Volume 8 (2) (20205): 177-190

The Indonesian Journal of Social Studies

Available at https://journal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/jpips/index

THE TOPONYM OF *DEDARI* IN BALI: Focusing On The *Rajapala* Tale And Mythical Waterfalls

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Abstract

This article highlights the local toponym "Dedari" (heavenly nymph) in Bali to explore the symbolic function of the imaginary figure in the historical dynamism of the island's local ecology. The preliminary research presents macroscopic and microscopic observations based on the mapping of geographical distribution and the author's 2023–2024 fieldwork. The survey first unveiled the fact that most places named Dedari are related to water such as waterfalls, springs, and streams. In particular, the example of a waterfall called Gerojogan Dedari in Pujungan (Tabanan), which is associated with the human-nymph marriage tale Rajapala, suggests three socio-ecological aspects in the holy waterfall of dedari: 1) hierarchizing spatial order as the "head" in the vertical structure of the world (bhuwana), 2) symbolizing territorial acquisition and boundaries, 3) implying the cultural hybridity brought about by the broad network in early Maritime Asia, in contrast to the closed-image mountain areas of Bali. The case study therefore demonstrates the significance of the toponym of Dedari as the key to rediscovering the epistemological landscape between nature and cosmology in the archaic culture of Bali.

Keywords: *Place Name/Toponym, Folktale, Nature, Landscape*

How to Cite: Nozawa, Akiko. (2025). The Toponym Of *Dedari* In Bali: Focusing On The *Rajapala* Tale And Mythical Waterfalls. *The Indonesian Journal of Social Studies*, 8 (2): 177-190.

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e-ISSN 2615-5966 (Online)

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to examine the symbolic function of the Balinese local toponym "*Dedari*" (heavenly nymph) in the island's local ecology. It also considers the relationship with the local folktale *Rajapala* as part of an ongoing study on the cultural heritages of heavenly nymph legends in the Hindu-Javanese period of Indonesia: a research project by JSPS (grant number: 23K00235).

The Balinese term *dedari* means heavenly nymph, *bidadari* in the Indonesian language. While the origin of the term *dedari* is unclear, J. Gonda states that "Indonesian/Malay *bidadari* and Javanese *widadari* are derived from Sanskrit *vidyādharī*, a member of a class of female genii (supernatural beings or spirits)" (Gonda 1952: 41). This suggests the omission of the first syllable of *widadari* during the process of Javanese cultural adoption in Bali, which finally became the Balinese *dedari*. As part of Balinese archaic culture, the belief in *dedari* has been represented in various folktales, songs, and rituals. The most well-known case is the *Sanghyang Dedari* trance dance, which has been studied from the time of its ritual practices during the colonial period (e.g., Covarrubias 1937) to the recent revival phenomenon (e.g., Saraswati Putri 2017). However, the place names related to *dedari* remain an unexplored area of research.

To reveal the relationship between the female spirit's image and nature in the historical dynamism of local ecology, this article examines the case of *Grojogan Dedari* (Waterfall of Heavenly Nymph) in Tabanan Regency—allegedly the legacy of the *Rajapala* tale. There are many places named *Dedari* in Bali, as well as *Bidadari/Widadari* in Java, which are mostly associated with water. Given the diverse histories and local contexts, this study first examines the socio-cultural backgrounds of old cases rooted in the medieval period, including this waterfall. It remarks on the collective memories behind the toponym by adopting the emerging *neotoponymy* (Giraut & Houssay-Holzschuch 2022) and previous studies. It also corresponds to today's *Napak Tilas* (revisiting ancestors' memories) trend (Susilawati 2021) and the increasing number of papers on toponym by local scholars, such as the transition of Indonesian island names since the colonial era (Nopriyasman et al. 2022), lost toponyms in Java (Apriadsa et al. 2019), and toponyms and disaster migration in Sulawesi (Suntoro et al. 2023). Given the growing interest in past/indigenous knowledge of local culture today, this study will thus contribute to the broader field of Indonesian toponymy, not only within a Balinese context, by rediscovering the significance of the toponym as well as its historical dynamism.

This case study also includes the perspective of trans-regional Asian folktale culture. Various *bidadari* tales, largely classified in the No. 413 category of "Stolen Clothing" in the International Folklore Type, have been the subject of literature studies of Indonesian *cerita rakyat* (national folktales), with the *Rajapala* tale in Bali being among them. However, this tale also has anthropological significance: Firstly, as Y. Momose points to the similarity between heavenly nymph tales in East Asia (including Japanese *Hagoromo* tales) and *bidadari* tales in Indonesia (Momose 2013), a comparative study can delve into the history of cultural diffusion and ethnic migration in Asia. Secondly, invoking T. Obayashi's classification of *Hagoromo* tales in Okinawa into "Dynastic myth" and "Folk myth" (Obayashi 1989), such an approach can develop the studies of Hindu-Javanese kingdoms by reexamining descriptions of *bidadari* as "king's mother" in *lontar* (palm leaf manuscripts). The *bidadari* narratives thus embed multilayered collective memories of adaptation to political or environmental changes in the maritime networks of medieval Asia, which can also promote cross-cultural empathy in the Anthropocene.

As a preliminary study, this article first presents the results of 2023–2024 fieldwork on 25 sites named *Dedari* in Bali, which comprise natural, man-made, old, new, active, and abandoned locations. Recognizing this diversity and historical dynamism, it highlights the correlation between the *Rajapala* tale and the *Grojogan Dedari* in Pujungan village, Tabanan. This case has

particular importance as the vestige of medieval Bali in three respects: 1) the recognition of a landscape through the three-layered worldview of *bhuwana* as a metaphor of human body (Arif 2016); 2) the territorial boundaries connected to the intricate water management of *subak* (Vel, Bedner, Utama, & Ichlas 2022); 3) the cultural mosaic in mountain areas exemplified by the *mapendem/*burial tradition (Suadnyana 2021) and the *Bhairawa* worship (Nasution 2022) in Pujungan village. This article accordingly seeks to explore a new historical perspective through anthropological insights into the historical memories of the *dedari*'s sacred site interwoven by the toponym, folktale, and socio-ecological environment in highland Bali.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent Studies of Toponym

One can argue that place names are the nexus between humans and the world, which transmits settlement history or sometimes even retrieves collective identity. Complementing classical toponymy, based on etymological, philological, and pragmatic approaches, F. Giraut and M. Houssay-Holzschuch state the mission of *neotoponymy* to observe the human activity of naming and renaming places:

> "The naming of places is fundamentally political because it participates in the institution of an order endowed with a regime of representation that hierarchizes places, resources, values and beliefs. It is subject to debates, to controversies, to claims, passions and conflicts, but it is also a discrete component of symbolic and practical order that insinuates itself in everyday life and pervades it. It is constitutive of the civil status, of the address—therefore of the identity—and of the system of the location, and by that it shapes the individual and collective relationship with the places." (Giraut & Houssay-Holzschuch 2022: 3)

This perspective will expand the possibilities of recent research on local toponyms by Indonesian scholars, as mentioned in the introduction, into an interdisciplinary collaboration between history, political science, and environmental studies. Studies on Balinese toponyms have just begun with N. L. P. Krisnawati's team as part of tourism studies. However, this research on tourist attractions has significance in suggesting local perspectives on nature from temple names that include words such as "water source (*beji*)," "forest (*alas*)," and "sky (*langit*)" (Krisnawati et al. 2024).

The toponym of *Dedari*, namely the intermediate beings between humans and gods, implies an embodiment of the ubiquitous human perception of "femininity of water as the source of life" (Bachelard 1942). On the other hand, myriad texts of the Hindu-Javanese era suggest *bidadari/dedari*'s political significance as "king's mother" that served to deify local authorities. It would appear, then, that the toponyms of *dedari* are rooted in the complex ecology of archaic nature-oriented societies. This also suggests the significance of the recent emergence of "new" *dadari* sacred places as the endogenous inquiry for "reconstructing local stories" in today's geopolitical and ecological crisis.

The *Rajapala* Tale in Comparative Context

The *Rajapala* tale is significant since it is related to the narratives of some *dedari* sacred sites. Though the origin is unclear, the folktale has been transmitted in forms of poetry (*geguritan* or *kidung*) to recite the text in rites of passage (*manusa yadnya*) in Balinese Hinduism. The common medium is *lontar* written in Balinese or Middle Javanese, but there are some books of Indonesian translation. Interestingly, the "landscape" of this story varies depending on the subject, medium, and era of transmission.

The well-known storyline in Bali is a "hunter version" based on a *lontar* manuscript, transcribed by I. G. A. Surasmi in 1980. The other is a "farmer version," introduced by S. Partodimulyo's 1978 picture book *Rajapala*. As shown in the table below, the two have many differences, such as Rajapala's occupation and story development.

	***Rajapala* in Lontar** (Transcribed in 1980)	***Rajapala* in Picture Book** (Published in 1978)
Occupation	Hunter	Farmer (flower grower)
Location	Forest and a nearby kingdom	Rural village at the foot of Mt. Agung
Theme	A success story of a man whose mother is a heavenly nymph and who becomes topmost in the kingdom	The story of a farmer who experiences fortune, misfortune, and relief due to his wife's supernatural power
Climax	Fight forest monsters, overcome conflicts within the kingdom, and venture to another island	Wealth by magic, financial and health difficulties due to taboo violation, and final relief through love
Moral	Wisdom to live strongly in both the natural and human worlds	Importance of keeping promises and working honestly
Ending	The son, Minister Durma, wins a beauty in another island and proudly returns to the kingdom	The three daughters grow up to be beautiful women and married into royal families

There are three striking differences between the two versions, the first of which concerns the issue of gender. The hunter version relates that the couple's son, Durma, finally becomes the ruler of the region: an ending that is the opposite of the farmer version, reminiscent of a Cinderella story, in which the couple's daughters marry into royalty. The second difference concerns the means of "success." In the hunter version, it is achieved by defeating the supernatural power of the forest after a series of "battles and conquests"; the farmer version, meanwhile, encourages a stable life through "hard work and loyalty," as seen in the flower grower's security of staple food (rice) depending on the wife's magical power. The third difference is the author's position. The author of the hunter version is unknown, but it would be natural to consider that many of the *lontar* of *geguritan/kidung Rajapala* were written by local hands, incorporating the influence of medieval Javanese culture. Contrarily, the 1978 picture book is written by a Javanese author and has many similarities with the Javanese *Jaka Tarub* tale, typically in the use of magic to keep rice plentiful.

Fight to get what you want, or work faithfully to be protected? The moral gap between the two versions raises this question. There is no clear answer about what constitutes an "authentic" *Rajapala* tale; however, the hunter version seems to be imbued with memories of ancient pioneers

in Bali. For example, the men are depicted as full of wildness that rivals the power of nature: the young Rajapala's bold love affair with a heavenly nymph in the forest; his son, Durma's, resistance to seductions and attacks by giantesses; and the hermit Rajapala's struggle with the entangling roots of a giant tree during his meditation. Of equal importance is that the first half includes long descriptions of Rajapala's philosophy on life, as he tells his son about what is human and how to behave properly (from the 26th to the 51st stanzas of the *lontar*). The classic *Rajapala* tale is not a simple Tarzan-like novel but conveys the art of kingcraft for governing two realms: human society and the natural world. Partodimulyo's picture book, meanwhile opposes this version, romanticizing flower-filled Bali where a modest farmer lives peacefully. Whatever the source, this version also portrays "beautiful Bali" through the Javanese author's eyes because the 1970s was the booming era of Bali as a "*paradise created*" (Vickers 2012). Both versions thus have significance in reflecting the ecological landscapes in people's minds of the time.

RESEARCH METHOD

Based on the research above, the current study surveyed the toponym of "*Dedari*" in Bali from 2023 to 2024. The survey process was: 1) Search for the place name "*dedari*" on Google Maps; 2) Conduct intermittent field surveys of all sites over two years; 3) Select the sites that are recognized as religious spaces among locals and visualize the locations on the map as sacred places for *Dedari* (the result is Fig. 1 showing 25 sites). The subsequent analysis is based on the geographical distribution shown on the map (Fig. 1) and the features of the surrounding environment (e.g., streams, ponds, or irrigation channels), including local recognition based on interviews with residents, which were obtained through the author's qualitative observations of all sites.

Setting aside historical backgrounds, Figure 1 shows three distinct features. First is the distribution difference by regency: in descending order, Tabanan (8: green), Buleleng (6: red), Bangli (3: pink), Karangasem (3: blue), Gianyar (2: yellow), Badung (2: white), and Klungkung (1: orange). Second is the inherent connection with water (except No. 12 mentioned in section IV): stream/spring (15), waterfall (5), irrigation canal (3), lake (1), and coast (1). Third is the relationship with agriculture, especially rice farming. In detail, the sites are gathered in areas that include rivers and tributaries from the main mountains in Bali: the north and south of Mt. Batukaru in the middle-west part, and the foot of Mt. Batur and Mt. Agung in the south-east part. These areas are thus blessed with water and good soil for rice farming, with Tabanan being known as the best rice production region in Bali in contrast to the dry areas of the northeast, the west, and the southern peninsula.

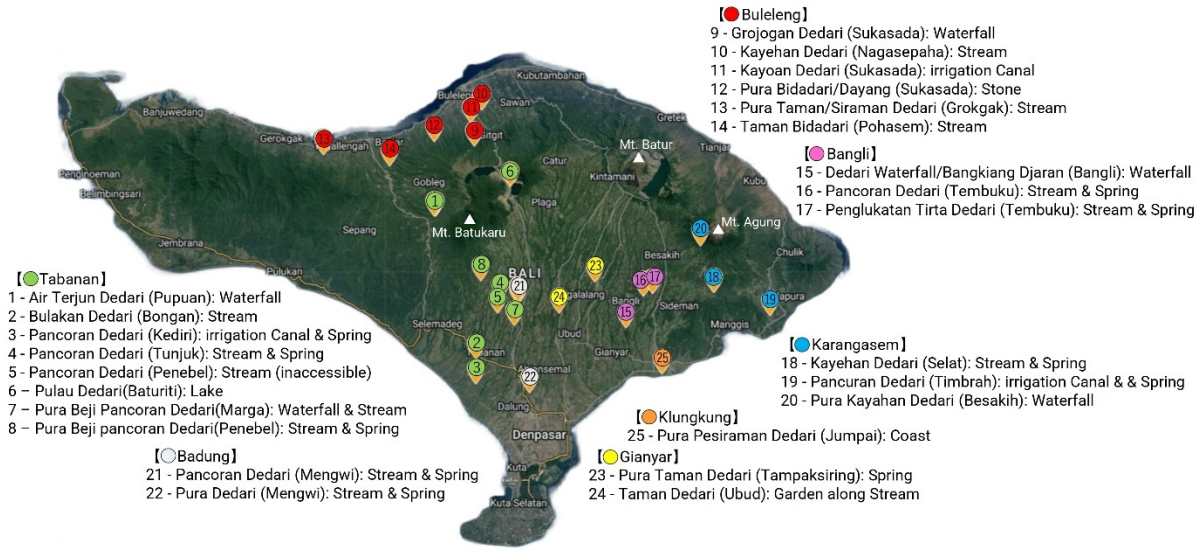


Fig. 1. Distribution Map of "*Dedari"* Toponyms in Bali (Edited from A. Nozawa's Google My Map of Fieldwork Data)

Each of these 25 sites includes a small temple or shrine built in the natural environment (waterfall, stream, etc.), where locals recognize the whole space as a *dedari*'s sacred site. The narratives on *dedari* depend on the spot. In many cases, people only know vague information such as, "It is said that a *dedari/dedaris* once descended here in those days" (e.g., No. 4, 7, 10, 13, 15, 16, 18, 20). Yet, three cases (No. 1, 9, 21) transmit more concrete narratives, which share a typical episode of the *Rajapala* tale (see the following sections): "seven heavenly nymphs descend from the heaven and one of them marries a human man."

Due to the environments with water, these sites are largely utilized as places of holy water (*tirtha*) for Balinese Hindu rituals. People take *tirtha* from a spring (*pancoran/pancuran,* or *bulakan*), which is included in most cases. However, the *tirtha* is not only for rituals and is often used as medicine to cure illnesses. In this case, a local priest (*pemangku*) is called to perform a special rite for both the *tirtha* and the patient. Some places also function in individual/communal purification practices, following the episode of heavenly nymphs bathing in the spots. Such cases include the term *beji* or *kayahan/kayehan/kayohan* (holy bathing place), *pesiraman* (bathing), or *penglukatan* (purification) in the toponyms.

These features suppose that the Balinese concept of *dedari* and the toponyms are generally perceived as a positive force to empower agricultural production and birth/rebirth in human life activities. The image, intertwined with people's desire for a healthy life and respect for water, has generated various site-oriented practices. The essential connection with water, however, sometimes discloses its vulnerability to disasters and environmental changes. For example, the *Pancoran Dedari* in Tabanan (No. 5), located by a stream in a forest, is inaccessible today due to serious damage to the surroundings by the heavy rain a few years ago. Others are abandoned sites resulting from social changes, such as the *Bulakan Dedari* in Tabanan (No. 2) and the *Pura Dedari* in Badung (No. 22), located near the capital city Denpasar. These are surrounded by built-for-sale houses now, and the residents from outside, who only need tap water, do not know the meaning of these places; only the toponyms survive without the cultural practices or collective memories.

Based on these findings and the dynamics of toponym, the next section presents the case of *Grojogan Dedari* in Tabanan Regency as an old example related to the *Rajapala* tale in order to discuss its significance in the local community, its historical background, and its importance from the perspective of local ecology.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Case of *Grojogan Dedari* in Pujungan Village, Tabanan

The waterfall is at a point about 4 km in a straight line northwest of the summit of Mount Batukaru (2,276 M) in Pujungan village, Pupuan district, Tabanan Regency (Fig.1: No. 1 and Fig. 2). In the territorial scope, it is midway between the main settlement on the west side and the eastern boundary along the ridgeline connecting the peaks of Mount Batukaru and Mount Sanghyang. One arrives at this waterfall (Fig. 3: left) stepping down through a path to a valley, about 1 km to the east from the settlement. Importantly, there is another waterfall with a larger drop just downstream, which is called *Grojogan Rajapala* (Fig. 3: right). Hence, the two waterfalls are regarded as the human-nymph couple of the *Rajapala* tale.

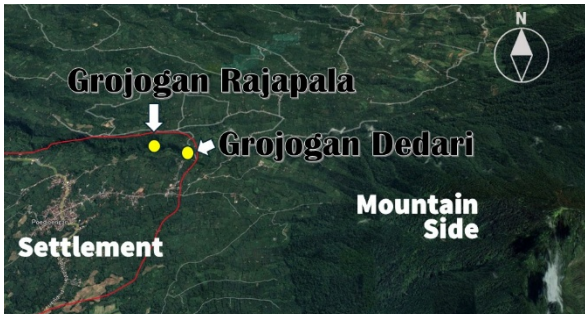


Fig. 2. Location of *Grojogan Dedari* and *Grojogan Rajapala*

Fig. 3. *Grojogan Dedari* (left) and *Grojogan Rajapala* (right): pictured by A. Nozawa in February 2024

There was nobody and no shrine at either, only the sounds of the waterfalls echoing through the air. The natural atmosphere suggests that these waterfalls themselves are objects of worship. However, the limited research period meant that it was possible to obtain only fragmental information. These two waterfalls, especially *Grojogan Dedari*, are places of "*tenget* (awe)" that should not be spoken of lightly according to a local in a farming community downstream. Respecting the custom, this preliminary report only shares the basic perceptions of local people: *Grojogan Dedari* is the legendary place of seven heavenly nymphs' descent whereby one of them gave birth to an ancient lord, while *Grojogan Rajapala* is believed to be the father's mausoleum.

While a detailed ethnographic description is a future task, the overview of this village is as follows. The population of Pujungan is 6,291 (2013 census), living mainly from small-scale agriculture (rice, chili peppers, etc.) and coffee and clove plantations (Pujungan 2015a). It is not a famous tourist destination, nor is it a so-called *Bali Aga* (indigenous Balinese) with accumulated past research like Tenganan Pegringsingan. However, recent local reports reveal its historical significance.

One example is the village's origin, described on the official website published in 2015 as follows: A Brahmin, a descendant of Ida Sri Jaya Bali, and his two vassals (I Pasek Kayu Selem and Pasek Kerandan/Pasek Auman), came from the village of Batur Penulisan in Kintamani and founded a place of meditation on the western foot of Mount Batukaru. After pioneering a forest and establishing a settlement, the Brahmin took a Chinese princess as his consort, but they were unable to have children. He was called back to Batur again to sustain the kingdom and married

another queen named Dewi Danu with whom he had two sons. Considering his remaining power in the western part of Mount Batukaru, he sent his second son (Sri Arya Dalem Kalan) there with two vassals. The rule of Sri Arya Dalem Kalan is thought to have begun in 945 CE (Isaka 867). Afterward, the area around Mount Batukaru was governed by Pasek Kayu Selem, who was trusted by Sri Jaya Bali. When Pasek Kayu Selem arrived at the village on the slopes of Mount Batukaru, he named it *Pujung*, which means "end of the journey" (Pujungan 2015b). This local history contains suggestive elements regarding political expansion both within and outside Bali, even though it is disputable in terms of chronological and historical validity. It also mentions significant historical remains, such as ancient tombs, Chinese vases, and bronze gongs.

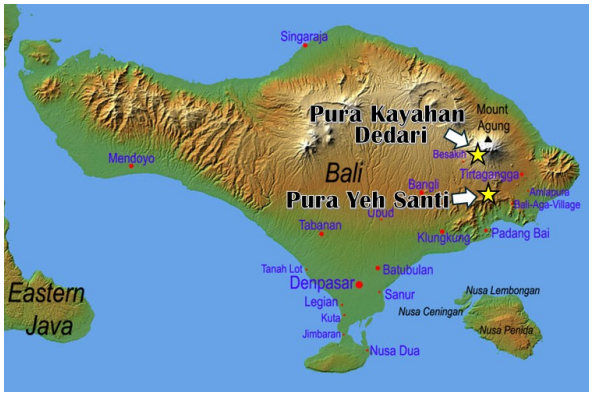
There are reports on the village's burial tradition called *mapendem*, which is rare in the cremation culture of Balinese Hinduism. I. N. Suadnyana's 2021 paper mentions the local belief that the smoke from burning corpses "pollutes (*cemer*)" Mount Batukaru, the place for *Hyang Mahadeva* (Suadnyana 2021). These aspects portray the thick cultural layers of Pujungan consisting of ancient cosmology, historical interactions with the outside world, and the established Balinese Hinduism.

Given the research findings, it could be assumed that the mountainous environment of *Grojogan Dedari* in Pujungan is compatible with the contents of the "hunter version" of the *Rajapala* tale. However, rather than essentializing the relationship between the two, it is more significant to examine the synchronistic relationship between the natural environment, the folktale, and the cosmology. Preliminary research extracts the following three points for further study.

The Cosmological Layer of *Dedari* Sacred Sites

The holy waterfall is assumedly grounded on mountain worship found throughout the Indonesian archipelago (Boomgaard 2003) and the ubiquitous association of water with femininity as a symbol of fertility and life. Furthermore, it reflects a spatial order to place the sanctuary of *dedari* closest to the mountain outside the settlement. Similar cases are Temukus and Tenganan Pegringsingan in the realm of Mount Agung in eastern Bali.

Temukus village is located northwest of Besakih Temple, the headquarters of Balinese Hinduism. There is a quiet waterfall on the upper side toward the mountain; it is called *Pura Kayahan Dedari* (Fig. 1: No. 20, Fig. 4, and Fig. 5: left) as a sacred place of *dedari*'s descent and *tenget*/awe. Only priests (*pemangku*) come here to draw holy water for special ceremonies. Tenganan Pegrinsingan village also settles a legendary place of *dedari*'s bathing called *Pura Yeh Santi* (Fig. 4 and Fig. 5: right) on the upper side of the settlement. *Yeh* means water, but it is a dried-wild space now, with weeds and a huge tree inside stone walls. Nevertheless, it is also regarded as a sanctuary that no one is allowed to enter except *pemangku*.



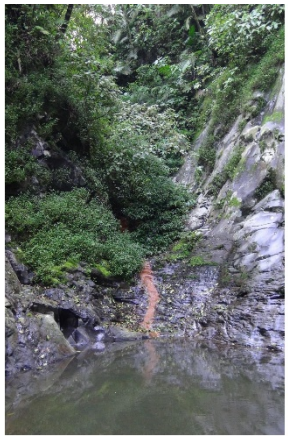


Fig. 4. Location of the two sites

Fig. 5. *Pura Kayahan Dedari* in Temukus (left: pictured by A.Nozawa in March 2024) and *Pura Yeh Santi* in Tenganan Pegringsingan (right: by A. Nozawa in March 2007)

The three cases' layouts suggest archaic spatial recognition: namely, the mountain-oriented order of the world (*bhuwana*). It is called *Tri Angga* in today's Balinese Hinduism and consists of a vertical three-layered structure as a metaphor for the human "head-body-legs" parts, which is projected in any form of architecture, housing, or village territory in Bali (Arif 2016). In this order, each *dedari* sacred site is exactly at the head/high/*utama* position on the mountainside (*kaja*) in local perception. Given the history of the three villages, the spatial structure symbolized by *dedari* and mountain worship is thought to have existed before the spread of Hindu doctrine. Moreover, the waterfall in Temukus is also called *Telaga Tunjung Bulan Sasih*, which means "Pond of Moon Waterlily" according to the *pemangku* of the village. Considering the meanings of *bulan* as a moon and *sasih* as a calendar month, the site seems to have had significance in ancient lunar-centered cosmology.

The aspects above thus provide the particularity of the notion of *dedari* that hierarchizes a territorial space by being attached to a mountain/upper-side water source. It is undoubtedly linked to the importance of female deities in Balinese culture, such as *Dewi Sri* in rice farming contexts, the wild power of *Durga*, and various roles of local/Indic goddesses (Ardhana 2018). Of these, however, *dedari*'s image would be the only one deeply incorporated into a specific, immovable, and natural spot: a subject that invites further consideration.

Territorial Acquisition and Symbolization of Boundaries

One valid approach is to examine the history of territorial settlement. As seen in the local history of Pujungan, the three villages share a belief that their ancestors came from other regions. People in Temukus relate their origin to the foundation of Besakih Temple in the ninth century by Rsi Markandeya, a sage from India (Stuart-Fox 2002) or Java (Darma Putra & Hitchcock 2005). Even Tenganan Pegringsingan, the most well-known *Bali Aga* community, transmits two legends: 1) a group of blacksmiths (*pande besi*) came from Bedaulu (today's Bedulu in central Bali) in search of a king's horse and acquired this territory as a reward for finding it (Korn 1960: 301–68, 388–90); 2) In the tenth century, the vassals of the god Indra, who had defeated the evil king of Bedaulu, arrived there chasing the god's horse and acquired the territory (Nozawa 2015: 37–8). These narratives thus suggest that the three villages date to immigrants from the ninth-to-tenth centuries.

It would not be too fanciful to envision the adventures of these villagers' ancestors, as ancient pioneers of Bali, as fitting into the *Rajapala*' s hunter version. Though further research is needed, it is certain that their ancestors cleared forests and settled in the highlands for some reason. Reconsidering the water places of *dedari* with this background, one of their purposes is thought to have been to occupy a water source. In today's situation at least, the villages have few tenant peasants, as even small-scale farmers mostly own lands. Furthermore, Tenganan Pegringsingan is a "landlord village" leasing their vast farmland to neighboring villages (Nozawa *ibid*.). Temukus village too, where today's main products are flower and upland rice, used to govern rice fields in downstream areas (based on information from locals).

Water rights have been crucial to every life activity throughout local and global histories. While it is arguable whether these villages were the pioneers sent by the rulers of the time or independent groups, their ontological positions necessarily hinge upon the issue of water sources.

However, instead of monopolizing water, the villages would have occupied the role of custodians who maintain the socio-ecological balance of the regions, as implied by their egalitarian social structures, as opposed to the caste-based communities in plain areas, and the strict rules for natural use and social behaviors on *awig-awig*/traditional law. From this perspective, these cases reflect past water governance that generated *subak*/irrigation systems: a key to improving today's conflicts among multiple stakeholders at water heritage sites in Bali and other islands that have been ignored owing to the allegedly "romantic" descriptions by UNESCO (Vel, Bedner, Utama, & Ichlas 2022).

Given the aforementioned socio-ecological water management, the image of *dedari* might have been a symbol that politically and psychologically mediated multiple boundaries: between private and common properties, communal and outside domains, and humanity and nature. It is essentially consistent with *dedari*'s marginality that moves between the two realms of human and divine. In this context, therefore, the sense of *tenget*/awe and the narratives on *dedari*'s descent have served to maintain clean and holy water by controlling human practices and cognitively hierarchizing life-worlds in harmony with "landscape symbols" (Lundén 2011: 9–19) such as waterfalls, mountains, and megaliths (see the wrapped boulder in the picture of the *Grojogan Rajapala* at the bottom right of Fig. 3: right).

Reconsidering Cultural Mosaic in Mountain Areas

However, the analysis above does not mean that the socio-ecological context of the *Grojogan Dedari* is entirely based on vernacular or the animistic culture of Bali. While Pujungan village transmits archaic traditions like the *mapendem/*burial, which is seen in the so-called *Bali Aga* communities, the villagers' ancestors are said to have migrated from Batur in the medieval era. Such historical backgrounds imply the need to reexamine the cultural mosaic of highland Bali, but doing so involves complicated issues.

The most challenging issue is relativizing the Western-oriented discourses about highland Balinese, especially the *Bali Aga*, that have accumulated since the colonial period. As B. Hauser-Schäublin argues, the history, culture, and ethnicity of Bali have been anthropologically constructed into the dichotomous categories of "non-Javanized Hindu-Balinese" and "Javanized Hindu-Balinese" since P. L. van Bloemen Waanders' 1859 paper on the cultural particularities of some mountain villages. Subsequent discourses by colonial scholars, such as J. Brandes, H. N. van der Tuuk, Frederik A. Liefrinck, and R. Goris, have consequently served to stereotype the former as *Bali Aga*, *Old Balinese,* or *Mountain Balinese*, adhering to the romanticism whereby "elite refugees from the *Majapahit* kingdom settled in the fertile southern plains and established [a] new royal and artistic center in Bali." Recently, the ambiguous term of *Bali Aga* was even assigned the status of an "ethnic group" by T. Reuter (Hauser-Schäublin 2004: 27–55). In fact, while Reuter points out the distribution of *Bali Aga* communities reaching plain or coast areas (Reuter 2002: 20), it is undeniable that Reuter's 2002 work strengthened the bias to view highland Balinese as *Bali Aga*.

The recurrence of these discourses inevitably questions the *raison d'etre* of cultural studies engaged in "otherness" again, despite Clifford and Marcus' introspective criticism forty years ago (Clifford & Marcus 1986). Joint research between outsiders and local researchers might be a solution, depending on the relational quality. However, as I. M. Pageh asserts, one should not ignore that local societies and cultures have also been involved in ideological conflicts throughout history (Pageh 2018), meaning that even so-called native scholars are not immune to these political, economic, and ideological interests.

In this context, the case of Pujungan has the potential to explore two perspectives due to the cultural ambiguity between namely *normative* Balinese Hindu and *Bali Aga* societies. The first is the perspective of mountain-oriented history. As if reflecting a causal relationship between the regional economic disparities today and academic discourses, the legend of *Majapahit* migration has expanded. Involving a premise of viewing the southern plains as "the heartland of Bali" since the colonial period, it eventually generated the notion of *Bali Aga* as "the communities who had escaped the yoke of oriental despotism that has been imposed on the less fortunate commoner people of southern Bali by their petty tyrants" (Reuter 2003: 13). In contrast, recent studies by local scholars introduce mythological narratives of histories "from mountain to mountain" such as the example of Rsi Markandeya, who experienced a divine afflatus at Mount Raung and moved to Mount Agung. Acknowledging the need to distinguish between myth and historical fact, it would also be worthwhile to attempt a paradigm shift to "histories beginning with mountains" from locals who live along the volcanic belts on the Sunda Islands.

The second perspective is of plural, syncretic, and polythetic cultures in mountain areas. This does not mean viewing them as a static and closed cultural structure but rather understanding the reality of the marginal regions that continue to seek "the ways of living culture for themselves" amid conflict with Balinese Hinduism norms and interactions with the outside world.

A critical example of Pujungan is Nasution's 2022 paper on the ritual practices of *Bhairawa*: a type of Tantric mysticism that was revived by a local man in 2012 and sparked controversy for its incompatibility with Balinese Hinduism (Nasution 2022). The case study portrays the emergence of a hybrid culture by a submontane villager who traveled around the world: an experience that incorporated his father's intimacy with the Beatles' meditation mentor from the same village, study trips to England and the Netherlands through the network, financial setbacks after returning to Bali, retraining in spiritualism in India, and the revival of *Bhairavaism* in his hometown. The ethnography disproves the closed image of highland Bali and insinuates the lingering colonial paradigm too, since his "journey of self-discovery" from an indirect relationship with the Beatles to training in India faithfully follows the canonic discourse of "Indianization of the East Indies" established by colonial scholars. However, as Nasution points out, the origin of *Bhairawa-Tantra* in Indonesia is still unclear due to a lack of written records, despite numerous discussions.

These facts thus imply room for "de-Indianization," particularly regarding the culture of highland Bali. The case of Pujungan, where inherent cultural marginality and hybridity generated the new sect above, would provide a springboard by delving into the local narrative of the Chinese bride mentioned above and ancient artifacts related to Eastern Asian and *Sasak* cultures in the *Pura Manik Geni Desa* (Astawa, Aryana, & Arta 2019). Still, while cultural intercourses with Chinese dynasties cannot be neglected, the case of *Grojogan Dedari* needs scrutiny because it suggests a broader cultural network in early Maritime Asia due to the existence of similar legendary water places, folktales of *Seven Sisters* related to ancient astronomy, worships of paired waterfalls, and esoteric Buddhism practices in other regions. Comparative study has the potential to shift anthropological engagements from "defining/dividing cultural groups" to "mediating historical and ecological conviviality."

Today, Bali is facing various social issues, such as the reevaluation of local cultural diversity along with the progress of decentralization since the beginning of this century and overtourism in the post-COVID era, including the serious environmental destruction that occurred as a result. This reality suggests that joint surveys of the *Dedari* Sacred Sites will provide keys to rediscovering how to protect natural and cultural heritages in line with the local cosmology, which

is rooted in the notion of "*tenget*/awe," as well as the possibility of a new ecotourism in which hosts and guests respect the dignity of both nature and human history.

CONCLUSION

Highlighting the *Grojogan Dedari* in Pujungan village, this paper argued three points: 1) the value of the Balinese toponym of *dedari* in terms of the medieval forest pioneering depicted in the *Rajapala* tale; 2) the epistemological landscape between nature and cosmology; and 3) the symbolic function of multiple boundaries and the cultural hybridity of highland Bali. The unveiled aspects from old cases, which suggest the archetype of Balinese culture embedding the correlation between *dedari*'s image and water, can help foster an understanding of the significance of the new cases that are reconstructing local identities in today's socio-ecological context. Therefore, as "Toponymy requires concerns in diverse cultural phenomena and knowledge of both nature and society" (Yanagita 2017: 41), the study of the toponym of *dedari* has the potential to develop into an interdisciplinary and practical project that responds to what the world needs today: it could become a threshold to rediscovering local wisdom for better relationships between humans and nature through the *dedari*'s catalytic action that mediates the two worlds.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was supported by JSPS KAKENHI (Grant Number: 23K00235). I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who kindly helped my field surveys in the Badung, Bangli, Buleleng, Gianyar, Karangasem, and Tabanan regencies in Bali, Indonesia.

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