable tourism development", i.e. developing tourism that does not destroy the resources it exploits, be it natural or cultural tourism. A decade later, Picard (2008) has started to side with one of the dilemmatic issues above, namely that tourism will destroy Balinese culture. According to Picard, as it has been manipulated and appropriated by the tourism industry, Balinese culture has not only become a source of profit and pride, but also a cause of anxiety for the Balinese themselves, who are beginning to wonder about their Balineseness: are they still Balinese?



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Tourism has thus triggered major concerns about identity among the Balinese, about what they refer to as 'Balineseness'.

Picard (2008) acknowledges that the term 'Balineseness' originated from Bali's leading newspaper, the Bali Post. The author of this newspaper wrote that the influx of admiration that comes from tourism has blindfolded the Balinese. Some Balinese seem to deny the painful fact that the authenticity of their cultural identity has been seriously compromised. This accusation is not far-fetched, though it may also be due to a lack of awareness on the part of the Balinese themselves. A poll was conducted among the newspaper's readers, and the result was that 40% of the readers' answers led to the accusation that Balinese tourism had turned Balinese into "Balineseness", while the remaining 60% thought that the increasing number of tourists coming every year to Bali was the most convincing evidence for the authenticity of Balinese cultural identity.

The discourse of 'Balineseness' seems to be agreed by several academics from Indonesia in general and from Bali in particular. According to Bagus (1995), today the behavior of Balinese people has become increasingly individualistic, asocial, even showing hedonistic traits in some communities. The original traditional values of Balinese people who are friendly, gentle, and polite have begun to be crushed by new values that rely on freedom. The phenomenon of the strengthening of the style and lifestyle of this hedonistic society is already quite worrying for the preservation of local values and has a negative impact on Balinese identity. Azhar (2018) sees that tourism has increased prosperity for the Balinese people, but on the other hand the emergence of tourism has also shown the inevitable destruction of Balinese culture and behavior and human identity. Suwardani (2018) also reminded that the biggest challenge facing Balinese society today is its ability to maintain, preserve, and pass on local wisdom. The inheritance of local wisdom values is intended so that the younger generation of Bali can protect themselves from the negative effects of modernization due to globalization.

According to Geriya (2003), tourism is a modern phenomenon that has a strong impact on Balinese social and cultural life. Tourism has changed the economic behavior of Balinese people, with a shift from agrarian culture to industrial and service structures. Tourism also expands Balinese social networks, crossing ethnic and national borders on an international and global scale. Whereas Balinese culture itself has a clear identity based on



Hinduism. While according to Sumerta (2011) for scholars who are not Balinese, the cultivation of Balinese-ness, which is based on traditional belief systems, seems to be more important to Bali than its association with Hinduism. Whereas the Balinese have integrated Hinduism into their belief system.

### **Ajeg Bali**

Facing this issue of cultural identity when dealing with tourism, Balinese people can actually create resistance. According to Wijaya (2004), the lack of appreciation from cultures and communities outside Bali coupled with the collective disappointment caused by it, eventually gave birth to Balinese resistance. The resistance was initially carried out by the traditional institution of the traditional village. In its development, the traditional village did not have the authority to reject government policies, so this institution was no longer able to stem the onslaught of culture outside Bali. This onslaught was carried out through the conversion of land functions, from rice fields and farms to residential areas, offices, shops, industries and hotels. When this cultural onslaught encroached on religious areas, for example by converting lands adjacent to temples into tourism facilities, there was resistance from social religious institutions at the general and student levels that grew in turn since the 1990s.

The momentum of the Legian bombing on October 12, 2002, has given Balinese resistance a place in the public sphere (Wijaya, 2004; Allen & Palermo, 2005). Initially, a bomb exploded inside Paddy's Bar, followed seconds later by the explosion of a vehicle parked in front of the nearby Sari Club, two popular night spots on Kuta Beach, Bali's most famous resort. Almost at the same time, there was a third blast, targeting the United States Consulate in the Renon district of Denpasar, but the bomb exploded destroying a tree in a vacant lot on the side of the road. The bombings in Kuta killed 212 people from 22 countries, including 88 from Australia and 35 from Indonesia. The tragedy also injured 324 people and damaged 418 buildings (Picard, 2009).

The mainstream media (local print and electronic media) participated in providing resistance through the power of public service advertisements, by socializing the Ajeg Bali concept in August 2003 (Wijaya, 2004). The word *ajeg* itself comes from the word *jejeg*, *tuara obah*, *tuara seng* which means firm, solid, fixed, which in turn means that Balinese



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people should return to the origin, back to a pure and peaceful Bali, where everything is organized and original. Ajeg Bali is the Balinese people's aspiration to make themselves feel socio-economically and socio-culturally just (Wijaya, 2004, Uryana, 2007). Meanwhile, the spokespersons of Ajeg Bali interpret it as something that is not stagnant, but a continuous renewal effort carried out consciously by Balinese people to maintain their identity, space and culture. The goal is to increase the strength of Balinese people so that they do not fall under the conquest of the onslaught of global culture, which includes consumerism, commercialism, and commoditization. All three are formidable challenges in maintaining Bali's uniqueness. Therefore, realizing Ajeg Bali also cannot be separated from efforts to stop the culture of consumerism in Balinese culture itself (Wijaya, 2004).

If traced, the term Ajeg Bali was first popularized by Pedande Made Gunung around May 2002 at the inauguration of a local TV station in Denpasar. The next day a daily newspaper that was still in the same group as the local TV immediately campaigned for the term Ajeg Bali. Since then, this term has become popularly spoken or written by Balinese people, especially among regional officials (Arida, 2012). This momentum was continued on August 1, 2003, when a seminar entitled Ajeg Bali's Triumph Strategy was held at an international hotel by Bali Post. The papers presented at this seminar were then published in a special edition of the Bali Post to celebrate its 55th anniversary on August 16. This collection of papers was reprinted in book format in January 2004 (Naradha, 2004), along with a collection of essays by leading public intellectuals (Darmaputra, 2004). In the editorial, the editor and owner of Bali Post, A. B. G. Satria Naradha, explains that the purpose of the Ajeg Bali strategy is to defend and preserve the identity, environment, and culture of the Balinese people. The problem is that Balinese people have forgotten their Balineseness, which is based on religion, tradition, and culture. They must strengthen themselves if they want to avoid the hegemony of global culture, with its traces of consumerism, commercialism and commodification. The critical situation in Bali back then was due not only to the bombings, but also to the fact that the Balinese had lost control of their island, which was overloaded with construction, invaded by migrant workers, and taken advantage of by foreign investors. Now, Bali is on the verge of destruction, and the Balinese are becoming alienated in their own land. In short, Bali must be saved (Picard, 2009).

The Bali bombings of 2005 were a series of bombings that occurred in Bali on





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October 1, 2005. There were three bombings, one in Kuta (RAJA's Restaurant, Kuta Square) and two in Jimbaran (Kafé Nyoman and Kafé Menega) with at least 23 people killed and 196 injured. The 23 dead consisted of: 15 Indonesians, 1 Japanese national, 4 Australians, and 3 were the bombers. The suicide bombing had a significant impact on tourism in Bali. In this situation, the number of visitors from Europe and Australia in drastically decreased, while the number of visitors from Asia, especially from Japan and Taiwan, increased. In particular, visitors from Japan have dominated Bali's international tourism landscape in recent years. Of the 1,460,000 'foreign direct visitors' to Bali in 2004, 326,000 (22 percent) were from Japan, while 268,000 (18 percent) were from Australia and 184,000 (13 percent) were from Taiwan (Picard, 2009).

Tragedi beruntun di atas sempat mengakibatkan gejolak yang sangat besar dan sangat berpengaruh terhadap keharmonisan bersama di dalam masyarakat Bali. Tragedi ini sempat memunculkan kekhawatiran akan kembali bangkitnya politik identitas yang mencuat dalam praktik Ajeg Bali yang berlebihan. Munculnya identitas politik Ajeg Bali ini bisa berpotensi mengancam keragaman identitas (agama, etnis, budaya). Kekhawatiran ini cukup beralasan karena praktek ini sebelumnya sudah berkembang dalam sejarah masyarakat Bali (Picard, 2009). Namun, kearifan lokal masyarakat Bali dapat menangkal kekhawatiran tersebut. Hal ini tampak ketika pelaksanaan upacara khusus *pemarisuda Karipubaya* yang bermakna penyucian alam semesta pasca tragedi tersebut. Masyarakat Bali dapat menahan diri dan tidak melakukan tindakan aksi 'balas dendam' dengan kekerasan, tetapi justru menempuh pendekatan spritual yang secara simbolik mengandung pesan perdamaian, persatuan dan toleransi yang menembus batas-batas ras, negara, etnik, agama, dan telah mendapatkan empati dan simpati masyarakat lokal, nasional dan dunia (Geriya, 2003). Kearifan lokal ini merupakan modal sosial, modal religius-kultural, modal rohani-batiniah untuk aksi pemulihan pasca tragedi bom (Suacana, 2011). Selain itu, di kalangan masyarakat Bali pada lapisan tingkat atas hampir tidak mempermasalahkan aksi kekerasan itu. Hal tersebut karena kesadaran kelompok-kelompok agama yang berbeda di Bali yang terhimpun dalam forum komunikasi beragama menjaga agar peristiwa tersebut tidak bergeser kearah isu konflik antar beragama (Picard, 2009).

Miharja (2013) dan Wijaya (2009) menemukan bahwa terdapat bukti sejarah tentang adanya semangat mengajegkan Bali itu sudah ada sepanjang sejarah Bali, meskipun dengan





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nama dan perwujudan yang berbeda-beda. Semangat ini selalu dibangkitkan kembali oleh para intelektual dari berbagai golongan dengan cara memanfaatkan atau mengelola wacana-wacana yang dianggap dapat mengikis identitas kebalian. Demi menjaga identitas kebalian itu, mereka berlomba mengartikulasikan Bali sebagai konsep kebudayaan, namun setiap jaman dimaknainya secara berbeda.

In addition, the concept of Ajeg Bali can also be interpreted as an effort to revisit the past and the dynamic present. When imagining the past that must be emulated, or used as a benchmark in the present, Balinese generally expect the glory of the Gelgel era to be repeated. While Bali was isolated from Islamization, this does not mean that post-Majapahit Bali was stagnant, or unchanging. That is, Islamization and Dutch domination did not change the social and cultural order of Balinese society. Compared to other Hindu regions in the archipelago, Bali's history is much more orthogenetic and organized. The dynamic contemporary meaning of Ajeg Bali was revealed in an article published by Nyoman Wiana, a Hindu expert who uses the pseudonym I Ketut Gobyah on August 13, 2003. In this article Nyoman Wiana says, in an effort to realize Ajeg Bali, meaning upholding Bali and fostering it to survive the era of globalization, it is necessary to apply the correct Hindu teachings and strive for saputra human resources (saputra is a person who is able to uphold dharma, has a lot of knowledge and a lot of work). Not killing the aspirations of the people and the truth with the power and authority of those above them (Wijaya, 2004).

However, criticism of the existence of Ajeg Bali was raised by Utama (2013). Utama considers that the development of Bali is contradictory to the idealism of Ajeg Bali, especially in relation to Balinese culture which actually cannot be separated from farming culture, and development conditions that rely too much on the service sector as the main revenue are very high risk. Bali tourism as the main sector for Bali in reality has lost its idealism. When capitalism has dominated the island, when artistic creativity turns towards commercialization, when Balinese people don't feel like living and staying in Bali anymore, that's when we have actually lost the ideal of development. When laborers work in international hotels but have to settle for local standard salaries, when craftsmen have to work as laborers and not as artists, when sculptors and painters work not from the inspiration of their souls, then at that very moment Bali is on the edge of the destruction of Balinese identity.



### Reklamasi Teluk Benoa

Balineseness and Ajeg Bali were tested again with two reclamation projects in Bali, Serangan Island in the early 1990s which was stopped due to the monetary crisis and the Benoa Bay reclamation plan in the 2010s. This second reclamation was planned with the boundaries of Benoa Sea Port in the north, Tanjung Benoa Village and Tengkulung Village in the east, Bualu Village in the south, and Pudut Island in the west, which is one of the sacred areas of the Balinese people. This is where Bali's authenticity is tested once again.

Indigenous villagers in Bali have firmly rejected the Benoa Bay reclamation activity, where there are already 39 indigenous villages in Bali that reject the Benoa Bay reclamation. A number of traditional villages that rejected the reclamation were Tanjung Benoa, Jimbaran, Kelan, Kuta, Bualu, Kedonganan, Kerobokan, Sesetan, Kepaon, Pedungan, Pemogan, Sumerta, Serangan and other traditional villages. All indigenous villages that reject the Benoa Bay reclamation made a statement regarding the rejection of the Benoa Bay reclamation. This is because the reclamation, which is supported by the Bali Provincial Government, is rejected because it is closely related to the concept of Tri Hita Karana. The reclamation plan is also considered to violate the values of preserving the bay water area and will have a negative impact on the land in South Bali such as sea water rise. In addition, it is feared that the Benoa Bay reclamation will damage 70 places considered sacred by the Balinese Hindu community, where some of these sacred areas are closely related to the spiritual, social and cultural activities of the Balinese people.

For Balinese Hindus, the sea (and associated mountains) is both a source of life and a sacred place. The concept of respect for the sea comes from the concept of Nyegara-Gunung (Sea-Mountain), a spatial concept in Balinese culture. The mountain as the embodiment of "Lingga" is the abode of "Lord Shiva". While the ocean as the embodiment of "Yoni" is the place where Shiva's magic resides. Lingga Yoni is symbolic of Purusa Pradana (male and female). Nyegara-Gunung is a natural spiritual balance oriented to mountains and oceans, *luan-teben* (upstream and downstream), *sekala-niskala*, holy-unholy, *rwa bhineda* (good and bad) and so on. Nyegara-Gunung is also a Hindu ceremony in Bali which means that the sea and mountains are inseparable. When both the sea and the mountain are damaged, it will damage the balance in Balinese culture. The Nyegara Gunung ceremony is usually held by



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the beach or *segara* (sea), this is because the sea has a philosophical meaning as a *segara* which is the source of life.

One other example that is related to the sea is the *ngaben* ceremony. The sea is an important element in the *ngaben* funeral ritual because the ashes of the deceased's body (in the procession of the *ngaben* ritual) will then be thrown in the sea. *Nganyud* ceremony has a meaning as a ritual to wash away all the impurities that remain in the spirit of the deceased with the symbolization of washing away the ashes of the corpse. This ceremony is usually performed in the sea, or river. If reclamation is carried out, there will be areas of the coast that are owned by the private sector, so people must have special permission to enter them. This will make the *ngaben* ritual more difficult for local Balinese. Even if they must move to another beach, the location will be further away to perform the ritual and will impose a cost burden on the indigenous community (Dewi & Parameswari, 2018).

One of the activities to reject the Benoa Bay reclamation that was originally going to be implemented by PT TWBI (PT. Tirta Wahana Bali International) was a protest action by the masses incorporated in the Bali People's Forum Against Reclamation (ForBALI) in front of the Bali Provincial government office on January 29, 2016. The mass of thousands of people hoped that the provincial and local governments in Bali would reject the AMDAL recommendation to avoid greater conflict. The central government was also asked to respect the aspirations of the people. This rejection occurred because the Benoa Bay area which will be the site of reclamation has 70 sacred areas of Hindus in Bali. Demonstration activities are almost routinely carried out every week to voice the community's rejection of the Benoa Bay reclamation plan. During this time, indigenous villagers, *prajuru* (traditional village administrators), and *bendesa* (traditional village leaders) were already aware of the controversy from the mass media. Their identity as indigenous villagers and as Balinese came to the fore and they joined the action movement to reject the Benoa Bay reclamation. The collective action of citizens from various indigenous villages to reject the Benoa Bay reclamation began to appear on January 29, 2016 when a joint mass and a number of indigenous villages on the coast of Benoa Bay staged a demonstration during the public consultation on the Environmental Impact Assessment (AMDAL) of the Benoa Bay reclamation (Subekti, 2019).



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The involvement of Bali's indigenous villages in the Benoa Bay reclamation rejection movement, which began sporadically in 2013, is an important phenomenon in the change of indigenous villages in Bali. Previously it had never happened that indigenous villages in Bali came together in coalition to engage in social action. As religious social institutions, indigenous villages have traditionally been more internally oriented to take care of customary affairs in their respective areas. Cooperation between indigenous villages is usually related to the organization of religious ceremonies in large temples managed by a combination of indigenous villages around the temple. After the inter-indigenous village action on 29 January 2016, the indigenous villages that rejected the Benoa Bay reclamation then created an organizational forum, called Pasubayan, which was formed on 16 March 2016. As of August 2016, Pasubayan includes 39 indigenous villages. Pasubayan also has members from indigenous villages that do not have territorial boundaries with Benoa Bay. The Benoa Bay reclamation is not solely seen as a pollution of the sanctity of the territory of indigenous villages that have areas related to the Benoa Bay reclamation plan but can be seen as a pollution of the sanctity of Balinese land in general. Through this belief, indigenous villages located outside the Benoa Bay area also feel they have the right to defend the sanctity of the bay.

Not only indigenous villages and fishermen, but also tourism business owners around Tanjung Benoa, the protesters also came from students and activists of non-governmental organizations. There were also groups of residents from areas quite far from Benoa Bay, such as Sukawati and Ubud, Gianyar and Jembrana. Outside Bali, protests were also held in Banyuwangi and Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara (NTB). Thousands of fishermen from Muncar, Banyuwangi gathered signatures to reject the plan to dredge sand in the Banyuwangi coastal area which will be used for Benoa Bay reclamation. In addition, rejection actions were also carried out by the people of NTB, this was because reclamation in Benoa Bay made the Lombok region, especially West Lombok, East Lombok and North Lombok, victims because the sand for reclamation was dredged from the three regions,



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