



Aesthetic Study of Temple Architecture in Bali: A Case Study of *Pamesuan Pura Puru Sada*, *Pura Agung Kentel Bumi*, and *Pura Batuan*

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Abstract—A temple as a place of worship is a sacred building, the center of worship of *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa* (God Almighty for Hindus) and His manifestations, so that its placement is in a part that is considered main in the land plan of a village or other special place according to applicable local village regulations. In the construction and planning, determining the size, layout, as well as the meaning and symbolism of each temple building in Bali has been stated in the *lontar Asta Kosala*. Meanwhile, the land management is stated in *lontar Asta Bumi*. Even though it was built based on concepts from the same *lontar* source, the shape and appearance of each temple can be very different. Each region in Bali has a unique architectural style, both in ornamentation, use of materials, and even the proportions of the form. In the view of Balinese architecture, the assessment of aesthetic quality is more focused on meaning, taste, and philosophical values, so the assessment tends to be subjective. This research seeks to examine the relationships between humans and the environment, especially those related to aesthetic aspects. The research method used is interpretive criticism, which is not influenced by certain views or doctrines and does not base itself on measurable objectivity. The results of the research show that there is an influence of formal aesthetics on the sensory and symbolic, where the shape and dimensions of the gates (both *Candi Bentar* and *Kori Agung*) have given an aesthetic impression to observers, which is then captured by visual sensors and interpreted.

Keywords: aesthetic; *pura*; *pamesuan*; human and environmental relations

1. Introduction

Since its inception, *Nusantara's* architecture has been a prominent and evolving feature of Indonesian society. The people of *Nusantara* adapt their architectural designs to achieve a harmonious integration with the surrounding natural environment. Consequently, a variety of *Nusantara* architecture emerges, distinct from Western architecture. One example is Balinese architecture. Residences, places of worship like temples, *pemerajan*, and *sanggah*, and public buildings like *bale banjar* and *bale kul-kul* all feature Balinese architecture.

The temple is a sanctified building that serves as a place of worship for *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*, the supreme deity in Hinduism, and His various incarnations. In order for it to be situated at a prominent location as specified in the land plan of a

village or any other designated area in accordance with the relevant local village regulations.

The *lontar Asta Kosala* provides explicit guidance on the dimensions, arrangement, and symbolic significance of every temple building in Bali, thereby informing the construction and design process. The *Lontar Asta Bumi* describes land management. These *lontar* texts serve as a valuable reference for temple planning and construction.

Each temple, though derived from the same *lontar* source, may exhibit distinct variations in shape and appearance. Every location in Bali shows a distinct architectural style, characterised by its unique ornamentation, choice of materials, and even the dimensions of its structures. The outcome of this is based on the availability of regional natural resources and the capabilities of local people. The majority of temples in Gianyar Regency are renowned for their beautiful ornamentation. In addition to their

ornamental decorations, the temples in Klungkung Regency possess distinctive features that enhance their attractive appearance.

This temple stands out compared to the majority of Denpasar temples, which lack elaborate ornamentation and have a basic appearance. Nevertheless, onlookers still find all three to be aesthetically pleasing.

From an architectural design perspective, Lang (1987) categorizes aesthetic theory into four distinct categories: formal aesthetics (which emphasizes aesthetic values related to objects), sensory aesthetics (which arise from pleasant sensations such as color, texture, and smell), symbolic aesthetics (which are produced through socio-cultural aspects), and intellectual aesthetics (which are created through meaning). Robert G. Hershberger (1974) classified meaning in architecture into two distinct categories: representational meaning, which pertains to the influence of the surrounding environment on architecture, and responsive meaning, which pertains to individual responses that are expressed individually.

Balinese architecture primarily centres the evaluation of aesthetic excellence around meaning, preference, and philosophical principles, leading to a subjective assessment. Therefore, it is important to examine how spectators perceive the aesthetic qualities of temples in Bali. By applying the idea of human-environmental connections, we can gain a more profound understanding of the factors that contribute to the aesthetic appeal or lack thereof in architectural works. The use of sensory aesthetics and symbolism achieves this. To have a deeper understanding of purist architecture, it is necessary to explore the subjective perspective of the viewer and the influence of the purist as a creator of the environment. Therefore, the study will utilize architectural digestion theory and behavior setting as indicators to thoroughly examine the aesthetic success of temple architecture in Bali.

2. Method

The selected architectural subject is the temple building in Bali. An architectural perspective will be used to analyze the aesthetic quality of their attractiveness. The researchers chose *Pura* Puru Sada in Badung for this study because of its simplicity, *Pura* Agung Kentel Bumi in Klungkung, and *Pura* Batuan in Gianyar because of their intricate decorations. All three temples, despite their differences, are considered beautiful and possess unique qualities. The only physical feature of the temple that will be observed is the *pamesuan* (gate).

The methodology used in this study is descriptive criticism. The researchers will analyze the aesthetic components present in the three temples selected for the study. Data analysis employs the interpretive critical approach, which involves examining architectural things using all five senses and informed by knowledge. In this instance, scholars, utilizing their cognitive comprehension, want to elucidate the significance encapsulated inside the architectural *pamesuan* temple through a narrative format.

3. Results and Discussion

We study Bali's temple architecture through the lens of formal aesthetics to determine its beauty. Each observer's subjective observation allows us to assess whether a work of architecture is truly beautiful or not. By utilizing the theory of human-environment relations, we can gain a deeper understanding of the perception of beauty in architectural works, specifically through sensory and symbolic aesthetics. Therefore, we will deepen our study of temple architecture by exploring the observer's subjectivity and the temple's role in environmental setting. We will use the theory of architectural meaning and behavior setting as indicators to further explore the aesthetic success of Bali's temple architecture.

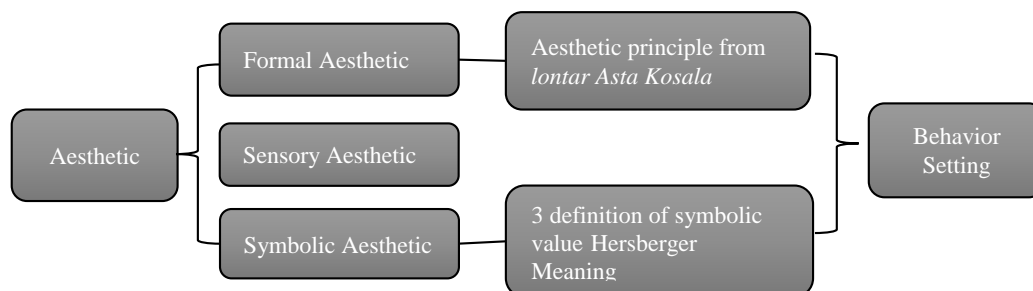


Figure 1. Framework of thinking
Source: Satria, 2022

Observation of Behaviour Setting

Generally, the temple divides into three *mandalas*, indicating the presence of at least three physical settings within one temple yard. Each setting is physically limited by a *panyenger* wall (the surrounding wall) and marked by a *pamesuan* (gate).

Setting 1: *Nista mandala* (front yard) for public activities or ceremony preparations. Generally marked by *candi bentar*.

Setting 2: *Madya Mandala* (middle yard) for ceremony preparation activities. Generally marked by *candi bentar*.

Setting 3: The main *mandala* (main yard) for ceremony activities. Typically, *kori agung* or *candi kurung*, which is flanked by two small *candi bentar*.

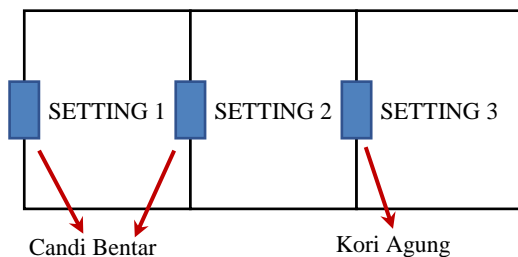


Figure 2. Schematic of Temple *Mandala*
Source: Satria, 2022

Apart from *Pura* Puru Sada, the other two case studies have several differences, including: *Pura* Agung Kentel Gumi consists of 5 *mandalas* because there are 3 temples, namely the *Maospahit*, *Masceti*, and *Pura* Kentel Gumi. This temple features a *nista mandala*, a *madya mandala*, and three main *mandalas*. The *maospahit* and *masceti* temple *mandalas* are located to the right and left of the main *kentel gumi mandala*, respectively, and are only accessible through the main *mandala*. So, in this research, the two temple courtyards can be considered one setting, namely setting 3.

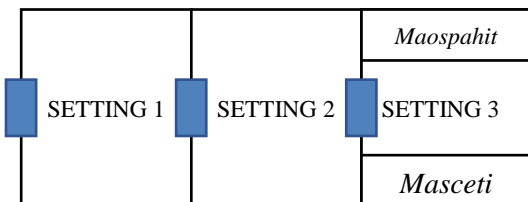


Figure 3. Schematic of *Pura* Agung Kentel Gumi
Source: Satria, 2022

Pura Batuan's *mandala* arrangement differs from temples in general, where setting 2 is next to setting 3, as shown in figure 4. At *Pura* Batuan, we conducted observations during the day at two specific times: during the Kuningan Day prayers and on weekdays. At the other two temples, we can only conduct this observation one day prior to Kuningan Day. The actors

and roles observed are based on Bali's cultural and social subsystems. The following are the actors and roles in each setting on Kuningan Day:

In setting 3, there are *pemangku* leading prayers, people praying, *pemangku* assistant giving *tirta*, and visitors (tourists) taking pictures (photos). In setting 2, there are *pemangku* and *pemangku* assistant preparing prayer facilities, visitors (tourists) taking pictures (photos), and tour guides. In setting 1, there are visitors (tourists) taking pictures (photos) and a tour guide. Meanwhile, on normal days, there are no prayer activities. As a result, there are no people or stakeholders in the setting. At certain hours, only assistants *mebanten* (offer offerings) in the temple area. The rest of the roles that seem dominant are those of the visitors taking photos and the tour guide.

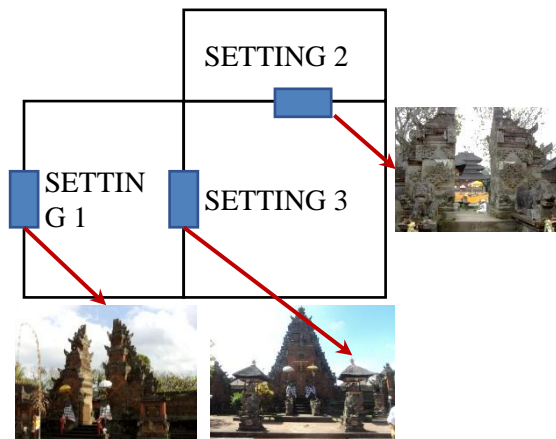


Figure 4. Schematic of *Pura* Batuan, Gianyar
Source: Satria, 2022

Formal Aesthetic Observation

The geometric composition of each temple reveals several points. In general, the gate's tall and large dimensions and proportions create a sense of grandeur. The open layout of the temple provides an inviting response. The *kori*'s more majestic and closed arrangement forms a less inviting response. *Pura* Puru Sada, a play on the arrangement of red bricks, produces a symmetrical geometric pattern with repetition in the ornamentation, which gives a formal impression.



Figure 5. *Pura* Sada Temple
Source: Satria, 2022

The dominance of red can give the impression of heat, but in Balinese society's cultural subsystem, red brick is a natural color. Apart from that, the green color of the grass seems to act as a balance. At *Pura Agung Kentel Gumi*, there is asymmetry in the gate ornaments. However, the symmetrical basic shape and similar carving standards can still create the impression of symmetry and balance. The carvings are not detailed and have many angles, balanced by the curved 'head' of the *kori* (called *bentala*, typical of Klungkung). The combination of brick red and gray on the face also gives a balanced impression.



Figure 6. Kental Gumi Temple
Source: Satria, 2022

Detailed and naturalistic carvings dominate the gate of *Pura Batuan*, creating a busy impression. There is a clear sense of symmetry and balance. However, even though it is dominated by carved features, the basic color of the red brick is still clearly visible. Coupled with the gold *prada* color on the doors, it adds a luxurious impression to the grand corridor. In Lang (1987), more complex patterns provide both attraction and pleasure. Therefore, we can assert that *Pura Batuan* more detailed and complex corridor offers greater attraction compared to the other two temples.

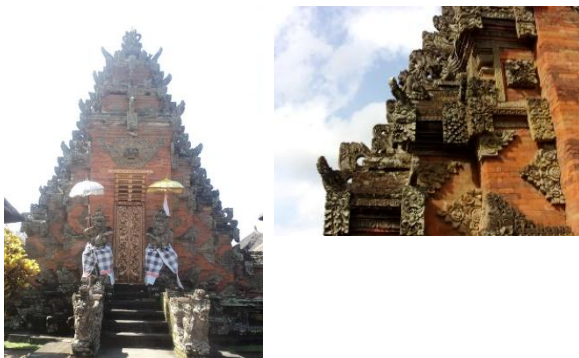


Figure 7. Batuan Temple
Source: Satria, 2022

Sensory Aesthetic Observations

The open prayer space means that activities are very weather-dependent, so the sensory aesthetics felt are also very weather-dependent. The sensory aesthetics that occur in this prayer include the senses of sight, smell, touch, and hearing, with the following explanation: Lighting, at its maximum (brightness), creates shadows. The play of colors between brick red, gray, and paving green provides a varied experience for the vision sensor. Prayer activities, particularly the use of fragrant incense, influence the sense of smell. To the touch, the air is hot, but in shaded areas, it gives the impression of being colder, even though the actual temperature may be the same. We can hear the sounds of insects and the ringing of the bell, which signifies the leader of the ceremony.



Figure 8. Prayer activities in *Pura Batuan*, Gianyar
Source: Satria, 2022



Figure 9. Prayer activities in *Puru Sada Temple*, Badung
Source: Satria, 2022

The differences in materials at the temple's base can also have an impact on the sensors. The entire composition of *Pura Puru Sada* is grass, contributing to its fresh taste. The pavement at *Pura Agung Kentel Gumi* and *Pura Batuan* consider people who engage in prayer activities find comfort in the paving and freshness in the grass. feeling of freshness (grass). Several senses capture the sensory aesthetics, revealing the influence of covert acts on overt actions, including those of prayer activity participants. The smell of incense and the sound of bells provide a different atmosphere, which gives rise to ritual

meaning in prayer activities, so that people can carry out prayer activities more calmly.

The shadows that appear give the impression that they are shady and cool, so people tend to look for places to sit in shaded areas. This can be seen in **Figure 8**, **Figure 9**, and **Figure 10**. People tend to sit on paving, but at *Puru Sada* Temple, which is without paving, people get used to sitting on the grass.



Figure 10. Prayer activities in *Pura* Agung Kentel Gumi, Klungkung
Source: Satria, 2022

Symbolic Aesthetic Observations

The gate, as a reflection of the temple, based on three definitions of symbolic value, can fulfill the needs of identity, appreciation, and affiliation for each temple. The different types also fulfill the three values of each *mandala*. The beauty of the gate embodies both the artist's creativity and the unique characteristics of the region. *Pura* Puru Sada, like most of the temples in the Badung and Denpasar areas, uses red brick as the main material, with typical ornaments resulting from playing with the arrangement of the bricks. *Pura* Agung Kentel Gumi uses red brick and sandstone typical of Klungkung, with ornaments carved into the sandstone. *Pura* Batuan also uses red brick and sandstone, but the latter comes from Gianyar. Where the sandstone is softer and easier to carve, the ornaments appear more detailed.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the current disparities, the criterion for constructing each gate still adheres to *Asta Kosal-Kosali*. The artisans do not have perfect control over the proportions, dimensions, and positioning of ornamentation. It is evident that the cultural subsystem, namely the strong traditions at each gate, has a significant influence. This gate is considered a delineation between different environments. The form and engravings of the gate possess their own symbolic artistic significance.



Figure 11. The gate of *Pura* Puru Sada, Badung
Source: Satria, 2022



Figure 12. The gate of *Pura* Agung Kentel Gumi, Klungkung
Source: Satria, 2022



Figure 13. The gate of Batuan Temple, Gianyar
Source: Satria, 2022

According to Hersberger's theory of meaning, the representation observed on the gate can be interpreted as follows: The apparent shape of the gate projecting from the wall of the pusher represents its role as an entryway. Referential meaning comprises three fundamental levels, specifically:

- (1) Recognition of use: People interpret this type of gate as an entrance to a specific *mandala*.
- (2) Recognition of purpose: Users recognize the open shape of the *Candi Bentar* as a sign of entry, while those who are more "sacred" recognize the more closed *kori*, the stairs, and the closed doors as signs of entry.

(3) Recognition of value: People interpret the sacred values of the *Bentar* and *Kori Agung* temples differently due to their differences in shape, dimensions, and height of the levels.

is adorned with sculptures of coral boma and figurines acting as guardians. During traditional ceremonies, it is customary to adorn the gate with umbrellas and penjors as markers.



Figure 14. Batuan Temple's *Candi Bentar*, Gianyar
Source: Satria, 2022



Figure 17. *Tedeng Aling-Aling* Kentel Gumi Temple (left) dan Karang Boma ornament in the Puru Sada Temple (right)
Source: Satria, 2022



Figure 15. *Kori Agung* Kentel Gumi Temple, Klungkung
Source: Satria, 2022



Figure 18. *Penjor* and umbrella installation at the gate
Source: Satria, 2022



Figure 16. The breadth of *candi bentar* is designed to accommodate only one individual
Source: Satria, 2022

Upon perceiving the gate's aesthetic qualities, a meaningful response arises, unveiling the impact of the hidden action on the apparent action. Consequently, this leads to a multitude of interpretations within the gate. The tiny size of the door implies that users must enter in an organized and disciplined manner. Security: the installation of a protective barrier on the interior of the gate is thought to prevent detrimental impacts. The gate

4. Conclusion

Through careful study of the three temples, it becomes evident that formal aesthetics have a significant impact on both the sensory and symbolic aspects. The shape and size of the gate (both *Candi Bentar* and *Kori Agung*) create an aesthetic impression for the observer, which is subsequently caught by the vision sensor and analyzed. The primary significance lies in the depiction of the gate's form, which is thereafter interpreted in a responsive manner.

The formal aesthetics of a brief temple capture the majestic and inviting image conveyed by its shape, sculptures, and colors. This impacts the visual sensors, which contribute to a sensory-aesthetic perception. The gate's fundamental form and unique engravings, when interpreted in many ways, contribute to its symbolic artistic significance.

Variances in the interpretation of aesthetics seem to impact the development of behavior settings. The various categories of gates have an impact on the creation of the three temple configurations. The presence of umbrellas and penjors at the entrance, together with other religious

decorations in the temple vicinity, significantly impact the arrangement of prayer spaces in the main courtyard of the temple.

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