

## THE CHANGING OF TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION MEDIUM TO SOCIAL MEDIA IN BALI

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### Abstract

Communication is one of the most important parts of a culture. Through communication, societies have interacted and built a culture. One such culture built of traditional mass communication in Bali is Kulkul. But nowadays, especially in the younger generation, the used of social media through mobile communications has become more attractive, which could affect the used and a role of Kulkul. The objectives of the research were to find out if and how far social media has replaced the usage and function of Kulkul in Bali customary society. The method of the study was qualitative in an ethnographic approach and carried out at Guwang Village, Gianyar, Bali, Indonesia in year 2014. The results showed that the younger generation preferred using social media for delivering messages related to customary rather than Kulkul. They also did not understand the original meaning of Kulkul's rhythm. The roles of Kulkul as a symbol of cultural mass-communication in Bali was threatened by using social media for communicating messages related to customary in Bali.

**Keywords:** Balinese culture, customary, medium communication, social media

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### Introduction

The relations between culture and communication explained by Carey (1988) who said that *Communication was a symbolic process whereby reality was produced, maintained, repaired and transformed*. It stressed that communication and reality related each other. Communication was a tool to cultivate values and norms in daily lives such as to understand, to educate and to construct view and reality of the world. Communication is the fundamental based of a culture.

Indonesia as a multicultural nation has a diverse traditional communication medium all over the region. Such as *tudung sipulung* (sitting together), *ma'bulo sibatang* (sitting together and discuss) in South Sulawesi; and also *selapanan* (35 days of celebration birthday) in Central Java. In addition, may also demonstrate a traditional instruments such as the gong are still widely used in Java. This instrument could be used to communicate messages that contain different meanings, such as the presence of death, accident, fire, theft and so on, to all villagers if it sounded with individual rhythms.

In Bali, one of a traditional medium is *Kulkul*. Kulkul is like *kentonqan* in Indonesia but ina smaller size. The chief of the lowest part of the society called *Banjar* uses kulkul to gather people in the community for doing custom traditionally. Besides *kulkul*, in Bali they have men who have a job to inform people of doing the traditional custom, they called *kasinoman*. They used to tell people in the society to come to gather in sitting area of Banjar, a place to gather in. They also told people what the Banjar does or has done related to customaries'

interests. *Kulkul* and *kasinoman* have significant roles in people and custom traditional relations.

In younger generations this tradition continues. They also used a role of *kasinoman* in spreading the news to their colleagues or member of their groups. The group of young people in the society called *Seka Teruna* (ST). Before today's advanced technology, *kasinoman* went to houses of the member of ST one by one to inform the news or invite the member to come to a meeting. Now, especially in one of the village Gianyar, Bali like in Guwang Village, the usage of *kasinoman* is degrading. Nowadays, they didn't have to visit one by one, but they could spread it by using short messages (SMS) or through BlackBerry Messenger (BBM). The younger generations do not use *kulkul* to gather their member again. For that, the objective of the research was to find out if and how far the social media has replaced the usage and function of a traditional communication medium in Bali's customary society.

### **Research Problem**

How far social media has replaced the usage and function of a traditional communication medium in Bali's customary society?

### **Review of Related Literature**

Studies about traditional communication medium in environmental customary have been written by Sadguna (2009) who said that the role of *kulkul* in Bali stayed alive because the people in Bali obey on their traditions. Balinese's people also known as a society who have values like working together. This tradition is seen as a sacred activity. Balinese's people have a strong cohesiveness in their society. Balinese's people always obey on their cultural symbols, *kulkul* for example.

Jürgen Habermas published *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* a book that has widely influenced public opinion theory. Public spheres mediate between the state and private individuals, for Habermas, and as such they presuppose a private sphere and private subjectivity, such as was beginning to emerge within the bourgeoisie during the eighteenth century (Crossley, 2004 p.4). Public sphere argued by Habermas existed during the eighteenth century, but it transformed now with the rise of mass societies and commercial mass media. Recently, new media theorists have drawn on Habermas's ideas to argue that Internet-based communication might be used to create a global public sphere (Littlejohn, 2009 p. 812-813).

Habermas (1991) in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, talked about face to-face dialogue that seen as rational interaction or critical discussion. Face-to-face was the vehicle and process of enlightenment. Even public opinion and the public cannot be separated from discussion. Public opinion is the outcome of discussion among private individuals, and it is through discussion that individuals forma public. Littlejohn (2009) argued that Habermas's privileging of face-to-face conversation becomes more problematic with regard to the possibility of a global public sphere. The size of the public who can take part in face-to-face conversation has natural limitations (Littlejohn, 2009 p. 815-816).

From the literature above, public sphere nowadays is moving and transforming through new media such as social media. Dialog and discussion is no longer in public places but has formed another shape to create global public sphere.

## Methods

The method of the study was qualitative in descriptive ethnographic approach and carried out at Guwang Village, Gianyar Bali, Indonesia in year 2014. Data were collected through interviewing and observation. Resources person in this research were the leader of *Sekaa Teruna* in Banjar Sakih, Guwang Village; the chief of the Guwang Village related in customary matters, it called *Bendesa Adat*, and members of *Sekaa Teruna*.

## Results and discussion

### Overview Guwang Village

Guwang village is located in Gianyar Regency, Bali Province, Indonesia. There are 3000 families lived in this village. Guwang village divided into seven area based on customary's society which it called by *Banjar*. There are *Banjar* Sakih, Danginjalan, Wangbung, Buluh, Tatag, and Manikan. In every *Banjar*, they have a place to gather called *Bale Banjar*. In this bale Banjar, people in the society sit together, socialize and make decisions. Every Banjar has an organization of the young generation called *Sekaa Teruna* (ST). In Banjar Sakih, their ST named is Budhi Utama. ST Budhi Utama in Banjar Sakih have 140 members, and they used to gather every month to discuss or they gather in Bale Banjar, and they sit together to discuss things. They have also various programs such as going to the temple together, taking part if one of the members gets married, until helping if there is a Balinese ceremony like Ngaben or Piodalan.

### The Changes: The Beginning of BBM usage

Doing the research, the researcher found there were same changing in communication medium and traditions in the younger generation. First changed, the role of Kasinomman was degrading. The second changed the usage of social media in spreading and discussion. According to Chief of Guwang Village related to the customary matter or Bendesa Adat Guwang, in every teenager organization in Banjar (*Sekaa Teruna*) has a leader. The leader's job was to organize especially the gathering their members and he also has Kasinomman.

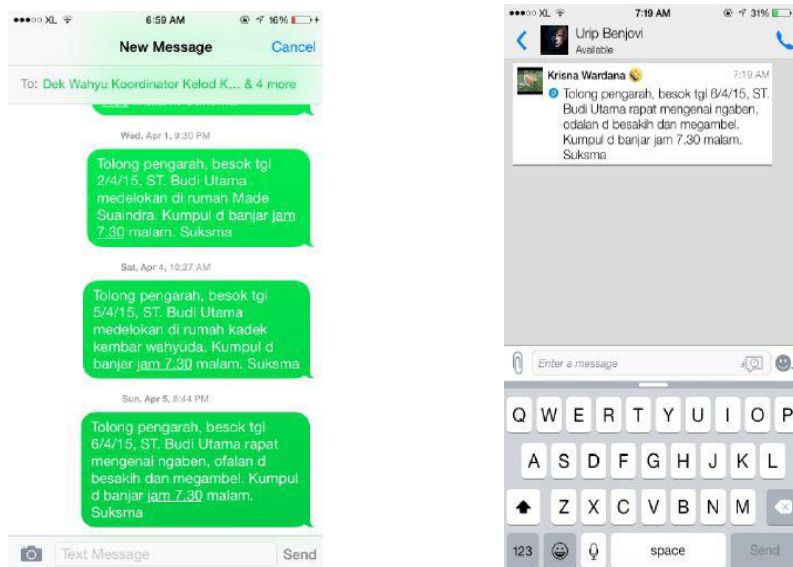
*Kasinomman is a man who has a duty to spread the news or invitation to their members, and they used to walk and visit the STT members' house one by one.  
I Wayan Dupa Dharmayudha, Bendesa Adat Guwang, 63 years old*

According to Dharmayudha, in the year past, a member of teenager used *kukul* to announce member of the STT that it was the time to gather. *Kukul*, which they used, is smaller than *kukul* in Banjar. But now, they don't use it anymore even researcher can't find *kukul* that they talked about in Banjar Sakih.

*We didn't use the small kukul or kentongan anymore, and we only used BBM or SMS to gather the members.*

Krisna Wardana, Chief of ST Eka Budhi, 25 years old

Now, members of the STT had a group in BBM (Blackberry Messenger). They used to share opinion and news in this group. There were some reasons why they preferred to use social media. Krisna Wardana said that by using BBM or SMS, it became more efficient and it didn't cost a lot of money and time.



Two pictures above are examples of using SMS and BBM in spreading the invitation to the member of STT Eka Budhi. By using social media, they can get the information quicker than by visiting members' houses.

*Sometimes kasinoman didn't meet the member in their houses, so they had to visit them all again and spent more time to do this.*

Krisna Wardana, Chief of ST Eka Budhi, 25 years old. Even through social media, the system still needed the roles of *Kasinoman*. The chief of ST gave the invitation to *Kasinoman* and then he will distribute the news. Eventhough, the roles of *kasinoman* nowadays almost have been replaced by the communication technologies.

### **The Degrading usage of Bale Banjar as Public Sphere**

Bale Banjar is a place other than the Banjar but Bale Banjar in Bali during this also serves as a platform where the fight occurred, discussed between ideas, opinions and views to the discourse. In Bale Banjar, all considered equally no hierarchy and all have an equal chance in talking.

Now, with the widespread use of social media, space public sphere that had been in the Bale Banjar has been transformed in the public spaces in social media. Where is the discussion about the opinion discourse taking place in social media? Indeed, Habermas's public sphere expressed does not assert that the public space in question is a space or place in a literal sense. Now the public sphere in Bali will change shape in Bale Banjar now in social media spaces.

### **Lack of understanding the original meaning of Kukul's rhythm**

By using *kukul*, it quite often makes the young generations have a lack of understanding the original meaning of *kukul's* rhythm. They don't understand the meaning anymore, because there were different meanings for different rhythms. For example, if the rhythm of *kukul* only three times it means someone in the society has passed away. The other rhythm is if the rhythm rapidly sounds it means something dangerous is happening, like flood or fire. *Kukul* not just cultural symbols; it still has important meaning for the society. *Kukul* is a traditional medium for communication in customary society. So it is necessary for all the members of the community to understand the meaning of *kukul's* rhythm.

*A lot of us did not understand anymore the original meaning of kulkul's rhythm. We almost never used the kulkul, for us kulkul was a symbol that sacred not as a communication medium.*

Wayan Anggayuda, member of ST Budhi Utama, 21 years old

## **The Impact**

Positive impact: sometimes those who do not brave to speak in public, start talking about their opinions in social media. The social media also provide the same space for those who do not have access to the meeting during that time.

Negative impact: the decrease negative impact of social tied, cohesively among teenagers become fragile. A sense of belonging also decreased. Also the number of active members was steadily declining. Of the 140 members were active only 20-30 members. The most dangerous might be the loss of the core values of the indigo family.

## **Conclusion**

The younger generation preferred using social media for delivering messages related to customary rather than Kulkul. They also did not understand the original meaning of Kulkul's rhythm. The roles of Kulkul as a symbol of cultural mass-communication in Bali was threatened by using social media for communicating messages related to customary in Bali. Bale banjar as tools of the public sphere is changing by the usaged of the social media in discussing issues.

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