

# Mappalili: The Rice Planting Ritual of Bissu Part of Sustainable Environmental Agenda

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**Abstract.** *Mappalili is a hereditary tradition carried out by the Segeri community in Pangkep Regency, South Sulawesi. This tradition is led by the Bissu in guiding the community as a sign that the cultivation of agricultural land (rice fields) has begun. This tradition is closely related to the understanding of Bugis cosmology in carrying out harmony between humans, nature, and the gods as creators. Mappalili contains a source of knowledge that is transmitted back through various symbols, movements, and ornaments used during ceremonies, but has begun to be overlooked. Therefore, this journal explores how the problems of the Bissu Community as an indigenous community play a role in socio-cultural development, related to the sustainable environmental agenda. This study uses an ethnographic method by involving direct participation with the Bissu community, observing their daily lives, conducting interviews, and utilizing other sources such as social context, kinship ties to patron-client relationships. This study shows that the Bissu community plays a role as a guardian of stability, namely social stability and ecological balance. They maintain the existence of noble values, and a strong relationship between humans, nature, and the gods that have been inherited from their ancestors. In conclusion, they play a key role in resisting external changes by maintaining local traditions. The symbols and movements in the Mappalili ritual highlight the ecological values held dear by the Bissu, which are closely interwoven with their spiritual and social beliefs.*

**Keywords:** *Mappalili, Ritual, Bissu, Rice, Segeri*

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## INTRODUCTION

For these transgender people (bissu), the Hajj allows them to gain recognition as a legitimate part of the Segeri Muslim community (Syamsurijal et al, 2024). Limited resources and technology, economic and social imbalances, to changes in behavior and consumption are urgent challenges facing the world today. "The world is getting older" seems to be inevitable. One of the efforts to respond to this challenge is to make a sustainable development agenda and continue to grow public awareness about critical global issues that are currently faced.

This effort demands integrity between environmental, economic, and social dimensions. So, local wisdom as an identity or cultural personality of a region will always continue to be attached to the "body" of its community, so that it will continue to contribute in responding to the challenges of the times that continue to appear, including in the environmental sustainability agenda. In his book *We Have Never been Modern*, Bruno Latour explained by separating nature and society, we have created a distinction that has no basis in reality. The modern constitution

simultaneously maintains this separation and yet relies on the constant hybridization of nature and culture. We live in a world that is neither purely natural nor purely social, but rather a world filled with hybrids of the two (Latour, 1993).

Latour explained that the separation between nature (nature) and society (society) is an artificial or illusory construction. Humans, today, no longer live in the Anthropocene era, but in the Misanthropocene era. In reality, the two are always connected and affect each other. Various entities, both human and non-human, will always be connected in a complex network. This network then blurs between facts and values or between nature and culture, because basically all entities have a role in shaping the reality we experience today. Latour refers to Lovelock and Margulis by seeing this life as Gaia as about the Earth as an organism.

In other words, all forms of life including bacteria, vegetation, insects have a role in the life circulation of every living thing; this certainly changes the existence of every entity to the point where the entire environment engineers the space of life. In the end, we as humans live in a world full of hybrids, a combination of natural and social elements. That is, the idea of space as a product of the agency is the center of Latour's actor-network theory. Therefore, in responding to this global environmental issue requires a holistic and inclusive approach, combining traditional knowledge with modern strategies is an inevitable option.

In fact, it is necessary to re-articulate ecological statements related to existence, survival, reproduction, to ecosystem areas. At this point, the meeting of everyday space, according to Latour, is held in geo-social classes. It is necessary to connect ecology with socialism in a social-anthropological framework. Humans need to reconnect the land where we live (land we live in) and the land that lives us (land we live from). Class is no longer determined based on its position in the production system, but based on territorial conditions for survival; material conditions of existence, reproduction, and ecosystem.

Efforts to redefine geo-social classes mean placing cosmology about nature (nature) as a social question about indigenous communities. Thus, because in indigenous communities, traditional knowledge and practices offer valuable insights into sustainable life (Latour, 2015). One of the communities that lives in South Sulawesi that is famous and has been widely studied is Bissu. The Bissu community is an indigenous group that has an important position in the social structure of the Bugis community (Triadi, 2018). They are believed to have a strong connection with the spiritual world and are considered to be the link between humans and god. Bissu also becomes a hybrid entity that mimics as an adaptation effort in its socio-cultural ecosystem.

This process forms its own geosocial class that creates space and places Bissu as an agency in indigenous groups (Ismoyo, 2020). In the midst of rapid social changes, Bissu's role is not only limited to ritual leaders, but also as a socio-cultural agent who maintains and transmits traditional values (Ismoyo et al, 2023). Bissu in his role as a gender-diverse spiritual leader, he played an important role in the traditional ritual of Mappalili, a ceremony that marked the beginning of the rice planting season in the Bugis community. Mappalili itself is a tradition that has strong roots in the cosmology of the Bugis community, especially in Segeri, Pangkep Regency.

The Mappalili procession not only serves as an agrarian ceremony, but also as a practical example of how traditional knowledge can contribute to environmental sustainability by reading the implied meaning in the various symbols used during the procession and dance movements performed by the Bissu, which then signal the beginning of the rice growing season, and reflect the deep relationship between the Bugis people and their environment, as well as reflecting the understanding of the Bugis people' cosmology in carrying out harmonization between humans, nature, and gods as the Creator, also as a symbol of cultural resistance to modernization and environmental degradation (Triadi & Ismoyo, 2022). This tradition becomes a place to transmit cultural and ecological knowledge between generations.

From these reflections, this study aims to analyze the role of the Bissu community in the context of sustainable socio-cultural and environmental development (Aisyah, 2018), how Bissu

takes part in maintaining social and environmental balance which is reflected in the annual Mappalili ritual and highlights how this tradition is seen as a cultural resistance effort to rapid social change (Acciaoli, 1990). By looking deeper into the connection of Bissu in the Mappalili ritual, this study will also examine and formulate policies that can integrate traditional knowledge into contemporary environmental practices and contribute to a sustainable environmental agenda. This agenda is considered as one of the efforts to answer the urgency of the challenges of the times that must be faced because it is related to the continuity of the lives of the next generation in the future, an effort to maintain the balance of economic growth, environmental protection, and social welfare.

## Literatur Review

Debates on environmental crisis and sustainable development increasingly highlight the need to reconnect modern policy with cosmological understandings of nature. Latour (1990) criticizes the modern separation between “nature” and “society” as a fictional divide that hides the continuous hybridization of humans and non-humans. For him, we live in a world of “hybrids” where human and non-human actors co-produce reality, and where space must be understood as a product of agency and relations rather than a neutral container. This perspective is important for reading indigenous rituals, because it opens space to see rice, pests, rivers, spirits, and humans as co-actors in an ecological network, not as separate domains. In parallel, Geertz (1973) and Wessing (1997) show that in many Indonesian societies nature is not an inert resource but a realm filled with spirits, ancestors, and unseen beings that demand reciprocity and respect. Maarif (2023) then formulates an “indigenous religion paradigm” that emphasizes intersubjective relations between humans and non-humans based on responsibility, ethics, and reciprocity. These works provide a conceptual bridge to understand Bugis cosmology, where land, water, rice, and invisible beings are treated as subjects with whom humans negotiate coexistence.

The notion of Bissu as *stability steward* can be anchored in ecological and systems theory. Holling (1973) distinguishes between stability and resilience: stability refers to the ability of a system to return quickly to equilibrium, while resilience is the capacity to absorb disturbance without losing its basic structure and function. A resilient system therefore does not reject change, but accommodates it while preserving core identity. Gharajedaghi (2011) extends this idea in systems thinking by arguing that long-term stability does not come from rigidity, but from the ability to adapt, learn, and reorganize. A resilient system is one that can respond flexibly to shocks while maintaining its essential patterns and values. When applied to indigenous institutions, these theories allow us to understand the Bissu not as a static remnant of the past, but as an adaptive node that helps the community negotiate modern pressures without losing its cosmological core.

Studies on Bugis cosmology show that the universe is divided into three realms *Botting Langi'* (upper world), *Ale Lino* (middle world), and *Uriq Liu* (underworld) with humans positioned in the middle and constantly mediating relations among these domains (Pelras, 1996). The epic *La Galigo* becomes a key textual reservoir that encodes this cosmology, including narratives about rice, gods, and moral violations against food and land. Aisyah (2018) reads *La Galigo* as a source of environmental ethics, showing how prohibitions against wasting rice or damaging land are rooted in a theological and cosmological order. Fardian et al. (2024) reinforces this by retelling episodes where arrogance toward rice and food is punished as a serious moral violation. These works underline that in Bugis thought, rice is not only a crop but a sacred presence embodied in Sangiang Serri, the rice goddess, whose honor is closely tied to ecological balance.

Within this frame, Mappalili is not merely a seasonal marker of planting time, but a ritualized renewal of the covenant between humans, rice, land, and the divine. It functions as a cosmological technology that aligns social action, agricultural practice, and spiritual obligations. Research on Bissu has largely focused on gender diversity, religious negotiation, and cultural survival. Triadi (2018; 2019; 2020) explores Bissu as non-binary spiritual figures who negotiate

power, Islam, and local belief in various domains ritual, tourism, and everyday life. Ismoyo (2020; 2023) further conceptualizes Bissu as hybrid entities and “queer spiritual spaces” that destabilize rigid gender and religious categories while opening alternative forms of religiosity and sociality.

Recent work by Syamsurijal et al. (2024) frames Bissu as “tropical indigenous queer” who act as guardians of tradition within Muslim societies, including through practices such as the Hajj. These studies show that Bissu occupy a complex geo-social position: simultaneously marginalized and central, contested and indispensable. However, most of this literature prioritizes questions of gender, identity, and religious negotiation. The ecological dimension of Bissu’s ritual work how they read pests, land, water, and weather; how they articulate ethics towards non-human beings; how their ritual scripts encode environmental governance tends to be mentioned only implicitly or as background. The present article positions Bissu more explicitly as *stability stewards* whose authority spans social, spiritual, and ecological domains.

Scott (1985) develops the concept of “everyday resistance” to describe subtle, routine practices that challenge domination without open confrontation. Within this lens, indigenous rituals can be read as quiet but persistent forms of resistance against state or market projects that homogenize culture and exploit nature. Acciaioli (1990) shows how spirits, deities, and ancestors are mobilized in household and livelihood management in South Sulawesi, revealing that ritual is not separate from economic and ecological life but an integral part of them. Tsing (2024), through the notion of “friction,” highlights how global discourses and local practices meet, collide, and co-produce new configurations, including in environmental projects.

In the context of Java, Wessing (1997) demonstrates that communities of spirits, people, and nature are interwoven in ways that shape how forests, rivers, and land are cared for. These insights inform the reading of Mappalili as a ritual that both sustains ecological relationships and quietly resists exploitative agricultural modernization. The ritual’s insistence on subject–subject relations between humans and non-humans can be understood as a critique of anthropocentric models that reduce nature to an object of extraction. At the global level, the United Nations (2015) through “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” explicitly calls for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge and local wisdom in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The agenda stresses the inseparability of environmental protection, social inclusion, and economic well-being.

Graham (2019) suggests that a “critically positive” discourse is needed to recognize the constructive contributions of local culture without romanticizing it. This aligns with Indonesian policy documents such as the *Indonesia Environmental Outlook 2019*, which warn that uncontrolled modernization can erode cultural practices that historically supported ecological sustainability. Maarif (2019) and other scholars of indigenous religion argue that local cosmologies often carry sophisticated ecological insights: recognition of non-human agency, ritualized forms of reciprocity, and moral constraints on exploitation. In this sense, indigenous rituals like Mappalili are not mere “cultural heritage” but living frameworks for environmental governance that can inform contemporary policy. The present article addresses this gap by bringing together ecological cosmology, resilience theory, indigenous religion studies, and sustainable development discourse to read Mappalili as a living environmental agenda. It argues that Bissu’s ritual practice is not only about identity and spirituality, but also about regulating relations between humans and non-humans, mediating modern pressures, and offering a locally rooted model of sustainable ecological governance.

## **METHODS**

This research uses the ethnographic method by involving oneself as a research subject (Tsing, 2024). The ethnographic approach requires direct involvement in the field to understand the social and cultural context of the Segeri community in depth. This research was carried out with participatory interview techniques, observation, and analysis of cultural symbols that appeared during the Mappalili ritual procession held on November 2024 (by interviewing eight bissu). Researchers used the instrument such as the use of ornaments, dance movements, and

ritual procession used by the Bissu to understand the deep meaning of each element used in this procession (Errington, 2014). In addition, researchers also collected data using an emic approach to understand the meaning constructed by local communities regarding their relationship with nature and the god by utilizing various sources such as social relations, kinship ties, and patron-client structures that exist in the community. The theoretical approach used in this research includes the concept of ecological cosmology and integrates the understanding of humans and nature as an inseparable unity (Geertz, 1973). In this context, the concept of cosmivision sees humans and nature as an integral unity. These glasses are then used to see Bissu not only as a guardian of tradition but also as an agent of social transformation. The Bissu community acts as the guardian of the balance, by combining spiritual and ecological values in daily life. Besides that, the theory of cultural resistance from James C. Scott is also used to understand how the Bissu community and Mappalili practices function as a symbolic form of resistance against the cultural homogenization brought by modernity and globalization to the exploitation of modernity. Finally, this study tries to outline how Bissu can play an important role in encouraging sustainable development by bridging the gap between traditional practices and modern environmental policies. This shows that their involvement in the Mappalili ritual reflects a deep respect for the environment that can be an input for contemporary conservation efforts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Bissu as Stability Steward

Pelras (1996) in his book *The Bugis* highlights the role of the Bissu community as a link between the human world and the spiritual world. The Bugis cosmology depicted in *Sure La Galigo* divides the universe into three parts, namely the upper world (*Botting Langi'*), the middle world (*Ale Lino*), and the underworld (*Uriqliu*). In Bugis cosmological order, Bissu exists in the middle world as a link between two divine entities (the upper world and the lower world) with the human entity that exists in the middle world. Therefore, not a few literature sources mention Bissu as a traditional priest who plays a role in religious and social rituals. Although their identity is often associated with the concept of non-binary gender, bissu's role goes beyond gender boundaries and functions as a guardian of the Bugis cultural tradition and as a stability steward (Holling, 1973).

An ecologist C. S. Holling who studied stability in ecological systems stated “Resilience allows systems to absorb disturbances and adapt without fundamentally changing their status or function” (Holling, 1973). As a stability steward in this context, Bissu is seen as a group that tries to preserve the culture that has existed for a long time and is believed to be passed down from generation to generation from the ancestors, as seen in the Mappalili tradition that is still preserved to this day, but at the same time they give a space to adapt with ongoing development. As a cultural guardian, Bissu plays an important role in maintaining social stability in the Bugis community. They act as mediators in social conflicts and spiritual healers (Triadi, 2019). This role helps maintain a stable social structure, where traditional values and beliefs are still respected. In this situation, Bissu functions to balance the changes that come from outside with maintaining local traditions. Bissu accepted modernization and adaptation in their practice, and many of them remained steadfast in maintaining old teachings and practices that reflected the Bugis cultural identity.

They often face challenges from parties who want to change or remove traditional rituals, especially from more conservative religious groups. By maintaining their role and traditional rituals, Bissu acts as a stability steward that would reject changes that are considered to threaten their existence and identity (Latour, 2005), meaning that a stability steward role is to preserve continuity while allowing necessary growth and adjustment, but not with any adjustment that could threaten the core values of their identity and belief. Meadows captures the importance of balance in the role of stability steward that long lasting stability does not come from rigidity but from the flexibility to respond to change without losing the system's core essence (Meadow, 2008). It encapsulates the essential role of a stability steward which is not only to maintain the

status quo but also to enable sustainable, ongoing development by balancing resilience and adaptability. Meadow emphasizes that a stable system is one that can respond to change flexibility which allows growth and adjustment.

In the modern era, Bissu's role as a stability steward is often tested by social changes, including modernization, the influence of major religions, and government policies that may not always be in line with their traditional practices. It needs to be understood that the emergence of Bissu's anachronistic view of knowledge is caused by what Latour criticized about the spatio-temporal conditioning of modernity. The epistemological framework limits the public's understanding of the Bissu community in space and time from linear development. Therefore, it is important to see how space and time are produced dynamically through Bissu interaction in its community in everyday space. This can be seen from the presence of Bissu who continues to be active in traditional ceremonies showing that they remain a symbol of cultural sustainability and local identity in the midst of rapid changes. Bissu, with their role as guardians of tradition and social balancers, can be considered as stability steward in Bugis society (Triadi, 2019).

Bissu rituals and communities are material discoveries of collective responsibility where human and non-human varieties are present in the ecological sustainability process. The idea of ritual in the Bissu community becomes a socio-cultural translation approach to understand Bissu in their spatial reality (Latour, 2005). In particular, how Bissu maintains and protects existing culture and values, while facing the challenges of external changes that have the potential to damage their social and cultural structure. This role shows that although Bissu is considered a unique minority group, their existence is still important in maintaining the continuity and stability of Bugis culture. He takes the role of a traditional guardian and social mediator. This role was reinforced by Geertz (1973) who emphasized the importance of rituals and nature to maintain social cohesion and strengthen cultural identity. Maintaining the culture that has been brought and trusted by ancestors. In this context, Mappalili is not only an agrarian ritual, but also a platform to strengthen social ties and strengthen cultural identity.

The Mappalili ritual that still exists to this day is evidence of Bissu's role as a stability steward by maintaining the continuity of these rituals that have been passed down from generation to generation. They ensure that traditional cultural and religious norms remain alive in the midst of modernization and social change. Their role in the Mappalili ritual is very central in maintaining cultural and environmental preservation. They use various symbols to ensure the fertility of the land and the welfare of the local community. This Mappalili ritual includes offerings, prayers, and ceremonial dances that reflect the relationship between humans, nature, and gods. Therefore, this ritual is the embodiment of the sustainability practice of the Bugis people and their respect for the environment.

### **The History and Role of Bissu in the Mappalili Ritual and Its Relationship in the Ecological Harmonization Agenda**

During the DI/TII upheaval period, Bissu was accused of being part of the PKI because it was considered deviant and the ritual practices that were carried out were also considered not in accordance with the norms and teachings of Islam. In 1966 became the peak of the lowest point of the Bissu community with the implementation of Operation Toba' (repentance) led by Kahar Muzakkar, Bissu was persecuted and executed so that his role was significantly reduced. Many places, attributes and tools used in the Bissu rite were burned and drowned, that's how the Mappalili ritual lost space and did not get a place and opportunity to be carried out. From then on, slowly the Bissu began to be discredited in the Bugis community order, their role was no longer needed centrally as it used to be during the royal era. But finally, Bissu was reborn and began to rise when the crop failure phenomenon occurred.

Some people who still believe in Bissu think that the phenomenon is caused because they no longer perform the Mappalili ritual. Because they considered the importance of this ritual, they began to protect and hide the remaining Bissu so that they could return and continue to perform the Mappalili ritual with the hope of avoiding reinforcements or the phenomenon of crop failure

in the following years. However, Bissu as part of the culture of the Bugis community certainly brings local identities, values and norms that may still be relevant to be applied in modern times, including in the sustainable environmental agenda. The crop failure event that occurred when the Mappalili ritual was abolished became evidence of how the value of local wisdom in the Mappalili ritual contributed to the harmonization of ecology, it may even be used as an alternative to answer the current problems. Bissu Emil said:

*“So, the Bissu is very attentive and sensitive, especially when it comes to killing plants, let alone animals, because they believe that everything in this world, napatangka puang lata’ala, dewata pappunnae, riwinru ri lino (brought to life by Allah SWT, the owner of all things, to live in this world), has its own purpose. This includes pests that disturb the rice goddess, Sangiang Serri, like anango, ancale (grasshoppers), aware pests, and others”*

It means the Bissu embrace all elements that correlate in planting the rice, including the unseen forces and natural being believed to dwell in the fields. They treat pests not as enemies, but as creatures with purpose, born into this world by the will of the divine. Mappalili, ceremonially, is indeed done as a marker of the beginning of the rice planting season and as a prayer and hope that appalili or avoids things that will disturb and damage the plants. However, in its implementation, it turns out that this ritual becomes a unifying space, whether it is between humans or between humans and non-humans. Bissu as part of the ancestral belief (ancient Bugis) sees the relationship formed between humans and nature as a relationship between subject and subject, not as subject and object.

The destruction of nature that causes many disasters and threats on this earth is one of them and the one that contributes the most is because of human greed by positioning themselves as a subject and nature is an object, so that humans feel entitled and have power over what exists and is available in nature and they can use and exploit at will (Triadi et al, 2020). It will be a different story if the relationship is built based on an intersubjective relationship by seeing nature as another subject that should be respected and appreciated for its existence. In one of an interview session with Bissu Emil, he explained about how Bissu make the intersubjective relationship during the planting and tending the rice:

*“When something becomes a disturbance, even rat, the Bissu will catch just one, gently stroke it, and speak to it by its real name (aseng tongeng-tongennna), perhaps what we now know as the Latin name. The Bissu will say: “this is not your place. Try to find another place where you don’t cause harm. This woman (the sangiang serri goddess) here is very kind, a beautiful woman who has never bothered you, so don’t disturb her”*

And the animal would listen because it was a sacred Bissu who was speaking. The Bissu would say: “If you disturb her, I will destroy you, because I know your name.” That means, they know the king (the essence or spirit) of that creature. Even for rats, there are so many Latin names, but once that is done, it is safe. Then the Bissu would say: “You are like the rice goddess, beautiful, graceful, intelligent, and everything, yet still humble. “So be like tice – *massipa’ pada ko ase, pede matanre, pede cuku ko, pede matanre pede cuku ko-* which means: “Be like a rice stalk, the fuller it becomes, the more it bows. The more it hods, the more it humbles itself.” In that statement, the Bissu view all living beings as part of a sacred ecosystem. When one disturb the rice, like a rat or grasshopper, the Bissu does not harm it immediately, instead, they gently speak to it by its true name, asking it to leave in peace, respecting the sanctity of the rice goddess, Sangiang Serri.

This spiritual dialogue reflects their deep respect for life, other subjects, humility and the belief that harmony with nature must be maintained, not by force, but by sacred understanding. Samsul Maarif (2023) explained that this intersubjective relationship is manifested in 3 principles, namely responsibility, ethics, and reciprocity. Responsibility is a form of responsibility that requires each subject to take care of each other's well-being, ethics or ethics requires each subject to treat other subjects as if they want to be treated. While reciprocity or reciprocal relationship is a concept of sowing, what you plant in another subject is what you will reap for

yourself. These three principles are reflected in the traditional ritual of Mappalili. There are several points that are used as sacred points where arajang must be carried when paraded, namely in rice fields, markets and rivers. The ritual shows that the Bissu consider nature (rice fields, land, rivers, and so on) as another subject, so that they feel responsible for each other's well-being by not treating nature arbitrarily, maintaining cleanliness and not destroying nature, one of which is by making these places sacred so that humans feel reluctant to damage and disturb the ecosystem in it (Triadi, 2019). Thus, the harvest that will be obtained will be good and abundant.

This inter-subjective relationship is also materialized in the form of prayers recited using the to rilangi Language by the Bissu addressed to the gods (including Sanggiang Serri) as well as Bissu is known as an intermediary between humans and gods. Then, also through "alms" the food that is placed in walasuji, a kind of stretcher made of bamboo blades, filled with various foods such as sticky rice (sokko') 4 forms, red, black, yellow and white which symbolizes fire, earth, wind and water, then there is also chicken, fruits and traditional Bugis cakes. This walasuji is then placed at several points that are considered to be inhabited by invisible beings, which are also considered to be other subjects. The food in walasuji is certainly also a blessing for the local community, because after the prayer is recited by the Bissu, the local community will scramble to take the contents of walasuji, because for them the food is intended by abstract creatures so they eat "delicately" and the local people who eat the "rough". In addition to intersubjective relationships (human and non-human), Mappalili is also a meeting place for all levels of society. The implementation of this ritual involves all groups starting from Bissu as the leader of the ritual, the government as the committee that helps the implementation of the ritual, traditional figures, academics, practitioners, and local communities who participate and interact with each other to enliven this ritual.

Mappalili is deeply rooted in the socio-historical context and culture of the Bugis community. It symbolizes the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, which is important for sustainable life. This ritual also serves as a reminder of the collective identity of the community and their responsibility to preserve the environment for future generations. By maintaining the tradition, Bissu contributes to the cultural continuity and environmental resilience of the Bugis community. Scott (1985). in *Weapons of the Weak* developed the concept of everyday resistance that is relevant to the Mappalili tradition. This ritual can be seen as a symbolic form of resistance to the pressure of modernization and globalization that threatens local wisdom. As an effort to maintain ecological balance, Mappalili emphasized the importance of maintaining harmony with nature, in line with the cosmovision view of the Bugis community. Acciaioli (1990) revealed that these practices reflect community-based ecological management that supports sustainability. Besides that, the Mappalili ritual led by Bissu shows how traditional knowledge and practices can contribute to sustainable development. By recognizing and utilizing Bissu's role in environmental management, the policies made can be more effective in maintaining ecological and social sustainability. This study highlights the importance of integrating traditional knowledge into contemporary environmental policies to achieve better sustainability.

### **Integration of Local Wisdom in Sustainable Development**

In the context of sustainable development, United Nations (2015) through *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* underlines the importance of integrating local wisdom into global policy. Mappalili as a local practice can make a significant contribution to the global environmental agenda, especially in maintaining ecosystem sustainability. This is in line with Graham's (2019) view on the importance of critical analysis in understanding the contribution of local culture to global development. A sustainable environmental agenda is a series of policies, strategies, and actions designed to ensure that the development and use of natural resources is carried out in a way that does not damage or reduce the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This concept focuses on the balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and social welfare. This agenda strives for

the use of natural resources such as water, land, and forests and must be done carefully to avoid excessive exploitation that can damage the ecosystem and reduce the availability of these resources in the future.

Protecting biodiversity, maintaining water and air quality, and reducing pollution are important parts of this agenda. This includes efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change. Reduce dependence on fossil fuels and switch to more environmentally friendly energy sources such as the sun, wind, and biomass to reduce the negative impact on the environment. This agenda also includes efforts to ensure that all levels of society, including vulnerable groups, are involved and benefit from sustainable development. This includes providing fair access to resources, environmental education, and economic opportunities. In addition, it also encourages economic growth that focuses on environmental sustainability, for example by developing environmentally friendly industries, supporting green technology innovation, and promoting sustainable consumption and production. The sustainable environmental agenda aims to create a world where economic development does not damage the environment and social welfare can be achieved fairly, by ensuring that the needs of the current generation are met without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

The existing literature shows that the Mappalili tradition and the role of the Bissu community play a key role in maintaining ecological and social balance in Segeri, Pangkep Regency. The importance of involving the Bissu community in sustainable development is widely recognized. However, the challenge of modernization and marginalization of indigenous communities is still the main obstacle. Modernization often has a negative impact on local culture, including the marginalization of indigenous communities such as Bissu. Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Indonesia in Indonesia Environmental Outlook 2019 showed that uncontrolled modernization can threaten the continuity of cultural practices that are oriented towards environmental sustainability. Therefore, the preservation of traditions such as Mappalili becomes increasingly important to protect local wisdom from cultural homogenization caused by globalization, and more than that, maintaining this local wisdom becomes a ticket for the implementation of the environmental sustainability agenda as an effort to respond to the damage caused by human activities to the ecosystem and human welfare such as extreme climate change, environmental pollution, deforestation and land degradation, unsustainable natural resource management to biodiversity damage that occurs in various parts of the world, so it is necessary to have an agenda in striving for environmental sustainability, and one of the ways out is to maintain local wisdom in which there are status agents quo that can maintain ecological balance and harmony.

### **Variety of Symbols and Movements of Mappalili Ritual in the Meaning of the Sustainable Environmental Agenda**

Mappalili tradition in this context becomes a medium for transmitting ecological knowledge, as a platform to convey conservation messages to the community. The Bissu community, as the leader of the ceremony, conveys the values of conservation and harmony with nature through a variety of symbols and movements related to the sustainability of nature and the welfare of the community. This procession contains a variety of symbols, movements, and ornaments that reflect the harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and gods. For example, the use of 'lipa' sabbe' (silk cover) and 'saloko' (Bissu's crown) in the procession is not only a decoration or a symbol of social status, but also reflects the natural wealth and spiritual connection between humans and nature. The Bissu community also acts as a social mediator, maintaining community harmony through their traditional knowledge. In the context of sustainable development, Mappalili can be seen as a local strategy to protect ecosystems and increase environmental awareness.

Furthermore, this tradition also shows how the Bissu community plays a role in socio-cultural development. In the Mappalili procession, the patron-client relationship between the Bissu and the Segeri community shows a complex social structure in which the Bissu acts as

spiritual and cultural leaders. They also become social conflict mediation agents, by using traditional knowledge to solve community problems related to natural resource management. In the context of the sustainable environmental agenda, Mappalili becomes a means to internalize conservation values to the wider community. The concept of palili which means protecting or maintaining, describes the philosophy of sustainability where humans must be responsible for the balance of the ecosystem. This tradition also shows the local community's resistance to modern agricultural practices that tend to be exploitative and unsustainable. Bissu's involvement in this ritual shows that they not only preserve cultural heritage, but also participate in environmental conservation efforts. These values are relevant to the sustainable development agenda that prioritizes social and ecological aspects.

Some symbols are commonly used in Mappalili ritual led by the Bissu in South Sulawesi. These symbols have a deep meaning in the traditions and beliefs of the Bugis people regarding agriculture and natural harmonization. The Mappalili ritual is led by Bissu, who plays a central role in maintaining cultural and environmental preservation. The Mappalili ritual involves various symbols such as offerings to the gods and traditional dances that symbolize the harmony between humans and nature. Therefore, this rite movement reflects the belief of the Bugis people about ecological and spiritual balance. This ritual shows a deep respect for the land as the source of life. The Bissu directed rituals with the aim of ensuring soil fertility and the success of the growing season. The entire community is involved in this ritual, strengthening a sense of common ownership over the environment and agricultural processes. The Mappalili ritual not only has an ecological value but also is deeply socio-historical. This ritual is an important part of the cultural identity of the Bugis people, connecting them with their ancestors and land. Hence, it functioned as a medium to transmit environmental knowledge and sustainability practices to the next generation. This ritual strengthens the harmonious relationship between society and the environment, as well as between humans and spiritual powers. We follow the Mappalili ritual in Segeri, Pangkep in 2023 for two month, from the results of our observations we have summarized several kinds of symbols and movements that we observed and interpret them as follows:

### ***Rice (Bere)***

As a source of life, rice becomes the main symbol in this ritual which shows the hope of the community so that their harvest will be abundant and blessed. The rice symbolizes prosperity and life. In Mappalili ritual, rice that has just been harvested or rice that is ready to be planted is used as a symbol of prayer for successful harvest and well-being. In Bugis cosmology, it recognizes one entity called Sengiang Serri (Goddess of rice) who is considered the goddess. It specifically did its duty to fertilize rice or thwart rice growth to condemn people who violate the command of Patotoe (God of Destiny). In La Galigo it is told that the figure of Sengiang Serri is actually the first child of Batara Guru named We Oddang Riu from his concubine named We Saung Riu who died 7 days after her birth and then it was known that this first child incarnated into rice and then known as the goddess of rice (Pancana, 2017)



Figure 1. Ase the Unhulled Rice  
*Source: Personal Documentation*

The epic of La Galigo is about how rice becomes a central thing in human life, in one chapter in La Galigo tells a story about the Kingdom called Toddang Toja. This kingdom also has a level that is equivalent to the kingdom of Tomanurung (people descended from heaven as the first human) which are pure descendants of to manurung who are occupied by a king named La Urung Mpepsi and his queen named We Pada Uleng. But unfortunately the power of La Urung Mpepsi and We Pada Uleng had to end because of their arrogance. This happened when they invited all the kingdoms on earth to celebrate the royal ceremony in Tompoq Tikkaq, then for some reason, none of the invited kingdoms could come to the event they held, so La Urung Mpepsi was furious and wasted rice and food that had been served, wasting or throwing away rice was strictly prohibited and considered a serious violation by Patotoqe. The story excerpt from the epic La Galigo emphasizes the importance of respecting the natural resources that have provided the human being until now and it is also important to ensure its sustainability for the future generations.

### ***Betel leaf and Areca Nut (Sirih and Pinang)***

Sirih (Betel Leaf) and pinang (Areca Nut) are prepared as offerings which are also required in rituals to honor the ancestors and guardian spirits. Sirih is considered as a tribute and respect to whoever it is presented, in mappalili ritual sirih is presented to represent good intentions and respect for ancestors or spiritual power, besides that it also means purification or cleansing against negative energy in order to present a holy space to carry out sacred rituals and finally it also symbolizes welcoming guests who come to attend the ritual as a form of openness and warmth from the bissu.



Figure 2. Puang Matoa Was Folding the Batel Leaf

*Source: Personal Documentation*

While pinang is associated with fertility and growth, in the context of mappalili, pinang symbolizes the hope for prosperity and welfare for the community, besides that it is also considered as a unifier that reflects the hope for the realization of unity and unity in a community, and finally it also symbolizes the balance between worldly and spiritual. Sirih and pinang show gratitude and requests for blessings from the ancestors so that the agricultural process runs smoothly. Sirih and pinang are two things that are always juxtaposed, it turns out that in the meaning of sirih and pinang if used together both create a symbol of harmony between body and soul, as well as between humans and nature. The use of this betel nut and pining is also proven to be found often mentioned in the epic stories of La Galigo, this sirih and pinang is presented when welcoming guests or at the new time the Tomanurung figures that are just woke up from sleep and started the day by sirih and pinang first.

### ***Walasuji***

Walasuji is the name for a place that is made in a square shape from bamboo that is filled with various kinds of food as an "offering or gift" to the nature. Among them are sokko patanrupa 4 kinds of sticky rice, white red, yellow and black. Sokko pute (white sticky rice) symbolizes water. Water has the nature of flowing to a lower place, so humans are symbolized by water with the hope that humans can be humble. Sokko cella (red glutinous rice), symbolizes fire.



Figure 3. Sokko' Patang Rupa (Four Kinds of Sticky Rice)  
Source: Personal Documentation

Fire has a burning and burning nature, which means that humans should be able to control themselves not to get emotional quickly. Sokko ridi (yellow glutinous rice), symbolizing the wind. The wind comes from various directions without knowing the time, symbolizing the nature of being self-restrained, meaning the nature that does not depend on others, and the last one is sokko bolong (black glutinous rice), symbolizing the land that is neutral and objective, therefore it is interpreted as honesty. For more details Bissu Emil explained as follows:

*"Why are there four types of offerings? Yes it's about how the Bissu teach their children. They don't explicitly say, this is earth, this is fire, this is water, this is wind, but they must understand that there are four basic elements. These are the fundamental traits of human beings, their inner nature. "*

Na alai manessu sipa'na apie (a person who follows the nature of fire), suju'i nroko i (easily flares up, quick-temperes), that is the nature of fire (the red glutinous rice). Then there is the nature of earth (sipa'na tanae - the black glutinous rice), the nature of water (sipa'na wae-the white glutinous rice, and the nature of wind (sipa'na bara'e - the yellow glutinous rice). So, nroko'ki na tarana angikki, nrata ki na tarana tana (you rise like the wind, you level yourself like the earth) that is the meaning behind it.

"O devine goddess, O Alla, O God who created the earth and all within it. Four directios, four e...ppa (four): earth, fire, wind water. O Lord... only to You we devote our believe and custom, only to Allah the one, and to His prophets." (This is part of the Torilangi chant of the Bissu.) So in the part, people already understood, the Bissu already knew that God is One, and that prophets and messenger are many. Allah sisinae (the One and only), while prophets are many." Bugis people in communicating their feelings and expectations, not only expressed verbally but also non-verbally such as the form of philosophical symbols found in food.

*"We eat the rough, they (to alusu) eat the smooth" said Emil, Pangkep 2023*

### **Other Symbols that are Interpreted**

In Mappalili procession, sacred arajang objects called Rakkala are placed in the middle of the house and decorated with various objects and offerings that have their own meanings, some of which we observed and analyzed by collecting information from the Bissu and local people, which is summarized as follows:



Figure 4. Benno - a Rice Crispy  
Source: Personal Documentation

Benno, a rice made like popcorn that is spread to the people who are present in the Mappalili procession as a symbol of development, increasing in number, and hope for long-lived. Dupa, the incense that is burned during the ritual has a very fragrant aroma that is intended for everyone to always feel positive aromas, besides that incense that is also lit as a medium to communicate with the upper world and the underworld done by Puang Matoa.



Figure 5. Utti Manurung  
Source: Personal Documentation

Utti Mattunrung (a bunch of bananas) is like a hand that is praying, this sign symbolizes a prayer to the Almighty, to always send sustenance to the owner of the wish. Bissu Emil once said:

*"Why utti (banana) manurung, the Bugis people know that uti manurung is also mysterious, which is why it is used in offerings. So, we want to be like that banana, even though it symbolizes independence and self-reliance. It grows without needing a father or anything else, yet it still thrives and benefits everyone. Every part of it is useful, from its root to all its component. That is Utti manurung"*

Gandrang Palili is a musical instrument that is played as in accompanying during the Mappalili ritual procession, the musical instrument consists of drums, gongs, pui-pui, lae-lae and buttons, each musician has his own beats pattern, this symbolizes a harmony that should be possessed in building a relationship between humans and nature that have their respective roles and do not dominate or expose each other. Bissu Emil said: When does the dru sound? It symbolizes five daily prayers times in Islam. There is a time called mattang esso (midday), when the drum sounds during the day. Then there is makkarueng, which is around Ashar (afternoon prayer). There is mallago kesso, which is at Maghrib (sunset prayer), and also mattangga benggi (midnight), Isha (night prayer), and subuh at maddini ari (dawn). Baki Pannampa is an accessory used by one of the Bissu to resemble a hat that covers the entire head and from around the tip of the hat protrudes certain ornaments, this object symbolizes the world and its surroundings, regarding the relationship between humans with nature, humans with their gods and humans with humans.

Alosu, it is a chicken head-shaped object that symbolizes a bird as a symbol of the upper world (Botting Langiq). Arumpigi which is in the form of bamboo covered with red cloth until it protrudes down to resemble a tail, this object symbolizes the snake which is a symbol of the underworld (Buri Liu). Labulalle is a male symbol where the banana tree is considered as his body, coconut as his testicles and jackfruit as his penis.



Figure 5: The Umbrella Bissu  
Source: Personal Documentation

The umbrella used by Bissu in rituals to protect rakkala that is placed in the middle, the umbrella symbolizes the form of protection from negative forces and symbolizes the protection and spiritual authority of Bissu as the guardian of harmony between humans and nature, and the last is the bun and traditional clothes used by Bissu. Bissu wears traditional clothes complete with buns and typical accessories in the Mappalili ritual. This traditional clothing signifies the majesty and sacredness of the ceremony, as well as depicting bissu's status as a neutral spiritual leader, not bound by gender. Before this Mappalili ritual is carried out, tudang sipulung (Communal Discussion) is first carried out to determine the date of the Mappalili ritual. According to Puang Matoa (Name for the leader of the Bissu) At first, the determination of the implementation of this ritual was determined by Puang Matoa, but along with the development of the times, the determination was no longer completely determined by Puang Matoa but must be discussed in consultation with all parties including the government, local village heads, traditional stakeholders and the large family of the Segeri.

Tudang sipulung is a typical term used by the Bugis-Makassar community in reaching a consensus in various affairs. In the environmental context, tudang sipulung acts as a platform for mediation between the government and the community in maintaining ecosystems and natural resources. With this democratic deliberation approach and based on local wisdom, tudang sipulung can be an effective means to increase community participation in environmental and sustainable development programs. In this procession on the first day of the ritual procession, Puang Matoa walked accompanied by two middle-aged men who were seen carrying ritual equipment walking towards the river to perform the procession of mallekke wae and malekke labullae, which was taking water from the river to be used as water to wash the arajang for the first time when it was lowered and taking banana leaves that were used as a base to put arajang in the middle of the house, these two processes signified respect for arajang (Robinson, 2008).

That is the sign of the beginning of the mattedu Arajang procession (awakening the arajang) at the beginning. Arajang or heirlooms that become the central in Bissu Pangkep in the Mappalili ritual which is called rakkala which is a rice field plowing wood that is believed to have spiritual power that can maintain soil fertility and give abundant harvests. This arajang becomes the main symbol of the importance of agricultural sustainability and respect for nature. In the context of the environment, this ritual reflects the public's respect for nature and the importance of

maintaining the balance of the ecosystem. This practice reminds the community of the importance of maintaining agricultural sustainability and the preservation of the natural environment. Maggiri is a typical dance of the bissu that shows its immunity by stabbing kris (a ceremonial knife) into their body parts such as in the palms, neck, chest, and eyes while walking around the arajang without injury. This dance symbolizes the form of bissu's loyalty to the kingdom that is willing to sacrifice and die to protect arajang, symbolizes immunity that is not vulnerable to physical threats and Bissu's spiritual strength, symbolizes protection of the community and the environment, and is believed to be a double-souled creature and has a direct relationship with the supernatural, therefore this dance is also a moment where Bissu communicates with the Gods and is usually followed by a trans event where Bissu loses consciousness that allows them to communicate with the gods or the spiritual world and receive messages or get certain insights.

In a modern context, this trans experience also serves to help people face environmental and social challenges through insights obtained from the spiritual experiences of the Bissu. In this ritual, the Bissu also uses kris or badik which is also considered as a spiritual tool that has magical powers. This traditional weapon is believed to be able to protect people from evil spirits and other threats that can disrupt the agricultural process. This procession is carried out on the last day and is considered as the peak of the ritual carried out by parading arajang (Rakkala) around the village, and specifically brought to several points, namely rice fields, rivers and markets. By parading around the village, the community will understand that their rice fields are ready to be planted, besides that this procession also symbolizes the spread of positive energy and blessings from ancestors to all corners of the village.

This is believed to provide fertility and abundant harvests and create harmony between humans and nature. In this procession, Puang Matoa along with several other Bissu, also assisted by the executive committee from the government, brought arajang to several points by carrying and sheltered with a Bugis umbrella in yellow, golden and red, complete with musicians. In addition, this procession is also followed by yellow, black, red and white flags. While traveling around, walasuji has also been prepared which will be kept in several places on the way to the stopover points of arajang. When arajang was carried around the village, the local people flocked out of the house and provided water and water scoop in front of the house while waiting for the arajang procession to pass after being taken to the stopover point. At that time, the group that delivered the arajang would be watered by the locals with joy. This is done as a hope that their rice fields will always be rained and not experience drought, besides that it also strengthens the relationship between each other. After being paraded around the village, the last stop was at arajang's house. That is where the cemme lombo procession or bathing arajang as a whole is done. This procession is of course still led by Puang Matoa, but the people are scrambling to participate in bathing the arajang.

After being cleaned as a whole, the arajang will be wrapped in a white cloth and tied with coconut leaves neatly, then brought to his room and tied on the ceiling of the house under which there is a wooden couch containing various kinds of food and incense that has been provided by Puang Matoa. This procession is called Mappaenre Arajang or putting to sleep arajang and is also the last form of tribute to the goddess Sanggiang Serri who has attended all the ritual processions that have been carried out. In the cosmic view of Bugis, humans, nature, and the spiritual world must live in balance. The series of movement symbols carried out by the Bissu is considered as a means to maintain balance. This ritual illustrates how the Bugis community considers nature not only as a resource, but as a living entity that has a will and power that must be respected and harmonized. Bissu, as the guardian of this tradition, plays an important role in maintaining this relationship through the sacred movements they do, and this becomes the same mission and awareness as the next to the sustainable environment that they want to achieve.

## **Implications of Sustainable Environmental Policy and Agenda**

The results of this research indicate the importance of integrating local wisdom such as Mappalili into sustainable development policies. The integration of the values contained in Mappalili into environmental conservation programs can be an effective strategy to increase community participation in maintaining nature conservation (Wessing, 1997). Recognition of the role of the Bissu community in maintaining environmental balance, or as a stability steward that still adapting and resilience to changes under modernity and preserving traditions that foster harmony and ecology, leads to strengthening cultural preservation efforts and improving the welfare of local communities. Conservation programs involving indigenous people such as Bissu can be a model for the implementation of inclusive and sustainable development. The government can set policies and regulations that support environmental protection, such as regulations on waste management, emission standards, and incentives for renewable energy. Environmental problems are often global, such as climate change and depletion of the ozone layer. Therefore, international cooperation through agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement are very important.

There should be an increasing public awareness about the importance of environmental sustainability through education and public campaigns so that individuals can take more environmentally friendly actions in their daily lives. Based on the findings from the Mappalili ritual, several policies and implementation strategies can be proposed to promote environmental sustainability. The first thing that must be done is to officially recognize Bissu as a guardian of culture and the environment so that it should be involved in making environmental policies, this will strengthen their role as guardians of traditional knowledge and sustainability. Furthermore, it is also expected that there will be a production of ecological knowledge and traditional Bissu practices into the planning and implementation of environmental policies to ensure more holistic sustainability. Then it will be able to develop a conservation program involving Bissu and local communities to manage natural resources sustainably. To cover more broadly, a training program can be carried out for the young generation on the values and practices of Mappalili to ensure the preservation of traditions and environmental knowledge, and continue to encourage collaboration between local governments and indigenous communities to create policies that are inclusive and based on local knowledge.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Bissu community in Pangkep Regency plays a key role in preserving the Mappalili tradition and strengthening the local cultural identity. Through this tradition, they act as stability steward who play a role in maintaining the sustainability of cultural values, and can contribute to the sustainable environmental agenda. Through a deep understanding of symbolism, ecological values and cosmology contained in this ritual, we can see how this tradition plays a role in facing global challenges such as climate change and environmental degradation. Therefore, their recognition and involvement in environmental policies and programs is essential to ensure that local wisdom remains an integral part of community development. The symbols that are summarized and analyzed, both static and moving, have deep meanings and are closely related to nature and the cosmological beliefs of the Bugis people. These symbols are not only located in aesthetic value, but far from that, they show spiritual expressions that convey sacred messages and are believed to be able to bring balance between humans, nature, and the spiritual world. Bissu, through his role in the Mappalili ritual, realizes a sustainable relationship with the environment that is rooted in cultural and spiritual values. Acknowledging and integrating their traditional knowledge into contemporary environmental policies can offer innovative solutions for sustainable development. This study highlights the importance of involving indigenous communities in the creation of a sustainable environmental agenda that respects and preserves socio-historical and cultural values.

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