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Construction of Hindu Identity: A Study in Palangka Raya City- Indonesia

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the construction of Hindu identity in Palangka Raya City. The identity of Hindu adherents has different ethnic backgrounds, including ethnic Dayak, Balinese and Javanese. In the process, the symbols of the cultural identity of the three ethnic groups are maintained and at the same time become a reference in the practice of Hinduism. This difference has the potential to trigger disintegration, polarization and even internal conflict among Hindus. The chosen research method is qualitative with a cultural studies approach emphasizing ethnographic aspects. Determination of informants was done purposively, while collecting data through observation techniques, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis refers to Milles and Huberman with integrative paths and critical analysis techniques. The results of the analysis reveal that there have been efforts to hybridize culture by the elite by accommodating, integrating and blending symbols of Dayak, Balinese and Javanese ethnic identity in Hindu social and religious activities. It is hoped that further cultural hybridization can become a source of information as well as being used as an evaluation system by Hindu elites and adherents of different ethnicities.

1. Introduction

The era of modernization through the role of globalization has given birth to many changes, both in physical form (development) and in human behavior and perspectives on life. The various

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influences due to the touch of globalization have also sparked concerns about cultural changes in ethnic groups due to transnational processes which Beck (in Ritzer, 2012:980-981) considers to have crossed national borders. In such circumstances, the process of tug-of-war between local and global will occur and continue and create tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogeneity (Appadurai, 1996).

The tension between homogenization and cultural heterogeneity causes the discourse of ethnic identity to strengthen. Ethnic identity is not only a biological and cultural identity, in which racial and cultural identity is strengthened. Ethnic identity has also become part of the political identity of interest groups in society because it contains sensitivity, if not managed properly it will lead to clashes and the fading of social cohesia (Huntington, 2005: 18; Sutrisno, 2013; Prawono, 2015). In line with Erikson (in Khisbiyah, 2012: 88) the diversity of ethnic identities besides causing divisions within various social groups, can also provide a sense of identity that makes members of a group feel different and have superiority over other groups. Each group feels more special, has a geographic locus, socio-culture, special theology and is superior to other groups. This feeling makes each group want to get a unique space and momentum to exist and to be in society. Group attitudes with various superior displays of sense of identity are generally represented by the elites of each group with various practices or constructions (Maarif, 2012).

The strengthening of ethnic identity in recent Hinduism also essentially contains the potential as above. In fact, symbols of ethnic identity are often dragged into determining the most ideal form of practicing Hinduism. On the one hand, Hindu identity in Palangkaraya City consists of three ethnic groups, namely the Dayak (*Kaharingan* Hindu), Balinese (Balinese Hindu) and Javanese (Javanese Hindu) ethnic groups. Conceptually, differences in ethnic identity become one of the triggers for ethnocentrism problems that lead to cultural identification that determines in-group or out-group positions (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999). Based on that experience, it is also important to underline the potential for latent conflict due to the strengthening of ethnic identity symbols constructed by Hindu elites, which are conceptually related to the meaning of identity which is also always changing, fluid in nature, continuously being constructed and reconstructed (Hall, 1996; Barker, 2004; Maunati, 2004) so that it becomes problematic when dealing with individual and social contexts (Huntington, 2005), in addition to factually there are struggles and even contestations among adherents of the same religion, namely Hindus, but have different cultural identities, so that there is potential for debatable, divisive and even conflict. If this is ignored, it will trigger unwanted problems both on a local and national scale.

Based on this description, research related to Hindu identity construction strategies is interesting to study in depth, especially the elaboration of elites as representatives of each ethnic group as well as the main actors of construction. The urgent question posed is efforts to overcome differences in ethnic identity and strategies to achieve Hindu identity integration in the City of Palangka Raya.

2. Materials and Methods

The chosen research method is qualitative with a cultural studies approach emphasizing the active, creative dimensions of the elite in constructing a meaningful reality which is then to be lived together. Based on that dimension, an ethnographic approach is used to reveal the subject's life experiences to identity construction strategies. The type of data used is qualitative data, obtained from primary data sources and secondary data sources. Determination of informants was done purposively, while collecting data through observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. Researchers act as key subjects in collecting data with interview guidelines, assisted by cameras and stationery. Data analysis was carried out through three channels, interplay in nature including (1)

data reduction, (2) data presentation, (3) conclusions or verification and interpretation (Milles and Huberman, 1992).

3. Results and Discussions

Variants of Hindu Identity in the City of Palangka Raya

Hindu identity in Palangka Raya City can be identified through ethnic identity symbols. Identification through these attributes is inherent both individually and collectively such as holy books as a source of knowledge and beliefs, role models or clergy, language, places of worship, greetings and rules, rites and ritual tools, works of art and clothing (Berger, 2000: 108 ; Ardhana, 2012: 7). Various symbols of ethnic identity originate from Dayak-*Kaharingan* , Balinese and Javanese cultures, according to elites, often claimed to be part of the symbols and practices of Hinduism itself, as well as Balinese culture which has close ties to Hinduism.

In the context of religious life in Bali, what is meant by religious symbols is not only focused on Hinduism theologically, but also on culture that has religious roots (Aziz, 2006:186-187). This concept is related to Radhakrishnan who said "Hindu teachings are more suitable as a culture than a religion" (Samovar, et al, 2010:163-164). Radhakrishnan's claim is consistent with empirical facts, given the varied ways or ways taken by Hindus in expressing their religious emotions. Therefore, Hindu adherents do not have to be identified with a single attribute that is visible because Hinduism has given space to the variants and contemplative nature of religious activity (Triguna, 2011).

Empirically this difference can be seen from the ethnic identity symbols of the Dayak-Hindu *Kaharingan* in religious practices referring to the main source of the *Panaturan* book and oral traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. *Panaturan* is a holy book that contains the concepts of the creation of the universe and the concept of ritual as an obligation. The source of faith or the five suggestions is the basis for the beliefs of its adherents. Language, ritual materials, *Balai Basarah, Sandung, Balai Antang, Lawung, Sumping*, religious leaders or clergy are called *basir*, *pisor*, *shaman* or *balian*. The rituals of the life cycle, *tiwah*, *ijambe*, *wara* are still practiced today, apart from having religious institutions or organizations from the provincial to village levels.

Balinese ethnic identity in Palangka Raya City in diversity refers to the Vedas (*sruti*) and its derivatives (*śmṛti*) as well as traditions referring to lontar. Religious leaders or clergy are called *sulinggih* (pandita) and *pemangku* (pinandita). Communal religious practices follow regulations and are organized by joy and sorrow, *témpék*, and *Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia* (PHDI). Other cultural symbols that are inherent are the Balinese version of the ballad, Balinese dance and gamelan, five prayers with flowers, incense, *bija*, and *tirta* (holy water). Other identities identified were *tridatu bracelets* (thread of three colors, white, red and black), *udeng* or headbands, offerings, temples, language, and people's names.

Another Hindu identity based on ethnicity is Javanese Hinduism. The representation of cultural symbols is identified through various ritual instruments besides the primordial organization, *Paguyuban* Hindu Jawi (*Pandu Jawi*). *Urjan* clothes, *blangkon* (headband), mantras, and songs with Javanese crooks are quite prominent in religious practice. Ritual means or *ubarampe* have become visible identities.

The difference in the identity symbols of the three groups on the one hand fosters a new awareness of the importance of ethnic identity, but on the other hand debates and even struggles often occur which have the potential to trigger disaggregation. Based on the research results show the following.

Balinization Problems

It is undeniable that Hindu religious practices in Indonesia are dominated by Balinese culture, starting from holy places or temples, clothing, ritual activities, and other symbols as signs as well as pointers referring to them. In general view, Hindus are ethnically Balinese, and ethnic Balinese are Hindus. Even outside the island of Bali, to this day, not a few people or society will feel strange when they hear the name of someone other than the Balinese name, who is a Hindu.

This view has unwittingly given rise to the domination of the Balinese ethnicity in the practice of Hinduism in Indonesia, so that the term Balinization or Balinese Hinduization emerged. On the other hand, in reality Hinduism is based on history and the number of adherents is dominated by Balinese ethnicity so that customs, traditions and cultural symbols are more dominant than Balinese Hindu symbols. Therefore, the contestation with the issue of "Balinization" cannot be denied or even avoided, as is the case in the City of Palangka Raya. "*…Bali people wherever they are…always like they want to be in Bali, when it is necessary to bring gods from Bali here to occupy temples. Meanwhile, there are gods of the Dayak people who are more familiar with the situation and environment and can look after the people here. But he doesn't want to be if he's not from Bali, like Ratu Mas Mecaling or other gods*"[5].

The practice that has been carried out by the Balinese by bringing the culture that becomes their identity is often in the spotlight by other Hindu elites, then it is contradicted by saying that the Dayak people also have gods. In Hindu *Kaharingan* , the term god is equivalent to king or *sangiang*. *Sangiang* parallels the term god in Hinduism and angels according to Jewish religions. *Sangiang* is a sacred substance *Ranying Hatalla Langit* (supernatural, powerful) god or angel, tasked with guiding humans in navigating life (Compiler Team, 2005; Ethics, 2017). Ratu Gede Mas Mecaling is a typical Balinese deity, having a role as Bhatara Kala at Pura Dalem Ped Nusa Penida. For those who want a long, safe and healthy life, they usually worship Him (Triguritno, https://www.kintamani.id). In other mythologies it is also believed to be able to dispel disease outbreaks and keep worshipers away from evil forces (Taksu, 2010).

The problem of Balinization and cultural differences in Hinduism has basically been going on for a long time, namely when several ethnic groups began to choose Hinduism as their official religion. The term that is often used is the problem between "Balinization of Hinduism versus Hindu Indonesianization". Both bring a dilemma, on the one hand Hindu religious identity in the modern era has become one of the official religions in Indonesia as well as being a "safe umbrella" for ethnic belief identities (Ramsted, 2004; Picard, 2012; McDaniels, 2017). Although the term Balinization was originally a Dutch colonial policy in Bali, aimed at making young people aware of the richness of cultural heritage, through education that emphasized traditional language, literature and art, was implemented starting in the 1920s, despite the political ethics of the colonial government (Picard, 2006: 26-28). The "Balinization" program constructed by the Dutch Colonial government, referring to Bourdieu, is close to the term habitus, functioning as a generative basis or as an engine of cultural action, developed to understand cultural sources towards the subjectivity of social actors (Mahar, et.al, 2009; Jackson, 2009) especially the Balinese Hindu elite when they are outside the island and when they come into contact with other Hindu ethnic identities the term "Balinization" reappears, both put forward by the Balinese elite themselves and Hindu elites from other ethnicities.

[5] Interview with Armadiansyah, Lecturer at the State Institute of Hinduism in Penyang, Palangka Raya, May 26, 2021

Cultural resistance

The issue of ethnic cultural differences has also caused resistance from some communities, including among Hindu *Kaharingan* students in Palangka Raya City. For example, in reciting the *tri sandya mantra*, it was found that students only kept silent, did not participate in chanting or following the movements made by the teacher and other students[6]. This means that there is an asymmetrical relationship in efforts to internalize Hindu identity so that the expected intermediary problem, namely mutual acceptance of variants of Hindu identity symbols often experiences distortion when dealing with social reality, namely the diversity of Hindu identities themselves.

On the other hand, the theory and practice of learning in schools is based on the teacher's identity background and is influenced by the "intake" of material when a prospective teacher is studying. For example, Hindu religious teachers have Balinese and Javanese Hindu backgrounds, so they are more dominant in referring to sources of Balinese Hindu identity, although they do not ignore practices based on *Kaharingan* procedures such as *basarah*, but with a minimal number of practices. The same thing will happen to religious teachers who have a Hindu *Kaharingan* background. The unbalanced portion of the material can be a cause for the emergence of resistance from students, because it is considered that there has been cultural domination from one party in addition to an asymmetrical relationship due to the pattern of socialization of Hindu identity carried out by actors with diverse ethnic and cultural identity backgrounds (Berger and Luckman, 1990; Berger, 1991).

Apart from being at school, the representation of the resistance of Hindu *Kaharingan* adherents to symbols of Balinese Hindu identity also occurs in joint prayers at the temple. The *pemangku* (clergy) of the *Sali Paseban Batu* Temple when giving *tirta* (holy water) experienced a subtle refusal from the participants who were adherents of *Kaharingan* Hindus, the participants just stayed silent without holding out their hands as befits other participants while waiting and getting tirta[7]. The attitude of resistance that often occurs causes the elite *Kaharingan* Hindu Religious Council (MB-AHK) to provide understanding in coaching and counseling, material on the diversity of Hindu identities, especially Balinese, greetings from *Om Swastyasu* and *tri sandya* as well as the history of choice as adherents of Hinduism to become frequent "campaigns" conducted[8]. In this context, the Hindu *Kaharingan* elite interprets identity itself as a key element of subjective reality contained in a dialectical relationship with society, especially other Hindus (Berger and Luckmann, 1990).

The emergence of resistance to Balinese Hindu identity appears to be a "scourge" so that it is not enough to be explained only by the Hindu *Kaharingan* elite and Balinese Hindus themselves, the Javanese Hindu elite provides an explanation by comparing Hindus throughout Indonesia and the world who have different cultural identities but can work in harmony[9].

Towards Cultural Hybridization

To bridge the differences between the three ethnic groups, the elite attempted to "merge" cultural identities through accommodation, integration and assimilation in social activities and Hindu

[6] Interview with Sukatiyem, Teacher at SMK Negeri 3 Palangka Raya City on May 3, 2021
[7] Interview with A.A. Alit, Stakeholder of Sali Paseban Batu Temple and Management of PHDI, Bukut Batu District, Palangka Raya City on May 24, 2021
[8] Interview with Walter S. Penyang, Chairman of the Central Kalimantan Hindu Kaharingan Religious Council (MB-AHK) May 5, 2021
[9] Interview with Budi Purnomo, adviser to the Jawi Hindu Association of Palangka Raya City on 6 May 2021

religious practices. These social activities include mutual cooperation at the temple and at the *Basarah* Hall as well as humanitarian actions through the Hindu Humanitarian Mission (*HHM*). This strategy can be interpreted as a way to hybridize Hindu culture. To show unity, the three ethnic elites came together, trying to focus on common interests as Hindus. The meaning of the unification of cultural identities according to the Hindu *Kaharingan* elite corresponds to the philosophy contained in the philosophy of virtue such as the value of *tampung penyang* (unite in diversity) or *penyang hinje simpei paturung humba tamburak* (unite in diversity to achieve common goals), *belom bahadat*[10] (civilized or civilized life), *utus penyang ije kasimpei* (the fact that humans come from one 'God'), *hatamuei lingu nalatai*, *hapangaja karendem malempang*[11] (realizing a peaceful, just and civilized life). This value converges on constructive sources, providing information about the nature of unity in creating social harmony. Through this philosophy, the differences that occur in the practice of Hinduism can be more appreciated. This reality is related to the value contained in the *Panaturan* Scripture, chapter 39, paragraph 3.

The world view of the Dayak-Hindu *Kaharingan* ethnicity regarding diversity in essence emphasizes a sense of brotherhood and avoids cross-disputes in everyday life as shown by the way problems and disputes are resolved using a peaceful approach on the basis of solidarity. For example, for disputes between one person and another, the solution taken is to elevate one another. In everyday life emphasizing concern and tolerance with other members of society as a form of value *pakat bulat* (be united), *ije auh tiruk itung* (thought unification), *bagawi handep habaring hurung* (mutual cooperation), *pakat putar* (friendly).

Solidarity for mutual accommodation and assimilation of the three identities was interpreted by the Balinese Hindu elite with *rwa bhineda*, *desa kala patra*, *desa mawa cara*, *tri hitakarana*[12]. *Rwa bhineda* (two differences in harmony), *desa*, *kala nan patra* (considerations based on place, time and situation), *desa mawa cara* (each place has its own discretion), *tri hitakarana* (three behaviors that create harmony, namely; harmonious relationship with God, humans and with the natural environment). in the view of the Balinese ethnic world will be able to bridge the inevitability of plurality in society (Triguna, 2011: 2).

Meanwhile, in the view of the Javanese ethnic group, the value of mutual cooperation, attitude of *leres*, *lurus, laras* (true, obedient to the truth, and compatible) *hening*, *heneng*, *henung* (purification of the heart or clarity of mind, patience, and gratitude)[13] are the foundations of values to build cooperation in the midst of differences. Plurality and cultural pluralism as a result of contact between Javanese culture and other cultures are addressed wisely which then gives birth to cultural tolerance which is also inseparable from the influence of the notion of "cultural *tantulairsme*", meaning that the differences that exist are essentially one (Endraswara, 2003: 4).

Therefore, sometimes in order to avoid a more complex conflict, the attitude of giving in and *ngalah* (avoiding) is often an option. In the City of Palangka Raya, the Javanese ethnic group prefers to give in or give in when faced with indications of clashes based on cultural identity, even if they are only asked about their opinions, there are indications of disintegration or polarization that trigger Hindu internal conflict, because the hope in the social process according to the Javanese ethnicity is an atmosphere *hening*, *heneng*, *henung*.

The reality of the diversity of Hindu cultural identities is a meeting or encounter between one knowledge and another in a necessity in the global era. In this context, the influence of globalization

[10] Interview with Walter S. Penyang, Chairman of the Central Kalimantan Hindu Kaharingan Religious Council (MB-AHK) May 5, 2021
[11] Interview with Parada, chairman of the Regional Hindu Kaharingan Religion Council (MD-AHK), City of Palangka Raya, May 11, 2021
[12] Interview with I Made Sadiana, Chair of PHDI City of Palangka Raya on 20 May 2021.
[13] Interview with Handoko, Head of the Jawi Hindu Association, City of Palangka Raya on May 3, 2021

is marked by trans-local interactions between Hindu identities that can provide positive changes. Referring to David Held's (in Wunderlich and Warrier, 2007:5), *'Globalization is best understood as a spatial phenomenon, lying on a continuum with 'the local' at one end and 'the global' at the other'*.

Globalization is a two-way phenomenon, that is, global and local influence each other, when local community forces are able to find their place in the midst of globalization, their culture and values will survive in accordance with the given context.

Even though there is no culture in the world that does not change, by maintaining its traditional values and beliefs, the process of tug-of-war between local and global will continue. To overcome the tension between the two, Hall (1991) provides a solution by placing global and local aspects as two faces of the same movement. The first face, 'local', reflects the specificity that never disappears, while the second face, 'global', shows the power that has penetrated, absorbed, reshaped and negotiated that specificity. In other words, what is later claimed to be local-global is actually interdependent, because not a few things that are considered local, as opposed to global ones, are actually the result of trans-local processes. The two-faced local-global relationship is a form of combination or hybridization, an attempt to mix cultural elements that were previously separated with the aim of producing new meanings and identities (Barker, 2014: 127), similar to Hindu religious practices that accommodate, integrate and blending ethnic Dayak-Hindu *Kaharingan* , Balinese and Javanese ethnic identities. The intended cultural hybridization strategy can be explained in the following figure.

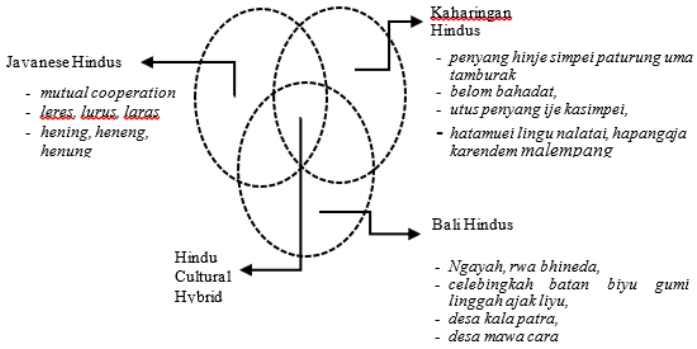


Figure 1. Hybridization of Hindu Identity in Palangka Raya City

Cultural hybridization is a view that supports the presence of heterogenization rather than homogenization and is even expressed as creativity from which various new cultural realities will emerge and there is hope for their sustainability (Ritzer, 2012). Efforts to hybridize culture practiced by the elite, although it cannot yet be declared to produce a permanent hybrid identity, are to mutually accept ethnic differences, in addition to a strategy of positioning oneself as a result of the power relations between the Dayak-Hindu *Kaharingan* , Balinese and Javanese inter-elite openly, mutually influencing each other in space. -family and public spaces are deliberately raised in society (Kraidy, 2007). This also means that Hindu cultural hybridization appears as a consequence of differences in ethnic identity and the relationship of attraction between local and global dimensions. The tug-of-war relationship in this context blurs cultural barriers so that crosses occur in the context of the "struggle" of different ethnic identities. On the other hand, differences in identity as a necessity are cultural and social capital to knit togetherness. If identity differences are sharpened, the potential for social rifts and clashes will occur.

Referring to the cultural historian, Arnold Toynbee (in Sutrisno, 2013) argued that a nation's civilization can be destroyed by three causal factors. First, the failure of creative groups or elites to

face disintegration; Second, the refusal to mimesis, namely acting culturally to realize the shared dream agreed upon by the elites to build Hinduism by maintaining ethnic identity; Third, the loss or fading of social cohesion (mutual trust) from society. On the other hand, civilization will be able to survive when the cultural and social capitals of society, self-determining in identity, are able to face the challenges of the times and their crises, namely by grasping opportunities creatively, one of which is by hybridizing Hindu culture. In this way, the elements of central-local domination or local-central tyranny can be minimized, if possible, eliminated. Because the presence of a new culture in an area is not always present to negate or negate other cultures. On the contrary, it can actually strengthen each other and form a new cultural pattern in society (Tantowi, 2015: 145).

This explanation is related to the idea put forward by Triguna (2011: 56-70) to determine Hindu identity that can be used as a unifying ethnic culture in Indonesia, Palangka Raya in particular includes things that contain the values of *ahimsa* (not hurting), *karma* (working hard), *sewa* (sincere service), brotherhood, please help. These five things have essentially been accommodated in each symbol of ethnic identity based on figure 1. Thus, the intended cultural hybridization contains within itself a strong spirit of brotherhood and solidarity among fellow human beings. A kind of moral contract explained by Parekh (2008:84-87) as adherence to values that become a common platform in society, thus forming a kind of shared ownership and shared guidance on these values, becomes a meeting point differences that must be obeyed in a society to ensure the establishment of peace. Obedience to the moral contract will place society in equal conditions because people have the same rights and responsibilities in social life.

The strategy of cultural hybridization is conceptually in line with the philosophy of God in Hinduism which opens wide roads for differences. Referring to that difference, the thought of contemporary mystic, Frithjoh Schoun (in Arifin, 2009: 96-99) can be used as an approach in viewing differences in Hindu identity in Palangka Raya City, which basically only lies in its exoteric part, but essentially has similarities in transcendental aspects, namely God and the social system refer to Triguna's previous opinion.

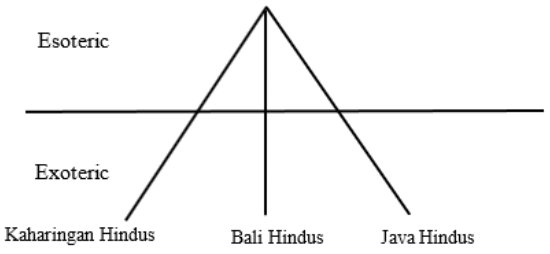


Figure 2. Exotericism and Esotericism in Hinduism

The idea in figure 2 above can disseminate Hindu adherents with different cultural identity backgrounds, that there is an esoteric dimension that is closely related to the transcendent nature of various practices that have been carried out so far. Although exotericically displays different ways, forms and practices, the essence of truth is only one and universal, which cannot be formulated exclusively (limited), but inclusive (open to various interpretations) (Takwin, 2009:54). Apart from being exoteric, every Hindu adherent is also influenced by the value of the clan clan which also supports emanation to be allowed and then to be able to take a certain path that he thinks is in accordance with his capacity to meet God. In line with the opinion of Mas'ud, (2017: vii-viii), God in Hinduism is even described by *sahasra namam* (a thousand names) and *sahasra rupam* (a thousand faces). Wise men of holy knowledge gave Him many names, but God is still one, single, and one (ekam

sat wiprah bahuda wadanti). In other words, different cultures can complement one another, then make them realize that "our own" culture is a result of different influences, contains different sets of thoughts and is open to different interpretations (Parekh, 2008).

4. Conclusion

Although the diversity of Hindu identities can be interpreted as the growing awareness of ethnic identity in the era of modernization and globalization, on the other hand, the resistance and potential for disintegration are getting thicker due to cultural differences. These differences, if left unchecked, can widen into polarization which can sharpen cultural boundaries so that there is the potential for open conflict to emerge. In order to narrow or reduce the potential for disintegration and polarization, attempts at assimilation of identities in the form of cultural hybridization can be used, even though it may be temporary or temporarily to build unity between ethnic identities. Through the hybridization of cultural identities, it is hoped that this will become a guideline which will then become a source of information as well as an ideal motivation for Hindu ethnic groups in Palangka Raya City. It is hoped that the combination of elements of ethnic identity symbols will be used as an evaluation system for appropriate and inappropriate behavior by elites and adherents of the Dayak-Hindu *Kaharingan* ethnicity, Balinese Hindus and Javanese Hindus. Although it is unavoidable that there will always be lawsuits or disarticulations due to the fact that cultural identity itself is fluid, not final, influenced by various interests and power.

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