




Sustainability and vernacular architecture - *Bale Tengah*, the symbolic representation of the life-cycle in the *Tenganan Pegeringsingan* community

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received November 06, 2024 Received in revised form June 30, 2025 Accepted November 29, 2025 Available online December 01, 2025</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Bale meten Symbolism Tenganan Tri kona Vernacular</p> <p>*Corresponding author: Kadek Edi Saputra Universitas Udayana, Bali, Indonesia Email: edisaputra@unud.ac.id ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-4825-6789</p>	<p><i>This article examines a sustainable architectural tradition embodied in the formation of the Bale Tengah within the Tenganan Pegeringsingan community in Bali. The Bale Tengah has been selected for its distinctive symbolic role in representing the conception of the life cycle within the broader framework of Tenganan's belief system. The study seeks to establish a connection between vernacular architectural forms and practices, the sustainable utilization of natural resources, and the continuous assurance of equitable access to these resources for the community across generations. On one hand, the research investigates deeply embedded and well-practiced belief systems, such as the krama adat's collective codes, social mores, and ethical values. On the other hand, it analyzes five determining elements of architectural formation symbolism, form, structure, construction, and the materials employed. A qualitative methodology has been adopted, combining subjective interpretation with empirical field research. Data collection was undertaken through a series of architectural documentations and in-depth interviews involving key community figures and krama adat village leaders. The findings reveal that although the term "sustainability" is absent from the Tenganan Pegeringsingan vocabulary, the community's traditional dwelling embodies the essence of sustainable practice. Both the conception and construction of the Bale Tengah reflect a philosophy of safeguarding the future by maintaining social cohesion and ensuring the conservation of natural resources. This process historically rooted and self-reflective has played a crucial role in sustaining the endurance and continuity of the Tenganan Pegeringsingan community.</i></p>

Introduction

Architecture has always been a revolutionary process an idea vividly symbolized by the demolition of the now-infamous Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis, U.S.A. Designed by the esteemed modernist architect Minoru

Yamasaki, the project's eventual social failures led to its destruction, marking what (Jencks 1977) famously declared as the death of modernism and the dawn of postmodernity on March 16, 1972, at precisely 3:30 p.m. This moment represented a monumental shift in architectural theory and practice. The architectural community's response



to this event produced a distinct counter-reaction to the sterility of modern architecture that had dominated since at least the 1920s. Mies van der Rohe's dictum "less is more" came to be perceived as destructive erasing individual rights, architectural expression, and the symbolic vitality of urban centers that once reflected the lives of their inhabitants. Modern architecture, in principle, sought to eliminate ornamentation and symbolic meaning, as exemplified by the works of modernist architects such as Mies van der Rohe himself, Walter Gropius, and Philip Johnson. In contrast, the ensuing reaction emphasized that architecture must embody the values of the communities it serves, leading to a sustained critique of modernity through the lens of postmodern thought. In essence, this transition marked a movement away from sterile, expressionless forms toward an architecture that reaffirmed symbolism, myth, archetype, geometry, and the unconscious dimensions that represent not only the external characteristics of buildings but also the inner, collective symbolism of their occupants. Furthermore, this shift recognized vernacular architecture as arguably the most authentic manifestation of this new architectural paradigm, which serves as the central focus of this paper. Symbolism, once dismissed by modernism, was thus revived as perhaps the most profound element of architectural expression.

"The Experience of Sacred Space makes possible the founding of the world: where the sacred manifests itself in space, the real unveils itself, the world comes into existence" (Eliade 1952).

"The abyss that divides the two modalities of experience — sacred and profane — will be apparent when we come to describe sacred space and the ritual building of the human habitation" (Eliade 1959).

It is, therefore, fitting that many of the most influential works on architectural symbolism emerged during this postmodern period, particularly throughout the 1980s. These writings collectively sought to restore to architecture the "soul" it had lost in preceding decades. Seminal texts from this era include *Shelter, Sign and Symbol* by Oliver (1977) and his later *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World* (Oliver 1997), *Signs, Symbols, and Architecture* by Broadbent (Broadbent, Bunt, and Jencks 1980) and *Architecture, Mysticism and*

Myth: The Symbolism of Architecture by Lethaby (Lethaby 1980). More recent contributions such as *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture* (Jones 2000) *Symbolism, Cognition, and Communication in Architecture* (George 2024) and *Materials and Meaning in Architecture* (Coleman 2000) have continued to deepen the discourse. The foundations of these studies were laid by earlier, mid-20th-century explorations of symbolism most notably by Eliade (1952); (1959). However, perhaps the most original and psychologically grounded work on symbolism remains Carl Gustav Jung's *Man and His Symbols* (1971), an exploration of humanity's collective unconscious and its manifestation in symbolic form.

From this theoretical foundation, the discussion now turns to Bali, where these broader architectural ideas find profound resonance. Due to its exceptional cultural depth, Bali embodies a distinctive and holistic worldview in which symbolism though often implicit remains ever-present and deeply interwoven into daily life. Similar to the previously cited theoretical works, Balinese culture has developed its own rich investigations into symbolism, imagery, and the interplay of the visible and invisible realms. Important studies that elucidate this include *Visible and Invisible Realms: Power, Magic and Colonial Conquest in Bali* (Wiener 1995); *Custodians of the Sacred Mountain: Culture and Society in the Highlands of Bali* and *The House of Our Ancestors: Precedence and Dualism in Highland Balinese Society* (T. A. Reuter 2002; T. Reuter 2002) and *The Politics of Sacred Space: Using Conceptual Models of Space for Socio-Political Transformations* (Hauser - Schäublin 2004). Crucial to this understanding is the recognition that there exist two distinct Balinese cultural identities: the *lowland Balinese*, descending from Javanese migrations during the Majapahit era, and the *Bali Aga* (or *Bali Mula*), descendants of Southeast Asian migrants who settled in the island's highlands around the 11th century (Hauser-Schäublin 2004) (table 1). Some theories also suggest that the latter group originated from the people of Bedulu Village, who relocated to the highlands centuries ago to preserve their ancestral traditions. For nearly a century, anthropologists have studied these Balinese traditions, all of which remain deeply rooted in village-based social and ritual life (T. A. Reuter 2002; T. Reuter 2002; Warren 1993). Over

time, it has become evident that to study Bali is to engage with a unique form of consciousness (Hobart 1978) one that organizes daily existence beyond the desiccated concepts of modern society and the passive, almost dreamlike condition of the touristic experience (Urry 1999; Picard 1996; 2008). This Balinese consciousness reveals an intricate world of meaning that unites the sacred and the profane in an extraordinary synthesis, perceived by the Balinese as an integrated reality. It is a reality dense with symbols, myths, and traditions whose origins are often indiscernible, yet which continue to shape and define the architecture, rituals, and spatial organization of Balinese life (Eliade 1959).

Table 1. Generalized differences between Wong Bali culture and Lowland Balinese culture

	Wong Bali Culture	Lowland Balinese Culture
1	Do not recognize <i>Majapahit</i> origins. All origin myths originate in Bali.	The source of <i>Brahamana</i> civilization is recognized as Indian (Hinduism) sourced from Java.
2	The dead are not cremated; instead, burial, disposal in gorges, or <i>air funerals</i> (e.g., Trunyan) are practiced.	Dead are cremated in <i>Ngaben</i> ceremonies following complex mores and rituals.
3	In theory, social class does not exist.	Social hierarchy established on the basis of caste, class, royal proximity and material wealth.
4	Lowland Balinese priests have no official roles	Aga ritual hierarchy is not recognized.
5	Do not employ Sanskrit mantras.	Sanskrit is used ceremonially (mantras) and in written documents.
6	Village leaders have greater symbolic capital than others.	Village leaders are elected; “royalty,” though lacking state sanction, remain respected among the Balinese.
7	Climatic conditions prevent rice cultivation in most <i>Banua</i> and prohibit it in <i>Pucak Penulisan</i> and <i>Batur communities</i> .	Society founded on rice growing and the system of Subaks or hydraulic engineering (See Wittfogel 1981).
8	Historical understanding is transmitted orally through myths and legends.	Historical records are inscribed on <i>Lontar</i> made of wood or copper, some dating from 900 AD.
9	Socio-spatial structures do not materialize in uniform or standardized	Spatial organization is governed by geometric principles rooted in Hindu philosophy, employing cardinal directions and

	Wong Bali Culture	Lowland Balinese Culture
	practices; only one orientation is significant, with primary markers being ancestral houses or temples.	templates such as <i>Nawa Sanga</i> and <i>Catus Patha</i> (see Budihardjono 1995; Sulistyawati 2014).
10	Acceptance of the term <i>Bali Aga</i> varies, as it may imply backwardness or subservience.	The term <i>Bali Aga</i> is in common use, though its acceptance and connotations vary by context.
11	Possess democratic institutions valuing status over aptitude; traditional markers of class and caste are disregarded; maintain a marginal relationship with the state.	Main institutions are hierarchical and integrated with state ideologies through urban planning and legal mandates, e.g., training of <i>Adat leaders</i> via <i>Badan Pelaksana Pembina Lembaga Adat</i> and ritual simplification under <i>Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia</i> .
12	Lowland Balinese festivals are not recognized.	Annual celebrations such as <i>Nyepi</i> , <i>Galungan</i> , and <i>Kuningan</i> are major social and symbolic events.
13	Social structure less susceptible to manipulation due to its non-material organization, and non-uniform social practices.	Social structures are prone to domination owing to hierarchical formation, the <i>Subak</i> system, and respect for authority (e.g., monarchy); such pre-existing hierarchies facilitated control.
14	Social hierarchy is determined by symbolic (non-material) status, where material wealth theoretically holds no influence.	Hierarchy is based on caste, class, royal association, and material affluence.
15	Religious centers correspond to locations of mythical ancestors.	Religious centers are established based on historical associations and design principles such as <i>Nawa Sanga</i> .
16	Religious traditions are animistic, with animal sacrifice playing a central role.	Blood sacrifice persists but is practiced to a lesser extent.
17	Balinese high language (<i>alus</i>) is not used.	Three traditional levels of Balinese language are spoken.
18	Philosophical principles are dualistic (<i>dyadic</i>), oriented <i>kaja</i> (toward the mountain) and <i>kelod</i> (toward the sea); harmony arises through opposites.	Lowland Balinese culture is triadic, grounded in <i>Tri Angga</i> or <i>Tri Loka</i> —the universe conceived in threes: head, body, and foot (<i>Utama, Madia, Nista</i>).

	Wong Bali Culture	Lowland Balinese Culture
19	Aga villages generally exhibit a dualistic spatial structure and form.	Lowland Balinese villages are codified analogously to domestic dwellings.
20	Wong Bali villages are gerontocratic (governed by elders), though marital status is also influential.	Villages are governed through democratic electoral processes.

Source: (G A M Suartika and Saputra 2019; Saputra and Suartika 2023; Cuthbert and Suartika 2017; Gusti Ayu Made Suartika and Cuthbert 2022)

Notes: Specific examples can be found that will contradict any item in the table. Due to the incredible complexity of social relations, all items are suspect, even the term *Banua*, which is the basic spatial unit of their culture cannot be uniformly applied.

The concept of consciousness, which is fundamental to the symbolism of any culture, remains a relatively unexplored dimension in Bali for several reasons. Within Western ideology, a highly specialized vocabulary exists to describe the mind terms such as *consciousness*, *subconsciousness*, *ego*, *id*, *neurosis*, *psychosis*, and *transference*. However, in Bali, psychiatry and psychology are not widespread professions and remain inaccessible to the general population due to cost and cultural distance. Consequently, *the mind* does not occupy the same conceptual terrain as it does in Western thought. This distinctive form of Balinese consciousness defined here as the collective memory of a culture is transmitted through Balinese Hindu traditions that infuse daily life with religious and mythical significance. The Balinese favor traditional healing practices (*ubad*) administered by *balian tetakson* (spirit mediums), *balian bulung* (bonesetters), or *balian uig* (practitioners of spells and charms). They also believe in *kelinggihang* states of trance and spiritual communication manifested, for instance, in the ritual dance *Sanghyang*, as well as in trance communion with the deceased through mediums known as *Jro Taksu*. Communication with invisible beings (*niskala*) is central to this belief system, occurring through a process called *nadi*, whereby a spiritual guide may temporarily become another entity (Hobart 2016). Funerary practices vary, including cremation (*ngaben*), aerial burial (as in Trunyan, Bali), and interment in the earth. The Balinese worldview distinguishes between white magic

(*pengeliakan*, from the right) and black magic (*pengiwa*, from the left), both grounded in the conviction that all beings animate and inanimate possess a soul (*atma*), and that reincarnation (*numitis*) is an incontrovertible reality. The Balinese lexicon also embodies religious dimensions through specific deities associated with various aspects of life and nature, each honored on dedicated ceremonial days: *Saraswati* (knowledge), *Pertiwi* (nature), *Tumpek Landep* (tools), *Tumpek Uye* (animals), and *Tumpek Wariga* (plants), among others. Within this worldview, other realms coexist with the visible one those of returning spirits, prophecy, magic, premonition, inexplicable phenomena, plagues, sorcery, ghosts, and what Hobart (1978) describes as “the eternal passage of the soul.”

The central dynamic that governs Balinese existence is the relationship between the sacred and the profane a tension that has prevented Balinese culture from being entirely subsumed by contemporary global developments. This context acknowledges that the notion of symbolism, both in life and in architecture, is universal (Samadhi 2004). Nonetheless, this paper adopts a more focused aim: to explore one of the most immediate and culturally expressive arenas of symbolism the home. Across many societies, the house often serves as a direct manifestation of a culture’s symbolic and spiritual values (Lévi-Strauss 1978; Marcus 2006). In the Balinese cosmological canon, the cardinal points each correspond to specific deities (*Catur Loka Pala*), and these divine associations are materially expressed within particular spatial domains (*Catur Negara*). Life and death themselves correspond to day and night, symbolically linked to the east and west directions. As Hobart (1978) emphasizes, the path of the soul, the natural environment, and Balinese conceptions of space are inseparably intertwined. The polarity between *Utama* (the highest) and *Nista* (the lowest) values is spatially embodied in the north south axis. When all four cardinal directions are unified, they form a holistic symbol of the earth itself a cyclical, sacred totality.

The paper thus positions the concept of the vernacular as both theoretically significant (Dewi et al. 2024; Fernandes et al. 2015; Guy and Farmer 2001; Hassin and Misni 2023; Pardo 2023; Gusti Ayu Made Suartika and Cuthbert 2022; Xi, Xiao, and Jingxuan 2021) and underexplored within the existing literature on Bali (Vellinga, Oliver, and Bridge 2008; Weber and Yannas 2009). It focuses

specifically on the *Bale Tengah*, a multifunctional pavilion that occupies the central position of the Bali Aga house in the village of Tenganan Pegeringsingan. This structure serves both material and symbolic purposes within the community's domestic architecture (Vellinga, Oliver, and Bridge 2008; Weber and Yannas 2009). Tenganan Pegeringsingan, a Bali Aga settlement located in southeastern Bali approximately five kilometers from the sea, is distinctive for its rectilinear, grid-like spatial organization and its self-sufficient economy supported by surrounding forests and agricultural lands. Other notable Bali Aga villages include Panglipuran and Trunyan (Dorn 2012). Yet, Tenganan Pegeringsingan remains unique as a Bali Aga settlement situated in the lowlands, combining geographical accessibility with cultural continuity.

Methods

In discussing vernacular architecture, multiple interpretations emerge, and precise terminology becomes essential. The first interpretation, following (Rudofsky 1965), defines vernacular architecture as the original and spontaneous architectural expression that evolves naturally, rather than one derived from formally institutionalized styles. The second interpretation conceives vernacular architecture as construction that employs locally available technologies, tools, and materials without reliance on imported resources (Glassie 2000; Pardo 2023). A third perspective argues that vernacular architecture endures as a practice that is technically, artistically, culturally, and socially sustainable and authentic (Gusti Ayu Made Suartika, Putra, and Saputra 2022). From these definitions, it follows that sustainable architecture involves the preservation of both physically and spiritually sustainable environments through ritual and custom. It embodies sacred as well as profane dimensions. In this sense, sustainable vernacular architecture concerns the protection and perpetuation of both the tangible and intangible elements of regional architectural culture, ensuring the enduring continuity of its people (Frampton 1983; Lefaivre and Tzonis 2020).

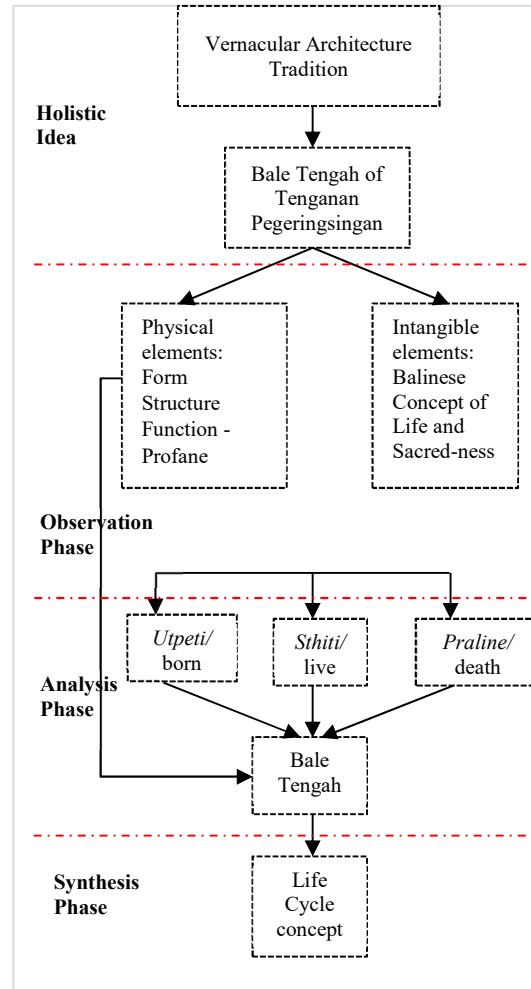


Figure 1. Methodology research

The methodology applied in this study employs traditional qualitative approaches grounded in empirical field observations. Data collection was undertaken through direct observation and photographic documentation, supported by textual compilation, literature reviews, and extensive searches of digital and library archives. The analytical process incorporated expert interviews, academic discourse with peers and specialists, and multiple on-site observations. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with the head of the village and residents of Tenganan Pegeringsingan, focusing on the lived experience and symbolic understanding of the *Bale Tengah*. Secondary data included literature on both traditional and modern Balinese housing, as well as theoretical concepts relating to sustainable architecture. The initial stage of analysis involved

identifying architectural concepts derived from local customs to formulate strategies for preserving and revitalizing sustainable architectural traditions within the context of the Tenganan Pegeringsingan community.

Results and discussion

The discussion is organized into several stages. The first stage examines the holistic concept of Balinese society. The second provides an overview of the Tenganan Pegeringsingan Village and its housing typology. The third discusses the conceptual meanings embodied in the *Bale Tengah*.

A. Faith, tradition and architecture

Hinduism forms the core of Balinese religious life. One of its key philosophical tenets is *Rwa Bhineda*, a term derived from *rwa* (two) and *bhineda* (different), signifying the coexistence of dualities that together generate balance and harmony in life. Rai (2001) notes that *Rwa Bhineda* reflects the dualistic equilibrium of existence, encompassing fundamental opposites such as right and wrong, top and bottom, male and female (Ardana 2016).

This concept of dual balance is deeply embedded in traditional Balinese architecture (*Arsitektur Tradisional Bali* or ATB). It manifests physically through symmetrical relationships that embody cosmic order. Examples include *Manik ring Cecupu*, symbolizing the maternal bond between mother and child; *Akasa* and *Pertiwi*, representing male and female principles as the origins of life; *Tri Loka*, which divides the universe into three realms *bhur*, *bwah*, and *swah*; and *Tri Mandala*, which defines three spatial zones, each with distinct meanings and functions (Diasana Putra, Lozanovska, and Fuller 2017; Putra and Adhika 2023; Susanta and Wiryawan 2019). The principle of balance is also reflected in Balinese cosmological belief systems, particularly the *Tri Koma* concept: *utpeti* (birth), *sthiti* (life), and *pralina* (dissolution). This foundational framework underpins the spatial organization of traditional Balinese settlements and architecture, encompassing both sacred and profane domains.

According to Susanta and Wiryawan (2019), four conceptual foundations shape the creation of traditional Balinese architecture (figure 3): (a)

Religious foundation – Architecture in Bali is a tangible manifestation of Hindu faith. (b) Philosophical foundation – Architectural form is not solely functional but imbued with metaphysical meaning. (c) Ethical foundation – Rooted in *Tri Hita Karana*, the Balinese ethos emphasizes harmony between humans, nature, and the divine, guiding material use and construction methods to respect environmental balance. (d) Ritual foundation – Every stage of construction must be preceded and accompanied by ritual, reflecting a deep integration between belief and built form.

Since architectural forms are cultural artefacts representing collective values and practices, culture itself must be positioned as the central element mediating relationships among belief, philosophy, ethics, and ritual. Culture serves as the crucible through which these domains interact, shaping the moral and spatial order of Balinese life (Gusti Ayu Made Suartika 2013; 2020; G A M Suartika 2019; Gusti Ayu Made Suartika and Cuthbert 2022; Bria and Suartika 2022; Gusti Ayu Made Suartika and Nichols 2020; G A M Suartika and Saputra 2019) (figure 2).

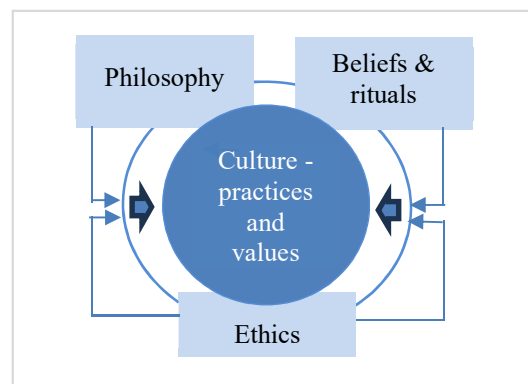


Figure 2. Architectural forms and culture (Gusti Ayu Made Suartika 2013; 2020; G A M Suartika 2019; Bria and Suartika 2022; Gusti Ayu Made Suartika and Nichols 2020; G A M Suartika and Saputra 2019; Gusti Ayu Made Suartika and Cuthbert 2022)

B. Desa Tenganan Pegeringsingan

Tenganan Pegeringsingan Village is one of the few remaining Balinese communities that has successfully preserved its natural environment, cultural heritage, and settlement structure (Suci Elvira, Endah Harisun, and Haryati 2023; Lu and Liu 2023). The village embodies a sustainable landscape model, in which ecological preservation and social continuity are embedded

in local traditions. Forests, agriculture, and home gardens constitute the primary resources of the community and remain actively protected (Putra and Adhika 2023). This collective commitment is formalized in the village's *awig-awig* a customary law that regulates all aspects of community life (I Nyoman Agus Suarya Putra, Putu Gede Surya Cipta Nugraha, and Ni Wayan Wardani 2023).

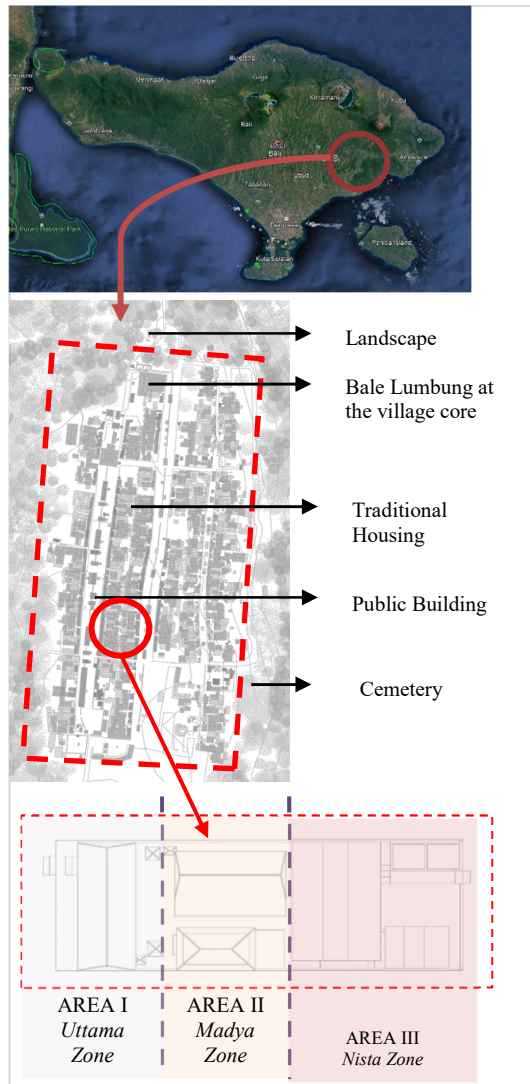


Figure 3. Tenganan Pegeringsingan settlement and housing

Situated along a hillside, Tenganan Pegeringsingan developed as a linear settlement centered on a communal open space that functions as the village's social and ritual core. The settlement pattern is symmetrical along the east–west axis, and every household follows a similar

spatial typology. Area I include the entrance and *Bale Buga*; Area II houses the *Bale Tengah* and *Bale Meten*; and Area III contains the kitchen and *Tebe* (rear courtyard), often used for pig farming.

From a cosmological standpoint, each spatial zone embodies both sacred (*utama*) and profane (*nista*) qualities. The sacred domain lies toward the front, gradually transitioning into the profane toward the rear. Thus, Area I (*Utama Mandala*) serves as a spiritual zone used for worship and ritual activities, containing structures such as the *Bale Boga*, shrine, and main gate. Area II (*Madya Mandala*) represents the intermediate domain, functioning as a family gathering and resting space where the *Bale Tengah* and *Bale Meten* are located. Finally, Area III (*Nista Mandala*) forms the most profane realm, dedicated to domestic functions such as cooking and livestock keeping.

C. Form and function of the Bale Tengah from a life cycle perspective

The *Bale Tengah* features a simple geometric form comprising a triangular roof, a beam framework, and a rectangular foundation (Hassin and Misni 2023). The community believes that this structure embodies balance resilient to earthquakes while maintaining a modest architectural form.

Each element manifests the *Tri Angga* concept, a hierarchical spatial division comprising the upper (*Utama Angga*) represented by the roof, the middle (*Madya Angga*) represented by the body and wall construction, and the lower (*Nista Angga*) represented by the foundation or base of the house.

Situated in the middle zone of the Tenganan Pegeringsingan household compound, the *Bale Tengah* corresponds to the *pawongan* domain in the *Tri Mandala* concept, which divides domestic space into three typologies. This zone facilitates harmony among humans (*pawongan*), and accommodates social and domestic activities, including housing, hospitality, childbirth, death rituals, and food storage.

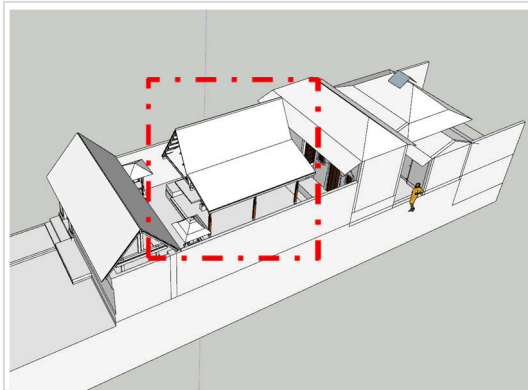


Figure 4. Perspective of the housing and *Bale Tengah* location in Tenganan housing

Bale Tengah encapsulates the dualism of life expressed in *Rwa Bhineda*. Its first function relates to death ceremonies, where it serves as the site for ritual body bathing. The deceased is laid on the bale platform, with the head facing north and feet facing south. This orientation symbolizes the human alignment between *hulu* (mountain/highland) and *teben* (sea/lowland). Upon completion, the body is carried to the cemetery and interred with the head to the south in a fetal position (*mekakeb*). The *mekakeb* position signifies the community's belief that the spirit returns to its ancestral origin in the south, symbolizing the cyclical nature of reincarnation.

Conversely, the second function of the *Bale Tengah* reflects the celebration of birth. When a child is born, the family resides in the *Bale Tengah* for one month and seven days (*bulan pitung dina* or 42 days). During this period, the newborn is considered a descendant of the Tenganan Pegeringsingan lineage, believed to have returned from the south to dwell once more in the *Bale Tengah*. Birth, therefore, represents the ancestors' spiritual return through the medium of the *Bale Tengah*.

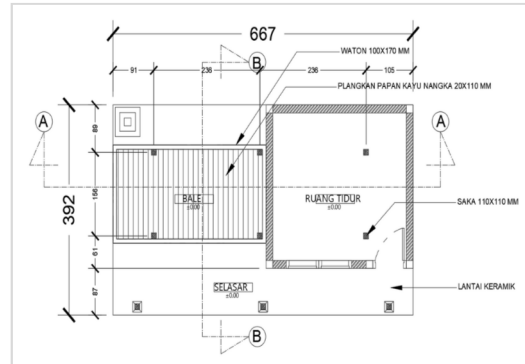


Figure 5. Lay out plan of the *Bale Tengah* in Tenganan Pegeringsingan village

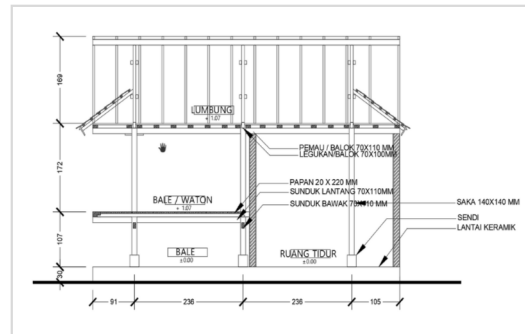


Figure 6. Section of the *Bale Tengah* in Tenganan Pegeringsingan village



Figure 7. *Bale Tengah* houses

As an aspect of *sthiti* (life), the *Bale Tengah* also functions as a residence for extended families sharing the same courtyard, as well as a granary for storing rice, fruits, and vegetables. Interestingly, sleeping orientation within the *Bale Tengah* faces outward toward the village corridor (*luan*), differing from the broader Balinese

convention, where sleeping orientation follows the sacred direction of mountains to the north or the sunrise to the east. This distinct orientation underscores the *Bale Tengah*'s symbolic role as a communal and transitional space between the sacred and the profane.



Figure 8. Typical view of foundation made from river stone

The *Bale Tengah* employs traditional vernacular construction methods (Marchante and Rivera Vidal 2022; Hidalgo Zambrano et al. 2023). The foundation consists of river stones to ensure stability, while the columns are crafted from jackfruit wood, and the roof structure combines timber framing with bamboo covering. The construction utilizes the *purus* and *lait* system, a traditional joinery method where wooden components are connected by inserting a tenon (*purus*) into a mortise (*kupak*), secured with a wooden peg (*lait*).



Figure 9. Construction System of Bale Tengah wooden structure - *purus* and *lait*; (a). Bale Tengah perspective; (b). detail A; (c). detail B; (d). detail C.

Upon completion, a consecration ceremony marks the building's "birth," while the *Bale Meten* a related structure symbolically sustains life (*urip*) through ritual use. After approximately 20 years, if the *Bale Meten* deteriorates, a ceremonial *pralina* (dissolution) process is

undertaken, analogous to the concept of human death.

An analysis of the *Bale Tengah* from the perspective of the life cycle produced the following results:

D. Observation data related to the Bale Tengah Life-Cycle concept

Table 1. Observation data related to the Bale Tengah life cycle concept

Architectural element	Life cycle			
	Birth	Life	Death	Observation
Form	The form originates from the idea of unifying materials to represent the human body.	-	-	The Bale Tengah building adopts a geometric shape with the basic shape using a box shape, form and the roof using a triangular shape. With a pitched roof. The orientation of shape is facing south, linear with the east and west.
Function	Serves as a residence for families with newborns.	As a bed for the occupants of the house with the head oriented towards the Bale Boga. As a place to socialize with other people and to store agricultural products (granaries)	Used for body bathing rituals, with north-south corpse orientation.	During daily life, the <i>Bale Tengah</i> serves domestic purposes, but transforms to accommodate birth and death ceremonies as required.
Structure and construction	The structure uses a traditional system (<i>purus, kupak, and lait</i>). At the beginning, a <i>nasarin</i> ceremony is given as a symbol of the first steps in the birth of a new building (birth or the beginning of development).	The combined structure of the foundation, body (<i>saka</i> (collum)/walls), and roof form one unit, which symbolizes human beings. The ritual of <i>meplaspas</i> or 'giving the soul' is carried out and uniting all the material components into one form of the Balinese house which has <i>wrip</i> .	Demountable structure. After the building is damaged and must be replaced, a <i>melting/praline</i> ceremony is carried out (equated to the process of death for human beings).	The demountable construction enables reassembly and material reuse, demonstrating sustainable principles embedded in Tenganan Pegeringsingan architecture.
Materials	Materials are sourced from forests owned by Tenganan Pegeringsingan Village. The material must be grown here before it can be used as a replacement for building materials.	Natural materials are cared for and maintained like life. Rituals are carried out as a symbol of appreciation that the material is alive.	Material that has grown and stored can then be used as building material and cut down for proper use.	The use of materials is a social convention that all materials that will be used must be planted and maintained locally. Once they are strong, they can be used as building materials.

Conclusions

The people of the Tenganan Pegeringsingan community continue to uphold the *awig-awig* their customary laws despite pressures of modernization and global development. Their steadfast commitment to ancestral traditions

exemplifies an indigenous form of environmental sustainability. The life-cycle concept embedded in the *Bale Tengah* serves as a symbolic equivalent of sustainability itself.

The architectural, structural, and material logic of the *Bale Tengah* articulates the principle that all entities whether human or architectural

undergo a continuous process from birth to life to death.

This cyclical understanding conveys that the *Bale Tengah* is more than a physical space; it is a manifestation of the enduring relationship among humans, nature, and the spiritual realm, embodying continuity between creation, existence, and dissolution.

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