

Protection Bissu right in the Bugis Arajang ritual

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Abstract

The Bissu retain their "marginalised status" for various reasons, the most significant of which is their status as the custodians of the Arajang. This practice is in direct opposition to their religious beliefs. Secondly, they are subjected to discrimination due to their status as indigenous individuals who are members of the queer community. The Bissu's rights have been restricted in the performance of the Arajang ritual in 2022 and 2023, despite the efforts of the state authority, and more specifically, the provincial government, to address the issue. This article employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to comprehensively analyse the lack of performance of the Arajang ritual. In-depth interviews, documentation, and non-participant observation comprise the research methodology. The results suggest that the legal protections are insufficient to adequately safeguard the Bissu during the performance of rituals, as they are sociologically insufficient. Furthermore, the investigation revealed that leadership is a critical element in realising the rights of the Bissu people; however, normative legal guarantees have minimal influence on the capacity to intervene effectively.

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Introduction

Since May 1998, Indonesia has been striving to reform its centralised conception of citizenship (Nordholt, 2008), emphasising obedience to the state, into an inclusive and multicultural concept. The centralised conception of citizenship created absolute state power over sub-national groups. The obedience-oriented citizenship concept was ingrained during the Suharto regime, both conceptually and in practice. Suharto's regime propaganda emphasised that the relationship between the government and its citizens was akin to that of a father and child (Berenschot & van Klinken, 2018). Like a child who is not yet legally competent (Shackelford & Friedman, 2007), citizens and citizen groups were considered to need the



guidance of their "father," the state. Citizens and citizen groups only received their rights if the ruling regime provided guarantees; at that time, legal guarantees were not stronger than the laws meant to protect citizens' rights. After the 1998 reform, this concept shifted to one that prioritises recognising and protecting citizens' cultures and religions and ensures multicultural political practices.

Multicultural politics is a concept that provides special treatment for vulnerable groups, namely immigrant and national minority groups (Kymlicka, 1996). These vulnerable groups do not receive their rights due to their relatively weak political power compared to dominant groups. The 1998 reform movement aimed to address discrimination, such as against the Chinese ethnic group, by implementing multicultural politics (Suryadinata, 2003). Likewise, for national minority groups to preserve their distinct cultures, regional autonomy is applied to sustain local ethnic cultures that require special attention, such as the Bissu.

Decentralisation is a practical embodiment of inclusive and multicultural governance, operating bottom-up. Regional autonomy rejects the top-down political culture characterised by the father-child dynamic. The regional demands for decentralising government succeeded in distributing power to the regions (Green, 2005). On a more principled level, this results from a wave of democratisation, which peaked during the reform era. Democracy does not support the classical, top-down view of governance (Morris, 2000). The rejection of the classical ideas proposed by Aristotle was advanced by thinkers such as Locke, Hobbes, and Jefferson (Morris, 2000). In addition to power, budgeting is also divided between the central and local governments. The purpose of decentralisation is based on national interests (central government) and local government interests (Smith, 2023). This design of regional autonomy is seen as a highly suitable power structure for a multinational state like Indonesia.

With regional autonomy, no communities will be excluded from fulfilling their fundamental rights. Implementing regional autonomy allows each culture to exist because local governments can focus better on the cultures thriving in their respective areas. This autonomy creates space for regions to tailor policies to the specific needs and interests of local communities, while also reducing the potential marginalisation of ethnic or cultural minorities (Anderson, 1991). This is also the core goal of implementing regional autonomy, namely, amending articles in the Indonesian constitution and transferring power to local governments to guarantee their cultures and uniqueness (Choi, 2012). The demand for decentralisation has granted significant power to local governments. Local government authority allows them to manage and regulate their own governmental affairs and exercise the broadest possible autonomy (Balaguer-Coll et al., 2010), except in specific areas such as foreign policy, defence, security, monetary and fiscal matters, justice, and religious affairs (Said, 2016).

Implementing regional autonomy is a form of recognition and protection of cultural diversity. Community rituals are a main cultural element (Koentjaraningrat, 2000). In this context, regional autonomy allows local communities to maintain and perform unique religious traditions without excessive intervention from central authorities. This autonomy is significant in multicultural or multinational countries, where various ethnic and religious groups have different worldviews and religious practices (Ghai, 2000). Thus, regional autonomy serves as an instrument that ensures government policies respect and support the continuity of local religious rituals, which are an integral part of the community's cultural identity. According to Brancati (2008), decentralisation can strengthen social cohesion and protect minority groups, including the practice of local religious beliefs that might be considered minorities at the national level. This reflects how regional autonomy can serve as a tool to facilitate diverse religious practices and prevent the marginalisation of certain religious groups.

One of the religious rituals protected under this system is the Arajang ritual (Lathief, 2004). The Bissu performs this ritual to guard the spirits within sacred objects known as Arajang (Davies, 2018; Lathief, 2004). The Bissu are a community of the Bugis people, known as "transvestite priests" (Pelras, 2021). The Bissu have been trusted local figures since the era of the Kingdom, referred to as *Attoriolong* (Lathief, 2004). The Arajang ritual is currently conducted alongside the Bone Anniversary in Bone Regency (Untara & Rahayu, 2021). They

perform annual ceremonies like the *mallangi arajang* (washing the arajang) and *mattompang arajang* (cleaning the arajang), which may also be held during times of crisis, such as disease outbreaks or prolonged droughts. Another significant ceremony, the *maccera arajang*, involves animal sacrifice, where the blood is offered to the Arajang as part of the *mattoana arajang* (offerings to arajang) ceremony (Lathief, 2021)

However, in recent years, specifically during Bone's 692nd and 693rd anniversaries (2022-2023), the Bissu were excluded from these rituals for the first time in history under the leadership of SS. Preliminary observations and interviews reveal that this exclusion stemmed primarily from an unspoken political policy by the SS, rooted in non-multicultural leadership values. Although other factors contributed to this exclusion, this non-multicultural political stance was identified as the primary determinant, overshadowing other influences.

Ideally, with the implementation of regional autonomy based on multicultural politics, cultural expressions of minority groups such as the Bissu should be protected by the government through special treatment. However, research by Syamsurijal et al. (2023) found that the Bissu community's cultural expressions remain unaccepted, necessitating concealment. Syamsurijal et al. (2023) indicate that performing the Hajj is a step taken by the Bissu to maintain their position within the predominantly Islamic Bugis society and avoid persecution due to gender issues. Labelling the Bissu as part of the LGBT community endangers their position both as citizens and as cultural custodians (Syamsurijal et al., 2024).

This protection is crucial because the Bissu's beliefs have been marginalised (Untara & Rahayu, 2021). Sociologically, there has been a shift in how society views the religion carried by the Bissu (interview with Sopyan Tamrin). The existence of the beliefs held by the Bissu reached the peak of conflict in the 1950s-1960s (Lathief, 2004). At that time, many Bissu were forced to abandon their beliefs or face death, as part of an operation led by DI-TII, known as the "*Toba*" operation (Lathief, 2004). Research by Triadi (2019) found that negotiations between the two groups have not reached a middle ground that respects each group's beliefs; instead, they describe these negotiations as a "time bomb waiting to explode." Through the decentralised system, the government, claiming to protect local cultures, including the Bissu rituals, should serve as a mediator to calm this tension and prevent negative impacts on social cohesion.

Decentralisation is like a double-edged sword; it can be a sharp tool for implementing multicultural politics, but also a sharp tool for undermining it. In practice, decentralisation has strengthened the political power of local elite leaders (Berenschot & van Klinken, 2019). The "father-child" doctrine, intended to be eliminated, has shifted to the regions within the decentralisation system. Legal oversight of government actions through vertical and horizontal check-and-balance mechanisms cannot counter local elites' power. On the contrary, they form mutually beneficial political alliances (Berenschot & van Klinken, 2019). As a result, implementing multicultural politics is contingent on the willingness of local government elites.

Local politics are greatly influenced by the socio-historical context in which local power exists. Historically, the political culture of governance is shaped by the old political culture from the era of feudalistic kingdoms. Sociologically, society is divided into social strata. In addition to these factors, the lack of successful democratic education also contributes to creating a centralised political culture in local governments. The centralisation of political power is focused on local leaders, forming "father-child" political relationships in the regions. Local governments at the district level follow the directives of the provincial government, as seen in the treatment of the Bissu minority group.

The Bissu minority group gains its rights through the implementation of multicultural politics. Multicultural politics refers to policies or political practices that recognise and respect cultural differences while providing legal protections to minority cultural groups within the broader society (Kymlicka, 1996). The minority group lacks the political power that dominant political groups possess, which allows them to form political agreements with prospective leaders and exert political control over them. Amid a power culture that strengthens government leadership, legal guarantees for protecting the Bissu, as outlined in positive law,

do not provide legal certainty for the Bissu group. Government leadership becomes a determining factor in granting or cutting the rights of the Bissu minority group. In this context, the political values of the provincial government leader in South Sulawesi dictate the granting or removal of the Bissu's role in the heirloom purification ceremony during the Bone Anniversary celebration in 2023-2024.

Bissu Right to Conduct the Arajang

The Bissu, a unique and revered group within Bugis society, embody a gender identity that transcends the conventional male and female binary. Traditionally, the Bugis recognize five genders—male, female, *calabai* (feminine males), *calalai* (masculine females), and Bissu—each with a distinct role in cultural and spiritual life (Davies, 2007, 2018). As intermediaries between the spiritual and physical realms, the Bissu occupy a special position, seen as figures who unite masculine and feminine qualities, symbolising harmony and completeness. This perceived transcendence allows them to act as potent spiritual mediators, establishing their integral role in Bugis society (Syamsurijal et al., 2024).

One of the most significant aspects of Bissu identity and their role in Bugis culture is their connection to the Arajang. These sacred royal heirlooms are revered as physical representations of ancestral spirits. The Bissu and Arajang are considered inseparable; their relationship is one of mutual sanctity, where the presence of the Arajang validates the Bissu's role, and vice versa (Lathief, 2004). The Bissu have exclusive rights and responsibilities in conducting various Arajang rituals, including *mallangi arajang*, *maccera arajang*, and *mattoana arajang*, each significant to Bugis cultural and spiritual practices. *Mallangi arajang* is a purification ritual for the Arajang, performed in times of war, widespread illness, or prolonged drought. This ceremony seeks to cleanse and revitalise the Arajang, restoring balance and harmony. *Maccera arajang* involves animal sacrifice and is performed during significant life events, such as the inauguration of a king, marriages, births, and deaths, reflecting the Bissu's role in important rites of passage. *Mattoana arajang*, in contrast, is a simpler ceremony that involves offering gifts to the Arajang, symbolising ongoing reverence and devotion to the ancestral spirits (Lathief, 2004).

The Bissu's association with the Arajang represents a profound comprehension of Bugis cultural identity, connecting spiritual leadership to revered artefacts. This bond serves as an expression of the Bissu's role as spiritual leaders and a mechanism for preserving the continuity of cultural practices across generations. The Bissu engage in rituals such as *mallangi arajang*, *maccera arajang*, and *mattoana arajang* to uphold the sanctity of the Arajang, thereby reinforcing their identity and cultural significance within Bugis society. These rituals function as a mechanism for intergenerational communication, facilitating the transmission of the Bugis' ancestral beliefs and practices in their original form (Lathief, 2004).

The exclusive rights and responsibilities of the Bissu in conducting these ceremonies reflect the socio-political structure of Bugis society. The Bissu serve as spiritual intermediaries, occupying a distinct role that connects the sacred and political domains. Their participation in rituals for the Arajang reinforces their spiritual authority and signifies their engagement in the political dynamics of the Bugis kingdom (Lathief, 2004). Rituals conducted during significant political events, such as royal inaugurations, serve to uphold spiritual order and reinforce the legitimacy of political authority within Bugis society.

The Bissu hold a central position in Bugis culture; however, their role can be critically examined within the framework of modernity and the evolving cultural landscape. With the increasing globalisation of the world, traditional practices such as those of the Bissu may encounter difficulties in preserving their relevance and continuity. The rituals associated with the Arajang are essential for the preservation of cultural heritage; however, they may face challenges in adapting to contemporary views that emphasise secularism, individualism, and modern religious practices. This tension underscores the intricate balance the Bissu must maintain in safeguarding their cultural identity while addressing the challenges of modernity and sustaining their distinct role within the cultural framework of Bugis society.

Through these rituals, the Bissu uphold their dual function as cultural custodians and religious figures, central to the survival of Bugis heritage. The Arajang rituals are not merely cultural performances but a foundational aspect of the Bissu's identity and existence. In performing these ceremonies, the Bissu preserve their essential role as guardians of the Bugis spiritual legacy, reaffirming their sacred duties while maintaining the community's connection to its ancestors (Syamsurijal et al., 2023, 2024). As illustrated in these rituals, the inseparability of the Bissu and Arajang underscores the Bissu's intrinsic value in Bugis tradition and society (Davies, 2007, 2018).

As citizens, Bissu have social rights that must be protected, fulfilled and respected. According to Turner (1997), citizens have three types of rights, namely economic rights, cultural rights and political rights. Every citizen is viewed as equal in rights (Bartlett, 2014; von Lieres, 2012), and there should be no difference in the fulfilment of rights between citizens or groups of citizens. In the context of Arajang, this can be classified as cultural rights. As John Locke stated, "all men are created equal and have rights that cannot be taken away by anyone." This concept has grown like a snowball rolling downhill, challenging the bourgeois class that held control over the state. The struggle of the working class and the ordinary people against bourgeois hegemony became the primary driving force in establishing more egalitarian political rights (Mohamed, 2020). The concept of human equality reached its culmination in 1948 with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was the first universal acknowledgement of the equality of every human being, regardless of social, economic, or racial status.

However, sociological facts later acknowledged, as expressed in Kymlicka's study, that national minority groups do not possess the same political power as most citizens. Minority groups are often in a more vulnerable political and economic position, thus requiring special protections and policies to ensure their rights can be realised (Kymlicka, 1996). Furthermore, minority groups require special treatment to enjoy the rights guaranteed by the constitution, with the understanding that equal treatment does not always mean the same policies for everyone, but rather policies that take contextual differences into account (Kymlicka, 1996). Minority groups need formal protection of their rights and participation in the decision-making process to address existing power imbalances (Young, 2020). Additionally, studies on the state as a night watchman in granting negative rights to citizens reveal that political minority groups need the assistance of state power to secure their rights. The state must protect and respect these rights and fulfil them. The state has the obligation to actively create conditions where minority groups can live meaningful and sovereign lives (Kymlicka, 2001). The state's responsibility in fulfilling these rights is both negative and positive, to overcome the marginalisation and subordination experienced by minority groups (Young, 2020).

Indonesia separates the meaning of the term belief from the term religion. Religion refers to the religions which have official status, like Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism (Article 1 of PNPS Law No. 1 of 1965 concerning the Prevention of Abuse and/or Blasphemy). By contrast, the term belief informally emerged to recognise the existence of the citizens who declare that they are different from the agama groups (Deta, 2022). In the Constitutional Court Decision number 97/PUU-XIV/2016, there are different meanings between religion and belief, resulting in different legal implications.

The inequality in status between followers of indigenous beliefs and recognised religions in Indonesia is evident in state policies that only allow religious adherents to list their religion on official identification documents. Although regulations permit the recognition of indigenous beliefs, such as those practised by groups like the Bissu, discrimination against their practitioners persists. This discrimination is not only perpetuated by the government but also reinforced by the predominantly religious society. The state plays a significant role in shaping the identity of religion and belief, often placing followers of indigenous beliefs in an unequal position within social and political contexts (Hefner, 2021). Moreover, identity politics in Indonesia has marginalised pluralism, with followers of indigenous beliefs frequently excluded from the state's official recognition framework (Hefner, 2021).

A clear example of this discrimination can be seen in the Bissu community, which sociologically faces pressure from both the government and religious society. The Bissu experience intense marginalisation due to neglecting their beliefs, which are not officially recognised by the state (Untara & Rahayu, 2021). According to Cornelissen (2010), state policies often place non-religious beliefs, like those held by the Bissu community, in a subordinate position compared to officially recognised religions. As a result, the inequality in status and structural discrimination continues for belief practitioners like the Bissu in Indonesia.

The marginalised position of the Bissu is further exacerbated by accusations that they "do not have a religion" (Untara & Rahayu, 2021). The narrow interpretation of official religions renders other belief systems, such as the Bissu's, unofficial and lacking meaningful protection from the government. Triadi (2019) notes that the Bissu face severe pressure from customary councils and fanatical Islamic groups, each wielding significant political and social influence. The customary councils, represented by nobility descendants, and the Islamic groups, led by religious leaders and educated citizens, create a social dynamic that, according to Triadi (2019), "is like a time bomb ready to explode". Thus, the Bissu face discrimination from the government through unsupportive policies and social pressure exerted by influential groups in society.

Government Legal Obligation to Protect Bissu's Ritual

The state of Indonesia is designed as a multinational state. Calling Indonesia a 'multinational state' confirms that Indonesian citizens have been isolated in a smaller community of nations, in addition to being part of a national community. This is a mistake if you consider Indonesia to be a unified nation-state. Sociologically, Indonesia has more than 1,300 ethnic groups (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2011). A 'nation' in the sociological sense is closely related to the idea of a 'people' or 'culture' (Kymlicka, 1996). Each ethnic group has a unique culture and comes from a different historical background. They merged without refusing their national identity. The "one nation" declaration in the youth oath was based on resistance to colonialism, a struggle for common destiny (interview with Sapriya). The statement of self-fusing into "one nation" is a strategy to fight against the politics of sheep fighting against colonialism. Many political strategies brought down the Asian island kingdoms. This bond of solidarity between nations is maintained to strengthen the defence of each ethnic group from colonisation. Because multinational countries, including Indonesia, cannot survive unless various national groups have allegiance to the larger political community in which they live (Kymlicka, 1996).

Indonesia formulated its constitution to accommodate all ethnic groups, including minority groups (Thio, 2010). National minorities typically wish to maintain themselves as distinct societies alongside the larger society, and demand various forms of autonomy (Kymlicka, 1996). The Indonesian state understands that several ethnic groups do not have enough political power to protect themselves. The basic philosophy of Indonesia formulated one precept to accommodate the minority group. Other specific norms are formulated in the Indonesian constitution to serve as legal protections for minority nations, namely Article 32, paragraph (1): the state advances Indonesia's national culture amid world civilisation by guaranteeing the community's freedom in maintaining and developing its cultural values. In this sense, national culture is the culture that was lived with indigenous people before Indonesia was proclaimed (Teeuw, 1967). National culture has several universal elements, including the religious system and ritual (Koentjaraningrat, 2000).

The Arajang ritual is the ritual of the Bugis society, in which life flows from generation to generation (Davies, 2018). The state of Indonesia is here to protect the adherents of the *Attoriolong* faith, the group that carries out the Arajang ritual, who continue to worship despite being a minority among the Bugis themselves. Article 29 paragraph (2) in the Constitution of Indonesia: The state guarantees the freedom of each citizen to embrace his or her religion and worship according to his or her beliefs.

Formulating legal guarantee norms for the culture of all ethnic groups, including the Bissu minority group, is the government's legal obligation. Indonesia claims to be a state following the rule of law in the Indonesian constitution in Article 1, paragraph (3). The consequence of

the concept of the rule of law is that all state actions are given and based on the formation of the law. Indonesian legal system led its 'founding fathers' to wisely opt for the rule of law (Isra et al., 2017). The consequence of the concept of the rule of law, if it is codified in Article 29, paragraph (1), is that the entire formulation of the article becomes an order that the government must implement by not leaving minority groups in its application.

Cutting Bissu Ritual Right through the Leadership Government

The government began to cut Bissu's rights in 2022. The role of Bissu, in the context of power, which is still carried out from generation to generation, is the ritual washing of a symbol of the Bugis monarchy state (Pelras, 2021). The monarch symbol is referred to in the Bugis language as Arajang. The ritual Arajang is not only interpreted as a tribute to the royal heritage, but rather a form of worship of the bissu group at the command of the gods who are mandated and addressed to them (Lathief, 2004). The ritual Arajang has been accompanied by Bone's Anniversary since 2022. Before that, Bissu had always been given this role, as they had since the royal era. The proper cut occurred for 2 years, namely until 2023. Illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1.

Bissu's Leadership and Involvement

Bone Anniversary	Year	Involvement	Provincial Government Period
689 and below	2019 and below	Involved	-
690	2020	Cancelled due to Covid 19	NA and SS
691	2021	Involved	NA and SS
692	2022	Not involved	SS
693	2023	Not involved	SS
694	2024	Get involved	ZA

Sources: Research Data, 2024.

Table 1 shows a relation between leadership and fulfilling Bissu's rights. The table shows that Bissu did not get the right to express his belief in the Arajang ritual in the SS era, which occurred for 2 years, namely 2022-2023 or the 692-693 Bone Anniversary Ceremony. A common thread was drawn from the governor's leadership that influenced the district's political policy (interview with Puang Matoa).

Leadership is a determining factor in curtailing the rights of the Bissu group, overshadowing any legal guarantees. Leaders lacking multicultural values contribute to the unfulfillment of minority rights. Policies that exclude the Bissu are shaped by the values held by leaders regarding the Bissu community (interview with Feby, Puang Matoa, and Bone District Government). The Bissu are seen as a group with a sexual orientation that contradicts the values of these leaders (interview with Puang Matoa).

Positive law cannot control the Governor's policy of cutting off Bissu's right of expression on Bone's anniversary. The law as a tool to access justice for minority groups, as John Rawls argues, is not present for the Bissu group. From a legal point of view, the guarantee for the protection of expression rights from Bissu has been regulated in detail in Indonesia's positive law. Starting from the constitution, laws, and district/city regulations, there are guidelines for the preservation of the culture of the Bissu group. Also, the Bissu Dance has been made an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO with the registration number WBTb REK/WTTB/2020/01/00019. In fact, legal guarantees were provided through the merger of laws into intellectual property in 2020, which was carried out during the term of office of the same government leader. After all, the law is a tool to limit the legal behaviour of the government. This postulate, which experts in state administrative law often put forward, is referred to as the principle of legality, which means that government legal acts must be taken based on a provision of law where Indonesia adheres to this principle in Article 1, paragraph 3

of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. If there is a provision for legislation on the promotion of intangible culture, then the government must implement that provision. However, this study found that leadership plays a decisive role in defeating the law used as a guideline for government behaviour. This happened in the provincial government that carried out legal acts outside the limits of the regulated authority, namely, cutting and taking over the rights of the Bissu minority. The district government could not resist the political manoeuvres of the provincial leaders, even though they had received a guarantee of autonomy in the government.

On the contrary, leadership can protect minority expression rights even without concrete legal guarantees. It was found that Bissu always got his right to express his belief in the Arajang ritual from 1951 to 2021, except during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In fact, the legal guidelines for the provincial government were only published in 2017, and in 2023, the Bone government's legal guidelines were published 2023. This can also be seen in 2024, where Bissu is involved, not because of legal factors but because of leadership. In the era of ZA's leadership, Bissu was again involved because he did not have inclusive political values.

This dominant leadership force can be drawn from the historical background and local political design of the local government in South Sulawesi. Historically, it is inevitable that the areas in South Sulawesi are a collection of former kingdoms, including the Kingdom of Bone, the Kingdom of Soppeng, the Kingdom of Wajo, the Kingdom of Sidenreng, the Kingdom of Gowa and others. These systems of government adhered to a very hierarchical feudal system.

This also affected the government culture that was divided between the "white descent" who believed in the descent of God on earth, where the nobles were characterised by white blood confirmed through *Manurung's* myth. At the same time, ordinary people who believed did not descend from God. This political culture was still preserved and maintained until the political period of the republic. Even though the belief in "white descent" is not as thick as in the royal period, feudal characteristics are still visible (interview with Sopyan). Society is divided into social classes, and the upper social classes are characterised by the *titles Andi, Daeng and Karaeng* (Haris, 2018).

The decentralised political design after 1998 cemented the power of the local elites (Berenschot & van Klinken, 2019). Decentralisation shifted the father-son political relationship carried out in President Soeharto's era, from the centre to the regions. This "father-son" citizenship relationship generally occurs outside Java and Sumatra (Berenschot & van Klinken, 2019) and in South Sulawesi. For immature regions in democratic education or those that adhere to feudal values, decentralisation supports local elite power. Through decentralisation, local political leaders gain greater financial resources and power than ever before. On the other hand, the national elite uses local political relations. It is much easier for them to rally the people's will through loyal local political elites than to face a cohesive political party that gathers the people's will in a national alliance (Berenschot & van Klinken, 2019).

Decentralisation, in practice, is not as outlined in the law—decentralisation as one of the supporters of the thwarted ideals of multicultural politics. Constitutionally, no clause opposes multicultural politics, but in practice, decentralisation encourages local leadership. Then, leadership positions are a determining factor in implementing multicultural politics. In South Sulawesi, it was found that the law did not provide a significant impetus. Only when the Leader has multicultural political values will multicultural political will exist. The study also found that even if there is no concrete and procedural legal guideline, multicultural practice is carried out if the leader has multicultural values. This is all due to the decentralisation factor that strengthens the value of local feudalism.

Conclusion

The performance of the Arajang ritual is part of minority rights that must be protected. Within the framework of multicultural politics, ethnic groups that tend to lack sufficient political power to protect themselves require the presence of the state to ensure their protection. The Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia is designed to ensure that the state can intervene to protect the performance of its citizens' rituals. Community rituals are

categorised into two types: those performed by agama as official religions and those performed by belief as beliefs outside official religions. Belief often faces the stigma of being perceived as not having a religion. Legal protections for belief, as traditional beliefs are sociologically insufficient to adequately safeguard the rights of the Bissu in performing their rituals.

The failure to carry out the Arajang Bissu ritual in 2022 and 2023 represents the state's violation of Bissu rights, where local government leadership is the determining factor. Various guarantees within the constitution have not been able to provide meaningful intervention in the local political arena, which instead strengthens the position of regional leaders, particularly the Provincial Governor. Furthermore, the dominant position of provincial leaders further enhances their political manoeuvres, thereby reinforcing the autonomy held by district governments. The excessive dominance of local leaders is shaped by implementing a decentralisation system in regions that are not yet mature in instilling democratic values and still adhere to a feudal-hierarchical system. This significant power allows the Governor to elevate his political position over others. Research reveals that these differing political values led to the policies that obstructed the performance of the Arajang ritual in 2022 and 2023.

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