

The Social Stratification System in Forming A Balinese Identity

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Abstract: This article defines the various layers and identity labels of the Balinese society. Much of their indigenous customs have been linked with Hinduism, and many would regard the two to be inseparable. This article, however, attempts to separate the indigenous elements of ancestral worship from the Vedic or Hindu understanding of societal divisions in order to properly study the two and how they influence one another. The history of the island has enforced the rigid caste system, but the application of Hindu philosophy serves an idealized definition of caste. In such a way, the Hindu or Vedic belief does provide much relief for Balinese society. However, they are still defined by their patrilineal heritage, and are bound to ancestral worship as per their indigenous religion. Fueled by the contemporary socio-political landscape of Bali, there is a need to properly define what Balinese identity actually is.

Keywords: Bali; Balinese caste system; social stratification; Balinese society and Hinduism

1. Introduction

It has always been a challenge for the Balinese to separate their identity from Hinduism. A majority of Balinese, 86,8% according to the June 2021 census (Kusnandar, 2021), identify as Hindus, and their notion of kinship and identity has been intertwined with the Hindu faith for centuries. There are, however, some fundamental challenges that question the Balinese identity. In recent years, in an attempt to defend and consolidate the Balinese culture, there has been a socio-political resurgence through the Majelis Desa Adat (MDA), the Council of Customary Villages. The Provincial Government of Bali established this Council in 2019 through the Provincial Decree Number 4 Year 2019 with the aim to govern over traditional, religious, cultural and/or customary affairs, including its interpretation, permits, and legality. This implies that the once

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abstract and subtle Balinese identity must now be defined and applied for legal matters. One example of this would be the overlapping *adat* customs and the *awig-awig* rules of the traditional Balinese *Banjar* communities (Hobart, 2022, p.638). The Balinese identity has always been composed of many layers, as this article will explain, but the formation of the MDA and the many attempts to define and defend it serves as an impetus for further academic discussion.

We boldly affirm that the Balinese identity is communal. In other words, one may claim to be Balinese, but it is up for a community of locals to agree or oppose. This is due to the fact that the social stratification system of the Balinese defines one's standing, involvement and fate. This social stratification is rooted in the indigenous traditions of the island. In the 1950s, in order to safeguard their indigenous religion from proselytization, the Balinese declare themselves to be Hindus and, ever since, have intricately woven their traditional beliefs and systems with the nationally recognized religion (see McDaniel, 2010). For the country's Hindu council, the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia, this has marked the end of prejudice and discrimination, for alas they are able to formulate a satisfactory rendition of their inherited customs as religious rituals (see Dana, 2005). From the perspective of anthropologist, however, the Balinese have ingenuously added another layer of identity to their already stratified society. Evidently, rebranding their local customary wisdom as part of a religion can indeed preserve it. However, there are Balinese who have adopted another religion, such as Christianity, whilst maintaining the customary wear and aesthetic. There are also Balinese Hindus who opt to believe in another Hindu theological tradition, differing from the monistic Śaivite-Buddhist majority, adopting other sects of Hinduism (Howe, 2004). And of course, there are Hindus who are not Balinese, and might know nothing of their indigenous expression. This religious alignment has fused a world religion, Hinduism, with the Balinese culture.

2. Literature Review

Geertz & Geertz in their *Kinship in Bali* (1975) have had challenges in understanding the relationship between the Balinese *tri wangsa* system and the Hindu caste system. *Tri wangsa* is the designation for the three upper classes in the *wangsa* system, the outcastes are called *jaba* or people who live outside the *puri* or kingdom. Furthermore, this *jaba* is connoted as ordinary people, people who are not aristocrats. Geertz & Geertz in their 1975 publication claim that the Balinese apply the four-fold Hindu caste system "to explain their own system to themselves" (p. 6). Wiana and Santeri (1993) have also tried to elaborate on the Balinese caste system, and an exposé on the Balinese *nyerod* marriage is also available by Segara (2015). The foundational work of Dumont (1981) should also

be noted herein in order to further understand the role of such caste systems. Such works, however, do not attempt to clearly isolate the Hindu elements and the Balinese remnants and study them both in a parallel manner. Such a parallel study is required to justify why they have been superimposed on each other by the Balinese in the first place.

3. Method and Theory

3.1 Method

Atmaja (2008), in agreement with Goode (1983) and Korn (1932), mentions that the stratification system of the Balinese is not only layered but also overlapping and without clear boundaries. Even if forced to make a boundary, it will only benefit those who make this boundary, i.e. the people in power. The religious definition of Balinese customs, and its protection through governmental efforts imply that the people in power who are able to agree or oppose to what is and what is not Balinese would be the Balinese government itself, namely through the Majelis Desa Adat (MDA) and the Provincial chapter of the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI). Therefore, we have opted to dissect the various layers of Bali-isms through the perspective of Hinduism in order to trace the religious involvement and philosophical interpretation of the system. We have done this through an extensive literature review wherein we isolate the theories and concepts at play. Only after identifying how has Hinduism influenced the system, are we able to discern what is indeed indigenous, and what is an indigenous interpretation of Hindu philosophy.

3.2 Theories

3.2.1 The Wangsa System

We are able to revisit the history of the social stratification of the Balinese by referring to the Majapahit era. According to Picard (2006, p.22), the conquest of this kingdom is of importance as contemporary Balinese still link the legitimacy of the *tri wangsa* with the Javanese aristocrats who ruled Bali after the conquest. Van Hoeyvell in Nordholt (2009) agrees that indeed Balinese aristocrats are of Javanese descent. Kerepun (2007), however, disagrees and states that the emergence of the *tri wangsa* in Bali was an attempt to “Majapahit-ize” the ancient Balinese social system which did not recognize the caste system. Unlike the Indian caste system based on birth, the Balinese *wangsa*, or *wangsa*, is based on lineage. Some lineages and social groups are considered superior, with customary laws favoring them over others. Howe (1984) interprets *wangsa* as *bangsa*, implying “race”, “family”, or “kinship”, which originates from the male ancestor.

Wangsa also connotes “species” or “genus”, thus clarifying the origins of humankind, much like what is done in classifying animals. The Balinese word *soroh* is also similarly used in classification. *Soroh* in Balinese, has the same meaning as birth or *jāti* in Sanskrit and Hindi. Meanwhile, the Sanskrit *varṇa* is a classification system based on one’s qualities. These terms will be further elaborated in this article. In short, these categories are internally divided into a set of separate classes or groups, resulting in a hierarchy that is designed as dichotomies of pure-impure, fine-coarse, top-down. These classifications enable the evaluation of social classes based on their generic disposition, like their standards of morality, their shared history, their inherited emotions and general sentiments. In use, *Wangsa* is only to refer to someone’s lineage and not their current place in society. For example, one may be a descendant of a *brahmana* and thus be part of *wangsa brahmana*, without having to be a priest. Likewise in the case of someone who may be a descendant of a king but is not a ruler. Over the course of history, the word *wangsa* changed its meaning to *kasta*, following the system in force in India by including the *sudra* class as the lowest class whose rank was equated with the *jaba* in Bali. The *wesya* class was also created to designate the descendants of the *wangsa ksatria* that came from outside the descendants of the Satria Dalem or Sri Kresna Kepakisan lineage, or royal courtiers who were no longer part of the king’s power. By using the terms *brahmana*, *ksatria*, *wesya* and *sudra*, the social stratification system of the Balinese mimic the *catur-varṇa* as it applies in India (Wiana & Santeri, 1993; see also Agung, 2001). This has brought a new meaning to the word *wangsa* which the Dutch colonizers also enforced as a caste system.

During the reign of the Ancient Balinese kingdoms, the term *raja* was never used. Instead, kings were called *tuha tuha* which later became *rama* as the *wanua* region developed into *karaman* or *thani* (see Korn, 1983[1932]). *Rama* grew to possess more authority and eventually the word changed to *ratu*. The vast *wanua* powers were called *keratuan*, with the *keraton* as the seat of government. The *Rama*, leader of the *karaman* is not hereditary, but is elected. This tradition is still practiced in some *Bali Aga* communities, for example the appointment of a *jero* or *kubayan*. Such is the case in the old village of Cempaga in Buleleng (Notiasa, 2005).

With the defeat of Bali’s last king, namely Sri Astasura Ratna Bumi Banten, the Majapahit kingdom headed by Sri Kresna Kepakisan came to power in 1343. Such a shift in power brought about massive changes to the Balinese society, especially with the creation of eight regions, each headed by warlords titled *Arya*. The Javanization continued with the arrival of the celebrated priests, Dang Hyang Nirartha and Dang Hyang Astapaka, attributed as the founders of the Balinese Śaiva-Buddha sect (Sastrodiwiryo, 1999). They are the progenitors of

the *wangsa brahmana* and institutionalized the *ksatria* and *wesya* systems (see Figure 1). Those who do not live within the palace boundaries are then called *jaba*, or the outsiders. The Majapahit concept of *dewaraja* further solidified the *perwangsaan* system by instating that the descendants of the king were fit to rule. Several kingdoms rule in various parts of the island (see Ardhana & Wardi, 2022). Anyone apart from the nobility of the *tri wangsa* are automatically considered to have the status of *panjak* or *parekan*, servants who are considered as *jaba*.



Figure 1. The *Palinggih Arip-Arip* shrine at Merajan Gede Bandesa Manik Mas, Banjar Geria, Desa Melinggih, Payangan, Gianyar. Dedicated to Dang Hyang Astapaka (left) and Dang Hyang Nirartha (right). Decorative banners painted by I Made Suarjana. Used with permission of the artist.

The colonial era of the Dutch East Indies determined the social stratification of the Balinese. The expedition in 1597 was led by Cornelis de Houtman. Van den Broek continued in 1817 and established a trading base in Bali. In 1841, under the leadership of Huskus Koopman, the Dutch gained full control. The Dutch reinstated the caste system by supporting the Balinese royalties, who heeded the Europeans (Tim: 1955, 1985, 1986; Wiana & Santeri, 2006; Kerepun, 2007; Agung, 1989). The caste system enabled the Dutch to control the Balinese via the *dewaraja*, the God-kings who had full authority over the Balinese whilst remaining at the mercy of colonial rule.

3.2.2 The *Sapinda*, *Gotra* and *Prawara* Systems

Wiana (2006, pp. 42, 45, 48) categorized the many layers of Bali's social stratification system. Firstly, there is the *sapinda*, groups of families who share a common blood line and are somewhat related to one another, loosely connected by the *wangsa* or by the mapping of their family tree.



Figure 2. The *Merajan* shrine of *Pasek Gelgel* at Serangan, Denpasar. Photographed by author.

Second is the *gotra*, kinships formed based on a shared vision or allegiance. This can be through blood line, or through the adoption of a new self-identity that ties one with the cult or the charismatic leader. One can choose or claim to be a

particular *gotra* such as the famous *Pasek Sanak Sapta Resi*, the *Bhujangga Waisnawa*, or the *Maha Semaya Pande*. They also worship at ancestral temples specifically dedicated to their kinship (see Figure 2). Such *gotras* are not to be confused with castes, as there also is the *Warga Brahmana Siwa Wangsa* of Danghyang Dwijendra, the *Warga Brahmana Wangsa Budha* of Danghyang Astapaka, and *Warga Pasek* of Mpu Gni Jaya. Some *gotras* also share patriarchal blood line, or *sapinda*. Such is the case of the *Warga Brahmana Siwa Wangsa* of Danghyang Dwijendra, who share common ancestry with *Pasek Sanak Sapta Resi* of Mpu Gni Jaya, due to their mutual relation with Mpu Bradah (Soebandi, 2003, 2009).

Third is the *prawara*, or prominence. This refers to the chosen deity or *iṣṭa-devatā* of the group. Worshipers of Śiva are *Śiwa Paksa* or *Warga Śiwa*. Likewise, worshipers of Viṣṇu are *Warga Wesnava*. In practice, *prawara* is a kind of association or *kewargaan* based on the similarity of the main deity worshiped. Although not exactly the same, this type of community used to be called a *sekte* or sect.

3.2.3 The Catur Warna System

In contrast to the two social stratification systems above, the Hindu *catur-varṇa* is defined by Indonesian Hindus, by the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (Tim, 2001; 2005), as a social stratification system based on one's actions, qualities and profession. Much of the references are taken from the Bhagavad-gītā's definition of the four *varṇas*. The Sanskrit *varṇa* originates from "vṛ", to choose. Professions are chosen based on one's *guṇa*, traits, and *karma*, actions. Thus, without exception, every Hindu has the right to choose the type of work according to their talents and abilities. This understanding can be seen clearly in the Bhagavad-gītā:

cātur-varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam
guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśah
tasya kartāram api mām
viddhy akartāram avyayam

"I have created the four kinds of social order according to the division of nature and one's activities. And although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the non-doer, being unchangeable." (IV.13).

brāhmaṇa-kṣatriya-viśām
śūdrāṇām ca paran-tapa
karmāṇi pravibhaktāni
svabhāva-prabhavair guṇaiḥ

“*Brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas* and *śūdras* are distinguished by the qualities born of their own natures in accordance with the material modes, O Arjuna” (XVIII. 41).

It is to be understood that this interpretation of the *catur-varṇa* system is not as a hierarchy. Instead, it forms a universal and broad understanding of one’s duty (*svadharma*) that is based on one’s individual disposition (*svabhāva*). The Bhagavad-gītā further describes each of these *varṇas*;

śamo damas tapaḥ śaucam
kṣāntir ārjavam eva ca
jñānam vijñānam āstikyam
brahma-karma svabhāva-jam

“Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, knowledge, wisdom and religiousness – these are the natural qualities by which the *brāhmaṇas* work.” (XVIII.42).

śauryam tejo dhṛtir dākṣyam
yuddhe cāpy apalāyanam
dānam īśvara-bhāvaś ca
kṣātram karma svabhāva-jam

“Heroism, power, determination, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity and leadership are the natural qualities of work for the *kṣatriyas*.” (XVIII.43).

kṛṣi-go-rakṣya-vāṇijyam
vaiśya-karma svabhāva-jam
paricaryātmakam karma
śūdrasyāpi svabhāva-jam

“Farming, cow protection and business are the natural work for the *vaiśyas*, and for the *śūdras* there are labor and service to others.” (XVIII. 44).

Other foundational Hindu texts mentions this system, such as the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra X.4 and I.87, Yajurveda XXX.5 and XXV.2, Mahābhārata XII, CCCXII. 108, and Ṛigveda Mandala X. Thus, these four *varṇas* maintain a social order based on four functions in the society. The *brāhmaṇas* are the priests,

scholars and religious experts. The *kṣatriyas* are warriors and leaders. The *vaiśyas* are traders, and *śūdras* are workers and servants. Despite being based on one's profession, the *varṇa* system is now applied as a rigid caste system (Srinivas, 1962). These four professions are pictured in the Yajurveda as parts of the cosmic body of God.

*brāhmaṇo 'sya mukham āsīd bāhū rājanyaḥ kṛtaḥ,
ūrū tad asya yad vaiśyaḥ padbhyāṃ śūdro ajāyata*

“*Brāhmaṇas* are the mouth of God, *kṣatriyas* are Hir arms, *vaiśyas* are Hir thighs, and *śūdras* are Hir legs” (XVIII.11).

The depiction of the four *varṇas* as being different parts of the Lord's cosmic body, paired with its enforcement in India throughout history has allowed the system to be interpreted as a hierarchy.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Patriarchy is the Default

The father's or male's lineage reigns supreme in Bali. Locally known as the *kapurusaan*, the male is the heir in the family line. This strict patrilineal system differs from other societies in Indonesia, such as the Bugis. Besides adopting a patrilineal system, the Bugis community in South Sulawesi also binds their kinship through a bilateral system, in which the mother and father have relatively the same relationship with their children (Millar, 2009: 31). The Balinese does not recognize the bilateral system, thus women lose their family (*batih*) at time of marriage, adopting the husband's. Bali adheres to a patrilineal system based on male descent according to a straight-line system or *batang lempeng*. We can observe from patterns of inheritance and relationships to further understand the Balinese patriarchy (Arsana, et al., 1986:52-72).

The Balinese have rites of passages that further bond the family with the individual (Surayin, 2002:3, 53, 69, 78; Sudharta, 2006:1, 12, 20, 27, 34, 41, 65; see also W. van Hoeve, 1960). These life ceremonies include the *magedong-gedongan* whilst the baby is in the womb for 5-7 months; at 12-day old (*ngerorasin*); 42-day old (*macolongan*); 3-month-old (*nyambutin*); 6-month-old (*otonan*); puberty (*menek daha*); tooth filling (*mapandes* or *masangih*); marriage (*pariwahan*); and lastly, death (*ngaben*). It can be said that marriage is of utmost importance to the Balinese, for it is by having children that the system can be perpetuated. Having a descendant is the goal of marriage (see again Korn, 1983 [1932]). Begetting a son is of extreme importance for the son serves as the primary inheritor and also the spiritual deliverer of the family. The mythical tale of a priest named

Jaratkaru illustrates the importance of a son in the Putru Astika Caritra (Kusuma, 2009). He was a powerful priest but did not marry and had no offspring. With his mystic powers, he could travel to the hellish realms, where he found his parents tied up to a bamboo, with their heads facing down an abyss of sharp objects. The bamboo sticks are jeopardized by the biting rats that will slowly, but surely, lead to his parents falling. Puzzled, Jaratkaru questioned the state of his parents, who explained that only by having a son can they be saved from hell. Jaratkaru broke his celibacy and married Nagini Jaratkaru Dewi, begetting a son to save his ancestors (*nyupat*). Such folklores enforce the importance of begetting a child. Moreover, parents who do not have children are shamed and called *Pan* or *Men Bekung/Jubeng*, a father or mother who is infertile. Atmaja (2008) further adds that the emphasis on a son is connected to the need of male members of the village who are secured volunteers for the communal *ngayah* or service. Fromm (2007) even adds that the son's primary concern is to carry the family name in the society, thus achieving his father's love due to fulfilling his father's self-centered expectations, increasing prestige.

The son's achievements and community involvement greatly impact his social standing. The better his social standing, the more likely is his chance of sitting at the *hulu* or front of village meetings held at the *bale banjar*. Everyone has the opportunity to move upward from the *teben* or back to the *hulu*, and the more upfront one is seated, the closer one is believed to be to the ancestral realm. The higher one's social standing is, the more chances of getting a bride. An honorary bachelor would be quickly approved by the elders. The necessity of marriage and begetting children further entraps the son in the system. The marriage, however, must be done do pay off one's debts, or *rna*, to the ancestors. Thus Hinduism, which is already patriarchal in nature, provides impetus for the Balinese.

If a family is unable to beget a son, the daughter is able to pick or be assigned a husband in the *sentana* custom. The husband will adopt the family lineage of the wife who accepts to this *nyentana* process, caring for the ancestral rites and temple (Refer to the Keputusan Pasamuhan Agung III MDA Bali Tahun 2022). In the case of a husband passing away before providing an heir, the woman is able to adopt a child as a *sentana* (Artadi, 2009:40, 46, 136, 147,156). Thus, there is no cessation to this patrilineal system (see further Korn, 1983 [1932]:7, 8; Panetje, n.d.).

Women will have to bear the consequences of marriage for they will then join the family of the husband, forming a new family (*kuren*), and live in his house compound, except in the case of *perkawinan nyeburin*. This marriage is done by asking the husband to live in the woman's house, but with customary status as "wife" or "woman". *Nyeburin* marriages are carried out because the

woman's family does not have sons, so one of the daughters is asked to stay at home with her parents with customary status as "husband" or "man" so that the inheritance system can still be implemented. Living in the husband's virilocal residence is the norm, but some do live away from the parent's home due to work though still obliged to care for the family temple or *merajan* in the family compound (see Figure 3). The youngest son, however, will be asked to *ngerob* or to live with their parents.



Figure 3. The *Padmasana* altar of the Sun God (and also the monotheistic Hindu God, *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*) and the *Rong Tiga* shrine of three chambers dedicated to the male ancestor (left), God (center) and the female ancestor (right). The private *merajan* of a Brāhmaṇa Keniten family in Kemenuh, Gianyar. Picture taken by author.

Every new family, *kuren*, will have the nearby *tunggal dadia* or *tunggal sanggah* or *tunggal kawitan*. *Tunggal kawitan* shows that they are related by blood from the *purusa* (male) lineage. Through this kinship they build a sacred building

to worship the common ancestor or *pura kawitan*, also known by a name which has almost the same meaning as *paibon*, *pedharman*, *dadia*, or *panti*. *Dadia* unites many families together that are related and share common ancestry. They worship in the same ancestral temple known as the *paibon* or *panti*. Endogamous marriages within a single clan of *dadia* or *paibon* would be considered ideal, because horizontal kinship is only counted up to the level of *misan* (cousin) and *mindon* (far cousin), so it is not considered incest. Aside from *dadia* and *paibon*, a family will also be bound by place and area of residence through customary *banjars* in one's village, the *desa pakraman*. The family is obliged to take active care of the temples at the *desa pakraman* by doing community service known as *ngayah* (see again Boon, 1977; Tim, 1985; Korn, 1983 [1932] ; Panetje, tt.). Geertz & Geertz (1975), who specifically researched the Balinese kinship system, said that the study of social structure in Bali was centered around the use of kinship symbols in managing households and public life. Much of their analysis was focused on the *dadia* as a social institution. Foucault (1997: 133) observes that this kinship system is usually very closely related to economy due to its ability in circulating wealth.

4.2 One Way Inheritance

It would be incomplete to not mention the Balinese system of inheritance, which recognizes three heirs of the father; the biological child, the adopted child, and the stepchild (Arsana, et al., 1986 p.58-65). These three children, as long as they fulfill the customary requirements, will one day become rightful heirs.

Apart from these three, there is the *anak astra* or *bebinjat*, the child born of illegal marriage. Usually these would be children born of illicit relations between royalty and the *panyeroan* or female attendants, or with the palace dancers from a lower *wangsa* (see also Putrawan, 2005). Even though they might live in palace grounds, they will be denied of any rights and inheritance (Korn, 1983 [1932]; Pudja, 1975).

Based on the patrilineal system, inheritance will always go in one direction, to sons or daughters whose status is appointed as "male". Boys and/or girls with *purusa* status have the right to become heirs. This inheritance includes the *druwe tetamian* or inheritance that cannot be divided, such as the *sanggah* (shrines), *keris* (swords), and *pusaka* (sacred objects). Inheritance that can be divided includes land, jewelry, and money, are known as the *guna kaya*. Daughters still have the right to inherit this *guna kaya*, but they are usually given when their parents are still alive or when the daughter is about to get married. Such inheritance is called *tetatadan*. Likewise, a woman who is divorced is still allowed to return to her home or *mulih daha* and is entitled to life insurance from

her parents and brothers based on *guna kaya* (Tim, 1985 p.65; Arsana, et al., 1986 p.60-62; Artadi, 2009 p.125).

4.3 Common Roots Through *Lelintihan*

Balinese kinship ties does always have to be based on caste. It can also be through a shared history or purpose. Individuals can trace their family tree, or *lelintihan* through the historical *babad* texts as a guide. People of a shared lineage will pray together in the *pedharman* or origin temple at the Besakih temple complex. There are approximately 29 *dadias* and 11 *pedharmans* in the Pura Besakih complex which serve as a center for searching for Balinese kinship (see Stuart-Fox, 2010 p.125-152). *Lelintihan* also plays a significant role in marriage. When the bride and groom share a common ancestry, they are considered to have “met again”. In some cases, the marriage would not be permitted if the bride and groom do not belong to the same lineage, although this is now less practiced.

Historical incidents are also able to unite, such as the case at Pura Taman Pole in Mas, Ubud. Regardless of their caste, people who attend the religious ceremonies at this temple are united with the *Bendesa Mas*, the locals of the village, and share a common purpose without consideration of caste or creed.

5. Conclusion

We have thus described the various layers of identity that has formed into the solidified social stratification system that Balinese continue to bare. There are obvious parallels between the indigenous Balinese system and the Vedic or Hindu tradition. For example, both are patrilineal and feudal in character (see Chakravarti, 1993). Therefore, concepts of the *brāhmaṇa* priests and the ruling *kṣatriya* warriors exists in both. The idea of the *puruṣa* or central personhood in the family are also both usually male, and in some exceptions, a female is able to fulfill this role if only no man is available to do so. Both the Balinese and Hindus believe in reincarnation, and thus there is the shared concept of *ṛṇa* or debts that can be “carried over” to another life, as seen in the Mahābhārata (Adhyaya 120.17-20). The rites of passage are present in both traditions as means on how to repay these debts. The various rituals within a Balinese life cycle is similar to the Vedic *saṃskāra* rituals. The *gotra* and *pravara* identification system is also applied in Hindu India and is very crucial in the performance of religious activities (Brough 1946).

What can be said to be indigenous would be the notions of *wangsa*, *banjar*, *lelintihan*, *dadia* and *pedharman*. The Balinese *wangsa* might reflect the Vedic caste system, especially when compared to the contemporary Indian caste system. The Indian caste system can be understood as *varṇa* and *jāti*. There are the four

varṇas but many *jātis* can belong under a single *varṇa* category (Vaid, 2014). However, both the Balinese and Indian caste systems have appropriated the Vedic divisions of qualitative castes to justify the supremacy of the priests, and the legitimacy of the king. The *banjar* and *lelintihan* are ingenious local methods of community-building. However, it would be the *dadia* and *pedharman* that causes the Balinese cult of ancestral worship to continue in the *kawitan* and *paibon*.

It can be thus concluded that some aspects of the Balinese social stratification system are indeed deeply intertwined with the Vedic worldview. However, the embryo of the Balinese identity would be their reverence to the ancestors, and strong allegiance toward their lineage through the *wangsa*, *pedharman* and *dadia*. Thus, birth, and whose family you are born into, is far more important to the Balinese social stratification system above and beyond religion. Of course, the ideal of *pañca-yajña* and *catur-varṇa* have been applied to justify the ancestor worship and inherited caste, but by all means they are local incarnations of lofty Vedic philosophy.

Isolating what is Balinese and what isn't is done to truly preserve its indigenous culture and not merely to persevere religious or cultural interpretations that are superficial and bound to be re-interpreted again later. Such a division also allows the Balinese to understand what ought to be practiced even though one has changed one's religious identity or theological inclination. Thus, there can be Christian Balinese and Vaiṣṇavite Balinese, without the need of abandoning one's customs or being excommunicated by the *banjar*. This division will also inadvertently protect the Hindu identity, as non-ethnic Balinese are able to practice without consideration of one's lineage or caste.

What this paper does is encourage the critical study of the appropriation of Hindu/Vedic philosophy on the Balinese. To what extent does it aid them, and how to ethically apply it without contradicting it with indigenous beliefs. Preserving the Balinese culture should not be done by mere orthopraxy. Instead, it should be properly understood in order for it to be appropriately situated.

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