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# Cultura

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# CROSS-CULTURAL SEMIOTIC DIALOGUES BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

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## **East and West Cross Cultural Semiotics. On Taman Ujung Bali Architecture**

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**Abstract:** Indonesia had absorbed various cultures since ancient times, caused the local cultures were enriched with sign language. However, signs on the traditional culture in Indonesia are more symbolic in nature. Interestingly, East and West cross-cultural sign was encountered in Bali, on Sukasada Park design, in Ujung Village, Karangasem regency. The park which was known as Taman Ujung was a legacy of Karangasem Kingdom. This article was compiled from the results of research conducted in 1999, 2012 and 2016. The latest study was specifically conducted to examine the signs on the design of Taman Ujung. Therefore, this study used a semiotic approach, which deals with the science of signs. Such signs could be seen in the form of design, material's quality and decoration of the building. The pavilion, placed in the middle of the pond caused Taman Ujung was different from the traditional Balinese garden in general. The Pavilion, called Gili, became a sign of the influence of modern western architecture. The use of concrete construction and decorative concrete mold were signs of the influence of western technology. Their decorative Karang Bentala and a lion with a crown were related to the Royal Dutch symbol mark. This sign implies the meaning of good relations between Karangasem Kingdom and Netherlands' Kingdom in the past.

**Keywords:** Symbolic, Cross-cultural, Pavilion, Gili, Lion

### **INTRODUCTION**

Semiotics refers to signs in Greek, which has shown an increasingly important influence since the last four decades. Walker (2010: xxiii), observed that semiotics had developed into a model approach in various scientific disciplines such as social, political, media, art, architecture, fashion, advertising design, popular culture, mass culture, youth culture, and subcultures. According to Aart van Zoest (1993: 49), culture is the result of a group of skills to recognize, interpret, and produce signs in the same way. However, signs in one culture cannot be understood by others cultures because of their specificities. In the global era, the cross-cultural aspects of signs needs to be further explored as media communication has broken down cultural barriers between countries.

Since ancient times Indonesia, has absorbed various cultures causing a very rich local culture that fuses aspects of the East and the West. Evidence of this cross-cultural fertilization has been encountered in the Bali area in the design Sukasada Park, in the village of Ujung, Karangasem Regency. The park was known as Taman Ujung, King of Karangasem Kingdom's heritage park. The pavilion, placed in the middle of the pond caused is different from the traditional Balinese garden. Based on the assessment of its visual signs, this paper explores aspects of cross-cultural representation present in Taman Ujung. This paper is the result of research on Taman Ujung conducted in 1999, 2012 and 2016 by author using ancient documents from several sources, mainly from Puri Karangasem families.

The palace was originally known as Taman Sukasada, known as Taman Ujung, because its location in the Ujung Village, Karangasem Regency, Bali Province. Also known as the 'Water Palace' its design contains cross-cultural elements of Eastern and Western origin. The essence of the semiotic theory used in this paper was to approach the design elements of the palace as a visual text (Adams, 1996: 133) helping designers understand the language of shapes and evaluate design models (Widagdo 1993: 43).

The analysis of data validity was carried out by means of triangulation techniques in order to obtain accurate and verified data. The first step involved the use video recording devices and field notes. Secondly, some of the newly acquired references, excluding field data, were used for comparison purposes to test data validity. Matches between the data and the conclusions on the outcome of research through the validation process proved the conclusion was credible. The final step was to involve key experts in related field to conduct a review of the obtained data and confirm the interpretation of researchers.

## AN OVERVIEW OF HISTORY AND LANGUAGE EVOLUTION IN INDONESIA

Javanese script originated in *candrasengkala memet*, also used in Bali because of Javanese influence upon Balinese culture. (Widagdo, 1993) The term "candra" referred to the moon and it was related to people's nature. The word "sang" meant a person, and "kala" referred annual time (years) (Simpen, 1988: 1) Thus, *candrasangkala* designed the person

who explained annual time, in a system based on Aji Saka calendar year, which differs 78 years from CE (standardized Common Era). The Javanese Aji Saka legend tells the story of how a legendary king named Aji Saka, said to have come from Bhumi Majeti in Jambudvipa ("the land of Jambu trees" a mythical land in India), and established civilization in Java, bringing along Javanese script and the calendar year. He was then granted with the title, Sangkala (Saka-Kala).

Examples of *candrasangkala* are found in the *Serat Kanda* stories which refer the downfall of Majapahit Kingdom during the classic period. Majapahit Kingdom was established in 1293 King Raden Wijaya, according to records found in the Javanese chronicle known as *Pararaton* or the "Book of Kings". The chronicle was written in Kawi (derives from Sanskrit "ku" or poet) prose, an ancestor language of modern Javanese.

Wijaya's rule was marked by his victory against the army and navy of Kublai Khan, during the Chinese Yuan dynasty. The king agreed to have some eastern territories of the kingdom under the control of his ally Arya Wiraraja. However, after the death of both kings, Jayanagara, the successor of Wijaya began a series of wars against Nambi, the successor of Wiraraja. In 1316, Jayanagara conquered the eastern realms reuniting West and East Java. According to the chronicle *Pararaton*, in 1376 emerged a new *keraton* (court, palace or center of power) opposed to the central authority of Majapahit. The Chinese Ming chronicle also registers two kingdoms at this time in Java. Another civil war took place between 1404-1406 between the Western and the Eastern courts. Known as the *Paragreg war*, it caused the decline of the Majapahit Kingdom in the following years. (Slamet Muljana, 2005)

The year of Majapahit's downfall is mentioned in the *Serat Kanda* by the phrase "sirna-ilang kertining-bhumi" (Muljana, 2006: 54). It meant that the Kingdom of Majapahit, which always did good (*kerti*), was lost (*sirna*) and disappeared (*ilang*) from the surface of the earth (*bhumi*) forever. The sentence also refers to *candrasangkala* calendar, as the words *sirna* and *ilang* referred to 0; *kerti* referred to 4, and bumi to 1. The number order 0041. Under the reading rules of *candrasangkala*, numbers were read from right to left, and became the year 1400 (equal to  $1400 + 78 = 1478$  CE).

Unlike *candrasangkala*, *suryasangkala* was read from left to right. Examples of this script can be seen as inlay frame images on the top of traditional

gateways known as *Kori* or *Padaraksa* (i.e. Kori Agung). These gates are commonly found in buildings from the classical Hindu-Buddhist period of Indonesia. They mark the threshold into the most sacred space of a religious compound or a palace. One of the oldest *Kori* is the gate of Bajang Ratu in Trowulan. It dates from mid 14<sup>th</sup> century Majapahit Kingdom and depicts stories from India such as *Ramayana*.

Klungkung Palace, also known as Puri Agung Semarapura, was the official palace of the Klungkung Kingdom, which succeeded the Majapahit. *Suryasangkala* script is found on *Kori* gateway of this palace, including a sequence of visual images of a chakram (a circular weapon from India), a yuyu (a type of crab), and two paksi (birds). As before, the numbers chakram (1) yuyu (6, based on the number of crab legs) and the 2 paksi (2, based on the number of bird's feet) yields the number 1622, referring to the same Saka year (equivalent to  $1622+78=1700$  CE) which marks the founding of the Klungkung Kingdom. (Raharja, 1988: 54-55)

The above lines offer an overview of the close relationship between language, writing and numerology in ancient Java, and of its association with sacred architecture. In the following lines, the paper explores the unique symbolism of Taman Sukasada heritage park.

## TAMAN UJUNG

Klungkung Kingdom lasted until 1908 when the Dutch, after a number of colonial incursions in 1846, 1848, 1849, and 1906, captured Badung. Descendants of the first Klungkung king, Dewa Agung Jambe (c.1686-1722) ruled for over two centuries. Known collectively as Dewa Agung monarchs, these rulers signed a number of treaties with the Dutch, until the renewed military expeditions of 1906 invaded the Klungkung territory spelling the members of the dynasty (Pringle 2004).

Taman Sukasada was the palace of Ida Anak Agung Anglurah Kutut Karangasem, the last Karangasem King (*Stedebouder* II) who ruled in 1908-1950. It was built in valley hills of the village of Ujung, about 5 km from Amlapura, and for this reason it is often known as Taman Ujung. Before World War II, under Dutch domination, Taman Ujung was known as the Water Palace, because all the constructions are surrounded by water.

A descendant of the royal family of Karangasem, Agung indicates that the the palace had been started under Puri Agung Kanganan in 1896,

when Anak Agung Gde Jelantik became king (*Stedehouder* I) (Agung, 1991: 62-63). It was finished in 1909 and in its construction a Balinese, a Dutch and a Chinese architect were involved, thus preserving some interesting cross-cultural characteristics.

The palace served as recreation park for King Karangasem, his family and guests such as the King of Siam (now Thailand), the Governor General of Netherlands, the Governor General of France, Mangkunegara VII ruler of the Mangkunegaran Palace and lands in Surakarta in Central Java in Indonesia from 1916 to 1944, Sultan Pakubuwana (1866-1939), tenth Susuhunan ruler of Surakarta, and other important personalities of the period. (Agung, 1991: 279). In 1970 a Dutch Australian named De Neeve received permission to settle in Taman Ujung and restore the palace and its gardens, which had been damaged by the eruption of Mount Agung in 1963. However, damages to Taman Ujung became worse again after various earthquakes (1976, 1978, and 1980).

Taman Ujung was built in a valley surrounded by hills. Rice paddies landscape formed a circular hill to the west. The highest peak to the east is also known as Taman Ujung, 700 meters above sea level. The soil conditions at the site of Taman Ujung are fertile and the place is surrounded by springs and rivers (Raharja, 1999: 59).

As mentioned, the palace construction was assisted by local Balinese architects as well as artisans from China, after the construction of Taman Narmada in Lombok. The gateway (*pemedal*) of Puri Agnun Kanganan, resembles a tower, as in Chinese architecture. Within the castle, there are also buildings for worshipping that resemble pagoda buildings and many Chinese ornaments were visible, according to Agung until the 1940s. According to A. A. Made Djelantik, one of the Puri Karangasem family, the Dutch artist Wijnand Otto Jan Nieuwenkamp (1874-1950), who was greatly influenced by Bali's art and culture, also wrote about Taman Ujung in his book *Bali and Lombok Eyewitness Travel* (1906/1910: 49),

Based on the above, it seems that the Taman Ujung was built gradually. The first building of 1901, under King A. A. Gde Djelantik included the Dirah pool in the south. From 1909-1920, the construction was continued by King A. A. Bagus Djelantik. Building such as Kolam I (in the West) and Kolam II (to the East), Bale Gili, Bale Kapal, Bale Lunjuk and the Home Guard were built. Between 1920 and 1937 Pura Manikan, including a pool was built.



After the damages caused by Mount Agung eruption in 1963 and the earthquake of 1976, Taman Ujung was abandoned for a time until it was reconstructed by the Asylum Office of Historical and Archeological Bali in 1998. Later, in 2001 the reconstruction was done by the Regional Tourism Agency Karangasem. Taman Ujung Karangasem was inaugurated by the Governor of Bali, Dewa Brata on September 18, 2004.

Taman Ujung can be reached through three entrances. The first entrance (Gapura I) is in the west, past the building called Bale Kapal, then down the hill through some stairs. Bale Kapal condition is currently not intact, with incomplete high roof. Visually, the design of the building could be seen by the document filming colossal by Panji Semirang in Taman Ujung 1955 collection of Kusuma Arini, of Puri Karangasem family (interviewed on April 17, 2012). The second entrance (Gapura II) to the south is used by visitors with vehicles. The entrance is flanked by Kolam II and III. The information board in the room pavilion explains that the pool is in the most southerly point (Kolam III), first built in 1901 as already mentioned. This pool was first filled with decorative fish, lotus flowers and algae called Rangdenggirah, so that it was also called Kolam Dirah. The third entrance (Gapura III) in the east, and it was the most frequently used entrance, because it was the closest to the center of the park which included fountains. The Gapura III entrance was flanked by Kolam III and rice fields.

As mentioned, the form of Taman Ujung overall design is dominated by water, accommodated in the four pools. The largest pool was Kolam IV, the smallest was Kolam III, and the middle ones Kolam I and II. In the middle of Kolam I, the main building is connected by two small concrete road above the pool, and equipped with a guardhouse. Thos building is called Gili A because it was analogous with a small land (gili) in the middle of the sea. Gili A was a modern pavilion with 4 rooms, a small hall equipped with two pieces of the canopy, and a transitional space between the pavilion and the bridge over the pond. The king's rooms and those of his family were contiguous to the guest-rooms. Both of these were located in the north corridor of the pavilion. Two rooms on the south corridor pavilion were used for displaying photographs of the royal family. A small hall was also located in the eastern part of the four-room pavilion.

On the western edge of Kolam I, on the rather high soil surface, a gazebo (Bale Bundar) was built supported by twelve poles. In the middle

of Kolam II, there was an open building called Gili B (Bale Kambang or Bale Gili) which followed Balinese open style in the middle of the pond garden, connected by a small concrete road above the pond.

On the west pool IV, on the elevated ground level (northern hill), a resort was built called Bale Warak. The name comes from the statue of one-horned rhino (in Balinese – warak) used in open buildings and equipped with a fountain. According to the information from Ngurah, the responsible person for Puri Gede Karangasem, the rhino sculpture was a memorial, as rhinos were used as sacrificial animals in the Maligia ceremony at Puri Agung Kawan Karangasem.

The Maligia ceremony was a big ceremony done after cremating (pelebon) the bodies of a noble family in Bali, especially to purify the spirit of the kings (Warna, *et al.*, 1989: 434). When the Maligia ceremony was held at Puri Agung Kawan Karangasem on August 6, 1937, Java rhinoceros were imported as sacrificial animal with the permission from the Dutch East Indies colonial government, on the big ceremony (Raharja in the Bali Post, 27-1-2002). Two marble inscriptions in Balinese and Indonesian language were installed referring to this ceremony.

## EAST AND WEST SIGNS DIALOGUE

As described above, Taman Ujung seems to differ from other royal park in Bali. This is mainly due to the annexed building surrounded by the large pool. Other royal parks in Bali generally have open houses in the middle of the pond called Bale Kambang (floating hall) or Bale Gili (small island), as mentioned above. The uniqueness of this Balinese palace and garden was a result of the development of local and indigenous knowledge, with other cultural influences, mainly Dutch and Chinese.

The design of Taman Ujung follows a particular structural code (Eco, 1979: 43-44) that derives its meaning from local mythology. The story of Amertha, water of eternal life that fell into the ocean, comes from “Kitab Adhi Parwa”, a story at the beginning of the *Mahabharata*, which among others included the stories of the gods and the giants fighting for Amertha, in order to obtain eternal life. This Indian legend was translated into the ancient Javanese language in the 10<sup>th</sup> century by Teguh Dharmawangsa, King of Kediri Kingdom in East Java (Budiastira, 1980: 7).

In the story, it was stated that Amertha who fell into the sea became the conquest of gods and giants. Lord Vishnu then hinted that Amertha could only get out of the ocean when the ocean was stirred. Eventually the gods and giants agreed to stir the ocean using Mount Mandhara (Mandhara Giri) and the sea-serpent Naga Basuki as a rope spinner. In order for Mandhara Giri not to be ejected into the air, the god Indra sat on the mountain holding it at the base with the help of Akupa, the giant turtle. Amertha was finally out of the ocean, which began to thicken like milk (Ksirarnawa). The giants first obtained Amertha although it finally became controlled by the gods.

This mythical story became the source of the structural design and philosophy behind many of the Bali gardens, such as it occurs with the Bale Kambang building (or Bale Gili). The building in the middle of the pond was stood for Mandhara Giri, while the pond was a symbolic sign of Ksirarnawa.

However, the Bale Gili of Taman Ujung did not take the form of an open building, as characteristic of Balinese architecture. Instead, the modern pavilion was built under the influence of Western architecture. In particular, Dutch colonial influence, because the Dutch government had had presence in the area since the fall of the Buleleng Kingdom in 1849.

Another element that shows the cross-cultural elements present in Taman Ujung are the small concrete roads. At the time the palace was built, Balinese architects were not familiar with the making of concrete, which in the West began to be used on a massive scale at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This technology was introduced to the King of Karangasem by Van der Heutz, a professor from the Netherlands who helped built the third stage of Puri Gede Karangasem on in 1838 (Seputro, *et al.* 1977: 15; Agung, 1991: 61). The traditional Balinese garden impression was kept for instance in the concrete pillars of the road which lead to the Taman Ujung pavilion (Gili A), which were decorated with *karang bentala* patterns. In the traditional Balinese architecture, *karang bentala* ornament looks like a crown and functioned to decorate the top of buildings. However, in this case, *karang bentala* was used on the concrete poles of the road.

The *karang bentala* decoration of Taman Ujung has double semiotic meaning. Here, the crown-shaped ornament used to decorate the top of buildings acquires meaning as a symbol of the Kingdom of the

Netherlands, a crown icon flanked by two lions. The symbol was also used to decorate the concrete piers of the bridge so that it was clearly visible. The symbol was also found on the roofs of guardhouse buildings at both ends of the small concrete bridge. In addition, crowned lion ornaments made of concrete also adorned the filigree walls, both along the small concrete bridge over Kolam I and over Kolam II.

Based on the documents of existing photos, it is known that the monumental *karang bentala* decoration was also found on Bale Kapal building façade on the west side, near Taman Ujung Gate I. This part of the building no longer survives. Studies of Bale Kapal old photos suggest that it was a very high building, perhaps similar to a cathedral church. Viewed from Kolam I and II, Bale Kapal might have looked monumental, also because it was built on a ridge. The demolished roof seems to be made of concrete, similar to Kolam I guardhouse roof. The peak of the highest central part of the façade shows *karang bentala* ornaments, and every peak of the façade in the lower layer, flanking the central façade, also shows traces of *karang bentala*. However, the photo was so blurred that it was not possible to know if crowned lion decorations appeared in the *karang bentala*.

In addition to buildings and bridges, concrete was used to make slab plates assembled into flower pots with decorations their sides, placed in several places in Taman Ujung. In addition, the fences surrounding the Taman Ujung were also made of cast concrete, complete with decorations. These examples show how Western concrete technology was mixed with Bali indigenous decoration. The advantage of using concrete was the faster creation of ornaments, which could be produced in larger quantities, printed with a repetitive pattern.

Cast concrete decorative motifs were mounted on the interior wall of the pavilion, which include floral motives, wayang motives (dancing puppets), and other traditional ornaments such as the winged lion (Ambara). The winged lion is the most distinctive ornament in the interior of the pavilion. Created by King Karangasem, it showed the face of a crowned lion on the combination of square and curved surface, flanked by two other crowned lions of smaller size. The peculiar ornamental pattern also shows signs of East-West cultural dialogue.

Furthermore, when the author conducted a study in 2012, Taman Ujung living room pavilion was equipped with a set of white with golden colored classical European-style furniture decoration. However, now the

living room and the King's bedroom furniture include an iron bed, and is no longer open to the public.

The original living room furniture design at Taman Ujung pavilion was similar to the design in Puri Kanganan Karangasem. According Kusuma Arini, of Puri Karangasem family (interview on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016), the classically styled furniture of Puri Kanganan Karangasem was a gift of Queen Wilhelmina during the colonial period. In connection with the lion crowned decoration, Kusuma Arini also explained that all the *karang bentala* cast concrete crown-shaped decorations, referred to a cross-cultural semiotic system encompassing Eastern and Western elements. This semiotic encounter in Taman Ujung implied a good-friendly relation between the Kingdom of Karangasem and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

## CONCLUSION

Indonesia has absorbed many cultures since ancient times, causing a semiotically rich local culture. This paper has focused on Taman Ujung, one of the monumental relics of the Kingdom of Karangasem, showing the cross-cultural designs encountered in this site. The study has shown the existence of a pavilion building in the middle of the pond, causing Taman Ujung to be different from traditional Balinese garden designs. This pavilion (Gili) has been shown to be influenced by modern Western architecture. Based on the quality of materials and construction signs on the building, Taman Ujung was a hybrid design, with concrete technology adapted from the West and decorated with mixed forms of *karang bentala* associated with the crown of Queen Wilhelmina, symbol of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as well as local Bali symbolism.

Based on the design form, garden building construction and visualization of its decoration, it can be concluded that the design of Taman Ujung implied a cross-cultural relation between Eastern and Western cultures and more concretely between the Kingdom of Karangasem (Bali) and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

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