

# The Influence of Megalithic Tradition on the Religious System in the Bali Aga Community, Pedawa Village, Buleleng

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of the megalithic tradition on the religious system in the Balinese Aga community, Pedawa Village, Buleleng. This study uses a qualitative approach with critical ethnographic analysis. The research was carried out through data collection by interview, observation, and document study, then triangulated the data. The final stage of the study was carried out with Mile and Huberman's interactive analysis. The results showed that the megalithic tradition still exists in the religious system of the Pedawa people. The influence of megalithic tradition can be seen in three aspects, namely ideas, cultural activities, and artifacts. The idea of the megalithic tradition resembles respect for ancestral spirits. It is practiced in various rituals related to respecting God, ancestors, and nature in the form of *sabha*. The cultural heritage artifacts influenced by megalithic nuances can be seen in the presence of sarcophagi, *taulan*, *gaingan*, and *umah taksu*, namely a temple building in the form of a pile of stones. All of them are still alive and harmoniously characterize the religious system of the Balinese Aga Pedawa community, Buleleng.

**Keywords:** *megalithic, religious system, Bali Aga, Pedawa*

## 1. Introduction

Culture is a continuous process from one era to another that continues to experience changes in meaning, form, and packaging. This phenomenon can be seen from three aspects of culture, namely, as a system of ideas, social systems, and objects or artifacts [1]. Culture in the form of ideas can be in the form of thoughts, ideologies, and local knowledge systems, which are the philosophical basis for why a group of people or communities carry out cultural activities. Furthermore, culture in the form of a social system is a social activity that develops in the community. One example is the existence of customs. The following form is the form of relics of objects that are evidence of that culture, such as mosques, temples, houses, etc. These three forms of culture are characteristic of every era and known as the spirit of the era or zeitgeist. The culture then became a cultural bond of a particular era known as the gebundenheit culture.

The same thing happened in the context of the Indonesian state, especially in Bali. The results of Ardika's study of sarcophagi in Bali explained that Balinese people also experienced

a challenging period, one of which was the development of the pre-literacy period with the discovery of sarcophagi in several places in Bali [2]. Many archaeological remains show the pre-literate culture in Bali, such as in Kintamani, Tejakula, Tigawasa, and various other places [3]–[5]. These discoveries are proof that Balinese cultural life has existed for a very long time. These various cultures then give color to the life of the Balinese people, one of which is in the aspect of the belief system. The belief system is related to the belief system in Bali, which adheres to Hinduism in general. However, in practice, Hinduism in Bali has a uniqueness; namely, it is practiced with Balinese customs and culture. This unique implementation then gives a character to the practice of Hinduism in Bali. Furthermore, if studied in more detail, Hinduism in Bali also has a long history with the arrival of various figures carrying Hindu teachings from the arrival of Mpu Markandeya, then Mpu Kuturan, and Dang Hyang Nirartha [6]. The presence of figures who brought the teachings of Hinduism to Bali was enough to influence the wider community. This condition then causes in Bali there are the terms Bali Mula, Bali Aga, and Bali Majapahit community groups [7].

The Bali Mula people are the original Balinese people who have an ancient culture and have settled historically in Bali, as seen by the remains of the Gilimanuk settlement site [8]. Then the Bali Aga is a group of people who ideologically see themselves as a descendant of Markandeya [9]. Bali Majapahit is a Balinese people who get influenced by Majapahit ideologically. However, there are also community groups that maintain traditions from pre-religion to the present, one of which is the village of Pedawa, which is a Balinese Aga community group in Buleleng-Bali. The pre-religious belief system in this village is still solid, with the remains of sarcophagi in several places, even one of the sarcophagi is used as a sacred object. Another condition is the existence of a religious system such as prayer, which is not the same as the plains of Bali. There are also prayer facilities made of stone called *taulan*, *gaingan*, and *umah taksu*. The existence of objects in the Pedawa village religious system is a continuation of megalithic culture. This condition is interesting to study further how the megalithic religious system still influences religious practices in Pedawa village.

## 2. Method

This research is descriptive qualitative research using the theory of Koentjaraningrat's religious system. Collecting data through in-depth interviews, observations, and document studies. The resource persons are the village head and village leaders who know the existence of megalithic objects and their ideology's influence on the Pedawa community's religious system. Then the process of collecting data through observation by looking at several sarcophagi in Pedawa village. Further data also uses documents explaining the megalithic culture in Bali and Pedawa in particular. After the data is collected, then triangulate the methods and data sources. The next step is to analyze using interactive analysis [10]. After going through the analysis process, the data obtained is holistic data about the traces of the influence of the megalithic tradition on the religious system in Pedawa village.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Sarcophagus, *Taulan, Gaingan, Umah Taksu* as Evidence of Megalithic Culture in Pedawa Village

Pedawa Village is located in Buleleng Regency, which is in the north of Bali. North Bali, as found by Ardika, is very rich in archaeological findings [2]. Other archaeological finds are also found in places in Buleleng, such as Pacung, Sembiran, Tigawasa, Tanjungser, and most recently, in the village of Pedawa. The existence of a sarcophagus in a location can be the basis that in that place once lived or developed a society with megalithic culture. The sarcophagus is one of the results of megalithic culture along with menhirs, waruga, dolmen, and others [11],[12]. The existence of these objects in an area can be evidence that the area is the location of the civilization of humans supporting megalithic life. The megalithic era was viewed from 2000-2500 BC [13]. Especially in Bali, the existing sarcophagus has an exceptional character and character known as type A with the general characteristic of being small, between 80-148 cm, and has protrusions in its narrow areas. In the type A sarcophagus, the bodies are buried laterally folded (with the body tilted to the side) or with the body folded dorsally (with the back down). In addition, there are also types B and C [14].

The sarcophagus found in Pedawa village is classified as type A according to the character of the sarcophagus mentioned above. However, the identification and more detailed description of the sarcophagus has yet to be discovered in detail because it requires further research. The exciting thing related to the existence of sarcophagi in Pedawa village is that there were seven initial findings with various conditions, from intact to incomplete fragments. The sarcophagi in Pedawa village are located in several places scattered in Pedawa village, namely in the areas of Ingsakan, Banjar Asah, Lebahlinggah, and Tampug. The following are the remains of sarcophagi in Ingsakan and Banjar Asah.



Figure 1: Sarcophagi in Ingsakan and Banjar Asah, Pedawa Village

Source: Purnawibawa, 2022

The sarcophagi in Pedawa Village are generally in the gardens of the villagers. However, one sarcophagus is in the family temple of Pedawa village and cannot be accessed arbitrarily. However, this sarcophagus is generally accessible to the general public. Apart from being in the form of a sarcophagus, other megalithic cultures also exist in the village of Pedawa, namely the use of stone facilities in religious rituals known as *taulan*, *gainan*, and *umah taksu*. *Taulan* is a term for small stones that are used as symbols of Ida (God in religion), which is equated with Arca. *Taulan* in Pedawa village is in every big temple in Pedawa village. There are two types of *taulan* which are round and flat, which are similar to the yoni phallus. Then there is also *umah taksu* which is shaped like a stacked stone which is similar to punden terraces in some areas of Pedawa village. Then there is the *umah taulan* which is located on the river close to Yeh Klasem in the Pedawa Village area. *Umah taksu*, for the Pedawa community, is seen as a village guard or spiritual center that protects the existence of villagers around the *umah taksu*. However, there is a shift now that the *taksu* house has been given a place in the form of the Saka Pat Sari building. The next stone object is *Gaingan*, a stacked stone located at the Munduk Madeg Temple in Pedawa village. These stones are also represented as a representation of companions or followers of the power of God who resides in the temple.

This is by the function of megalithic objects, which have a religious dimension of the supporting community [15]. The existence of megalithic objects, as mentioned above, is clear evidence that Pedawa Village has gone through a long historical process from the pre-literacy era to the present. The existence of these objects is not only historical evidence but also has implications for religious practices in Pedawa village.

### **3.2 The Practice of the Megalithic Religious System in the Pedawa Community**

The religious system, as described by Koentjaraningrat, is a form of representation of the ideology adopted by the people in an era [16]. So the religious practices of the Pedawa villagers are also the same, meaning that what the Pedawa people do in interpreting religious values in the form of religious rituals is the practice of their ideology. Talking about the Pedawa village community as the Bali Aga community, namely a community group that adheres to the influence of Maha Rsi Markandeya, one of the characteristics is that they do not recognize the concept of *tri kahyangan* in the construction of temples. Not familiar with the concept of *tri mandala* in the division of temple space. Hence, Pedawa village has different characteristics, including the system of religious rituals, making offerings, and others [17].

Furthermore, suppose it is based on the evidence of relics in the form of a sarcophagus in Pedawa village, of course. In that case, it also has a religious function that colors the ritual practices that exist in the community. Soejono conveyed the same thing that the sarcophagus also generally contains decorations that have practical, decorative, and religious meanings [14]. This means that the sarcophagus's existence also has implications for religious practices in the village. Based on the results of an interview with Kelihan Adat of Pedawa Village, Wayan Sudiastika (50 years) explained that in Pedawa village, there are several sarcophagi relics when viewed from their function of religious existence, some are functional, and some are not. One thing that is still functioning is the existence of a family that sanctifies the existence of these objects. So that just no one can access it; the others are not very sacred but are still considered magical powers and are usually given offerings (*maturan canang*) at certain times.

Based on this condition, the sarcophagus in Pedawa village has diversified its function as a sacred place and is considered profane.

Then for other megalithic objects, such as *taulan* it still functions as a symbol or is similar to a statue. *Taulan* in Pedawa village is in several temples, such as Pura Bingin and Pura Desa. Especially for the Bingin temple does have a special ritual, namely when there is a *piodalan* or ritual at the Bingin Temple. There is a *ngayehang taulan* procession or bathing the *taulan* held at the Sabih water source. This procession is carried out by young men and women in Pedawa village called *daha* (unmarried women) and *truna* (unmarried men). This procession is not just anyone can follow and carry out one of the conditions that parents of *daha* and *truna* must still be fully alive and have never practiced polygamy. For the Pedawa people, they are still considered worthy and perfect for carrying out the ritual. During the *ngayehang taulan* ritual, the women hold the flat-shaped *taulan* mat while the men win the round *taulan*. The forms of the two *taulan* have similarities with the *linga* and *yoni* in Hindu beliefs [18].

Another ritual related to the megalithic religious system in Pedawa village is the presence of *umah taksu*. This *taksu umah* building resembles the *punden terraces* during the megalithic period with a smaller size where the shape is in the form of an arrangement of stones arranged in such a way that it forms a unique pile of stones. For the people of Pedawa village, according to an interview with Wayan Sukrata (65 years old) explaining that this *umah taksu* is usually a stone or earth building that *puring plants* will later surround as a symbol of him ruling the area. *Umah taksu* are scattered in several areas of Pedawa village. *Umah taksu* is usually a ritual center for the people around the place. Worship is done on significant days or when there are people who make certain vows/promises. The existence of *umah taksu* in several places in Pedawa village, according to Putu Yuli Supriyandana (29 years old) explained that some special buildings were made in the form of *Gedong Saka Pat Sari*, which did not match the history and philosophy of the *umah taksu*. However, in terms of meaning, it is not in the form of the community still believing that the *umah taksu* is the protector of the occupied area. Then there is also the *Gaingan*, a stone pile building at the Munduk Madeg Temple which is a symbol of the followers of God who reside in this temple. This *gaingan* is in front of the sacred building at the Munduk Madeg Temple.

The existence of a megalithic belief system in Pedawa Village is not only preserved but also maintains the distinctive identity of Pedawa village. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a comprehensive understanding so that existing historical values are not forgotten and replaced with other ritual concepts. The existence of the sarcophagus, *taulan*, *gaingan*, and *umah taksu* is historical evidence that strengthens that Pedawa village is not a new village but has a long history.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the religious system in Pedawa village is a long historical process. It can be started from pre-religious with the remains of sarcophagus objects in the village. Then there is the tradition of using stones in the form of *taulan*, *gaingan*, and *umah taksu*. The evidence in the form of these objects is enough to be used as a basis that Pedawa village is one of the old villages, so it is right to label itself

as a Bali Aga village. The existence of the above objects is not only evidence of artifacts. However, it has influenced the ritual process as a practice of the local ideology of Pedawa village with a procession that uses these objects as a means of religious rituals in Pedawa village. These findings enrich other findings about preliterate sites in North Bali in particular and, at the same time, prove that culture is a continuous process from time to time by adapting to the evolving situation of the times.

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