

Social Communication and Integration in the Development of Traditional and Service Villages in Bongkasa Bali

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Abstract

Sense of security, well-being, and social protection encourages the importance of social communication in building community cohesion and integration. This study examines the role of social communication in the formation of the Bongkasa Traditional Village and the Bongkasa Official Village using a qualitative approach through observation, interviews, literature review, and analysis of archaeological remains, informed by social communication and structural functional theory. The results show that social communication plays a crucial role in building collective understanding amidst migration and cultural mixing during the Middle Balinese period. Archaeological remains and written sources (Purana and Chronicle of Mengwi) indicate that the Bongkasa region developed from Teguh Wana to Banjar Teguan, then became a centre of socio-political integration after the decline of the Mengwi Kingdom. Communication between groups resulted in an agreement to establish the Bongkasa Traditional Village on April 12, 1825, and the Bongkasa Official Village in 1932. To this day, both operate harmoniously, with the Traditional Village managing customs and religion, while the Official Village manages government. This study concludes that social communication is a key factor in shaping social integration and community institutions that are adaptive to historical and cultural changes.

**Keywords: Social Communication; Integration; Customary Village (*Desa Adat*);
Administrative Village (*Desa Dinas*); Social Structure**

Introduction

Human society is fundamentally shaped by communication, which facilitates the development of trust, the resolution of differences, the transmission of values and norms, and the creation of social integration that underpins harmonious communities. Social communication theory posits that communication functions not only as a conduit for information but also as a mechanism for shaping collective identity, reinforcing social cohesion, and establishing consensus (Craig, 1999; Habermas, 1984; Foss, 2011). In contrast, structural functional theory conceptualizes each societal element as performing complementary roles that contribute to social balance and order (Parsons, 1951).

The history of Bongkasa Village in Abiansemal District, Badung Regency, Bali Province, exemplifies this phenomenon. The village's development has been shaped by political dynamics, population migration, and cultural changes since the Middle Balinese period. Nevertheless, the origins and formation processes of Bongkasa Village remain ambiguous due to the scarcity of written historical records. Most available information derives from oral traditions transmitted through families, clans, palaces, households, and traditional institutions. Consequently, reconstructing the village's history is inherently partial and necessitates an interdisciplinary approach that integrates historical, archaeological, anthropological, and social communication perspectives (Spradley,

2007). According to oral traditions, the area now known as Bongkasa Village was originally a forest called Teguh Wana, which subsequently developed into Banjar Teguan and eventually Bongkasa Village.

This transformation was driven by population migration, particularly following the decline of the Mengwi Kingdom, which facilitated interactions between newcomers and the local population. Sustained social communication fostered mutual understanding, cooperation, and social integration, forming the foundation of village life. While oral traditions are inherently subjective, they provide valuable supplementary information to address the limitations of written sources and can be contextualized and integrated with scientific disciplines such as archaeology, anthropology, and social history to construct a robust historical narrative (Lombard, 1990; Ricklefs, 2008; Vansina, 1985).

The diversity of the Bongkasa community is evident in the existence of multiple clans, palaces, households, professional groups, traditional leaders, and religious figures. Oral traditions highlight individuals such as Ida Pedanda Istri Manuaba and Ki Dalang Tangsub as pivotal in shaping the community's social structure. Beyond their roles as spiritual and traditional leaders, these figures acted as social communicators, facilitating relationships among residents, mediating conflicts, promoting values of unity, and reinforcing community solidarity (Ricklefs, 2008).

Archaeological evidence further substantiates the history of Bongkasa Village, including megalithic traditions, statues, fragments of ancient structures, architectural components dating from the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, and ancient temples. These findings indicate the continuity of community life from prehistoric periods through Ancient Bali. Historical sources such as the Puranas, the Babad Mengwi, and oral traditions corroborate the transformation of the Teguh Wana region into Bongkasa Village. However, the limited scope of archaeological research has hindered the comprehensive reconstruction of Bongkasa's historical communities.

The evolution of the Bongkasa Village community is facilitated by social communication, which is expressed through traditional activities, religious ceremonies, village deliberations, cooperative efforts (*ngayah*), kinship relations, and other social practices. Communication in these contexts functions not only as a channel for information exchange but also as a mechanism for conflict resolution, cultural value transmission, collective identity formation, and the reinforcement of social cohesion. Through these processes, the community establishes norms, objectives, and shared interests that underpin harmonious social relations.

This process of social integration provided the foundation for the emergence of two institutional systems in Bali, including Bongkasa Village: the Traditional Village and the Official Village. Institutional changes during the Dutch colonial period shaped the development of these entities and the broader governance system, resulting in a separation between administrative and customary functions. The Traditional Village was responsible for preserving customs, religion, culture, and customary law, while the Official Village managed governmental administration.

Despite their distinct roles, both systems operated harmoniously, facilitated by effective communication among village authorities, traditional leaders, religious figures, and the broader community. From the perspectives of social communication theory and structural functional theory, this arrangement illustrates that communication is central to maintaining functional balance, role differentiation, and the stability of the community's social system. Although extensive research has addressed the history of Bongkasa Village, including both the *Desa Adat* (traditional village) and *Desa Dinas* (administrative village) systems in Bali, few studies have explicitly examined the relationship between social communication, community integration, and the formation of these village entities.

Prior scholarship has predominantly concentrated on historical, genealogical, administrative, or cultural aspects. The role of social communication as a catalyst for community integration remains underexplored, particularly through analyses that synthesize historical, archaeological, and oral tradition data. Accordingly, this study pursues two primary objectives. The first objective is to identify historical and archaeological remains that provide early evidence of settlement in Bongkasa Village. The second objective is to analyze the role of social communication in facilitating community integration, which contributed to the formation of Bongkasa Village and the establishment of the *Desa Adat* (Customary Village) and *Desa Dinas* (Administrative Village) institutional systems.

Method

This research employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing a descriptive-chronological approach to reconstruct social communication during the village's formation. The study traces historical events, socio-cultural dynamics, and the evolution of structural and territorial organization, with particular emphasis on the temporal relationships among social phenomena. Data collection was conducted using four techniques: (1) observation of territorial structures, socio-cultural patterns, and historical remains in Bongkasa Village; (2) document analysis of traditional manuscripts, including babad, usana, and purana, as well as relevant research and scientific literature; (3) interviews with customary leaders possessing historical knowledge based on oral tradition; and (4) artifactual analysis of archaeological remains, such as statues, building components, and megalithic artifacts, interpreted as cultural texts within their respective contexts. Data validity and consistency were ensured through triangulation of sources and methods. The analysis synthesizes social communication theory and Talcott Parsons' structural functional theory to elucidate how communication processes foster collective understanding, social cohesion, and the development of enduring community institutions. The final stage of interpretation and historical reconstruction applies the principles of serialization, chronology, causality, and historical imagination to construct a comprehensive narrative of social communication dynamics and community integration during the formation of Bongkasa Village.

Results and Discussion

1. Evidence of Early Settlement in Bongkasa Village

Megalithic remains, such as stone mortars and other natural stones utilized as ritual and worship tools, have been discovered in the temple area of Bongkasa Village. These artifacts suggest the existence of a settled community that practiced ancestral spirit worship (Perry, 1818; 1923; Soejono et al., 1993). Sutaba (2018) argues that the archaeological symbols uncovered in Bongkasa Village reflect not only belief systems but also the socio-cultural values and social organizational structures of the period. Belief in ancestral spirits was a fundamental aspect of prehistoric Balinese society, as demonstrated by worship practices and the use of standing as a sign of respect. Such forms of worship originated during the advanced hunting and gathering era and persisted through the agricultural and bronze ages (Sutaba, 2018).



Figure 1. The Bhatara-Bhatari statue located at Braban Temple
(Source: Research Team, 2023)

Stone continued to serve as a medium for worship beyond the prehistoric era, persisting into the Old Balinese and Middle Balinese periods. This continuity is demonstrated by the discovery of Lingga, Nandi, Ganesha, and *bhatāra-bhatari* (deity) statues at Pura Braban and Pura Dalem Lingsir in Bongkasa (Figure 1). These statues display features characteristic of the Middle Balinese style (14th-15th centuries CE), including frontal poses, tiered lotus (*padma*) headdresses, and elaborate attire (Widia, 1980; Stutterheim, 1929; Rema, 2023). The sculptural art of this era was not solely an adoption of Hindu-Shaivite styles; it also reflected a continuation of ancestral worship, articulated in a more systematic and symbolic manner (Sutaba, 2018).

Tabel 1. Archaeological Remains in Bongkasa

No.	Archaeological Remains	Location of Discovery	Period	Function
1.	Natural Stone	Pura Puseh	Megalithic Tradition	Object of Worship
2.	Natural Stone	Pura Dalem	Megalithic Tradition	Object of Worship
3.	Stone Mortar	Pura Puseh	Megalithic Tradition	Ritual Use
4.	Natural Stone	Pura Dalem Lingsir	Megalithic Tradition	Site for <i>Ngerti</i> Ceremony
5.	Standing Stone	Pura Dalem	Megalithic Tradition	Object of Worship
6.	Lingga	Pura Braban	14th/15th Century	Object of Worship
7.	Ganesha Fragment	Pura Braban	14th/15th Century	Object of Worship
8.	Nandi Fragment	Pura Braban	14th/15th Century	Object of Worship
9.	Bhatara-Bhatari Statue	Pura Braban	14th/15th Century	Object of Worship
10.	Bhatara-Bhatari Statue	Pura Dalem Lingsir	14th/15th Century	Object of Worship

The findings indicate a communication process characterized by the transmission of ancestral values, the ongoing creation of objects for worship, ritual practices, and a symbol-based social structure. These elements function as social symbols that reinforce community cohesion through non-verbal communication transmitted across generations, thereby playing a crucial role in maintaining social order and integration (Parsons, 1951). The status of Bongkasa Village as an ancient settlement is supported by archaeological findings in nearby areas, including Carangsari and Bongkasa Pertiwi.

Discoveries such as mortars, human and animal statues, and stepped terrace structures indicate the existence of an extensive cultural network in the past. Statues depicting an elder figure with betel nut, a bare-breasted woman with prominent breasts, and a frog carrying a stone represent beliefs related to leadership, fertility, and communal cooperation (Sutaba, 2018). These findings suggest that the community's social structure and belief systems were established before the implementation of formal administrative divisions. Oral traditions recounting the village's origins, describing it as a forest named Teguh Wana (now Teguan), further reinforce the narrative evidence of early settlement.

The significance of artifacts as media for social communication is demonstrated by the use of mortars at Pura Puseh and stone thrones at Pura Dalem Lingsir. These artifacts are employed in religious rituals, such as the *ngerti* ceremony, and serve as symbolic communication between humans and ancestral spirits. Littlejohn and Foss (2011) argue that symbolic communication within a cultural context not only conveys messages but also shapes structures of meaning and social identity. The continuation of traditional burial practices in Bongkasa reveals a structured system of social relationships. The treatment of the deceased reflects their social standing during life and embodies aesthetic, spiritual, and familial values rooted in prehistoric belief systems (Soejono et al., 1993).

Artifacts from the megalithic tradition thus provide evidence of early settlement and an ancestor-worship-based belief system in Bongkasa Village. The Hindu-Buddhist statuary tradition found in the area demonstrates cultural continuity into the Middle Balinese period. Both verbal and symbolic social communication played a pivotal role in social integration and the formation of local institutions. This communication process developed through artifacts, rituals, and oral narratives that unified community groups from diverse backgrounds under a shared village identity.

2. The Formation of *Desa Adat* (Customary Village) and *Desa Dinas* (Administrative Village) in Bongkasa

a. Formation of the *Desa Adat* in Bongkasa

In the early nineteenth century, an internal crisis within the Balinese kingdoms, particularly in Mengwi, emerged due to the weakening of central authority. This situation prompted nobles from Puri Sayan and their followers to migrate to the area west of the Ayung River, now known as Bongkasa (Nordholt, 2006; Manuaba, 2017). Between 1823 and 1825, they established Puri Banyuning, which became the center for the initial migrant community. This development facilitated significant social interaction between the aristocracy and the local population during a period marked by insecurity and identity crisis.

Subsequently, other prominent individuals, such as Ki Dalang Tangsub a poet and healer who fled following a conflict with the King of Gianyar also settled in Bongkasa. These figures contributed to the development of community structures through religious rituals, literary activities, and cultural integration (Manuaba, 2017; Suardiana, 2007; Simpen, 1988). Prior to the formal establishment of the *Desa Adat*, migrants from various *banjar* (hamlets) brought their respective *kahyangan tiga* (the three village temples) as

spiritual symbols. To promote integration, representatives from the *puri* (Banyuning palace), the *griya* (residence) of Ki Dalang Tangsub's descendants, and community leaders composed a *purana desa* (village origin narrative). Nine heads of families established the community through rituals, *banjar* deliberations, and the formulation of local norms (*awig-awig*), thereby collectively shaping the identity of Bongkasa Village (*Purana Desa Bongkasa*). According to I Gede Sugata Yadnya Manuaba (Interview, November 25, 2022)

The community elders (*penglingsir*) originated from Banjar Teguan, specifically Banjar Bucu, and represent a lineage governed by the *Bhisama* (spiritual decrees) of the *Griya* (Brahmin household) and the *uger-uger* (regulations) of the *Puri* (royal palace). Through mutual agreement, leadership roles within the customary village (*desa adat*), the *subak* (irrigation society), and the priests (*pemangku*) of the *Kahyangan Tiga* (the three village temples) were allocated to individuals from Banjar Teguan. The enduring social and spiritual relationship (*aguron-guron*) between the *Griya* and Ki Dalang Tangsub is demonstrated at the residence of Ki Dalang Tangsub's descendants, now known as *Griya Agung Bongkasa*, by the presence of a shrine called Pura Gria Sakti Manuaba.

Additional evidence for this perspective is provided by the continued maintenance (*nyungsung*) of Pura *Griya Sakti Manuaba* in Bongkasa by Ki Dalang Tangsub's descendants, as well as their stewardship of the *galih* (leg bone relic) of Ida Pedanda Sakti Manuaba. The current *Griya* site is acknowledged as having previously belonged to the ruler of Puri Mengwi, who granted the land to Ki Dalang Tangsub upon his arrival from Tegalalang. Oral tradition states that Ki Dalang Tangsub was adopted as an *oka jnana* (spiritual child) by Ida Pedanda Sakti Manuaba. After unrest at *Griya Kendran*, Ida Pedanda Istri Kanya departed Kendran for Bongkasa (Banjar Bucu), accompanied by Ki Dalang Tangsub.

I Gede Sugata Yadnya Manuaba further contends that, within the historical context of the Bongkasa community under the authority of the Mengwi Kingdom, where the *sulinggih* (high priest) acted as the *bagawanta* (royal spiritual advisor), the three groups the general populace, the *Puri*, and the *Griya* collaborated to establish the Bongkasa Customary Village. Previously, each *banjar* community maintained its own *Kahyangan Tiga* temple complex; however, they ultimately agreed to consolidate into a single customary village, *Desa Adat Bongkasa*.

The management of the *subak* irrigation system, ritual activities at Masceti Temple, and the formulation of village regulations (*awig-awig*) by the King of Mengwi (1830-1836) illustrate the emergence of institutions governed by customary norms and functional communication, which Habermas (1984) refers to as "norm-regulated action." Deliberations among clans and royal houses (*puri*) facilitated symbolic consensus and reinforced social legitimacy. Collective agreement resulted in the establishment of Bongkasa Customary Village (*Desa Adat*), characterized by the presence of three principal temples (*Puseh, Desa/Sanggah Bale Agung, and Dalem*).

The highest form of legitimacy was achieved through the *ngenteg linggih* ceremony, conducted on the auspicious day of *Selasa Kliwon Medangsia*, which functioned as a sacred consecration of the shared *Kahyangan Tiga* (Three Temples) complex. According to Balinese calendar calculations, converted to the Gregorian calendar, the founding of Bongkasa Customary Village is estimated to have occurred on April 12, 1825. This date signifies the formal recognition of the village's existence, rooted in spiritual and symbolic foundations.

Drawing on the theories of Parsons (1951); and Ritzer and Goodman (2011), the customary system operates through four functions: Adaptation (integrating newcomers from diverse communities), Goal Attainment (establishing the *Kahyangan Tiga* as a spiritual center), Integration (uniting *banjar*, *puri*, and collective norms), and Latency (preserving social patterns through *awig-awig* and rituals). Social communication, facilitated by ritual symbols and narratives, shapes an adaptive social structure. Habermas's (1984) concept of "communicative action" further indicates that symbolic discourse among the *banjar* and *puri* produces inclusive social consensus, rather than relying on bureaucratic coercion.

Symbolic communication, exemplified by the literary works of Ki Dalang Tangsub, functions as a crucial medium for transmitting spiritual and historical values. Consequently, the formation of Bongkasa Customary Village is a product of social construction mediated by symbolic and narrative communication. The migration of nobility, the establishment of *puri* (palace) symbols, *Kahyangan Tiga* rituals, and normative agreements within the *awig-awig* (customary laws) constitute the institutional foundation and identity of the village. Communication thus connects social needs such as security and solidarity, customary institutional structures, and Hindu religious values, transforming the customary village into a symbol of social cohesion, legitimacy, and continuity.

b. The Establishment of Bongkasa *Desa Dinas* (Administrative Village)

In the early twentieth century, the Dutch established colonial rule in Bali and introduced a new administrative system called the *desa dinas* (administrative village). This system coexisted with the pre-existing traditional structure, the *desa adat* or *desa pakraman* (customary village). As a result, a dual structure developed within village organization: the *desa dinas* served as an administrative unit of the colonial government, while the *desa adat* maintained the traditional socio-religious functions of Balinese society (Parimatha, 2011; Ardika et al., 2013; Davidson, Henley and Monnich, 2010).

The *desa dinas* was led by a *perbekel* (village head) representing the colonial government, whereas the *desa adat* was headed by a *bendesa adat* (customary village head), who provided spiritual and cultural leadership to the local community. This dualistic system was intended to function in tandem, with each structure fulfilling complementary roles within Balinese society. The Dutch intentionally separated customary authority from administrative and political power. According to Liefrinck (1927); and Nordholt (2006) colonial policy in Bali aimed to isolate religious and traditional functions from political affairs by designating customary matters as a spiritual domain, distinct from government administration.

This separation was intended to prevent the consolidation of traditional power that might threaten the stability of colonial rule and its allied kingdoms (Nordholt, 2006). By dividing these domains, the Dutch maintained control over the population without direct involvement in spiritual structures. In principle, the selection of the *perbekel* was carried out by the local community. In practice, however, this process was significantly shaped by both local and colonial power dynamics. Candidates for *perbekel* were usually nominated by the district *punggawa* (district chief) and then evaluated by the colonial controleur.

Selection criteria prioritized loyalty to the colonial government and proficiency in the Malay language (Nordholt, 2006). This system was semi-democratic but remained largely controlled from above, emphasizing socio-political connections over merit. Candidates with strong ties to the local aristocracy were more likely to be appointed, while independent candidates or those from ordinary backgrounds were often excluded due to political intervention by local elites. In 1927, the Bongkasa area remained part of

Taman Village under the administrative jurisdiction of Blakiuh District. As the population increased and the number of banjars (the smallest social unit in a Balinese village) grew, the necessity for administrative decentralization intensified. The colonial government, acting on the recommendation of the Mengwi Kingdom aristocracy, appointed Ida Bagus Mayun as a temporary official to lead the Bongkasa area. This appointment initiated the administrative separation of Bongkasa from Taman Village, culminating in the official establishment of Bongkasa as a separate administrative village in 1932 (Bongkasa Village Office, 2023).

Following the independence of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945, the mechanism for electing village heads shifted toward a more democratic process. That same year, the Bongkasa community formally elected I Gusti Agung Putu Raka as the first legitimate village head through an open election system aligned with republican principles (Bongkasa Village Monograph, 2021). Subsequently, village head elections have been conducted every five years in accordance with national regulations. According to functional-structural theory as articulated by Parsons (1951), the establishment of the dual village system exemplifies role differentiation, specifically the division of functions within the social structure to promote systemic stability.

The official village and the customary village operate as subsystems with distinct task specializations: one is oriented toward administrative and bureaucratic functions, while the other emphasizes traditional and spiritual values. In this framework, social communication serves as the principal mechanism for legitimizing these two authorities. This communication process is enacted through cultural symbols, including traditional rituals, village meetings, and the transmission of oral histories. Such practices foster a collective understanding that the duality of village structures represents not a source of conflict, but an adaptive mechanism for integrating structural change with cultural continuity (Habermas, 1984).

The selection of village heads, which takes into account local traditions and aristocratic structures, demonstrates the crucial role of social communication in political and cultural integration. Traditional figures, village heads, and local aristocrats act as communication mediators between the community and higher power structures. Through oral communication, traditional ceremonies, and historical narratives, the legitimacy of the formation of official villages is symbolically constructed as part of a collective identity that continues to be passed down.

Thus, the community accepted the new administrative structure not as a colonial imposition, but as part of a natural and ongoing process of social adaptation. The collective identity of Bongkasa Village was formed through intergenerational communication that framed the village administration system as a legitimate social institution, alongside the traditional village. As explained by Nordholt (2007), the structural transformation from a traditional community to a village administration system marked a significant shift in how Balinese people interpreted their socio-political relations.

Whereas previously social relations were sacred and communal, the presence of the village administration system introduced a more structured bureaucratic and administrative logic. This transition occurred not only vertically between the people and the colonial power but also horizontally, through interactions between villagers and traditional institutions. Berger and Luckmann (1966) emphasized that social meaning is formed through an intersubjective process known as the social construction of reality. In this context, the formation of Bongkasa Village is the result of social construction influenced by symbolic communication, negotiation of meaning, and adaptation to historical dynamics.

Conclusion

The formation of the Bongkasa Traditional Village resulted from a long historical process influenced by social, political, spiritual, and cultural dynamics from the Middle Bali period to the early 19th century. Archaeological traces of lingga (linga) and statues of Bhatara-Bhatari (gods) indicate that the Bongkasa area already held a sacred function as an early settlement. The main momentum for the village's formation occurred in 1823-1825, when the decline of the Mengwi Kingdom prompted the migration of local communities and elites. This included the establishment of Puri Banyuning and the settlement of Ki Dalang Tangsub and Ida Brahma Istri Manuaba, which strengthened the religious and cultural life in Bongkasa. This migration process gave rise to intensive social communication between the newcomers and the local population, resulting in an agreement to establish a collective identity by unifying Kahyangan Tiga into Pura Puseh, Pura Desa Bale Agung, and Pura Dalem as a shared spiritual center. From the perspective of Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action, this process demonstrates that social consensus is built through dialogue, deliberation, traditional rituals, and the development of customary laws (awig-awig), rather than through power domination. Meanwhile, based on Talcott Parsons' structural-functional theory, the establishment of Bongkasa Traditional Village reflects the fulfillment of the AGIL function, namely the community's ability to adapt, achieve common goals, build social integration, and sustainably maintain cultural values. Symbolically, the establishment of Bongkasa Traditional Village was marked by the ngenteg linggih ceremony on Anggara Kasih Medangsia Day, estimated to coincide with April 12, 1825 AD. The Bongkasa Official Village was only officially established in 1932. Thus, Bongkasa Traditional Village emerged from historical, spiritual, and social integration built through collective communication, cultural legitimacy, and shared community awareness. This process makes Bongkasa Traditional Village an example of social cohesion capable of harmoniously integrating traditional values with the development of a modern government system.

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