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## **Religio Politics of Puri and Balinese Community Development**

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### **Abstract**

Balinese history records the existence of the *puri* as a center of power through a monarchy system led by a king (*puri*) from the early 10th century to the early 20th century. *Puri* in Bali also plays a role in various religious ceremonial rituals and traditional activities. The religious ideology of the *puri* does not only play a role in the realm of religion, but has expanded into the cultural, social, economic and political realms. This study attempts to describe the relationship between the political religious of the *puri* and the community development program. The theory used to analyze is World Desecularization Theory and Patron-Client Theory. The research method used is a qualitative approach which is located in Gianyar Regency and is supported by data originating from books and journals. The results of the study found that the religious ideology of the *puri* had a positive relationship with the development progress of the community. Not infrequently regional development programs originate from these religious ideas. This research also explains the concept of *puri* political religious, in which religion in this case not only works to build an ideological ties, but more importantly religion is able to build social and economic ties for a society. This model of political religion indirectly maintains the political power of the *puri* in Bali.

### **Keywords:**

Religio Politics; Puri; Development

## **INTRODUCTION**

The history of Bali records that *puri* is the center of power through a system of



monarchical government led by a king. In addition to its role in the field of government politics, the *puri* also plays an important role in ritual activities. In the monarchy era, most of the religious ceremonial rituals were

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(chairman of major ceremonies) which involves a large number of people. And the community sincerely helps from the

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The ritual activity is related to the power that exists in Balinese society itself. As stated by Clifford Geertz (Geertz, 2017, p. 176), the model of power applied by the Balinese kings is a form of theatrical state, in which power is exercised without elements of coercion, but through ceremonies, rituals, and symbols. Until now, the existence of the *puri* can not be separated from the performance of large ceremonies that involve large numbers of people.

*Puri* is the residence of Balinese nobles, especially for those who are still descendants of Balinese kings. Based on the caste system in Bali, the *puri* is occupied by the knight caste. *Puris* in Bali

are led by a descendant of the king, who is chosen by the *puri*'s kinship institution. The leader of the *puri* is known as the *penglingsir*. And the descendants of these kings can be recognized by their names such as Cokorda, Anak Agung, I Gusti Ngurah Agung, I Dewa Agung, and Dewa Ayu. The term *puri* itself can be equated with *keraton*.

Several *puris* in the 19th century served as fortifications from the Dutch colonialists. Currently, there are nine main *puris* which are part of the Klungkung om, namely Puri Agung Semarapura (Klung), Puri Agung Susut (Bangli), Puri Agung Patekan (Jembrana), Puri Agung Singaraja (Buleleng), Puri Agung Gianyar (Gianyar), Puri Agung Ubud (Gianyar), Puri Agung Tabanan (Tabanan), Puri Agung Denpasar (Denpasar), Puri Agung Amlapura (Karangasem) (Suadnyana, 2019).

The dynamics of the *puri*'s power experienced ups and downs, where in the New Order era the power of the *puri* was limited and only symbolic. *Puri* only became a tool for the Suharto government to maintain its power. Policies in the regions themselves are an extension of the central government's decisions, and not infrequently the *puri* only act as an intermediary between the New Order



government and the community (Ichwannuddin, 2013, p. 4). After the fall of the New Order regime, Indonesia experienced a transition period towards a democratic state. And this momentum is used by the *puri* to restore its former glory which had been lost. Through a democratic political system, the *puri* elite appear brave, and become an alternative choice as a leader who is able to maintain the traditions and values of local wisdom of the Balinese people.

After the reformation, there was a significant change in the political constellation in Bali, especially the discourse of '*Ajeg Bali*' which aims to maintain cultural traditions in the midst of globalization caused by the development of the tourism industry. *Puri* as a symbol of traditional power, triggers the figures of the *puri* to actively participate in managing government based on local wisdom. *Puri* is one of the initiators of cultural tourism which became the forerunner of the recognition of Bali abroad. In terms of tourism development industry, the *puri* has a cultural role in art preservation so that it is not eroded by modernization (Bagus, 2019).

Several *puris* in the Gianyar area besides playing a role in the field of religion, also take part in the arts, culture,

social, economic and political fields. The role played by the *puri* contributes to the development of the Gianyar community in particular. In the field of religion, the *puri* plays a role in major ceremonies such as *ngaben* and *nyekah mass*. Both of these ceremonies involve large numbers of people and they lighten the burden on the community, because the ceremony costs a lot of money. In the field of arts and culture, for example, Puri Agung Ubud regularly facilitates performances of traditional Balinese dances such as the Barong dance, the Legong Kraton dance, and the Ramayana dance. In addition, Puri Agung Ubud also acts as the host for the Ubud Festival, Ubud Writers Readers Festival, and The Ubud Royal Weekend.

In the social field, the Puri Agung Ubud family has entered the community as village officials such as to become the *bendesa adat pakraman*, the Chair of *pecalang* and the Chair of the Village LPM (village empowerment institution). In the economic field, Puri Agung Ubud develops cultural tourism such as the Puri Saren tourist attraction, which becomes the prima donna of tourist destinations in the Gianyar area. Apart from that, in politics, the *puri* family who occupy the position as regional heads, and members of the legislature continuously provide assistance to repair



traditional markets which have an impact on the economy of the surrounding community.

This study assumes that there is a relationship between the *puri* and politics. *Puri* is not only a cultural center, but has been transformed into a center of power that is able to subdue the obedience of its people. Submission of society is created through religious dogmas which are manifested in various ceremonial rituals. However, this religious ideology has now expanded and transformed into various cultural, social, economic and political activities.

Several previous studies on religion and politics regarding the issue of religious nationalism have been conducted by (Vásquez, 2012); (Bangash, 2012); (Haynes, 2017); (Robinson, 2017) by viewing that the politicization of religion tends to be manifested in a discriminatory manner in the form of hate politics, racism, and political anarchism. Those studies explain political religion based on issues of ethnicity, tribal, and caste. However, there is no study on political religion based on religious ideology and Balinese Hindu belief values.

Research from (Laliberté, 2017); (Ozzano, 2013); (DeCanio, 2007) discusses the issue of religious political actors who

view religious political movements initiated by parties. And parties are considered to play a central role in the political process. Thoses studies on religious political actors explain religious political movements pioneered by modern elites, namely political parties. However, there has never been a study of religious political movements driven by traditional elites, namely the *puri*.

Research from (Gaskins, Golder, & Siegel, 2013a); (Dhima & Golder, 2021) discusses issues regarding religion and development. This research looks at the decline in religious participation along with the progress of society. Religion is placed in the 'private' domain so that it is not involved in the development process. Those studies on religion and development explain that religion more as 'private matters', not as 'public matters' that can be included in the development process. But there is no study on religion which is seen as private matters and public matters as a unit, which contributes to the development of a region.

Further research from (Silcott & Kreinath, 2013); (Maritain, 2014); (Gaskins, Golder, & Siegel, 2013b) addresses the issue of religious decline. The study views religion as an obstacle to the progress of society, and religion is a threat





to the economic progress of a society. Those studies on the decline of religion explain that modernization is increasingly getting rid of the influence of religion in people's lives. But there is no study that explain modernization strengthens the existence of religion in a society. Religion and modernization are not contradictory, even complementary to make an economic contribution to a society.

These previous studies basically assume that religion has a set of values and beliefs that are placed in the private sphere and are seen as having different and separate dimensions of life in the public sphere. So that religion in this context has a negative relationship to the political process, development and economic progress of society. Thus, this paper aims to explain about Balinese Hindu political religion which combines immaterial and material elements which are an inseparable part of Balinese Hindu society itself. So that religion is placed in the private and public spheres as an inseparable unit.

This research ultimately wants to show that religion is able to make a positive and real contribution to the political process, development and even economic progress of a region. The focus of this study is to understand the transformation of the role of the *puri*, which was originally only

synonymous with dealing with sacred matters such as ceremonial rituals, now the *puri* is also dealing with profane matters such as the community's economy. So that the current *puri* is not only understood as a religious actor, but also the *puri* currently acts as an economic actor.

## 26 RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The *puri* that will be focused on in this research is Puri Agung Ubud. Primary data sources obtained from interviews with purposive techniques are the people of Ubud, several traditional leaders (*Bendesa Pakraman* Ubud, *Bendesa Peliatan*, *Bendesa Teges*), and figures from Puri Agung Ubud. Those informants were chosen because it relates to the socio-economic role carried out by the *puri* in the midst of the Gianyar community, in which the community as a part who feels the assistance from the *puri*, traditional leaders who have close social relations and constantly interact with the *puri* representing the community, and of course figures from *puri* who clearly know the economic contribution made to the community, and also those who have been involved in politics.



This research also uses secondary data that comes from several journals and books. The books that will be used as a theoretical basis are *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* by Peter L Berger and *Patron-Client Politics and Change in Southeast Asia* by James C Scott. The religious ideology of the *puri* is not only interpreted in the context of fulfilling the immaterial needs of a human being, but more than that, it turns out that this religion is also related to the economic needs of the community, and this is what is formulated as a form of political religio of the *puri* in maintaining existence amidst modernization.

The study of literature aims to analyze how the transformation of the role of the *puri*, which was originally only synonymous with dealing with sacred matters, now the *puri* is also dealing with profane matters. And this religious ideology transformation of the *puri* contributes positively to the development process and economic progress of a society, which also has a positive impact on the lasting power of the *puri*.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Puri* and Community Development

Bali itself is known as an area that is strong in religion and culture. Even religion and culture have become a complementary and inseparable. One of the actors who still maintain Balinese Hindu tradition and culture is the *puri*. *Puri* has experienced several political ups and downs in the community, starting with the New Order which limited the regions in choosing their leaders, and everything was determined by the Suharto regime. The *puri* during the New Order era was only a tool to strengthen Suharto's power at that time. After Suharto was ousted, Indonesia entered a reform era which provided a great opportunity for the *puri* elite to restore its former glory which had disappeared.

In some areas, the phenomenon of the number of *puri* figures appearing in local politics began to emerge. Not infrequently the *puri* figures become the alternative choice of the community after experiencing a crisis of trust due to the New Order regime. One of the strengths that the *puri* has today is the power of religion and culture. It can even be said, if the *puri* is lost, the Balinese culture itself will also be lost. So this causes the *puri* to be responsible for maintaining Balinese culture so that it is not eroded by the times. The reform era is the era used to restore the





regional identity of the Balinese people, which based on the local wisdom values.

The role played by the *puri* at this time is not only in the realm of religion, but has expanded to other aspects of life such as culture, art, social, and economy. *Puri* places itself as a leader who moves the community and ensures its survival. The community feels indebted to the *puri*'s services, and this is what causes the existence of the *puri* to be stronger, even this is what triggers the *puri* figures to gain advantages in the political process.

The existence of *puri* in Bali does play a significant role for community development, especially with regard to the rituals of major ceremonies such as *ngaben* and *nyekah mass*, and tooth filling mass ceremonies to the role of the *puri* as the head of major ceremonies (*pengraja karya agung*) in the temple's *piodalan* ceremony. Not infrequently the *puri* is also active in providing temple repair assistance for certain villages. Currently the role of the *puri* has expanded, not only in the realm of religion, but has included in the socio-economic realm of the community. The religious ideology of the *puri* has positive implications for regional development programs and the economic progress of the community itself.

Puri Agung Ubud is one example, actively providing assistance in ritual activities, actively assisting the community's customary affairs to help revive the economy in the Gianyar area. In terms of ritual activities, Puri Agung Ubud has several times held *ngaben mass* ceremony which was attended by the Gianyar community, the aforementioned ceremonies provided help for the community from an economic perspective.

The *ngaben* ceremony requires a large amount of money, in this case Puri Agung Ubud would help facilitates general operational costs, and the community will not pay the full cost. And this really helps the community from an economic point of view. In addition, Puri Agung Ubud is also known as the owner of the Gunung Lebah Temple, this temple has ties to 18 *desa pekraman* (traditional) villages in the Gianyar area. Every time a *piodalan* ceremony is held, temple repair or rehabilitation is held, the *puri* is fully responsible for those activities.

In addition to its role in the religious field, currently Puri Agung Ubud is also actively involved in cultural arts activities as the host of the Ubud Festival, Ubud Writers Readers Festival, and The Ubud Royal Weekend. The Ubud Royal Weekend activity itself is a reflection of the

vertical balance of life between humans and *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa* (God), the horizontal balance between fellow humans, and the balance of human life with the environment (Diwyarti, 2018). Puri Agung Ubud also facilitates performances of traditional dances intended for foreign guests such as the Barong dance, the Legong Kraton dance and the Ramayana dance. These cultural arts activities, besides channeling the artistic potential of the community, also have an impact of increasing the culture-based tourism economy.

Puri Agung Ubud also provides a dance studio for tourists who want to learn Balinese dances. The purpose of providing a studio is to maintain cultural traditions, and promote Balinese tourism through traditional dances. Activities organized by the *puri* provide income for Balinese artists in channeling their artistic talents. Several times, Puri Agung Ubud was visited by government officials both from outside and within the country. *Puri* plays an important role in people's lives. Central government programs have also been held at Puri Agung Ubud several times, such as mass vaccinations visited by President Jokowi, and the visit of the Indonesian foreign minister to see the *puri's* readiness to

encourage tourism with health protocols in accordance with government standards.

In the social field, Puri Agung Ubud takes care of the community's customs issues both as the *bendesa* (head) of the *desa pakraman* (traditional) village, the chair of *pecalang* to the chair of the village LPM. The involvement of the *puri* family in these traditional organizations is to maintain the values of local wisdom, and to assist the development of village communities. In this case the *puri* plays a role as a source of knowledge, where the community always asks for the *puri's* consideration in matters of religion and custom. *Puri* is considered an actor who has the ability to exceed other people in general, this is obtained from history which indeed places *puri* as a superior group and has power in its time. The knowledge possessed by the *puri* does not hesitate to be shared with the community, and this also strengthens the harmonization of the relationship between the *puri* and the community. In order to find out about the condition of the community and the problems that exist within it, the *puri* had to work directly, they even had to become administrators of a traditional village.

The relationship between the *puri* and society is like a king and his people. The king is responsible for providing



protection and welfare for his people, and in return the people give loyalty to their king. Even now, the *puri* is still carrying out its socio-cultural role, and people do not hesitate to come to the *puri* to ask for help. This relationship is a construction that has been built for a long time and its benefits are felt at certain moments.

In the political field, it is not uncommon for the Puri Agung Ubud family who holds the position of regional head to provide assistance in repairing temples to repairing traditional markets in the Gianyar area, which are a source of livelihood for the community. Furthermore, the role of the *puri* in the economy is the ability to create culture-based and sustainable tourism. One of them is Puri Saren tourism which is the most important tourism asset in Bali, where this tourist attraction was formed by the *puri* family as a response to the development of the tourism industry by not abandoning the traditional values of Balinese culture.

Referring to the sustainable concept, Puri Saren tourism has a big impact on the community's economy and is also based on cultural values that are believed by the community. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Puri Agung Ubud also reemphasized the importance of the CHSE (Clean, Healthy, Safety Environment)

concept as a benchmark for managing a tourist area to comply with health protocols, thereby providing benefits to the wider community (Anonim, 2020). One of the forms of CHSE activities is the *We Love Bali* program which aims to restore Bali tourism after Covid-19. The *We Love Bali* program is a form of support for the actors of the tourism sector and the creative economy in Bali, which organized by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Anonim, 2020). Looking at some of the examples above, it can be said that the role of the *puri* is currently not only limited to aspects of ceremonial rituals, but has provided cultural, social, and even economic benefits for the development of an area.

Puri Saren tourism object is an important asset, not only for the Gianyar area but also for Bali. Puri Saren tourism is a symbol of Balinese culture that is still maintained today. The building, which is filled with Balinese carvings and ornaments, is the identity of the *puri* that fulfills majesty and luxury. Even Puri Saren tourism has a huge economic impact on the surrounding community, where this object is a growth pole that affects the people's economy. *Puri* in this case remains the norm in *Puri Saren* tourism, but *puri* also provides economic opportunities for its

people so that they also benefit from what the *puri* does.

Here are some pictures that show the role of Puri Agung Ubud in the fields of religion, art, culture, social and economy in the Gianyar area.

**Figure 1.** The *Ngaben* Mass Ceremony of Puri Agung Ubud



Source: obtained from liputan6.com-  
Ribuan Wisatawan Hadiri Ngaben  
Keluarga Kerajaan Puri Ubud, 2018.

**Figure 2.** Puri Agung Ubud as Host of the Ubud Writers Readers Festival



Source: obtained from baliekbis.com-  
Ubud Writers and Readers Festival ke-15  
Resmi Dibuka, 2018

**Figure 3.** Puri Ubud Figure (Cok Ibah) Giving *Dharma* Discourse as the *Bendesa* of *Pakraman* Traditional Village



Source: obtained from youtube.com-  
Dharma Wacana Tjokorda Raka  
Kerthyasa, Bendesa Desa Adat Ubud,  
pengekeban 6 jan 2021

**Figure 4.** Puri Saren Tourism as an Important Tourism Asset in Bali



Source: obtained from payanadewa.com-  
Istana Puri Saren Ubud, Wisata Terbaik  
Ubud Untuk Pecinta Sejarah

The model of power created by Puri Agung Ubud tends to lead to a religious political power system, namely a power system that is influenced by religion (Joebagio, 2012, p. 172). In the religious





political power system, religion is a legitimate tool to gain power (Joebagio, 2012, p. 173). Peter L Berger in the Desecularization Theory of the World states that religion is slowly starting to boldly fill public spaces that have long excluded them (Berger, 1999). Berger in his studies focuses on the relationship between religion and the modern world. Society is considered as an objective and subjective reality. This reality is formed through an endless dialectical process through the stages of externalization, objectivation, and internalization (Berger, 1999). Berger also views religion as a social reality that is formed through the process of interaction between humans as autonomous and independent agents acting with certain structures, restrictive structures, and coercive.

In Berger's view, human life is not perfect and to maintain its survival, humans must construct their world to avoid vulnerability and loss. The way that humans do is by carrying out a process called externalization, objectification, and internalization. In which externalization is the phase where humans with stock of knowledge interpret the reality outside themselves. And the reality that comes out of humans is called objectivation. Reality that has been objectified according to

human meaning will be transferred to other individuals or generations through the internalization stage. The internalization stage involves socialization activities obtained from family, education and society. After humans construct reality, human life is guaranteed continuity, and is able to interpret reality as something that is appropriate or not.

In this case, religion will emerge as a determining factor that influences people's behavior towards their world. Religion is considered capable of giving meaning to life, be it right or wrong. Even religion is seen as the closest human reason for social action. Religion becomes something important and believed by humans, because in it there are elements of sacred, magical or mystical that are beyond human reason. In this case, religion has unquestionable authority (Benavides, 1990). So that religion is superior in human life itself. Religion involves beliefs that slowly become the ideology adopted by a society.

Religion is a guide for human life that is essential. Minimizing the role of religion means eliminating the instructions or ways of human life in the world. Religion provides certainties that sometimes cannot be understood logically. All come from God's revelations, which



require individuals to obey them and carry out their religious orders. It is difficult for these humans to refuse religious orders, because it means humans make deviations, major mistakes and even fatalities are considered sinful. This is what causes religion to survive, and is believed by the community in their daily lives.

Religion today is not only confined to a narrow space such as a house of worship (private), but its movement has touched the social life of society (the public) (Berger, 1999). According to Berger, modernization ultimately provides more space for religion to survive and develop. Modernity is no longer seen as a dichotomy with religion. Religion and modernity can coexist, even complement each other. In the context of politics, religion is a strong magnet that attracts people.

Religion is an important factor, and cultural identity is the most taken into account in political life. Political desecularization is also a tactic, a ritual strategy in the political stage to gain public support. Religion even becomes an instrument of legitimacy for certain elites to stay in power. When society enters the modernization phase, in some countries today religion and politics often marry, and even establish a symbiotic relationship of

mutualism. Where politics guarantees security for religious people, on the other hand religion provides ideological legitimacy to maintain political power.

In the case of Puri Agung Ubud, religious ideology becomes a strong identity for the *puri* family to continue to exist, and to contribute positively to the economy and community development. In addition, the *puri* family places itself as a patron, who with a higher position (socio-economic) uses its influence and resources to provide protection or benefits to lower people (clients), who in turn reciprocate the gift by providing general support and assistance, including personal services to patrons.

Patron is someone who has wealth, and a higher social status than the client. Patron-client relationships develop in rural areas, where land is only owned by a few people, which causes a monopoly on wealth, power, education and means of communication with the outside world (Hall, 2008). The client's position is that of an individual who has entered into an unequal exchange relationship in which he cannot fully reciprocate materially. The client has an obligation to repay the patron's services, namely by providing energy, dedication, and even political support (Scott, 1972). Services provided





reciprocally by patrons and clients will be used for various purposes as well as social security so as to provide a sense of peace and comfort to the parties involved.

The patron-client relationship also emphasizes the aspect of the client's great dependence on the patron. This dependence side is because the client feels indebted to the patron who are involved during the exchange. Patrons as parties who have greater ability to control economic and political resources tend to offer more units of goods and services to clients, while clients themselves are not always able to repay these units of goods and services in a balanced manner (Scott, 1972). The inability of the client creates a debt of gratitude to the patron, which in turn creates a condition of dependence. In the end, this dependency aspect extends from one aspect of social life to other aspects of social life (Scott, 1972).

The patron-client relationship is a mutually beneficial relationship. In the case of Puri Agung Ubud, the *puri* is present as a patron who often provides assistance to the community both in ceremonial rituals, cultural arts activities and customs. *Puri* has provided its economic resources to facilitate these various activities. The economic power of the *puri* becomes a strong binder with the community, in

addition to its religious ideology. *Puri* is not only a center of religion and culture, but has been transformed into a regional economic center. In return, the community will be willing to serve the *puri* because they feel that it is not possible to return the favor to the *puri* with economic resources, but only with loyalty and dedication to show community loyalty.

Patrons must have economic power that is able to bind the loyalty of their clients. Patrons do not hesitate to provide assistance in the form of money and even facilitate the community to make a living in their area. It can be said that patron assistance to clients can be direct or indirect assistance. The mutualism symbiosis that exists between patron and client can last a long time, even this will extend their cooperation to other political matters. The patron-client relationship has been proven to be able to bring the elite of Puri Agung Ubud to a public position as regional head.

Several figures from Puri Agung Ubud became regional officials such as Cok Ace who served as regent of Gianyar in 2008-2013, and currently he serves as deputy governor of Bali. And then is Cok Ibah, who was once nominated as regent of Gianyar in 2018. This proves that the *puri* is still considered important by the people of Gianyar. People still need a *puri* figure



to manage their area. *Puri* figures are not only experienced in government, but *puri* figures have the social ability to become one with the community. *Puri* figures have a strong religious ideology, so that people give their beliefs. *Puri* figures are seen as capable of managing the government by carrying out the teachings of goodness (*dharma*) which are used to help the people.

Apart from being the regional head, the Puri Agung Ubud figure is also involved in political parties. Some of them became party administrators in the regions. The relationship between *puri* figures and political parties will be seen during the regional head election process, in which the *puri's* position will be seen and sometimes the *puri* will become the identity of certain parties, and even the victory of certain political parties is influenced by the support of the *puri* (Pramana, 2015, p. 66). *Puri* and power are two things that cannot be separated, the *puri* was once the center of power in Bali and has such a large mass to support it.

*Puri* appears as a political actor who has a characteristic that is a *purist* identity that other political actors do not have. The masses who support the *puri* still maintain loyalty to the *puri*, because the *puri* also has a commitment to help them in various ways. The assistance provided by the *puri*

will create dependence from the community to always repay the services. So that their kinship and religious ideology will determine the people's political choices later (Hidayat, 2008).

The relationship that was originally formed due to cultural traditions slowly turned into a functional bond. *Puri* and its elite are trying to find ways to maintain power through a political approach rooted in the religious and cultural values of the Balinese people. *Puri* has a strong commitment to helping the community, as evidenced by the various activities that the *puri* organizes involving large numbers of people. Although the *puri* no longer has formal power like the monarchy era, non-formal power through religious and cultural activities makes the *puri* strong in politics. Puri Agung Ubud can be said to have expanded political influence towards the grassroots with a strategy of religious and cultural symbols (Arida, 2012).

The political power of the *puri* also comes from the various networks of cooperation that have been established by Puri Agung Ubud over the years. The formation of a network requires cooperation and trust between various parties. This network will be useful when there is a *puri* elite who comes forward in the political stage. The cooperative



relationship formed by the *puri* is also extensive, not only around religion, culture but also economic and artistic networks, as partners who will always support the *puri's* figures.

In addition, the *puri* also builds relations with major parties, both at the regional and central levels. This was proven when Puri Agung Ubud held a big ceremony, so it was not uncommon for many party officials attend the ceremony. The presence of party politicians can be interpreted as a form of power consolidation built by the *puri* in a political context. Mass mobilization in large numbers is also a form of political legitimacy of the *puri* in the community. The people who come to help the *puri's* activities are those who have been loyalists of the *puri* so far.

The choice of a *puri* figure in politics must be understood as a form of relationship construction that has been built for a long time and is still maintained today. The local political constellation in Bali is also marked by the emergence of *puri* figures as representatives of *puri* (Agustina, 2020). The community feels they have a strong inner bond with the *puri*, and the *puri* reciprocates that bond with tangible forms such as helping to improve the people's economy, providing jobs, to

helping the community carry out their religious obligations through ritual activities. The relationship that was initially fostered because to maintain its cultural tradition, slowly turned into a relationship with certain motivations. Puri Agung Ubud is able to adapt to changing times, even being able to create creative ideas for regional development.

The transformation of the role carried out by the *puri* is no longer only dealing with issues of religious ceremonies or customs, but has developed to take care of the economic problems of the community such as providing Puri Saren tourism objects for community income, creating a hotel business that absorbs job opportunities for the Gianyar people and the *puri* also holds ceremonial activities. Big ceremonies such as *ngaben mass* which bring in foreign tourists to come see the procession, and this has an impact on increasing the businesses owned by the surrounding community. *Puri* as a growth pole that has a significant economic impact not only for Gianyar, but also for Bali. Bali itself is known for its religion and culture that is still stable, and through the role played by the *puri*, Bali is increasingly recognized by everyone.

Understanding the existence of *puri* in Bali is ultimately not only seen from the



ideological aspect of religion that is able to contribute socio-economically to society, but it is also necessary to understand how the *puri* position itself as a patron who is willing to help clients, which creates a pattern of dependence from clients in the context of socio-economic resources provided by the *puri* family. In this case, there is a symbiotic relationship of mutualism between the *puri* and the community, where the *puri* provides socio-economic resources for the community, and vice versa, as a token of appreciation, the community provides service and even political support to the power of the *puri* itself. Involving religion in politics is not wrong, what is important is the purpose of its use. If it is for positive purposes, it will certainly have an impact on people's belief in religious values themselves in directing their lives to the right path and avoiding things that trigger division or conflict (Khan, 2022).

### **Religio Politics of Puri**

This study wants to explain the concept of *puri* political religions, in which religion in this case does not only have the power to bind society ideologically, but religion also has the power to bind society socio-economically. Political religion that

is able to unite these two important elements has become an instrument for *puri* figures to gain political power. Along with the changing times, the *puri* make adaptations so that its existence survives in the midst of society. One of the things being done is how the current *puri* must merge and unite itself with the community, and even become part of the community group itself.

In Bali, religion and culture become one unit so that all ceremonial ritual activities have become traditions, habits carried on by the community for generations. The implementation of Balinese Hinduism itself can be understood from its immaterial and material aspects. Balinese ceremonial rituals originate from God's revelations that are believed by the community, and to manifest a sense of devotion to *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi* (God), some ceremonial facilities are made that function as a medium of gratitude from the people to *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi*.

*Puri* currently plays a central role in religious activities in Bali. *Puri* has always been the *pengraja karya agung* (chairman of the big ceremony) which is carried out by certain villages. *Puri* is responsible starting from the preparation, the implementation, until the completion of the ceremony. In several ceremonial rituals, the



*puri* often provide assistance to the village, either goods or money (*dana punia*). Of course the assistance provided by the *puri* really helped the village community in terms of ceremonial costs. In addition, the *puri* also often helps repair temples, build *wantilan*, and facilitate large ceremonies that can be attended by the community, such as cremation ceremonies (*ngaben mass*).

In addition, the role of the *puri* has now developed, not only in religious ceremonial activities, but the *puri* also plays a role in the field of tourism which is become the people's livelihood, like the *puri* opening the Puri Saren tourist attraction that can be visited by foreign tourists, the *puri* also facilitates Balinese dance performances, *puri* is also active in supporting cultural arts activities. The role played by the *puri* directly provides income for both Balinese artists and people who work in the tourism sector. Even the role of the *puri* in culture-based tourism helps the government in encouraging regional development programs.

The political religion of *puri* is different and unique, because it is not only an instrument for building ideological beliefs, but more importantly being able to build social and economic ties with its people. This model of religious politics

does not only talk about immaterial things in the form of beliefs and God's revelations but also talks about material things in the form of ceremonial facilities, assistance for repairing temples, assistance for repairing *banjar* and other cultural arts activities. The political religion of *puri* makes a great economic contribution to the village community, by not violating the sacred values of a ceremonial ritual and artistic and cultural activities of a village itself.

In Berger's theory of religion, it is emphasized that religion is the closest reason for humans to take action. Even in a democratic system, religion is needed to guarantee the morality of its people. And in Balinese society, ceremonial rituals have become part of people's daily lives and contain guidelines for living in the world. *Puri* in this case plays an important role in helping people carry out their religious obligations, so that their lives are peaceful and sustainable. The community has dependence on the *puri*, especially the economic resources provided by the *puri* to the community. *Puri* and the community both need each other. The community needs a *puri* as a figure that always guides the community in various traditional religious activities and becomes a funding support for certain ceremonies. And conversely, the *puri* needs its people in





terms of their obedience, and loyalty to the wishes of the *puri*'s family.

<sup>1</sup> The role transformation carried out by the *puri* has a positive impact on the community's economy and government development programs. *Puri*'s religious ideology is not only utilized in ritual activities, but is also implemented in various artistic and cultural activities which becoming the backbone of the people's economy. Currently, *Puri* also has businesses that are able to open jobs and absorb workers from people who need jobs in the hospitality sector. The increasing role of the *puri* makes the *puri* have a strong bargaining position, especially during political moments.

Various assistance that has been provided by the *puri* will certainly be taken into consideration by the village community in selecting leaders in political contestation in the regions. Religious, cultural, customary, social and economic considerations will become powerful weapons for *Puri* figures who will advance in politics. However, it should be noted that building trust and community loyalty cannot be done instantly, all require process and sincerity in providing assistance to rural communities in need. The existence of a symbiotic relationship of mutualism

between the *puri* and the community, makes the position of the *puri* will remain an actor to be reckoned with in local politics in Bali.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that religion in this case is not only related to beliefs (immaterial), but religion can also be used to deal with economic (material) problems such as helping the community economy and regional development. In addition, this study sees that the religious ideology of the *puri* does not only talk about issues of power (politics), but more importantly religion also plays a role in economic matters. Political religion that combines the two elements, both immaterial and material, is seen as being able to maintain the existence of the *puri*.

Religio politics of *Puri* is a marriage between religion and politics, which has a symbiotic relationship of mutualism. *Puri* with its religious ideology does not only provide benefits in the field of religion alone, but has expanded to the socio-economic field of society. And the ability to innovate based on religious and cultural values has an impact on the resilience of the *puri*'s power.





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