



Re-emerging Issue of Bali Strait Connecting Bridge

Eka Ari Suhendra¹

ABSTRACT

After received harsh critiques in 2016, once more, a rumor about the construction of a bridge between Java island and Bali island has been sparking wildly since January 2020. Previously, Banyuwangi Regent Azwar anaz proposed a plan to build a connecting bridge to reduce vehicle queues in ketapang harbor. Commonly, the traffic would reach its peak time on holiday season after Eid al-Fitr, where congestion in Ketapang harbor got its limit capacity. For decades, the Bali strait has been serving as a connecting port between Java and Bali, which is essential for economic growth and public migration. Meanwhile, philosophically, the strait holds a symbol of new hope and new life that separates between past and future. A rumor to build an overpass between java island and

Bali island discussed in early 2020 and in 2016 to reduce vehicle queues in ketapang harbor received critiques from Balinese society. To connect the two islands by land route would be considered a poor decision since it would affect some values and cultures that the community, especially Bali, holds dearly. Thus as an alternative solution, the idea of making another dock, an executive dock, both in Ketapang and Gilimanuk, is much preferred. The presence of the executive port will automatically eradicate the resurgent discourse on the Java-Bali bridge construction. Because crossing via ship alone takes 15 minutes, thus the Java-Bali bridge seems unnecessary. The executive pier would be in synergy with the construction of the Denpasar - Gilimanuk toll road.

Keyword: Connecting Bridge, Bali Strait, Java, Bali

Cite This Article: Suhendra, E.A. Re-emerging Issue of Bali Strait Connecting Bridge. *Bali Tourism Journal* (BTJ) 2020, 4(1): 19-22. DOI : 10.36675/btj.v4i1.42

¹PT. BPR KAS Indonesia;
ekaas666@gmail.com

BACKGROUND

After received harsh critiques in 2016, once more, a rumor about the construction of a bridge between Java - Bali has been sparking wildly since January 2020.¹ Previously, Banyuwangi Regent Azwar anaz proposed a plan to build a connecting bridge to reduce vehicle queues in ketapang harbor.² The proposal corresponds to Data from manifest ASDP Ketapang dan Gilimanuk, which showed that the number of visitors from java island to Bali has been increasing every year. The traffic would reach its peak time on holiday season after *Eid al-Fitr*, where congestion in Ketapang harbor got its limit.³ Azwar's plead was reasonable since Bali Island has been a favorite destination for domestic and international tourists to spend their long holiday.

A plan to link Sumatera, Java, and Bali by overpass is not a new idea. The innovation previously has been long proposed in 1960 by the late scholar, Prof. Dr. (HC) Ir. Sedyatmo, a professor at Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB). Sedyatmo proposed the *Tri Nusa Bimasakti* concept, which refers to establish connecting access between three islands: Sumatera, Java, and Bali. From the proposal, should the overpass be built, numerous benefits would be obtained.⁴ As for the arch between East Java and Bali, the bridge would play a significant role in boosting economic growth, ease the accessibility of goods, and reduce traffic in both Ketapang and

Gilimanuk harbor, especially on the peak of the holiday season.

Although the plan to construct a bridge would significantly impact society, the Balinese company is not pleased about the idea. The proposal triggered mixed reactions from wider communities. Some parties believe it is necessary to build the bridge for the sake of social and economic benefits. Adversely, some detest the construction due to its possibility of causing a detrimental effect in the long run.^{1-3,5}

BALINESE PERSPECTIVE: WHY DOES BALI STRAIT HOLD SIGNIFICANT MEANING?

The Bali strait is the nearest proximity between Java and Bali islands.⁷ It is situated on coordinate 114,340 EL-115,170 EL and 8,090 SL-8,820 SL, the western part of Bali island.⁸ all these times, Gilimanuk harbor in Bali, and Ketapang harbor in eastern Java, have been served as the only connecting harbor for cargo delivery as well as visitor's access.

From a sociocultural perspective, According to folklore, the Bali strait resulted from separation after a priest named Sidhimantra decided to cut off the only path that attaches Java and Bali. He determined to separate Java and Bali; thus, his son, Manik Angkeran, would not return to their Java village and continue his gambling addiction.⁹ Furthermore, In the 15th century, after the

Editor:
Ida Bagus Ngurah Tri Pramana

Received : 2020-03-16
Accepted : 2020-04-20
Published: 2020-05-05

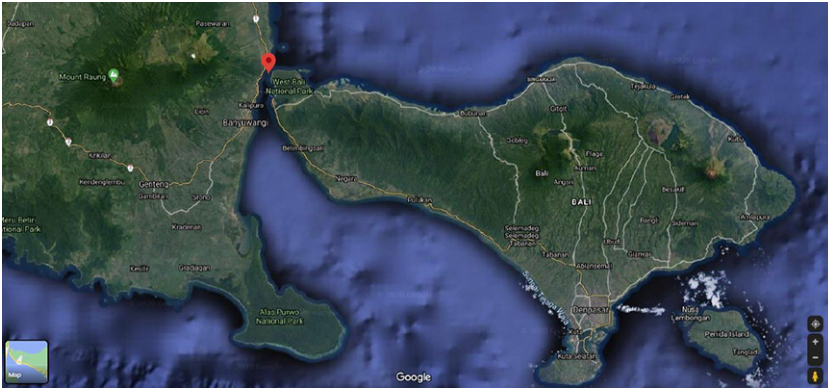


Figure 1. Satellite Image of Bali Strait⁶



Figure 2. Kamasan Style painting illustrating the Legend of Bali Strait¹¹

Majapahit empire lost its influence throughout the archipelago, Bali island became the destination for the kingdom exodus, who refused to surrender to the new ruler.¹⁰ Bali strait, then becomes a symbol of separation, a barrier, and last stronghold for the Majapahit's refugee. Together with the indigenous people of Bali, they lived side by side. It was because of their close relationship since the 9th century. Thus, these multicultural societies were able to mix and breed to a new system of religion, customs, and social structures that most people see as Bali culture.

No wonder, when In 2016, the Regent of Banyuwangi, Azwar Anas, pleaded to realize the overpass construction plan between Java Island and Bali, Balinese scholars and mass organizations declared rejection of the regent's proposal. In an interview, the Hindu Dharma Association (PHDI) Jembrana Regency chairman, I Komang Arsana, coldly replied to the idea. He emphasized some points on why society's resistance had occurred. It is solely based on community respect to the Bali history and the mythology of Dang Hyang Sidimantra. The strait should be left as it is.

The mythology has explained that these two islands were separated by sea as a barrier to limit social interaction. It becomes a natural filter,

making society easier to monitor any foreign influences that sought to reach the island. "If it is true that the construction of the Java-Bali bridge will be carried out, surely the existence of the bridge will affect the sociocultural level and create value shifting in Bali," he said, Wednesday (16/3). Because of that reason, he admitted that he would continue to defend Jembrana as the gateway to Bali in the western part by the sea. He has firmly despised the construction of the Java-Bali bridge. An identical idea was also conveyed by the Head of the Jembrana Regency Indonesian Buddhist Inter-Institution Forum (Walubi), I Ketut Sujono. "Moreover, the construction of the bridge does not guarantee the people of Bali and Java will be more prosperous," he said.³

MISINTERPRETATION OR DELAYED PROJECT?

Bali Governor Wayan Koster confirmed that there would be no construction of toll roads or bridges connecting Bali's island with Java. "The construction carried out by the central government is the toll road from Jakarta to East Java," he said at the Wiswa Sabha Building, Bali Governor's Office, Monday (27/1). Koster emphasized the connectivity between the two islands through the sea voyage. Gilimanuk Port, he said, will continue to operate as usual. Meanwhile, in Bali, a study is currently being prepared for the construction of the Gilimanuk-Denpasar toll road. The private sector will undertake the toll construction with a business to business (B to B) scheme. Its first construction phase is estimated to be started in mid-2021 and would cover 40km in the distance.¹²

The Toll Road Regulatory Agency revealed at the moment; there is no plan to build a bridge between Java and Bali Island as a continuation of the Trans-Java toll road. Earlier, at the Indonesia-Turkey Construction Business Forum, the Minister of Public Works and Public Housing, Basuki Hadimuljono, said that the government would continue constructing the Trans-Java toll road to Bali. A similar statement was also conveyed by Head of the Toll Road Regulatory Agency (BPJT) Danang Pariesit that there was no plan to build a toll bridge. Danang explained, there are plans to build new toll roads in Bali to develop the island's road network, not an overpass between Java and Bali. Likewise, Director General of Highways of the Ministry of PUPR, Hedy Rahadian, also emphasized that there is no plan to build a toll bridge on the two islands, only constructing a new toll road in Bali. Later, the two islands will remain linked via a ferry. Indonesia Ministry of Public Works & Public Housing has



Figure 3. Vehicle queue in Ketapang Harbor¹⁴



Figure 4. A Meeting between Jembrana Vice Regent and ASDP executive Officers¹⁶

approved five new toll roads to be built on the Island of the Gods. The five toll roads are Gilimanuk-Denpasar, Gilimanuk-Tabanan, Tabanan-Kuta, Kuta-Padang Bai, and Kuta-Tanah Lot.¹³

However, a statement from Head of Public Communication Bureau of the Ministry of PUPR, Endra Saleh, as cited from his interview by *INews* on Friday (26/6/2020), mentioned that up to the moment, there is no investor available to fund in building a bridge over the Bali Strait. According to him, such a project requires large funds in addition to a long study period. The statement raised a question, does it mean that should any investor willing to pour their funding on the bridge project, it would exist in the future?

Endra added that people who want to cross from Java to Bali or vice versa use a ferry. He said that transportation would be maintained, as would the Java-Sumatra ferry route. According to him, President Jokowi has a clear vision that marine connectivity must be strengthened. On this basis, the construction of the sea highway was implemented. “The sea highway does not mean that we build a toll road over the Bali Strait or connect the islands of Java and Bali in a physical sense, not because Java and Bali still use ferries, but ships and ports are modernized,” he said.¹⁵

ALTERNATIVE OPTION

The rumor about bridge construction immediately responded to by Jembrana Regent I Putu Artha and Jembrana Deputy Regent I Made Kembang Hartawan. Artha heard about the discourse on the structure of the Java-Bali bridge, including the bridge’s name. According to Artha, the improvement of the Denpasar-Gilimanuk road infrastructure should be prioritized, compared to constructing a connecting bridge between the islands of Java and Bali.

Denpasar-Gilimanuk route serves as one of the provincial roads, like the Mengwi-Singaraja route. Traffic on the Denpasar Gilimanuk route is often associated with death highway due to numerous accidents on the location. Narrow roads, unrepresentative road conditions, and high user access make accidents frequent. Likewise, Deputy Regent of Jembrana I Made Kembang Hartawan responded to the Bali Strait Bridge’s re-emerging discourse. According to Kembang, previously, the bridge proposal had been explicitly disdained by residents and Balinese society elements.

Kembang argues, rather than building the Bali Strait bridge, which is full of controversy, he leaned towards the idea of making another dock, an executive dock, both in Ketapang and Gilimanuk, which is currently being designed by PT ASDP Indonesia Ferry Ketapang.

The executive Ketapang and Gilimanuk Seaports would be available for public and private vehicles only, with premium services. It would not serve freight trucks. With this executive dock, the crossing process efficiently reduced the traffic because it only takes 15 minutes to cross instead of an hour. “The presence of the executive dock will make it easier for the community to cross. Furthermore, it would be providing the best access for tourists who want to travel from Bali and Java,” he explained, after meeting with the General Manager of PT ASDP Indonesia Ferry Ketapang Fahmi Alweni.

The presence of the executive dock will automatically eradicate the resurgent discourse on the Java-Bali bridge construction. Because crossing via ship alone takes 15 minutes, thus the Java-Bali bridge seems unnecessary. The executive pier would be in synergy with the construction of the Denpasar - Gilimanuk toll road. They are designed in 2021, starting land acquisition by involving the private sector.

Meanwhile, PT ASDP Indonesia General Manager Ferry Ketapang Fahmi Alweni said that the construction of an executive dock is a program from the central government under the Ministry of Transportation and state-owned enterprises' ministry. The government wishes to improve the quality of ferry services. In addition to a special dock, an express ship will also be prepared to serve the Ketapang-Gilimanuk crossing route, to meet people's expectations for a more comfortable and faster crossing, "Fahmi said.¹

CONCLUSION

For decades, the Bali strait has been serving as a connecting port between Java and Bali, which is essential for economic growth and public migration. Meanwhile, philosophically, the strait holds a symbol of new hope and new life that separates between past and future. A rumor to build an overpass between java island and Bali island discussed in early 2020 and in 2016 to reduce vehicle queues in ketapang harbor received critiques from Balinese society. To connect the two islands by land route would be considered a poor decision since it would affect some values and cultures that the community, especially Bali, holds dearly. Thus as an alternative solution, the idea of making another dock, an executive dock, both in Ketapang and Gilimanuk, is much preferred. The presence of the executive port will automatically eradicate the resurgent discourse on the Java-Bali bridge construction. Because crossing via ship alone takes 15 minutes, thus the Java-Bali bridge seems unnecessary. The executive pier would be in synergy with the construction of the Denpasar - Gilimanuk toll road.

REFERENCES:

1. A Mustofa. Wacana Jembatan Selat Bali Mencuat Lagi, Jembrana Langsung Menolak . Radar Bali. 2020. Available at URL: <https://radarbali.jawapos.com/read/2020/01/23/176123/wacana-jembatan-selat-bali-mencuat-lagi-jembrana-langsung-menolak>
2. PA Rizky. Urgensi Membangun Jembatan Penghubung Jawa-Bali. Matamatapolitik[dot]com. 2020. Available at URL: <https://www.matamatapolitik.com/urgensi-membangun-jembatan-penghubung-jawa-bali-original-news-polling/>
3. GN Jaya. Ide Bupati Banyuwangi bangun jembatan Jawa-Bali ditolak tokoh agama. Merdeka[dot]com. 2016. Available at URL: <https://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/ide-bupati-banyuwangi-bangun-jembatan-jawa-bali-ditolak-tokoh-agama.html>
4. AT Kurniawan. Sejarah Kontroversi Proyek Jembatan Selat Sunda. Tempo[dot]co. 2016. Available at URL: <https://bisnis.tempo.co/read/420183/sejarah-kontroversi-proyek-jembatan-selat-sunda/full&view=ok>
5. Anonymous. Bridge connecting Java and Bali? Banyuwangi makes proposal, Bali resists. Coconuts[dot]co. 2016. Available at URL: <https://coconuts.co/bali/news/bridge-connecting-java-and-bali-banyuwangi-makes-proposal-bali-resists/>
6. Screenshot of Bali Strait. 2020. Personal Collection.
7. TRENGGONO, Mukti, et al. Pemantauan Elevasi Muka Air Selat Bali dengan Menggunakan Stasiun Pasang Surut. Research Gate, 2015, 39-47.
8. SIMBOLON, Domu, et al. Tingkat pemanfaatan dan pola musim penangkapan Ikan Lemuru di Perairan Selat Bali. Buletin PSP, 2011, 19.3.
9. Damayanti, Astri. Kumpulan legenda Nusantara favorit. Puspa Swara, 2010.
10. KEMPERS, AJ Bernet. Monumental Bali: introduction to Balinese archaeology & guide to the monuments. Tuttle Publishing, 2013.
11. Image by Anonymous 'BALI FOLK STORIES: HOW THE ISLAND WAS CREATED'. 2020. Available at URL: <https://volunteerprograms Bali.org/bali-folk-stories-how-the-island-was-created/>
12. IWS Suadnyana. Koster Pastikan Tidak Ada Tol Jawa-Bali, Sebut yang Disiapkan Kini adalah Tol Denpasar-Gilimanuk. Bali[dot]tribunnews[dot]com. 2020. Available at URL: <https://bali.tribunnews.com/2020/01/28/koster-pastikan-tidak-ada-tol-jawa-bali-sebut-yang-disiapkan-kini-adalah-tol-denpasar-gilimanuk?page=all>
13. A Yasa. BPJT : Belum Ada Rencana Bangun Jembatan Tol Jawa-Bali, tetapi Bisnis[dot]com. 2020. Available at URL: <https://ekonomi.bisnis.com/read/20200625/45/1257602/bpjt-belum-ada-rencana-bangun-jembatan-tol-jawa-bali-tetapi->
14. Image by BC Setya 'Pelabuhan Ketapang Banyuwangi Dipermak April 2020'. Antara. 2019. Available at URL: <https://republika.co.id/berita/q0gu81291/pelabuhan-ketapang-banyuwangi-dipermak-april-2020>
15. Anonymous. Pemerintah Belum Berencana Bikin Jembatan Penghubung Jawa-Bali . Inews[dot]id. 2020. Available at URL: <https://www.inews.id/finance/bisnis/pemerintah-belum-berencana-bikin-jembatan-penghubung-jawa-bali>
16. Image taken from BaliPost 'Dibandingkan Bangun Jembatan Untuk Sambung Bali Dengan Jawa, Jembrana Pilih Alternative Ini'. BaliPost. 2020. Available at URL: <https://www.balipost.com/news/2020/01/23/100132/Dibandingkan-Bangun-Jembatan-untuk-Sambung...html>



This work is licensed under
a Creative Commons Attribution