



# Symbols in hindu political communication by the governor of bali regarding pusat kebudayaan bali (symbolic convergence analysis)

Ida Bagus Ngurah Tri Pramana

## ABSTRACT

In the news on Tempo.co Online Media on April 28, 2022, at 09.43 WIB with the title Towards a New Era of Bali, Built Cultural Center Areas, Governor of Bali for the 2018 – 2023 period, I Wayan Koster made several statements relating to Hindu political communication. In several accounts, the Governor of Bali, I Wayan Koster, used several symbols considered historical representations during the Hindu Gelgel Kingdom that are repeated in the present. In this study, researchers used a qualitative descriptive research method with an analysis of Symbolic Concentration Theory to analyze fantasy themes conveyed as symbols in political communications contained in the news. Based on the study, it can be stated that a fantasy theme correlates with the political communication goals of the Governor of Bali as a political communicator, namely Character, Plot, Place and Supporting Intermediaries. In this news, the Governor of Bali, I Wayan Koster, delivered rhetoric by using several symbols such as Raja Dalem Waturenggong (Character), the 500-year journey of the evolution of civilization in Bali since the time of the Gelgel Kingdom (Groove), Ex-Excavation Area C Gunaksa, Klungkung (Place), Concept Bali Padma Bhuwana, Bali Cultural Center Area, Monumental and historical masterpiece, new Economic Center, as well as a symbol of pride and happiness for Balinese people, and New Era of Balinese Civilization (Supporting Intermediaries). The use of this symbol aims to strengthen the political position of the Provincial Government of Bali, in this case, the leadership of the Governor of Bali, I Wayan Koster, through the achievements that have been achieved through the Development of the Bali Cultural Center which is located in Ex Excavation C, Gunaksa. Apart from that, the Governor of Bali's statement also aims to influence the Balinese people to unite in supporting government programs to realize harmonious social conditions following the Padma Bhuwana concept.

**Keywords:** Symbol, Hindu Political Communication, Governor of Bali.

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\*Magister Ilmu Komunikasi Hindu,  
Universitas Hindu Negeri I Gusti Bagus  
Sugriwa;  
ngurah.t.pramana@gmail.com

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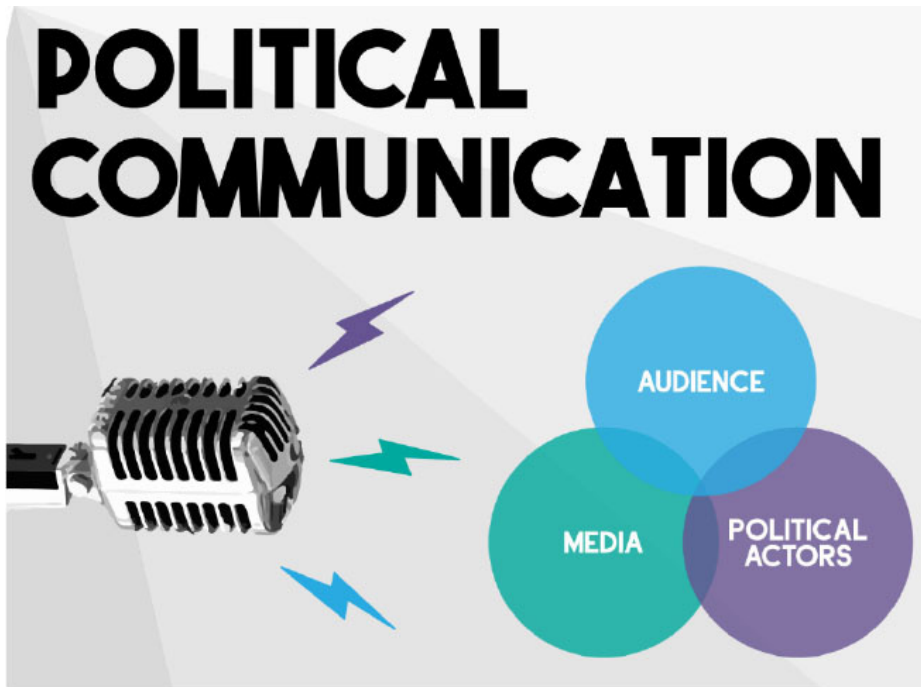
## BACKGROUND

As one of the Political messages tools, media serves to disseminate the Government's political agenda. Political information has something to do with the ultimate goal of the ruling: to gain absolute power over people. According to Nasution (1990), political communication relates to management, government policies and governance. Despite being often considered to have formal discussions or messages, political communication is closely related to daily human activities. Therefore, Individuals are generally involved in touch, unconsciously participating in political communication. In framing a political message, using symbols helps create a common perspective in people's minds. By using marks closely related to

the society's culture, the communicant is expected to grasp the concept conveyed by the communicator. In this context, the government in doing its function (Heryanto: 2018). In this interaction, symbols were used to strengthen the message's meaning. The theory of symbolic convergence by Ernest Bormann (1985) explains the process of the exchanging message that raises group awareness, resulting in the presence of meanings, motives and shared similarities.<sup>1</sup>

In a published online news by *Tempo.co* dated April 28, 2022, at 09.43 WIB entitled *Menuju Bali Era Baru, Kawasan Pusat Kebudayaan Dibangun*, Governor of Bali for the 2018 – 2023 period, I Wayan Koster made several statements relating to Hinduism political communication. In some of his messages, the Governor of

Bali, I Wayan Koster, uses several symbols considered to represent historical events during the Gelgel Kingdom that are repeated in the present. The Kingdom of Gelgel, with Dalem Waturenggong as its king, is often associated with Bali's golden age period. With many cultural remains that can still be found today. In the study of semiotics, the meaning of symbols can help researchers understand more in detail about the communication conveyed in a discourse (Piliang: 2004). This article analyzed the concentration of symbols in the news of the Governor of Bali, I Wayan Koster, along with their meanings following the political communication objectives of the Provincial Government of Bali, especially the Governor, in carrying out his political agenda.<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 1.** <sup>3</sup> Illustration of elements in political communication.



**Figure 2.** <sup>10</sup> Masterplan of *Pusat Kebudayaan Bali*.

## POLITICAL COMMUNICATION BASED ON CULTURAL SYMBOLS

Research by Putra et al. (2021) suggests that using religious and cultural Jargon in Political communication as a medium in the Election of the Governor of Bali has proven to be a special attraction for voters in Bali. The survey found that 87.6 percent said they were interested in voting in the Bali governor election because of religious and cultural jargon. One of the candidate pairs with their Religion and Culture dictions was the pair of I Wayan Koster

and Tjokorda Artha Ardana Sukawati. They proposed the terminology of *Nangun Sat Kerthi Loka Bali*. These figures passed and won the 2018 Bali governor election.<sup>4</sup> Another study by Parwati (2020) found that verbal signs and conventions in advertisements for the 2018 local election departed from the general sociocultural and socioreligious Balinese people. This symbol contained a message of hope for peace and harmony in Bali. The meaning of non-verbal signs in the form of illustrations, logos, colors, and characters in regional election advertisements

originated from myths of Balinese. While Sutharjana and Indrajaya (2022), in their study entitled Political Communication of Members of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) from the PDI Perjuangan Party Who Are Hindus in Tulang Bawang District, found that the use of mass media had proven to be effective in overcoming geographical problems which often became obstacles to political communication face-to-face meetings in the Tulang Bawang area. These three studies support the existence of religious and cultural symbols in political communication, along with the effectiveness of mass media in influencing society. However, previous studies have yet to discuss the meaning of symbols and their interpretation especially using Symbolic convergence theory, which explains why religious and cultural symbols in political communication can affect society.<sup>5,6</sup>

The Political communication model by Harold Lasswell (2017) shows that the communicator has a definite desire to influence the recipient. Thus, political communication is seen as an effort of persuasion. Then, the delivery of messages in political communication can have a positive or negative impact, depending on how the message is delivered. In the interactional political communication model, the communication process characteristics were 1) non-systemic, 2) non-linear and 3) qualitative.<sup>7</sup> In the interactional model, political communication activities are described as the formation of meaning or interpretation of messages or the behavior of other individuals by communication participants. Important concepts in the interactional political communication model are self, other self, meaning, symbol, action and interpretation. In understanding the interactional political communication model, symbols are interpreted as people who act as participants in communication. These participants are active, reflective, and creative and exhibit unpredictable behavior.<sup>8</sup>

The components of political communication have similarities with other types of communication. This component has a function so that the communication process can run



Table 1

	Symbol
Character	Raja Dalem Waturenggong
Plot	Perjalanan 500 tahunan evolusi peradaban di Bali, sejak masa Kerajaan Gelgel
Place	Areal Eks Galian C Gunaksa, Klungkung
Intermediaries	Menuju Bali Era Baru, Kawasan Pusat Kebudayaan Dibangun,



**Figure 3.** <sup>13</sup> Governor of Bali inspected the construction area of *Pusat Kebudayaan Bali*.

properly and the message can reach the communicant (listener or interlocutor). These components are 1) Communicators, 2) Messages, 3) Media, 4) Communicators, 5) Effects or consequences and 6) Barriers. Furthermore, Political Communication has various functions. These functions are 1) Conveying political information, 2) Maintaining values, 3) Political outreach, 4) Encouraging climate change, 5) Social control, 6) Providing motivation, 7) Entertainment, and 8) Increasing political participation.<sup>9</sup>

Symbolic convergence theory or fantasy theme analysis is a remarkable theory by Ernest G. Bormann, John Cragan and Donald Shield, which was proven to be used by individual storytellers in communication. The starting point of this theory is that an individual's picture of reality is guided by stories that describe how things are believed to exist. Fantasy themes are part of larger plays which are longer, more complicated stories called rhetorical views, a view of how something has happened, is happening or will happen. In large measure, this view forms the basic assumptions of knowledge of a group, then creates an understanding of reality. Fantasy themes and even larger rhetorical views,

consisting of supporting Characters, Plots, Places, and Intermediaries. Characters can be heroes, villains or other support players. The plot is the development of the story. Place or setting is the location, equipment and sociocultural environment. Finally, the supporting intermediary is a source that certifies the story. This source can be a power that lends credibility to or legitimizes the story. This medium can be a belief in God, a commitment to justice or democracy, or faith in the opposite.

### CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS IN GOVERNOR OF BALI'S POLITICAL MESSAGES

Several words, phrases, and interview excerpts refer to symbols conveyed in the news entitled *Menuju Bali Era Baru, Kawasan Pusat Kebudayaan Dibangun*, published by Tempo. The symbols in the information are analyzed based on the four basic assumptions of the Symbolic Concentration Theory: Character, Plot, Place, and Supporting Intermediaries. The data were classified and presented in tabular form as follows:

Dalem Waturenggong, or Dalem Gelgel, was a *Dalem* (King) who reigned

in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century (circa 1520-1558). He was a king who brought the golden age of the Balinese Hindu Gelgel kingdom—ranging from political expansion, cultural renovation, and sociocultural developments. In Balinese historiography, Dalem Waturenggong represented an epic vision of an empire that was a model for the island's subsequent rulers (Murdha et al.: 1986). The character of Dalem Waturenggong in the Governor of Bali's rhetoric, I Wayan Koster, functions to evoke the communicants' memory of a great king, an innovative leader in various social aspects who were able to bring the Gelgel Kingdom in the past to its golden age. The affirmation of the golden age becomes central in building the context of the message so that the communicant can imagine the ideal social conditions that the Balinese have achieved in the past.<sup>11</sup>

The emphasis continues on the plot, illustrated in the sentence, "*Perjalanan 500 tahunan evolusi peradaban di Bali, sejak masa Kerajaan Gelgel*"—the affirmation aimed to establish social agreements in the Balinese people's minds. The Kingdom of Gelgel began when the royal center was moved from Samprangan to Gelgel during the reign of Dalem Ketut Ngulesir (1380-1400) until the center of government was forcibly moved to Klungkung in 1686. The Gelgel period, which lasted from the XIV to XVI centuries AD, left many cultural heritages in the form of sacred buildings—Temples, inscriptions, weapons, settlements of community groups, holy objects and art objects. The cultural heritage in the form of temple buildings classified as 'large' in the Gelgel indigenous village totals more than 24 temples, consisting of the *Kahyangan Jagat* Temple, *Dang Kahyangan* Temple, *Kahyangan Tiga* Temple, and the central temple of *Kawitan*. Other cultural remains are objects of cultural art such as Ratu Panji's *Gelung* (crown) kept at Pusering Jagat Gelgel Temple, *Oncer Ganda* spear at Bale Tumbak Temple, and *Wayang Wong* Art at Bale Batur Kamasan Temple (Mardika et al.: 2020). Even though various events occurred in the historical development of the Balinese people, which became the dynamics of social life, Governor Koster emphasized that the Balinese people had evolved. This evolution is part of the

understanding that Balinese people have moved towards progress when viewed from the perspective of Balinese human civilization today.<sup>12</sup>

The Ex-Excavation Area C, Klungkung, was soil, sand, gravel, limestone, marble, kaolin, granite and several other types of mining sites. The area includes three villages: Jumpai Village, Tangkas Village and Gunaksa Village, Dawan District and Klungkung District, and Klungkung Regency, Bali. The ex-excavation site C is part of the Unda River estuary (Pariartha et al.: 2021). This area has received attention from both the central government and local governments to maximize its utilization as a surface freshwater reservoir and reduce the potential for flooding that often occurs in the estuary area. The Bali Cultural Center area, built in the Ex-Excavation Area C, Gunaksa, provides economic value to the area. Previously, the site was a less productive land and always being blamed as the main cause of flooding. In addition, the strategic position of Ex Excavation C in the Klungkung regency has similarities with the center of the Gelgel kingdom which was also located in the Klungkung region.<sup>14,15</sup>

The concept of Bali Padma Bhuwana, according to Tary Puspa (2012), is a combination of three types of philosophical conceptions that have a philosophical background for establishing Kahyangan Jagat in Bali, namely the *Rwa bhinneda* Concept, the *Catur Loka Pala* Concept and the *Sad Winayaka* Conception. Whereas in the book Padma Bhuwana by the Deputy Governor of Bali 2018-2023, Tjokorda Oka Artha Ardana Sukawati argued that Padma Bhuwana is an idea to develop Bali with each of its *taksu*.<sup>16</sup> Padma Bhuwana is a cosmic space concept that resembles the *Padma* (Lotus) flower, in which divine spirits control every space and its cardinal points. Ardana Sukawati (2022) stated that this meaning refers to the ejection of *Padma Bhuwana*, which discussed that Mpu Kuturan, around the 11<sup>th</sup> century, called Bali a 'Padma Bhuwana.' Then, the Hindu prophet Danghyang Nirartha in the 15<sup>th</sup> century also noted the same thing. Suppose it related to the analysis of meaning in an interview excerpt from the Governor of Bali.<sup>17</sup> In that case, I Wayan Koster said that the construction

of the Bali Cultural Center, built on the Ex-Excavation C, Klungkung was a Monumental and historical masterpiece in Balinese Hindu civilization, which refers to the concept of development based on the philosophy of Padma Bhuwana. Because this development aimed to provide material and moral benefits to the people of Bali. Material refers to using former non-productive land to be reproductive and becomes a new economic center for the community. Morally, this development reflects the evolution of Balinese social progress that has developed since the time of the Gelgel Kingdom. The construction of the Bali Cultural Center would demonstrate the progress of the New Era of Balinese Civilization. It would become a symbol of the pride and happiness of the Balinese people today.<sup>18,19</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Based on analyzed symbols and their meanings, it can be stated that a fantasy theme correlates with the goals of political communication. Based on the components in the Symbolic Convergence Theory, namely Character, Plot, Place and Supporting Intermediaries, it was found that in the news, the Governor of Bali, I Wayan Koster conveyed rhetoric with several symbols such as *Raja Dalem Waturenggong*, The 500-year journey of the evolution of civilization in Bali since the time of the Gelgel Kingdom, Ex Excavation Area C Gunaksa, Klungkung, Padma Bhuwana Bali Concept, Bali Cultural Center Area, Monumental and historical masterpieces, new Economic Center, as well as a symbol of pride and happiness for the Balinese people, and the New Era of Balinese Civilization. This symbol aims to strengthen the political position of the Provincial Government of Bali, in this case, the leadership of the Governor of Bali, I Wayan Koster, through the achievements achieved through the Development of the Bali Cultural Center. Apart from that, the Governor of Bali's statement also aims to influence the Balinese people to unite in supporting government programs to realize harmonious social conditions under the Padma Bhuwana concept.

When conveying his political agenda to the mass media, the study shows symbols with fantasy themes in Hindu political

communication by the Governor of Bali, I Wayan Koster. An understanding of symbols and their purpose in political communication is useful for individuals to understand the direction of the political agenda of a political actor, be it the government, organizations, politicians or NGOs. This becomes important so that communicants can provide interpretations and criticize a political activity so that they are not trapped in a political agenda that is detrimental in the future. Further studies are needed to examine the level of community participation as a response to political communication, especially Hindu political communication by the government in persuading Balinese Hindus and non-Hindu.

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