



The Urgency of Asta Cita Values and Cultural Stakeholders' Perceptions of Policy Strategies Based on Balinese Cultural Philosophy

Ida Bagus Wika Krishna; Komang Puteri Yadnya Diari; I Wayan Kariarta

Institut Agama Hindu Negeri Mpu Kuturan, Indonesia

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v12i10.7112>

Abstract

This study examines two key aspects: the urgency of Asta Cita values in strengthening national cultural identity, and the perceptions of cultural stakeholders regarding policy strategies grounded in the philosophy of Balinese culture. Asta Cita refers to the eight strategic missions of national development proposed by President Prabowo Subianto in his vision for a Golden Indonesia 2045. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, using in-depth interviews and participatory observations conducted in three customary villages in Bali. The findings reveal that the values embedded in Asta Cita align substantially with core principles of Balinese culture, such as Tri Hita Karana, Tat Twam Asi, and Rwa Bhineda. Cultural stakeholders emphasize the need for policy strategies that are locally rooted and community-driven, ensuring that Asta Cita is not implemented in a top-down manner that detaches it from the lived cultural realities of local communities. These findings highlight the importance of synergizing national policies with local wisdom to inclusively and sustainably reinforce national cultural identity through values native to the archipelago.

Keywords: *Asta Cita; Balinese Cultural Philosophy; Cultural Policy; Local Wisdom*

Introduction

Balinese culture represents a form of Indonesia's local cultural expression with a deeply internalized value structure, symbolic system, and social practices within its community life (Paramita, 2019). Philosophical values such as Tri Hita Karana, Tat Twam Asi, and Rwa Bhineda serve not only as ethical guidelines but also regulate relationships between humans and the environment, with one another, and with the transcendent realm. This aligns with Budiadnya, (2019), who asserted that these teachings are essential concepts for living in harmony in Indonesia's multicultural society, which is unique compared to other nations in the world.

Balinese cultural philosophy does not merely exist as an abstract concept, but is manifested in social institutions that collectively govern community life. Values such as Tri Hita Karana are embedded in customary village systems, spatial planning, religious rituals, and the traditional agricultural system of Subak. Subak, a communally managed irrigation system, is a tangible form of implementing harmony between humans, nature, and the divine (Windia et al., 2018). This makes Balinese culture not just a static cultural heritage, but a living knowledge system that continually adapts and transforms over time.

UNESCO's recognition of Subak as a world cultural heritage in 2012 was not solely due to its technical uniqueness but because Subak reflects ecological practices based on the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana. This system exemplifies how local wisdom is consistently actualized in daily Balinese life, and serves as a symbol of successful integration between spirituality, the environment, and social structures.

However, with the massive influence of globalization, modernization, and the tourism industry, Balinese culture faces serious challenges (Riska et al., 2024). Phenomena such as land conversion, commodification of cultural symbols, and the lack of tradition bearers' regeneration signal a shift in values that could weaken local cultural roots. It is in this context that the need arises for development policies that are not only economically driven but also culturally sensitive and rooted in local identity.

In the national development vision toward Indonesia Emas 2045, President Prabowo Subianto formulated Asta Cita as eight strategic national policy directions, including strengthening Pancasila ideology, developing superior human capital, environmental preservation, and empowering villages (Prabowo & Gibran, 2024). Substantively, the values in Asta Cita significantly intersect with the principles of Balinese cultural philosophy. For example, the emphasis on environmental conservation and village-based development reflects Tri Hita Karana, while human development and cultural advancement align with Tat Twam Asi, which promotes collective consciousness and universal humanity.

Recent studies have shown that integrating local values into public policy formulation and implementation is not only relevant but also crucial for ensuring development sustainability and effectiveness. Suranto & Darumurti (2024), in their study of regional policies in Indonesia, confirmed that local wisdom-based approaches significantly enhance development program effectiveness because they are more adaptive to the social and cultural context. Similarly, Yulianingsih et al., (2024), in their study on cultural festivals in Bali, found that tradition preservation through community events not only strengthens local collective identity but also fosters social resilience in facing social and economic change. Furthermore, Ardani et al., (2025), highlighted the importance of sustainable tourism development strategies grounded in local values, especially in managing desa adat in Bali. They found that values like Tri Hita Karana are not merely symbolic, but can be operationalized as principles of governance and community empowerment. In the context of technological development, Hervansyah et al., (2025) emphasized that cultural digitization can serve as an innovative medium to broaden the reach of tradition preservation without compromising its essence and wisdom. However, they also underscored the importance of cultural and digital literacy to maintain the authenticity of cultural narratives presented online.

These various studies illustrate that local values are not merely complementary in the development narrative but are a foundational bridge between national development visions and the social-cultural realities of communities. Unfortunately, there has been little research that explicitly explores the connection between the values in Asta Cita and the value structures in Balinese cultural philosophy, particularly from the perspective of cultural stakeholders. Therefore, this study is significant and timely to explore how national policy strategies can gain legitimacy and success through living local cultural roots upheld by the community.

Although there have been several studies related to strengthening local culture and development policies, there remains a lack of research explicitly examining the relationship between Asta Cita values and Balinese cultural philosophy structures, especially from the viewpoint of cultural stakeholders. In a multicultural nation-state framework, national policy strategies are more effective when designed dialogically and participatorily, taking into account the living local values. With this background, this study aims to examine two critical aspects:

1. The urgency of Asta Cita values in strengthening national cultural identity; and
2. Cultural stakeholders' perceptions of strategic policy directions relevant to Balinese cultural philosophy.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of exploring the meanings, perceptions, and in-depth interpretations of cultural stakeholders regarding the values of Asta Cita within the context of Balinese cultural philosophy. This approach was selected because it is appropriate for investigating social dynamics and cultural values that are contextual and qualitative in nature, as well as for explaining the relationship between local value structures and national policy directions (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, 2016; Yin, 2010).

The research was conducted in three customary-based areas, namely Desa Adat Canggu (Badung Regency), Banjar Anyar (Tabanan Regency), and Desa Adat Banyuning (Buleleng Regency). These three locations were purposively selected based on considerations of traditional sustainability, diversity of cultural practices, and the active involvement of cultural stakeholders in preservation efforts and locally based development.

Informants were selected purposively based on the following criteria: (1) Customary leaders and cultural stakeholders actively involved in the preservation of Balinese cultural values; (2) Possessing in-depth knowledge of local cultural philosophy such as Tri Hita Karana, Tat Twam Asi, and Rwa Bhineda; and (3) Being involved in decision-making or policy discourse at the local level. The total number of informants in this study was 12 individuals, consisting of bendesa adat, sulinggih, traditional art figures, and cultural activists.

The data collection techniques in this study included three main methods: (1) In-depth interviews using semi-structured guidelines to allow narrative exploration from each informant; (2) Participant observation, with the researcher being present during customary and cultural events to directly observe the actualization of local values; and (3) Document study, which involved the analysis of local policy documents, outcomes of customary deliberations, and other relevant cultural records. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (2014), which consists of three main stages: (1) Data reduction, (2) Data display, and (3) Conclusion drawing and verification.

During the analysis process, the researcher conducted source and technique triangulation to enhance data validity and reliability. Data interpretation was carried out by integrating local cultural perspectives with the strategic framework of Asta Cita, in order to identify points of convergence and divergence between the national vision and the realities of local values in Bali.

Result and Discussion

The Urgency of Asta Cita Values in Strengthening National Cultural Identity

In this context, cultural revitalization as one of the main pillars is not merely interpreted as an effort to preserve cultural artifacts, but also as a value-based nation-building strategy. Thus, it is essential to examine how the values embedded in Asta Cita can be made relevant to the living and functional cultural systems at the local level.

Balinese culture offers both philosophical and practical foundations that strongly align with the spirit of Asta Cita. The Balinese philosophy of life—embodied in concepts such as Tri Hita Karana, Tat Twam Asi, and Rwa Bhineda—emphasizes harmony, balance, and interconnectedness among humans, the environment, and the divine. These concepts are not merely normative doctrines but are deeply embedded in customary institutions such as Subak, desa pakraman, and ceremonial cycles that unify spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions.

Such a structured cultural life, integrated with the social system, demonstrates that Balinese culture is not a static value system but rather a living knowledge system—an evolving form of wisdom that continues to adapt to the dynamics of the times. In this context, Asta Cita can gain grassroots momentum if implemented in ways that respect and incorporate local values as lived by Balinese communities. Several components of Asta Cita, such as village-based development, environmental preservation, and strengthening social resilience through culture, are in line with the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana. The Subak system, for example, which has been recognized as a world cultural heritage site by UNESCO, represents a model of natural resource governance that is democratic, spiritual, and sustainable—highly relevant to the national sustainable development agenda. As emphasized by Suranto & Darumurti (2024), policy approaches rooted in local wisdom are more widely accepted by communities because they originate from values that people believe in and practice. In other words, the values in Asta Cita will not be effective if they are not contextualized with local values, such as those found in the Balinese cultural philosophy.

Findings from observations and interviews conducted in three desa adat in Bali—Desa Canggu, Desa Br. Anyar, and Desa Banyuning—further reinforce this argument. For instance, cultural stakeholders in Desa Br. Anyar consistently link their Subak agricultural system to the teachings of Tat Twam Asi and Karma Phala, which strengthen a sense of responsibility towards both nature and the community. In an interview with a customary leader, it was stated:

“We never separate farming from prayer and social responsibility. What is now called Asta Cita is actually something we’ve been doing for a long time.” — Bendesa Adat Br. Anyar, interview, 3 July 2025.

Likewise, in Desa Banyuning, the preservation of values and cultural practices is carried out through the roles of sekaa teruna (youth groups), arts organizations, and community-based customary education. Their activities not only sustain traditional continuity but also serve as venues for transmitting national values and local spirituality. Several activities, such as gamelan rehearsals, makidung (chanting), and etiquette training based on traditional customs, are routinely conducted with youth involvement. Customary leaders there emphasized that the village-based development concept in Asta Cita closely resembles their way of life but requires an approach that aligns with local customs:

“We don’t reject central government programs. But the approach shouldn’t be like handing down a project. Let us carry it out in our way, according to our customs and traditions.” — Customary Leader, Desa Banyuning, interview, 5 July 2025

Meanwhile, a youth from Desa Canggu who is actively involved in cultural activities stated:

“If Asta Cita is about developing from the village and preserving culture, we’ve already been doing that. But what we need is space—not just training—but long-term recognition and support.” — Chairperson of Sekaa Teruna Br. Pipitan Canggu, interview, 5 July 2025

These statements demonstrate a high level of collective awareness regarding the potential of local culture as the foundation of development, along with the hope that the state will act as a facilitator rather than a dominator.

From these findings, it can be concluded that the urgency of Asta Cita in strengthening national cultural identity is highly dependent on its connection to value structures that are already living within society. Without a participatory approach rooted in local wisdom, Asta Cita risks becoming a mere symbolic agenda. On the other hand, if implemented through a functional and adaptive cultural approach as seen in Bali, Asta Cita holds strong potential to become a transformative national cultural strategy.

Cultural Stakeholders' Perceptions of Policy Directions Based on Balinese Cultural Philosophy

The national development agenda guided by Asta Cita demands active involvement from indigenous communities as cultural stakeholders. Based on interview and field observation results, their perceptions of Asta Cita's policy direction reveal two sides: support for its core values, but also criticism regarding the implementation approach, which tends to lack contextual alignment with the living customary structures.

Table 1. Summary of Field Findings by Location

Location	Informant	Key Findings	Relevant Quote
Desa Cangu	<i>Pinandita / Cultural Leader</i>	Policy is considered good, but it fails to touch the cultural "sense"	"The state has good intentions, but often forgets how to touch the 'sense' of the people."
Desa Cangu	<i>Chairperson of Sekeha Truna</i>	Minimal youth participation, appears merely symbolic	"Involve us not only in training, but in sustainable programs that support the preservation of Balinese customs and culture."
Desa Cangu	Cultural Leader	The approach remains project-based	"Programs from the central government often feel like projects, while we have our own way of preserving culture."
Desa Br. Anyar	<i>Member of Karang Taruna</i>	Local initiatives need recognition and systemic support	"We act on our own because we love culture. But if we're not recognized, it gets exhausting."
Desa Banyuning	Community Leader	Must go through customary institutions to be accepted by the community	"If it doesn't go through the <i>desa adat</i> , Asta Cita will just be a name without a soul."

From these findings, it is evident that cultural stakeholders emphasize the importance of recognition and reinforcement of local institutions such as *desa adat* as the primary channels of development. Balinese cultural philosophy—including *Desa Kala Patra*, *Tat Twam Asi*, and *Nyama Braya*—is considered essential for aligning state policies with community values. They acknowledge that national policies will succeed only if they are implemented through pathways of long-standing values and beliefs.

"We do not reject change. But the state must not come as a ruler, but as a cultural ally." — Cultural figure from Banjar Anyar, interview, 5 July 2025

Therefore, policies guided by Balinese cultural philosophy are more likely to address identity crises and value disorientation in development. Cultural stakeholders advocate for a model of partnership rather than domination; an inclusive approach rather than a mere formality.

This study shows that Asta Cita, as a national development strategy, holds significant potential in strengthening the cultural identity of the nation—especially if it is implemented through approaches that respect local values that are living and functional. Balinese cultural philosophy offers ethical, ecological, and social foundations that are highly relevant for the actualization of Asta Cita values.

Cultural stakeholders in Bali welcomed the spirit of Asta Cita, yet emphasized the need to reformulate its approach so that it does not become top-down or symbolic. Development strategies implemented through customary institutions and cultural dialogue will be more effective, sustainable, and substantially accepted by the community.

This study asserts that national development policies rooted in local cultural philosophy are not only more acceptable but also more impactful in nurturing the soul of the nation. Therefore, going forward, policy design must position indigenous communities as equal partners in the realization of Indonesia Emas 2045.

Conclusion

This paper asserts that national cultural development aimed at strengthening national identity requires a value foundation derived from local wisdom. The main thesis of this study is that integrating Asta Cita as a national strategic agenda with Balinese cultural philosophy—reflected in concepts such as Tri Hita Karana, Tat Twam Asi, and Desa Kala Patra—can offer a more contextual, participatory, and sustainable direction for cultural policy.

Through two main areas of discussion, it was found that the values of Asta Cita are highly coherent with the Balinese cultural system, which is still actively practiced in social life. Cultural stakeholders expressed appreciation for the strategic direction of Asta Cita, provided that its implementation does not contradict local value structures and provides room for community participation. This indicates that cultural development strategies will be more effective if not designed uniformly but instead tailored to the unique social and cultural structures of each region.

This conclusion also serves as a prelude to further studies, particularly concerning how Asta Cita-based strategies can be interpreted and contextualized into operational cultural policy. This is essential to ensure that the formulation of national policy can be implemented in ways that are relevant, adaptive, and aligned with the living cultural dynamics of society.

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