

Symbolic Communication as a Struggle for Identity Recognition:

A Case study in Blimbingsari, Bali

Sih Natalia Sukmi

Satya Wacana Christian University

Abstract

Bali is a part of Indonesia with unique behavior and tradition. It has some specific symbols which become the mirror of its identity. More than 90percent Balinese are Hindus. For Hindus, the faith is clearly shown in their daily rituals. In the other hand, Bali tradition is similar with Hindus. Identity in their society contain primordial sentiment such as ethnics, religion and etc. For this society, identity is a “self-value” and “weapon” to face the foreign or external power using symbols in language and culture. Therefore, to get its resistant, built “pekraman” village or Bali traditional village which legalized by Bali government and considered that villages do not include in “pekraman” village is foreigners. The resistance of Hinduism is strenghtened after the Balinese bombing in 2003 by “ajeg Bali” programme.

The problems may occur that not 100% of Balinese are Hindus. All of the villages in Blimbingsari are Christian which different from the common Balinese. The matter in this research is the specifically found how Blimbingsari’s effort to obtain a legacy that they are considered as Balinese eventhough they hold their Christianity.

This research uses the ethnography of communication with the writers’s observation by living in this society. The result of this research shows that Blimbingsari do some effort to acculturate in building cultural symbols by inserting culture of (Hindu) Bali without leaving Christianity. This result indicates that acculturation process within Cristianity and Hinduism in Blimbingsari conducted through some communication media or lines, i.e. the architectures of Pniel Church in Blimbingsari, the carving in Pniel Church, the rituals of Pniel Church, social organization and Awig-awig in villages with Christianity tradition.

Blimbingsari uses culture as one of the media to fight for the dominant culture. The acculturation within Hinduism and Christian culture in Blimbingsari village is an effort to fight for without violence, and a conformity which they try to use in reducing conflicts happened inside Bali society. The acculturation of culture creates self identity of Blimbingsari culture, in Bali society which embraces Christian in a village with Christianity tradition.

Keywords : Cultural Acculturation, Ethnography of Communication.

A. Introduction

Bali is stated unique, for it has specific symbols which reflect their identity. Ting Toomey in Purnomo Raharjo revealed that cultural identity is emotional significance from a person to own sense of belonging or affiliate with certain culture. The inhabitants which

divided into different groups, then do cultural identification, that is, every person concern himself as a representative of a particular culture. A person who incoordinated in a certain society will identify himself similarly with cultural identity in their society.

There is a general agreement that recognizes identity as one of the few fundamental human needs and part of condition of being human. (Ling Chen, 2011:213).

Therefore, identity becomes the important part of someone's or society's life. Identity in a society contains primordial sentiment like ethnics, religions and others. For society, identity is a pride and weapon to encounter outer strength by language and cultural symbols. (<http://ejournal.unud.ac.id>, 12 Januari 2011).

Identity will become more complicated in plural society. And Bali owns it. Historically, Bali and its dynamics has pluralism in the identity of *Bali Mula* or *Bali Aga* (Bali Asli) dan Bali Majapahit (*wong Majapahit*). (Damayana, 2011: 91). The development authority of Majapahit dynasty in Bali and the migration of Java-Bali utters second distinguishing which based on kinship identity (*tri wangsa dan jaba wangsa*) as a specific caste of society system in Bali. (Wiana 1993: 98; Dwipayana, 2005: 5, Putra 1998: 32 dalam Damayana, 2011:92).

Pluralism in Bali is more materialized when Moslems as King accompanist came in step with Patih Agung Maruti coup d'etat which caused conflicts and internal cleavage in Bali to become several kingdoms. Islamic identity is more materialized in the organizing of several Islamic kampong in Bali, such as Kapaon, Serangan, Karangasem, Pegayaman di Buleleng and the founding of place of worship (male deity's intersection in Mekah) in several temples in Bali (Mengwi, Badung, dan Bangli). (Ibid: 93).

Besides Islamic identity, Christian identity also existed in Bali since Dutch colonialism, although indirectly, through some missionaries. The next journey of Catholic

missionary, Pastor Johanes Kersten SVD, followed the bilding of Catholic community who are most resident at Palasari.

Based on BPS (Statistical Centre Bureau) Bali Province in 2009, Bali is widely range about 5.632,86 km² or only have measurement of 0,3% of all the land width in Indonesia. The amount of the inhabitants is 3.471.195 persons (1.739.526 persons atau 50, 10% males dan 1.732.426 persons atau 49,90% female), with the composition of inhabitants' religions can be seen from the following table

Tabel 1.2. Table of Inhabitants' Composition Based on Religion in the year of 2009

Inhabitants' Composition (based on religion)	2009	
	Amount(person)	Percentage (%)
Hindu	2.751.828	87,44
Islam	323.853	10,29
Buddha	16.569	0,53
Christian	30.439	0,97
Catholics	23.834	0,76
Others	476	0,002
Total amount	3.471.195	100

Source: BPS Provinsi Bali, 2010: 83-120

Based on those data, it can be observed that the dominate religion in Bali, based on the survey, is still Hindu. However, other religions except Hindu have developed, from 2,67 % become 12,56%.

Bali identification with Hindu is also validated by Bendesa Adat (ketua adat) *desa pakraman* (desa adat) Ekasari, I Wayan Winara, "Bali culture is difficultly released with Hindu. Whereas the majority of Balinese is Hindu, and the culture art is always connected with religiosity. So, automatically, the culture known as Balinese culture is Hindu culture." (an interview result on Wednesday, pukul 09.13 WITA). The unique of Bali is identical with Hindu. That Hindu Culture which then becomes the contributor of tourism business in Bali. Since 1970, tourism has become the part of Balinese culture. (Suryawan, 2005: xxvii).

However, August 2002 became historical month for Balinese. A month which bring a great change for the society well-known with its excotic of nature and culture. The Bombing Event in Bali, of course became the tragedy which contrastive with the effort of developing devisa of Bali. The tourism became buried, in which most of the Balinese were lost their job as a result of the hotels left by without any visitors. The income drastically decreased and give the result on the raising amount of unemployments. Chaos, it was the description of Bali after bombing.

Collateral with that event, mass media began to take part exclusively. Mass media became the effective access in building the public opinion. The media which unceasingly pioneer this is incosolidated in Kelompok Media Bali Post (KMB). In the end of nineties Bali Post was a solid province media and include of it, a local television channel, four radio stations, the prestigious Bali Post newspaper, daily Denpost and other magazines. (Suryawan, 2005: xxx). KMB make serious effort to awaken the society through the jargon they have created with the term *ajeg* Bali. The launching of jargon *ajeg* Bali was in step with the opening of Bali TV on May 2003 by The Governor of Bali, I Dewa Made Beratha.

Henk Schulte Nordholt in *Bali: an Open Fortress* revealed that “*ajeg means that we should go back to the origin. Back to the peaceful Bali, when things were in order and true.*” “*Ajeg means that Bali is safe and can resist terrorists.*” (*Ajeg* means we should have be back to the origin, back to the pure Bali, and peaceful, in which everything is neat and original, *ajeg* means Bali is safe and able to resist from the terrorists). (Suryawan, 2005: xxxi).

Jargon *Ajeg* Bali has not only anaesthetized identity of “Balinese” of Balinese society, but uncosiously, besides it is –*Ajeg* Bali- has congealed culture, made it become property, ignited the seeds of cultural essensialiam movement, and also the seeds of

Hindus fundamentalism. (Suryawan, 2009:130). Ajeg Bali in make the ossification of Balinese identity occur, between something or someone indicated Bali or not. (Suryawan dalam Damayana, 2011: 4). This is because *ajeg Bali* –for the follower of cultural essentialism movement- should have been based on Hindus percept which underlies Balinese culture. So, it is called then, that Ajeg Bali should have been called Ajeg Hindu. (Suryawan, 2009:131). More deeply then, is the understanding of Ajeg Bali which should be called Ajeg Hindu. In the stage of the struggle, there is an affirmation and institutionalization of religion, including the grudge of localism, which in this term, BALInese based on Hindu percept. The basic of the grudge itself, then become the seeds of fundamentalism movement, just like what had happened in Islamic or Christian movement, and others. (Media Hindu, Ajeg Bali Proteksi Agama, Budaya, dan Tanah Bali, Edisi 21 November 2005.) (Suryawan, 2009: 143).

In Denpasar, the contribution for the visitor is increased, in order to make wary effect for the visitor that it was not easy to enter and stay in Bali. The effort reaped protest from the visitors. The KTP (identity card) politics was clearly done. The traditional institution, that is *pakraman*, *pencalang* dan *sekaa teruna* (youth organization) has a great power to determine who is able to live or stay in that island. This matter builds opinion that they (Balinese) purpose to show their existence which seen discriminative in determining identity (original or not) from Bali, including the struggle of economical assets' belonging.

The apprehensive about hard discriminative action is not only experienced by the visitors. This condition also makes Blimbingsari society restless, a village in Melaya district, Jembrana region. Their restless in not because they are visitors. The fact reveals that ajeg Bali is on behalf of keeping the originality of Balinese culture, which is Hindu, the religion which is professed by almost of Balinese. In the other hands, Blimbingsari,

eventhough they are Balinese (born in Bali) but all of the inhabitants are Christian. Blimbingsari begins to feel worry because the recent policy makes non-Hindu feel suppressed. In that condition, Blimbingsari seems to do some effort to build the symbols which they want to express as their own identity.

B. Research Problems

Blimbingsari society is Balinese who profess Christian. The program of ‘Ajeg Bali’ build by the goverment of Bali directs that Bali is Hindu, so it can be said that ‘Ajeg Bali’ is identical with “Ajeg Hindu”. Blimbingsari society who profess Christian, feel threaty with that policy, so they need to do some adjustments in the form of cultural acculturation. This observation is purposed to know how Blimbingsari society who profess Christian do the cultural acculturation with Hindu (Bali) in order to keep that their cultural identity is still Bali, so their existence is guaranteed.

C. Discussion and Conclusion

This research took Bali as the place, exactly in Blimbingsari village, Melaya district, in Jembrana region. Pre research has begun since October 2010 and the data was collected until February 2012. In this research, the writer has explained all the data and corpus (primary data) as the result of observation through ethnographycal communication.

According to the result of this observation, the writer found process of aculturation between Hindu and Christian occur to Blimbingsari society. The aculturation is able to be seen from several elements of cuture, i.e.:

1. The architecture of Pniel Church in Blimbingsari
2. The arrangement of religious service in Pniel Church in Blimbingsari
3. Sociality system of Blimbingsari society

Based on those categories, here are the analysis of aculturation result to Blimbingsari society.

1. The Culture Aculturation of Hindu and Christian in The Architecture of Pniel Church in Blimbingsari

Rasmusen (1964) in *Experiencing Architecture* reveals that architecture is not only able to be seen and touch, which can be heard and felt are also part of architecture. It can be said that architecture is a realization of complexity in art. This art is built to emerge the deeper feeling according to the aim wishes to reach. The aim itself is definitely close related with the meaning of the creator of the architecture.

Blimbingsari is well-known as Christian village. The Christianity is deeply seen by the existence of unique church with Balinese architecture, called Pniel. The word "Pniel" means a meeting with God. In a glance, it cannot be seen that this building is a church, because it more seen as a temple. In its development, this church has rebuilt three times.

Based on the site of Pniel Church, it can be observed that the building is located in kaja side or the northern part of the village and it is on the highest part of Blimbingsari village. This matter is similar with the understanding of Hindu society when they build a temple. Therefore, though it is a church, Blimbingsari people are still figure on the understanding of the situation of the church based on Hindu's philosophy.

Aculturation seems to be applied by Blimbingsari society in building their place of worship. Pniel Church is divided into three stages. First is the outer side of the church, second stage is the foreground and the third is the main building where

the service is done. Those three elements of Balinese temple symbolize Tri Loka, or three parts of the world according to Hindu's philosophy.

In every part of religious service building, there is always an entrance door. In



common church, entrance door is only ordinary gate. However, it is different in Pniel. There is Bentar Temple as the entrance for the first foreground of Pniel church.

On the architecture of Pniel Church, it is seen that this church also has *candi kurung* to enter the second foreground. This building is stepped, made of concrete bricks which neatly arranged, looks like Pura/temple. However, the difference is, there is a Cross symbol in *candi kurung*. The Cross of Jesus Christ, for Christians, is also understood as a symbol of The Trinity of God.

Bali island is an island with inhabitants majority in Hindu. The worship to the gods done by Balinese, has been done hundred years ago. Every temple built has its specific characteristic, which make it looked special. One of the characteristics is on its carving. (<http://eksotikabaliutara.wordpress.com>).

Pniel Church seems the same with those temples which state in Bali with fulfilled with carvings in every wall of its. The carving in Pniel Church done by an artist from Ubud. The ideas of making the carving came from Priest Ketut Suyaga Ayub. He gave A Holy Bible to the artist to be learnt, and then realized in the form of carving. Those carving is appeared to exert Balinese approach.

2. The Arrangement of Religious Service in Pniel Church Blimbingsari

In Blimbingsari, the religious service is done according to Christian Church in common. However, the difference is that the religious service is performed in the beginning of the month. Pniel Church differs it into common religious service and special service. Every beginning of the month or in the first week, the Church will perform contextually service (Religious service in Balinese context) and diverge with the common Christian religious service, the community wears traditional clothes in contextually service. Priest Ayub said that in that Procession, the feeling will be reached when all the members are able to get the feeling and build it. Therefore, in the procession of Blimbingsari contextual service, the members of community must wear Balinese traditional clothes.

A liturgy is a guidance in arranging religious service in Christian worship. This written guidance directs the community in the way to behave in a service. In opening the public worship, the community of Pniel Church will do the first procession, that is votum and greeting, however in its liturgy, it will be written as the opening worship, they will do votum and *Swastiastu*. *Swastiastu* is a greeting which is used to say by Hindus people. Whereas for Christians, the greeting which used to be said is Syallom. But in reality, *Swastiastu* is the word chosen to be used as one of the procession when they want to do the worship in Pniel Church.

Blimbingsari society also do acculturation process towards the musical instruments they use in worship. In contextual service, Blimbingsari people use *gong kebyar* as the accompanist instruments.

3. Social System in Blimbingsari Society

3.1. Christian Traditional Village Blimbingsari

The policy of “ajeg Bali” is tried to be received and behaved by Blimbingsari people with the concept of pekraman village which is emerged in Blimbingsari as

Christian Traditional Village of Blimbingsari. Based on the villagers election, Bendesa Adat in Blimbingsari is Mr. Suka Bagya. The founding of Christian Traditional Village in Blimbingsari was legitimately done in November 2009. The founding of traditional village which is finally compromised with the name of Christian Traditional Village of Blimbingsari, is actually realized as an effort to harmonize with the policy of Bali Government about “*ajeg Bali*”. Since it is understood that the Government with the society (Hindu) is hard in making effort to succeed ‘*Ajeg Bali*’ program.

3.2. Awig-awig Christian Traditional Village of Blimbingsari

When *pakraman village* is the form of social organization, awig-awig is the system or the order of manner to operate the components in pakraman village. Awig-awig in traditional village is a basic to do actions for all components of the village.

Based on the content of awig-awig of Blimbingsari village, it was fated that Blimbingsari constructs itself to become Christian Traditional Village. That matter has been legitimated since November 2009. Seeing the content of awig-awig of Blimbingsari, it can be observed that this village has positioned itself righteously as Hindu village. They called *Jesus Christ* as *Ida Sang Hyang Yesus Kristus*. Similar with Hindu people who called Their Majesty with *Ida Sang Hyang*. Then, it is explained that in the basic and background of awig-awig of Christian Traditional Village Blimbingsari, stamped that St. Matthew ch.28: vs. 18 – 20 and 1st Peter ch.2: vs.9 as the basic. The striking difference with the other awig-awig of pakraman village is that the basic is taken from Holy Bible of Christian.

It is also in the name of the place to do ritual service or the place considered holy one. Christians are used to call the place to ritual service with church, whereas Hindu people called it with pura. Pura is a holy building where Hindu Bali do the ritual service.

(Soebandi, 1983: v). In Chapter 3 of stipulation of Christian traditional village, Blimbingsari constructs itself similar with Balinese in the other pekraman village. The word Pura is chosen to call their place of worship or church.

Beside Pura, in running the life, Balinese is oriented on the phylosophy of Tri Hita Kirana which means three subjects conducived to welfare. Those three subjects are: (1) Parahiyangan Element, that is Divinity, which points at the supernatural of powers. (2) Palemahan Elements, that is territory, which is macro-cosmic element. (3) Pawongan Elements, that is the human (who inhabit in the territory) as the micro-cosmic element. (Ayub, dkk, 2011: 5).

Based on the explanation of Official Regulations of Bali Provence Number 3 Year 2011, about Pekraman Village (Ttp and Tth, hal.2 butir 11), Tri Hita Kirana is the basic of pekraman village,which previously called traditional village. In the explanation, it is lean on that the phylosophy of Tri Hita Kirana is “contain constitutive characteristics which become the ethical spiritually orientation to the entirely basics which purified in the life of desa pekraman.” (ibid).

The culture acculturation through three media which meant by Blimbingsari society is more physically/ outer appearance, without touching the conviction aspect of Christianity in Blimbingsari.However, in the arrangement of religious service or ritual in Pniel Church in Blimbingsari, what which happen seems not only in the level of acculturation. The result of the research reveals that what are being done by Blimbingsari people, especially in ritual or the arrangement of religious service is the form of syncretism between Christians and Hindus. Therefore, it can be said that syncretization Pniel Church Blimbingsari is a new identity of Christian Bali, an identity which eventhough Blimbingsari society are Christian, they are still Balinese.

REFERENCES

- Chia-Fang (Sandy) Hsu. 2010. "Acculturation and Communication Traits: A Study of Cross-Cultural Adaptation among Chinese in America". *Communication Monographs*, 77, 414-425.
- Damayana, I Wayan. 2011. *Menyama Brana: Studi Perubahan Masyarakat Bali*. Salatiga: Fakultas Teologi UKSW.
- Devito, A Joseph. 2003. *Human Communication: The Basic Course*. New York: College of The City University of New York.
- Dillistone, F.W.. 2002. *The Power of Symbols*. Yogyakarta: Percetakan Kanisius.
- Fiedler, Klaus. 2007. *Social Communication*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Frey&Sunwolf, Poole & Hirokawa. 2007. *Introducing Communication Theory*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Gillespie, Marie. 1995. *Television, Ethnicity, and Cultural Change*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Gumperz, John. J, & Hymes, Dell. 1974. "The Etnography of Communication." *American Anthropologist*, 76, 932-933.
- Henslin, M. James. 2006. *Sosiologi dengan Pendekatan Membumi*. (Edisi. terjemahan oleh Prof. Kamanto Sunarto, S.H.,Ph.D). Jakarta: Penerbit Erlangga.
- Ling Chen. 2011. "Cultural identity as a production in process: Dialectics in Hongkongers' Account". *Journal of Asian Pasific Communication*, 21, 213-237.
- Martin, Judith & Nakayama, Thomas K. 1990. *Intercultural Communication In Context*, Singapore: McGraw.
- Mulder, Niels. 1999. *Agama, Hidup Sehari-Hari dan Perubahan Budaya. Jawa, Muangthai dan Filipina*. (Edisi terjemahan Satrio Widiatmoko). Jakarta: PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Pearson, Judy C. & Nelson, Paul E. 2000. *An Introduction to Human Communication, Understanding and Sharing*. USA: McGraw-Hill.
- Rahardjo, Turnomo. 2005. *Menghargai Perbedaan Kultural: Mindfulness Dalam Komunikasi Antaretnis*. Jogjakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Samovar, Larry A., Porter, E. Richard, McDaniel, Edwin R.. 2007. *Communication between Cultures*. United State: Thomson Wadsworth.

- Saviell, Mauriel & Troike. 2003. *Ethnography of Communication (An Introduction)*. United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Suastra, I Made. 2008. *Bahasa Bali sebagai Simbol Identitas Manusia Bali*. Bali: Udayana University Press.
- Suryawan, I Ngurah. 2009. *Bali Pascakolonial, Jejak Kekerasan dan Sikap Kajian Budaya*. Yogyakarta: Kepel Press.
- White, F. James. 2005. *Pengantar Ibadah Kristen* (Edisi terjemahan oleh Liem Sien Kie). Jakarta: Gunung Mulia.
- Yangrong, Chang. 2011. "Performing Cultural and Personal Identities through Talk". *China Media Research*, 7, 3, 21-32.

References from the Net

- Suastra, I Made. 2008. *Bahasa Bali sebagai Simbol Identitas Manusia Bali*. Diambil dari <http://ejournal.unud.ac.id> pada 12 Januari 2011.
- Yudy. 2010. "Mengagumi Ukiran Khas Bali Utara di Pura Beji" Diambil pada 16 Desember 2011 dari <http://eksotikabaliutara.wordpress.com>