



Visiting Pengukur-ukuran Temple & Garba Cave in Pejeng Remnant of Ancient Balinese Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

Historical relics of the past are widely scattered in different areas in Indonesia, including Bali. For instance, Pejeng Village is an ancient village that was the capital city of the Old Balinese kingdom. Therefore, some archaeological sites can be found in most areas. *Pengukur-ukuran* Temple and Garba Cave are the heritage of the Pejeng Kingdom, in Gianyar Regency. This cave was thought to have existed since the 12th century AD. Located on the eastern bank of the Pakerisan river, the temple was one of many prominent ancient Balinese temples for the Kingdom. Some argued that the name 'Pengukur-ukuran' was associated with the previous King's

grand plan to measure his territory. In contrast, the others believed the term was given after General Kebo Iwa proved his invincibility in the area. The Pengukur-ukuran Temple site is situated between a steep valley formed by the Pakerisan Watershed. There are temple complexes, cliff temples, and hermitage niches carved into the cliff walls on the western edge of the Pakerisan riverbank. Despite the history of the temple's significance for the Pejeng Kingdom, Megalithic remnants found around the temple's inner courtyard explained that the temple had been serving as a center for religious rites since prehistoric times.

Keyword: Pengukur-ukuran Temple, Garba Cave, Pejeng

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BACKGROUND

Historical relics of the past are widely scattered in different areas in Indonesia, including Bali. For instance, Pejeng Village is an ancient village that was the capital city of the Old Balinese kingdom. Therefore, some archaeological sites can be found in most areas. *Pengukur-ukuran* Temple and Garba Cave are the heritage of the Pejeng Kingdom, in Gianyar Regency. This cave was thought to have existed since the 12th century AD. Located on the eastern bank of the Pakerisan river, the temple was one of many prominent ancient Balinese temples for the Kingdom. The Pakerisan river is surrounded by shady forest and choked by cliffs on its sides. There are some collections of notable archaeological sites along its bank, such as *Tirta Empul*, *Gunung Kawi*, *Mangening* Temple, to the *Tegalinggah* Temple in Blahbatuh. A visitor may easily find Garba Cave once they reach Pengukur-ukuran temple. The temple is 15 minutes drive from Ubud Palace to the east. Meanwhile, those who depart from Denpasar would drive about an hour to reach the place.¹

The Bali Provincial Government has been conserving the Sites around *Banjar* Samegunung's vicinity, especially Garba cave, which has notable ancient architectural designs. Since 2020, the Gianyar regency has taken over the responsibility to maintain the ancient cave. The cave is situated under the Pengukur-ukuran temple. Despite its

traditional design, the area was an important monument in Balinese History. The alcove once was a hermitage place for the archaic society, founded during King Jayapangus's reign, around 1116 (1196 AD). It was specifically designed to teach the young prince and princess.² A legend mentioned the glorious effort of Kebo Iwa, a well-known general in the Old Balinese Kingdom, who had his skills tested in this historical site before being appointed as the Kingdom's vanguard. A footprint relic can be seen in the middle of the stairs to the cave, which has believed to be the soles of Kebo Iwa himself.³

KING'S GRAND PLAN AND THE WARRIOR'S TEST

As a temple, societies praised Shiva-Buddha as the deity who resides on the Pengukur-ukuran shrine. Commonly, the locals refer the lord as *Siwa Bhujangga* or *Siwa Astawa*.⁴ The site was more than a mere location for praying in the past. The word 'Pengukur-ukuran' is quite odd to articulate, including for locals. The term could be roughly translated as measurement. However, no written record specifically mentioned the temple's name. Some argued that the name 'Pengukur-ukuran' was associated with the previous King's grand plan to measure his territory. In contrast, the others believed the term was given after General Kebo

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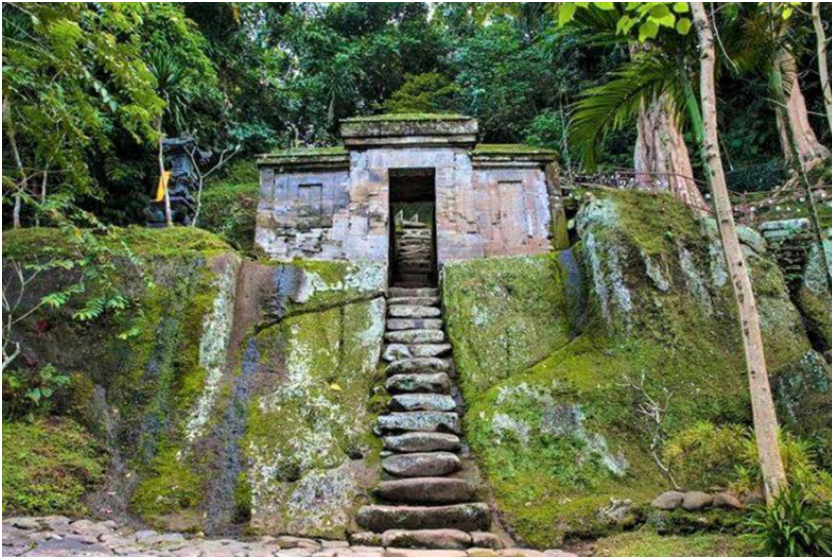


Figure 1. Gate to Garba Cave³



Figure 2. A Right footprint of Kebo Iwa⁵

Iwa proved his invincibility in the area. Kebo Iwa, a descendant of Arya Karang Buncing, before held the title as *Mahapatih*, was given official task by several high-ranking officers, including Ki Pasung Grigis. Since the tasks were aimed to measure Kebo Iwa's spirit, skills and resilience, thus the word Pengukur-ukuran word derived. Furthermore, the word *Garba* in Garba Cave means deep into the earth.

Legend said that Kebo Iwa was trained and tested here by King's order. Thanks to his superhuman powers, Kebo Iwa passed all the tests. One of his most difficult tasks was building stairs

out of gigantic-sized stones. Today, the stone stairs between Goa Garba and the Pengukur-ukuran Temple are believed the Kebo Iwa's handwork, including a footprint on one of the stone stairs that is believed to be his.

Meanwhile, from the oral story that passed through generations, the King treated the Pengukur-ukuran temple as the axis for the ruler's grand plan to establish the original Basukian (Besakih) temple. Starting from Manik Corong Temple, in Pejeng Village, he determined the Pengukur-ukuran temple. Then, the initial location of the Basukian temple was supposed to be at the north of the Pengukur-ukuran Temple area. Nevertheless, after many discussions, the temple's location was inappropriate and did not point towards the northeast; hence the project was abandoned. Hitherto, the visitor may see remnants of a limestone base covering an area of 150 m², while the Basukian temple is established at Besakih Village, under Mount Agung's floor.⁶

Nevertheless, an official report of the Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Antiquities from the Ministry of Education and Culture mentioned the place name was *Dharma Hanyar*. The published information in 1985 was based on *Ambang Pintu* Inscription, a solid stone inscription, with 130 cm-length, 52 cm-width, and an 18 cm-thick. The text was located at the temple's gate containing three words lines:

"...suasti cri caka warsatitanagata wartamana
1116-phalgunamasa tithi pancami cuklapksa.
...a...wa...wr ning julung pujut dewa arta. Irika
dewasa nira mpungkwing dharma hanar guru
aji mapanji jiwaya-a
...amurnajiwa ingkang astapaka mowah bhyumi
bhatar 1 jro IH 9eng) apanti maka muka mukan
ratna kunya (Rapa)...da..."

Translation in English

"... Happy New Year, for the past, the upcoming and the ongoing year 1116, on *sasih kawulu* (the eighth month), on the fifth day of half-light (day five, after new moon).

... *Urukung, wage, wraspati, wuku pujut*, its God is *Arta*, at that time, he was a saint in Dharmma Hanyar as the teacher of the King (bawaganta) named Jiwaya.

... Has perfected his soul in *astapaka* (priest's knowledge) and again the region of God and Goddess inside and outside the temple acts as upstream in Ratna Kunjara Pada". (Goris, 1965: 61).

According to the description mentioned by R. Goris in his book, the Ancient History of Bali, it was estimated that the temple was built in 1116



Figure 3. The Garba Cave⁵



Figure 4. A grand shrine is situated in the center of the inner courtyard, acting as the most sacred shrine on the site.¹¹

caka or 1194 AD, during King Jaya Pangus' reign. The inscription was written using Old Javanese letters. Further, the text did not mention the King's name, only referring to a location named Dharma Hanyar, which was believed to be the site's name.⁷

Meanwhile, according to Purbakalabali, the Ambang Pintu inscription explained a slightly different story:

“*Swasti cri paduka warsa titaganata wartamana 1116 phalguna masa tithi pancama caklapaksau..wa..wr..waraning julung pujut,*

irika dewaca nira mpungkuwing dharma hanyar guru ajimapanji jiwaya amurnajiwa ingkang astapaka mowah bhyumi bhatar I jro I heng mapanti makamuka mukan ratnakunja..da’”

Translation in English:

“On Thursday, Wage Wara Pujut around 1116 Saka, that was when Cri Maharaja Aji Jaya Pangus died. His spirit went to the afterlife. His ash *puspasarira* was buried in the Dharmaanyar hermitage. And there was a temple called *panti-panti* which Dang Acarya Jiwaya managed.”⁸

ANCIENT ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The Pengukur-ukur Temple site is located in a steep valley formed by the Pakerisan Watershed. There are temple complexes, cliff temples, and hermitage niches carved into the cliff walls on the western edge of the Pakerisan riverbank.^{9,10} The area was divided into three mandalas with rectangular floor plans that slightly shrunk into the inner courtyard. The wall with an entrance *Candi Bentar* bordered each mandala.

The gate of the outer courtyard is connected with high-steep stairs. In the outer mandala, there are several buildings, such as a pair of *sedahan apit Lawang* in front of the gate that divide the outer courtyard and the middle courtyard, a stage, and a *bale kulkul*. To the eastern part of the outer courtyard, there are *bale jajar* and a hall. The *Bale jajar* and the cockfighting area are located on the outer courtyard's west side.

The middle courtyard is connected with several staircases. Several shrines, such as the Ratu Panji shrine with its cylindrical-shaped stone and the Barong shrine, are located on the northernmost, next to the division wall, separating the central and inner courtyard. The music hall is located in the east. *Penggungan*, *panegtegan*, *perantenan*, *bale paebatan*, *pyasan pasamuhan agung*, and *Pesimpangan Goa Lawah* are located on the west side of the area. In addition to buildings, there are also architectural fragments in the vicinity. A half-sided yoni, a circular peak decoration resembles stupa, a relief of a mace and an ax found on a rectangular stone were some items found here.

The connecting *Candi Bentar* between the middle and inner courtyards was decorated with *Makara Gaja-mina*, high relief of a small tiger and Ramayana story reliefs. On the right side arc of the structure, there is a Hanuman figure with his monkey army. There is a statue of Sarpakanaka, and a giant sculpture was carved in one panel on the left side. There is a huge giant statue in another

niche, possibly Kumbhakarna and several other figures. A grand shrine is situated in the center of the inner courtyard, acting as the most sacred shrine on the site. It was a new building erected on the old shrine foundation. The lower building from the cubicle floor to the temple's base displayed an old construction of ancient andesite stone masonry. While the top building consisted of solid stone and bricks, it was the new structure. The old building in the northeast corner of the stairs was made of andesite stone. Most of the buildings' apexes were decorated with a *Lingga* miniature. Around the Grand shrine, there are *Luhuring Akasa* shrine, *Pesamuan Agung*, Ratu Ngurah Agung shrine, *Ratu Madeg* shrine, and *Ratu Tukang* shrine.¹²

Padmasana and Mount Agung shrines are located west parallel to the Grand Shrine. On the eastern side, there are a series of small buildings, Gunung Lebah shrine, Tirtha Empul shrine, storage building, a hall, *Bale Penyucian*, *Menjangan Seluang* shrine, *Manik Api* shrine, *taksu*, and *sedahan penganten*. At the south of the inner courtyard, adjacent to the wall, there is a *piyasan*, Ratu Bujangga shrine, several statues and relief artifacts, including two Bodhisattva statues, an Agastya statue, two Ganesha statues, the statue of various deities, and reliefs panel. Some menhirs were found in the inner courtyard. The existence of the megalithic remnants told a story that the temple has been central for religious purposes since prehistoric times.¹³

CONCLUSION

Pengukur-ukuran Temple and Garba Cave are the heritage of the Pejeng Kingdom, in Gianyar Regency. This cave was thought to have existed since the 12th century AD. Located on the eastern bank of the Pakerisan river, the temple was one of many prominent ancient Balinese temples for the Kingdom. Some argued that the name 'Pengukur-ukuran' was associated with the previous King's grand plan to measure his territory. In contrast, the others believed the term was given after General Kebo Iwa proved his invincibility in the area. The Pengukur-ukur Temple site is situated between a steep valley formed by the Pakerisan Watershed. There are temple complexes, cliff temples, and hermitage niches carved into the cliff walls on the western edge of the Pakerisan riverbank. Despite the history of the temple's significance for the Pejeng Kingdom, Megalithic remnants found around the

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