

REVITALIZATION OF *THE SEKALA* AND *NISKALA* DIMENSIONS OF PALM SUGAR MAKING TRADITIONS IN SUPPORT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: CASE STUDY IN PEDAWA VILLAGE, BANJAR DISTRICT, BULELENG REGENCY

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ASBTRACT

The existence of tourism in Pedawa Village, Banjar District, Buleleng Regency is inseparable from the tradition of making iconic palm sugar. Advances in science and technology have challenged the existence of this tradition in the process of passing it on to the younger generation. Therefore, the existence of this tradition is still being maintained, both to maintain the traditional order and the sustainability of community-based tourism. Efforts to revitalize the tradition of making palm sugar in Pedawa Village involve two dimensions, namely the “sekala” (real) dimension and the “niskala” (abstract) dimension. The sekala dimension is carried out through concrete actions, namely sugar palm conservation and product innovation, while the noetic dimension is carried out through sacredization based on Hindu teachings combined with local wisdom. The study conducted in Pedawa Village is quite interesting because the revitalization carried out can be an example amidst the negative issues of the tourism sector which are synonymous with resource exploitation, degradation of traditional values, and desacralization. Through the results of this research, it is hoped that it can create a strong tradition and impact on tourism that can be managed in a sustainable manner.

Keywords: revitalization, sekala, niskala, palm sugar, sustainable tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a travel activity or *traveling* carried out for various purposes, both recreational and educational purposes. These travel activities are possible due to differences in culture, traditions, or local wisdom owned by the area of

origin of tourists with the destination or area that is the destination. Therefore, the existence of cultural differences or local wisdom is a potential aspect to be developed, both as cultural tourism and educational tourism. Especially in Bali which has

a variety of traditions and local wisdom.

The development of Bali's cultural potential and local wisdom has an important urgency to be actualized. This is in line with Bali Governor Regulation No. 28 of 2022 concerning Bali Tourism Governance Article 29 which states; "tourists deserve courteous, courteous, ethical, professional service, as well as information about Tourism Attractions and introduction to local culture" (Bali Provincial Government Legal Documentation and Information Network, 2020). The development of cultural potential has a strategic role. On the one hand, the development of cultural potential can promote the richness of cultural treasures owned by the Balinese people. On the other hand, there will be pride as well as public awareness to maintain and preserve, and further explore more deeply related to their cultural potential. The most important part of it all is that the community can be empowered as the main actors in its management, so that the tourism concept developed will be sustainable. One example of community synergy in developing cultural potential in building sustainable tourism can be seen in the community of Pedawa Village, Banjar District, Buleleng Regency.

Pedawa Village is one of the villages that is famous for its people who are included in the Bali Aga community. In addition, the people of Buleleng know Pedawa Village as a palm sugar producing village with a distinctive sweet taste and has a high reputation (Jayendra & Supriyandana, 2021). Not only palm

sugar products are produced, the manufacturing process is also a treat of tourist attractions that are quite popular because they are full of nuances of local wisdom and educational value.

The tradition of making palm sugar in Pedawa Village is a local wisdom that has been going on for generations. This is because the geographical terrain of Pedawa Village is overgrown with wild palm trees. Palm trees (*Arenga pinnata*) that grow in Pedawa in local terms called *jaka* are varieties of deep palm or forest palm that produce in the age of 10 years or more with a height of up to 25 meters, not varieties of genjah palm that produce faster and have a shorter height. The number of local people who work as palm wine farmers makes this tradition a socio-cultural identity pinned on Pedawa Village. In local terms, palm farmers are called *pangiris*.

This tradition had experienced serious threats coming from within the Pedawa community itself. Especially the younger generation who do not want to pursue and inherit the way of tapping palm wine because it is considered the work of old people. In addition, the progress of the era and technology tends to make the next generation prefer to pursue other sectors that are considered more productive. The work of tapping palm palm and cooking it into sugar is only considered a side job that is even difficult to rely on to make ends meet.

The entry of the tourism sector has made efforts to revitalize the tradition of making palm sugar carried out by the community. An interesting phenomenon in the

dynamics of the continuity of the tradition of making palm sugar is the revitalization efforts carried out by the community in maintaining its existence. This revitalization in addition to involving all components of the local community, also involves two aspects or dimensions, namely *the sekala* dimension (concrete actions) and *the niskala dimension* (actions in the realm of abstract or sacralization) Although this effort is actually carried out to maintain the traditional order so that it is not extinct swallowed by the progress of the times, it also indirectly has an impact on the sustainability of tourism developed in Pedawa Village. The existence of local wisdom makes palm sugar also make Pedawa Village win the title of a tourist village through the Buleleng Regent Decree No. 430/405/HK/2017 (Bali Provincial Tourism Office, 2023).

The existence of revitalization in two dimensions *of scale* and *scale* in relation to the tradition of making palm sugar is an interesting thing to be studied in more depth. This is important amid the growing negative stigma raised by some circles that tourism is synonymous with environmental damage, desacralization, and degradation of traditional values and local wisdom. This negative stigma seems to be reinforced by capitalization, where tourism seems to be controlled by capital owners and excludes the involvement of local communities. The study conducted in Pedawa Village can be an example in maintaining synergy between tourism, local communities, and traditional values. Thus, quality

tourism development will be formed and able to be managed sustainably, namely from, by, and for the community.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is classified as a qualitative descriptive type using a cultural tourism approach. Data were collected by non-participatory observation techniques, interviews, and literature studies. Data analysis techniques carried out in the form of; 1) data reduction, where data is simplified by removing data that is not related to the topic discussed, 2) data presentation, namely by sorting and categorizing the data obtained into more specialized sub-themes, and 3) drawing conclusions, namely by drawing conclusions after combining data from observations and interviews and strengthened from the results of literature studies. The results of data analysis are then presented in an informal way, namely by description or description of ordinary words without using numerical processing and other quantification methods.

III. DISCUSSION

Revitalization is simply a process of reviving or reviving (Nugroho et al., 2019). Revitalization can be interpreted as an effort to revitalize an area or attraction that once existed, lived, but has regressed. Revitalization can also be interpreted as an effort to modify a condition, environment, cultural heritage, or any form with the aim of being reusable (Nurhidayah, 2017). Related to the local wisdom of palm sugar in Pedawa Village, revitalization means

strengthening the existence of the tradition with the aim that it becomes vital and takes place sustainably.

The tourism sector is the main factor that contributes to motivating the Pedawa community to revitalize. Quoting the opinion of Rosardi et al., (2021) who stated that *Tourism can collaborate on economic, ecological, and social dimensions. The sector that can be expected to improve the local community's economy is tourism especially nature-based tourism which can provide conservation values and community social dynamics experiences change due to tourism activities that grow and strive to always carry out innovation* (Tourism can collaborate on economic, ecological, and social dimensions. The sector that is expected to improve the welfare of the local community, the economy is tourism, especially nature-based tourism which can provide conservation value and the social dynamics of the community have changed due to developing tourism activities and trying to always innovate).

The efforts made in revitalizing local wisdom make palm sugar broadly categorized in two dimensions, namely *sekala* and *niskala*. In *the sekala* dimension, revitalization is carried out in two ways, namely palm plant conservation, and product innovation, while in *the niskala* dimension it is carried out through sacralization. The three ways can be described as follows.

III.1. Conservation of Aren

Conservation has the meaning of preserving the carrying capacity, quality, function, and ability of the environment. Conservation aims to realize the preservation of natural resources for ecosystem balance and maintain the use of these natural resources so that they are always harmonious and balanced (Rachman, 2013). In this context, palm conservation has a definition of preserving the existence of palm trees as the main resource.

Palm trees that grow in Pedawa as a whole are wild palm that grow by themselves and belong to forest palm or deep palm that is relatively long to produce (approximately within 10 years). Palm tree propagation also occurs naturally, through seeds that fall from the mother tree and are allowed to grow just like that. People consider this type of sugar palm to produce the most delicious sugar with a distinctive sweet taste. In addition, this type of palm tree grows relatively high when it can be harvested sap, so it becomes a unique attraction, where palm farmers climb *bangul* (wooden peg ladders) to tap the sap.

The increasing need for palm sugar products, both for the internal Pedawa community and marketing out of the village, made in 2020 efforts to nurse palm trees with human intervention for the first time. For this reason, in the same year a new farmer group was formed called the Uyung Sap Group. This group is specifically tasked with handling the conservation and cultivation of palm trees native to Pedawa. There was a discourse to bring palm seeds from outside Pedawa, including genjah type palm

which in some regions became the prima donna to be developed massively. This is because genjah palm produces faster and the trees are relatively short, so it is considered very easy for farmers to carry out sap tapping activities. However, this discourse received rejection from most residents, because it was feared that the inclusion of other types of palm sugar would affect the quality of the palm sugar flavor produced because so far, the distinctive palm sugar taste of Pedawa has been very famous. Therefore, the original Pedawa palm is considered the most original which is then cultivated. Seeding is carried out by breeding palm seeds that have fallen from wild palm trees and cultivated in polybags in special nurseries that have been prepared, and treated by watering and fertilizing regularly.

III.2. Product Innovation

Pedawa palm sugar is a product that is well known among the people of Buleleng, and is sought after until many come directly to Pedawa. Pedawa sugar is priced between Rp. 35.000,- to Rp. 40.000,- per kilogram. Initially, palm sugar produced by Pedawa was only limited to traditional form variants, namely Gula Gede and Gula Kicak. Gula Gede is the most commonly known form and is printed with coconut shells or shells. While Gula Kicak is a smaller version of Gula Gede. Kicak is the native language of Pedawa which means small. Unlike Gula Gede which is printed using coconut shells, Gula Kicak is printed with

wooden boards that are given several hollows.

Thanks to the creative touch of the BIMA DEWA Farmer Group, several product innovations were created. BIMA DEWA stands for Bhumi Pertiwi Mesari Aren Desa Pedawa. The BIMA DEWA Farmer Group is different from the Gum Uyung Farmer Group as described in the previous sub-chapter, so Pedawa Village has two farmer groups. The BIMA DEWA Farmer Group was formed and chaired by Mr. Ketut Arya Wirawan with the aim of accommodating farmers' production and reprocessing it into several new variants, as well as seeking remarketing through several social media platforms. Some of the product variants created include:

1. Semut Sugar, which is palm sugar in the form of powder which is processed by grinding solid sugar
2. Juruh Sugar, which is thick liquid sugar obtained by remelting solid sugar, and
3. Candy Sugar, or also called Mini Sugar, is sugar that is small, in the form of rectangular bars whose size is only around 5 cm. Its small size makes it able to be put in a pocket and practical to carry everywhere.

Some of these new variants are packaged innovatively so as to create an elegant impression as shown in the following picture.



Picture 3.1.
Some New Variants of Palm Sugar Pedawa
Source: Doc. Jayendra, 2021

In addition to creating new product variants, another innovation is the creation of parcel packages containing several variants of palm sugar at once. The idea of making this parcel is also only developed in 2022.



Picture 3.2.
Parcel Gula Aren Khas Pedawa
Source: Dok. Gula Bali Pedawa, 2022

In this parcel, several variants of traditional sugar are packaged in mica plastic packaging and combined with new variants and placed in woven bamboo baskets so that they become one complete package. However, this parcel is still marketed only in a limited way for tourists who come

directly as *souvenirs* or local souvenirs typical of Pedawa Village (Jayendra, 2022).

In addition to being marketed directly in Pedawa Village and conducting various promotions on social media, palm sugar products produced by Pedawa Village also regularly take part in various events organized by the Buleleng Regency government, such as the Buleleng Festival and the anniversary celebration of the city of Singaraja. In these annual events, Pedawa palm sugar is displayed in an exhibition stand that specifically introduces MSME products from several villages in Buleleng Regency. Thus, it is expected that information about the advantages of Pedawa sugar products will be more widely known in the community.

3.3. Digital Platform Setup

The provision of digital platforms is considered very useful for the purpose of disseminating product information while marketing the product. Digitalization is an important aspect that is a basic need in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 in order to increase product sales figures. For example, with the existence of a *marketplace*, the interaction process in the tourism industry or business can be intertwined and measurable because data can be stored online. Many benefits are obtained from selling on the *marketplace* such as low operational costs, getting visitor traffic easily, technically selling on the *marketplace* is very easy and *real time* (Saputra, 2021).

Digitalization is also a new trend that is increasingly popular. In the future, tourism trends that are increasingly in demand are the use of non-contact applications such as the use of Google by tourists in planning trips as well as purchasing products (Lestari, 2021). In this case, the Pedawa community has recognized the concept of digital-based marketing as an implication of the revitalization of the tradition of making palm sugar. Information about Pedawa sugar can be accessed on the village's official website, as well as several marketplaces such as Shopee and Tokopedia. Marketing through social media accounts such as Facebook and Instagram has also begun to be carried out so that it can be concluded that the entry of the tourism sector makes the Pedawa community also required to be more digitally proficient and master technological developments and realize the vital need for the provision of digital infrastructure.

3.4. Sacralization

Sacralization basically has a definition of something sanctified through ritual (Antono, 2022). Sacralization is an action or process based on an agreement by a community to purify (sacralize) something with religious values so that something afterwards has a sacred, special and sacred position (Satiri & Safei, 2022). Sacralization basically makes something that looks ordinary cannot be treated carelessly on the grounds that it has sacred and religious and magical values.

Related to this, the tradition of making palm sugar in Pedawa Village

is a tradition that is then given sacred values by the community. In order to maintain its existence and sustainability, the aspect of sacredness plays an important role in maintaining the traditional order so that it does not become extinct, especially for the local younger generation to want to inherit it. Some forms of sacralization of this tradition include the following.

3.4.1. Sacrosalization of Palm Trees

Palm trees as producers of sap which will later be processed into sugar are the first component that gets sacralization value. Palm farmers in Pedawa believe that palm trees also have a body and soul that must be in harmony with the soul and body of their owners. If something happens to the tree that causes sap production to become stuck, a ritual is carried out with *tipat bekel*, *canang daksina baas pipis*, and *banten sodan*, as well as *incense*. Then a *sasontengan* or prayer is said in everyday language which basically aims to ask that the palm tree will produce it again as before.

3.4.2. Sacralization of the Tapping Process

The process of tapping palm trees is carried out by male farmers who in the local language are called *pangiris*. In wiretapping, starting from the moment they depart from their homes to the garden, these farmers must not be consulted, greeted, let alone gossip. The goal is that the farmer's mind is always focused on positive things, because greeting can make you forget and complacent, and has the potential to talk about the ugliness of others. This

is also what is believed to make palm trees not release sap because the minds of farmers who tap them have been contaminated with negative things. The Pedawa people who saw the palm wine farmer going to the garden already understood this and would not invite him to talk. But if someone who doesn't know this accidentally invites him to talk, then the farmer will not answer. Palm wine farmers can only be invited back after their duties are completed.

3.4.3. Sacralization of the Roles of Men and Women

A unique custom related to the sacralization of the tradition of making palm sugar in Pedawa Village is the division of duties between husband and wife or men and women in a balanced manner. The men are the ones who are in charge of tapping sap from the palm tree, while the women are the ones who are obliged to process the sap that has been tapped until it matures into sugar. Similarly, if someone wants to buy sugar directly to the palm farmer's house, then the buyer must transact buying and selling with women, not with men. This is a form of gender equality based on Hindu philosophy where sap is considered a symbol of maleness (masculine) and mature palm sugar is considered a symbol of femininity (feminine). Nira is believed to be the embodiment of the *Akasa asssspect* and sugar is a symbol of *Prthivi*, so the duties of women and men in making palm sugar should not be interchangeable. Therefore, the sacralization of the roles of men and women is also one of the factors in empowering women

in building a positive and sustainable tourism image in Pedawa.

3.4.4. Suicide of Selling Nira

Sap or palm wine produced from the tapping process of palm trees in Pedawa is strictly prohibited for sale. This provision is not governed by customary law, but rather by the beliefs of the local community. The Pedawa people believe that palm trees and farmers must unite their souls, so that if the sap is then sold, it is equivalent to selling or pawning their own souls. This is also one of the causes of palm trees will "*nyat*" or suddenly stop producing (Jayendra & Supriyandana, 2021).

In addition to these reasons, selling sap also means breaking the palm sugar cycle, in the sense that the sap will not have time to become sugar because the cycle has been forcibly broken. This also means that it will kill the role of women who are in charge of cooking sap until it is cooked into sugar as previously described. The disconnection of the cycle and the role of women in addition to making palm trees stop giving sap, is also believed to result in the farming families who sell them will break their fortune.

If calculated, selling sap economically is indeed much more profitable because there is no need to bother processing it into sugar. In addition to the process is quite long, production costs also become more expensive because the process of cooking sugar requires quite a lot of fuel, especially the method used is the

traditional way. However, the implication of this sacralization makes that none of the Pedawa people work as sap sellers. On the contrary, the community obediently no one violates this taboo and all sap that has been produced will be directly processed into sugar to completion, even though there is no written provision prohibiting it. When sugar has been produced, it is allowed to be sold.

3.4.5 Palm sugar becomes a means or obligatory offering at the *yadnya* ceremony

One of the interesting phenomena and becomes iconic in every *yadnya* ceremony held in Pedawa Village is that locally produced palm sugar must be a means of ceremony or offering. Some of the offering facilities that characterize the local wisdom of Pedawa Village are *banten daksina*. *Banten daksina* Pedawa community is very unique because it does not use eggs, but palm sugar. This has been a tradition for generations where palm sugar symbolizes wisdom, tranquility, and noble ethics. This philosophy arises because in the process of making it alone is very sacred as explained in the previous sub-chapter. Palm sugar also symbolizes *Bhuwana Alit* in which was created due to the meeting of the elements of *Purusa* (male) and *Pradhana* (female) as the contents of the universe (*Great Bhuwana*).

As a form of offering, palm sugar is considered an offering that symbolizes good qualities. In Hinduism, there are three types of

offerings based on their nature, namely:

1. *Sattwika Yadnya*, that is, the type of *yadnya* that is based on sincerity, according to the instructions of scripture, and does not expect reward or reward.
2. *Rajasika Yadnya*, that is, the type of *yadnya* that is based on sincerity, according to the instructions of scripture, and does not expect reward.
3. *Tamasika Yadnya*, that is, *yadnya* which is done carelessly, small sacrifices but hoping for big results, without being based on scriptural instructions and without sincerity (Widana, 2019).

In this context, palm sugar can be categorized as a *sattwika* offering as a symbol of sincerity and sacred sacrifice from the farmers who make it. Palm sugar symbolizes calmness, silence of mind, and wisdom, as well as balance or harmonization of relationships between men and women. In *burdentenan*, both as a staple and offering, palm sugar is usually wrapped in *keraras* or dried banana leaves. With the sacralization as a means of ceremonies and offerings, this is one of the motivations for the community to continue to produce palm sugar to maintain the traditional and spiritual practice of the Pedawa Village community. This motivation also has an impact on the stability of palm sugar production as the mainstay product of Pedawa Village in supporting a sustainable tourism sector.

IV. CLOSURE

Based on the description in the discussion, above, it can be concluded that a study conducted on the Pedawa Village community found that there are two dimensions involved in revitalizing the tradition of making palm sugar as one of the tourism potentials. The two dimensions are *the sekala* dimension (real) and *the niskala* dimension (abstract). The occasional dimension is carried out by conserving palm plants through human intervention, which is for the first time done in 2020. Previously, palm sugar production always relied on naturally growing palm trees or wild palm palms. Revitalization in the occasional dimension is also carried out by creating product innovations, where several new variants such as Ant Sugar, Juruh Sugar, and Candy Sugar are created, as well as packaging innovations, namely by making parcels. The niskala dimension is a sacralization effort made to keep palm sugar from becoming extinct in the times, namely by sacralization of palm trees, sacralization of the tapping process, sacralization of the roles of men and women, abstinence from selling sap, and used as a means or offering of *yadnya* ceremonies.

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