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AL-KINDI CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

|RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Symbol of *Garuda* as A Cultural Media and Ideology: A Case Study in Bali-Indonesia

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| ABSTRACT

Garuda is a mythological creature originated from Vedic literature, depicted as a combination of human and bird. The purpose of this paper is to understand the meaning of the *Garuda* symbol as a cultural and ideological medium from the perspective of postmodernist thought, which is a very interesting topic to discuss. Until now, the *Garuda* symbol in cultural and ideological media has rarely been discussed the meaning behind the use of the *Garuda* symbol in aspects of contemporary Indonesian society. The *Garuda* symbol in contemporary life in Indonesia, especially on the island of Bali, contains certain meanings. The meanings contained in the symbolization of the *Garuda* as a cultural and ideological medium certainly have various interpretations, depending on the subject of society who interprets this *Garuda* symbol. This is related to the culture of the use of bird symbols as ideological symbols. The approach used to answer several problems in understanding the meaning of the *Garuda* symbol as a cultural and ideological medium in the perspective of postmodernist thought is the hermeneutic approach associated with postmodernist thought to provide an interpretation of the *Garuda* symbol as a cultural and ideological medium. The hermeneutic approach in this paper is borrowed in providing interpretation and critically analyzed from postmodern thought to understand the meaning of the *Garuda* symbol as a cultural and ideological medium. For this reason, it is still felt necessary to examine more deeply so that the meaning behind the meaning of the *Garuda* symbol can be understood more deeply from the perspective of cultural studies. Based on the above description, understanding the *Garuda* symbol as a cultural and ideological medium from a postmodern perspective is quite compelling. This interest stems from the specific meaning each postmodernist perspective possesses, allowing for a deeper analysis of the meaning behind the *Garuda* symbol.

1. Introduction

Understanding the meaning of the *Garuda* in Bali from a postmodern perspective is a fascinating topic. While the *Garuda* in Balinese art and culture has rarely been considered, the meaning behind its use in all aspects of contemporary Balinese life remains elusive. The *Garuda* is highly revered in all aspects of Balinese life and carries specific meanings. These interpretations of the *Garuda* symbolism vary, depending on the community's interpretation of the *Garuda*. This is related to the cultural use of bird symbols. Birds are highly revered in contemporary Balinese culture. Certain species of birds are often used in Balinese ceremonies. These include the turtledove (*titiran*), the bird of paradise (*manuk dewata*), chickens, especially the *sudamala* chicken (frizzle feather or a reversed feather chicken), and from the species of *rajawali* (eagle, falcon and hawk) which is considered a symbol of the *Garuda* bird. The *Garuda* bird is not found in real life, as the bird often referred to as the *Garuda* is a mythological creature depicted as the ruler of the upper world. However, birds are highly revered in Balinese culture, as they hold significant meaning and value in the community. In Balinese arts and culture, the *Garuda* is used in all aspects of social and cultural life, especially in artwork. Furthermore, in religious aspects, the *Garuda* is visualized as a winged animal, the ruler of the upper world, and is used as a symbol in the ritual of Balinese ceremonies (*yadnya*).

In Balinese society, there is a special day to honor animals, including birds, called tumpek kandang. The visualization of birds as symbols of the gods of the upper world (manifestation of the vehicle of the god Vishnu) in Balinese arts and culture is related to religious ceremonies, social culture, social status, and the arts, including fine art and performing arts(Clemens, (2009); Feloj, (2025); Li, (2018). Furthermore, in mystical culture (*desti*) and traditional medicine (*usada*), the *Garuda* also represents certain symbols. There is a term called *nadi Garuda emas* (golden *Garuda*) or a high-ranking mystical follower. In Balinese culture, from the perspective of artwork as a cultural object, the *Garuda* has a specific form, function, and meaning. However, on the other hand, a deeper understanding from a cultural perspective reveals the mystery of the *Garuda*'s meaning. This is what drew the author to a deeper understanding of the meaning of the *Garuda* in Bali from a postmodernist perspective.

2. A Glimpse of Cultural Media
This short narrative about the *Garuda* in Bali from the perspective of Jean-Francois Lyotard's postmodernist thought is very interesting to understand. Lyotard's thoughts will help analyze the *Garuda* from the perspective of postmodernist thought. Since the 1980s, Lyotard has been known as a prominent non-Marxist postmodern thinker. Although he belonged to the Marxist group, his group consistently rejected critical and dogmatic interpretations of Marx's thought, such as those of Stalinism, Trotskyism, and Maoism. In 1971, Lyotard earned a doctorate in literature with a dissertation entitled "Discourse, figure," which discussed the problem of language by comparing structuralism and phenomenology. In this way, Lyotard hoped to transcend structuralism and position himself as a leading figure in French poststructuralism and postmodernism. Lyotard's world of thought will be used as an analytical tool in dissecting the *Garuda* to understand the meaning behind the meaning of the *Garuda* in contemporary culture in Bali.

Among poststructuralists, Lyotard most seriously presented arguments regarding grand narratives. On the other hand, Lyotard also rejected the definition of society as an organic unity (Durkheim), a functional unity (Parson), and, consequently, a unity composed of contradictory forces (Marx). The grand narrative referred to in this paper is the *Garuda* as a symbol of Indonesian national ideology. However, behind this grand narrative about the *Garuda*, there are smaller narratives related to all aspects of society's socio-cultural life and the use of the *Garuda* symbol in culture. This is what is interesting to explore.
The term "Post" is often combined with other words such as post-empiricism, post-industrial society; post-structuralism, post-religiousness, post-metaphysics, post-colonialism, and others. The prefix 'post' in postmodernism elaborates on modern beliefs, as an attempt to break with (modern) tradition by creating entirely new ways of life and thought (Lyotard, 1992). Furthermore, according to Lyotard, it is a way to forget and repress the past. So, it is a kind of psychoanalytic procedure of anamnesis or analysis that allows patients: "to elaborate on current problems by freely associating details through various past situations that enable them to reveal hidden meanings in their lives and behavior." (Lyotard, 1993).

According to Lyotard, postmodernism is a condition where the credibility of metanarratives is lost and attention is growing toward developing new knowledge that immediately undermines them. While modernism emphasizes unity, namely the unity of logic (homology), the unity and universality of human values (universal humanism), while ignoring the diversity of human situations, conditions, and cultures, postmodern thinkers, such as Lyotard, Noam Chomsky, Jameson, and Hebermas, reject rationalism and universal humanism, considering these views totalitarian and ignoring cultural differences and diversity. It is further explained that for postmodernists, the ideas of rationality and humanism are historical and socio-cultural constructions, not something natural and universal. Therefore, they cannot be standardized without considering local socio-historical and cultural conditions. Diversity of thought, according to Lyotard, can only be achieved by rejecting unity and grand narratives, by achieving radical desensus (disagreement). The above thought, if linked to the writings about the *Garuda*, will give rise to a diversity of thoughts about the *Garuda*, where there are terms such as nadi *Garuda* mas, usada *Garuda*, *Garuda* is symbolized as liberation, cleansing, and warding off disaster. In addition, in buildings it is used as a complementary element that indicates the social status of the community, and can still be found in many other aspects of people's lives.

Among postmodern thinkers, Francois Lyotard holds a significant position because he provided the philosophical foundation for the postmodern movement. Lyotard further expressed his rejection of modern views by proposing the concept of mini-narratives as an alternative to grand narratives, and by proposing the concepts of difference and language games as alternatives to unity (Yusuf, 2004). Lyotard's thoughts and observations have important implications for the understanding of science. Pre-modern and modern science, according to Lyotard, has a unified form based on grand narratives. Furthermore, grand narratives serve as a framework for explaining various research problems, even on a micro and remote scale. Grand narratives (meta-narratives) are theories or world constructions that encompass all things/problems and establish the criteria for truth and objectivity of science. Consequently, other narratives, narratives that fall outside the grand narrative, are considered non-scientific. Lyotard rejected the Enlightenment view or the positivist paradigm, particularly regarding the unity of science and objectivity, by rejecting meta-narratives and allowing other narratives to develop or events to speak for themselves with their own criteria and rules. Modern science developed as a fulfillment of the desire to move beyond pre-scientific explanations such as beliefs, myths, and stories used

by primitive societies to explain natural phenomena. In the view of postmodernists, including Lyotard, science has proven incapable of eliminating myths from the realm of knowledge. This includes the myth of the *Garuda*, a symbol of freedom, and sacred symbols. The term postmodern for Lyotard is a total break with modern culture and not just a correction of various modern thoughts and cultures as stated by Hebermas and Giddens. Lyotard's ideas are specifically focused on the problem surrounding the position of scientific knowledge in the era known as the information/high technology age which according to Lyotard demands fundamental changes. Furthermore, postmodernism is defined as a distrust of various forms of meta-narratives, a distrust of claims of objective-universal scientific truth that is based on an awareness of the limitations and inability to see reality as a whole as it is, as well as the fact that scientists always see reality from a certain perspective and paradigm (Yusuf, 2004).

When there is a diversity of perspectives/paradigms, a diversity of rules of the game or criteria of truth (language games) emerge in scientific narratives. Furthermore, it is explained that scientific pluralism fosters skepticism or relativism towards scientific truth. In this regard, Lyotard emphasizes the importance of the rhetorical aspect of language by eliminating the aspect of domination and mutual subjugation between language players by proposing a more radical and democratic post-Marxist "micropolitical" strategy. In this context, rationality is not uniform (homogeneous) but heterogeneous; truth and rationality are not absolute and universal, but rather conventional, local, and temporary (Yusuf, 2004).

Based on the description above, the small narrative about the *Garuda* in Bali from the perspective of Jean-Francois Lyotard's postmodernist thought is interesting to understand more deeply. This is because Lyotard's thoughts will reveal many hidden meanings behind the meaning of the previous truth with the emergence of various interpretations of the *Garuda* in the arts and culture of the people of Bali. With Jean-Francois Lyotard's postmodernist thought, what is related to the small narratives that are marginalized about the *Garuda* can be revealed according to the reality that exists in society.

3. The *Garuda* Symbol as a Cultural Medium in Relation to Postmodernism and Contemporary Society

Understanding the relativism of meaning behind the meaning of the *Garuda* in Bali from the perspective of Jacques Derrida's postmodernist thought. In this paper, by borrowing Derrida's thoughts on the relativism of meaning behind the meaning of the *Garuda* in Bali, it can be deconstructed and understood more deeply. Derrida entered postmodern thought through his deconstruction of modernity in terms of language (linguistics) and literature. Deconstruction does not hold the existence of objective (True) meaning that appears in the work. The focus is not on the search for objective meaning, but on the search for new meaning through freedom of interpretation. Poststructuralism does not believe in the existence of monolithic meaning. Thus, the focus is not on the work and the author, but on the interpreter, the connoisseur of the work. The focus is also not on the signified but on the signifier. Therefore, the term epistemology is not used; instead, the term "Pleasure" is used, namely pleasure related to desire and Jouissance (peak pleasure) (Yusuf, 2004). Borrowing Derrida's thinking leads to a search for new meanings for the *Garuda* in Balinese arts and culture.

Until now, the meaning of the *Garuda* has been associated with its function in religious ceremonies, as a decorative addition to Balinese buildings, both sacred and modern, and with its artistic and economic functions. Referencing Derrida's thinking will give rise to new understandings of previous meanings. For example, in the context of the sentence G-A-R-U-D-A (G = something majestic (gagah) , A = something that evokes greatness (agung) in every Balinese ceremony, R = reality (realitas) in society, where the *Garuda* symbol is frequently used and always placed at the top, U = primary (utama) in every depiction and symbolism, D = the foundation (dasar Negara) of the Indonesian state, A = graceful (anggun)l in every depiction in society, which when combined becomes *GARUDA*).

Derrida's deconstruction is actually concerned with the issue of metaphysics. This presence, which deconstructs the metaphysics of the binary opposition, the opposition between speech and writing, and the rejection of the single truth (logos) espoused by structuralists (Yusuf, 2004). In this binary opposition, the *Garuda* is always contrasted with the dragon. The *Garuda* symbolizes the upper world and the dragon symbolizes the underworld. This opposition is common and frequently encountered. However, there is certainly something else behind this binary opposition regarding the *Garuda*.

Derrida's deconstruction is applied to fundamentally examine the forms of Western metaphysical thought traditions and the foundations of the law of identity, or the logical and linear thinking model. With his free play and deconstruction, Derrida applies a more lateral, creative, and imaginative model of thinking (Yusuf, 2004). It would be very interesting if the author borrowed this thinking to help uncover the meaning behind the *Garuda*.

Derrida's basic assumption is that there is no single meaning or metaphor in a text (Yusuf, 2004). In postmodernist thought, all that exists is a "Text" that contains meaning. In providing meaning to the *Garuda*, there is no single meaning. The *Garuda* in this article is a text that can contain various different interpretations depending on the perspective from which the *Garuda* is understood. This is because in the socio-cultural life of the Balinese people, the *Garuda* is applied or used in all aspects of life, which of course have different meanings. Derrida provides openness to the interpretation of the text, because for him all

interpretations of the text have an equal opportunity to occupy a central position because the text balances meaning and interpretation (Yusuf, 2004).

Based on Derrida's aforementioned thinking, it opens up the possibility of interpreting the *Garuda* as a text, which naturally gives rise to various interpretations depending on how it is applied within Balinese culture. This will reveal the meaning behind the *Garuda* from a Balinese cultural perspective. Through Derrida's postmodernist thinking, many of the hidden meanings of the *Garuda* in Balinese culture will be revealed. Furthermore, it will provide a deeper understanding of the *Garuda* as it relates to Balinese arts and culture (Piliang, and Yasraf, 2003 ; Ritzer,2005; Sim, *et al* 2003.) .

4. The *Garuda* Symbol as an Ideological Role in Cultural Media

Michel Foucault's postmodernist thinking on the other side of the *Garuda* in Bali is very interesting to explore. In this paper, the other side referred to is the phenomenon of desti *Garuda* mas (the transformation of a human form into a golden *Garuda*, a term used in advanced magical science). The problem in this paper is that in this modern era, there is still a mystical understanding of the transformation into a *Garuda*. In addition, traditional medicine uses certain parts of the *Garuda* bird as medicine to cure diseases or the influence of supernatural powers. This is what must be discussed in this paper related to Foucault's postmodern thinking. Foucault is called a marginal thinker (a marginal man in his intellectual development). The word marginal is more accurately defined as a thinker who pays attention to issues that are ignored, marginalized, especially by supporters of the positivist paradigm (Yusuf, 2004). The term nadi *Garuda* emas (golden *Garuda* pulse) is a form of traditional knowledge that is rarely mastered, this is because it is a level of mystical knowledge that is already high for the small portion of Balinese society who truly understand it. Intellectual developments have had a revolutionary meaning and impact on various disciplines, for literary criticism, where history not only provides a background for the study of manuscripts, but also constructs important parts of textual meaning, on the other hand, manuscripts or images have been considered fundamental to creating history and culture (Yusuf, 2004).

Michel Foucault not only rejected the positivist paradigm but also rejected various alternative social theories that smack of humanism, such as the Husserlian, Weberian, and Habermasian approaches. Foucault called his method genealogy, a form of historical investigation into how various forms of knowledge, objects of knowledge, and scientific discourses were formed/constructed (Yusuf, 2004). Borrowing Foucault's thought on genealogy to examine the *Garuda*, we can trace historically how the *Garuda*'s forms in Balinese art and culture developed in the past. This is what makes it more appealing if we want to understand the *Garuda* more deeply within the cultural context of Balinese Hindu society.

Power is further explained as the ability to influence and control the thoughts, will, and behavior of others. The manifestations of this power are commands, rules, and laws. A ruler is the creator and enforcer of law, as well as the regulator of order in society (Yusuf, 2004). The *Garuda* is often used as a symbol of power. Every depiction of the *Garuda* in the form of symbols is always associated with power. In the arts and culture of Indonesian society, including Bali, the symbolism of the *Garuda* as a bird of power over the world is always associated with power and social status. This is if we observe in military symbols, the *Garuda* symbol in every soldier up to the general's depiction of the *Garuda* in its placement depends on the level of rank related to social status and power. Based on the above description, there are still many things related to the *Garuda* when viewed from Foucault's postmodernist thought to understand another side of the *Garuda* in Bali.

5. The *Garuda* Symbol as a Cultural Medium in Contemporary Society

Rorty is a neo-pragmatist thinker who favors a pragmatist theory of truth, emphasizing the role of the individual in acquiring knowledge, particularly in the context of diverse actions. (Yusuf, 2004). Rorty's thinking favors a pragmatist theory of truth over other theories, emphasizing the individual's role in acquiring knowledge, particularly when linked to the context of diverse actions (Yusuf, 2004). Rorty's epistemological focus specifically addresses the relationship between consciousness and the body (mind-body), scientific truth claims, and artistic, moral, and religious claims. To understand the uniqueness of the *Garuda* in Bali, the relationship between moral and religious consciousness surrounding the *Garuda* is crucial. The *Garuda* can be viewed morally through its prevalent mythology and religious connections.

Rorty is influenced by postmodernist views that emphasize local, ethnocentric, and contextual aspects in determining truth claims. This view is evident in his concept of language, which posits that language is not universal. According to Rorty, language is influenced by specific socio-cultural contexts, along with its values, worldviews, beliefs, and ideals (Yusuf, 2004). Rorty proposes a search for new forms/models by developing sensitivity to various forms of life and art as an alternative to the search for objective truth from analytical philosophy (Yusuf, 2004).

Rorty argues that facts are culturally connected realities. This means they are highly dependent on socio-cultural and historical contexts (Yusuf, 2004). Based on the aforementioned view, the facts about the *Garuda*, its presence in society, are applied and related to all aspects of community life. Consciously and unconsciously, society uses the *Garuda* symbol, which, despite its uniqueness, is linked to the religion and social status of the people who use it. In this case, the uniqueness of the *Garuda* symbol

carries a specific meaning that is indirectly related to the community's social status(Christomy, *et al* 2004; Kutharatna, 2006; Norris, 2003).

Since the 1960s, philosophers of science, such as Kuhn, Polanyi, Feyerabend, Heidegger, and Gadamer, have consistently emphasized that pure consciousness, unaffected by sociocultural factors and unaffected by the paradigms or theories used to observe objects/reality, is unacceptable (Agger, 2005; Barker, 2004; Capra, 2002). Therefore, there are no truly pure facts, no "brute facts" in the scientific world that are uninfluenced by paradigms, theories, or perspectives (Yusuf, 2004).

Based on Richard Rorty's postmodernist thinking, understanding the uniqueness of the *Garuda* in Bali is a fascinating topic to discuss. Rorty's postmodernist thinking strongly believes in the importance of using logic and linguistic analysis in the world of science. This allows for a deeper understanding of the uniqueness of the *Garuda* (Fig 1-10).

Figure 1. Garuda symbol as an invitation card for a seminar commemorating Mother Earth Day, September 1, 2006;
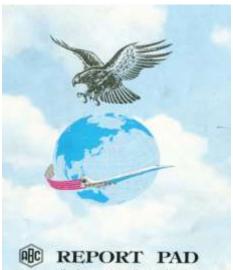

Figure 2. Garuda symbol as the front cover of a notebook; Figure

Figure 3. Garuda symbol as a symbol in a TV program

Figure 4. Garuda symbol as the logo of Metro TV in TV media

Figure 5. Garuda symbol as a transportation tariff advertising media for Garuda Indonesia flights

Figure 6. Garuda symbol as a brochure media for SMK Negri 1 Sukawati, Bali, Indonesia

Figure 7. Garuda symbol as a billboard media

Figure 8. Garuda symbol as a media for Garuda peanut packaging products

(Gambar 8)

Figure 9. Garuda symbol signifies belonging to the Bali Regional Development Bank as an information media

Figure 10: Garuda symbol as an information media in the BBM program on Indosiar TV station.

6. Conclusion

The approach used to answer several problems in understanding the meaning of the *Garuda* symbol as a cultural and ideological medium in the perspective of postmodernist thought is the hermeneutic approach associated with postmodernist thought to provide an interpretation of the *Garuda* symbol as a cultural and ideological medium. The hermeneutic approach in this paper is borrowed in providing interpretation and critically analyzed from postmodern thought to understand the meaning of the *Garuda* symbol as a cultural and ideological medium. For this reason, it is still felt necessary to examine more deeply so that the meaning behind the meaning of the *Garuda* symbol can be understood more deeply from the perspective of cultural studies. Based on the above description, understanding the *Garuda* symbol as a cultural and ideological medium from a postmodern perspective is quite compelling. This interest stems from the specific meaning each postmodernist perspective possesses, allowing for a deeper analysis of the meaning behind the *Garuda* symbol.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest."

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