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HEALTH ASPECTS
OF TRADITIONAL HOUSING
IN BALI

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To Mr. Kuruppu
In appreciation for
your kindness for
visit to Sri Lanka
in 1977.

By

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PREFACE

Man is made in the image of his creator, and in his turn becomes the creator of his immediate environment, again in his own image. Thus do the Balinese view their own existence and their role in shaping the tiny morsel of the physical world allotted to their care. Their success as caretakers will affect their crops, their families' safety and well-being, wealth, happiness, state of mind, and their physical health. The guidelines and consequences of alternative methods in manipulation of the living environment are detailed in ancient texts in the classical *Kawi* language, which have been preserved and recopied from the times of the Hindu Javanese Kingdoms until the present. These texts allow us to see the insights which the Balinese have into the interrelationships between themselves as physical and spiritual beings, their surroundings, and the physiology of the perceivable universe.

In examining Bali as a phenomenological whole, it must not be forgotten that interaction with the countries of South and Southeast Asia has played a formative role in the development of Balinese traditional life and beliefs, requiring that it be viewed in its proper geographic context. Many of the beliefs expressed in the form of the house are common throughout much of Southeast Asia. The classical literature found from India and across Southeast Asia reveals related underlying cosmological perceptions, relevant to the concept of the house, as well.

Bali has enjoyed a long period of cultural growth and prosperity, which has resulted in a unique, highly developed and refined cultural tradition, harmoniously intertwined with not only its social and economic life, but also constituting an integral part of the spiritual fabric of the island. In spite of its uniqueness and relative isolation, many of Bali's traditions are marked by strong influences from the Hinduism of India, Buddhism, and the effects of long contact with traders and settlers from China. The period of colonial dominance by the Dutch contributed to the richness of the Balinese cultural repertoire; and more recently the heavy and sustained onslaught of tourism is both making its contribution and taking its toll on the cultural, economic and social equilibrium which has characterized Bali for many years.

This thesis will not attempt to prove the correlation between environmental conditions and health, an interdependent relationship which is assumed to be true by the Balinese as an integral part of their traditional beliefs concerning the inseparability of the macro- and microcosmos. It is the intention of this thesis to further the understanding of the Balinese perspective on housing and its health implications, and to attempt to address deficiencies in environmental health conditions in such a manner as to improve these conditions without violating the religiously based traditions of Balinese architecture. Therefore the Balinese living environment will be examined from three vantage points: 1) as it has been



dictated by the gods in the classical texts, 2) as it actually exists, and 3) as it might be with the incorporation of new concepts of health and methods of construction.