

Research Article

Phenomenology: Adaptation of Poleng Motifs in Facing Bali Tourism

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Abstract.

The poleng motif is defined as a combination of black and white, configured in a decorative pattern in the form of a checkerboard resembling a chessboard. Lifestyle changes occur in aspects and forms of culture. This study aims to analyze the meaning of the poleng motif. The method used is phenomenology. The results show that Balinese people accept the changes that occur with predetermined boundaries. These limits are by the awig-awig that exists in Balinese society.

Keywords: Adaptation, Poleng Motif, Phenomenology

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1. Introduction

Poleng motif is defined as a combination of black and white, sometimes with gray in between the black and white, or with red, which is configured in a decorative pattern in the form of a checkerboard that resembles a chessboard. In general, this *poleng* motif is usually wrapped around a large tree, *kulkul*, *palinggih* (sacred altar) which functions as a guard, *dwaraphala* statues (guard statues), also used by *pecalang* (security guards in *Pakraman* village), and other uses related to Hindu religious activities.¹ At first the *poleng* motif was only used for Hindu religious rituals and for certain people who showed a certain status. One of the religious ritual ceremonies that use the *poleng* motif as a means is the *Pengrebongan* ceremony in *Kesiman* village, East Denpasar. This ceremony has been around since 1937 but has been carried out with a smaller capacity in the Royal area or *Puri Kesiman*. The purpose of the ceremony is to create a balance in the world.² What is interesting in this *Pengrebongan* ceremony is the clothing used by the *pemangku* at the time of the *Pengrebongan* ceremony, which is different from the clothes that are usually used by *pemangku* in other temples in Bali. In general,

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the clothes used by the stakeholders when carrying out ceremonial rituals at the temple are all white clothes, while the *pemangku* at *Agung Petilan Kesiman* Temple during the *Pengrebongan* ceremony use different clothes according to their respective levels and duties, including the *Pengluran pemangku* who wear *poleng* clothes.³



Figure 1: Pengrebongan Ceremony. (Source:<https://otomotif.antaranews.com/foto/1343682/upacara-ngrebong-di-bali/2>).

The *poleng* motif is not only used in Hindu religious rituals in Bali but is also used only by certain people for social status such as the *pecalang* who serves as a security guard in *Pakraman* village. The smallest Balinese social organization is *Desa Pakraman* or *Desa Adat*. According to Bali Governor Regulation Number 26 of 2020 concerning Article 1 paragraph 9, it is stated that the *pecalang/pacalang* is a traditional Balinese security task force formed by the *Desa Adat* (Traditional Village) which has the task of maintaining regional security and order in the village. In article 23 paragraph 1 it is stated that in carrying out routine tasks, *pacalang* uses traditional clothing uniforms, and attributes as specified in the Bali Traditional *Pacalang Sasana* (*Sasana Pasikian Pacalang Adat Bali*) Guidelines issued by the Provincial *Majelis Desa Adat* (Indigenous Village Council). Whereas paragraph 2 states that in carrying out limited police duties, *pacalang* uses a vest that is adapted to the assignment. In the *Lontar Purwadigama*, it is stated that a *pecalang* at least wears an *udeng/destar* (headband) with a special shape that is different from the *udeng* worn by the *patih* (general) as a royal official, *mawastra akancut nyotot pertiwi* (wearing cloth/*kamben* with the ends of the cloth piercing the ground), *makampuh poleng* (wearing a *poleng* over-cloth), *ayungkalit keris* (sliding a *keris* in his waist), and *masumpang waribang* (sliding red hibiscus flowers in his ears). In real life the people in Bali, in general, the *pecalang* have followed what has been outlined in the *lontar*, sometimes they are added with some equipment, such as the present situation, such as a whistle, baton, radio communication, and other.



Figure 2: Pacalang. (Source: Arya Pageh Wibawa, 2021).

The development of information and communication technology has brought the Balinese people to globalization. Globalization occurs due to tourist visits to Bali. This tourist visit has brought many changes in the patterns and lifestyles of Balinese people who were previously religious into a postmodern society that emphasizes consumerism. This of course has an impact on the goods produced, especially those related to *poleng* motifs. The *poleng* motif as one of the sacred symbols for the Balinese people has changed its function into a motif used for consumerism. The occurrence of this shift has an impact on changes in the meaning contained in the *poleng* motif. This research was conducted to obtain new meanings for the *poleng* motif for the Balinese people.

2. Method

This study uses a phenomenological method that aims to get the meaning of the *poleng* motif due to globalization, especially the impact of tourism in Bali. Data collection was done by interview and observation. Interviews were conducted with the direct actors, in this case, the designer who applied the *poleng* motif to his design works. In addition,

interviews were also conducted with traditional leaders in the Kerobokan area to hear directly the responses of these figures about the existence of the *poleng* motif in the Kerobokan area. The reason for choosing the location for the Kerobokan area is because it is close to tourist areas and urban communities, so it is interesting to observe. Furthermore, the results of the interviews were grouped and adjusted to the problems. The next stage is a synthesis to produce the meaning and essence of the research problem, namely the meaning of the *poleng* motif due to the impact of globalization, especially tourism.

3. Result

Globalization is a process of becoming global, unified, or interconnected between countries, as a result of the development of information technology and transportation technology that can overcome the constraints of time and space that insulate one country and another.⁴ Globalization also causes intercultural adaptation by both immigrant communities, in this case, tourists and local communities. The intercultural adaptation can take the form of acculturation, inculturation, and cultural enculturation. Acculturation is a transformation process in which both cultures can accept their cultural values. Inculturation is the process of adjusting to the cultural changes that occur.⁵ Meanwhile, enculturation is a process of learning and adjusting one's mind and attitude towards customs, norm systems, and all the regulations contained in one's culture. This process has started since the beginning of life, namely in the family environment, then in an increasingly wider environment.⁶

Tourism as the main livelihood of the Balinese people has brought cultural change. An especially material culture whose speed is very fast compared to the culture of ideas. According to Ogburn, a change in material culture is an important factor indicating another, larger change. As a result, the emergence of social and value changes in layers results in cultural backwardness for some people who are unable to adopt it. Like the *poleng* motif, which was originally a motif that was highly respected by the Balinese people, due to tourism, it turned into a decorative motif. As in previous research, the *poleng* motif is used as a packaging design for consumer products. The *poleng* motif is used as decoration on the packaging of jam food products and also chocolate food packaging. As a Balinese identity. Based on the observations made, the *poleng* motif is also used as a decoration for sandals and shoes. Of course, this shows that material culture occurs very quickly.



Figure 3: Poleng Motif on Sandals. (Source: Setiawan Sabana, 2021)

According to Tjokorda Abinanda Sukawati (interview on 20 July 2021), “the transformation of *poleng* motives is separate creativity for the designer. This creativity should be appreciated considering that Bali has many motifs that are very aesthetic and can be applied to various media and happen to be loved by the wider community. Of course, this provides an advantage for the designer. The application of the *poleng* motif is also adapted to the existing meanings in general, such as protecting, nurturing, and guarding. For example, if the *poleng* motif is applied to shoes or sandals, it means that the shoes or sandals protect the wearer’s feet. The application of a more extreme *poleng* motif, for example, when used for underwear, means that the *poleng* motif protects the wearer’s vital parts. According to Tjokorda, he also respects the *poleng* motif according to the religious ethics that apply to society”.

According to Anak Agung Putu Sutarja (interview on 7 August 2021), “the transformation of *poleng* motives which was previously respected as a decoration is a natural thing considering that from an aesthetic point of view, this motif is very interesting when placed on certain objects. Besides the aesthetic value, this motif has a selling point for tourists visiting Bali so that it can increase income for the Balinese people. Many *poleng* motifs are used by hotel services for room decoration and sarongs. The most important thing is the difference in treatment if the *poleng* motif symbol has been purified, such

as the *poleng* motif in a holy place. This is of course based on the *awig-awig* (rules) that exist in the local community”.

The Bali Provincial Government through Bali Governor Regulation Number 25 of 2020 concerning Temple Protection Facilities, Pratima, and Religious Symbols has provided rules in the form of protection for religious symbols in Bali. Article 1 paragraph 9 states that religious symbols are all attributes, concepts, and/ or markers as a manifestation of the teachings of Hinduism to make it easier to live and practice Hinduism. Article 32 paragraph 1 states that religious symbols include: a. Sacred characters; b. picture; c. religious terms and expressions; d. *Arca/Statue*; e. *Prelingga*; f. *Wahana/ Vehicle*; and g. *Uperengga*. In paragraph 4 it is said that religious terms and expressions are religious terms and expressions which are believed to contain the meaning of holiness by religious literature. Article 39 paragraph 2 states that the maintenance of religious symbols is carried out by: a. function of religious symbols as appropriate; b. maintain the sacred value of Religious Symbols, and c. take care of Religious Symbols. So, it can be said that the Provincial Government of Bali as the maker of the highest *awig-awig* in Bali has made efforts to prevent and protect all religious symbols so that they are not treated arbitrarily. Through this *awig-awig*, it is hoped that the community will be wiser and wiser in using religious symbols for various purposes.

4. Conclusion

Cultural transformation as a result of tourism is unavoidable. The impact of cultural transformation can be negative and can be positive. Based on the results of interviews conducted, it can be said that Balinese people, in general, can accept the cultural transformation that occurs as a result of the impact of globalization. The cultural transformation that occurs is of course adapted to the *awig-awig* which is the basis of social life in Bali. The order and harmony of Balinese social life cannot be separated from *awig-awig*. For this reason, *awig-awig* becomes the basis of society in accepting or rejecting cultural transformation. If the cultural transformation is by *awig-awig*, the community will certainly accept it well, but if it is not appropriate then the community will reject it because *awig-awig* is a form of the collective cultural agreement made by the Balinese people.

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