

**ICONOGRAPHICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF
MODERN ELEMENTS
IN NORTHERN BALI TEMPLE RELIEFS
DURING DUTCH COLONIAL
PERIOD, 1900-1940**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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by

I DEWA ALIT DWIJA PUTRA

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**INTERPRETASI IKONOGRAFI ELEMEN-ELEMEN MODEN PADA
RELIEF PURA BALI UTARA SEMASA
ERA PENJAJAHAN BELANDA, 1900-1940**

ABSTRAK

Seni relief untuk seni bina bangunan candi di Bali umumnya menggunakan hiasan daripada warisan budaya Hindu Bali klasik. Kesenian tradisional atau klasik terhasil daripada gabungan budaya Hindu Jawa dan Bali pada zaman Majapahit. Sejak kedatangan kolonialisme Belanda di Bali Utara pada tahun 1849, ia telah membawa banyak pengaruh dan perubahan dalam semua aspek kehidupan masyarakat Bali. Begitu juga dalam seni tradisional khususnya seni relief. Peralihan daripada seni relief konvensional kepada seni moden boleh dilihat di beberapa bangunan kuil di Bali Utara, seperti Kuil Beji Sangsit, Kuil Madue Karang, Kuil Dalem Jagaraga, dan Kuil Desa Lan Puseh. Penjelmaan relief menunjukkan imej yang berbeza daripada konvensional seni tradisional seperti tema, gubahan dan gaya. Seperti karya seni yang lain, relief dibuat dengan tujuan dan mesej tertentu daripada karya seni. Kajian ini memberikan analisis yang lebih mendalam tentang seni relief dengan menggunakan teori ikonografi dan ikonologi Erwin Panofsky sebagai kaedah menganalisis karya relief dalam konteks sejarah sosiobudaya masyarakat Bali. Melalui tiga peringkat analisis ikonografi Panofsky, dapat dilihat bahawa kerja-kerja bantuan itu dibuat sebagai sebahagian daripada strategi politik Belanda untuk membentuk imej Bali sebagai kawasan "eksotik" dan "berbudaya", sebagai destinasi pelancongan dunia, selain daripada menjadi satu lagi destinasi tersembunyi iaitu mengalihkan ingatan akan keaiban akibat peperangan Belanda terhadap rakyat Bali.

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ABSTRACT

Relief art on temple buildings in Bali generally uses ornaments from classical Balinese Hindu cultural heritage. Traditional or classical art resulted from a blend of Javanese and Balinese Hindu culture during the Majapahit era. Since the arrival of Dutch colonialism in North Bali in 1849, it had had numerous influences and caused changes in all aspects of Balinese life. Likewise, in traditional arts, especially relief art. The shift from conventional relief art to modern art can be seen in several temple buildings in North Bali, such as Beji Sangsit Temple, Madue Karang Temple, Dalem Jagaraga Temple, and Lan Puseh Village Temple. The embodiment of reliefs shows images that differ from traditional art conventions such as theme, composition, and style. Like other works of art, reliefs are made with a specific purpose and message. This study provides a more in-depth analysis of relief art by using the iconography and iconology theory of Erwin Panofsky as a method for analysing reliefs in the context of the socio-cultural history of the Balinese people. Through three stages of Panofsky's iconographic analysis, it can be observed that the relief works were created as part of the Dutch political strategy to shape the image of Bali as an "exotic" and "cultured" area and as a world tourist destination, in addition to divert the memory of the shame caused by the war the Dutch had against the Balinese people.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This research examined the relief sculptures at four temples in North Bali as well as changes in the shape of traditional Balinese reliefs as the indicating signs of modern art. The changes were observed through the aspects of forms, themes, composition, and narrative as the main characteristics of classical art. The factors causing these changes stand as an important research subject, particularly as North Bali was colonised by the Dutch East Indies government in 1849.

Relief art carved on temples, such as artefacts and historical relics, is commonly regarded as artistic objects that contain various thoughts and stand as the cultural symbols of a society. This can be seen from the marks formed on the relief surface where each sculpted visual sign carries a particular aesthetic and meaning, particularly as every work of art is with a specific purpose.

The historical framework of research on changes in traditional Balinese reliefs is related to the socio-cultural changes experienced by the Balinese people, which are associated with the modern elements brought by the Dutch. Modernism in traditional Balinese society was considered novel and peculiar due to its sudden and rapid presence, resulting in an incomplete understanding of modernism among Balinese. This owed to the fact that modernism was interpreted based on intuition rather than the critical considerations of rationality.

The Cambridge online dictionary defines “element” as “part of something”.¹ When adapted into the context of this study, “modern elements” describes parts of modernism or modernisation, which may include parts of contemporary art such as techniques, materials, composition, and styles. This suggests that modern elements can be investigated based on different visual signs shown by works of art. Similarly, the “parts” of modern culture may incorporate numerous elements like way of thinking, dressing, eating, and education.

Meanwhile, the concept of modernism brought by the Dutch colonialists refers to the history of the civilisation of human thoughts in the Enlightenment (mid) century, which prioritised on logic and knowledge in the West but was preceded by the Renaissance era. The Enlightenment century, also known as the century of ratios, is said to be the period of the Western intellectual explosion around 1650 to 1800.² Subsequently, the Western civilisation gave birth to various scientific thoughts, which became the basis for the development of modern culture, leading to the industrial revolution.³

In art history, modernism is an aesthetic ideology that has dominated art practices for approximately 125 years. It is a new era of machinery and technology (industrialisation) that leaves behind the period of anarchy and eclecticism (pre-modern). Modern art firmly breaks away from the past or abandons its traditions. This means that contemporary art is based on novelty and progress following its belief in a linear historical movement, which refers to the Universal Style that is highly

¹ Cambridge online dictionary, Juli 2, 2023,
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/element>

² Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on postmodernisme* (Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1996), 98.

³ Djuli Djati Prambudi, “Pembentukan Seni Modern di Asia Tenggara,” *Jurnal Seni Rupa, FBS. Unimed.* Vol. 2 No 1. Juni 2005:13-26.

technological, functional, healthy, light, simple, economical, logical, and mass.⁴ Due to these modern (Western) art principles, traditional art (non-mainstream art) is not considered in contemporary art.

The relief artworks in the four temples in North Bali were created or made not from an awareness of the Balinese people *sangging* on the principles of modern art. However, the Dutch government created or formed through construction or coercion as part of its political mission in the colony.⁵ Dutch interference in traditional arts, such as relief artwork, has its reasons. Given that conventional Balinese art is very closely related to religion or religious ceremonies in society. Art in the community cannot be separated from religion and customs.⁶ The colonial-era reliefs depict significant cultural changes. Incorporating and modifying modern elements result in an image distinct from traditional art.

Reliefs as a work of art are not merely observed from the creation process but also from the meanings or messages conveyed through their forms, where meanings and symbols are closely related to human values or cultural views. To examine the importance of relief artworks at the four temples in North Bali, Panofsky's approach to the Art History Theory, namely "iconography" and "iconology", was used across three stages in this study with a particular contextual consideration on the social history of the Balinese community. This is in line with Lydia Kieven, who also utilised Panofsky's approach to study temple reliefs in East Java during the Majapahit period. She explained that in a specific temple building, the symbolic meaning of the narrative

⁴ Jim Supangkat, *Membaca Modernitas Indonesia dalam Representasi Budaya pada Seni Rupa* (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan, 1998), 8.

⁵ I Wayan Seriyoga Parta, "Perkembangan Seni Rupa Pita Maha dalam Konteks Konstruksi Kebudayaan Bali," *Mudra Jurnal Seni Budaya*, 26, no 2 (Juli 2011): 192-181.

⁶ I Made Yudabakti dan I Wayan Watra, *Filsafat Seni Sakral dalam Kebudayaan Bali* (Surabaya: Penerbit Paramita. 2007), 27-25.

reliefs reflects the importance and function of the temple.⁷ This suggests that changes in style, themes, and scenes in the reliefs at the four temples in North Bali may correlate with the temples' position as a place of worship.

The objects of this research were relief sculptures in four temples located in the Buleleng Regency, North Bali. It included Madue Karang Temple in Kubutambahan Village, Dalem Jagaraga Temple in Sawan Village, Beji Sangsit Temple in Sangsit Village, and Desa lan Puseh Temple in Sudaji Village. These ancient temples shared close resemblance and similarity in terms of architecture and ornaments. Three temples were classified as *Tri Kayangan*, namely Madue Karang, Dalem Jagaraga, and Desa lan Puseh, while Beji Sangsit was classified as a community temple, commonly known as *Subak*.

The reliefs available at these four temples differed from other typical relief sculptures in Bali. Figurative reliefs generally use characters in *wayang* stories; however, the four temples contained reliefs with deformed cartoonish shapes, which were humorous and peculiar. They also depicted products of industrial modernisation that were developed in Europe, such as cars, bicycles, and aeroplanes. Such differences raise the question whether the reliefs in these four temples were purely formed from the dialogues between two cultural elements or whether there was an intervention, such as engineering projects, by the colonial government. This was investigated in this study through historical traces of the Dutch colonial period in North Bali.

The presence of the Dutch in North Bali resulted in social changes among the Balinese community. Modernisation was introduced to all aspects of their community life, ranging from the government management system to office buildings and housing

⁷ Lydia Kieven, *Menelusuri Figur Bertopi dalam Relief Candi Zaman Majapahit* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2014), 16.

construction projects. Infrastructures and facilities were built to improve the economy and revenue of the colonial government. This consequently gave rise to the emergence of policies that favoured the economic benefits of the Bali region. These policies also explored the possibility of featuring Balinese culture as the primary income of the colonial government. Bali was presented as a cultural tourism area with the slogan of “Last Paradise from the East”.⁸

The concept of cultural tourism introduced by the Dutch government has received significant interest from Western scholars and scientists who were brought to Bali since they gained control over North Bali and South Bali. These 19th century scholars and scientists formed an image of Bali as an exotic and cultured island that could attract world travellers and tourists, especially the West. This image was created based on the current market at that time where World War I had ceased and there was a vast emergence of bourgeoisie or capitalism in the West that were looking for areas to invest.⁹

The exotic image explored by the Dutch government stemmed from the circulation of photographs in the 1920s that illustrated the "naturalness" of Balinese women. These photographs were captured by G. Krouse, who visited and served in Bali from 1912 to 1914.¹⁰ Such image further amplified Bali as the "Last Paradise of the East". Since then, Bali tourism experienced rapid development where many tourists came to see the Balinese women's nature, culture, and charm. Some travellers even chose to settle down in Bali and mingle with the locals. Therefore, the influence of

⁸ Michel Picard, *Bali: Pariwisata Budaya dan Budaya Pariwisata* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2006), 36.

⁹ M. Agus Burhan, *Perkembangan Seni Lukis Mooi Indie sampai Persagi di Batavia 1900-1942* (Jakarta: Galeri Nasional, 2008), 22-20.

¹⁰ Adrian Vickers, *Bali A Paradise Created* (Jakarta: Reprinted by Paripulus Editions HK. 1989), 102-100.

modernism towards the Balinese customs and cultures could not be avoided as a result of these tourist local's social interactions.¹¹

To obtain modern resources, the Dutch government opened schools for local communities as a form of welfare (reciprocity) for the colonized people. These schools were established to meet the administrative need of the colonial government in Bali. Schools also gave birth to awareness of nationalism among Balinese, especially those educated outside Bali. However, nationalism was considered an internal threat by the Dutch government, which realized such movement and tried to mitigate it by strengthening the bureaucratic system of government by granting special autonomy rights to formerly conquered kings. This created internal complications/tensions within Balinese society itself.¹²

The preservation of Balinese culture was organized in a Dutch policy called Balinisasi or Baliseering which aimed to protect Balinese culture from the influence of Islam from Java and Christianization from the colonial government itself. Bali was considered a "living museum of Majapahit", which must be protected from extinction as well as from the influence of modernization brought by tourists visiting Bali. The Balinization program aimed to restore the tarnished image of the Dutch East Indies government due to war and to extraction profits from its colonies.¹³

The inclusion of European (modern) cultural elements in traditional Balinese arts during the 1900s was first discovered in paintings and sculptures, and subsequently in relief sculptures across several temples in North Bali. Paintings and

¹¹ Picard *Bali; Pariwisata*, 36.

¹² Geoffrey Robinson. *Sisi Gelap Pulau Dewata*, trans. Arif B. Prasetyo (Yogyakarta: LKis Yogyakarta, 2006), 53-52.

¹³ I Made Pageh, "Genealogi Balinisasi Zaman Kolonial Belanda: Analisis Kritis Bali Sebagai Museum Hidup," *Seminar Nasional Riset Inovatif*, no. 2 (2017): 902-896.

sculptures are generally considered as mediums that can easily adapt to modern rules. Additionally, these two forms of art were considered to have high economic value by the Dutch government. Hence, the artistic items were often promoted or exhibited as exotic works of art abroad, especially in Europe, and as a medium for fostering Balinese tourism.

The present study of temple reliefs was concerned not only on the forms and meanings of symbols but also how the visualisation and purposes of the reliefs were related to the temples' function as a holy place and its cultural values towards the Balinese people. This study was limited to the *penyengker* (walls) of the temples, with the possibility of discussing several statues or figures that might be available on the temple walls to obtain a complete picture of the depicted scenery. This was because the present investigation covered the complex and interrelation of functions and meanings portrayed by objects in a temple.

Panofsky's iconographic and iconological analysis was used to analyse the reliefs in the four temples to obtain a structured and systematic description and expression of its artistic values. The characterisation and identification of modern elements, such as materials, techniques, styling, storyline, and themes described by the *sangging* (artist) were also conducted. Subsequently, this study aims to draw a conclusion regarding the disclosure of meanings and symbols conveyed by the reliefs since traditional artworks are commonly related to cultural values, unlike autonomous modern works of art. Reliefs as a classic artwork belong to the community and the art serves to benefit religious ceremonies in the Balinese society.

1.2 Background of Study

Temples in Bali are heritage buildings with high historical value and their existence has undergone a lengthy formation process from the pre-historic era to the

ancient Balinese period, mid-Balinese period, and the colonial era. Today, the shapes of temple buildings in Bali and the splendour of their ornaments inherit the artistic traditions of the mid-Balinese era, namely the Javanese-Hindu influence during the Majapahit period, which has been part of Balinese culture.¹⁴

The term "Museum of Majapahit" was proposed by Raffles in the 18th century and had taken root in all aspects of life within the Balinese society, including politics, economy, and socio-culture. The presentation of these reflections was transmitted to Dutch administrators in the 20th century. Balinese nobles were refugees from Majapahit due to the expansion of the Islamic military in Java. The book also stated that the Balinese people did not hesitate to call themselves as the descendants of Majapahit, except for *Bali Age* or *Bali Gunung*, who were indigenous Balinese who still lived in certain villages in Bali.¹⁵ The Dutch government also defended Raffles's view of Bali as a Majapahit museum at the beginning of the 20th century and as a Hindu-Javanese cultural conservation area (living museum). This highlighted the importance for Bali to be protected from extinction via the Baliseering programme.

Before the Balinization program was launched, the colonial government brought in many scientists and scholars to study Balinese culture and life. Likewise, everything related to Balinese literature was brought to the Netherlands as an effort to further study Bali. The Balinization program was allegedly not a purely cultural program but had a specific purpose of changing the world view of the cruelty of Dutch colonialism and forming a new image of a prosperous and peaceful Bali.¹⁶

¹⁴ I Wayan Ardika, I Gde Parimerta dan A A Bagus Wirawan, *Sejarah Bali, dari Prasejarah Hingga Modern*. (Bali: Udayana University Press 2015), 329.

¹⁵ Adrian Vickers, *Peradaban Pesisir, Menuju Sejarah Budaya Asia Tenggara* (Bali: Udayana University Press, 2009), 22.

¹⁶ I Ngurah Suryawan, *Genealogi Kekerasan Dan Pergolakan Subaltern: Bara Di Bali Utara* (Jakarta: Prenada Press, 2010), 16.

The temple relief ornaments in Bali, especially in the North Bali region, have slightly different characteristics from the decorations in temples across South Bali, in which they are more orderly, refined, detailed, and obey the rules for ornament layout in the architecture of temple buildings. In contrast, the placement of relief ornaments at temples in North Bali is more expressive and voluminous - the symbolic shapes and decorations are disproportionate, and the statues look as if they were arranged haphazardly. The ornament style is similar to the baroque and rococo ornaments in Europe. Excessive stylisation is the first impression that comes to mind when looking at the reliefs.¹⁷

The people of southern Bali strongly support classical arts in the style of feudalism (Classical Balinese Hinduism) and the majesty of art, such as seeing the grandeur of a king (the conception of Dewa Raja) who is considered a symbol of a specific god. Balinese community's dedication to art is extremely strong where the majesty and luxury of the classic arts may be observed from the depiction of the clothes used in puppet figures and the clothes of classical dancers.¹⁸

The traditional Balinese art forms, especially sculptures such as ornaments, have existed through centuries and the art process is not only influenced by internal factors of the community itself, but also influenced by external factors such as foreign influences through cultural acculturation. Foreign cultures that influence Balinese culture are India (Hinduism and Buddhism), Chinese, Arabs (Persians), and Europeans. The influence was generally spread initially through trade relations, diplomatic relations, and wars.

¹⁷ Wiyoso Yudoseputro, *Jejak-Jejak Tradisi Bahasa Rupa Indonesia Lama* (Jakarta: Yayasan Seni Visual Indonesia, 2008), 124.

¹⁸ I Wayan Adnyana, *Pita Maha, Gerakan Sosial Seni Lukis Bali 1930-An* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2018), 72.

The elements of Indian culture brought a heavy influence on Balinese culture during the reign of Hindu and Buddhist kings in the archipelago. The influence of Buddhism existed during the Srivijaya kingdom in the 5th century AD and while the elements of the Hindu culture prevailed during the reign of Majapahit in the 12th century AD. The two great cultures coexisted and formed the basic framework of the archipelago culture. The cultural elements of Majapahit survived and remain strong in Bali until now. This can be observed from the artistic activities of the Balinese people who continue to conduct these traditions in many religious ceremonies.¹⁹

The entry of foreign cultural elements from mainland Europe added more colours to traditional Balinese art. Modern elements and principles brought by Europeans (e.g., the Portuguese, Dutch, and British) also changed the mindset and mentality of the Balinese people, from being communal and religious to being rational and individualistic. Likewise, the function of art, which was previously for ritual purposes, has now expanded towards secularism.

The acculturation of modern cultural elements is unlike previous cultures such as India and China. This culture can be well assimilated and integrated gradually and become the basis of the local culture. The characteristics of modern culture brought about by colonialism are like the modernization model in Europe. The process that occurred in Europe is a gradual process from an agricultural country to an industrial nation. According to Umar Kayam, the cultural transformation that occurred during the colonial period in Bali was a clumsy transformation or, to borrow Alvin Toffler's term, the modification of future surprises.²⁰ The modernization brought by the Dutch colonial government was attempted to be implemented in the colonies, causing

¹⁹ Ardika, Parimerta, Wirawan. *Sejarah Bali*, 3.

²⁰ Wiyoso Yudoseputro, *Historiografi Seni Indonesia* (Bandung: ITB Press, 2005), 14.

changes and shifts in traditional Balinese society, which seemed surprised by the foreign modernity.

The influence of modern cultural elements from the Western world, especially Europe, spread by means of exploration and imperialism. The introduction of a new ideology, a different mental attitude and mindset, provided a different artistic experience to the existing artists. It also provided space for new interpretations and understandings of the local community, as well as creating changes to the creation of works. Changes and developments in media and techniques were inevitable. Artists were faced with various choices that opened creative spaces that are different and more individualistic, contrary to the traditional communal mindset and mentality of Balinese art.²¹

The transition process of the Balinese society can be seen in both their performing and visual arts. Balinese artists portrayed different artistic creations after getting acquainted with Western aesthetics brought by European artists in which their artworks showed a unique vision of combining traditional ways with modern concepts. The perspective rules and depictions of human anatomy were not adapted logically but rather intuitively, resulting in striking and humorous works.²²

In anatomical understanding, Balinese artists do not fully follow modern norms. On the contrary, they still follow *wayang* or traditional puppet patterns. Human faces are drawn to appear three-quarters, the legs are drawn to arise from the front, while the anatomy of certain parts are based on estimated calculations. Light is created, not based on facts, like impressionist paintings, but based on artists' imagination. They

²¹ Jean Couteu. *Museum Puri Lukisan*, (Ubud Bali: Yayasan Ratna Warta, 1999), 27.

²² Sanento Yuliman. *Dua Seni Rupa (Serpihan Tulisan)* (Jakarta: Yayasan Kalam)

draw humans based on their memories and stereotypes, still leaving a collective nature.²³

Similar transition process applies to the art of ornament or sculpture, which changes the strength of the patterned motifs. The traditional motif designs that are the pride of the Balinese people have been combined with modern objects. Ornaments are no longer fixed on old patterns but are more accessible without a design pattern. They are created based on the theme and the free will of the artists. Additionally, the existence of freedom stands as an influencing factor.

Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the causes of these factors to explore the involvement and role of *sangging* (artists) as a sculptor and the time of the colonial government's intervention. The penetration of modern elements in relief art is undoubtedly through a consideration favouring the authorities. This is because the temple area in Bali is sacred, and no community or artist can carelessly create relief works without the approval of the Brahmins or the kings (nobility) who rule the place.

Geographically, the mountain ranges from East to West divide Bali into two parts, namely North Bali and South Bali, which form differences in the socio-cultural characters of the people. North Bali generally has a more dynamic culture and society and is receptive to foreign cultures. The community is very open to new values, ideas, and concepts both from inside and outside Bali.

Ketut Artadi in his book *Manusia Bali* (Balinese) stated that the people of North Bali are more adaptive than the people of South Bali. It is more accurate to look at Bali from two regional divisions, namely Buleleng (North Bali) and Southern Bali. The people of Buleleng are generally emotional, open, and receptive. In contrast, people of South Bali are more stable and not easily emotional. They place a high

²³ A.A.M. Djelantik, *Balinese Painting* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990)

emphasis on manners (polite manners) and grammar *sor-singih* than the people of Buleleng, who are flat and do not have different language levels. Even in the field of art, South Bali is heavily rooted in its classical artistic heritage that modern arts, such as pop music and the like, are somewhat difficult to develop in South Bali. In Buleleng, all kinds of art forms can bloom and fade quickly as well. ²⁴

Furthermore, the people of Buleleng are heterogeneous where various tribes or ethnicities mingle freely in daily activities and can interact across all areas of life without the barriers of social strata. For example, the city of Singaraja is mainly dominated by Chinese compared to other ethnic groups, such as Bugis, Malay, and Javanese. There are also non-Majapahit natives of the Balinese people called “Bali Mula” who exist in the Sembiran, Pendawa, Sidatapa, Tigawasa, and Cempaga areas. All tribes, or a mixture of ethnicities and cultures in North Bali, exist due to the presence of two main ports during the royal era, namely the Buleleng ports of Pabean Sangsit and Temukus.²⁵

North Bali, as an open area with an egalitarian society, creates a decorative style that is slightly different from South Bali's ornaments. The ornaments adorning the temples in North Bali are denser and more voluminous in which the sculpting technique is more profound and higher, thus forming deep depressions. Ornament forms are highly dynamic in regular patterns. The shape of the ornament resembles the shape or style of the ornamental baroque and rococo in Europe.²⁶ Thus, the impression created by the decoration is highly vibrant and blazing compared to southern Bali.

²⁴ Ketut Artadi, *Manusia Bali* (DenpasarBali: Bali Post, 1993), 15.

²⁵ I Made Pageh. *Soenda Kecil; Dinamika Menuju Indonesia Raya* (Klaten Jawa Tengah: Penerbit Lakeisha, 2020), 56.

²⁶ Wiyoso Yudoseputro. *Jejak-Jejak Tradisi Bahasa Rupa Indonesia Lama* (Jakarta: Indonesia Visual Art Foundation, 2008),102- 98.

Additionally, the image is calm, full of order, and more obedient to the *pakem* (Balinese).

The form of ornaments in temple buildings in Bali is not only limited to the stylization of flora, fauna, or imaginary creatures. It also combines figurative elements that take characters from puppet figures. Figures were carved on the walls of the buildings that surround the temple complex. The puppet figures were combined with the formation of motif patterns to demonstrate a harmonious image with the materials. The combination of patterns and puppet figures provides a more comprehensive ornamental function. Ornaments are not limited to aesthetics and are a medium of information on Balinese teachings and views. The figurative ornaments carved on the walls of the temple buildings are known as narrative reliefs and are classified as human ornaments, which include giants, gods, and ancestors.²⁷

Reliefs that use puppet figures on temple walls usually use stories based on Hindu teachings, such as the epic of Mahabharata, Bharatayuddha, Ramayana, and other *wayang purwa* stories. Other folklores were also used, such as Ni Dyah Tantri, Lubdaka, Raja Pala, Cupak Gerentang. Likewise, various ancient kings such as Panji, Semarandana, Maya Denawa, Jaya Prana, etc. were also featured. These stories were carved with several panels in a series of stories (narrative reliefs).

On the other hand, there are relief images that deviate from traditional ornaments. The use of elements that have never been previously carved indicates an incoherent pattern that feels forced. Although the sculpted form is not dominant, it appears to contrast the pattern of traditional motifs. The contrasting relief depictions shown at the four temples in North Bali were alluded by Miguel Covarrubias in his

²⁷ Aryo Sunaryo, *Nusantara Ornaments, A Special Study on Archipelago Ornaments* (Semarang: Dahara Prize, 2010), 16.

book titled *The Island of Bali*. They depicted two motorists, a mechanic repairing a car with an Arab passenger, two fat Dutchmen drinking beer, and a man riding a bicycle with the bicycle wheels made of flower ornaments.²⁸

Furthermore, the role of North Bali as an international shipping traffic in the 17th century was mentioned in the book "Ship and Commerce of the Archipelago in the 16th and 17th Century." Then, Bali's relationship with other islands in Indonesia was extremely harmonious. The Dutch colonial government, which arrived in 1596 (the first expedition) witnessed considerable trade in the eastern and western parts of Indonesia. Ships from the western regions of Indonesia sailing from Maluku to Nusa Tenggara usually stopped by Bali since there was a good port to refill drinking water. Additionally, food was abundant and cheap, and various kinds of cloth were traded there. Besides Bali and Lombok, Sumbawa Island was also a producer of rice and other rations such as fish and meat. Likewise, there were trades in sandalwood, resin, honey, and slaves.²⁹

During colonial period, North Bali was also used as the central of government representing the government of the Dutch East Indies in East Java and Lombok. The government system in Bali had also changed from a traditional (feudal) government to a colonial government, where kings were only an extension of the colonial government. North Bali was controlled by the Dutch 75 years earlier than South Bali. As a result, North Bali was quicker to accept the influence of modernism and initiated a movement against colonialism under Surya Kanta group to create awareness among Balinese on the importance of cultural identity, nationalism, and independence.³⁰

²⁸ Miguel Covarrubias, *Island of Bali*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947).185.

²⁹ Adrian B. Lopian, *Pelayaran dan Perniagaan Nusantara Abad Ke-16 Dan 17* (Depok- Jawa Barat: 2017), 54.

³⁰ Ardika, Parimerta, Wirawan, *Sejarah Bali*, 470.

Geography and cosmology also provide a different perspective of Balinese society towards changes in art. Balinese people have their own way of looking at their geographical events. The orientation of the cardinal directions is guided by belief, where mountain areas or high areas are considered sacred, as well as the North direction. In Balinese society, Mount Agung and Besakih Temple are considered the mecca to determine the direction and areas deemed sacred. The north direction *kaja*, indicating the direction to the mountain, is like the upstream or the upstream area, as opposed to the south *kelod* which points to the sea direction, equal to the bottom or downstream *teben*. East and north indicate upstream or upper (sacred) directions while west and south indicate down and downstream *teben*.³¹ This is illustrated in traditional Balinese architecture, layout of temple areas, castle houses, houses, and the interior parts. This is also shown in artistic items, such as ornaments and puppet patterns in reliefs and performing arts.

There is also the concept of *kaja-kelod*; the word *kaja* in Balinese means “towards the mountain” while *kelod* means “towards the sea”. In Balinese tradition, the gods have a permanent residence on high mountains, such as Mount Agung. The area under the mountain (i.e., the middle world) is believed to be a place for humans while the bottom world (i.e., the ocean) is the habitat of demons.³² The Balinese philosophy often interprets *kaja* as birth or the concept of a father (masculine), which is symbolised by *lingga acala* that is the designation for a mountain. Whereas *kelod* comes from the word *lod* or *lud*, which means sea.³³ This indicates that *kaja-kelod*

³¹ A.A. Gede Putra Agung, *Peralihan Sistem Birokrasi dari Tradisional Ke Kolonial* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2009), 10.

³² I Made Bandem. *Kaja-Kelod tarian Bali dalam Transisi*, (Yogyakarta: ISI Press, 2004), iv.

³³ P.J. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan Sastra Jawa Kuno Selayang Pandang*, trans. Dick Hartono S.J. (Jakarta: Djambatan Press, 1995), 606.

means mountains and oceans, also known as *giri-segara* in the traditional Balinese language.

Such duality conception is the foundation for the Balinese people's way of life, including places to live, holy places, and matters relating to their interests. It even influences the layout of buildings through the *kaja-kelod* rule as *luan* (head/top/sacred) and *teben* (feet/bottom/profane). For instance, the Village Temple would be placed towards *kaja* (mountain) while the Dalem Temple would be placed towards *kelod* (sea).³⁴



Figure 1. 1 Madue Karang Temple and Dalem Jagaraga Tempel.
Source: Photo taken by the researcher.

³⁴ I Nengah Lestawi, *Kaja-Kelod sebagai Budaya Adiluhung di Bali; Kajian Tatwa, Susila*. (Denpasar: IHD Negeri, 2022), 21-20.



Figure 1. 2 Desa lan Puseh Temple and *Utama Mandala* Beji Sangsit Temple.
Source: Photo taken by the researcher.

The four temples in North Bali, namely Pura Madue Karang Temple, Dalem Jagaraga Temple, Beji Temple, and Desa lan Puseh Temple shared similarities in terms of style. The only difference was the carving technique of the relief ornaments at Madue Karang where the ornaments were flatter, and calmer as opposed to the other three temples. The forms of motifs and figures were more prominent, strikingly different, and freer; the *Patra Cina* power ornament was highly dominant across the four temples combined with statues in the form of scary imaginary creatures. In addition, there were depictions of *wayang* figures in certain story fragments.

According to historical records, the island of Bali was rocked by a terrible earthquake in 1917, causing a lot of damage, including to the four temples in northern Bali. At the initiative of the Dutch government, the temples were rebuilt and renovated. Assistance was also provided to the largest temple in Bali, Pura Besakih. The Dutch aid for the reconstruction of temples in North Bali produced visual changes and story modification in the reliefs, as evidenced in the Madue Karang Temple, where the relief form of people pedaling bicycles was slightly different before and after the earthquake.

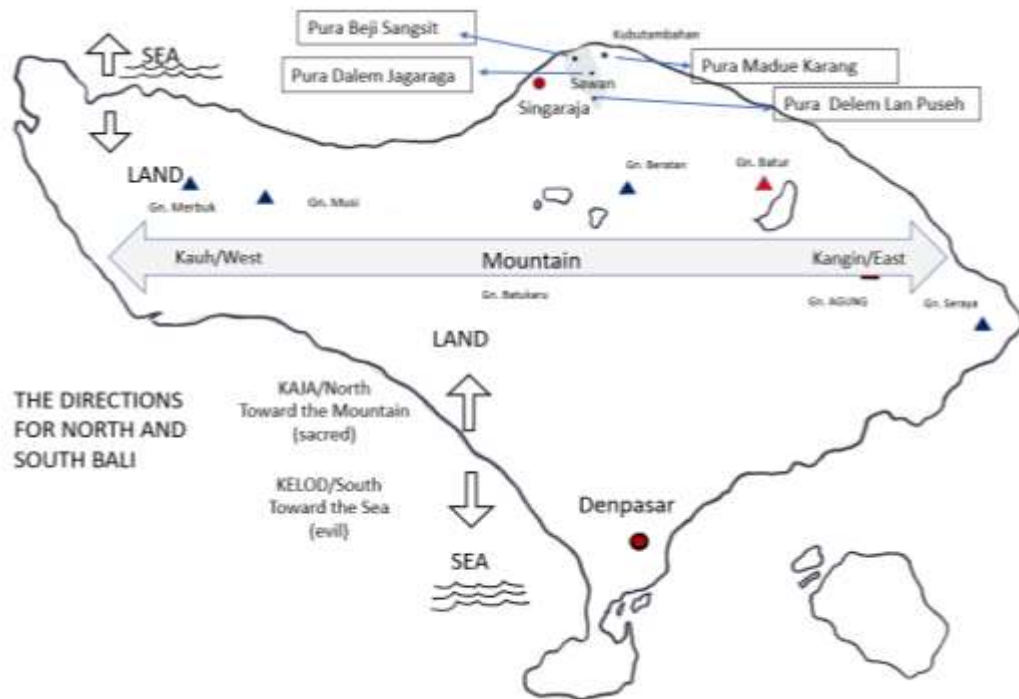


Figure 1. 3 Research location.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Generally, the embodiment of relief works of art carved on the walls of *Pura* (Hindu places of worship), *Griya* (priest's house), *Puri* (king's palace), *Kori* (gates), and other buildings in Bali still adheres to the rules of traditional art. These traditional reliefs were inherited from classical Balinese Hindu art and were heavily influenced by the Javanese Hindu cultural elements when Majapahit colonised Bali circa the 13th and 14th century AD. Such classical art underlined the development of Balinese art and has become the identity of its traditional arts to this day.

Majapahit's cultural and artistic heritage experienced its golden peak in Bali during the era of King Dalem Watu Renggong of the Gelgel Kingdom in Klungkung around 1460 AD to 1550 AD.³⁵ The decline of Majapahit in Java was caused by

³⁵ Ardika, Parimerta, Wirawan, *Sejarah*, 341-342

internal factors where the conquered kingdoms exploited the death of King Hayam Wuruk and the emergence of rebellions in fighting over the royal throne to break free and become independent kingdoms. King Dalem Watu Renggong also used such a situation to continue and maintain the Hindu-Majapahit culture. It is historically acknowledged that the Balinese kingdom centred in Gelgel was the saviour and successor to the greatness of the Majapahit kingdom and saved Hinduism from the process of Islamisation that hit the archipelago kingdom at that time.³⁶



Figure 1. 4 Traditional Balinese relief, Ramayana story.
Source: <https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/oriental-background-man-woman-surrounded-by>

Relief art is one of the traditional art forms in the Balinese society. It describes the aspect of *ngayah* or *yadnya* (sincerity), which is intended for the sake of service to the ancestors, gods, and rulers of Puri.³⁷ *Yadnya* in Balinese society is not only synonymous with materials and food offerings (ceremonies) but also incorporates the essence of focusing more on work to achieve *Siddhi*, which is dedicated to *Sang*

³⁶ I B. Sidemen. *Sejarah Badung 1776-1906* (Badung: Pemerintah Daerah Kabupaten Badung Daerah Tingkat II Bandung, 1992)

³⁷ Picard, *Bali*, 121.

Hyang Widhi (God).³⁸ There is no artistic profession in the modern (individual) sense; although there is respect for creative work such as *sangging*, which can be equated with artist. Traditional art has played an imperative role in various ceremonies where it stands as a medium for expressing the symbols of belief based on Hindu religious teachings. Classic art and religion become one unit in Balinese society.³⁹ Therefore, fine arts (e.g., relief art) are symbolic, magical, and philosophical. Likewise, the story scene refers to the book *Itihasa-Purana* (5th Veda), which teaches *dharma* or actual truth through stories of heroes in the Mahabharata and Ramayana.⁴⁰

The relief artworks carved on the walls of the four major temples in North Bali, Madue Karang Temple, Dalem Jagaraga Temple, Desa lan Puseh Temple, and Beji Sangsit Temple clearly show the forms of visualisation that differ from the traditional relief art. It used the theme of everyday reality, depicted industrial objects, and showed signs of modern art such as those brought by the colonials. According to several sources, changes in shape illustrated in the relief sculptures of these four temples were part of the exploitation of traditional art for the benefit of colonial political programmes in protecting their colonial territories.⁴¹

On the other hand, changes in the forms of reliefs occurred not through harmonious and perfect acculturation but rather were additions and forced adaptations to create new symbols that are yet to be known in the Balinese society. The addition of these new forms was part of Bali's imagery to support tourism programmes and

³⁸ Matapurkar, B.G, *Song of Science-Shrimad Bhagwad Gita: Science in Gita, A Scientific Song on Creator, Creation and Creature* (Tamil Nadu: Nation Press, 2020), 35-32.

³⁹ Sang Ayu Laksemi. “*Nilai Estetik Bali Kertha Gosa di Puri, Klungkung Bali*” (Dissertation ITB Bandung, 2013), 101.

⁴⁰ Klaus K. Klostermaire, *A Survey of Hinduisme*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007)

⁴¹ I Made Pageh, “Genealogi Balinisasi Zaman Kolonial Belanda: Analisis Kritis Bali Sebagai Museum Hidup,” *Seminar Nasional Riset Inovatif*, no. 2 (2017), 902-896.

restore the good name of the Dutch colonial government in Bali.⁴² It also aimed to accelerate the introduction of Western ideology (modernism) as applied by the Dutch in colonial countries. This was because the entire life and social order of the Balinese people were regulated by the Dutch East Indies government. As revealed by Vogler, those in power can only implement changes to a traditional (sacred) art style. The courage to change something established usually comes from the outsiders (foreigners) of local communities, such as through colonialism.⁴³



Figure 1. 5 One of the relief works at Desa lan Puseh Temple in Sudaji.
Source: *Island of Bali*, 1974.

The relief art in the four temples iconographically depicts pictures of industrial objects developed in the West (Europe), such as bicycles, jeeps, aeroplanes, cowboys, and sailing ships.⁴⁴ The everyday objects carved on these temples in Bali have historical backgrounds or stories that illustrate important events in the colonial period. Creating these reliefs certainly has a specific message and purpose besides the sensation raised in the local community.

⁴² Picard. *Bali*, 26-27.

⁴³ E.B. Vogler. “*Masyarakat dan Perubahan Gaya Seni*”, Makalah disajikan dalam Diskusi Ilmiah Arkeologi Indonesia. Jakarta-Bandung, 11-12 februari 1988, 40-41

⁴⁴ Miguel Covarrubias, *Pulau Bali; Temuan yang Menakjubkan* (Denpasar: Udayana Press, 2013), 194-190.

This study focused on exploring the symbols and meanings of relief art through Erwin Panofsky's Theory of Art History. It comprised three stages: pre-iconography, iconography, and iconology. Analysing these relief works of art did not stop at expressing meaning and symbols but also exploring the relationship between the place, namely the temple and the meaning of the art. This is because not all temples in North Bali were intervened by the colonialists. In this regard, another step was added to the three stages of Panofsky's theory to establish a complete and more cooperative analysis. The fourth step investigated the relationship between the meaning of works of art and the place (i.e., the temple). Such a step was adapted from the study by Keiven that investigated the reliefs of temples in the Majapahit era in East Java.⁴⁵

The Dutch colonial government chose temples as a place to introduce modern principles or elements with specific reasons and considerations of its location and theme of the carved story. Dutch scholars have conducted various research on the existence or role of temples in the Bali society. Temples in Bali are mainly the area or place of worship for Hindu-Balinese people. It is deemed sacred and possesses a vital role among the local society, which is strictly regulated in customary law. Temples in Bali were formed through a long historical journey from ancient Bali, medieval Bali, classical Bali, colonialism, and until the present time. Its forerunners have existed since pre-historic times, namely *punden berundak* (stepped pyramid). The concept of spatial planning and architectural buildings began in the ancient Balinese era around the 10th century AD.⁴⁶ Temples are also the places where festive activities of religious rituals and arts take place, as well as requests for blessings from

⁴⁵ Lydia Kieven, *Menelusuri Figur Bertopi Dalam Relief Candi Zaman Majapahit* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2014), 14.

⁴⁶ Rahmat Subagya, *Agama Asli Indonesia* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1981)

the gods and ancestral spirits who descend into the world through offerings of food and fruit that are presented artistically.⁴⁷

The existence of numerous temples in Bali shows that Balinese people are known for being religious. This gave Bali the nickname "Island of a Thousand Temples" and prompted the rise of religious ceremonies involving the human life cycle *Manusia Yadnya* and *piodalan* ceremonies *Dewa Yadnya*. As revealed by Korn, the spiritual nature of the rural community in Bali forms a closed and self-sufficient unit known as "republic".⁴⁸ Each traditional village *pakraman* in Bali has its respective area, temple, and cemetery. This shows that temples have a binding role in the continuity of community life for the Balinese people, which is based on the *awig-awig* (traditional rules) in each village.

In explaining the Balinese community's attachment to the existence of temple, Geertz said that the continuity of ritual ceremonies and traditional activities were initiated by the Brahmins who held religious knowledge as well as the nobles (kings) as the owners of capital or organising costs. Geertz viewed the rural "republic" in Bali as similar to a "theatre" country, meaning that the village area and its community life are managed and highly dependent on the Brahmins and aristocrats as well as the *Vasya* (Tri Wangsa).⁴⁹

By demonstrating the critical and strategic function of the temple in Balinese society, the colonials used this to infuse modern elements as part of their political policies. The ruler's hegemony as the presenter or initiator of the creation of the relief

⁴⁷ Wiyoso Yudoseputro, *Jejak-Jejak Tradisi Bahasa Rupa Indonesia Lama* (Jakarta: Indonesia Visual Art Foundation, 2008), 124.

⁴⁸ Wayan Ardika, *Kata Pengantar untuk Karya-karya Goris dalam Goris R. Sifat Relegius Masyarakat Pedesaan di Bali* (Denpasar: Udayana University Press: 2012), IX.

⁴⁹ Clifford Geertz, *Negara Teater*, trans. Hartono Adikusumo (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Bentang Budaya, 2000), 21-20.