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THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PATUS TRADITION WITHIN PITRA YADNYA RITUALS IN KEDIRI, TABANAN, BALI

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Abstract

This study examines the transformation of Patus, a traditional institution of mutual cooperation (gotong royong) in Kediri District, Tabanan, Bali, which provides material assistance for death ceremonies (Pitra Yadnya). The research is motivated by Patus's vital role in mitigating the substantial economic burden of large-scale ceremonies, a function currently challenged by modernization and monetization. To address this phenomenon, this study analyzes the forms, underlying causal factors, and socioeconomic implications of the transformation within the Patus tradition. A qualitative method with a phenomenological approach was employed to capture the lived experiences and perspectives of community members and ritual actors. The findings indicate a significant shift in Patus from traditional contributions based on goods and labor toward the dominance of cash donations. This change is driven by economic monetization, demands for time efficiency, and the philosophical adaptation of desa, kala, patra (place, time, condition). The implications are complex: while monetization enhances logistical efficiency, it potentially erodes communal bonds (menyama braya), reduces spiritual meaning to financial calculation, and threatens the transmission of traditional ritual knowledge. Ultimately, Patus reflects a cultural adaptation dilemma, balancing modern efficiency with the preservation of Bali's core communal values.

Keywords: *Patus, Pitra Yadnya, cultural transformation, monetization, Bali Patus, Pitra Yadnya,* cultural transformation, monetization, Bali.

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's rich socio-cultural heterogeneity is reflected in its enduring traditional practices of mutual cooperation (gotong royong). In Bali, this social cohesion is deeply embedded in customary rituals, particularly surrounding the life cycle. The event of death serves as a critical juncture that demands active communal participation at the *banjar* (neighborhood) level. In Kediri District, Tabanan Regency, this cohesion is manifested through *Patus*, a traditional ritual economy mechanism and informal social security system where community members provide collective material assistance to a bereaved family. *Patus* functions primarily to mitigate the heavy financial burden of death ceremonies (*Pitra Yadnya*), such as ngaben (cremation). Beyond its economic utility, the tradition operates as a concrete gift-exchange system that reinforces communal solidarity, empathy, and social responsibility within the local society.

However, rapid modernization, monetization, and shifting community mindsets are driving significant transformations within this practice. *Patus* is transitioning from traditional contributions of labor and agricultural products toward cash-based donations and modern commodities. While general literature widely recognizes the impact of globalization on Balinese rituals, previous studies have predominantly focused on the macro-level commercialization of tourism or the broad structural changes in customary institutions. There remains a distinct research gap regarding how micro-level, localized reciprocal mechanisms like *Patus* adapt to monetization, and how individual actors navigate these shifting economic obligations. Consequently, an in-depth investigation is required to analyze these changing aid types, contributor motivations, and the resulting socio-cultural implications, such as emerging social stratification.

This study addresses this gap through an ethnographic exploration of *Patus* within three customary villages in Kediri District: Banjar Anyar, Abiantuwung, and Kaba-Kaba. Academically, analyzing this shift offers valuable insights into how local communities adapt to contemporary economic pressures while maintaining cultural heritage. To untangle these complex dynamics, this research utilizes Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory to examine the dialectic between structural transformation and individual agency, alongside Rational Action Theory to understand the changing economic behavior of contributors. Based on this framework, this study addresses three central questions: 1) How have the forms of contribution in the *Patus* tradition changed over time? 2) Why has this transformation occurred? and 3) What are its socio-cultural and economic implications amidst progressive social change?

II. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to capture the deep, lived experiences of the community regarding the transformation of the *Patus* tradition. In line with the core principles of qualitative inquiry, this study serves as an inductive process where the researcher acts as the primary instrument to gather meaningful insights from a natural setting, prioritizing process over mere outcomes (Moleong, 2008; Sugiyono, 2019). Rather than relying on statistical quantification, this approach allows for a comprehensive, descriptive-interpretive exploration of how traditional social mechanisms adapt over time (Moleong, 2008).

The phenomenological framework specifically guides this study to explore the lived experiences of the local community and customary leaders in navigating the shifting

practices of *Patus* during the *Pitra Yadnya* ceremony. This approach allows the researcher to understand how these actors perceive and experience the transition from traditional goods or labor contributions to cash-based participation.

To anchor these conceptual frameworks into practice, this research was conducted in Kediri District, Tabanan Regency, Bali Province. This specific site was purposely selected as the research locus because Kediri represents an urbanized area in Tabanan that, despite its modern developmental shifts, still profoundly maintains and practices the *Patus* tradition. Data collection was carried out through observation, documentation of relevant records, and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure rich and relevant data, comprising key stakeholders including the Perbekel (Village Head), Bendesa Adat (Traditional Customary Leaders of each Desa Adat), and local community members.

The gathered qualitative data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which involves a continuous and cyclical process of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. To ensure the trustworthiness, validity, and scientific accountability of the findings, the analyzed data were cross-verified using source and technique triangulation with the designated informants.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Metamorphosis of the *Patus* Tradition in the *Pitra Yadnya* Ceremony from a Temporal Perspective

The *Patus* tradition, a customary system of communal mutual cooperation (gotong royong) that provides material and labor assistance for *Pitra Yadnya* (death ceremonies) in Bali, has undergone a significant transformation, shifting from traditional in-kind or material contributions to the dominance of cash donations. This structural shift reflects the broader socio-economic dynamics and rapid modernization within Balinese society. Conceptually, the original function of this tradition was deeply rooted in a subsistence economy and agrarian solidarity, acting as an effective social safety net. By alleviating logistical and economic burdens through direct contributions such as rice, firewood, or physical labor the practice intensively strengthened social cohesion and perpetuated traditional knowledge related to ritual procedures. However, temporal changes in contemporary Bali have altered the operational mechanism of this customary obligation.

This transition toward monetary giving is driven by a distinct interplay of three structural, social, and cultural dimensions.

1) From the structural (economic) dimension, Bali's transition toward the tourism and service sectors has accelerated monetization in nearly every aspect of rural-urban life. This economic shift has prompted the commodification of ritual services, such as hiring professional *juru banten* (offering makers) or catering services, which require liquid capital rather than raw agricultural goods. Field observations in Kediri District show that local markets now heavily supply pre-made ritual packages, altering how families prepare for ceremonies. Cash contributions offer greater cost and time efficiency, serving as a rational choice for the bereaved family to quickly purchase specific ceremonial necessities. As noted by the Perbekel (Village Head) of Kediri, "*Masyarakat sekarang lebih memilih praktisnya, kalau dikasi beras atau kayu bakar justru membingungkan keluarga yang berduka karena semua keperluan banten sekarang sudah dibeli instan dalam bentuk jadi*".
2) From the social (time and lifestyle) dimension, modernization and urbanization

in Kediri have limited individuals' leisure time. Cash donations have emerged as a highly practical solution, allowing community members to fulfill their customary duties (*ngayah*) without risking their formal work hours or monthly income. This shift accommodates the busy schedules of a semi-urban workforce. A local community member from Kediri highlighted this dilemma, stating, "*Saya bekerja di sektor swasta di kota, jadi sangat sulit untuk izin libur berhari-hari untuk ngayah di banjar. Memberikan uang patus menjadi jalan tengah agar saya tetap bisa berkontribusi tanpa kehilangan jam kerja*".

3) From the cultural (values and meaning) dimension, a collective shift in social functions has occurred, wherein the community grants legitimacy to monetary giving as the new norm. The cultural symbolism of *Patus* has thus moved from collective physical participation to collective financial support, demonstrating a resilient attempt at adaptation to keep the custom relevant in a changing world. As emphasized by a local Bendesa Adat, "*Tradisi ini tidak hilang, tapi bentuknya yang beradaptasi. Uang patus itu justru menjadi bukti bahwa krama desa masih peduli, hanya saja diwujudkan dalam nilai finansial untuk menyokong biaya upacara yang semakin tinggi*".

The manifestation of this transformation carries nuanced, dual-sided implications for the meaning and execution of the *Pitra Yadnya*. On one hand, the monetization of *Patus* offers vital flexibility and efficiency that align with the demands of modern life, ensuring broader participation from members who are geographically dispersed or bound by formal employment. On the other hand, it introduces risks regarding the erosion of organic communal values, as cash assistance involves less personal interaction and direct collective effort, potentially transforming active participation into an abstract financial transaction. Furthermore, the focus may pivot from spiritual *punia* (sincere offerings) to economic calculation, risking the loss of traditional ritual knowledge historically inherited through direct practice. Paradoxically, while cash Patus is intended to lighten burdens, fixed monetary rates standardized by certain *awig-awig* (customary regulations) can create subtle social pressure and highlight financial disparities among villagers. Ultimately, the evolution of *Patus* highlights the resilience of Balinese culture in balancing modern efficiency with essential values, requiring conscious community efforts to safeguard the spiritual essence of mutual cooperation across generations.

3.2 Transformation of the *Patus* Tradition in the *Pitra Yadnya* Ceremony

The transformation of the *Patus* tradition from material and labor-based mutual cooperation to cash donations in the *Pitra Yadnya* ceremony in Kediri, Tabanan, highlights a dynamic socio-cultural adaptation. This shift is driven by the interplay between modernization, the market economy, and flexible religious interpretations. Rather than representing a simple decline in cultural values, this change redefines communal solidarity and contemporary participation, offering both pragmatic solutions and socio-cultural adjustments within the ritual practice.

This monetization of *Patus* inevitably alters the landscape of communal solidarity. The traditional practice, which was deeply rooted in physical interaction and shared labor (*nguopin*), has expanded to include more abstract financial transactions. On one hand, this shift can create a more individualized sense of responsibility and reduce face-to-face gathering moments, which challenges the traditional expression of *menyama braya*. However, looking at it from an adaptive

perspective, cash assistance serves as a flexible mechanism that allows community members to maintain their social obligations despite the time constraints of modern urban lives. While the increased reliance on cash can introduce subtle financial pressures and reflect social stratification based on economic capacity, it also ensures that solidarity remains functional in a changing economic environment.

From an economic and material standpoint, cash *Patus* reshapes the consumption patterns of the organizing family. The transition naturally supports the commercialization of the ritual service sector such as professional *juru banten* and catering services aligning with the commodification frameworks observed by Widyastuti (2019) and Darmawan (2018). This shift from local, self-sufficient production to market-dependent vendors alters the traditional gotong royong-based economy and modifies how ritual knowledge is transmitted. Nevertheless, this market reliance is not merely a threat to local economic independence or the spiritual essence (*taksu*) of the tradition. Instead, it provides a vital logistical buffer for modern families, converting what used to be an intensive labor requirement into a manageable financial contribution, thereby preventing the total breakdown of ritual execution in semi-urban communities.

Technological development and innovation act as both a catalyst for and a constructive response to this monetization. The adoption of digital tools encourages structural innovation in managing ceremonial finances, fostering greater transparency and efficiency in recording donations (Wibowo & Handoko, 2021). Furthermore, it facilitates the rise of technology-based ritual services (Putra & Santosa, 2020) and digital communication platforms that streamline coordination. While these digital advancements reduce physical, face-to-face interactions, they simultaneously democratize participation, enabling diaspora or working community members to stay connected and contribute to the banjar activities transparently, mitigating potential financial mismanagement.

Ultimately, the resilience of the *Patus* tradition lies in its inherent capacity to evolve through the flexible interpretation of Hindu philosophy. This shift is deeply legitimized by the principle of *desa*, *kala*, *patra* (contextual adjustment based on place, time, and condition) (Windia, 2017), which recontextualizes *dharma* (duty) and *punia* (sincere offering) within a monetary era. Consequently, financial contribution is recognized as a legitimate form of dana punia, fulfilling both social and spiritual obligations. This philosophical flexibility serves as an essential cultural sustainability strategy. It ensures that the *Pitra Yadnya* ceremony remains viable amidst the high cost and fast pace of modern living, successfully balancing pragmatic efficiency with the preservation of sacred meanings and non-material solidarity.

3.3 Implications of the Transformation of the *Patus* Tradition Amidst Progressive Change

The transformation of the *Patus* tradition from a goods-and-labor-based system to cash donations during the *Pitra Yadnya* ceremony in Kediri District carries complex, layered implications. While this shift reflects a functional adaptation to modern urban pressures, it simultaneously reshapes the philosophical meaning, communal solidarity, and generational preservation of this collective tradition. Rather than representing a unilateral decline, this phenomenon operates as a dual-faceted reality: it challenges traditional spiritual depths while introducing pragmatic mechanisms that ensure the tradition's structural continuity.

Philosophically, the monetization of *Patus* presents a tension between the dilution of sacredness and the pragmatic preservation of ritual execution. On one hand, money as a neutral medium abstracts the concrete,

symbolic meaning of material *Patus*, which was historically tied to upakara (ritual paraphernalia) and purifikasi *atma* (soul purification). Informants from the local community noted that the shift sometimes alters the psychological landscape of participation, changing the focus from *punia* (sincere, devotional offerings) to financial calculation. This risks turning active participants into passive financial donors (Darmawan, 2018). On the other hand, customary leaders (Bendesa Adat) emphasize that this shift is not inherently devoid of spirituality. Viewed through the lens of *desa kala patra* (contextual flexibility of place, time, and circumstance), cash *Patus* is reinterpreted as a modern manifestation of *punia* an adaptive sacrifice that accommodates the time constraints of an urbanized workforce, ensuring that the Pitra Yadnya can still be held properly.

Practically, cash *Patus* undeniably enhances logistical efficiency and ease, offering vital flexibility for modern families and diaspora members who cannot afford days of physical labor. However, this efficiency inherently accelerates the professionalization of ritual services, reducing direct collective involvement in preparing the ceremony (Windia, 2017). Field observations in Kediri indicate that while purchasing ready-made ritual components streamlines the process, it introduces a reliance on commercial market forces. Consequently, the spiritual quality of the event risks being overshadowed by economic calculations and prestige-driven displays (Widyastuti, 2019). Yet, this pragmatic shift also prevents the total abandonment of the tradition, serving as a compromise that allows *Patus* to remain relevant in a fast-paced economy.

Socio-culturally, the monetization of *Patus* alters the dynamics of *menyama braya* (communal brotherhood). Traditional solidarity, once forged through shared physical labor, is transitioning into a new form of mediated solidarity. While the reduction of physical interaction can weaken immediate communal intimacy (Supartini, 2017), field interviews with Perbekel and community members reveal that cash *Patus* also acts as a social equalizer in urban settings. It allows individuals with rigid formal work schedules to maintain their structural inclusion and fulfill their customary obligations within the banjar without facing social exclusion. Nevertheless, this transition does introduce new social pressures, as the visibility of cash values can inadvertently create subtle social competition and highlight economic disparities within the community.

Finally, the most critical implication concerns cultural education and the transmission of traditional knowledge. The convenience of commercialized ritual services reduces empirical learning opportunities for the younger generation to master complex cultural skills, such as creating *banten* or processing ritual materials (Wirawan, 2016). This creates a structural gap in skill inheritance, threatening the long-term authenticity of the practice. However, this crisis has also prompted proactive institutional responses. In several desa adat within Kediri, customary leaders are actively counteracting this gap by organizing community-led workshops and integrating traditional craftsmanship into local educational frameworks. Ultimately, cash *Patus* creates a constructive dilemma: it serves as a highly functional, adaptive shield that protects the continuity of *Pitra Yadnya* in the modern era, while constantly challenging Balinese society to intentionally safeguard the core communal spirit that anchors it.

IV. CONCLUSION

The *Patus* tradition in Kediri, Tabanan, Bali, originally a communal mutual cooperation system based on the contribution of goods, materials, and labor to ease the burden of the *Pitra Yadnya* ceremony, has transformed into a system dominated by cash donations. Driven by modernization, the monetization of life

particularly within the tourism-driven economy and increasingly individualistic lifestyles, this shift is often legitimized by the inherent flexibility of Hindu teachings through the principle of *desa*, *kala*, *patra* (place, time, condition). Far from being a mere technical adaptation, this transformation represents a fundamental reinterpretation of Hindu theological praxis in the context of modernity, where traditional customs are systematically renegotiated to fit contemporary socio-economic realities.

Rather than a neutral evolution, this study argues that the monetization of *Patus* serves as a double-edged sword that ultimately functions as a necessary yet highly critical adaptation. While it offers undeniable pragmatic efficiency and logistical ease that aligns with modern occupational demands, it carries profound socio-religious risks. This shift threatens to erode genuine communal bonds (*menyama braya*) by reducing organic solidarity into abstract financial transactions, and it undermines spiritual sacredness by shifting the psychological focus from *punia* (devotional sincerity) to calculated economic exchange.

Most seriously, this monetization hinders the intergenerational transmission of traditional ritual knowledge. This disruption constitutes the most severe threat to cultural sustainability because when ritual components are simply purchased rather than communally created (*ngayah*), the younger generation loses the lived, practical space required to learn and inherit the complex esoteric meanings of Balinese rituals. Consequently, the transformation of *Patus* places the Balinese community before a crucial existential challenge: it demands a conscious, careful reconstruction of customary practices to ensure that the pragmatic efficiency of modernity does not entirely eclipse the spiritual essence, communal values, and cultural authenticity that form the bedrock of the *Pitra Yadnya* tradition.

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