



# Islamization or Arabization? The Arab Cultural Influence on the South Sulawesi Muslim Community since the Islamization in the 17th Century



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## [ *Abstract* ]

This paper explores the influence of Arab culture on the culture of Bugis-Makassar, the two major ethnic groups in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, particularly after their Islamization in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The paper argues that since then, the on-going process of Islamization in the region has also brought a continuous flow of ideas and cultural practices from Mecca to Indonesia by means of the *hajj* pilgrims, Arab traders, and the establishment of Islamic educational institutions that emphasized the teaching and use of Arabic language in education. These factors, among others, have facilitated a cultural inflow which enabled cultural practices borne of West Asia (Middle East) to be integrated into local customs and beliefs. The paper particularly depicts the most observable forms of Arabic cultural integration, acculturation, and assimilation into the Bugis-Makassar culture such as the use of Arabic in Islamic schools and religious sermons; the Arab-style dressing by religious scholars, teachers, and students; the wearing of the *hijab* (head cover) by women; and the change of people's names from local into Arabic. By utilizing the historical and anthropological approach, this paper investigates this dynamic

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process of adaptation and integration of a foreign culture that first came through the Islamization of a local culture, exploring the role of an Islamic missionary and educational institutions in mediating and maintaining such cultural integration processes.

**Keywords:** Arab Culture, Bugis Culture, South Sulawesi, Islam, Islamization

## I . Introduction

Indonesian Islam has been commonly described to be very distinctive from Islam elsewhere, particularly as practiced in the Arabian peninsula. Islam in Indonesia represents an oriental worldview that differs in principal matters from the theological and legal orientation of Islam in the Arabic realm. The influence of the long-established Indian religious traditions in the Archipelago is often emphasized as major contributory factors that shaped the religious beliefs and practices of Indonesians.

Nevertheless this paper shall argue that in the course of the 20th century, the on-going process of Islamization consisted remarkably of a continuous tide of ideas and practices from Mecca to Indonesia. *Hajj* pilgrims, Arab traders, and Islamic educational institutions became vital carriers and disseminators of this cultural inflow, enabling cultural practices borne of West Asia (Middle East) to be integrated into local customs and beliefs (Bruinessen 1999). The exposure of Indonesian Muslims to the Arabian heartland of Islam, especially by means of the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) resulted in what Martin van Bruinessen (1999: 11) observed as “the adoption not only of elements of “scripturalist” Islam into the Indonesian Muslim cultures but also of a fair amount of Arabian *adat* [local custom]”. Interestingly, the products of such adoption or integration, intangible or otherwise, were later acknowledged by the local community as *their* cultural and religious characteristics.

The use of Arabic in Islamic schools and in sermons during Friday congregational prayers, the use of Arab-style attire by religious

scholars, teachers and students alike; the donning of *hijab* or *jilbab* (head cover) by women; and the change into Arabic names were just a few examples of such cultural integration, even more appropriately regarded as acculturation and assimilation. Utilizing both the historical and anthropological approach, this paper investigates the dynamic process of adaptation and integration of Islamic global culture and Bugis-Makassar indigenous culture and belief in South Sulawesi as it was mediated and accelerated by Islamic missionary endeavors and educational institutions since the middle of the 20th century.

## II . The introduction of Islam and the first exposure to Arab culture

The first conversion to Islam of the Bugis-Makassar<sup>1</sup> people took place in the first decade of the 17th century. Historically, three *ulama* (Muslim religious scholars or cleric) from Sumatera are popularly acknowledged as the first disseminators of Islam in the region. The first to embrace Islam was the aristocracy (the local kings), followed by the entire realm. In the case of the Bugis state of Luwu and the Makassar states of Gowa-Tallo, Islam made its entry without significant violence, although it took years for the first propagators of Islam to make the kings of Luwu (1603) and Gowa-Tallo (1605) finally embraced Islam and made it the official religion of their states.<sup>2</sup>

However, when the king of Gowa-Tallo attempted to convert the Bugis states to Islam, some resisted it. Some small states along the Makassar straits and the north of Lake Sidenreng willingly accepted Islam, partly due to the political supremacy of the kingdom of Gowa. But to convert the major Bugis states of Bone, Soppeng, and Wajo, the Gowa king had to wage a series of wars. Soppeng and

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<sup>1</sup> “Bugis” and “Makassar” in this work are used in reference to the languages and two major ethnic groups who inhabit the southern peninsula of the island of Sulawesi, which is today the South Sulawesi Province of Indonesia.

<sup>2</sup> The brief description of the process of “structural” Islamization in South Sulawesi here is extracted from the following sources: Noorduyt (1956); Mattulada (1983) Pelras (2001).

Wajo eventually embraced Islam (in 1609 and 1610 respectively). Bone, on the other hand, had to suffer a series of ferocious wars with Gowa before it finally submitted to the superiority of Gowa military power and accepted Islam in 1611.

As can be seen, Islam became the religion of the local states once the kings had converted. Consequently, as the anthropologist of Bugis Christian Pelras (2001) notes, the conversion of the population was neither the object of choice nor of coercion; it was a simple affair of education and also of the royal power. This process may explain why after the “structural” conversion (as opposed to the “cultural” one), some populations still engaged in pre-Islamic and non-Islamic practices based on myths, such as the worshipping of regalia, sacred places, place spirits, and the consultation of pagan transvestite priests (Bugis: *bissu*)—clearly all incompatible with Islam (Pelras 2001). In another case, a Muslim would have accepted both the old beliefs and Islam (Noorduyn 1956; Mattulada 1983; Pelras 2001).

Pelras (2001) presumes that the inclination of South Sulawesi people towards “spontaneous syncretism” may not only be their character, like other Indonesian peoples, but also because of the “conscious policy” of the first propagators of Islam in South Sulawesi to accept the impossibility of radically eradicating the pre-Islamic elements in the Bugis tradition which “they considered essential to their culture.” The first preacher of Islam in South Sulawesi, Dato’ ri Bandang, had focused his efforts in building the institution of *sara’* (B. for *Shari’a*), ensuring the practice of main religious ritual obligations (the “five pillars” of Islam); the abandonment of pig-eating; the introduction of celebrations or rites such as circumcision, marriage, and funerals in accordance with Islamic rules; and the development of basic religious teaching. Understanding the message of Islam would come later. A more thoughtful effort was much later taken, mainly through religious education programs, to narrow the gap between normative Islamic belief as stipulated in canonical texts and Islam as actually practiced by the local people.

Before Islamization, the people of South Sulawesi believed in spirit or soul-substance or in a supernatural power that organizes

and animates the material universe (cf. Reid 1995: 322), which were common among peoples living in Austronesian regions (cf. Fox 1995). Unlike in Java and Sumatera (Coede 1968), the influence of Indian religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, were not observed among the peoples in this island. In South Sulawesi in particular, there is, as Campbell Macknight (1975: 129) notes, no “more than the merest trace of that enriching Indian tradition so familiar elsewhere in Southeast Asia.” Macknight (1975: 129) further writes that “South Celebes has some claim to be regarded as a test case of the vitality of indigenous Southeast Asia traditions.”

According to Bruinessen (2012: 10), “Islamisation in Indonesia has to be seen as a process that had took place since the 13<sup>th</sup> century and it is still going on until the present day.” Similarly, writing about the conversion to Islam of the people in Southeast Asia in general, Merle Ricklefs (1979) argues that Islamization in this region consists of a continuing endeavor instead of one step process. In Pelras’ (2001) observation, in the context of South Sulawesi, Islamization shows an endless process, particularly as it is undertaken or continued by the Islamic educational institutions since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The local historical accounts state that towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, several *ulama* from Sumatera, Java, and the Arabian peninsula had visited Bugis-Makassar state capitals, either with the only purpose of preaching Islam or trading with local populations or both. Some of these *ulama* extended their stay for months or years and taught about Islam to local rulers and people (Mattulada 1983; Halim 2015).

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, several Meccan-born Bugis *ulama* or those who continued to stay in Mecca and Medina for several years for the purpose of studying Islam after they performed the *hajj* rituals, had returned to South Sulawesi. In most cases, they became preachers and teachers in their own places of origin. Some of them like Muhammad Thahir al-Mandary (1839-1952) and Muhammad As’ad al-Bugisy (1907-1952) established their own Islamic learning group (I. *pengajian*, Arabic [A]. *halaqa*). Muhammad As’ad later expanded his *pengajian* in 1930 into a formal Islamic school (A and I. *madrasa*) called al-Madrasah al-‘Arabiyyah al-Islamiyyah (the Islamic Arabic school) in the city of Sengkang, Wajo, South Sulawesi.

The school name indicates the importance of Arabic language in the curriculum of this school. In fact, most if not all the religious textbooks used in this school were written in Arabic (popularly known in Indonesia as '*kitab kuning*' or 'yellow book') (Bruinessen 1990). Arabic language in its all aspects was a mandatory lesson for all students to master as a primary instrument to study the vast body of Islamic knowledge written in Arabic. After the death of its founder Muhammad As'ad in 1952, the *madrasa* was expanded into an Islamic boarding school (I. *pesantren*) that ran Islamic schools in various levels in its headquarters in Sengkang, and hundreds of school branches in various places in South Sulawesi and beyond (Mattulada. 1983; Pasanreseng 1992).

Many direct students of Muhammad As'ad in his *pengajian* and *madrasa* later established their own *pengajian* and *madrasa* throughout South Sulawesi and became influential *ulama* in their own right in the 20th century. As I shall discuss later in this paper, these *ulama* helped expand their teacher's influence particularly in disseminating Islamic knowledge and introducing the importance of Arabic in the process of learning and practicing Islam. As I have argued elsewhere (Halim 2015), it can be said that Muhammad As'ad is the grand master of most, if not all subsequent influential *ulama*, in the last century who had played an instrumental role in the transformation of Islamic authority and the dissemination of Islamic knowledge to the peoples in the province and other places in eastern parts of Indonesia.

The historian Anthony Reid (1995) depicts Islam as one of the most fundamental challenges to Austronesian values in the period between the second part of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the first part of the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. "The discontinuity represented by Islam in that period of rapid change was most obvious to outsiders in matters that bore on identity —dress, speech, deportment and diet" (Reid 1995: 319).

Dress in public was one of the quickest things to change with Islam .... Bare breast, penis inserts, tattoos and long male hair all disappeared very quickly in favour of what we now see as standard Indonesian/Malay dress of *sarung* and *kebaya* (chemise). Again, the initial change was particularly dramatic. In Makassar city only fifty

years after the conversion to Islam women were sometimes “entirely covered from head to foot, in such fashion that not even their faces can be seen” [Rhodes 1653: 207]. In Banten in the same period Arab-style dress became common [Schrieke 1957: 242] (Reid 1995: 319).

Knowledge Subject	Related Textbook	Author
<i>Tafsir</i> (Qur’anic exegesis)	<i>Tafsir al-Jalalayn</i>	Jalal al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Mahally and Jalal al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr al-Suyuthy
<i>Hadits</i> (The Prophetic tradition)	<i>Riyad al-Salihin</i>	Yahya al-Din Abi Zakariyya Yahya ibn Sharf al-Nawawi
	<i>Sabih al-Bukhari</i>	Abu Abdillah Muhammad ibn Isma’il ibn Ibrahim al-Mughirah al-Bukhari
	<i>Sunan Abi Dawud</i>	Abu Dawud Sulayman ibn al-Ash’ath al-Azdi as-Sijistani
<i>Fiqh</i> (Islamic jurisprudence)	<i>Fath al-Mu’in</i>	Zainuddin ibn Abdul ‘Aziz al-Malibari
<i>Taubid</i> (Theology)	<i>Tanwir al-Qulub</i>	Muhammad Amin al-Kurdi
<i>Tasawuf</i> (Sufism)	<i>Shabr al-Hikam</i>	Muhammad Ibrahim al-Nafizhi al-Rindi
<i>Akhlak</i> (Ethics)	<i>Man’izab al-Mu’minin</i>	Jamal al-Din al-Qasimiy
	<i>Irshad al-Ibad</i>	Zaynuddin bin Abdul Aziz bin Zaynuddin bin ‘Ali al-Ma’bari al-Malibari

**Figure 1:** Arabic textbooks used in the curriculum of a *pesantren* in Sengkang, Wajo, South Sulawesi (since 1930)

It should be noted that Islam as a religion is not necessarily Arab culture. It is true that the message of Islam was spread by the Prophet Muhammad who was an Arab; that the Qur’an as Islamic holy scripture is in Arabic; that the recitation of basic Islamic prayers is also in Arabic; and that the Ka’bah or the house of God to which the Muslims globally face when praying is in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. However, Islamic culture is not always identical with Arab culture, as Arab culture is not automatically Islamic as many of its aspects was corrected or amended by Islam.

Islam, however, had mediated the influence of Arab culture to many parts of the archipelago, including South Sulawesi. For example, through Islam, the Muslim people in South Sulawesi consider it necessary to learn Arabic in order to not only be able to read the Qur'an, but also to learn about Islamic knowledge from the standard religious books written in Arabic produced by Muslim scholars during medieval Islam (Bruinessen 1990). As I shall discuss further, many Muslims in South Sulawesi regard Islam to be identical with Arab culture which includes the language, dress, and diet, or even the Arabs themselves.

In general, in the South Sulawesi context, people came to know about Arab culture through at least four ways. Firstly, through the interaction of the local people with the Arabs who, since the 14<sup>th</sup> century or two centuries before the Islamization of the Bugis-Makassar states, had frequently visited the region for trading and other purposes (Rahman 2011). Secondly, the influence of Arab culture came with the acceptance of Islam in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century as the official religion by the Bugis-Makassar kings. Islam, particularly some aspects of the *Shari'a* (Islamic law) or *sara'* (Bugis [B]), was later adopted and incorporated as part of the customary system (I. *adat*, B. *ade'*) of their state called *pangngaderreng* (B) or *pangngadakkang* (Makassar [M])<sup>3</sup>. Thirdly, the Bugis-Makassar people were exposed to the Arab culture when they performed the *hajj* or pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. According to historical data, Muslim people from South Sulawesi had started to travel for *hajj* since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Putuhena 2007: 126). Certainly a few people with special religious, political, or economic privilege, such as the famous Makassarese Sufi *ulama*, Syekh Yusuf (1626-1699) could perform the *hajj* in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century (Hamid 1994). Nevertheless, it was (and still is) always the case that only the richest among the Muslim people who could perform that ritual as the cost to travel by ship in such a long distance was very expensive. Even today, when the only mode of transportation used to travel to Saudi Arabia is by plane, *hajj* pilgrimage is still unaffordable for most people. Finally, the return to the archipelago

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<sup>3</sup> The abbreviation (B) throughout this paper refers to Bugis language, and (M) to Makassar language. In other case (I) stands for Indonesian language and (A) for Arabic.



of many *ulama* who spent several years in studying about Islam in the Arabia, or the coming of the *Jawi*<sup>4</sup> *ulama* to their maternal homeland such as Muhammad As'ad al-Bugisi (1907-1952), a Bugis Meccan-born *ulama* whose parents migrated to Mecca in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to the prolonged political turmoil in the local state of Wajo (Halim 2015).

Thanks to the rapid development in information technology that makes it possible for much wider access to print and electronic media, and later to the Internet, towards the end of the last millennium, more people in Indonesia, including South Sulawesi, began to learn many new different global cultures. For Muslims, these provided opportunities to learn about, or learn from Muslim brothers and sisters across the globe, different culture and religious ideologies. The growing acceptance of transnational radical ideologies from the Middle East in Southeast Asia like Al-Qaeda (Abuza 2003) and later Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is partly spawned by the widespread of digital media.

In the next parts of this paper, I investigate the influence of Arab culture, particularly of the Arabian peninsula, on the Muslim people of the South Sulawesi through what appears to be the most visible elements of culture such as dress, language, names, and manners. To do this I will rely on my field notes during my ethnographic research in Wajo, South Sulawesi, Indonesia in 2012 and several subsequent short-term visits in 2013 and 2014 as part of my PhD research from 2011-2015. In my study (Halim 2012, 2015), I looked at how an Islamic educational institution and mission transforms religious belief and practice among peoples in the province and beyond. Therefore, my observation is limited to Wajo district, although I also consider similar cases in other parts of South Sulawesi that I was able to investigate during the course of my fieldwork in 2012 and 2016.

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<sup>4</sup> The *Jawi* *ulama* or *Jawi* students referred to all Muslims who stayed in Mecca and Medina who came from the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.

### III. The Arab cultural influence on Bugis-Makassar culture through styles of dressing

The most discernable influence of the Arab culture on the Bugis-Makassar people is on dressing. Today wearing various Arab-style dresses is easily observed in both Muslim men and women in Indonesia. But before describing the Arab dressing currently adopted by Muslims in South Sulawesi in particular, it is necessary to first explain various Arab-style dress. Iztizada (2017) notes that the common dress among males in the Arabian peninsula is called *thawb* or *dishdasha* (A), an ankle-length garment usually with long sleeves, similar to a robe, kaftan, or tunic. In Indonesia, the popular term for this type of garment is *jubah*, although it is also applicable to women's dress of the same type. The headscarf (A. *ghuthrain*) is tied on the head with a black piece of cord (*aghal*) and is used with a skullcap called *thagiyah*, which keeps the hair in place.

Meanwhile, Arab women commonly wear *hijab* or headscarf. The word *hijab*, however, is also a general term for modest attires which include head covering. On the other hand, the term veil, which is often taken as the English rendering for *hijab*, includes different kinds of head gears which come in a multitude of shapes, lengths, and fabrics. The *shayla* is a rectangular long scarf wrapped around the head, pinned under the chin and gently rests on the shoulders; on the other hand, *al-amira*, is a two-piece veil made of a head cap and a tubular scarf worn on top of it, and is one of the most commonly used by the Muslim women in Southeast Asia. Another is the *niqab*, a face veil which is usually worn with a headscarf and tied behind the head, leaving a gap for the eyes only. It is most commonly used in Saudi Arabia.

In Indonesia the popular term for face-veil, which is somewhat similar to the term *niqab* as explained above, is the *cadar* (from Persian word, *chadar*) which refers specifically to a garment that covers a woman's face and head. In her studies on face-veiled women in Indonesia, Eva F. Nisa (2012a; 2012b) found that term *cadar* has been more commonly understood as the whole set of dress worn by a woman to cover her face, head (by thick and

somber *jilbab* or tight veil), and body (by *abaya/gamis/jubah*, a head-to-toe-wrap). The stricter wearers even include wearing socks for their feet and gloves for their hands.

Another type of Arab dress is *khimar*, a long veil which covers the head and the chest to the waist while the face is left uncovered. I have seen some Indonesian women in South Sulawesi also wear *burqa*, the Pakistan and Afghanistan style-dress that covers the whole of a woman's body (Iztizada 2017).

Arabic influence in dressing is clearly observed for both men and women. During my fieldwork in Wajo, I saw Arab-style dresses worn by men of different social and economic background. A male informant (around 72) showed me a picture of him during his wedding around the mid 1960s, where he had worn a complete Arab-style male dress, with black ankle-length garment and a black headscarf tied on his head with a black piece of cord. He told me that at the time, such a style-dress for the groom was considered the most respectable in the local Muslim community. Presently, it is more common for grooms to wear suits and ties, or local style dresses.



**Image 1:** Contemporary Bugis pilgrims just returning home from Mecca  
(Photo credit: shared internet image)

Another instance where males wear a complete Arab-style dress is when they have just returned from Mecca to perform the *haji*. The Bugis-Makassar Muslim community has made it a tradition to welcome, in a special gathering of fellow villagers and family members, those who have just completed their *haji* rituals and have arrived home safely. Such a gathering or ceremony is usually held in a local great mosque, attended by hundreds of local residents. The male *haji* pilgrims wear the Arab style-dress, symbolizing that they have transformed themselves, at least physically, into a true Muslim after accomplishing the last (of the five) personal Muslim obligations.

The dress is also worn by the graduates of the Qur'an memorization program (A. *Tahfidh al-Qur'an*) during their graduation ceremony. Pesantren As'adiyah has been, since its establishment, running a special program for the Muslims (mostly young) who want to memorize the whole (30) chapters of the Qur'an and become the *hafidh* (preserver of the Qur'an), a status that is valued and yields great respect from the Muslim community (Halim 2015). During their graduation ceremony normally attended by hundreds of people, the new graduates sit on stage wearing white ankle-length garment and a white headscarf with red grid lines tied on the head with a black piece of cord.

When I asked a graduate why he had worn such a style-dress, he points to its being a tradition since the program began in 1930. It is also considered by the director of the Qur'anic memorization program of As'adiyah as the most glorious style-dress to wear by a Muslim male. He also further explained that it is the same cloth worn by the people from where the Prophet Muhammad was born. Paying high respect to the Arab Muslim people during the early phase of Islamization in this region may be well understood if we read Van der Kroef's (1954: 256) observation with regard to the early presence of the Arabs in the archipelago:

[T]he Arabs, in general, were stricter in performing their religious duties and, because of this, in the view of the natives, they were superior in their knowledge of the Islamic religion. Furthermore an Arab Muslim also had a secure opinion in religious affairs. Such an attitude sometimes involved condescension toward the Islamic way of life of the natives.



**Image 2:** Graduates of Pesantren As'adiyah's Qur'anic memorization training program in Sengkang Wajo in their graduation ceremony in 2012  
(Photo by the author)

Since the early 1980s, many Bugis-Makassar women, as in most parts of Indonesia, seem to have begun wearing various styles of *hijab* (popularly known in Indonesia in another Arabic term, *jilbab*, which simply meant head covering). A female informant, 65, told me that before the 1980s, when Muslim women in South Sulawesi attended religious ceremonies, they usually just donned *kerudung*, a simple long semi-transparent headscarf made from sheer materials while the hair was still visible to others. As for the dress, they used a traditional blouse-dress called *kebaya*, usually worn with a sarong or batik *kain panjang* (long garment).<sup>5</sup> This trend to expose more Islamic symbolism in women's dressing was partly prompted by the growing transnational interactions with countries where face-veiling has a much longer history such as Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Egypt. This trend is also significantly influenced by the growing encounter of Indonesian Muslims with various Islamic political and theological movements and activism globally such as the Iranian Revolution (in 1979), Egypt's Muslim

<sup>5</sup> The name *kebaya* was probably derived from the Arabic word *abaya*, which simply means "clothing."

Brotherhood, the Indian Subcontinent-based Tablighi Jama'at, the Malaysian-based Darul Arqam, and the global Hizbut Tahrir political movement. As Fealy, Hooker, and White (2006: 41) observe, since the 1970s, such external influences, especially from the Middle East, have a more significant influence on Indonesian Muslims, making them even more complex and variegated to be merely categorized as either traditional and modern in their religious understanding.

Today almost all *hijab* styles mentioned earlier in this paper, such as *shayla*, *al-amira*, *niqab*, *khimar* and, albeit rarely seen, *burqa*, are also used by women in South Sulawesi, particularly in its capital city of Makassar. They may not be able to identify the original names for the type of *hijab* they are using, but most of those who wear these different types of *hijab* believe that covering the head is obligatory for Muslim women and therefore consider donning *hijab* (or *jilbab*) as part of their religious commitment or of practicing the “true” Islam (I. *Islam yang sebenarnya*). Nor do they realize that the different styles of *hijab* they wear are merely part of different cultural traditions in the Middle Eastern countries, including the Arabic.

One of the religious organizations that can be considered as having significantly influenced the widespread donning of a tighter Arab-style dress, particularly *niqab* or *cadar*, for Muslim women in contemporary South Sulawesi is the Makassar-based ultra-conservative (*salafi*) movement, Wahdah Islamiyah. In her study of the women's members of this organisation, Nisa (2012a) investigates how wearing *cadar* (face-veil) among these women has become part and parcel of their effort to become obedient and “true” Muslim women, as well as to keep their public surroundings more Islamic by presenting themselves as respectable women.

#### **IV. Arabic as a sacred religious language and text for local Muslims**

The significant influence of the Arab culture on the Bugis-Makassar community since the Islamization is also observable in language. Arabic, as mentioned earlier, is the language of the Qur'an and the

many basic rituals in Islam. For Muslims, Arabic is the most sacred language as well as the official language of global Islamic culture and civilization. This certainly ignores the fact that other languages such as Persian, Urdu, Turkish, Indonesian, and Malay are also spoken by hundred millions of Muslims around the world.

Writing about the 17th-century Makassar (in this discussion, specifically means the name of the united two local states of Gowa and Tallo in South Sulawesi), William Cummings (2001: 559) describes the crucial roles of Arabic texts in the spread, reception, and structure of Islam in early modern South Sulawesi, much more than the role of Islamic doctrines or beliefs. As Cummings (2001: 560) further contends, Islam in this region's particular period "was largely a matter of text." The Makassar people perceived "Islam as embodied in physical Arabic manuscripts as much or more than they saw it as a defined set of doctrines to which they must convert or as asset of practices that they must adopt" (Cummings 2001: 560). To give spiritual primacy to written texts among the Makassar people is certainly not a unique phenomenon (cf. Pelras 1979). Anthropologists have investigated that throughout Southeast Asia, words are viewed as potent tools and weapons, and the skill to make use of them is proof of status and prowess (cf. Hefner 1985; Bowen 1993; Kuipers 1990).

Most scholars (Noorduyn 1956; Pelras 2001; Reid 1995) studying the history of people's conversion to Islam in South Sulawesi focused on the fundamental process of transformation of religious beliefs and practices as well as its introduction as a new ideological basis for local political dynamics. Cummings (1991) calls our attention to the importance of cultural and social framework within which the Makassar people viewed Islamic writing as crucial. As Cummings (1991: 581) concludes:

Makassarese perceived "Islam" as something embodied in the physical Arabic manuscripts that traveled from the heartland of Islam to their distant island. For Makassarese, the Arabic script made Islam present: Islam *was* its language, spoken and written. Possession of Islamic texts and their power when voiced aloud in recitation and prayer were at the core of the spread of Islam to South Sulawesi. So

too their possession and power were at the core of the socio and political changes that followed the introduction of Islam in Makassar. This example suggests that we might better understand the spread of religious traditions by focusing on the sacred, authoritative languages that instantiate the religions they represent. Words and texts are not mere vehicles for ideas but forces in themselves. The histories of these words and how they were received has much to teach us about the culturally specific nature of religious change.

It is logical to understand that because the Muslim people in South Sulawesi, as most Muslims in other parts of world, view and respect Arabic language as the sacred language of Islam, they are also respectful to the people who are knowledgeable about Arabic language, whether they are Arab people or not. This is also related to political authority. Writing about Egypt, Timothy Mitchell (1991: 131) notes the close association between political authority and the authority of texts. The same case is seen in the expansion and dominion of the state of Gowa over Makassar in the 17th century, which coincided with the introduction of Arabic texts to Makassar, where “the establishment of Islamic textual authority corresponds in an uncanny way with Gowa’s establishment of its political authority” (Cummings 2001: 579). In other words, Islam, through its Arabic textual primacy played a crucial role in strengthening Gowa’s dominance within Makassar. “The presence of sacred, potent Arabic words contained in Islamic text offered Makassarrese material with which to represent and transform social and political relations by controlling and manipulating these texts” (Cummings 2001: 579). The impact of this 17th century perception of the embedded power of Arabic texts is still observable in this region, particularly within the process of Islamic education, as I shall discuss below.

In all traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia called *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), Arabic is instrumental in the entire process of learning about Islam and therefore must be taught as an important part of their curricula (Steenbrink 1986; Dhofier 1999). For religious and other purposes Islam introduced the Arabic alphabet without displacing the old. Describing the situation in Makassar in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Nicholas Gervaise (1701: 219) explained that the Makassar boys spent an hour in the morning and



the evening with the *ulama*, who taught them to explain the Qur'an, to read and to write in Arabic script.



**Image 3:** A graduation ceremony for children's completion of the Qur'an Recitation in Belawa, Wajo (1970s) (Photo credit: author's personal collection)

Steenbrink (2006:338) argues that Pesantren must have played an instrumental role in introducing many Arabic loanwords to vernacular languages as well as to Malay-Indonesian. Nikolas van Dam (2010) has conducted a careful research on the Arabic loanwords in Indonesian and concludes that the Arabic loanwords in Indonesian came not only directly from South Arabia or Hadramaut but also from Persia, India, and Sri Lanka. Certainly, besides from Arabic, loanwords in Bugis came also from other foreign languages such as Malay, Sanskrit, Persian, Javanese, Dutch, and Portuguese (cf. Matthes 1874).

In his research, Muhammad Haritsah (1978) listed more than 200 Arabic loanwords in Bugis language, most of them are classical and/or formal, instead of colloquial Arabic. This fact may indicate that most Arabic loanwords in Bugis were most likely introduced through Islamic education institutions such as *pesantren* or *madrasa*

where Arabic is taught in its classical form. It might also be spread by the *ulama* who preached Islam using the language of the Qur'an. These Arabic loanwords do not necessarily became part of the terms found in the Qur'an or those considered as religious terms or part of ritual instructions in Islam. For example, the name of places, times (such as the name of the months in Islamic lunar calendar), figures, events, and rituals (such as *zikkiri* and *doang* in Bugis for respectively *dhikr* or invocation and *du'a* or prayer in Arabic). In fact, the loanwords listed in Haritsah's (1974) research also included verbs, adverbs, and adjectives, which were given parallels in the old Bugis language. For example, an Arabic loanword like *babang* (A. *bab*, door) has the same meaning as *tange* in the original Bugis. Due to space limit, only a few other examples of Arabic loanwords in Bugis language are listed below (Haritsah 1978: 98-116):

Original Arabic words	Their adopted forms into Bugis	Meaning
<i>ab/abun</i>	<i>abba'/ambo'/ambe'</i>	father
<i>umm</i>	<i>emma'/ummi</i>	mother
<i>barakat</i>	<i>barakka'</i>	blessing
<i>tawbat</i>	<i>toba'</i>	to repent
<i>jinn</i>	<i>jing</i>	genie
<i>harf</i>	<i>hurupu'</i>	word
<i>hashl/hashil</i>	<i>hassele/wassele</i>	result
<i>dawat</i>	<i>dawa'</i>	ink
<i>ruku'</i>	<i>roko'</i>	to bow
<i>sabab</i>	<i>saba'</i>	cause
<i>syaythan</i>	<i>setang</i>	satan
<i>tala'</i>	<i>talle</i>	to appear
<i>'aql</i>	<i>akkaleng</i>	intellect, reason
<i>'adil</i>	<i>adele</i>	just, justice
<i>fikr</i>	<i>pikkiri</i>	thought
<i>fahm</i>	<i>pahang</i>	to understand
<i>qirtas</i>	<i>karetasa</i>	piece of paper
<i>kitab</i>	<i>kitta'</i>	book
<i>mata/mawt</i>	<i>mate</i>	to die/dead
<i>niyat</i>	<i>niya'</i>	intention
<i>wakil</i>	<i>wakkele'</i>	vice/delegate
<i>warits</i>	<i>warisi'</i>	inheritance
<i>yaqin</i>	<i>yaking</i>	believe/sure

In Pesantren As'adiyah in Sengkang as well other *pesantren* established later by the first direct students of Muhammad As'ad, Arabic is taught in all aspects of language: reading, listening, writing, speaking, and literary expressions. For a long time before the widespread of digital media since the 1990s, when everyone has had access to the sources of knowledge and information available online, a person could not claim him/herself to have an authority in religious knowledge unless he/she has mastered all aspects of Arabic language (grammar, syntax, rhetoric etc.), particularly in order to have full access to the classical Islamic books written in Arabic. To seriously learn about and pursue high competence in Arabic language, a serious student should spend several years studying in a *pesantren* (Halim 2015).



**Image 4:** An ulama teaching an Islamic Arabic textbook using a learning circle system in a pesantren in Wajo, South Sulawesi in 2012 (Photo by the author)

The combination of Arabic words have been common to be used in the names of the Bugis, male or female, although they have been adapted to Bugis accent, dialect, and pronunciation. In terms of Arabic loanwords used in naming people, the Bugis people adopted the system that pronunciation follows spelling. For example, Muhammade instead of Muhammad. There are even more variations of the names derived from the Prophet Muhammad's

name, for example, Muhammadong, Muhamma', Mamma, Mahmudong, Hammade, Hemma, Hemmu, Made, and Madong. Other popular Arabic names among the Bugis people after the Islamization are derived from God's many attributes by adding before each of the attribute the word '*abd* or '*abdul* (meaning, the servant of). For example, the name 'Abdul Rahman (servant of the Most Gracious), 'Abdul Rahim (servant of the Most Merciful) and 'Abdul 'Aziz (servant of the Most Powerful) will become, respectively in Bugis dialect, Beddu Amang or Ramang or Remmang, Beddu Rahing, and Beddu Asise or Sise.

Other sources of inspiration for naming in Arabic in Bugis society includes the names of the Prophet's companions, the most respected religious scholars in Islamic history, and the great *ulama* in Bugis society itself. For the latter case, Muhammad As'ad (usually pronounced in Bugis as Muhamma' Sade'), the name of the founder of Pesantren As'adiyah, is among the most popular names among the Bugis people in Wajo and the surrounding areas. Here, particularly during the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, As'ad was acknowledged as the most influential *ulama*. My informant, Muhammad As'ad (74) told me that in his primary school in Belawa, a sub-district in Wajo, there was always one or more students in each classroom whose name was Muhammad As'ad. As for women, among the most popular names were Aisha, Khadija, Hafsa (names of the Prophet Muhammad's wives), Fatima (the Prophet's youngest daughter), Amina (the Prophet's mother), Maria (Jesus' mother), Asia (the Prophet Moses' mother). Certainly, the spelling or pronunciation of those Arabic names would have to be significantly adapted into Bugis way of pronouncing Arabic personal names. Thus, the name Fatima, for example, may become Patima, Patimang, Timang, and I Pati, while Maria becomes Mariang, Mareyyang, and I Mari'.

One important contribution of Islam to the development of literacy in the archipelago was that its spread was accompanied with a version of Arabic script which, according to Reid (1988: 224) and Dam (2010: 240), had been adapted from Persian. As Reid (1988: 224) notes, Malay language began to be expressed in the Arabic alphabet at least by the 14th century.

As the preeminent language of Islam in the region, Malay subsequently became inseparable from the Arabic script, and they spread together into many parts of the Malay Peninsula, Borneo, and the eastern islands where there is little prior evidence of popular writing systems (Reid 1988: 224).

Unlike Malay and other vernacular languages in the archipelago which used Arabic script to write texts for religious purposes, according to Reid (1988: 224), Javanese as well as Bugis and Makassar languages had a very well established writing system in such a way that it did not “give way to Arabic.” Nevertheless, the existing of short and long Arabic expressions or quotations in many old Bugis-Makassar manuscripts written in a traditional or pre-Islamic script called *lontaraq* is very telling (see Paeni *at al.* 2003). It shows how important it was (and still is) the use of Arabic script to express religious messages, be they part of the verses of the Qur’an, the Prophetic tradition or the sayings of ulama.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to cover all aspects of the South Sulawesi culture in which the significant influence of the Arab culture can be observed. However, based on my field notes, I should also mention, albeit briefly, the influence of Arab culture on the personal lives of the Bugis community. For example, many Muslim families, especially those with a *pesantren* education background, taught their children to call their father *abba* or *aby* (A. ‘*ab* = father, ‘*aby* = my father) and mother *ummi* (A. ‘*um* - mother, ‘*ummy* = my mother). Among close friends, many Indonesians call each other *akhi* (A. literally means my brother), or *ikhwan* (A. for plural, means ‘brothers’) and *ukhti* (A. ‘my sister’) or *akhwat* (plural, ‘sisters’). Other signs of Arabic influence include signatures using Arabic script instead of Indonesian, the performance of Arabic music whose instruments include, but not limited to, a small drum (locally called *rebana* [I] or *rabbana* [B]) and a short-necked lute called *gambus* (I.A.) or *gambusu* (B).

Certainly the influence of Arab cuisine culture on the types of cuisine commonly enjoyed by the people in South Sulawesi cannot be underestimated. But again, it is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate those cultural aspects here. Another important issue to explore with regard to the influence of Arab culture in contemporary

Indonesia is the “new wave” of transnational Islamic ideology and movement from the Middle East countries that have reached the Southeast Asia Muslim communities since the early 1980s (Bubalo and Fealy 2005). This trend to adopt transnational ideologies and movements among some Muslim groups in Indonesia has facilitated the growing interest in once again not only the use of Arabic language, Arab dress-style, cuisine and manners but also in the way people understand Islamic texts which employs a more scriptural, radical, and political approach (Fealy 2006; Ward 2008).

On the other hand, at least since 2015, certain Muslim groups, especially those associated with the Nahdhatul Ulama (NU), the traditionalist Muslim organization, show their opposition to the Muslim groups who endeavor to make Islam in Indonesia to be culturally more identical with Arab-style Islam. The former group promotes instead the concept of “*Islam Nusantara*” (“Archipelagic Islam” or “Islam of the archipelago”) and it became the major theme of the Nahdlatul Ulama's congress in 2015. The NU proposes the concept of *Islam Nusantara* as an Islamic interpretation and action that take into account distinctive Indonesian traditions, cultures, and histories. The “Islam Nusantara” interpretation and action may not be always necessarily identical with or similar in legal and cultural matters to those of the other parts of the Muslim world, such as the Arab, African, Chinese, Indian, Iranian, and Turkish types of Islam (Sahal and Aziz 2015).

## V. Conclusion

The interaction between the people in South Sulawesi with the people from distant places like the Arabs has had a long and complex history. Even before the “structural” conversion of the local people and their kings to Islam, the Arab people had frequently visited many parts of South Sulawesi. The first purpose was probably to trade but later, they also began to preach Islam. As I have discussed in the previous sections, there are a number of ways in which some elements of the Arab culture began to influence the culture of the indigenous people in this region. At first, it was just

an encounter between two foreign groups of people of different cultures. Later, what went on was the adaption and eventually the integration of certain elements of the Arab culture into the Bugis-Makassar culture, two major ethnic groups inhabiting the central and southern peninsula of the island of Sulawesi.

Interestingly, unlike the islands of Sumatera and Java, the influence of the long-established Indian religious traditions, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism, on the island of Sulawesi was not a major contributory factor that shaped the religious beliefs and practices of people in the region. Before the coming of Islam, the local people only believed in animism and dynamism, which was common among Austronesian peoples. When Islam was accepted as the religion of the Bugis-Makassar states since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it brought a dramatic change in the culture of these two ethnic groups. Following Islamization, there was a remarkable flow of ideas and practices from the Arabia—which was considered to be the source of global, authentic Islam—in the different localities in the archipelago.

The *hajj* pilgrims, Arab traders, and Islamic educational institutions such as *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) acted as crucial platforms for the adaption, adaptation, or even integration of cultural values and practices from the Middle East into the vernacular or indigenous customs, beliefs, and practices. From one perspective, this may be seen as the encounter between the “global” Islam from its heartland in the Arabic and the “local” Islam in its periphery. However, the products of such adoption or integration eventually constituted what the local community accepted, consciously or otherwise, as their valuable cultural and religious characteristics. This can be seen in their language, manner of dressing, names, practices, and cuisine which embody significant Arabic influence. Certainly, this dynamic process of adaptation and integration or enculturation of Islamic global culture with the local culture and belief is not typical of South Sulawesi because the same process can be found elsewhere in the archipelago. What is worth noting is that what we might have thought to be local at some point might have been just the final product of a long process of adaption and integration with the global culture.

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