



Analysis Layout of Bukit Mentik Temple in Natyasastra Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Bukit Mentik temple has long been a significant place of worship for the local community. Some people believe that this area holds mystical power for fulfilling various desires. Many visitors come with diverse intentions, from seeking a unique vacation place to fulfilling personal wishes. The temple's architecture is distinctive and unique, reflecting Hinduism's rich cultural and spiritual heritage. The temple is built according to the Tri Mandala concept, encompassing the innermost, middle, and outer courtyards. The analysis of Bukit Mentik temple within the context of Natyasastra reveals how its architectural design and use of space play a crucial role in creating a rich and meaningful religious experience for visitors and Hindu devotees. The temple's symmetrical beauty, detailed ornamentation, and expansive open spaces used for various religious rituals and performances embody the principles of Natyasastra. These elements facilitate a profound connection between the participants and the sacred atmosphere of the temple. Additionally, the symbolic interpretations of architectural forms, such as gateways and pagodas, highlight the deep spiritual significance embedded in the temple's design. By integrating concepts from the Natyasastra and research on Balinese temple architecture, Bukit Mentik temple is a testament to the intricate relationship between religious practice, architectural beauty, and cultural heritage in Balinese Hinduism.

Keywords: Bukit Mentik temple, natyasastra, tri loka, Bali .

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BACKGROUND

The Hindu religious life in Bali is intrinsically linked to ceremonial activities conducted at temples, which have become integral to religious practice. In the traditional village of Batur, Kintamani, Bangli Regency, Bali, there is Bukit Mentik temple, believed to be the dwelling place of the Goddess of Fertility. Worship is typically performed in this area. The appeal of Bukit Mentik temple includes its primary structure, which remains in its natural state. Visitors will find frozen lava in the area, originating from the eruption of Mount Batur. Due to its prolonged presence in a cold environment, the lava has solidified, creating a visually pleasing landscape.

Bukit Mentik temple has long been a significant place of worship for the local community. Some people believe that this area holds mystical power for fulfilling various desires. Many visitors come with diverse intentions, from seeking a unique vacation place to fulfilling personal wishes. The temple's architecture is distinctive and unique, reflecting Hinduism's rich cultural

and spiritual heritage. The temple is built according to the *Tri Mandala* concept, encompassing the innermost, middle, and outer courtyards. The main structure features a five-tiered *meru* flanked by a three-tiered *meru*. This architectural concept is characteristic, embodying the profound philosophy of Balinese culture.^{1,2}

In this context, the research aims to analyze the structure of Bukit Mentik temple using the Natyasastra approach, an ancient text related to communication arts and performance in Hindu tradition. An in-depth analysis of Bukit Mentik temple's structure will be conducted, referencing relevant architectural principles from the Natyasastra. The research approach involves a literature review that includes theoretical sources, information about Bukit Mentik temple, and concepts related to Natyasastra.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

In analysing the structure of Bukit Mentik temple within the context of Natyasastra, it is essential to reference relevant literature. This literature review

includes theoretical sources and research on Natyasastra, temple architecture, and associated symbolic elements. Natyasastra, authored by Bharata Muni, is a classical text in the Indian tradition of theatre and performance. This text addresses various aspects of performance, including stage architecture and spatial usage. In Natyasastra, concepts such as symmetry, proportion, and the placement of statues are crucial elements in creating an artistic experience.³

The literature review also encompasses research related to temple architecture in Bali. Books and scholarly articles on temple architecture provide insights into the design of temple structures, the use of ornaments, and their symbolic meanings. Previous research has also revealed the relationship between temple architecture and religious performances, where the structures serve as stages for offerings and communication with deities. Additionally, the literature review includes research on symbolic elements in Hindu tradition. Color, form, and ornamental motifs hold profound symbolic meanings in religious contexts. Previous studies

have elucidated the interpretations and symbolic significance of these elements. By referencing literature that includes Natyasastra, temple architecture, and symbolic elements, the analysis of the Bukit Mentik temple within the context of Natyasastra can be conducted with a robust theoretical foundation.⁴

This study uses an approach of qualitative descriptive to analyze the structure of Bukit Mentik temple within the context of Natyasastra. The qualitative approach is used to obtain a deeper understanding of the symbolic meanings of each architectural element. At the same time, the descriptive analysis method is employed to describe and explain the architectural characteristics of the temple. This research is supported by a literature review that includes theoretical sources relevant to Natyasastra and temple architecture. References used in this analysis pertain to classical texts such as the Natyasastra and related literature on temple architecture in Bali, including the structure of the Bukit Mentik temple. The layout, proportions, and placement of statues and ornaments, as well as the use of colors and materials, are studied, and the collected data are then analyzed qualitatively. The analysis refers to concepts related to Natyasastra, such as spatial usage, symmetry, harmony, and symbolic meaning. Each architectural element of the Bukit Mentik temple will be analyzed separately to understand its contribution within the context of communication and performance in the Hindu tradition.

Description of Bukit Mentik temple

Bukit Mentik temple, located near Lake Batur, features two three-tiered Meru on the left side of the main five-tiered Meru, which serves as the principal shrine at Bukit Mentik temple. The five-tiered Meru is dedicated to worshipping *Dewa Danuh*, referred to at Bukit Mentik temple as *Ida Ratu Ayu Sembah Suun*. The three-tiered Meru on the left side of the principal five-tiered *Meru* is dedicated to *Ida Ratu Maduwe Gumi* and *Ida Ratu Maduwe Gama*. These two three-tiered *meru* provide a visual representation that encourages Hindu devotees to believe that God owns the earth He created, which is the place where humanity lives and

develops its aspirations.

The five-tiered *Meru*, dedicated to *Dewi Danu* and named *Ida Ratu Ayu Sembah Suun*, represents the worship of God in the *Vaishnavism* tradition. This aims to motivate humans to understand that water protects and sustains all life on Earth. Water, regarded as the Jewel of the Earth, is a divine creation that must exist in sufficient quantity and quality in every settlement. The preservation and protection of water sources, such as lakes and rivers, which are God’s creations, are essential elements of *Sad Kerti* that must be safeguarded for the well-being of humanity. Water will continue to sustain human life as long as the earth, a creation of God, is well-maintained as a form of devotion to God.

God’s *dharma* provides the guidelines for preserving the earth’s water sources. This concept of worshipping God is sacredly visualized at Bukit Mentik temple near Lake Batur, Kintamani. In front of the five-tiered *Meru* is the *Balai Pesamuan* (hall), which symbolizes when *Ida Ratu Ayu* descends to receive offerings from devotees during general Hindu religious ceremonies, especially during the *Pujawali* festival. This signifies that *Ida Ratu Sembah Suun*, in the spiritual realm (*Suksma* or *Sunia Loka*), is symbolically enshrined in the five-tiered *Meru*. At the same time, her presence on earth (*Wahya*) is depicted in the *Balai Pesamuan* shrine.

Thus, the *Masineb* or *Ngeluhur* (closing) ceremony symbolizes her return to the five-tiered *Meru*, representing the great and small cosmos.

The tiers of the *Meru* symbolize the soul and layers of the universe. The earth, being the closest realm to humans, becomes a place for cultivating a noble life if it is maintained through the spiritual teachings of God and the knowledge developed by sages such as the *Rishis*. Therefore, the three-tiered *Meru* to the left of the five-tiered *Meru* serves as the *Ida Ratu Maduwe Gama* shrine, signifying that the earth should be organized

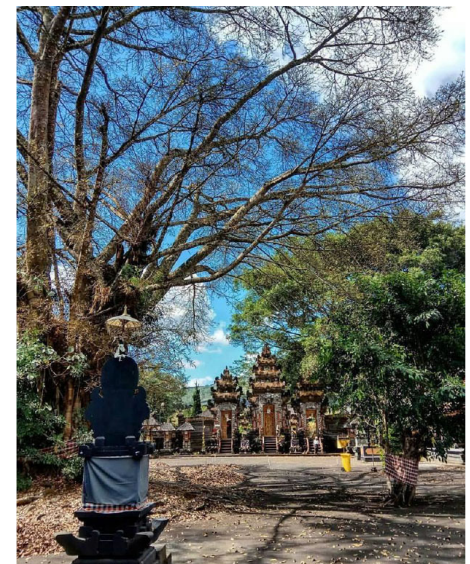


Figure 1.⁵ Front gate of Bukit Mentik Temple.

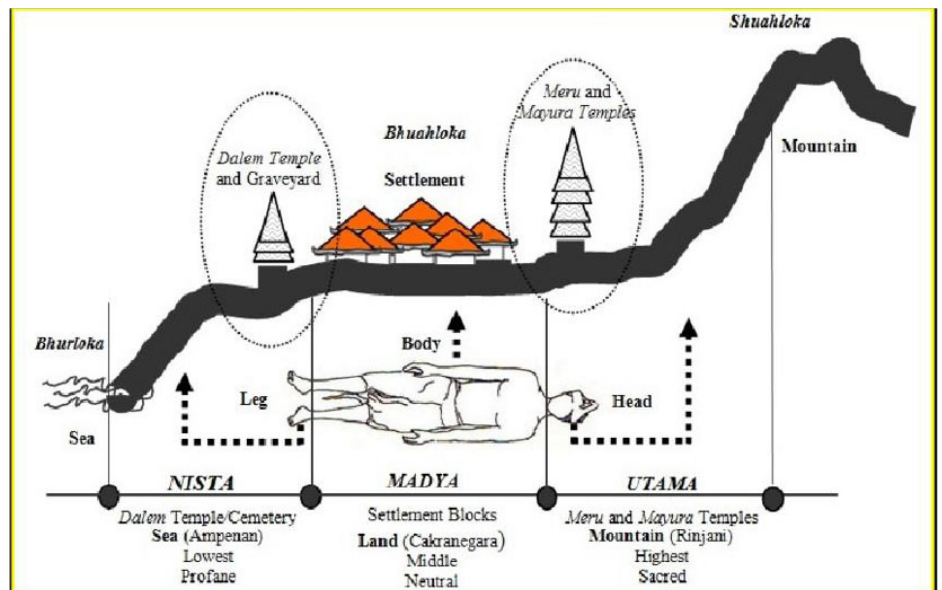


Figure 2.¹¹ Illustration of The Elements of Tri Angga; Tri Mandala; and Tri Loka (Source: Mulyadi (2008)).

according to religious guidance developed into various sciences by wise individuals. When these aspects are combined, the hills surrounding Mount Batur will thrive as sources of community well-being. This is likely why the temple is named Bukit Mentik temple, or the temple for nurturing the hill into a prosperous and fertile one.^{6,7}

Rituals and Supporting Structures of Bukit Mentik temple

Like other *Kahyangan Jagat* temples, Bukit Mentik temple is complemented by auxiliary temples known as *Pura Prasanak*. Ten *Pura Prasanak* are surrounding Bukit Mentik temple. These include Pura Ratu Gede Pemas, the initial worship site, before proceeding to Bukit Mentik temple. This temple is likely dedicated to Batara Gana, the deity of obstacles, where devotees seek *Tirtha Pengelukatan* (holy water) to ensure an unimpeded journey to Bukit Mentik temple for central worship. Following this are Pura Belong, the Batara Ratu Mas Magelung shrine, and Pura Pandan Harum, the shrine of Masula Masuli. Next is Pura Gua, located in an open cave featuring a *Lingga*-like shrine dedicated to Sang Hyang Pasupati. The worship of Sang Hyang Pasupati serves as a medium for venerating Lord Shiva to control negative traits (*Asuri Sampad*) and foster divine qualities (*Dewi Sampad*), guiding life towards developing godly characteristics. According to the Bhagavad Gita, Dewi Sampad's inclinations lead humans to noble behavior akin to the gods.

Other *Pura Prasanak* include Pura Batu Kembang, where Ratu Mas Melanting and Ratu Mas Muncar are worshipped, and Pura Taru Alit, the shrine of Ratu Aji Luwih. Pura Jati serves as the shrine of Bujanggan Ida Batara, and Pura Ratu Subandar is the worship place for traders. The ultimate worship then takes place at Bukit Mentik temple. The Pujawali ceremony at Bukit Mentik temple is held every Sasih Kapat, a month when nature fosters the growth of various plants used for food, medicine, and maintaining vegetation known as *tanem tuwuh*. Forest plants, essential for environmental protection, also play a crucial role in urban areas to reduce air pollution.⁸

Bukit Mentik Temple in Natyasastra perspective

When discussing the layout of Bukit Mentik temple, it is essential to consider its mandala configuration, which includes the inner sanctum (*jeroan*), the middle courtyard (*jaba tengah*), and the outer courtyard (*jaba sisi*). The main structure features a five-tiered *meru* flanked by a three-tiered *meru*. This architectural design is highly distinctive, reflecting the profound philosophy of Balinese culture. The temple's architecture embodies the principles of Natyasastra through its use of proportion, ornamentation, and symmetry.⁹ Bukit Mentik temple stands as a significant example of Hindu cultural and religious heritage in Bali. Its design illustrates the beauty and harmony central to Hindu art and belief, with precise proportions, detailed ornaments, and regular symmetry, creating a sacred and awe-inspiring atmosphere for visitors.

The design of a temple reflects the Hindu understanding of nature and religious teachings. The architectural concept of the temple is according to the *Asta Kosala-Kosali* scriptures, which include the philosophy of temple architecture: *Tri Hita Karana*, *Panca Maha Bhuta*, and *Nawa Sanga*. These principles align with human logic as users of the structure. Understanding nature also influences the temple's structure, reflecting the Balinese Hindu conception of the division of nature. The temple's courtyard is divided according to the macrocosmic concept, symbolizing the *triloka*, or three worlds: *Bhurloka*, *Bhuvaloka*, and *Svaloka*.¹⁰

The division of the temple into two courtyards represents the upper (*urdhva*) and lower (*adha*) worlds, i.e., Akasha and Prithvi. Additionally, the division into seven sections symbolizes the "Saptaloka," or the seven layers of the upper world: *Bhurloka*, *Bhuvaloka*, *Svaloka*, *Maharloka*, *Janaloka*, *Taparloka*, and *Satyaloka*. This understanding is reflected in the temple's architectural concept, mirroring the Balinese Hindu interpretation of nature. This is done to balance human relationships, humans and nature, and humans and the divine (Ida Sang Hyang Widi Wasa) to achieve happiness for all. Most temples in Bali follow the *Tri Mandala* layout, comprising *Nista Mandala*, *Madya*

Mandala, and *Utama Mandala*.

In the context of Natyasastra, Bukit Mentik temple's architecture can be analyzed based on the principles outlined in this text. Symmetry and proportion are essential principles in temple design. Bukit Mentik temple exhibits symmetrical beauty in its structure and the arrangement of architectural elements. Additionally, Natyasastra discusses the use of space in the context of performance. Bukit Mentik temple has expansive open spaces for various religious rituals and performances. These spaces allow participants and visitors to interact with the surroundings and experience the temple's sacred atmosphere.^{12,13}

The literature on Balinese temple architecture also provides symbolic interpretations of the architectural elements found in Bukit Mentik temple. For example, architectural forms such as gateways (*candi bentar*) and pagodas (*meru*) hold deep symbolic meanings in the Hindu tradition. They represent gateways to the sacred realm and serve as places of worship for deities. By integrating concepts from Natyasastra and research on temple architecture, the analysis of Bukit Mentik temple within the context of Natyasastra reveals how its architectural design and use of space play a crucial role in creating a rich and meaningful religious experience for visitors and Hindu devotees.

CONCLUSION

Bukit Mentik temple, situated near Lake Batur in Bali, is a significant Hindu temple featuring a distinctive architectural design with a five-tiered Meru dedicated to Dewi Danu, flanked by two three-tiered Meru. These structures symbolize the connection between the divine and the earthly realms, emphasizing the sacredness of water as a life-sustaining element. The temple's layout, based on the Tri Mandala concept, reflects the profound philosophy of Balinese culture, where the inner sanctum, middle courtyard, and outer courtyard represent different layers of the universe and the spiritual journey of devotees. This design aligns with the Natyasastra principles of symmetry, proportion, and the symbolic use of space, enhancing the temple's spiritual and aesthetic experience.

The analysis of Bukit Mentik temple within the context of Natyasastra reveals how its architectural design and use of space play a crucial role in creating a rich and meaningful religious experience for visitors and Hindu devotees. The temple's symmetrical beauty, detailed ornamentation, and expansive open spaces used for various religious rituals and performances embody the principles of Natyasastra. These elements facilitate a profound connection between the participants and the sacred atmosphere of the temple. Additionally, the symbolic interpretations of architectural forms, such as gateways and pagodas, highlight the deep spiritual significance embedded in the temple's design. By integrating concepts from the Natyasastra and research on Balinese temple architecture, Bukit Mentik temple is a testament to the intricate relationship between religious practice, architectural beauty, and cultural heritage in Balinese Hinduism.

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