Living in Two Worlds: How tourism has influenced the Balinese worldview of Tri Hita Karana

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Abstract

This thesis readdresses the scarcity of research that relates to the role and influence of tourism on the Balinese worldview of Tri Hita Karana. It achieves this principally through an ethnographic study of a specific Balinese community. Three specific objectives were fulfilled; (a) to develop a clearer understanding of the origin and evolution of the philosophy and how it has been applied in contemporary Bali (b) how the different pillars of this philosophy have been affected by the processes of tourism (c) to provide insight into the reasons why the application of the philosophy in a practical context is challenging.

Interviews were conducted with Balinese living within the tourist community of Nyuh Kuning. The interviews focused on their relationship and interaction with the Tri Hita Karana philosophy and how tourism had influenced this. Recurrent themes from these interviews were identified, documented and analyzed.

Key conclusions drawn from the results imply; (a) that the processes of tourism have had both a positive and negative influence on the three different pillars of this worldview (b) the community continues to apply and reinforce the Tri Hita Karana in a spiritual and metaphorical sense but simultaneously struggles to maintain within a practical context a sense of harmony and balance with others and the natural environment (c) the understanding and application of the philosophy needs to be reexamined if it is to be effective in promoting balance and harmony in both the spiritual and material world.

This thesis proposes recommendations for this worldview to be applied in a more realistic and concrete framework that enables its guiding principles to adapt and absorb the ongoing processes of tourism.

Keywords: philosophy, worldview, spiritual, material, pillars, Tri Hita Karana, balance, harmony, tourism.
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