

Contesting Bridewealth-Classification of the Bugis Marriage Prestations

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Abstract

This paper re-examines the classification of Bugis marriage prestations in anthropological terms as presented by Susan B. Millar, Sharyn G. Davies, and Christian Pelras. Widely classified as a bridewealth system, or loosely as a dowry system, the Bugis practice of material-giving prior to marriage, I argue, has been reduced to terminologies which neither encompass nor reflect the essence of the practice. If anthropologists feel the need to classify the practice under anthropological terms, despite the option of using Bugis' own indigenous "terms," there is an umbrella term which I believe represents and articulates the practice—marriage prestations. In an attempt to reorient the use of anthropological terms, I begin with looking at the Bugis marriage practices/rituals through the lens of performative theory. Performative theory helps us to discover how identities of gender, kinship, and status, each with its own role in Bugis marriage, are (re)produced through ongoing ritual performances. The discussion of ritual performativity of these identities, when posed side-by-side with classic kinship discussion in anthropology, reveals the inadequacy of the category of bridewealth to encompass the Bugis practice of material-giving.

Keywords: *Bugis, gender, status, marriage, performativity, bridewealth*

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1. Introduction

The formation of any Bugis marriage is important, because it establishes new ties among people who depend, for their sense of meaning, on kinship networks. ... The structure of Bugis weddings allows elaborate displays of social hierarchies. Bugis weddings are structured to allow sponsors to play the roles of competitive status equals, and guests to play the roles, symbolically or otherwise, of subordinates in a hierarchical network focused on the hosts. (Millar 1989)

This paper engages in a classificatory discussion of a particular aspect of the Bugis marriage—the Bugis bridewealth system. I argue that the Bugis practice of material giving from the groom to the bride prior to a marriage does not constitute the essential idea of a “bridewealth” system, a categorical system which previous studies use for the practice. Using the term bridewealth to refer to such practice within the Bugis context implies a forced compression of the practice’s complexity, thus rendering it a simplified, potentially misunderstood, meaning. I propose to classify the practice as “marriage prestations,” which is a broader category than bridewealth yet which appropriately accommodates the complex meanings and rituals behind the practice.

The analysis in this paper is developed through a deep reading of several ethnographies: one which specifically focuses on the Bugis wedding rituals (Millar 1989), one which discusses the Bugis gender system (Davies 2007), and two historical ethnographies of the Bugis (Chabot, et al. 1996; Pelras 1996). This paper comments on these ethnographic accounts and is intended to be part of a larger ethnographic project. Thus, arguments of this paper should be taken only as preliminary contributions which begin to re-read the ethnographic context of Bugis in relation to discussions of gender, sex, and marriage.

The Bugis marriage prestations consist of two portions which they call *sompa'* and *dui' ménré*. *Sompa'*, roughly translated as rankprice, is a symbolic payment made by the groom to the bride's family prior to or at the time of marriage ceremony. The amount of *sompa'*, to date, has insignificant monetary value and is determined in accordance with the bride's family descent-rank, following the rules within *adat* law (custom law). *Dui ménré* (lit. spending money), in contrast, is a set amount of payment with significant monetary value which the groom's family gives to the bride's family. The amount of *dui' ménré* is not determined by *adat* law; it is agreed upon through negotiation between both families of the marrying couple. The gestures, meanings, and functions of these two portions of marriage prestations may differ in accordance with marriage situations, i.e. types of marriage (hypergamy/hypogamy/equal-status), purpose of marriage, and ascriptive/achieved status (social locations). Classifying *sompa'* and *dui' ménré* as components of a bridewealth system results in the generalization of various differences among marriage situations.

The rich cultural practices and intricate rituals of Bugis have provided a fruitful landscape for cultural anthropologists to build and develop theoretical perspectives regarding gender, sex, marriage, and kinship. One notable example is Sharyn Graham Davies (2007), who developed her own gender theory from looking at how Bugis live with five different gender identities, and how these genders play their parts in marriage/wedding. Christian Pelras (1996) and Hendrik Theodorus Chabot (1996; 1950) discuss Bugis marriage broadly in relation to the Bugis gender, status, and kinship systems. Nurul Ilmi Idrus (2003; 2011) adds topics of sexuality, divorce, and state law to the discussion. Susan B. Millar (1989) focuses entirely on the practices and rituals conducted during the whole process of Bugis weddings. Missing from the research, however, is a challenge

to the existing discussion of Bugis marriage, particularly the topic of what we have come to know as the Bugis bridewealth system.

The concept of bridewealth is a staple of classic kinship theory in anthropology (Dalton 1966; Evans-Pritchard 1931; Goody 1970; Goody and Tambiah 1973; Harris 1962; Leach 1953). Bridewealth is defined as a pre-marital transaction in which the groom makes a payment (it can be in the form of money/goods/livestock) to the bride's family, followed by the transfer of certain rights over his spouse.² On the surface, the Bugis practice of material giving from the groom to the bride's family prior to a marriage may resemble the bridewealth system of some societies in Africa and Eurasia. The few anthropologists who have observed Bugis marriage classify the Bugis practice of this material giving from the groom to the bride's family prior to a marriage as bridewealth. Chabot (1996; 1950) refers to the system as bridewealth. Following Chabot, Millar (1989) uses the terms "rankprice" and "spending money" as a literal translation of the Bugis *sompa'* and *dui ménré*,³ but she classifies these terms as two parts of the bipartite Bugis bridewealth system. Pelras (1996) loosely classifies *sompa'* and *dui ménré* as dowry.⁴ More recent scholars such as Idrus (2003; 2011) and Davies (2010) follow Millar and Chabot's decision to classify the practice as bridewealth.

However, a closer look at the material-giving rituals in Bugis marriages casts doubt on this definition. The complexity of Bugis marriage practices, customs, and rituals does not easily translate into the anthropological categories of marriage systems, including the practice of material

² It should be noted, however, that the term bridewealth is not to be confused with dowry. Bridewealth is the transfer of wealth from the groom to the bride's family before marriage; it is an inter-familial wealth circulation. Dowry, in contrast, is a form of familial inheritance in which parents pass down their wealth/property to their daughter (usually prior to her marriage).

³ The Indonesian translation of Bugis *dui ménré* is *uang belanja*. Millar uses these terms interchangeably in her ethnography.

⁴ Although Pelras does explain that to use the term brideprice would be inappropriate as it implies the idea of buying a woman's sexuality which is not the case in the Bugis marriage, Pelras does not elaborate what he means by dowry, and precisely because of this lack of contextual definition the term is problematic in the Bugis ethnographic context.

giving from the groom to the bride's family. Yet, the previous studies which classify this practice as bridewealth or dowry remain unchallenged, and especially the idea that this practice can be described as a transaction, in economic terms.⁵ What I propose in this paper is to look at the Bugis *sompa'* (rankprice) and *dui ménré* (spending money) not as (sub)categories of bridewealth, brideprice, or dowry. Doing so would render the Bugis customs into categories which cannot necessarily encompass both the symbolic meaning and the pragmatic value of *sompa'* and *dui ménré*. This paper examines why using the term bridewealth, brideprice, or dowry for the Bugis practice of *sompa'* and *dui ménré* would be inappropriate, if not inequivalent or irrelevant. Consequently, this study includes a larger discussion on marriage and kinship system of the Bugis. A discussion of what marriage may mean to the Bugis and why *sompa'* and *dui ménré* are an important part of it serves as a departure point to answer the main question posed above.

There is a vast scholarly literature on marriage in Indonesia. However, it should be noted that the available scholarship discusses marriage mostly in a generalized, nation-wide, socio-legal context. Topics which are generally discussed include marriage and health (Bennett 2005; Boomgaard 2003; Jacobowski 2008), domestic violence (Aisyah and Parker 2014; Bennett, et al. 2011; Hayati, et al. 2013), early marriage (Jones 2001; Jones, et al. 2011), socio-economic and marriage behavior (Buttenheim and Nobles 2009; 2008; Smith-Hefner 2005; Utomo 2014), and Indonesian marriage law (Jones, et al. 2011; Katz and Katz 1975; Soewondo 1977; Supridai 1995). Most studies center their attention on women and how marriage affects their lives, such as the potential of women's getting sexually transmitted diseases from their husbands, women's vulnerability to domestic abuse and economic deprivation, and negative implications of child marriage for girls.

⁵ See Evans-Pritchard 1931; Gray 1960; Dalton 1961, 1966; Gibson 1962.

On the one hand, the existing studies raise important issues of gender inequality and women's oppression at the national level. The lack of government attention, weak rule of law and law enforcement, and probably difficult access to women's centers for domestic abuse are among the many reasons that managing and preventing gender inequality/women's oppression has been difficult in Indonesia. On the other hand, I am not convinced by a generalized claim of some feminists who argue that (the institution of) marriage empowers male dominance as the head and "owner" of women and the family, and thus perpetuates women's oppression.⁶ It is one thing to say that most conjugal violence/abuse happens in a domestic setting, but it is entirely another thing to say that marriage causes and perpetuates the violence/abuse. Such a claim would render "the institution" abusive in nature generally while neglecting the social idea of marriage within an ethno-specific context which may consider marriage neither abusive nor "gender-unequal." It is also important to note that Indonesia comprises vast variations of ethnicity, religion, culture, and traditions, within which different kinship, gender, and marriage systems are exercised. Bugis co-exist with other ethnic groups in Indonesia, and they cannot all be generalized about together.

Feminist anthropologists have long argued against generalized claims. Ethnographic findings suggest substantial variation among Indonesian societies, from the matrilineal Minangkabau, where the woman is said to possess the dominant power in marriage (Blackwood 2000), to the equality in marriage between woman and man found in Bugis society. For both these societies, marriage often comes with its own mechanism to settle domestic disputes. For example, in Minangkabau marriage, whenever a woman has a dispute with her husband, a senior woman of her kin goes to arbitrate the dispute with the kin's representative from the husband's side. The senior woman of a Minangkabau family has the power not only to arbitrate a marriage dispute but

⁶ Several feminist works leaning towards this claim include Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Betty Friedan (1963; 1981), Susan Moller Okin (1989), John Stuart Mill (1996), Mary Wollstonecraft (1792; 1996).

also to counsel and disapprove it (Blackwood 2000). In this context, marriage is not always necessarily a nuclear domain which empowers men and oppresses women.

The bilateral kinship system of Bugis secures every woman's membership in her natal kin group; even after marriage, a woman is not exclusively "transferable" to the husband and his kin. Both husband and wife gain membership in each other's kin group, but neither loses membership in his/her natal kin. Thus, marriage is not an institution in which a husband exclusively owns his wife. Husband and wife have their respective gender roles, but neither spatial category of the roles (public or domestic) is considered inferior/superior to the other. Gender roles and their spatial divisions are also quite versatile in practice. This situation shows that space does not come with a power that one or the other gender can claim, nor is either gender inherently more powerful. Ethnographic scholarship on Bugis could substantially add to the debunking of both universalized descriptions of "Indonesian marriage" and conventional claims about marriage in general.

Such ethnographic accounts not only challenge conventional claims about marriage as oppressive for women; they also emphasize the importance of looking at marriage from the point of view of those who believe in it and seeing how it works within specific societal contexts. Although marriage differs in different Indonesian ethnographic contexts, it is always more than just an institution that binds two people "in holy matrimony." Marriage involves families of both parties, and even networks and allies of the families. Marriage is, borrowing Engels' (1942) words, "a deployment of an alliance."

The diversity of kinship systems across the Indonesian archipelago creates corresponding diversity in the gender relations embedded within marriage. The matriarch of a Minangkabau family holds power over her family and kin. The patriarch of a Javanese family holds power over his family and kin. The bilateral kinship system of Bugis, however, differs from both matrilineal

and patrilineal systems. As a result, while Bugis indeed believe in different roles for women and men, neither gender is considered inherently dominant or subservient over the other, nor is spatial division of gender static/rigid. The kinship system of the Bugis creates equal positions for both genders in a (reproductive) marriage, as descendants will inherit their kin status from both parents' sides of the family (Pelras 1996).

I do not seek to argue that patriarchy or unequal gender power is entirely absent in matrilineal kin Minangkabau or bilateral kin Bugis, for there is no absolute relationship between unequal gender power and kinship systems. Rather, I seek simply to clarify that marriage under these kinship systems, especially the Bugis marriage and kinship systems, is not a patriarchal institution in nature. It is imperative to note that kinship system is not the only entity that regulates gender roles and marriage. If the Bugis kinship system recognizes equal gender power between man and woman, what is left then are the questions of what brings patriarchy in; what perpetuates patriarchy; and what grants a husband more power than his wife.

A few scholars have tried to theorize about this issue, and one has successfully addressed it within the Indonesian political context. Julia Suryakusuma (1988) in her book *State Ibuism* argues that the Indonesian state (during its authoritarian regime) developed a very specific gender ideology in accordance with its interests which led to the process of “domestication” of Indonesian women in almost every sphere—economic, political, and even cultural. Besides the “official” dictating of Indonesian womanhood/motherhood, probably one other potential means of patriarchy is male-centric teachings of religions.⁷ Nevertheless, this issue needs not a paper but books to adequately accommodate its debates, explanations, concepts, and theories.

⁷ I am not in any way suggesting that all religions in Indonesia are patriarchal in nature. Rather I am suggesting that the ways in which religious knowledge is constructed/taught/proliferated, and the ways in which sacred texts are interpreted, are male-centric and thus full of male bias that perpetuates patriarchy.

1.1. Status Performativity: What to Expect from This Paper

Kinship ties and status are important aspects of Bugis society, and are strongly connected to each other. Each lineage possesses an ancestral, inherited status. Families try to maintain their status by marrying their children to kin groups that are equal in status. Therefore, endogamy is desirable as it maintains the purity of ancestral status. However, ambitious individuals or kin groups strive to achieve higher status by making new connections to others with higher status. One of the ways to do so is by marrying up (hypergamy). Although endogamy is desirable, exogamy is not prohibited in this case. Exogamy is permitted when the statuses of the marrying couple are equal or have been “equalized” through status negotiation as to avoid a loss of status for the in-marrying Bugis spouse and his/her descendants.⁸ Marriage is thus important not only to legalize sexual intimacy between a woman and a man, but also, complementary to that function and yet equally important, to establish and legalize new kinship ties and status.

Acceptance or rejection of a groom’s proposal depends on the success of the status negotiation. A successful of status negotiation during a marriage proposal usually results in the gesture of the groom’s giving material of both symbolic value (*sompa’*) and monetary value (*dui ménré*) to the bride’s family. This particular practice of Bugis has been classified as bridewealth or dowry. Such terms, I argue, are not adequate to describe the practice of *sompa’* and *dui ménré*. The term bridewealth implies that the transfer of material from the groom to the bride’s family is interpreted as the exchange value of “the bride,” economically or otherwise,⁹ while the term dowry implies the transfer of wealth from the bride’s parents to their daughter. If bridewealth secures the transfer of certain rights over a woman, and dowry is an inheritance-related concept, then neither term, I argue, applies appropriately to the practice of Bugis *sompa’* and *dui ménré* which is related

⁸ Status negotiation also happens within an endogamous marriage between two people of different rank/status.

⁹ See Evans-Pritchard 1931.

more to status performance and rights over kinship. Therefore, before we can understand the meaning behind the Bugis practice of *sompa'* and *dui ménré*, it is imperative to understand how kinship and status work in Bugis society, and how marriage then relates these two aspects of life.

This paper attempts to complicate readings on marriage by providing a different perspective on marriage, as a (ritual) performance in which more than a nuclear family is involved and more than two families are involved. Instead, the whole society takes part. This performance of marriage and wedding, I argue, marks an initial point in which status ideology is conceived, (re)produced, and practiced throughout the society. For Bugis, at least, marriage is an act of performing and delegating status, in which value-embeddedness and value-negotiation interplay.

In a stratified society such as the Bugis, social location is one of important aspects of everyday life. A family acquires its descent rank through ancestral lineages, and a person born into a family inherits the descent status. People who are the descendants of Bugis nobles and/or “good” commoners have higher status than that of Bugis commoners. However, if a Bugis noble happens to marry a person of lower status, the lower status spouse automatically elevates his/her status; their children, however, will have a status lower than their noble parent. Bugis also acknowledge and respect a person’s social standing based on achievement. People of low-ranking descent can acquire higher social location through achieving higher military rank/government office, successful entrepreneurship, higher education, affiliation with *tau matoa* (elders/leaders), and so on. All of these situations contribute to the construction of status identity.

Status in the Bugis context is not an abstract identity; it is rather articulated and practiced in a number of ways. People wear their status on their sleeves. Everyday presentations of demeanor and appearance are simple examples of how Bugis articulate their social locations. People pay attention to how they dress and how they behave (Millar 1989). Other ways for people to “display”

their social locations are through kinship affiliation and marriage/wedding ceremony. Whom a person marries, the amount of marriage prestations, the size of wedding reception/party, guests' statuses and wedding gifts, foods served, and many other things are all for the purpose of establishing and practicing social locations (Millar 1989).

My arguments in this paper regarding status, kinship, and marriage prestations revolve around the same idea of gender performativity that Judith Butler (1990) develops. I argue that status in the Bugis sense is never meant to be acquired only inherently. There are certain situations in which inherited status is expected to be reflected in the ways a person displays his/her demeanor. There are also ways in which a person can acquire higher social standing without having to have any relations with nobles or "good" commoners, but rather from their own achievement. Bugis act, talk, behave, and dress in ways that reflect their status identity. Status is therefore performed.

People conform to a system which constructs and structurizes every aspect of social relations and category of identities. Kinship system marks the division between social locations. It regulates the marriage system as well as filial and affinal relations. The Bugis kinship system plays a vital role in influencing the various ways people can acquire status: through blood relations, marriage, or affiliation with leaders. People perform their status in accordance with this grand social organization. The performance of status then helps to perpetuate status ideology in the kinship system. Status is therefore performative.

No other scholar explains identity performativity better than Judith Butler. In this paper, my analysis is developed through reflecting the idea behind Butler's gender performativity. Butler (1990) first introduced her concept of performativity to explain how gender is produced and reproduced through ongoing performances. Butler begins with the idea that gender is, in fact, not so much of an identity of "being" as a repeated sequence of "doing." In Butler's theoretical notion

of performativity, act/performance composes and establishes the identity it is supposed to be (Butler 1990; 1993; Salih 2002). Some cultural anthropologists echo this concept of performativity in their ethnographic works, expanding the category of identity being analyzed from gender to class, race, and sex (act). For example, Kulick's (1998) accounts of Brazilian *travestis* narrates the idea of gendered identity of man and woman by focusing on the ways in which the *travestis* act and interact with work, boyfriends, and sexual acts in their everyday lives. In this conception, identity is never innate.

I argue in this paper that descent-rank (status) in Bugis society is not just something that a person has at birth, an automatic inheritance; it is indeed part of one's personal history, but it requires an ongoing performance of "status" in order to establish that descent-rank into a socially recognizable (and probably respectable) identity-status. It is looking at the Bugis status system as performative that will later enable us to understand the Bugis marriage prestations and why bridewealth is not an appropriate term for the practice of material giving in a marriage. There are direct connections between how status works in a larger societal context and how it plays its role in the Bugis marriage system.

This paper is divided into five parts. The first part is this introduction which I use to lay out my main question and develop the objectives of the study. The second part presents a discussion of the Bugis kinship system and the various ways people can make a connection to certain kin, marriage-wise or not. The third part discusses the Bugis status system and the way marriage complicates status value. The fourth part specifically discusses the merits of Bugis *sompa'* and *dui ménré* and their problematic classification into bridewealth or dowry. The last part is a conclusion.

2. Bugis in a Nutshell

Bugis are one of the most well-known ethnic groups in Indonesia probably because of their history of mobility and reputation as inter-island traders. They constitute some population of the southwestern peninsula of Sulawesi island which is primarily mountainous. The Bugis co-exist with three other major ethnic groups on this island—the Makassar, the Mandar, and the Toraja but is by far the largest of the four, constituting a population of over three million. Historically, there were four major kingdoms in Bugis society—Boné, Soppéng, Wajo, and Sidénréng—and the Bugis still distinguish among themselves accordingly.

The Bugis share close historical and cultural connections with their neighboring ethnic groups. Linguistically, the four ethnic groups in Sulawesi have their own respective indigenous languages, but each can easily learn the other's language (Millar 1989). The Bugis and the Makassar are especially close, and since the eighteenth century Makassar terrains have also been home to many Buginese (Pelras 1996). The Makassar are widely known for their harbor, either as a connecting harbor or as a door for many Buginese and Makassarese to sail in and out of the island. Bugis and Makassar also have shared histories of writing and literacy. They both have volumes of writings called *lontara'* which consist of *adat* codes and accounts of customs (Millar 1989). The handwritten *lontara'* also record histories of kingdoms; rules of law; ancient knowledge about agriculture, astronomy, navigation and sailing, and much more.¹⁰ Bugis themselves have copied and circulated these historical volumes which many families, both of noble and common descents, still keep in their houses (Pelras 1996).

Although historical evidence shows that agriculture has been the primary economic activity among Bugis, they are known most for their popular history as seafaring people and pirates. Yet

¹⁰ The Bugis *lontara'* also record knowledge on firearms technology and time reckoning from time as a Portuguese colony, and Islamic teachings from an early period.

anthropologists and historians have disputed this popular belief. Historical evidence suggests that Bugis did not achieve their momentum in maritime activities till the eighteenth century when they started to reside in their neighboring harbor—Makassar (Pelras 1996). In addition, piracy has never been part of Bugis' maritime activities; in fact, those who sailed were mostly traders and settlers. Nowadays, Bugis engage in numerous economic activities, ranging from agriculture to business/entrepreneurship and government office.

Islam constitutes the major religion among Bugis, with their history of Islam beginning in the early seventeenth century. Although Islam holds a vital importance in Bugis' religious identity, many still preserve some of their pre-Islamic religious heritage (Millar 1989; Pelras 1996), usually resulting in (for lack of a better terms) syncretism. In other words, Islamic influence on Bugis has never been static—rather, it is dynamic.

3. The Bugis Kinship System

Kinship is one of the important aspects to look at to understand the composition and/or organization of social relations of a society. The term kinship is familiar to our ears, but it actually lacks a formal definition, perhaps because it should not have a formal/rigid/universal definition. Anthropological studies have long shown that each society has its own particular system of kinship, although some societies may share similarities or differences in kinship characteristics. Kinship system not only reflects a society's rules of tracing and marking blood relation among members of the kin group (descent), but also influences the whole system of social organization. It influences strategies of heirships,¹¹ filial and affinal relations, wealth circulation, power, social hierarchy, and so on.

¹¹ See Jack Goody (1973) *Strategies of Heirship*.

Although kinship is a rather general term for various social organization systems, anthropologists have at least classified types of social group based on its descent rules. The two most common types are unilineal descent groups and bilateral descent groups. Under unilineal system, the line of descent is traced through one side of the family; children affiliate themselves with either their matrilineage or patrilineage side. With the bilateral system, genealogical ties are traced through both sides of the family, and children have kin memberships in both their father's and mother's sides of the family (Murdock 1940).

There are two other types of descent rule that add to the complexity of genealogical and kin membership rules—double descent system and ambilineal descent systems. Matrilineage and patrilineage kin are equally established and recognized under the double descent system. Children have kinship affiliation with both their matrilineage and patrilineage relatives. The double descent system and bilateral descent system might sound rather similar to each other, but they are essentially quite different. Under the latter, children have equal kinship connections to all four grandparents, while under the former, children are affiliated only with their maternal grandmothers and paternal grandfathers (maternal grandfathers and paternal grandmothers being excluded) (Murdock 1940). Ambilineal descent system is a descent rule in which a person may choose to relate him/herself with either side of his parents' families. Under this system, it is also possible for a person to change his/her permanent kin association following a change of residentship (Lambert 1966).

Bugis recognize a bilateral descent system in which children are equally affiliated to both their mother's and father's sides of the family. From the point of view of the Ego, terms of address for parents, parents' siblings, and grandparents are divided by gender; kin terms for relatives of the same generation as the Ego are not divided by gender (Millar 1989). The Bugis usually address

mother with *amma*’ and father with *bapa*’; *amma toa* and *bapa toa* are used to address grandmother and grandfather. Relatives of a generation after the Ego, whether they are children, nephews, nieces, or cousins’ children, are all addressed as *ana*’ (lit. child); grandchildren are usually addressed as *eppo*’ or *cucu*’ regardless of gender (Pelras 1996).¹² Relatives of the same generation fall under the same kinship category *séajing* (lit. of one origin). Brothers, sisters, and cousins are distinguished and addressed only by their age-seniority status—*kaka*’ for older siblings and *anri*’ for younger siblings (Pelras 1996).¹³

In matters of inheritance, generally wealth (land, money, and other types of property) is equally transferred to/inherited by both son(s) and daughter(s). However, the parents’ house is usually given to the youngest daughter of the family. In the case where the parents have no daughter, the youngest son inherits the house. Whoever inherits the house is expected to care for her/his parents in their old age (Millar 1989).

Neither matrilineage nor patrilineage are recognized by Bugis, for both mother’s and father’s sides of the family are equally important determinants of kin membership. Kinship affiliations are traced and acknowledged from each pair of a person’s ancestors. Membership of the kin group is usually very large; it includes descendants from four grandparents, from the four couples of great-grandparents, from the eight couples of grandparents’ grandparents, and from the sixteen couples of grandparents’ grandparents’ parents (Pelras 1996). Thus, Bugis recognize up to their fourth cousins as members of their kin group. This “branching off-lineage” is an important

¹² Although these are the most commonly used terms among Bugis, there are other kin terms that could be used though are not as popular. Usually relatives of the generation before and after the Ego have both or either gendered/genderless terms of address. Kin terms for relatives of the same generation as the Ego have always been genderless. (See Chabot 1996 for reference on kinship terms)

¹³ Some scholars such as Millar note a different term that Bugis use to address an older sibling—*daeng*. However, the term *daeng* is also widely used to address an older person with no kinship relation. Most Bugis use the term *daeng* to politely grace or address someone older than themselves.

part of Bugis kinship, as they trace common ancestors who may be of a high status family and so may pass on the status to his/her descendants.

In addition to kinship affiliation by birth, Bugis also recognize kinship by marriage and kinship by alignment (Millar 1989). Marriage is one way by which a person can expand his/her kin membership to other groups. Although the marrying couple will automatically gain membership in the partner's kin group upon marriage, neither partner will lose membership in the natal kin group. Residence arrangement of the marrying couple tends to be matrilocal in which the husband will usually reside with the wife's kin after marriage. The newlyweds may also live with the husband's kin, although this residence arrangement is less common (Millar 1989).

Kinship alliance can also be acquired through personal connections/alignments that people have with leaders among larger societal groups. For Bugis, these leaders are referred to as *tau matoa*. A person can align him/herself with *tau matoa* in several ways. One way is to trace a bilateral kinship tie with the *tau matoa* (within four generations of ancestors). The other ways include residing with/near the *tau matoa*'s house and working for/with the *tau matoa*. All followers of the *tau matoa* are called *ana'* (lit. children). Those who technically do not share descent kin ties with *tau matoa* but align themselves by residence and/or occupational relations are also called *ana'* by *tau matoa* and are treated like kin (Millar 1989).

In Bugis language, *tau matoa* means "elder." However, people use the term to specifically refer to some elders, either male or female, who possess a great number of leadership qualities that charm others. They are socially and politically aware of the situations in their surroundings, and are generally incisive and influential. *Tau matoa* are known for their distinctive and inspiring personalities, charismatic behaviors, authoritative minds, and courageous acts that draw people to

follow them and seek their guidance and wisdom. *Tau matoa* are often the descendants of nobles, high-ranking persons, or at the very least “good” commoners (Millar 1989).

Tau matoa are usually quite prosperous and are very gracious. They are well established and work either as high-ranking officials or successful entrepreneurs. They have enough wealth to continuously provide and care for their dependents, guests, and followers. They care and look after their followers in the same way parents do their own children. Reciprocity in terms of respectful obedience is therefore expected from their followers, much like the way children are expected to respect their parents (Millar 1989).

There are degrees of influence and a power hierarchy among Bugis *tau matoa*. In general, every *tau matoa* must have at least some influence over his/her own household (and his/her followers who reside within or near the *tau matoa*'s house). Some *tau matoa* may have greater influence over several households outside of their own which makes them greater leaders with extensive followers. Some of the lesser *tau matoa* align themselves with the greater *tau matoa*, expanding their networks to even a larger scale than previously acquired. Followers of these lesser *tau matoa* are automatically recognized as part of the larger networks and are affiliated to both the lesser and the greater *tau matoa* they follow (Millar 1989).

Followers of a *tau matoa* consist of various types of people. A *tau matoa* is usually followed by distant kin members who reside in the household of the *tau matoa*. Those who have no kin relations with a *tau matoa* may also live within his/her household, and they are usually recognized as kin members by the *tau matoa*. Some young adolescents are adopted by *tau matoa* as his/her own children, and *tau matoa* usually pay for their schooling, other needs, and even weddings. They are close and active followers of a *tau matoa*. However, a *tau matoa* usually has a greater number of followers that expands beyond his/her own household. Common people who

live in the neighborhood, usually farmers and workers, are also followers of a *tau matoa* (although they may be of passive followers). These commoners often consult and seek advice from *tau matoa* regarding important decisions in their lives, ranging from family issues to business and even to match-making and pre-marital counseling (Millar 1989).

Alignments with *tau matoa* are important for the Bugis in terms of pursuing/achieving status. Distant kin and non-kin followers of a *tau matoa* acquire, at the least, the status of “good” commoner; these acquired statuses are, of course, lower than that of *tau matoa* him/herself. Closest kin members and adopted children of *tau matoa* are granted higher status by *tau matoa* because of their descent-kin relations (consanguinity). However, before granting an even higher status, *tau matoa* often consider not just a follower’s ascriptive status but also his/her achievements as he/she grows up.

The acquired status of a follower is a beneficial trait in times when status is demanded—time of marriage is one instance. In a society where status is an important aspect of life and endogamy is preferred, people tend to marry members of their distant kin who are of status equal to themselves. Endogamous marriage among Bugis is not limited to consanguinity between marrying partners. Alignments with *tau matoa* extend the kinship network among people of different bilateral kin groups. If two people who come from different kin groups but recognize the same *tau matoa* marry each other, theirs is still considered an “insider marriage.” Exogamous marriages are not prohibited but are less common. In a case where exogamous marriage is intended, advice and guidance from *tau matoa* are even more important and relevant; *tau matoa* will assess the status/social location of the “outsider” and assure its equal position with the Bugis partner before the couple can marry.

4. Bugis Categories of Gender: The Body, The Soul, and Divine Interventions

The Bugis gender system acknowledges five categories of gender identity: *oroané* (masculine-male), *makkunrai* (feminine-female), *calalai* (masculine-female), *calabai* (feminine-male), and *bissu* (androgynous male/female). The words “female” and “male” here are used to refer to biological sex of a person, while the words “masculine” and “feminine” are used to refer to attributed qualities/ideals of manliness and womanliness. There is an excellent ethnography written by Australian anthropologist Sharyn Graham Davies which accounts in detail Bugis notions of gender. In her book *Challenging Gender Norms*, Davies argues that the Bugis gender system does not abide by a biological determinist notion, nor does the system rely solely on behavioral notion. The conception of a gender among Bugis involves combinations of biological traits, degrees of attributed qualities of *manness* and *womaness*, and notions of spirituality (Davies 2007).

Among Bugis, as in many other societies in Indonesia, man and woman constitute the most common genders and are positioned at the farthest extremes on the gender spectrum. *Oroané*—a man—is a male-bodied person with considerably high masculine qualities. *Makkunrai*—a woman—is a female-bodied person with considerably high feminine qualities. The Bugis ideal of masculine/feminine qualities are usually reflected through clothing style, gesture, and general behavior. Spatial division of social roles does not have strict boundaries for either gender. Although usually women assume the household domain and men assume the public domain, both spaces with their respective tasks are also flexibly available to either gender (Pelras 1996).

Somewhere between these two extremes of the spectrum are what Bugis called *calalai* and *calabai*. *Calalai* is a person born with a female body but acts, talks, and behaves the way a man does. In contrast, *calabai* is a person born with a male body but conforms to feminine qualities as

does a woman. This situation does not indicate, however, that they consider themselves a man or a woman trapped in the wrong body, and neither person desires sex reassignment surgery. Rather, for *calalai*, s/he¹⁴ is simply a female-bodied person with a man's soul; for *calabai*, s/he is a male-bodied person with a woman's soul. Some *calalai* and *calabai* believe that they possess women's/men's souls by divine intervention. For them, it is God's will that makes them *calalai/calabai*, and thus it is also their fate/destiny to follow God's plan as *calalai/calabai* (Davies 2007). This notion of a sexed-body with a gendered-soul also conforms with the nationwide identity of Indonesian *waria*¹⁵ (Boellstorff 2004; Davies 2007; Idrus 2013). Here, it is important to note that while biology plays a role in determining a person's sex, it does not, however, solely determine a person's gender. Notions of spirituality are important determinants of the Bugis conception of gender.

Besides having a gendered-soul, everyday presentations are important for *calalai* and *calabai* to affirm their gender identities. Bugis associate a set of ideals with notions of manhood and womanhood. These ideals range from the way to act/ behave, to dress, to work, and so on. *Calalai* wear trouser, while *calabai* wear miniskirt. In a wedding party, or any other social gatherings, *calalai* dress in man's attire, while *calabai* dress in woman's attire. *Calalai* talk, act, and behave in the Bugis sense of manliness; *calabai* do so in accordance with the Bugis sense of femininity. Most *calalai* work in male-dominated job environments such as in the rice field or machine workshop. *Calabai* are usually very talented beauticians and most work in beauty salons.

¹⁴ Neither Indonesian nor Bugis language has gender pronouns. All subjective, objective, and possessive pronouns for the third person are gender-neutral. Davies uses the terms s/he, hir and himself to refer to *calalai*, *calabai*, and *bissu* to avoid confusion between the conventional English terms for gender pronouns and the Bugis categories of gender. For the same reason, I follow her decision to use the terms s/he, hir and himself to refer to the three genders when necessary in this paper.

¹⁵ The term *waria* derives from a combination of two Indonesian words: *wanita* (lit. woman) and *pria* (lit. man). *Waria* is a person born physically as male but possessing the soul of a woman. The gender a *waria* presents/performs is the gender of hir soul—a woman.

Some *calabai* are also popular entertainers who are often asked to perform at wedding parties and other social events. Possessing a woman's soul in a male body does not automatically make a person *calalai*; the same goes for *calabai*. Both *calalai* and *calabai* conform to and perform these sets of gender ideals in their everyday lives (Davies 2007).

If within the gender spectrum *oroané* occupy the farthest point on the spectrum, *makkunrai* at the other farthest point, and *calalai/calabai* somewhere in between, another gender category either encompasses the whole spectrum or lies at the nexus—*bissu*. *Bissu* can be born as either biological male or biological female, but s/he encompasses elements of both manhood and womanhood. Yet *bissu* do not consider themselves as possessing any of the four genders. They are, in fact, believed to have the perfect embodiment of all elements of the genders.

Beside their androgynous qualities, *bissu* possess spiritual qualities that no other gender has. *Bissu* hold very important roles for Bugis; they are shamans, priests, healers, and spiritual leaders. *Bissu* possess the power to contact the spirit world, mediating the mortals and the gods. They bestow blessings on Muslims before they go on pilgrimage to Mecca, on couples at their weddings, and in religious rituals. Their clothing style incorporates both masculine and feminine elements. They wear flowers (a feminine element) and they hold an athame or *keris* knife (a masculine element) when performing rites. They have both female and male “energies”, and it is precisely this quality that enables them to draw the power to mediate the mortals and the divine/the spirits (Davies 2007).

One does not wake up one morning and decide to be a *bissu*. Androgynous qualities are prerequisite but not the only determinant. One has to encounter “the calling” to become a *bissu*, such as through epiphanic or prophetic dreams.¹⁶ The calling leads a *bissu* to his decision of

¹⁶ A person born intersexed is believed to have a destiny to become a *bissu*, but s/he is not one until certain rites of passage have been learned and completed.

whether to “accept” or “refuse” the *bissu* path. Those who accept the calling go to a place where they participate in arduous learning activities such as mastering magical knowledge, sacred instruments and texts, dances, chants/mantras, and blessing and healing abilities. A few *bissu* also learn these abilities through their dreams. The *bissu* have their own language which is unintelligible to anyone but *bissu* themselves (Davies 2007; Millar 1983); the language is not taught anywhere but in *bissu*’s own dreams. There are rules of conduct that *bissu* have to follow for the rest of their lives, such as refraining from sexual activity and lustful desire of mundane things (Davies 2007).

To summarize, one becomes *oroané* (a man) when he is born male-bodied, embodies a man’s soul, and performs the Bugis notion of masculinity. One becomes *makkunrai* (a woman) when she is born female-bodied, embodies a woman’s soul, and performs the Bugis notion of femininity. One becomes *calalai* (a masculine female) when s/he is born female-bodied, embodies a man’s soul, and performs the Bugis notion of masculinity. One becomes *calabai* (a feminine male) when s/he is born male-bodied, embodies a woman’s soul, and performs the Bugis notion of femininity. One becomes *bissu* (an androgynous shaman) when s/he is born male/female/intersexed-body, embodies androgynous soul, encounters “the calling,” and undergoes certain rites of passage. The Bugis conception of gender involves not only biological traits, but also divine interventions, and learning and performing certain qualities.

4.1. The Sex that Marries

Bugis *adat* law, as well as the Indonesian Marriage law, recognizes a partnership under the institution of marriage for male and female. I use the words male and female instead of man and woman here to refer to biological sexes of persons who are able to get married; both man-woman marriage and *calalai-calabai* marriage are permissible. Although *calalai* does not consider himself

as a woman, and *calabai* does not consider himself as a man, they can still marry each other because of their opposite biological sexes. Usually in the case of *calalai-calabai* marriage, the female-bodied *calalai* takes the role of a husband and the male-bodied *calabai* takes the role of a wife (Davies 2007).

Neither *adat* law nor the national law recognize same-sex partnership under the institution of marriage. Bugis, however, tolerate any forms of partnership between same-sex couples of different genders but not same-sex couples of the same gender. What this means is that while the Bugis may tolerate *calalai-woman/calabai-man* relationships, man-man/woman-woman affairs are rather frowned upon. In the olden days, though, Bugis had once recognized *calabai-man/calalai-woman* marriages, in addition to man-woman marriage:

“When I asked Puang Bachri, a well-respected Bugis man, if he knew any *calalai*, he recounted a number of historical tales. Puang Bachri said the last Raja of Balannipa, a town near Majene in Sulawesi, was a *calalai*. This Raja wielded a great deal of power, Puang Bachri said, and as a sign of his power s/he had three wives.” (Davies 2007)

It may be inferred from the tale that the *adat* law was different back then in terms of marriage permissibility for *calabai-man/calalai-woman* couples. But it is not clear, at least to me, whether the *calalai* Raja was able to marry a woman because the *adat* law really was open to *calabai-man/calalai-woman* marriages, or because the raja was a powerful person whom nobody dared confront. It is also not clear whether same-sex couples of the same gender, i.e. man-man/woman-woman couples, have always been prohibited from marrying each other, even in former times.

5. Bugis Marriage: Between Status and Marriage Prestations

Social relations among the Bugis are fluid, equivocal, and competitive, yet strongly hierarchical. Within this society, individuals simultaneously compete for higher achieved status, on the one hand, and jealousy guard their privileges based upon ascriptive status, on the other. ... Their weddings constitute fora in which competitive and hierarchical relations are momentarily articulated.
(Millar 1989)

This section centers its attention on particular elements of Bugis marriage, *sompa'* (rankprice) and *dui ménré* (spending money) which previous scholars have described as the Bugis bridewealth system. In this section, I discuss these two types of gifts which the groom and his family give to the bride's family prior to a marriage and their significance within Bugis marriage. This section also explores more deeply the relational pattern between descent-rank and personal achievements in the process of gifts negotiation. More importantly, I refrain from using the term "bridewealth" as an anthropological category for the gift-giving process for the main reason that the term is too simplistic and rigid, and it does not encapsulate the actual meaning of the practice. In summary, two interventions that I make here are: (1) to look at status as a performative identity, and not necessarily an intrinsic essence; (2) to de-categorize *sompa'* and *dui ménré* from *bridewealth*.

Bugis marriage is a direct reflection of kinship, gender, and status systems. Bugis marriage serves as means of making kin and extending alliances. When a man and a woman take each other as husband and wife in a marriage, their families, by virtue of their marrying son and daughter, are joined in a kinship alliance. Bugis recognize a concept called *siala* which means "to take each other" as a basis for their marriage system (Pelras 1996). Nurul Ilmi Idrus (2003), a native Bugis woman, has written a wonderful ethnography about the concept of *siala* and its importance in the Bugis kinship, gender, and status systems. "To take each other" or *siala* for the Bugis means not

only that the bride and the groom take each other as wife and husband, but more importantly “there is an act of exchange in which the groom’s side takes the bride’s, and vice versa, in order to form a new social alliance which plays an important role in kinship (*asseajingeng*)” (Idrus 2003). Consequently, under this concept the husband gains membership in the bride’s kin group, and likewise, the bride gains membership in the husband’s kin group; and neither of them loses membership in his/her natal kin group.

Important in making kinship affiliation by means of marriage is a process of assessing candidates’ social locations. Social locations in terms of ascriptive status and achieved status are important elements in Bugis lives. The relation between the status people have when they are born and the achievements they acquire as they live through adulthood is always uncertain, unpredictable, and flexible, yet both inherent and achieved statuses are always important. The status is always in direct relation to people’s honor and self-worth. People elevate their status by means of personal achievements as well as making connections to a higher level kin group. It is within this situation that strategies in assessing social location of a potential son/daughter in law becomes very important prior to a marriage, for when a man and a woman marry each other their statuses are at stake; one goes down (hypogamy) or goes up (hypergamy), or, in the status-equal marriage the status quo is maintained.

Because status is at stake upon marriage, the Bugis prefer endogamy, that is, marrying their children with other members of the same kin group. According to the Bugis kinship system, endogamy is allowed between second, third, and fourth cousins only. Inter-generational marriage between members of the same kin group is strongly discouraged (Millar 1989).¹⁷ Endogamy

¹⁷ Millar (1989) notes that despite the negative sanctions, there are a few cases in which marriages are arranged between classificatory uncles and nieces although it very rarely happen.

maintains the circulation of status within the kin group precisely because the couples share common ancestors, making it easier to trace genealogy and inherited status of the marrying couple.

Endogamy in Bugis society is not limited to marriage between couples of the same descent-kin group, that is, couples who share blood relations by virtue of having common ancestors. Because people also make a kin connection through personal alignment with *tau matoa*, two people of different natal kin groups but who recognize or affiliate themselves under the same *tau matoa* can also marry each other and still be considered as not marrying an “outsider.” However, because some of the followers of *tau matoa* are mobile young adults, sometimes exogamous marriage is proposed. When exogamous marriage is planned, usually *tau matoa* will assess the social location of the potential outsider candidate to match the status of the Bugis partner (Millar 1989).¹⁸

5.1. Compound Strata: The Nobles, The Commoners, and The “Mixed-Blood” Generations

Social locations are paramount for Bugis. Bugis recognize both descent-rank and personal achievement as equal determinants of one’s social location. Descent-rank is an inherited status, fixed by birth, and traced from both parents’ lineages. Generally, there are three major strata of descent-rank: noble, commoner, and slave (Acciaioli 2009; Idrus 2003; Mattulada 1998; Pelras 1996).¹⁹ Noble descents are usually traced through blood relations with some ancestral rulers. According to the Bugis epic manuscript *La Galigo*, there are at least two divisions of noble rank: upper level nobles who are descendants of ancestral demigods, and middle level nobles or lesser nobles who are usually descendants of officials (Idrus 2003; Mattulada 1998). In a contrasting

¹⁸ Idrus (2003) also explains that exogamous marriages are sometimes desirable because of certain advantages that come with the union. Political advantages are usually the strategical consideration behind exogamous marriages in that, as Idrus points out, people seek to marry the children of influential leaders in order to expand political connection and authority.

¹⁹ The Bugis terms for these strata are slightly different in each district with its respective local dialect. See Greg Acciaioli (2009).

position are commoners. Commoners are also divided into two separate ranks: free commoners who are descendants of neither nobles nor slaves, and good commoners who are a degree higher than free commoners by virtue of having a bit of noble blood (although not enough to be categorized as noble descent) or being exceptional public figures (Millar 1989). Slaves used to be divided into two categories: those who were descendants of slaves, and those who were just becoming slaves (new slaves) (Acciaioli 2009).²⁰

It is important to note that position in social strata in Bugis society is highly complex, flexible, and competitive. Especially in contemporary Bugis society, social location is determined through both descent-rank and personal accomplishments. People can have high social locations through striving for economic success regardless of their lower-rank status. Economic success is not the only way for people to elevate their social location. Every achievement they make contributes to a certain degree of their social standing—for instance, having an influential position in the military or in government office, becoming a religious leader, affiliating with leaders, achieving a higher education, and so on. Consequently, the personal achievements of every individual become dynamic elements within the hierarchical Bugis society (Millar 1989).

Because descent-rank is not the sole determinant of one's status, competition for higher social location through means of personal accomplishments is pervasive, although descent-rank is not necessarily of lesser concern than accomplishments. People still pay attention to descent-rank, yet they simultaneously compete to elevate their status through personal accomplishments. The emergence of contemporary categories of social location only complicates the old system of hierarchy by descent-rank, rather than erasing it. Bugis are keen on preserving their ancestral traditions, values, and customs. However, they are also very open to changes in their lives and

²⁰ Although the Bugis still recognize noble descents and commoners, the stratum slave is no longer applied in the present day. See Idrus (2003).

environments. For the contemporary Bugis, status, and social location in general, is no longer a static, prescribed identity. Instead, it is fluid and very much influenced by ever-changing socio-cultural, political, and economic situations.

There is a strong relational pattern between descent-rank and personal achievements within Bugis marriage practice. It is precisely by looking at the Bugis marriage practice that one can see the importance of both descent-rank and personal achievements. Because descent-rank is transferred to children from both the mother and the father as a consequence of the Bugis bilateral kinship system, social locations of the couple are of important consideration before a marriage is initiated. A marriage between status equals is usually the safest strategy as it ensures the continuation of the kin's rank; this type of marriage usually happens between two equally higher-ranking families. Children of equal-rank parents have the exact same rank of their parents. In other words, neither child nor either parent in this case has higher/lower descent-rank.

A marriage between two people of unequal descent-rank would result in the decrease of status of the previously higher-ranking spouse. In the past, women were highly discouraged from marrying men of lower-ranking families. However, high nobles were not entirely unwilling to marry their daughters to men of lower-ranking families if the men were high achievers in business or possessed a great deal of religious knowledge. In the present day, it is still common for a woman of higher-ranking family to marry a man of lower-rank provided that these men have acquired a great deal of social standing, such as by becoming a higher-ranking military or government official, becoming a successful and wealthy entrepreneur, or having a master's/doctoral degree. In this case, the achieved status of the lower-ranking man equalizes his position to the ascriptive status of the higher-ranking woman. In addition, the ascriptive status of the higher-ranking woman also elevates the rank of the man as he gains membership in the woman's kin group upon marriage.

The same rule applies to lower-ranking women of high achievement who desire to marry up (Millar 1989).

Children of unequal-rank parents inherit slightly lower rank than that of their higher-rank parent, but also slightly higher than that of their lower-ranking parent. For example, if a woman of noble descent marries a lower-ranking man, their children will inherit their mother's noble status although slightly lower than their mother's while higher than their father's—though the status of the father has also been elevated by virtue of marrying a noble-descent woman (Millar 1989). If these (for lack of better terms) middle-rank children marry up, their offsprings' rank goes up. In contrast, if they marry down, the rank of their offspring goes down a notch. These cycles of inter-rank marriages have been ongoing for centuries such that they complicate genealogies of descent-rank. There are cases in which commoners are actually the descendants of those who were once of noble-descents.

Despite the long history, no definitive pattern exists regarding a family's preference for descent-rank vs. achievements of the prospective son/daughter-in-law. While there are some cases in which lower-ranking women of high achievement marry up to higher-ranking men to elevate their status, there are also a few cases in which commoner families reject marriage proposals from men of noble-descent families on account of the men's low achievement. Millar (1989) notes one example in her ethnography *Bugis Weddings*:

“A commoner family actually turned down a proposal for their very attractive, well-educated daughter from one of the highest-ranking raja families in Soppeng. The prospective groom was 20 years old, attractive and bright, but had no interest in education. He only liked to zoom around on his motorcycle.”

In this case, clearly the woman's parents value education more than descent-rank, to the extent that they confidently rejected the proposal from a man of noble-descent who had no future prospects in education. Such a situation negates the assumption that descent-rank is valued more

than personal accomplishment and complicates the ways in which descent-rank and personal accomplishments are valued in society.

5.2. “To Take Each Other”: Status Performativity in Bugis Marriage/Wedding

In a stratified society such as the Bugis, status is an essential aspect of everyday lives. But what constitutes status for Bugis is more than just what is inherited; it is also more than just what is acquired. Just as reiteration of gender through everyday presentations is important for the establishment of gender identity in Bugis society, equally important for status embodiment are the actual presentations of status in the social dimension. In other words, status must be articulated and iterated in certain ways in order to establish a socially recognizable social location.

Status in the Bugis context is never just about an intangible blood connection with ancestors. Status is a very material, very worldly identity. People display their status in every aspect of their lives. The clothes they wear indicate status, as do the food they are eat, the way they serve food to their guests, and the way they act, talk, and behave in front of other people. Demeanor is a palpable indicator of status; there is a set of collective understandings of how people expect other people to behave according to their status. And there is a whole other set of expectations, and taboos, of how people of the same status and people of different status interact with one another (Millar 1989).

Everyday presentations are some of the ways in which status is displayed in everyday lives. There are other ways for people to reiterate their status that are much bigger in terms of mechanisms of presentation but are much less frequent (within each individual’s life cycle) compared to the everyday presentations. Marriage/wedding marks one of these grand gestures of presenting status. Marriage/wedding for Bugis occurs less frequently but is conducted on a large scale and with intricate details, that involving families, friends, and alliances. It is one of the

ultimate ways in which the statuses of the bride and the groom, together with those of their respective families, are reiterated and established in front of a large group of people, solidifying the marrying parties' social locations.

Important considerations in Bugis marriage include not only whom to marry but also proposal strategies; size, location, and decoration of the wedding party; whom to invite; what food to serve and how to serve it; fine clothing, and so on. One other element of the Bugis marriage, perhaps, the most important of all, is the amount of marriage prestations: the set of gifts the groom and his family give to the bride's family prior to a marriage. These marriage prestations are a direct, material reflection of the marrying couple's social locations.

Bugis have at least five stages of marriage procession: proposal stage, engagement stage, marriage ceremony, wedding party, and post-wedding family meetings of both sides (Millar 1989).²¹ When a man initiates his intention to propose to a woman, his parents usually observe and put into careful consideration the prospective bride's social locations to see whether the pair are equivalent. After the careful consideration, the man's family proposes to the woman's family; here it is time for the woman's family to observe and put into careful consideration the man's social locations (Millar 1989). In the past, arranged marriages were very common in Bugis society. Among contemporary Bugis, however, in addition to the parents' considerations, both men and women also have a voice in their own marriage.

In this proposal stage, descent-rank and personal achievements are always in a balancing relational pattern. For example, if a man of lower descent-rank proposes to a woman of higher-rank, it is likely that the woman's parents will accept his proposal provided that the man has achieved a successful life of his own. In this case, the man's high personal achievement balances

²¹ Detail accounts of Bugis wedding rituals can be found in Millar's (1989) wonderful ethnography *Bugis Weddings*.

his lower rank status compared to the woman's high descent-rank. As we have noted from Millar's (1989) ethnography, it is also possible that commoner parents of a woman of high achievements will reject the proposal of a noble-descent man on account of his not being their daughter's equivalent in terms of personal achievements. Descent-rank and personal achievements of both man and woman always balance each other out, although the balancing pattern is never static or rigid.

When a proposal is accepted by the bride's family, the groom's family (usually represented by a spokesperson) proceeds with asking the amount of marriage prestations—*sompa'* and *dui ménré*—the bride's side wishes before moving on to the engagement stage. The convention of marriage prestations in Bugis society represents the materialization of status identity. *Sompa'*, or rankprice, is fixed and determined according to *adat* law and represents the rank of the bride and her family. It is highly discouraged for a woman to receive a rankprice lower than her mother's. The payment of *sompa'* today has little to no significant monetary value as it is paid in old currency. It is merely a symbolic gesture made by the groom's family to recognize the descent-rank of the bride's family. The amount of rankprice is paid and made public during the marriage ceremony (Millar 1989).

Dui ménré, or spending money, in contrast, is not fixed by *adat* law and is highly flexible in amount depending on the result of the negotiation between the two sides. The payment is practical in that it has significant monetary value, unlike rankprice, yet it is also symbolic in that it represents both the achievements/wealth of the bride's parents and the personal achievements of the bride. The parties can choose whether to publicly announce the amount of *dui ménré* alongside the amount of rankprice at the marriage ceremony. Even though they may choose not to announce it at the marriage ceremony, the amount of spending money will eventually become public

knowledge. It is expected that the spending money will be used to finance the wedding party, and thus the amount will be reflected in the size and fanciness of the wedding party. Sometimes, depending on the size of wedding party desired by both parties, the bride's family will also contribute to its financing, in addition to using all the spending money given by the groom's family. Sometimes the bride's family spends so much more than the spending money that they also use some or all the money received by the newlyweds as gifts from the guests at the wedding party to cover the remaining expense (Millar 1989).²²

In addition to *sompa'* and *dui ménré*, sometimes the bride's family will request an engagement gift, especially if they are of higher status than the groom and his family. If the status of the bride and the groom are relatively equal, the groom may choose to bring (or not to bring) any kind of engagement gift. If the groom is of higher status than the bride, the groom's family will also request an engagement gift from the bride's family (Millar 1989). This additional gift-giving practice usually occurs among wealthier families.

After deciding the amount of marriage prestations, the families move to the engagement stage to make decisions about the dates of the marriage ceremony and the wedding party. A marriage ceremony is a religio-cultural rite where an *imam* officiates. A wedding party is more of a post-ceremony social gathering/party to celebrate the union of the groom and the bride, and the alliance of both families. A wedding party is the ultimate gesture in which statuses of both the groom and the bride as well as their families are articulated, reiterated, and flaunted in front of the many guests.

“... It is, after all, the guests who give meaning to weddings: status and *harga diri* [self-worth] depend upon the perceptions of others, particularly at *pesta* [party].”
(Millar 1989)

²² Besides money put inside an envelope, some guests also give other types of wedding gifts, usually wrapped in fancy plastic/paper.

How many high-status guests are invited by both parties and how these high-status guests are treated, size and location of the wedding party, decorations, what and how foods are served, and so on, all contribute to the performance of status. This public presentation of a wedding party serves as a means of constructing and embedding the idea of status for the guests.

The practical and symbolic meanings of *sompa'* and *dui ménré* in the Bugis marriage/wedding inform us how important those practices are in the establishment of status for each individual and family, and even to the status system of Bugis in general. These two types of marriage prestations require careful planning and negotiation because "..., once made public, it explicitly locates the two parties as equals and may change their locations with respect to the rest of the society" (Millar 1989). The one who marries a higher-ranking spouse elevates his/her status; the one who marries a lower-ranking spouse decreases his/her status unless the spouse is a high achiever and thus they can be considered equals.

As Butler (1990) argues that "nobody really is a gender from the start,"²³ status too is not necessarily an intrinsic essence; rather, it requires continual performances and reiterations in every aspect of life—from the way people dress to the way people do a wedding. Descent-rank is indeed acquired by birth, but Bugis also have sets of expectations, and taboos, attached to descent-ranks; these expectations are to be performed accordingly, in addition to people's competing for higher personal achievement to compensate and/or complement their descent-rank. These two status makers, descent-rank and personal achievements, when combined together establish a socially recognizable, and possibly appreciated and respected, social location of each individual and family.

²³ There is a very nice audiovisual explanation from Judith Butler regarding her theory of gender performativity, in addition, of course, to her work *Gender Trouble* (1990), see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo7o2LYATDc>

5.3. De-categorizing *Sompa'* and *Dui Ménré* from Bridewealth

I stated briefly at the beginning of this paper that the reason I refrain from using “bridewealth” to describe the practice of *sompa'* and *dui ménré* is that the term reduces *sompa'* and *dui ménré* to a rigid, too formulaic anthropological concept. The term bridewealth does not encompass the whole meaning of the practices. Even the classical kinship discussions in anthropology regarding the use of the bridewealth category to describe certain types of marriage prestations/gift-giving practices are problematic and full of debates (Dalton 1966). Some anthropologists use the terms bridewealth and brideprice interchangeably; some anthropologists argue that using the term bridewealth and brideprice interchangeably is potentially misleading. Even to use the revised definition of “bridewealth” that E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1931) proposes still does not encapsulate the full idea behind the Bugis practice of *sompa'* and *dui ménré*.

The implication of using the term bridewealth interchangeably with the term brideprice is that it gives the sense that the payments will be followed by the transfer of certain rights in the bride by the bride's family to her husband and his lineage (Goody and Tambiah 1973; Gray 1960; Harris 1962). In his ethnographic account of the Kachin and Lakher, Edmund R. Leach (1953) uses the term bridewealth and brideprice interchangeably precisely to describe this situation;

“With the ‘Ordinary Jinghpaw’, marriage involves a transfer of the bride from the jural control of her own patrilineage to that of her husband, and this transfer is absolute and final. The husband's lineage acquires by the marriage not only rights in the bride's potential children, but also absolute physical control over the person of the bride herself. ... In this case the bridewealth transactions can correctly be described as a ‘brideprice’; ownership of the physical person of the bride and all rights that adhere to her are transferred in exchange for the goods of the marriage payment.”

It appears that the term bridewealth here is used to describe a certain type of transaction in which the bride is actually transferred to the groom and his kin through payments made by the groom to her family.

However, to use the term bridewealth in this sense to describe the Bugis practice of *sompa* and *dui ménré* betrays two essential aspects of Bugis: first, the Bugis kinship system, and second, the Bugis marriage philosophy *siala*, or “to take each other.” As I have described in a previous section of this paper, Bugis society is neither a patrilineage nor a matrilineage one. The Bugis abide by a bilateral system in which both the female and male lineages are equally important and recognized. Their kinship system secures the transfer of kinship genealogies from both parents to their children. Their kinship system also secures both the bride’s and the groom’s memberships in their natal kin groups as neither loses membership in their natal kin groups upon marriage. *Siala* confirms the union of two people as husband and wife, while simultaneously “marrying” the two families of the newlyweds. The Bugis marriage system secures the alliance of two kin groups in which both the bride and the groom each gain membership in the other’s kin group.

Evans-Pritchard (1931) argued against the use of the term brideprice and suggested moving away from it and using the term bridewealth instead. His argument against using the term brideprice is based on the negative implication of suffixing the word “price” to the word “bride.” He argues that the term brideprice indicates that the bride is “purchased” or “transferred” in the same way commodities are purchased/transferred in the context of the European economic system. Such appropriation, he argues, is harmfully misleading to describe the actual context of African societies:

“On one point at least there seems to be fairly complete accord among specialists, namely about the undesirability of retaining the expression “bride-price”. . . ., at worst, it encourages the layman to think that “price” used in this context is synonymous with “purchase” in common English parlance. Hence we find people believing that wives are bought and sold in Africa in much the same manner as commodities are bought and sold in European markets. It is difficult to exaggerate the harm done to Africans by this ignorance.” (Evans-Pritchard 1931)

Instead of using the term brideprice, he proposes the term bridewealth. He argues that the word “wealth” at least does not have the same meaning as the word “price,” nor does it indicate purchasing activity in an economic sense. His decision to keep the prefix “bride” before “wealth” was intended to preserve the appearance of continuity of the prefix which had become a popular usage. Bridewealth is a comprehensive term that encompasses all transference activities; it indicates the marriage-payment practice in which all types of wealth can be transferred economically or otherwise (Evans-Pritchard 1931).

However, even the term bridewealth as Evans-Pritchard suggests still cannot be applied to the Bugis context of *sompa'* and *dui ménré*. With precisely the same reasoning Evans-Pritchard (1931) used to replace the suffix “price” with “wealth,” I argue that retaining the prefix “bride” before the word “wealth” can be potentially misleading in the Bugis context. The prefix “bride” signifies the actual bride/woman as the categorical object of the term “bridewealth” which (1) may still indicate that the bride is being transferred regardless the types of wealth involved in the process; and (2) may indicate the bride as the autonomous owner of the wealth. Both possibilities, I argue, do not fit into the Bugis context.

On the one hand, *sompa'* is a rankprice, a sum paid by the groom to the bride’s family in which the value represents the rank of the bride and her family. *Sompa'* itself has no monetary values and is merely a symbolic gesture. In this case, *sompa'* is not necessarily an economic transaction. Although descent-rank can technically be classified as wealth, it still does not indicate the bride as the autonomous owner of the wealth; the descent-rank (the wealth) is hers and her family’s altogether. Thus, to use term bridewealth in this case can be problematic, if not inappropriate.

Dui ménré, on the other hand, is a sum paid by the groom and his family to the bride's family to indicate the achieved standing of the bride's parents. It has significant monetary value, but it does not indicate the transfer of the bride nor does it indicate the wealth of the bride. According to its purpose, *dui ménré*, or spending money, is used to finance a wedding party. As discussed earlier, the purpose of a wedding party is to display the statuses of the newlyweds as well as those of their parents. Therefore, to use the term bridewealth in this case can also be problematic, if not irrelevant.

It is even more misleading to classify *sompa'* and *dui ménré* in the category of dowry. Dowry, at least within the classic kinship discussion, is a category used to describe the transfer of property/wealth from parents to the bride upon her marriage; it is a pre-mortem, intergenerational inheritance (Goody 1970; Goody and Tambiah 1973). Practically speaking, *sompa'* and *dui ménré* involve inter-familial, not intra-familial, transference of wealth.

I do not attempt here to debunk the conception of the bridewealth category from anthropological discourse. There are already extensive (though forgotten) debates/controversies regarding the use of bridewealth vs. brideprice categories in ethnographic works; debates/controversies which call for the establishment of "unambiguous categories" (Dalton 1966). One can consider Goody's (1970) term "marriage prestations" in the most general sense—the establishment of any benefit upon marriage—to categorize the practices, which I think stands as a neutral category for most cases. I merely suggest the careful choice and use of anthropological categories to describe practices within the contexts of many different societies. Because certain anthropological terms/categories are very rigid and formulaic, they cannot be applied to all societies in the world. The term bridewealth surely cannot be used to describe the Bugis practice of *sompa'* and *dui ménré*.

6. Conclusion

I have argued in this paper regarding the problems of using the categories of bridewealth, brideprice, or even dowry to describe the Bugis practice of gift-giving from the groom to the bride's family prior to marriage—*sompa'* and *dui ménré*. Using those categories renders the practices into rigid, too formulaic anthropological categories which are not necessarily able to encompass the whole meaning/idea behind the practices. On the one hand, *sompa'* and *dui ménré* are not dowry, as they are not a strategy of intergenerational inheritance which is what dowry means. On the other hand, *sompa'* and *dui ménré* are not bridewealth, as the category of bridewealth betrays the Bugis kinship system and marriage philosophy. It is tempting to quickly classify certain practices or rituals into an existing anthropological category just by looking at how the practical gesture of the practices resembles the idea/definition of that anthropological category. However, doing so is a careless, perhaps ignorant, approach.

One should be aware of the grand social structure in place that influences and may regulate social interactions within a society, including how to do certain rituals/practices and what their meanings are. It is important to understand the Bugis kinship system which structurizes and organizes inter- and intra-kin relations. It is important to understand the Bugis gender ideology and conception which elucidate gender roles and relations within the society. It is important to understand the Bugis status ideology in order to understand how everyday presentation and social interaction matter. It is important to understand the Bugis marriage philosophy and the ways people do marriage which explicates the purpose and importance of marriage. *Sompa'* and *dui ménré* are direct manifestations of these four essential aspects of Bugis society. *Sompa'* and *dui ménré* can be understood only when one pays equal attention to the practical gesture of the practices and to

all four essential aspects of Bugis society—kinship system, gender ideology, status ideology, and marriage philosophy.

All claims that I make in this paper are based on my interpretation of Judith Butler’s theory of performativity and the way I use her theory to explain status performance/reiteration in Bugis society. This understanding and/or interpretation of status—as performances, gestures, actions, and presentations which construct *the* status identity—enables me to explore the meanings of the Bugis practice of marriage prestations and the relevance of status performances within the practice. Nevertheless, this paper is a work in progress that I intend to develop in the future. Further research for this paper shall include aspects not only of status but also (to name a few) of religion, history, and state, all of which are lacking in this paper but play crucial parts as well within the Bugis societal context. It is also worth noting that the Bugis society has a long history of marriage permissibility and norms for other types of union. For instance, there are people who can still recall the story of a time when a *calalai* raja married three women. Further research on the history of Bugis marriage permissibility for people of the same sex may challenge popular assumption of cultural hostility toward non-normative sexuality; that, in fact, homosexuality is a part of our long history of traditions and customs, and not an invention of the “West.”

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