RESEARCH ARTICLE

Between the Past and the Possible: Bugis Identity in Motion

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how the Bugis emerged as a distinct ethnic group by examining the historical, cultural, and social processes that shaped their collective identities. It further investigates the defining features of Bugis' identity and how ethnic boundaries are constructed, maintained, and negotiated over time. The research were conducted in Bugis diaspora areas in Pagatan, South Kalimantan and Jakarta, as well as in several Bugis regions in South Sulawesi—namely Barru, Pangkep, and Bulukumba Regencies—between April and September 2021. This study demonstrates that Bugis's development as an ethnic group was exclusively connected to the Cina Kingdom in Sulawesi. The expansion of this local kingdom contributed to the formation and shaping of the Bugis identity in the ancient period. However, Bugis identity developed and transformed over time; from the tradition of *La Galigo* it became a Muslim society. In addition, migration and commercial culture helped construct their identity. Re-examining ethnic identity from a long-term historical perspective is important in order to move beyond cultural essentialism, which tends to ignore the shifts and changes as a result from cross-cultural encounters. Ethnic boundaries are not immutable, but are contextually deployed and relationally defined.

Keywords: *Bugis; ethnic group; fluid identity; Indonesia*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is widely recognized as a nation-state with a vast diversity of ethnic groups adding up to hundreds or even thousands. During the census held in 2010 by the Statistic Official Bureau (BPS), which is based on respondents' self-identification method, 1,331 ethnic and sub-ethnic groupings in Indonesia were identified; consisting of around 41% identified as Javanese and 15% as Sundanese, both of which are predominantly located in the island of Java. These two groups accounted for over 50% of Indonesia's total population. The other known large ethnic groups, such as Malay, Madura, Batak, Minangkabau, Bugis, Betawi, and Banten, only contributed 2 to 3% of the total Indonesian population. The other groups has an even smaller number.

While the precise number of each ethnic group has been well documented today, this was not the case in the past. Under the 'Old Order' (1950 – 1965)" and 'New Order' (1966 – 1998) government, there was no census that included questions about ethnic affiliation. Under the

Sukarno and Suharto regimes, inquiring someone's ethnicity was considered a threat to national unity (Tirtosudarmo, 2007). This was also seen as obstruction to national development (Pitoyo and Triwahyudi, 2017).

This political approach has been taken to deter the rise of aspirations of regional identity in national and political scenes. The main objective of these regimes was to strengthen national identity in the midst of thousands of local identities. During these periods, ethnic identity was aesthetically showcased, but politically suppressed. However, following Suharto's fall in 1998 and the advent of the "Reformation Era," the 2000 census began recording the ethnic affiliations of Indonesia's population. This change signified the state's acknowledgment of its local identities. Under a new democratic regime, the state has allowed primordial identity, such as ethnicity, to play a role in various public and political scenes.

Despite the large number of ethnic groups in Indonesia, research on the subject, notably concerning its genesis and the history of its emergence, remains rare. Most explanations about the origin of a certain group were accounted to oral tradition. It is legitimate to consider oral tradition as a source of explanation of history (Vansina, 1985). Thus, oral traditions are crucial to understanding the collective consciousness of an ethnic group. However, ethnic identity is also generated by the political dynamics and socio-economic structure of society (Brown, D. 2005) In order to have a solid comprehension, an extensive approach and sources are needed, such as putting into consideration a broader social and historical aspect. The hypothesis concerning the emergence and dynamics of Batak groups in Sumatra is a good example of a scientific work regarding the formation of an ethnic group (Perret, 2007). Perret's work offers an alternative interpretation of the history of Northeast Sumatra. Batak, as an ethnic identity, emerged only in the early 20th century. Initially, the local population was distinguished by topographical identities, namely, coastal and inland inhabitants. However, with the arrival of colonial powers accompanied by a massive wave of migration from diverse origins, a transformation occurred leading to social and economic disparities. The coastal population became more prosperous than the inland communities. Gradually, the Batak identity claim for the inland population began to take shape, and when papers or books regarding this subject were available, it was mostly constructed regardless of the relevant theories and perspectives in the domain of social science (Lan, 2006). According to Lan, in discussions about ethnicity about ethnicity, it becomes evident that the concept is always closely tied to the notion of an "ethnic group," as developed in classical anthropology. An ethnic group was traditionally defined by its boundaries, which tend to be viewed as "natural" and "fixed." However, this perspective might have been relevant only in the past, when ethnic groups in the Indonesian archipelago lived in isolation, separated by geography and topography, with limited interaction between them.

METHOD

To contribute to a deeper understanding of ethnic identity in Indonesia, this paper focuses on the Bugis, one of the country's major ethnic groups, predominantly residing in South Sulawesi with a population of approximately 3.5 million (about 3% of Indonesia's total population). While previous scholarship has examined Bugis from various disciplinary perspectives, this paper approaches Bugis identity through a long-term historical lens in an effort to reinterpret and reexamine existing

understandings. This approach is important to uncover the dynamics of how identity is formed, negotiated, and transformed over time as a response to shifting sociocultural conditions.

To collect data, I conducted observations and interviews in Pagatan, South Kalimantan and Jakarta, where there are significant Bugis diaspora communities. I also interviewed young people and community leaders in several areas considered as ancestral regions of the Bugis, namely the Barru, Pangkep, and Bulukumba regencies. Additionally, I used data from censuses, including Dutch colonial statistics from the years 1689, 1739, and 1930, as well as Indonesian government censuses from 2000 and 2010. In these first two censuses, questions regarding the population's ethnicity and regional languages were included, whereas in the subsequent census, such questions were omitted. A literature review of several relevant studies and research findings was also conducted. The collected data were then analyzed using an interpretative method and presented descriptively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Genesis of Ethnicity

The term "ethnic" originates from the ancient Greek word "ethnos," which is commonly understood as "people," "nation," or occasionally partially related to "tribe." It appears to have described a variety of circumstances in which a group of humans lives and behaves together (Østergard, 1992a). Within the field of anthropology, particularly in traditional interpretation, an "ethnic group" is essentially seen as a continuation of a clan. Although they may be distantly related, members of the ethnic group are thought to share common ancestry and culture (Jenkins, 2008). According to an essentialist or primordialist viewpoint (see McKay, 1982), an "ethnic group" is formed by cultural commonalities among its members, regardless of the nature of the family relationship. Before referring to a group of people that lived in isolation and had a distinct culture as an "ethnic group," American anthropologists dubbed them "tribes" or "tribal societies." What does the term "tribe" imply? Tribal society appears to have been viewed by anthropologists or ethnographers who came to the village for extended fieldwork as a primitive or non-civilized social organization with distinct and bounded entities and an apparent ethnic boundary that was fixed and permanent. For a few decades, the dominant structuralist perspective in anthropology assumed that culture is a closed system.

Research on local people conducted mostly in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when colonialism was still prevalent, sustained this essentialist perspective. The colonial civilization had to make a distinction between "I" and "You," or civilized and non-civilized social formations. Using this division, colonial authorities were able to maintain control over and elevate the colonized society. Thus, it is evident that colonial authorities have contributed to the formation of ethnic identity. For instance, there is little question whether strong new forces associated with colonial control in Africa greatly influenced how modern ethnicity manifested itself throughout the continent. While it is undeniably not a historical vacuum, the external actor contributes in part to the foundation of ethnicity (Atkinson, 1999).

The perspective of social anthropology has served to refine the traditional anthropological concept of the genesis of a "culture group." Jenkins maintained that the idea of shared ancestry is more likely to be an effect than a cause of collective political activity, with Weber (1978) having a

major influence. Therefore, people have a common sense of belonging not because of similarities in their origins, but rather because of the outcomes of their collective action, which serve to advance a common goal. In other words, the genesis of ethnic formation is socially manufactured based on shared interests rather than being inherited from the same lineage. However, any shared cultural characteristic, such as language, customs, or kinship, can serve as the ideal foundation for the development of an ethnic group.

According to this theory of social construction, the existence of a different cultural group helps to define "groupness." Perret's research on the rise of the Batak ethnic group in Sumatra revealed a strong correlation with the Malay population living along the shore. There was not a single local source from the 19th century that mentioned the term "Batak." The Batak people of today are embodied in the settlement surrounding Lake Toba; they are frequently referred to as the "savage community" or "consumer of pork." Furthermore, the Muslim-Malay effect on the people converted into Christianity in the hinterland was hindered by the establishment of the "Batak" as an ethnic group associated with colonial interests (Perret, 2007).

Group Ethnic Boundary

It is difficult to provide a stronger case for the essentialist or primordialist perspective which originated in classical anthropology, and regards that ethnicity is a permanent trait. The way society evolves is one of its causes. Changes within a society begin with transformations at the individual level, as individuals collectively shape the community. An individual's habits are complex and not predetermined. Intense interactions with others can lead to shifts in awareness, habits, wealth, well-being, and access to power and knowledge. This phenomenon becomes increasingly evident in the era of technology, where cross-cultural communication facilitates changes in all aspects of an individual's life, from the most visible (e.g., their manner of dressing) to the most profound, such as their way of thinking.

Fredrik Barth in his influential 1969 work *"Ethnic Groups and Boundaries,"* challenged the essentialist or primordialist theories of ethnicity that were dominant at the time. Ethnicity is not considered as inherited and unchanging, rooted in a shared origin or ancestry. He introduced constructivist and interactional approaches to ethnicity. On one hand, he saw that the presence of cultural commonalities produced ethnicity. Sharing a shared culture is considered paramount. A person's and local group's designation as belonging to an ethnic group must be based on their display of certain cultural characteristics. Disparities among groups lead to variations in trait inventories. However, he did not dispute the dynamic character of openness to change.

The concept of "shared culture" refers to interpersonal interactions that facilitate the creation and dissemination of cultural elements. Cultural and ethnic borders are not established in a descriptive manner prior to engagement; rather, they are dynamically established through encounters with other people. However, because the modifications made possible by the phyletic line were always persistent, Barth did not fall into a pattern of less change. This phrase was derived from the biological idea of evolution. According to Barth, the ethnic barrier organizes behavior and social relations in a way that canalizes social activity, and is often rather complicated. To identify someone as a fellow ethnic group member involves sharing assessment and judgment standards. Social interaction between individuals from various cultural backgrounds is necessary

to maintain ethnic boundaries; ethnic groupings only appear as meaningful entities when they indicate notable behavioral differences.

According to Barth, ethnic identity is a dynamic process through which individuals create and comprehend ethnicity from a psychological perspective. However, according to the psychological research, ethnic identity—which is described as flexible and linked to the socio-historical context—doesn't take away from "a stable core" or a feeling of kinship with the most important component of the self (Phinney, 2005). Barth discussed the boundaries of ethnicity, which, according to him, are not derived through explanation but are produced and reproduced through social interaction. The ontological status of a 'collectivity' in postmodern thought rejects the notion of a core, subscribing to the idea of "no core." However, Barth acknowledged the existence of a 'core', although it is not rigid or fixed. Instead, collectivity–referred to as ethnicity– emerges from the presence of shared basic cultural values.

The core, referred to as the *phyletic line*, although inspired by biology, is not a biological or a genetic lineage. It is social and cultural, relating to cultural transmission and the reproduction of social boundaries, which are maintained through cultural systems, such as language, marriage systems, and customs.

How the Bugis emerges: an extension of the hypothesis

What is argued here does not originate from new data but from an attempt to provide a reinterpretation of previous research findings and published data. Despite many work dedicated to the Bugis, no reliable source has clearly revealed when and under what sociocultural context Bugis was formed as an ethnic group. One hypothesis and others sometimes seem contradictory. However, many scholars accepted that Bugis' story is strictly related to *La Galigo*, an epic cycle that provides a legendary description. The manuscript is considered the most remarkable work in the literature, with approximately 6.000 pages of folio, longer than the epic of *Mahabharata* written in Sanskrit (Koolhof, 2017).

One of Bugis scholars, Zainal Abidin (1983) linked the emergence of the name Bugis with one of the characters in the epic, called La Sattumpugi. Taking the basis of an explanation from the chronicles of the Wajo kingdom *(lontaraq sukku'na Wajo)*, who found a story about the establishment of this kingdom, he considered this story to be the principal cause of the Bugis formation. The chronicle mentions that the "Cina Kingdom" was founded by a sailor from Luwu under the leader by the name of La Sattumpugi, followed by his people called *Ugi to Cina*. It seems that from the final syllable of the name of this character / Sat-tum-**pugi**/, the name Bugis progressively appeared. Most of Bugis people nowadays refer to themselves as "Ugi" or "To Ugi" which can be translated as "orang Bugis" (Bugis people). It is plausible to suggest that the final '-s' simply indicates a plural (Jones, 2016). Another scholar on Bugis, Mattulada, proposed another hypothesis. The topography of South Sulawesi consists of lowlands and highlands. Thus, people living in the lowland areas are oftenly called "*tu pabbiring,*" "*tu passisir,*" "*tu lau,*" while communities residing in the mountains or highlands are referred to as "*to ale, tu raya*" or "*tu riaja.*" He claimed that the Torajanese referred to the inhabitants of the lowland plains around Bone Bay's shore, which stretches from the northern to the southern portion of the South Sulawesi peninsula, as "sea people who catch fish." This might be the cause of the names Luwuq and Ugiq (Bugis) given to the residents of this region (Mattulada, 1982).

From these two scholars of Bugis, Mattulada, and Zainal Abidin, we propose two hypotheses. Abidin claimed that La Satumpugi's name was the source of the term "Bugis" or "Ugi.". In his opinion, it is the people from Luwuq who have migrated to Wajo that was considered as the origin of the Bugis while for Mattulada, "Bugis" was a name given by others (Torajanese) living in the upland plains in reference to their characteristic feature. These propositions imply that identity is relational. External parties also shape a group's identity through naming. This view is relevant to naming theory. Learning from the naming system to a child involves the surroundings that bestow a name. The father and mother serve most frequently as name givers, while other societies give naming rights to grandparents, aunts, or uncles. The external actor holds naming rights (Alford 1988). Furthermore, the name given by others is internalized by the group from which the identity is established. Although the two hypotheses look different, they fundamentally share a similar perspective on Luwuq as the origin of the Bugis. However, the lack of convincing historical and archaeological sources regarding the formation of the Bugis ethnic group necessitates further investigation, as was done by Caldwell and Wellen (2017). I argue that the scarcity of colonial historical sources detailing the genesis of the Bugis ethnicity, along with archaeological data that do not directly relate to a specific ethnic group, necessitates a comprehensive reinterpretation of existing sources.

Historical records indicate that the Bugis, as an ethnic group, had not yet developed until the fifteenth century. Alternatively, although the Bugis have existed, their identity has not yet been solidified. Using the Nāgarakertāgama as an example, a document originating from the Majapahit dynasty in the 14th century, no single word or information about Bugis has been revealed. This source, when describing something that occurred in Sulawesi, used the names of toponyms such as Silaja (Selayar) and Bontain (Bantaeng). From this fact, we gather that prior to 16th century, the name "Bugis" as an ethnic group is not yet existed or is not well established. While no information about Bugis was found in the preceding period, it was in the 16th century that this word (Bugis) appeared.

According to Godinho de Eredia, colonial documents from the 16th century indicate that in 1545, Father Viegaz departed Malacca and traveled to Suppa and Machoquique (Bacukiki) at the behest of the monarchs of Bougis and Macaçar. His objective was to baptize the nobility of Suppa and Siang (Eredia, 1930). Christian Pelras claimed that this document is the first document in which the word "Bugis" appears to have been used (Pelras, 1977).

Based on archaeological evidence, it can be inferred that people who have inhabited the region of Sulawesi, home to the Bugis, are people whose civilization has formed through the influence of several ethnic groups and cultures. The initial Austronesian colonization in the Indonesian Archipelago began around 3,600 BP, as indicated by dating at the Minanga Sipakko site in West Sulawesi (Noerwidi, 2012). Sulawesi is considered the earliest colony of Austronesian-speaking peoples, with subsequent settlements gradually appearing later—westward toward Sumatra and Java, southward to the Lesser Sunda Islands, and eastward to the Moluccas and the Pacific. These findings position Sulawesi as a key location in the prehistoric dispersal of Austronesian-speaking peoples

In addition, a novel discovery made possible by current archaeological data has fundamentally changed our understanding of Sulawesi's prehistoric past (Carlhoff et al., 2021). The findings of a 7,200-year-old female hunter-gatherer's skeleton is linked to the "Toalean" people and

shares physical and genetic similarities with Denisovan, Papuan, and native Australians. This demonstrates the complexity and discontinuity of the Sulawesi population (Carlhoff et al., 2021).

In a certain prehistoric period, Sulawesi Island seemed to have been inhabited not only by a single genetic group, indigenous Australians, but also by Denisovans. Moreover, these genetics have rarely been found, and they may even disappear. It is now that the Austronesian people who constituted the indigenous people of the island, a fact that shows a kind of discontinuity or replacement of the population. However, this discovery does not provide information on the formation of ethnicity in Sulawesi.

Caldwell and Wellen (2017) presented an additional theory on the genesis of Bugis that Luwuq is not the birthplace of Bugis civilization, as they confronted us with Bugis genealogy and physical geography. They suggested that the Cina kingdom described in the La Galigo cycle could have been the ancestor of succeeding Bugis kingdoms like Wajoq, Bone, and Soppeng. All of these kingdoms central regions are found on the edges of what is thought to have been the Cina kingdom. Cina and Luwuq might be seen as complementary parts of the same political complex, at least until the mid 15th century (Caldwell and Wellen, 2017). This perspective is largely consistent with La Galigo's writings. This can be found, for instance, in the episode of *Ritumpanna Wélenrénngé* (RW) (Enre, 1999), where several stanzas refer Cina as Tanaugî (Land of the Bugis people), the place where the palace of the author Wé Cudaiq was located. Sawerigading, who was from Luwuq, had a palace in Wareq.

> ....
> *Somperenggé ri Tanaugî (*Voyage to the Bugis Land)
> *Naé rékkua wakkâé mua* (If only by boat)
> *Teppajaji o ssompeq ri Cina* (Prevents you from sailing to Cina)
> (RW, p. 370)
> ....
> ....
> *Malatta élô iseqdéwi* (Desiring a princess)
> *Mattanangaé ronnang ri Cina, ri Tanaugî* (Who holds power in Cina, on the land of Bugis)
> *(*RW, p. 504*).*
> ....

Based on this, I argue that the origins of the Bugis people are strictly related to the Kingdom of Cina instead of Luwuq, even though these two kingdoms had close relationships in the past. The hypothesis that Cina, not Luwuq, is the origin of the Bugis gained traction in the modern era, when people from Luwuq rejected being equated with the Bugis people. They prefer to be categorized as *Wija to Luwuq* (descendants of Luwuq). This is because they speak a local language that is different from the Bugis vernacular language; Luwunese insists on the differentiation of identity. This identity revival is partly related to the political dimension. During the *reformasi* and autonomy era, the Luwunese struggled to separate from the province of South Sulawesi, where the Bugis live. They urge the central government to legitimate their territory as a new province under the name of Province of Luwu Raya.

Returning to the question about the emergence of the Bugis identity as an ethnic group, it

has probably emerged during the development of the Cina kingdom as precursors to the emergence of the Bugis kingdoms in the following periods. As per Macknight's statement, "small leads to large, simple to complex thus the world progress," the group's growth is influenced by power and political relations (Macknight, 1993). People in Sulawesi live in scattered communities within villages (kampung), usually on the coast or rivers. These communities were made up of platform houses or houses on stilts along the waterfront until the local kingdom was established in the 13th century (Mattulada, 1982).

Considering this scenario, it appears that internalizing ethnic identity is difficult. In ceremonial and popular belief, the establishment of the kingdom as a source of power and authority with state regalia undoubtedly has some significance. The diverse tiny communities' sense of belonging has been strengthened by the spread of territory, together with the introduction of myths and a way of life. This type of process gives rise to larger organizations.

Defining the Bugis identity

As mentioned above, the myth of the origin of Bugis is strictly related to La Galigo's epic story. The ancient Bugis acknowledge the figures of the chronicles as charismatic historical figure. Two important figures are Sawerigading and La Galigo, the ancient Bugis see them as a kind of prophet and messiah in monotheist religion. Transmitted by oral tradition, this epic is preserved throughout the manuscript when the system of writing has been introduced. For the most ancient Bugis, the setting of the epic is believed to have taken place at the beginning of universe creation. In contrast, scholars explain that chronicles began to take shape around the middle of the 14th century (Pelras, 1996). Rituals and ancient Bugis traditions were anchored in the myth of origin. However, the arrival and influence of Islam since the 17th century have largely transformed this community. The ancient rituals progressively disappeared. However, some traditional communities in South Sulawesi, such as *To Lotang* and *Kajang,* still maintain some rituals with simplified forms. Therefore, it is certain that despite the forgetting of this chronicle among the Bugis, La Galigo still represents the Bugis identity. Scholars from around the world interested in learning are always related to Bugis and La Galigo. Unfortunately, the La Galigo is no longer accessible to the modern Bugis people, except for a very few elderly individuals who possess the skill. As the ancient identity of Bugis declined, many Bugis people, both those living in their native region of South Sulawesi and those who have migrated, no longer recognize the *La Galigo* epic, and as a result, it is no longer a part of their identity, another identity has produced in the course of time.

Islam has certainly become a major aspect in Bugis identity. According to the BPS census, almost 100% of the Bugis formally embrace Islam, except for *To Lotang*, who was classified as Hindu during the New Order era, and some Bugis Soppeng who were Christianized during the colonial period (Ito, 2022). Mosque can be found easily in the place where most Bugis reside, from where the call to prayer echoes back and forth at least five times in 24 hours. Islamic holidays are celebrated joyfully by the Bugis. The influence of Sufism teaching can still be traced among the Bugis, which sometimes blend with esoteric beliefs from the past still being widely believed and practiced.

However, the development of modern Islamic schools has become "a competitor" to traditional Islamic schools (*pesantren)*. Religious teachers who graduated from Middle Eastern countries or a higher educational institution affiliated with Middle East University has brought

about some changes related to religious practices. For example, the tradition of reading *Barzanji*, which is associated with traditional Islamic groups, has been slowly abandoned. In addition, some ancient Bugis traditions that are still tolerated within the framework of traditional Islamic views are often opposed by those of modern Islamic teaching. Some consider it a practice that is not based on the teachings of the Prophet's Sunnah, whereas others opt for simpler practices. Regardless, Islam is a significant part of identity for the Bugis, as it is for many other ethnic groups in Indonesia, as various Islamic practices exist among the Bugis.

Another identity attached to the Bugis is their status as a migratory or diasporic community. The culture of migration is one of the characteristics of the Bugis, largely perceived by other communities. Many different sociocultural and historical contexts have motivated the Bugis to leave their territory of origin in southern Sulawesi. One of the primary causes of Bugis' migration to other regions of the Malay world was the Dutch conquest of the Gowa kingdom in the late 17th century. The direct control of colonial power over their territory accentuates the argument of intolerable conditions in Sulawesi, which made it imperative for a new home to be found somewhere away from their territory of origin. During the Dutch annexation, the economic life of the Bugis, notably Bugis of Wajo were irrevocably disturbed. The political monopoly and commercial restrictions imposed by colonial power on the trade of Makassar have caused a wave of Bugis migrants to move out from Sulawesi (Bastin, 1964). On the one hand, for the Bugis traders, finding the new territory to live is a way to circumvent the Dutch monopoly; on the other hand, the number of Bugis migrants headed by their nobles left their original territory to be involved in many conflicts, either assisting the local rulers to defend their powers or to retain their throne.

The history of five nobles brother from Sulawesi that succeeded in establishing their power in the Malay world and Sumatra served as an important pull factor for later Bugis migration. According to Andaya, the migration of Bugis in Malay World proved extraordinarily successful (Andaya, 1995). Furthermore, the quest for a better life or seeking fortune (*massape dale)* was another reason for the Bugis to leave their village. The success of being a rich man allows them to have a better social class in their villages. In the past, it was strictly prohibited for non-noble men to marry noble women. However, by the dint of success in a new land, an ordinary man could marry a noble woman through a cultural mechanism called "buy blood" (*mellidara)*. This motivation encouraged Bugis to move out of South Sulawesi. In addition, "*siri*" a socio-cultural value of Bugis had contributed as well to the migration. Someone who was considered to have committed a violation of custom *(pangadereng)* must permanently leave his village and would be considered dead by his family. Nevertheless, quantitatively speaking, the history of bloody conflicts in South Sulawesi constitutes an important factor in Bugis mobility. The annexation of Makassar by the Dutch in the 17th century, the conflict between the Bone kingdom and Wajo during the 17th and 18th centuries, and the annexation of Bone by the Dutch in the beginning of the 20th century triggered waves of migration. Similarly, the rebellion of Kahar Muzakkar's troops over the central government in the middle of 20th century prompted the deployment of the national army to besiege many villages in South Sulawesi. Consequently, the disturbance of socio-and economic life during this period further accelerated out-migration from the region.

The Bugis as a trader is also a strong image attached to the community. It seems that the capacity for commercial activities developed during the colonial period. Their territory, situated on the route of international trade, between Maluku as the Spice Island, Batavia, and Melaka as

a city harbor where traders from many places came to do an economic transaction contributed to their commercial culture. Particularly after the conquest of Melaka by the Portuguese in 1511, Makassar, which emerged as a new trading entrepot in the east, shaped their skill of trade. They actively engage in commercial transactions with traders coming to this port. Bugis traders buy spices directly in Maluku to sell them cheaper than others. For a long time, their migration and commercial culture have pushed the Bugis to move out of their origin to settle in many other areas as traders. Nowadays, it is found that Bugis traders prefer to live as traders in newly developed areas. In the contemporary context, the eastern part of Indonesia, such as Papua, is preferable as the urban zone. The middle city seems more interesting to them. Rarely, Bugis are traders in urban areas such as Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya in Indonesia. Hence, in many commercial centers in Jakarta, Minangkabau traders are much more visible along with the Indo-Chinese (Wahyuddin, 2019).

Another noteworthy aspect of Bugis identity concerns their vernacular language. Wherever the Bugis live, preservation of their language seems to be a distinctive feature. However, it is not to say that Bugis use their vernacular language in daily conversation. According to the census of the use of local language among the Bugis diasporas in several regions in Indonesia decreased with variation (Census 2010, table 30,3 ; 30,6 ; 30,9).

In rural areas, the number of Bugis communicating in their vernacular language is higher than in urban areas. For example, in the rural zone of Jambi, 77% still use the ~~local~~ Bugis language in their daily interactions, while in the urban zone, only 39% do so. In metropolitan cities such as Jakarta and Bandung, only 3–4% of Bugis speak the Bugis language. During field research in Jakarta and Kalimantan, it was found that the Bugis communicated with others in the host dialect, Betawi, in Jakarta, and Banjar in South Kalimantan. However, this does not signify that the Bugis have lost their sense of belonging and ethnic identity. On the contrary, the language is still well preserved and functions as a means in guarding ethnic identity. Thus, despite minimal usage of the Bugis vernacular language in daily interaction with families, when a newcomer from Sulawesi - or a Bugis living in other places - comes to their place, they feel comfortable initiating conversation in the Bugis language. The Bugis language serves as a language of persuasion for the Bugis diaspora (Hamonic, 1988).

Bugis' material culture also represents its identity. The Bugis traditional house, which represents their ancient cosmological view, can be easily found in the Bugis rural area. The Bugis traditional costumes, such as *songkoq to bone and baju bodo,* become a distinctive feature, notably when the Bugis diaspora lives in a multicultural society. Similarly, the badik, in its various forms, often serves as a marker of Bugis identity. When non Bugis visits the Bugis family, or during the wedding celebration, the Bugis women will serve their traditional cake *barongko* which represent their culinary identity.

Defining the Bugis in the census : a fluid identity

As previously mentioned, ethnic identity is shaped and reshaped in part by external groups. Through the census, one may discover how the colonial administration categorized individuals based on their ethnicity, which revealed how the government not only understood the society but also used this categorization to rule and manage it. We attempt to learn about this topic by using data from the colonial census of the Bugis diaspora who resided in Batavia (Jakarta), as well as

the Indonesian government censuses of 2000 and 2010, where we can find questions related to ethnicity and regional (local) languages.

Since the very beginning of their presence in power in Java, notably in the city port of Batavia, the Dutch have tried to administer and control the city's population. On the one hand, the population of the city lived separately following their cultural or ethnic differences, and on the other hand, to control them easily, the government launched the census in 1689, in which cultural characteristics were one of the main categories. For this reason, the government enumerated the population by asking about their ethnic affiliations. Using this method, the number of the Bugis was identified.

However, the Makassar tribe was also included in the first colonial census of Batavia, in which they were classified ~~them~~ as Bugis. Both ethnic groups originated from the same region, Sulawesi. It is highly possible that the government did not make any effort to distinguish the two ethnic groups or lacked sociopolitical justification for doing so. The Butoneses, Makassarese, and other eastern archipelago populations were recognized as Bugis in the colonial enumeration of 1739. Therefore, even though the Buginese, Makassarese, and Mandarese were classed differently in their own country, colonial authorities and other groups recognized them as Bugis in the newly acquired territory (Andaya, 1995).

The first official census, in which every group was counted, was conducted in 1756. Other ethnic groups were categorized differently from the Bugis. The exclusion of the Wajo tribe makes the colonial government's method of counting the Buginese population in Batavia unclear from a modern standpoint. Most of us are aware that the Wajo people of Sulawesi are, in fact, Bugis. Up to the 1930 census, this type of categorization was in place.

After independence, for a long period, none of the censuses were held by the Indonesian government, in which the ethnicity of the population was asked. Since 2000, the Indonesian government has published, for the first time, a census with an ethnic category affiliation that re-appeared in the 2010 census. However, in the last publication census in 2020, it disappeared.

In the two census publications, in 2000 and 2010, other than Bugis living in Sulawesi, the government recorded a new category of Bugis. Due to migration, since the beginning of the 20th century, a high number of Bugis had moved to several different islands, one of the main destinations of their migration is Kalimantan (Borneo). In the southern Kalimantan, namely in Pagatan where the Bugis mostly live, the government ~~has~~ identified them differently from the Bugis living in Sulawesi or in another place by categorizing them uniquely as "Bugis Pagatan." referring to the way ~~of~~ the governments, either by the colonial government or the Indonesian government, classified the population, ~~and~~ we see that Bugis as an ethnic identity is never fixed. This is a fluid identity. Stemming from this view, it is argued that efforts to mythologize in an essentialist view of Bugis' identity are rather problematic. The external party contributed to the formation of the group's identity. Even though the dynamics within the group in the course of history have established a strong identity for the Bugis, as discussed in the preceding section.

Bugis as a multiple identity

There is a nuance when the conversation on Bugis identity in daily life is shifted. When the setting shifts, a person seen as a Bugis may portray their identity in a new way. such as shown on both the Bugis living in Sulawesi and the Bugis diaspora. In addition, Although South Sulawesi is

home to four major ethnic groups—the Bugis, Makassares, Torajanese, and Mandarese— which are distinguished from one another by their vernacular language, many areas exhibit sub-ethnic life that reveals a blend typical of the dominant ethnic group. For instance, when a certain group resides alongside the Buginese and Torajanese in the northern region of the Kabupaten Enrekang district. Both ethnic groups left a considerable legacy of influence in this territory, especially for the residents of the Duri sub-district. Their vernacular language bears similarities to Torajanese or Buginese in terms of vocabulary. This group feels more Buginese than Torajanese despite the apparent theological explanation for this since the majority of Torajanese people were Christians. The Duri people went so far as to refer to themselves as Bugis people once they moved.

Similar occurrences can be found in another intersection when two major ethnic groups influence local people. In Maros and Pangkep, two districts in the north of Makassar, the people generally speak either Makassar or Bugis language and identify themselves as Bugis-Makassar people. In the case where they visit the place of "pure Makassar," they also call themselves Makkasarese. On the contrary, when they visit a family in the "pure Bugis" territory, they directly shift their self-identification. In the district of Bulukumba, situated in the northwest of the capital, people are influenced by both cultures. They also have a fluid ethnic self-identification that depends on their whereabout.

Additionally, according to Pelras (1977), Bugis residing in Malaysia who speak Malay as their first language often identify as such in front of "pure Malay people" while identifying as Bugis when interacting with other ethnic groups, such as the Tamil. Kotarumalos (2019) claimed that the communal memory of the five Bugis brothers' migration, which helped to distinguish between Bugis and Malays identities, helped the Bugis Diaspora in rural Johor retaining their sense of identity. In contrast, they favored using the term "Malays" when referring to non-Muslims, such as Tamil or Chinese. Similarly, the Bugis diaspora living in a multicultural society in Pagatan, South Kalimantan, construct a ritual called *mappanre tasi* (litt: feeding the sea) as a distinctive marker of their identity. This shows that collective identity is produced and reproduced to distinguish them from other communities.

Self-identification in relation to ethnic affiliation is contextual. The identification of ethnic groupings entails relational dimension, involving at least two collective parties. Identity involves both one's self-identification and that of others. Therefore, it is not unilateral. People's perceptions of their identities may vary depending on the context of their interaction. In certain cases, people alter their self-identification when they experience a sense of marginalization, or when they seek to distinguish themselves.

CONCLUSION

This article offers a nuanced scholarly contribution by critically reinterpreting Bugis' identity through the lens of social construction and historical fluidity, challenging long-standing views that treat ethnicity as a fixed and timeless cultural essence. Instead of viewing Bugis' identity as something inherited or static, the article presents it as a historically contingent, context-sensitive, and continuously negotiated phenomenon—one that evolves in response to shifting political, social, and cultural landscapes.

At a broader level, this study contributes to contemporary debates on ethnicity and

postcolonial subjectivity by illustrating the malleability of ethnic boundaries and strategic deployment of identity in diverse spatial and historical contexts. Drawing from theories by Barth, Jenkins, and Weber, the analysis affirms that ethnic identity is never fixed but always contextually mobilized—be it in response to state politics, migration, religion, or cultural memory. In doing so, it brings Southeast Asian ethnographic data into a productive dialogue with global theoretical discourses on fluid identity and social constructionism.

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