



## Nangluk Mrana in Intaran Community; The Modern and Old perspectives

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### ABSTRACT

Indigenous society of Intaran Village, in Sanur, South Denpasar District, holds a ceremony namely *Tawur Nangluk Mrana*. It is a *yadnya* ceremony to pledge to God Almighty, to ward off or control any disturbances that may bring harm or disease to plants, animals, and humans thus it would not endanger the existence of the living. Other areas in Indonesia also hold similar activities in warding off the plague from their territory, however, with different names and specific times to perform the ritual. In Bali, the community believes the implementation of the Nangluk Merana has been around since the time of Rsi Markandya. The people conducts Nangluk Merana Ceremony on new moon on the fifth

month in Balinese calendar system based on two reasons: nature condition and urban legend in society. In the ritual implementation; there are several phases carried out by the Intaran village community. They are *Matur Piuning*, *Ngaturang hidangan*, *Mecaru*, *Pandita puja*, *Melis*, *Ngalebar*, and *Pakelem*. Although it is full of mythological backgrounds, the community of Intaran seems able to interpret the ceremony as a reminder to be more aware in dealing with various phenomena that are socially-detrimental. By doing the Nangluk mrana ceremony, the Balinese expects it can bring harmony to the universe.

**Keyword:** Nangluk Mrana, Intaran Village

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### AN EFFORT TO WARD OFF THE PLAGUE

Indigenous society of Intaran Village, in Sanur, South Denpasar District, holds a ceremony namely *Tawur Nangluk Mrana*.<sup>1</sup> The communities conduct it every new moon, on the fifth month in Balinese calendar system (*Tilem sasih kalima*). Nangluk Mrana is a *yadnya* ceremony, an effort to pledge to God Almighty, to ward off or control any disturbances that may bring harm or disease to plants, animals, and humans thus it would not endanger the existence of the living.<sup>2</sup> The ceremony belongs to *Bhuta Yadnya*. Its purpose is purely to invoke safety thus the village would be spiritually protected from the plague, disaster, disease, epidemic or any form of negative energy.<sup>3</sup>

Nangluk Mrana derives from the Balinese word which might be influenced by Sanskrit word. The word "Nangluk" means to bounce or barrier, and "mrana" means pest or disease. Mrana is a term commonly used to refer types of conditions that damage plants. Mrana may be in the form of pests, plant disease, abnormality or any cosmic balance disorders that bring harm to the plants, animals as well as to human. Thus, nangluk mrana has meaning as a ritual to keep pests, epidemic, plague, or pandemic diseases at bay.<sup>2</sup>

### BACKGROUND OF THE CEREMONY

Not only in Bali, but other areas in Indonesia also hold similar activities in warding off the plague from their territory, however, with different names and specific times to perform the ritual. Karel A. Steenbrink in *Beberapa Aspek tentang Islam di Indonesia Abad ke-19*, mentions that similar tradition exists in Muslim societies as well. He believes the custom has been emerging since the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, especially in Aceh, Sumatra, Java, Riau, Kalimantan, Nusa Tenggara, Sulawesi, even Maluku.<sup>4</sup>

As for Balinese Hindus in Intaran village, they conduct the Nangluk Mrana Ceremony on new moon on the fifth month in Balinese calendar system. Why on that day? There are two main reasons. First is nature condition and second is an urban legend in society.

The sixth month or *sasih kanem* on Balinese calendar is a transition season. In Indonesia, it is well known as *Musim Pancaroba*, a common phenomenon that occurs in tropical countries between dry season to rainy season. Pancaroba is the time when rain falls non-stop for a day, while on the other day, the weather twists into a hot-scorching day.<sup>6</sup>

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**Figure 1** *Mrana* may be in the form of pests, plant disease, abnormality or any cosmic balance disorders that bring harm to the plants, animals as well as to human<sup>5</sup>

A study conducted by Yale University suggests that every single drop-in air temperature due to rain or storms apparently become a fertile place for bacteria to multiply. In cold air, body cells that respond to detect viruses grow 'stiff' and cannot work optimally. Cells are weakened and unable to fight bacteria or viruses that enter the body. Furthermore, a drastically changed on air pressure or sudden cold air may cause a migraine or a headache due to arteries narrowing, while high-intensity exposure to sunlight may result in a chemical component imbalance in the brain.<sup>7</sup>

The rain on Sasih Kanem is thicker than in Sasih Kalima. The transition season positively impacts on natural conditions, as well as in spreading various diseases or pests. Therefore, the existence of this ceremony is expected to provide physical and spiritual safety. The community believes the implementation of the Nangkluk Merana has been around since the time of Rsi Markandya. The ceremony is strongly related to agrarian culture. It is generally carried out by *Krama subak*. Some pieces of literature such as *Lontar Purwaka Bumi*, *lontar sangara bhumu*, *bhama kertih*, and *lontar Tuttur Lebur Gangsa* discuss philosophical reasons and a tutorial in performing the ritual. In addition, the activity is not only limited on how to ward off the disaster but also to maintain land fertility and prosperity.<sup>2</sup>

## THE MYTHOLOGY OF IDA RATU GEDE MAS MACALING

The Balinese people, especially the residents of Sanur, believe in the mythology about *Ida Ratu Gede Mas Macaling*. A highly praised supernatural figure



**Figure 2** Illustration of *Ida Ratu Gede Mas Macaling*. A highly praised supernatural figure who resides in Dalem Ped temple, Nusa Penida island<sup>8</sup>

who resides in Dalem Ped temple, Nusa Penida island. Nusa Penida Island is notorious for its dark past. During the reign of the Klungkung kingdom, the island which is facing the coast of Sanur served as a place to exile criminals, sorcerers, as well as political prisoners. Whereas in various legends, *Ratu Gede*, the name used by the community to call the ruler, is the king of the spirits, goblin, and demon. He had a grotesque form and skilled in the art of witchcraft. From an old testament, he got an authority to visit Bali every Sasih Kanem to spread the plague and creating chaos on the island. However, despite his dreadful abilities, the Balinese also admire the figure of *Ratu Gede* as an expert in traditional medicine and a generous deity.<sup>9</sup>

The society puts deep faith to the mythology, especially the resident who stay on the east coast of Bali. They believe in order to reduce the ruler's negative energy; the community performs the ceremony of *nangluk merana* every *tilem sasih kalima*. *Tilem sasih kalima* is the last day before entering the new month on the next day, which is the first day of *sasih kanem*.

Supported by 19 communities (*Banjar*) in Intaran Village, the Banjar pay for all ceremony expenses. Denpasar City Government, philanthropies, Bank and other Village assets sometimes support the activity as well by donating for the cause.<sup>1</sup> In the ritual implementation; there are several phases carried out by the Intaran village community. The processions are *Matur Piuning*, *Ngaturang hidangan*, *Mecaru*, *Pandita puja*, *Melis*, *Ngalebar*, and *Pakelem*.





**Figure 3** The community of Intaran carries the holy relic or Pratima of the deities in the village to Sanur Beach for purification<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 4** Phenomenon such as moral degrading, gang fight, vandalism, drug abuse, as well as street violence are diseases in society<sup>12</sup>

Matur Piuning means to notify the deity in the local village temple. The message explains that from the moment, the ritual has begun with its whole phases. Matur piuning is held a few days before the peak ceremony, as a symbol to request permission from the deities reside in the village temple (*Kahyangan Tiga*) of Intaran. Therefore they grant safety during the Nangluk Merana Ceremony from the beginning to the end of the ceremony.

Ngaturang hidangan is a procession carried out in particular by a noble family in Intaran, to greet Ratu Gede and his entourage. These activities are usually carried out in Pura Mertasari, Sanur. In the procession, the stakeholders are accompanied by traditional leaders, as representatives of the Sanur village. They are serving a banquet to please the ruler and his followers.

In the next few days, the community conducts Mecaru, which more or less has the same purpose to Ngaturang hidangan. Mecaru ceremony is part of Butha Yadnya. Butha Yadnya essentially acts as a symbol to nurture the five natural elements that form the universe, namely land, water, air, fire, and ether.<sup>10</sup>

At the peak of the ritual, Priestess carried out worship in regards to Nangkluk Merana Ceremony. The prayer is addressed to God Almighty in his manifestation as Lord Vishnu and Lord Varuna, the ruler of the ocean, wish they may be pleased, and bestow prosperity, welfare, and safety to all living things, as well as protect from various types of diseases and pests. Besides Nangluk mrana, the people of Intaran also hold *Ngusaba Desa* on the same day. The ceremony is carried out annually. It serves as gratitude to the creator Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa for all his gifts to the Intaran society.

The community of Intaran then carries the holy relic or *Pratima* of the deities in the village to Sanur Beach for purification. At the beach, after the priest finishes his prayer, he would lead the society to pray together. In the end, *Pemangku* distributes holy water, and rice grain *bija* as gifts from God. The community then do Ngalebar or Ngalungsur. The meaning is as a gift of prosperity to the people. Finally, in the last series, Pেকেlem, where all the offering will be drowned to the bottom of the sea. The meaning of pekelem is as an offering to Lord Varuna (God of the sea) therefore he may bless the people with prosperity, and safety for nature and its content. After completing all the stages of the Nangluk Merana Ceremony, the community requests for holy water *Tirtha* from the priest. They are sprinkling it at their house, family member, and to their fields.

## THE COMMUNITY'S PERSPECTIVE

Today, Balinese people, especially people in Intaran, does not only interpret the ritual of nangluk merana as a cultural heritage based on mythology. In a press release as listed on the Denpasar city's official website, the implementation of Nangluk Merana and Ngusaba Desa ceremonies in the Intaran Village aims as a moment to reflect and to seek the solution in dealing with various social phenomena that are detrimental to the human being.

This phenomenon such as moral degrading, gang fight, vandalism, drug abuse, as well as street violence is challenging to be eradicated. Besides, natural disasters such as tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, landslides, and others, are reminders of how human should take good care of mother earth. By conducting the ceremony, it is hoped that the ill will

which often disrupts human life can be eliminated, and it may become goodwill to keep the universe in harmony.

## CONCLUSION

Nangluk merana is an inherited tradition from ancestors that has been practiced by Indonesian people, including the indigenous community of Intaran, Sanur. The folk conducts a ceremonial procession of Nangluk mrana consisting of Matur Piuning, Ngaturang hidangan, Mecaru, Pandita puja, Melis, Ngalebar, and Pakelem as the last phase every tilem sasih kalima, or one day before entering sasih kanem. The ceremony was funded independently by the local, and supported by Denpasar city government, the bank as well as philanthropies.

Although it is full of mythological backgrounds, the community of Intaran seems able to interpret the ceremony as a reminder to be more aware in dealing with various social phenomena that are socially-detrimental. By doing the nangluk mrana ceremony, it is expected the human, and the universe can live in harmony.

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