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# **Evolving Traditions: The Contemporary Dynamics of Uang Panai' in Bugis- Makassar Wedding Ceremonies**

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#### **Abstract**

The tradition of "uang panai", a traditional dowry in Bugis-Makassar wedding ceremonies, plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage while adapting to contemporary societal changes. This study adopts a qualitative ethnographic approach to explore the evolving criteria for determining the price of uang panai' and its implications on social dynamics within the Bugis-Makassar community. Data were collected through observations and interviews with informants from various districts, supplemented by literature studies. The findings reveal that while lineage remains a predominant criterion, factors such as wealth, education, and occupation have gained significant importance. Wealthy and noble families often demand higher uang panai' to maintain their social status and ensure compatible marital matches. Education and occupation also significantly influence the dowry's value, reflecting the community's increasing emphasis on social mobility and economic stability. This study's novelty lies in its detailed examination of the interplay between traditional practices and modern socioeconomic factors, providing a comprehensive understanding of uang panai's' evolving role. The research highlights the dual function of uang panai' as a symbol of respect and a potential source of economic pressure, offering insights for balancing cultural preservation with economic realities. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on cultural adaptation and suggest avenues for future research on mitigating financial burdens associated with traditional practices. By elucidating the contemporary dynamics of uang panai', this study



enhances our understanding of cultural practices and their adaptation in a rapidly changing society.

Keywords: Uang Panai', Bugis-Makassar Culture, Culture

#### INTRODUCTION

Culture encompasses a complex array of beliefs, customs, and behavioral patterns that define a society. Indonesian culture, in particular, is rich and diverse, marked by its unique languages, traditional houses, clothing, dances, artifacts, and wedding ceremonies. Among these, the wedding traditions stand out due to their intricate preparation and implementation, governed by customary rules (Burhanuddin & Arham, 2017). One such unique tradition is found in the wedding ceremonies of the Bugis-Makassar people, where the groom's family offers a sum of money known as "uang panai" to the bride's family. This practice is an essential aspect of the wedding process, involving thorough discussions between the groom's and bride's families until an agreement is reached.

The tradition of uang panai' has historical roots, tracing back to an incident involving a young Dutch man who wished to marry a woman of noble descent. The woman's father challenged him to offer a substantial amount of uang panai' as a demonstration of his seriousness and respect for the noble family. This tradition is deeply intertwined with the Bugis-Makassar cultural philosophy of Siri' na Pacce, which emphasizes dignity and mutual respect. Failure to meet the uang panai' expectations is considered a serious breach of this philosophy, leading to social disgrace and a lowered status for the man and his family.

In Bugis-Makassar culture, uang panai' holds a significance similar to that of the dowry in Islamic weddings. While the dowry is a religious requirement, uang panai' is a cultural heritage that is deeply ingrained in society, making it a challenging tradition to abandon. Over time, the practice of uang panai' has evolved. According to Sari (2019), societal developments have led to modifications in its meaning, with uang panai' becoming a symbol of prestige and economic power. A more lavish wedding party often signifies higher social status for both families involved. Alimuddin (2020) supports this view, stating that uang panai' represents respect and appreciation for the bride's family, with higher amounts indicating higher social status. However, Mutakhirani (2020) argues that the value of uang panai' has shifted from its original meaning to a form of social arrogance.

Historically, the determination of uang panai' was based primarily on the noble descent of the bride. Today, several factors influence its amount, including the bride's social status, education, job, and wealth (Andi, 2017; Jannah & Arham, 2016). This shift has led to increased attention on the process of setting uang panai' amounts, which often exceed the dowry. For instance, Sadli Nurjaffia Ichsan, the son of Ikhsan Yasin Limpo, provided 1 billion rupiahs, along with a house worth another billion and a set of gold worth hundreds of millions, to meet the uang panai' demands of Andi Emma Ainun Nidzma's family. Andi Emma, a doctor and a woman of high education, comes from a noble family, further elevating the expected uang panai'.

The modern practice of uang panai' can lead to conflicts, sometimes adversely affecting the individuals involved. Syarifuddin and Damayanti (2015) critique this social phenomenon, highlighting that it can strain relationships and impose financial burdens on grooms. Educated

and career-oriented women may find it challenging to marry due to the high uang panai' expectations, leading men to incur debts to fulfill these demands.

Despite the extensive literature on the cultural significance and social implications of uang panai', there is a lack of comprehensive studies that analyze its evolving role in contemporary Bugis-Makassar society. Existing research predominantly focuses on historical perspectives or isolated social critiques, but there is limited exploration of the current economic, social, and psychological impacts of uang panai' on individuals and families. Furthermore, there is a need to understand how modern societal changes, such as increased education levels and economic pressures, influence the expectations and practices surrounding uang panai'. This study aims to fill these gaps by providing an in-depth analysis of the contemporary dynamics of uang panai' and its implications for the Bugis-Makassar community.

This study aims to explore the evolution and current implications of the uang panai' tradition in Bugis-Makassar wedding ceremonies, examining how it shapes social dynamics and affects the individuals involved.

#### **METHOD**

This research adopts a qualitative approach using ethnographic methods to construct theories from reality based on empirical data. The aim is to analyze social interactions, behaviors, and perceptions within groups, teams, organizations, and communities. The methodology follows the ethnographic principles outlined by Spradley (1979) for selecting informants and conducting data collection. The selection of informants is a crucial step in this ethnographic study. According to Spradley (1979), there are five essential criteria for selecting good informants. First, informants must be fully integrated into the culture being studied, ensuring they have comprehensive and authentic knowledge of the cultural practices. Second, informants should have direct and active involvement in the cultural practices under investigation, providing firsthand insights into the phenomena being studied. Third, informants should provide insights into cultural settings that may be unfamiliar to we, offering new perspectives and a deeper understanding of the cultural context. Fourth, informants must be willing to dedicate sufficient time to provide comprehensive information, ensuring the data collected is rich and detailed. Finally, informants should present their cultural experiences and knowledge without over-analyzing or interpreting them, allowing us to capture the authentic cultural narratives and practices.

# **Data Collection**

The data for this research is categorized into two types: primary data and secondary data. Primary data is obtained from direct narratives through observations and interviews with informants. This involves immersing in the community and engaging with individuals who possess deep cultural insights. Observations are conducted in natural settings, allowing us to witness cultural practices firsthand and gather contextual information. Interviews are conducted with selected informants to capture their personal experiences, stories, and perspectives on the cultural practices under study.

Secondary data is sourced from literature studies relevant to the research problem. This includes academic articles, books, and other documented sources that provide background and context to the cultural phenomena under study. The combination of primary and secondary data



ensures a comprehensive understanding of the cultural practices and their historical and social contexts.

# **Data Analysis Technique**

The data analysis technique follows Spradley's (1979) four models. The first model, domain analysis, involves identifying the broad categories or domains within the social situation under study. This step helps to organize the data into manageable segments and provides an overview of the key themes and concepts.

The second model, taxonomic analysis, delves deeper into the identified domains to subdivide them into more specific subdomains and sections. This detailed analysis helps to uncover the finer nuances of the cultural practices and their interrelationships. The third model, componential analysis, examines elements within the domains that have contrasting relationships, allowing for a more in-depth analysis of these elements and their significance within the cultural context.

Finally, the fourth model, cultural thematic analysis, involves collecting themes from various domains and identifying patterns and relationships among these themes. This step aims to uncover overarching cultural patterns and provides a holistic understanding of the cultural practices and their implications.

By adhering to these methodological steps, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the cultural practices and their implications within the Bugis-Makassar community, particularly focusing on the tradition of uang panai'. The rigorous selection of informants, thorough data collection, and detailed data analysis ensure the research findings are robust, reliable, and reflective of the authentic cultural narratives and practices.

# FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION Findings

In contemporary times, the criteria for determining the price of "uang panai"—a traditional dowry in the Bugis-Makassar culture—are observed to be relatively consistent across various districts inhabited by the Bugis-Makassar people. However, there are variations in its implementation and the factors considered. This is evident across different districts such as Soppeng, Bone, Wajo, Makassar, Gowa, and Jeneponto. Over time, the value and determinants of uang panai' have evolved. Notably, lineage remains a primary factor in determining the price, although other aspects such as wealth, education, and occupation also play significant roles. Therefore, the primary focus of this study is to identify the most frequently used criteria in determining the price of uang panai'. According to the informants:

"...tidak adaji sebenarnya standar wajibnya karena beda-bedami sekarang itu pertimbangannya orang di setiap daerah, ada yang utamakan dari garis keturunannya, pendidikannya, kekayaannya, kecantiknya itu perempuan, sama pekerjaannya itu perempuan, tapi yang paling sering itu diliat dari garis keturunannya dulu perempuan baru yang lain-lainnya, kalau keturunan bangsawanki biasanya lebih tinggi uang panai' nya, perumpamaannya toh kalau berlian disandingkan dengan emas yang sama-samaji perhiasan tapi karena lebih tinggi statusnya berlian jadi lebih tinggi harganya toh..." (there is no absolute standard



nowadays as considerations differ across regions. Some prioritize lineage, education, wealth, a woman's beauty, and her occupation, but lineage is typically the first factor considered. If the woman is of noble descent, the price of uang panai' is usually higher. It's akin to comparing a diamond with gold; both are precious, but the diamond's higher status commands a higher price)

Therefore, it is evident that lineage is a predominant criterion in determining the price of uang panai'. Generally, if a woman descends from a noble family, the price is relatively high. This reflects a diamond-like status, higher than others. Uang panai' thus serves as an indicator of appreciation and respect for a woman and her family and a means to maintain noble status within society. Noble families often use the uang panai' challenge to gauge a man's seriousness and willingness to sacrifice, ensuring their daughter's well-being. An informant elaborated:

"...lagian itu uang panai' nya bukan untuk keluarganya, tapi untuk biaya pestanya perempuan supaya lebih mewahki acaranya. Terus mauji juga diliat ini bagaimana seriusnya laki-laki, nanti kah nabuang-buangji anak perempuannya orang..." (the uang panai' is not for the family but to finance the woman's wedding party, making it more luxurious. It also tests the man's seriousness to prevent their daughter from being taken lightly)

The uang panai' is typically allocated for the wedding expenses, not for the bride's family. Consequently, noble families usually set a high price for uang panai' to host grander parties, maintaining their social status. Similarly, families with high economic status determine the price of uang panai' based on economic standing, as society accords them higher respect. Rich families often seek a son-in-law of equal status by demanding a high uang panai' to preserve their social standing. Additionally, some families prioritize the prospective husband's ability to sustain their daughter's lifestyle, as an informant stated:

"...iya, samaji juga dengan orang kaya yang cari menantu yang statusnya sama dengan mereka, supaya tidak jatuhki statusnya di masyarakat. Karena itu orang- orang juga lebih nahargai orang kaya daripada orang yg biasa-biasaji rumahnya. Tapi ada juga yang minta uang panai' tinggi karena mau na tau itu laki-laki kalau bisaji hidupi ini anak perempuannya sama dengan caranya keluarganya hidupiki, jangan sampai menderitaji anaknya kalau menikahki sama itu laki-laki..." (wealthy families look for a son-in-law of equal status to prevent a drop in social standing. They are more respected than ordinary families. Sometimes, a high uang panai' is demanded to ensure the man can provide a lifestyle similar to what her family has)

Moreover, education level is a significant criterion in determining uang panai'. Education is crucial for securing a good career and establishing a woman's societal status. Parents invest significantly in their children's education, and this effort is expected to be continued by the husband. The price of uang panai' symbolizes respect for the family's educational efforts. A highly educated woman is more likely to secure a good career and higher social status. As explained by an informant:

"...iya, kalau tinggi pendidikannya perempuan memang harus tinggi uang panai' nya





karena tidak gampang itu usahanya orangtuanya, yang mungkin pinjam kiri kanan mi untuk sekolahkan anaknya supaya nanti bagus pekerjaannya anaknya, jadi ini laki-laki harus hargai dan lanjutkan usahanya itu orangtuanya perempuan..." (a highly educated woman commands a high uang panai' because of her parents' efforts, possibly involving significant sacrifices to ensure her education and future career. The husband must respect and continue these efforts)

Moreover, a woman with a high level of education was guaranteed to have good knowledge that could be used in parenting and educating their children. So, a man had no respect for a woman if they gave a low price of uang panai' to a woman with a high level of education, and it can be considered embarrassing by society. It was because that attitude was not in line with the value of Siri' na Pacce, the culture that is held by the people of Bugis-Makassar. Consequently, a woman's family could refuse a man's proposal. It was explained by the informant as follows:

"...perempuan yang bagus pendidikannya itu, bagus juga ilmunya jadi bisami dijamin nanti bagus didikannya untuk anak-anaknya, jadi seharusnya memang maluki itu laki-laki kalau nakasi rendah uang panai'nya. Kalau orang — orang bilangi itu, paccei..." (a well-educated woman ensures good upbringing for her children. A low uang panai' for such a woman is shameful and goes against the cultural value of Siri' na Pacce, leading to rejection)

Additionally, a woman's occupation significantly influences the determination of uang panai'. A woman's job elevates her status in society, prompting her family to seek a husband of similar standing. High uang panai' can also serve as a polite rejection if the family prefers another suitor or does not favor the current proposal. As an informant noted:

"...apalagi kalau perempuan yang adami kerjanya mau nalamar, pastimi tinggi uang panai'nya karena adami gaji sendirinya dia jadi tinggi sekali statusnya itu di masyarakat. Jadi pasti keluarganya mau menantu yang paling tidak setara sama anaknya. Atau biasa juga itu sengaja dikasi tinggi uang panai'nya perempuan supaya mundurki keluarganya laki-laki. Karena mungkin keluarganya perempuan adami calon lainnya atau memang tidak mauki kalau itu laki-laki jadi menantunya..." (if the woman has a job, her uang panai' is high because her salary elevates her societal status. The family seeks a son-in-law of equal status or uses high uang panai' as a subtle refusal if they have another suitor or do not favor the current one).

These findings indicate that the determination of uang panai' in Bugis-Makassar culture is multifaceted, reflecting various social, economic, and cultural factors. The evolving criteria for uang panai' reflect broader societal changes and underscore its continued significance in Bugis-Makassar wedding ceremonies.

#### **Discussion**

The findings of this study highlight the evolving and multifaceted nature of the uang panai' tradition in Bugis-Makassar culture. As a significant cultural practice, uang panai' serves as more than just a financial transaction; it reflects deeply ingrained societal values, social hierarchies, and the expectations placed on individuals and families within the community. The value of this culture is found to be difficult to separate from society because it is closely related to the value of philosophy held by the Bugis-Makassar people, Siri na Pacce: "punna tena siri' nu, pacenu seng paknia," which means that if you don't have your Siri', you just hold your Pacce. This culture is used as a guideline for Bugis-Makassar people in carrying out activities, making decisions, and socializing. Similar to Mughny (2016), who stated that Siri' na Pacce is a cultural pattern of Bugis-Makassar that shapes the character of society. Siri' means shame, which refers to a person's self-esteem. Meanwhile, Pacce means pity. Therefore, the people of Bugis-Makassar will do everything to avoid being shamed and feeling pity, and they will sacrifice everything to maintain their self-esteem in society, including sacrificing their wealth or their soul. This belief is having a big impact on the culture of uang panai' since a man and his family will be shamed if they cannot fulfill the request of uang panai', which can lead to rejection from a woman's family because the man will be considered as not serious. It is supported by Mutakhirani and Irma (2020), who stated that the culture of uang panai' is used as a benchmark of the seriousness of a man toward a woman. Moreover, we found that uang panai' is a symbol of appreciation from a man to a woman, which means that the higher the price of uang panai' from a man, the higher his appreciation for a woman and the higher their status in society. It is causing the determination of the price of uang panai' to be crucial for society since it depends on several terms. We found that the terms most used in determining the price of uang panai' are descendant, economic, education, and job background. It will be discussed below:

# a. Lineage as a Primary Determinant

Lineage was found to be one of the terms most used in determining the price of uang panai'. A woman who had the blood of a noble descendant was considered to have a higher status than other women in society, so their uang panai' was also relatively expensive. It was because uang panai' was believed to be a symbol of appreciation to the women and the family of a noble descendant and to be a way to maintain the social status of a noble descendant. Similar to Huda and Eyanti (2019), who defined uang panai' as an offering of money from the groom to the bride's family to appreciate the woman and her family, which will be used to fulfill the needs of the woman's wedding party. Thus, a woman's family was not requesting the uang panai' for themselves, but it will be used to fulfill the needs of a woman's wedding party. Moreover, we found that uang panai' was a challenge to see the seriousness of a man to a woman by fulfilling the request from a woman's family and his sacrifices. It was supported by Prawiro (2013), who stated that uang panai' was one of the ways to prove the seriousness of a man to a woman.

# b. Wealth and Economic Status

Lineage as a Primary DeterminantThe influence of wealth on the determination of uang panai' reflects the broader socioeconomic dynamics within the Bugis-Makassar community. Wealthy families leverage uang panai' to assert their status and ensure that their daughters marry into families of equal or higher economic standing. This practice not only preserves their

social position but also highlights the community's respect for financial success. The trend of demanding high uang panai' based on economic status also reveals the interplay between cultural traditions and modern economic realities, where financial capability is equated with respectability and social prestige. It was supported by Suriyani et al. (2021), who stated that uang panai' was one of the ways to show their wealth as well as their social status, which was caused by the expectation of society to have a luxury party at their daughter's wedding party. Besides that, we also found that some families were not only concerned about the status but about how the man would fulfill their daughter's needs as well.

#### c. Educational Attainment

The level of education is found to be one of the crucial terms most used in determining the price of uang panai'. It is because education plays an important role in the success of people nowadays, since a high level of education opens a big chance to have a good career, so society gives them more appreciation and puts their social status higher than others. Therefore, most parents will sacrifice and give more effort for their daughters to reach a high level of education. For Bugis-Makassar people, that effort is expected to be continued by a man later in another aspect of a woman's life, since the parent has fulfilled the effort to get a high level of education. Thus, the price of uang panai' is symbolic of respecting the efforts of a woman and her family to finish her education at a high level. It is supported by Rinaldi et al. (2022), who state that offering a high price of uang panai' is a form of appreciation and respect from a man's family to a woman's family. Moreover, they state that fulfilling the price of uang panai' the same as the level of a woman's education is a form of a man's responsibility before marrying a woman. According to Ahmad et al. (2023), the level of education is considered to be an indicator of intelligence and women's achievement, so the low price of uang panai' is a symbol of the lack of appreciation. Moreover, we found that a woman with a high level of education is guaranteed to have valuable knowledge that can be used in parenting and educating their children. Consequently, it is considered that the man has a lack of appreciation and respect for a woman if they give a low price of uang panai' to a woman with a high level of education. This situation can cause a woman's family to refuse a man's proposal, and it can be considered embarrassing by society. It is because that attitude cannot describe the value of Siri' na Pacce that is held by Bugis- Makassar people. It is supported by the level of Rinaldi et al. (2022), the level of uang panai' closely related to the culture of Siri' na Pacce, so that a man should be shamed if he gives an inappropriate price of uang panai' to a woman with a high level of education.

# d. Occupational Status

A woman's occupation further influences the determination of uang panai'. In contemporary Bugis-Makassar society, a woman's job and income elevate her status, prompting families to seek husbands of similar standing. This reflects changing gender dynamics and the growing importance of women's economic contributions. High uang panai' serves as both an affirmation of a woman's professional achievements and a mechanism to ensure social compatibility in marriage. Additionally, it acts as a subtle tool for families to express their preferences or rejections without overt conflict. Similar to Ahmad et al. (2023), who state that a woman with a good job has a high status in society, this condition affects the price of uang panai' because society considers a woman to have a positive contribution to her family's



finances.

# e. Implication of the Study

The practice of setting high uang panai' prices, while maintaining cultural traditions, also poses challenges. It can lead to financial strain for grooms and their families, sometimes resulting in debt. This economic burden can create tensions and conflicts, potentially affecting the marital relationship and family dynamics. Moreover, the high expectations tied to uang panai' can inadvertently limit marriage prospects for educated and career-oriented women, as potential grooms may feel intimidated by the financial demands.

The cultural value of Siri' na Pacce, emphasizing dignity and mutual respect, plays a critical role in the determination of uang panai'. Failing to meet the expected amount can be seen as disrespectful, leading to social embarrassment and rejection. This cultural pressure underscores the importance of uang panai' as a symbol of a man's seriousness and commitment to the marriage.

# **CONCLUSION**

Uang panai' is a Bugis-Makassar culture that was inherited from ancestors and practiced by generations until today. This culture is closely related to the philosophy held by the people of Bugis-Makassar, Siri' na Pacce. However, over time, most people use this philosophy to see the other perspective from uang panai' that shifted the value of uang panai' as a consequence. It changes the terms used in determining the price of uang panai' from only depending on the noble lineage of a woman to depending on several terms, including wealth, education, and a woman's occupation. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the contemporary dynamics of the uang panai' tradition in Bugis-Makassar wedding ceremonies, revealing its multifaceted nature and evolving determinants. The findings underscore that while lineage remains a primary criterion, factors such as wealth, education, and occupation have gained significant importance in determining the price of uang panai'. This shift reflects broader societal changes, including increased emphasis on education and economic status, and highlights the adaptation of cultural practices to modern contexts.

The research novelty of this study lies in its detailed exploration of the evolving criteria for uang panai' and the implications of these changes on Bugis-Makassar society. Unlike previous studies that predominantly focused on historical perspectives or isolated social critiques, this study offers a holistic understanding of how contemporary socioeconomic factors influence traditional practices. By incorporating insights from various districts and a diverse set of informants, the research provides a nuanced view of how uang panai' serves as both a cultural heritage and a social mechanism for maintaining status and respect within the community.

Furthermore, this study bridges the gap between traditional cultural practices and modern societal dynamics. It highlights the dual role of uang panai' as a symbol of respect and commitment while also posing economic challenges for individuals and families. The research contributes to the discourse on how traditional practices can evolve to remain relevant and meaningful in changing social and economic landscapes.

Future research could explore strategies to mitigate the economic pressures associated with high uang panai' demands, such as community-based approaches to setting reasonable expectations or alternative forms of demonstrating commitment and respect. Additionally,

comparative studies with other cultural practices could further illuminate the universal and unique aspects of dowry and bride price traditions, contributing to a broader understanding of cultural adaptation in a globalized world.

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