MEANING IN BALINESE TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

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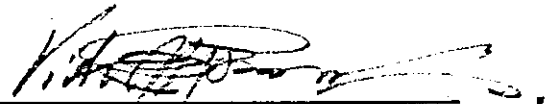# MEANING IN BALINESE TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

by

Mauro Purnomo Rahardjo
Sarjana Muda Arsitektur, Universitas Katolik Parahyangan, 1976.
Sarjana Arsitektur, Universitas Katolik Parahyangan, 1980.
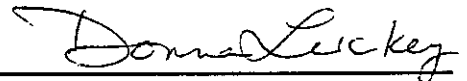Sarjana Strata II (MSc. Arch,), Institut Teknologi Bandung, 1986.

Submitted to the School of Architecture and Urban Design of the
University of Kansas in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
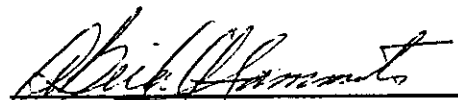degree of Master of Architecture
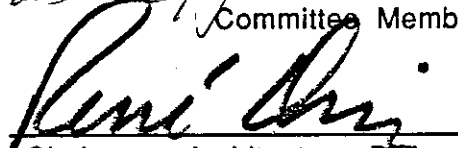

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ABSTRACT

Balinese traditional architecture is an architecture which has been evolving for centuries even until today. This evolution continues because the Balinese myths, beliefs and the Bali-Hindu religion are strongly embedded in the culture of the people.

This study is an application of the 'Meaning Approach' to Balinese traditional architecture. The data is based on scattered literature about Bali and field observation of modern designs. The study describes the objects in three aspects of meaning in architecture, namely "physical attributes", "conceptions", and "activities."

The theory is briefly reviewed, and used for data analysis. Balinese traditional architecture is comprised of sacred buildings, residential buildings and public buildings, and each category is reviewed according to the meanings it may have.

Current issues in Balinese traditional architecture are identified, such as influences on traditional building, and the use of traditional forms in modern designs. Finally, meaning in Balinese traditional architecture is found to be changing and dynamic and in need of rigorous re-interpretation. The author proposes to adress himself to this issue of re-interpretation in a future study.

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CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION

I. 1. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Recently meaning has become a great interest in architectural theory. It arose as a result of an awareness that a crisis of identity occurs in architecture (Groat, 1981). The collapse of Modern Architecture reflects this event. It occured for several reasons : unfamiliar forms, new inhuman scale (Papanek, 1983), new technology and building materials, and so forth. Modernists used entirely different forms compared to previous architecture. These were made possible by the invention of new technology and new building materials. The unprecedented giant scale of the modern buildings, particularly their spatial orientation, has shocked people.

In short, the emerging forms have, in a certain way, created confusion in the building typology that had been established. As a result the building users are compelled to interpret new meanings. These meanings are very important because they provide basic information concerning behavior.

Out of this situation, various approaches to a theory of meaning in architecture evolved. Pros and Cons arose; some writers became skeptical, yet some others struggled for the possible positive establishment of a theory. This study is an attempt to grasp the emerging theory by studying an indigenous tradition.

Architecture in Bali by and large still has a traditional character; it employs the language which is understood by the people, and therefore meaning, in the sense of architectural language, has been a significant basis for

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they are not the same old conditions because of the rapid social change. Along with the change of both conditions and people, there arose new needs. The people's conceptions about this architecture have also changed. Along with these changes, the meaning in Balinese traditional architecture has been transformed. To cope with such a problem, this study will assume architecture to be a cultural artifact, which will later be described in more detail.

Bali was selected for research because the physical characteristics of its architecture are very pertinent for the purpose of investigating meanings behind the physical forms. In addition, literature concerning Bali is widely available. It is also interesting to show how the architecture of modern public buildings is affected by traditional forms, in the sense that these buildings attempt to incorporate some traditional forms in their design. However, meaning in traditional architecture cannot be as fully maintained in the context of the modern public buildings; hence there must be changes as well as continuity.

Changes and continuity in architecture can be observed from three aspects : physical characteristics, conceptions, and the behavior of the people. In recent times, temples, the sacred buildings of Balinese traditional architecture, have undergone almost no changes in the three aspects mentioned above. The physical characteristics of traditonal houses may appear the same, however conceptions about what a house is and how it is utilized have changed. Modern people look for practicality, rationality, and efficiency, therefore conception about how a house should be used has changed. The spirit of co-operative living is still reflected in public buildings, however the physical

1979; Barthes, 1967; Broadbent, 1977a, 1977b, 1979, 1980a, 1980b; Eco, 1976, 1980a, 1980b; Bonta, 1979, 1980, 1986; Krampten, 1979 and many others), Non Verbal Communication Approach (Rapoport, 1982), Linguistic Analogy (Jencks, 1977, 1980; Lange-Seidl, 1977), Environmental Psychology (Canter, 1977; Proshanky, 1977; Groat, 1980, 1981, 1987; Sime, 1986, etc.), Behavioral Science in Architecture (Altman, 1980, and many others), etc. Rahardjo (1988) tried to structure these different "meaning approaches" which are based on Bonta's (1980) scheme of architectural semiotics shown in Figure 1.
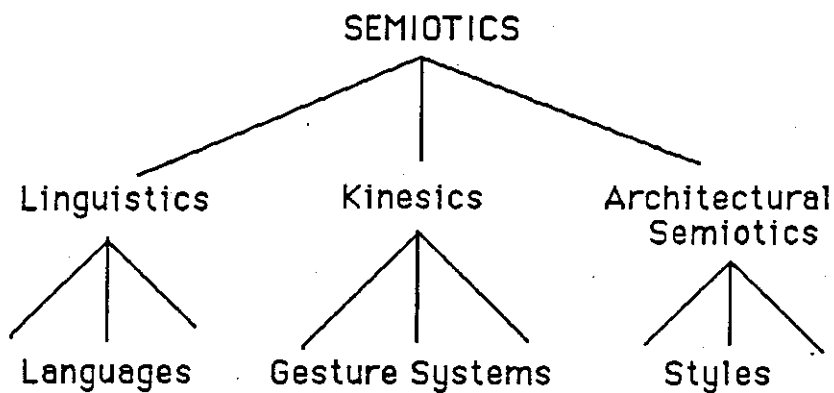

Figure 1 : Semiotic Tree

In the above scheme, Bonta (1980) focuses his study of meanings on what he calls "Architectural Semiotics". There are three different possible ways to arrive at architectural meanings : by coming down, moving laterally, and climbing up.

2. Some researchers have attempted to generate a theory of architectural semiotics by borrowing from other fields in the middle level of the diagram (see diagram 1). Pioneers in linguistic analogy is Charles Jencks (1977) and Bonta (1979). Both assume architecture or architectural elements are communicating agents, like a language.

3. Building on familiarity with specific architectural styles.

The meaning in architecture is essentially related to the architects' intentions. Norberg-Schulz's (1965) Intention in Architecture, provide us with its theoretical basis. Norberg-Schulz (1965) argues that there are four building tasks that architects consider in their designs, namely : 'functional frame', 'physical control', 'symbol milieu' and 'cultural symbolization'. The people using the building may or may not realize those intentions as meaning in architecture. Rahardjo (1988) summarizes the many approaches in the study of meaning in architecture in the following diagram :
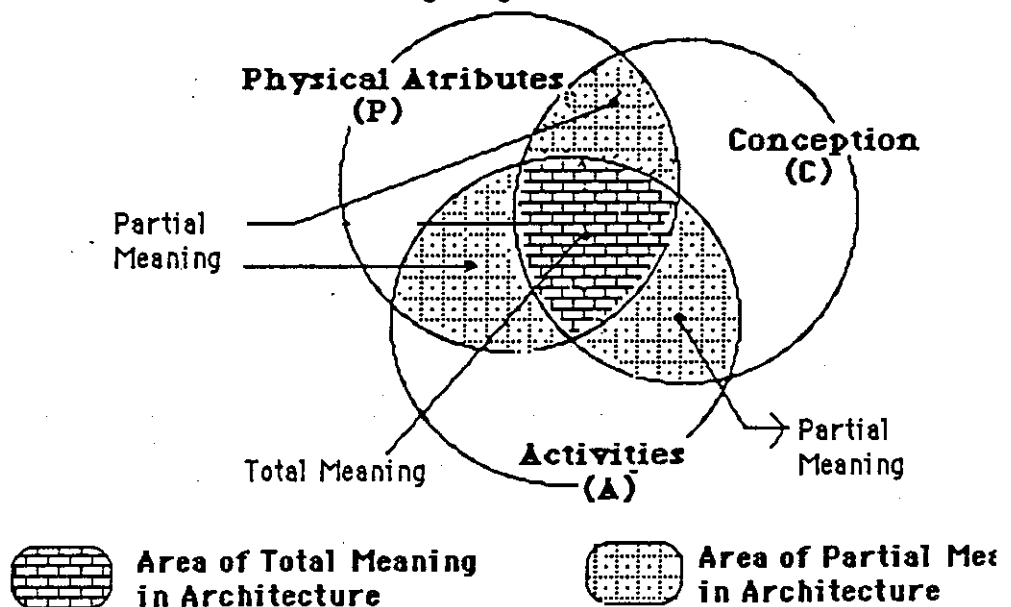
Figure 3 : Venn diagram of area of meaning in architecture.
Source : Rahardjo, Mauro (1988), p. 53.

(b) *Sanggah* or *Pamerajan* (family temples) are located inside the houseyard. For this type, two different names are given. *Pamerajan*, the shrines built by *Tri Wangsa* (caste as social stratification, known among the Hindu community), *Brahmana, Ksatrya,* and *Wesya* . The second is called *sanggah*, built by *saptajalma* (common people).

In addition to the two kinds of the above sacred buildings, there is another called *Panunggun Karang.* This is a small monument erected inside or outside the houseyard and intended to protect the safety of the house or houses and the inhabitants from the evil spirit. In some places in Bali this building is called *"tumbal."* · It is, however distantly related to the Thai "Spirit House."

2. *Bangunan Pawongan* (residential buildings). Four kinds of this type can be identified. *Geria,* the house of the Hindu priest or Brahmana; *Puri,* the house of the king; *Jero,* the house of Ksatrya who do not become king; and *Umah,* the house of the common people.

3. *Bangunan Umum* (public buildings). Two kinds of traditional public buildings are recognized. *Bale banjar,* intended for periodic meeting. Bale *kulkul* is the specific character for this building. The second type is *Wantilan,* a shelter outside the temple for the people during the festivals.

I. 6. LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations to this study :

- Although the author has visited and stayed on Bali, this paper is fleshed out through literature reports which are very important complementary sources in this study.

architecture can be understood from this introduction to Bali. And last but not least the final part discusses current issues in Balinese traditional architecture in the hope of opening up further areas of study. Some theoretical review will be presented in the discussion.

Five chapters constitute this study :

(1) *The Introduction ;*

(2) *Bali : Land, People, History and Culture.* This chapter will briefly introduce Bali. Concern over Balinese cultural history is the focus of the discussion. A summary of chronology referring to the development of Balinese traditional architecture will be given.

(3) *Myths, Beliefs, and Balinese Traditional Architecture (Conceptions and Architecture) .* This chapter will discuss how ideas, myth, beliefs, values and so on are expressed in the physical artifacts of Balinese traditional architecture. Terms in Bali Hindu will be introduced, since this religion has shaped people's perception. Meanings in architecture are closely related to the perception of the people and their world view.

(4) *Activities and Balinese Traditional Architecture .* This chapter will discuss how the Balinese traditional architecture was utilized by the people. Much of the description here is taken from the available literature which has documented the related data. Use of architecture is the basic association for meanings in architecture.

(5) *Current Trends in Balinese Traditional Architecture.* This chapter is intended to discuss the influence of modern life such as tourism and Indonesian development on Balinese traditional architecture. The intention of this part is