

Maintaining Identity in A Foreign Land: A Study of Bugis Tribe Cultural Communication in Tanah Bumbu, South Kalimantan

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Abstract: The Bugis tribe is known for its migration culture, not only in South Sulawesi but also spread across several regions in Indonesia. For the Bugis people, migration is not just about seeking a livelihood, but is part of their identity and social pride. This research aims to describe the forms of communication among the Bugis migrant community in Tanah Bumbu and identify the challenges faced in maintaining cultural identity in a multicultural environment. The theory used is cultural communication. Data was obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation studies. There were 2 informants in this study who had the characteristic of being Bugis people who migrated to Tanah Bumbu Regency. The analysis technique used in this research is the interactive analysis technique of the Miles and Huberman model, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of this study found that the Bugis tribe in Tanah Bumbu Regency continues to strive to maintain its cultural existence through the use of the local language, preservation of customs such as the Mappanre ri Tasie festival, and the application of cultural values such as sipakatau, sipakainge, and sipakalebbe. Despite facing challenges in the form of differences in local culture, a homogeneous society, and the process of cultural adaptation, the Bugis people are able to adapt and acculturate with local cultures, such as Banjar and Islamic culture, so that they remain existent and harmonious in the community of Tanah Bumbu Regency.

Keywords: Bugis tribe, cultural communication, cultural identity

1. Introduction

Indonesia has a diverse range of ethnic groups, languages, values, and traditions spread from Sabang to Merauke. One ethnic group known for its social and cultural mobility through migration is the Bugis people. Not only do they reside in their original region in South Sulawesi, but the Bugis community has also spread to various regions in Indonesia, including Tanah Bumbu, South Kalimantan. The Bugis community is not only present as a migrant group but also brings a distinctive system of values, symbols, and cultural identity. Rico & Hayat (2021) explain that culture is a collection of values, norms, beliefs, traditions, and practices owned and inherited by a community group from generation to generation. Culture encompasses various dimensions of human life, ranging from language, religion, art, music, culinary, clothing, to the prevailing social system. Therefore, Indonesia can be categorized as a country with cultural diversity. Multicultural societies consider this diversity as part of their identity.

Multiculturalism itself can be understood as an approach that recognizes diversity and cultural plurality, including aspects of race, ethnicity, and religion, living side by side in a community or country. A multicultural country is characterized by the harmonious coexistence of different cultural groups and openness to other cultures. In this context, intercultural communication plays an important role as a means to bridge differences, in order to realize a harmonious social order. Communication and culture are two interconnected entities that develop simultaneously. This is inseparable from the fact that Indonesia is a country that inherits cultural wealth from previous generations. Ideologically, the values of Pancasila and the motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" reflect the hopes of the nation's founders that must be realized in a diverse society (Suparlan, 2013).

The relationship between communication and culture is reciprocal; culture influences the communication process, both verbally and nonverbally. Cultural variations give rise to different communication practices in each community

group. These differences also influence how individuals interact and convey messages, thus creating diversity in communication styles within society (Juliani et al., 2015). According to Sihabudin (2022) in his book *Intercultural Communication*, cross-cultural communication occurs when a message is sent by an individual from one cultural background and received by an individual from a different culture. The challenge that arises in this context is the process of encoding and decoding messages that takes place within a cultural framework that is not always the same (Sihabudin, 2022).

However, intercultural communication is not free from various obstacles. Differences in language, value systems, and social norms often become sources of misunderstanding and conflict. Therefore, an adaptive, sensitive, and inclusive communication approach is needed. In a multicultural society, intercultural communication is a key element in building relationships of mutual respect and understanding. Effective communication allows society to face the challenges of multiculturalism constructively and contribute to building a peaceful and harmonious future for all citizens. In this context, cultural communication plays a very important role, especially when there is a meeting between ethnic groups with different cultural backgrounds. Communication that is not only informative but also sensitive to local values becomes the main means to build social cohesion and maintain harmony in a multicultural society. Effective and locally-based cultural communication has a key role in promoting understanding and cooperation among various stakeholders in maintaining cultural sustainability. The importance of integrating communication methods and media with the local cultural context to ensure effective message delivery and reception (Carlson & Harwood, 2000).

In the process of social interaction in a new environment, intercultural encounters occur which can give rise to communication challenges, both in terms of language, norms, and social traditions. Cultural communication plays an important role in the adaptation process when migrating and as a means of maintaining their cultural identity in a multicultural environment (Jackson, 2019). Communication is understood as a broader mechanism than merely a tool for exchanging information; it functions to shape society's views on acceptable social norms, and to establish boundaries regarding legitimate behavior (Susanto, 2025). Based on cultural communication theory, each ethnic group has a way of communicating that is influenced by the cultural values they adhere to (Gudykunst, 2004). The cultural communication practices of the Bugis community in migration can be seen from the use of regional language, customary practices, life principles, and daily social interactions. Being a migrant demands their ability to adapt culturally, which often leads to negotiations of meaning and identity in interactions with the local community.

The Bugis community in Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan Province, exhibits distinct and interesting characteristics. They are known to have strong social bonds and continue to maintain ancestral traditions and culture. One form of cultural preservation is evident in the scheduled annual Mappanre Tasiq ceremony (a ritual offering to the sea). Interestingly, this tradition is becoming rare in their area of origin, South Sulawesi. Besides actively preserving culture, the Bugis tribe in Tanah Bumbu also contributes to economic development, particularly in the trade sector. In the political field, their role is also prominent, proven by the election of a Bugis Pagatan figure as Regent for three consecutive periods. Not only that, this community is able to establish harmonious social relations with other ethnic groups, such as the Banjar and Dayak communities as indigenous people, as well as with migrant groups from Java, Madura, Sumatra, and other regions.

This research is important because there are not many specific studies discussing the cultural communication of the Bugis tribe in migration in the Tanah Bumbu area, South Kalimantan. The approach used is qualitative by exploring the meaning, practices, and processes of intercultural communication that occur, and revealing the dynamics of preserving Bugis cultural identity in migration.

2. Research Objectives

This research was conducted in order to describe the meaning of cultural communication of the Bugis tribe who migrated to the Tanah Bumbu Regency area, South Kalimantan. The following is a description of the objectives of this research:

- a. To describe the forms of communication of the Bugis migrant community in Tanah Bumbu in maintaining cultural identity.
- b. To identify the challenges faced in maintaining cultural identity in a multicultural environment.

3. Research Questions

Based on the background above, the research questions for this study are:

- a. How do the Bugis migrant community in Tanah Bumbu communicate culturally in maintaining their cultural identity?
- b. What are the challenges faced in maintaining cultural identity in a multicultural environment, and how do they strategize to face them?
- c. How can an effective monitoring and evaluation system be implemented to ensure the successful implementation of guidance and counseling in schools?

4. Literature Review

The Bugis tribe is known as a maritime community with a tradition of migration. For the Bugis people, the culture of migration is not just about seeking a livelihood, but is part of their identity and social pride. The Bugis community in migration generally forms a solid community and continues to maintain their original culture, including in aspects of communication, customary traditions, and social practices in daily life. In areas like Tanah Bumbu, the existence of the Bugis community is an interesting example of how cultural communication is carried out in maintaining identity within a multicultural society. Ardani (2025) explains that the Bugis people are known for their high adaptability in new environments, yet they maintain their cultural identity, one of which is through communication or language in daily interactions.

According to Turistiati et al. (2018), the adaptation process occurs when people enter a new and foreign culture and interact with that culture. They gradually begin to detect similarities and differences in the new environment. Then Jandt (2007) states that the similarity between the culture of origin and the host culture is one of the most important factors in successful adaptation. Regarding cultural adaptation, Liliweri (2020) states that interaction among people as social beings is natural, but the individual's ability to communicate according to local cultural norms and values depends on the process of adjustment or adaptation of newcomers. When someone faces a new culture, special abilities are needed to overcome cultural differences or the cultural gap in the new environment, which is through adaptation.

The ethnic identity of the Bugis community in Tanah Bumbu is reflected through various cultural expressions that are still maintained and preserved to this day. Elements that describe this identity include the use of the Bugis language in daily communication, patterns of naming individuals and places, the use of traditional clothing, the performance of traditional rituals, the existence of distinctive cuisine, and the types of work that are characteristic of the community. These seven aspects play an important role in shaping and maintaining the ethnic identity of the Bugis people in migration. Cultural or traditional preservation is very important as part of efforts to maintain the continuity of cultural heritage so that it remains alive and can be passed on to future generations. Through culture, humans develop identity, understand the world around them, and interact with each other. Culture also plays an important role in shaping the mindset, behavior, and relationships between individuals in society (Rico & Hayat, 2021).

Maintaining culture does not only mean preserving traditional practices, but also maintaining collective identity and noble values inherent in the life of a society. Culture is believed to contain positive values that can be explored and used as guidance in establishing social relationships between individuals and between groups. In this context, culture is understood as an integral part of community life that describes the expression of human creation, feeling, and will. It contains religious values, philosophical views, and local wisdom that shape the character and identity of a community. Communication is the process of conveying someone's thoughts or feelings to others using language as a channel (Efendi, 1989). Culture is the basis for social interaction and communication where a civilization is formed from a blend of cultures that include norms, rules, laws, and customs that apply in the social environment. Culture is an important factor for humans in communicating with each other, both with parties who have the same culture and with other parties who have different cultures. Communication often brings out culture which plays an important role in maintaining the existence of ethnic identity, especially for people living in multicultural environments such as in migration. Cultural communication plays a dual role for the Bugis community in migration, namely as a medium for adaptation in a new environment and as a strengthener of cultural identity. Without active and organized cultural communication, Bugis cultural values are potentially eroded by globalization and acculturation, to the point of losing those traditional cultural values.

Hall (1989) introduced the significant concept of 'context', which indicates the environmental culture in which communication occurs. He emphasized that individuals from diverse backgrounds, even in seemingly similar cultural settings, may encounter challenges in effective communication. Culture, as observed through the lens of high-context and low-context communication, plays a crucial role in shaping interactions, expectations, and social dynamics. The typology of high-context and low-context cultures centers on how individuals from these cultures communicate, deeply intertwined with their cultural backgrounds.

Cultural communication and communication are closely related, according to Hall (1989) theory of intercultural communication. He asserted that culture is communication and communication is culture. In this theory, there are high-context cultures and low-context cultures. Low-context communication, including clear and explicit messages and a direct and honest speaking style, is characteristic of low-context cultures. According to Samovar et al. (2010), in their book *Communication between Cultures*, they define intercultural communication as a form of communication that involves interaction between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are quite different in a communication.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because the focus of this research is to understand the meaning, process, and practice of cultural communication in maintaining the cultural identity carried out by the Bugis migrant community in Tanah Bumbu. Researchers can explore experiences, perceptions, and

symbols that emerge in social interactions more deeply (Creswell, 2014). Data collection techniques in this research include observation, interviews, and documentation study. The researcher directly went to the field to observe the environmental conditions and the object being studied. This activity aims to obtain a clear picture of the situation and condition of the research object. Then interviews were conducted to gather direct information from informants regarding their experiences, views, and understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

There were 2 research informants. Documentation was used as an additional source of information to strengthen the findings in the field (Sugiyono, 2019). The collected data will then be analyzed to make it easy to sort and arrange for the research. The appropriate technique for analyzing this journal data is the interactive analysis technique of the Miles and Huberman model, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is done by selecting, focusing, and simplifying the data obtained from the field according to the research focus. Furthermore, data presentation is done by arranging the data in the form of a descriptive narrative to make it easier for the researcher to understand the meaning of the reduced data. The final stage is drawing conclusions, which is making interpretations of the presented data to answer the research problem formulation (Miles et al., 2014).

5.2 Research Sample

The subjects in this research are the Bugis people who migrated and settled in Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan. The regency is one of the migration destinations for the Bugis people, and this location has a strong Bugis community that still practices the original cultural values and traditions in their adopted environment. The selection of informants was done through purposive sampling, meaning they were chosen based on certain considerations, such as being of Bugis ethnicity, having migrated, and having settled in Tanah Bumbu for at least 6 months.

5.3 Research Instrument

The main instrument in this research is the researcher themselves, who acts as the planner, implementer, data collector and analyst, as well as the interpreter of the research results. In addition, supporting instruments in the form of interview guides, observation guidelines, and documentation were used to assist the data collection process in the field (Sugiyono, 2019).

6. Findings and Discussion

6.1 Bugis Cultural Communication in Tanah Bumbu, Kalimantan Selatan

The following are the results of in-depth discussions with various stakeholders in Ar-Rasyid Foundation, Tanah Bumbu Regency related to the role of school principals in implementing guidance and counseling (BK) to strengthen teacher performance. The Bugis people in South Kalimantan province, especially those inhabiting the Tanah Bumbu regency, have a significant number, which can be seen from the distribution of the Bugis people spread across 12 sub-districts. Approximately 44.1% of the population of Tanah Bumbu Regency are of Bugis ethnicity, living side by side with various ethnic groups such as the Banjar, Javanese, Madurese, and various other ethnic groups who also inhabit the area.

The Bugis people themselves are the largest ethnic group inhabiting South Sulawesi province and are spread across several areas with significant groups. This potential also makes the Bugis people the 8th largest ethnic group in Indonesia. In addition to their large population potential, the Bugis people are also famous for their various civilizations in Indonesia. The culture of migration is an activity that has long been carried out by this ethnic group because they are known for their ability to navigate the seas, and advanced technology in the past encouraged Bugis diasporas to explore areas in Asia and even Australia.

The high mobility and widespread distribution of Bugis communities in various regions, make cultural communication practices an important element in maintaining their identity in the midst of a diverse social environment. The research findings indicate that the Bugis community in Tanah Bumbu exhibits a pattern of cultural communication that is deeply rooted in their ethnic values. Communication function not only as a tool for social interaction but also as a means of preserving cultural identity. Cultural communication plays an important role in the process of adaption and in maintaining cultural identity within a multicultural environment (Jackson, 2019). Cultural communication refers to the way individuals from different cultural background send and receive messages, as well as how they interpret meaning based on their respective cultural frameworks (Gudykunst, 2004). Bugis cultural communication is a form of communication that reflects the distinctive values, norms, symbols and traditions passed down through generations in Bugis society. This communication not only includes verbal aspects such as the local language, but also includes nonverbal aspects such as polite speech, body gestures, and customs in conveying messages, especially in social contexts and customs.

Living in a foreign land requires the Bugis people to be more flexible in adapting to different environments and cultures. This requires good adaptation so that the areas inhabited by these groups can tolerate each other's differences (Ridho & Nugraha, 2024). The existence of the Bugis people in Tanah Bumbu regency can be seen from various cultural products and ceremonial activities such as traditional ceremonies, literacy, and the use of language, which show that the Bugis people in the area still maintain their cultural values and character.

a. Cultural Activities

A Bugis cultural performance on the coast of Pagatan Tanah Bumbu, held as part of the traditional Mappanre ri Tasi'e ceremony. One form of Bugis cultural product in Tanah Bumbu Regency is traditional festivals that still

maintain the character of the ethnic group. Traditional activities can be found in the Mappanre ri Tasie event, which is a routine activity of the Pagatan community in Kusan Hilir District as shown in Fig. 1.



Fig 1. A Bugis cultural performance on the coast of pagatan tanah bumbu, held as part of the traditional mappanre ri tasi'e ceremony.

Based on observations with informants, this activity has been carried out for some time, even before the country of Indonesia existed, the Bugis people of Pagatan had carried out this tradition. To this day, the Mappanre ri Tasie momentum has become a cultural-based tourism attraction in Tanah Bumbu regency. It is known that in the Kusan Hilir district in the past, a Bugis-style kingdom stood, which the informant referred to as the Bugis Pagatan kingdom. This condition marks the Bugis civilization that has been built for a long time and has been integrated with local culture, giving birth to its own identity and character for its culture.

b. Bugis Wedding Tradition

Bugis culture can also be seen in wedding ceremonies. Usually, the Bugis people in Tanah Bumbu Regency will wear Bugis traditional clothing which is generally the same as the traditional clothing worn by the Bugis people inhabiting the Sulawesi region. According to the informant, this is done because there is a strong cultural character in showing cultural identity and character among the homogeneous community of Tanah Bumbu.

c. Bugis Language

The Bugis language can be easily recognized by its language, something that shows the strong and deeply rooted influence of culture in the region. The use of the Bugis language in the community can be found in several sub-districts in Tanah Bumbu such as Kusan Hilir, Kusan Tengah, and Batulicin. The speakers of this language are Bugis people who still recognize and maintain their original subculture, although their speech and dialect have undergone changes, they are not significant.

6.2 Values in the Bugis Tribe

Cultural adaptation is also supported by various things, including the cultural values still held by the community. Cultural values that regulate the principles and ways of a community group in acting (ethics). Based on observations, the Bugis community of Tanah Bumbu still firmly holds these tribal values. Cultural communication is seen in their consistency in using cultural terms and upholding the values of Sipakatau, Sipakainge, and Sipakalebbi in social interaction. "These values are a culture that has existed since humans were born, these values are born from a family cluster that contains values of nobility, wisdom, and prudence as a principle of life whose truth is believed and used as a guide for life" (Herlin et al., 2020). This is in line with Wijayanto et al. (2023) who states that the Bugis community in the diaspora utilizes cultural communication as a medium to maintain solidarity, identity, and noble values that are their characteristics (Wijayanto et al., 2023). Thus, these values are used as a philosophy that motivates the Bugis tribe community of Tanah Bumbu to act in preserving and maintaining their cultural character. The informant explained that these values are well understood by the Bugis tribe in Tanah Bumbu and serve as a guide for life in society.

6.3 Acculturation of Bugis Culture in Tanah Bumbu

The Bugis tribe in Tanah Bumbu Regency is basically still strongly influenced by their original culture, which still maintains its cultural character and language. However, in further observation, the author found that cultural and linguistic acculturation has occurred, giving rise to new cultures. Acculturation is a blend of different cultural components that unite in an effort to form a new culture without losing the personality of the original culture (Bauto, 2014). These cultural products can be found in traditional wedding activities and the language used by the Bugis community of Tanah Bumbu, such as the massukkiri activity, which is the recitation of chants similar to barazanji at important events such as traditional parties and weddings. This shows the influence of Islamic culture on Bugis culture in Tanah Bumbu Regency.

The influence of Banjar culture is also quite significant in the daily lives of the Bugis tribe in Tanah Bumbu, which can be seen in the Banjar language speakers who are also used by the Bugis tribe in Tanah Bumbu. The author in

this study found that the Banjar language is well understood by most of the Bugis tribe in Tanah Bumbu Regency. This shows that cultural acculturation also occurs in the Bugis tribe as a strategy to adapt to local culture.

7. Conclusion

The Bugis tribe in Tanah Bumbu Regency strives to maintain the existence of their culture, which can be seen in their efforts to maintain the use of the Bugis language in their daily activities. In addition, the Bugis tribe also still maintains traditional activities such as the mappanre ri tasie traditional party, which has now become a regional tourism icon that further introduces the customs of the Bugis tribe in Tanah Bumbu Regency. The Bugis tribe of Tanah Bumbu also understands the principle of values which are then applied in community life such as sipakatau, sipakainge, and sipakalebbi, which are the foundation of their culture.

In maintaining their culture, the Bugis tribe certainly faces many challenges such as different local cultures, "homogeneous society and cultural adaptation. In this research, cultural communication can be seen in the strategy of the Bugis tribe in adapting to local culture, both Banjar and Islamic culture, which to some extent influenced the Bugis tribe's own culture. However, with good adaptation, the Bugis tribe has been able to remain existence and develop alongside various tribes and groups through cultural acculturation to remain relevant in the community of Tanah Bumbu Regency.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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