

DUTCH COLONIALISM SYMBOLS AT THE RELIEFS ON JAGARAGA TEMPLE, NORTHERN BALI

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Abstract: Temple (Pura and Candi) reliefs in Bali usually depicts stories of gods or mortal life that are sourced from public beliefs about their religion. The sources of these stories came from the epic of Ramayana, Mahabharata and Tantri. However, the Jagaraga Temple in northern Bali is different –it has its own special relief embodiments by blending modern shapes and symbols in both the story and the display. Modern shapes and symbols are presented with depictions of cars, bikes, drunkards, bandits, fishermen, and so forth. Even so, the techniques and ways of expressing these reliefs still align with traditional Balinese principles in carving statues and reliefs. This study aimed to determine the elements of relief formation in Jagaraga Temple that can be traced back to the history of its inception. The Dutch colonial influence that carries these modern symbols provided a substantial contribution to it, aided by the open character of northern Balinese living in coastal areas that makes them easy to accept new things. The data collection is done by conducting observation, interviews, literatures study, with relief visualizations analysis based on several constituent factors such as environmental factors, both external and internal. The external influences were brought by Dutch colonial, while the internal came from the Sangging as the relief carver, and people of Bali who remained obedient to their custom and belief. The alteration in symbols and values of the traditional Balinese relief artworks—from sacred to profane – provides visual diversity to the development of traditional Balinese art.

Keywords : Relief, Depiction, Symbol

1. INTRODUCTION

The building walls in the Balinese temple are called "*Penyengker*". The *Penyengker* walls are usually decorated with carving or sculpture of mythology, legends, stories and folklores that relate to the Balinese ceremonial and way of life. Popular tales that are often depicted on temple wall reliefs are the Wayang puppet story of Mahabratha and Ramayana, the Lubdaka folklore, and the fable collection of Ni Dyah Tantri. Other than that, the *Penyengker* are often only decorated with *Pepatran* (ornaments) and a bouquet of *Batu Karang* (sheer rock).

The relief displays in Balinese temples are generally identical to those found in eastern Javanese temples in terms of both storytelling and the display forms. Both regions created similar portrayal of the Wayang puppet character, and stylized plants and animals either in form and meaning. It is because historically, Bali has a good relationship with the kingdoms in Eastern Java, especially Majapahit.

Unique reliefs can be found in several temples in northern Bali villages, such as Beji Temple in Sangsit, Maduwe Karang Temple in Kubutambahan, and Pura Dalem Jagaraga in Sawan—all located in Buleleng district. Pura Dalem Jagaraga, estimated to have existed before the arrival of the Dutch colonial, had experienced destruction and rebuilt at the colonization period. The relief depictions and appearances on the walls of this temple do not align with shapes or symbols contained in the Balinese teachings and life philosophy. Forms and symbols that are present were depiction of everyday objects.

The uniqueness of the particular temple relief was revealed by Miguel Covarobias (1947: 185) who came to Bali and wrote in his book entitled "Island of Bali." In northern Bali, there are unique reliefs that resemble "comic strips." There are depiction of bandits carrying pistol and pointing the

gun at two motorists, mechanic repairing car, two fat persons drinking beer, people riding bicycles, and aircraft. These depiction are illustrated in a more freely manner, to the likes of cartoon figures.

The influence of modern elements in relief patterns found in northern Bali temples are estimated to occur when Bali was conquered by the Dutch through a great war between the people of Buleleng and the Dutch East India Company. The heavy-toll war is known as the Puputan Jagaraga War led by I Gusti Ketut Jelantik in 1846 and ended in 1849. At the time of the Dutch annexation, Buleleng people start to get acquainted with modern things such as western lifestyle and industrial products that are entirely new for the local community.

Description of events experienced by the people of Buleleng are visualized through reliefs on Pura Dalem Jagaraga, which rendition blended with unique ornamentation of Bali. The shift in the symbolic form of Pura Jagaraga relief is associated with forming factors such as the *Sangging* (artist) and the Balinese themselves, especially those who live in northern Bali that has a different character from the people in the south.

The transformation process in the shape and symbols of the relief artworks is very interesting to study from the aspect of its change of course, symbolic meanings, and the emergence of new artistic forms. The age challenge in the fields of art always meet a response from the Balinese.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As a work of art, forms of relief depend on the *Sangging*, the audience and its content. In the context of the Balinese, it is mandatory to first understand that the role of artists here are different to the terminology offered by the West. *Sangging* is a skilled person who understands the rules of traditional arts, both two and three-dimensional. Besides, the *Sangging* is also required to abide religious rules and local customs.

As a work of art it is certainly attractive to see the creative process of the artist. Internal processes at the artist side will often bring up depictions of certain shapes that have a particular meaning or symbolism on their own. This symbolic process can be enjoyed through the forms arranged within a variety of mediums and workmanships. The externalization or output of these direct internal processes is called symbolic expression (Sumardjo, 2000:140). Further disclosed in Cassirer (1987: 211), the meaning of the artwork will be served through artist's expressions of symbols created through the medium and the technique used. Symbols are highly sensual and immanent elements attached within the perceived meaning of shapes and structures. Through symbols, observers try to interpret and grasp the meaning of a work of art based on their experience. The description of the reliefs on Jagaraga Temple can be interpreted through reading marks carved on its wall.

In Liliwari, (2014: 296), signs and symbols are said to be a visual illustration that represents the idea—a deeper indicator of a universal truth. The symbol is the foundation of a human understanding that serves as a vehicle - through which all concepts of human knowledge passes by. Human imagination and ideas are embodied in symbols. The symbol is what moves the humanity.

In semiotics, symbols are signs made by convention or regulations, agreed to be understood together. Symbols can only be acknowledged if one already understands the meaning of which has been agreed in advance. (Sudjiman, 1992:9). At the time of its existence, the Balinese do not assume the meaning of novel display forms on Jagaraga Temple relief. The *Sangging* then made an explanation to enhance the community awareness – a process that certainly took long amount of time.

3. THE RESEARCH METHOD

To analyze the relief depiction of Pura Dalem Jagaraga, the author uses visual analysis, starting from the stage of description, analysis, interpretation, to the stage of assessment. By using a tiered stages, the meaning and formation process of the depiction can be assumed (Soewardikun, 2013: 39). To support the outlined relief analysis, as well as to obtain valid data, this study is amplified

with direct observation to the location of the object of study, while strengthened by interviews of expert informants, and literature study to validate all field data obtained.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pura Geolocation: The Jagaraga village geographically stood at a height of 100-150 meters above sea level, and lie within an area of approximately 383 hectares, 11 kilometers to the east of regency capital Singaraja. It is administratively located in the District of Sawan, Buleleng northern Bali. Pura Dalem Jagaraga is classified into the "*Kahyangan Tiga*" (Three Paradises), comprised of *Pura Desa* (Village Temple), *Pura Puseh* (Temple of Origin), and *Pura Dalem* (Temple of the Dead). Every village in Balinese realm typically has the three. Sometimes, *Pura Desa* and *Pura Puseh* are integrated or located in one area. In Balinese society, each of the "*Kahyangan Tiga*" are believed to host the manifestation of the trinity of Supreme God (*Tri Murti*) consisting of Lord Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Brahma the creator resides in the *Pura Desa*, Vishnu the preserver sit at *Pura Puseh*, while Shiva the destroyer sit at *Pura Dalem*.



Figure 1 Pura Dalem Jagaraga
Source: Personal documentation

The ornaments and decoration of Pura Dalem Jagaraga in general are identical to the likes of common temples in Bali. However, the display feels really solid and redundant with more exaggerating sculpture in volume, and a bit more relaxed styling that is reminiscent of the Baroque era in Europe.

Due to the uniqueness of the temple, thus making it a tourist destination in Bali for its relief depictions. These reliefs that are estimated to have existed since the Dutch era, are carved with shapes of everyday objects that mingle with local figures such as Wayang puppets and stylized trees. Reliefs are made by utilizing *batu paras* or local sandstones. A large part of these reliefs is situated on the outside the walls near the village road.

The temple relief depiction on the outer walls are divided into two parts. There are two panels on right side of the temple gate, and one panel on each of the front and rear surface of left side. The "panel" is used as a term to enable authors easily expose the forms contained in the reliefs, thus making it easy to analyze. Each scene of the relief panels measuring approximately 4x1 meter, extending along the outer walls of the temple walls, with an exception of one panel that located on the inside.



Figure 2 First panel of the right-side relief on gate of Pura Jagaraga
Sumber : Personal documentation

First panel, (see Figure 2) from left to right, a sort of Wayang figure of Arjuna is being illustrated to have accompanied by a something akin to a giant at behind. At the bottom, a *panakawan* character known as *Tualen* (Semar) confronts Arjuna. These fragmented portrayal of Wayang characters are limited by deep crevices resembling fissures.

The same panel also shows stylized plants, next to the depiction of people carrying guns and others driving open-wheel car with three-colored flag, squied by a sitting dog. The relief illustration is clarified and copied by Miguel Covarobias as seen in Figure 3.

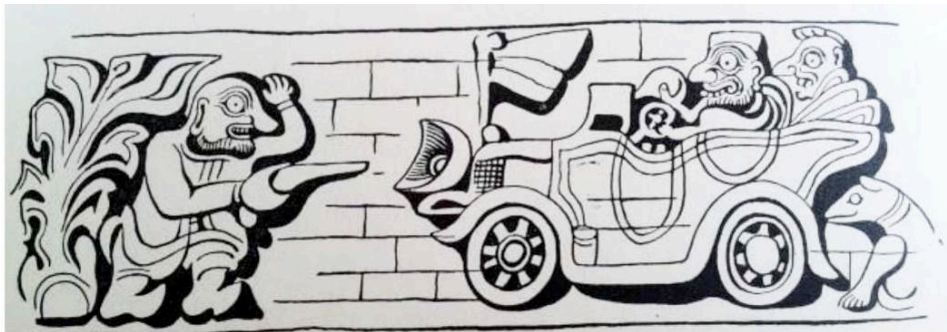


Figure 3 Covarobias' sketch to further clarify first panel
Source: *Island of Bali* (1947)



Figure 4 Second panel of Jagaraga relief depiction on the middle temple gate
Source: Personal documents

The second panel is ordered from right to left. A three-masted houses (*Saka*) is seen to enclose a sort of door. Next to the house there is a person sitting down while smoking and wearing shoes. Next to him, a car - mini bus - are being occupied by a driver and two passengers. Beside the figures there are a clown and a female whose both genitals are being depicted.



Figure 5 third panel of Jagaraga relief depiction
Source: Personal documentation

The third panel depicts a more diverse figuration with scenes from everyday life stories. Starting from the depiction of mythical creatures portrayed with spooky, bulging eyes, fangs, and took a form of scaly snakes with fins. Beside the snake, people are seen riding bikes below two aircraft in flight. Under the aircraft there are two male figures wearing only rags (*Kamben*) looking upwards. Next of it, someone climbs a tree while assisted by two persons underneath. Alongside them, a larger character is seen wearing hat, long pants and boots while fishing and successfully hooked a big fish. Two persons play bird-shaped kite, while another two rowing a boat and squied underneath by fish heads.

Relief illustration on the inside of the Jagaraga temple wall describes a creature resembling a lizard with big eyes, open mouth, and fangs eating humans. Above them, a crescent-shaped boat appears. On the right side two large fish – one intact and the other smaller - pictured as somewhat shriveled.



Figure 6 Forth panel of Jagaraga relief depiction on the inside
Source: Personal documentation

4.1 Analysis Result

Based on the panel presentation, it shows that there are difference in prevalent depiction formats that align with standard relief portrayal in Bali. This is seen when it comes to figures and its supportive objects. It is uncommon for Balinese temple (Pura) that the relief depicted there shows modern, everyday objects such as cars, aircrafts, ships, laying kites and bicycles as well as public daily activities - people riding bikes, driving a car, housekeeping, fishing, and so forth.

The presence of these reliefs with its ornaments and statues in the temple building are a bit distinctive that it no longer follows the standard Wayang figure and bas-relief illustration in Bali. The present forms looks highly spontaneous and decorative, stylized as cartoon (distortion) which do not have the specific pattern. One figure sometimes depicted larger and stand out from the others. Such portrayal are reminiscent of children's drawings, emphasizing the main figures in larger size.

The presence of the carved, peculiar figures that resemble Dutchmen on the temple walls is a reminder or markings made by the Sangging (artists) that the region was experiencing a historic event known as The Jagaraga War, with the Jagaraga village played the role as the last bastion for the people of Buleleng.

Apart from its purpose as a reminder, the freedom of shape markings present on the temple walls was also influenced by the Buleleng open society who accepts novelty easily due to their coastal areas. Since the Dutch conquered Buleleng, the Bali society became acquainted with the Dutch lifestyle such as driving car, riding bicycle, drinking beer, owning fire guns and using other equipments from Europe. Cars, bikes, planes, and others were new things for them. These things quickly got response and Bali-nized. That is because when there are things that are considered new and strange, a society will quickly process and accommodate them to their tradition so that these novelties become theirs. One example that still exist today in Bali society is the use of *Uang Kepeng* (Chinese coin) as a ritual (*Upakara*) paraphernalia.

Judging from the role of Pura regarding these depiction icons whether they are violating the rules, the function of the temple as proposed by Wiyoso, is not a place of cult. Pura is a sociable place to receive the grace of God Almighty (*Sang Hyang Widhi*) rather than a storage revering statues or sculptures. The depiction of these reliefs acts a commemoration and decoration for the temple walls. Therefore, the appearance of Dutch colonialism in the carving created by the Balinese people (*the Sangging*) is a marks that Bali was once experiencing an event that deeply affect them.

From the point of view of Bali people in art, everything is always based on the concept of "*Rwa Bhineda*" or the concept of a bi-singularity, which consist of *Tri Hita Karana* and *Tri Pramana* which give spaces for the artist's creations. *Rwa Bhineda* are two different things but one of them is the aesthetic aspect of the balance which encourages the artists to have always done things or work properly. *Tri Hita Karana* concept put a basis on harmony and happiness that must be aligned to the relationship between man and the Creator, man with the others, and man with natural surroundings. The principles of *Desa, Kala, Patra*, are the adaptation made by the Balinese to respond the change and development in age. The advancement of Balinese art, especially fine arts, happen because their ability to adapt and then process foreign elements to embrace it as their own (*Membali*).

This process of acculturation and assimilation are then clearly seen in the development of Balinese art, heavily influenced by European academics visiting Bali like Walter Spies, Rudolf Bonnet, Arie Smith and the others. The influx of foreigners made an impact on changes in the Balinese art pattern, illustration development, and ways to do art, from the traditional artwork pattern to the modern one.

5. CONCLUSION

The existence of an artwork, particularly relief could not be separated from its process such as the forming factors of its formation, both internal (way of life, skills possessed); and external (foreign culture influence, media and age development). Therefore, the existence of an artwork will always undergo a change, transforming according to time.

Developmental changes of artwork, especially shown at the Jagaraga Temple relief in northern Bali, cannot be separated from its geographical area as a coastal region that is open and easy to accept newcomers and new things. It is quite the opposite of southern Bali which slow to adapt with the development of modern art, and still hold strongly to the classic artistic taste.

Modern influences in the northern Bali that were brought by the Dutch, and the introduction of Bali by the Netherlands as a tourist area, invited a lot of people who travelled from Europe to Bali. Many European artists and academics came to Bali to change the artistic pattern and arrangements, thus making Balinese art rife with diversity in forms and way of expressions. The sacred function of art also degraded down towards a more secular one.

Research in artwork process is very attractive topic, given the fact that the creation of one will always undergo a long process, either in terms of historical, geographical and socio-cultural, alongside the talent and skills as well as insight from the artists themselves. The development and diversity of Balinese arts were rapidly progressing when Bali was visited by many Europeans, that some of them chose settled there until today. It turns out that the blend of cultural elements provides a special appeal, giving the water for new artworks to sail adrift from the preexisting aesthetics standards. This flexibility sparked the artists to explore their individual styling.

Albeit not deep, the authors hope this study prove to be useful for the development of visual communication design field and all related stakeholders. Furthermore, the research can be continued and enhanced to complement the shortcomings in this study.

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