

CHAPTER V :

CURRENT ISSUES IN BALINESE TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

VI. 1. FACTORS OF CHANGES

There are at least two reasons why Bali is changing very fast:

(1) Tourism in Bali and (2) The pace of Indonesian development. Both of them directly or indirectly influence Balinese traditional architecture in three ways : the physical changes, the utilization of the buildings, and the changing concepts of the people.

(1) THE INFLUENCE OF TOURISM

Through centuries of isolation, the people viewed the lofty volcano Gunung Agung as "Navel of the World" and nourished their philosophies in temples and palace courts of small kingdoms. However for the past 20 years, Bali has been visited by both foreign and domestic tourists. One reason for this is the specific attraction of its native culture which includes the people's religion, customs, art and architecture.

The rule of native kings ended violently with the Dutch conquest of Bali early in this century. After brief colonial rule and later liberation as part of a new country, Bali has emerged a lively, dynamic community, where past traditions are preserved, yet where styles are forever changing and new contrasts are emerging.

In 1912 a young German, Gregor Krause, was commissioned as a temporary medical officer in Bangli, a small town in Bali. He took more than 4000 photos, brought them to Europe; introduced them to the people in his

by travel bureaus has contributed to much of the cultural destruction, because many cultural attractions have been created for the sake of the tourists and tourism, as Putu Setia (1986 : 5) says that ritual dances are designed not to fulfill their original purposes but for tourists' cameras and their tour programs. Yoety (1985) adds that the side impact of the commercialization of tourism in Bali is that it became a strong agent of cultural changes. The 'curiosity' and 'social interest' of the tourists are profitable 'commodities' and the relationship has turned out to be commercial.

(2) THE PACE OF INDONESIAN DEVELOPMENT.

Indonesia has been struggling to maintain independence since 1945. Wars with the Dutch who wanted Indonesia back as a colony, civil wars, and many other local riots have made Indonesia difficult to build. The extreme revolt happened in 1965 when there was an attempted coup d'etat by the Indonesian Communist Party which ended with hundreds of thousands of deaths. The communists were overthrown and the party was banned. The new-order government under Suharto has been successful in maintaining political stability. Development was begun with a series of five-year-development-plans (*Repelita*) starting in 1969 and continuing to the present.

Yunus (1985) in his report concerning the influence of the five-year-development-plan on the communities in Balinese villages, says that success has been achieved especially in the restructuring the local village government, leaving the traditional system. The rapid changes in the physical development were attained through the constructions of elementary school buildings and a transportation network which provide good access to remote places.

Balinese traditional architecture. Some traditional principles which are missing are : (a) their size is not measured according to the body of the owner of the building; (b) the use of the building material does not follow the *Janantaka* architectural manuscript; (c) they have no 'soul'.

Obviously the physical characteristics have also changed, as has the sense of divine value. The negative impact is that the Balinese no longer know the philosophy of those building components.

The invention of modern artifacts has also lured the Balinese to use them in their traditional buildings. Covarrubias (1937 : 71) says :

Streets by night in Denpasar are now a jubilee of neon lights, yet on every busy intersection stands a statue of demon-giant to ward off evil spirits who might cause accidents. Even far out in the country are touches of the modern world. Like a light bulb set on top of a temple shrine in a village without electricity. Why the bulb ? The reason is simple, practical and typical: where function fall short, form takes over - in this case, the fine shape of glass serves as a good decoration.

However, the use of modern building materials like this is not an affront to the traditional principles. The uses of other foreign materials and motifs have been known. For example, *uang kepeng* (Chinese coins), and Chinese porcelains were used for wall decorations in Balinese temple; the use of new reliefs depicting bandits in Western film, bikes, cars, and so on is not unfamiliar to Balinese.

(b) Conceptions.

Koentjaraningrat (1984 : 2) states that culture has seven universal elements. All of these elements he calls the contents or ingredients of culture. He arranged each element according to an order beginning with the element that is most difficult to change :

architectural meaning. There are several examples worth mentioning :

The enormous use of *candi bentar* (the split gate) has loaded it with shades of meaning, that is: meaning which 'connote a certain ideology of the function' (Eco, 1980 : 23).

If we go from East Java to Bali by ferry, we might hear somebody in the boat saying : "Look at the 'gate', we have 'arrived' in Bali." What is seen from afar is *candi bentar* (the split gate). Again, on a trip to Denpasar by bus or car, *candi bentar* are found along the road. When we enter a village, near this split gate we will read a notice : "Welcome to *desa* (*desa* =village). . . ." If we come by air and land at Ngurah Rai International airport, we will see the split gate at the entrance. *Candi bentar* is extensively used in offices, especially new offices. Two things we can learn from this :

a. The use of *candi bentar* everywhere around Bali has been prominent. Everything associated with Bali features the split gate. It has given the gate a connotative meaning, i.e., *candi bentar* signifies Bali.

b. *Candi bentar* means "welcome".

The second example is the use of Balinese houses and *Puri* for 'home-stay'. This use started because of the demands of tourism. The buildings of Balinese traditional architecture have been occasionally or permanently used for different purposes than they used to be. *Puri* (house of *Ksatryas* / rulers class) is used for visitors' lodgings; the tourists term is 'home-stay'. Tjokorde Bagus, one of the *Ksatryas* who owns a *puri* at Pliatan told Oka A. Yoety (1985 : 15) that actually he is not willing to let the *puri* used as the 'home-stay'; *puri* used to be a taboo place for Balinese. However he has been forced to do so

governor's building, the parliament building, the post office and many others, make them 'look' Balinese.

The characteristic of these efforts are :

- (1) All of them use Balinese traditional motifs and patterns (*patra* and *karang*); apply them as ornaments on the wall, column, door and so on.
- (2) A significant effort is made to use the traditional building form. For example, they have the gates take in the form of *candi bentar* and *candi kurung* (*paduraksa*); use of traditional building types i.e., *wantilan* , *bales* (open pavillions), *bale kulkul* and so on. It must be admitted several new building types are incorporated.
- (3) They do not have spatial differentiation, i.e., sacred - profane. If there is any, the lay-out of the buildings is created according to modern geometrical design methods.
- (4) They do not use the human body as the measurement units, instead they use the metric system.
- (5) They applied the concept of the 'head-body-leg' pattern only to certain architectural components, e.g., columns, walls, etc.

The issue that arise from the extensive use of traditional forms in modern design is that the majority of 'modern' architects, who come from different part of Indonesia. (mainly from Java), are not aware of the 'original' meaning of those inherited forms. For example they use the form of *panunggun karang* (small shrine), which is sacred by nature, for ornamental elements in the hotel garden; the form of *lumbung* (rice granary) for motels or villas; *bale kulkul* is used for storing generator set. As a result its location change, it

"filter", in the mind of the young generations, which stands between two cultures : the traditional versus the modern views. Depending on how deep the young generations are influenced by each cultural view, this "filter" will open or close them to interpreting meanings. The question is how meaning in Balinese traditional architecture can be maintained. This will be an area of investigation for further study.

Balinese traditional architecture depends on who interprets them. One group of interpreters might perceive the buildings as symbols, others as icons and still the last group of interpreters perceive them as index .

(2) Meaning in Balinese traditional architecture can be signified by observing the activities that take place in the physical form; in other words how the buildings are created and utilized. People's behavior is ruled by their religious beliefs. They perceive meaning through their spatial experiences. These meanings are only partial meanings.

The physical attributes and the conceptions behind them are not enough to signify meanings; the activities of the people contribute to establishing total meanings in architecture.

The production of Balinese traditional architecture appears in the form of social obligation; here the accent is on a communal basis, with the main aim to create a harmonic environment where all elements enhance one another.

This study tries to show that the utilizations of the Balinese traditional architecture have changed. This indicates that meanings in Balinese traditional architecture are dependent on the emerging activities.

The emergence of new activities in modern times results in the needs for other building types. Recent trends in Bali show architects have used traditional forms. These forms can be the traditional building types as well as decorative patterns. The design principles of Balinese traditional architecture are not applicable to these modern buildings, as a result the outcomes are 'Balinese-style' buildings rather than Balinese traditional architecture.

This situation is important, because the people can learn the meanings of

by a growing collection of *experiences* .

Balinese culture continues to be strong enough to nourish its traditional and new application. Therefore the author hopes that Balinese traditions which have been growing for centuries do not stop and change their course because of outside influences. The lesson the world has learned from the emergence of 'Modern Architecture' is to not again make the architecture of the world infertile.

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desa adat : traditional village ; based on the Balinese Hindu traditional system.

desa-kala-patra : literally means Place-Time-Condition ; a flexible contextual dictum which enables the Balinese to adapt external influences without fear of losing their own identity.

dharma : moral conduct or obligation.

gamelan : (set of instruments making up) any of various types of percussion orchestras.

gong or bale pegongan : a set of complete percussion instruments; it also means open pavillion in temple, *puri*, or *banjar* for gamelan rehearsals.

jaba : outside.

jero : inside.

jineng or lumbung : rice granary.

kaja : mountainward direction symbolizes goodness.

kala : minor demon.

kangin : direction of the sunrise.

kelod : seaward direction symbolizes evil.

klihan : village head in newer-style *desas* ; head of any various other associations.

klihan banjar : head of *banjar*, particularly as representative of higher authorities.

ksatria : (member of) second of four castes, including many rulers and *punggawa*.

kulkul : hollow bamboo or wooden cylinder beaten with a stick as a calling or alarm signal.

lontar : palm leaf manuscript ; Balinese literature is traditionally inscribed upon palm leaves with a sharp instrument. Soot is then rubbed into the incisions to darken them. A lontar 'book' can last hundreds of years.

madya : medium, middle, intermediate.

pura dalem : temple of the dead, located near the cemetery.

pura desa : village temple.

pura puseh : temple of the origin, dedicated to the founding fathers of the village.

pura pusering jagad : 'world navel temple', sanctuary symbolizing origin of world.

puri : house of the head of the villagers.

Sang Hyang Widhi : the Almighty God.

sanggah : small family shrine, group of shrines for ancestors and family god on *kaja* or *kaja-kangin* of every compound.

sanggar : temporary offering platform.

sanggar agung : tripartite temporary platform of bamboo for offerings, particularly to Surya or Siwa; *padmasana*; also called *sanggar tawang*.

semara ratih or **rwa bhineda** : a Balines basic philosophy which essentially means the reconciliation of two opposing poles, elements, norms, or values.

subak : irrigation association, association of owners or holders of irrigable ricefields forming one complex, with aim promoting common interests.

sudra : (member of) fourth and lowest caste, to which most Balinese belong.

tilem : (festival of) new moon.

tri angga : a basic concept derived from the philosophy of *tri hita kirana*. It divides the physical world into three zones : *nista* (low, impure, leg), *Madya* (middle, neutral, body), and *utama* (high, pure, head).

tri hita karana : a Balinese basic philosophy which literally means 'three causes of goodness'. The essence of the philosophy is that everything in the world consists of three component : soul - physical body - power or ability.

tri loka : three spheres : hydrosphere, lithosphere, atmosphere.

triwangsa : 'three caste', (member of one of) three privileged castes (Brahmin, *ksatryas* and *wesyas*) above *sudras*.

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