

Ethical and Cultural Philosophy of the Bugis in *Pappaseng Kajaolaliddong*

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Abstract: This study examines the philosophy of the Bugis people as reflected in *Pappaseng Kajaolaliddong*. Fundamentally, a philosophy of life can be understood as socio-cultural values that function as a way of life in guiding the daily activities of a community. The motivational values embedded in this philosophy have been recognized since ancient times and are preserved in *lontarak* manuscripts containing ethical and philosophical messages. The objectives of this study are: (1) to reveal the moral values contained in *Pappaseng Kajaolaliddong*, and (2) to elaborate the socio-cultural values that remain relevant to contemporary Bugis society. This research employs a qualitative method and was conducted in Kajao Laliddong Village using a philosophical approach. The data were obtained through a combination of library research and field study. The literature review refers to books, academic journals, documents such as *lontarak* manuscripts, oral traditions, and previous scholarly works. The findings indicate that several essential aspects of *Pappaseng Kajaolaliddong* are highly relevant to the values and life principles upheld by the Bugis community today. These include moral integrity, honesty, wisdom, courage, and adherence to customary norms (*adat*), which continue to shape social behavior and leadership ideals.

Keywords: Philosophy, Message, Norms, Custom (*Adat*), Kajao Laliddong.

I. INTRODUCTION

Before Islam came to the archipelago, particularly to South Sulawesi in the 17th century, the Bugis people already possessed and adhered to a dogmatic belief system intertwined with customs and traditions among various ethnic groups, especially those considered still traditional. This “indigenous belief” referred to God as *Dewata SeuwaE*, meaning “Our One God,” the owner of the universe and all its contents, the Almighty God in a monotheistic sense—that is, the belief that God is one/single and has absolute power over everything. The Bugis belief in *Dewata SeuwaE* and *PatotoE* still leaves traces today in the form of traditions and customary ceremonies.

These two indigenous beliefs contain a cosmological concept of the universe, which is believed by their adherents to consist of three realms: the upper world, *Botilangi*; the middle world, *Alekawa* (inhabited by humans); and the underworld, *Buri'liung*. Each realm has its own inhabitants, and they influence one another. These interactions also affect the continuity of human life (Mustamin & Salik, 2022; Dalyan et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2025). In the early life of the Bugis community, there were numerous myths. For example, in *Sure' La Galigo*, it is explained how the Bugis land was first inhabited: when Batara Guru from *Botilangi* (the upper world) met We Nyelli Timo from *Buri'liung* (the underworld) in the land of Luwu.

In Indonesian literature, there are many types of historical writings, such as those found in Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Madurese, and Lombok literary traditions. In these local literatures, the term *babad* is commonly used. In Javanese literature, besides the word *babad*, other terms are also used at the beginning of titles, such as *sejarah* (history) and *pustakaraja*. This can be seen in a catalog entitled “Katalogus Naskah Kitab Babad Museum Pusat,” for example *Babad Tanah Jawi* and *Pustakaraja Wasana*.

In Sundanese literature, in addition to the term *babad*, other terms such as *sejarah*, *cerita* (story), and *pancakaki* (genealogical relations) are also used. According to Edwar Djamaris (2007), for example, Sundanese historical literature includes *Cerita Dipati Ukur* by Ekajati (1982). In Balinese literature, Worsley (1972) discussed *Babad Buleleng* in his dissertation. In Lombok literature, there is *Babad Lombok* (1979), and in Madurese literature, *Babad Madura*. In Bugis literature, this type of historical writing is known as *Lontara'*, which is further divided into several categories.

A philosophy of life, in a fundamental sense, is understood as socio-cultural values that are upheld by a community as a guiding pattern in carrying out daily activities. These normative values are so important and precious that they often remain deeply attached to their adherents, even amid the ongoing pressures of modernity. In practice, they become the spirit that shapes patterns of thought and stimulates human actions, including motivating efforts and endeavors. The motivational values contained in a philosophy of life have, in fact, been known since ancient times. During what is often called the “Axial Age,” approximately five to six hundred years before the Common Era, wise figures emerged across the world teaching humanity about ways of life.

Philosophical reflection seeks to construct a conceptual framework of a particular kind and to obtain the meaning of terms found in the *Pappaseng Kajao Laliddong* through analysis of these terms. The existence of *Pappaseng Kajao Laliddong* is marked by a diversity of functions and is rich in meaning and philosophy. However, in the early 21st century, its existence has experienced degradation, making reconstruction necessary as an invaluable cultural heritage. Therefore, the research problem can be formulated as follows: The objective of this research and writing is to analyze how the philosophy and existence of *Pappaseng Kajao Laliddong* have developed within society.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several major studies on Bugis culture that strongly support this research and writing entitled “*The Philosophy of the Bugis People in Pappaseng Kajao Laliddong*”, which deserve to be discussed in this review. Among them are the following studies:

a. In the work of Zainal Abidin Farid entitled *Wajo pada Abad ke XV–XVI: Suatu Penggalian Sejarah Sulawesi Selatan dari Lontarak*, he narrates the agreement between Bone and Luwu known as *Polo Malela'e ri Unynyi* (the “Breaking of Weapons in Unynyi”). This agreement is unique because both kingdoms consented to treat the citizens of each kingdom equally in both territories, and the customs of the two kingdoms were harmonized. This is expressed in wise, philosophical, and figurative language, stating that if a person from Bone is in Luwu, then he is considered a person of Luwu; likewise, if a person from Luwu is in Bone, then he is regarded as a person of Bone. According to the author, what Zainal Abidin Farid explains in the above-mentioned book emphasizes the philosophy of law.

b. *The Concept of Identity* (Mashadi Said, 1996). Identity (*jati diri*) refers to the essential nature of an individual or a nation, which can be recognized through the prominent attitudes displayed by that individual or nation. Discussing identity means addressing human beings in all their complexity and multidimensionality. Human beings, as *homo sapiens*, have become highly complex creatures, and this complexity continually invites discussion. According to the author, what Mashadi Said has written reflects the attitudes of individuals and nations as *homo sapiens*.

c. In *La Galigo: Menelusuri Jejak Warisan Sastra Dunia* by Christian Pelras, the author discusses the richness of Bugis literary heritage, particularly the epic *La Galigo*, as a reflection of Bugis cosmology, social structure, and moral values. Pelras explains that the mythological narratives in *La Galigo* are not merely literary works, but also contain philosophical foundations that shape the worldview of the Bugis people, including concepts of leadership, honor (*siri'*), and harmony between the macrocosm and microcosm. According to the author, Pelras' study is highly relevant because it

highlights the philosophical dimensions embedded in Bugis traditional texts, which also form the conceptual background of *Pappaseng Kajao Laliddong*.

III. METHODS

The research was conducted in Kajao Laliddong Village, Barebbo District, Bone Regency. This study employs a qualitative research design. Informants were selected based on representation from various community groups within Kajao Laliddong Village. The research approaches used were sociological and historical approaches.

The theoretical benefit of this research is to enrich scholarly references concerning the study of the local culture of the Bugis community. The practical benefit is to provide motivation for researchers of local wisdom, particularly the cultural tradition of *Pappaseng Kajao Laliddong*. The data sources and type of research are described descriptively using qualitative methods. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. The research instruments consist of interviews and questionnaires.

The data analysis method involves a series of activities including reviewing, classifying, systematizing, interpreting, and verifying data so that a phenomenon attains social, academic, and scientific value. The results of the analysis are presented descriptively, as the study of *Pappaseng Kajao Laliddong* in the life of the Bugis people is qualitative in nature. In addition, library research methods were employed, referring to books, journals, documents such as *lontarak*, oral traditions, and previous research findings.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Pangadereng as the Philosophy of the Bugis People

The shift in cultural values and social life in Bugis society in recent times tends to no longer reflect the continuity of past Bugis cultural values. Ishak Ngeljaratan argues that the core values of Bugis culture are no longer “grounded” and no longer possess vitality in contemporary Bugis society (Fadli et al., 2025; Rahman, 2019; Nursaadah et al., 2025; Suma et al., 2024). This view is reinforced by the South Sulawesi poet Husni Djamaluddin, who states that the principal cultural values of South Sulawesi, which descended from heaven together with *To Manurung*, have *mallajang* (floated back to the sky, returning to the deities).

The shift in the core cultural values of South Sulawesi (particularly Bugis culture) was caused, among other factors, by the dominant influence of Dutch colonial power in the region around the late 17th century. The Dutch colonial administration, which applied a governmental concept based on the principle of “control” and domination over economic resources, gradually influenced the kingdoms whose governance had previously been grounded in the ideal concept of *Pangngadereng*.

In the past, the Bugis people also had a number of wise figures who taught the community about ethical philosophy. Historical records reflect that the life of the Bugis people has always been an integral and inseparable part of the practical application of *pangngadereng*. The term “dichotomic” refers to a theological concept stating that the human self can be divided into two aspects: the spiritual soul and the physical body.

In this context, *Pangadereng* refers to the entire set of norms governing how a person should behave toward fellow human beings and toward social institutions that shape patterns of behavior and worldview. The values of *pangadereng* are so deeply embedded among the Bugis that failing to uphold them is considered sinful (Ramadan (2025; Rahman & Letlora, 2018; Akhmar et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2022). Mattulada (1985) argues that the normative order derived from *pangngadereng*—(*ade*, *rapang*, *bicara*, *wari*, and *sara*)—has gradually deteriorated, and the values and normative systems bequeathed by the intellectuals of the past have increasingly been displaced.

Ade (custom) is a key concept, because the Bugis people's trust in their customary law forms the foundation of their ideas regarding relationships with fellow human beings, social institutions, the surrounding natural environment, and even the macrocosm. If we succeed in understanding its meaning within family life, economic life, political life, and religious life, only then can we comprehend their worldview, which is animated by custom. The successes and setbacks they have experienced over centuries have undoubtedly followed their adherence to custom (Akkase Teng & Hasyim, 2020; Rahman et al., 2019; Nursaadah et al., 2025; Dalyan et al., 2025).

The term *ade* or *adat* has attained an important position in everyday discourse, especially within Bugis culture (Aswar et al., 2024; Tahir et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2023). The word *adat* originates from the Arabic word *adatum*, which, according to Edward B. Tylor, refers to culture. It is also synonymous with the term *'urfun*, meaning behavior or actions that are virtuous and aligned with reason and law. *Adat* does not merely mean habit. As explained by Benjamin Frederik Matthes, in Bugis culture *adat* is often translated as *gewoonten* (customs or habits), yet its meaning remains rooted in the connotative sense found in *Lontarak* manuscripts. He explains through an expression that *adat* is equivalent to the essential conditions for human life:

“If the customary practices of a land are destroyed, then palm wine will cease to drip, fish will disappear, and rice will fail to grow.” (*Iyya nanigesar' ada' 'biyasana buttayya tammattikamo balloka, tanaikatogangngamo jukuka, annyalatongi aseyya*)

If *adat* is disregarded, it means disregarding human life itself. The consequences are not only felt individually but also impact the entire community. Mattulada (1985, p. 315) states that “It is *adat* that shapes the character of society, its culture, and the people who uphold it.” *Adat*, as formed from the character of society and human culture, is pluralistic—in philosophical terms, it reflects pluralism.

“Pluralism, from the perspective of cultural philosophy, is a concept of humanity that demonstrates mutual tolerance, respect, appreciation, and coexistence based on brotherhood and togetherness, carried out productively and without conflict, thereby leading to cultural assimilation and acculturation.” The dialogue between the Arung (king) and Kajao in the *paseng* (“messages”) contains advice related to customs and the rules of social life. In his messages, Kajao seeks to instill the values or qualities of *Pangadereng* that must be possessed by both ruler and people. The main principles of *pangngadereng* outlined by Kajao Laliddong are:

- a. *Lempue nasibawai tau* (honesty accompanied by piety)
- b. *Ada tonging nasibawa tike* (truthfulness in speech accompanied by vigilance)
- c. *Siri nasibawai getting* (a sense of shame or honor accompanied by firmness of heart)
- d. *Awaraningeng nasibawai nyamekkininnawa* (courage accompanied by compassion)
- e. *Appesona ri Dewata Seuwae* (surrender to the One Almighty God)

Of these five components, Kajao Laliddong emphasizes three: honesty, wisdom (intellectual excellence), and courage. Various *Lontarak* records and oral sources state that during his lifetime, Kajao Laliddong never lied; he was firm and honest in all actions, modest and generous, brave in facing enemies, and skillful in presenting arguments in diplomacy. According to the author, the values taught by Kajao Laliddong, as cited in Asmat Riady, reflect *akhlaqul karimah* (noble character). These three components are explained as follows:

1. Honesty

The word “honest” in Bugis is *lempu*. Linguistically, *lempu* means “straight,” as opposed to “crooked.” In various contexts, it can also mean sincere, true, good, or just. Its opposites include deceitful, fraudulent, lying, treacherous, bad, manipulative, unjust, and so on. These meanings become clear when the term *lempu* appears in Bugis expressions.

In *Latoa*, Kajao Laliddong engages in dialogue with the Arung Pone:

“Dua tanranna namaraja tanaé Arungponé, seuwani malempu namacca Arung Mangkaué,

maduanna tessimala-salaé.” (There are two signs that a state will prosper, O Arungpone: first, the ruling king must be honest and intelligent; second, he must not act arbitrarily.)

2. Intellectual Excellence (Wisdom)

In *Lontarak*, intellectual excellence is often paired with honesty, as both complement one another. A wise person is described as someone for whom nothing is too difficult to accomplish, no conversation too difficult to respond to with kind and gentle words, and who maintains trust in fellow human beings.

In daily conversation, Bugis people often interpret the word *acca* as clever or smart. However, according to the author—who agrees with A. Rahman Rahim—this meaning is insufficient, because “smart” can have both positive and negative connotations. In *Lontarak*, the word *acca* is not neutral; it carries only positive connotations. Therefore, the author prefers to interpret *acca* not merely as clever or smart, but as wise, intellectual, or possessing profound insight.

In addition, the word *nawanawa* is used in *Lontarak* with a meaning similar to *acca*. A person who possesses the value of *nawanawa* or *acca* is referred to as *Toacca*, *Tokenennawa*, or *pannawanawa*, which may be translated as scholar, intellectual, thinker, or wise sage.

3. Courage

Values related to courage are described in the *pappaseng*:

“Learn the deeds of the brave, imitate their conduct. There are ten characteristics of a brave person, though one is bad; thus there are nine that are good. The one bad trait will also perish. The virtues of the brave are: first, not startled by bad news; second, not overly concerned with rumors; third, not afraid to be placed at the front; fourth, not afraid to be placed at the rear; fifth, not afraid when facing an opponent; sixth, respected by others; seventh, made a defender of the village; eighth, regarded as a strong person.”

In this *pappaseng*, the qualities of a brave person are outlined as guidance for governance. Courage is an essential trait of leadership.

The implementation of *Pangadereng* as the Bugis philosophy of life rests upon four foundational principles or pillars:

1. **The Principle of Mappasilasae:** manifesting *ade'* (custom) for harmony in life, in attitudes and behavior toward oneself within *pangadereng*.
2. **The Principle of Mappasisaue:** the manifestation of *ade'* in imposing sanctions for violations of custom as expressed in *bicara* (legal discourse). This principle emphasizes legality and consistent enforcement.
3. **The Principle of Mappasinrupae:** practicing *ade'* to maintain continuity with established patterns as expressed in *rapang* (precedents or examples).
4. **The Principle of Mappalaiseng:** manifesting *ade'* in clearly defining boundaries between individuals and social institutions to avoid problems and instability. This is expressed in *wari'*, regulating variations in Bugis social behavior.

The noble values contained in the Bugis philosophy of life are particularly interesting when related to the Bugis work ethic in South Sulawesi.

Pangadereng also serves as the guiding principle of life for the Bugis–Makassar community in their daily existence. Kajao Laliddong, whose childhood name was La Méllong, served as *pabbicara* (advisor), community leader, and royal envoy of the Bone Kingdom during the reigns of La Uliyo Bote'é and Tenri Rawe Bongkangé. These two rulers greatly explored and drew upon his ideas. La Méllong was also regarded as a statesman with far-sighted vision.

B. Message as Philosophy

1. The Bugis Philosophical Message on Trustworthy Leadership

The illustration of a trustworthy leader in Bugis philosophy is expressed in the phrase: “*Ku Engkai ri Purennu, ku Dei’ ri Undani*,” which roughly means: a trustworthy leader, when present, brings joy to everyone, and when absent, is deeply missed by all. In Arabic, the word *al-Amin* refers to someone who is trustworthy, reliable, and responsible. Anyone who becomes a leader should begin by asking: “Am I *ri Purennu* (trusted) or *ri Uddani* (missed) by the people I lead?” If people feel doubtful—meaning they neither trust nor miss us—then their willingness to comply with activities, let alone to make sacrifices, will be minimal. The greater the doubt, the less effective the leadership.

How can one become *ri Purennu* (trusted) and *ri Uddani* (missed)?

First, by safeguarding the faults of others—not exposing the weaknesses of colleagues, employees, or members. The more someone reveals the secrets and shortcomings of others, the more their credibility declines. One must be cautious of people who frequently disclose others’ disgrace; if they dare to reveal others’ faults to us, what would prevent them from revealing ours to someone else?

Second, by striving to fulfill promises. This can be seen in one’s carefulness in making promises—making few promises but always keeping them. Be wary of potential leaders who easily scatter promises. A leader who makes many promises should not be immediately trusted. When choosing a leader, it is better to select someone who has demonstrated proof throughout their life rather than someone who only offers promises. An oath itself is already a promise, especially when invoking “By Allah.” A person who holds office, rank, or position but cannot be accountable for it will find that these become a path to disgrace. Moreover, society today is increasingly critical. The higher the position, the more devastating the fall if one proves untrustworthy.

Third, by being responsible and refraining from taking what belongs to others. Every statement should be free from doubt; time should never be underestimated—even a second is valuable (late by a second, a minute, or an hour is still late). The organization under one’s leadership should prioritize the rights of others above one’s own, especially in matters of welfare.

Fourth, by being steadfast in family life (steadfastness that yields happiness).

Pemmali is one of the many cultural traditions created by the Bugis community and has been embedded since ancient times. As we know, culture is inseparable from human beings. In other words, culture cannot exist without human existence, because humans are created by God with intellect, which distinguishes them from other living beings. George Herbert Mead and Michael Owen Jones (1995) state that folklore includes legends, music, oral history, proverbs, jokes, superstitions, folktales, and customs that become traditions within a culture, subculture, or group. Folklore is also a set of practices that function as a means of transmitting cultural traditions.

Pemmali can be understood as a cultural aspect resulting from the community’s creativity in building social order, adopted from noble values passed down from one generation to the next within every Bugis family. It can also be seen as a form of communal prudence—learning from the past so that past events are not repeated in the future. According to one informant, *mappemali* emphasizes obedience to norms and laws. It teaches that one should not take what does not belong to them. This underscores the importance of honesty in social life.

Another informant explained that *pemmali* is instilled from early childhood so that the values are firmly embedded. For example, children are often told not to leave the house after sunset (maghrib), and the television should be turned off. This encourages children to enter the house and perform the maghrib prayer, preventing them from lingering outside. These values are absorbed in childhood and continue into adulthood. Although many of La Méllong’s teachings remain practiced, people often carry them out as ordinary habits of togetherness without fully realizing their

philosophical depth.

Building leadership begins with being trustworthy in small matters. A good leader is not only successful at the office but also successful at home. Many leaders manage systems, offices, or companies well but fail to build their families properly. Returning to Bugis philosophy, a trustworthy leader's presence is *ri Purennu* (joyful) and *ri Uddani* (deeply missed). Yet in recent times, as seen in media reports, many leaders' visits to regions are no longer welcomed with joy or longing; instead, they are met with demonstrations, sometimes even uncontrollable and beyond humanitarian limits, resulting in loss of life.

One fundamental truth that humans must realize is that they are servants, not rulers. Their ability to manage and develop the world is merely a trust bestowed upon them. They are not the ultimate authority; they only carry out the mandate of the One who entrusts it. That is Allah SWT—the true Owner, Creator, and Sustainer of the universe. Yet humans often become arrogant. Their abilities make them forget their status as servants. They begin to govern the world and their lives according to their desires and passions alone.

This is where the teaching of prayer (*shalat*) becomes essential, as it signifies servitude to Allah SWT. From beginning to end, prayer teaches humility. It begins with *takbir*, acknowledging the greatness of Allah SWT—meaning that no one should feel great, including the person praying. The peak of human servitude in prayer is expressed in the acts of bowing (*rukuk*) and prostration (*sujud*).

V. CONCLUSION

The shift in the core cultural values of South Sulawesi (particularly Bugis culture) was, among other factors, caused by the dominant influence of Dutch colonial power in the region around the late seventeenth century. In the past, the Bugis people also had a number of wise figures who taught society about ethical philosophy. Historical records reflect that the life of the Bugis people has always been an integral part of, and cannot be dichotomously separated from, the practical application of *pangngadereng*. *Ade'* (custom) is the key concept, because the Bugis people's belief in their customary law forms the foundation of their ideas regarding relationships with fellow human beings, social institutions, and the surrounding natural environment.

The Bugis philosophical message concerning trustworthy leadership is expressed in the saying: "*Ku Engkai ri Purennu, ku Dei' ri Undani*," which roughly means that a trustworthy leader is one whose presence brings joy to everyone, and whose absence is deeply missed by all. It is here that human beings are truly required to relinquish all worldly attributes that make them feel superior or exalted.

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Conflict of Interest

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