REINTERPRETATION OF SPATIAL ORIENTATION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ARCHITECTURAL PATTERN

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Abstract - Many villages in Bali have unique spatial orientations that are different to other villages. This uniqueness has produced the diversity of Balinese cultural practices. However, the standardization of the cultural practices has caused the change of such unique orientation. This phenomenon gives rise to the question about relationship between the movement of standardization of the cultural practices in Bali and the uniqueness of spatial orientation and pattern in Bali. By examining the setting, forms, and transformation processes of villages, the paper discusses the continuity of a spatial orientation identity after the movement of standardization of cultural practices in Bali.

Index Terms - Architectural Pattern, Cultural Practices, Reinterpretation, Transformation, Spatial Orientation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Spatial orientation is a significant element to configure architectural pattern in Bali. In Bali north –south and east – west are respectively called kaja-kelod and kangin-kauh especially in Southern part of Bali (in Northern part of Bali, north – south direction are kelod-kaja). These orientations are significant to determine the sacred-profane direction. On the other hand, some villages have different spatial orientations that are unique and locally accepted by the people. However, since the people try to re-interpret local spatial orientation, especially in Sega, a traditional village in eastern part of Bali, there is transformation of the architectural pattern in some parts of the village. Since the Balinese culture is a product of collaboration and interactions between the Balinese with the people from other communities, transformation is a part of Balinese culture [1]-[2]. Culture is a unique response of a society to face new social conditions [3]. This unique reaction is the endless transformation of Balinese culture. Balinese authorities from time to time including the Balinese kingdoms, Javanese kingdoms, colonial and postcolonial orders, and tourism have influenced the Balinese culture to express their superiority [4]-[5]-[6]. In this transformation process, the Balinese have selectively adopted new cultures in which the new have been amended to meet the new demands and circumstances of the Balinese. This transformation process is performed based on the desa kala patra concept [7]. This concept demonstrates that traditional practices are performed in accordance with location or space, time and circumstance [8]-[9]. Using the desa kala patra concept, this transformation process has influenced and has caused variations in cultural practices showing that the culture of Bali is complex and dynamic [10].

In order to preserve the spirit of Balinese culture, the Balinese established an organization called Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) to reinterpret texts of scripture of Hindu religion. This organization has succeeded in delivering Hindu religion to be eligible for the status of a religion in Indonesia and has produced standardizations and interpretations in the form of cultural and ritual practices and procedures [11]. The standardizations have become a movement to reform the Balinese cultures based on the Balinese religion and social order. On the other side, these standardizations, have produced sameness in the implementation of the Balinese culture; have eliminated the cultural diversity and have changed the spatial pattern of a traditional village including the pattern of Sega.

These two sides of argumentation show that there are endless debates about the transformation and the diversity of culture. The standardizations have caused the changes of patterns in some parts of the spatial cultural spaces in Sega, thus altering the spatial configuration of the existing configurations. The new setting present a conflict between the preservation of traditions pattern inherited from ancestors and the new interpretation of religion and social order. This conflict is proving to be a challenge and creates a tension in relation to the maintenance of the diversity of traditions based of desa kala patra concept as a continuity of Balinese culture.

This paper investigates how the Balinese house has been reconfigured as a response to address the standardization process of traditional culture. To do this, the paper examines spatial cultural spaces in Sega, a village in the eastern part of Bali. Architectural examination and spatial stories of people's activities were used as a method of investigation. Narratives of people's cultural activities, architectural documentation and graphic analysis were involved in this method. Initially, however, some theoretical considerations of how traditions in general are transformed are discussed and what the rules of the

spatial orientation in the traditional building practices. This is followed by a discussion about the spatial cultural spaces of Sega. The paper then discusses how the traditional cultural spaces have been transformed based on movement of the standardizations. Some conclusions are presented in the final section.

II. THE TRANSFORMATION, SPATIAL ORIENTATION AND THE INTEPRETATION OF THE BALINESE CULTURE

Balinese culture is the result of the reactions and interactions of the Balinese people with people from other societies [1] [2]. Culture is a form of communal movements that represents a unique response to address new settings [3]. This unique response is a continuing process and historically uncompleted [12]. Parallel to Williams' [3] and Clifford's [12] theories, the continuous renewal of Balinese culture involves the collaboration and contest of social relations. In this process, by collective contribution and interaction, Balinese culture has been infiltrated new ideas, such as spatial orientations, physical constructions, the spirits of ancestors and nature, family structures and systems and offerings, [13]-[14]. In this term, the spatial orientation is a traditional practice becoming the spirit of Balinese culture that influences many part of cultural practicing including spatial cultural pattern. This indigenous tradition is still performed, even though the religion and social structures of Bali has been transformed influenced by a broadly Indian worldview and the cultural links between Java and Bali [4]-[6]-[14]-[15].

The configuration of spatial pattern is designed based on a spiritual orientation interrelated to the concept of cosmic antagonism called in Bali as rwa bhineda such as the sacred and profane, mountain/ highland and sea/ lowland, high and low, day and night, sunset and sunrise. This concept inspires spatial orientations and the forms of the physical built environment in Bali ([16] Hobart, Ramseyer & Leeman 1996). The spaces in the traditional physical patterns mediate a world divided into two antagonistic poles, the divine and the nether forces or energies. In this antagonistic poles, the upper world is the sacred that is the dwelling of the Hindu deities situated in the highland/mountains called kaja while the below world is the profane direction that is less sacred, even impure called kelod meaning the seaward. However, kelod is a space for purification where purification ceremonies such as melasti on the beaches are performed.

A space for human dwelling is designed in between the upper and nether worlds called madyapada/ mertyapada [13]. This intermediate sphere has an important role to maintain the stability of the upper and nether worlds [16]. Therefore, the Balinese's built environment is then designed into three zones: the divine world, the intermediate sphere and the nether world (Figure 1).

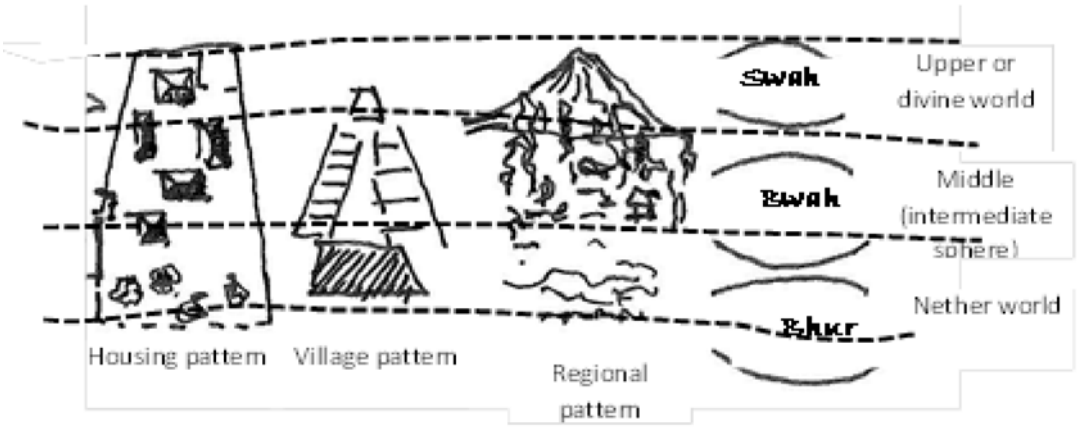


Figure 1 Spatial orientations and the spatial pattern in Bali
Source: Edited from [17]

The geographical condition also influences this spatial orientation concept in Bali. The highland in Bali is located in the middle stretching from east to west so that the kaja and kelod are variable directions. Kaja is the north and kelod is the south in the southern part of Bali while kaja is the south and kelod is the north in the northern part of Bali. On the other hand, kangin and kauh are fixed orders. Kangin as the sacred direction is the east while kauh as the profane direction is the west (Figure 2).

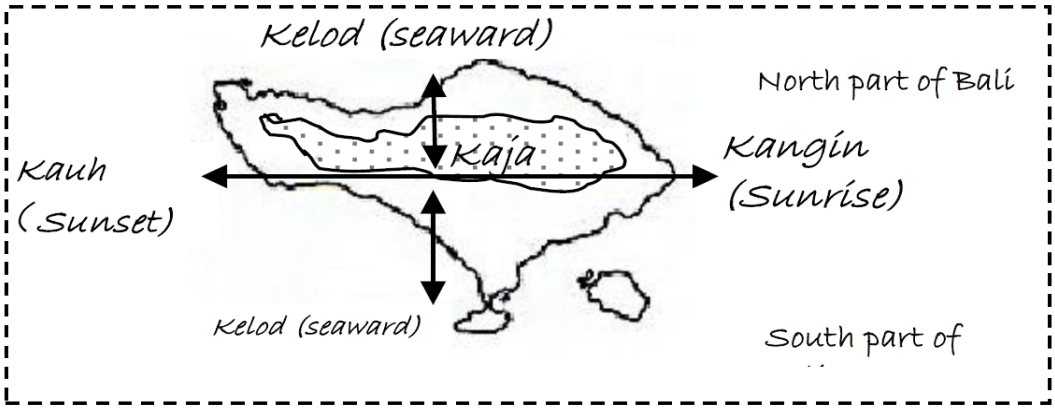


Figure 2 The two opposition concept, kaja-kelod and kangin-kauh
Source: [18]

Based on abovementioned concept, the villages in Bali are designed in which the divine world is placed in the kaja direction and the nether world in kelod. In kaja or the higher place called hulu direction, the Balinese build places for God while in kelod direction or lowland direction called teben the Balinese place a cemetery. In this spatial orientation, the traditional orientation, kaja-kelod and kangin-kauh, harmonizes with the global spatial orientation (north-south and east-west). For example, the kangin-kauh is aligned with the east-west.

However, some areas in Bali, such as villages in eastern part of Bali, have different spatial orientation system. Unlike villages in other part of Bali, some villages in eastern part of Bali such as Sega, Amed and Bunutan, have spatial orientation that use Mount Bisbis and Seraya as the center of orientation. In Sega, kaja is north-east and kangin is almost the East while in Batukaseni Village and Banyuning Village the sun rises in kelod (towards the sea) and kangin is to the north [19] (Figure 3). This special spatial orientation that is different with other villages in Bali has become one of objects of standardization of cultural practices in Bali.

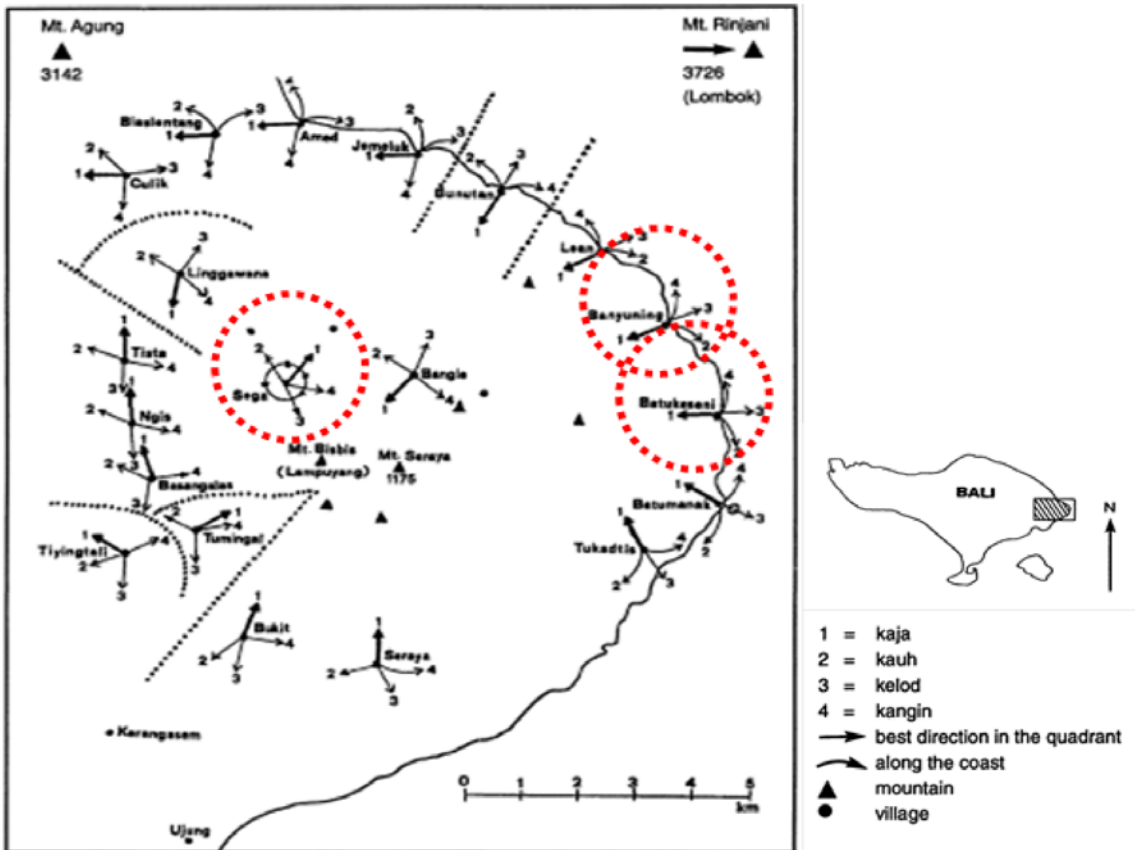


Figure 3. Traditional orientation system in many villages including Sega
Source: [19]

After the independence of Indonesia in 1945, the Hindu religion in Bali faced a serious enough threat from the proselytizing movement by Islam and Christian [20]-[21]. In this period, the Balinese Hindu religion was not considered as a religion in Indonesia but was classified as the ethnic groups that just believe in supernatural forces called kepercayaan. In order to avoid becoming the target of proselytizing, Balinese people reinterpretations of their cultural practices to make them eligible for the status of a religion [11].
Based on traditional manuscripts, the Balinese tried to make any justifications that their cultural practices have a link with the Hindu religion. The Balinese religion was then deeply studied and discussed. The Balinese tried to reinterpret the manuscripts of scripture of Hindu religion, and standardize the interpretations [11]. To conduct these, an organization in relation to the Hindu religion called the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) was established so that they can deeply study and make responses and explain their traditions and religion based on Hindu literatures such as Bhagavad-Gita and Veda [22]-[23]. This organization, supported by Balinese experts, scholars and religious leaders, has a rule to preserve the Balinese culture, inspired by Hindu Balinese religion by creating standardizations through interpretations of Balinese cultural and ritual practices from the any manuscripts of Hindu religion [11]. The standardizations have produced discussions about the preservations and diversities of traditional practices. The standardizations have become an agenda to restructure the Balinese cultures and traditional practices.

III. THE STANDARDIZATION AND TRADITIONAL PRACTICES IN SEGA

Sega is a traditional village located in a plateau of Mount Bisbis. Traditionally, Sega covers several other villages such as Bangle, Bunutan, Lean, Banyuning, Batukeseni and Batumanak. These villages, which are officially called dusun, have a spiritual link with Sega in which the main temple of these villages called bale agung is located in Sega. The sacred direction in Sega, unliked other villages, is in the north-east direction. In Sega the direction is called hulu that means higher place of head. This directions is also called kauh. In this direction, many temples are located such as Bale Agung Temple (the most important temple in Balinese village), Puseh Temple, and many temples that are categorised family temples called kawitans or paibons. On the other hand, the cemetery is in the direction of teben (the lower place) or kangin (Figure 4).

The traditional settlement is in kangin direction. The settlement has two main corridors where the people built the gate of their houses. There are several houses that has small alleys to access to the main corridors. In the past, this corridor had an access to other villages, especially to the village of Bangle [24]. The development of infrastruktur to acces the village to other villages have made this main traditional access become less important and tend to be avoided. The people then use the new road that is more confortable and more accessible.

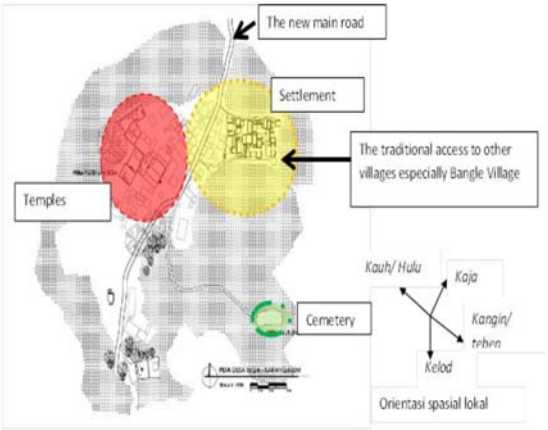


Figure 4. Traditional orientation system in many villages including Sega
Source: [24]

Traditionally, the padmasana, the shrine as a place of God called Ida Sang Hyang Widhi is located in kauh-kaja direction in which this direction is pointing to Mount Agung. However, since the people try to reintepret of their spatial orientation, the people then move the padmasana in to kelod – kauh direction that is pointing to Mount Lempuyang the close mount from Sega. In the old direction, the position of padmasana was in the right side of other shrine so that the ritual procession did not address to the standard of the ritual procession based on the manuscript of Hindu religion. While, in the new direction, the padmasana is in the left side of other shrines. This composition is applied in other villages so that the configuration will allow the procession address the standard. Based on this consideration and intepretation, the villager guided by other Balinese scholar then designed the new setting of the temple. The new setting of the temple produces the configuration of the temple is different with the configuration of other temple di the village. This new setting also different with the family temple in the traditional houses in the village.

The reintepretation of the setting of architectural setting in Bale Agung Temple in Sega presents that the standardizations has eliminated the concept of desa kala patra in which every location has different ways to perform their cultural practices. In this term, the people forget that the diversity of the implementation of the cultural practices is the unique of the Hindu religion in Bali. Therefore, the standardization of religion practices has fade the uniqueness local practices and become the sameness of cultural practices in many parts of Bali.

CONCLUSION

Spatial orientation is important to organize architectural setting in Bali. In general, the kaja-kelod is variable direction while kangin-kauh is fixed direction. These orientations are significant to determine the sacred-profane direction. But, some villages have different spatial orientations. Some villages in eastern part of Bali have unique orientations. The uniqueness is influenced by applying the concept of desa kala patra in which the cultural practices are influenced by location, time and circumstance. However, since the movement of standardization of cultural practices, some uniqueness begins to fade and the sameness of traditions have become the standard of implementation. This phenomenon can be seen in Sega where the padmasana in Bale Agung Temple has been reposition to the other direction to accomodate the standard of ritual processions in the temple. The standardization that was to preseve the Balinese culture has become the way to create sameness and to fade the diversity of cultural practices in Bali. The infiltration of internal cultural practices in Bali has polluted the uniqueness of traditional practices in the village.

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