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## THE AESTHETICS INTERPRETATION THROUGH EXPERIENCE IN PLACE AT UMAH BALINESE ARCHITECTURE Case Study: *Pamlaspasan* Ceremony Sacred Ritual Event

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### ABSTRACT

*Bernard Tschumi explained that there is no architecture without an event. It could be observed in Balinese traditional architecture. Balinese people never left their ritual event, daily and holydays for the sacred ritual. The Pamlaspasan sacred ritual events in their umah could illustrate the experience in place. The experience in place can be experienced through the senses and the wisdom of community.*

*Through three cultural phenomena; ideas, activities and artifacts (Honingmann's terms in the field of anthropology to distinguish cultural form), the experience in place can be described through the events of pamlaspas. From the process in perception through the experience in place at this pamlaspas ceremony could be identified the aesthetics interpretation of the umah Balinese architecture.*

**Keywords:** *sacred ritual event, experience in place, aesthetic interpretation*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Tschumi (Vallee, 2007: 36) reveals that one of the starting points for the architecture is on top of all the events and not a form. In addition "an event is a different variety." He also said, that the definition of architecture is the dynamic and static definition of the senses in the sense of not dealing with a homogeneous space but the space that is always questioned by the movement or the use of (the experience of space-use) (Vallee, 2007: 38).

Furthermore, Grainger (Perez, 2006: 126) says that there are important differences between the two types of actions, actions taken by humans and the actions taken by humans in the belief that his success is not to reduce the human sense, but results from other places. Only the second kind of action can be called a ritual. Furthermore, Quantrill (1974: 19) says the myth and ritual is a causal concept (the cause). Rituals associated with the form or style of buildings and a group of buildings. Also in Quantrill Alexander (1974: 14) recognized the ritual as a generator of the floor plan which produces the architectural form. But on the other hand, Vitruvius in Quantrill (1974: 23), on his writing the most rooted in the tradition of classical education; predicting divorce between ritual and form. While this prediction has not happened in Bali, the research for this is very necessary. In addition, Ruskin in Kostof (1995: 19) writes that all the architecture suggests an effect on human mind, not only serves the needs of human body. Rituals can be said as poetry of functions: as far as a building that is shaped by ritual, a house which is not only function, but a description of it.

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Ritual event is part of human cultural life as a complex pattern of human activities and actions both for individual or social life. Similarly, the ritual activity is the life of Balinese people that are believed to pass through hereditary legacy, when people perform daily activities will be always preceded, accompanied or based on patterns of thinking and act according to religious beliefs (Sabha, 1985: 34). Ritual events can be in the form of *rahinan* (ceremonial activities performed daily) and *rahinan ala ayuning dewasa* (ceremonial activities held on holy days). While the ceremony / *upakara* is one of three basics of Balinese traditional architecture which is interrelated with each other. Two other basics are *tattwa* (philosophy), and *susila* (ethics) (Sabha, 1985: 118). One of the examples of the sacred ritual event case, *rahinan ala ayuning dewasa* is in the form of offering *yadnya pamlaspas ceremony*.

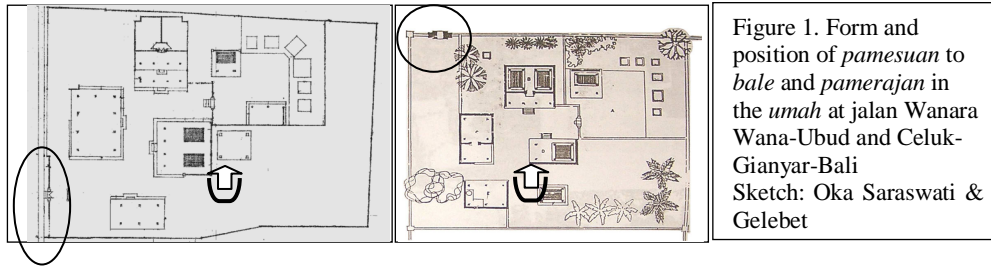
Table 1. Rahinan sacred rituals events

Sacred Ritual Events	daily Performed	<i>Rahinan</i> : daily performed ceremony	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Yadnya saiban</i> dedication</li> <li>• <i>Yadnya segehan</i> dedication</li> </ul>
	Performed at certain times	<i>Rahinan ala ayuning dewasa</i> : ceremony held on the holiday	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dedication of <i>Yadnya mekiis</i> ceremony,</li> <li>• dedication of <i>Yadnya pamlaspas</i> ceremony</li> <li>• etc.</li> </ul>

*Pamlaspas* is a series inauguration event of a work; could be mask, barong, temple or *umah*. In this case the event presented is *pamlaspas* of Balinese architecture work in the form of *umah*/house (case: newly constructed house). The series of events consist of *memakuh / memangguh* (discovery / determination of land), *ngeruak karang* and *nyengker* (opening and land boundary), *memirak* (change of land status), *mecaru / offering tawur* (permission for natural harmony), *mlaspas* (purification and reviving house according to its functions), and *mempen / mendem pedagingan* in *pemerajan / temple / place of worship* (to enshrine God and His manifestations and the ancestors to pray wholeness *Tri Hita Karana* toward *mokshartam jagaditha*).

Furthermore, with the living experience through senses and social wisdom, aesthetic interpretation revealed three kinds of culture, namely, idea, activity and artifact in *pamlaspas umah* event of Balinese community. Referring to the results of the research of Gelebet et al (1986), it is seen that all districts and towns in Bali have a similar architectural characteristics although it is noted that there are specialties for certain regions. Thus, the location of study samples may be conducted all over Bali Island (Figure 1). Therefore, this study accumulates space experience in several *umah* (houses) in Bali. One of the houses taken as a sample for the *mlaspas* event is the house (*umah*) on Waribang Street, Denpasar - Bali. The emphasis discussion is more on the aesthetic interpretation of a house on *pamlaspas* ceremony of which event exposed on its *pamesuan* (gate).

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## II. PAMLASPAS EVENT IN UMAH BALI



Figure 2. Ornaments and decoration on the Pemesuan  
Foto: Oka Saraswati

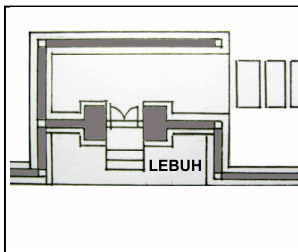
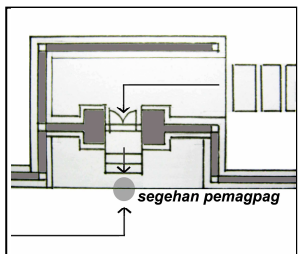


Figure 3. The map of Pemesuan in the form of cangkem kodok  
Sketch: Oka Saraswati



Gambar 4. Segehan Pamagpag on every arrival of tirtha  
Sketch: Oka Saraswati

*Pamlaspas* is the event cleaning and purification of a newly constructed building. *Mlaspas* according Arwati (2008: 4) is a Balinese word deriving from the word *mlas* and *pas*. *Mlas* means “to separate” and *pas* means “suitable”. In this case, it is an event where building materials consisting of various materials such as inanimate objects named stones, bricks, cement, timber and other building materials, collected and built or stacked and then into a unitary building up and live well hereinafter referred to as *umah*/house. Furthermore, the newly completed building is purified from the bad effects that may occur during preparation, construction to completion. In a series of ceremonies *melaspas*, also pray to Hyang Widhi Wasa to be pleased to bless His *kasunarin* (bless His holy rays) as well as strength and in order to make the building having *mlaspas* ceremony to “live /urip” adjusted with its function and is disassociated from “*ngeletehin*” (bad effect) and give expected welfare.

In this *pamlaspas* event, *manggala prawartaka karya* (the chairman of this event/the house owner), invites friends, relatives, families and public figures. The invited expected to be present act as *manusia saksi* (human witness), in addition to *dewa saksi* (God and His manifestation and ancestors as witnesses) and *kala saksi* (nature as a witness). In addition, this event is started by conducting some preparations. The preparation begins with putting on *kuaca* /ornaments/clothes for buildings/*bale*, in the form of decorations *ider-ider*, *pedapa*, *langse*, *ulon*, *saput*, and *kuaca*/decoration for *saka lanang-wadon* as if bride groom and bride. Similar decorations for *sanggah* (shrines) and *pamesuan* (gate), these buildings are also decorated with *kuaca* (clothes). Besides being decorated with *kuaca*, *pamesuan* (gate) has decorative ornaments and decorations of its own. Ornaments on *pamesuan* of this *umah* (house) only show a personification *pengawak* (body), *sipah* (armpit), *gidat* (forehead), and *lelengen* (arm), and are not equipped with decorations in the form of statues as seen at the outer part of *pemesuan* (gate). In addition, the plan *pamesuan* (gate) forms *cangkem kodok* (frog mouth) (set back). Since this *pamesuan* (gate) is decorated with *kuaca* or ornaments among others *lamak*, as well as *Penjor*, it has given a signal that there will an event occurring at the *Umah* (house). During this *mlaspas* event, the invited person are only those close family, limited to the children of mother’s and father’s brothers and sisters of the house owner.

Furthermore, prior *pamlaspas* event is held, the *undagi* offer *tebasan* to *Ida Bathara Wiswakarma* who is believed as a guide like a teacher during the *umah* (house) development. Then, *tirtha* from *Ida Bathara* is sprinkled to all parts of the *umah* (house). In this event, *Upasaksi* is offered to *Ida Bathara Surya* and *Pertiwi* for all events to be held. Besides, *matur piuning* (notification) and *mendak toya tirtha pekuluh* (taking

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holy water) is conducted to a number of temples. The *prajuru* (officers) *pesu/medal* (go out) of the *pamesuan* (gate) to family temples and *pamerajan Ageng* (temples/*pamerajan* at original house) and *kahyangan tiga* temples (*Puseh temples*, *Desa temples*, *Dalem temples*). On the arrival of this *toya tirta*, *pemagpag / pemendak* ceremony is held in the form of *segehan* at *lebu* (the outer part of the compound) in front *pemedalan/pamesuan/gate* from the house having *plaspas* ceremony. After that, Tirta is placed in *Sanggar Surya*.

Then, on a good day/*rahinan ala ayuning dewasa* taken, the entire parts of the building is attached or tied with *sasap* on the walls or *saka bale* (pillars). *Sasap* which is made from coconut leaves and *dapdap* leaf tied with weeds and sprinkled with *toya segara/sea water*. Further, *bagia orti* and *ulap – ulap* are put on. *Bagia orti* is hookup on top of building (on the ridge or on top of row) and *ulap-ulap* at plank frame board or on the upper part door threshold. *Bagia orti* shapes in *reringgitan* and is made from palm leaves and *ulap-ulap* shapes in a piece of white cloth with *rerajahan* drawing. After that, *matatorek* (finger rubbing) is done with red, white, and black color.

Subsequently, *pengelukan*/cleaning is performed to all types of ceremonial devices including *umah* which will have *plaspas* ceremony of which procession begins by sprinkling *toya anyar/clean water*, *ngayap penyengeng*, *ngayap beakaonan*, *ngayab durmenggala* and sprinkling *tirta pangelukan* and *ngayab prayascita* and followed by fragrant incense and flower blown by *saab* danced by hand in prayer rhythm. *Tirta panglukan* (in the form of fragrant water/*toya maukup* placed in *pangedangan/soil pot*) is an aromatic incense *tirta*, flowers and fragrant sticky wet soil. Besides being sprinkled, this *tirta* is also drunk by the occupants and their families. As this *tirta* underwent fumigation process of burning incense, fragrant dry flowers, sugar, incense, sandalwood and *majagau* wood/*gaharu* wood, then the *tirta* besides fragrant is also sticky. After the procession is completed, it is followed by sputtering *tirta Pasupati* and knocking buildings; one of them is by hitting/strengthening the connection pins. This event is led by priest/*sulinggih* (as *wiku yajamana karya/leader* of a religious ceremony) praying by chanting mantra. And during this *pamlaspas* ceremony is held, *kidung* (spiritual hymn) is sung in groups like choirs and gongs *bleganjur* is unrelenting be rhythmical. In *pamlaspas* ceremony for bigger house, this ceremony is completed with *sasolahan wali* (dances accompanying the ceremony), like a puppet and *sidakarya* mask.



Figure 5. Gong Bleganjur saat pamlaspas  
Foto: Rudy

Moreover, to what extent of the invitees who are invited to be present, is also a matter of concern. For a simple house with simple gate, the invitation is only for close family until a representative from the big family where *tirta* from *pamerajan Ageng* is taken. Whereas for *pemangku/leaders* at *Kahyangan Tiga* Temples, only an announcement is submitted to them without being invited to be present.

## III. AESTHETIC INTERPRETATION AT UMAH BALI

Aesthetic work is the result of man-made, not born from nature, intended for human and his life and have a relationship with life and human existence. In addition, the expression of a work is its properties, which include shape, color, decoration and ornament. Furthermore, the expression is represented the subject that expresses a particular character. Intrinsic expression can trigger a particular emotional state, so it is considered as a system of signs. Further, the intrinsic expression is accepted as the perception with its meaning in five senses.

Furthermore, Tuan (1974: 14) says that perception based on the principle of human cognition (including the experiences and feelings). That factors determine the human perspective, then proceed by identifying the rules on the elements and provide examples to support the interpretation. To support the above, on another occasion he says (1974: 14) that only a small part of most people's lives is

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rational. It also conveys that the ways in which people perceive and evaluate that surface are far more varied. No two persons see the same reality. With good will one person can enter into the world of another despite differences in age, temperament, and culture (1974: 5).

In addition, human being has more ways to respond to the world than the five senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching known to us since the time of Aristotle. According to Tuan (1974: 6), the traditional five senses man is more consciously dependent on sight to make its way in the world than on the other senses, but apart from that a human being perceives the world through all his senses simultaneously. It also says (1974: 8) that music is for most people a stronger emotional experience than looking at pictures or scenery. Furthermore Tuan (1974: 10) says the person who just "sees" is an onlooker, a sightseer, someone not otherwise involved with the scene of that experience. In modern society, man comes to rely more and more on sight. Space for him is bounded and static, a frame or matrix for objects (Tuan, 1974: 11).

In addition, to explore the close relationship between buildings and places, in which all aspects related to social, economic, cultural, world view and its historical, that is a researcher's "spatial experience" (empirical). In this condition, to understand the meaning of the architecture, necessary activities of interpretation that can provide and enrich the real answer about what is researched. Also submitted that it is a cultural unit, where the readings can result in different interpretations in accordance to the background of the observer.

*Umah* which has been manifested is not completed there. This work should bring happiness. How does this work bring happiness? It is mentioned that (Sabha, 1984), happiness will exist if the embodiment of traditional Balinese architecture is based on three things, namely, *tattwa*, *susila*, and *upacara*. In a conducted *upacara* (ceremony), it can be identified aesthetic interpretation of Balinese society which is fully filled of signs to read. Sometimes wishes will cover and block the senses and the human sensory from what should be read. As mentioned earlier, this aesthetic interpretation emphasizes more on the affected event on *pamesuan* and revealed through the ideas, activities and artifacts.

When *mendak* (taking) *toya tirta*, where the occupants or *prajuru* (officers) *pesu/medal* (go out) of *pamesuan* to *pamerajan ageng* or to the temple, then it can be seen that a territorial is formed from *umah* until their destination. During the trip, the aesthetic comes in form, decoration, ornaments, and colorful offerings, as well as fragrant incense, and the strain of chanted hymn. In addition, territory indirectly also reflected in people's daily life when they exit from the *pemesuan* (gate) will be asked by other people meeting them. The form of the question is as follows, "*Bli ka kija* (meaning: older brother, where are you going)?" It is not reasonable if asking, "*Bli uling dija* (meaning: older brother, where do you come from)?" That is a concept of leaving the house which has a territorial distant dimension. Then, does this mean that the outside was a wonderful pleasure. Will this contradict to the opinion of Suryani (Balinese, 1996: 60) who said *lek* (shy) is a normal behavior of the Balinese?

Further, on the arrival of *tirta* (placed on the shoulder) the *pemagpag/pemendak* (the welcoming ceremony) is conducted at *lebuh* (outside) in front *pamesuan*. This shows the existence of meetings; there is no handshake, but there is welcome regard communication. The occupants staying inside go out *medal/pesu* to greet the comers; what and whoever they are. The physical space formed at that time is in accordance with the territory of the *pamesuan*. When the requested is in a small territorial level (village level: *tirta* from of *Kahyangan Tiga* temple), the dimensions of space formed is in an intimate scale. It will be different if the *tirta* being welcome is in the level of *Sad Kahyangan* Temple distributed all over Bali. Moreover on the front of *pemedalan* also wafted fragrant incense and strain of chanted hymn is heard. This strain is heard up to a radius of 50 meters. This spatial experience shows the existence of idea of welcoming with etiquette, namely, the activity of people staying inside go outside to welcome and then together come inside and the existence of artifacts supporting such welcome. Does this also mean that going outside is beautiful. If there is no going out then there is no incoming. Therefore, it was beautiful to going out so that the entry is also expected to beautiful.

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Hereinafter, to what extent invitees to be invited is also reflected on the *pamesuan*. If the *pamesuan* form tends to be simple, namely in the form of *angkul-angkul* and plan is only in the form of *cangkem codok* (frog mouth), the invitation is just around the house (close relatives), The more invitees coming will also be reflected from the *pemesuan* (gate). If the invitation involving various parties and also cross kingdom, the *pamesuan* will be more mainstream. The *Pamesuan* in a more mainstream level (Saraswati, 2002: 84, 108) will have *ancal saji* as well as in the shape of *kori agung* completed with its *betelan*. Likewise, the decoration and ornaments of personification where will be more complete. Ornament on the *pamesuan* shows a personification (Saraswati, 2002: 60th) among others demonstrating the emergence of *pengawak* (body), *sipah* (armpit), *gidat* (forehead), ears, *subeng* (earring) or *lelengen* (arm), while decoration in the form of statues is found at the outer part of *Pemesuan*. *Pamesuan* and sculpture decorated with yellow, red, pink, purple, and green, kuaca; a contrasting colors that give splendor atmosphere of space. Meanwhile, gold and black and white *poleng* color gives the impression of the sacred. As Rockow said (MCMLIV: 56) that color cause the expression. The differences of both value and intensity have been deepened by the contrast. It will be more complete if *pamesuan* is equipped with umbrella tends to red or yellow color and *penjor*. *Penjor* that stood in front of *pamesuan* describes the prosperity of the occupants. Geck (1971: 11) says that color has a sensation. Colors have psychological effects, physical and also a symbol. Moreover, despite the *penyengker* high wall *umah* impressed covered, but the condition of the occupants shown on *pemesuan*. Will it signify something happiness should be displayed in the aesthetic extend to the outside of his *umah*.

The above conditions, one of the meanings can be seen from this sacred ritual event. The experiences in place at the event of the *pamlaspasan ceremony* give an aesthetic interpretation that shown going out from *umah* and exposed on *pamesuan*.

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