

Meaning of Ornament in Balinese Traditional Architecture

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ABSTRACT

Ornaments have a very important role in the architectural expression, and ornament is one of the architectural elements that serve as a medium for expressing the meaning, especially in traditional architecture. Ornaments in the Balinese traditional architecture have symbolic, historical, aesthetic and allegorical meaning. The aim of this research is arrive at an understanding Balinese architecture, and to conserve and preserve the knowledge of Balinese architecture as alternative resources in designing. The study was conducted using field observation, interpretation and doing narrative. Result of interpretation upon meanings of ornament in Balinese Traditional Architecture is expressed as aesthetical meaning, symbolic meaning, historical meaning and mostly allegorical meaning. Beneficial of this reseach does not serve only to understand the beauty of Balinese traditional buildings, but can also be used as a medium to understand the Balinese way of life in relation to nature, God and fellow human beings.

Keywords: allegorical, architecture, balinese, ornaments, symbolic

INTRODUCTION

Traditional Balinese architecture is one of the ethnic architecture in Indonesia which has a beautiful expression and use a lot of ornaments. Bali of Regional Government has issued a local regulation relating to buildings in Bali such as Regulation No. 2, 3, 4 1972 and Regulation No. 5 of 2005. These regulations are generally set about building in Bali and one clause requires states to all buildings constructed in Bali to apply the principles of traditional Balinese architecture in its design. Regulation is issued in order to regulate development in Bali and Bali to have a different identity with other regions. One of the architectural elements of the easiest and the most that can be applied is the corporeal use of traditional Balinese ornaments. The phenomenon of applying traditional Balinese ornaments on the buildings of today give some consequences of the ornaments just taped it without understanding the value and meaning behind the expression contained an ornament, this condition could cause degradation in the development of architecture in Bali.

The role of ornament in architecture as an element to beautify the buildings have been written, but seeing as bearer of meaning has not been widely applied, especially in the traditional Balinese architecture. Meaning in architecture can be expressed through various means such as the spatial, architectural form view, proportion, and through the use of ornaments. Given the significance of architecture is considered the same as the language, because the architecture can be read as it contains message to be conveyed to the observer.

Ornament in traditional Balinese architecture is a form of respect for human beings to nature by taking various forms to nature such as animals, plants and other organic forms in nature. Decorated elements in the buildings generally consist of ornaments and decorations. In his book Gelebet (1) does not sort out the elements to beautify the building into ornaments and decorations, but all were categorized into decorations (1). But when examined more in depth, description of the décor, more elaborated ornaments as part of the construction of a building. Gelebet classify ornaments to be seen into three categories namely the form of florice, fauna, and nature. Forms of ornaments used in Balinese traditional architecture not only take the form of plants or animals that exist in actual reality, but also take other forms that exist in the imaginary world of puppetary or a myth.

Ornaments are elements that used to beautify the building and are part of the architectural style, more permanent and less likely to be moved. On the other hand the building decorations are the artibuts that can stick and replaced in accordance with the needs of its users (2). The development of the use of ornaments over the building has been up and down. Modern movement tends to regard the use of ornament and decoration is a waste, growing niche to reject using ornament in architecture. There belief in modern movement that by adding decoration or ornament will adulterate the purity of the form. But some of modern architects using ornament as requirement for fully developed architecture and ornament for them were a means of emphasising the spiritual intensity of a building and not alway accomplish by lines and masses (3). Traditional architecture tends to use

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ornament more than the other architectures style, because ornaments are not only for beautifying architecture and seen as an aesthetic element, but it has a role as a symbol that meaningful and as a communication medium. To understand a piece of artworks needs an interpretation (4).

The concept of interpretation is open and there is no single meaning, and most importantly, the meaning of it varies among the many cases in which interpretation is used. Interpretation should be brought closer in the context of technological scientific thinking, because then the interpretation can be a tool to explain and describe the conceptual objects. Interpretation is not just a mere object visual explanation, because the pattern of this interpretation is only to explain something that is already known, therefore the interpretation must be able to reveal something new about the truth (5)

One should always do the interpretation, because people should be able to put themselves in an ever-changing context. Transcendence interpretation is the essence of human existence to deal with and avoid drowning in a stream changes in the world (5). The main purpose of interpretation is an explanation or elucidation an object, but then people began to seek a broader sense as edification and transformation. Edification is the process of moral or spiritual development, including self-development, healing, freedom of emancipation and self-transformation, but the main purpose of the interpretation is very different from edification (6).

This paper examines the meaning of ornaments in traditional Balinese architecture who viewed also as a work of art. The purpose of this study is to understand the various meanings, expressed through ornaments used in Balinese traditional architecture. From this study will be obtained an understanding of the meaning and understanding of these ornaments can be used as a source of knowledge of traditional architecture in the future. In addition, this study also aims to conserve and preserve tradisional architectural knowledge for generations to come and learn the meaning of ornament on the other hand can also be a medium for studying the history and understand the culture of the Balinese people and also gain knowledge about the community of artistic expression and mastery of art skills.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study will use data and information gathered through the documentation that has been done on the temple in the district of region in Bali. The chosen temple is *Pura Kehen*, in Bangli, *Pura Segara Madu*, *Pura Beji* in Buleleng regency, *Pura Maospahit* in Denpasar. These four temples were chosen because it has characteristics of typical and beautiful ornaments. To be able to perform a more objective interpretation of the study conducted references related to meaning and ornament.

Function of Interpretation can be seen as well as product and process. There are three features of the interpretation such as (a) interpretation is an object reference on something different about the object itself, (b) interpretation involving the assessment of which is considered valuable (c) the main objective is the elucidation or to understand the object interpreted (6). Interpretation required number of conditions, especially for beginners. The first condition is, the interpreter must have the same world, same interests and the same universe of discourse and they must understand the context of the object. The second occurred in the pre-circularity of understanding to produce a new interpretation (5).

Selected ornament in the discussion is ornaments representing the ornament of plants, animals and nature. In this reserach Interpretation is done by making observations on the ornament that applied to the traditional Balinese building. Information that collected from observations and interviews are used as the basis for interpretation, and perform comparisons and interviews with experts to understand the meaning of the stored behind a work of art. All information collected and compiled in the form of descriptive narrative complete and thorough.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ornament in traditional Balinese architecture

Traditional Balinese ornaments are divided into three major groups, namely the ornaments that take the form of flora, fauna and nature (1). This grouping is based on the form expression of ornaments as a form of metaphor or stylistik of the forms that exist in the environment, but there are also forms of imagination of artists drawn from stories from puppetary, myth or legend. These imaginary forms are found in many traditional societies, such as the shape of dragons, eagle, and the other puppet figures.

The naming of each ornament is given based on several considerations such as based on the reference of original form of the ornaments such as *Patra samblung*, *patra punggel* which represented local woodbine, or emphasize on certain parts of the ornaments that were represented (*Patra sari*, *patra wangga* emphasis on pollen of the flower). Classification and naming ornaments in general is based on a form that is used as a reference to imitation or metaphors. The shape of ornaments and how to use it can be stated that the *patra* (*pepatran*) is a term used to name the ornament pattern that is usually applied repeatedly and in general take reference from the

floric form. While *kekarangan* is a term for this form of ornament which tends to be more independent, often become the focal point of a facade, and takes the forms of animals both real and imaginary(4). In some cases the use of the term *pepatran* and *kekarangan* sometimes exchanges for naming of plant and animal

Expression of the Balinese additional ornaments have different levels of complexity, there are carved in great detail using lots of lines and points, but some are just showing the silhouette form that is still very global so it is not clear the name. Ornaments can also be done in several ways such as in sculpture, carved or painted or drawn, but in general the ornament made by carved, as its main material is wood, brick and other organic stone. Final touch of traditional ornament used the natural color of materials, but some are using the paint, especially gold paint color combined with red, black or other colors to complete the final elucidation of ornaments (1) Completion of ornaments with paint was found on the architecture for the temple or to building of the people who have a higher status as a king or other ruler. In some areas in Bali, especially in Tabanan and Badung, ornaments are also decorated with China tiles as accents (7).

Besides, there is a form of traditional Balinese ornaments that can not be entered into the three categories above, is *pepalihan*. *Pepalihan* is a art of lines and plane that are usually used in the wall base of the column and the walls of the building. *Pepalihan* is the tectonics of brick or other organic rocks are used in Balinese traditional architecture. *Pepalihan* is one of important ornamentation form in Balinese traditional Architecture and it has some rules in their applications and if we ignored these rules, appearance of the ornament become bad or failed. Typology of *pepalihan* are vary from simple *pepalihan* just playing the position of the brick surface through a complex calculation that produces the art of line and intricate detail. *Pepalihan* much developed in many areas using the materials of brick and not much use as carvings like in Badung regency and Denpasar. (7)



Figure 1: The main gate of Pura Bale Agung at village of Julah Buleleng depicted wall with ornaments, Figure 2: Very simpleline of *pepalihan*, Figure 3: Art of line and plane of *pepalihan* at Moaspahit temple complex in Denpasar.

Meaning of ornament in Architecture

Meaning has a very broad sense. Meaning of the word is used in nearly all fields of science and is usually associated with the message. Meaning is often associated with communication, and it has many forms, including non-linguistic form, which included the experience to interpret the meaning of the artwork. Meaning can not be defined simply in standard terminology, because meaning is not something that exists in the dictionary. Dictionaries do not represent the facts of language and has lack of independence for the user language. Meaning of words in the dictionary is only a list of the evidence that is usually used by the speaker consistently (8).

Meaning of work of art can be categorized into 3 such as aesthetic significance, symbolic meaning and significance historican (9). Meaning at first deemed to be simple and according to the Tractatus (10) the meaning is simple and is a symbol or name. A name of the represented object and the object it is meaning itself. Understanding the meaning is also authored by Rapoport, meaning can be perceived by someone, and someone reacts globally and affectively before analyzing it more deeply. Rapoport differentiate meaning into two category, the perceptual meaning which the terminology created by architects and associative meaning where the terminology defined by the user. According to him the meaning of which is perceived by the user is more important (11).

Rapoport also stated that the meaning of the built environment can be divided into three levels, namely (a) a high level of meaning related to cosmology, philosophy, etc., (b) the meaning of such middle levels of identity, privacy, status, power, etc, and (c) with low levels of meaning or significance of everyday life such as accessibility, seating arrangement, and so-called movement is also a manifestation of the function (12). The essence of meaning is an essential nature or character of content that is contextually specific association of an idea (9).

Bandmann see the symbolic meaning of the two approaches, namely from the source of the written and visual sources. He also talks about the meaning of the source is alegorical both written and visual sources. According to the interpretation of the meaning of the allegory is sometimes very free and independent of link

history (9). Discussed the meaning of the allegory of a written source or sources of visual and allegorical meaning he has to avoid the formal consequences of the subjective interpretation (9). Only affect the interpretation of formal allegory on new components or that do not have meaning. In this role in understanding the meaning of the language has several levels, namely: (a) The independence view, where meaning can be understood instantly and requires no other references, (b) The constructivists view the revelation of the elaborate edifices mental and explanations necessary to understand the meaning, and (c) The intentional view that is between the above two points of view (8).

Aesthetic Meaning

Architecture has always been associated with beauty and the concept of beauty in every period of architectural development is always changing and different. In the Balinese traditional architecture, building dimensions were determined using the size of the human body, and calculating the building proportion based on the width of the wood poles. The proportion is not only related to creating the beauty of a building, but also have symbolic meanings hidden in the calculation of proportion (1, 2). The most important component in the calculation of the proportion of traditional Balinese buildings is multiplied by the width of the wooden pole between 18-24 times vertically and the height of poles is added to *pengurip*. *Pengurip* are values were added to the calculation of the proportion of buildings. In this *pengurip* embeded the virtues that are selected and specified by the owner, user or *undagi*. By calculating the proportion of these will be obtained as the ratio between width and height of buildings is not the same on each building as they adapted to the perception of their owners. With the calculation of such proportions that the traditional Balinese buildings there tend to slim or vice versa.

Balinese traditional building forms almost of them have a balance of symmetry, similar to other traditional buildings. The use of ornaments in the context of to beautify the building has a very important role, because in general the Balinese traditional building has a simple shape, the building size are not too big and almost all of them take the form of a rectangular base. Ornament used to fill the empty plane, to beautify the corner of the building, to make a transition of using two different materials more aesthetic, enhance the connection and the termination of a construction, etc. In these circumstances, the traditional architect or *undagi* have a very broad opportunity to beautify the building through the ornament, and in some cases, the use of ornaments so dominant that almost covered all areas of the surface. (Figure: 1 and 2)



Figure 4: Meduwe Karang Temple, Figure 5: Beji temple at Buleleng, the two temples are using ornaments look very dominant

The use of ornaments in addition to beautify the building, also as a creative work of the artisans and their communities, and to some degree they have freedom to create the art work. The material used is also considering to local availability of material and local practices. For example in Badung and Denpasar, because of local practices and local costum, most people use brick materials, and they are using *pepalihan* more for aesthetic work (Figure: 6). While in Buleleng ornament are ellucidated very dynamic and opened to accept and adapt new forms of external. This is shown in figure lion ornament is flanked by two white musicians, maybe the Dutch are ever to colonize Indonesia (Figure: 7). The characters of carved ornaments in Gianyar finer detail and use a combination of brick and sandstone material. (Figure: 8).



Figure 6: Use of an engraved brick material at Temple Maospahit, Denpasar, Figure 7: Figure of a lion and the white musicians in the temple Beji Sangsit Buleleng, Figure 8: Patra relief in Puri Payangan Gianyar

The use and placement of ornaments in relation to creating an aesthetic ornament of buildings should follow the compliance with the state of the universe, both for ethical placement, shaped ornament plants, animals or nature should follow the pattern of compliance with the actual conditions. Form of ornament which has a heavy impression, using rock material will be placed at the bottom while the ornamentation that give the impression of light, or a smaller form will be placed in the deeper parts above. Aesthetic concepts such as this would create the impression of a natural aesthetic and harmony. Engraving used on ornemen carvings vary from simple to very intricate carvings. Ornaments with intricate carvings are used on buildings that have a higher level, temples or palaces, while at the a residential used simple ornament. In the early development of ornaments that are used sometimes disproportionate shape, there are some parts of the ornaments are in extragerated to create the dynamic impression. In some places the ornaments that are used are also likely vulgar, especially in ornament at the period of ancient Bali, Characteristic of the ornament on ancient Balinese tend to be simpler and more expresive.

The meaning of artistic ornament in traditional buildings can be understood directly by the observer, the independence view, but there are some ornaments require an explanation that is constructive view, because the form of stylization are applied are not always similar to its original form.



Figure 9: The figure of a lion in the Pura Segara Madu Buleleng very expressive, Figure 10: The lion figure for grounding pole in Puri Kerambitan Tabanan; Figure 11: The figure of lion for wooden column base Kehen Bangli temple with a very simple expression

Symbolic Meaning

Some ornaments used in Balinese traditional architecture are taken from puppetry stories like, Mahabharata or Ramayana. In the puppet story contains a lot of philosophy about virtue, attitudes and values embraced by the people of Bali. Philosophical values expressed in the selection of a figure like the figure supposed to represent virtue like *arjuna*, *bima*, or *sri rama*, while the figure of giant as representative of the expression of emotion and greedy are put on the outside of the temples as an expression of the sorting area in this part of the sacred and the not sacred area. Architectural configuration that also tells the philosophy of the Balinese people, which is on the sanctity of the temple and to achieve it requires effort to achieve the purity by giving a lot of stairs and a narrow entrance on the inside. Such a configuration is a representation of purity and also the achievement of the procession as well as to regulate the media and the public who entered the temple area. The selection and placement of the choosen ornaments also as an applicationn of the cosmology concept, and it will be aligned with the orientation of the compass direction or mountain and sea direction and the spatial concept of the temple (Figure:12).



Figure 12: Spatial concepts are sorted by the temple stairs and *candi bentar*(gate), Figure 13: The use of colored fabric decoration as a symbol of Tri murti, Figure 14: Brahma statue in the Pura Maospahit height of 2 meters and use the red color as symbol.

Symbolic meaning is also supported by the use of decoration in accordance with the philosophy and concept of Balinese cosmology, such as the use of cloth with a color corresponding to the orientation north and south direction, and the use of many attributes such as umbrellas banners and other decorations (fig 13 and 14). The layout of the ornaments which must be aligned with the actual condition is also symbol of the attitude of the Balinese in protecting the environment. Balinese people view the environment as a partner to achieve lasting happiness, not as a resource exploited for material gain. Therefore respect for animals, plants, nature and human as part of universe is expressed through the use and layout of the ornaments on the buildings.

Understanding the symbolic meaning of the traditional Balinese ornament requires explanation because it is below the layer. These symbolic meanings categorized into constructive view, to understand it requires someone to dig and explore the hidden symbolic meaning behind the ornament expression.

Historic Meaning

Development of architecture in Bali began a long time, and the period of cultural development is divided into several periods, one of which is the period of ancient Bali evolved since 8-10 century. Relics of an ancient Balinese culture spread across several districts places in Bali, and most of its location in the mountains. In Buleleng and Denpasar there are some temples that developed in the period of ancient Bali, it is seen from the use of ornaments. Expressions used ornaments at Maospahit temple still showed an ancient era of Bali. At the moment the temple there are statues more than 2 meters high with a brick material. Statue of the god of nature describe the stories of several Hindu beliefs, but the statue is rarely found in the temple on the influence of the Majapahit period (Figure: 14).

Developing culture in Bali produce various types of characters used ornaments, although ornament refers to the same reference. Like a lion or tiger ornaments, found in many temples in Bali, but the figure of a lion has a very clear appearance differences. In the ancient Balinese architecture, the figure of the lion is still very simple, do not use many attributes and decorations in a position to stand up with 4 feet, although some use position with both feet. While the figure of a lion on the Majapahit period was equipped with a variety of other many attributes such as wings, hair, necklaces, and its position stand on two legs. Appearance of ornaments at the ancient Bali, although very simple, but has capability of showing a very dynamic expression. As examples of ornamental lions at the temple Kejen Bangli growing around the 11th century has a very simple form, as well as figure of a lion in the temple Segara Madu Buleleng with a very unique friendly expression. While the lion ornaments in Puri Anyar Kerambitan have used a variety of other many attributes that look more decorative. (Figure: 9,10, 11)

Characteristic ornament expression is used also provide regional identity. Characteristics of ornaments used in Buleleng district tend to be more lively, sharp and dynamic impression. In taking such a lot Buleleng sandstone whorls taps greater size and many use florid elements. Ornament is also more visible sculpture by enlargement of the dental elements and dynamic facial expressions. While in Badung regency much more use of brick and exploitation of *pepalihan*, so the visualisation is also building a more stable and rigid. Disadvantages of using brick is not much using engraving and tend to use of brick tectonic ornament. Various ornaments typology developed in accordance with the development of cultural of community and ornaments can serve as unfold the history of a society.

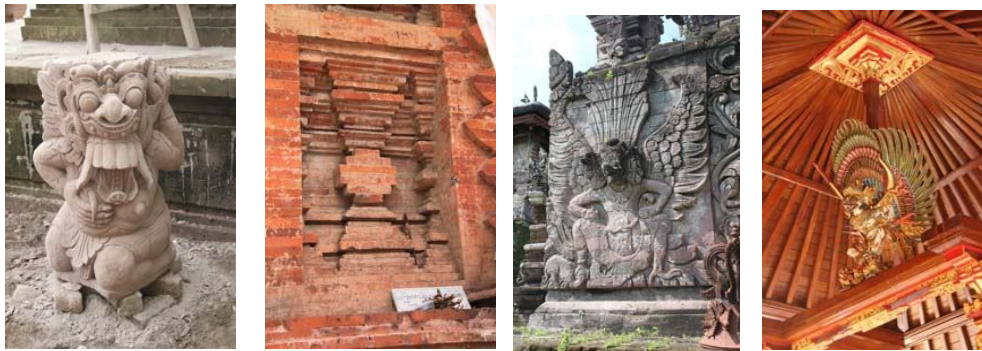


Figure 15: The statue of giant in the Pura Segara Buleleng, Figure 16: Art of line of pepalihan in Maospahit temple, Figure 17: Reliefs of Garuda in the Pura Segara Madu Buleleng, Figure 18: Garuda statue in a residential building in Renon Denpasar

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it can be concluded that the ornament is not only to beautify the building, yet have different meanings content that can be interpreted either directly or allegorical meanings. Have the symbolic meaning of philosophical ornaments, the meaning of education for the community and historical significance. Understanding of the meaning of ornament will increase our sensitivity to the application of ornament in contemporary design and layout must consider the rules and the use of ornaments should also be able to provide education for the observer.

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