

# Prophetic Feminist Romantism In The Tradition Of *Saba Munama* In Pedawa Village

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**Abstract.** The term feminist is often associated with contemporary phenomena that are in line with current trends with various implications. In addition, the term feminist is only more directed at modern and urban women. However, the concept of feminism is also stored in religious traditions in traditional societies known as prophetic feminism, namely efforts to see women's movements through the spring of divinity. The objectives of this research are: 1) to describe the denotative and connotative meanings of the *Saba Munama* ceremony; 2) to analyze the content of prophetic feminism in the *Saba Munama* ceremony. Qualitative method was used to formulate research objectives with the following steps: determining informants, determining primary and secondary data sources; and qualitative data analysis. Through the use of the concept of tradition, symbols and the concept of prophetic feminism, the following findings can be obtained: the Pedawa community gives denotative and connotative meanings to the implementation of the *Saba Munama* ceremony. Denotatively, this ceremony is interpreted as a ceremony whose implementation is the responsibility of the *deha*/single women and is carried out exactly at midnight and as an opening ceremony for the next *saba* ceremony. In a connotative sense, it can mean human submission to supernatural things, glorification of women and a symbol of coming out of darkness to a new life. The prophetic feminist content in *Saba Munama* is filled with the concepts of humanistic; liberation and transcendence. The conclusion of the research on the *Saba Munama* ritual reinforces that the prophetic feminist dimension legitimizes the urgency of the ritual as a reference for freeing humans from injustice.

**Keywords:** *Saba Munama*; Prophetic Feminism; Submission; Humanistic

## 1 Introduction

Balinese society is a society that has long been known as a carrier of a very strong patriarchal culture [1]. Patriarchy can give rise to the dominance of one over another [2]. This dominance is also seen in the division of roles between men and women which gives rise to the idea of patriarchy. Lerner (1986) defines patriarchy as a manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women in society [3]. Various cases in Bali related to the portrait of gender inequality can still be found, some of which are published in the mass media are: 1) the prohibition of female MCs when attended by the Governor of Bali[4]; 2) 185 women and children experienced violence in 9 months [5]; 3) Bali Police Handle 206 cases of violence against children and women throughout 2022 [6].

The portrait of gender inequality that still imprison the socio-cultural life of Balinese society does not match the traces of artifacts that still exist in the lives of traditional communities in Bali. So far, the ritual activities carried out by the Balinese people have been interpreted more as an obligation to carry out the teachings of their religion, without exploring the hidden

meaning behind the glitter of the ritual ceremony. In fact, the ancient Balinese people had artifacts in their rituals. The traditional society in Bali that still leaves traces of cultural artifacts related to feminist issues is the Bali Aga/Ancient Balinese society. The romanticism of the life of the Bali Aga society is evident from the density of rituals that are carried out routinely and continuously even without question, so that ritual activities stop at the understanding of the community's obedience to the beliefs of their ancestors. In fact, the *Saba Munama* Ceremony carried out by the Pedawa community has its own appeal considering that this ceremony may only be carried out by the *deha*/girls as an opening for a series of subsequent ritual ceremonies called *Lelintin Nemugelang*. This is interesting in relation to the study of prophetic feminism initiated by Kuntowijoyo [7]. The urgency of the study can enrich references to the ways in which traditional societies glorify women. This is related to opening up space for writing post-traditional feminism which will reveal the existence of traditional women who are categorized as subaltern [8]. Feminist practices carried out by traditional societies need space for explanation. The explanatory space of feminist studies must continue to be opened to break the fear and allergy to feminist discourse, considering that feminism can be used as a tool to see women's problems more critically [9]. The interesting questions are: 1) What meanings emerge from the implementation of the *Saba Munama* ritual?; 2) What prophetic feminist conceptions are found in the *Saba Munama* ritual in Pedawa Village?

Several relevant studies have actually been conducted, including: (1) Sex, Religion: A Review of Review of Temporary Marriages in Cisarua and Jakarta [10]. This article focuses on the position of women in the midst of culture and religion. Their study is relevant to the way prophetic feminists view the *saba munama* ritual, which places the issue of women and religion in a critical study that religion can be used as a tool of legitimacy in achieving human goals; (2) The Value of Prophetic Feminism in the Novel Kota Kaum Cadar by Zoe Ferraris, which reveals prophetic values and both position religion as a tool to see the equality of women and men. The study of the novel moves in the realm of text, while this study is empirical research based on real activities that reveal women's religious experiences [11]; (3) Prophetic Values in Two Song Lyrics by Rhoma Irama Study of the Song Lyrics "Akhlak" and "Corona Virus". Studies that use songs as objects of study both use a sociological perspective on feminism, the difference lies in the object of study which focuses on song lyrics, but this research's object lies in empirical activities and symbols [12].

The concern of academics in paying attention to the importance of raising the potential of prophetic feminism as a material for raising awareness that religious teachings will also determine the equality of women and men. The values contained in religious teachings are implemented in various rituals. Tradition is the hereditary habits of a group of people based on the cultural values of the community concerned. Tradition is not only related to the past in its habits, but also its relationship to values, norms, identity, and culture. The legacy of the past can be in the form of values, social norms, behavioral patterns, and customs as a manifestation of various aspects of life [14]. In the implementation of tradition, there will be an ideological content that becomes the basis of the beliefs of the supporting community. According to Karl Marx, ideology is a teaching that explains a situation, especially the power structure, in such a way that people consider it legitimate. Ideology serves the interests of the ruling class because

it gives legitimacy to a situation that actually has no legitimacy [15]. Ideology is wrapped through language that is implemented through poetry, dance or improving the quality of life [16]. Symbols are an important aspect that allows people to act in ways that are typical of humans. Because of symbols, humans "do not respond passively to realities that impose themselves, but actively recreate the world in which they play a role" [17].

The use of symbols has actually been present in the ancient traditions of Indonesian society. According to Durkheim, the symbol appears in totemism worship which is none other than worship of society itself [18]. The main purpose of totemism is to express the interconnectedness of things, the very complex relationships that bind one person to another within the clan, the clan's connection to the physical world, and finally its connection to various natural phenomena.

In the practice of totemism, the form of worship is divided into two forms, negative and positive and the third form is called "piacular". The position of the third form is in the area of the first form of worship. The main task of negative worship is to keep the Sacred separate from the Profane. The first form of worship contains prohibitions or taboos. This can be in the form of a place, day or sacred object. While positive worship is the implementation of the ritual and worship in the form of piacular is worship held to maintain the Sacred from darkness - events of grief, disaster, fear and uncertainty. Hence, the piacular ritual shows the two sides of the Sacred which symbolize darkness as well as light and goodness.

The totemism belief system is all the elements that underlie the beliefs of society and are related to the supernatural powers believed in by its people. Belief is a system of belief or something that is believed to exist or be true by a group of people who stand on a foundation that explains sacred stories, which are related to the past [19]. The religious ceremony system specifically contains emotional aspects that are of special concern to anthropologists, namely: The first aspect is related to sacred places. The second aspect is the aspect concerning worship times. The third aspect is about the objects used in the ceremony. The fourth aspect is the aspect that deals with the perpetrators of the religious ceremony. The ceremony itself also has many elements, namely: 1) Offering; 2) Sacrificing; 3) Praying; 4) Eating together food that has been purified with prayer; 5) Dancing sacred dances; 6) Singing sacred songs; 7) Praying or parading; 8) Playing sacred drama art; 9) Fasting; 10) Asceticism; 11) Meditation.

In the context of understanding the belief system of a society, it is related to Talcott Parson's structural functional theory. The basic assumption of the structural functionalism theory is that "every structure in a social system also applies functionally to others [20]. On the other hand, if it is not functional, the structure will not exist or will disappear by itself. The belief system in a society is seen as having a function so that its continuity is maintained. In this regard, according to Parson, there are four (4) functional imperatives that are needed or are characteristic of the entire system - adaptation (A/adaptation), (G/goal attainment), (I/integration) and (L/latency) or pattern maintenance [21]. Together, these four functional imperatives are called the AGIL scheme. In order to survive, the system must carry out these four functions.

Prophetic feminism in the context of structural functional theory contained in ritual activities also fulfills the AGIL scheme. The term prophetic refers to the idea of Kuntowijoyo who has tried to explore new treasures in Islamic social science to compete with western social science [22]. This theory is a form of interpretation of the values of freedom that are excavated

from the springs of divinity, Islam, and prophecy. Prophetic feminism is an alternative movement that builds women's awareness of their rights, roles, functions, and responsibilities as individuals and as social beings who must return to the context of religion so as not to be trapped in the deceptions of materialism, capitalism, and atheism that originate from the West which tend to be secular. Prophetic feminism then becomes a surgical tool that is considered suitable to be able to raise women's equality in terms of their roles, functions, and rights based on religious teachings.

## 2 Method

This research relies on qualitative methods in finding research questions. The steps taken are: 1) determining the research subject; 2) determining the data source; 3) data collection techniques and 4) data analysis. The subjects were determined purposively by considering the availability of data owned by the subject. The data source is in the form of primary data from informants, while secondary data is relied on from journals, folklore, and *awig-awig* (traditional customary law and regulations). Data were obtained through observation interviews and documentation. The informants interviewed amounted to 8 people consisting of elements of indigenous community leaders, *deha* heads, *deha* members and cadets. Data analysis was carried out descriptively qualitatively through the preparation of data reduction, data display and drawing conclusions. In the data analysis process, the triangulation step of data sources and methods is still carried out to maintain data validity.

## 3 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Meaning of *Saba Munama* (SM)

The Pedawa community knows a number of *saba* ceremonies that are still carried out according to the principle of *lelintihan nemugelang*, which means that the *dewa yadnya* ceremony is carried out using certain sequences or levels of ceremonies. Connecting like a circular bracelet. For example, the ceremony starts from the first sequence and so on until the last sequence, after that it returns to the first sequence and so on. There are 5 *Saba* ceremonies that are categorized as major ceremonies in Pedawa, namely: 1) *Saba Ngelemekin*. This is the first ceremony accompanied by *Melis* activities to the Labuan Aji coast (beach) and also to Bengkala village. In this *Saba*, the status of *deha* and *teruna* in the traditional village will be confirmed, accompanied by the obligation to *ngaturang ayah* (offering energy) at the temple when there is a religious ceremony; 2) *Saba Malunin*. This ceremony is considered the most sacred by offering *Banten Balun* as the main means in carrying out the ceremony. In its implementation, it involves *krama ngarep* (foremost, main) which is recorded in *tata lungguh* and will be held 4 times in a period of 5 years using the village temple as the main center of *saba* activities; 3). *Saba Ngujabinih*. This ceremony is a form of worship to Dewi Sri which will be held in the village temple, where later each *krama desa* will hand over at least one bundle of *gaga rice* which will be stored in the village barn (*jineng*) which will then be presented as offerings during *saba*; 4). *Saba Namdam*. This *saba* is also held in the village temple as a form of gratitude for all manifestations that have been bestowed on the *krama desa* in carrying out life; 5) *Saba Nyenukin*. This ceremony is held at Telaga Waja Temple and Taman Temple and is the last ceremony in the *saba* series, which is interpreted as a form of respect for the gods/ancestors.

Various *saba* ceremonies carried out by the Pedawa community are still maintained to this day, because they believe that their consistent implementation will provide happiness and

prosperity. In this regard, Mr. Sukrata as an elder of the Pedawa indigenous community said: "It once happened, our community did not carry out SM, as a result there were many problems in our community, and we believe that ignoring the implementation of the ceremony will result in disaster". In order for the implementation of *saba* to be maintained, the traditional elders took steps to include the *saba* ritual in the *awig-awig* of the traditional village and it was written in *pawos* 34 page 42 and was ratified on October 9, 2019 (Sukrata, October 2024). The belief in the importance of implementing the *saba* ceremony has been mythologized as an exclusive myth, namely a truth that is upheld and related to the gods. In general, myths are often associated with something ancient, unreasonable, but are still widely believed by the community. This is in line with Mircea Eliade's statement that myths can be said to be metaphysical concepts of the ancient world to describe something in everyday life. The function of myth is equivalent to the function of symbols, rites, or utterances, which indicate awareness of a certain situation in the cosmos and result in a certain metaphysical attitude [23]. The events experienced by the Pedawa community related to the *Saba* ceremony can be interpreted as functioning as an effective strategy to strengthen the religious beliefs of its people. The same thing also applies to maintaining the implementation of SM, as the initial and final milestone of the implementation of a series of the other five *Saba* ceremonies. So, as an initial milestone, *Saba Munama* is interpreted as the opening and closing *Saba* for the implementation of other *Saba*. In its position as the opening and closing, the following denotative and connotative meanings can be found.

Table 1. Denotative and Connotative Meanings of *Saba Munama*

No	Denotative	Connotative
1	The implementation of SM is the initial and final ceremony (opening and closing) of a series of the other five <i>saba</i> in the <i>lelintih nemugelang</i> circle	Submission of society to ancestors
2	The subjects involved are only the <i>deha</i> of Pedawa village	The restoration of single women and the vessel of social control
3	When the implementation is carried out at midnight at the Village Temple, only by the <i>Deha</i> , while the <i>Teruna</i> are prohibited from following the procession	The silence of the night road that opens a new chapter of life

Data Source: Wayan Sukrata; Wayan Sadyana, August 2024

Young women in Pedawa Village have a certain attitude towards the implementation of SM. In general, young women in Pedawa welcome every arrival of *saba* with joy. Joy is interpreted as the emergence of a romantic nuance that makes them aware of the ownership of "*taksu*"/magical religious power over the beliefs of their ancestors. This power of *taksu* is what "forces" them to return (for example from abroad for school reasons) to Pedawa to *ngaturang ayah* (offering their energy) when the *saba* ceremony arrives. They feel that there is a process of internalization of values that makes them aware of their identity as Pedawa women who are bound by the religious traditions of their ancestors who hold a magical religious side. The confession of *deha* that represents the views of young Pedawa women in general can be seen in the following views.

*"I once asked my friends who had become deha, such as Kadek Uriantini; Ni Putu Dita Juni Aryani and Luh Devi, usually when there is a saba ceremony they are happy because they can gather with their peers, they said there is a special pleasure, they feel called to ngayah, she said. Then from Mega's own point of view, through this saba activity, it can also be used as a place to learn, especially for the daa and teruna who usually never know how to make canang, make banten and other ceremonial equipment at home, in this saba they know because whether we like it or not, when we do ngayah, we will definitely be involved in activities such as mejejaitan, making penjor, and other religious activities. At the same time, it can be a medium for socialization between people who previously never left the house and rarely communicated, but when they are at the temple during saba, they will definitely interact. There is also no social stratification between deha or teruna, for example in terms of education or economic ability when they are in the pura ngayah they will all be the same regardless of their social status, if they have to work then they will work according to their respective duties." (Mega Aulia, 23 years old)*

These obligations and prohibitions serve as reinforcements for the religious meaning of the community regarding their ancestral heritage. Their obedience in maintaining various myths as a tool for their religious actions. In this regard, it is relevant to use Durkheim's claim which defines religion as a belief and practice that unites members in a moral community [24]. Whatever type of belief and practice is not questioned, no matter where it comes from. This is how to see religion inwardly. From Durkheim's perspective (1965), collectivity is fostered through rituals, and religion is made a common affair. The survival of religion and belief in the Pedawa community in the form of actions in the Saba ceremony, it is also relevant to use Weber's thinking who argues that there is no human society without religion. If society wants to survive for a long time, there must be a God to worship [25]. Hence, religion influences the sustainability of society. The function of the Saba ceremony for the Pedawa community is closely related to the function of religion which helps humans face uncertainty, inability, scarcity in their lives and helps humans answer fundamental questions [26].

The main position held by *deha* denotatively in its implementation creates a romantic side that also creates pride when given the trust to be the main mission bearer. The peak of its implementation is carried out exactly at midnight, without electric lighting, only relying on *damar* (traditional lighting tools). The feeling acknowledged by the Chairman of *Deha* is as follows.

*"What I feel is happy, there is also a feeling of pride because only Deha can make the way for Ngaben, and can also open the way for to being able to pray in the temple after Ngaben. There are quite a lot of equipments for this ceremony that has to be arranged, such as jaje kukus, jaje iwel, taluh bebek, undis, don waluh, don biyu" (Luh Suartiningsih, 35 years old).*

The busy preparation, followed by a dim atmosphere, relying only on lighting tools from resin, the *deha* accompanied by *lingsir* (old) women became proof of the submission of Pedawa women to the beliefs of their ancestors. The following is documentation of activities from a series of SM ceremonies.



Figure 1. Preparation for *Saba Munama* Ceremony in Pura Desa Pedawa  
Source: Luh Suartiningsih, September 2024

As the main opening for the continuation of the next *Saba* ceremony in Pedawa which is entrusted to the *deha* - unmarried teenagers, it is a sign that there is an act of glorification of women based on ancient beliefs that place women as symbols of fertility. Traces of ancient worship in the village of Pedawa can also be drawn through the existence of the *Pelinggih Ida Bhatara Pengijeng* which represents the worship of the goddess of fertility, whose original name should not be mentioned (Sukarta, 70 years old). The term *pengijeng* refers to the meaning of the guardian of life. The *pelinggih* is placed in the Pedawa Village Temple.



Figure 2. *Pelinggih Ida Bhatara Pengijeng* at Pedawa Village Temple  
Source: Wayan Sukrata, August, 2024

The placement of the *Deha* in the *Saba Munama* ceremony which is centered at the Village Temple can be interpreted as an act of respect for women who are given the position of opening the way in the implementation of the following *saba*.

### 3.2 Concepts of Prophetic Feminism in *Saba Munama* (SM)

Prophetic feminism is a feminist concept that makes prophetic nature the main reference in understanding the existence of relations between women and men in socio-cultural life. There are three basic principles in understanding prophetic feminism, namely humanism, liberation and transcendence. In the concept of humanism, there is a desire to humanize humans with the basic values of loving, caring and sharing; liberation contains the meaning of liberation from a system that dominates the upper class over the lower class; transcendence contains an effort to give meaning to every action taken [27]. The SM ceremony carried out by the Pedawa community contains the following prophetic feminist concepts.

### **3.3 Humanism Concept**

In general, the concept of humanism is interpreted as an understanding that places humans as the main object. The term human is interpreted as male and female. In the SM ceremony, the discovery of the concept of humanism must be associated with the patriarchal culture adopted by Balinese society. Patriarchal culture is a culture or social condition that places men in a superior position compared to women. There are several impacts that can be caused by the implementation of patriarchal culture, namely, marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence and double burdens [28]. In the implementation of SM, the patriarchal culture was apparently dropped because of the placement of single women/deha as humans who were not positioned as marginalized, free from stereotypes, without violence or pressure. Single women have space for self-actualization according to their skills in preparing the needs of the ceremony with the spirit of offerings to the gods and ancestors. In the context of the division of tasks to carry out the ritual, it is inevitable that there is a "glorification" of the role of women in SM, because from preparation to implementation it is entirely the responsibility of women. Even the offerings of the ceremony are intended for the Goddess who resides in the *Pengijeng* shrine. Furthermore, SM is interpreted as an opening for the implementation of the next Saba ceremony. This opening task is interpreted as the existence of equality between women and men in carrying out customary and religious duties in the life of the Pedawa community (Sukrata, 70 years old). It was also emphasized by Sadnyana (40 years old) that "there is glorification" of the position of women in maintaining the Pedawa taksu. The Pedawa people's behavior is very protective of the messages that have been passed down by our ancestors, and we believe that all of these messages are aimed at maintaining the harmony of the Pedawa community. Recognition of the existence of women in SM is the basis for understanding the existence of humanism elements. The humanistic side of the concept of humanism in SM lies in providing a place for women to channel their potential which consists of natural instincts (recognized, development of interests and talents) and divine instincts (the urge to worship, respect others, and love peace).

### **3.4 Liberation Concept**

The freedom that is seen in the SM ceremony is a freedom that is humane in character. Although in SM women are given full responsibility in SM, and men are even prohibited from attending the ceremony, this is only interpreted as a duty and responsibility towards ancestors, not as a medium to compete and seize the power and authority held by Pedawa men. It is acknowledged that the responsibility to maintain the village spiritually is still believed to be the duty of women together with men. This is evident from the existence of the *sangkep cane* tradition, namely the tradition of a joint meeting between men and women at the Pedawa Village Temple Hall which aims to evaluate the implementation of the SM ceremony and make



decisions related to the next *saba* ceremony.

In the SM ceremony, every single woman has the same opportunity to be involved in it regardless of her socio-economic status. Both have the opportunity to learn to strengthen the identity of pedagogy through the preparation of various necessary ceremonial facilities. In addition, responsibility is also carried out together. The expression of each individual's freedom is given space in SM. Single women channel their joy in participating in SM without any pressure from other parties. The knowledge that women have in preparing the ceremony is a form of authority without any interference from men. The authority of Pedawa women in SM is evident from the rules respected by the community regarding the prohibition for men to witness women's activities during the ceremony. According to Luh Suartingsih's confession as the head of the *deha*, when Wayan Sadnyana was found to be secretly "peeking" at SM activities in the middle of the night, he experienced an incident that was difficult to explain, and finally received a stern reprimand from the traditional elders.

### **3.5 Transcendent Concept**

The concept of spirituality is inherent in the term transcendence which is related to spiritual matters. The prophetic feminist content in SM related to the concept of transcendence is when the SM ceremony is interpreted as a space for self-growth that encourages individuals to understand the values of honesty, patience, kindness and empathy. The transcendent element in SM is also associated with conditions that teach individuals to connect with something greater than themselves. The selection of a critical time (midnight) is also associated with a time full of religious magical atmosphere and at the same time it is recognized that there is a vibration that leads humans to a situation of submission to the power of the Almighty. It is also believed that the midnight situation will lead to the inner peace needed by every human being to practice mental and emotional health. The silence of the night helps Pedawa women practice mind meditation and self-reflection when all SM participants pray together. The midnight atmosphere, in a dim atmosphere, is intended to open up awareness that humans are born from the darkness of the mother's womb (mother earth) and are born to welcome a new life. Connotatively, the SM ceremony can be interpreted as the beginning that opens a new life and is strengthened through the next *saba* procession to achieve the perfection of life for the Pedawa community. Transcendent values in religious life are needed for two interests, namely the interests of the individual and society. In the context of the individual, religion is a path to self-purification, a means of purifying the soul that will provide guidelines for the perfection of life. For society, religion is an important means of social order and norms to form a social system [29].

## **4 Conclusion**

The concept of romanticism in the Saba Munama religious tradition is felt by the *deha*/single women in the form of religious spirit that is carried out with joy and feels closer to the traditions of their ancestors. The meaning of society towards its implementation can be seen from the denotative and connotative meanings. Denotatively, *Saba Munama* is more interpreted as an activity that is centered on *deha*, carried out exactly at midnight with limited lighting and as an opening ceremony for the implementation of the next *saba*. While connotatively it can be interpreted as human submission to supernatural things; glorification of women and a symbol of coming out of darkness to a new life. The prophetic feminist content in Saba Munama is filled with concepts of humanistic; liberation and transcendence. The findings of this research will reinforce the importance of exploring the meaning behind rituals as a material for designing

equal relations between women and men in the lives of indigenous communities.

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