

**Women's Empowerment Through Bussiness of
Banten in Bali**

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— *Review of* —
**Integrative
Business &
Economics**
— *Research* —

ABSTRACT

Hindu is the core of Balinese culture which is very rich in ritual. All rituals require offerings (*banten*) as its primary medium. It makes the various social units that handle customs and religion in Bali, such as *desa pakraman*, *dadia* (clan), *subak* (irrigation system), etc, develop a system of mutual aid or *ngayah* in the making *banten*. However, from the evidence gathered in Bali today's society, making *banten* with mutual aid system is being abandoned and replaced by purchasing or buying *banten*. Purchasing *banten* is an interesting phenomenon because it shows the changes in socio-cultural dimensions of Balinese people. In addition, this business is also interesting because majority run by women. Participation of women in this business making them to have incomes that is helpful in strengthening their position from domination of men in Balinese culture that is patriarchal. Study about this business can enrich the knowledge of business that is affected by the socio-cultural aspect of society as well as women's empowerment dimension.

Keywords: *banten*, business, women's empowerment.

1. Introduction

Balinese identity is not only its locality, but also its religion, specifically Hinduism. Hindu religion is also positioned as the core culture of Bali. Thus it is not surprising that Balinese culture has different characteristic from other cultures, which is seen in the features its Hinduism both openly and latently (Atmadja, 2010). The element of Balinese culture which its Hindu's character in reality can be seen from the ceremonial in the form of rituals (Parisada Hindu Dharma, 1972). Ritual is an integral part of Hinduism and always accompanies the Balinese motion, "no day without ritual", so it is not surprising that Hinduism is often equated with religion of ritual.

Ritual is a social act that is not easily identified as a religion phenomenon or as a religion culture, but also because it is multi-functions such as function of religion, social solidarity, social status exhibition, economically strengthen, art creation, etc (Atmadja, 2010, 2010a). This fact, undoubtedly has made Hinduism very rich in rituals. Ritual is included in *yadnya*. *Yadnya* is divided into several types, namely *Dewa yadnya* (ritual for the god), *manusa yadnya* (ritual for human including life cycle ritual), *Pitra yadnya* (ritual for ancestral spirits), and *Rsi yadnya* (ritual or sacrifice for the priest) (Pulasari, 2013). Whatever the type and form of the ritual performed by Hindus, it absolutely needs the ritual equipment such as offerings or Hindu's community in Bali called it as *banten*. One of the ceremonies that requires *banten* is one's birthday celebration or *otonan*, which is celebrated every six months based on the Balinese calendar system and using *banten* such as below.



Figure 1. *Banten otonan*, a set of offerings to celebrate one's birthday
(source: www.bali.panduanwisata.com)

From this fact it can be argued that *banten* as part of ritual system is essentially an integral part of Hinduism. Even *banten* that are used for the ritual are numerous and varied, both in terms of types and form. This phenomenon can be seen in life-cycle rituals, such as death which is continued with cremation or *ngaben*. This fact has driven the social units that deal with customs and religion in Bali, such as *Desa Pakraman* (local communities), *banjar adat* (part of *Desa Pakraman*), *dadia* (small patrilineal clan), *subak* (agricultural organizations), and the others, developed system of mutual cooperation or *ngayah* in procurement of

banten. *Ngayah* emphasize on social capital investment in the ritual operation, namely in the form of reciprocity, social solidarity and trust each other in the context of neighbourhood relationships (Hasbullah, 2008; Fukuyama, 2002).

The use of social capital effectively has lead a ritual process, either in the family environment (*Kuren*), *dadia*, *Desa Pakraman* or *banjar pakraman* run well. For example, the process of life cycle rituals, the cremation (*ngaben*), marriage (*nganten*), tooth filling (*metatah*), etc, are performed by *ngayah*. Villagers or *krama desa* whose the members of *dadia* are willing to invest their social capital through *ngayah* so the ritual can run well. The villagers prepare *banten* and actively participate in the ritual, either as witnesses or participants. Thus the market mechanism is invalid on the ritual in Bali, because everything can be solved with social capital investment, ie *ngayah* or mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*). This mutual cooperation of the Balinese was admired by foreign researchers, as reflected in the work of Covarrubias (1972), Geertz (1977, 2000), Geertz and Geertz (1959), etc.

Based on observations, as well as actor of the Balinese culture who is often involved participatory in organizing ritual, the evidence shows that Balinese, who is full of sense of mutual cooperation in organizing ritual has change drastically. This phenomenon can be seen from the fact that the provision of *banten* cooperatively became obsolete, replaced by way of purchasing *banten*.

Observations indicate that the institutionalization of purchasing *banten* has become habitus that has implications, such as the rise of the industry of *banten* handled by a family-based business unit. Borrowing the ideas of Sadjad (2011) industry is substantially processing raw materials into finished goods that has higher economical value. If this idea is associated to industry of *banten*, it is particularly interesting to be studied. It is not only related to the raw material and the ways of procurement, but also capitals invested and management systems in relation to the production process.

Activity series of producing *banten* can not be separated from the role of workers or human capital. The study of these workers is more interesting since the workers who work for industry of *banten* are mostly women. Absorption of women in this industry is not surprising because the production of *banten* is a

home industry. Thus they can work without leaving the household duties. Besides of being able to work at home, they don't need too much capital. Women who has lack of intellectual capital and financial capital can be easily absorbed in industry of *banten* and provide more opportunities compared to other types of industries.

Utilization of women as workers in *banten's* production is an interesting phenomenon because it can make them to have an economic resource in everyday life. This economic resource is very important to be associated with the spirit of emancipation. The ownership of economic resources can lead women to be independent and reduce their dependence on men. In the end, this independence will be implicated on the women's ability in increasing their bargaining power which is the basic essence of emancipation.

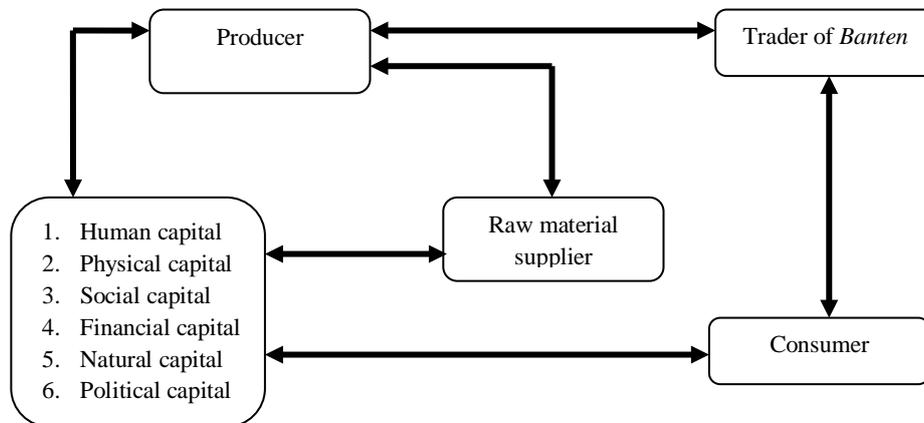
This paper will discuss the business processes in the industry of *banten* that involving women, so they are able to increase their economic capital and encourage the strengthen of their position in the family and society. It is expected that all of related parties such as government, financial institutions, NGOs that concentrate on women's empowerment to be able to create policies that encourage the development of industry of *banten* in order to provide greater benefits for women.

2. *Banten's* Production and Marketing Systems in Bali

As an industry, industry of *banten* involves the production and marketing activities undertaken by various parties. Parties that involved in this industry are the domestic actor of industry of *banten*, suppliers, traders, as well as consumers. All of these parties interact with the capital belonged such as human capital, physical capital, financial capital, social capital, and natural capital.

Production and marketing system of *banten* can be seen in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1.
Production and Marketing System of *Banten*



a. Producers of *Banten*

Banten is a ceremony medium for Hinduism that its manufacturing process is mostly done by women (Atmadja, 2011). That is why the industry of *banten* become an industry that makes women as main workers. One of the major producers of *banten* in Bali is located in Beng village, Gianyar regency-Bali which employs hundreds of women. One of worker activities can be observed in Figure 1 below.



Figure 2 Workers are actively producing *banten* at Beng village, Gianyar. (Documentation of Atmadja, 2013).

Based on observations, the women who worked in this industry are generally housewives. They work there as part-time workers after completing their

household tasks. They will be absent if there are state of emergency such as family member who is sick, obligations of *ngayah* or other family matters. With revenues ranging from Rp.30.000,00 - Rp.40.000,00, per day, this job is very valuable to meet the needs of family life.

Besides the housewives, women who work on these field are women who unmarried or widow. In Balinese society, women who unmarried or widow will stay with their family and free from the customary obligation binding because their single status (Pudja, 1997). These women usually work there as main job. They work almost every day and became the main worker of the producer.

The producers gather these women to produce *banten* have variety of capitals to support their business. They have these workers as human capital in producing *banten*. Those woman come from neighbors around the producer's house. This makes the relationship between producer and workers unlike the business entities. Besides as neighbors, they may have kinship with each other. This social network is a social capital which became one of the main capital in the business of *banten*.

This social capital differs this business from others which is profit-oriented. In this business process, the businessman also has social value of generosity, mutual cooperation, and solidarity that is shown when the workers have problems. On the other hand, the workers are also embracing these values, shown in their social interactions with producers and co-workers. They are not merely demanding high salary, although they can earn higher incomes in other industries, such as working on a lively handicraft industry. They still prefer work in this industry.

Observation shows that value of generosity, as well as mutual cooperation and solidarity was occurred by social network belong to producers and their workers as well as the religious values that they profess. This value is derived from the Hinduism that believe in *karma* instead of earning money (Wiana, 1995). *Karma* is then able to determine whether they will get heaven or hell after death. (Atmadja, 2014; Kobelen and Kowida, 2010: 2).

The belief in *karma* in any kind of job they do has grew bigger when they work in the industries that are directly related to the religious practice, such as industry of *banten*. Therefore, the workers in this industry do not use vocabulary of “working” but use vocabulary of *ngayah*. This vocabulary means to serve that

shows this job is a form of devotion and not merely an effort of getting revenues. In addition, religious values also appear on clothing they wear that impress the activity of *ngayah*. They wear clothes that use to be wearing when they attend religious ceremony.

Social networks belonged to the producer of *banten* is certainly not developed with the workers themselves. Producers must also develop social network with the suppliers of raw materials, as well as with traders of *banten*. Without well-maintained social network, this business is not running well. Well-maintained social networks can ensure producers to obtain raw materials with appropriate quality. This becomes important especially when busy ceremony held in Bali and raw materials of *banten* become scarce. This social network makes the producers able to obtain raw materials for production activities.

For sure, the human capital and social capital must be juxtaposed with adequate financial capital and physical capital. Financial capital plays very significant role to hold a variety of funding sources to support the operational activities carried out by the producer. In addition, adequate physical capital is also very important. Physical capital can be a business location that is representative to support business activity. Good location determines the business development.

b. Suppliers of raw materials

Banten requires a lot of materials derived from a variety of crops such as coconut leaves, bamboo, palm leaves, coconuts, banana leaves, etc. The materials of *banten* come from various regions that become material supplier in Bali (Atmadja, Maryati, and Atmadja, 2013). Materials such as bamboo come from the villages of Kintamani, palm leaves are from Karangasem and East Buleleng, etc.

The price of these materials is much increased when Bali is celebrating religious holidays such as *Galungan*, *Kuningan*, *Nyepi*, etc. In addition, the price of raw material will also increase when Bali is entering a period of the best time to perform religious ceremonies according to Balinese calendar. At that time, many Balinese do a cremation ceremony (*ngaben*), marriage ceremony, *melaspasin* (building inauguration), etc.

When the price of raw materials increases, suppliers will bring them from outside of Bali such as bananas from Java, coconut from Sulawesi, coconut leaves

from Lombok, etc. To be a supplier, it is needed a wide range of adequate capital. As a business entity, financial capital plays very important role. However, financial capital is not enough if it is not supported by human capital and social capital.

A supplier must be an entrepreneur who can see the potential of the market and be able to manage their business properly. In addition, he must also be able to manage the human capital of their workers. The management of human capital needs an adequate social capital so that all members can move dynamically to achieve the organizational goals. Social networks can also be used to ensure that suppliers are able to obtain the raw material, especially when the price is increased.

c. Traders of *banten*

Traders of *banten* is a party that connected banten's producer and consumer. Their operation is generally in traditional markets, or by setting up their own stalls. Traders of *banten* can be seen in Figure 3 below



Figure 3 Yadnya Wholesale, the stores that selling *banten* (Documentation of Atmadja, 2013).

As intermediaries between banten's producer and consumer, the traders of *banten* have a very important role in this industry. In operation, they manage financial, human, physical, and social capital. Their position between the producers and the consumers make the traders to be parties that communicate the desire of consumers to producers of *banten*. This help the producer to innovate and make new creation. For example, in recent years, the raw material of *banten* is

widely used *ibung* (latin:*Roystonea regia*) to replace the coconut leaves. This material is requested by consumer because it is more attractive in appearance and durable. *Ibung* is also whiter and easier to set up. Innovation like this has made the industry of *banten* getting bigger for they can suit the desires of consumers.

d. Consumers of *Banten*

The development of *banten's* industry in Bali can not be separated from the growth of market demand. The demand comes from both urban community and countryside. Balinese people, in general, start leaving the activity of making *banten* cooperatively for the big ceremony. They replaced the process by purchasing *banten* from market. This condition is related to the socio-cultural changes in Balinese society (Atmadja, 2013).

One of the factors causes the change of Balinese sociocultural is the increase of Balinese education level. The increase of education level effect in modernity that encourages them go through cultural polarization. This cultural polarization becomes the separation between the new culture and old culture (Wolton, 2007). The process of making *banten* cooperatively was an old culture, and replaced by new culture namely purchasing *banten*.

In addition to the cultural change, the increase of education level leads an educated Balinese young generations migrate to the city. They generally work in the tourism industry. As result, they are difficult to invest their social capital in the form of *ngayah* and *metulungan* in their *Desa Pakraman*. They are busy working and having no time to *ngayah*. When they held a ceremony, they were difficult seeking help because the members of *desa pakraman* are not optimally helping as result of their less participation. This condition will be more difficult when they reside outside of Bali.

Banten's Industry is also related to globalization among Balinese. Globalization unites with market ideology and other ideologies, such as consumerism, which is characterized by the fact that all the objectives, the activities or the relationship are dominated by the sale and purchase (Ritzer and Goodman, 2004; Kitiarsa, 2013; Atmadja, 2010; Wibowo, 2010; Lull, 1998; Varela and Iglesias, 2011). Starting from this idea, the emergence of *banten's* industry is also a reflection of the enforceability of market ideology.

The transaction is no longer just limited to non-religious life, but extends to the field of religion, so the emergence of *banten*'s industry is unavoidable. The strong influence of the market ideology is not only reflected in the act of purchasing *banten*, but also related to the underlying considerations, namely profit and loss, practical, efficient and effective. For the actor of the ritual who is making *banten* collective self-reliance can indeed to be economically viable, because *banten* has become cheaper. However many informants states that making *banten* has weaknesses, which is remained less practical, less efficient and less effective or generally mentioned is very inconvenient.

With reference to Villarino (2011: 19) globalization that unites with consumerism does not only result humans to be tied to sale and purchase to meet their needs, but also spawned a habit, which is "what we have will be exhibited publicly, even over proud". Regarding that fact, it will raise a human who embrace the spectacle culture, what they have is not only having a use value, but also a symbolic or sign value (Atmadja, 2010; Ibrahim, 2007; Piliang, 2012).

From this idea, it can be argued if someone buys *banten*, is not only because of the encouragement of religious values, but also because of the symbolic value or sign value. This idea is reflected in religious ceremonies that highlight the price of *banten* from tens or hundreds millions in public spaces and ignored the philosophical meaning. This idea is closely related to the fact that the price of *banten* is basically an artifact that useful to communicate the identity of the actors both their social class and the quality of the devotion. The more expensive their *banten*, the higher their social class.

Rituals that satisfy the audience in a public space, is very likely to lead to imitation. This idea is in line with Vitello (2013) on the *meme* as a cultural gene. In this context, cultural imitation (mimesis) can lead to a culture quickly followed by many people, both in the same form as well as an adaptation. Thus the industry of *banten* which was originally done by a few people, but because of mimesis, then more people apply it.

3. Industry of *Banten* and Its Role in Women's Empowerment

The work of women in the producers of *banten* is useful economically and in addition is also very important to strengthen the position of women in the family

and society. Marx (in Magnis-Suseno, 1999) states that human beings are essentially the work being so that the work is the person's identity. By working in this industry these women can gain a job as well as identity.

In the patriarchal system, or *purusa* in Bali (Pudja, 1997) states that a man marries, then he will bring her wife into the family. The custom of settled after marriage follows the pattern of patrilocal or *virilokal*, ie, they live in the locality around the parents of husband (Koentjaraningrat, 1990). This condition makes a married woman should be able to fit into her husband's family. In addition, the system of *purusa*, a man in Bali is the heir of the parents and ancestors (Artadi, 1993). Thus, women who have been widowed and returned to his family - or in Bali called *mulih daha* – is not entitled to the ancestral property. She only entitle to enjoy the property remained in the family. If she remarries then the automatic right to enjoy this family legacy property will fall back.

Unmarried women or widowed who living as *mulih daha* become subordinated if they have no economic basis (Sanderson, 1993). Moreover with the division of gender roles, where women are identic to the domestic sector while men with the public sector, is very detrimental to women. And this separation is not complemented each other, but it stratified, the public sector has higher value than the domestic sector. Thus this separation also makes the position of women is lower than men.

Ownership of economic capital is very useful for the improvement of the social status of women. Women are no longer dependent upon her husband, but contribute to the family in the form of financial input, material, and ideational. At the same time, they are potential adapting the political system of bargaining power, which is "an ability to bargain in order to get better" (Hardy, 1998: 122), reflected in the good treatment of the family. They also have right to make decisions related to family's problem.

Resource ownership can encourage women to free from the subordination of men (Megawangi, 1999). In addition, by working outside they can play the role outside of the domestic sector or working in the public sector. By working in the public sector, psychologically, they can develop self-confidence, personal skills, and competition (Rowatt and Rowatt, 1990). Finally, it is expected to bring an

adjustment at the level of the superstructural ideology, such as religion and cultural values that is originally emphasis on the relationship between individual level that hierarchical character where men is higher than women's position. It can change the direction of a social relationship that respect the gender equality (Megawangi, 1999; Abdullah, 1997).

4. Conclusion

Banten is an important ritual for the Balinese. Recently, the process of preparing *banten* has changed from self-preparation into purchasing them. This condition can not be separated from the socio-cultural changes in Balinese society.

The existence of *banten's* market encourage the born of *banten's* industry in Bali. This industry is unique because it is not run solely by profit-oriented but also by the values based on solidarity, mutual cooperation, and willingness to help. This business is based on solidarity, mutual cooperation, and willingness to help. In addition, this industry has the particularity that the majority of workers are women.

By hiring women, this industries have a tremendous role in providing an economic resources to women. Ownership of economic resources is causing women have a higher bargaining power and are able to be involved in decision making in the family. This condition can eventually encourage the creation of emancipation for women.

Although this industry has a lot of positive side but there are also negative impact, especially on socio-cultural aspects of society. Society will increasingly leave the spirit of mutual cooperation and prefer practical ways to meet their needs. If this is allowed then the sense of community solidarity will decrease and dragged into the stream of individualism.

In addition, the fulfillment of the needs of *banten* by purchasing encourages the emergence of show off attitudes in public. In pursuit of prestige, people tend to buy an expensive *banten* so the more the merrier ceremony which took place and create its own prestige for the organizers.

To prevent the negative effects, the role of government is needed. The government with the help of religious leaders can bring awareness that strived to

meet the needs of *banten* can be done alone or with a work together with the family. If this can not be done and buying *banten* is the last option, the *banten* are purchased must be as simple as possible without leaving the meaning of the ceremony. If this can be done then the negative impact of industry of *banten* can be reduced and in the same time It still delivering benefits for people, especially women.

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