



## THE MEANING OF "WATER" (TIRTA) AS A VISUAL MESSAGE ON "BAK TRUK" IMAGE

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### Abstract

When examined, the image on "bak truk" is very diverse, both in the type and object of the image. Per the intent and purpose of making images, there are visual expressions and messages. Issues to be discussed are The Meaning of "Water" (Tirta) as a Visual Message in the "Bak Truk" Image. "Argha-Tirtha-Sidhi" (Water Energy and Related Creative Prospects), everything related to the availability and quality of the sea and land water is visualized in "bak truk". The "Bak truk" image with the theme of "Tirta" has not yet been studied in depth and specifically. This study uses a qualitative methodology in order to be able to capture contextual experiences and obtain data about the phenomenon of the "bak truk" image. They collected literature review data, field data, and direct observation and conducted in-depth interviews with truck owners who participated in the Jogjakarta Truck Festival contest. The selected resource persons include; three actors from members of the freight truck community in different locations (Bali, Padang, Kalimantan) and individuals implementing formal authorities and local informal actors. The "bak truk" image of turning the street into a display case or a demonstration vehicle also colours the public space through the appearance of street art / trans art. This image gives rise to various forms of expression that enliven the traffic atmosphere. Streets can be considered public spaces where various interests are contested.

**Keywords:** Tirta, "bak truk" images, expressions, representations, communities.

### INTRODUCTION

The image on "bak truk" when examined is very diverse, both in type and object of the image. Several things, such as daily life experiences, hopes/prayer/dreams, the beauty of the natural scenery, regional origins, issues that are developing in the community both socially, economically, politically and culturally can affect the theme on "bak truk" image. The image on "bak truk" is a portrait of people's daily life. Themewomen and sex, poverty, male power, divorce, polygamy, politics, and religion are common themes that are often found on "bak truk". This is in accordance with the intent and purpose of making images, there are visual expressions and messages. The picture of "bak truk" contains many meanings, either denotatively or impliedly or connotatively or explicitly. The theme raised in "bak truk" painting will affect the illustration and style of the painting later **Error! Reference source not found.** In this study, the theme of "bak truk" to be studied is "Tirta (water)". Although it is very rare, visuals of water in the image of "bak truk" often appear. The visual of "Tirta" is present as a reinforcement in the theme of regional markers (locations) and the theme of natural panorama. "Tirta" has a good philosophy in life, such as a waterfall that flows from a high place to a lower place. From there, a lesson can be drawn, namely, even though you are at the top, never forget to look down. So what we have now, can be useful for others. Healthy water is certainly clear in color and does not



smell at all which can be interpreted in doing good, must have sincere intentions without expecting anything in return. "Tirta" gives life and also has deep meaning for Indonesian people. Balinese people interpret water as a source of life, a symbol of purification and cleansing (Suhernawan, 2013)[1]. The people of Suwat Traditional Village in Gianyar Regency, Bali, have a unique tradition of welcoming the new year. They always hold the Suwat Water Festival with the peak of activities in the form of water wars as a symbol of purifying themselves. The water war (Siat Yeh) is interpreted by local people as an effort to fight the bad energy that will hinder their struggle to face life in the new year. Through this "Siat Yeh" which is symbolized by taking and then splashing each other on the body, they hope to be able to clean themselves again. "Siat Yeh" is a way for local people to respect water as an important component in their lives[2]. The Dayak culture of Kalimantan recognizes "Danum Kaharingan Belum" which means the water of the nobility of life. They see the river is part of the water of life [3]. The Minangkabau tradition of recognizing the "Turun Mandi" ceremony held in Batang Aia or the river is a form of gratitude for the birth of a child into the world [4]. For the Javanese people, the existence of water is an absolute thing and cannot be separated. What's more, the Javanese people are very attached to a culture rooted in agrarian traditions. This is what gave birth to myths and even folklore that is so sacred to the existence of water in order to maintain its sustainability. For example, the belief of the people around the Solo River considers that the "tuk" (water source), trees and large rocks are believed to be places where ancestral spirits reside to protect and maintain water sources. Folk stories that flow in the ears of the people around the Bengawan Solo river such as the origin of Kedung Bacin, Dlepih Kayangan, Kedung Pungal, and Langenharja Baths, the fairy tale of Jaka Tingkir, Kyai Rajamala Ship, Kedung Bridal and others are still well maintained by the community. High respect for water is also shown by the Javanese people in naming people or places using the words "tirta", "banyu", "warih", "toya bening" and other names[6].

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative methodology in order to be able to capture contextual experiences and obtain data about the phenomenon of "bak truk" image. Data were collected through observation and interview methods. In this study, literature review data collection, field data, direct observations and in-depth interviews were carried out with truck owners who took part in the 2018 Yogyakarta Truck Festival contest held at the Jogja Expo Center (JEC). The selected resource persons include; three actors from members of the freight truck community in different locations (Bali, Padang, Kalimantan) as well as, individuals implementing formal authorities and local informal actors. The "Truck Painting Festival" is present as a form of "show off" both in terms of works and painting techniques used by truck-carrying artists who are members of various truck communities. In addition, the Truck Painting Festival is a means of strengthening brotherhood (ground coffee) among fellow truck drivers. Through this Truck Painting Festival, new creative innovations in painting and truck modification were born[7].

## DISCUSSION

"Argha-Tirtha-Sidhi" (Water Energy and Related Creative Prospects) in the image of "bak truk" is interpreted as the natural charm related to the availability and quality of "Tirta" which inspires the image of "bak truk". A visual example of "tirta" in the image of "bak truk" appears in the work of Eddy, a man from Sampit, Kotawaringin district, Central Kalimantan Province. Eddy decorates his truck with paintings of Dayak dancers, tropical rain forests and Nokan Nayan waterfall. Nokan Nayan is the highest waterfall in Kalimantan, has an extraordinary height of more than 180 meters. Nokan in Ot Danum language means waterfall and Lonayan is the name of the river where Nokan Nayan Waterfall is formed. Nokan Nayan Waterfall consists of two waterfalls with two different

river sources but falls in one place at the end of a valley, namely Nokan Nayan Waterfall and Jongonoi Waterfall[8].



Figure 1. Nokan Nayan waterfall is the highest waterfall in Kalimantan  
 [Source: <https://www.wisatakhatulistiwa.com/2019/10/5-air-terjun-yang-still-hidden-di.html>]



Figure 2. The next truck painting belongs to Eddy, a man from Sampit,  
 Kotawaringin district, Central Kalimantan Province  
 [Source: Private doc.]

This image of “bak truk” belonging to Eddy introduces the culture and local wisdom of Kalimantan where the role of tirta (water) in the lives of the people of Kalimantan is very important. The people of Kalimantan are one of the many people in Indonesia who are so dependent on rivers for their daily life. Rivers in Kalimantan are used as a means of transportation because of their width and length, connecting regions with one another.

Sadiri, a man from Sumpiuh, Banyumas district, Central Java province, describes the charm of Indonesia in the variety of cultures and tourism icons found on the island of the Gods, Bali. Legong dance, Balinese Barong, Lord Vishnu, Garuda Wisnu Kencana and Tanah Lot

are the objects depicted on the truck. Tanah Lot consists of two words, the word "Tanah" is interpreted as a coral looking like a dyke or island. "Lot" means sea. Tanah Lot means a small island floating in the sea. Tanah Lot is a beach with the uniqueness of a temple located on a rock in the middle of the sea near the beach. The rock is separated from other rocks and when the sea water is high, Tanah Lot Temple looks like it floats because it is surrounded by choppy sea water. In the cave which is located just below the Tanah Lot Temple in the middle of the sea, there is a "tirta suci" or holy water. It is believed that this holy water can cure some ailments that are being suffered. Or even for those who want to have children, by drinking holy water in this cave, it is believed that children can be given. So that's why it is also called fertility water. Unfortunately, to be able to come to the location of this holy spring, you have to wait for the sea water to recede first, because it will be very dangerous if the sea water is high[9].



Figure 3. Tanah Lot, one of the unique and very famous temples in Bali, located in the village of Beraban, Tabanan.  
[Source: <https://backpackerjakarta.com/sejarah-dan-keunikan-tanah-lot/>]



Figure 4. Painting the “bak truk” belonging to Sadiri, a man from Sumpiuh, Banyumas district, Central Java province  
[Source: Private doc.]

There is also Aliyan, a man from Karanganyar Regency, Central Java Province who sees the charm of Indonesia in the variety of cultures found in West Sumatra. Paintings of plate dancers and parasol dancers typical of West Sumatra, the icon of the “Rumah Gadang”, “Kelok 9” Flyover and the flow of the river which is below we can see in Aliyan's truck painting. The river water channel in the overpass area of Kelok 9 is now laid out and walled. This condition adds to the beautiful view of the flyover so that people can enjoy sitting relaxed on the edge of the “kelok 9” road. In addition, currently the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (PUPR) has built a ground sill or building that is built transversely as a basic threshold, which is a sediment control building on the Batang Sanipan river. The construction of the “kelok 9” flyover infrastructure still considers the existing nature and does not change the existing river flow, thus nature is maintained in its beautiful state[10].



Figure 5. The view of the 9 winding road and the Batang Sanipan river  
[Source: Private doc.]



Figure 6. a picture of “bak truk” by Aliyan, a man from Karanganyar Regency, Central Java Province  
[Source: Private doc.]



Figure 7. a picture of “bak truk” by Aliyan, a man from Karanganyar Regency, Central Java Province  
[Source: Private doc.]

Thales was one of the first natural philosophers to contemplate that water is the constituent substance of nature. That is, nature is built from water. Thales stated that water is the basic principle everything. Water is the base, principal, and foundation of everything in the universe. Thanks to its own creative power and power, without any external causes, water is able to appear in all forms, is steady and imperishable. According to Thales, water is a source of life. Thales' argument for this view is how all living things' food ingredients contain water and how all living things also need water to live [11]. It seems no different from water, that even art is ontologically an essence (reality). The charm of nature related to the availability and quality of “Tirta” is the inspiration for “bak truk” image. However, existing research has not studied it in depth, because studies on the tail of a truck so far have discussed the theme of obsession, the phenomenon of women in the “bak truk” has not yet been studied “Tirta”.

## CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of “bak truk” image turning the street into a display case or a vehicle for demonstration, its appearance also colors the public space through the appearance of street art / trans art. When a truck is said to be a “walking gallery”, it means the same thing as showing off a truckload of art to the public. In an average vehicle speed of 60-80km per hour, a truck body artwork must be able to capture the intent and message quickly and clearly. That is why the pictures and words in the truck painting are really very short and easy to understand and can cause various reactions from the audience (Nicholas, 2018) [12]. Truck painting artworks can easily be enjoyed by the general public, not only art connoisseurs, everyone from all walks of life can enjoy it. This is in accordance with the opinion of Gilbert Seldes who once gave the idea of public art (Rosenberg, 1967) [13]. Painting a truck becomes an inner satisfaction for the artist. Painting trucks is a medium for them to share their thoughts on the daily fatigue of life. Through painting like a truck, they try to invite the audience to communicate. They try to move the audience's feelings and emotions for a specific purpose. Painting trucks is also not an easy thing,

especially since these truck painting artists have never received an art education. Their painting skills are self-taught. Likewise with the painting techniques used. In the past, truck bed paintings were made by painting with brushes and paints, then airbrush techniques and now many have combined them with cutting sticker techniques. Wasono (2020) revealed that, “bak truk”, it is like a canvas that can be painted or written on anything, which then makes it a space for expression. Furthermore, each image carries its own message or meaning for anyone who reads or sees it [14]. The pictures on “bak truk” are a form of creativity. In order to make the truck look dashing and attractive with various purposes such as conveying a moral message, a form of aspiration, satire or protest or just entertainment (Apandi, 2014) [15]. The images that appear give rise to various expressions that enliven the traffic atmosphere when the streets can be considered as public spaces. This gives rise to various forms of expression that enliven the traffic atmosphere. Streets can be considered as public spaces where various interests are contested. Trucks, especially in the tailgate, have become a medium for conveying messages, a medium of expression and creativity for drivers, which they are proud of. A running gallery, where other road users are curators as well as art connoisseurs. A work of art that does not need criticism and only exists to entertain the public (Wila Adi, Nicholas, 2010) [16]. Connoisseurs of painting like a truck are not only special people because trucks can move from place to place so that the message to be conveyed can be accepted by the public anywhere on the highway.

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