Gudang Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu
Volume 4 ; Nomor 9 ; September 2026 ; Page 50-56
Doi : https://doi.org/10.59435/gjmi.v4i9.2319
Website : https://gudangjurnal.com/index.php/gjmi

E-ISSN : 2988-5760

Construction Of Identity And The Meaning Ff The Title Opu In The Tanete Village Community, Bontona, Selayar Islands Regency

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the background of the Opu title in Tanete Village, Bontona, Selayar Islands Regency; how the process of inheriting the Opu title influences the construction of identity and individual social status within the community; and the symbolic meaning and function of the Opu title regarding customary practices and local power dynamics in Tanete Village, Bontona, Selayar Islands Regency. This research employs a qualitative approach. Data were collected from informants through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis utilized the Miles and Huberman interactive model,comprising data reduction, data display, and verification,to understand identity construction and the meaning of the Opu title within the community.

The study concludes that the Opu title is a social institution formed through a long historical process predating colonial intervention; the inheritance of the Opu title in Tanete Village occurs genealogically and reflects a lineage-based social stratification system; and the Opu title in Tanete Village is the product of a dynamic social construction that is not only rooted in history and tradition but also undergoes continuous reinterpretation in response to social changes within the community.

Keywords: Identity construction, Local culture, Opu title

INTRODUCTION

Generally, a society consists of a group of people living alongside one another. Society forms when individuals respond to and interact with their surrounding environment through their own emotions, ideas, and desires. Native American communities represent cohesive units connected not only by geography but also by direct or indirect lineage to common ancestors, established through marriage or traditional genealogy.

One of the earliest descriptions of society is a "union of families," signifying a combination and aggregation of households. The origins of society can be traced back to small groups of individuals that eventually expanded into larger groups and, ultimately, into society as a whole (Khairuddin, 2008). The inherent nature of society drives its evolution and development. Interactions among individuals continuously shape society. Every aspect of social life is influenced by both individuals and society as a whole (Soetomo, 2009). Neither ignoring nor denying the existence of indigenous populations is an option for the government. They constitute a substantial part of Indonesian society. Article 18 of the 1945 Constitution is the sole formal document governing the recognition, approval, or protection of indigenous tribes within the framework of the state (Sugiswati, 2012).

Subhan Agung (2017) states that indigenous communities are characterized by distinct value systems, ideologies, and economic, political, cultural, and social behavioral patterns; they inhabit specific geographical locations and possess ancestral roots passed down through generations. The concept of the Indonesian nation-state is incomplete without them, notwithstanding their distinct philosophies, economies, politics, cultures, and social customs. This implies that they remain obligated to adhere to and accept the state's fundamental principles, ideology, economic and political systems, and social and cultural practices.

The way individuals construct their identities is influenced by their distinct value systems, which may extend to their ideologies. Conceptualization plays a crucial role in shaping human attachment to geographical settings, shared loyalties, and the sentiments and aspirations that emerge within a group. These characteristics not only help individuals develop and maintain bonds with one another but also serve to distinguish individuals within the group based on their identities.

Local traditions (local customs) govern social interactions and can be regarded as customs. According to encyclopedic definitions, "customs" or "traditions" are established cultural norms passed down from generation to generation. In this context, the term "customs" is sometimes used interchangeably to refer to practices that entail sanctions such as Customary Law and those that do not, such as general social customs.

Lifestyle encompasses all aspects of culture. Simply put, culture is broad, nebulous, and complex. Everything an individual learns and practices as part of their social group such as beliefs, art, morals, laws, and customs constitutes their culture (Tylor 1871).

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Societies and their cultures possess deeply rooted sociological foundations. Culture, emerging from social interaction, creates a distinct sense of identity within a society. The origins of culture represent a crucial aspect of the social framework (Kamarusdiana 2019). Discussions regarding culture particularly at a conceptual level often lead to confusion due to the multitude of existing definitions, creating uncertainty about where to begin in interpreting the concept itself. Furthermore, there is no consensus among anthropologists regarding a standardized definition.

In a general context, culture is often referred to as a nation's ancestral heritage, while in the specific context of a community, it is viewed as the heritage of the local people. Indeed, the existence of culture is frequently regarded as a community's hallmark—a distinguishing attribute that sets a local population apart from members of other communities (Mubarak Dahlan, 2024).

According to one of the oldest definitions, culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1924: 1). This concept was further developed and expanded upon by E.B. Tylor, the author of the seminal work Primitive Culture. By examining the nature of culture, we see that no society can exist apart from culture; conversely, no culture can exist apart from the society that serves as its vessel and support system. Under this line of reasoning, everything within a community is fundamentally shaped by the traditions and culture of its members.

Every city and region in Indonesia possesses its own unique culture. Regional diversity serves as a testament to this individuality; indeed, beauty lies in such variety. Distinct civilizations are preserved within specific regions, a feat made possible by the transmission of traditions across generations. Amidst rapid technological advancement, it is crucial for the current generation to make every effort to preserve their cultural heritage.

All forms of life share an innate need to communicate and coexist. Social contact is essential for fostering a spirit of good neighborliness and mutual care. Interpersonal relationships flourish in communities where members genuinely care for one another. Daily interactions reveal the social life of the community in Tanete Village, Bontomatene District, Selayar Islands Regency. The *Sigorai* cultural practice facilitates the forging of bonds when people meet. Culture is a key factor influencing a region's social life, serving as a medium of interaction that enables residents to live together in peace.

Examining every aspect of life in the Selayar community is vital to understanding their cultural heritage. From a sociological perspective, comprehending a society requires viewing it as a system of interdependent parts that form a complex whole. Therefore, investigating the cultural and social elements of the Selayar community is essential to gaining a comprehensive picture of their identity.

A community's culture evolves over time and can become a distinctive hallmark of its place of origin. *Sigorai* is a traditional practice in Tanete Village, Selayar Regency; it is a form of greeting that encourages conversation. People are more likely to become close friends with those with whom they have exchanged greetings. Openness and attentiveness to others' perspectives are valuable skills for cultivating close relationships.

Status and title are closely linked concepts in the social structure of a community, denoting the standing, rights, obligations, and esteem accorded to individuals and groups. Status and titles within society are linked to an individual's position. Status reflects a person's role in social life such as being a student, teacher, or leader and entails specific rights and obligations. Status can be innate, acquired through personal effort and achievement, or conferred based on public trust. Titles, meanwhile, are designations or marks of respect awarded based on education, office, lineage, or services rendered. Status and titles allow society to more easily understand each individual's role, even though, fundamentally, everyone holds an equal standing as a member of society.

The people of Selayar inhabit the Selayar Islands Regency in South Sulawesi. Their lives are largely shaped by the archipelago's geography; consequently, most residents earn their livelihoods as fishermen, farmers, and traders. Values such as togetherness, mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and strong kinship ties remain highly cherished in their daily lives.

Culturally, the Selayar community maintains strong customs and traditions, encompassing social structures, the local Selayar language, and traditional ceremonies. Social status and customary titles are recognized within the community particularly for traditional figures, community leaders, and individuals deemed to have made significant contributions. These statuses and titles serve to signify an individual's role and standing within the social sphere. Despite these distinctions in status and title, the community upholds the values of mutual respect and equality. Their social life tends to be simple and religious, prioritizing customary norms and religious teachings to maintain communal harmony.

In Tanete Village specifically the Bontona Hamlet the title *Opu* serves not merely as a form of address but as a mark of honor and a symbol of social, cultural, and historical identity that endures to this day. It is a social construct whose meaning is shaped, negotiated, and sustained through social interactions and power relations within the community.

The significance of customary titles in Tanete Village, Selayar Islands, is closely linked to honoring ancestors, acknowledging social roles, and preserving traditions. Bestowing a customary title signifies that the community officially recognizes the individual as a significant figure; the title does more than just label a person it places them in a respected position that carries moral responsibility. These titles often involve names or designations inherited from ancestors or predecessors; in the Bontona Hamlet of Tanete Village, Selayar Islands Regency, this specific title is known as *Opu*. While the title *Opu* is a primary noble title in the Kingdom of Luwu, within the broader Bugis-Makassar cultural sphere, it is also used in other regions including Selayar to denote noble or leadership status. Historical accounts indicate that nobles from the Kingdom of Gowa came to Selayar to rule, resulting in a dominant Gowa cultural influence. However, there are also stories of an *Opu Tanete* from Selayar who maintained diplomatic ties with both the

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Kingdom of Gowa and the Kingdom of Luwu such as the instance where he escorted the remains of the Luwu king's son. Such interactions demonstrate the close political and kinship ties among the kingdoms of South Sulawesi, which facilitated the exchange of titles and cultural elements.

Thus, the *Opu* title borne by certain figures in Tanete including the *Bulaenna Parangia* kin group likely stems from a long established social system in Selayar influenced by major kingdoms, rather than originating from a direct genealogical link between the *Bulaenna Parangia* and the Luwu royal family. Andi Ima Kesuma (2015) explains that Tana Luwu was a major center of historical and cultural development in South Sulawesi, leaving behind a diverse cultural legacy. This legacy is understood not merely as historical artifacts, but as a living cultural identity that continues to influence communities across various regions. Against this backdrop, it is compelling to examine whether the *Opu* title used by the people of Tanete Village (Bontona) is part of a cultural legacy historically linked to Tana Luwu.

The origins of the *Opu* title in Selayar specifically in the Tanete region cannot be separated from the long history of relations between the Selayar Islands and the major kingdoms of South Sulawesi, particularly Gowa and Luwu. Gowa's cultural influence was profound; one manifestation of this was the adoption of noble titles such as *Karaeng* and *Opu* into the social structure of Selayar society.

The title Opu is also typically bestowed upon individuals of royal or local ruling lineage. A local folktale tells of a Tanete king named *Bulaenna Parangia* who maintained ties with the *Opu* and *pabate-bate* figures in Selayar. Thus, the *Opu* title in Tanete village represents a cultural legacy an acculturated element of the Bugis-Makassar social system introduced by nobles and rulers from the kingdoms of mainland South Sulawesi that has since become an integral part of the local community's social identity.

METHOD

Research Approach and Type

To resolve a problem methodically and scientifically, one must conduct research. Based on the premise that all events follow regular patterns and that their origins can be determined, the goal of scientific inquiry is to explain, predict, and manage these events. Creswell (2003) identifies three strands of inquiry: quantitative, qualitative, and hybrid methodologies. Researchers can gain a better understanding of these three schools of thought by examining three components of the research paradigm: knowledge claims (philosophical assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge), strategies of inquiry (broad approaches to research), and methods for data collection, analysis, and reporting.

In many branches of management and the social sciences, qualitative research methodology has long been recognized as the gold standard. This approach has evolved into an indispensable resource for studying organizational and managerial phenomena, as well as human behavior and dynamics. According to Sugiyono (2023), qualitative methods seek to acquire comprehensive knowledge of a phenomenon by considering the background and firsthand accounts of those involved in the research.

The nature of qualitative research has evolved significantly over the years. This type of study has progressed from an initial focus on less complex events to serving as a tool for investigating more intricate issues. Phenomenology, case studies, grounded theory, and ethnography are just a few of the qualitative research approaches and methodologies that, according to Sugiyono (2023), can be adapted to specific research objectives. As a result of this evolution, qualitative research is now more adaptable and applicable to a wider range of contexts.

This study employs an interpretive qualitative method. This method was selected because it aims to understand and elucidate the underlying meanings of a social phenomenon specifically, the *Opu* title and its connection to Tanete Village, Bontona, in the Selayar Islands Regency, as well as the associated values, identities, and symbols. The interpretive approach views social reality as something constructed through social interaction and the subjective attribution of meaning by individuals or social groups. Consequently, this study focuses on how the local community understands, interprets, and represents the *Opu* title within their social lives.

Through this approach, the researcher seeks to explore the symbolic significance of the *Opu* title, including the cultural values, social status, and collective identity embedded within it. Thus, the study does not merely describe the phenomenon but also interprets how the title becomes part of the construction of social identity within the community of Tanete Village.

Data Collection Techniques

Locating original sources of information for use in a study is known as data collection. Data collection is a crucial part of the scientific method for evaluating previously developed hypotheses. In this study, the researcher will collect data directly and realistically. The methods used to gather information for this research are:

1. *Observation*

This approach is based on the direct observation of a subject, situation, activity, or behavior. The senses are used to gather data, which is then systematically recorded alongside the phenomena or events being studied. Researchers often employ observational methods when little is known about the problem under investigation. Careful observation can lead to a better understanding of the issue and, potentially, a solution.

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According to Harsja W. Bachtiar (cited in Koenjaraningrat, 1993), the role of an observer extends beyond merely seeing what is right in front of them; they also strive to extract as much information as possible from what they observe. Consequently, to compile a report based on their observations, an observer must record everything they deem significant.

2. *Interviews*

The researcher will conduct interviews with relevant informants to obtain reliable data or information and to complement observational findings. As a vital component of the observational approach, interviews help the researcher understand the daily lives of the community and the values they uphold (Koenjaraningrat, 1993). In this study, the researcher will pose questions to be answered by the informants. The researcher will interview key informants—such as customary leaders, holders of the *Opu* title, village elders, and members of the general public—to gain direct insight into the history of the title, the succession process, its social function, and the symbolic meanings prevalent within the community.

3. *Documentation*

The use of data and documents in this research aims to gather information or data related to the study of identity construction and the meaning of the *Opu* title within the community of Tanete Village, Bontona, Selayar Islands Regency. These data and documents encompass various types of materials such as family archives, newspapers, books, and other records capable of providing deep insight into the social phenomenon under investigation (Koentjaraningrat, 1993:45). Documentary study serves as a means to understand phenomena, facilitate interpretation, formulate theories, and validate data. Documentation also constitutes a primary source—utilizing modern formats such as images, audio, and video that functions as a data collection method. The documentation to be employed in this research consists of images and field notes collected during the course of the study.



Figure 1. Atmosphere in Tanete Village.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Symbolic Meaning of the Title *Opu*

The speaker's intent, the impact of linguistic units on human perception and behavior, the correspondence or lack thereof between language and the natural world, the scope of an utterance and its referents, and the symbolic use of language all contribute to what is known as meaning. Everything expressed inherently carries implications of meaning the domain of semantics, a linguistic subfield dedicated to the study of meaning. Meaning plays a crucial role in language use within society for communicating ideas, spiritual experiences, and objectives (Muzaiyanah, 2012).

Etymologically, the term symbol derives from the Greek roots *sym* and *ballein*, signifying the act of casting or throwing something (an object or action) and subsequently associating it with an idea. According to the definition in the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI) by W.J.S. Poerwadarminta, a symbol is a type of sign, word, emblem, or similar element used to convey a specific intent or meaning (Ida Kusumawardani, 2013).

The significance or import of a symbol is known as its symbolic meaning. The form of the sign itself is linked to meaning, establishing a connection that extends beyond the symbol's physical appearance. According to Ismaya Indri Astuti and Septia Nindy Lestari (2022), the linguistic form of a work can be understood by examining the symbolic form in relation to its meaning, manifestation, and structure.

Meaning is the relationship between an acoustic symbol and the things it represents. Participants in communication construct meaning as a reaction to a process, based on the understanding shared by a group of individuals with common interests. According to the Department of Education and Culture (1993), the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* categorizes the term "meaning" into three etymological branches: first, meaning itself; second, the speaker's intent; and third, the meaning assigned to a linguistic form.

Context is crucial to the meaning of a symbol, as demonstrated by Leslie White in his writings on humans as symbol-using beings. According to Ernst Cassirer, logic is difficult to attain without a shared system of symbols.

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Humans can deconstruct interactions and generate abstract concepts. Based on this, it can be concluded that, from an anthropological perspective, symbols characterize humans as bearers, products, objects, and subjects within a system of signs and symbols that serve to communicate information and messages. According to Haris and Amelia (2018), symbols serve as the foundation for behavior and activity.

Etymologically, the English word symbol derives from the Latin *symbolum* meaning a sign or quality that conveys information to others and the Greek symbolos, which carries the same meaning. Symbols are frequently used to represent people in everyday life. Consequently, symbolic thought and behavior are truly defining human characteristics, leading to the description of humans as animal symbolicum. This forms the basis of all cultural advancement. Humans are, in essence, cultural beings steeped in symbolism (Ade Yusuf Ferudyn, 2013).

According to Colombijn, a symbol is a manifestation that possesses meaning. Ahimsa Putra posits that symbols are things that are understood; that is, something acquires meaning when it is imbued with significance. Consequently, Dwi Ratna N. (2007) defines a symbol as a unit that simplifies phenomena, with meaning derived from symbolic action. Today, humans inhabit both physical and symbolic realms. Within this universe, art, mythology, language, and religion are interconnected like strands in a tapestry of symbolic meaning. An idea recognized as distinct from other things possessing characteristics explicable through reasoning or connections between concepts and facts is termed a symbol or sign. A symbol can inspire contemplation and behavioral change through the messages or stimuli it conveys. The foregoing explanation clearly demonstrates that symbol and meaning are distinct concepts, albeit interconnected and mutually reinforcing. A form possessing a specific function emerges from the union of symbol and meaning. According to Eko Punto Hendro (2020), the symbolic meaning of an object represents the deeper knowledge it conveys through a particular event.

The distinction lies in the fact that meaning serves as the external form communicating a specific intent. While meaning and symbol are separate concepts, they are not mutually exclusive; a form with a defined function results from the fusion of sign and meaning. Cultural diversity among the various ethnic groups in South Sulawesi has been remarkably well-preserved over the years. Among the people of Selayar, the use of honorific titles is highly valued. An individual's social status determines their position within society and the extent of their involvement in social interactions. Various factors such as rank, wealth, and authority contribute to a person's social standing.

Changes in social circumstances go hand in hand with the gradual formation of social hierarchies. An individual's social status can be defined as their rank within their social group often referred to as their position. A person's standing relative to other members of their community constitutes their status or position. Many aspects of a person's social life including their occupation, place in the family lineage, religious affiliation, and level of education contribute to their social status. According to Abdul Syani possessing a status enables successful communication with others, particularly in everyday situations where individuals may not know one another personally yet remain aware of each other's status.

Nobility continues to hold high social standing in various parts of the world. In Java, for instance, noble titles are bestowed upon those who have contributed to the royal courts of Surakarta and Yogyakarta. As noted by Soemarsaid Moertono in State and Statecraft in Old Java, the Second Mataram period was an era when individuals could join the elite or ascend in rank (*kawulawisuda*) through the royal court's bureaucratic system, which encompassed both district-level administration and the central authority of the *keraton* (royal palace).

Titles were awarded based on rank and length of service. The title *Raden* was bestowed upon lower-ranking *priyayi* (aristocratic officials) ranging from *jajar* to *wedana* while the title *Mas* was given to commoners. South Sulawesi is home to the Bugis and Makassar peoples, whose cultural diversity has been remarkably well-preserved over the years. The use of noble titles is a distinctive feature of Bugis-Makassar culture. These communities utilize noble titles as part of their social stratification system; titles are not awarded arbitrarily but must be traced back through successive generations.

The social stratification system of the Selayar community determines eligibility for noble titles. These titles are conferred based on strict lineage requirements rather than at random. An individual who marries may receive the noble title *Opu*, as noted on the official website of the Yogyakarta Culture Office. Structurally, an *Opu* is an individual who serves the royal government. Bearers of this noble title enjoy a social status equal to that of other nobles of the same rank; consequently, being addressed as *Opu* signifies a mark of social distinction (Risdayanti Ismail, Detiksulsel, 2023).

Background of the *Opu* title in Tanete Village

In a historical study of the social and political structures of the Selayar Islands region, the *Opu* title can be understood as part of a local leadership system that emerged autonomously prior to colonial intervention. This indicates that Selayar society possessed an established traditional authority structure categorizable in political anthropology as a form of indigenous political organization which derived its legitimacy from custom (*adat*), kinship ties, and community recognition. As noted by Koentjaraningrat, traditional leadership systems in Indonesia generally evolved from the community's internal need to organize social order, thereby grounding their legitimacy in custom and kinship. This aligns with the statement provided by informant Andi Opu Bau' Tenri Pada:

> The *Opu* title in Tanete village, Bontona, Selayar Islands Regency, existed long before the Dutch arrived to govern Selayar. Before leaving Selayar, the Dutch handed over the administration of their respective areas to the holders of the *Opu* title (Interview, February 15, 2026).

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This statement is corroborated by another informant, Massoarangan elder of Tanete Village who stated:

> Opu Gala the grandfather of the current *Opu* titleholder, Andi Opu Bau' Tenri Pada served as a village head with jurisdiction extending from Tonjo Village to Polong Village; he held this position by virtue of his authority as an *Opu*, without undergoing an election (Interview, February 22, 2026).

Based on these interviews, it can be concluded that the *Opu* title existed long before the arrival of the Dutch colonial administration, reinforcing the view that *Opu* leadership was a locally developed political institution. The colonial government's decision to retain the authority of *Opu* titleholders in managing their territories exemplified by the appointment of Opu Gala as village head over the area spanning Tonjo Village to Polong Village demonstrates that this traditional authority already commanded strong recognition and legitimacy within the community. Thus, the colonial administration preferred to utilize existing local leadership structures rather than establish an entirely new leadership system.

Follow-up interviews with informants highlighted the name Andi Tenri Dio also known as We Tenri Dio a figure associated with the formation of early kingdoms in Selayar. Legend holds that We Tenri Dio, the middle daughter of Sawerigading and We Cudai, settled in Selayar and became the ruler of the Putabangun kingdom. This was one of the local kingdoms believed to have existed prior to the arrival of Islam in Selayar, as recorded in the *Lontara Putabangun*, a chronicle of oral traditions. Some regard her as the first ruler of Selayar, or even as an ancestral figure. Furthermore, she is linked to local beliefs regarding the *Tomanurung* supernatural entities said to have appeared from nowhere and been endowed with the mantle of leadership (Arung Selayar, 2025).

According to the *Sureq Galigo*, the story of the descendants of Sawerigading and We Cudai plays a crucial role in the dissemination of noble and ruling lineages across South Sulawesi and the surrounding regions. In the *La Galigo* tradition, Sawerigading is portrayed as a seafarer, a conqueror, and an heir to Upper World lineage; his descendants subsequently spread out to establish new centers of power. We Tenri Dio is one of the figures in local Selayar tradition frequently linked to this lineage (Widiangsih, 2021).

According to the oral traditions of the people of the Selayar Islands, We Tenri Dio was the middle child of Sawerigading and We Cudai; she sailed to Selayar and settled in the Putabangun area. Her arrival is believed to mark the inception of local authority prior to the advent of Islam. Consequently, she is regarded not merely as a figure of Luwu noble lineage, but also as an ancestor of the community and a symbol of the origins of traditional governance in Selayar.

From the perspective of the *La Galigo* epic, descendants of Sawerigading generally possess extraordinary qualities due to their lineage, which connects them to the realm of the gods. This association is why, in Selayar tradition, We Tenri Dio is linked to the concept of *Tomanurung*. A *Tomanurung* is understood as a figure who "descends" or appears mysteriously to bring order and lead the community. In many Bugis-Makassar kingdoms, this concept serves to explain the origins of rulers who are deemed to possess sacred legitimacy and a connection to supernatural powers.

Through this narrative, the people of Selayar view We Tenri Dio not as an ordinary human, but as a bringer of social order and governance. The story illustrates how the *La Galigo* functions not only as a literary work but also as a source of cultural and political legitimacy for local kingdoms in South Sulawesi. By linking Selayar's rulers to the lineage of Sawerigading, the community constructs a historical identity that positions Selayar within the vast network of ancient Bugis civilizationcentered on the Luwu tradition and the world of the *La Galigo*.

Around 800–900 CE, the oldest kingdom in Selayar was established; its first ruler was a *Tomanurung* a daughter of the noble Prince Sawerigading who stopped in Selayar while her party was returning from China. This aligns with the statement made by informant Andi Opu Bau' Tenri Pada, who noted:

> There was indeed a political relationship between the kingdoms of Luwu and Selayar particularly involving Tanete Village—as Opu Tanete assisted in transporting the remains of the Luwu King's son, whose body had washed ashore in the waters of Selayar (Interview, February 15, 2026).

This is further supported by the statement of informant Andi Maulana Karaeng Jinara, who noted:

> That relationship existed and is acknowledged because Sawerigading himself declared them to be kin and of the same lineage, evidenced by the specific style of their house roofs a feature reserved exclusively for nobility (Interview, February 15, 2026).

Research findings indicate the existence of genealogical and historical ties between the holders of the *Opu* title and Tana Luwu. This belief is rooted in oral traditions identifying We Tenri Dio a descendant of Sawerigading as an early ruler in Selayar; consequently, the legitimacy of *Opu* leadership is viewed as being linked to the noble lineage of Luwu. These findings align with the work of Andi Ima Kesuma (2015), who highlights the significance of Luwu's historical and cultural heritage in shaping the identity of communities in South Sulawesi. However, the people of Tanete Village believe that the *Opu* title existed in Selayar long before the arrival of the Dutch colonial administration. Thus, from the local perspective, the *Opu* title represents a traditional Selayar leadership institution with genealogical links to Tana Luwu, rather than an institution established during the colonial era. Therefore, the use of the *Opu* title in Tanete Village

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can be understood as a form of cultural identity transmission that has undergone adaptation to the local community's social context.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the *Opu* title in Tanete Village, Bontona (Selayar Islands), represents a social institution with historical, symbolic, and cultural dimensions. This title predates the Dutch colonial era, originating as part of the traditional leadership system of the Selayar people; it was subsequently preserved and utilized within the colonial system of indirect rule. The community of Tanete Village believes in a genealogical and historical connection between *Opu* titleholders and Tana Luwu, a belief rooted in oral traditions concerning We Tenri Dio a descendant of Sawerigading and an early ruler of Putabangun. However, this connection is best understood as a construct of cultural legitimacy transmitted through oral tradition, the *La Galigo* epic, and collective memory rather than as a genealogical fact that can be fully substantiated historically. Thus, the *Opu* title evolved through an interplay of Luwu influences and local Selayar political, cultural, and kinship processes.

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