

# The Walasuji Tradition: Forgotten Meanings And Values

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## Abstract

The Walasuji tradition is one of the cultural activities of the Bugis Makassar community, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. It can be found at wedding celebrations as a large gate made of bamboo called "Baruga" Walasuji. However, it is hard to find Baruga Walasuji at youth's wedding nowadays. Whereas the tradition has unique meaning and values which are good to preserve. This study employed a data validation triangulation method involving interviews, literature review, and observations. Subsequently, the analysis was carried out using a qualitative approach known as the "Three Layers of Culture" method. The results of the study show how meaning and values of the tradition are transferred to each behaviors of the tradition and how intervention factors affect them. The research shows some behaviors which are not relevant anymore in modern context. Therefore, knowledge about the condition of values and meanings in the Walasuji tradition today can be important information to consider when deciding whether to preserve or innovate so that the tradition survives.

**Keywords:** Bugis Makassar, Culture, Indonesia, Values, Walasuji, Tradition

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## Introduction

Tradition is a series of practices, beliefs, and values passed down within a group or society, often involving rituals, ceremonies, and social activities regularly carried out by previous generations and inherited to future generations for the purpose of preserving identity (Pabbajah, et al. 2021; Ciptandi, 2020). Tradition can also be understood as past customs that preserved to the present day (Nugraha, 2010). Historical events originating from ancestors, resulting from a significant event or issue experienced on a massive scale within a community, give rise to these traditions. Consequently, traditions emerge as thoughtful solutions devised by the ancestors of that time and are repeated continuously because they have proven effective in addressing these issues (Dove, 2021; Haidle and Jürgen, 2011). Therefore, activities within a tradition carry profound meanings and values revered by a specific group of people and have successfully permeated their way of life.

During the process of passing down traditions across generations, some cases have noted that the values within these traditions undergo degradation due to various factors, with one of the most influential being the intervention of time, leading to a tradition's potential acculturation or transformation (Kunst, et al. 2021; Moftizadeh, et al. 2021). Therefore, it is essential to pay attention to the motivations behind the emergence of a particular tradition to understand the driving forces that have kept that tradition alive until today. Over the course of time, these motivations have created profound meanings and values that continue to be passed down, shaping the character of specific communities in the present day (Andreescu and Andra, 2022).

Particularly in Indonesia, a country rich in diverse traditions and cultures, issues related to the preservation of traditions are always considered vital in order to safeguard something considered valuable and that has played a significant role in shaping the nation's identity and character. Preservation efforts are not limited to conservative methods alone but also include transformative approaches, recognizing that change is an inevitability that affects the essence of traditions. Consequently, preserving traditions without taking into account potential intervention factors that may influence the tradition itself can accelerate its decline (Ciptandi, et al. 2022; Hani and Amarendra 2019). With certainty, the fundamental factors that form the foundation of these traditions should also be thoroughly examined and understood proportionally.

One tradition that has grown and deeply rooted itself in Indonesia is the "Walasuji" tradition originating from Makassar, South Sulawesi. Initially, this tradition was a form of celebration practiced by the traditional Bugis Makassar community when getting married. It involved constructing a large bamboo gate, which was previously considered a standard by the community (Musliadi and Reski, 2023; Saleh, 2019). However, as time has passed, there has been a shift in the application of the Walasuji tradition. This shift encompasses both practical aspects, as the wedding gate is now rarely seen, and philosophical aspects that were once regarded as noble but have been forgotten (Charles, et al. 2021). This transformation has been driven by the disruptive phenomenon of rapid information exchange through various media and technology, offering alternatives for individuals to adopt new perspectives on their way of life (Lim, 2022).

In the context of the Walasuji tradition, this phenomenon is explained by Charles et al. (2021) as the influence of modern wedding decoration trends and changes in the attitudes and characteristics of young people who have become followers of popular trends. How-

ever, if examined more deeply, it is believed that the Walasuji tradition still holds important values that align with the characteristics of the Makassar community and are considered relevant for use in contemporary life based on local wisdom. Therefore, in the initial stages, it is essential to rediscover these significant values that have been forgotten for so long, so that they can be reintroduced to the Bugis Makassar community. It's important to acknowledge the existence of intervention factors that have influenced the changes in the tradition, as well as the possibilities of certain aspects of the tradition having to be abandoned because they no longer align with the context of modern life today.

### Research Methods

This research is a qualitative study, with the first phase employing the method of data source triangulation validation. This method involves gathering specific information from various data sources to gain insights from multiple perspectives, which are then synthesized (Khoa, et al. 2023; Flick, 2018), as illustrated in Figure 1.

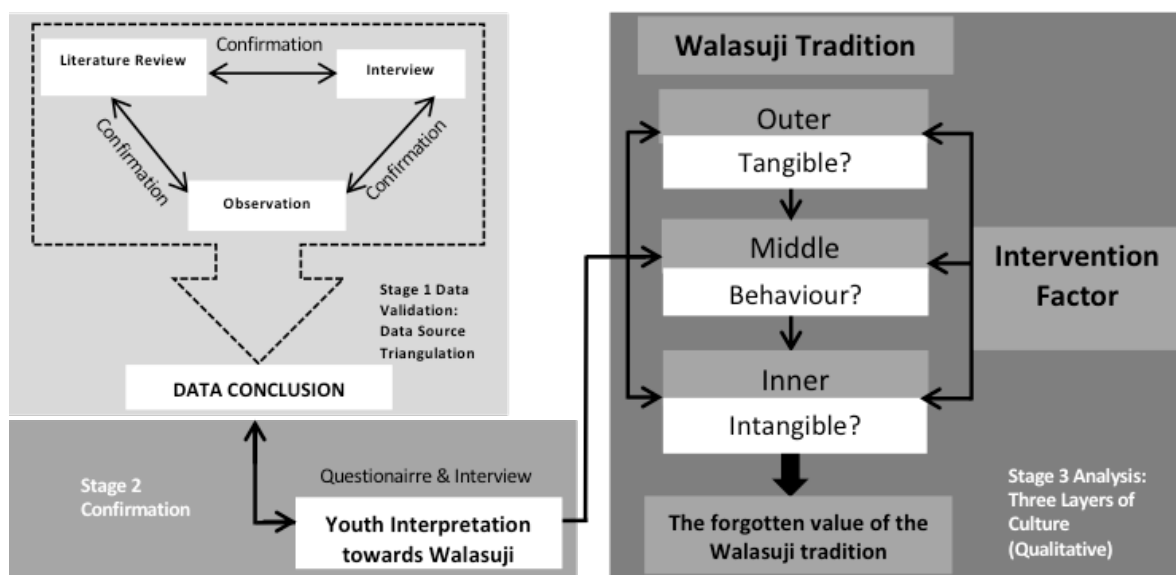


Figure 1. Research Methodology Schema.

The data collection techniques used are:

1. Observation is carried out by observing the process of making the Baruga Walasuji in the Mattiro Sompe Sub-district, Pinrang Regency, and the Mallusetasi Sub-district, Barru District, South Sulawesi. The observation is conducted from the researcher's perspective, involving direct observation of how the behavior, interactions, and technical aspects are carried out in the process of creating the Baruga Walasuji by the local residents.
2. The literature review is conducted by comparing the data gathered from observations and interviews with the findings of previous research studies. These earlier studies may have employed different methods and perspectives, but they all focus on the same subject, which is the Walasuji tradition of the Bugis Makassar community.
3. Interviews are conducted with traditional figures who are highly respected by the local community, often referred to as elders. In this case, interviews are carried out with Mr.

Puang Bareng in Pinrang District and Mrs. Andi Hasna in Barru District. These individuals are considered valuable sources of information for the research because they are descendants of the Makassar kingdom and have a long-standing tradition of practicing Walasuji, passed down through generations. They are also believed to have a deep understanding of the cultural and symbolic meanings embedded within the Walasuji tradition. Interviews with informants were limited to figures who were truly believed to know information about the values and meanings of Walasuji traditionally. In the current conditions, with the values and meanings of Walasuji forgotten, it is increasingly complex to find figures who still have pure knowledge of Walasuji. Therefore, confirmation was also carried out on previous data, namely observation and literature studies, to validate the data from the two figures.

The gathered data will be further advanced to the second stage by seeking confirmation from the Bugis Makassar youth regarding the present-day Walasuji tradition. This is done to ensure that there has been a shift in how these young individuals interpret and experience the values embedded within Walasuji. In the third stage, the condition of this tradition will be mapped out using the "Three Layers of Culture" framework (Leong and Clark, 2003). This method categorizes the structure of tradition or culture into three layers, aiding in explaining how the tradition manifests within each of these layers, as well as identifying the factors that intervene in it.

As depicted in Figure 1, these three layers consist of the "tangible" layer as the outermost layer, the "behavior" layer as the middle layer, and the "intangible" layer as the innermost layer. These three layers are interconnected; what is visible in the tradition (outer level) is a manifestation of the behaviors of the community practicing the tradition (middle level), and these behaviors stem from the values and beliefs they hold within the tradition (inner level). Through this method, it is expected to schematically illustrate the meaning and values that truly underpin the Walasuji tradition, culminating in the Walasuji tradition that is known to the community as "tangible." This method is employed to provide a clear depiction that behind every activity in the creation of the Baruga Walasuji (the Walasuji tradition), there are specific values and meanings at the core of the tradition's implementation.

## Results and Discussion

### Bugis Makassar Youth Perception and Experience Towards Walasuji Tradition

A number of studies have been conducted to examine the Walasuji tradition. Firstly, research conducted by (Musliadi and Reski, 2023) and Elvira (2014) has highlighted that the Walasuji tradition originated as an expression of the Bugis Makassar community's orientation towards the natural environment surrounding them. In the past, Makassar was rich in bamboo plants, and various aspects of community life were made from bamboo, including the Walasuji gate used in wedding celebrations. Research by (Saleh, 2023; Sudirman, et al. 2019; Ramadan, 2019) explains that Walasuji portrays the social strata of the community implied through the bamboo weaving patterns on the Baruga Walasuji. This implies that the Walasuji tradition carries social and political values based on social status, namely noble and non-noble. However, it is further explained that Walasuji also embodies values such as social responsibility, mutual cooperation, discipline, and communicativeness. This means that although the artifact's form of the Baruga Walasuji signifies the social status of

the bridal family, the process of creating the Baruga Walasuji teaches that despite different social statuses, the Bugis Makassar community should support each other. This implies that the Walasuji tradition itself is a positive aspect of Bugis Makassar community life that should be preserved. This idea is also supported by research conducted by Akramullah (2023), who attempts to incorporate the Walasuji tradition as a teaching material in elementary schools in Makassar because it is considered to contain values that align with character education objectives.

Unfortunately, in today's circumstances, the practice of the Walasuji tradition itself is gradually being abandoned, especially by the young Bugis Makassar generations, leading to the diminishing of its inherent values. The bamboo gate of the Baruga Walasuji, traditionally crafted for wedding ceremonies, has now been replaced by modern wedding decorations preferred by the younger generations. Based on a questionnaire administered to a sample of 100 young Bugis Makassar individuals from Pinrang and Barru regencies in South Sulawesi, aged between 15-35 years, we were able to assess the perceptions and knowledge of these youth regarding the Walasuji tradition. The data is presented in chart format, as depicted in Figure 2.

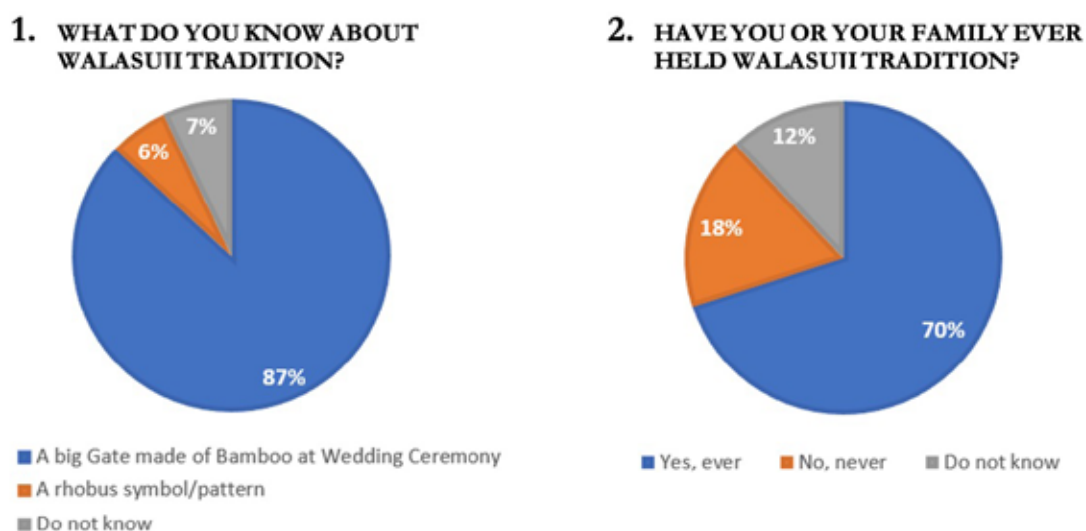


Figure 2. Bugis Makassar Youth Perception and Experience Towards Walasuji Tradition.

The first question pertains to respondents' knowledge of the Walasuji tradition (see Figure 2 on the left). Interview results indicate that a significant 87% of the respondents are familiar with Walasuji in its literal sense, which involves the creation of a large bamboo gate as a marker for wedding ceremonies. A smaller group, comprising 6% of the respondents, mistakenly identified Walasuji as a diamond-shaped motif, which is actually the symbol of "sulappa eppa" and is also an ornament on the gate. Meanwhile, the remaining 7% of the respondents either do not know or are unsure about what the Walasuji tradition is, and therefore chose to answer that they do not know.

Moving on to the second question, it aimed to uncover whether the respondents or their families had previously conducted the Walasuji tradition (see Figure 2 on the right). The results show that the majority of respondents, accounting for 70%, have indeed organized the Walasuji tradition at some point. However, 18% of the respondents stated that they had never organized it, while the remaining 12% were uncertain whether their families had ever conducted the Walasuji tradition or not.

Subsequently, additional follow-up questions were presented to know their interest in preserving the tradition. Specifically, they were asked if, in the event of their own wedding, they would consider using the Walasuji tradition or not, as depicted in Figure 3.

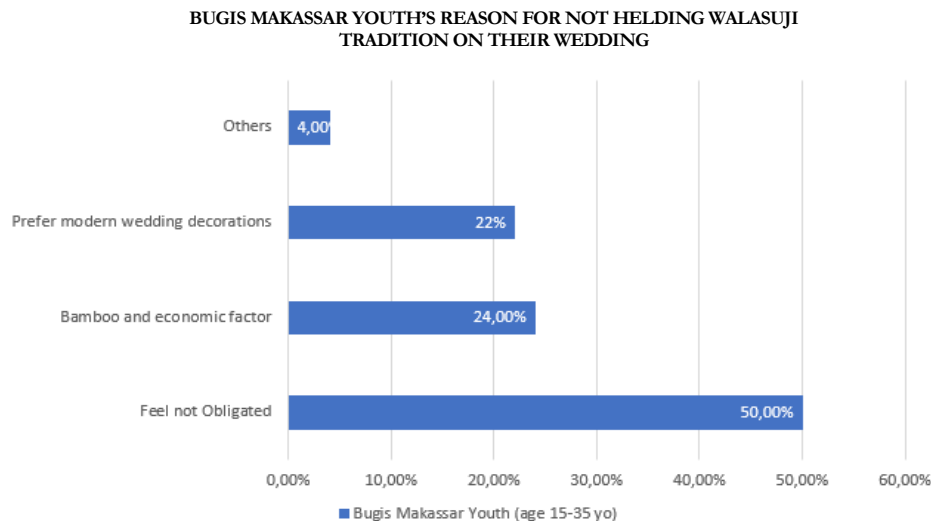


Figure 3. Bugis Makassar youth's reason for not holding Walasuji Tradition.

Based on Figure 3, a total of 50 respondents provided reasons for not conducting the Walasuji tradition. Here are some quotes from the open-ended responses of young Bugis Makassar individuals regarding this question:

- "Walasuji is only for specific Bugis families (Andi people)."
- "Creating it (Walasuji) requires many people, while preparing for a wedding is already quite demanding."
- "We are not obligated to hold Walasuji. If we can afford it, we will, and if not, we won't, depending on the circumstances."
- "My husband is not Bugis, so he doesn't know what Walasuji is."

According to 50% of respondents, they generally believe that the Walasuji tradition at wedding ceremonies is not considered mandatory. The reasons behind this view are varied, because they are not descendants of the nobility, known locally as "Andi ." Some find organizing the Walasuji tradition to be quite troublesome, and others simply admit to being unaware of this tradition altogether. Additionally, mainly related to the difficulty and cost of obtaining the primary material bamboo. So, it can be seen that for this group, the Walasuji tradition is just a choice of decisions that do not have a negative impact if not carried out. They have lost their understanding and appreciation of the actual values of Walasuji.

As many as 24 respondents expressed their difficulties in sourcing bamboo, citing financial constraints, as mentioned in the following open-ended question:

- "When I was a child, bamboo was readily available in the garden. Now, the garden has turned into a residential area."
- "Creating Walasuji requires a significant amount of money, not only for buying a large quantity of materials but also for paying the craftsmen."

In today's changing times and evolving social conditions, the scarcity of bamboo area as the primary material for making Walasuji has become a challenge. In the quote, "...just take it from the yard," it implies that in the past, making Walasuji didn't require buying bamboo because bamboo grew wild and was readily available for free. Meanwhile, the second quote expresses the reluctance due to the need not only to purchase materials but also to "pay craftsmen." They further explain that the process of creating the Baruga Walasuji takes about 2 weeks and involves a significant number of people, which not everyone can do as they did in the past. Today, if someone wants to create a Baruga Walasuji, they have to hire specialized "craftsmen" for the task. Another factor contributing to the decision is that 22% of the young Bugis Makassar generation is more inclined towards modern wedding decoration styles, which are considered trendier and are influenced by various social media and other digital platforms that have significantly impacted the lifestyles of many Bugis Makassar youths. This sentiment was expressed by one of the respondents in an open-ended question, as follows:

"My younger sister (a girl) wants her wedding event to be like the ones on Instagram."  
"It's better to hire a wedding organizer's services, which also include event venue decoration and it's beautiful."

In general, most of the respondents are aware of the Walasuji tradition, and their families have previously organized it. However, there are also some respondents who are unaware of this tradition and have no intention of organizing it due to various factors. It can be concluded that these factors include both internal and external elements within the community, influenced by changes in the surrounding environment and the evolution of the times. These factors reflect a shift in the priorities of the current generation of young Bugis Makassar regarding the Walasuji tradition, moving from a "duty or habit" to "not obligatory." However, it's important to note that the Walasuji tradition is not just about a wedding decoration gate; it holds important values during the process of creating the Baruga Walasuji, such as educational and positive belief values. Today, due to the discontinuation of the practice of making Baruga Walasuji, there is an impact on the hindered transfer of knowledge and the wisdom of these values to the younger generation.

Similar ideas are also presented by (Sudirman, et al. 2019; Ramadan, 2019), indicating that many young Bugis Makassar individuals today misunderstand the true essence of the Walasuji tradition. Walasuji, which should encompass ideas, concepts, philosophies, values, and artifacts, is currently perceived by young people merely as the "Sulappa Eppa" ornament. Sulappa Eppa is a bamboo embroidery motif that adorns the Baruga Walasuji, typically in a diamond-shaped pattern. Sulappa Eppa holds its own significance as a symbol of the four mystical elements that shape the universe: wind, fire, water, and earth (Triadi and Petsy, 2022; Hasbi, 2021). This symbol represents the written embodiment of the Bugis Makassar community in ancient times, describing life as a wise message for their younger generations. Consequently, this symbol is incorporated as a motif throughout the Baruga Walasuji to serve as a reminder of life's teachings for their young people about to get married. However, it is this very symbol that the current generation perceives as "Walasuji" due to changing societal behaviors during wedding ceremonies. As a result, Walasuji ultimately lives on merely as a symbol, devoid of its inherent values and meanings.

From this discussion, it can be concluded that although the Walasuji tradition in wedding ceremonies has become less common, the term "Walasuji" remains as a symbol of the



ethnic identity of the Bugis Makassar community. The profound values behind the Walasuji tradition seem to have been left behind, making the term "Walasuji" merely a visual symbol. This underpins the motivation for conducting this research, particularly in response to the study conducted by (Carles et al. 2021) which emphasizes that the Walasuji tradition holds several noble values worth preserving. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore and rekindle the forgotten meanings and values of the Walasuji tradition.

### **Walasuji's Cultural Structure**

In this section, we will discuss the structure of the Walasuji tradition, both in its ideal form and its comparison to its shifted current state, encompassing its physical manifestations, community behaviors, as well as the meanings and values it holds. This comparison can be made by examining the intervening factors analyzed based on previous related work, as well as data obtained through observation, literature, and validated interviews using data source triangulation.

Intervention factors themselves refer to all the factors that interrupt the whole structure or certain parts of the culture (Allen, 2022; Ciptandi, 2020; ). These factors can be identified by analyzing the gap between the current state of the tradition and its ideal state. In the case of the Walasuji tradition, based on previous related work data, it can be seen that there are two main intervention factors contributing to the decreasing visibility of the Walasuji tradition.

Firstly, there is the issue of bamboo, which has become increasingly inaccessible to the community, despite being the primary material for crafting Walasuji artifacts. Secondly, there is the factor of changing lifestyles and characteristics of today's Bugis Makassar youth. Based on interviews with 100 representative respondents from the Bugis Makassar youth in Pinrang and Barru regencies, at least three main factors were identified as the reasons why people today do not engage in the Walasuji tradition: (1) Feeling it is not obligatory or not wanting the hassle; (2) Difficulty in obtaining/buying bamboo; and (3) Preference for modern wedding decorations.

### **"Outer" Layer of the Walasuji Tradition: The Baruga Walasuji Artefact & Sulappa Eppa Pattern**

According to the Cultural Layers theory (Leong and Clark 2003), the outer layer comprises all tangible elements of culture or tradition, often referred to as artefacts. Traditional artefacts are physical objects closely associated with tradition, customs, or the culture of a particular group of people. They reflect cultural heritage and values passed down from generation to generation (Pabbajah, et al. 2021). These traditional artefacts are frequently used as symbols of a particular tradition or culture and typically encompass elements such as material, technique, form, dimensions, and aesthetics (Dong, 2022; Trauer, 2021). This traditional artifact based on the theory of innovation guiding the pyramid of tradition-based products (Ciptandi, 2025) is also described as one of the fundamental elements that influence the formation of traditional identity through sensory capture as an entry point to be recognized as something unique and distinctive. In line (Álvaro, 2024) also states that artifacts contain information that goes beyond their utilitarian function and is not only seen as physical objects but as the result of interactions between humans and objects, which reflect cultural practices, values, and social structures.

In the Walasuji tradition, there are tangible artefacts, namely the bamboo gate known as the Baruga Walasuji and the woven motif called Sulappa Eppa. The Baruga Walasuji resembles a gateway at the front of a traditional stilt house in the Bugis Makassar com-



munity, symbolizing that this wedding marks the gateway to a new phase of life (Inaya, 2021). The distinctive motif, shaped like a diamond, adorns the entire surface of the Baruga. This motif is created by weaving bamboo diagonally, forming empty spaces resembling the shape of a diamond. Different arrangements of the Baruga motif are seen at each wedding ceremony, reflecting the social status of the marrying families, which relates to the cosmological concept of the Bugis Makassar community, recognizing three layers of the world: upper (God), middle (the universe), and lower (life after death) (Saleh, 2023; Tenriwaru, et al. 2021). The detailed form and size of the Baruga also vary according to the preferences of the marrying families and the conditions of the couple's residence (see Figure 4).

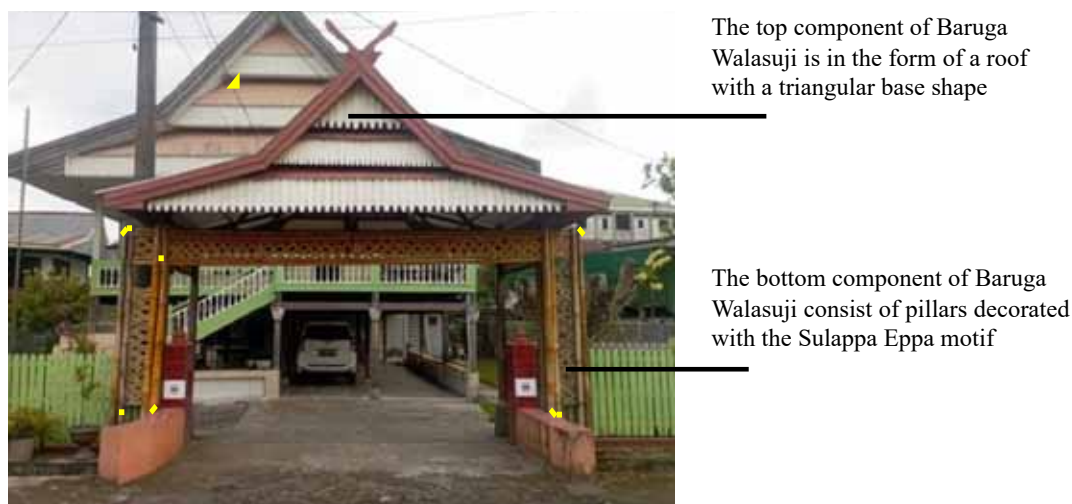


Figure 4. The shape of "Baruga" Walasuji.

Based on interviews with elder figures (Bareng, 2023), the completed Baruga Walasuji is then installed at the entrance gate of the bride's house. In the past, ideally, the Baruga should have been installed 2-4 weeks before the event. However, nowadays, people prefer to install it only 1 week before the wedding. This Baruga serves as a marker indicating that a wedding ceremony will take place at that house. It also signals to passersby to behave appropriately when passing by the house, such as not making noise or causing disturbances (Inaya, 2021). The construction of the Baruga Walasuji, as explained by the elder Bareng, must be done through a communal effort involving a group of people, especially young individuals. The primary material used is bamboo, specifically old, straight, and green bamboo, known as "mallise" (Adam, 2022). Bamboo is the primary building material for the Baruga Walasuji, as it has been for many traditional practices in Indonesia, serving various daily purposes such as kitchen tools, weapons, house construction, and traditional games (Sari, et al. 2022; Fauziyah, et al. 2022).

The Sulappa Eppa motif (see Figure 5) visually consists of diagonal bamboo strips woven into the walls of the Baruga, filling the spaces between the structural posts. In the context of artefacts, there are only two types of Sulappa Eppa weaving: those made using two layers of bamboo strips and those made using three layers of bamboo strips. These two weaving styles are associated with the social status of the marrying families, with two layers representing non-aristocratic families and three layers representing aristocratic families (Saleh, 2023).

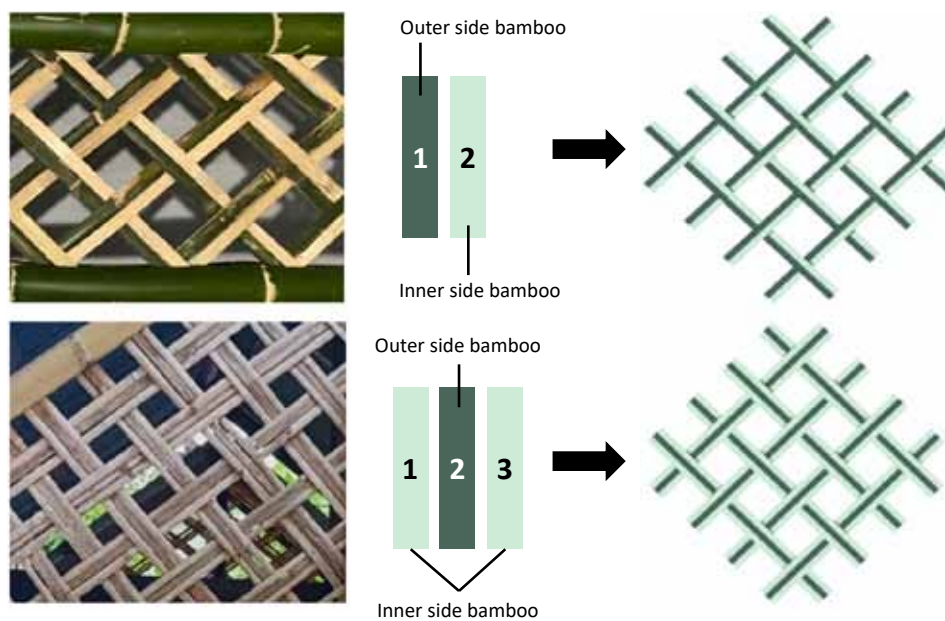


Figure 5. (Top) Two-plies pattern, (Bottom) Three-plies pattern.

#### “Mid” Layer of Walasuji Tradition: Building Process of Baruga Walasuji

The second layer, or the middle layer, in the theory of the three cultural layers pertains to the realm of behavior or customs practiced by the community in the tradition. Based on the theory of Cultural Behaviorism (Krieg, 2020), it is stated that the community practices behavior or customs because it is regulated by local culture, where culture is considered a control system for behavior through norms, punishments, and rewards. According to (Ciptandi & Arumsari, 2024), this cultural behavior is also said to be a pattern of behavior inherited because it has been carried out socially for a long time. So, referring to the explanation of these theories, there are several behaviors formed during the process of constructing the Baruga Walasuji. According to interviews with elder figures (Bareng, 2023), it was stated that the making of the Baruga Walasuji must be a collective effort. Therefore, in the past, the Walasuji was considered invalid if it was carried out by a small number of people. It had to be done collectively, following the principle of "assitulung-tulungeng," which means mutual assistance (involving many people). The process of making it consists of several stages, generally as follows:

##### 1. Bamboo Selection

The community's knowledge about the suitable type of bamboo for Walasuji, which is old and thick (mallise) with a bluish-green hue (see Figure 6), has reached a deep level of understanding. This knowledge allows them to select bamboo by visual inspection alone, demonstrating a confident and spontaneous behavior. Additionally, their understanding of bamboo as a valuable and essential material for daily life has shaped their attitudes and behaviors towards preserving bamboo. However, in today's context, there has been a shift in attitudes and behaviors regarding this, with a dwindling inclination to care for and preserve bamboo. This change aligns with the decreasing interest and motivation to use Walasuji. Consequently, there has been a change in behavior where people who want to build Walasuji now need to purchase bamboo from suppliers because bamboo groves are no longer as abundant as they once were.



Figure 6. Bamboo Selection.

## 2. Bamboo Processing

After the bamboo has been selected, it is then processed collectively with simultaneous task distribution. First, the bamboo is cut into pieces according to the desired size of the Baruga, which is adjusted to the size of the gate and fence of the family's house or the request of the marrying families. Typically, the height of the Baruga will reach about 3 meters with a width of around 3 meters. Generally, the cut bamboo pieces will be grouped into several types, such as for the posts, roof, and specifically for the weaving of the Sulappa Eppa motif. Long bamboo sections are used for the posts and structural components, while the bamboo strips are used for weaving Sulappa Eppa. Almost no part of the bamboo is wasted (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. Bamboo processing cut into smaller pieces and grouped.



### 3. Baruga Assembly (assembling)

In this stage, the creation of the Baruga is divided into several parts: the installation of the structural posts of the Baruga, the weaving of the Baruga walls, and the installation of the Baruga walls and roof (see Figure 8). In the past, the structural components of the Baruga were secured using bamboo pegs. In modern times, some also use rattan, ropes, and nails. The process of weaving the Baruga walls involves sandwiching bamboo between the two sides of the posts. As for the roof, the original Baruga should ideally use Nipa leaves. In today's era, since Nipa leaves are rarely found, residents have replaced the roof with sheets of zinc or spandex (a type of roof made from a combination of aluminum and zinc) to make it more practical and durable, ensuring it can be reused for other events.



Figure 8. (Left) Making the structural posts of the Baruga, (Center) Weaving the Baruga walls, (Right) Installation of the Baruga roof use Nipa leaves.

Ideally, the entire process of creating the Baruga Walasuji is carried out by following the guidance of the elders and is performed collectively and in synergy by skilled artisans. This fosters a community behavior of obedience and compliance with the instructions of leaders and encourages cooperation in achieving a common goal, known in their terms as "gotong royong." The elders, considered the most knowledgeable and wise, guide the construction process of the Walasuji while imparting various techniques and insights to the residents involved in the construction, especially to the young who are inexperienced in Walasuji-making. This cultivates a behavior of teaching tradition that naturally forms, allowing knowledge and skills to be passed down through generations. Additionally, during the construction process, all residents assisting communicate and coordinate effectively to ensure the Walasuji is completed according to the plan. Thus, the moment of building the Baruga Walasuji becomes an interaction among the community members and a means for transferring knowledge and insights about the Walasuji tradition.

However, with the decreasing demand for building Baruga Walasuji, this activity has become increasingly rare. Consequently, when there is a need to construct Baruga Walasuji today, it is no longer done by the community through voluntary mutual assistance but rather by seeking the services of commercial providers. This is why many families of brides and grooms are reluctant to build a Baruga Walasuji because they do not only have to pur-

chase bamboo but also pay craftsmen for their labor. This phenomenon has led to a shift in the unique values of Walasuji, such as the absence of voluntary mutual assistance and the breakdown of communication among community members due to their exclusion from the construction of the Baruga. This can be summarized as causing a change in how the community treats the Walasuji tradition and the loss of its social values.

### ***“Inner” Level of Walasuji Tradition: Meaning and Values***

The inner level of culture is intangible in the form of non-material culture. According to (Yan, 2023), the principle of nonmaterial culture theory is that it is a cultural element that cannot be seen or touched physically but is very important in forming society's identity, social structure, and behavior. These elements include values, beliefs, norms, language, religion, and symbols community groups use. According to (Tauschek, 2011), these principles also focus on immaterial aspects that, although they cannot be seen or touched, have a great influence on the community because they are the essence of a group's identity. According to the explanation of the theory, Baruga Walasuji takes the form of a large gate and carries specific meanings and values, including:

#### **1. The meaning of the name Walasuji and Baruga Walasuji in wedding ceremonies.**

Walasuji originates from the Lontara language (the regional language of the Bugis Makassar ethnic group) and signifies "protector" or "fence" (wala) for daughters or young women (suji). This is why the physical representation of this tradition takes the form of a large gate (Inaya, 2021). In other words, Walasuji means "protector of the daughter" (Bugis girls who are getting married). This demonstrates the Bugis Makassar community's deep respect for the role of women (Syarifah, 2010). According to an elder (Bareng, 2023), the name Walasuji also carries the meaning of the sanctity of the place where the Walasuji is placed. This implies that the location where the wedding ceremony takes place, along with the people inside it, must be free from behaviors prohibited by religion or the government. Based on this, it can be concluded that Baruga Walasuji, besides serving as a marker for the wedding ceremony, also holds values of respect and protection for the sacred nature of the event (Adam, 2022; Inaya, 2021).

#### **2. The Meaning of Sulappa Eppa on the walls of Walasuji.**

The term Sulappa Eppa originates from the Lontara language and refers to the diamond-shaped pattern (see Figure 9), which the Bugis Makassar community believes to be a mystical symbol representing the universe. The philosophical symbol of Sulappa Eppa itself comes from the Bugis alphabet system, which used to be written on lontar leaves. The symbol of the letter is  $\diamond / s / = sa$ , which means  $// = eswseua$  or 'one.' This symbol holds cosmological meanings such as God, humans, the sky, and the earth (Mahbud, 2008; Artiningrum, et al. 2019). This meaning is interpreted by Bugis-Makassar people to establish a social status within the community with the aim of maintaining the principles of balance in the upper, middle, and lower realms of the world. In a more concrete sense, it signifies the responsibility of humans to preserve local wisdom and maintain harmony in its governance.

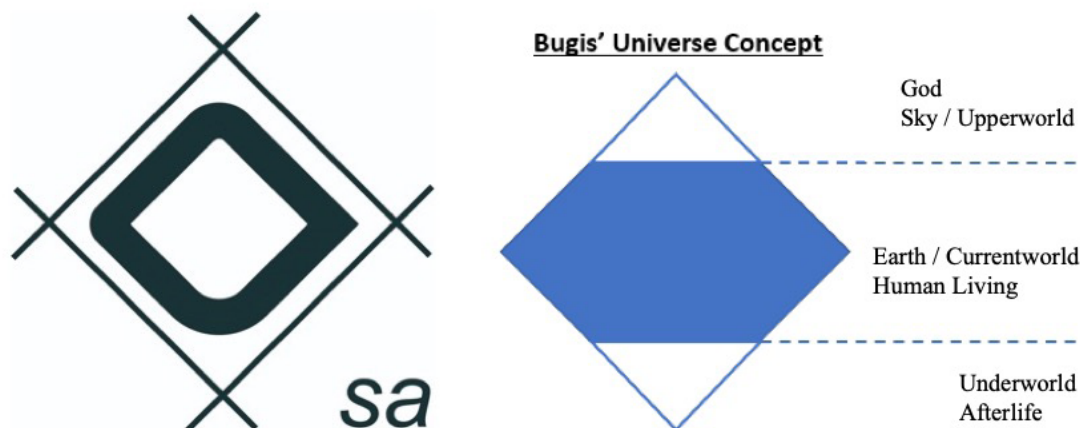


Figure 9. The concept of the universe in the symbol "Sulappa Eppa."

According to the perspective of the elder (Bareng, 2023), this concept signifies the current position in our lives, where there is "God" above, and there is the realm of death below. Meanwhile, according to the elder (Hasna, 2023), this concept holds religious significance, as the Bugis community believes in the existence of the One God (the uppermost point of the diamond), humans live in the middle realm (the blue area in Figure 8, right), and there is an awareness of the existence of the "lower realm" (the bottom point of the diamond), which is the realm that humans will enter after death. This concept forms the belief system of the Bugis community. The woven motif of sulappa eppa on the walls of Baruga Walasuji signifies this concept of life, which must be remembered by both the bride and groom and all the guests attending the wedding ceremony.

### 3. The significance of bamboo material as the primary material in Walasuji.

Based on interviews with elders (Bareng, 2023; Hasna, 2023) and studies (Adam, 2022), bamboo was chosen not only because it was abundant in Makassar but also because bamboo carries the philosophy of the goodness of life. In the past, bamboo was a plentiful natural resource in South Sulawesi. People used bamboo as tools, kitchen utensils, construction material for houses, and traditional games, so bamboo had a wide range of benefits for humans. Therefore, young Bugis people were expected to emulate bamboo's way of life, which provided benefits to the surrounding community.

### 4. The meaning of the Baruga Walasuji making process.

According to interviews with elders (Bareng, 2023; Hasna, 2023), Ideally, making Baruga Walasuji cannot be done alone, but it has to involve many people, emphasizing the values of mutual cooperation and hard work. During the process of creating it, there's a transfer of wisdom and knowledge that fosters good communication among the participants. This moment teaches not just technical skills but is also linked to the concept of the Sulappa Eppa symbol, signifying the awareness of the Bugis Makassar community about doing good deeds on Earth as instructed by God, in hopes of receiving blessings in the afterlife.

Based on all the explanations about the Walasuji tradition and the intervention factors that have caused transformations in the tradition, the overall structure of the Walasuji tradition can be depicted as shown in Figure 10 below.

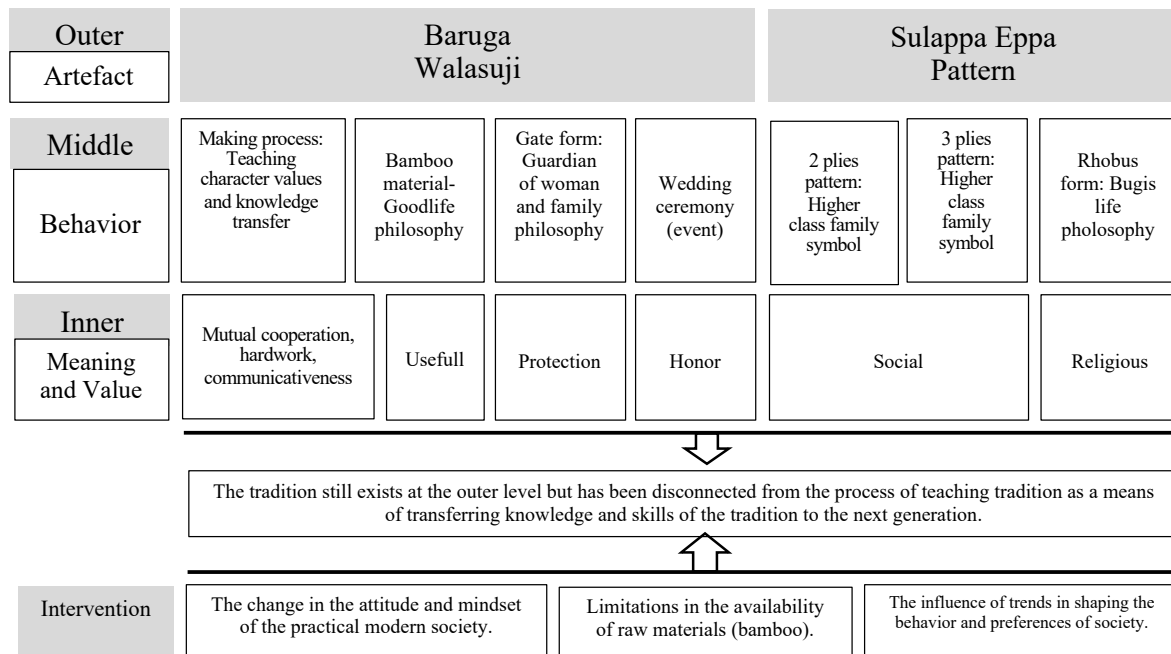


Figure 10. The Structure of Walasuji Tradition and the Form of Transformation.

It can be concluded that the cultural layer structure of the Walasuji tradition at the Inner layer consists of deeply internalized values and beliefs, which are then expressed through the attitudes/behaviors of the community at the Middle layer and manifested in the form of artifacts at the Outer Layer. In general, there are two main artifacts in this tradition, namely the large gate called "Baruga" and the weaving on the Baruga called Sulappa Eppa. It can also be said that each artifact is manifested from different community behaviors, and, of course, they originate from different values as well. In the process of making Baruga Walasuji, there are at least three noble values: cooperation (gotong royong), hard work, and communicativeness, which further explain the teaching process of the tradition. Bamboo, the main material, represents the idea of usefulness and making the most of what is available in the surroundings. The gate's form symbolizes protection and respect, primarily used as a marker for families holding wedding ceremonies. Meanwhile, the type of weaving called sulappa eppa signifies social status, and the diamond shape of the weaving serves as a decorative element that adds an aesthetic touch, while also symbolizing the ideology of divinity believed by the Bugis Makassar community.

In addition to the structure of the Walasuji tradition, it can be observed that today there are three main intervention factors that affect the condition of the Walasuji tradition: a shift in the practical attitudes and mentality of society, a shortage of bamboo as raw material, and changes in people's preferences due to trends. Ultimately, these factors have led to the continuation of the tradition in the form of making Baruga Walasuji and applying the Sulappa Eppa weaving pattern, but only at the outer/artifact level. At the behavioral level, values like "gotong royong" or cooperation have disappeared, and at the inner level, the philosophical meanings have also been lost.



## Conclusion

There are some points that can be concluded regarding the expression of the Walasuji tradition among the Bugis Makassar community today include:

1. The Walasuji tradition embodies several noble values for the Bugis Makassar youth, which are conveyed during wedding ceremonies. These values are expressed through the community's actions in the tradition, resulting in artifacts such as the Baruga Walasuji with Sulappa Eppa weavings. These values include Cooperation, Hard work, Communicativeness, Usefulness, Protection, Respect, Social, and Religiousness.
2. There are behaviors in the middle layer of the Walasuji tradition's cultural structure, which constitute acts of teaching, particularly in the process of making the Baruga Walasuji. This behavior carries the most value among other behaviors and serves as a key element in transferring knowledge of the Walasuji tradition to the next generation. These attitudes act as a crucial bridge in preserving the tradition from one generation to another.
3. Three intervention factors have led to the declining practice of the Walasuji tradition, namely: (1) Changing attitudes and practical mentality of modern society, (2) Difficulty in obtaining/buying bamboo, and (3) Preference for modern wedding decorations. These factors clearly show the Walasuji tradition is no longer fully appreciated. The most influential thing is that the majority believe that the Walasuji tradition at wedding ceremonies is not considered mandatory and generally indicates that the values contained in Walasuji have been forgotten. So, the practice of making it is currently no longer easy to find, without anyone feeling that it needs to get any consequences.
4. There is a tradition behavior that actually supports the difficulty of carrying out the Walasuji tradition when facing the aforementioned intervention factors, namely the Wedding Moment. This is an eventual moment for every individual and is not something that occurs frequently, which can motivate someone to do things that are important and considered sacred.
5. There is a traditional behavior that no longer supports the Walasuji tradition when facing the aforementioned intervention factors, namely the type of Sulappa Eppa weaving that symbolizes social status. In the current condition, this has categorized society into castes, leading to the perception that non-noble individuals do not feel obliged to create Walasuji.
6. The Walasuji tradition cannot be allowed to vanish as it carries several valuable character education values to be taught to the younger generation. However, the changing times have altered the lifestyle of the community, requiring the adaptation of the Walasuji tradition to endure. By analyzing the cultural structure and intervention factors in the Walasuji tradition, it is hoped that this will aid cultural enthusiasts, researchers, or designers in their efforts to transform the Walasuji tradition to suit the contemporary context.

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