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The Architecture of the Car-Shaped Altar: Anomaly in the Ideological Vehicle of the Gods at Paluang Temple, Nusa Penida, Bali, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study describes the architecture iconic car-shaped shrine at Pura Paluang Nusa Penida, Bali. The car-shaped shrine is a manifestation of God's vehicle, which has the title *Ida Bhatara Ratu Gede Sakti Ngurah* and *Hyang Mami* or Lord *Shiva* and *Durga*. The altar resembles a Jeep Jimny and a VW Beetle. This architectural form is what distinguishes it from mainstream cult architectural works in Bali. This study aims to reveal the phenomenon of cultural anomalies based on the ideology of the vehicle of the gods on the car-shaped altar. This study also reveals the process of meaning and local elites who capture ideological knowledge on the car-shaped altar, to use power through cultural discourse. This study uses a qualitative method with an interpretive descriptive approach. Primary data was obtained through observation and interviews with informants determined by purposive sampling, and secondary data through literature study. Data analysis with the post-structuralism approach, Foucault's power genealogy methodology, and theory of discourse-power-knowledge relations are also from Foucault. The results of the study show that the dominance of the discourse of local elites in *Karang Dawa Nusa Penida* causes the ideology of traditional sign language about the vehicle of the gods to be exceeded, and the symptoms of cultural anomalies are strengthened through the power-knowledge-truth relation. The cultural discourse has disciplined the local community and people outside Nusa Penida, to attend prayers or to travel to Paluang Temple.

Keywords: Car-Shaped Altar, Ideological Anomaly, Discourse

1. Introduction

The most powerful phrase car in this study is intended as a work of worship architecture in the form of a sacred building or altar of worship for Balinese Hindus with the icon of a 'vehicle' car or land transportation vehicle, with a smaller size and different materials from the actual car. In the context of the location of this research in Paluang Temple, Karang Dawa, Nusa Penida, Klungkung Regency, Bali, the shape resembles a VW Beetle (VW *Kodok*) and Jeep (Suzuki Jimny). The local community strongly believes that the manifestation of God worshiped in the temple is *Ida Bhatara Ratu Gede Sakti Ngurah* and *Hyang Mami* or *Shiva-Durga* in the pantheon of the gods of Hinduism.

The architectural design of this car-shaped altar, of course, does not use the basic guideline for the design of traditional Balinese worship architecture, as is commonly done in Balinese Hindu society. Hindus in building worship architecture are based on the design guidelines for traditional Balinese worship architecture as contained in the manuscripts of *Asta Kosala Kosali*, *Dewa Tattwa*, *Kusumadewa*, *Ithi Prakerti*, *Padmabhuwana*, *Anda Bhuwana*, and others (Ida Pandita Dukuh Acharya Dhaksa, interview 2020).

This design guide, which is a "cultural discourse," has been adjusted through the policy mechanism of socio-religious arrangement in the era of the Klungkung kingdom, and is considered to have reached the golden peak of Balinese culture under the leadership of Dalem Waturenggong (1460-1490 AD) (Sidemen, et al., 1983). The design guide as a cultural discourse is the production of power relations that exist through discursive formations (Suyono, 2002; Kurniawan, 2020; Paramadhyaksa, 2021; Wirawibawa, 2021).

Foucault emphasizes that the process of disseminating discursive formations is the same as the dissemination of discourse or knowledge that distributes what is considered important and unimportant, considered true and not true. In a sense, each era has its formation and discursive group which is disseminated through discourse and signifies a regime of truth. Foucault views discourse is inseparable from power. Discourse is a means for an institution to gain power through a process of definition and exclusion (Storey, 2003). Furthermore, power is controlled by discourse, and discourse is always rooted in power. Discourse is a social practice that will always shape power relations (Foucault, 1990 in Piliang and Jaelani, 2018).

The power spreads, scattered everywhere, like an entangled net. Barker and Foucault see the productivity of this power forming capillaries that are woven into the fibers of social order, power is distributed in social relations (Barker, 2005; Foucault, 2002). Discourse can strengthen a regime of truth, as well as marginalize other regimes. Internally through the narrowing of meaning in the production and reproduction of texts (discourse) and externally through the formation and dissemination of discourse through institutions (Suyono, 2002).

The relevance of Foucault's thought with the ultimate context of *palinggih mobil* as a cultural discourse lies in the relation of knowledge and power in Bali in producing discursive formations to strengthen a regime of truth. The formation of discursive formations or groups through this "ideological" discourse greatly influences the episteme, range of reasoning, and the Balinese experience of their culture.

This phenomenon is increasingly interesting to study with a critical approach to Cultural Studies, intending to reveal the strength of the discourse-power-knowledge relation that lies behind the ideological anomaly of the vehicle of the gods on the car-shaped altar. A number of these statements can be formulated into research questions, namely: (1) How does the discourse of knowledge behind myths move the agents and community structures of Karang Dawa Hamlet, Nusa Penida so that the convention of the language of symbolic signs of mainstream worship altar architecture is exceeded? (2) What are the symptoms of cultural and ideological anomalies of the vehicle of the gods on the car-shaped altar at Pura Paluang?

2. Discussion

The existence and guidelines for building worship altars in the style of traditional Balinese architecture can be seen in several *lontars*, such as *Asta Kosala Kosali* (Development Team, 2009), *Dewa Tattwa lontar*, *Kusuma Dewa*, *Ithi Prakerti* (Soebandi, 2000), and others. The work of academic researchers related to traditional Balinese architecture and the results of research from domestic and foreign researchers who describe the existence of the *Palinggih* and several temples in Bali are quite numerous, including Books on Traditional Balinese Architecture (Gelebet, 2002), Pura Besakih (Fox, 2010), Architecture Hindu Sacred Buildings Based on Asta Kosala-Kosali (Dwijendra, 2008), Bali Sekala and Niskala (Eisman, 1992), Island of Bali (Covarrubias, 1972), Profile of Kahyangan Jagat Temple in Bali (Development Team, 2012), Bali Cultural Heritage (Laksmi et al, 2011), Temples of Unity in Diversity in Bali (Ardhana et al., 2020), and others. A number of these libraries try to provide a description of the temple and its shrine (*Palinggih*) with the perspective of the scientific background of researchers, but are still oblivious to the existence of Paluang Temple with two iconic car shrines (*Palinggih*) located in Nusa Penida. Meanwhile, the results of a study conducted by Suyoga and Anadhi (2018) show the strength of the power-knowledge relationship at Pura Paluang, as well as the results of the Suyoga study (2019) showing some identity struggles from the existence of a car altar at Pura Paluang.



Figure 1: Car-shaped altar at Paluang Temple Nusa Penida, Bali

Source: I.P.G. Suyoga, 2020

Understanding the Ideology of the Rides of the Gods (*Wahana Dewata*)

Ideology in Habermas's thinking or referring to the Critical Theory tradition is not the same as understanding ideology in general. If in general, ideology is defined as a comprehensive and in-depth view or value system about the goals to be achieved by society as well as about the ways that are considered good to achieve those goals (Hermawan, 2001), then in Habermas's thinking or the Critical Theory tradition, the use of the word ideology refers more to "false consciousness or social illusion." In other words, the use of the word ideology by Critical Theory is intended to describe false ideas or beliefs that are widely considered true and are used to support certain institutions and perpetuate domination relations supported by that ideology (Lubis, 2016; Dwijendra, 2003).

Wahana Dewata is an idea about depicting the mounts or vehicles of the Gods (*Dewa*) in Hinduism. *Wahana Dewata* uses the form of mythological animals as described in *Pangideran Dewata Nawa Sanga*. *Wahana Dewata* is one of the complete attributes of the Gods who rule the cardinal directions, in addition to *sakti/istri*, *neptu*, colors, weapons. The *Wahana Dewata* is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Rides of the Gods (*Wahana Dewata*) in the *Pengideran* of *Dewata Nawa Sanga*

| Direction | God (<i>Dewa</i>) | Vehicle (<i>Wahana</i>) |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. East | <i>Iswara</i> | elephant |
| 2. Southeast | <i>Mahesora</i> | Lion |
| 3. South | <i>Brahma</i> | Angsa |
| 4. Southwest | <i>Rudra</i> | Cow |

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 5. West | <i>Mahadewa</i> | Dragon |
| 6. Northwest | <i>Sangkara</i> | Buffalo |
| 7. North | <i>Wisnu</i> | <i>Garuda</i> |
| 8. Northeast | <i>Sambu</i> | <i>Wilmana</i> |
| 9. Middle | <i>Siwa</i> | <i>Lembu Nandini</i> |

Lord Shiva's vehicle (*Wahana Dewa Siwa*) in the sensing (*pengideran*) structure uses *Lembu Nandini*, as well as other gods riding certain types of animals or birds that are commonly encountered in the daily life of traditional agrarian societies. Thus the formation of the symbol of the vehicle of the gods (*Wahana Dewata*) is very dominant in the nuances of an agrarian ideology with a strong foundation of mythical and mystical knowledge that has become a habitus in the structure of Balinese society (Dwijendra, 2020).

Unlike the case with the architectural work for the symbol of the vehicle of Lord Shiva (*Wahana Dewa Siwa*) which is held at Pura Paluang, it is depicted as a car. The car is a product of industry and capitalism. Thus the formation of the symbol of the divine vehicle (*Wahana Dewata*) is influenced by a market ideology based on industrial/capitalist culture with the dominant power of realist knowledge and the strong individual norms of its cultural agents. The process of shifting the ideology of the vehicle of the gods occurs because the language of traditional signs is exceeded and cannot be separated from the symptoms of cultural anomalies (developed from Kontuwijoyo, 2006).

Going Beyond Traditional Sign Language

The design standards for traditional Balinese worship architecture are loaded with socio-religious values and norms as a complete link between *tattwa*/philosophy, ethics-morals and ceremonies or rituals. The values that underlie every development are for *parhyangan* architecture (worship), *pawongan* architecture (residential buildings and death buildings), and *palemahan* architecture in the form of spatial planning, land and complementary buildings and public facilities. The guide to mainstream Balinese Traditional Architecture was at least established until the 19th century at the beginning of the colonial era.

Cultural reproduction that appears as a symbolic sign and is based on the norms of the standard is what drives the construction of the worship architecture of the Balinese people. However, if it refers to Foucault's perspective, they are not driven by values and norms but compromise with the discourse conveyed by people who have the power to speak on behalf of these values in building the architecture of their worship (developed from Foucault, 2002). Thus, the form of a car altar that does not follow the values and norms of the construction of a mainstream traditional altar, shows that there is a strong discourse conveyed by local agents/elite so that it is not commensurate with the mainstream Balinese traditional worship building.

Discourse through myth, mentions that *Ratu Gede Ngurah* and *Hyang Mami* as gods (*Dewata*) who reside in Paluang Temple conduct inspections by driving a car to monitor, protect and grant safety to the entire community (Jro Mangku Suar, June 2020). The strong power of knowledge behind the mythical discourse has received a positive response from local elites and various groups in Karang Dawa Hamlet and has mobilized agents or local elites of the Karang Dawa community to realize his vehicle (*Wahana*) in the form of the sacred *Pelinggih* building with the icon of a car.

Cultural Anomaly

The study of the symptoms of cultural anomalies sees a symbolic process transforming. A product of culture can become no longer supported by its social institutions, or by the mode of the social organization of the culture. Cultural contradictions can occur so that they can paralyze their social foundations (Kontuwijoyo, 2006). Kontuwijoyo in the same source previously tried to elaborate on the sociological thought of Williams (1981), that there are three main components in the sociology of culture, namely cultural institutions, cultural content, and cultural effects or norms. In other words, cultural institutions ask who produces cultural products, who controls

them, and how that control is exercised. Cultural content asks what is produced or what symbols are sought, and cultural effects ask what consequences are expected from the cultural process.

Kontuwijoyo then constructs the history of Indonesia and its symbolic process into three historical categories, namely: traditional patrimonial, capitalist, and technocratic. While the symbolic process of each historical category is divided into three, namely institutions, symbols, and norms. The term historical category is used instead of a period, meaning that the categories are not always in alternating order, but can overlap each other, even though there is chronological order. The reconstruction of his thinking is shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Indonesian History and its Symbolic Process

| History Category | Symbolic Process | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|
| | Institution | Symbol | Norm |
| Patrimonial Traditional | Abdi Dalem Society | Mythic | Communal |
| | King | | |
| | Command | Mythic | Obedience |
| Capitalist | Professional | | Individualist |
| | Market | Realist | |
| | Tender | | |
| Technocratic | Professional | | Modification |
| | State | Pseudorealis | Behavior |
| | Order | | |

Source: Developed from Kuntowijoyo, 2006: 6

Kontuwijoyo further stated the possibility of a cultural dichotomy in one category and also symptoms of cultural anomalies at the end of each historical category. In a patrimonial society, for example, there will be a social and cultural dichotomy between the nobility and the peasants. There is court culture and there is folk culture, each of which has its institutions, symbols, and norms. Likewise in the capitalist category, it has a cultural dichotomy in high culture and popular culture, with its institutions, symbols, and norms. In this case, Sorokin (1964) reminds us that even though the dichotomy exists, there is also cultural mobility, up or down, which causes both institutions, symbols, and norms to transform.

Kontuwijoyo's ideas can be used as a basis for analysis that the iconic *Palingih* car as a symbol of worship shows that the people of Karang Dawa at the time of the idea of building a worship symbol by taking a shape resembling a car, can be categorized into the category of capitalist history. Individual norms as a normative aspect in the symbolic process can be seen from the no longer using the standard form of the traditional Balinese altar to worship idols, but using a new, more realistic form as a vehicle, namely the iconic car. In other words, it can be stated that there has been a shift in the choice of altar form that deviates from the general tradition of worship architecture. This cultural anomaly can certainly be understood from the strong influence of capitalist culture with its market ideology in introducing new things that are more trendy at that time. The realist form of the car as a means of transportation is then considered very adequate to be presented as a vehicle of the gods. Its function is transformed into a vehicle for idols, it is even believed to be able to fly to facilitate the process of supernatural protection and can speed up the process of providing help to people who need it, wherever they are (Jro Mangku Suar, interview June 2020).

The idea of an altar in the form of an individual car was realized at the Paluang Temple which was originally owned by an individual. The history of Pura Paluang tells that at first Pura Paluang was built on dry land owned by a resident so that automatically the temple was a private temple or a family temple. Then after the crowds of people from outside Karang Dawa Hamlet, Nusa Penida came to pray or visit to find out the existence of the car-shaped altar, its ownership and management were handed over to the traditional village institution. Since then its management has been carried out by the temple organization (*Pamaksan*) and the status of Paluang Temple later became one of the properties of the traditional village with the status of a territorial temple. Now the existence of Pura Mobil is widely known, the people who attend are both Hindus and non-Hindus from within and outside the country (Jro Mangku Suar, interview June 2020).

The strength of the power relation of knowledge in myth was developed by intellectual actors, namely religious leaders (*Pemangku*) with traditional leaders and the Karang Dawa Hamlet service. The knowledge behind the myth is captured and developed as power through symbolic signs or the sacred *Palinggih* building in the form of a car. Then the power of discipline relation works to discipline the community body of Dusun Karang Dawa to be obedient and obedient in the practice of worship in the two sacred buildings with the iconic car, and other sacred buildings in Paluang Temple. The power of discipline has even expanded to discipline the community outside the Karang Dawa Hamlet. This body discipline is not only a form of fulfilling desires and expectations, the glue of social relations but has become an ideology.

If you refer to the thinking of Thompson (2003), which reveals that the function of ideology is as a glue for social relations that binds members of society together by applying collectively agreed values and norms. Although it seems that Thompson's statement about ideology is criticized by Foucault who states that people are not moved by conventions of values and norms, but by discourses delivered by people who have the power to speak. However, the power and domination relations that are intrinsic to the depths of ideology reflect the power of discourse. Discourse in the sense of language practice or words carried out by dominant actors in Karang Dawa Hamlet. Thus, the social meaning of ideology is also constructed in the discourse, so that it can be said that solidarity and even solidity are maintained, and the unity of steps is also maintained thanks to the ideology of the vehicle of the gods.

On the other hand, Danesi explains that buildings can be "read" as narrative texts with specific meanings (Danesi, 2012). Thus, architecturally, the design of *Palinggih* cars is influenced by certain car manufacturers' brands (VW and Suzuki). The design of the car (a mass industrial product of the era of the Industrial Revolution 2.0), was transformed into a religious symbol or religious sign. In particular, these two types of cars were quite popular in the colonial era and were seen as being able to represent the Family Wagon-family vehicle (VW Beetle) and operational vehicle (Jimny) which were inspired by the reliable vehicles of today's tourists. Both options are believed to be appropriate for *Dewa Shiva-Durga's* vehicle when only with internal family members, and when he is carrying out field duties monitoring the people or community of Karang Dawa, Nusa Penida either at home or overseas (Jro Mangku Suar, interview June 2020).

The design of the car altar is different from the standard of Balinese traditional worship architecture which stipulates certain provisions in building worship altars (forms, materials, and development ethics) which are categorized as high taste standards, noble values, and are "high culture." Thus, *Palinggih* cars whose designs are outside the traditional values and norms can be categorized as "popular culture." This is following Piliang's thinking, which understands that religious practices in popular culture have developed along with industrialization, mass production, and mass media. Religious practices are displayed, carried out, understood, and carried out as an inseparable part of the process of industrialization, mass production, and mass media. Religion (religious symbol) is presented and carried out as the fulfillment of mass desires (Piliang and Jaelani, 2018; Idedhyana 2020; Wijaya 2021).

Conclusion

The car altar at Paluang Temple, Nusa Penida is a Hindu religious symbol to *stana* the manifestation of God with the titles *Ida Bhatara Ratu Gede Ngurah* and *Hyang Mami* (a term in local theological terminology) or *Shiva Durga* in Hindu theological terminology.

The unique architectural design of this car altar, which is "free" from the grip of mainstream Balinese traditions, has become an architectural existence that is different from several large temples in Nusa Penida. This is inseparable from the dominance of the local elite in capturing and developing the power of knowledge through internal discourse in Karang Dawa, and has even been able to discipline the wider community to visit Paluang Temple.

The strong power of discourse-knowledge-truth behind mythical discourse has moved agents or local elites of the Karang Dawa community to realize their vehicle (*Wahana*) in the form of an iconic car altar so that it can be

categorized as "popular culture." The process of shifting the ideology of the vehicle of the gods occurred because of the transcendence of the traditional sign language and the strong symptoms of cultural anomalies.

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