

Milestone and the Meaning of Puri Agung Karangasem Ornaments in Hermeneutical Perspective

I Nyoman Laba, I Wayan Adnyana, I Ketut Muka, I Wayan Suardana,
 Ida Ayu Gede Artayani
 Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, Indonesian of The Arts Bali
 E-mail: nyomanlaba@isi-dps.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem shows important achievements of architectural progress and the trajectory of ornamental meaning that shows the acculturation of Balinese, Chinese, and European cultures. The purpose of this study is to explain the historical milestones and ornamental meanings of Puri Agung Karangasem by using a hermeneutic theory approach. Qualitative descriptive method was implemented in explaining the milestone and meaning of ornaments in the architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem. The results showed that the architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem has very important meanings and achievements in the history of Bali, especially in the context of the kingdom. The form of ornamentation can be divided into three, namely ornaments with traditional Balinese, Chinese and European styles, resulting in a combination of typical forms of ornamentation of Puri Agung Karangasem. In a hermeneutic perspective, the ornaments are signs that refer to certain aspects of social, religious, and political life in Bali, especially the Karangasem kingdom, also showing that the Karangasem Kingdom has established good cultural relations with China and Europe.

Keywords: Milestone, Ornament, Meaning, Puri Agung Karangasem

INTRODUCTION

Milestone is a term to refer to an important point to mark an achievement of progress that can be used as a benchmark to measure further progress (Sunmola, 2020). Milestone in Puri Agung Karangasem can be interpreted as an important point in every progress of the construction of the Castle, both in the context of history, social, and Balinese culture. In terms of ornamentation, Puri Agung Karangasem has a distinctive meaning and can be interpreted in various contexts, such as history, culture, and religion embraced by the Balinese people.

Ornamentation is decoration or decoration applied to an object and can reflect the cultural characteristics of a particular era, and is also often used to express a certain social, religious and cultural status. Ornament is one of the most important elements in every culture. An ornament is composed of several ornamental patterns and ornamental motifs. Ornamental patterns and motifs can be interpreted as the main elements in ornamental art. It is the basic form in the creation or realisation of ornaments. Ornamental motifs are the main idea and basic form of the embodiment of ornaments

or ornamental varieties that include all natural forms of God's creation, such as animals, plants, humans, mountains, water, clouds, and rocks. Explicitly, ornament serves as a beauty enhancer on an object, but behind that, ornament has a multi-dimensional function. An ornament created carries many meanings in accordance with the orientation of its creator in relation to its form, motif, and function. Textually, ornaments contain aesthetic values as an expression of the creator to add artistic value to an object, while contextually, ornaments carry philosophical content, as stated by Soengeng Toekio (1987, p. 3) it is not uncommon for an ornament to contain symbolic meanings related to the worldview of a particular society at a particular time. Covarrubias (1973, p. 148) argues that ornaments are not just decoration, but a manifestation of the soul and philosophy of life inspired by natural elements such as rocks, mountains, plants, and various other natural forms. Furthermore, it is stylised through the processing of shapes and elements into decorative forms that have symbolic meaning and high aesthetics, both in painting, carving, and ornamental art, and each work has characteristics that reflect the expertise, talent, and spiritual depth of its creator, as stated by Sp Gustami (2007), that in ornaments there are often symbolic values or certain intentions that have to do with the view of life of humans or the society of its creator, so that objects related to images have a further meaning with certain expectations as well.

Hermeneutics is the science of interpreting texts or meanings contained in literary works, historical documents, and religious texts. The

main purpose of hermeneutics is to understand the meaning of a text or cultural phenomenon by revealing the historical, cultural and socio-cultural background of its formation. In a broader sense, hermeneutics is not only

about interpreting texts, but also understanding the meanings hidden behind reality. According to Ricoeur, hermeneutics is a theory about the operation of understanding in interpreting texts. Furthermore, Ricoeur explains that there are two main focuses in the study of hermeneutics, namely: first, the event of understanding the text. second, issues that are more directed towards understanding and interpretation. This indirectly explains that the main idea in hermeneutics is "understanding (understanding) of the text" (Rosyidi, 2010). Meanwhile, according to Palmer, hermeneutics means expressing words, explaining, such as explaining a situation, and translating, as in foreign language transliteration. These three basic forms of meaning can be interpreted as "to interpret" or interpretation (Anshari, 2009; Palmer, 2022).

Departing from the above understanding, the author is inspired to raise the topic of milestones and the meaning of Puri Agung Karangasem ornaments in a hermeneutic perspective. In a hermeneutic perspective, the architectural milestone of Puri Agung Karangasem includes various important events that occurred in the history of Puri Agung Karangasem, such as political, cultural, and religious events related to the palace complex. As for the meaning of the ornaments, it is not only limited to the cultural and religious values of Balinese Hinduism, but also includes broader and complex meanings related to the

larger historical, social, and cultural context, as well as a representation of the relationship between the King and his people, the King and the immigrant population, and the King and other Kingdoms in the past.

One of the important milestones in the history of Puri Agung Karangasem is the construction of the Palace complex that began in the 19th century, namely since the reign of Karangasem King I Gusti Gde Jelantik in 1896-1908 AD, with the title Anak Agung Gde Karangasem as well as Stedehouder I, and his successor during the reign of I Gusti Bagus Jelantik in 1908-1941 AD, with the title Anak Agung Agung Anglurah Ktut Karangasem also as Stedehouder II. The title Stedehouder was given to the King because at that time the Karangasem kingdom was under the control of the Dutch colonial government (Putra Agung, 1996; Sulistyawati, 2008, p. 2). The Puri has a unique and stunning architecture, with a blend of Balinese, Chinese and European cultural influences, making the Puri has a different architecture and layout (palebahan) from other Grand Puris in Bali.

The influence of Chinese and European cultures on architecture from the royal era until Indonesia's independence was a necessity, because almost all cultures that were born were always influenced by other cultures and merged into a unified whole, producing various amazing cultural artefacts. Nyai Kartika et al. (2020, p. 104-107) argued that the various cultural influences absorbed resulted in several hybrid elements contained in visual elements which basically did not just provide identity, but also showed evidence of artefacts resulting from cultural crossovers

with several countries of origin. This proves that interaction and communication between the community and foreigners was well established, and shows that at that time there was a very high relationship and tolerance among the ethnic groups in the area.

The architectural existence of Puri Agung Karangasem shows a picture of well-integrated acculturation of Eastern and Western cultures, especially seen in its architectural forms and ornaments that decorate it. Most of the buildings have styles and ornamental patterns that show the influence of Chinese and European cultures. In terms of ornaments, the application of European ornaments with their techniques seems to dominate, because almost every corner of the building applies the style and technique of these ornaments, so that traditional Balinese ornaments seem marginalised.

The ornaments that adorn the architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem can be found on the traditional Balinese kuwadi doors and windows of the main building in the King's palace complex, as well as many carvings on the columns, walls, ceilings, foundations, and other important buildings in the style or style of traditional Balinese, Chinese and European carvings, both with kerawangan carving techniques and concrete moulding techniques. Until now, the Puri is still persistent in maintaining and preserving the ancient style of its architecture, because it is always maintained regularly by the Puri family.

Some research writings related to the existence of the architectural heritage of Puri Agung Karangasem include; the results of

Mugi Raharja's research (2017, p. 51-59) with the title "The Expression of Sign Language in the Architecture and Interior of Taman Ujung Karangasem Building", his writing focuses on the expression of cross-cultural sign language in the architecture of Taman Ujung Soekasada, which in its construction combines elements of Balinese and European culture, resulting in an architectural form and variety of ornaments typical of Taman Ujung Soekasada, Karangasem (Taman Ujung Soekasada is one of the architectural heritages of the Karangasem Kingdom). Another research was conducted by Anak Agung Rai Kalam et al., (1988, p. 11-21) entitled "Decorative Variety in Puri Karangasem", the focus of his writing on the form and structure of ornaments that were influenced by Chinese culture, and through the development of motifs produced typical ornamental motifs of the Puri Agung Karangasem style. Sumantika's (2007, p. 13) article in the Bali Post, titled "Cultural Interaction Reflected in Ornaments", looks at the results of Balinese and Chinese cultural interactions which, after going through development and modification of forms by Balinese artists, resulted in the form of traditional Balinese ornamental motifs, namely the Chinese Patra as it is known today, and Sulistyawati's (2008, p. 1-13) entitled "Integration of Chinese Architecture into the Architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem", focuses on the role of the King of Karangasem who was able to collaborate by adopting three different cultures, namely Balinese, Chinese and European cultures to form an integration monument in the form of the Puri Agung Karangasem building.

All of the above writings almost all have similarities, namely both reviewing the architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem and the acculturation of influencing cultures, but the focus of the study is different and the focus of the study does not mention the milestone and the meaning of Puri Agung Karangasem ornaments in a hermeneutic perspective. Milestone in Puri Agung Karangasem can be interpreted as an important point in every progress of the construction of the castle. In a hermeneutic perspective, it can be understood through the historical, social, and cultural context of Bali at that time. The construction of the palace complex is evidence of the power of the King of Karangasem who wanted to show the greatness and splendour of his kingdom through beautiful and artistic architecture and ornaments. The meaning of Puri Agung Karangasem ornaments in a hermeneutic perspective can be understood through the interpretation of the symbols in the ornaments. Each ornament has a distinctive meaning and can be interpreted in various contexts, such as culture, religion, and history. Thus, the state of the art of this paper becomes clear, because the study of milestones and the meaning of Puri Agung Karangasem ornaments in a hermeneutic perspective is a novelty, because it has never been discussed by other researchers.

METHODS

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. The descriptive qualitative method is based on the philosophy of post-positivism, which recognises that reality is not completely objective and can be

influenced by the researcher's perspective. This approach still seeks to achieve objectivity, but recognises the limitations in fully understanding reality. Researchers play a major role in providing an in-depth and comprehensive description of a phenomenon based on facts obtained in the field (Sugiyono, 2014, p.15). This method is used because descriptively it can convey the quality of analysis in accordance with the circumstances that will be observed in the field more specifically, transparently and deeply. Descriptive is used as a research procedure in solving a problem by investigating a description or object in the form of an artefact, place, or institution without using a hypothesis or special treatment of the object of research. In collecting data through observation, interviews, and documentation, with snowball purposive sampling technique because the data source has a uniqueness that is only found in Puri Agung Karangasem, Bali.

Gill et al. (2008, p. 291-295), state that qualitative research has several differences, especially in the ways of collecting data. These methods include observation, visual analysis, reference studies, and interviews with a person or group of people. For this research, data was obtained through field observations and also through literature studies. Field observations were conducted directly on the architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem related to the existence of its ornaments, and conducted interviews with relevant individuals who hold the rights to the objects observed, namely *Penglingsir Puri* and *Abdi Dalem Puri*. The literature data used in this research correlates with the main focus of the research related to the history of the existence of Puri Agung Karangasem

architecture, ornaments, and the elements that influence it. The data is categorised into two types, namely primary data collected directly, and secondary data collected from other sources to support the primary data. Wilhelm Dilthey's methodical hermeneutic approach and supported by historical and semiotic approaches were used to analyse the collected data descriptively qualitatively, in describing the important milestones of Puri's history, and interpreting the cultural signs or visual meanings of ornaments attached to the architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem. In addition, the role of the Puri figure (Raja) in the promotion of traditional Balinese architecture, especially the architecture style of Puri Agung Karangasem, Bali is also discussed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Puri is a house or residence for the king or based on the caste level belongs to the main level of the knight caste (Gelebet, 1982). In the past, Puri was the centre of various types of social and cultural life that were very important to the Balinese community. The social aspect of the castle can be seen from its various functions, among others: Puri acted as a defence fortress to protect the people from enemy attacks or external threats; Puri ensured the welfare of the people through a system of resource distribution, agriculture, and management of the royal economy; Puri became a place where leaders, advisors, and community leaders deliberated to discuss important decisions for the lives of the people; Puri often became a stage for various traditional art, dance, and entertainment

events as part of celebrations or rituals; and Puri became a place for people to serve the king and the royal family as a form of loyalty and respect. Based on the cultural aspect, Puri can be seen from various functions, among others: a place for the development of various types of arts such as dance, traditional music, carving, and literature developed rapidly in the Puri environment; Puri stores archives, ancient manuscripts, and historical relics which are a source of knowledge for the next generation so that a Puri is a place to study history; a place to research the results of past culture, because Puri stores many cultural works such as inscriptions, statues, and artefacts studied and developed in the temple environment; and Puri also functions as a place of recreation for the royal family and important guests, as well as a symbol of the grandeur and beauty of traditional architecture (Girindrawardani, 2018, p. 41). Such is the importance of the role and function of a Puri at that time if drawn into a metaphorical term "if there is no palace or Puri in the traditional Balinese community, it is like an animal without a head" (Salain, 2016, p. 1).

A Puri is also the centre of the region, the centre of power, the centre of the settlement, the place of protection (fortress) and the centre of orientation which when analogous to urban areas then the castle becomes the city centre as well as a landmark. The existence of the Puri as the king's residence and various other functions is important and main, both in terms of location, area, materials, structure, dimensions, ornamentation and so on in a discourse, functional, sturdy, and beautiful that gives a feel of the authority of a king and

also a sign and symbol of his power. Apart from being the residence of the King and his family, the existence of Puri in daily life generally becomes a place for the development of arts and other cultural elements. Many new architectures emerged from the development carried out by the Puri ruler. The existence of the castle at that time became the central point of the development of traditional Balinese architecture, so it had a strong influence on the development of Balinese architecture in general.

The same situation also occurs in Puri Agung Karangasem, where when viewed in terms of architecture and the application of ornamental ornaments shows the influence of various cultural elements, especially the influence of Eastern and Western cultures, and it represents tolerance and a strong spirit of Multiculturalism in Puri Agung Karangasem. The architecture of this Puri has a very important historical record in the development of Balinese architecture, as well as the existence of ornaments that decorate it full of meaning and cultural values that influence it. The influence of the European style occurred because when the Palace was built in the 19th century AD, the Kingdom of Karangasem was under the rule of the Dutch colonial government, while the influence of the Chinese style occurred because of the King's close relationship with Chinese traders and artists in Karangasem (Sulistyawati et al., 2011, p. 35). These signifiers and signs will be discussed through Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutic approach that emphasises the importance of a holistic and subjective understanding of text and context, taking

into account the experience, historical continuity, and cultural values of Puri Agung Karangasem's architecture (Palmer, 2022, p. 189-199).

Architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem

The architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem belongs to ancient architecture with a content of innovation as a result of cultural acculturation that is well integrated in the Puri. This important achievement is inseparable from the role of the Puri's authority, in this case the King of Puri Agung Karangasem. He is known to be very open and not bound by traditional panatism, breaking the rules of tradition in the development of traditional Balinese architecture. As stated by Sulistyawati (2008, p. 5), thanks to the contribution of the King of Puri Agung Karangasem, innovative architectural works were born for the first time including: a) the introduction of modern structures (reinforced concrete and moulding techniques) into traditional Balinese architecture; b) the introduction of new foreign ornaments (Chinese and European ornaments) to decorate the Puri buildings.

Based on literature search, it was found that Puri Agung Karangasem was built in the 19th century, during the reign of I Gusti Gde Jelantik as the King of Karangasem titled Anak Agung Gde Karangasem (*Stedehouder I*), who reigned from 1896-1908 AD, then the construction was continued by his nephew I Gusti Bagus Jelantik as the king titled Anak Agung Agung Anglurah Ktut Karangasem (*Stedehouder II*), who reigned from 1908 - 1941 AD. The title *Stedehouder* was given to

the King because at that time the Kingdom of Karangasem was under Dutch colonial influence or power (Sulistyawati, 2008, p. 2). The term *Stedehouder* can also be interpreted as a representative of the Dutch government (Putra Agung, 2009). These two kings were relatives of the King of Mataram (Selaparang) Lombok (having lineage from the Karangasem Kingdom), who was given a "gift" by the Dutch colonial government for helping to conquer the Karangasem Kingdom earlier. Due to this success, one of the families was appointed as a representative of the Dutch government (*stedehouder*) based in Karangasem City, and automatically the Karangasem Kingdom was under the control of the Dutch colonial government.

Various programmes launched to rebuild and advance the social and cultural life of the Karangasem kingdom, "must" receive approval from the Dutch colonial government based in Batavia. In addition, the Dutch colonial government also applied cultural politics, and applied to every kingdom that had been controlled throughout Bali. Parimartha in Ardika et al., (2015, p. xxii) writes that in terms of culture, the Dutch colonial government mobilised the cultural policy of "*Balinisering*" which encouraged the Balinese population to explore, develop their traditions and culture that were different from the culture of other regions within the scope of Dutch colonial rule. In this relationship, various perceptions of culture emerged with the approval and ideas of the Dutch colonials, borrowing Gramsci's concept in Siswati (Gramsci, 2000; Siswati, 2018, p. 21) where the submission of a person, community, and certain entities is

obtained through the ideological control of the hegemonic class, in this case the Dutch colonial government has succeeded in hegematizing the Karangasem kingdom and Balinese society in general.

Various colonial strategies were aimed at building a Karangasem kingdom government that continued to carry out its traditions and culture, but remained within the framework of Dutch colonial politics. Up to this point, it can be concluded that the influence of European (Dutch) culture on the Karangasem Kingdom and Karangasem society in general, was strongly influenced both in terms of social life, architecture and all forms of ornamental motifs that decorated it, resulting in an amazing fusion of Eastern and Western architecture, which cannot be found in other Puri buildings in Bali. Puri Agung Karangasem in some of its buildings and ornaments shows the influence of Eastern culture and Western culture, especially European culture (Dutch and English). This happened because during the reign of I Gusti Gde Jelantik as *stedehouder I*, he had modern, innovative thoughts, and was not anti foreign culture. It was proven by the trust of a Chinese carver named Cik An Tuang to carve the *kwadi* doors and windows of *Gedong Maskerdam* and *Bale Pemandesan* in the style of Chinese carvings in the Karangasem palace complex. The same thing also happened to his successor, I Gusti Bagus Jelantik as *stedehouder II*, who brought in an architect from the Netherlands to make the design of the Soekasada Water Park building, and Chinese artists who lived in Karangasem, with the help of craftsmen or *undagi* maintained by the Karangasem kingdom to help complete the



Figure 1&2. Kori Agung on the outer and inner sides of Puri Agung Karangasem.

(Source: Author's Documentation, 2024)

construction of the Puri Agung Karangasem. However, despite bringing in architects with different cultures, the King of Karangasem at that time never felt worried, because the King remained as the main architect, because all ideas and control remained in the hands of the King, as stated by Sulistyawati, that the King of Karangasem was the main architect in the construction of the *Puri* and was very interested in architectural innovation issues and was the first figure to adopt modern structures, into Balinese architecture (Sulistyawati, 2008, p. 5).

Puri Agung Karangasem has a *palebahan* (area) layout that does not follow the general spatial pattern of Great Puri in Bali, but the division of *palebahan* follows the spatial pattern as found in Hindu sacred buildings (temples) which commonly use the *Tri Mandala* concept. *Tri Mandala* is a spatial concept that divides space into three hierarchical zones based on the level of sanctity and function, namely *Utama Mandala*, *Madya Mandala*, and *Nista Mandala*. This resulted in the spatial distribution of the planning of Puri Agung Karangasem to be simpler compared to other Puri Agung in Bali (Kurniawan et al., 2020, p. 22). The same thing

was also stated by Agus Aris Munandar (2005, p. 73-75), that the Puri Agung Karangasem complex is divided into three courtyards: the first courtyard is in the outermost position (west side); the second courtyard is a narrow gap extending between the first and third courtyards; and the third courtyard is the core courtyard of the Puri. In the third courtyard or the core of the Puri stands *Gedong Maskerdam* as the King's residence. Munandar (2005) in Sulistyawati (2008) further elaborates that, the first courtyard (*Jaba*) is divided into three Palebahan namely: *Bancingah*, *Kawula Roban*, and *Keramen*. *Bancingah* is often called *Ancak Saji* and is a common front yard in a Puri, as a place for guests to enter the deeper area of the Puri.

On the western perimeter wall is the *Kori Agung* building which has a towering shape, with a three-storey roof, and on each level there is a niche containing a *Ganesa* statue. *Kori Agung* in Puri Agung Karangasem is one of the important milestones in the history of the Karangasem kingdom, because it has a distinctive, unique, and different form from other *Kori Agung* forms in Bali, as well as a form of success for the Karangasem Kingdom to produce new architecture in the development of traditional Balinese architecture.

Kori Agung has two adjoining doors, namely the left door and the right door. The left door symbolises the material world and the right door symbolises the spiritual world, and there are various ornaments depicting Hindu mythology that are full of symbolic meaning. *Kori Agung* is a symbol of the gate that separates the human world and the sacred world, which is often found in temples



Figure 3. Bale Kambang Puri Agung Karangasem
(Source: Author's Documentation, 2024)

(Hindu shrines) in Bali. In the past, *Kori Agung* was only accessible by the King and his family, as told by *Abdi Dalem Puri*, that *Kori Agung* was only accessible by the King and his family as a gate to enter the inside of the Puri. In the context of Puri Agung Karangasem, *Kori Agung* represents the sovereignty of the King and separates the royal territory from the outside world (interviewed, Friday, 13 September 2024, 10.00 Wita).

The second courtyard (*Jaba Tengah*), there is also a second *Kori Agung* precisely in the northern part of the courtyard which is a narrow courtyard extending north-south, as well as being able to connect the second courtyard with the first courtyard. The southern part of the second courtyard has a building located in the middle of a pond called *Bale Kambang* which is connected by a bridge to the courtyard of the second courtyard.

Bale Kambang (*Bale Gili*) is an open building with a low wooden fence, and at any time can be used as a gathering place or deliberation of the entire Karangasem Royal family. According to one of the *Abdi Dalem Puri*, *Bale Kambang* used to function as a place for art performances or banquets to welcome

big royal guests and also as a place for banquets in welcoming Dutch colonial dignitaries who came to Puri Agung Karangasem, but now it is mostly used to receive guests and also the development of arts for young people who are interested in Balinese culture, especially the culture of Puri Agung Karangasem (interview with I Made Juliarta, Friday, 13 September 2024, 10.00 Wita).

The third courtyard, is the core courtyard of the Puri and stands several important buildings, such as the *Gedong Maskerdam* building which was originally built to receive royal guests, especially officials from the Dutch colonial government, but its further development was intended as the King's residence. This *Gedong* was originally named *Gedong Amsterdam*, but later because it was pronounced by Balinese speakers, it changed its sound to *Maskerdam* (Putra Agung, 2009). The core courtyard of the Puri also has *Bale Pemandesan*, precisely in front of *Gedong Maskerdam*. From the past until now, *Bale Pemandesan* is still used as a place to carry out tooth cutting ceremonies, coming of age ceremonies, marriage blessings by the Puri family. *Bale Pemandesan* can also function as a *Sumanggan* (a place for temporary burial of the dead). There is also *Bale Pawedan* on the west side of *Bale Pemandesan*. This building is an open building with a low wooden fence carved *kerawangan* with a high *batur* (ladder) as a place for *Mabasan* (reading holy books) (Sulistyawati, 2008).

At the back of *Gedong Maskerdam* there is a large courtyard and in this courtyard there are *Gedong Londen*, and *Gedong Betawi* buildings. *Gedong Yogya* and *Ekalanga* are located on



Figure 4. Gedong Maskerdam
(Source: Author's Documentation, 2024)

the east side of *Gedong Maskerdam*, all of which are occupied by the King's family (empress, concubines and the King's children). One row with *Gedong Yogya* and *Ekalanga*, precisely on the east side of *Bale Kambang*, there are buildings called *Jero* which are the residences of other close relatives of the King, and *Kelod Kangin* (southeast corner) there is a *Pamerajan* (place of worship) of the Puri Agung Karangasem family which is not too large (interview with *Abdi Dalem Puri* I Made Juliarta, Friday, 13 September 2024, 10.00 Wita).

Architecture that became an important milestone in the history of Puri Agung Karangasem besides *Kori Agung* is *Gedong Maskerdam* and *Bale Kambang* (*Bale Gili*) or "Floating Pavilion". *Gedong Maskerdam* was built as a residence for the King and his family, a symbol of the King's luxury and power, as well as a symbol of the success of the King of Karangasem in collaborating various cultural elements into a unified form, both in the form of the building structure and the adoption of ornaments that decorate it. The cultural elements can be traced from the existence of Balinese, Chinese, and European cultures that are visualised in

the architecture and ornaments of Puri Agung Karangasem. While the *Bale Kambang* (*Bale Gili*) building has a deep meaning, in the context of Balinese culture, because it can be seen as a representation of the sea which is considered an important source of life for the Balinese people, especially the people in the Karangasem Kingdom.

Bale Kambang is a symbol of beauty and luxury, and is often used for performing arts and traditional ceremonies. In a hermeneutic perspective, *Gedong Maskerdam* and *Bale Kambang* can be seen as signs of the King's status and power, as well as his ability to maintain art and culture in the Karangasem Kingdom. This shows that the architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem are signs that refer to certain aspects of social, religious, and political life in Bali, especially in the Kingdom of Karangasem.

Ornamentation of Puri Agung Karangasem

Ornamentation is a decorative element used to beautify or decorate an object, space, or work of art. Ornaments can be certain patterns, motifs, or designs added to the surface of objects or structures with aesthetic, symbolic, or functional purposes. Rustarmadi (2012, p. 176) argues that ornamental decoration that is ornate, in carving or sculpture is often called *pepatran*, or *kekarangan*, or some say coral decoration. These *pepatran* include plant *pepatran*, cloud *pepatran*, and other decorations as relief sweeteners. In Bali, ornaments are divided into three categories, namely *keketusan*, *pepatran*, and *kekarangan*, and are divided into three periods in the process of realisation, namely the ancient, classical and modern

Balinese periods. These cultural artefacts are still well preserved and easily found in several locations in Bali.

In general, the architecture of Puri Agung Karangsem still maintains ancient ornaments, namely ornaments that exist today are ornaments that existed when the Puri was built, although it has undergone restoration in several parts but the shape is still maintained as it was originally. Almost all buildings of Puri Agung Karangasem still retain their ancient ornaments. Many of the ornaments are carved on the core buildings of the Puri such as building pillars, parapets, fences, kuwadi doors, windows, ceilings, house foundations, and parapets with a combination of traditional Balinese, Chinese, and European ornaments.

In a hermeneutic perspective, the ornaments found in the architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem are signs that have meaning and significance in a social and cultural context. The ornaments can be interpreted as signs that represent values, beliefs, greatness, and traditions in Balinese culture. In this case, Puri Agung Karangasem can be seen as a "text" that contains signs or symbols that represent Balinese history, culture, and identity. For example, the shape of the *Kori Agung* building in Puri Agung Karangasem has a striking difference with the shape of the *Kori Agung* building in general in Bali. *Kori Agung* in Bali is generally dominated by *pepatran* and *kekarangan* ornament motifs that seem luxurious and festive and almost every space does not leave empty space so it looks crowded with ornaments, but still looks harmonious. While the *Kori Agung* in Puri Agung Karangasem appears in a very different

form, the shape is towering, three-storied, minimal ornamentation and seems simple, but still looks majestic and magnificent (see figure 1). In terms of ornamental motifs, it seems that it has not been exposed to foreign influences because it still maintains traditional Balinese ornamental motifs such as *patra punggel*, *karang goak*, *karang gajah*, and reliefs of characters in the *Mahabarata* and *Ramayana* epics.

The foreign influence can only be seen in the craftsmanship techniques as they have applied concrete moulding techniques in the realisation of all the ornaments. Similarly, the joints of *Bale Kambang*, *Bale Pawedan* and *Bale Pemandesan* still retain traditional Balinese motifs in the form of *karang bentulu*, *karang goak*, *patra olanda* and *patra punggel* ornaments, but the concrete moulding technique has been applied (see figure 5). The ornaments on the *Kori Agung* can be interpreted as a symbol of the beauty and high artistic skills possessed by Karangasem artists or people, as well as symbolising the luck, fertility, and power of the Karangasem kingdom, as well as showing evidence of the competition of the kingdoms in Bali at that time to present the beauty of their residence, as stated in Sunarya's research (2022, p. 54), the appearance of *Kori Agung* (the entrance to the puri) with its various forms of decorative art, shows a form of competition between small kings in Bali in presenting the beauty of their residence, and thanks to this competition, it eventually gave birth to great architectural works that can still be enjoyed today.

Chinese-style ornaments can be found in the carvings of the *kuwadi* doors and windows of *Gedong Maskerdam* and *Balai*



Balinese ornaments with concrete molding techniques

(Source: Author's documentation, 2024)

Pemandesan, which have the following specific characteristics: a) featuring *krawangan* carvings in each relief form; b) featuring motifs of animals, plants, humans and clouds; c) featuring symmetrical objects with compositional arrangements of fields and lines; d) ornamental motifs fill every inch of the door field; e) the appearance of the carved decoration character reflects the state of China. The influence of Chinese cultural elements can also be found in the wall decorations and *parba* decorations on the *Balai Pemandesan* building.

The shape of the ornate characters carved on the *kuwadi* doors, windows, walls, and *parba* in Puri Agung Karangasem reflects the original Chinese state, reflected in several characteristics in the name of the *patra cina* ornament in Puri Agung Karangasem, as stated by Sulistyawati et al. (2011, p. 35), that the term *patra cina* name known today was most likely popularised by artists or *undagi* of Puri Agung Karangasem to refer to carving motifs made by Chinese artists, as well as the naming of *patra mesir*. This can be proven by the many ancient relics of Chinese architecture that use *patra mesir*.

According to Kalam et al, (1988), the shape of the Chinese *patra* found in Puri Agung

Karangasem is the shape of a hibiscus flower through stylisation of patterns and shapes, and stylised according to the spatial pattern of the *kwadi* door in the Puri. The shape of the flowers, leaves, and stems have been processed in such a way as to display the impression of a firm line, thus reflecting a constructive pattern. Meanwhile, the shape of the *karang sae* motif in the Puri also reflects the influence of the original Chinese cultural elements, so it has a significant difference to the shape of the *karang sae* motif commonly recognised by Balinese people. The *karang sae* has a plump form with a firmer line impression. Kalam further suggests that the *karang sae* in Puri is a stylised form of a bat's head. Bats are believed by the Chinese people to have supernatural powers to guard the house at night, so as to avoid danger and get safety, because bats are always awake and their activities at night.

European-style ornaments can be found on the pillars, parapets of the terrace of the *Gedong Maskerdam* building, the pillars and walls of the courtyard fence, and on some of the foundations of the *Puri* building. Generally, European ornamental motifs prioritise realist forms with symmetrical compositions such as stems, leaves and flowers, but the European-style ornaments in the *Puri* have been stylised into convex shapes as required. This may be due to the effect of the use of concrete moulding techniques on their realisation, but in general they are still recognisable. Other ornaments influenced by European (Dutch) style ornaments are the carved motifs under the roof (*ringring*), and the wall ornaments on the left and right sides of the terrace of *Gedong Maskerdam*.

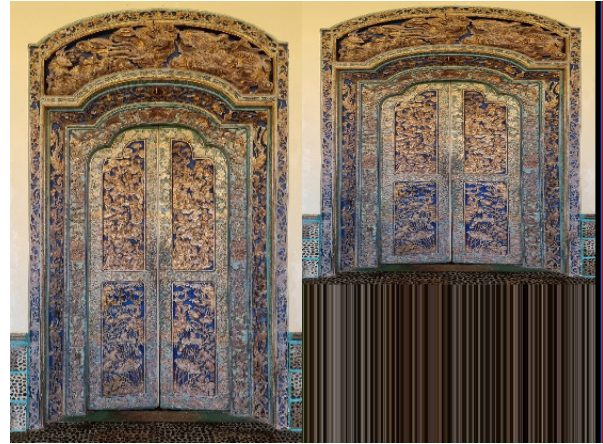


Figure 6. Chinese style carvings on the Gedong Maskerdam of Puri Agung Karangasem
(Source: Author's Documentation, 2024)



Figure 7. European-style ornaments with concrete moulding technique on the Gedong Maskerdam building
(Source: Author's Documentation, 2024)

The application of European style ornaments can also be found in other buildings in Puri Agung Karangasem. The ornaments can be recognised from their forms in the form of *singa bermahkota* motifs, *karang bunga* and *karang daun*, and *karang sae bermahkota* motifs. The beauty of all ornaments in Puri Agung Karangasem can be found in each aesthetic element that forms them, as stated by Djelantik (1999, p. 59) that all objects or art must contain 3 basic aspects, namely, form or appearance, weight or content (content, substance), and appearance or presentation (presentation). The beauty of the *singa bermahkota* ornament motif (figure 8) can be seen in the form of a lion performing the dance movements of



Figures 8 & 9. Crowned lion motif and coral sae motif flanked by two crowned lions.

(Source: Author's Documentation, 2024)

Siwa Nataraja, holding a mace (*gada*) weapon, adorned with a crown, head facing forward, with the form of filling several European-style ornaments. Similarly, the *karang sae bermahkota* ornament is flanked by two *singha bermahkota* motifs, and contains a combination of traditional Balinese and European-style ornamental motifs with concrete moulding techniques. These two ornaments clearly show the influence of European style ornaments as evidenced by the adoption of Queen Wilhelmina's crown shape, becoming an integral part of the typical ornamental form of Puri Agung Karangasem-Bali.

These ornamental forms show that there has been cultural acculturation in both the shape of the motifs and the manufacturing techniques that have adopted concrete moulding techniques. The concrete moulding technology that has been adopted by the Karangasem Kingdom both in creating architecture and ornamental motifs, produces creative ideas that leave room for exploration. The use of concrete moulding techniques provides many advantages, namely being able to reproduce a model or shape in a short time and in large quantities. At first glance, the concrete moulding technique displays a

carving motif that seems low, with a convex motif shape, but in the form of patterns and motifs it is still very clear.

This cultural acculturation shows that Balinese people, especially the King of Karangasem and his people, are very selective and adaptive to cultural differences and those that follow them and embrace them in a form of integration that gives birth to various innovations in both building forms and ornamental forms. The glorious achievements of the King of Karangasem, the architects and *undagi* in creating ornaments and architecture typical of Puri Agung Karangasem, is a manifestation of creativity that illustrates the spiritual strength and hard work that produces fair architectural works, which in Balinese terms is called *taksu*. Mantra in Mariasa (2015, p. 109) suggests that *taksu* can be interpreted as a manifestation of pure cultural creativity that illustrates the spiritual strength of an artist's heart to express himself through the best works. *Taksu* as a gift from God is the result of hard work, dedication, and surrender to a pure state. Artworks or performances that have *taksu* in them are the kind of artworks that have soul and life force.

The glorious achievement of the Karangasem kingdom in creating architecture and its ornaments does not necessarily negate the role of the *undagi* or *sangging*. This means that even a king may not dare to admit that the work is the result of his own work, but rather the result of collective work, so that almost all traditional Balinese works are without the name of the creator. This is evidenced by the untraceability of the name of the maker of the ornaments attached to the architecture

of the Puri. This is in line with the Balinese artists' concept of thinking that in terms of art, especially related to traditional Balinese art, it is always communal. As stated in the research of Suardana et al. (2022, p. 506), that the achievements of the brilliant thoughts of the *undagi* or *sangging* of the past in art are always communal, as is the case with the process of forming an ornament (decorative variety), resulting from a collection of thoughts of artists and stakeholders so that the ornaments that are realised reach perfection and have a distinctive character, one of which is the crowned lion motif and other motifs found in the architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem.

The distinctiveness of the *singa bermahkota* (crowned lion ornament) motif in the architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem, has a high historical and aesthetic value, so that this ornament motif began to be found in many public spaces in Bali. The utilisation of these ornamental motifs is a new phenomenon, because ornamental motifs typical of the Karangasem Kingdom used to be very difficult to find in public spaces, although they can be found limited to the residence houses occupied by the Puri family. This is in line with the opinion of Lufiani et al., (2017, p. 41-47), that the presence of craft products (ornaments) in public spaces can be categorised as a new phenomenon not only in a certain area, but also occurs throughout Indonesia, especially in its big cities. This is interesting because in other countries art products as elements in public spaces are common.

The crowned lion ornament (*singa bermahkota*) motif is now widely used as a decoration in public spaces, and is very easy

to find in several locations, such as in the ceremony field of the Karangasem Regency Government, city park decoration, decoration of the Karangasem-Bali Regency DPRD office, and even used as a barrier wall decoration on the connecting bridge at *Tukad Unda*, Klungkung-Bali Regency. This shows that the ornamental creations of artists or the King of Karangasem, have been able to captivate the hearts of art lovers, connoisseurs, and artists, and indirectly gain legitimacy for the uniqueness of the ornamental motifs of Puri Agung Karangasem. The usefulness of these ornamental motifs opens potential business opportunities for the people of Karangasem and Bali, and even the people of Indonesia, as stated by Hendriyana (2022, p. 339), that the wealth and diversity of Indonesia's original art and cultural potential, from *Sabang to Merauke* can provide a new source of income for the supporting community. Thus, the ornaments found in Puri Agung Karangasem are not just decoration and business opportunities, but also have a deep meaning, in the context of Balinese Hindu culture and religion. The ornaments are a reflection of local wisdom and Balinese cultural wealth that should be respected and preserved, as well as recognition of its existence in society. The cultural diversity, shapes, and colours that follow can be interpreted as symbols of joy and cheerfulness in the culture of Karangasem and Bali in general.

Cross-Cultural Meanings of Puri Agung Karangasem

The cross-cultural meaning of architecture and ornamentation of Puri

Agung Karangasem is a symbol of openness, harmony, and beauty created from the fusion of various cultural influences. The splendour of Puri Agung Karangasem can be a sign of the establishment of good relations between the kingdom of Karangasem and the Dutch kingdom and has brought significant progress to the development of traditional Balinese architecture, especially the architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem, as well as a sign of the establishment of a good relationship between the King of Karangasem and Chinese artists in Karangasem. It reflects the spirit of tolerance and openness of the King of Karangasem towards foreign cultural influences. These various cultural signs were adopted selectively, resulting in the innovation of new ornaments, without losing their original identity. Therefore, cross-cultural signs are seen from the dialogue through integrated ornaments, the result of the development of creative ideas full of cultural expressions and new meanings, thus becoming rich and complex. Traditional Balinese ornaments represent the sign of Balinese culture, which is visualised in every corner of the Puri architecture, the sign of Chinese culture is visualised through typical Chinese ornaments on the wall decoration, windows, and *kuwadi* doors in *Gedong Maskerdam* and *Bale Pemandesan* buildings. Meanwhile, signs of European culture are visualised through ornaments applied to the pillars, walls and ceilings of the house with concrete molding techniques, also seen in the plan of the *Gedong Maskerdam* building resembling a *landhuis* building which is a combination of European and Nusantara architecture with the main

characteristics of the front porch and hallway connecting the rooms on both sides. As stated by Santoso (2016, p. 31), the type of building that combines European and Archipelago architecture is characterised by a front porch (*voorgal lerij*) connected to a central hallway (*binnengallerij*) with rooms on both sides.

The cultural acculturation is accumulated in the form of the crowned lion motif. The crowned lion (*singa bermahkota*) ornament typical of Puri Agung Karangasem is the result of the development of ideas and creations from the King of Karangasem, who was assisted by Karangasem *undagi* and artists. This ornament implies that at that time the Kingdom of Karangasem had established a good friendly relationship with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, so there was no impression that the Kingdom of Karangasem was under the rule of the Dutch colonial government. This is evidenced by the visit of the Queen of the Netherlands to Puri Agung Karangasem, as well as various gifts given by the Queen of the Netherlands to the King of Karangasem. The strength of the friendship was accumulated by making the symbol of the Dutch Kingdom into a special decoration, to decorate several parts of the Puri building, so that there was a cross-cultural dialogue of signs visualised in the ornaments and architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem. This is reinforced by the explanation of *Abdi Dalem* Puri Agung Karangasem, that the crowned lion ornament, the design idea comes from the crown of Queen Wilhelmina, while the decoration motif combines Balinese, Chinese, and European motifs (interview with I Made Juliarta, Friday, 13 September 2024, 10.00 Wita).

Besides containing the meaning of sign dialogue through ornaments, the ornaments also contain the meaning of cultural diplomacy. Where cultural diplomacy is a soft political tactic that is expected to launch the aspirations of the Karangasem Kingdom which at that time experienced pressure and restrictions from the Dutch colonial government through cultural adoption and a series of cultural ceremonies (interview with *Penglingsir* Puri Agung Karangasem Anak Agung Kosalya, Friday, 13 September 2024, 13.00 Wita). In line with this, Ma'as and Yuliati (2020, p. 143-147), in their research explained that during the Dutch colonialisation in the archipelago, the Kings who wanted their kingdoms to remain intact would take cultural diplomacy as a way to voice their aspirations through a series of cultural ceremonial agendas in certain kingdoms can be considered as a softening effort to survive, it can also be considered as a new breakthrough in conveying the aspirations or demands of the kingdom while keeping the situation safe and under control. The ceremonial banquet became a symbol of the tendency of power, royal tradition as well as a new form of political communication of a kingdom.

The intense cultural diplomacy then produced new architectural forms and ornaments, which were the result of the King's creation and assisted by the *undagi*, *sangging*, and or Balinese artists in the form of *singa bermahkota* ornament motifs and other motifs with the appearance of *takpak sida* carvings with concrete molding techniques. In addition to the *singa bermahkota* motif, the *karang bentulu* motif is also a form of cultural

diplomacy carried out by the Puri through the creation of ornaments, because the shape of the *karang bentulu* motif can contain a double meaning. Firstly, *karang bentulu* is denotatively a traditional Balinese ornament in the form of a crown, functioning as an ornament on the top of the *Kori Agung* and several roofs of the Puri building. Secondly, the *karang bentulu* ornament has a connotative meaning of the crown of the Dutch Kingdom. This is also reinforced by the presence of a *karang sae bermahkota* (crowned *karang sae*) ornament flanked by the motif of two crowned lions (see figure 9). The crown motif is a symbol of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, so it is certain that the *karang sae* crowned ornament motif also contains connotative meaning, the crown of Queen Wilhelmina. Similarly, Mugi Raharja (2017, p. 166-167) states that the *karang bentulu* ornaments found in the architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem and Soekasada Water Park contain a double semiotic meaning. Ornaments with the shape of a crown as the top decoration of a building have a meaning as a symbol of the Dutch Kingdom. Visually, the crown symbol is also found in the form of a *karang sae* motif flanked by two crowned lions used as decoration on the wall or building foundation. This crown symbol is also used to decorate the bridge connecting Soekasada Water Park and *Bale Kambang*, especially the crowned lion (*singa bermahkota*) motif, and the *karang bentulu* motif at the top of the concrete pillars of the connecting bridge so that it is clearly visible. Cross-cultural signs other than in the form of ornaments, are also found in the names of buildings in the Puri Agung Karangasem area, which have adopted the names of cities

in Indonesia and Europe. This naming shows the importance of the relationship built by the Karangasem Kingdom. Relations with Europe are represented by the naming of Amsterdam and London. The relationship with the Dutch East Indies centre of power is expressed in the name Betawi with the characteristic form of Betawi houses, especially seen from the use of Betawi ornamental motifs on the carved *ring-ring* under the roof. The cultural relation with Java is shown in the naming of Gedong Yogya, thus further strengthening the cross-cultural meaning found in the architecture and ornaments of Puri Agung Karangasem.

CONCLUSIONS

In general, the Balinese people, especially the Karangasem Kingdom, are always open to various cultural influences that come to Bali. They managed to adopt positive elements from outside cultures without sacrificing their local cultural identity. The selective and adaptive ability of Balinese people is very high in absorbing outside cultural influences. This can be seen in the relics of cultural artefacts resulting from acculturation in the form of cultural collaboration to produce a new culture that is integrated with Balinese culture. The markers and signs are contained in every building of Puri Agung Karangasem, especially in terms of architecture and ornaments, and are important milestones in the history of the construction of the Karangasem Kingdom. The combination of various cultures then produces a combination of architecture and ornaments that are rich, beautiful, and become the hallmark of Karangasem architecture and

ornaments. These ornamental forms then inspired and absorbed by Balinese artists in designing Balinese art and design, which after going through modifications in form produced types of ornamental motifs such as *keketusan*, *pepatran*, and *kekarangan* as commonly known today by the Balinese people. This fusion of cultures resulted in unique works of architecture, art, and customs, making Karangasem one of the successful examples of cultural integration in Indonesia.

In a hermeneutic perspective, that every ornamental motif found in the architecture of Puri Agung Karangasem has a meaning related to the beliefs, traditions, and cultural values of the Balinese people, also has a very important meaning in the context of Balinese culture. These ornaments are often used in traditional Balinese architectural art and have a very high aesthetic value. In this case it can be understood that the milestone and the meaning of Puri Agung Karangasem ornaments are not only physical symbols, but also represent important values in Balinese culture, such as the value of togetherness, simplicity, and local wisdom that is closely held by the people of Karangasem and Bali.

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