

Ethnographic Reflections on Nationalism and Interfaith Dialogue in the Three-Faith Tourism Village

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the Jamblang mural attraction located in the Old Town Area of Jamblang, Jamblang Village, Jamblang District, Cirebon Regency known as the Three-Faith Tourism Village as a complex communication event within the framework of nationalism. The mural attraction, created collaboratively by students, artists, and local residents, retells the history of communal existential crises (1845–1889) leading up to the turning point of recovery in 1900, focusing on the restoration of Vihara Dharma Rhakita. Its primary purpose is to revitalize the forgotten Chinatown area, provide historical education, and deeply instill the values of tolerance and national unity. This qualitative research employs the framework of Ethnography of Communication and the Triadic Semiotic analysis of Charles Sanders Peirce to examine the visual messages and surrounding social practices. The semiotic analysis reveals that the mural's iconography (Representamen), depicting collective suffering and recovery, produces an Interpretant of nationalism. This nationalism can be understood as the collective memory of resilience within a multireligious community, where harmony becomes the essence of local patriotism. This notion is reflected through particular signs and symbols depicted in the mural, which represent the shared struggle and unity of different faiths. Considering Indonesia's historical concept of Nasakom, such expressions suggest how ideological and social classifications may still shape local narratives of nationalism. The meaning and intention behind these representations were also conveyed by the interviewed informants, indicating that the interpretation of the mural should be grounded in their perspectives. The application of Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model integrates semiotic findings with real communication practices. It was found that the mural's strategic placement in front of the Vihara (Setting) and the inclusive interfaith collaboration (Participants) explicitly support the Ends of promoting National Tourism. The social interaction norms (Norms) are directed toward displaying harmony to visitors, while selfie-taking activities (Act Sequence and Genre) function as an adoption of this collective narrative into personal digital identity. This study concludes that the Jamblang mural successfully transforms local history into a visual lingua franca (Instrumentalities) that effectively fosters national resilience education and tourism village branding, mitigating the challenges of spatial and economic degradation.

Keywords: Ethnography of Communication, Interfaith Dialogue, Nationalism, Three-Faith Tourism Village

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Introduction

Rural landscapes often serve as semiotic spaces where local identity, tradition and community values are visually communicated. As Reershemius K. G (2020) argues, semiotic rural landscapes through signage, visual culture and everyday practices enable rural communities to perform and preserve their collective identity while shaping tourism that remains distinct from mass tourism. This framework provides a valuable lens for understanding how local visual expressions become material manifestations of history, belief and social harmony in village contexts such as Jamblang.

Jamblang Village in Cirebon Regency holds significant potential as a multicultural tourism destination. Known as the Three-Faith Tourism Village, it is characterized by the harmony of interreligious relations among communities living side by side and the presence of historical religious sites such as the Kebagusan Ancient Mosque and Vihara Dharma Rhakita (IPB, 2018). Development efforts in this area, particularly within the Old Town of Jamblang, are directed toward an educational tourism model in which historical narratives and communal harmony are presented professionally to visitors (IPB, 2018).

In the revitalization of an area that had long been neglected, a series of collaborative programs were carried out, including the 2022 Jamblang Festival (Fajar Cirebon, 2022). One of the main outcomes of this initiative was the creation of the Jamblang historical mural, strategically located in front of Vihara Dharma Rhakita. This

mural resulted from a Student Creativity Program (PKM) initiated by Maranatha Christian University Bandung, employing participatory and collaborative workshops with local residents (Putra, 2023). Designed to educate the community about five crucial historical phases including famine (1845), earthquake (1847), cholera outbreak (1859), and flood (1889) the mural culminates in the turning point of collective recovery in 1900 (Fajar Cirebon, 2022).

The mural's primary purpose was educational rather than decorative: to remind the community that present-day progress was built upon past struggles (Fajar Cirebon, 2022). The Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), led by Arif, played a facilitative role in ensuring that Jamblang's historical and social potential could emerge as a viable tourism destination (Fajar Cirebon, 2022). This mural attraction thus serves as a medium of visual communication that bridges local collective memory with the broader national narrative.

The uniqueness of the Jamblang mural lies in its representation of nationalism not through formal state symbols, but through local iconography that reflects resilience and collective recovery among multireligious communities. This aligns with contemporary scholarly discussions on how public art and visual culture construct social identity and collective memory. For instance, Migeon (2024) analyzed how gendered murals in Belfast shape narratives of peace and conflict within shared public spaces, while Amjad (2025) explored graffiti art as a sociolinguistic expression of identity reclamation. Similarly, Piliang, Sulistyaningtyas, and Azhar (2024) examined

digital visual spaces as ideological arenas of legitimization, and Candelaria (2025) discussed how World War II memorials in the Philippines visualize national resilience and collective memory.

These studies collectively demonstrate that visual expressions murals, graffiti and monuments serve as semiotic and communicative media for negotiating identity, ideology and memory. However, few have specifically addressed how interfaith communities articulate nationalism through local iconography in the context of rural Indonesia. Therefore, this research aims to fill that gap by analyzing how the Jamblang mural communicates, mediates, and embodies the meaning of resilience and nationalism through the framework of Ethnography of Communication and Visual Semiotics.

In practical terms, this study contributes to local efforts in tourism development and community education. By examining how the Jamblang mural represents collective memory and interfaith harmony, the research provides insights that can help Pokdarwis and local stakeholders develop educational tourism programs rooted in cultural understanding and community participation. The findings may also guide future art-based initiatives that strengthen social cohesion and promote historical awareness among residents and visitors alike.

At the academic level, this study offers a perspective on how nationalism and resilience are expressed through everyday visual culture in rural settings. It emphasizes that public art can serve not only as decoration but also as a medium for learning, remembrance, and identity building linking local narratives to broader

understandings of national values.

Theoretical Review

The Ethnography of Communication provides a holistic framework for analyzing communication not merely as an exchange of messages but as a structured cultural practice (Nugroho & Purwati, 2019). Within the field of visual studies, this approach enables researchers to move beyond artistic description and focus on the social processes that produce, distribute and receive visual messages. As Horst and Hjorth (2014) emphasize, ethnography plays a crucial role in visual and art studies by allowing researchers to interpret how visual practices reflect cultural meaning and lived experience. Similarly, Goopy and Kassan (2019) highlight arts based ethnography as a participatory approach that makes research more engaging and transferable to local communities, particularly when working with culturally diverse or harder to reach groups.

Ethnography of Communication emphasizes that visual signs (such as murals) must be understood within a complete cultural and interactive context (Nugroho & Purwati, 2019). To explore the complexity of communication surrounding the mural attraction, this study employs Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model. The model divides communication events into eight components: Setting and Scene, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms and Genres (Nugroho & Purwati, 2019). Applying the SPEAKING model in public art studies such as the mural in Jamblang Village is particularly useful in assessing communication effectiveness. For example,

analyzing Instrumentalities and Ends helps determine whether the mural medium successfully serves as an appropriate and relevant tool to communicate with the community and achieve goals of education and national character building (Nurcahyawati & Alfisyahrin, 2021).

Murals, as wall paintings, have long served as an effective medium of visual communication since prehistoric times, capable of conveying ideological messages in a direct yet aesthetic manner (Kurniawaty & Widayatmo, 2024). In the context of tourism, murals function as a medium of communication between artists and the public, while also serving an educational purpose (Nurcahyawati & Alfisyahrin, 2021). Lourenço (2023) further explains that public art and graphic design share communicative goals in shaping social meaning through visual form, emphasizing the designer's and artist's responsibility to deliver messages clearly and contextually.

To analyze how the Jamblang mural constructs the meaning of nationalism, this study adopts Charles Sanders Peirce's Triadic Semiotic approach (Karbela, 2022). Peirce divides a sign into three elements: Representamen (the observable form of the sign), Object (the reference it represents) and Interpretant (the meaning that emerges in the receiver's mind) (Karbela, 2022). A similar analytical model was effectively applied by Bayu, Putra, Jayendra and Putra (2024) in their semiotic study of the Bali Arts Festival, demonstrating how local visual signs communicate layered cultural meanings through Peircean interpretation. This analysis is significant because nationalist murals are often examined through highly symbolic iconography

(Siau, 2021). By analyzing Jamblang's local historical Representamen including famine, earthquakes, and the restoration of the Vihara this study reveals how these signs refer to the Object of resilience and generate an Interpretant of patriotism and love for the homeland, supported by local sentiments of cultural loyalty (Karbela, 2022).

The Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) plays a key role in the development of tourism villages. Its main functions include enhancing tourism awareness, increasing community participation, and supporting the success of tourism development (Pardede & Sinaga, 2023). In the case of Jamblang, the Pokdarwis led by Arif actively utilizes the historical mural as a communication asset to achieve its goal of positioning Jamblang as a viable tourism destination (Fajar Cirebon, 2022). The mural, which depicts the period of recovery following historical crises (1845–1900), serves as a powerful tool for character education and the strengthening of national resilience (Nurcahyawati & Alfisyahrin, 2021). The strategic placement of the mural in front of Vihara Dharma Rhakita visually reinforces the branding narrative of the Three-Faith Tourism Village (Putra, 2023). Although Pokdarwis often faces internal challenges, such as limited skills, and external challenges, such as lack of material support (Pardede & Sinaga, 2023), the use of the mural as an engaging visual Instrumentality has proven to be an effective means of attracting public, media, and tourist attention (Putra, 2023). The relationship between Semiotics (the mural's message) and Ethnography of Communication (message reception)

thus becomes crucial in understanding how Pokdarwis successfully transforms local history into a compelling cultural attraction.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach within the framework of the Ethnography of Communication to explore the communicative and semiotic dimensions of the mural in Jamblang Village. The fieldwork was conducted in Jamblang Village Cirebon Regency focusing on the area surrounding Vihara Dharma Rhakita and the Old Town, where the mural is located.

Informants

To ensure the feasibility and relevance of this research, previous studies on visual communication and mural art were consulted. Sahabuddin and Hildayanti (2023) examined how mural art in public spaces functions as a medium of visual communication in Makassar, highlighting its social and cultural significance. Similarly, Thellefsen and Friedman (2023) discussed the relevance of Peirce's theory of iconicity in analyzing visual communication, emphasizing the interpretive and semiotic processes involved. These studies provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the communicative and semiotic dimensions explored in this research.

Primary data were collected through interviews with four key informants. The selection of informants was based on their roles in the communication events surrounding the mural attraction, which included facilitators, community mobilizers and message recipients:

1. Arif (Head of Pokdarwis) Provided data regarding the Ends (tourism objectives), planning processes and the role of Pokdarwis as the driving force among Participants.
2. Hari (Head of Hamlet / Kadus) Supplied contextual information on the Setting and social Norms as well as the legitimacy of the community.
3. Lala (Manager of Barengsay Café) Offered empirical data concerning the economic impact (Ends) and the Act Sequence of tourist interactions around the mural.
4. Riyanto (Local Resident) Represented the perspective of the message receiver, providing insights into the Interpretant of the mural's message and the most effective Instrumentalities.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was carried out through the following systematic steps:

1. Triadic Semiotic Analysis of Charles Sanders Peirce was applied to the mural's iconography to deconstruct the visual Representamen, relate it to the historical Object, and interpret the Interpretant (the meaning of nationalism) (Karbela, 2022).
2. Application of Dell Hymes' SPEAKING Model was used to categorize interview transcripts and observations of interactions surrounding the mural. This model identifies cultural communication patterns that emerge and develop within the context of public art (Nugroho & Purwati, 2019).

3. This study strengthens its analysis through in-depth interviews that explore the origins and intentions behind the creation of the mural symbols, as well as the collective meanings shared within the community. These interviews reveal how local narratives of resilience and harmony are visually legitimized and socially maintained. The focus on the Three-Faith Tourism Village is particularly significant because the coexistence of Islamic, Christian, and Buddhist communities provides a living representation of nationalism grounded in religious diversity, where harmony itself becomes an expression of patriotic unity.

Results and Discussion

This analysis is based on the perspectives of four key informants representing various sectors of the community in the Old Town of Jamblang. Qualitative data from informants was integrated into the SPEAKING framework to understand the structure of communication events surrounding mural attractions. Ethnographic Analysis of the SPEAKING Communication Model in Mural Attractions

S (Setting and Scene): Physical and Psychological Revitalization

The physical location of the mural is strategically placed on a wall directly in front of the Dharma Rhakita Temple, also known as the Jamblang Temple. The historical background of Jamblang is very important. This Chinatown area was once a bustling center of trade during the

colonial period, but is now characterized as a forgotten “dead city.” “This mural attempts to revive that collective memory. It used to be very crowded here, and this wall is a silent witness. This mural attempts to revive that memory. Its location is right in front of the temple, so that everyone knows that this temple is part of Jamblang’s history, not just Chinatown.” (Interview with Arif, September 19, 2025). The choice of location in front of a minority place of worship is a powerful act of spatial communication. When collective historical narratives are placed in the most vulnerable spaces of minority areas, the message conveyed is one of validation and inclusion. This spatial decision effectively declares that minority history is an integral part of majority history, directly supporting the framework of pluralistic nationalism.

P (Participants): Collaboration and Diversity of Actors

The main participants in the creation of the mural were a team of lecturers and students from Muhammadiyah University Cirebon who collaborated participatively with local residents, especially those living around the Dharma Rhakita Temple. “The diversity of participants in the mural-making process itself is a tourist attraction. The mural participants are diverse, some are Muslim, some are Chinese. This is what I sell to tourists. That this art belongs to all of us.” (Interview with Riyanto, September 19, 2025). The inclusive involvement of various religious and ethnic backgrounds in the creative process demonstrates a real representation of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* in action. The diversity of participants

proves that the process of creating art is an inclusive speech event.

E (Ends): Dual Purpose History and National Ideology

This mural has a dual purpose. The primary purpose is to revitalize the Chinatown area, educate the public about the history of Jamblang, and attract public and tourist attention (including selfies). The secondary, more profound purpose is to instill values of tolerance, bring peace (shalom), and overcome the threat of disintegration. "Economic and ideological goals are intertwined. The main goal is to boost the economy. But in the eyes of the village government, this is the most creative way to instill the idea that we live in harmony here, that three religions coexist peacefully. This is our capital for national tourism." (Interview with Hari, September 19, 2025). In this context, local economic success (revitalization) is explicitly linked to the success of the national ideology (pluralism). If Jamblang progresses as a tourist village, this is considered proof of local success in maintaining national unity. Thus, the communication ends of the mural transcend aesthetic aspects, functioning as an indicator of local socio-political performance in implementing the Pancasila ideology.

A (Act Sequence): Public Communication Action Sequence

The sequence of communication actions surrounding the mural includes: (1) historical education and presentation of the mural concept, (2) collaborative mural creation workshop, (3) discussion of visual meaning and addition of narratives by

residents, and (4) selfies or documentation. "The most important sequence is when we explain the symbols in the mural, then other residents ask questions and add stories. That's called historical dialogue, not just display. This sequence of actions shows that the communication produced is not just a passive presentation, but an active negotiation of local historical narratives." (Interview with Lala, September 19, 2025). The act of taking selfies in front of the mural is the final part of this Act Sequence, where individuals non-verbally "agree" and "adopt" the historical/pluralistic narrative as the backdrop for their identity.

K (Key): Tone, Spirit, and Emotion of Communication

The key (tone) of communication must ensure that the message of pluralism can be conveyed effectively without causing tension. The mural activity was carried out in a spirit of education and participatory collaboration, emphasizing a non-intimidating tone. "The tone must be persuasive and inspire local pride, in line with the demand to instill a spirit of nationalism. The tone must be proud. I have to speak in a tone that inspires a sense of belonging to Jamblang. It's not just an old temple, but a heritage that must be preserved together." (Interview with Hari, September 19, 2025). "The tone must be relaxed and open. No one is afraid to speak incorrectly about religion or history. We all feel equal when discussing in front of the mural. The participatory and collaborative tone ensures that the historical narrative is warmly accepted." (Interview with Arif, September 19, 2025). This successful key functions as a bridge connecting diversity

Participants (P) with Ends (E) unity, while also creating a non-verbal 'code of tolerance'..

I (Instrumentalities): Visual and Linguistic Codes

The main communication instrumentality is the visual art of the mural itself, which is rich in symbolism of peace and harmony. In addition, spoken language (Indonesian or the Cirebon dialect) is used in discussions and promotions. "The colors and shapes we choose must be 'friendly'. The message of tolerance is conveyed through symbols such as cool leaves and white scrolls. This is a universal language that does not need to be contested." (Interview with Lala, September 19, 2025). In the pluralistic society of Jamblang, this visual code is the most effective way to convey the message of nationalism (unity) without getting caught up in textual or religious debates. Murals act as a visual *lingua franca*, ensuring that the core message of tolerance and shared history is understood by all diverse Participants (P).

N (Norms): Rules of Interaction and Interpretation of Pluralism

The norms of interaction surrounding murals focus on appreciation of public art and an interest in understanding the visual meaning behind them. The norms of interpretation require all parties to respect

differences. Social norms are directed towards ideology and tourism. The norm is, if a tourist asks, answer proudly about the temple and mosque. Don't highlight one religion, but show our unity. That is the national norm here." (Interview with Riyanto, September 19, 2025). These norms are driven by Jamblang's status as a Three-Religion Tourism Village, which creates a need to perform tolerance. Every utterance and interpretation must support the narrative of harmony, ensuring that any communication produced (A, K) serves as a reaffirmation of the values of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*.

G (Genre): Visual Historical Narrative and National Promotion

This mural is explicitly categorized as "Jamblang Mural Attraction." The genres that emerge are historical narrative, tourism promotion, and selfie as a non-verbal genre. «This mural is not just a picture, it is history. It tells the story of the river, traders, and three long-standing places of worship. For us, it is a document (Genre) that speaks without words.» (Interview with Riyanto, September 19, 2025). Meanwhile, the prevalence of the selfie genre shows that this attraction has successfully become a social icon. The act of taking selfies integrates individuals into the collective narrative of Jamblang and

validates that narrative within the framework of contemporary nationalism.

Summary of Key Findings from the SPEAKING Analysis:

Table 1. Ethnographic Analysis of Communication (SPEAKING) in the Jamblang Mural

SPEAKING Factors	Key Descriptive Elements	Context Local Key Informants	Relationship with Nationalism & Pluralism
S (Setting & Scene)	Front wall	Arif: Emphasis	The determination of
	Dharma Rhakita Temple, revitalizing Chinatown "Dead City"	on collective memory and inclusion of minority spaces.	location is an act of communication that places diversity at the center of collective history.
P (Participants)	Artists, Collaborative Residents, Tourists, Residents of Three Religions.	Riyanto: Selling collaborative participation as proof of the living Bhinneka Tunggal Ika.	The diversity that participates in creation affirms collective national identity.
E (Ends)	Economic Revitalization, Historical Education, and Cultivation of Tolerance/Peace.	Day: Dual economic/ national objectives, linking local progress with national ideology	Using pluralism as a strategic asset for development and stability of the state ideology
A (Act Sequence)	Local History Dialogue, Art Collaboration, and Selfies as acts of adoption.	Lala: Dialogue between citizens is very important for negotiating historical narratives.	A series of actions that ensure the collective narrative is absorbed and maintained by society.
K (Key)	Participatory, proud, relaxed, and non-intimidating.	Hari & Arif: A tone that inspires local pride while maintaining openness in interfaith interactions.	The warm tone creates a nonverbal code of tolerance, bridging the differences between P and E.
I (Instrumentalities)	Visual Art (Mural), Symbolism of Peace, Visual Language	Lala: Visual codes function as a lingua franca that transcends linguistic and religious barriers.	Visual art ensures that the core message of unity is easily accessible to a diverse audience.

s)	Respecting symbols, Rules of interpretation that always prioritize unity/harmony.	Riyanto: Every public communication must support the narrative of unity for the sake of national tourism.	Objectively regulated norms to demonstrate tolerance for the sake of national stability. There is an identifiable trend in this communication, namely a shift from mere tolerance to National Tourism. When tolerance is linked to tourism, the Norms (N) of community interaction shift from simply showing the harmony to an obligation of displaying it.
)	Narrative History Visuals, Tourist Attractions, Visual	Arif: Murals are considered 'historical documents' that can speak to new generations.	Consistent public communication must showcase a Unique Selling Proposition (USP) that is in line with the narrative of national unity. This shows that nationalism in the Old Town of Jamblang is not just a passive ideology, but also a market communication strategy used to overcome the sluggish economic reality. Visual Semiotics Analysis of Charles Sanders Pierce's Triadic Theory Attraction of Murals
	Testimonials (Selfies).		

The Jamblang mural serves not only as decoration, but also as a map of Cirebon's collective identity within the national framework. The Old Town of Jamblang faces the challenge of spatial degradation, where it has declined from a lively trading center to a "dead city." Visual communication through murals is an urgent compensatory measure to reclaim Jamblang's historical and social relevance. When economic and social conditions are sluggish, the power of national ideology (pluralism and unity) is used as an asset to attract outside attention and reaffirm local pride. The decision to place the mural in front of the Dharma Rhakita Temple is the most substantial message of nationalism. By positioning historical narratives in minority community spaces, this activity implicitly states that the existence of the temple (as a representation of diversity) is the foundation of Jamblang's history, not merely a complement.

This spatial decision reinforces

Iconography



Figure 1 Jamblang Historical Mural depicting the famine and cholera outbreak (1845–1889)



Figure 2. Mural showing the recovery and interfaith collaboration (1900).



Figure 3 Jamblang Mural Attraction

The key representation in the mural is a simple and straightforward visualization of four natural and social disasters (famine, earthquake, cholera, flood) that struck Jamblang between 1845 and 1889 (Fajar Cirebon, 2022). The intended object is the collective memory of suffering. However, the most powerful representation is the

iconography from 1900, which features the restoration of the Dharma Rhakita Temple/ Vihara and symbols of craftsmen's tools (Putra, 2023). The interpretation derived from this series of iconography is inclusive nationalism. The visual message interprets that the revival of the community, which explicitly includes the restoration of minority religious sites, is the result of solidarity and the foundation of unity that enables "happiness" today (Fajar Cirebon, 2022).

Figures 1 and 2 were adapted from publicly available online sources that closely resemble the historical and visual context of the Jamblang mural scenes described in the study. These images serve as representational illustrations of the famine cholera outbreak (1845–1889) and interfaith recovery (1900). Meanwhile, Figure 3 originates from the author's own field documentation and photographic records captured during a direct visit to the Jamblang mural.

Thus, historical harmony (Three Religions) is enshrined as the essence of local national spirit, functioning as a reinforcement of integrated national defense at the grassroots level (Nurchayawati & Alfisyahrin, 2021). The mural in the Old Town of Jamblang serves as a semiotic icon, where the images on the wall resemble historical references (Karbela, 2022). The semiotic message of this mural is built on the contrast between times of crisis and times of revival.

Discussion

The Jamblang mural symbolizes local nationalism that emerges from collective experience. Through Dell Hymes'

SPEAKING model, communication around the mural includes participatory art creation, dialogue and social media interactions that reinforce pluralism as national identity.

1. Local National Nexus of Nationalism: Bottom-Up versus Top-Down Interpretation

The Jamblang mural exemplifies a bottom-up articulation of nationalism rooted in the everyday realities of coexistence and mutual respect among diverse religious communities. Unlike the top-down nationalism promoted by the Indonesian state which emphasizes unity through ideological symbols such as Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika the nationalism reflected in Jamblang is organic, experiential, and community-driven. It emerges not from state institutions or official narratives, but from the daily interactions and collective memories of villagers who have long practiced tolerance as part of their social fabric. In this sense, Jamblang's version of nationalism operates through cultural intimacy and shared space, rather than through state-sanctioned rituals or political slogans. The mural becomes a visual testimony of how ordinary people reinterpret the meaning of national identity from below. It embodies what scholars describe as a "vernacular nationalism" A nationalism that grows from lived realities, emotional bonds, and local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) reflects the rooted values of community identity and moral character formation in the Industrial 4.0 era (Sumartias et al., 2020). Through artistic collaboration among Muslims, Buddhists,

and Christians, Jamblang produces a participatory form of nationalism that redefines what it means to belong to Indonesia. This vernacular dimension of nationalism is deeply connected to the region's cultural philosophy, where local traditions such as *Dalihan Na Tolu* in other Indonesian contexts exemplify harmony, mutual respect, and interdependence (Harahap & Hamka, 2023).

This bottom-up approach does not reject state nationalism, but rather complements and revitalizes it. While the state's ideology of unity tends to remain abstract and symbolic, Jamblang's local nationalism gives those ideals tangible, everyday meaning. The mural's creation process itself collective, dialogic, and inclusive demonstrates how nationalism can be practiced as a dialogue of equality rather than a doctrine of authority. It challenges the rigidity and monolithic interpretation of the official national identity, offering instead a vision of Indonesia as a mosaic of interfaith harmony and grassroots participation. Ultimately, the Jamblang case reveals that nationalism is not a fixed ideology, but a living discourse negotiated between the state and its citizens. The local reinterpretation of unity through art, culture, and faith interaction reflects how nationalism in Indonesia continues to evolve beyond political boundaries, affirming that "being Indonesian" is as much about shared human values as it is about allegiance to a national symbol.

2. Semiotic Framework of the Jamblang Mural

To analyze the visual representation of nationalism and interfaith harmony in the mural, this study employs Charles Sanders Peirce’s triadic semiotic model, which includes the elements of Representamen (signifier), Object (signified), and Interpretant (interpreted meaning). This framework allows for a deeper understanding of how visual symbols communicate collective values within the Three-Faith Tourism Village. The following table presents key visual elements and their interpreted meanings as identified through field observation and interviews with community members:

Table 2 Semiotic Analysis

Visual Element (Representamen / Signifier)	Denotative Meaning (Signified / Object)	Interpretive Meaning (Interpretant)
Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians depicted working together	Interfaith cooperation in daily life	Local nationalism rooted in solidarity and coexistence. The depiction of Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians working together symbolizes an everyday
The old village architecture and natural scenery	Historical continuity and local identity	Interfaith collaboration transcends doctrinal boundaries. This visual unity reflects a localized form of nationalism one
Hands painting together on a single wall	Collective participation in creation	Symbol of inclusive communication and equality rather than political ideology. The portrayal of
The national flag subtly placed in the background	Unity in diversity (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika)	traditional village architecture and natural scenery further reinforces the sense of historical continuity reminding viewers that national identity is built upon local heritage. Such visual preservation of local culture reflects the people’s pride in being both part of the village and the nation. Meanwhile, the image of hands painting together on a single wall signifies collective agency and inclusive communication. It represents how harmony is not passively inherited but actively created through joint participation. This act of co-creation

legitimizes a form of nationalism grounded in equality and shared responsibility.

To systematically link these visual elements with the collective values of nationalism and interfaith harmony, the analysis combined semiotic interpretation with ethnographic data gathered through direct field observation and informal interviews with community members, artists, and local religious leaders. During these interactions, participants frequently emphasized values such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), *rukun antarumat* (interfaith harmony), and *cinta tanah air* (love for the homeland) as inspirations for the mural's composition. These narratives provided an empirical foundation that guided the interpretive coding of symbols, ensuring that meaning attribution was grounded in community discourse rather than researcher subjectivity. Consequently, each visual motif such as the joint painting hands, shared tools, and interfaith figures was analyzed as both an artistic and social signifier reflecting lived practices of collaboration. This integration of visual semiotics and community ethnography strengthens the validity of the interpretation, positioning the mural as a co-produced expression of grassroots nationalism.

Finally, the subtle inclusion of the Indonesian flag in the background serves as a symbolic bridge between local and national identities. Through this image, the idea of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* ("Unity in Diversity") is visually articulated, transforming religious pluralism into a unifying element of Indonesian nationalism. Thus, the mural does not merely decorate the space but functions as a communicative medium that legitimizes harmony as the

essence of local patriotism. The semiotic interpretation above is further supported by ethnographic interviews with local residents, mural artists, and members of the Tourism Awareness Group (*Pokdarwis*). Informants consistently emphasized that the mural was not merely an artistic project but a collective reflection of lived experience a remembrance of how Muslim, Buddhist, and Christian communities in Jamblang have survived crises together. According to Arif, the head of *Pokdarwis*, the choice of symbols such as shared labor and communal landscapes was deliberately made to communicate that "our strength as Jamblang people lies in togetherness, not in differences.

This convergence of visual signs (Semiotics) and social narratives (Ethnography of Communication) reveals that the meaning of nationalism in Jamblang emerges organically from daily interactions, rituals, and mutual care among diverse faith groups. Thus, rather than representing nationalism through state symbols or political discourse, the community redefines it through interreligious solidarity a lived form of patriotism grounded in collective memory and moral resilience.

3. Communicative Context and Collective Interpretation

Interviews with the mural creators (Riyanto, Lala, and Arif) and local leaders reveal that the design emerged from community discussions facilitated by *Pokdarwis* (Tourism Awareness Group). Before finalizing the mural, interfaith participants deliberated on themes that could symbolize their shared experience after the economic downturn and social

fragmentation during the pandemic.

They agreed that depicting interreligious cooperation such as scenes of communal work and joint painting would best represent the spirit of recovery and togetherness. This process reflects a collective semiotic negotiation, where meaning is not imposed by an individual artist but co-constructed by the community. Viewer interpretation also aligns with this shared meaning. During field observation, visitors and residents frequently described the mural as “*pengingat harmoni*” (a reminder of harmony) and “*simbol kebangkitan bersama*” (a symbol of collective revival). Hence, the interpretant nationalism as harmony was not only intended by the creators but also recognized by the audience, confirming a successful communication process.

Design decisions were made through participatory workshops held during the PKM program and facilitated by Pokdarwis. In these deliberations, residents, student artists, and local leaders collectively selected scenes that would best narrate Jamblang’s trajectory from crisis to recovery. Participants explicitly agreed to depict multi-faith communal labor as a central motif because it visually encapsulated both the historical process of recovery and the everyday practice of mutual help across religious lines. As one local leader stated “We want to show that the revival of this village is the result of joint efforts, not the work of one group alone” (Arif, Pokdarwis, interview, September 19, 2025). This confirms that the motif was deliberate, dialogic and communally authorized not an artist’s solitary interpretation.

To ensure the validity of interpretive findings, this study employed source triangulation combining three primary methods: in-depth interviews, field observation, and document analysis. Interviews with mural artists (Riyanto and Lala), community leaders (Arif and Hari), and residents provided insight into the creators’ intended meanings and collective decision-making process. Field observations during the mural’s creation and subsequent community engagement activities helped verify how visual symbols were received and interpreted by the public. In addition, project documentation and local media publications were analyzed to cross-check the historical context, design rationale, and public narratives surrounding the mural. This triangulation of data sources ensures that the meanings identified through semiotic analysis are not merely the researcher’s interpretations, but are consistent with the community’s lived experience and collective understanding.

4. The Mural Attraction as a Communication Strategy of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis)

The combination of Charles Sanders Peirce’s Visual Semiotic Analysis and the Ethnography of Communication demonstrates that the Jamblang mural functions as a cultural communication catalyst, strengthening the local narrative of harmony as the foundation of nationalism. This mural is not merely an artistic creation but also a collective visual archive that records the community’s social resilience. It depicts how interfaith communities Muslim, Buddhist, and Christian have

made harmony the key to recovery after social and economic crises. National values are not transmitted through symbolic indoctrination but through an honest collective memory of shared suffering and collective triumph, immortalized in visual form. Conceptually, the Jamblang mural can be understood as a medium of participatory communication that integrates art, history, and tourism into a single narrative space.

The Jamblang Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) plays a strategic role in this communication process, serving as an intermediary agent connecting local communities, local government, and tourists. Despite facing internal challenges such as limited managerial capacity and digital literacy and external barriers like insufficient material support, the mural serves as a smart and effective instrumentality to attract public attention and strengthen the image of the tourist destination. Through the framework of Means Ends Analysis, the mural functions as a means that generates tangible tourism value (ends). In this context, the success of the mural's visual message depends not only on its symbolic strength but also on the social legitimacy constructed through Dell Hymes's SPEAKING communication model. The active participation of residents such as Riyanto and Lala, the support of Pokdarwis Chairperson (Arif), and the commitment of the Hamlet Head (Hari) to the norms of harmony demonstrate the presence of equitable communicative participation, where community members are not merely message recipients but also producers of new meanings of nationalism.

Thus, communication surrounding

the mural functions as a cultural framing strategy, transforming Jamblang's local pluralism into a contextual narrative of nationalism. The mural is no longer just a visual art object but has evolved into a social communication genre that connects collective historical memory with Jamblang's future aspirations as an Old Town area symbolizing peace and nationalism. Theoretically, the Jamblang case illustrates that community-based tourism can serve as a new arena for the construction of national identity, in which mural art acts as a medium of interfaith and intercultural dialogue, as well as a tourism branding mechanism rooted in humanistic and pluralistic values.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that this interpretation carries the risk of romanticizing local harmony while overlooking latent social tensions or dissenting voices within the community. While the mural celebrates interfaith unity, not all residents may equally experience or participate in this narrative. Marginalized groups such as informal workers, minority youth, or those excluded from tourism-related benefits may interpret the mural's message differently. To address this limitation, the study positions the mural as both an aspirational and contested symbol: a representation of collective ideals that coexists with everyday negotiations of power, inclusion, and voice. Future ethnographic inquiry could further explore how these differing interpretations shape community participation and local identity formation in Jamblang's evolving tourism landscape.

Conclusions and Implications

The Jamblang mural articulates a living form of nationalism that complements Indonesia's pluralist ideals. It serves both as a community revitalization tool and as visual pedagogy for resilience and unity. The integration of Peirce's Semiotics and Hymes' Ethnography highlights how art transforms ideology into everyday communication. The ethnography of communication in the Old Town of Jamblang reveals that the mural attraction, which tells the story of the crisis and revival of a multicultural community, is a complex and successful communication event. Through Peirce's semiotic analysis, the mural successfully produces an interpretant in the form of communal nationalism, in which the resilience and harmony of the three religions are enshrined as the essence of local patriotism. The application of the SPEAKING model proves that the Ends (goals) of the murals are education and tourism economy, achieved through the Act Sequence of public selfie interactions and verbal support from local residents (Instrumentality), based on Norms of social harmony maintained by the Village Head (Hari).

Theoretically, this study situates the Jamblang mural within broader academic discussions on how public art contributes to constructing multicultural and national identities. As Ong and Ting (2023) demonstrate in the Malaysian context, murals can serve as sociolinguistic spaces that negotiate belonging and diversity. Similarly, the Jamblang mural reinterprets nationalism through visual narratives rooted in interfaith collaboration and collective resilience, positioning it as a model of vernacular multiculturalism.

Furthermore, the integration of Peirce's Semiotics and Hymes' Ethnography

offers a novel analytical framework that advances visual communication studies in community and tourism contexts. Whereas previous research often examined these frameworks separately, this dual approach enables a multidimensional understanding of how visual symbols (representamen) are embedded within communicative events and social practices. In line with Echtner (1999), this study extends the semiotic paradigm by showing that meaning-making in tourism communication involves not only visual representation but also ethnographic participation that sustains its interpretant in everyday interaction.

Practically, these findings have important implications for the development of tourism villages. The Jamblang mural exemplifies how art-based storytelling can enhance cultural education and community-based tourism. In the digital era, murals can also be leveraged as part of tourism strategies to attract and educate tourists through social media, virtual exhibitions, and digital heritage campaigns (Aliyah, Kartini, Amanda, & Sartika, 2025). Therefore, Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis) are encouraged to integrate visual communication instruments with professional digital guide training so that complex messages of unity, resilience, and local wisdom can be effectively transmitted to both onsite and online audiences.

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