

**ORAL MYTH OF *BADAWANGNALA* IN THE ISLAND OF SERANGAN,  
SOUTH DENPASAR**

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**ABSTRACT**

The myth of *Badawanganala* believed by the people of Bali is found on Lontar Adiparwa, but in Serangan Island it has its own version, adapted to the present context. With the global influence, the local culture is slowly eroding, as in Serangan Island, namely reclamation. Reclamation occurred in 1994, causing changes in the life cycle both on land and sea; the marine life was damaged, due to the greed of rulers. *Badawangnala* myth, constructed in Pura Batu Api is believed to neutralize and reconstruct patterns of harmonious and prosperous behavior.

The research objective is to understand the meaning and function of *Badawanganala* oral myth in Serangan Island. The theory used in this research includes the narrative discourse theory, the theory of mythology, transformation theory, and the theory of semiotics. The research method is qualitative with qualitative and interpretative descriptive analysis techniques. The primary data are taken from informants purposively and the secondary data are from the study of documents. The collecting of data is done through observation, interviews and document study.

The structural analysis of the text is started from the text of the *Bedawangnala* myth of Adiparwa then Medang Kemulan, and the text spoken by indigenous leaders, *bendesa adat* of Serangan. The text is associated with linguistic intrinsic elements that build up the myth of *Badawangnala* in Serangan Island particularly on its characterizations

The research findings are strengthening of the cultural attitudes and behaviors of the Serangan community to defend their rights, and the younger generations are able to promote solidarity through ritual, that is *odalan* (temple ceremony), and Batu Api Temple is the implementation of strength and confidence in the ritual policy.

*Keywords: Bedawangnala myth, meaning, and function.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Oral tradition is an aspect of life that can affect the mindset, including a myth. A myth is considered to be a message delivered through speech or orally (Barthes, 1983: 151). It is believed to be one way of reminding and forming human mind to behave better. Roland Barthes (1983: 49), stated that the mythical story develops through thoughts, ideas, and dreams that are believed and understood by the local community, by a group of people or followers through interests, power, and ideological unity and coherence that are very dependent on its function in society. Likewise, according to Levi-Strauss (1993: 208) the myth is created irregularly, depending on the will of the narrator's heart. Regularity in creating the myth is not recognized by the narrator, this regularity is often called structure

Serangan Island which is known as Turtle Island experienced the impact of globalization in its civilization. Global influence is slowly eroding local culture, such as the emergence of modern culture, consumerism and lifestyle. Serangan Island is located in South Denpasar, Bali. Serangan Island is 481 hectares wide. Before reclaimed, Serangan Island area was 110 hectares, consisting of 6.456 ha residential land, 85 hectares of fields and plantations, and 19 hectares swamp or forest (Profil Kelurahan Serangan. 2006). As a tourist area, BTID made reclamation in 1994 at Serangan Island. Reclamation caused changes in the life cycle of both on land and sea. The economy began to decline, slowly turning the local livelihoods, and damaged marine life. Due to the greed of rulers, it brought about changes in the behavior patterns of Serangan community followed by lack of human

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knowledge, awareness to preserve and maintain nature and save the environment (Kleden, 1987: 148). It is very influential for the community to address the balance of the natural environment in the community, in order to create harmony and conformity between man and the natural environment. Community leaders make efforts to improve life on Serangan Island. Those efforts are inspired by the myth of *Badawangnala* to neutralize and reconstruct harmonious and prosperous patterns of behavior.

This study aims to clarify the interpretation of the text of *Bedawangnala* myth in its uniqueness, reveal the function and meaning of the myth in Serangan Island in the dynamics of cultural enlightenment of Serangan community; and get a picture of the conservation and development of the myth as an oral tradition.

Theoretically, the findings of the study are expected to enrich the cultural knowledge on oral tradition as a system of symbols and contribution to the growing scientific community. The contribution can be taken as a policy of ritual model in the life of society in Serangan Island. Practically, the research can legitimize the existence of *Badawangnala* as a source of strength, and add confidence to welfare.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative method that emphasizes the description, decomposed in the form of words or images, namely, a phenomenon that invites many interpretations (Endaswara, 2002: 5). Serangan Island is taken as a research location with the consideration that, first, the reclamation resulted in the emergence of environmental problems and conflicts of society, and a decline in social and cultural values; second, the icon of Serangan Island is a turtle; and third, in Serangan Island there is Batu Api Temple as a community force in Serangan Island, which is a new text to achieve harmony. The type of data includes qualitative and quantitative data. The primary data are obtained through observation and in-depth interview about the mythical story of *Badawangnala*. This myth is told and heard by the people of Serangan Island orally during the local community rituals and texts of

*Badawangnala* myth that were found in written form. While secondary data are obtained from the archives, customary documents, and the village monograph.

Determination of informants in the research was done purposively, based on experience and knowledge of *Badawangnala* myths and rituals associated with the myth. The research instrument is the researcher herself since the data are collected through interviews (cross check) and observation. The data collection techniques are done on triangulation basis. During interview question and answer techniques are used. The data were qualitative and interpretative descriptively analyzed.

### **3. DISCUSSION**

Serangan Island is located in South Denpasar, in the south part of Bali island, known as Turtle Island that becomes a haven for nesting turtles. Serangan Island is a small island that is loaded with uniqueness, ranging from the sea, beautiful beaches, many temples, and attractions for tourists. Many entrepreneurs are interested in investing in Serangan Island. Investors, namely PT. BTID expands the land by way of reclamation causing disrupted environment and marine life, thus affecting the cultural life of the community. Sea currents change, coral reefs are damaged, the fishermen catch reduces such as fish, shrimp, seaweed and other marine products. As a result, the economy declined and human behavior slowly changed for the sake of subsistence. Companies that carried out reclamation suffered losses.

Traditional village figure, named Mudana, got the inspiration to improve the shattered lives. Together with several other leaders, he built Batu Api Temple, as a religious strengthening for Hindus in Serangan. The inspiration came from the mythical figure of *Badawangnala*, an *Awatara* of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu is believed to be able to overcome the problems that occur in the world. Balinese people know that *Badawangnala* is a giant tortoise, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu that is written in *Adiparwa* papyrus. *Adiparwa* contained the following text.

"Once there was a turtle named Akupa, *kurmaraja* turtle king, reportedly the incarnation of "god Vishnu ". He was told to hold mount Mandara as the base of the mountain in order not to be sinking ".

The figure of Lord Vishnu is believed to help people cope with the problems of human life. Seeing the social living conditions in the Serangan, Mudana was inspired by the story of the collapse of Watugunung contained in Lontar *Medang Kemulan*.

The myth of Badawanganala in Serangan tells about the collapse Watugunung as follows

"Dewi Sintakasih, mother of Watugunung realized at the time of his ambition to marry his mother. Dewi Sintakasih reported her emotional son to Lord Indra, that his son wanted to marry his mother. Lord Indra asked Lord Vishnu to destroy Watugunung. Lord Vishnu was given the task and then he was transformed into *kurma awatara* turtle that breathed fire, to perform physical fights with Watugunung. Watugunung was lost and was killed but given forgiveness, and was made alive again. That's when Hindu people started to know about the new civilization "(Interview with Bendesa Adat of Serangan Village, dated May 13, 2012).

The myth tells about a child who marries his own mother. The incident makes Lord Indra angry and sent Vishnu to combat him. Finally the *awatara* of Lord Vishnu, namely *Kurmaraja* or *Badawangnala* kills Watugunung. The storytelling consists of interwoven texts into sentences and form a discourse that produces new myths. Oral and written speeches consist of a set of texts created according to the needs of the era and its ability to become a new framework of citations of the past by arranging scattered meanings, just like in the myth (Barthes, 1981: 15)

The story told that the ruler of Serangan Island was greedy, immoral, and wanted to master Serangan Island. The figure of Lord Vishnu transformed himself into *Badawangnala* that is interpreted as the savior of the world. *Badawangnala* that takes the form of giant tortoise is implemented into Pura Batu Api. The architecture of Pura Batu Api is *pelinggih* (shrine) flanked by two giant turtles, the statues of Be Rumini, *Pelinggih* (shrine) of god Indra, well, and blocking monument or shrine of the temple guards. The two giant turtles

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are paired, male and female. The distinguishing device of the couple is a ribbon symbol tied around the neck of each giant tortoise. Lanang wore black ribbons, while his wife wore a red ribbon. The giant turtles are big having green color and with the head lifted up and putting out fire. From the standpoint of etymology, the word *Nala* is derived from the word *anala* which means fire while *Badawang* means giant turtle. *Badawangnala* means giant turtle that emits fire (Sanjaya, 2001:7).

Lord Vishnu is the manifestation of God Almighty who maintains the universe and its contents, and gives life to everything (Titib.2002: 220). Lord Vishnu has the ability to change form into what is called *Awatara*. *Awatara* Vishnu came to address the destruction of the world, lawlessness, and crime. Through *Awatara*, He saves people to uphold virtue. The ceremony at Pura Batu Api as the implementation of *Badawangnala* myths, and ceremony is performed every six months, as reflection of a man devotion to *Sang Hyang Widi Wasa*. This is the inspiration of Mudana, and Pura Batu Api is believed to overcome the problems in the village Serangan.

The myths from various regions are interpreted by the public as something sacred and often contains messages or moral values that must be maintained and preserved by the community. The goal is to be able to control their actions and attitudes appropriate to the culture and morals. The myth of *Badawangnala* is a past story about Lord Vishnu as the savior of the world who becomes *Badawangnala (kurmaraja)* a giant turtle that emits fire. As stated by Sibarani (2012. 198) the myth is a local cultural heritage, that the ancestors had thought about the welfare of the next life. This is reflected in the ideas and thoughts of the local culture through oral tradition

Based on the old and new texts, the myth of *Bedawangnala* has a creation function, social function as a form of protest against arrogance, as the inspiration of the founding of Pura Batu Api, and religious functions. Creation function becomes an inspiration to the current context of the content and form of the *Badawangnala* myth that orally told in Pulau Batu Api. Disclosure of local knowledge of the structure of *Badawangnala* myth orally told

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in Serangan Island helps reveal the values and cultural norms contained in the oral tradition (Sibarani. 2012: 309). Discourse contained in the myth of *Badawangnala* serves as the basic function of the creation of spoken text, which appears in the text orally told by the *bendesa adat*: "... *kurma* that breathes fire ...", and in *Adiparwa* "... *kurmaraja* who breathes fire ..." while in Medang Kemulan, "... *kurmaraja* has long nails and sharp ..." The text indicates the rearrangement that combines traits or characteristics of *Badawangnala*. The initial text of *Adiparwa* I is a text which is used as a guide or reference in the process of inheritance. The text becomes the background of the creation of a new text (hypogram). The derivation and inheritance are based on the context of the local culture. It is then expected to organize social life into an ideology that plays a role and influences the community to think, act, and behave.

The social function as a form of protest against arrogance appears in the myth of *Bedawangnala* that is believed by Serangan community, namely the collapse of Watugunung. Through this myth, they were convinced and believed to be able to revitalize and have a role in the process of continuous change, in line with the culture and civilization. It can improve all sectors of human life, namely norms, values, behavior patterns, and social institutions. Then a shrine was made in the form of a giant turtle as it is spoken by the *bendesa adat*, that the only one that can combat the greed of Watugunung is sharp-nailed *Badawangnala / kurmaraja*. The text that showed that *kurma* has a sharp-nail is as follows,

"It is Narawisesa Mawesa Kurma alone with sharp nails that is able to beat me ".

It is explained through the text that Watugunung is a powerful person and can not be defeated by the gods. Watugunung has a weakness, which can be defeated by *kurmaraja*. The people of Serangan know *Kurmaraja* as *Badawangnala*. *Badawangnala* is the incarnation of the god Vishnu. Serangan traditional leaders and community believe that the mythical message on Watugunung story can be used as guidelines and implemented in the present life. Then a shrine was made taking the form of a giant turtle that is believed by the *bendesa adat* to be the only one that can combat the greed of Watugunung, the sharp-nailed

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*Badawangnala / kurmaraja*. Through the sharp nailed Kurma is believed to be able to fight ruthlessness of Watugunung. The attitude and behavior of Watugunung exist in most villagers of Serangan.

The inspiration function of the establishment of Pura Batu Api, is evidenced by the formation of a new holy building. *Badawangnala* is believed to have a different and unique version. As stated by Hutomo (1990: 63), the story could support a belief that is considered correct. The local leaders of Serangan believe that the version of *Badawangnala* orally told from the transformation of Watugunung story. The story can be used as an inspiration, of Awatara Vishnu who killed Watugunung. *Awatara* of Lord Vishnu is a sharp-toed giant turtle known as *kurmaraja* or *Badawangnala*. Then to the traditional leaders, it is the description of this *Badawangnala* that inspired the formation of the place of worship or temple for Hindus in Serangan Island, namely Pura Batu Api. The temple is believed to be used as a mediation between man and Sang Hyang Widhi. The mediation is expected to improve the community life.

Religious function is associated with rituals that are sacred and considered to beliefs in gods and ancestral. Rituals are performed in accordance with the place and time based on beliefs and traditions of the local culture. The function of the ritual as an act of devotion to Sang Hyang Widi. Rituals that are performed continuously and constantly make the next generation carry out based on hereditary. The ritual in Pura Batu Api is held every wuku Watugunung, on the Buda Urip. The selection of wuku Watugunung in Buda Urip is based on the text contained in Medang Kemulan, the defeat of Watugunung, namely:

"The following day about 6 am, Lord Vishnu went to combat Watugunung. At that time it was Radite kliwon day / kliwon Sunday. On the height of the war finally the Watugunung was defeated. And he fell in the natural world. It is called Watugunung collapse (Radite Kliwon). The time of death is called Candungwatang. On the next day, Bagawan Lungmalang came tugging Watugunung corpse. The day was called day of *paid-paidan*. At the time of Weraspati or wage Thursday, came Bagawan Waraspati became

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merciful, turned Watugunung back to life again. He was alive when Dauh 3. But was killed again on kliwon Friday, And then Lord Shiva came to bring the Watugunung to life again and Lord Vishnu came again to kill ..."

Lord Vishnu managed to beat and kill Watugunung by transforming into *Badawangnala* as a giant tortoise. Furthermore Watugunung was revived and killed by the gods, and this happened repeatedly. So that the incidence of Watugunung defeat is celebrated as *piodalan* in Pura Batu Api on *Wuku Watugunung, sasih* Buda Urip according to the Balinese calendar. The purpose of the ritual is to invoke the safety and harmony as their devotion over the blessing of life that they've got. Hindu community in Bali and the ceremony can not be separated from everyday life, the ancestors of Hindus in Bali taught to always maintain harmony, be it a relationship with the Creator and with nature and the surrounding environment, all of it contained in the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana representing the concept of harmony including the existence of a harmonious relationship between man and God, a harmonious relationship between man and man and a harmonious relationship between man and nature.

The overall interpretation of the text of *Bedawangnala*, Serangan Island version, results in meanings that have values and norms for Serangan community. The meanings contained are as follows:

First, the social meaning as strengthening cultural attitudes and behavior, is seen in the character of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu is known by the people of Bali as the savior of the world. Lord Vishnu incarnated as *Badawangnala (kurmaraja)*, i.e a giant turtle emitting fire. The text contained in Adiparwa and Medang Kemulan describes Vishnu Awatara as *Badawangnala*, namely the giant turtle. In the story of Watugunung, *Badawangnala* is believed to give strength to overcome the problems in the village of Serangan. Watugunung is a picture of the attitudes and behavior of Serangan community after the reclamation.

Secondly, the meaning of resistance, the implied meaning of Pura Batu Api is the fight against evils. The building architecture in the form of giant tortoise emitting fire,

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shows anger. The anger against the context of the present time, in which most people are now greedy and dissatisfied. The characters appear on the antagonist that is Watugunung, in the mythical version of *Badawangnala* in Serangan Island. The present context is the master and entrepreneur who control the land of Serangan regardless of the environment. As a result, the environment and life cycle in Serangan are disrupted, thus affecting the economy and changes in behavior patterns.

Third, the philosophical meaning, as people devoted to Sang Hyang Widi, establish places of worship as a manifestation of a balanced and consistent attitude to life and serve others, and maintaining the natural environment. The cult serves to organize the social system as a forum of harmonious, dynamic, and productive life. It is expected to grow a balanced spiritual and material values to form qualified human resources. The text of *Badawangnala* myth in Serangan Island is a strategy to improve the moral and environmental damage in the village of Serangan. The myth of *Badawanganala* in Serangan Island has the meaning of creation as a resistance to insolence of Watugunung attitude. Watugunung married his own mother. While the interpretation of the text in the figure of the god Vishnu, philosophically Hindus in Bali believe that the gods provide protection and safety for human beings.

Fourth, the symbolic meaning, is apparent at the text of the myth of *Bedawangnala* orally told in Serangan Island, that the Awatara of Lord Vishnu as a symbol emitting all His might to help human beings. As stated by Titib (2001: 71) Lord Vishnu fought against the destruction by transforming as *kurmaraja*. According to the theology of Hinduism, Lord Vishnu implies the embodiment of the universe, which is the beginning of everything, and where the soul resides. Meanwhile the symbolic meaning of Pura Batu Api takes the form of a pair of giant tortoises, male and female. The shape of the building has a denotative meaning as a sign of a counterweight. Distinguishing types of statues, are seen by the winding of the ribbon on the neck of each turtle, the male with a black ribbon and the female wrapped with a red ribbon. The ribbon winding is based on the perspective of beauty,

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universally wives or women prefer red than *lanang* or male. The apparent symbol is the turtle tongue, sticking out in red and shaped like a flame or flame burst. The fire bursts represent the turtle anger against insolence. Turtles are believed to be sacred beings, able to cope with evils on earth. For Hindus fire causes flame and emit light in all directions enlightening, guiding, helping in darkness or distress. On a giant turtle with a flame is understood that the fire may burn or scorch anything that is considered to eradicate disaster or evils.

The finding of this research is that the text of *Bedawangnala* myth in Serangan Island is the transformational text from the hipogram text of Adiparwa via Watugunung text. In the process of transformation, the character, *Badawangnala* experienced development of meaning from the buffer of the earth moved into a killer of Watugunung. Finally *Badawangnala* became a symbol of Serangan villagers resistance against egoism of those who exploit the land of Serangan. The text of *Bedawangnala* gives meaning in strengthening cultural attitudes and behavior of Serangan in defending rights as a communication of Balinese society, especially against the natural environment. The establishment of Pura Batu Api in Serangan Island, is the implementation of a policy of strength and confidence in the ritual as a reminder and devotion to Sang Hyang Widi. The implementation of ceremony is every six months at the time of Watugunung wuku.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Results of the discussion show that *Bedawangnala* is believed to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and is known by the public of Serangan as a savior of the world. *Badawangnala* myth that orally told in Serangan, is interpreted as a discourse that creates a character of savior for mankind so as to encourage and provide ideas to build a place of worship. The overall of *Badawangnala* myth that is orally told in Serangan Island has four functions, namely, (1) the function of creation, seen in places of worship, Pura Batu Api; (2) the social function as a form of protest against the arrogance of businessmen and investors

of land, who wanted to control Serangan; (3) the function of inspiration to the establishment of Pura Batu Api, to curb the behavior of greedy rulers; (4) the function of religion, as an act of human devotion to Sang Hyang Widi.

The meaning of *Bedawangnala* myth in Pura Batu Api includes, (1) the social meaning, namely the strengthening of attitudes and cultural behaviors through the story of Watugunung and becomes inspiration in providing power in order to fix the pattern of behavior towards living in harmony, which is implemented in Pura Batu Api, and gives meaning of strength as a resistance in the fight against greed. (2) the meaning of resistance, shows resistance to greed in an effort to improve the behavior to be prosperous. (3) the philosophical meaning, the activities in an effort to improve behavior towards living in harmony through building a place of worship, Pura Batu Api are expected to grow a balanced spiritual and material values to form qualified human and (4) the symbolic meaning, apparent in the reflection of *Badawangnala*, the Awatara of Lord Vishnu embodiment as the symbol of its existence with the universe, keep the world from destruction, enlighten, protection, and harmony.

The findings of the analysis is that the text of *Bedawangnala* gives meaning in strengthening cultural attitudes and behavior of Serangans in defending her rights as a communication of Balinese society, especially the natural environment.

The myth of *Badawangnala* shapes and directs the routine pattern in the activeness of young people do worship as a selfrestraint of egoism and selfish. The younger generation is able to promote togetherness in the family and becomes a harmonious life on his own consciousness through the rituals that are performed regularly.

The establishment of Pura Batu Api in Serangan Island, is the implementation of a policy of strength and confidence in the ritual as a reminder and devotion to Sang Hyang Widi. The ceremony is done every six months at the time of wuku Watugunung.

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