Pundukdawa Movement: In Search of Identity, Deconstructing Ideology of Hierarchy in Contemporary Bali

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.24843/JKB.2025.v15.i03.p02

Abstract: Contestations related to hierarchy among the Balinese have long been discussed. In present-day Bali, one of the most spectacular cases of hierarchical conflict was the conflict surrounding the prohibition of a high priest from *Wangsa* Pasek (Pasek Maxima Clan) from officiating rituals in Pura Dasar Bhuana in Gelgel, Klungkung. This conflict triggered the construction of a new temple, called Pura Catur Parhyangan Ratu Pasek Linggih Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana located in Pundukdawa village, also in Klungkung district. This research aimed to analyse in depth the motivation of the temple construction and its ramifications, employing a qualitative research approach. It concluded that the development of the new temple is a movement to search and strengthen identity (*wangsa* identity, *identitas* ke-*wangsa*-an), and to increase the maxima clan's standing. The findings of this research suggest that in analysing the current hierarchy and dominance in Balinese society, it can no longer employ analytical theories based on static hierarchy.

Keywords: Pundukdawa movement; identity; *Wangsa* Pasek; deconstruction

1. Introduction

Identity is one of the primary discussions in studying an ethnic group, as group identity, or ethnic identity, is crucial for the members of that group. The social structure in society is closely tied to individual identity. Hence, identity has long been a topic of debate among anthropologists, sociologists, and social psychologists (Fox, 2010; Pitana, 2020; Pitana & Winatha, 2023).

In ancient Bali, inquiring about one's social status or clan identity was very important before continuing a conversation. The common question asked was "*nunasang antuk linggih*", which literally means "what is your seat", a question implying someone's status, *wangsa*, warga, or clan. *Wangsa* or maxima-clan clan

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is a large group that considers itself to have a single ancestor as its origin point (Pitana & Winatha, 2023).

As identity is flowing, not static in nature, the search for identity is quite common in every society, and this search for identity often triggers rivalry or open conflict among groups. In the case of Bali, conflicts over status have been in place for decades. At least it can be traced back to the 1920s, when conflict between the *Triwangsa* and the *Jaba* occurred in Singaraja, represented by the Bali Adnyana and Surya Kanta organisations, respectively.

In 1925, Surya Kanta published the *Surya Kanta* magazine, criticising the dominance and unjust treatment of the caste system, concluding that the caste system must be abolished and replaced by a more democratic system. On the other hand, *Bali Adnyana's* publication, motivated by the people of *Triwangsa*, argued that the caste system is a system to protect Bali from the negative influence brought about by modernisation or Western culture. The *Triwangsa* insisted on maintaining social status based on lineage (ascribed status), while the *Jaba* argued that in the modern era, social status should be based on achievement (achieved status) (Agung, 1974; Ariyani, 2022; Kurniawan et al., 2025).

The conflict persists in various forms, including a conflict within the highest Hindu council, the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia of Bali Province, which occurred in 2003. This conflict ultimately led to the split of the council, known as *Parisada Campuhan* for the *Triwangsa*, on one hand, and Parisada Besakih for the *Jaba*, on the other (Pitana & Winatha, 2023).

One of the key motivations in searching for identity is social standing. Field data indicate that several strategies are employed to enhance the standing of one's identity or group identity. First, by changing the font name (title name), whereby a family (or a group of extended families) changes its name to one considered more prestigious. For example, *Gusti* families change their names to *Anak Agung, Ngakan* to *Dewa, Si* to *Gusti,* and so on.

Secondly, by claiming that the group belongs to or is related to a prestigious group. For this, a group of families would change their lineage. Thirdly, by claiming that their ancestors are prominent figures in the past. Using this strategy, the group would announce that they are not from the lower class, but they are descendants of high-ranking ancestors. The fourth is the use of prestigious symbols during ritual ceremonies, such as the tiers of the cremation tower, the shape of the coffin, and the ornaments used as paraphernalia. Lastly, the use of a high priest from their clan serves to demonstrate their high standing (Windia, 2022).

Conflicts over status and identity may lead to continuous rivalry, contestation, or excommunication. The conflict that occurred between Wangsa Pasek and the management of Pura Dasar Bhuana is interesting to analyse

in the context of the search for identity and status recognition, as well as to understand the current situation of hierarchy and dominance in Balinese society. The conflict, which ended with the movement of God in a shrine in Pura Dasar Bhuana to a new temple in Pundukdawa village, both located in Klungkung District, would give an empirical data on how a maxima clan or *wangsa* or *warga* as 'maximal descent group' (Fox, 2002, p. 105) challenges the tradition of the vertical hierarchy among the Balinese.

2. Literature Review

Identity has been one of the main topics of discussion in analysing the social structure of a society since the era of Max Weber, the German sociologist (Weber 1962, 2002). Theoretically, identity is a characteristic of someone or a group of people that distinguishes them from others or other groups. It manifests in how people or group members perceive themselves (self-concept), how they tend to behave towards others (other groups), and how they are accepted by society at large. Distinguishing factors of identity can be physical characteristics, values adhered to, belief system, religion, world-view, and social interactions. Social identity is members' understanding of belonging to the groups, and the attendant of significant values and praxis of the group (Sanderson, 2011).

Giddens (2011) distinguishes between personal identity and social identity. Personal identity refers to how someone perceives themselves individually, including the values they adhere to, their beliefs, personal experiences, psychological aspects, and aspirations. Social identity is associated with how a group is perceived by other groups, based on several attributes such as ethnic group, religion, and social status. Both personal and social identities are important in formulating interactions with other groups.

Identity is a complicated, multi-layered, and multi-perspective issue, as well as a contextual one; hence, it is often difficult to define the identity of a group rigidly. This is more so because identity is not static, but dynamic. This holds true in the case of Bali, as stated by Putra and Verheijen (2019, p. 425):

> "… Balinese cultural identity is complex in many aspects. It is diffuse, multi-layered, and has both active and passive forms that can crystallise through economic, political, and cultural events or developments. Over the last thirty years, this identity has been especially dynamic…"

Despite its complexity, it is safe to say that Balinese identity is deeply rooted in Hinduism, blending with pre-Hindu traditions, artistic expressions, and modern influences. It emphasises harmony, respect for nature, communal in nature, and a vibrant spiritual life. Like other ethnic groups, Balinese cultural

identity is constantly evolving, adapting to new influences; however, it maintains its core values. As Segara and Kuckreja (2024) note, the Balinese identity is multi-layered, a combination of indigenous customs and Hindu teachings that are inseparable. Putra (2011) also emphasises that identity is never fixed or static, but rather dynamic, or, following During (2005), 'in constant mutation'.

Within Bali, groups of society, including *wangsa* or maxima clans, have been in constant contestation, manifested in claims and overclaims on cultural and social capital. In other words, internally, there are ongoing games of identity politics. According to Putra (2011, p. 146), the politics of identity is:

> "Strategy to see oneself vis-à-vis others. The others here can be individuals, other groups, other ethnics, other races, or other nationalities with all the differences …. The process of identity construction generally includes the analysis of sameness and differences with the others…".

There has been a phenomenon of a strengthening wave of contestation among lineage groups, or *wangsa*, in Bali, whether silently or overtly. Maxima clan's identity is crystallising. In analogy with social identity, *wangsa* identity refers to an individual's sense of belonging to a particular *wangsa*, encompassing their understanding of their *wangsa*, self-identification with their *wangsa*, attitudes towards their *wangsa* and other *wangsa*, and behaviours, particularly in religious ritual contexts.

Although the caste system is not actively operating in the daily life of the Balinese, the term "caste system" is still widely used by writers, including academicians. It is said that in Balinese society, social status and identity are primarily determined by the caste system, a fixed hierarchical structure of the society. It is worth noting that there are four castes in Bali, namely *Brahmana* (priests), *Ksatria* (warriors and rulers), *Wesia* (merchants and officials), and *Sudra* (commoners and peasants) (Howe, 2004; Kerepun, 2007; Mardika, 2018; Palar and Hewat, 2024).

3. Method and Theory

This article is based on a long-term participant observation (2017-2023), whereby the researchers were intermittently actively involved in the process, particularly during temple festivals. Deep interviews were also conducted with several key informants, to include The Chairman of MGPSSR, Prof. Dr. dr. Wayan Wita, SPJP; the Secretary General of MGPSSR, Wayan Winatha; the Chairman of the Fact finding Team of MGPSSR, Prof. Dr. Pasek Dianta, S.H., M.H.; the then Governor of Bali, Irjen Pol. Made Mangku Pastika; the Chairman of MGPSSR of Klungkung Regency, Nyoman Sudiasa, S.H.; the Chairman of the first Major Ritual ceremony of Pura Pundukdawa, Drs. Nyoman Putra

Suarjana; The Chairman of the Priest Group of MGPSSR, Ida Pandita Mpu Daksa Merthayoga; and several informants met during events. The writing is also supported by a study document found in the secretariat of MGPSSR, as well as internet sources. In short, the research method combines the use of observation, interviews, and study of documents.

The data obtained were analysed using a qualitative method called critical ethnography. In so doing, a set of steps was followed, including data reduction, data presentation, data interpretation, and conclusion, as stated by Cresswell (2019) and Bungin (2011). In the analysis, theories of identity and deconstruction are applied, as the subject being studied appears to be a deconstruction of ideology within social structure.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Maxima Clan in Contemporary Bali

The kinship system in Bali has long been studied by anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists, including Margaret Mead (1930), Clifford Geertz (1959), and Geertz and Geertz (1975). Fox (2010) in his study on Pura Besakih aptly describes the kinship system or clan-based organisation of the Balinese island-wide. As membership in a clan is quite large, Fox termed the clan in Bali a 'maximal descent group', while in Bali it is better known as *soroh, wangsa*, or *warga*.

Amidst its complexity, *wangsa* in Bali is neatly organised, associated with the existence of Wangsa's temple system as a binding factor. Kinship system among Balinese Hindus started from 1) nuclear family, signified by the ownership of a simple family temple; 2) extended family, owning a big family temple called *sanggah gede* or *merajan agung*; 3) *pedadyan*, a compilation of several extended family, worshipping an ancestral temple called *dadya*; 4) *dadya agung* congregation, which might be called sub-*wangsa*; and 5) *Wangsa* or *warga* or *soroh*, bond by Pura *Kawitan*, a temple dedicated to the creator or the origin point of the maxima-clan (Windia, 2021).

Wangsa, or the maxima clan in contemporary Bali, merely refers to someone's lineage and not necessarily their current position in society. For example, if someone is a descendant of a *Brahmana* family, they are automatically part of the Wangsa Brahmana, even if they are not a priest. Similarly, if someone is a descendant of King Dalem Segening, they are automatically a member of Wangsa Dalem Segening, even if they are a low-class worker in the tourism industry.

Aside from the temple, a *wangsa* is also unified by a common identity, especially evident in the *ngaben* ritual, notably in the use of sacred formulae written on the white cloth covering the dead, known as *kajang*. The existence of the *wangsa* is also strengthened by the requirement to have holy water (*tirtha*) at the ancestral temple whenever a member conducts a major ritual ceremony (Pitana, 2020).

There are several *wangsa* in Bali, as shown in Table 1. However, some *wangsa* are, in fact, sub-wangsa of a larger *wangsa*. For example, *Wangsa* Pasek (Agnijaya *Wangsa*) can be seen as a single *wangsa*; however, some also mention that *Wangsa* Pasek consists of several *wangsa*, such as Pasek Tohjiwa, Pasek Gelgel, Pasek Tatar, Pasek Gaduh, Pasek Kubayan, Pasek Bendesa, Pasek Bendesa Mas, Pasek Tangguntiti, Pasek Aan, and so forth.

Table 1. The name of *wangsa* in Bali (alphabetically ordered)

No.	Wangsa
1	Wangsa Anggungan
2	Wangsa Arya Batulepang
3	Wangsa Arya Belog
4	Wangsa Arya Gajah Para
5	Wangsa Arya Kanuruhan
6	Wangsa Arya Kenceng
7	Wangsa Arya Kenceng Tegehkori
8	Wangsa Arya Kepakisan
9	Wangsa Arya Kepakisan Dauh Baleagung
10	Wangsa Arya Kubon Tubuh
11	Wangsa Arya Kuta Waringin
12	Wangsa Arya Pengalasan
13	Wangsa Arya Sidemen
14	Wangsa Arya Telabah
15	Wangsa Arya Wang Bang Pinatih
16	Wangsa Bendesa Manik Mas
17	Wangsa Bhujangga Waisnawa
18	Wangsa Brahmana Boda
19	Wangsa Brahmana Siwa
20	Wangsa Dalem Segening
21	Wangsa Dalem Tarukan (Balangan, Bebandem, Belayu)
22	Wangsa Dukuh
23	Wangsa Gaduh
24	Wangsa Karangbuncing
25	Wangsa Ksatria Dalem Segening
26	Wangsa Ksatria Dalem Sukawati
27	Wangsa Pande
28	Wangsa Pasek Kayu Selem
29	Wangsa Pasek Sanak Sapta Rsi (Agnijaya Wangsa)
30	Wangsa Penyarikan
31	Wangsa Pulasari
32	Wangsa Sekar
33	Wangsa Sukahet
34	Wangsa Tangkas Kori Agung
35	Wangsa Tirta Arum

A number of these *wangsa* have established modern organisations, commonly known as clan-based organisation (*paiketan pasemetonan*), such as *Keluarga Besar Bhujangga Waisnawa* (for *Wangsa* Bhujangga Waisnawa); *Maha Gotra Pasek Sanak Sapta Rsi* (for *Wangsa* Pasek or Agnijaya *Wangsa*); *Keluarga Besar Arya Kepakisan Dauh Baleagung* (for *Wangsa* Arya Kepakisan dauh baleagung); *Swagotra Bhatara Arya Batulepang* (for *Wangsa* Arya Batulepang), *Maha Semaya Warga Pande* (for *Wangsa* Pande), *Maha Gotra Sentanan Dalem Tarukan* (for *Wangsa* Dalem Tarukan), *Pratisentana Sira Arya Kubon Tubuh* (for *Wangsa* Arya Kubontubuh); and lots more (Pitana & Winatha, 2023).

Among these modern organisations, one of the most active is *Maha Gotra Pasek Sanak Sapta Rsi* or MGPSSR. MGPSSR can be said to be the most prominent clan-based organisation in Bali, as more than 60% of the Balinese are members of this maxima clan (Soebandi, 2003). MGPSSR is also the first clan-based organisation to own and manage a crematorium, simplifying the *ngaben* ceremony. MGPSSR also manages a large cooperative unit, named Koperasi Santhayana Pasek, and is one of the few clan-based organisations that regularly organises annual meetings (*pesamuan agung*) and national congresses (*Mahasabha*). In 2024, MGPSSR established 12 provincial organisations beyond Bali. In supporting its activities, MGPSSR has also established an economic wing (*Yayasan*) called Yayasan Santhayana Dharma, which manages the school, private courses, trainings for religious leaders and priests, as well as manages the first Hindu crematorium in Bali, *Krematorium Santhayana Pasek*.

4.2 Pura Dasar Bhuana

To understand the context, it is essential to briefly describe the status of Pura Dasar Bhuana in Gelgel, located in the village of Gelgel, Klungkung Regency. The temple is a state temple of the Gelgel Kingdom (XIV-XVII century). According to several chronicles such as *Babad Pasek* and *Babad Dalem* (Soebandi, 2003), the temple, in its simple structure, was built by Mpu Dwijaksara in 1267 AD, in respect to his ancestor, Mpu Ghana, a prominent high priest at the end of the 10th century (Prabawa et.al, 2019).

During the era of the Gelgel Kingdom (ca. 1384-1686 AD), the status of the temple was elevated to become a state temple. For this purpose, shrines for the royal family and a shrine for Wangsa Pande (the blacksmith) were constructed; hence, the temple was also known as a temple of triwarga (a temple for the three major clans, namely *Wangsa* Satria Dalem, *Wangsa* Pasek, and *Wangsa* Pande). After the advent of a famous high priest Dang Hyang Nirartha (ca 1489 AD), another shrine was built, for Wangsa Brahmana Siwa (descendants of Dang Hyang Nirartha), hence the temple was known as the temple of *Pura Catur Warga*, meaning a temple for four maxima clans (Soebandi, 1985). Referring to

Wirawan (2008), Prabawa et al. (2019) states that Pura Dasar Buana Gelgel is a public temple dedicated to Ida Bhatara Catur Dewata, i.e dedicated to ancestors of four maxima clans, i.e. *Wangsa* Brahmana Siwa, *Wangsa* Ksatria Dalem, *Wangsa* Pasek, and *Wangsa* Pande. At the same time, it also functions as a public temple (*dang kahyangan*).

Mardika (2018) resumes the history of Pura Dasar Bhuana as follows:

> Pura Dasar Bhuana was built by Mpu Dwijaksara from the Kingdom of Wilwatikta (Majapahit Kingdom) in Caka 1189 or 1267 AD. This temple is one of the *Dang Kahyangan Jagat* in Bali. During the Majapahit Kingdom, Pura Dang Kahyangan was built to honour the services of the *pandita* (holy teacher). …

However, as claim over claim is not unusual for temples in Bali, in a later publication, the temple is stated as purely a state temple of Gelgel Kingdom, a public temple (*dang kahyangan*), nothing to do with maxima clan, since temple for maxima clans are all located in Besakih temple complex, called *Pedharman* (Raka et al., 2021). It is said that in Pura Dasar Bhuana, there is no shrine dedicated to Mpu Ghana, although it is acknowledged that there is one shrine where members of *Wangsa* Pasek pay homage, known as Ida Ratu Pasek.

Whatever the history and whatever the status of the temple is, data show that in every six-monthly temple festival, the temple is visited by thousands of worshippers, most of whom are members of *Wangsa* Pasek (Agnijaya *Wangsa*), especially before 2017, when Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana was considered still resided in the temple.

4.3 Moving the God to a New Temple

As stated above, Pura Dasar Bhuana was known as a place of worship for Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana, one of Wangsa Pasek's ancestors. Members of *Wangsa* Pasek are obliged to pay homage to this temple as a sign of respect to their ancestors. However, in 2016, *Wangsa* Pasek decided to move the shrine to worship Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana to another place. As it is impossible to move the shrine physically, a new temple was constructed elsewhere.

The relocation of the shrine dedicated to Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana from Pura Dasar Bhuana Gelgel to Pundukdawa village was triggered by the rejection of high priests from Wangsa Pasek to officiate from the platform, known as *pawedan*. Two cases occurred in August 2016, in which high priests of Wangsa Pasek were prohibited from officiating from a proper platform (Photo 1 and 2). The first case occurred on 11 August 2016, when a high priest of *Wangsa* Pasek from Antiga village, Karangasem, named Ida Pandita Mpu Dwi Dharmanatha,

refused to officiate from the altar (*pawedan*). A heated debate ensued, but there was no way out, and the priest was forced to officiate by sitting on the ground. The guardians of the temple insisted that only a high priest from *Wangsa* Brahmana is allowed to officiate at the altar.

Photo 1. Incident 1. High Priest from *Wangsa* Pasek (Ida Pandita Mpu Angling Darma) sitting on earth in officiate in Pura Dasar Bhuana, August 2016 (Photo FB IPM Jaya Premananda, 23 August 2016).

Photo 2. Incident 2. High Priest from *Wangsa* Pasek (Ida Pandita Mpu Dharma Winata) was prohibited from officiating at the proper altar (*Pawedan*) (Photo: FB Semeton Pasek, 2016).

In the second case, on 16 August 2016, a Pandita Mpu from Manggis, Karangasem, led a group of pilgrims to Pura Dasar Bhuana as part of the Ngaben rituals, known as *maajar-ajar*. However, the priest (Ida Pandita Mpu Dharma Winatha) was not allowed to officiate from the altar (*pawedan*). Because there was no solution, the priest and the pilgrims left the temple without performing the ritual. These incidents were broadcast on social media, which invited pros and cons for months. A report states that this was not the first incident. In the 1970s and early 1990s, the same incidents also occurred, but at that time, few people were aware of them, as the incidents were not broadcast, and social media did not exist at the time of the incidents (TPF report, 2016).

Realising the repeated incident, which is a humiliation for the priests from *Wangsa* Pasek and *Wangsa* Pasek as a whole, and to prevent similar incidents in the future, several Wangsa Pasek members came up with ideas to move the

shrine of Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana to another place. In this discourse, there were also pros and cons within *Wangsa* Pasek.

To find an agreed-upon solution, meetings were conducted by the leaders of the *Wangsa* Pasek organisation (MGPSSR). To gain a comprehensive understanding of the incident, a fact-finding team (*Tim Pencari Fakta*) was established, formalised by Decision of the Chairman of Central MGPSSR No. 086/MGPSSR-Pst/IX/2016, dated 24 September 2016. This team was chaired by Prof. Dr. Made Pasek Dianta, S.H., a professor of Law at Udayana University.

The team was tasked with collecting data and information on the harassment of the high priest in Pura Dasar Bhuana, analysing the harassment from various aspects, and putting forward recommendations for the next steps, particularly regarding the discourse on relocating the shrine of Ida Betara Mpu Ghana to another location.

As mandated, the team worked hard to have meetings with various stakeholders related to the temple and Balinese Hindu traditions, to include the temple congregation, the local government (the Bupati of Klungkung regency), the governor of Bali, leaders of Desa Adat Gelgel, *Parisada Hindu Dharma* of various levels, senior priests, and elders as well as intellectuals from *Wangsa* Pasek.

The team presented its findings, conclusions, and recommendations at the annual meeting (*Pesamuan Agung*) of Wangsa Pasek on 4 December 2016, in the central office of MGPSSR in Denpasar. The main points of the report were that harassment of the high priests of *Wangsa* Pasek was confirmed. The discrimination had been in place for decades, whereby the high priests from *Wangsa* Pasek were prohibited from officiating rituals from the altar (*pawedan*). Furthermore, the report states that the management committee of the temple has been replaced, with Wangsa Pasek excluded, and the temple is now directly managed by Desa Adat Gelgel (Gelgel customary village). Most of the visitors worshipping in the temple are members of *Wangsa* Pasek, but ironically, *Wangsa* Pasek has no right whatsoever. Even worse, offerings dedicated by *Wangsa* Pasek to Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana were not offered to Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana, but to the ancestors of other maxima clans having shrines in the temple (TPF Report, 2016).

After considering various aspects comprehensively, including SWOT analysis, the committee recommended constructing a new temple dedicated to Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana. The meeting unanimously agreed on the recommendation and commissioned a team to find a proper site for the planned temple. Hence, the decision to construct a new temple was made by Pesamuan Agung, which holds a high legal position within the organisation of *Wangsa* Pasek (MGPSSR).

Within a short period, led by Ida Pandita Mpu Siwa Putra Paramadaksa, a suitable location was found that met the criteria, namely a small hill in the Pundukdawa sub-village of the Village of Pesinggahan, Klungkung Regency. Without further delay, the land was bought and cleared, while the design of the planned temple was not yet finalised.

Before the designated temple was ready, a special ceremony was conducted on 11 September 2016, involving a request for forgiveness (*maguru piduka*) to Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana and the relocation of Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana from Pura Dasar Bhuana to be temporarily accommodated in Pura Caturlawa or Pedharman Ratu Pasek in Besakih. This was done in a hurry, as a temple festival in Pura Dasar Bhuana was scheduled for 13 September. By relocating Ida Bethara from Dasar Bhuana to Besakih, the organisation of Wangsa Pasek, MGPSSR, announced to the public, especially its members, that they should no longer visit Pura Dasar Bhuana but instead worship Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana in Besakih.

On 5 March 2017, a gathering of high priests and the MGPSSR was organised in the designated place, led by the chairman of the MGPSSR, Prof. Dr. Wayan Wita. They agreed to continue the development and develop a strategy to mobilise funding from members of *Wangsa* Pasek (Agnijaya *Wangsa*).

4.4 Pundukdawa Movement

The development of the temple was relatively fast. The silent majority, the oppressed mass of *Wangsa* Pasek, built their self-pride, as they do not want to be seen as a second-class citizen. The process and mobilisation of *Wangsa* Pasek in the development of Pura Pundukdawa can be primarily seen as a movement, involving millions of *Wangsa* Pasek members from all over Bali and other islands (Lombok, Lampung, South Sumatra, South Sulawesi, Central, and Central Java).

The first ritual ceremony, signifying the new temple, was conducted at a rapid pace on 10 April 2017. The major purification inauguration of the temple, called *Upacara Ngenteg Linggih Menawa Ratna*, was organised for a month at the end of 2019. The temple is named *Pura Penataran Catur Parhyangan Linggih Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana* and is better known as Pura Pundukdawa.

The relocation of the shrine dedicated to Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana and the development of Pura Pundukdawa can be seen as a movement by Wangsa Pasek to seek and enhance their status identity. This can be seen from various indicators. Firstly, the enthusiasm of the members of Wangsa Pasek to work voluntarily on the physical construction of the temple. They came from all over Bali to help with land clearing, which took months. Secondly, members of *Wangsa* Pasek voluntarily contributed in cash and in kind to construct the temple,

including all paraphernalia needed. This was also supported by members of *Wangsa* Pasek, who held positions of power in the bureaucracy, including the governor of Bali and several *bupati* (regents). Thirdly, the enthusiasm of Wangsa Pasek members in conducting the ritual ceremony. For example, during the melasti to purify effigies and paraphernalia, tens of thousands of people join, making a long march from Pura Pundukdawa to Goa Lawah beach, a distance of around 5 km (Photos 3 and 4). Enthusiasm was also apparent during the 42-day ritual ceremony. Pitana and Winatha (2023) conclude that the move from Pura Dasar Bhuana Gelgel to Pura Pundukdawa is indeed a movement aimed at strengthening the identity and standing of *Wangsa* Pasek.

Photos 3 and 4. Enthusiasm of members of *Wangsa* Pasek during the Melasti procession (30 December 2018) for the big ceremony in 2019 (Photo by the author).

4.5 Deconstruction from Hierarchy to Differentiation

Hierarchy or social stratification is very salient in the literature on Balinese society, as can be seen in Geertz and Geertz (1975) or Korn's (2017) classic '*Het Adatrech Van Bali'*. Even until recently, the concept of caste as a rigid social hierarchy has remained a significant topic of discussion. Segara and Kuckreja (2024, p. 1) conclude that:

> "The history of the island has enforced the rigid caste system, but the application of Hindu philosophy serves an idealised definition of caste".

Palar and Hewat (2024, p. 470) also state that:

> Balinese society is characterised by a hierarchical structure that fosters a strong sense of community and family ties. The caste system … traditionally organised Balinese society into four main castes"

It is undeniable that the sense of the caste system in the formation of Balinese society still works in practice, but caste ideology has been vigorously

challenged by several maxima clans. The construction of Pura Pundukdawa by Wangsa Pasek is linked to both hierarchical and differentiated ideologies. In the ideology of hierarchy, society is vertically arranged, with imbalanced relationships among strata. On the other hand, the ideology of differentiation acknowledges the differences among groups in a society, but these groups are arranged horizontally (Suyanto & Sudarso, 2011).

In the ideology of hierarchy, groups in society are classified into special groups that have exclusive privileges and are placed at the top of the hierarchy. The rest are the ordinary people (commoners). Ordinary people are prohibited from taking jobs that are exclusively reserved for special groups. The hierarchy is reinforced by a set of symbols, behaviours, ornaments, clothing, and other elements. This ideology is found in many places. In Java, there was hierarchy between *Priyayi* and *Wong Cilik*; in US, there was hierarchy between the black and the white; in Bali, between the *triwangsa* (the combination of priestly, kingly, and merchants) and *jaba-wangsa* (commoners); in Sumba island, between *Maramba* (royal families) and *Ata* (workers); in Lombok there are *Raden* (*Datu*) on the top, *lalu* and *baiq* in the middle, and *Jajar Karang* (*amang*) at the bottom; in Toraja, there are *Tana' Bulaan* (royal families) on the top, *Tana' Karurung* (ordinary people) in the middle, and *Tana' Kua-kua* (workers) at the bottom (Suyanto & Karnaji, 2011).

In the case of the Pundukdawa movement, Wangsa Pasek deconstructs the ideology of hierarchy to transform it into the ideology of differentiation. In this case, following Jacques Derrida (Ritzer, 2010; Sanderson, 2011), deconstruction is a process that undermines the existing ideology of social structure, replacing it with an alternative ideology. Deconstruction proves to challenge the monopoly of truth that has been adhered to so far.

In deconstruction, Derrida strongly urges questioning old truths and offers new alternatives of explanation, as the truth is often associated with the needs of those in power or those who define it. By deconstruction, Derrida proposes a shift in perspective in reading, interpreting texts, or social structures (Sanderson, 2011; Lubis, 2014; Ariyani et al., 2022).

Wangsa Pasek and several maxima clans in Bali, such as *Wangsa* Pande, *Wangsa* Brahmana Bhujangga Wesnawa, *Wangsa* Dalem Tarukan, *Wangsa* Tangkas Koriagung, *Wangsa* Pasek Kayuselem, and lots more, were traditionally known as Jaba-*wangsa* (ordinary people), for which their rights in the society were limited, including the prohibition for their members to be high priests (*pandita* or *sulinggih*). If so, they are not allowed to perform rituals from the altar of the high priest (pawedan), as seen in the case of the prohibition of the high priest from Wangsa Pasek from officiating in Pura Dasar Bhuana.
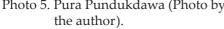
Photo 5. Pura Pundukdawa (Photo by the author).

Photo 6. Shrine of Ida Bethara Mpu Ghana in Pura Pundukdawa (Photo by the author).

By building the new temple in Pundukdawa (Photos 5 and 6), *Wangsa* Pasek demonstrates its high status and pride in using its identity as a Wangsa Pasek of equal status to other maxima clans in Bali. Ideology guides the groups or actors in their daily praxis. In line with the ideology of differentiation, members of *Wangsa* Pasek refuse to identify themselves as "*jabawangsa*". They identify themselves as the descendants of a famous high priest during the Udayana era in Bali (ca 10th century).

> "If asked, do not say that we are *jaba*. Say that we are *Wangsa* Pasek or Agnijaya *Wangsa*, descendants of Ida Bethara Mpu Agnijaya. As descendants of a high priest, we are entitled to assume priesthood of equal status to those of others" (Interview with Wayan Winatha, 12 December 2024).

As stated by Wayan Winatha, the secretary general of MGPSSR, as quoted above, this appears to be a general view among members of *Wangsa* Pasek. Interviews with several pilgrims in Pura Pundukdawa, as well as in Pura Pedharman Pasek in Besakih, reveal similar positions.

5. Conclusions

The construction of a new grand temple in Pundukdawa village by *Wangsa* Pasek, which can be described as the 'Pundukdawa movement', is a phenomenon in search of identity and standing among members of *Wangsa* Pasek. The prohibition of using their high priest in Pura Dasar Bhuana triggered the movement in this identity searching. The identity being searched is neither a religious identity nor an ethnic identity, but a maxima-clan's or *Wangsa* identity.

The search for identity is also achieved by deconstructing the existing ideology of hierarchy, transforming it into an ideology of Differentiation. In this

way, *Wangsa* Pasek continues to strive to elevate their status to be equal to those who have enjoyed special privileges in society.

In the socialisation and internalisation of Wangsa Pasek's identity among the maxima-clan's members, leaders of Wangsa Pasek have made a strong effort to increase the maxima-clan's awareness (a shared sense of belonging to the maxima-clan), self-identification, associated attitudes, and behaviours towards others. The self-identity of the maxima-clan is applied in positioning and standing of the groups, in addition to the use of symbolic attributes.

Due to the highly dynamic nature of Balinese society, influenced by various factors at present, it is challenging to define its structure. For this point, this article subscribes to the view that Verheijen and Putra (2019) stated, namely, that due to internal dynamics as well as influences from the modern world, Balinese culture is changing over time, and one may come to different conclusions based on various narratives and images. Indeed, Balinese culture is multi-layered, pluralistic, and not a monolithic culture. Accordingly, more studies with various perspectives are needed to have a comprehensive understanding of the vibrant cultures of this tiny island.

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