

REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH NUSANTARA CULTURAL SYMBOLS IN TIFO LA GRANDE INDONESIA: A CULTURAL COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRAK

Dalam memupuk persatuan di dalam satu bangsa, identitas nasional menjadi salah satu aspek penting demi menjaga keberlangsungan persatuan dan kesatuan. Lebih lanjut, sepak bola sebagai olahraga yang paling digemari di dunia juga memainkan perannya sebagai suatu olahraga yang dapat menyatukan keberagaman yang ada. Hal ini dapat terlihat dalam tifo La Grande Indonesia pada laga Indonesia vs Tiongkok di Kualifikasi Piala Dunia 2026 grup C. Tifo ini hadir sebagai cara komunikasi budaya sebagai penyampaian pesan kepada khalayak umum. Pada penelitian ini, peneliti menerapkan pendekatan kualitatif serta metode fenomenologi yang ada di tengah masyarakat terkait laga tersebut. Dengan teknik studi dokumen gambar tifo sebagai bentuk dari teknik pengumpulan data, penelitian menemukan bahwa tifo La Grande Indonesia menampilkan representasi identitas nasional lewat komunikasi budaya dengan menampilkan sosok ksatria beserta atribut-atribut dari beragam suku yang mampu memupuk rasa kebersamaan diantara masyarakat diantara perbedaan suku di Indonesia.

Kata kunci : Identitas nasional; Komunikasi budaya; Tifo; La Grande Indonesia

ABSTRACT

In fostering unity within a nation, national identity is one of the important aspects to maintain the sustainability of unity and oneness. Furthermore, football as the most popular sport in the world also plays its role as a sport that can unite the existing diversity. This can be seen in the La Grande Indonesia tifo in the Indonesia vs China match in the 2026 World Cup Qualifiers group C. This tifo is present as a way of cultural communication as a means of conveying messages to the general public. In this study, the researcher applied a qualitative approach and phenomenological methods that exist in society related to the match. With the tifo image document study technique as a form of data collection technique, the study found that the La Grande Indonesia tifo displays a representation of national identity through cultural communication by displaying the figure of a warrior along with attributes from various tribes that are able to foster a sense of togetherness among people among the different tribes in Indonesia.

Keyword : National identity; Cultural communication; Tifo; La Grande Indonesia

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication isn't just about how individuals speak or express their opinions orally. Nowadays, communication has expanded into

various other areas, serving as a means of conveying ideas and opinions to the general public. Indirectly, communication plays a significant role in everyday life and in the social sphere, affecting every aspect of society.

Referring to the basic concept, communication can be defined as a process of interaction between humans and other individuals and their surroundings (Purba et al., 2020). This process enables existing interaction patterns to form a specific meaning. Furthermore, communication can also be understood as the transmission of information and even commands from the top of a hierarchy to the bottom, ensuring the flow of information is properly channeled (Prabowo et al., 2017). As we know, we can see that human and communication are living with a dynamic every time (Setiadi, 2024).

With the passage of time and the rapid advancement of globalization, communication has evolved into a more diverse space. Today, intercultural communication is one aspect of communication that serves as a conduit for information and a means of conveying the aspirations of the global community. The emergence of intercultural communication is, of course, inseparable from the diverse cultures that have emerged within a given society.

According to Gonzales et al. (in West and Turner, 2008), culture itself is known as a community of meaning and a shared, local knowledge system. In this sense, culture is a system of patterns that have been mutually agreed upon by a community within a particular region or area.

Furthermore, in a basic sense, intercultural communication, also known as intercultural communication, can be defined as the communication activity carried out between individuals with different cultural backgrounds (West and Turner, 2008). This is certainly related to the various ethnicities and cultures that emerge in the midst of daily life activities.

Over time, intercultural communication has evolved beyond the mere study of oral communication

conducted by people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Today, this communication is also applied in various forms as a means of representing distinctive cultural values to the public. In this context, one method of communication within intercultural communication is the use of sports as a means of demonstrating the existence of a given culture. Sports activities have become an essential part of human life, not only for maintaining health but also for demonstrating the inherent identity of individuals and groups.

In Indonesia, one of the most popular sports and attracting significant attention at every event is football. In fact, this sport is also quite well-known worldwide as the most popular sport among the global population (Kismono and Dewi in Wicaksana et al., 2021).

Football is a sport played by two teams of 11 players each, each team attempting to score points by putting the ball into the goal (Akhmad and Suriatno, 2018). The team with the most points is declared the winner.

In addition to the players in the competing teams, football is also inseparable from the presence of supporters or supporters who are able to create an atmosphere of enthusiasm during the match session. As a form of support given to the competing team, supporters usually do several things such as singing songs, unfurling team attributes, to the presence of unique tifo that can attract the attention of the general public who watch it. Until now, tifo is one of the treats for football fans that is always awaited because of its uniqueness. Referring to Handoko, tifo or tifosi is a phrase from Italian that can be interpreted to a supporter or sports fan (Handoko, 2008). In their activities, these tifosi usually present an object in the form of a display of images or visuals that have a certain meaning.

Furthermore, Indonesian football fans have recently garnered significant public

attention. One such incident occurred during the Indonesia vs. China match held at the Gelora Bung Karno Main Stadium in Jakarta on Thursday, June 5, 2025. This was the ninth matchday of Round 3 Group C for the 2026 World Cup Qualifiers in the Asian Zone. On this occasion, one of the Indonesian National Team (Timnas) supporters clubs, La Grande Indonesia, presented a tifo that caught the attention of its audience. On this occasion, the visual image of the tifosi presented by La Grande Indonesia showed a man destroying a wall while holding a sword and shield. This man was also wearing traditional clothing with a brave and decisive expression. In this match, Indonesia was able to win 1-0 through a penalty kick taken by one of Indonesian players, Ole Romeny.

The presence of tifosi from fans created by La Grande Indonesia supporters during the Indonesia vs. China match certainly boosted the enthusiasm of the Indonesian national team players for the match. Furthermore, the supporters and the Indonesian public felt a sense of pride as Indonesian culture was directly represented in the midst of a major world football match. This intercultural communication has been present by La Grande Indonesia supporters as a form of aspiration and creativity that is interesting as the soul of the Indonesian national identity that never gives up. This also makes national identity present as a symbol that has deep meaning for the Indonesian people. Of course, this goes straight to the fact that a national identity is related to the understanding of the nation, where an individual is able to obtain its reality as a whole naturally (Tilaar, 2007).

In this study, the researcher will focus on two theoretical studies that can examine the meaning of the Indonesian National Team supporters' tifo during the Indonesia vs. China match. These two theories, namely national identity and cultural communication, are considered

quite relevant to the research object that will be further examined. The research problem is how the Indonesian National Team supporters' tifo can represent national identity and intercultural communication during the Indonesia vs. China match.

The aim of this research is to find out what aspects are presented in the tifo of Indonesian National Team supporters that can be linked to the representation of national identity and also in aspects of intercultural communication.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

1. National Identity

Within a nation and in national life, society requires a symbol as a tool to unite the nation. This arises from the spirit of nationalism that arises among individuals and community groups within a country. Nationalism is a form of behavior or behavior that takes the form of an ideology embraced by society (Narendra, 2006). The ideological concept adopted by the Indonesian state is Pancasila, where diversity and differences can be woven into one within the nation and nation through the spirit of the struggle to liberate the Indonesian nation from colonialism. From here, the Pancasila ideology emerged as a national identity that is present in society. Of course, the distinctive characteristics of this identity ideology are able to distinguish Indonesia from other countries due to differences in terms of history, geography, culture, demographics, and the character of its people (Nasional, 2007).

National identity, when viewed linguistically, is two combined sentences, each of which has a meaning that can be understood further. The *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* or KBBI states that the

word 'identity' can be interpreted as a self-identity.

Meanwhile, the word 'national' can be known to have several meanings, namely 'national in nature', 'regarding or originating from one's own nation', or 'encompassing a nation'.

When these two words are combined, the meaning can be seen as the identity of a nation originating from a country. Kaelan states that national identity is essentially a manifestation of cultural values that grow and develop in aspects of a nation with its unique characteristics in the life of its people (Kaelan, 2007). This means that these unique characteristics in the state can also be present as a strong national identity in the life of the state.

Furthermore, national identity will always be dynamic and will always change openly with the passage of time and with current developments (Aulia et al., 2021). As in the current era, technological advancements and shifts in the mindset of an increasingly diverse society can also present unique challenges in community life. Within the essence of national identity, there are several dimensions encompassing it that can be further explored (Aulia et al., 2021):

- Behavioral patterns reflect patterns created in everyday environments. Examples include the culture of mutual cooperation, hospitality, and respect for elders.

- Symbols that reflect the functions and goals of the state. Examples include language and the national anthem.

- Tools used to achieve goals and desires in building, equipment, and technology. Examples include transportation technology, traditional clothing, traditional weapons, places of worship, and others.

- The desired goal. For example, the 1945 Constitution, as the legal

basis and constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, aims to uphold just laws and improve the welfare of society at large.

National identity not only has dimensions, but also functions to reflect a nation. In this regard, there are at least five functional aspects of national identity for national life (Nurdin, 2023):

- Strengthening the sense of nationalism: Able to strengthen individuals and groups towards culture and country and influence the behavior of citizens in various aspects of life.

- Building solidarity: Able to build a sense of unity, solidarity, mutual support, and even make sacrifices for fellow members of society.

- Promoting development: Able to provide strong impetus for sustainable economic, social and political development to create progress and strong cooperation for the nation.

- Maintaining sovereignty: Able to make society more solid in defending the interests of the country from domestic and foreign threats.

- Promoting international relations: Able to be a bridge to promote healthy relations between nations in international cooperation.

Based on the above study of national identity, it can be concluded that every nation and its people possess unique values that distinguish their country from other nations. Furthermore, national identity can foster a spirit of nationalism and can be a vital benefit to national life, fostering unity, togetherness, and a strong national identity.

2. Cultural Communication

Within the scope of communication, this section has several areas of focus for study. Specifically, one

area of communication that still exists within society is cultural communication. This type of communication exists as a follow-up to cultural activities and norms that apply in society, particularly in Indonesia. From a daily perspective, the diversity of ethnicities, races, religions, cultures, and languages makes Indonesia a multicultural nation (Clara and Marta, 2021).

Before exploring the perspective of cultural communication, it's helpful to understand the basic context of what culture is. Nuzuli explains that culture itself is a system of values, norms, beliefs, or behaviors that apply within a society and have been passed down from generation to generation (Nuzuli in Sunanta, 2023). It's important to note that culture has long been present in people's lives as a collectively agreed-upon system. Furthermore, the manifestation of culture can be seen in various aspects, such as science, physical structures, art, literature, technology, and others (Setiawan, 2018).

Furthermore, cultural communication can be defined as communication between people from different cultures, between people who hold different beliefs, values, or cultural behaviors (Devito in Hernawan and Pienrasmi, 2021). Hadiono states that intercultural communication occurs between individuals with different backgrounds (Hadiono in Sunata, 2023). This is certainly in line with Indonesian society, which is born from various ethnicities and beliefs.

When examined more deeply, the function of intercultural communication has profound implications for understanding dignified social life. In the social sphere, Mulyana explains that intercultural communication is essential for building self-concept, self-actualization, survival, happiness, and fostering relationships with others (Mulyana in Hernawan and Pienrasmi, 2021). Meanwhile, in the process itself,

intercultural communication involves several elements, such as the source, message, media, recipient, and the resulting effects (Muchtar et al., 2016). Furthermore, Martin and Nakayama also suggest that other functions can be understood so that society can better understand cultural differences, increase appreciation for diversity, and even increase empathy for the nation and state (Martin and Nakayama in Muhtarom et al., 2024). Even other functions that can be understood include social control, strengthening group solidarity, providing references, and providing emotional support (Hariyanto and Dharma, 2020).

Cultural communication certainly plays a crucial role in fostering national unity and statehood for its people. This type of communication can positively contribute to fostering a sense of unity among individuals as a unified nation, uniquely distinguished from other nations. Communication and culture are inseparable. Ultimately, intercultural communication serves as a tool for bridging cultural gaps by understanding differences and finding commonalities in communication (Mudrik and Fawwaz, 2024).

3. METHODOLOGY

This research will use a qualitative method. Qualitative research itself can be associated with an approach used to study phenomena that cannot be quantified and is descriptive in its study (Satori in Perdana, 2021). In this sense, a qualitative approach focuses more on exploring concepts, images, cultural practices, and other aspects.

It can also be said that a qualitative approach as a research method can take the form of written or spoken words about people and observed behaviors that can be accepted by human reason (Mulyahjo in Maulana et al., 2021). Qualitative research methods are also inseparable from the paradigms that exist in society (Yudhi and William, 2019).

Furthermore, a qualitative approach also can be used by any researchers which their research itself is not related with any numbers and mostly focused on interpretation (Setiadi and Devin, 2025).

In relation to the research focus that will be further explored by the researcher, the rationale for using qualitative methods is to determine how the Indonesian National Team supporters' tifo represents national identity and also fosters intercultural communication in the Indonesia vs. China match. This is certainly in line with the work of qualitative studies, which focus on naturalistic observations (Girsang and Razali, 2023). It is also known that the qualitative research come as an approach for exploring and understanding meanings from an individual or groups of human (Creswell in Setiadi, 2025).

And as an addition to the research method in data collection techniques, the researcher conducted a document study technique on the research material to be conducted. Herdiansyah stated that document study is one of the actions in qualitative research where it is obtained from the subject's perspective, through written media or other media written or created directly by the subject (Herdiansyah, 2010).

In addition, the definition of document study itself can also be said to be a data collection technique through various books on opinions, theories, postulates and others that can be linked to the research problem (Anto et al., 2024). Of course, in this study, the object of the tifo created by La Grande Indonesia as one of the supporters of the Indonesian National Team is an interesting study for researchers to examine.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On Thursday, June 5, 2025, the Indonesian national football team faced

China in a 2026 World Cup qualifying match for the Asian zone, held at the Gelora Bung Karno Main Stadium in Jakarta.

During the match, one of the Indonesian supporters' groups, La Grande Indonesia, unfurled a tifo that captured the attention of the general public watching the match.

The tifo depicted a man holding a sword and shield. Furthermore, the man was seen smashing a wall, wearing a cloth and a crown.



Figure 1. Tifo La Grande Indonesia in the Indonesia vs China match in 2025.

(Source: @lagrandeindonesia12)

According to the Instagram post by @lagrandeindonesia12, this tifo depicts a soldier fighting to defend the honor and dignity of his nation. In this context, the soldier can be interpreted as the Indonesian national team players struggling to win the match against China.

In terms of national identity, the knight figure represents one of Indonesia's heroic figures, Raden Wijaya. Raden Wijaya, also known as Kertarajasa Jayawardana, was the founder and first king of the Majapahit Kingdom. He ruled the Majapahit Kingdom from 1293 until his death in 1309. Furthermore, during his reign in 1289, the Majapahit Kingdom was attacked by the Mongol Empire from China. Kublai Khan, as emperor of the Mongol Empire, deployed an army of around 20,000 to 30,000 soldiers to the island of Java. This attack was carried out because King Kertanegara of the Singasari Kingdom

refused to pay tribute to the Mongol Empire. With fierce battles, Raden Wijaya was able to achieve a significant victory against the Mongol Empire's attack.

Looking at the story and its connection to the tifo presented by La Grande Indonesia in the Indonesia vs. China match, this depicts the figure of Raden Wijaya as a national identity capable of providing high pride in the nation's dignity. In his representation, Indonesia is expected to be able to bring a great victory over the Chinese national team as depicted in the story of the Mongol Empire's invasion of the island of Java. This is also seen where the great wall in the tifo represents the Great Wall of China which is a site of pride and national identity of the Chinese nation. In terms of national identity, of course, the figure of the Indonesian nation's identity is tireless in struggle and can provide pride in achievements that can elevate the nation's dignity. Certainly, with the visualization of the figure of Raden Wijaya, this can strengthen the sense of nationhood and build solidarity among the people of one Indonesian nation from the perspective of national identity through the dimension of visual images.

Furthermore, in the cultural communication study, researchers found that the tifo displayed by La Grande Indonesia, the Indonesian national team's supporters, also deeply reflected Indonesian cultural values. Cultural communication here showcased several local cultural elements from various regions, each with its own unique characteristics.

According to a post on Instagram by @lagrandeindonesia12, this tifo, in terms of cultural communication, is able to weave together cultural differences and increase appreciation for the diversity that exists in Indonesia. Furthermore, the details of the tifo displayed can be seen individually:



Figure 2. Tifo La Grande Indonesia presents the diverse cultures of the archipelago as a means of cultural communication. (Source: @lagrandeindonesia12)

- Shield from the Dayak tribe:

The shield is flat and known as a Talawang among the Dayak people. In ancient times, the Talawang was used by the Dayak people as a means of self-defense, both in battle and against wild animals in the forest. Typically, this type of shield features a carved motif of the Tinggang bird, considered sacred by the Dayak people. However, on the La Grande Indonesia tifo, the shield itself depicts the Garuda bird, the national symbol of Indonesia.

- Ulos cloth from the Batak tribe:

Ulos is a type of woven fabric that is important to the Batak people of North Sumatra. This fabric typically features dominant colors such as black, red, or white. In their culture, ulos is worn for various traditional ceremonies. One important traditional event for the Batak people, and the people always wear ulos, is called Mangulosi. Mangulosi can be used for various activities, such as birth ceremonies, funerals, and weddings.

- Head covering and Mustika stone from the Javanese tribe:

For the Javanese, the Mustika stone is considered a powerful object for its wearer. This is particularly true for some Javanese, especially those with Javanese traditions, where amulets are often held in place. These amulets are often found in the form of Mustika stones, also known as agate stones, which were once popular among the community some time ago. In the tifo presented, Mustika stones

are believed to bring good luck, courage, and even victory over opponents.

- Decorations on the body from Papua:

For Papuans, body adornments hold profound meaning. Ornaments and accessories are an inseparable part of their culture. The ornamentation or type of accessory attached to the figure depicted in this tifo can be seen on the knight's arm, near the shield. This arm adornment features an additional feather, which could be interpreted as coming from the bird of paradise, an important species of fauna for Papuans. The bird of paradise also holds several meanings for Papuans, symbolizing good luck, prosperity, beauty, and elegance.

- Traditional sword from Maluku:

The tifo presented by La Grande Indonesia depicts a knight brandishing a traditional sword. This sword resembles the Parang Sawalaku, a traditional sword from Maluku. The name Parang Sawalaku itself comes from two words: "*parang*," meaning large sword, and "*sawalaku*," meaning shield. In Maluku, the Parang Sawalaku is typically used alongside a shield as a means of defense. This sword is also commonly used in traditional dances, such as the Cakalele dance, performed by a man, symbolizing strength, courage, and spirit. Furthermore, this traditional weapon from Maluku is also associated with one of Indonesia's heroes, Thomas Matulesy, commonly known as Kapitan Pattimura. The tifo image of a warrior and the traditional Maluku sword, often associated with Kapitan Pattimura, illustrate the spirit of struggle and victory in battle.

From the five symbols displayed by La Grande Indonesia's tifo during the soccer match, it's clear that the visualized cultural communication holds profound meaning for the ethnic diversity of Indonesia. This is evident in the blend of diverse ethnicities from Sabang to Merauke, representing a close cultural

communication with the spirit of unity as a unified Indonesian identity.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted by the researchers, it can be concluded that the tifo presented by La Grande Indonesia, the Indonesian national team's supporters, is able to convey aspects of national identity for the Indonesian people. Furthermore, the cultural communication aspects visualized in the tifo can convey a spirit of unity as a unified Indonesian nation, despite the diversity of ethnicities and backgrounds that exist in its society.

In this case, the tifo representation fulfills several objectives, reflecting the national identity aspects inherent in its visualization. These objectives include strengthening nationalism, building solidarity among individuals, and promoting relations between diverse nations, reflecting the distinctive characteristics of Indonesia's ethnic groups, complemented by the dimensions of the visual media.

Meanwhile, from a cultural communication perspective, the tifo representation presented also fulfills its function as part of fostering relationships with others and increasing a sense of diversity. Specifically, relationships with others here can be interpreted as every individual in Indonesian society experiencing togetherness with one another through cultural communication activities. Furthermore, the process of cultural communication is present here in the message and media elements displayed in the La Grande Indonesia tifo during the Indonesia vs. China match in the 2026 World Cup Qualifiers Group C Asian zone.

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