
Tradition of Mejaga-Jaga: Ritual Communication and Perceptions in Menyamabraya

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ABSTRACT: The presence of the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* serves as a historical representation of the populace's allegiance to their monarch. This tradition encompasses the *pacaruan* ritual, which aims to counteract the adverse influence of *bhutakala* and infuse the sanctity of the universe. The research objective underscores the role of ritual communication in shaping the perceptions of *menyamabraya* as a means to construct the belief system of the BesangKawanTohjiwa Village community. The study employed a qualitative-interpretative approach with the aim of extracting information to elucidate the research locale, grounded in community experiences and subsequently documenting it in scholarly discourse. The data analysis technique uses the *Miles and Huberman* model, resulting in an illustration that the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* ritual uses the main means of a *bantengcula* which is paraded in the *ngider* procession around the village, *krama lanang* carry *berokan* made of *jakatree* fronds decorated with *bludruleaves* and the ends are paired with *dewatanawasangaweapons*. In the *ngider* procession, the *bantengcula* is paraded around three times as a symbol of cleansing *bhuana agung* and *bhuana alit*, namely *alambhur*, *bwah*, and *swah*. The *Mejaga-jaga tradition* employs the concept of *menyamabraya* as a means of ritual communication to influence the perception of the BesangKawanTohjiwa community. Ritual communication is directed towards the elaboration of cultural messages, serving as a mode of logical reasoning, consequently overcoming the challenges associated with public comprehension when interpreting religious symbols and rituals. *Menyamabraya* is a significant concept for the Balinese people when it comes to understanding tradition and culture. Ritual communication has the potential to influence how *Menyamabraya* is perceived in the social interactions of the BesangKawanTohjiwa community. This perception is deemed ideal depending on the stimuli it encounters, enabling the development of a belief system that preserves cultural identity.

KEYWORDS: Mejaga-jaga Tradition, Ritual Communication, Perception, Menyamabraya.

I. INTRODUCTION

The island of Bali is renowned for its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage, with culture and tradition deeply ingrained in the lives of its Hindu inhabitants, especially in the realm of social interactions. Culture and tradition serve as the foundation and backbone of religious life, rendering Balinese society distinctive and noteworthy on the global stage. Balinese individuals continue to uphold the concept of *menyamabraya* as a means of preserving their culture and traditions. *Menyamabraya* entails a practice of *gotong royong* within Hindu community groups in Bali, aimed at fostering a sense of solidarity. Essentially, *gotong royong* involves mutual assistance, referred to as *matetulungin* Balinese. *Menyamabraya* activities demand human cooperation and consciousness within community groups that possess distinct roles, traditional privileges, and social etiquette.

As social beings, humans rely significantly on others to ensure their survival. The inherent inclination of individuals to engage in continuous interactions with one another leads to the formation of a social system, aimed at satisfying their physical, psychological, and social needs. Effective human interaction necessitates communication, as it serves as the means through which individuals fulfill their imperative desire to engage with others (Dasih, 2023). Human nature, as inherently social beings, finds fulfillment through communication. Social interactions that lack the foundation of communication fail to give rise to communicative actions characterized by actions and reactions. Communication affords individuals the opportunity to engage in discussions, gain insight, and arrive at decisions. Furthermore, it broadens the human mindset, facilitating the acquisition of knowledge and information, which, in turn, can lead to shifts in attitudes and behavior. This process plays a pivotal role in shaping culture, advancing intellectual thought, and fostering connections among individuals (Cangara, 2013).

Balinese individuals establish a social system known as *menyamabraya* due to the values associated with social acknowledgment, which include equality, fraternity, and harmonious coexistence. Consequently, *menyamabraya* also assumes a significant role in

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the preservation of culture and religion through the practice of *ngayah*. *Menyamabraya* has a tendency to maintain human interactions that include a sense of kinship, togetherness, and mutual need (Budiantara and Ningsih, 2022). While *ngayah* is more intended to express the sense of *sraddha bhakti* of Hindus to *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*, so *ngayah* is carried out at the temple in the context of *piodalan*. The concept of *ngayah* and *menyamabraya* can be implemented together in interpreting culture and tradition.

Balinese people perceive religion and culture as challenging to separate, as they are intertwined in describing human attitudes and behavior. Traditions encompass the incorporation of both religion and culture, as the ritual process involves the use of religious symbols and is interpreted in accordance with the cultural comprehension of the community. The *Mejaga-jaga* tradition in BesangKawanTohjiwa Village is a *pacaruan* ceremony, which is held once a year to coincide with the holy day of *tilemsasihkaru*. The *Mejaga-jaga* tradition is an ancestral heritage that is still preserved today, to harmonise *bhuana agung* and *bhuana alit*, and neutralise the power of *bhuta kala*. *Banten* as a means of ceremony and a symbol of worship, in the *Mejaga-jaga* Tradition uses *pacaruan pancasata* which is equipped with one duck *belangkalung* and one *bantengcula*.

The *Mejaga-jaga* tradition is manifested through rituals, as its significance, conveyed through both verbal and nonverbal messages, can only be comprehended from a religious standpoint. Rituals are akin to ingrained customs or routines, representing ancestral practices imbued with transcendental values. Ritual is a form of communication as it encompasses symbolic behavior within human social contexts to convey a certain message. Ritual communication is not primarily focused on the direct dissemination of messages within a given space; instead, it is oriented towards preserving communication as an act that symbolically represents or re-presents shared beliefs from the past. Ritual communication underscores the significance of symbols in fulfilling the identity of individuals and social communities. It accentuates the commitment of humans to their familial, tribal, national, ideological, and religious traditions. Voluntary and structured behavior in the concepts of *menyamabraya* and *ngayah* serves as a reflection of the execution of rituals, often taking the form of performances or ceremonies.

Culture and communication exert mutual influence on one another, evident in habits, behaviors, language patterns, and communication styles. Culture fosters behavioral patterns that ultimately shape belief systems, attitudes, values, knowledge, and experiences. In contrast, communication underscores a dynamic and ongoing process (Sihabudin, 2013). Interpersonal perception and self-concept bestow significance upon individuals, enabling them to make conscious choices in evaluating the reality they encounter during interactions with other individuals or groups (Bungin, 2011). Martin and Nakayama elucidate that perceptions are shaped by culture's influence on the process of perceiving reality. This suggests that culture, serving as the foundation for communication, allows for the emergence of diverse cultures within various communication practices, thereby facilitating innovation in cultural realities through communication (Dasih, 2021). Ritual communication is a cultural process that involves the exchange of cultural elements. Culture is responsible for shaping communicative behavior, holding dominant influence over individuals. Therefore, ritual communication assumes a role when the message producer belongs to a particular culture, and the message recipient is capable of ascribing meaning to symbols within the context of religious rites.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This article employs a qualitative-interpretative approach, as it collects data directly from the research site using techniques such as observation, interviews, and literature review. In-depth interviews were conducted with research participants to unearth information that elucidates real issues at the research site, aiming to provide a comprehensive depiction of the actual situation rather than solely seeking explanations or solutions for reality. In this study, primary data sources are individuals referred to as informants, while secondary data sources include books, journals, and previous research findings. This research adheres to the principle of using the human researcher as the primary instrument, supplemented by interview guidelines, cameras, and recording devices during its execution. The method employed for selecting informants is *purposive sampling*, with the rationale that the chosen informants are perceived to possess knowledge and comprehension of the research topic. This approach ensures the validity of the collected data. The informants were *pemangku*, religious leaders, and community leaders, who were considered to understand the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition*. The data analysis technique employed is based on the *Miles and Huberman model*. During the interviews, an analysis of the informant's responses was conducted. If the responses were deemed unsatisfactory, the interview process continued until credible data were obtained. The data analysis process involved stages of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions, as outlined by Sugiyono (2016).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was carried out in BesangKawanTohjiwa Village, Klungkung District, Klungkung Regency, Bali Province, with the aim of uncovering the distinctiveness of the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition*. The primary objective of this research is to delve more deeply into the ritual communication process rooted in the concept of *menyamabraya*, which entails establishing a shared understanding and fostering harmonious interactions. In light of these research objectives, the subsequent sections will provide a description of the research findings.

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3.1 Ritual Tradition of Keeping Watch

Genealogically, the *Mejaga-jaga tradition* is closely related to the history of the battle between the Karangasem Kingdom and the Klungkung Kingdom. Karangasem Kingdom was the winner in the battle, so several villages in the eastern end of Klungkung Kingdom were controlled by Karangasem Kingdom, such as: Hyang Taluh Village, Sidemen Village, Marga Ayu Village, Sukahet Village, Talibeng Village, Tohjiwa Village, and Sangkanaji Village. Nevertheless, a subset of Tohjiwa villagers opted to maintain their allegiance to the Klungkung Kingdom and relocated to BesangKawan Village. In order to commemorate their place of origin, it was collectively decided that the village would be named BesangKawanTohjiwa Village.

The *Mejaga-jaga tradition* is a historical picture, so the core of the *upakarais pecaruanas* an effort to neutralise the negative power of *bhutakalain* to a holy force, to maintain the welfare of people's lives and clean the universe in *sekala* and *niskala*. In line with the *Tri Hita Karana* concept believed by Hindus, namely: *Parhyanganas* a balance between humans and *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*, *Palemahanas* a balance between humans and nature, and *Pawonganas* a balance between humans and humans. The purpose of *pecaruanin* the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* is so that the lives of the people of BesangKawanTohjiwa Village are harmonious, no more wars occur due to the negative nature of humans.

The ritual of the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* begins with bathing the *bantengcula* as an effort to purify the symbol of the *yajna* which is carried out from generation to generation by *pemangkukubayan*, *pemangkuprajapati*, and *pemangkuhyangapi*. After being bathed, the *bantengcula* is sprinkled with *tirta* and tied with seven threads of bamboo rope. Next, the *pacaruanupakarais* performed by the *pemangku* in all corners of the village, from the east, west, north, south, and in the centre called *catuspata*. The *Banten* used is the *pacaruanpancasata*. *Krama lanang* from children to adults carry *berokan*, derived from the word *berawa* meaning brave. *Berokan* is made from the fronds of a small *jakatree*, decorated with *bludruleaves* and fitted with the weapon of the *god nawasanga*. The *bludruleaves* only grow in *sasihkaro* and are red in colour.

The procession of *ngiderin* the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* takes the *start* at the *catuspata*, starting northwards towards the *puseh temple*, the *bantengcula* is paraded and slashed on the right side of its rump using the weapon *penyenengsudamala* or also called *pati*. After the *bantengcula* is bleeding, it is then pulled in a circle three times as a symbol of *tri loka*, namely *bhur*, *bwah*, *swah*. Next, the *bantengcula* is paraded south to the *dalem temple* and the ritual procession runs the same, but the difference is that the *bantengcula* is slashed on the left side of its rump. From the south, the *bantengcula* is paraded east towards the village border with the same ritual procession, but the *bantengcula* is again slashed on the right side of its arse. Then, the *bantengcula* is paraded westwards to the *setraat* the *temple prajapati* with the same ritual procession, then slashed on the right rear knee. Finally, the *bantengcula* is paraded back to the *catuspata* with the same ritual procession, slashed on the left rear knee and stomach until the *bantengculadies*. The slashing of the *bantengcula* by its bloodied horns is believed to generate positive energy to neutralise negative energy in the *Buana agung* and *bhuana alit*. The people of BesangKawanTohjiwa Village believe that the blood of the *bantengcula* by the *Mejaga-jaga tradition* can cure various diseases.

The dead horned *bantengculas* are skinned to make *shadows* and the meat and *offal* are taken. *Bayang-bayang* and *jeroan* are used as *ulamcaru*, while the meat is processed into food such as *lawar* and *timbangan* to be distributed to the community. In the afternoon at the *catuspata*, the *pacaruanpancasataupakara* is added with a *necklaced striped duck*, and in the centre is placed the *shadow of a bantengcula with a horn*. The *pacaruanpancasata with the duck* added is called *pacaruanpancasanak*. *Berokanis* placed around the *shadow of the bantengcula with horns* in accordance with the nine cardinal directions. The procession of *pacaruanin* the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* is led by the *pemangku*, ending with prayers together.

3.2 Ritual Communication of the Symbols of the Mejaga-jaga Tradition

The process of ritual communication is not solely rooted in historical background; it also encompasses various other factors including rite liturgy, belief systems, and worship practices. Ritual communication plays a significant role within the context of rite liturgy, serving as a theoretical framework in the domain of religion that pertains to the notion of ritualized existence within social systems. Ceremonial activities represent the most pivotal cultural manifestations that mirror human religious life. Religious life finds expression through ritual practices, and the integrity of the community's religious system hinges upon a sense of sincerity, which in turn facilitates the preservation and perpetuation of culture.

Ritual communication encompasses the generation of cultural messages imbued with specific concepts and thoughts intended for comprehension by the recipients. These messages often manifest as visible symbols comprehensible to human observers. Cultural symbols encapsulate ideas that serve as a conduit for conveying ritual communication. These ideas find expression through ritual practices, thereby giving rise to traditions rooted in collectively held beliefs and convictions. In tradition, people often use nonverbal symbols in *upakara* means, which have meaning in influencing the balance and harmony of their lives. Ritual communication through symbolic meaning in the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* has the aim of increasing human knowledge about unconscious communicative behaviour, in understanding the meaning in nonverbal symbols.

Understanding the significance of symbols within the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* is crucial for the community through the medium of ritual communication. This comprehension allows for the establishment of limitations on mindset, discourse, and social behavior, contributing to the development of social capital and trust. For example, the use of male and uncastrated *bantengculas* in the

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Mejaga-jaga Tradition is a symbol of controlling lust. The use of bamboo rope to tie the *bantengcula* is a symbol of binding human attitudes and behaviour. The bamboo rope is not tied carelessly to the body of the *bantengcula*, but has been determined so that humans can maintain their behaviour according to the teachings of *Tri Kaya Parisuda*. One thread of rope is tied around the head, to bind the mind in a positive direction and not be affected by negative thoughts. Two strands of rope are fastened to the forelegs, symbolizing the notion of progressing forward without looking back. This signifies the expectation for humans to possess a spirit of perseverance in their quest for survival, ultimately leading to the attainment of abundance and prosperity in life. Similarly, two strands of rope are secured at the rear of the foot, symbolizing the concept of endurance. This signifies the expectation for humans to endure and thrive in any circumstance, thereby fostering the development of strength and strategies to navigate through life's challenges. Two threads of rope are fastened in the center, serving as a symbol for binding the human body, which enables the preservation of one's vigor and self-strengthening. Additionally, the utilization of "berokan" stands as a symbol denoting courage in confronting adversaries. The procession of *bantengculas* is paraded in a circle of three as a symbol of *Tri Loka*, the three layers of the world consisting of the realms of *bhur*, *bwah*, and *swah*. The *bhur* realm is inhabited by negative spirits, the *bwah* realm is inhabited by humans, and the *swah* realm is inhabited by the gods. Ritual communication within the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* conveys a message emphasizing the imperative for humans to uphold the sacredness of nature and to maintain both physical and spiritual cleanliness. This practice is undertaken to foster a state of natural equilibrium and environmental harmony.

3.3 Perception of Menyamabrayain the Mejaga-jaga Tradition

In a literal sense, the communication process is characterized as interactive, transactional, and dynamic. Within this process, individuals have the opportunity to cultivate comprehension through their mental framework. In the transactional process, humans acquire fresh knowledge through communication and firsthand experiences, thereby allowing their mental framework to construct meaning and shape perceptions (Pratiwi et al., 2023). Devito states that perception is an experience of objects, events, or relationships obtained by inferring information and interpreting messages. Perception includes the process of making a person aware of the many stimuli that affect the senses. So, perception is an internal process carried out to select, evaluate, organise stimuli from the external environment (Ridwan, 2016).

Perception plays a significant role in shaping how stimuli are absorbed and imbued with meaning when individuals attain consciousness. The formation of perception commences with a cognitive process influenced by personal experiences, perspectives, and knowledge. Experiences and the process of learning contribute to shaping and structuring the way individuals perceive objects, subsequently influencing their attitudes and behavior toward these objects. These factors collectively determine the range of responses and individual actions (Rohim, 2016). People have the ability and power to shape perceptions through their observations or experiences. Society is a unit of human life that interacts according to a system of customs and is sustainable. *Menyamabrayais* a process of social interaction for Balinese people in a system of customs that is bound by a shared sense and identity.

Menyamabrayais an ideal concept in social life that comes from the *karma clan* philosophy. *The menyamabraya* system emphasises the pattern of Balinese life on cultural values and customs, thus realising a harmonious and prosperous life. The term *menyamabraya* means that all humans are brothers, or a way of life to treat others as one's own (Fatmawati, 2021). *Menyamabrayais* the social capital of Balinese society, because its growth and development is the colour of civilisation. Social interaction in *menyamabraya* is believed by the Balinese as an unwritten but upheld agreement, especially in maintaining and preserving customs, culture, and religion.

Individuals within society rely on one another, as they engage in collective activities despite having distinct roles within the social realm. The role of Balinese people in the environment can be seen in the concept of *menyamabraya*, one of the ideal communication actions in maintaining the customs system remains *steady* and has a cultural identity. *Menyamabrayain* the perception of Balinese people gets the impression that a person receives in the unity of group life, to interact according to the system of customs so that the results can be observed and felt. Within the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition*, the concept of *menyamabraya* perception can be understood as the impression that the residents of BesangKawanTohjiwa Village derive from events or aspects of their surroundings. This perception subsequently becomes the central point of their attention, motivating them to sustain it as an integral part of their cultural and religious identity. Thus, the perception of *menyamabraya* as a ritual communication joint in the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* in BesangKawanTohjiwa Village, as follows:

a) Emerging from the conscience

In general, the Balinese people, including those from BesangKawanTohjiwa Village, embrace the significance of the *menyamabraya* philosophy. They view individuals within their social environment as akin to siblings, making the practical application of this philosophy in their religious life a tangible reality that significantly influences their mindset;

b) Belief as an obligation

The inhabitants of BesangKawanTohjiwa Village have established a belief system within the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition*, emphasizing the importance of its continued sincere practice across generations.

c) Togetherness and brotherhood

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The people of BesangKawanTohjiwa Village prepare a series of *upakarain* the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* with *tedunngayah* as a form of *sraddha bhakti*. *Ngayahis* done to prepare *banten* and *offerings* related to the *Mejaga-jaga* procession, the social interaction that occurs during *ngayah* will strengthen the sense of togetherness of the community, thus playing a role in bringing closer the brotherhood relationship between the *krama desa*.

d) Trust and Balance

The *Mejaga-jaga tradition* builds a belief and religious system for the people of BesangKawanTohjiwa Village through *yajna*. By doing *yajna*, it will maintain the balance of *Tri Lokanature*, namely *bhur*, *bwah*, and *swah*. Trust and balance in the *yajna* procession also builds harmony in human relations in the concept of *Tri Hita Karana*, namely *parhyangan*, *palemahan*, and *pawongan*.

e) Preservation of Cultural Values

The belief held by the BesangKawanTohjiwa Village community in the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition's* existence takes the shape of preserving cultural values. The sincere performance of *yajna* serves as a means to impart education to the younger generation, encouraging them to perpetuate these traditions as a significant *ancestral heritage*.

The process of perception formation is influenced by two primary factors: internal and external factors. Internal factors originate from the individual themselves, including attitudes, habits, and willpower. In contrast, external factors consist of stimuli received from sources external to the individual, typically in the form of social stimuli. Perceptions develop in response to actions shaped by contextual comprehension, thereby demonstrating a mutually influential relationship. The process of perception possesses the ability to sway an individual's emotions in response to suitable and rational circumstances. When combined with reasoning, this influence can consistently mold human behavior in accordance with mutually accepted rules. There are four types of logical power, namely: 1) causal power, behaving without restraint or responding with anger; 2) practical power, behaving strategically to get future results; 3) contextual power, behaving trustingly with actions and interpretations; and 4) implicative power, behaviour showing a reflection relationship between intent and action (Littlejohn, 2014).

Social interaction contributes to the development of more structured perceptions, thereby expediting the process of comprehending and altering mindsets. The shaping of perceptions has an impact on human cognitive aspects, prompting communicative responses in the form of individual behavior and attitudes in reaction to these interactions. Within the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition*, the process of perception formation unfolds through several distinct stages. It begins with the reception of stimuli, followed by the conversion of these stimuli into messages, and ultimately transforming these messages into perceptions. Initially, the five senses receive social stimuli from the interaction process, facilitating physical recognition and information gathering. Subsequently, the process involves the selection and organization of information through the processing of social stimuli. In processing the stimulus, individuals will interpret their social environment as a process of developing cognition influenced by experience, insight, and knowledge. The people of BesangKawanTohjiwa Village in building the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* belief system starts from receiving stimulus through historical stories of *penglingsir* for generations. This narrative holds a deep place within the heart of the community, thereby serving as a catalyst for the dissemination of information during social interactions. The community, in turn, filters the information it receives and proceeds to interpret it through a cognitive process, ultimately enabling them to generate a positive response that contributes to the preservation of their cultural identity.

IV. CLOSING

Menyamabraya represents an ideal concept within Balinese society, fostering a profound sense of solidarity and recognizing all individuals as brothers and sisters. This concept is deeply ingrained in the lives of Balinese people, extending to the traditional community of BesangKawanTohjiwa Village. The presence of the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* inherently facilitates social interactions in people's lives, particularly in the establishment of ritual communication through the development of communal perceptions. The cultivation of collective perception within the context of *menyamabraya* can give rise to a belief system that endures across generations. Ritual communication plays a role in giving a cognitive touch to the people of BesangKawanTohjiwa Village in interpreting the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* so as to form a contextual understanding without changing its original function. Ritual communication in the perception of *menyamabraya* emphasises the sustainability of the *Mejaga-jaga Tradition* as a cultural identity for the people of BesangKawanTohjiwa Village.

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