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# Multicultural Aesthetics of the Ornaments of Puri Agung Karangasem

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**ABSTRACT**
This study examines the multicultural aesthetics of the ornaments of Puri Agung Karangasem, rooted in Balinese tradition and enriched by Indian, Javanese, Chinese and European elements and formal tendencies associated with Islamic art. This interpretative qualitative study used visual observation, documentation, interviews and a literature review. The objects include *Singa Ambara Raja*, *karang sae bermahkota*, dancing lions (*singa menari*), *karang singa bersayap*, *patra olanda*, *patra cina*, *karang asti*, *karang goak*, column-base ornaments and European floral-geometric motifs. The findings show that their aesthetic value is formed through unity, symmetry, rhythm, hierarchy, controlled complexity, clarity of line and proportional relationships between convex and concave surfaces. Cast-concrete production creates shallow relief, known as *tapak sida*, raised *cawian* lines, consistent dimensions and relatively smooth surfaces. Multicultural aesthetics does not diminish local identity; the Balinese systems of *kekarangan* and *pepatraan* provide the structure that unifies diverse visual sources and establishes the distinctive ornamental character of Puri Agung Karangasem.

**KEYWORDS**
Multicultural Aesthetics, Balinese Ornament, Cast Concrete, *Tapak Sida*, Puri Agung Karangasem

## Introduction

Puri Agung Karangasem is one of Bali's royal complexes distinguished by the visual richness of its diverse ornaments. Its buildings feature Balinese *kekarangan* and *pepatraan*, lion figures associated with royal identity, Chinese-influenced flora, Baroque flora and European motifs on neoclassical elements. This diversity does not appear as a collection of separate fragments; rather, it forms an ornamental environment unified by form, material and technique. Ornament therefore serves not only as decoration but also as a visual language that expresses royal identity, cultural openness and the ability of local artists to transform multiple references into forms distinctive to Karangasem. Previous research has recorded Balinese and Chinese ornaments and the use of casting techniques at Puri Agung Karangasem [1] , while a subsequent

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study examined the integration of Balinese, Chinese and European ornaments in the *puri* (palace) architecture [2].

This richness is rooted in the system of traditional Balinese ornament. Balinese decorative forms include *keketusan, pepatraan, kekarangan* and mythological figures; *karang asti, karang goak, karang boma, karang sae, karang bentulu, patra punggel, patra sari, patra cina,* and *patra olanda* belong to these classifications [3]. Balinese tradition developed through long-standing connections with the Hindu-Buddhist worlds of India and Java and later interacted with Chinese and Islamic networks and colonial Europe [4], [5]. Indian influence can be traced through lion iconography and mythological creatures. As lions are not endemic to Bali, their presence is linked to the circulation of symbols from Indian culture, their reinterpretation in Java and their subsequent localisation in Bali. Chinese and European elements are more directly visible in floral forms, forms resembling bat heads, heraldic lions that contributed to the *karang sae bermahkota* and *singa menari* motifs, rosettes and decorative scrolls. Islamic tendencies are more limited and appear through geometry, symmetry, repetition, interlacing and non-figurative order. Together, these layers form a multicultural aesthetic context without displacing Balinese culture as the visual foundation.

This visual diversity developed within the political, economic and social relations of the Kingdom of Karangasem. Following Dutch intervention in Bali and Lombok in 1894, the ruler of Karangasem was incorporated into the colonial administration as a *Stedehouder*. This unequal power relationship nevertheless left local elites some space to negotiate royal authority [6]. It provides a context for the reinterpretation of the emblem of the Kingdom of the Netherlands as *karang sae bermahkota*, the heraldic dancing lion (*singa menari*), and a crown associated with Queen Wilhelmina as inspiration for *karang murda* [2], [7]. In the economic sphere, Padang Bai was an important port of the Kingdom of Karangasem and part of the trading networks of Chinese communities, including Hainanese merchants [8]. These commercial relations help explain the presence of Chinese flora, *patra cina*, and bat-like forms. Karangasem's rule in Lombok also created sustained social interaction between Balinese Hindus and Sasak Muslims [9]. This context permits the interpretation of interlaced geometry and pointed forms as formal Islamic resonances, but does not in itself prove a direct Islamic origin.

Studies of Puri Agung Karangasem have generally focused on identifying ornament types, cultural relationships and processes of integration. Wayan Mudra classified the palace ornaments into Balinese and Chinese styles and noted the use of casting and carving techniques [1]. Laba et al. subsequently expanded this interpretation to the integration of three cultures—Balinese, Chinese and European—as seen in *patra cina, patra olanda, karang sae, karang bentulu*, and *singa bermahkota* [2]. Research on *patra olanda* has also identified broad leaves, repetitive patterns and a generally formal rhythm [10]. These findings provide an important foundation, but they do not fully explain the aesthetic qualities arising from relationships among forms, compositional precision, relief characteristics and technical unity in the ornaments of Puri Agung Karangasem.

The research gap lies in the absence of an interpretation of these ornaments as a single multicultural aesthetic system encompassing Balinese, Indian, Javanese, Chinese, European and Islamic layers, together with the technical dimension of their production. Previous studies have

largely explained the contributing cultures and their integration, while the relationship between visual diversity and aesthetic quality has not been the principal concern. Cast concrete is also often mentioned merely as a production technique, rather than analysed as a means of creating shallow relief, or *tapak sida*, clear lines, measured complexity, convex-concave arrangements, smooth surfaces and consistent dimensions. From an aesthetic perspective, beauty depends not only on motif but also on the unity, complexity and intensity through which a form is experienced as a coherent whole [11].

This study aims to explain the character and value of the multicultural aesthetics of the ornaments of Puri Agung Karangasem. The analysis focuses on *Singa Ambara Raja*; a panel of *karang sae* and heraldic lions; dancing lions (*singa menari*); *karang singa bersayap;* Baroque flora and *patra olanda;* Baroque-inflected *patra cina; karang asti; karang goak*; column-base ornaments; European flora on neoclassical columns; and an interlaced floral-geometric panel. The central argument is that the palace's (*puri*) multicultural aesthetics is created through the unity of visual sources, precision of composition and distinctive character of cast concrete. Balinese tradition provides the unifying structure: diverse elements are organised according to the principles of *kekarangan* and *pepatraan*, adapted to architectural fields and realised in *tapak sida* relief. The novelty of this research lies in its interpretation of cultural diversity and formal and technical qualities as a single aesthetic identity distinctive to Puri Agung Karangasem.

## Methods

This study used an interpretative qualitative method informed by aesthetics and visual culture. The research was conducted at Puri Agung Karangasem, Karangasem Regency, Bali. The primary data consisted of ornaments attached to *Kori Agung*, *Gedong Maskerdam*, fences, columns, *sendi* or *saka* bases, and other parts of the complex. Objects were selected purposively because they represent variations in royal figures, *kekarangan, pepatraan*, cross-cultural flora, geometric patterns and cast-concrete techniques. Secondary data were obtained from literature on Balinese history, traditional architecture and ornament, research on Puri Agung Karangasem, aesthetics, Indian-Javanese iconography, cultural representation, and European and Islamic ornamental traditions. Historical and social sources were also used to trace the *Stedehouder* structure, Chinese trading networks at Karangasem ports, and relations between Balinese Hindus and Sasak Muslims under Karangasem rule in Lombok [6]-[9].

Data were collected through visual observation, photographic documentation, interviews with individuals knowledgeable about the history and ornaments of the palace (*puri*), and a literature review. Observation recorded form, line, volume, texture, symmetry, rhythm, proportion, relief depth, placement and the relationship between ornaments and architectural fields. Information concerning local terminology, inspiration from the emblem of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Chinese bat symbolism, the use of negative moulds and the term *tapak sida* was treated as field data and interpreted alongside the visual evidence. The term dancing lion (*singa menari*), meaning '*Dancing Lion*', is used as an analytical designation proposed by the researcher on the basis of the figure's posture; it is not presented as an established traditional name.

The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, each object was described according to its visible elements. Second, the forms were grouped as *kekarangan*, *pepatraan*, royal figures and decorative flora. Third, aesthetic value was analysed through unity, balance, rhythm, complexity, intensity, the relationship between positive and negative space, and convex-concave characteristics. Fourth, the diversity of cultural sources and the cast-concrete technique were interpreted as a unified multicultural aesthetic. Cultural analysis was used to explain how meaning is produced through form [12], rather than to make acculturation the principal subject of the study.

# Result

## *Singa Ambara Raja* as the Focus of Visual Identity

The *Singa Ambara Raja* ornament on *Kori Agung* is rendered as a square cast-concrete relief. The lion is shown in profile and in motion, with its head upright, mouth open, wings extended, legs bent and tail forming a spiral. The wings create strong diagonal movement, while the body and legs balance the centre of the field. Details of the mane, feathers, floral patterns and decorative lines enrich the surface. Two small birds occupy the upper area, while floral scrolls at the corners form a visual frame. Although the relief is relatively shallow, variations between convex and concave surfaces preserve the legibility of its anatomy and detail. The composition unites the visual intensity of a royal figure with the refinement of local ornamentation.



**Figure 1.** The *Singa Ambara Raja* ornament on *Kori Agung* at Puri Agung Karangasem. The cast-concrete relief depicts a winged lion with the shallow-carving character known as *tapak sida*.
Source: Author's documentation, 2025

## *Karang Sae Bermahkota* and the Heraldic Lions

The next panel presents a *karang sae bermahkota* as the central figure, flanked by two heraldic lions. The composition follows bilateral symmetry. The larger central crown establishes a vertical axis and visual hierarchy, while the lions face one another on the left and right. Their legs, curved tails, scrolls, leaves and flowers are paired. According to field data, the composition was inspired by the emblem of the Kingdom of the Netherlands but does not reproduce it in full. Heraldic attributes such as a shield, sword and arrows are absent; instead,

karang sae occupies the centre. Cast concrete unites the crown and lions with facial expressions, scrollwork and a field-filling system rooted in Balinese ornamentation. Crown imagery also appears in *karang murda* at the apex of buildings; field data and earlier research associate this form with the crown of Queen Wilhelmina [2], [13], [7].





**Figure 2 & 3.** A *karang sae bermahkota* flanked by two heraldic lions and *karang murda*. European heraldic inspiration is organised through the visual grammar of Balinese ornament in cast-concrete relief. Source: Author's documentation, 2025

## *Singa Menari* as a Heraldic and Pupet-Inspired Creation

The crowned-lion motif on a fence or boundary ornament is shown standing upright in an anthropomorphic posture. One leg supports the body while the other is bent and raised. One arm lifts a mace, while the other follows the movement of the body. The figure also has a crown, wings, a layered mane, a curved tail and floral scrollwork below. The positions of the legs, arms, mace, tail and wings create a rhythm suggestive of dance. On this basis, the study proposes the analytical name *singa menari*, or 'dancing lion'. This is not an established traditional name but a descriptive term that distinguishes the figure from other crowned lions. The figure occupies a vertical panel and is repeated horizontally through casting, producing uniform dimensions, shallow relief, relatively smooth surfaces and clear, flowing lines.

The European visual source is apparent in the crowned lion, its upright heraldic posture and its association with power. The mace adds another layer of meaning by evoking the weapons of powerful characters in the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* epics and in Javanese-Balinese wayang traditions. The available attributes, however, are insufficient to identify the figure as a particular character. Its anthropomorphic posture, facial expression, wings, stylised mane and scrollwork indicate that the heraldic reference was reorganised through Balinese ornamental sensibility. Repetition transforms an individual gesture into a collective rhythm along the fence.



**Figure 4.** The *singa menari* motif: a crowned and winged lion holding a mace in an anthropomorphic pose. The designation is proposed on the basis of its movement.
Source: Author's documentation, 2025.

### *Karang Singa Bersayap*

The *karang singa bersayap* is presented as a frontal head with prominent round eyes, a short nose, an open mouth, teeth, two large fangs, pointed ears and two symmetrical wings. The head resembles the stylisation of a bat in Chinese culture, while the frontal facial structure, protective expression, fangs, mane and integration with flora are close to karang boma in Balinese tradition. The wings are not depicted naturalistically as bat membranes but as elongated arrangements resembling feathers or leaves. The face forms the centre, the wings establish balance and the scrollwork unifies the field. The ornament demonstrates how several visual layers can coexist without sacrificing formal unity.



**Figure 5.** *Karang karang singa* showing similarities to a Chinese bat head and the characteristics of Balinese *karang boma*.
Source: Author's documentation, 2025

## Baroque Flora and *Patra Olanda*

The Baroque-influenced floral motif is arranged in bilateral symmetry around a large central flower. Leaves and scrolls extend to the left and right through C- and S-curves, rolled foliage, secondary flowers and a dense composition. Cast concrete is combined with *kerawangan*, an openwork technique in which spaces between the leaves and scrolls form negative areas. The openwork creates transparency, reduces the apparent weight of the concrete, clarifies the silhouette and generates depth through light and shadow. This European floral tendency is organised according to Balinese *pepatraan* principles and developed into the patra olanda characteristic of Karangasem. Its complexity remains controlled by the central flower, symmetry and a clear hierarchy of scale.



**Figure 6.** Baroque flora and *patra olanda* in a symmetrical composition. Cast concrete and *kerawangan* create volume, depth and a balance between positive and negative space.
Source: Author's documentation, 2025

## Baroque-Inflected *Patra Cina*

*Patra cina* is placed on a square panel set diagonally to form a diamond. A fully opened flower forms the centre, while petals, leaves and scrolls radiate towards the four corners. Chinese identity is evident in the floral source and centrally organised flower; the Baroque tendency appears in the density of decoration, abundance of petals, movement of the scrolls and modulation of volume. Balinese pepatraan principles are present in the stylisation, repetition, filling of the field and adaptation of the motif to the panel's contours. Casting produces shallow relief and measured depth. Although weathering has reduced the clarity of some details, the radial structure and flower-leaf relationships remain legible.



**Figure 7.** Baroque-inflected *patra cina* on a cast-concrete relief panel. Chinese flora and European decorative characteristics are unified through the Balinese *pepatraan* system. Source: Author's documentation, 2025.

## *Karang Asti* and *Karang Goak* as Foundations of Balinese Tradition

*Karang asti*, or *karang gajah*, is placed in a triangular field. The elephant is deformed through emphasis on the eyes, trunk, ears and parts of the head, which merge with spirals and scrollwork. No internal frame separates these elements; the trunk directs movement downwards, while the spiral returns the viewer's gaze upwards. The relief has several levels of depth. The eyes and trunk are convex, the ears are more concave, and raised cawian lines clarify the texture. The composition follows the contour of the field without abandoning the established form of *karang asti*.



**Figure 8 & 9.** *Karang goak* and *karang asti* in a triangular field. Cast concrete retains the classical form of Balinese *kekarangan* through layered relief and raised *cawian* lines
Source: Author's documentation, 2025

A similar principle is evident in the *karang goak* at the corner of the building. The bird can be recognised by its prominent eye, long curved beak, crest and layered feathers. The beak creates a horizontal direction, while the feathers extend vertically downwards. Scrolls and spirals integrate the figure with the corner field. The depth of the eye, curve of the beak, feather layers and *cawian* details indicate that the negative mould was designed with precision. *Karang asti* and *karang goak* demonstrate that casting technology did not erase traditional conventions but provided a new medium through which their legibility and distinctive forms could be maintained.

### Integration of *Kekarangan* and *Pepatraan* on the *Sendi*

The *sendi*, or *saka* base, uses the basic *kekupakan* pattern in an inverted position to follow a field that widens below and narrows towards the column. The upper field consists of a centre and two flanking sections. *Karang sae, karang bentulu, karang goak* tendencies, *patra sari, patra punggel,* and *patra olanda* are interwoven without rigid divisions. *Karang sae* forms the visual focus, while flowers, leaves and scrolls follow the contour of the base. The lower block displays a central flower and flora on both sides, reinforcing horizontal stability. Inverting the kekupakan pattern demonstrates creativity in adapting the decorative system of the saka to the function of the base. *Tapak sida* relief keeps the ornament shallow so that it does not interfere with the structural function.



**Figure 10.** A *sendi* or saka base with an inverted *kekupakan* pattern. Various *kekarangan* and *pepatraan* motifs are combined in cast-concrete relief characterised by *tapak sida*.
Source: Author's documentation, 2025

### European Flora on a Neoclassical Column

European floral motifs occupy three vertical panels on the shaft of a neoclassical column. The upper and lower panels display rosettes, while the middle panel contains a symmetrical arrangement of flowers and leaves. Unlike dense and dynamic Baroque flora, this motif is more

orderly and geometric and leaves areas of open space. The panel divisions, repeated rosettes and vertical axis reinforce stability. The column provides the context, while the floral motif is the object of analysis. The shared white colour, concrete material and shallow relief connect the European flora to the adjacent fence ornamented with *pepatraan*.



**Figure 11.** European floral motifs on a neoclassical column. Rosettes and symmetrical foliage are rendered as cast-concrete relief panels.
Source: Author's documentation, 2025

## European Floral-Geometric Ornament with Islamic Resonances

Another vertical panel displays acanthus-like leaves, floral medallions, interlaced bands and a pointed frame. Its dominant elements are closer to European decoration because they employ plastic foliage, a cartouche composition, medallions and interlaced bands or strapwork. The pattern is closed and centred rather than an endlessly repeatable geometric module. Nevertheless, its symmetry, interlaced lines, repeated curves and pointed frame create visual resonances with Islamic art. As the panel contains no star pattern, interlocking polygon, calligraphy or girih structure, it is not classified as purely Islamic ornament. The category proposed here is European floral-geometric ornament with formal Islamic tendencies, unified by cast concrete and the field-filling practices characteristic of Karangasem.



**Figure 12.** European-style floral-geometric ornament with interlaced bands, a symmetrical composition and formal resonances with Islamic art.
Source: Author's documentation, 2025.

# Discussion

## Unity within Visual Diversity

The findings show that the multicultural aesthetics of Puri Agung Karangasem cannot be adequately explained as the simple addition of Balinese, Chinese and European ornaments. A single object may contain several layers: the *karang singa bersayap* combines a form resembling a Chinese bat head with the structure of *karang boma*; *patra cina* unites Chinese flora and Baroque tendencies; the *sendi* brings together Balinese *kekarangan* and *patra olanda*; the *karang sae bermahkota* and heraldic lion panel combines European heraldic imagery with a Balinese protective figure; and dancing lion (*singa menari*) unites a heraldic lion, a mace recalling Indian epic traditions and Javanese-Balinese wayang, and an anthropomorphic gesture. Their aesthetics arises from the capacity of these forms to remain legible while creating unity. In representational terms, meaning is not permanently attached to the source form but is produced anew through placement and composition [12].

Unity is achieved through principles repeated across nearly all the objects: a compositional centre, the extension of forms towards the sides, recurring curves, hierarchy of scale, balanced mass, and continuity between figures and flora. *Singa Ambara Raja* is dynamic and diagonal; the *karang sae bermahkota* and heraldic lion panel is symmetrical and hierarchical; dancing lion (*singa menari*) relies on rhythm of posture and repetition; *patra olanda* uses bilateral balance; and *patra cina* develops radially. The floral-geometric motif combines a European cartouche with symmetrical interlacing. These structural differences do not fragment the visual identity because all the objects share clear contours, shallow relief, measured density and adaptation of motif to field.

## Controlled Complexity and Formal Intensity

Ornamental complexity is evident in layers of wings, manes, fangs, crowns, maces, petals, leaves, scrolls, spirals, interlacing, and *cawian*. This complexity is consistently controlled by hierarchy. In *Singa Ambara Raja*, the extended wings and head are dominant; in dancing lion (*Singa Menari*), the crown, mace, raised leg and tail direct the movement; in *karang singa bersayap*, the eyes and fangs form the centre of intensity; in Baroque flora, the central flower governs the movement of the scrolls; and on the *sendi*, *karang sae* organises the supporting motifs. This clarity produces complexity without excess and accords with the aesthetic view that complexity acquires value when it remains within a perceptible unity [11].

Intensity does not always entail a forceful expression. Lion figures and *kekarangan* achieve intensity through prominent eyes, open mouths, fangs and the movement of wings. European flora, by contrast, derives intensity from the ordered arrangement of rosettes and foliage. These contrasting expressive qualities broaden the aesthetic experience: ornaments may appear protective, majestic, dynamic, delicate or orderly while remaining part of a single visual environment.

## Cast Concrete as a Determinant of *Tapak Sida* Relief

Cast concrete is the most visible unifying element. The same material and technique were used for royal figures, *singa menari*, classical *kekarangan, pepatraan*, Baroque flora, *patra cina*, *sendi*, neoclassical panels and floral-geometric ornament. Casting produces relatively shallow relief, or *tapak sida*, consistent dimensions and clear contours. Convex and concave areas are carefully calibrated to create volume without making the ornament project excessively. Smooth finishes and legible details show that casting does not necessarily entail simplification.

Negative moulds demand considerable spatial skill. Areas intended to project in the final work must be recessed in the mould, while *cawian* lines, feather layers, curved beaks, trunks, crowns and scrolls must permit release without damaging the form. The precision of *karang asti*, *karang goak* and the *sendi* demonstrates the creativity of *undagi*, traditional Balinese architects and master builders, and *sangging*, specialist artisans, in translating the logic of carving into the logic of casting. In the Baroque flora, *kerawangan* adds another dimension by creating open space and interactions between light and shadow. Technique is therefore not merely a means of production but an integral part of aesthetic quality.

The encounter between traditional forms and cast concrete demonstrates multiculturalism at the technical level. The visual vocabulary may derive from Balinese, Chinese or European traditions, but the casting medium unifies it through a consistent material character. This is where the distinctiveness of Puri Agung Karangasem emerges: diverse iconography is retained, while tapak sida relief establishes a visual consistency rarely found in a comparable configuration elsewhere.

## Balinese Foundations and an Expanded Multicultural Scope

*Karang asti* and *karang goak* show that the puri (palace's) multicultural aesthetics does not position Balinese culture as a passive recipient. The conventions of *kekarangan* are maintained

through the selection of characteristic anatomical features, deformation of form, filling of the field, use of spirals and application of *cawian*. *Karang sae bermahkota* and dancing lion even occupies the centre of a panel inspired by Dutch heraldry. On the *sendi*, the *kekupakan* pattern is inverted to follow the contour of the *saka* base, while several *karang* and *patra* motifs are arranged without internal frames. Balinese tradition therefore acts as a visual grammar that determines how other elements are read.

The Indian layer can be traced through lion iconography and mythological creatures. Lions are not endemic to Bali; their presence in art cannot therefore be understood as direct imitation of the local environment. In Indian culture, lions have long symbolised strength, authority, protection and power. This iconography travelled with Hindu-Buddhist religion, literature and art to Java. Borobudur, a Buddhist monument of the Sailendra period dating from the eighth and ninth centuries, demonstrates that Indian iconography had been interpreted in Java long before Majapahit [14]. Majapahit was not the point at which all Indian influence first entered the archipelago, but it was an important phase that reinforced the continuity of Hindu-Javanese culture towards Bali. In Bali, lion figures were subsequently deformed and incorporated into *kekarangan*, royal emblems and creations such as *Singa Ambara Raja* and *Singa Menari* [3]-[5], [15].

The Chinese layer appears in floral forms, patra cina and the resemblance to a bat head; the European layer is evident in crowned lions, heraldic postures, Baroque flora, *patra olanda*, acanthus leaves, rosettes, cartouches, strapwork and neoclassical panels. The Islamic layer is more limited and is interpreted primarily through symmetry, repetition, interlacing, pointed arches and geometric order. Islamic decorative traditions also developed extensively in India under the sultanates and the Mughal Empire, but formal similarity alone does not demonstrate a direct relationship between Puri Agung Karangasem and Mughal art. As no star structures, interlocking polygons, calligraphy or *girih* patterns were found on the observed panel, the more accurate term is formal Islamic resonance, rather than Mughal or purely Islamic ornament.

This position distinguishes the study from earlier research that grouped the ornaments into two or three cultures [1], [2]. Its contribution is not simply to increase the number of cultural categories, but to show that multicultural aesthetics is formed through layered relationships among visual sources, Balinese compositional principles, the function of the architectural field and technical character. These forms have become part of the palace's identity. The concept of an in-between space, or hybridity, may help explain the emergence of new forms [14], but this study places their aesthetic qualities, rather than the process of acculturation, at the centre of analysis.

## Power, Trade, and Social Relations as an Aesthetic Context

The adoption of Dutch heraldic symbols occurred within a complex colonial power relationship. The appointment of the ruler of Karangasem as *Stedehouder* after the 1894 intervention placed the kingdom within the Dutch administrative order, while the palace (*puri*) remained an arena in which local elites displayed and reformulated their authority [6]. *Karang sae bermahkota*, *singa menari* and crown-shaped *karang murda* should therefore not be read as passive copies. The omission or alteration of heraldic attributes, the placement of *karang sae* at the centre,

and the use of *kekarangan, pepatraan* and cast concrete demonstrate selective appropriation. Symbols of colonial authority were transferred into a Balinese visual order and acquired new functions within the royal image of Karangasem [2], [7], [13].

Trade provided a different route for the circulation of forms. Research on the Hainanese community in Bali identifies Padang Bai as an important port of the Kingdom of Karangasem [8]. The movement of merchants, objects and decorative tastes through the port created conditions in which Chinese flora, centrally organised flowers, *patra cina* and bat-like forms could be encountered and reworked by local artists. This evidence does not establish that every Chinese motif originated with a single maker or transaction, but it strengthens the historical argument that economic relations served as channels of visual exchange.

The Kingdom of Karangasem's social relations with Lombok further expanded this field of encounter. Settlement organisation under Karangasem rule in Cakranegara shows Balinese Hindu and Sasak Muslim communities within a shared political order, although they occupied different areas [9]. This historical proximity provides a context for interpreting symmetry, interlacing, geometric order and pointed forms on the (*puri*) palace panel as formal Islamic resonances. In the absence of star patterns, *girih*, calligraphy or documentary evidence identifying its makers, however, direct attribution to Islamic or Mughal art should be avoided. Social relations provide an interpretative context, while aesthetic assessment remains grounded in visual evidence.

### The Aesthetic Identity of Puri Agung Karangasem

The aesthetic identity of Puri Agung Karangasem is shaped by four characteristics. First, its iconographic diversity encompasses royal figures, heraldic lions, the pupet-associated mace, protective creatures, Chinese flora, European flora, geometric interlacing and Balinese *kekarangan*. Second, compositional unity is established through symmetry, rhythm, hierarchy, repetition and adaptation of forms to their fields. Third, complexity is controlled through *cawian*, scrollwork, wings, petals, strapwork and convex-concave arrangements. Fourth, material consistency is achieved through cast concrete, which produces the *tapak sida* character.

These four characteristics ensure that multicultural aesthetics extends beyond a discourse of diversity. It can be recognised concretely in the appearance and experience of the ornaments: their lines are clear, their volumes measured, their relief shallow, their surfaces smooth, their dimensions consistent and their elements free from excess. This distinctiveness emerges when cross-cultural sources are organised through local sensibility. The findings may therefore be summarised as a Balinese-rooted multicultural aesthetic.

## Conclusion

The multicultural aesthetics of the ornaments of Puri Agung Karangasem is formed through the unity of Balinese, Indian, Javanese, Chinese and European visual sources and, to a more limited extent, formal resonances with Islamic art. This diversity is evident in *Singa Ambara Raja*, *Karang Sae Bermahkota* and Heraldic Lion, *Singa Menari*, *Karang Singa Bersayap*, *Patra Olanda*, Baroque-inflected *Patra Cina, Karang Asti, Karang Goak, Sendi* decorated with *kekarangan* and

*pepatraan*, European flora on neoclassical columns, and an interlaced floral-geometric panel. *Singa Menari* combines a European heraldic posture, a mace recalling Indian epic traditions and Javanese-Balinese pupet, and local ornamental treatment. Its aesthetic value arises through symmetry, balance, rhythm, hierarchy, repetition, controlled complexity, the intensity of figures, and harmonious relationships between positive and negative space. Balinese tradition provides the foundation that governs placement, stylisation, the filling of fields and connections among motifs. These encounters were enabled by power relations with the Dutch, Chinese trading networks and Balinese Hindu-Sasak Muslim social relations. They formed the context for the circulation of forms, while Balinese tradition continued to determine their aesthetic treatment [6], [7].

Cast concrete is a principal determinant of the *puri* (palace's) visual identity. Precisely made negative moulds enable shallow relief, or *tapak sida*, clear lines, raised *cawian*, measured convex-concave arrangements, relatively smooth surfaces and consistent dimensions. This technology did not erase the conventions of Balinese ornament but expanded the possibilities for their realisation. The novelty of this study lies in demonstrating that the multicultural aesthetics of Puri Agung Karangasem is not merely cultural integration at the level of motif. It is a unity of iconography, composition, material, technique and the creativity of *undagi* and *sangging* that produces an ornamental character distinctive to Karangasem.

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