

# Struggle of Meaning and the Jokowi Myth in the 2018 Asian Games Opening Video

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## ABSTRACT

Myths as a foreigner's lackey, communist sympathizer, and anti-Islam have been cast virtually by anonymous political adversaries unto Joko Widodo (Jokowi) as one of Indonesia's presidential candidates. This study discusses the myths underlying the meaning of Jokowi's figure; how those myths developed meanings of images in the 2018 Asian Games Opening video; and how those myths became a struggle of meaning for Jokowi as the presidential candidate. This study employed the qualitative approach by using the critical paradigm. This is, thus, a research that attempts to develop elaborations concerning the concept and phenomenon of power and its practices, and it describes them to develop inductive explanation from the acquired data. Roland Barthes' semiotics method is used in this study. The text analyzed is the content of Jokowi's video during the 2018 Asian Games Opening ceremony. This research managed to produce a model for understanding the struggle of meaning involving myths and the construction of sign reality in the text display of the 2018 Asian Games opening video. The model indicates the struggle of meaning between the scripts of the ruler (the incumbent) and the myths attached within the public's ideological frame of mind.

**Keywords:** *Struggle of meaning, Myths, Asian Games 2018, Foreigner's Lackey, Jokowi*

## INTRODUCTION

The Asian Games, which involved 45 participating countries and 11,720 athletes and was held from August 18 to September 2 of 2018 in Jakarta ([www.antaranews.com](http://www.antaranews.com)), was a multi-sport event, but it also had political insinuations as it occurred in the period leading up to the Indonesian Presidential Election campaign between Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and his challenger, Prabowo Subianto. The rivalry between Jokowi and Prabowo has persisted since the 2014 Presidential Election, which was won by Jokowi. In 2019, Prabowo is seeking revenge while Jokowi persistently intends to maintain his power until 2024.

The 2018 Asian Games sport event had turned into one of the arenas for conveying political messages between the presidential candidates. Sports and politics do indeed have very close ties (Qorih, 2015) and they are frequently utilized by political actors for political purposes. Grix and Houlihan (2014) show that Germany as the host of the 2006 FIFA World Cup and England as the host of the 2012 Olympics had taken advantage of these events for their respective purposes of international political imagery.

This is similarly observed in Indonesia. In 1962, President Sukarno held the Games of the New Emerging Forces – GANEFO as a political propaganda to rival the summer Olympics dominated by Western nations (Lutan and Hong, 2005). In Bandung, West Java, the Mayor of Bandung, Dada Rosada, employed symbols associated with Bandung's Persib football club, which had a huge fan base, during his campaign in the 2008 Mayoral Election (Fadli, 2012).

President Jokowi is the same, he also utilized sporting activities to deliver political messages. Jokowi appeared in his YouTube channel publication that contains boxing and archery activities. Through these various sports activities, Jokowi seems to be sending a message to his political adversaries that may be interpreted as “he will beat his opponents in the presidential election”.

During the opening ceremony of the 2018 Asian Games, Jokowi performed in full action by displaying his skills of maneuvering a motorcycle through the video presented at the stadium and broadcasted live throughout all Indonesian television stations. Viewers were treated to a spectacle of Jokowi’s journey from the Presidential Palace in Bogor to the Senayan Stadium.

According to the scenario, the President’s journey was hindered by traffic. So as not to be late, President Jokowi switched his mode of transport. He rode the motorcycle and accelerated in high speed which lifted the tires up—the scene was played by a stuntman.

In the video clip, Jokowi was shown to have arrived on time, parked his motorcycle, entered the lift, then emerged on the stadium stage. The event subsequently began. The costume Jokowi had on when he opened the event was similar to what he wore when riding the motorcycle so it appeared as if he really did ride the motorcycle to the event venue.

On the other hand, Prabowo was praised by the pencak silat athletes who were under his patronage as the Chairman of the Indonesian Pencak Silat Association (*Ikatan Pencak Silat Indonesia – IPSI*), which raked in all eight gold medals in the 2018 Asian Games pencak silat field. With that, Indonesia succeeded in collecting 31 gold medals and ranked fourth after China (132 medals), Japan (78 gold), and Korea (49 gold). It was Indonesia’s most prestigious achievement since the 1962 Asian Games ([www.kompas.com](http://www.kompas.com)).

The 2018 Asian Games did not only carry sports and sportsmanship significance among the athletes, it also had political inferences to the presidential candidates and their supporters in the 2019 political year. The event did not only present sports competitions, it also involved a game of discourses in the context of communication science.

During the narrative of the Asian Games, Jokowi took advantage of the stage to portray his imagery with his motorcycle act, while Prabowo appeared with his success story as pencak silat’s patron.

Large-scale sporting events serve as a field for political actors’ struggle of power (Krisdinato & Supardi, 2018), which is carried out by using particular symbols. Political interests are exhibited via particular symbols by establishing particular myths or meanings. Political actors with vested interests attempt to build public legitimacy by engaging in a struggle over meanings of linguistic messages with their symbols (Shin, 2016; Sanawi, 2014).

The political contest between Jokowi and Prabowo also led to a battle of public opinions by presenting stories from their past. Prabowo has always been associated with the 1998 political turmoil leading up to the fall of President Suharto, who was Prabowo’s father-in-law. Prabowo is also labelled to have had his hand in the forced disappearance of people opposing the New Order. His supporters are considered to be followers of radical Islam. These myths have always been attributed to Prabowo’s figure every time he steps into the political stage ever since the fall of President Suharto.

Meanwhile, Jokowi has been branded with the symbol of Chinese lackey, a sympathizer of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), a liar, a puppet president, and a party officer. Essentially speaking, the supporters of both sides have sent various messages and signs to the public, which resulted in the public text within the sign system to be filled with symbol images built on the myths of both candidates.

Asian Games itself presented political symbols from the ruling government. The 2018 Asian Games, which was held during a period approaching the presidential election campaign, was in itself allowing symbolic struggle of interests between the presidential candidates to occur. In Barthesian terms, this is a struggle of myths that were generated from thousands of past signs or footsteps. Born out of the struggles of history, tragedy, and dissatisfaction, as intertexts that established myths through the naturalization of history (Barthes, 1991).

The battle between Jokowi and Prabowo not only deals with the battle of ideas and concepts regarding Indonesia, but it also puts the deep motives of each presidential candidate on the table. This is reflected in the verbal and visual signifiers within their campaign image configuration. Barthes stated, an electoral candidate's signifier, basically, not only brings forth ideas, but also deep motives, history, family, and all archetypical attributes within the historical constellation of their self image (Barthes, 1991).

The Asian Games, was in essence a display of Indonesia's identity to compete with Asian nations in the field of sports. However, once the event became a struggle of the presidential candidates' deep motives, then there were significant potentials for the signifiers appearing in the event to have connotations with myths existing among the public. Such condition connected the various thoughts of people in the past with the construction of sign reality in the publication materials of the 2018 Asian Games.

-From a semiotics perspective, the Asian Games opening ceremony became a signifying image framed naturally by myth. The Asian Games, semiotically, is a sign configuration, a regularity of meaning in the myths of the colossal event.

A sign, regardless of its various functions, is specifically something that has the capacity to convey truth. According to Umberto Eco, a sign can be used to convey truth and it can also be used to convey untruth (Eco, 1979). Fundamentally, a sign can be used by anyone to think according to their will and it can also be used to build a frame of myth so that the mind can be naturalized with the intent that it would later be considered as something common.

Various expressions of hatred, silliness, and shouts in the political arena leading up to the presidential election are mere naturalization of the myth's reality. The myths forged out of conflict are myths that also lead to conflict in the society. Thus, the politicization of sports is the struggle of meanings that was developed by certain myths. Sports is nothing more than a sign, which Derrida likened to a ghost town (Derrida, 1978).

In order to observe how the semiotics constellation is within the various images relating to the presidential candidates, the research questions posed in this study are: "What are the myths underlying the meaning of Jokowi's figure? How did those myths develop the meanings of President Jokowi's imagery in the 2018 Asian Games opening video display? How did those myths become a struggle of meanings for Jokowi as the presidential candidate?"

The aim of this research is to provide a description on meanings of Jokowi developed by the myths regarding his self and the struggle of meanings in the video material of the 2018 Asian Games opening ceremony. Based on this elaboration, an interpretation model of the struggle of meaning that involves myth and the construction of the reality of sign in the text display is desired.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A semiotic study on a general election involving presidential candidates has been conducted by Ramaldes and Prado (2008) by describing the persuasive procedures of symbols configuration relating to the presidential candidates. Each candidate featured their various

superior points; developed concerns over particular issues and created puzzles directed at the promises of the candidates (Ramaldes and Prado, 2008).

Ramaldes' study had only reached the stage of describing the structure of symbolization while the deep motive, historical background, and intertextual contribution were not exclusively analyzed, hence the interpretative process and the constructed meanings are not known. The study had no assumption of constructing historical relevance, it only estimated the reading and interpretation of the outer layer of symbolization (denotative).

Ramaldes' research, generally, describes the struggle of power by providing a structure of symbolization and its relation with meaning to become a constructive material for campaigners of both sides by constructing symbols, accentuating positive features, emotions of the masses, and political promises.

Meanwhile, a semiotic study by Fernando (2013) found the editorial meanings of political cartoons from the Sri Lankan presidential candidates, Rajapaksa and Fonseka. The meanings of the cartoons were found to be closely associated with the knowledge and cultural background of the voters (Fernando, 2013). This means that the aspects of history, tradition, language, and culture within a particular period may influence or have the potential to form certain texts and intertexts regarding an event or symbol within a text.

Another study relating to a presidential election was carried out by Tepla. He conducted a semiotic study of photojournalism pertaining to the Czech presidential election (Tepla, 2014). The study describes the strategy of online media photography relating to the 2013 Czech presidential candidate. Tepla's finding indicates that photographic representation differs according to the media institution. Although visual manipulation exists, political factor remains to be the basis of consideration for voters in determining their preference.

Unlike the studies carried out by Ramaldes, Fernandes, and Tepla, this research on the struggle of meanings and the Jokowi myth in the 2018 Asian Games opening ceremony attempts to determine the state of the art in the study of connotative semiotics developed by Barthes with the main justification of meaning formed by functioning myths, and there are layers of meanings that function incoherently between one another.

This study does not expound on the procedural aspect but it describes a deconstruction of historical and cultural motives relating to the semiotic constellation of a text associated with the presidential candidates. This research aims toward a theoretical model that has not been found in the body of literature, which is the struggle of meaning in every power struggle during presidential elections.

The practice of discourse is a side of power struggle that contributes to varying degrees of reproduction and transformation in the order of discourse within power relations and social relations (Fairclough, 2010). In this matter, discourse functions through signs. Discourse is a semiotic process with activities that focus on constructing power practices through signs. The struggle taking place in discourses is surely associated with the struggle of producing sign and the meaning of power.

Bourdieu specifically made this concept of struggle in the theoretical construction of capital. The concept of capital in Bourdieu's theoretical perspective refers to all entities and resources that are fought for as valued resources (Swartz, 1997). Thus, the 2018 Asian Games was not only a physical sports activity because its conversation and activities involved valued resources. The sporting material had thus turned into a political event.

McNair (2003) argues that public conversation regarding an issue may be categorized as a political communication message. In the discourse conception, all political communications about power are discourse.

Given the definition above, this sports event becomes a political discourse when it is associated with political actors and their activities. The activities of political actors are then associated with particular political events. In the aspect of discourse, the semiotic dimension will construct various events as texts or configuration of political signifiers.

Louw states that the society is a configuration of symbolic activities, and the construction of meanings, which he calls "communication pools", which is a structure of meaning that have congealed over time. These communication pools are coding styles and circulation patterns that have taken forms of social culture (Louw, 2001). Essentially, the forming or structuring of existing meanings and symbols are created through a particular semiotic process.

According to Louw, power relation is a central variable when someone intends to observe meanings within a specific time and space. Observing semiotic relation is basically observing how a power activity transpires through signs. A political struggle is also a struggle of meanings. Meanings change from time to time, and so do power: it is a constant struggle in human life (Louw, 2001).

Given this theoretical assumption, a basic concept can be developed that the struggle of power is the struggle of meaning in the semiotic context, which is the essential relation of humans themselves, because the basic character of human beings is to existentially construct semiotic constructions. Humans try to make sense of their lives, and this is achieved through the use of language (Louw, 2001; Ritonga, 2014).

Barthes' theory of semiotics is a semiotic analysis based on structuralism. However, the theoretical style of Barthes' thoughts is also the beginning of post structuralism. Barthes argues that myth is a special type of speech; it is a way of using special speech (Fry and Fry, 1989). Barthes assumed that myth, semiotic wise, is a language constellation.

Myth is understood by Barthes as a process of removing history. Through myth, history is stripped off and filled in by nature (Barthes, 1972). Thus, historical events, or archetypes are constructed within significant reality by stripping historical qualities, leaving behind an empty premise. And this is conducted naturally without remorse. The outcome is subsequently justified as natural truth.

The analysis on myth is in the articulation of relations between all aspects of the sign system constructing meaning, encompassing the cultural assumptions attached to form. The process begins with the identification of an ideological object or an awareness that the system of sign brings forth a seemingly natural assumption, while in fact it is historical through a series of past causalities (Gaines, 2001).

Myth, in the context of metalanguage conceptualized by Barthes, is essentially a historical material. Yet, people do not question its causality. It merely applies as common sense, it has become a habit, as if it were purely a given and natural signifier-signified relation.

Barthes viewed myth as a system of communication and modes of significations, a type of discourse that is not limited to verbal communication, and this produces broad symbolic communication found in social media, mass media, advertising, or electoral propaganda (Schussler, 2017; Jalli, 2016). Myth is, essentially, present every where, it guides and seeks sociocultural references in symbols so that the human logic functions naturally.

Barthes perceived the system of signification, which is also a system of communication, in the following semiotics model below:

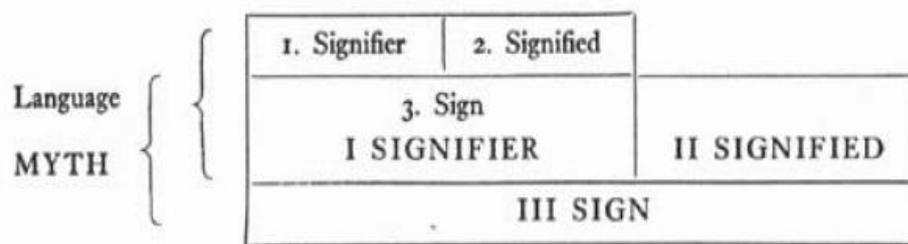


Figure 1 Barthes Semiotics Model (Barthes, 1991: 113)

Figure 1 indicates that sign has two orders of signification. The first order of signification refers to language. Here, the system of language or the system of sign is arranged in language signification. This is called language object, in which together with myth, they construct a system of signification, touching on reality and known as representational configuration. This is the primary signification order or the first order.

Second, metalanguage, which is myth itself, as connotation. This is a global sign, all that forms sign and lends it to myth. Here, myth manages signification and holds the signification function. Myth is a system of signification, it is not a meaning. Myth contains deeper signifier-signified relation. Barthes always referred to it as deep motive. Myth is not hidden because it is naturally present and is considered as a common thing.

In general, Barthes was of the opinion that the secondary signification level is the main location or site of cultural power (Reed, 2015). When speaking of cultural power, it will relate with the struggle of power which is understood as the struggle of meaning.

Semiotics is a study on the struggle of power in sign constellation. Meaning is a historical entity that changes and power follows. Based on Barthes' theory, a relationship is present between power and meaning, which is the constellation of myth itself. Therefore, the struggle of meaning in the Barthesian theory of semiotics is assumed as a struggle or conflict between myths of ideological bodies.

Struggle between powers or power of authority is a consequence of differences in ideological formation (Fairclough, 2010). In this case, the battle of ideologies underlies the various power rivalries and conflicts. The struggle of meaning as a struggle of power is an ideological conflict. This occurs at the myth level. Undoubtedly, every myth as a configuration of signifier or sign within a secondary semiotics system is also in conflict with one another in the structure.

The theoretical justification developed in this study is the struggle between myths, which is a struggle of meanings, and it is also a myth about the struggle itself. Ideological struggle is constructed by particular signification rules controlled at the myth level so that it becomes a particular ideological constellation, relating to the power struggle itself.

## METHODOLOGY

This research employed the qualitative approach with critical paradigm. In practice, this is a deconstructive study that attempts to develop a description about a concept and phenomenon by elaborating concepts and developing inductive explanations from the acquired data.

The method used is semiotics with data collection model based on Roland Barthes' semiotics schematic, wherein analysis is carried out by taking connotations apart and constructing the first order of semiotic relation (denotation). The texts examined were video

content of Jokowi's arrival to the 2018 Asian Games opening ceremony that was broadcasted in the run up to his grand entrance on stage.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *The Communist Sympathizer Myth*

The 2014 Presidential Election was an entry point for Jokowi to rise to the summit of power in Indonesia. During the election, Jokowi was associated with a past archetype as a sympathizer of a forbidden party, the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). Jokowi rejected that claim (<https://www.merdeka.com>).

However, the clarification signification does not mean that the matter is resolved. The myth as a connotative signification remains. 1965 is the historical narrative of the Indonesian nation with the September 30 Movement (*Gerakan 30 September – G30S*) involving PKI and resulted in the deaths of several army generals. This incidence has become a historical-sociological journey and is perceived as a turning point of change in Indonesia (Hadi, 2017).

PKI, which was initially rather dominant on Indonesia's political stage, suddenly had turned into a loser. The military along with a number of anticommunist elements in the society had annihilated PKI members and communist sympathizers (Hadi, 2017).

Following the G30S incidence, the word communist became an archetype in Indonesia to illustrate PKI's brutality in killing the generals. This archetype is further supported by cinematic hegemony through a film titled "*Pengkhianatan G-30-S PKI*" (The Betrayal of G30S PKI), which contains the brutal massacre of the generals.

PKI is symbolized as a political specter. Anything bad would be associated with this party. Even an accusation of someone being a member of PKI may have dire consequences: captured then shunned by society. This archetype is present in the ocean of denotative configuration. Meanwhile, the myth pertaining to PKI's relation and its brutality remains in the common thoughts of Indonesians.

In the history of Indonesia, PKI was known to be close with President Sukarno, and some of Sukarno's supporters were communist sympathizers. Sukarno's reluctance to disband PKI for the sake of maintaining the existence of "nationalism-religion-communism" (Nasakom) had led to the association that Sukarno's supporters are PKI supporters as well.

Nasakom, according to Mortimer is Sukarno's prescription in his slogan, which had legal standing and was the legal basis for communism in Indonesia. Nasakom was often used as a legal standing for PKI to attack its enemies (Mortimer, 2006: 90). The association between PKI and Sukarno was incredibly strong.

Sukarno's socialism was identified as a part of PKI style communism, and as a result Sukarno's myth was constructed as a part of PKI. PKI symbols had symbolic associations with all Sukarno based socialism movement. In the myth construction constellation, Sukarno's political ideas and the organizations of his supporters are described in a demonic construction of reality.

The demonization does not exist in the legal realm as the law had already cut of its chronicle. However, myth has established its relation of reality as a demonic construction and it will continue forever.

Upon General Suharto's disbandment of PKI in 1966, noncommunist Sukarnoists continue to engage in politics during the New Order. They joined the Indonesian Democratic Party (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia – PDI*) that maintained the spirit of socialism. The association between PKI and Sukarnoism is a myth, and PDI existed under such understanding: as a symbol of communist presence in the New Order era.

On July 27<sup>th</sup>, an incident occurred and it triggered a momentum leading to the establishment of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan* – PDI-P), which is a revolutionary offshoot of PDI. General Suharto's political oppositions all gathered in PDI-P, in which some of them were second generation members and or sympathizers of PKI who were victims of the New Order's clean-up in the period from 1965 to 1971.

Within such constellation, Jokowi began his political career in 2004 through PDI-P and became the Mayor of Solo (2005-2012), the Governor of Jakarta (2012-2014), and reached the summit as the President of the Republic of Indonesia by winning the 2014 Presidential Election ([www.detik.com](http://www.detik.com)).

Once he became president, a number of arrests were made on oppositions who spoke about Jokowi's association with communist signifiers and symbols. These political actions and incidents have amplified the myth and became something natural when ulemas were arrested, among them Ustad Alfian Tandjung. In terms of semiotics, Tandjung correlated with the construction of Jokowi's myth as a communist sympathizer. He revealed various prepositions and data regarding Jokowi's association with PKI (<https://tirto.id>).

In the signification, the myth has been set in motion. The relationship between Jokowi and PKI in the myth has resulted in an amplification of the matter. The link of social relations has led to such direction, despite the relation being untrue. Myth merely naturalizes and creates relation of truth or reality in the denotative construction through connotative control.

The myth of communist sympathizer resides in the interpretative mind of Indonesians. The relation solidified in conversations held on social media. Jokowi and PKI was not only regarded as a serious conversation, but also a satire, as shown in Image 1 below.



Image 1: Jokowi accused of being a communist sympathizer

The Image 1 picture, which was distributed throughout the virtual world, shows a man in white shirt with a face similar to that of Jokowi, in the foreground the PKI leader, D.N. Aidit, can be seen making a speech on the podium with the hammer-sickle logo, the symbol of PKI. The truth of the photo need not be proven because as a photograph it certifies its own existence (Barthes, 1982). The certification of reality occurs theoretically, the myth leaves the historical aspect and vitalizes the historic monument into a specific configuration of signifier and signified. Therefore, the semiotic relation the signifier carries does not correlate with truth or history. The semiotic relation is the truth, the myth is like that.

The truth concerning the myth of Jokowi and PKI does not need to be historically proven because, in terms of semiotic, it has become a common thought or it has been naturalized in the relation of signifier and signified. Jokowi's appearance is construed as a figure enveloped in anger toward PKI.

Meanwhile, in the videographic text of Jokowi's arrival in the 2018 Asian Games opening ceremony, there are a number of visuals that can be read in the myth framework, as described by referring to Image 2.



Image 2: Jokowi leaving Bogor Palace to Senayan

Jokowi left the Bogor Presidential Palace, featured at the 00:07 second mark in the video. In the video, Jokowi and his guards are seen walking out of the palace hall. The language symbol of this object is that Jokowi is the leader of a nation. The Bogor Palace gives the impression of a residence fit for a leader.

According to the myth of Jokowi's relation with PKI, this image is interpreted as the reign of communist in the palace. This means that Jokowi's administration is understood to be of communist color. That the archetypical spaces are identified by the myth, leading to a signification of signifier signified that is given meaning with the display of the presidential motorcade (Image 3) at the 00.41-minute point in the video.



Image 3: President Jokowi's motorcade leaving the Bogor Palace

Guards are constantly in close contact with the figure of authority. A guard is a symbol that the accompanied individual is without a doubt of a special stratum. This difference of stratum leads to a hierarchy of power. In the context of myth, the signification configuration of this image establishes the meaning of communism's strength in legitimacy. It completes the image from the initial scene, the justification of PKI as a scepter, as a demon juxtaposed with the myth of power, so that it is construed as a reigning demonic figure.

In the past, PKI, in its various activities, had always involved mass destruction or demonstrations. In the records of history, as noted by Hadi et al. (2017), PKI's mass protests from 1963 to 1965 were in the form of demonstration that led to the burning of the British Embassy in Jakarta, demonstration involving approximately 3000 North Sumatran PKI youths that ended in violence, and many other mass protests.

The mass protest involving PKI organizations and their members was eternalized in the texts of the G-30 S-PKI movie, which depicted members of *Gerwani* (Indonesian Women's Movement) and *Pemuda Rakyat* (the People's Youth) in joy following their massacre of the army generals.

The PKI figures construction of reality, and such mass protests is an obligation or a signifier that must be present in the signification of the communism myth. This can be discerned in the depicted imagery of sport supporters and crowds in the scene at the 1:15 minute mark of the 2018 Asian Games opening video (Image 4).



Image 4: A crowd of supporters in the 2018 Asian Games Opening video.

In general, Image 4 merely portrays a crowd. Even so, how does myth read into this? The mythical relation between Jokowi and PKI perceives this as something not unlike a mass protests held by the Indonesian Farmers' Front (*Barisan Tani Indonesia – BTI*) or *Gerwani* during PKI's heyday prior to the 1965 incident.

### *The Anti-Islam Myth*

In addition to the PKI myth, the Jokowi's semiotic relation is also associated with anti-Islam. This is due to Jokowi's administration bringing a number of Islamic figures to court. Some Muslim social media activists who opposed him also had to deal with the court.

There were also numerous other incidences that had been mythicized to give the impression that Jokowi's administration is unfriendly to the Muslim community, in which one of them is Jokowi's relationship with Basuki Tjahaja Purnam (Ahok), the Governor of Jakarta SCR, who was the vice-governor when Jokowi was Governor of Jakarta (Citraesmana, 2018).

The myth of Jokowi not defending the Muslim community was suggested by his unwillingness to meet with the millions of Muslims demonstrating and demanding for Ahok to be put on trial. The people were consequently divided into the "indigenous" and "nonindigenous" narratives (Puspitasari, 2018), in which the nonindigenous group was understood as Chinese.

The Jokowi administration and its supporters also tended to take unpopular stances. The PDI-P cadres, for instance, support the presence of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and

transgender (LGBT) group, which is in opposition to the voice of the Muslim group. There is also the monitoring of ustad (religious cleric) preaching in mosques, as well as a number of other cases that triggered Jokowi's anti-Islam myth.

The regime's political statements and political actions have also, more or less, contributed to the construction of this myth, for instance, in the speech delivered by Megawati Sukarnoputri, the Chairperson of PDI-P, the party promoting Jokowi:

*...Not only that, they are truly anti diversity. That has been appearing with the various issues of SARA (ethnicity, religion, race) recently. On the other hand, leaders who adhere to closed ideology even position themselves as the bearer of 'self fulfilling prophecy', oracles of the future. They eloquently predict what would definitely occur in the time to come, including in the life beyond the mortal realm, which they incidentally have not seen for themselves (<https://news.detik.com>).*

This statement gained negative response from the Muslim community. The leader of the Islamic Defenders Front (*Front Pembela Islam – FPI*), Habib Rizieq Shihab, even reported Megawati's speech to the police as abuse toward SARA. Not long after, Habib Rizieq went to seclusion in Saudi Arabia for refusing to heed the summon of the police for the allegation of pornographic chat on social media charged against him.

*Tempo.co* on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 released a study by the Indonesian Survey Circle (*Lingkaran Survei Indonesia – LSI*) indicating that the electability of the Jokowi-Ma'ruf pair had declined in two pockets of educated Muslim voters. The reason is that the Jokowi-Ma'ruf pair was considered to lack good relationship with the Muslim community (<https://nasional.tempo.co>).

This fact shows that there is a gap between Jokowi and the Muslim community in terms of supporters, party, or even the Muslim community's sentiment toward Jokowi. Thus the myth of Jokowi being anti-Islam is apparent in the frame of communication act or public perception.

### *The Foreigner's Lackey Myth*

Jokowi is also mythicized as a foreigner's lackey (*antek asing*), in which the word *asing* (foreign/foreigner) is spun into *aseng*, which is a common name for Indonesians of Chinese descent. In Indonesia, anti-Chinese sentiments never vanished because the Indonesian Chinese descendant minority are the ruling majority of Indonesia's economy.

The foreigner's lackey myth gained significance with the advent of capital from China to build infrastructure. The sentiment of Jokowi as a foreigner's lackey can be traced back to various meme on social media, in which one of them is shown here in Image 5.



Image 5. Jokowi meme with the foreigner's lackey myth  
 Translate: *The amount of foreign workers thriving, majority from China  
 Foreigners told to work. Our own people told to sell scorpions. Who do you work for, Sir???*  
*For the people or foreigners???*

The meme from the Instagram account @keripikpedas\_ is widespread all over social media. The content associates Chinese workers coming to Indonesia. In semiology, a relation holds a critical role. What about the relation between Indonesia and China concerning the communist myth?

China is a country believed to have supported PKI in the 1965 incident. During the Sukarno regime, Indonesia and China had very close relationship, but it deteriorated when Sukarno stepped down from power. President Suharto halted diplomatic relations with China up till the last remaining period of the New Order regime.

Schwarz (2000, 106) explains that following the 1966 incident, Indonesians of Chinese descent were under strict supervision. They were prohibited from using Chinese language and characters. They were also forbidden to use Chinese names, they were not allowed to celebrate Chinese New Year, and were not permitted to establish special schools for Chinese children.

Anti-Chinese sentiments became more prominent when Ahok, the Governor of Jakarta, who is of Chinese lineage, was convicted and imprisoned for conducting an act of blasphemy against the Holy Qur'an. On the other hand, Ahok became a patriotic symbol for Chinese descendants. Nevertheless, PDI-P continued providing support to Ahok by promoting him as a candidate in the Jakarta SCR gubernatorial election for the second term.

Meanwhile, Jokowi's economic cooperation with China is considered to adopt the turnkey project. This raised concerns among the public that Indonesia would be Chinacized like Africa. Due to the China – Indonesia development cooperation, Jokowi's image is constructed into the myth of China's lackey, as someone who works for China's interests.

News of the constant stream of Chinese labor into Indonesia adds up to the myth of Jokowi being China's lackey. According to records of the Indonesian Ministry of Labor broadcasted by CNN Indonesia.com, the number of foreign labor in Indonesia had reached 126 thousand workers, which was a 69.85 percent increase compared to the amount in 2016, which was only at 74,813. The majority of workers came from China (<https://www.cnnindonesia.com>).

This condition was reinforced with Jokowi's statement facilitating access to the foreign workers. "The procedure is made simpler from the plan for submission, permit of assignment, and limited stay permit. I asked that it would be implemented more quickly and online-based" (<https://www.cnnindonesia.com>).

That statement is the archetype that developed a preposition of Jokowi being pro China. The China sentiment concealed in the archetype of history becomes resurrected by myths created by Jokowi's political communication, which tends to defend foreigners.

### *The Struggle of Meaning and Myth Model*

In the five-minutes duration video of the 2018 Asian Games opening ceremony, there is a configuration of symbols that exhibit signifiers concerning President Jokowi that denotatively are depicted in the signification symbols of a leader, a person who has power, is caring, and supported by many people. Nevertheless, history and time constructed something entirely different. The configuration of past archetypes unites with current snippets of history. It is then combined with various media conversations, constructing a myth, a reality in the natural signification system.

The connotation system is also constructed through intertextuality as mentioned by Kristeva (Noth, 1990). From the intertextual aspect, new historical series are portrayed and they are absorbed into myths, which lose their history. The hundreds of archetypes attach themselves to the construction of reality and appear in denotation. The codes arranged in the visual language of video meet with hundreds of past signifiers. Archetypes, pieces of history, hoaxes, parodies, and various styles of past significations shape the connotative configuration of a myth. As a result, denotative codes are only capable of speak of power language without being able to touch on the actual meaning.

In the case of Jokowi, all the history, hoaxes, public conversations, traditional settings, his responses in the media, or news in the media either partial or whole, have established a construction of myths, metalanguage as a connotative structure. The efforts of Jokowi's campaign team in building a construction of reality, denotative symbols of Jokowi, are a struggle of meanings with the language of power attempting to enter the sign system configuration, attempting to communicate ideas.

However, the idea of "Jokowi" merely reached the first stage of primary signification. All the symbols are subsequently separated from their historical ideas, which are public relation ideas, construction ideas, ideological ideas from the ruler. It enters into the actual idea. Something that is constructed by history, Indonesian history, supporting history, performance history.

Instead of changing the image, it becomes stripped away of history. The struggle slayed Jokowi in his own symbols. The meanings they tried to seize, submitted to the myths. The struggle with myth required another variable of time. And time is a different dimension to space. Time has its own laws. Time chooses the individuals. Time cannot be turned back to construct spaces similar to that of the past.

Upon observation of the way the structure of myth gives meanings to signs in the 2018 Asian Games opening video, a model of semiotic analysis of onset connotation in this research is presented in the scheme below:

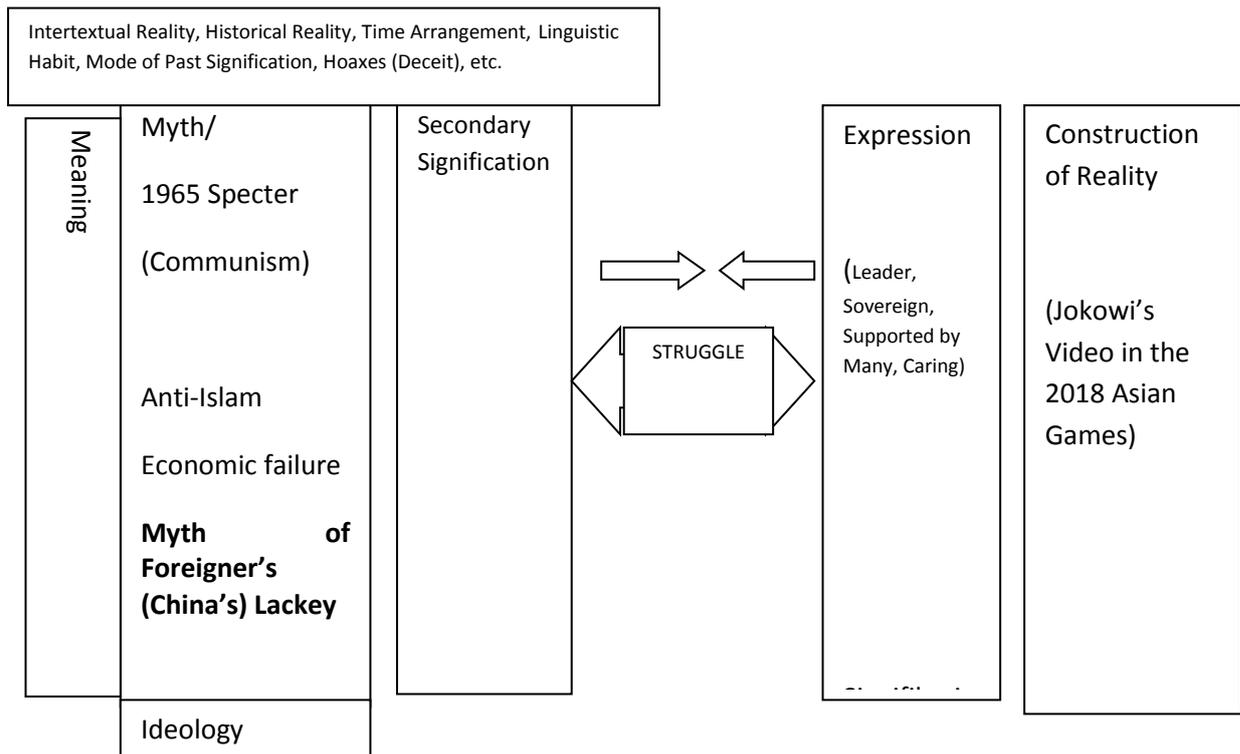


Figure 1. The connotation of semiotic analysis on Jokowi's struggle of meaning

The video material on Jokowi broadcasted during the 2018 Asian Games is essentially a construction of reality. The Asian Games event is a text—a construction of reality containing symbols of human physical supremacy. Muscles, strength, flexibility, speed, and all physical categories were displayed. All are included in the performance mechanism, shown in pieces of sports reality, so that sports construct human narratives.

The video as a construction of reality presents a reality about power, about care, about deceit, and all symbolic aspects of a leader and his power. With a goal or symbols of a goal that are clearly declared through the verbal signifier of "Indonesia".

This complete construction subsequently enters into a struggle with dialectics of social relation, wherein symbols or signifiers can no longer maintain their consistency in the primary signification. The semiotic court by connotation confronts all significations constructed in the myth configuration. Myth is like the face of a judge who has been touched up with a make up of reality.

Myth is also a construction of reality. More ruthless even. All realities, that are lies or otherwise, the past and the present, partial or complete, all are stripped bare and unified with conventions and codes that are mixed and then naturalized into normalcy. While the aspects of history and causality are left behind. Thus is the work of myth and the occurring struggle of meaning.

The constructed myths about Jokowi are basically patches of history and dialectics Jokowi conducted in the past, or dialectic and construction of his self in the past, so the reading of the message no longer dominates the construction of reality, it is no longer in line with the script of the ruler, but in opposition to the script of the myth, it belongs to ideology, it belongs to the essence of reality itself.

Ultimately, Jokowi's contestation as political construction ends at the semiotic court, wherein meaning proceeds according to the expectations of myths to vitalize itself opposing

constructive meanings. Jokowi attempted to seize that by portraying himself as he is in the significations. However, he had to struggle with the myths concerning all of the underlying backgrounds, along with the social realities confronted.

In the above scheme, the meaning construed is different with the signifier – signified relation of the symbols presented. “Leadership”, “populist”, “care”, and “sovereignty” which set Jokowi’s main preposition are given a different meaning or construed differently at the connotative level. Myth perceives them according to what is present in the intertext, in the touch of history, in the tradition that indicate the opposite. Jokowi is haunted by the specter of communism, it exists in the scenes of reality about socialism, about horrors of the past practiced by PKI.

Jokowi is also understood as a “puppet” rather than a leader. Despite the fact that there are symbols of a leader in the video, they are regarded as nothing more than the puppet’s ornaments. The symbol of care no longer holds meaning since history and public discursive space talks about facts of the various actions taken by Jokowi’s working team.

Meanwhile, Jokowi’s anti-Islam sentiment is a mass opposition to Jokowi. Archetypical symbols, such as the December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016 Movement, also known as the 212 rally, which is a gathering of millions of Muslims demanding Ahok to be put on trial as a blasphemer of Islam, become a myth that gives meaning to Jokowi’s leadership, not in the way of Muslim leadership in the *umara* concept. In Javanese symbolisms, widely known in Indonesia’s social relation, a leader is defined in the myth of “*Sayyidina Panatagama Khalifatullah ing tanah Jawa*” (the Ulema Regulator of Religious Life and Caliph in the Land of Java) (Asshiddiqie, 1995).

A leader holds two aspects, as a religious (Islamic) leader and political leader. The 212 symbols archetype has repudiated Jokowi’s religious aspect, and political aspect along with political pressures that tend to back Islam to a corner. Therefore, Jokowi as a signifier, or a symbol given meaning in the mythical structure, is more oriented to the rivalry of the Muslim community and its social political relations. This implies that Jokowi is understood within the construction of not being a leader of the Muslim community.

## CONCLUSION

This study produced a model that essentially shows the struggle of meaning occurring between the scripts presented by the sign makers and the myths attached in the mindset and ideology of the readers, in which myth is a naturalization of reality or history. It is capable of constructing particular meanings. When someone constructs reality through signs, then that someone enters into a Barthesian myth realm, as a form of struggle of meaning and power.

The language of power will surely come in conflict with the language of history to construct meaning with myth being the “judge” that seizes the properties of historical reality, wherein, ultimately, meaning is constructed. Although that meaning is dissimilar with the meaning constructed by the language of power, myths do not construe that meaning as such. Myths construe it as “concern to foreign interests”, a concern of political drama.

In the background voice at the 01:45 time mark in the video, there is verbal signifier in the form of people yelling out “Indonesia”, which denotatively refers to Indonesia as a country. However, myth constructs the meaning into “For whom is Indonesia?”. This implies that Indonesia is under threat of being subjugated by other countries.

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