

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN CREATIVITY ON THE CENTRAL OF BALI ETHNIC CREMATION TOWER COMMODITY

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ABSTRACT

This study talks about the cremation tower creativity of the architectural design as a means of ceremonial cremation of Balinese Hindus. The body of the tower, called the wadah/bade, is currently available in commodity craft centers at the Ngaben ceremony facility. An impromptu crab system that is implemented within a time limit a week after the day of the deceased's death, will be very urgent requiring the availability of means of carrying bodies. This cultural practice is seen as a business opportunity for creative individuals with an entrepreneurial spirit. The development of the architectural work of the corpse as a commodity requires a number of innovations and design creativity in its design. The phenomenon of the commodification of the cremation tower is examined with the foundation of the theory of semiotics and commodification. This qualitative study determines informants purposively. Observations and interviews were conducted at the architectural craft centers of the cremation tower. Primary and secondary data are traced to the creativity of architectural design as symbolic artifacts in the whole process of commodification. The study findings show that design creativity has started since the stages of production, distribution, and consumption. The production phase shows the strength of a postmodern aesthetic code through innovative architectural forms, knock down construction techniques, standardization of colors on the transition, and creative ornaments on design and technical work with the help of computer software. The distribution stage, in the form of distribution of marketing information and product distribution, covers the way the organization and transportation of works are carried out. The consumption stage by consumers who use the architectural work of the cremation tower develops sign fetishism, the worship of the play of signs rather than the ideological value contained in the commodity, has even led to the consumption of signs, so that it becomes a trend in ritual Ngaben. The combination of design creativity, socio-religious praxis, and commodification is a creative business opportunity whose sustainability is quite promising today.

Keywords: design creativity, semiotics, commodification, cremation tower architecture

INTRODUCTION

Death in the Hindu tradition is seen as the end of a worldly life process as well as the beginning of a new life in the realm of death. The end of life or the beginning of a new life after death requires a procession in the form of a ritual treatment of the body. Such understanding of the importance of death as a life process for both the deceased and the family left behind, has placed death as one of the ritual cults of human society, including ethnic Balinese Hindus. The Balinese Hindu culture has a tradition of death ritual called *ngaben*.

Death that is unexpected, can happen to anyone and anywhere, as well as the understanding that the faster the purified spirit of the deceased through the procession of the death ceremony will be better. So, there is a cremation system known as *ngaben pramangkin*. This type of cremation ritual is one of the immediate death ceremonial systems, which is within a limit of the week after the day of the deceased's death. This condition certainly requires the facilities and infrastructure

of a fast-paced death ceremony, including the availability of tower facilities to carry the body or called a *wadah/bade*. Technique of making corpse towers, on the one hand requires skilled workers skilled in carpentry work techniques which are generally not owned or available in all traditional villages in Bali.

Artists who have special skills in the field of design of the tower body are called *undagi wadah/bade*. The profession of *undagi wadah/bade* is increasingly rare nowadays, especially in urban areas in Bali. The work of an *undagi* as an architect or building artist of death is more *ngayah* (voluntary) than *mebayah* (salaried). Moreover, this type of architectural building includes ritual facilities that will be sacred, so that the artist must be expert both in physically and spiritually. He must be accountable for his symbolic work in real time to the late and his family, community, and especially (idiotic) to *Bhagawan Wiswakarma* (the gods of *undagi*).

These social praxis and myth-ideologies are increasingly pressing the interest of the younger generation to pursue the profession as an *undagi wadah/bade*, especially in responding to the needs of global life today. However, the socio-cultural phenomenon of Balinese ethnicity, in the view of entrepreneur's as a creative individuals with an entrepreneurial spirit, is actually read as a business opportunity. The development of the work of providing death ceremonial facilities, especially the architectural building of *wadah/bade* which was originally not one of the business fields of trade, it is not easy. It needs to be mentally strong in addressing the established socio-cultural paradigm in a relatively long period of time in the history of Balinese culture. Although it is undeniable, as a product object, the design of the architectural work of the corpse which is a symbolic sign, must ultimately be adapted to the concepts of commodities.

Commodities laden with capitalist nuances will not be separated from the basic conditions namely effective and efficiency in the whole process of production, distribution, and consumption. Any object of production must fulfilled the concept of CQT (Cost, Quality, Time) that can be measured (accountable) and predictable (predicable). Any object that was not originally a merchandise or a commodity is then made into a commodity understood as commodification (Faireclough, 1995: 207). Likewise, making artifacts or cultural physical objects "architecture of cremation tower" as a commodity is included in the realm of commodification.

Commodification of the cremation tower requires creativity. Creativity in Csikszentmihalyi's understanding (1997: 28) is not an individual phenomenon, but a social production and cultural system. Creativity is the interrelation between three parts of a system, namely the domain, the realm and the creative individual. First, the domain is a set of knowledge, systems, symbols, rules, and procedures that are shared by a community. Second, the domain that includes all members of a society as evaluators of creative works, and third, creative individuals who use symbolic sources or objects in a particular domain to create creative works with new ideas, systems, shapes, or patterns such as artists, designer, architect, scientist or entrepreneur (Piliang, 2018: 73).

The architectural design creativity of the corpse towers thus encompasses the domains and roles of creative individuals in order to remain functional, not leaving their symbolic meaning, and still fulfilling the three concepts of commodification both in the stages of production, distribution, and consumption. The design creativity of the corpse towers in craft centers that accommodate it, is interesting to study by focusing on developing architectural design creativity and parsing symbolic values related to socio-religious in the cultural practices of the ethnic Balinese Hindu community.

METHOD

This study is a qualitative research with an interpretative descriptive method. Determination of the informants purposively namely priests, artists or *undagi wadah/bade*, and the craftsmen in the cremation towers craft centers, as well as

consumers who use their production. Primary data obtained through in-depth interviews with informants and direct observation at the workshop. Secondary data obtained from various scientific research results and books as literature complete the basis of the analysis conducted.

The description with the interpretative descriptive method approach is based on two theories, namely the first theory of semiotics as a theory in reading the sign (Eco, 2016: 21), used in underlying the study of the corpse tower as a sign system or social code with values based on Hindu teachings in the practice of ethnic Balinese culture. Thus the most appropriate one to use is Pierce Semiotics or Pragmatic Semiotics. Pierce's semiotics is an interpretation of the practice of using signs. Pierce formulated a sign through a triangular relationship between representmen, objects, and interpretants. Representmen is something that represents something else for someone, and it is concrete. An object is something that is represented. It is reality, value, or the other, and interpretant is the meaning of the sign or interpretation of the sign in someone's mind (Short, 2007: 207-222). Second, the theory of commodification with the concepts of production, distribution, and consumption (Faireclough, 1995: 207), is used as a basis for analyzing architectural design creativity in each stage of the commodification process.

DATA DESCRIPTION AND DISCUSSION

The sacred ritual activities of the Hindu community, must include (1) aspects of the *upakara* "facilities" in the form of offerings, (2) aspects of *uparengga* "infrastructure" in the form of all kinds of equipment, (3) aspects *upacara* "the procession" of ceremony in the form of technical procedures for preparation to the implementation of a series of ritual offerings, and (4) aspects of the *mantra* "chanting" in the form of types and techniques for reciting introductory prayers by ritual leaders (Titib, 2001: 113). The ritual aspects of the offerings are usually prepared independently in the community, but not infrequently also obtained by buying at markets, ceremonial means shops, and at craft centers ceremonial infrastructure.

Changes in livelihood patterns from the agrarian sector to the service sector of the industry, especially tourism have triggered and spurred an increase in demand for ceremonial infrastructure facilities (Suyoga, 2014: 110). The process of turning goods or something from what was originally not a commodity into a commodity is called commodification (Faireclough, 1995: 207). The economic relationship which is based on commodity exchange is no different from the relationship in the function shown by objects/goods that have become tools (Eco, 2016: 35). Commodification in the realm of artifacts or physical objects of culture, especially architectural works / bade or body towers, has become part of the social practices of Balinese society today. This is driven by the increasing number of people who understand philosophical knowledge and engineering techniques that are relatively complex.

The availability of skilled labor in making the architectural work of the corpse is increasingly scarce. The younger generation is also decreasingly interested in persevering because of their work tends to be non profit (voluntary) in the midst of indigenous Balinese, so it cannot guarantee daily life which is getting tougher in the current consumptive era. In addition, the strength of the power of the myth-ideological knowledge underlying an artist's death building or *undagi wadah/bade*, also affects the interest of the younger generation to make a profession. An *undagi wadah/bade* is required to be able to understand (1) the aesthetic code in the form of architectural symbolic knowledge, (2) practice, namely the technical skills of design work, then (3) the code of ethics, which is able to account for the results of his work to himself as a professional, also to the deceased following the extended family of the deceased related to *soroh/wangsa* (clan), indigenous people (territorial), and to the deity of the manifestation of God which he adored, namely *Bhagawan Wiswakarma* as among the architects-designers or *undagi-sangging* (building and ornamental artists). Such symbolic meaning structures cause the only

reason that professional aspirants as *undagi wadah/bade* is to work for offerings to God by not thinking about rewards/results in *sekala* (material), but the reward is more of *niskala* an imaginary (Jro Mangku Nyoman Artana, interview 2020).

Today's development (the last 30th years), the changes in the inner Balinese Hindu society in general, which are triggered by materialistic-based unlimited relations through the global tourism agency and the global information-communication era. This condition, on the one hand, has changed the mindset of the Balinese people in respecting the professionalism of every profession of others, not only the award in the form of obtaining a *sesari niskala* (idiotic money), as *ngayahin swadharma* or a blessing because of the obligations of professional duties, but also rewards in the form of *sesari sekala* (real money) in the form of material/economic capital (Ida Nabe Dukuh Acharya Dhaksa, interview 2020).

The change from the traditional agrarian era to the era of capitalist industry seems also to strengthen the development of market ideology in the middle of Balinese cultural practices in general. This is shown by the people's acceptance of capital appreciation for the work of this *undagi wadah/bade*. This condition, then stimulates the effort to professionally accommodate the building of this death building in the form of a home industry business. The initial effort of commodification had begun since the 1970s, but only in the 1980s could it be accepted as "helpful" in the midst of the social and religious life of the Balinese people (Jro Mangku Undagi I.B. N. Parta, interview 2020). The availability of infrastructure for cremation ceremonies in craft centers that accommodate it is increasingly needed in the socio-religious practice of the ethnic Balinese Hindu community.

The need for the existence of a tower of bodies related to the implementation of the cremation ceremony, both for the necessity of impromptu cremation ceremony (of an immediate) or the implementation of a regular cremation ceremony (time exceeds a week) for the ethnic Balinese Hindu community, is increasing in the present. This opportunity was captured by entrepreneurs as creative individuals with entrepreneurial spirit to develop the profession of *undagi wadah/bade*, not merely as a non-profit social profession, but as part of a profession that can produce economically through the business of producing creative ideas. The production of creative works is a product of the "creative class", i.e. as people who create economic value from what they done (Florida, 2003: 69; Piliang, 2018: 70-71).

The need for the existence of a cremation tower related to the implementation of the cremation ceremony, both for the necessity of impromptu cremation ceremony (of an immediate nature) or the implementation of a regular cremation ceremony (time exceeds a week) for the ethnic Balinese Hindu community, is increasing in the present. This opportunity was captured by entrepreneurs as creative individuals with entrepreneurial spirit to develop the profession of *undagi wadah/bade*, not merely as a non-profit social profession, but as part of a profession that can produce economically through the business of producing creative ideas. The production of creative works is a product of the 'creative class', ie as people who create economic value from what they do (Florida, 2003: 69; Piliang, 2018: 70-71).

Creative production business that specifically develops tower corpses as commodities. The commodity of the architectural work of the corpse must naturally fulfill the aspects of commodification, namely production, distribution and consumption. These three basic aspects in the realm of commodification in the context of the corpse architecture are inseparable from their existence in terms of denotative and connotative, namely as a sign system whose form (sign) is laden with social codes, religious mystical aesthetic codes, symbolic codes laden with markers (meaning) and the interpretation of the people who saw it. The pragmatic semiotics of Pierce underlie the formulation of signs (cremation tower) through trichotomy relations between representmen, objects, and interpretants. The

architectural work of the corpse in this study will be placed as a “social text” that can be read semiotics. The semiotic text of the corpse in the realm of commodification will be approached with Pearce's “Pragmatic Semiotics”, which are described from each aspect of the commodification (production, distribution and consumption), as follows:

Cremation Tower Production

The cremation tower as an physical artifact of Balinese culture contains ideofact, sociofact, ecofact, and technofact contents. The Balinese ideology places the myth of the sacred mountain *Maliawan* as a place of the holy spirits (*Indik Mekarya Bade* manuscript). The idea of the sacred mountain is the final destination of the journey of the spirits after going through the cremation ceremony, so that the ritual of death is a symbolic sign of the sacred mountain as a vehicle for the spirit. This ideology then transformed architecturally into various forms of body towers called *wadah/bade*.

The architectural embodiment of the *wadah/bade*, from the viewpoint of a Hindu Balinese cultural sociofact, is based on the concept of *catur warna*. The *catur warna* in the Vedic scriptures underlies the pattern of social relations of the people. *Catur warna* sets the four professional skills (*warna*) of a person, namely of the *brahmana*, *ksatrya*, *wesia*, and *sudra warna*. The *Brahmana warna* is someone who is a Vedic expert who works as a priest of ceremonial leaders and religious scholars. The *Ksatrya warna* is a profession as a king, soldier, government/community leader, then the *warna* of *Wesia* refers to the profession of someone who is engaged in business (entrepreneurs) for the welfare of the community, while the *warna* of the *Sudra* is a profession of someone who can only help/serve with the strength of physical force alone to the three professionals mentioned before. The concept of *catur warna*, although in practice is degraded in terms of *catur kasta* (four people classes), even in Balinese society it is understood as four nations (according to one's birth). The fourth castes/nations concept has been transformed in a *wadah/bade* architectural form, into (1) *Padma* form (*Padmasari* for the priest's assistant and *Padmasana* for the priest), (2) *Bade*-roofed overlapping form for the *Ksatrya*, (3) *Lelimasan* form for the *Wesia*, while (4) the form of *Pepaga* (simple stretcher) for the *Sudra* (Sulistyawati, 2008: 107; Suyoga, 2014: 24; Anadhi, 2015: 47).

The architectural form of the corpse in a semiotic perspective is an object of reality carrying the body from the funeral home to the grave or cremation place (denotative meaning) which contains the religio-ideological value of the *Maliawan* holy mountain (connotative meaning). The shape of the tower of the body, thus at the same time representmen, namely a convention of forms that represents a traditional social stratification of the deceased, an indication of the social status of the late extended family for others or for the community. The shape (signifier) of the cremation tower from the interpretant side, is a sign that is interpreted (signified) in the mind of individuals or social collectives of Hindu Balinese ethnicity, closely related to *catur warna* (one's profession) and nationality or the deceased clan.

The cremation tower as a sign system in the socio-cultural structure of Balinese ethnic, in the centers of *wadah/bade* craft, the shape design (signifier), not much created. The form is generally still the same in accordance with the provisions of the convention of the right to use the form of the container / *bade* in accordance with the traditional social stratification, and also still refers to the provisions of the manuscript underlying such as *Mekarya Bade*, *Sukat Wadah/Bade*, *Yama Purana Tattwa* and *Yama Purwana Tattwa*. Architectural design is only done by removing parts of the *suku* (feet) of the *wadah/bade* that is under the *sanan* (bearer), because the cremation tower (according to current trends) will be placed on a wheeled iron cart so it is not too high (*Jro Mangku Undagi*. I.B.N. Parta, interview 2020). Likewise, the height is adjusted so as not to disturb the electrical cable

installation on the way to the cemetery or cremation site (*Jro Mangku Undagi*, I. N. Artana, interview 2020).

The ecofactic aspects of the corpse tower are related to the choice of basic structural design materials, namely from certain types of wood, such as yellow or white *cempaka*, *sandat*, and bamboo. Design creations related to the structure of the skeletal frame of the cremation tower, at the center of *wadah/bade* craft prefer to use industrial wood available on the market, namely the type of wood commonly used for building materials in general, such as camphor wood, *kruing*, and *meranti* with standard sizes 2/3, 4/6, 5/7 cm, with a length of 3-4 m, unless there is a special order from the consumer for the use of *cempaka* wood.

The innovation of the architectural form of the *wadah/bade* also takes into account the standard sizes of rafters, battens, plywood and profile lists that are available on the market, so that in the production process the design takes into account multiple units of the size. The construction techniques used are the loading and unloading system related to work space restrictions, the technical transportation (distribution) to the destination, and the redesign of the structure of the *wadah/bade* parts removed so that it can be placed on a wheeled iron cart (machine) as a means of conveyance. Work technology also uses modern wood working equipment, such as chainsaws, electric drills, nail gun, and other modern tools.

Other production process innovations were carried out in limiting the choice of color or standardization of color arrangements that were applied to the body parts of the body tower. *Padma*-shaped *wadah/bade* use white and yellow standards, while the other types of cremation towers (*Wadah Lelimasan*) are of the same color standard, so each of the *pepalihan* elements (part of body cremation tower) is created standardized in size and shape. This will speed up the process of making wood and plywood boards mounting colorful paper as a backdrop for gold paper ornamentation. The color standardization system is very fulfilling the commodification criteria, but as a sign system, the body tower which is loaded with social codes and related cultural codes in the application of colors has not yet been fully fulfilled. Creativity markers on the transition of the body tower body, through color standardization has degraded the knowledge of the signified (meaning) that has been established previously, about the right to use color based on one's social status, for example, the *turut sia* colors (nine types of color) only for the main nobility (king of kings and his family), also the *turut pitu* colors (seven types of color) for subordinates (kings and their families), the *turut lima* colors (five type of colors) for servants who serve the king, while for *pepaga* for ordinary citizens (*jaba wangsa*) do not use colorful paper, the color is only formed from the color of natural materials such as bamboo, white cloth, and some are equipped with young banana leaves on the roof without ornamentation.

The creativity of ornament design at the *wadah/bade* craft center besides using manual paper carving techniques with a chisel, more design designs based on Corel Draw software and printed by laser cutting stickers have been applied. This work system will accelerate production time, especially the carving of all types of ornament carvings that are relatively small and complicated, because once printing it can get 10 layers of the same carving, compared manually 3-5 stacks, it is difficult to get precision carvings. Besides that, new ornament design creativity was also developed, such as skull corals, celuluk corals, dedari corals in the form of a paper layout that was still within the boundaries of aesthetic codes and death ceremonial codes of ethics. Thus, semiotic the tower of the body in its production process more meets the modern aesthetic code by adapting symbolic socio-codes in it.

Cremation Tower Distribution

The distribution stage in commodification can be roughly divided into two parts, namely the distribution of marketing information and the distribution of *wadah/bade* cremation tower works. Distribution of marketing information or promotion of the

architectural work of the corpse as a commodity object or commodity is carried out as befits a commodity object in general. The conventional way of word of mouth information, brochures/leaflets, signage, and business cards. Digital method by utilizing various types of social media on line, such as instagram, face book, and others. Both methods are considered quite effective in disseminating information related to the existence of cremation tower craft centers, including the service of other facilities/ceremonies needed in the *ngaben* procession.

The distribution of the *wadah/bade* works to the funeral home or the place of the *ngaben* ceremony has been thought of from the beginning of the design creations. Mechanical work structures that can be dismantled pairs will facilitate the technical arrangement and transportation of works in a pickup or truck. Both aspects of this distribution are more of a commodification praxis that is not too influenced by social codes, ethical codes, or aesthetic codes. The existence of a cremation tower as a cultural object as well as a representative means of transporting a corpse, containing socio religious value from the consumer side whose mindset is consumptive, as the interpretant has accepted the production process and distribution system of the corpse as a commodity.

Cremation Tower Consumption

The third stage of commodification is the consumer. Consumers as commodity users in this case the architectural works of *wadah/bade* can order the cremation tower by coming directly to the craft centers. Consumers can order the cremation tower according to the provisions of the *Bhisama* or respective ancestral chronicle, or can buy right away a cremation tower that is available at the workshop. Reservation of the corpse is in the form of a product package received at the location of the funeral home, for example only the building tower package with the bamboo bearer, there is also a package of building the cremation tower and wheeled iron cart that is rented. In a semiotic description, it shows the cremation tower as an object and a representative, has been accepted by the wider community as the interpreter who interpreted it as an object of production or commodity. The value of corpse towers as signs and signifier of cultural objects will be further enhanced as sacred objects through a process of sacralization (*pemlaspas* ceremony) so that they are worthy of being a means of cremation or fulfilling the socio-religious ethical code of the Balinese Hindu community.

Consumers (deceased family and/or *Banjar Adat* members) consume contemporary architectural *wadah/bade* works to facilitate the trip to the grave or cremation site, usually putting the corpse product on a wheeled iron cart even now there is an engine iron cart, so that it can driving like a pickup truck. This has been communicated from the beginning of the order at the craft center, so that the creativity of the design and design has been adjusted to fit the size of the pedicab.

An interesting phenomenon in this socio-cultural praxis is that the sign consumption by consumers as the use of a *wadah/bade* becomes a "mode" in the *Ngaben* ritual or cremation ceremony of Hindus Balinese ethnic. Consumption patterns by consumers who use the architecture of the cremation tower develop sign fetishism, worship of the play of signs rather than the ideological value contained in the commodity, even has led to consumption of the sign, so that the use of the cremation tower in the cremation ritual is becoming a trend today. The combination of design creativity, socio-religious praxis, and commodification thus, is a business opportunity whose sustainability is quite promising today.

CONCLUSION

The need for the cremation tower related to the implementation of the cremation ceremony, both for the necessity of impromptu cremation ceremony (immediately) or the implementation of a regular cremation ceremony (time exceeds a week) for the Hindu Balinese ethnic community, is increasing at the present time. This has led to the commercialization of efforts to get positive space in the middle of

Balinese cultural practices. Creativity that places the interrelation of three parts of a system (domain, realm, and creative individual) puts the creativity of the architectural design of the cremation tower fulfilling the denotative, connotative, and commodity aspects.

The production phase demonstrates the strength of a postmodern aesthetic code through innovative architectural forms, knock down construction techniques, color standardization in *wadah/bade pepalihan*, and ornamental creativity in design and technical work with the help of computer software. Semiotic the cremation tower in the production process better meets the modern aesthetic code by adapting symbolic socio codes in it.

The distribution stage, in the form of distribution of marketing or promotional information and product distribution, includes how to arrange and transport works. The existence of cremation tower as a cultural object as well as a representative means of transporting a corpse, containing socio religious value from the consumer side whose mindset is consumptive, as the interpretant has accepted the production process and distribution system of the corpse as a commodity.

Consumption phase by consumers who use the architecture of the cremation tower develops sign fetishism, worship of the play of signs rather than the ideological value contained in the commodity, even has led to the consumption of signs, thus becoming a trend in the ritual *Ngaben*. The combination of design creativity, socio-religious praxis, and commodification is a creative business opportunity whose sustainability is promising today.

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