

Usaba Sumbu from Karangasem: A Tradition with A Thousand Pork Offering

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ABSTRACT

In historical records, Babad Dalem, there is a record about *Usaba Sumbu*, A celebration that represents the people's gratitude for the prosperity and resilience of the Gelgel Kingdom. As part of King Dalem Waturenggong's territory, Bungaya traditional village, which today becomes part of Karangasem regency, has carried out *Usaba Sumbu* activities since the 16th century, even some claimed it had been performed since the 11th century. The whole series of rituals and ceremonies on *Usaba Sumbu* is viewed as offerings to ask for *Amertha*, the elixir of life. It is expected that the lord will bless the residents of the indigenous Village prosperous and welfare life. The tradition sparks a sense of togetherness and increases tolerance and cooperation among the people since the entire village community attends the annual ceremony. It encompasses cultural values, brotherhood, and economic values. The tradition lives as a cultural identity of the traditional village community in Karangasem and represents the people's values. For instance, the value of brotherhood can be seen when the villager shares their roasted pork with others who could not afford the meat on occasion due to economic conditions or else. The high demand for porks, chickens or other livestock when preparing the ceremony allows local businesses to flourish. It indeed indirectly improves the local economy.

Keywords: *Usaba Sumbu*, Karangasem, Pork.

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BACKGROUND

In historical records, Babad Dalem, there is a record about *Usaba Sumbu*, A celebration that represents the people's gratitude for the prosperity and resilience of the Gelgel Kingdom. As part of King Dalem Waturenggong's territory, Bungaya traditional village, which today becomes part of Karangasem regency, has carried out *Usaba Sumbu* activities since the 16th century, even some claimed it had been performed since the 11th century.¹ The claim is supported by the local mythology of Timbrah village, where it is said that a high entity called Hyang I Tuduh created the cosmos of the village of Timbrah. This high entity then created four pigs: I Tabu, I Tumtum, I Jenek, and I Sari. The four pigs represent four aspects of the offering, according to the myth of the Timbrah community. I Sari represents *Bayu* (energy), the source of sacred power from heaven, then I Jenek is a *Panegtegan* body. The next swine, I Tumtum, has the body of a *Tumpang Guru*, and the last, I Tabu, is an action to splash *Tuak* (palm wine) at the offering ceremony. It is derived from

the word 'tu' of *Tuak* (Palm Wine), then gradually changes into 'ta.' Meanwhile, A pig in the Balinese language is called *Celeng*. At the creation time, the creator was said to have started the creation process with *Mahayunan Mamuji Céleng*. If translated word to word, *Mahayunan* comes from the word *Ayunan* which means 'peace.' *Mamuji* is from the word *Muji* which means 'desire.' Then, *Céleng* comes from the word *ling*, which means

'words.' Therefore, the sense of the words leads to the meaning that the Hyang I Tuduh built the Timbrah village through conciliatory words. Allegedly, folklore became the fundamental belief that pigs were the offerings desired by the Gods.²

This ceremony is held at different periods by each traditional village. As in the traditional village of Bungaya, the event is held at *Sasih Sada*. The first month in the Balinese calendar. While in the

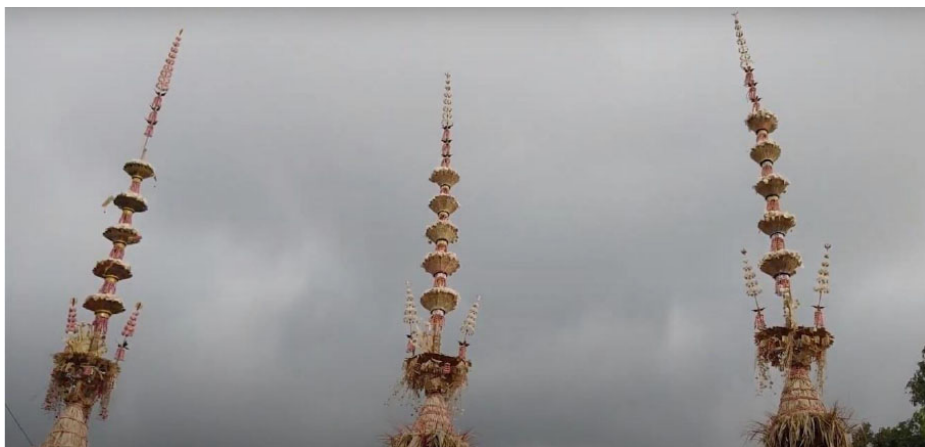


Figure 1.⁷ *Sumbu*, A straight bamboo pole similar to a Penjor, marks the series of *Usaba Sumbu*.

Timbrah traditional village, as part of the Pertima rural area, they hold the tradition on the twelfth month, *Sasih Sada*.³ Despite differences in implementation time, however, both traditions are lively and celebrated by their people. The Sumbu setup, A straight bamboo pole similar to a Penjor, marks this series of traditional activities. The pole is assembled and decorated with various ornaments, traditional rice cakes, roasted pork, coconut leaves, and flowers. In addition, during Usaba Sumbu, a tradition to offer *Guling Siyu* usually steals the most attention. As the name implies, *Guling Siyu* means a thousand suckling pigs.⁴ The roasted pork would be the offering in the ceremony. It is not surprising, at the moment villagers are preparing for the ceremony's offering, outside visitors can easily spot each household that would be busy rolling the hogs at home or in groups on the village's roadside. However, before offering the pork, a series of ceremonies must be prepared and carried out by the indigenous people in the easternmost district of Bali.^{5,6}

A Whole Week Ceremonies

Different traditional villages lead to different habits and details to celebrate the Usaba Sumbu series. In general, the preparation for Usaba Sumbu begins with the *Nuur Prawayah* activity to determine the leader of the traditional ceremony and, subsequently, its organizing committee. Through small meetings, village leaders and local Banjar representatives determined the figures. The meeting also decided which family would do the *Ngayah* (service) in preparing the Sumbu. The Sumbu should be prepared by the family who has a *Deha* (Young, Teenage Girl) in their family, but the opportunity is rotated yearly. For every celebration of Usaba Subu, five poles would be erected. In Timbrah village, three poles would stand upright at Panti Kaler Temple and two more at Bale Agung Temple. Once the village council determined the committee, the ceremony preparation would be started. It begins with processing the complementary materials for the offering, such as thousand rice cakes, which would take days to prepare. Meanwhile, in a series of ceremonies, the Usaba

Sumbu series starts when the community conducts *Melasti* and *Mulang Pেকেlem*, a process to purify the village relics and the first offering to the Lord of Sea. The event usually takes place five days before the peak of the event.^{8,9}

The Melasti ceremony would be a mandatory event to be attended by two *Prabagus* (chosen cadets), *Pengabih* (companion/protector), four *Klian Daha*, the *Bapa Desa*, *Kubayan*, *Prawayah*, *Truna Adat* and hundreds of village members. Some of the people would perform the duty to uphold the village deities' relics, *Jempuna*. The Melasti ceremony aims to purify every ceremonial instrument that will be used in the Usaba Sumbu prayer, as well as to conduct joint prayers at the beach. After the ritual, the convoy will return to the Timbrah Traditional Village. Each *Jempuna* would be placed in each Panti Temple by the ceremony committee, namely Panti Kaler, Tengah and Kelod Kangin. The Timbrah Traditional Village has fifteen *Jempuna* and four Idols, namely the *Batara Gunung*, *Sakenan*, *Gulian*, and *Tunggujalan* idols. In detail, Panti Kaler temple becomes the abode of deities Ida Batara Muter Jagat, Ida Batara Muter Anom, Ida Batara Mayun, Ida Batara Bagus Sakti, Ida Batara Gedong Baas, and Ida Batara Nganten Tenganan. Meanwhile, Ida Batara Gede Beten Bingin, Ida Batara Nganten Bungaya, Ida Batara Bukit, Ida Batara Maspahit and Ida Batara Nganten Saren are situated in Panti Tengah temple. The Panti Kelod Kangin temple is a residence for Ida Batara Bagus Aeng, Ida Batara Kelod Kangin, Ida Batara Ketut and Ida Batara Kusamba.¹⁰

The duty as a village youth member, *Truna* (male) or *Deha* (female), provides by a family who has at least a 15-year-old adolescent. However, should a family have more than one adolescent, only the firstborn would serve as village youth. A village youth should not be *cedangga* (handicapped from birth), *cedala* (disabled due to an accident), and *pongoh* (toothless). Should the village youth experience one of those accidents while holding the duty, their title would be evoked. In addition, if one of their parents passed away, they would no longer hold the title. *Truna* and *Deha* must attend the village tradition or holy ceremony as indigenous community

members. They must dress properly in traditional clothes and receive proper treatment from the folks. Once they wear the traditional dress, since leaving the house to the ceremony location, they are prohibited from stopping at any place other than the ceremony's location. They should not use footwear, talk in the street, fight or break up people fighting. A village youth will naturally complete their duties when reaching age thirty-five or bound by holy matrimony.¹¹

A Day after Melasti, the townsman proceeds with the Usaba Sumbu series by *Nyujukang Sumbu*, erecting an approximately 25 meters high bamboo pole. The bamboo pole, or Sumbu, represents an axis of life, a center of life, the beginning and the end, *Sunia* (afterlife). They decorate the straight bamboo pole with various purified utensils derived from agricultural products such as coconut leaves, palm leaves, and *plendo* (cassava's stem cambium). The decorations were arranged in a conical shape with a *Manuk Dewata* on top. The animal represents the divine creature that would be a messenger of the citizen's offerings. The word derives from *Bubu*, which has been adjusted to become a Sumbu. Philosophically, Sumbu represents the mountain as part of the universe. Mountains are a symbol of an ecosystem for various living creatures' habitats while providing resources for life. Therefore, to decorate a Sumbu, many of the ornaments would be showcased, similar to a diorama. From the base to the middle cone, ornaments such as *Tiing Petung*, *Robrob*, *Kukur*, *Rerenteng*, *Bungan Langkuas*, *Reringgitan Naga Sari*, *Sesapi Buduh*, *Paku Pidpid Kedis*, *Kapal*, *Sesapi Kempes*, *Sesapi Kembung*, *Baling*, *Pepijetan*, *Pipisan*, *Salang*, *Tapung Meringgis*, *Tapung Buah*, *Kampid*, *Janggar*, and *Kedis Manuk Dewata*., there are *Bunga Plendo*, *Wayang*, *Jekjek Wayang*, *Kulungkulung*, *Bongli*, *Anjel* and *Gada* on the upper part. The *Wayang* represents puppet characters from the *Bharatayuda* and *Ramayana* play in Hindu epic stories.¹²

Indeed, making a pole seems like a daunting process. However, the community sees the effort to carry on despite its complex process as a way to express their sincerity as the ultimate offering to the God Almighty. Before

the process of erecting the Sumbu, there is a *Nyulubin* ritual. A Deha, who is responsible for *Ayahan Sumbu*, wearing a simple *Rejang* traditional dress, enters the base of the Sumbu. Then, a group of Teruna will rotate the pole until it completely stands upright.¹³ The Deha represents the Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of luck and prosperity. Luck and prosperity for the family and the traditional village.

Symbolically, a girl would later become a mother, with her role in running the wheel of life. The procession to rotate and erect the sumbu is associated with the story of Bharata Yudha, which has been known and inherited by the people of the Timbrah Traditional Village.¹⁴

After the folks erected the Sumbu at Panti Kaler Temple, they continued erecting the other poles at Bale Agung

Temple two days later. After that, in the afternoon, people will visit both temples. The villager will flock to bring the pork offerings, together with *Pengapit Guling* and *Pemuja*, to the temple. The Usaba Sumbu is divided into two stages: *Usaba Sumbu Kaja* (North) and *Usaba Sumbu Kelod* (South).¹⁶ Three days after Melasti, the folk holds the peak ceremony of Usaba Sumbu Kaja. The indigenous community would be assigned into four groups named *Pauman*. These Pauman, namely Pauman Beji, Pauman Desa, Pauman Manak Yeh, and Pauman Lambuan, later appoint a girl to represent each Pauman, except Pauman Desa. Two girls represent Pauman Desa since the group has the most people. Further, historically they were the *wed*, the first inhabitant of the traditional village of Timbrah. Three of those five Deha will have to perform their service on Usaba Kaja, while the other two will be on Usaba Kelod. Approximately seven hundred eighty families inhabit this heterogeneous village, meaning that for Usaba Kaja, there would be almost a thousand suckling pigs in Panti Kaler temple. This figure must include the female population who have married outside the village. In addition, usually, the resident prepares more than one pork offering. The pork offering would be served in both Usaba Kaja and Usaba Kelod; thus, if accumulated, thousands of pork offerings are served yearly in one Usaba Sumbu procession.

Citizens pray to deities Ida Betara Mutar Jagat and Ida Betara Mayun in Usaba Sumbu Kaja by establishing three Sumbu as a symbol of *Buana Agung* (mountain). They perform the ceremony for a whole day, with its prayer usually conducted at midnight. On the next day, it is called *Pengajengan*. Cockfighting rites or *Tabuh rah* are held on this day, aiming to purge evil spirits. Then, *Penyelagan*, a day after *Pengajengan*, where the villagers prepare the ceremonial instruments that will be utilized at Usaba Sumbu Kelod. On this day as well, the folks conduct *Mebiasa*. During this ceremony, they uphold the village deities' *Jempana*, accompanied by *Prabagus*, *Praguluh*, *Bapa Desa*, *Kubayan*, and *Prawayah*, rotating the village three times. Then, there will be *Mebarang*, a tradition where the Jempana's entourage charades to fight over the relic by crossing



Figure 2.¹⁵ The Melasti ceremony would be a mandatory event. Participated by two Prabagus (chosen cadets), Pengabih (companion/protector), four Klian Daha, the Bapa Desa, Kubayan, Prawayah, Truna Adat and hundreds of village members. Some of the people would perform the duty to uphold the village deities' relics, Jempana.



Figure 3.¹⁸ Pork Offerings *Guling Siyu* in Usaba Sumbu.



Figure 4.¹⁹ The *Guling Siyu* tradition exemplifies Bali's high demand for hogs. The tradition shows that the consumption of roasted pork in the area is huge and is potentially a starting point for the development program for conserving Balinese pigs.

the long altar *Bale Panjang*. The act of pulling each other, as in *Mebarang*, is a symbol of respect to the Highest being, as well as a form of cultural preservation.¹⁷

Two days after *Usaba Sumbu Kaja*, it is time for the *Usaba Sumbu Kelod*. A ceremony to praise *Ida Betara Sri Rambut Sedana* by establishing two *Sumbu*. The village elders lead the ceremony, while the community again presents roasted porks as an offering. On this day, thousands of roasted porks would be piled up at the *Bale Agung* temple. The ritual day will be closed with *Nyimpén* or *Nyineb*, returning all the relics to their storage at *Bale Agung* Temple. The village deities' relics would be returned to the respective temples, accompanied by traditional musical instruments, *Selonding* and *Gong*, presented by the local community. It can also be seen as a performance of the *Rejang Dance* by village *Deha*. In the evening, a *Ngundangin* ceremony is held. This sacred ceremony is performed by the *Kelian Deha* while chanting unknown mantras. The *Kelian Deha*, while in a trance, would repeatedly invite the holy spirit, whereas the group of *Teruna* loudly cheered to prevent other parties from hearing the spell. No one is allowed to do any documentation on this occasion.

Moreover, village security *Pecalang* guards the ritual procession attentively.

Value and Future Possibilities

The whole series of rituals and ceremonies on *Usaba Sumbu* is viewed as offerings to ask for *Amertha*, the elixir of life. It is expected that the lord will bless the residents of the indigenous Village prosperous and welfare life. The tradition sparks a sense of togetherness and increases tolerance and cooperation among the people since the entire village community attends the annual ceremony. Some believe the tradition exists up to date since it has complex uses in the scope of society. It encompasses cultural values, brotherhood, and economic values. The tradition lives as a cultural identity of the traditional village community in Karangasem and represents the people's values. For instance, the value of brotherhood can be seen when the villager shares their roasted pork with others who could not afford the meat on occasion due to economic conditions or else. The high demand for porks, chickens or other livestock when preparing the ceremony allows local businesses to flourish. It indeed indirectly improves the local economy.

Meanwhile, a study proposed that *Usaba*

sumbu, as one of the cultural heritages, has the potential to become a cultural and gastronomic-based tourist destination. The proposal was offered because in a series of *Usaba sumbu*, together with various cultural activities, many types of traditional culinary are available during the week of the ceremony. The study suggested that the Karangasem Regency government organizes, manages, and empowers the cultural tourism potential in the Timbrah Traditional Village area. Further, cultural and gastronomic tourism management can be based on community participation.²⁰

Another potential industry that worth to be developed is pig farming. Karangasem has many traditions that have the potential to be the frontline to maintain the existence of this Balinese pig. The *Guling Siyu* tradition exemplifies Bali's high demand for hogs. The tradition shows that the consumption of roasted pork in the area is huge and is potentially a starting point for the development program for conserving Balinese pigs. From the field observation, it is known that most of the pigs used by the people in the ceremony are purebred pigs. Should the people's choice fall on Balinese pigs, there would be a good opportunity for Bali pigs farming. Moreover, almost every ceremony in Bali requires at least a roasted pork as one of the important offerings in Balinese Hindu rituals. The availability of local pig farming cannot fulfill the yearly demand. Livestock business owners can take the opportunity from this gap to provide the market demand and help maintain Balinese pigs' existence.

CONCLUSION

Usaba Sumbu is a celebration representing the people's gratitude for the prosperity that has existed since the 16th century, even though some claimed it had been performed since the 11th century. The whole series of rituals and ceremonies on *Usaba Sumbu* is viewed as offerings to ask for *Amertha*, the elixir of life. It is expected that the lord will bless the residents of the indigenous Village prosperous and welfare life. The tradition sparks a sense of togetherness and increases tolerance and cooperation among the people since the entire village community attends

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