

BEYOND BINARY: GENDER FLUIDITY IN BUGIS TRADITIONAL PANTHEISM

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ABSTRACT This study explores the rich cultural heritage of the Bugis people, an ethnic group from South Sulawesi, with a focus on their historical literature, religious beliefs, and the role of the Bissu in their society. The Bugis' historical literature, encompassing various forms such as myths, legends, and historical narratives, is essential for understanding their governance, religious beliefs, and social structures. This literature reflects the Bugis' deep connection to mystical sciences and the integration of everyday rituals with their belief in ancestors (*toriolo*). The Bissu, gender-neutral religious leaders, play a crucial role in maintaining the cultural and spiritual fabric of Bugis society, bridging the gap between the human and divine realms. They are involved in significant rituals, including royal ceremonies and agricultural rites, and are respected for their mystical abilities and knowledge of traditions. The document also discusses the political and social significance of genealogy and marriage alliances among the Bugis nobility, the impact of Hindu and Buddhist ideologies on Bugis culture, and the historical context of the *La Galigo* era, which marks a turning point in the history of South Sulawesi royalty. The Bissu's role in contemporary Bugis society, though evolved, remains a vital link to their ancient customs and traditions

Keywords: Bugis, historical literature, political structure, Bissu, religious practices.

INTRODUCTION

This research discusses the rich cultural heritage of the Bugis people, an ethnic group from South Sulawesi, with a focus on their traditional belief system and the role of the *Bissu*, a gender-neutral religious leader. The Bugis' early history is shrouded in mystery, with their cultural identity and origins difficult to pinpoint due to historical records in Bugis languages and diverse oral traditions. The Bugis are known for their literary works, which encompass a variety of forms such as myths, legends, and historical narratives, reflecting the society's governance, religious beliefs, and social structures. Pre-Islamic Bugis society was influenced by mystical sciences, with everyday rituals and mantras playing a significant role in their literature and daily life. The Bugis pantheon included a variety of deities, with the worship of the sun and moon as central elements. The nobility traced their lineage to heavenly beings, reinforcing their dominance. The *La Galigo* era is a significant period in Bugis history, with the epic *La Galigo* serving as a sacred text before the advent of Islam.

The *Bissu*, a unique figure in Bugis society, is believed to have originated from the pre-Islamic period, possibly from the term "*Bhiksu*,"¹ associated with Buddhism. *Bissu* are characterized by their gender neutrality, serving as mediators between humans and the divine. They are respected for their knowledge of customs, traditions, and their role in various rituals, including royal ceremonies. *Bissu* are also involved in agricultural rites and are considered to have mystical abilities, including the power to communicate with ancestors and deities.

The research further details the *Bissu*'s role in the political and spiritual life of the Bugis, including their participation in the *Mattompang Arajang* procession, which involves the cleansing of royal heirlooms. *Bissu* are seen as guardians of tradition, history, and culture, and are highly respected for their ability to maintain balance and harmony in society. Despite the influences of Islam and modernity, the *Bissu* continue to play a crucial role in the preservation of Bugis traditions and customs. Historical literature is of great significance in understanding Bugis culture as it provides insights into various aspects of their society, including governance, religious beliefs, social structures, and laws that govern people's lives.

The research emphasizes that through the stories contained in diverse Bugis literary works, one can learn about a wide range of social stages. These literary works, which include myths, legends, fairy tales, spells, customs, laws, letters of agreement, and texts regarding culture and religion, are considered essential components of the nation's culture and are part of Indonesia's cultural heritage. They are not only a reflection of the Bugis' strong cultural values but also represent the cultural heritage of the Indonesian people's ancestors. The study of these old literary works is crucial for properly understanding the rich cultural tapestry of the Bugis people.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Amin (2021) in his work 'Reconstruction of Historical Literature of Bugis-Makassar', the Bugis people, an ethnic group from south Sulawesi, Indonesia, have a rich cultural heritage that is deeply intertwined with their historical literature, religious beliefs, and social structures. This literature encompasses various forms, including myths, legends, and historical narratives, which serve as essential components of the Bugis cultural identity and heritage. While Andaya (2018) in 'Gender in Focus Identities, Codes, Stereotypes and Politics' discusses the historical literature of the Bugis and Makassar is significant for understanding their governance, religious beliefs, and social structures. It includes a variety of literary forms such as myths, legends, fairy tales, spells, customs, laws, and texts related to culture and religion. Notably, the *La Galigo* era marks a pivotal period in Bugis history, with the epic *La*

¹ According to Halilintar Lathief (2021:5), based on their attire and ceremonial practices, there are clear similarities between the Bugis *bissu* and *Bhiksu* Buddhist monks. However, language scholar Adriani clarifies that the term *bissu*, widely used in various languages across the archipelago, does not originate from the word *bhiksu*. B.F. Matthes refers to *bissu* as "priesters en priesteresse" (priests and priestesses), describing them as transgender priests or *waria* an amalgamation of "wanita" (woman) and "pria" (man), or referred to in Bugis as *calabai*. Rural Bugis people believe that the term *bissu* comes from the Bugis word *mabessi*, meaning "clean" or "pure." A Bone community figure, Andi Angkong Petta Rela (a keeper of sacred relics), explains that the *bissu* are called as such because they are pure, untouched, lacking breasts, and do not menstruate.

Galigo being recognized as one of the longest classical works in the world and a sacred text prior to the advent of Islam. The origins of the *Bissu* can be traced back to pre-Islamic times, with their presence linked to the myth of *Batara Guru*, the progenitor of the Bugis people. The *Bissu*'s involvement in rituals, such as the *Mattompang Arajang* procession, highlights their role as guardians of tradition and history, ensuring the continuity of Bugis customs despite the influences of Islam and modernity.

Syam (2020) in 'The Role of Bissu in The *Mattompang Arajang* Community of Bugis Bone Sulawesi Selatan', points out how old literary works are crucial for preserving the cultural values of the Bugis people, representing their ancestral heritage. These texts not only reflect the Bugis' strong cultural values but also provide insights into various social stages, including governmental systems, religious beliefs, and laws governing daily life. The study of these literary works is essential for understanding the rich cultural tapestry of the Bugis people. Central to Bugis culture is the figure of the *Bissu*, a gender-neutral religious leader who plays a vital role in maintaining the cultural and spiritual fabric of Bugis society. The *Bissu* are involved in significant rituals, including royal ceremonies and agricultural rites, and are respected for their mystical abilities and knowledge of traditions. Their role as mediators between the human and divine realms underscores their importance in Bugis spirituality and cultural practices. Genealogy plays a crucial role in Bugis society, serving as a means to establish social status and political power. The Bugis and Makassar chronicles are often arranged according to the ancestry of the ruling elite, with genealogies providing records of marriages and descent that are historically significant. This emphasis on genealogy reflects the importance of ascriptive status in Bugis culture, where lineage and ancestry are critical for social standing and political office (Suliyati, 2018). The literature and cultural practices of the Bugis people are vital for understanding their identity and heritage. The interplay between historical literature, the role of the *Bissu*, and the significance of genealogy illustrates the complexity of Bugis culture. As the Bugis continue to navigate modern influences, their rich traditions and historical narratives remain essential for preserving their unique cultural identity.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach to explore the rich cultural heritage of the Bugis people, focusing on their historical literature, religious beliefs, and the role of the *Bissu* in their society. The methodology consists of several key components: A comprehensive literature review was conducted to gather existing knowledge on Bugis culture, historical literature, and the *Bissu*. This involved analysing various academic sources, including journal articles, books, and historical texts that discuss the Bugis' governance, social structures, and religious practices. The review highlighted the significance of the *La Galigo* era and its impact on Bugis literature and identity. Secondly the study involved a detailed textual analysis of Bugis literary works, including myths, legends, and historical narratives. This analysis aimed to identify themes related to social stages, governance, and the integration of mystical sciences in everyday rituals. The examination of these texts provided insights into the cultural values and beliefs of the Bugis people.

RESULTS

The research on Bugis culture yielded several specific outcomes and findings. The study highlighted the significance of Bugis historical literature, which includes myths, legends, fairy tales, spells, customs, and laws. These literary works are essential for understanding the social stages, governance, and cultural values of the Bugis people, reflecting their deep connection to mystical sciences and ancestral beliefs (*toriolo*) that influence everyday rituals. The research is expected to elucidate the crucial role of the *Bissu*, gender-neutral religious leaders, in maintaining the cultural and spiritual fabric of Bugis society. Their involvement in significant rituals, such as the *Mattompang Arajang* procession, underscores their importance as guardians of tradition and history, despite the influences of Islam and modernity.

The findings emphasize the importance of genealogy in Bugis society, illustrating how ascriptive status and lineage play a critical role in social standing and political power. The research will explore how genealogical records document the social advantages and political hierarchies within Bugis culture. The study is expected to reveal the impact of Hindu and Buddhist ideologies on Bugis culture, particularly in the context of their historical literature and religious practices. This includes examining the fusion of customs and beliefs that arose from these influences, alongside the autochthonous beliefs of the Bugis. Ultimately, the research demonstrate how the Bugis people continue to preserve their cultural identity through their literature, rituals, and the role of the *Bissu*, providing insights into the resilience of their traditions in the face of modern challenges. These outcomes will contribute to a deeper understanding of the Bugis people's rich cultural heritage and the complexities of their social and spiritual life.

The Pre-Islamic History of The Bugis

The term "*ugi'* or "*ogi'*," which is the living term used by the Bugis to refer to themselves, is incorporated into Indonesian or Malay to become the word "Bugis." The early history of the Bugis is unknown because historical records on their origins and early lives are missing. There are a few oral histories that cover the early years and origins of the Bugis' existence, although they are very different from one another. Those stories could have been told to reinforce the Bugis' dominance over other ethnic groups (Said, 2004). The term "Bugis" has an actual meaning that the only generally recognised literary narrative that is frequently used to follow the Bugis' beginnings, notably their aristocracy. Determining the origins of the Bugis cultural identity is difficult. The hazy history of their early lives and the diversity of their sub-ethnic groups may make it difficult for anyone interested in learning more about the distinctive culture of the Bugis. One possible approach to discussing the origins and early phases of Bugis culture would be to sketch it in general terms (Said, 2004).

Historical literature, which can be spoken or written, is one kind of creative work that offers details about historical events that took place in a particular decade. Since many of these are artistic creations that tell tales that have been passed down through the years, many of them are anonymous. First created by a community, oral historical literature transforms into written

literature before becoming the property of an individual (Amin, 2021). It imparts morality and ideology to its adherents while also providing information about the culture of the tribe. Through the stories contained in diverse Bugis literary works, one can learn about a wide range of social stages, including governmental systems, religious beliefs, social structures, and laws that govern people's lives (Amin, 2021). Literary topics, especially those involving old *Nusantaran* writing, such as oral. As essential components of the nation's culture, literary issues—especially those relating to ancient Indonesian literature, including oral literature—must be properly studied. The people's strong cultural values are preserved through old literary works, which are a component of their cultural heritage. Recent compilations of historic literature, sometimes referred to as classical archipelago literature, are derived from classical Malay and Javanese literature, which is the output of several islands in Sumatra and Java (Amin, 2021).

Even before Islam arrived in Sulawesi, knowledge of the mystical sciences continued to shape Bugis literature. Everyday rituals that are impacted by the belief in *toriolo* (ancestors) include childbirth, marriage, death, the treatment of illness, entering the forest, harvesting rice fields, walking down to the river, entering a new home, travelling abroad, and engaging in combat (Amin, 2021). Dancing to the beat of traditional belief patterns and reciting mantras to rhythms reflect an awareness of mystical knowledge. The result of intellect and imagination, the mantra is composed of poetry-style words and sentences and is believed to possess mystical qualities. Within the Before Islam arrived in Sulawesi, knowledge of the mystical sciences continued to impact Bugis literature (Amin, 2021). The result of intellect and imagination, the mantra is composed of poetry-style words and sentences and is believed to possess mystical qualities. Mantra is now considered to be a form of classical literature (Amin, 2021).

The limitations of literary works the diverse characteristics and expressions of the language are merely hinted at in the history of the Bugis and Makassar. Literary works with historical significance that are described here include myths, legends, fairy tales, spells, customs, laws, letters of agreement, and texts regarding culture and religion that are part of the Makassar Bugis community and have a connection to the events portrayed (Amin, 2021). The antagonistic and protagonist roles that the characters play in the events that make up the storyline are sometimes described in scripts. akin to the story "*Musu Selleng*," which tells of the Gowa King's attempts to establish Islam and conquer the Bone Kingdom. The fascinating nature of the novel stems from the distinct viewpoints of the characters (Amin, 2021).

As essential components of the nation's culture, literary issues—especially those relating to ancient Indonesian literature, including oral literature—must be properly studied. Old literary works have tremendous cultural qualities and represent the cultural heritage of the Indonesian people's ancestors (Amin, 2021). Old Indonesian literature, or classical archipelago literature, is a common term. Classical Bugis literature gathers a range of oral literature that is classified as classical literature by examining the historical periods, characteristics, and literary styles of literary works. Finding periodization in classical Bugis literature is the aim. Local awareness that ethnic relations in Central Kalimantan must be preserved by the application of

values at the praxis level Indonesia is home to a diverse range of customs and cultures because of its large number of tribes (Amin, 2021).

There is strong evidence that Buddhist and Hindu ideologies had an impact on the Bugis. There are Buddhist bronze statues in South Sulawesi, but the Hindu influence is most noticeable in the Sanskrit loanwords found in Bugis. These are especially clear in the epic poetry cycle *I La Galigo* and in early works written by priests (Purday, 2013). These influences gave rise to an extraordinarily rich fusion of customs and beliefs, together with the autochthonous beliefs. The worship of the sun and moon appears to have been the focal point of the Bugis' pre-Islamic religion, but there was also a wide range of other divine and semi-divine characters, like the rice deity *Sangiasserior Sangiang Serri* (Purday, 2013). Actually, the Bugis practiced what has been called "prolific religious thinking," which means that they thought there were many different kinds of entities in the universe that lived above, below, and around the earth. The Bugis nobility and traditional beliefs were particularly closely associated because of the belief in "beings descended from the heavens," *tomanurung*, as the nobles traced their descent from such *tomanurung*. In South Sulawesi, these ties persisted for a considerable amount of time, however it is unclear how strong they were (Purday, 2013).

The historical literature of Makassar Bugis began during the *La Galigo* era. *La Galigo* was given its name for several reasons. In the first place, as the world's longest classical work; in the second place, as the most heroic protagonist of his era; and in the third place, as a sacred text for the Bugis before they converted to Islam in Sulawesi. *La Galigo* is a place of gathering for the Bugis, Makassar, Mandar, and Toraja tribes in South Sulawesi. The *Sianrebale* era, when South Sulawesi was destroyed, was a time without culture. The Makassar Bugis people have left no traces of their civilization in South Sulawesi. It's expected to go on for a thousand years. People prey on each other (*cyanrebale*). The saga of *To Manurung* marks a turning point in the history of South Sulawesi royalty (Amin, 2021).

The Bugis Makassar group still finds great pleasure in oral storytelling today. In spite of the fact that *To Manurung's* history of emergence in this third period isn't identified by a precise year, enough data is available to determine its century. It is believed that the events of *To Manurung* took place in the early 1300s. Based on the kingdoms that ruled when they were recorded in the 1500s AD, this estimate is sorted according to how long their reigns as kings lasted. The zero-culture era is thought to have started with the end of the *La Galigo* period and ended with the advent of *Manurung* (Amin, 2021).

The Makassar Bugis have preserved *Tujua Karebosi* oral history, which describes how peace was established. The Tallo community in Makassar experienced the establishment of peace, according to the oral history of *Tujua Karebosi*, which is preserved by the Makassar Bugis. Arriving to unite the people and end the *Sianrebale* era was *Tomanurung's* mission. A multitude of kingdoms were founded, *Manurung* ruling the first. A few decades later, the grandchildren and offspring of *To Manurung* were regenerated as leaders. Until the fifteenth century AD, according to the genealogy of the *Gowa Tallo* dynasty (Amin, 2021).

The mythology of the Bugis claims that *Tomanurung* is the origin of Bugis society. Historical data demonstrates that almost all of the kingdoms and governmental systems in Bugis Makassar were founded as a result of political agreements between different factions designating *Tomanurung* as their leader, lending credence to this theory. Legend has it that *Tomanurung* came to Pallankan Hill in the shape of a white cloud and transformed into a beautiful and charming girl in the Gowa kingdom (Amin, 2021). The people at that time acknowledged *To Manurung* as their leader after a protracted period of time without a trustworthy figurehead. Once upon a time, *To Manurung* married *Matoa*, who subsequently gave birth to offspring who would rule the Gowa country as its kings. During the fourth phase, which generally lasted from 1500 to 1600 AD, the kingdom experienced prosperity. The written records of the *Lotrarak* monarchs support the oral tradition. The story of Gowa's Sultan Alauddin, often referred to as the "king who sits on the golden throne" or *Tunipallangga Ulaeng*, and *Sultan Awwalul Islam*, popularly known as the "*Karaeng Pattingalloang*," who controlled the country for nearly 40 years without ever losing a war. In 6581, at the age of nine, he ascended to the throne. He is capable of ruling 72 kingdoms. The narrative of the Dutch Convention's repeated terrible defeats is also related in the *Lontarak* of the Kings of Gowa (Amin, 2021).

From prehistoric times, the South Sulawesi lowlands have been divided into political and geographical units known as kingdoms and, occasionally, confederations. The six great kingdoms of *Luwuq*, *Soppéng*, *Sidénréng*, *Boné*, *Wajoq*, *Goa*, and *Talloq* are mentioned in texts from Bugis and Makasar with reference to the fifteenth century A.D (Caldwell, 1995). However, we should not presume that their monarchs possessed the same level of authority as European princes at the same period, nor that their frontiers were the same as those of the countries of the same name in the seventeenth century (Caldwell, 1995). In this essay, "kingdom" simply refers to one of the roughly twelve historical Bugis and Makasar confederations, each of which recognised a supreme noble with a unique title whose authority extended, it is I argue that these confederations had a basic three-tiered political structure that I have named "kingdom," "domain," and "settlement" (Caldwell, 1995).

A fundamental organising principle of the history of the Bugis and Makasar people was and remains the division of the South Sulawesi lowlands into kingdoms. The Bugis and Makasar chronicles are arranged according to the ancestry of the most distinguished nobles within a kingdom, typically referred to as "rulers". This genealogy presents events both inside and beyond the kingdom in chronological order (Caldwell, 1995). The majority of Bugis and Makasar's historiography concentrates on the ruling elite, with only a few texts explicitly mentioning the constituent areas of the kingdoms. Common Bugis and Makasars are seldom discussed, and when they are, it's usually in relation to their monarchs. Arguably, the Bugis and Makasar literature's most extensive genre is genealogy. Genealogies provide records of first marriages and descent. These weddings have a great deal of historical significance. An aristocrat from the Bugis or Makasar people would usually remarry, although his first marriage was the most important (Caldwell, 1995).

In an attempt to establish or strengthen relationships with another aristocratic family, his family arranged this marriage. Investigating them will reveal some of the political concerns that shaped the discussions between these spouses. The evidence for these marriages found in the pre-Islamic genealogical sections suggests that coherence within kingdoms was more important in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries than links between them (Caldwell 1995). Rather than between two monarchs, marriages were arranged between a ruler and the local *arung*, or lord of a principality or province inside the realm. The towns' evident significance, documented in the kings' genealogy, contradicts political scientists' definition of the state's degree of political and administrative centralization—typically under a single government or constitution (Caldwell, 1995).

Moreover, historical accounts of South Sulawesi before to the arrival of Islam provide little evidence of an administrative bureaucracy, which is a feature of states. Actually, Bugis sources almost never characterise an office according to its location, but rather its administrative role. The capitals, or palace centres, of the kingdoms receive much less attention (Caldwell 1995). For example, the genealogy of the *Soppéng* monarchs mentions nothing about *Tinco*, the site where early pre-Islamic rulers are thought to have built their palaces based on archaeological discoveries. These traits suggest that pre-Islamic kingdoms were dispersed, and the groups that the genealogical records mention were probably autonomous political units (Caldwell, 1995).

Most of these lineages begin with a marriage between a *Tompoq*, a female raised from the underworld, or a *Manurung*, a male descended from heaven. Usually, the names of these archetypal individuals are followed by the names of two or three mythical rulers (Caldwell 1995). When writing first appeared, these individuals and the places they are associated with (if any) were probably remembered or maintained by oral tradition. However, following a few generations of these outdated records, there is an abrupt and significant increase in information. Suddenly, a great deal of detail is provided (Caldwell, 2016). The names of the ruler's descendants, the locations and dates of their marriages, the positions they occupied in politics, and the properties they owned.

The Political Hierarchies

Since status was vital in Bugis society, individuals of high status always presided over polities, regardless of their size. Social standing in Bugis society is mostly ascriptive, which means that it is passed down from one generation to the next via birth (Caldwell, 2016). This rank is thought to have originated with the *Manurung* and *Tompoq*, who are the ancestors of most of the major and lesser kingdoms in South Sulawesi. Male *To Manurung* arise on top of a hill, come down a rainbow from the higher realm, or emerge from a patch of bamboo. When the female *Tompoq* emerge from the underworld, they are carried by the froth of the sea or river (Caldwell, 2016).

A holdover from the pre-Indic, pre-Islamic belief that the universe is composed of three realms—the world of Man, the upper world of the gods, governed by seven levels, and the underworld, ruled by seven layers of gods—is the idea that divine entities emerge from the sky, the sea, or a river. As rulers had to be descended from *Manurung* and *Tompoq*, only members

of an elite kinship group that could claim such a position were eligible for high political office. Therefore, proving ascriptive status and documenting the social advantage that resulted from it were the main goals of genealogy (Caldwell, 2016). A family history was a need for both high social standing and possible political office. The common people have no written family histories. A man can ascend in society by hard labour even if the Bugis highly regard ascriptive rank, especially if he already belongs to this ascriptive elite. The finding of new lands and the enrichment that followed was one very noteworthy achievement. Many genealogies begin mentioning this process with the words "*ia timpangngni*," which translates as "he/she opened," and on to list the community's name. This act of foundation bestows rank on the founder's descendants (Caldwell, 2016).

Bissu The Gender-Neutral Religious Leader

The Bugis people are one of the tribes in Indonesia that continues to follow its customs and culture. One example of a system that is different from the one that is often used throughout the archipelago is the gender system that is applied to the Bugis tribe community. The Bugis tribe's indigenous knowledge can be used to derive these ideals. This is fascinating to look at and study in detail from a sociological perspective, especially in light of the gender perspective and how the Bugis community views gender roles in connection to regional custodial (Ramli, 2021). The hierarchy of gender within the Bugis community, where the structures built by the Bugis Tribe are different from those seen in other spheres of society. Most men do not genuinely exhibit masculinity, just as women do not always embody the qualities that define femininity (Ramli, 2021). In communal life, a lot of people pass on information about the responsibilities that men and women play in sustaining their lives from one generation to the next. The community life that has shaped the culture has been passed down through the centuries. This gender culture has persisted and developed into a strong foundation for all community-related endeavours. In all their customs, the unique Bugis tribe assigns responsibilities based on a socially acceptable identity (Ramli, 2021).

The Bugis tribe community recognises five gender systems: *Oroane* (man), *Makkunrai* (female), *Calalai* (female with male responsibilities and functions), *Calabai* (men with female roles and functions), and *Bissu* (unity of two genders, i.e., female and male in one body). Community development often acknowledges only two gender expressions: feminine and masculine (Nurohim, 2018). However this paper is going to analyse one gender the *Bissu*. It's possible that the word "*Bissu*" originated from the phrase "*Bhiksu*," which denotes the leader of Buddhism and dates back to a time before Islam. This is shown by the associated roles of *Bissu* and *Bhiksu* (Ismoyo, 2020). The name "*Bissu*" may also have come from the Bugis word "*bessi*," which means "clean"—that is, not bleeding, holy, not going through a menstrual cycle, and not nursing. Furthermore, *Bissu* might not be able to control their sexual cravings and participate in romantic relationships. Other sorts of austerity that *Bissu* must demonstrate include giving up tea, coffee, and sweets (Ismoyo, 2020).

The Transformation Into A Bissu

A person's status as a *Bissu* is determined by *Puang*, the *Bissu* leader, and his or her preparedness. This is because being a *Bissu* requires a person to give up their identity as an ordinary person and give up their lust till they cease seeking the world. This is since becoming a *Bissu* not only acts as a cultural mover but also has the power to penetrate previous cultural traditions (Putra, 2023). These traditions cannot be confused with the civilization that altered many of them, such as the now-outdated custom of wearing traditional wedding attire. It is also evident how colour is used in culture. Given their associations with aristocracy and monarchy, it may be argued that only royals in active service are permitted to wear the colours green, red, and black. Gold *songko*, sometimes called *songko recca*, has a very significant connotation that establishes a person's rank (Putra, 2023). This is when a *Bissu's* role becomes important, because only those who are able to advise or reprimand a non-king can use colours and customs in the same manner as a son of a king (Putra, 2023).

The majority of people are misinformed about *Bissu*. They are thought to be equivalent to *calabai* (Putra, 2023). A *Bissu* person has a link to the other world. The *Bissu* have a prominent role and high prestige in Bugis society. The Bugis people view *Bissu* as a supernatural being endowed with exceptional abilities. In each Bugis traditional ritual, *Bissu* fulfils specific functions and responsibilities as a priest or traditional representative (Suliyati, 2018). According to old Bugis creation stories, the creator is an androgynous god who creates a female moon and a male sun. There's an argument between the two, and they refuse to live together. The moon is the one who gives birth to the stars, some metals (such as iron and gold), and the first generation of "monstrous" plants, animals, and other species, despite the fact that both are capable of self-impregnation (Andaya, 2018). Some Bugis think that reptiles, including crocodiles, are symbolic of their hideous forefathers. The goddess of the tree, who is thought to have started the *Bissu*, was one of the forty goddesses that were formed. Not long after the moon makes her numerous creations visible, the sun and moon reconcile. This causes the two to divide and then unite, giving rise to the gods that are honoured at *I La Galiga*. The *Bissu* is one of the "monstrous" creations, endowed with sacred abilities, according to the Bugis cosmogonic myth. The androgynous nature of the female moon deity is connected to the *Bissu* origin. Rather than the concept of sexual completion and autarchy, androgyny is an ancient global formula for expressing fullness, the coexistence of opposites, and perfection inside one being (Andaya, 2018). Because they were viewed as impotent, the male *Bissu* gained access to the court's princesses. Due to this notion, any sexual activity involving the *Bissu* and the princesses would result in drowning—a punishment typically meted out to individuals found guilty of incest. In the courts, the women *Bissu* handled various kinds of household (therefore feminine) tasks, although this was only seen to "kill time". Their real purpose was to carry out rituals related to the passing away of the royal heirs (Andaya, 2018). In this capacity, the *Bissu* commanded the spirits or deities (*réwata*) to enter their bodies and descend to earth, as well as to stop at the specific altar (*lamming réwata*). They were not truly *Bissu* until they were taken over by the spirits. Usually, the *Puang Matoa* led the parade, which was swiftly joined by many dancing and singing *Bissu* as well as female *Bissu* holding a cuspidor and a betel box. The rituals came to an end with the sacrifice of a buffalo, which is seen as a representation of the moon, the buffalo's creator deity (Andaya, 2018).

The Political Role of *Bissu*

Nonetheless, the first idea was strengthened by related functions that *Bhiksu* and *Bissu* show (Ismoyo, 2020). Because *Bissu* is gender-neutral, she is neither exclusively male nor exclusively female. As a result, it is portrayed more as a mediator between the sexes, or as a mouthpiece (*penyambung lidah*) and void filler between humans and the god *Dewata Sewwae*, who is worshipped by adherents of the ancient Bugis faith. The *Bissu* have free access to both gender realms since they do not identify as *Makkunrai*, or female, or *Oroane*, or man (Venty Rohmalita Saskia, 2021). The Bugis community holds *Bissu* in the highest respect due to his knowledge of customs, traditions, family lineage, social life in the world, and the lives of people gods, medical professionals, and mystics. *Bissu* is often looked upon by society and the royal family for guidance, assistance, supervision, and teaching. *Bissu* used to receive special attention since they were active in deciding what the Bugis community wanted for their lives. The belief that *Bissu* may communicate with gods, spirits, and ancestors is linked to its social role (Putra, 2023).

In Bugis society before Islam arrived, *Bissu* held a significant role in the Kingdom. Thus, *Bissu's* gender function will be distinct from other identities, in addition to being seen as a holy figure and having a significant position in Bugis society. Moreover, *Bissu* needs to maintain their objectivity and not show any signs of their gender identity, either feminine or masculine. *Bissu* needs to have specific skills as well (Venty Saskia Rohmalita, 2021). There wouldn't have been any customary ceremonial activities or royal rites without him. During the *adat* procession, *Bissu* performed the roles of both conductor and executor. In the Bugis cultural context, *Bissu* is considered a person who may facilitate communication between gods and humans through traditional processions in the language of *To Rilangi*. *Bissu* carries on this tradition as the guardian of ancient Buginese cultural values. This group is claimed to have magical abilities. As defenders, carers, and carriers of *Arajang* (royal inheritance), they fulfil the duties of a *Bissu* (Syahrir, 2019).

The *Bissu* have a prominent role and high prestige in Bugis society. The Bugis people view *Bissu* as a supernatural being endowed with exceptional abilities. In each Bugis traditional ritual, *Bissu* fulfils specific functions and responsibilities as a priest or traditional representative. In a multitude of religious ceremonies, whether national or communal, *Bissu* members chant prayers and mantras in the ethereal language. The traditional ceremonies known as *Bissu* are performed to ascertain the auspicious days for important events, such planting rice, planning a pilgrimage, building a house, crowning a leader or king, and so on (Suliyati, 2018). However, the most important part of all the data that is available—home, wedding, birth, circumcision, etc.—is not any less important than the Bugis tribe's *Bissu* figure, which they use as a last resort and that enables them to look into every last detail of every event. An additional approach to define this *Bissu* is as a perceptive person who can examine every event that occurs. It's also a means of educating a young woman who becomes a well-known celebrity in her own right, regardless of gender (Syahrir, 2019). However, the definition of *Bissu* has already progressed to the extent that it is used to protect the esteemed organisation (Putra, 2023). In the past, the traditional Bugis community held the firm belief that a monarch lacked the right to

rule his people if *Bissu* had not prayed for him. In South Sulawesi, it was established during the pre-Islamic kingdoms' rule that every *ranreng*, or customary region (now sub-district), had to have a *Bissu* village. At that time, it was known that the Bone and Segeri kingdoms shared a *Bissu* community known as *Bissu PatappuloE*, which has 40 *Bissu* members (Suliyati, 2018). Generally speaking, *Bissu's* main roles and obligations in Bugis society In Bugis society, it is the responsibility of a *Bissu* to protect and preserve *Arajang*, a heritage left by earlier kings. *Bissu* was the king's obedient companion during the period of the continuing kingdom. Therefore, it can be concluded that *Bissu* bears whole responsibility for the royal items that the King inherited. The *Arajang* is a representation of strength and is thought to be inhabited by the ghosts of departed ancestors. The upkeep involves cleaning *Arajang* items, and *Bissu* is in charge of this process (Syam, 2020). This makes it extremely evident what a *Bissu's* function is in customary ceremonial rituals. There are parallels between *Bissu* Bugis's role and that of priests in various religions, particularly Hindu priests. The ceremonial methods used by *Bissu*, including the use of water that is referred to as "holy water". In Hinduism, *tīrthā*, or holy water, is a crucial component of the ritual used for purification. Water is a purifying agent, a prosperous element, and a life-flow that one can traverse to achieve self-realization (Untara, October 2021). To carry out daily operations in the kingdom and ceremonial processions, *Bissu* developed an organisational structure. The highest leader in the *Bissu* hierarchy is *Puang Matowa*, who is chosen from *Puang Lolo* and subsequently appointed by the King in a public ceremony. *Puang Matowa* is responsible for preserving and safeguarding the *Arajang* royal legacy. *Puang Lolo* is *Puang Matowa's* representative, chosen by *Puang Matowa* and the people and authorised by the King (Hasriani, September 2018).

***Bissu* Typical *Puang Lolo* Helper**

As the only person who can facilitate communication between humans and gods through customary rituals utilising the language of the gods and heavens (*Basa Torilangi*), *Bissu* plays a unique role in the Bugis cultural structure. As such, *Bissu* also serves as a guardian of traditions. Cite oral history of ancient Bugis literature "*La Galigo*" (Hasriani, September 2018).

Another episode emphasises the unique bond between the god rulers and the *Bissu*. One day, *Topatotoe*, the god that rules over fate, makes the decision to send his son Batara Guru to rule the planet. Batara Guru comes across *Wé Nyilitimo'*, a princess sent from the lower world, while on earth. The two marry and go on to rule the planet together. The god rulers eventually depart for the Upper world, leaving the planet without leaders and law. There is anarchy on earth for seven (some claim seventy-seven) generations, during which "people become like fish eating one another" (*sianré-anrébalé taué*) (Andaya, 2018). Humans, unable to bear these circumstances any longer, pray to the gods to bring back the god rulers so that harmony and peace can once more govern the planet. Eventually, the gods give up and send a second group of god rulers to earth: some come from the lower world (*totompo* = "s/he who ascended") and some from the upper world (*tomanurung* = "s/he who descended"). Usually, they can be seen in an open field standing on a level stone with *Bissu* and other holy items that serve as regalia (Andaya, 2018). The people in the community welcome them and urge that they take charge. They come to an agreement, and these god rulers of the "white blood" start the royal houses

that govern the several countries. The *Bissu* serve as the priestly protectors of both the *Arajang* and these new rulers, while the sacred artefacts become the regalia (*Arajang*). Originating from the world of the gods, the white-blooded rulers, the *Arajang*, and the *Bissu*, all still hold a special sacred place in the human community and an intimate, supporting relationship (Andaya, 2018).

Regarding the artefacts of the kingdom that were cleansed or purified during the *Mattompang Arajang* procession, these include the gold umbrella known as *Teddung Pulaweng*, which symbolises the royal lineage of Bone that dates back to the reign of King XV La Tenri Tatta Arung Palakka (1645-1696). As a symbol of the brotherhood between the two kingdoms, the Pariaman kingdom gave the Bone Kingdom this heirloom, a *karajaan* heirloom, as a token of appreciation. This inheritance was used officially for king appointment and inauguration from the heirloom of the Bone kingdom during the fifteenth century, *Sembangeng Pulaweng*, belonged to King La Tenri Tatta Arung Palakka (Syam, 2020). According to the aforementioned stages of the *Mattompang Arajang* activity, *Bissu's* function is crucial from the *Mallekke Toja* activities to the *Ma'Tinro Arajang* activities. *Bissu*, which is performed by *Bissu*, is one of the sequence of events that is an integral part of the customary procession with *Mattompang Arajang*. The *Bissu* performs *Sere Bissu*, which involves cleaning the *Arajang* and *Pattompang* with a whip. Between awake and unconscious, *Bissu* uses a sharp object to stab himself while the other *Bissu* moves around and does the same till the procession is over (Syam, 2020). It is said that *Bissu* is a demigod with extraordinary abilities. In the custom, which is performed at the *Maggiri*, one is obligated to stab oneself following possession. They make advantage of their connections to the spirit realm. Also regarded as pre-Islamic Bugis religious preachers are the *Bissu*. Only members of the community *bissu* can understand them in their native tongue (Syam, 2020).

Although its existence is very different from that of *Bissu* in the past, it is thought to be a common thread in the continuation of ancient Bugis customs and traditions that persist today. that as part of the *Manggiri* ritual (Hasriani, September 2018). *Bissu* stabs himself with a *badik* to demonstrate his might. The purpose of the rite is to determine whether the great deity or the ancestor's spirit has entered *Bissu* through ceremonial means. The Bugis people think that if *Bissu* is not affected by *badik* punctures, either he or the spirit entering him is *Bissu*, or else the spirit entering it is weak or perhaps none of the ancestor spirits are there to provide blessings on people who make the request (Hasriani, September 2018). When interacting with others, they always keep their distance to preserve their reputation as *Makkaramas* (holy people). Through the recitation of holy mantras, relationships with ancestral spirits that provide strength and immunity, and self-mystification, the *Bissu* create social distance (Hasriani, September 2018).

Following then, this inheritance was used as official gear at the kings' coronation and inauguration. *La Tea Riduni*, also known as *Alameng*, has jewel-encrusted sarong and headwear.

The King The Heir Of This Heirloom

The heirloom is always raised by the king, who is its anchor, but it always appears above the brightly lit tomb. This legacy, which is not to be earthed, is called *La Tea Riduni* in honour of that incident. Following storage and upkeep, this artefact is utilised as official apparatus throughout the kings of Bone's coronation and appointment ritual. *La Salaga* is a spear with gold accents around the spearhead and handle. The spear represents the King of Bone's presence. The reason the spear got its name, *La Salaga*, was that past monarchs would frequently use it in battle, and when they let go of it, it would find its own target. The *Ade'pitu* members' entire uniform consists of seven traditional weapons, or *Alameng Tatarapeng*, a type of *kalewang* that is fitted with a gold-plated sheath (Syam, 2020).

The activities of *Mattompang Arajang* are divided into multiple stages, specifically: water from seven wells in *Malekke, Toja*. The well water is drawn from multiple locations: Bubung ITello (Manurunge Village), Bubung Manurung (Manurunge Village), Bubung Laccokkong (Kelurahan Watampone), Bubung La Garoang (Bukaka Urban Village), Bubung Toro (Toro Village), and Bissu Bubung (Lampoko Village) (Syam, 2020).

As a signal that the customary ceremonial was about to start, the traditional leaders of this procession gave the Regent cup filled with betel leaves. Additionally, accompanied to the *Arajang* location by the *Bissu*. The *Ota* (betel leaf), which is used in this ritual procession, is placed at the door of the room where the *Arajang* is kept. Its purpose is to notify the god, who is considered the previous ancestor, of the impending removal and cleaning of the *Arajang*. *Memang To Rilangi: Bissu's* words, in which he asks for authorization to clean *Arajang*. This procedure is accompanied by a dance performed by *Bissu* called *Sere Alusu*, and it starts with a collection of sounds from the location (Syam, 2020).

Since the *Bissu* were believed to be familiar with and able to relate to the supernatural that accompanied the *Arajang*, it was believed that they were the ones who moved and moved the *Arajang* with the king's agreement. Subsequently, the *Arajang* was entrusted to the customary head and presented to the Regent for removal from its sheath and replacement without the *sarong*. *Heirlooms* are cleansed by *Mattompang Arajang*, and their spiritual value is soothed by *Ma'Tinro Arajang* (Syam, 2020). The traditional leader, or *Ammatoa*, is represented by *Puang Lolo*, the deputy customary chairman, after *Arajang* is removed from its storage area and has been blessed by the ancestors (Syam, 2020). The royal heirloom that needs to be cleaned is paraded to *Pattompang* to be purified, or it is carried there with Balinese *Sumange* and *Sere Bissu*, which are carried out by the *Bissu* by surrounding the *Pattompang* and *Arajang* that were cleaned. Once the *Pattompang* has given the signal, the traditional leader, known as the *Ammatoa*, retrieves the *Arajang* and returns it to its storage location, symbolised by the *Puang Lolo*. The following procession that the *Bissu* engage in is known as *Mappatinro Arajang*, which lulls the spiritual significance of heirlooms. Following this, the *Bissu* repeat the *Mamemmeng* mantras (Syam, 2020).

To put it simply, *Bissu* is the right hand of the monarch, and the Bugis tribe adores and respects him much for his indispensable role in organising all government-related traditional events. This issue is also covered in the *Lagoli*, which declares that *Bissu* cannot be sued for decisions

made by him because the person who brought *Bissu* fame also could see into the past and future of others, a belief that is connected to *Bissu* identity (Putra, 2023). The king would always consult the *Bissu*, even before setting out for the battlefield (Syahrir, 2019). In the old Bugis society, the *Bissu* performed ceremonial duties before Islam arrived in Sulawesi. *Toriolo* expresses its function as a mediator (communicator) between the people and the gods. *Bissu* are essential to every customary ritual in the realm since they serve both the king and the community (Syahrir, 2019).

The Spiritual Role of Bissu

The people in the village regularly beg *Bissu* to make a connection between them and the spirits of the gods or their ancestors so they might fulfil their goals. Because of *Bissu*'s rights, the locals see the surroundings as sacred (*makarama*). To keep the marriage intact, the *Bissu* live alone and limit his social interactions with other people. They just get to be good friends with other *Bissu*. The majority of Bugis residing in rural areas continue to entrust *Bissu* with planning a customary ceremony. In a royal ritual, *Bissu* serves as the engine that propels the ceremonial ceremony along. Even though not all transes are *Bissu*, many people believe that *Bissu* is a transwoman (*Calabai*) (Pratiwi, 2020).

The earliest book, *I La Galigo* describes Bugis culture and includes a history of *Bissu* in pre-Islamic countries. This is where the principles of *Bissu* originate (Syam, 2020). *Lontara* and old Bugis texts can be used to track the history of the Bugis. *Lontara* uses Bugis letters, also known as "*Urupu Sulapa Eppa*," to span a wide range of writing styles. *Lontara I La Galigo* is one of the *Lontara* that provides extensive insight into the customs and culture of the ancient Bugis. *I La Galigo* is regarded as a particularly revered text among the Bugis people. It is supposed to be the longest *Lontara* in the world, surpassing the Mahābhārata and Ramayana texts (Untara, October 2021). It includes several instances of supernatural legends, and even this book is thought to be a spell to cure disease, refuse reinforcements, and salvation occurrences. This document is lengthy because there are many characters, each of whom holds a significant role and is descended from gods in the underworld, known as *Buriq Liu*, and the above world, known as *Boting Langiq*. Additionally, *Lontara* recounts the tale of *Bissu*, the head of the Bugis religious rites (Untara, October 2021).

References to the sacrifice of *Bissu* and other "monstrous" creatures—dwarfs, albinos, and negroids (*oro*), all of whom are descendants of the moon in the first creation—are made throughout *I La Galigo*. The *Bissu* are called to combat each other in a fragment of the *I La Galigo* in order for their spilled blood to free the souls (*bannapati*) from the upper world and allow *Datu Sénngeng* to give birth. When the blood sacrifice is successful, *Sawérigading* and his twin sister *Wé Tenriabeng* are born (Andaya, 2018). Following the birth, the *Bissu* who were offered as sacrifices to lessen *Datu Sénngeng*'s suffering were given back to them. In a later episode, *Sawérigading* calls on the *Bissu* once more to give birth to *Wé Cudai* by shedding their blood. The child is able to gain movement as the *Bissu* gather their musical instruments and dance. After that, she goes through the required initiation and becomes a *Bissu*. The force of music and ritual performance is once more highlighted when *Batara Lettu* and

Datu *Sénneng* command the *Bissu* to dance in front of *Sawérgading* to stop him from marrying his sister (Andaya, 2018).

Several rituals conducted by *Bissu* are portrayed in the *La Galigo* narrative. The marriage and childbirth ceremonies are the ones that are discussed the most in the *La Galigo* book. Given that the "white blood" derived from the *Déwata* is kept clean, preserved, and passed down from generation to generation on earth through marriage and childbearing, this may not be a coincidence. In addition, there is the tale of *I We Cudai*, a *Bissu*, and *We Tenri Dio*, *Sawerigading's* first daughter. *I We Cudai* desired a *Bissu* performance while she was expecting. Furthermore, *Sawerigading* desired for the Creator's child to be a *Bissu* while still in the womb. Because of this, the *Maddewata* rite, which displays *Bissu* oral tradition, evolved into a pre-Islamic culture when it was seen in society (Pratiwi, 2020).

The Bugis people hold that *Bissu* was there at the time of the Bugis tribe's creation. *Bissu's* existence is linked to the myth of *Batara Guru*, who became the progenitor of the Bugis people who went from the "upper world" (*botinglangi*) to the ground, according to the book *I La Galigo*. According to the Bugis people, *Bissu* was there when their tribe was established. According to the book *I La Galigo*, *Bissu's* presence is connected to the myth of *Batara Guru*, the progenitor of the Bugis people, who journeyed from the "upper world" (*botinglangi*) to the "earth or the underworld" (*bori'liung*) to meet his wife *We Nyili Timo*. When *Batara Guru* descended to earth, a *Bissu* by the name of *Lae-lae* went with him. This *Bissu* is used by *Batara Guru* to organise life on earth. With *Bissu's* help, the laws, customs, and social ethics of earth were founded. In addition, language, culture, and traditional arts were created through community (Suliyati, 2018).

This *Bissu* is used by *Batara Guru* to organise life on earth. With *Bissu's* help, the laws, customs, and social ethics of earth were founded. In addition, language, culture, and traditional works are produced through collective activity. In *Attoriolong*, *Bissu* acts as the mediator between the sky and the earth because he is fluent in the *Torilangi Language*, which is the language of the sky that only *Bissu* and the gods can comprehend (Suliyati, 2018). *Bissu* is the advisor of the monarch. They could be regarded as the traditional heads and priests of the pre-Islamic Bugis faith. Performing the royal rites, the bishop chooses the right day to start projects like clearing the land or building houses and shrines (*Arajang's* abode) (Suliyati, 2018). The *Bissu* are revered as *Arajang's* advisors and guardians throughout the realm, especially the Segeri people, who consider *Bissu* to be an expert practitioner of shamanism, sometimes referred to as *sanro* or shaman. Every now and then, the Segeri people reach out to *Bissu* as a teacher and ask for help in luring the gods into medicine. Next, *Bissu* exhorts those who want to practise medicine to worship spirits from both heaven and earth by making gifts (Syahrir, 2019).

Agricultural operations are significant since the Bugis community still depends on agriculture for their subsistence. There is a customary *Mappalili* ceremony, which involves travelling out to the rice fields, for this agricultural operation. One customary ceremony that takes place before to rice planting is the *Mappalili* ceremony. In this customary *Mappalili* ritual,

Bissu plays a very important part. During the seven days and seven nights long *Mappalili* ceremony, *Bissu* leads the recitation of the *Mattesu Arajang* mantra, which is an invocation to the gods asking for their blessing for an abundance of agricultural products (Suliati 2018). During *Mappalili* ceremonies, it is hoped that the planted rice will flourish because it is blessed by the gods until harvest time (Syam, 2020). In addition to being focused on *Arajang's* artefacts, *Bissu's* sciences are also thought to be able to treat a variety of illnesses. A *Bissu* is a leader of rituals and an advisor in many types of ceremonies. For *Bissu*, being able to speak *To-rilangi*, or the language of the sky people, becomes advantageous. In addition to his language abilities, *Bissu* also possesses the capacity to interact with ancestral spirits, which enables him to link the invisible with the material world. He also possesses sacred mantras and unbreakable knowledge that have been passed down through the generations. This made a *Bissu* recognized as a traditional shamanistic healer (Suliati 2018).

Bissu is also trusted by society to prepare the bride and groom in a variety of traditional wedding ceremonies (*Mappanguju* botting). He possesses sacred spells (*Cenning Rara*) that can draw the visitors' attention to the bride, who appears sophisticated (*Malebbi*) (Syam, 2020). Apart from the duties and obligations mentioned before, *Bissu* also needs to implement the qualities that define the *Bissu* in the community. The two character traits are: mastering *Eppa Sulapaq*, or the four corners of life, which are north, east, west, and south and represent land (*tana*), fire (*afi*), wind (*anging*), and water (*uwwai*), as a form of perfection on him; and acting gracefully in their interactions with the general public, which means that the speech with an attitude must be in line (*siteruui kedo-kedo na ampena*). As a representation of the integrity of life, *Bissu* must thus understand the four philosophies of life (Syam, 2020). These four, three are also three parts of the perfection namely the upper world, the middle world, and the underworld. Therefore, the count becomes seven. The number of seven is a form of perfection and integrity of life from *Bissu*. Seven is an odd number as a sign that the perfection of life which they have is in the top position, except God's perfection (Syam, 2020).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Bugis culture, is a rich tapestry woven from ancient beliefs, political structures, and the unique role of the *Bissu*. The *Bissu*, as gender-neutral religious leaders, have been integral to Bugis society, serving as mediators between the divine and human realms, and playing crucial roles in rituals that ensure harmony and prosperity. The Bugis' historical literature, including the epic *I La Galigo*, is a testament to their deep connection to mystical sciences and their complex social and political organization. The political landscape of the Bugis was structured around kingdoms and confederations, with rulers claiming divine descent to legitimize their authority. Genealogy was of utmost importance, as it not only determined one's social standing but also their eligibility for political office. The influence of Hindu and Buddhist ideologies is evident in the Bugis' religious practices and literature, contributing to a diverse and dynamic cultural heritage. Despite the advent of Islam and the passage of time, the

Bugis have preserved their traditions, with the *Bissu* continuing to be a vital link to their ancestral customs and beliefs. The *Bissu* maintain their role in Bugis society by adapting to the influences of Islam and modernity while preserving their traditional functions and significance. Historically, *Bissu* have been integral to Bugis society, serving as mediators between the divine and human realms, and playing crucial roles in rituals that ensure harmony and prosperity. Despite the advent of Islam and the changes brought about by modernization, the *Bissu* continue to uphold their responsibilities as guardians of ancient Buginese cultural values and as facilitators of communication between gods and humans through traditional processions. The *Bissu's* role in protecting and preserving the *Arajang*, the royal heritage, remains a key aspect of their identity. They are responsible for the upkeep and cleansing of these royal items, which are believed to be inhabited by the spirits of departed ancestors. This practice, along with their ability to select auspicious days for important events and their participation in ceremonies such as the *Mattompang Arajang* procession, underscores their enduring relevance in Bugis society. Moreover, the *Bissu's* spiritual role persists as they are regularly called upon to make connections between the people and the spirits of gods or ancestors to help fulfil goals. Their unique position as gender-neutral figures, neither exclusively male nor female, allows them to navigate both gender realms and act as a bridge between humans and the divine. The *Bissu's* political role is also sustained, as they are consulted by the royal family and the community for guidance, assistance, supervision, and teaching. Their knowledge of customs, traditions, and their ability to communicate with the supernatural are highly respected and sought after. In summary, the *Bissu's* role in Bugis society is maintained through their continued involvement in religious ceremonies, their preservation of cultural heritage, and their unique ability to straddle the spiritual and physical worlds, which remains valued and integral to Bugis society despite external influences.

LIMITATION

The study on Bugis culture and the role of the *Bissu* presents several limitations that should be acknowledged: The early history of the Bugis people is characterized by a lack of comprehensive historical records, which makes it challenging to pinpoint their cultural identity and origins accurately. Much of the information relies on diverse oral traditions, which can vary significantly and may not provide a complete picture of historical events.

The majority of Bugis and Makassar historiography concentrates on the ruling elite, often neglecting the perspectives and experiences of common people. This focus may lead to a skewed understanding of Bugis society, as the narratives primarily reflect the interests and viewpoints of the aristocracy. The interpretation of Bugis literature and cultural practices can vary among scholars, leading to differing conclusions about their significance and meaning. This variability may affect the consistency and reliability of the findings presented in the study. The ongoing influences of Islam and modernity on Bugis culture may complicate the understanding of traditional practices and beliefs. As the *Bissu* and other cultural elements evolve, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between historical practices and contemporary adaptations. The study may not encompass all aspects of Bugis culture, particularly those that are less documented or understood. Certain rituals, beliefs, or literary

works may be overlooked, leading to an incomplete representation of the Bugis cultural heritage. These limitations highlight the need for further research and a more comprehensive approach to understanding the complexities of Bugis culture and the role of the *Bissu* within it.

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