

THE EXISTENCE OF CORPSE TRANSFER TO *PEMAU* IN THE CREMATION CEREMONY PROCESS IN SANDING TRADITIONAL VILLAGE, TAMPAKSIRING DISTRICT, GIANYAR REGENCY

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Abstract :

The cremation ceremony (*ngaben*) is a life cycle tradition of humanity that has existed and been passed down for generations. Over time, it has become a cultural identity perceived as sacred, containing processes and rituals imbued with philosophical meaning, believed to influence the journey of the afterlife. Along with the advancements in the industrial technology era, this ceremony or tradition has begun to experience the influence of the industrial world. This is evident in the emergence of crematorium practitioners, leading to the diminishing mysticism and sacred values within the ceremony. Modern society, faced with economic and family demands, tends to view religious ceremonies as commonplace, shifting the perception of the cremation ceremony to a more practical and flexible one due to the demands of globalization.

Based on this background, the researchers aim to address several key issues: 1) How is the process of corpse transfer to *pemau* conducted in the cremation ceremony in Sanding Traditional Village? 2) What philosophical meanings are embedded in the process of corpse transfer to *pemau* in the cremation ceremony in Sanding Traditional Village? 3) What are the positive and negative impacts of the industrial globalization era on the tradition of corpse transfer to *pemau* in the cremation ceremony in Sanding Traditional Village?

Key Words : Cremation Ceremony, Corpse Transfer, *Pemau*

I. INTRODUCTION:

Indonesia's national culture is highly complex and diverse, reflecting the multitude of ethnic groups inhabiting thousands of islands with varying ethnicities. Balinese society is one such ethnicity that contributes to the richness of Indonesian culture. It is particularly intriguing for research due to the diversity and unique cultural patterns within Bali itself, even among its own communities.

One of the deeply rooted traditions practiced by the Hindu Balinese community is the cremation ceremony (*ngaben*). This tradition is fascinating to study as every region in Bali has distinct variations in performing this ceremony despite their geographical proximity.

In Bali, specifically in Gianyar Regency, there is a unique ceremony or tradition in Sanding Traditional Village, Tampaksiring District. A significant ritual upheld by the Sanding community is the *pesalinan* process, transferring the corpse from *tumpang salu* to *pemau*. Unlike the cremation ceremony conducted by the *pertisentana mawang* in Kulu Tampaksiring, where the

ritual of corpse transfer to *pemau* is absent due to the use of the *sawa agni* system (a cremation process performed by burning the corpse atop a burial mound using fragrant pandanus leaves and various ceremonial offerings), the *nyalinan* ritual in Sanding is conducted at midnight, a day before the corpse-burning ceremony (*pengesengan*). This ritual is believed to release the bonds tied to the deceased's body, allowing the spirit to proceed to the afterlife (*sunia loka*).

However, with the advent of industrial globalization, such traditions have begun to lose their mystical aura. This has raised concerns among certain segments of the community regarding the continuity of Balinese rituals and traditions. They worry that these customs are no longer practiced purely by the Balinese people themselves, especially the younger generation. Many young Balinese find it challenging to comprehend and execute traditional Balinese rituals due to their philosophical and moral complexities. Some are even unaware of the meanings embedded in such traditions, including the significance of the *nyalinan* ritual of transferring the corpse from *tumpang salu* to *pemau* within the cremation ceremony.

On the other hand, a portion of the Balinese community has become detached from their traditions due to modern lifestyle influences. A clear example is how Balinese traditions are now often viewed as optional or replaceable by modern alternatives. This trend is evident in ceremonies such as temple festivals (*piodalan*), weddings, and cremations, where people increasingly adopt external modern practices, often without understanding their original philosophy.

In light of these concerns, the researchers have chosen to study "*The Existence of Corpse Transfer to Pemau in the Cremation Ceremony Process in Sanding Traditional Village, Tampaksiring District, Gianyar Regency*". This research is important not only to preserve this highly esteemed tradition but also to encourage the community, particularly in Sanding Traditional Village, to understand and maintain this ancestral practice handed down through generations.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research conducted is qualitative research. This study utilizes two types of data sources: primary data and secondary data. The primary instrument in this research is the researchers themselves, while additional supporting instruments include a digital camera and a tape recorder.

The selection of informants was determined based on the research objectives, employing a purposive sampling technique. This involves selecting specific individuals deemed knowledgeable and capable of providing insights into the research subject. These include the *pemangku* (priest) of Pura Khayangan Tiga, the *Bendesa Adat* (traditional village head) of Sanding, and the *Kerta Desa* (traditional village council) of Sanding, who are familiar with the process of transferring a corpse to *pemau*.

Data collection methods include observation, interviews, documentation, and a literature review. The data analysis method applied in this research is qualitative descriptive analysis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Process of Transferring the Corpse to *Pemau* in the Cremation Ceremony in Sanding Traditional Village

To understand the process, the researcher will first outline the stages of the ritual from beginning to end:

1. Preparation Stage
2. *Ngendagin*
3. *Mabersih Alit* or *Mreteka Adegan*
4. Transferring the Corpse to *Pemau* (*Nyalinan Pemau*)
5. *Mendak Toya Ning*
6. *Ngaskara*
7. *Ngagah Mayat*
8. Cremation (*Ngeseng*), or Burning the Corpse
9. *Nganyut*, or Dispersing the Ashes

1. Preparation Stage

The preparation for the *ngaben* ceremony begins with a community meeting (*sangkep*) attended by all villagers (*krama desa*) to determine the date of the ceremony. The decision is typically made to hold the ceremony during the *sasih karo* period. Preparations for the ceremony begin seven days prior to the main event and include the making of ceremonial cakes (*jajan suci*), offerings such as *surya*, *pangorongan*, *bale te*, *tukon*, *pisang jati*, and *damar kurung*. Each family participating in the *ngaben* ceremony is required to prepare *banten* (*yadnya penjejer pengabenan*), marking the start of the ritual and the onset of *cuntaka* (ritual impurity related to the *ngaben*) (Sudiasa, August 18, 2024).

2. *Ngendagin*

According to Gede Merthawan (2021), *ngendagin* refers to the exhumation of the remains of the deceased to retrieve bones as materials for the *ngaben* process. In Sanding Traditional Village, this stage is typically conducted three days (*ketelun*) before the mass cremation ceremony (*ngaben massal*). This timeline is agreed upon by the traditional village council (*desa adat*) to mark the beginning of the *cuntaka* period. During this time, all forms of *Dewa Yadnya* (rituals dedicated to the gods) are temporarily suspended at all levels of the community, including in villages, *banjar* (hamlets), and households (Sudiasa, August 18, 2024).

3. *Nyiramin* or *Mreteka Adegan*

According to Ketut Yasini (2021), *nyiramin* involves bathing the corpse in the family's courtyard. This is an essential stage in the *ngaben* ceremony for Hindu adherents. The specifics of this ritual vary depending on local customs. Following *nyiramin*, a process called *mreteka sawa* takes place. As explained by Swarsi (2008), *mreteka sawa* is a form of *pitra yadnya* (ancestor worship), involving symbolic offerings that represent parts of the human body. These symbols include ducks on the body, a beehive near the ears, and threads tied to the fingers.

The purpose of this process is to return the elements of the body to their source, the *Panca Maha Bhuta* (five great elements), ensuring that the soul reincarnates into a complete and perfect body. According to Hindu belief, after death, the soul will be reborn (*reincarnation*). This ritual is intended to bless the reincarnated soul with a flawless body, free from physical defects, in its next life (Suprpto, 2019)

The implementation of the *Nyiramin* ceremony in Desa Adat Sanding utilizes a symbolic representation made from *majegau* wood, conducted three days prior to the peak of the *ngaben* ceremony, specifically after the *ngagah* ritual is performed. This *Nyiramin* ceremony holds a philosophical meaning of bathing the deceased using a symbol, crafted from *majegau* wood.

Based on this practice, the *Nyiramin* and *Mreteka Sawa* ceremonies carried out by the community of Sanding Traditional Village symbolize the bathing of the deceased. The symbol is made flat, using *majegau* wood, and inscribed with markings resembling the form of *Acintya*, representing the seat of the spirit of the deceased. The symbol is placed on a *penusangan*, which serves as the base for bathing the symbolic representation of the deceased. This ritual is an integral part of the *ngaben* ceremony series performed by the community in Sanding Traditional Village

4. Ritual of Transferring the Corpse to *Pemau*

The *nyiramin* ritual in Sanding Traditional Village incorporates tools made from *kayu majegau* (*majegau* wood) and is conducted three days before the *ngaben* ceremony, specifically after the *ngagah* ritual. Symbolically, the *nyiramin* process represents bathing the deceased's body using representations made from *kayu majegau*. This wood is carved into flat forms that are marked (*dirajah*) to resemble *Acintya*, a sacred symbol serving as the resting place of the departed soul. The base for this symbolic bathing, called *penusangan*, functions as the platform for washing the representation of the deceased.

The combination of *nyiramin* and *mreteka sawa* in Sanding symbolizes not only the cleansing of the physical body but also spiritual purification, ensuring the departed soul transitions to its next stage of existence. These rituals form an integral part of the *ngaben* procession, emphasizing the community's adherence to tradition and the symbolic sanctity of the process.

1. The Process of Transferring the Corpse to *Pemau*

The *nyalanan pemau* ritual is a distinctive element within the *ngaben* process in Sanding Traditional Village. The term *nyalanan* literally translates to "replacing," while *pemau* refers to a symbolic resting platform resembling a small boat (*jukung*). In essence, this ritual signifies the replacement of the deceased's symbolic "bed" from its original structure (*tumpang salu*) to a new resting place known as *pemau*.

In practice, the material used as a symbol of the corpse is a sandalwood effigy, which is transferred from *tumpang salu* to *pemau*. The sandalwood effigy represents the physical body of the deceased, and all processes conducted are treated as if it were an actual corpse. The initial step involves unwrapping the shroud (including towels, clothes, *kamen*, and white cloth) followed by removing the bamboo and pandanus mats. Once unwrapped, the effigy is lowered from *tumpang salu* and placed on *pemau* below. This ritual takes place at exactly at midnight the night before the cremation ceremony.

According to I Wayan Sudiasa, the head of Sanding Village, this timing symbolizes the release of the spirit from the material world into the spiritual realm, adhering to the Hindu beliefs held by the village community. Logically, it aligns with the transition of a new day beginning at midnight. Based on the above, the *nyalanan pemau* ritual is an integral part of the cremation ceremony, involving several stages to ensure the transformation of the physical body into a

spiritual one, guiding the soul to its rightful place.

2. Ngening (Ritual of Purification)

As explained by the head of Sanding Village, the *ngening* ceremony is a purification ritual within the cremation process. It uses an *ampiran* (a symbolic representation of the deceased) to request holy water (*tirta*) from Lord Vishnu for the purification of the soul (*atma*). Thus, the *ngening* ceremony conducted by the Sanding Village community serves as a form of purification for the departed soul, employing *ampiran* as a symbolic medium.

3. Ngaskara (Elevating the Soul's Status)

According to the *Lontar Gayatri*, when a person passes away, their *atman* is referred to as *preta*. If the *atman* is properly ritualized and purified, it is then referred to as *pitara*. In the *ngaben* ceremony, the *ngaskara* ritual is mandatory and essential as a means of returning the five elements of the universe, known as *Panca Maha Bhuta* (macrocosm and microcosm), to their original state in perfect balance, thereby elevating the sanctity of the *pitra* to become *Hyang Pitara* or *Hyang Dewa*.

According to Pemayun (2015:32), the *ngaskara* ceremony is a purification ritual for the *atma*, enabling it to return to its source. It is a process of elevating the status of the *atma* from *preta* to *pitra*. In other words, the *ngaskara* ritual serves as a *padiksan* (consecration) ceremony for Hindus who, during their lifetime, were not initiated as *dwijati* (twice-born). The *Atharvaveda XII.1.11* states that all Hindus are obligated to uphold Mother Earth through six principles, one of which is the *diksita* ritual, aimed at enlightening the soul with *jnana agni* (the sacred light of knowledge).

Based on this, the *ngaskara* ceremony performed by the community of Desa Adat Sanding is a form of *padiksan*, signifying the elevation of the *atma*'s status to become *pitara*, conducted one day before the peak of the *ngaben* ceremony. This ritual takes place at the local cemetery, led and officiated by a *Sulinggih*.

4. Ngagah Mayat (Exhumation of the Deceased)

The *ngagah* ritual involves exhuming the remains of the deceased for further ceremonies. This process varies among villages, with time frames ranging from seven days before cremation to the morning of the cremation itself. In traditional villages, this ancient practice is preserved, beginning with burial (*mekingsan di pertiwi*) before cremation.

In the *Lontar Yama Purwana Tattwa*, it is stated that death rituals are highly sacred, religious, and mystical ceremonies, as described in the following verse:

"Nihan daging kcap Yama Purwana Tattwa, par ssi, tingkah angupakara sawa sang mati, agung alit, nistha madhia utama, maka patuting wulah sang magama tirtha ring Balirajia, kewala wwang mati bner tan wnanng mapendem, mangde magseng juga, saika supacarania, prasida Sang Atma molih ring Bhatara Brahma".

Translation:

"This is the content of the *Yama Purwana Tattwa*, the procedures for performing death rituals according to one's capability—simple, moderate, or elaborate—that should be carried out by Hindus in Bali. If a person dies naturally, they are not to be buried but must be cremated along with the necessary rituals so that the *atma* being honored can attain a place by the side of Lord

Brahma" (*Yama Purwana Tattwa*, 2b).

It can be said that the *ngagah* ceremony performed by the community of Desa Adat Sanding is part of the cremation rituals, which still adhere to the ancient system (*kuno dresta*), including the day of the ceremony and the time frame used during the *ngangah* process. This practice is based on the considerations of the traditional village, their beliefs, and the heritage passed down from the elders or ancestors of Desa Adat Sanding, ensuring the *ngagah* ceremony continues to be carried out to this day.

5. Ngeseng or Pengutangan (Cremation)

The *ngeseng* ritual represents the culmination of the cremation ceremony, involving the burning of the body accompanied by offerings and *tirta pengentas* (purification water) sprinkled by priests. The process is accompanied by sacred chants, and the body is cremated until only ashes remain. The timing of this ritual is determined by local customs (*dresta*).

Therefore, the *ngeseng* ceremony conducted by the community of Desa Adat Sanding serves as the culmination of the cremation ritual. It involves the use of *Petulangan* based on the *terehan* as the *taulan* container, accompanied by ritual offerings (*bebantenan upakara*) such as *ampiran*, *pisang jati*, *tukon*, prepared *adegan*, and *tirta pengentas* to ensure the proper execution of the *ngeseng* ceremony.

6. Nganyut (Disposal of Ashes)

According to Gede Merthawan, the *nganyut* ritual involves scattering the ashes of the deceased into a river or sea, symbolizing the cleansing of impurities attached to the soul. For the Sanding Village community, *nganyut* marks the conclusion of the cremation process, signifying the separation of the physical and spiritual worlds. The ashes are scattered at the beach or river, symbolizing the final farewell between the deceased and their family.

2. The Philosophical Meaning Embedded in the Process of Transferring the Corpse to *Pemau* in the Cremation Ceremony in Desa Adat Sanding

According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (1999:619), meaning refers to the interpretation or understanding given to a linguistic form, representing the speaker's or writer's intent. Philosophy, on the other hand, refers to a set of beliefs that serve as a guiding principle or standard in life, often encompassing behaviors and ultimate goals (Ismail, 2011:13). The execution of religious rituals cannot be separated from meaning, particularly philosophical meaning (*tattwa*), as religious teachings inherently contain the essence and significance of their practices. Philosophical teachings are closely tied to the beliefs held by a community, forming the foundation of religion itself (Ibnu Rusyd, 2020).

The cremation ritual, visualized through the process of transferring the corpse from *tumpang salu* to *pemau* in Desa Adat Sanding, represents a purification ceremony intended for the soul of the deceased. This process is believed to open a pathway for the deceased to attain their rightful place, symbolizing the transition of the soul from the physical body (*panca maha bhuta*) in the material world to the spiritual realm (interview with I Wayan Sudiasa, August 25, 2025).

Thus, the meaning embedded in the *nyalinan pema* ceremony performed by the community of Desa Adat Sanding reflects an act of *karma bhakti* (devotion) by the descendants of the deceased. It serves as a form of offering and purification of the physical body, which is bound by ignorance (*awidya*), to liberate it from the material world. It also signifies the purification from the material realm to the spiritual realm, ensuring that the soul of the deceased finds its proper place.

3. Positive and Negative Impacts of the Industrial Globalization Era on the *Nyalinan Pema* Tradition in the Cremation Process in Desa Adat Sanding

According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), meaning is the interpretation or intent behind speech or writing, while influence refers to the power or force exerted by something, be it a person, object, or other elements in nature, that affects its surroundings (Yosin, 2012:1). Effect, on the other hand, denotes changes or results, which can be either positive or negative. In broader terms, impact refers to the outcomes caused by something interacting forcefully with another.

The following outlines the impact of globalization on the *nyalinan pema* tradition practiced by the community in Desa Adat Sanding. Globalization is the process of strengthening worldwide connections, integrating various aspects of human life (Roland Robertson, 1997). Evidently, globalization has brought significant social changes, manifesting in the evolving practices within communities. In modern times, rituals such as *nyalinan* are often viewed as mere illusions or routine practices.

The positive impact of modernization on cremation practices can be observed in the preparation of offerings (*bebantenan*) and time efficiency. Historically, preparations for cremation ceremonies were labor-intensive and time-consuming. Nowadays, offerings can be purchased from specialized vendors, simplifying the process. Furthermore, the dissemination of information has become much faster due to digital communication technologies. Previously, messages were delivered door-to-door, which was inefficient. Today, information can be quickly shared via mobile phones.

However, the modernization brought by globalization also has negative implications. One major downside is the declining understanding of the rituals among the community. Modern life has fostered a desire for convenience, leading to disinterest among younger generations in learning about intricate traditional practices, including the preparation of offerings. The fast-paced work culture of the industrial era, where people labor like machines day and night, contributes to this neglect. Consequently, traditional skills, such as making offerings, are at risk of being lost.

Based on the above discussion, the industrial globalization era brings both positive and negative impacts. On the positive side, it enhances the efficiency of ceremony preparations and information dissemination. On the negative side, it fosters a sense of laziness among the younger generation and the community at large, as people prefer simple and ready-made solutions, thus neglecting the more complex aspects of traditional practices like offering preparations.

CONCLUSION

The tradition practiced by the Hindu community, particularly in Desa Adat Sanding, is a form of inheritance from their ancestors, carrying profound messages and meanings. The uniqueness of the tradition passed down by the ancestors of Desa Adat Sanding is the *nyalanan pema* procession in the cremation ceremony, which takes place precisely at midnight, 00:00 WITA. This timing symbolizes the transition of the soul from the material body to the spiritual one. The meaning embedded in this procession is a form of *karma bhakti* (devotion) expressed by the descendants of the deceased, serving as an offering for the purification of the human body, which is bound by ignorance (*awidya*), so it may be freed from the cycle of life. It also symbolizes the purification from the material world to the spiritual realm, ensuring that the soul of the deceased finds its rightful place.

Everything that is carried out certainly has impacts, both positive and negative. The positive impact observed in the cremation ceremony by the community of Desa Adat Sanding is the time efficiency and the ease of conducting the ritual. On the other hand, the negative impact is the laziness of individuals and the younger generation in learning to make offerings (*banten*), as they prefer simplicity without the complexity and intricacy involved.