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A Touch of Destiny: *Mappasikarawa* as a Manifestation of Transcendental Unity in Bugis Marriage

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Abstract: This research explores the transcendental dimension of *mappasikarawa*, a Bugis wedding ritual performed after the Islamic ceremony (*mappakawing*), which marks the groom's first touch of the bride. This study employs an ethnographic research conducted across Bone, Wajo, and Soppeng regencies from January to December 2023. This research aims to reveal how *mappasikarawa* reflects the concepts of spiritual responsibility transfer and destiny unification in Bugis culture. Despite variations in practice across regions—such as touching palms in Bone, wrists in Wajo, or foreheads in Soppeng—the ritual's transcendental essence remains a part of the collective consciousness of the Bugis people. The study documents how the ritual has evolved through four historical periods: the pre-Islamic era (before the 17th century), the Islamisation period (17th-19th centuries), the modern era (20th century), and contemporary times (21st century), with each period exhibiting adaptation while maintaining its spiritual significance. Findings also reveal generational differences in perceptions of the ritual's transcendental elements, with younger generations viewing it more as a cultural heritage than a spiritual practice, although many develop a deeper appreciation after experiencing it. This study enriches ritual anthropology by demonstrating how *mappasikarawa* embodies the integration of social and transcendental dimensions, while also introducing a combined ethnographic–philological method for analysing indigenous rituals.

Keywords: *mappasikarawa*; Bugis marriage ritual; cosmological conception; ethnophilosophy; ritual symbolism

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji dimensi transendental dari mappasikarawa, sebuah ritual pernikahan suku Bugis yang dilakukan setelah upacara Islam (mappakawing), yang menandai sentuhan pertama mempelai pria terhadap mempelai wanita. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian etnografi yang dilakukan di Kabupaten Bone, Wajo, dan Soppeng dari Januari hingga Desember 2023. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap bagaimana mappasikarawa mencerminkan konsep penyerahan tanggung jawab spiritual dan penyatuan takdir dalam budaya Bugis. Meskipun terdapat variasi praktik di berbagai wilayah—seperti menyentuh telapak tangan di Bone, pergelangan tangan di Wajo, atau dahi di Soppeng—esensi transendental ritual ini tetap menjadi bagian dari kesadaran kolektif masyarakat Bugis. Studi ini mendokumentasikan bagaimana ritual tersebut telah berevolusi melalui empat periode sejarah: era pra-Islam (sebelum abad ke-17), periode Islamisasi (abad ke-17–19), era modern (abad ke-20), dan masa kini (abad ke-21), di mana setiap periode menunjukkan adaptasi sambil tetap mempertahankan signifikansi spiritualnya. Temuan juga mengungkapkan perbedaan antar generasi dalam persepsi terhadap unsur-unsur transendental ritual ini, di mana generasi muda lebih memandangnya sebagai warisan budaya daripada praktik spiritual, meskipun banyak di antara mereka yang mengembangkan apresiasi yang lebih mendalam setelah mengalaminya. Penelitian ini memperkaya antropologi ritual dengan menunjukkan bagaimana mappasikarawa mewujudkan integrasi dimensi sosial dan transendental, sekaligus memperkenalkan metode gabungan etnografi–filologi untuk menganalisis ritual-ritual adat.

Kata kunci: *mappasikarawa*; ritual pernikahan Bugis; konsepsi kosmologis; etnofilosofi; simbolisme ritual

1. Introduction

Indonesia has a wealth of marriage traditions shaped by diverse rituals and layered philosophies (Kurniawan, 2024; Solikah, Izzah, & Valeria, 2024). Bugis weddings in South Sulawesi stand out for their complex ritual sequence, which serves as both a public social ceremony and a transcendental experience. As one of Indonesia's largest ethnic groups, the Bugis have long upheald marriage traditions that express deep cultural values, spiritual commitments, and social organisation (Achmad Musyahid Idrus, Nurdin, Qayyum, Halim, & Amir, 2023). Although modernisation and global cultural flows challenge ritual transmission, Bugis communities continue to treat marriage rites as a key marker of collective identity.

Mappasikarawa is among the most sacred rites in the Bugis wedding cycle (Mahdaniar, Juhannis, & Usman, 2021; Salida, 2023). This ritual involves the groom and the bride's first touch after signing the marriage contract. *Mappasikarawa* is more than a formal prosedure (Marwing, 2024; Syamsurijal, Mursyid, Ilyas, & Ahmad, 2022); it expresses the concept of unification that reaches beyond the physical into the spiritual and cosmological realms (Ilham & Wijiati, 2022; Ridwan & Hidayat, 2023; Said, Hukmiah, Nur, Wahyuni, & Akbar, 2024; Sesse, 2019). In a community guided by *siri'* (self-respect) and *pesse* (empathy), *mappasikarawa* also affirms social standing and symbolically joins two families through marriage (A M Idrus, Nurdin, Qayyum, Halim, & Amir, 2023; Sudirman & Mustari, 2021). Yet, despite its longevity and ritual centrality, scholarship has not examined the transcendental dimension of *mappasikarawa* in depth, particularly in relation to Bugis cosmology and the ways cosmological reasoning shapes married life.

Studies of Bugis marriage have largely focused on social sequencing, stratification, and gender relations (Ahmadin, 2019; N. I. Idrus, 2016; Lineton, 1975; Millar, 1983; Pelras, 2000). Broader anthropological discussions of Indonesian marriage rituals (Alimi, 2014; Limantara, 2020; Schrauwers, 2000), as well as recent work on Bugis sacred culture (Rahmat & Purnomo, 2025; Syam, Tang, & Safriadi, 2021; Zhafira & Geshica, 2024), rarely place *mappasikarawa* at the centre of analysis. This study addresses that gap by analysing *mappasikarawa* through the lens of Bugis cosmology and by tracing its implications for married life. The contribution of this research lies in a sustained account of *mappasikarawa* as a transcendental practice, rather than as an auxiliary custom within a wedding sequence.

Accordingly, this research treats *mappasikarawa* not only as a socio-cultural symbol but also as a ritual expression of a Bugis cosmological orientation towards the union of destiny (*appasideppeq pammase*). This framing highlights how ritual action can generate spiritual expectations that couples and families carry into everyday marital life, including ideas about harmony, responsibility, and moral conduct within kin networks. By employing an ethnophilosophical approach grounded in local concepts, this study clarifies how Bugis marriage functions as a social institution that also articulates spiritual and transcendental commitments.

This research contributes theoretically by developing an ethnophilosophical framework for analysing marriage rituals that scholars can adapt beyond the Bugis context to other ethnographic settings. In practical terms, the study supports cultural preservation and revitalisation by showing why communities often regard the spiritual dimension as the foundation of the ritual, not an optional layer that modern life can discard. At a broader social level, the findings prompt reflection on marriage as an institution with both legal and social dimensions, as well as spiritual and transcendental ones, which remains especially relevant in pluralistic religious and cultural contexts.

This study aims to: (1) explore the transcendental dimension of the *mappasikarawa* ritual in Bugis marriage; (2) analyse the relationship between the *mappasikarawa* ritual and the concept of Bugis cosmology; (3) identify changes in the meaning of the *mappasikarawa* ritual in the context of contemporary Bugis society; (4) describe the spiritual implications of the *mappasikarawa* ritual on

married life; and (5) formulate a conceptual model that integrates the transcendental dimension in the understanding of Bugis marriage rituals. The study focuses on Bugis communities in Bone, Wajo, and Soppeng Regencies, where many families continue to practise the marriage tradition relatively intact, and it prioritises the enactment of *mappasikarawa* and its meanings as articulated by ritual actors and customary stakeholders.

This study employs an ethnographic design, complemented by an ethnophilosophical approach to interpret the ritual's symbolic and cosmological meanings. Ethnophilosophy is essential because observation alone cannot account for why participants treat particular gestures, spatial arrangements, and invocations as spiritually consequential; interpretation requires engagement with Bugis worldviews preserved in oral traditions and *lontara'* manuscripts. Between January to December 2023, the researcher conducted participatory observations at twelve Bugis wedding ceremonies: five in the Bone Regency, three in the Wajo Regency, and four in the Soppeng Regency. This fieldwork enabled sustained attention to the sequence of ritual stages, the use of symbols, and the interactions among ritual actors within the sacred atmosphere of the ceremony.

The researchers collected data through methodological triangulation, combining participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The interview component involved 15 key informants: customary stakeholders (*puang matoa*), religious leaders (*imams*), ritual actors (*indo' botting*, bridal make-up artists who also guide the ritual), Bugis cultural experts, and couples who had undergone *mappasikarawa* and had been married between one and 30 years. This range of marital duration allowed the study to capture both recent experiences and longer-term reflections on the ritual's meaning and its perceived implications for married life. The researcher selected informants through purposive sampling based on their in-depth knowledge of Bugis marriage traditions, direct involvement in *mappasikarawa*, and willingness to share information. The researcher conducted interviews in Bugis and Indonesian, with each session lasting 60 to 120 minutes, and recorded them with participants' consent.

For document analysis, the researcher examined Bugis manuscripts (*lontara'*) that guide marriage rituals, alongside photographs and video recordings of wedding ceremonies from different periods, as well as academic literature on Bugis marriage practices. The analysis followed Spradley's ethnographic model (Garrido, 2017; McCurdy, Spradley, & Shandy, 2004; Spradley, 1997) through domain, taxonomic, componential, and cultural theme analyses. This analytic process enabled the researcher to map core categories, specify internal structures, examine contrasts and variations in meaning, and identify overarching cultural themes that illuminate the ritual's transcendental principles. To strengthen credibility, the researcher used member checking, prolonged engagement, and triangulation across data sources. The researcher maintained research ethics by obtaining informed consent, respecting the privacy of sacred ritual elements, and validating interpretations with members of the cultural community being studied.

2. The Concept and Philosophy *of Mappasikarawa* in Bugis Marriage

Bugis communities perform the *mappasikarawa* ritual after the marriage contract (*mappakawing*), and many consider it a crucial stage in the broader wedding cycle. The term *mappasikarawa* derives from *karawa* (touch), with the prefix *mappasi-* indicating an action that brings something about between two parties; in this sense, *mappasikarawa* denotes "causing two parties to touch." In an interview, a *puang matoa* from Bone Regency explained that the ritual does not merely mark physical contact, but symbolically unites two entities previously understood as separate, across physical, spiritual, and cosmological dimensions.

The philosophy underpinning *mappasikarawa* draws on the Bugis cosmological notion of *duampoleang*, which frames reality through complementary pairings. Within this worldview, paired oppositions such as sky and earth, day and night, and male and female sustain the universe's order through reciprocity rather than hierarchy. Bugis communities often view marriage as a form of cosmic balance that unites distinct yet complementary entities, thereby achieving a sense of harmony. As one cultural informant stated: "In *mappasikarawa*, touch is not just physical contact, but is a meeting point

between two *sumange'* (souls) that have been destined to unite, forming a new balance in the cosmic order."

An analysis of *lontara's* manuscripts links *mappasikarawa* to ideas of destiny within pre-Islamic Bugis belief, commonly expressed as *totompoe ri batara* (handed down by the gods). After the arrival of Islam, Bugis communities reframed this orientation through the concept of *pammase puang* (God's grace), while sustaining the ritual's spiritual logic in practice. Across both contexts, participants often describe *mappasikarawa* as a moment that actualises destiny, when two souls unite in a way that carries transcendental implications for the marriage. Table 1 summarises this evolution to clarify how Bugis communities have reinterpreted the ritual in response to religious and social change while retaining its sacred orientation.

Table 1. The Evolution of the Meaning of *the Mappasikarawa* Ritual in the Bugis Society

Period	Basic Concepts	Ritual Meaning	Implementation
Pre-Islam (before the 17th century)	*Totompoe ri batara* (which was sent down by the gods)	The gods arrange the union of destiny through sacred touch	*Bissu* (traditional Bugis ritual specialists) lead the rite within a complex ritual sequence
The period of Islamisation (17th-19th centuries)	*Pammase puang* (God's grace)	Touch symbolises the actualisation of God's destiny through marriage	The rite integrates Islamic values; *indo' botting* guides the ritual, and *imams* witness it
Modern Period (20th century)	*Appasideppé pammase* (Bringing Grace Together)	A symbol of social and spiritual unity, with a stronger emphasis on family bonds	The rite becomes more streamlined, with greater focus on the locus of touch and its meaning.
Contemporary Period (21st century)	*Passialleang eloki* (meeting of the will)	A combination of social-status affirmation and ritualised hopes for married life	The rite adapts to contemporary sensibilities while maintaining its core sacred intent

Based on Table 1, *mappasikarawa* shows a trajectory from a more explicitly divine-centred practice in the pre-Islamic period to a socially and spiritually symbolic ceremony in contemporary settings. Although communities vary in the locus of touch, participants consistently interpret the gesture as a conduit for *baraka* (a positive blessing) and as an affirmation of spiritual unity between spouses. This continuity indicates that Bugis communities adapt ritual form to shifting religious and social contexts while sustaining the ritual's transcendental significance.

Field observations across twelve ceremonies in Bone, Wajo, and Soppeng reveal patterned regional variation in how participants perform *mappasikarawa*, without diluting its spiritual purpose. In Bone, the groom typically touches the bride's palm; in Wajo, ritual specialists more often direct the touch to the wrist; and in Soppeng, the touch frequently centres on the forehead or crown. Participants across these settings linked each locus of touch to a shared intention: to transmit *baraka* and to enact a spiritually consequential union that frames the couple's responsibilities and hopes within the context of married life.

3. Procession and Symbolism in the *Mappasikarawa Ritual*

Bugis communities perform *mappasikarawa* within a structured ritual sequence that embeds symbolism at each stage. Based on participatory observation across twelve wedding ceremonies, the researcher identified a procession that typically includes *mappasili* (spiritual cleansing of the bride before the rite), *mallekke dapureng* (the groom's arrival and reception at the bride's house), *mappakawing* (the marriage contract according to Islamic law), *mappasikarawa* (the first touch guided by *indo' botting*), and *mappasiluka* (the couple sitting side by side as legal spouses). By placing *mappasikarawa* immediately after the contract, the ritual positions embodied contact as the ceremonial bridge between legal validity and the spiritual reorientation of the couple's life together.

In this procession, the *indo' botting* plays a pivotal role as a ritual mediator, guiding the groom's hand to touch specific parts of the bride's body. The *Indo' botting* performs this guidance with deliberate care, drawing on oral instructions and guidance recorded in *Lontara'* traditions, which treat the gesture as sacred rather than casual. Communities associate the locus of touch with the projected dimensions of married life. Hence, the palm often signifies sustenance and livelihood, the wrist connotes loyalty and steadfast commitment, and the crown or forehead suggests protection and moral responsibility within the household.

Symbolism in *Mappasikarawa* also extends beyond the gesture itself to include supporting ritual objects that participants treat as both materially and spiritually significant. Ritual specialists may include *angkuleng* (a pillow) to signify prosperity and tenderness, *uwae cenning* (water) to represent clarity and relational purity, *betel* leaves (ota) to express fertility and continuity of lineage, and *tai bani* (a candle) to signify guidance and illumination along the couple's life path. These objects do not function solely as decoration; participants often interpret them as material forms that make cosmological ideas legible and actionable within the ritual setting.

Interviews with *Indo' botting* participants suggest that they associate these elements with Bugis cosmological reasoning about balance, destiny, and spiritual continuity. In this view, the touch of the palm, wrist, or crown does not simply mark physical contact, but opens a channel through which *baraka* can flow and through which a new relational equilibrium can emerge. As an *indo' botting* from Wajo Regency stated: "When I lead the hand of the groom to touch the bride, I bring together not only two bodies, but also two *sumange'* (souls) who will be united in the bond of fate."

Figure 1 presents the procession and key symbolic elements of *mappasikarawa* to clarify how gesture, objects, and sequence operate as a single ritual logic. It also shows how regional variation in the locus of touch aligns with a shared transcendental intention, which strengthens the argument that meaning persists even as performance adapts across communities.

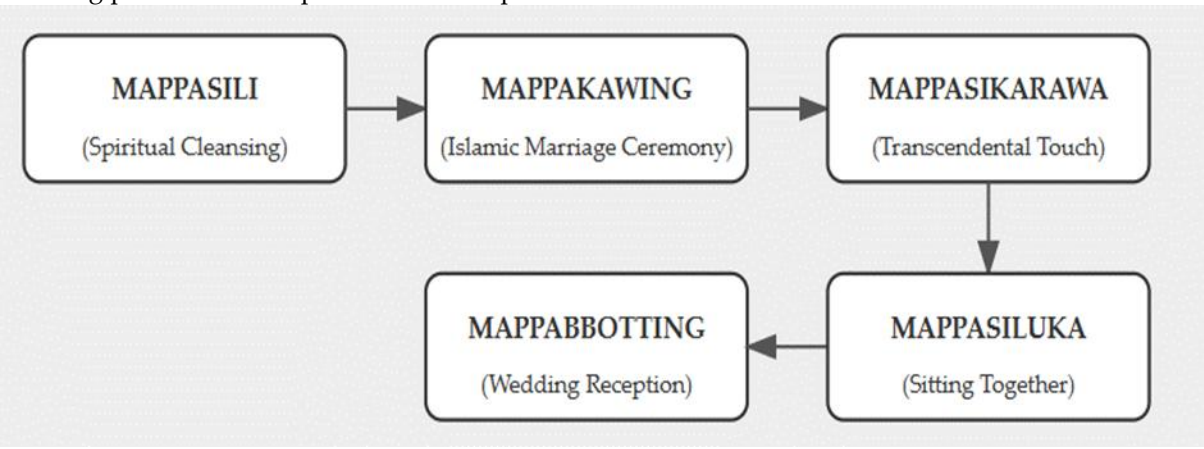


Figure 1 shows the procession flow and symbolism in the *mappasikarawa ritual*.

4. The Transcendental Dimension *of Mappasikarawa* in Bugis Cosmology

The transcendental dimension of *mappasikarawa* emerges from Bugis cosmology, particularly the concept of *sulapa eppa* (four sides), which represents wholeness and cosmic completeness. Within this cosmological framework, people view humans as microcosms that mirror the macrocosm, and they often describe the macrocosm in terms of four foundational elements: earth, water, fire, and wind. Bugis communities interpret marriage, and especially the *mappasikarawa* phase, as a ritual act that aligns these elements within a new social and spiritual union. This alignment does not function as a metaphor alone; ritual actors treat it as a practical, religious, and ethical orientation that frames how spouses should cultivate balance, self-discipline, and relational harmony in their everyday married life.

This study closely links *mappasikarawa* to the Bugis spiritual concept of *appasideppé pammase* (bringing grace together), based on lontara analysis and interviews with cultural experts. Informants described each person as carrying a distinctive capacity for grace, and they framed marriage as the moment when the couple brings these capacities together to form a more complete balance than either individual could sustain alone. In this view, *mappasikarawa* does not merely follow the legal contract as a cultural add-on; it ritualises the spiritual logic that the contract itself cannot express, namely the aspiration to create a household that embodies blessing, mutual care, and cosmological harmony.

A central insight that emerged from this research is the concept of *panrolikadampéngang* (taking spiritual responsibility), which underpins local interpretations of *mappasikarawa*. Informants used this concept to describe a spiritual transition in which responsibility for a woman's wellbeing moves from her parents to her husband, not only in social terms but also in spiritual and cosmological terms. The ritual touch functions as the embodied sign of that transition, because it allows participants to witness a change that would otherwise remain abstract. By framing responsibility in transcendental terms, ritual actors also set expectations for the husband's conduct, including the duty to uphold dignity, provide sustenance, and guide the household towards moral maturity.

According to a *puang matoa* from Soppeng Regency;

> "In *mappasikarawa*, spiritual responsibility *(pangngonroang)* is transferred from the female parents to her husband. This responsibility is to provide for the body and bring the wife to the level of spiritual perfection *(akkamaléngang)* in this life and the hereafter." (Indo Angka, personal communication, April 23rd, 2023)

Bugis cosmology also frames *mappasikarawa* through the union of destiny *(passialleang toto),* which many informants described as a key aim of the ritual. Traditional understandings often hold that each person carries destiny from before birth, and marriage marks the meeting point where two complementary destinies converge into a shared path. Participants treat *mappasikarawa* as a moment that actualises this convergence, when *baraka* flows from one partner to the other and establishes a bond that exceeds the purely physical and social. This belief does not erase the social function of marriage, but rather deepens it by placing the marital union within a sacred moral framework that couples must continually renew through their conduct, reciprocity, and spiritual discipline.

5. The Role of Indigenous Stakeholders in Articulating the Transcendental Dimension

Traditional authorities and ritual specialists play a decisive role in maintaining, explaining, and transmitting the transcendental meanings of *mappasikarawa*. Interviews with 15 key informants indicate that three figures consistently shape how communities understand and perform the ritual: the *indo' botting* as the ritual guide who directs the *mappasikarawa* touch, the *puang matoa* as the customary authority who safeguards ancestral legitimacy, and the imam as the religious figure who aligns the ritual with Islamic values. Each figure contributes a distinct form of authority, and together they enable the ritual to speak simultaneously to customary law, religious ethics, and cosmological meaning.

The *indo' botting* often functions as the primary mediator between visible practice and invisible significance in the *mappasikarawa* rite. Rather than limiting their role to technical arrangement, many *indo' botting* articulate confirmatory explanations about why specific gestures, objects, and loci of touch

matter, and they describe how the rite channels *baraka* across generations. Their interpretive authority matters because the ritual depends on correct guidance, not only to preserve form but also to maintain the sense of sacred efficacy that participants associate with the act. In practice, the *indo' botting* coordinates the bodily discipline of the rite, regulates pace and sequence, and frames the moment so that the couple and their families recognise it as spiritually consequential rather than merely performative.

Observations and interviews also suggest that communities attribute spiritual credibility to an *indo' botting* through a recognised process of initiation. Informants described preparations that may include special fasting *(appuasa pattansa),* meditation *(makkunrai solo),* and the mastery of sacred mantras or chants uttered during the ritual. They do not typically voice these mantras publicly; instead, ritual specialists may whisper them or recite them inwardly, which reinforces the rite's mystical texture and the sense that its meaning depends on inner discipline as much as outward form. By emphasising restraint and secrecy, these practices also protect ritual knowledge from casual circulation and preserve its standing as sacred expertise.

One senior *indo' botting* from Bone Regency explained:

> "Before leading mappasikarawa, I had to achieve a certain spiritual state through fasting and meditation. It is necessary so that I can be a conduit for the cosmic energy that will flow to the bride and groom. Without this spiritual preparation, mappasikarawa would be an empty ritual without transcendental meaning."(Puang Mandu, personal communication, March 16th, 2023)

The *puang matoa* provides customary legitimacy, ensuring that ritual practice remains consistent with ancestral frameworks. Informants also described the *puang matoa* as an interpreter of signs that may arise during ritual time, including unusual events that participants may read as meaningful indicators of the relationship between the visible world and the unseen. This interpretive role does not necessarily introduce determinism; instead, it offers a culturally authorised way to negotiate uncertainty, moral responsibility, and communal expectation around marriage. Through such authority, the *puang matoa* helps sustain the ritual as a living institution rather than a staged heritage performance.

Imams play a complementary role by integrating Islamic values into customary ritual practice. Informants indicated that *imams* help communities ensure that, despite pre-Islamic resonances, *mappasikarawa* does not conflict with Islamic law and moral teaching. In some settings, the imam also offers prayers before or after the ritual to bless the couple and to place the marriage within an explicitly Islamic ethical framework. This integration does not simply "Islamise" the ritual; it enables Bugis communities to sustain customary continuity while framing transcendental meaning through theological language familiar to contemporary religious life.

6. The Transformation of the Meaning and Practice *of Mappasikarawa* in Contemporary Society

Mappasikarawa has undergone shifts in meaning and practice alongside socio-cultural change in contemporary Bugis society. Comparative reading across field observations and interview narratives indicates several recurring transformation patterns, including the simplification of ritual stages to accommodate time and resource constraints, the reinterpretation of ritual meaning to align more explicitly with Islamic values and modern sensibilities, the growing emphasis on aesthetic presentation for documentation and tourism-oriented display, and the revitalisation of philosophical reflection led by educated community members and cultural custodians. These patterns do not move in a single direction; communities often negotiate them simultaneously, and the same wedding may display simplification in procedure while preserving strong claims about blessing and destiny.

Even with these changes, participants frequently locate a transcendental core within the ritual. Interviews with couples suggest that many do not articulate the philosophical vocabulary in detail, yet they still treat *mappasikarawa* as spiritually consequential and emotionally memorable. In this sense, the ritual's transcendental dimension persists not only through doctrinal explanations but also through

embodied experiences, family narratives, and the intense emotions that accompany sacred moments. As one informant, married for 20 years, stated: "I still remember the moment of *mappasikarawa* as a profound spiritual experience. There was a different sensation when my husband's hand touched my wrist, like there was energy flowing, and I still feel it in our marriage bond to this day."

The most noticeable interpretive shift is evident in how many younger Bugis couples describe *mappasikarawa*. Interviews with couples married for one to five years suggest that they often approach the rite primarily as cultural inheritance and family obligation rather than as the immediate actualisation of spiritual cosmology. However, several informants reported that participation prompted later reflection, especially when elders explained the symbolism or when marital challenges made the ritual's ethical expectations feel newly relevant. This pattern suggests that contemporary interpretation does not simply weaken transcendental meaning; it may, in fact, delay it, relocating spiritual significance from prior belief to a retrospective understanding shaped by experience and social learning. Table 2 shows the comparison of perceptions about the transcendental dimension among different life stages of marriage.

Table 2. Comparison of Perceptions of the Transcendental Dimension *of Mappasikarawa*

Group	Perception of the Transcendental Dimension	Level of Compliance with Ritual Procedures	Interpretation of Symbolic Meaning
Senior (>65 years old)	Very powerful, believed to be the union of destiny	Very high, emphasising the precision of the procedure	Literal and mystical
Adults (36-65 years)	Strong, seen as an integral part of marriage	Tall, with minor adaptations	Symbolic and spiritual
Young adults (18-35 years old)	Moderate, cherished as an ancestral tradition	Moderate, with significant adaptation	Metaphorical and psychological
Highly educated	Varied, tends to seek philosophical rationalisation	Moderate, with critical awareness	Philosophical and sociological
Religion-based	Strong, integrated with Islamic values	High, with theological adjustment	Theological and ethical

Transformation also appears in the material and technical dimensions of ritual practice. Several informants noted that some contemporary bridal make-up artists now perform the role of *indo' botting* without undergoing the same spiritual initiation that senior practitioners regard as essential, which can shift how families evaluate ritual authority and efficacy. Material substitutions can also reshape emphasis, such as when families prioritise the aesthetic display of angkuleng (pillow) arrangements over their symbolic function, or when they replace traditional tai bani with electric candles for convenience and a photographic effect. These changes do not automatically erase symbolic meaning, but they can reposition meaning as optional knowledge rather than shared communal literacy.

Alongside these shifts, a revitalisation movement seeks to reaffirm the transcendental dimension of *mappasikarawa*. Bugis scholars and cultural custodians have promoted this renewal through seminars, documentation initiatives, and training for younger *indo' botting*, often by recording senior practitioners' explanations and tracing ritual concepts within *lontara'* knowledge. This movement treats revitalisation as more than heritage preservation; it frames marriage ritual as a moral and spiritual pedagogy that can guide contemporary households. By strengthening interpretive transmission, revitalisation efforts aim to ensure that adaptation does not reduce *mappasikarawa* to spectacle, but instead sustains it as a sacred practice that binds social order to cosmological meaning.

7. *Mappasikarawa* in Global Perspective: Ritual Touch, Baraka, and the Cosmological Ethics of Marriage

This study shows that *mappasikarawa* functions as the ritual hinge between the legal validity of marriage and the couple's entry into a spiritually charged marital life. Across Bone, Wajo, and Soppeng, participants interpret the rite as an act of unification that extends beyond bodily contact into the realm of cosmological order, destiny, and blessing. Although communities vary in the locus of touch, they sustain a shared transcendental orientation through concepts such as *duampoleang, sulapa eppa, appasideppé pammase*, and the union of destiny (*passialleang toto*). The findings also foreground panrolikadampéngang as a local articulation of spiritual responsibility that frames marriage as a transition of duty, care, and moral guidance. At the same time, the study documents contemporary shifts that include simplification and stronger aesthetic orientation, alongside revitalisation initiatives led by cultural custodians and scholars who seek to preserve interpretive depth rather than ritual form alone.

Earlier scholarship on Bugis marriage has often prioritised social sequence, stratification, and gendered negotiations, offering valuable accounts of marriage as a social institution and a site of kinship organisation (Ahmadin, 2019; N. I. Idrus, 2016; Lineton, 1975; Millar, 1983; Pelras, 2000). This study aligns with that tradition because it also shows how marriage rites organise kin relations, status recognition, and communal legitimacy. However, the present findings diverge by placing *mappasikarawa* at the analytical centre and by treating transcendental meaning as constitutive rather than secondary. Broader anthropological studies on Indonesian marriage rituals often foreground exchange, social cohesion, or the politics of custom and religion (Alimi, 2014; Limantara, 2020; Schrauwers, 2000). Yet, they rarely reconstruct the cosmological grammar that participants use to interpret embodied ritual action. Recent work on Bugis sacred culture likewise tends to privilege other sites of sacrality, which can leave *mappasikarawa* under-theorised even when scholars acknowledge the wider religious texture of Bugis ritual life (Rahmat & Purnomo, 2025; Syam et al., 2021; Zhafira & Geshica, 2024).

Mappasikarawa without isolating it as a purely local curiosity. Studies across various regions demonstrate that ritual action frequently mediates blessings, destiny, and marital ethics through touch, prayer, and embodied symbolism. Ethnographic research on Tajik weddings links ritual practices to purification and blessing that protect the couple's transition into married status (Starostina, 2021). Work on South Asian diasporic weddings shows how embodied acts sacralise marriage and publicly inscribe legitimacy, often by materialising religious and cultural meanings on the body (Khan, 2011). Research on Bemba women's ritual systems highlights how ritual instruction and embodied practice prepare a bride for marital roles and ethical expectations, which positions touch within broader infrastructures of knowledge transmission (Kaunda, 2023). Ethnographies of marriage as a rite of passage in South East Iran and Turkish contexts, including diasporic settings, also demonstrate how gestures such as hand-holding and guided bodily acts can signal a shared destiny and obligation, not just emotional intimacy (Ayyıldız & Hisar, 2025). Studies of the Karay Turks similarly frame marriage ritual as a rite of passage that uses embodied practices to bless and protect the couple within a cosmological horizon of vulnerability and safeguarding (Atmaca, 2023).

The *baraka* and blessing literature strengthens this comparative frame because it clarifies how many societies treat divine grace as something that can be conveyed through socially authorised ritual action. In Ethiopia, for example, rituals oriented towards baraka adapt to contemporary conditions, and ritual leaders mobilise gift-giving and religious authority to secure protection and prosperity for women migrants (Tsehayu & Østebø, 2021). In the West Bank of Palestine, shared shrines and practices of seeking baraka demonstrate how blessing can operate within a "common religious culture" that transcends doctrinal boundaries, highlighting how ritual efficacy can unify communities despite formal theological differences (Marteijn, 2024). Conceptual work on baraka in global Islamic contexts emphasises that people often pursue divine grace through prayer, consumption, and other practices that treat blessing as contingent and unevenly distributed, which drives repeated ritual engagement (Nigst, 2024). This wider scholarship makes the Bugis case easier to interpret: Bugis actors treat *baraka*

as transmissible through touch within *mappasikarawa*, and they secure that transmission through ritual specialists and authorised sequences rather than through abstract belief alone.

These findings suggest that Bugis marriage rituals continue to serve as a moral and cosmological pedagogy, rather than merely as a heritage performance. *Mappasikarawa* exemplifies a wider phenomenon in which communities use embodied rites to stabilise meaning during social change, especially when legal frameworks and institutional religious norms cannot fully articulate lived expectations about marriage. Indigenous knowledge scholarship on rites of passage in African settings highlights a comparable logic: ritual practices cultivate responsibility and shape social personhood by aligning individuals with moral and spiritual orders (Lebese, Mothiba, Mulaudzi, Mashau, & Makhado, 2022). This perspective clarifies why Bugis actors treat *mappasikarawa* as ethically consequential, particularly through panrolikadampéngang, which frames marriage as a transition in responsibility that requires embodied confirmation.

The study also shows how Islamisation can reframe cosmological reasoning rather than erase it. Comparative scholarship helps explain this dynamic. Baraka practices at shared shrines in Palestine demonstrate how communities sustain sacred efficacy through shared repertoires of blessing even when doctrinal differences persist (Marteijn, 2024). Work on baraka in global Islam likewise shows that people often treat grace as something they can seek and channel through prayer, ritual practice, and materially mediated signs (Nigst, 2024). In South Asia, studies on sensory religiosity in Orthodox Christian practice emphasise tactile piety, where touching sacred objects links embodied action to divine grace and communal belonging (Luehrmann, 2018). These studies resonate with the Bugis emphasis on touch as a medium that links the couple to a wider moral and cosmological horizon. The generational shift documented here also reflects a broader pattern visible in diasporic wedding studies: younger participants may initially approach the ritual as a cultural inheritance, then reinterpret its transcendental claims through experience and family narration as marital life unfolds (Khan, 2011).

Conceptually, the findings indicate that *mappasikarawa* serves as a cosmological act that shapes marital ethics, rather than as a symbolic supplement to the marriage contract. This repositioning matters for religious and cultural studies because it strengthens analyses that treat marriage rites as sites where embodied practice, moral obligation, and metaphysical imagination intersect. Comparative ethnography supports this claim by showing that ritual touch and prayer can produce ethical commitments in culturally legible form. Studies of marriage in Islamic and Turkic contexts demonstrate that embodied gestures can express shared destiny and moral responsibility in ways that formal speech alone rarely achieves (Atmaca, 2023). Baraka-focused scholarship further suggests that ritual practice often mediates divine grace through socially authorised action, which helps explain why communities invest so heavily in correct ritual procedure and credible ritual leadership (Nigst, 2024; Tsehayu & Østebø, 2021).

Practically, the study highlights a preservation risk: communities can retain ritual form while losing transcendental literacy when ritual roles become primarily technical and when aesthetic documentation becomes the main motive for performance. Research on changing wedding customs in Europe reveals how weddings can preserve visible traditions while renegotiating the values and meanings that once anchored them, especially under contemporary pressures of identity display (Rakonjac, Dujović, & Šubarić, 2022). If this trajectory intensifies in Bugis settings, families may still enact *mappasikarawa* while losing the conceptual keys that make it spiritually persuasive. For religious life, the findings suggest that integration with Islamic values works best when customary custodians and religious leaders collaborate in explaining how rituals express ethical commitments, rather than competing with theology. For community wellbeing, the study reveals that participants utilise the ritual to frame responsibility, care, and household harmony; thus, the erosion of meaning can also weaken a culturally grounded moral vocabulary for marriage.

The findings take this form because Bugis cosmology links personal transitions to macrocosmic order, and *mappasikarawa* offers a concentrated moment where participants can experience that linkage through embodied practice. The ritual environment disciplines attention to roles, boundaries, and signs, and it authorises particular persons to mediate sacred meaning, which explains why participants

treat touch, objects, and sequence as spiritually consequential. The prominence of ritual stakeholders, such as *indo' botting* and *puang matoa*, also sustains the durability of transcendental meaning because these figures authorise the rite through initiation, interpretive knowledge, and communal recognition. Comparative studies similarly show that rites of passage often depend on specialist authority and culturally protected knowledge to maintain perceived efficacy and ethical force (Kaunda, 2023; Lebese et al., 2022).

At the same time, contemporary pressures reshape practice because weddings now operate within tighter schedules, higher costs, and stronger demands for photographic and digital documentation. These pressures encourage simplification and aesthetic prioritisation, which can shift authority away from initiated ritual specialists toward service providers who prioritise efficiency and presentation. Studies of weddings in diasporic and contemporary settings reveal how ceremonies are increasingly serving as public arenas for negotiating belonging and identity, thereby intensifying attention to staging and documentation (Ayyıldız & Hisar, 2025; Khan, 2011; Rakonjac et al., 2022). The generational differences also make sense within this frame: younger couples often learn ritual meaning through family explanation or post-ritual reflection rather than through long-term immersion in customary teaching. In broader baraka-oriented scholarship, people typically view divine grace as contingent and pursued through repeated practice, which means that changing social conditions can quickly reshape how communities seek, interpret, or justify blessings (Nigst, 2024; Tsehayu & Østebø, 2021).

This study points towards actions that can sustain *mappasikarawa* as a living sacred practice while allowing adaptation. First, cultural custodians and community institutions should document interpretive knowledge alongside ritual procedures, including explanations of sulapa eppa, appasideppé pammase, panrolikadampéngang, and the symbolic logic of touch, so that families inherit not only the form but also the meaning. Second, communities should strengthen structured transmission for younger *indo' botting* that balances professional standards with recognised spiritual preparation through mentorship, supervised practice, or community-endorsed training that respects boundaries around esoteric knowledge. Scholarship on rites of passage grounded in indigenous knowledge highlights why deliberate intergenerational transmission remains ethically formative rather than merely performative (Lebese et al., 2022). Third, local religious leaders and customary authorities should develop collaborative guidance that clarifies how the ritual aligns with Islamic ethical commitments, particularly where families are concerned about pre-Islamic resonances. Comparative scholarship on baraka at shared sacred sites suggests that communities can sustain sacred practice through shared repertoires and careful interpretation, even amid doctrinal diversity, when religious actors treat blessing as a bridge rather than a boundary (Marteijn, 2024).

From a research perspective, future work can refine a conceptual model that maps how cosmology, ritual mediation, and marital ethics interact over time, especially as weddings become increasingly digitised and more exposed to tourism-oriented representations. Comparative research can also deepen analysis by tracing how different societies conceptualise blessing or grace as transmissible through touch, prayer, and sensory practice, including Islamic baraka traditions and tactile forms of Christian spirituality (Luehrmann, 2018; Nigst, 2024). Community-based guidance for respectful documentation can help families protect sacred privacy while accommodating contemporary needs for recording and sharing, especially in contexts where weddings increasingly function as public identity performances (Khan, 2011; Rakonjac et al., 2022). Taken together, these actions treat *mappasikarawa* not as a static heritage object, but as a cosmological practice that continues to shape how Bugis communities understand marriage, responsibility, and spiritual flourishing.

8. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that *mappasikarawa* functions as more than a post-contract wedding custom. It operates as the ritual hinge that moves the couple from legal marriage into a spiritually charged marital life, where touch becomes an authorised medium for blessing (*baraka*), destiny (*passialleang toto)*, and cosmological balance. The research also shows that regional variation in the locus of touch across Bone, Wajo, and Soppeng does not dilute the ritual's sacred purpose; instead,

communities preserve a shared transcendental orientation through Bugis cosmological concepts, such as duampoleang and sulapa eppa, as well as spiritual frameworks, including *appasideppé pammase*. A further distinctive contribution lies in identifying panrolikadampéngang as a key local articulation of spiritual responsibility, which frames marriage as a morally consequential transition in care and guidance rather than as a purely social alliance.

The study's primary conceptual contribution is an ethnophilosophical framework that connects embodied ritual action to Bugis cosmology and marital ethics. By centering mappasikarawa as a cosmological act, the research advances scholarship in religious and cultural studies, which often treats marriage rituals primarily as social performances or expressions of identity. Methodologically, the study's added value lies in its integrated design: ethnographic participation across multiple districts, triangulated interviews with ritual authorities and couples at different marriage durations, and interpretive engagement with *lontara'* manuscripts. This combination enables the analysis to move beyond description of ritual sequence towards an account of how communities authorise transcendental meaning, maintain sacred efficacy through ritual specialists, and negotiate continuity under religious and social change.

This study limits its scope to Bugis communities in Bone, Wajo, and Soppeng, focusing on the meanings articulated by ritual actors and cultural authorities in these settings. As a result, the findings may not fully represent other Bugis regions or urban contexts where ritual simplification and hybrid wedding practices may take different forms. The study also relies on participants' narratives and interpretive accounts to access transcendental meaning, which may vary according to family background, levels of religious education, and the degree of exposure to contemporary wedding industries and digital documentation practices. Future research could expand the comparative range by including Bugis communities in metropolitan areas and in the diaspora to examine how digital mediation, tourism-oriented representation, and shifting religious discourses influence the reshaping of ritual authority and the transmission of esoteric knowledge. Further studies could also develop a more systematic cross-cultural comparison of "ritual touch" and blessing practices, especially in societies where *baraka* and divine grace are conceptualised as transmissible through touch, prayer, or sensory religious practice, to clarify which features of *mappasikarawa* reflect wider patterns and which remain distinctly Bugis in cosmological logic and ethical orientation.

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