

**A STUDY ON THE ACCULTURATION OF  
ISLAM AND LOCAL CULTURE**  
*Bungamale* as a Local Culture of South Sulawesi

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*Abstract*

God created the nature in a variety of styles and shapes. Moreover, God created man with a diversity of ethnics, cultures, religions, and even the so-called multicultural. Islam does not perceive plurality as a sort of split potentially leading to disaster that might bring down the foundations of unity in human life. In fact, plurality makes human life dynamic and not stagnant, as it brings about competitions between each party in order to perform the best. Islam in Indonesia is considered more tolerant upon culture, as indicated by its accommodating attitude towards the local culture. This attitude reflects the willingness of Indonesia Muslims to absorb the local culture and to adjust it to the teachings of Islam. Culture is seen as an inherent part of society's life, hence it is not possible for a doctrine that brings a breath of *rahmatan li al-'alamîn* (a blessing to the universe) to suppress something that has become part of the society as long as the subject culture does not contradict the teachings of Islam. Among the local religious cultures in South Sulawesi is the tradition of "Bungamale", which is serving boiled chicken eggs that have been decorated with certain ornaments, on every celebration of the birth day of the prophet Muhammad.

**Keywords:** Acculturation, Local Culture, *Bungamale*, *Maulu*

## Introduction

The “Bungamale” tradition has been passed on from generation to generation by the people of South Sulawesi and they bring along this tradition wherever they go. Based on the above, a research question pertaining to the subject matter to be discussed is formulated: “In what way is Islam acculturated so as not to clash with local culture that has become part of people's lives”? Islam in Indonesia is considered to be more tolerant of culture, as indicated by its accommodating attitude towards the local culture. This attitude reflects the willingness of Indonesian Muslims to absorb the local culture and to adjust it to suit the teachings of Islam. A culture is seen as an inherent part of the society's life, hence it not possible for a doctrine that brings a breath of *rahmatan li al-‘alamìn* to suppress something that has become part of a society's culture as long as it does not contradict the teachings of Islam. Among the local religious cultures in South Sulawesi is the “Bungamale,” which is a dish made up of boiled chicken eggs decorated in such a way and is served in every celebration of the Prophet's birth day (*Maulid*). The tradition of Bungamale has been passed on from generation to generation by the people of South Sulawesi, and they bring along this tradition wherever they reside.

A traditional ceremony is an integral part of a community's culture, which serves as a reinforcement of norms and cultural values that have been valid for generations. These norms and cultural values are presented with symbolic expression in the form of ceremonies performed respectfully by the society practicing it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sugira wahid, *Manausia Makassar*, (I; Makassar: Refleksi, 2007), p. 35.

A point of fact that cannot be denied is that the territory of the Republic of Indonesia consists of a series of islands inhabited by manifold ethnicities, religions, and customs, each of which has a culture and a wide choice of customs symbolizing their plurality.

South Sulawesi as a province in the eastern part of Indonesia, is very rich with customs that can be categorized as local culture, customs where it goes from generation to generation, even Bugis Makassar has its own script that is used to reveal the literary works of high quality.

As a province located in the eastern part of Indonesia, South Sulawesi is very rich with customs that can be categorized as a local culture. The culture has applied throughout history and has been hereditary from generation to generation. The community of Bugis Makassar even has its own script that has been used in composing and revealing literary works of high quality.

### **The Meaning of Islamic Acculturation and Local Culture**

Acculturation is a process of integrating two or more cultures that meet and affect each other, or the process of the occurrence of foreign cultural influences upon a society, wherein some selectively absorb a little or much of the foreign cultural elements.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Islamic acculturation means the mixture of the Islamic values with a local culture to the extent that, whether realized or not, the local culture appears as if it is a part of the Islamic teachings. This is what happened in many parts of Indonesia wherein a great number of Muslim populations reside.

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<sup>2</sup>Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, (Cet. II; Jakarta :Balai pustaka, 199), p. 18.

According Masnun Tahir,<sup>3</sup> the meet up of Islam and the local treasures makes Islam so multifaceted. When Islam encounters a variant of the local cultures, then what immediately takes place is a multifarious process of symbiosis that enriches one another. Hence there come into sight different variants of Islam: Bugis Islam, Java Islam, Sasak Islam, Malay Islam, Madura Islam, Coastal Islam, Poliwali Islam, Ambon Islam, Padang Islam, Banjar Islam, Bima Islam, and so forth. Such features well reflect how Islam always adds in a local color as it approaches a community.

When speaking of acculturation, one cannot avoid talking about communication between cultures, wherein in discussions about how human beings conduct communication across social communities take place. Such is so because the focus of communication and cultural studies comprises exploration of meaning, patterns of actions, as well as of how the meaning and patterns are articulated in a social group, ethnic group, political group, educational process, even a technological environment that involves human interaction.

According to Charley H. Dood, as quoted by Aloliliweri, “Communication between cultures includes communication that involves participants representing personal, interpersonal, or groups, with an emphasis on differences in cultural backgrounds that affect the communication behavior of the participants.”<sup>4</sup>

In a global world scope, the meeting between Islam and the local culture together with the traditions accompanying it makes Islam in Indonesia has many faces. Differences in perspective of and responses to the presence of Islam in Indonesia can be understood from the Islamic expression reflected in people’s lives, be it in the form of thoughts, rituals, or Muslim organizations. The great number of Islamic

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<sup>3</sup>Alolewori, *Makna Budaya Dalam Komunikasi Antar Budaya* (Cet. II; Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2007), p. 12.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*,

organizations such as NU, Muhammadiyah, Persis, FPI, HTI and many others that exist in Indonesia makes an evidence of the plurality of the aforementioned Islamic expressions.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, there are many variants of Indonesia itself. The variants were influenced by the long process of Islamic meetings with the very heterogeneous local culture. According to many circles, including that of the orientalist's, Islam in Java is a result of an integration with the local Javanese religion, Hinduism, and Buddhism that have been living together and result in the emergence of the different facets of Islam.<sup>6</sup>

Islam entered into different regions in Indonesia through peaceful missionary preaching, not through oppositions against local cultures and customs, and it colored the local traditions with the spirit of Islam. The societies even develop their own methods in preserving the harmony. They well understand that the cultures and traditions will continue to be carried on without offending the spirit of Islam, whereas Islam will be performed while maintaining the harmony of the local traditions.

As is well known, the main sources of the Islamic teachings are the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. Throughout the course of its history, the local cultures have also been taking part in shaping the cultural patterns of Islam. Historical facts have shown that Islam as exemplified by the Prophet is a system of a holistic unity between the aspects of faith (*iman*), Islamic formal rules, and of spiritual morality (*ibsan*).

After the Prophet passed away, although there were social and political turmoil for a certain period, the charm of

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<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*,

<sup>6</sup>Situs Akulturasi Islam dan Budaya Lokal, M. Muzakki Kholil (Zakky @sidogiri.net, 31 July 2005). Retrieved in Februari 2012.

the Qur'an and the Sunnah continued to be strong enough to pull together the soul of their adherents, especially of the great companions of the prophet that the local culture did not have a significant impact on the culture of Islam. It can be said that the original Islam had been performed by the Prophet Muhammad and was carried on by the *Khulafa al-Rasyidin*, that is, in the period in which Madinah al-Munawarah still functioned as the center of the *Imamate* (Islamic Leadership). The practice of Islam in this period was quite simple but the faith (*taubid*) was very firm and had not been affected by other civilizations. Instead, it significantly affected the culture of the local Arab. Although the early period of the Islamic culture was considered relatively uncomplicated, and the Qur'an as well as the Sunnah of the Prophet served as the basic values, in fact rational values are also included thereby.

### **Acculturation of Islam with Local Culture Values**

The arrival of Islam in Indonesia does not instantaneously change the structure of the trust and the social structure of society. According to Irwan Abdullah, "The process of social transformation that occurred in the history of human life, in terms of religious practices, local ritual practices, and in how a community that is trying to build a strategy to survive in the global shadow and challenges encounter barriers. Certainly there is no society that develops relationship with outside community is able to retain all its old habits without being affected by any outside influence at all."<sup>7</sup> Likewise, to some extent incoming culture will normally go through a process of acculturations with the pre-existing culture.

As a universal religion transcending the boundaries of space and time, Islam is at all times in chance of encountering different local traditions. When Islam meet with the local culture, the face of Islam in different places becomes diverse. In response to this, there are two aspects that need to be realized:

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<sup>7</sup> Irawan Abdullah et.al (ed), *Agama dan Kearifan Lokal dalam Tantangan Global*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2008), p. 1.

First, Islam was actually born as a local product, which then expanded and transcended to become universal. In Arabian context, Islam as a local product means Islam that was born in Arab, precisely in the region of Hijaz. Provided with the situation of the Arabs at that time, Islam was intended to serve as a response or, more precisely, answers to the problems developed in that region. Arabic Islam continued to grow when meeting with the cultures and civilizations of Persia and Greek. It follows that Islam underwent a process of cultural as well as civilization dynamics. Secondly, although it is firmly believed that Islam is the revelation of God with its universal and supernatural nature, it is normally perceived in accordance with the experience, predicament, capacity, diversity, and intellectual as well as cultural system of its adherents in their respective communities<sup>8</sup>

Local cultures are normally so blended with public life, to the extent that the advance of civilization and modern life are not capable to entirely wipe out local cultures. Instead, local cultures can even find ways to adapt to the progress of time in order to preserve their existence in the society. A research conducted by Nur Syam on fishing communities on the north coast of Java, as quoted by Ahidul Asror<sup>9</sup> in Istiqra wherein he classifies the types of research on the relation between Islam and the local culture into two categories: the type of research that explores the patterns of syncretism Islam and that of acculturative Islam. The first type assumes Islam as a religion that is incapable of touching the depths of the local

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<sup>8</sup>Masnun Tahir, *op.cit.*, p. 175-176.

<sup>9</sup>Departemen Agama RI, Ditjen Pendidikan Islam Direktorat Pendidikan Tinggi Islam, *Ritual Islam Tradisional Rekonstruksi Nilai Lokal dan Proses Pembentukannya*(Jurnal Penelitian Islam Indonesia “Istiqra “ Vol. 06. No. 01, 2007), p. 216.

culture, whereas the second type views Islam to be comprising the capacity of making adjustment to go along with the local culture. In his writings, Nur Syam offers a new concept identified with the term collaborative Islam, which accommodate the reality of diversity by adopting local elements that are not contradictory to Islam and strengthening Islamic teachings through a process of continuous transformation.

A traditional ceremony is an integral portion of the community's culture, as it serves as reinforcement for the norms and cultural values that have been applied in the society from generation to generation. The norms and cultural values are presented symbolically in the form of a ceremony conducted with full of wisdom by its supporting community. The virtues contained in the traditional ceremony performed fasten people's solidarity as they feel the sense of having a common interest. The ceremony, which is full of meaningful symbols, serves as more friendly tools for connection and communication among the society members.

Indonesian people who were widely known to be identical with tolerance, in reality has gradually begun to grind down at the practice level due to the existence of certain circles of exclusivity in carrying out religious life. Such communities tend to be rigid as well as emotional and are not prepared to accept diversity, including cultural diversity. Circumstances that are not listed in their doctrines are considered as acts of heresy (*bid'ah*), which must be abandoned and avoided, or even be fought.

But actually the case is that the acculturation of Islam with the local culture frequently occurs the majority of Indonesian communities, which are naturally multicultural. In this manner, components of the local culture that have been attached to the local community appear as if they are parts of the teachings of Islam to the community following this religion. An example of this sort of acculturation is striking of a huge drum placed in the mosque upon the entry time of the five obligatory prayers, or upon other religious activities such as before the feast of *'ied al-Fitr* and *'ied al-adha*...

In the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> year of *Hijriah*, Islam necessitated the conduction of the call to prayer (*adzan*) to notify the entering to the time of the five daily obligatory prayers. Before that, many of the companions suggested to use, among others, bell, trumpet, or even fire. The Prophet turned down all of those proposals, as such methods are customarily applied by Christians and Jews.

In the context of Indonesia, there is something unique about the call to fulfill the obligation of prayers. Indonesian Muslims do not only perform the call to prayer (*adzan*), but also strike the drum prior to the call. There has been no clear trace concerning the origination of the application of drum in the midst of the Indonesian Muslim community and of how it developed to be a part of the Islamic symbols (*syi'ar*). In one of his marginal note, Gunawan Muhammad, as quoted by M. Muzakki Khalil, suggests that the drum originally comes from China. He obtains this information from an American professor of ethnomusicology, Charles Capwell. He furthermore argues that in the era of Hindu and Buddhism this instrument was never mentioned. It is possible that not until the coming of Zheng He, along with his army, as a messenger of Emperor Ming to Java that the instrument was brought in. He himself introduced the drum when he signaled a call to march to his army.<sup>10</sup>

Regardless of whether or not the source is valid, in essence the drum is a local culture that has turned into an Islamic culture. This is the point where mutual acculturation between Islam and the local culture took place. The possibility of such mutual acculturation is recognized in a principle rule in the science of basic provisions *Usul al-Fiqh*, that is: "Tradition is Rule" (*al-'Adab Mubakkamah*), or more specifically "A tradition is a rule of the Islamic law" (*al-'Adab mubakkamah shari'a*), which means that the customs and habits of a society, that is,

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<sup>10</sup>Situs Akulturasi Islam dan Budaya Lokal, M. Muzakki Kholil (Zakky @sidogiri.net, 31 July 2005). Retrieved in February 2012.

the local traditions, make sources of law in Islam.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, in the science of *Usul Fiqh* the local cultures in the form of customs are called *'urf* (etymologically derived from the same root of *ma'ruf*, which means 'to be recognized'). This is because a society normally contains the elements of right and wrong at the same time, and therefore Muslims are required to observe critically. The attitude of merely justifying is not approved, as the principle of Islam itself is firmly in opposition to traditionalism.<sup>12</sup> In this regard, it is necessary to meditate upon God's command in the Qur'an about the argument frequently asked by unbelievers concerning the truth, (al-Zukhruf / 43: 23-24.)

Translation:

23. And thus, We did not send before you any warner in a town, but those who led easy lives in it said: Surely we found our fathers on a course, and surely we are followers of their footsteps. 24. (The warner) said: What! Even if I bring you to a better guide than that on which you found your fathers? They said: Surely we are unbelievers in that with which you are sent.<sup>13</sup>

The words of God above confirm that Islam is opposed to traditionalism, that is, the attitude of perceiving that ancestral traditions are always better and therefore they should be maintained and followed. This principle should be consulted to the basic teaching that requires us to always have critical

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<sup>11</sup>Nurcholish Madjid, "Islam Doktrin dan Perdaban Sebuah Telaah Kritis tentang Masalah Keimanan, Kemanausiaan, dan Kemodrenan, (Jakarta: Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina, 2000), p. 550.

<sup>12</sup>Iihat *Ibid.*, p. 552.

<sup>13</sup>Departemen Agama RI., *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahnya* (Semarang: PT. Karya Toha Putra, 2002), p. 704-705.

attitudes. This is in accordance with the words of God in Q.S. al-Isra' / 17: 36.

Translation :

And follow not that of which you have not the knowledge; surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that.<sup>14</sup>

Hence the presence of Islam has always reformed a society or brought about social transformation from the period of Ignorance (*Jahiliyah*) towards a better future. However, that does not mean Islam is disruptive or always deletes all customs or traditions with fundamentalism.<sup>15</sup> Islam is open to legalize customs or traditions living in a society as long as they are not contradictive with the rules of the Islamic law (*shari'ah*). Drum is included in such circumstance.

Referring to the observations conducted by Ibn Khalil, there are at least two factors contributing to be the reason why the drum is tolerated by Muslim scholars to be applied among the cultures and symbols of Indonesian Islam. First, the drum had been in the culture of Hinduism deeply rooted in the community long before the arrival of Islam in Indonesia. If the drum were instantaneously taken out from the society, it would have been quite difficult to accept Islam, as Islam would come into sight as an alien practice to the existing society. Secondly, that the drum, just like the case of *adzan*, only serves as a mediator (*wasilah*) in carrying out the prayer of worship. Put in other words, striking drum is not part of the worship.

However, this does not mean all traditions within the community can be justified by religion. An *apriori* attitude towards tradition by justifying and accepting it uncritically and unselectively could lead to losing of religious celestial values. In

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<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 389.

<sup>15</sup>See, Nurcholish Madjid, *op.cit.*, p. 550.

this light, Nurcholish Madjid emphasizes on the difference between tradition and traditonality:

A tradition means a custom, which does not necessarily contain entirely good elements, hence one should look critically and analyze in order to select valuable portions to preserve and to follow. While traditionalist is definitely negative, as it is an exclusive viewpoint as a result of a total absolutization of tradition, without any chance for critical judgment to separate the positive from the negative portions<sup>16</sup>

Almost in similar tone to that of Nurcholish Madjid, K.H. Ahmad Siddiq (Rais Aam NU, 1984) argues that Islam has three principles to hold firmly in addressing the traditions of the past. First, being accommodative. Meaning, Islam can accept local cultures. Second, being selective. Meaning, the traditions or the local cultures are examined in advance so as not to conflict with the Islamic law. Third, being proportional. That is, the implementation of activities related to local cultures is compatible to their acknowledgement.<sup>17</sup>

If we look at the context of the past, drum was tolerated to be part of Islam because the drum used for reminding Muslims of prayer time encloses positive values. Moreover, the advancement of information and communication technology at that time was not as sophisticated as it is today. With the present advancements of communication and technology, notice of the entry of the prayer time using a systematic megaphone device such as microphone can reach out more significantly than using drum however large that drum is. Besides, with the advancement of the mass media technologies such as radio and television, the

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<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 553.

<sup>17</sup>Situs Akulturasi Islam dan Budaya Lokal, M. Muzakki Kholil (Zakky @sidogiri.net, 31 July 2005). Retrieved in February 2012.

Government has programmed to broadcast the *adzan* at every prayer time, especially those of dusk (*magrib*) and dawn (*subuh*) prayers. As for each of the other three prayer times there is always a display on TV to remind: It is time for evening (*isyah*) prayer, noon (*dzuhur*) prayer, or afternoon (*ashr*) prayer.

Accordingly, we need to reanalyze with the purpose of placing drum proportionally as a local culture, which was formerly acculturated with Indonesian Islam. Thus with the advance of science as well as communication and information technology, the time has come for putting aside the usage of drum in reminding Muslims about the coming of prayer times and replace it with microphone, which can produce much louder sound than that of the drum. Moreover, drum is also often used by the society for unethical matters.

On the other hand, as a consequence of social reality in a given society, the form of ritual traditions, which up to now have been survived for generations, will as well experience a reformation when its time has come. The changes take the form of symbols in certain rituals in a particular community, such as those to be found in the ritual of celebrating the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, which is popular with the term *mauludan*. In earlier time, certain communities applied the scent from the smoke of burned incense wood to symbolize the presence of the Prophet. At any particular time in the future, however, there is chance that people will replace the incense wood with modern perfume.

Additionally, Nurcholish Madjid<sup>18</sup> further explained that the influence of local cultural environment on religious expressions can be found much more in practical and concrete matters. In our country and culture, sarongs are clear examples to point to. There is no universality in *sarong* clothing, but in terms of the local culture it has become a symbol of Islam. In a wider scope, with a more profound influence, this aspect of cultural influence is manifested in the form of Arabic culture, so intense that Muslims are incapable to distinguish between

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<sup>18</sup>Lihat, Nurcholish Madjid, *op.cit.*, p. 546-547.

the real universal Islamic and local Arabic components. However, although in practice there will always be difficulties in identifying which ones are of “Islam” and which ones are of “Arab” with the result that the matter becomes controversial, a close look can show clearly that there is a difference between the two. Correspondingly, what everyone agrees upon is that *sarong* contains local instrumental values in its outward material appearance as a traditional outfit itself. This is so because elsewhere the universal Islamic value of covering the body according to the rule of Islamic law are carried out in different ways: by *gamis* (robe) in Arab, *sirwal* in India, and *pantolan* (pants) in Western countries or other places that have been more or less Westernized.

### **Acculturation of Islam and the local culture in South Sulawesi**

Since the ancient time, the culture of South Sulawesi has been recorded in the ancient literature of Bugis Makassar people called “*Lontara*.” In this *Lontara* there are teachings that tell about the origins of human’s existence, the kingdoms; the rules of human life, and so forth. Nevertheless, detailed explanations about the situation of the society before the arrival of Islam are very little. According Mattulada in Abd.Kadir Ahmad,<sup>19</sup> the overall of South Sulawesi society is quite firm in preserving their existing custom, especially in terms of social ranks. This solid social classification becomes a characteristic of the South Sulawesi public.

Almost all of human’s social communities living in this world receive their cultural heritage from their ancestry. This cultural inheritance usually take the form of ideas, thoughts, or

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<sup>19</sup>Abd. Kadir Ahmad (Ed), *Masuknya Islam di Sulawesi Selatan & Sulawesi Tenggara*, (Makassar: Balai Penelitian dan Pengembangan Agama Departemen Agama, 2004), p. 15.

noble values and cultural objects.<sup>20</sup> A custom is a reflection of the personality of a nation as well as a manifestation of the soul of the nation over the centuries. Therefore, every nation in the world has its own customs which are different from one another. This diversity is what makes custom is said to be the crucial aspect that gives an identity to a nation.

Indonesia consists of a series of clusters of islands inhabited by manifold tribes whose culture, customs of many kind and different from one another. On top of that difference is an asset that must be protected, nurtured, and developed into a solid potency.

As we know that the population of South Sulawesi still uses their mother tongue, which includes different ethnic languages, extensively in everyday life. These languages comprise Bugis, Makassar, Luwu and Toraja, each of which has various dialects.<sup>21</sup> The variety of languages used shows that even in the context of South Sulawesi region there exist so many different cultures, customs and civilizations, not to mention if we look more broadly in the context of the entire Indonesian archipelago. Therefore, it is undeniable that every nation, state, region, and ethnic has its own local custom and culture which is different from one another.

To build and foster a sense of unity between ethnic groups in a nation, it is necessary to know each other in all aspects of culture in order to develop mutual respect in terms of attitude, outlook, and behavior ... Yet the uniqueness existing in the life of every ethnic needs to be explored and introduced.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Shaf Muhtamar, *Masa Depan Warisan Luhur Kebudayaan Sulsel*(Makassar: Refleksi, 2007), p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Sugira Wahid, *Manusia Makassar*, ( Makassar: Refleksi, 2007), p. viii.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid*

Speaking of acculturation of Islam and the local culture in South Sulawesi (Bugis Makassar), it cannot be separated from the first method of introducing Islam performed by the *muballigh* (Muslim missionary preacher). Research findings indicate that political aspect plays a very important role in the process of spreading out Islam in South-Sulawesi. Acceptance of Islam by the kings paved the ways for their societies to convert or to leave their old belief and follow the teachings embraced by their kings. All the kings pronounced Islam as the religion of the country. An instance of this is such as Sultan Alauddin, who accepted Islam in 1605 AD and two years later declared it to be the official religion of the kingdom and that the entire community should follow this new religion.<sup>23</sup> From this point, there emerged two modes of acceptance:

Acceptance of Islam from “above” by decree of the king, accelerated the widespread of Islam, but the Islamic nuance of the society was dominantly of formality, wherein practices conducted in pre-Islam era continued to take place even though they realized that the practices were not comprised in the teachings of Islam. And conversely, the acceptance of Islam from the “bottom” usually showed a society following the religion in a syncretic pattern.

This could happen due to the accommodating power of Islam in accepting traditional elements that integration between the teachings of Islam and old traditions occurred. In this pattern the society considers the elements of tradition is also part of religion.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Abd. Kadir Ahmad (Ed), *Masuknya Islam di Sulawesi Selatan & Sulawesi Tenggara*, (Makassar: Balai Penelitian dan Pengembangan Agama Dep. Agama RI, 2004), p. 54.

<sup>24</sup>See *ibid*

Islam was introduced to the Bugis Makassar society by stepping through the path of the existing traditions and culture. Lawful and unlawful acts remained preached but not to shake the foundations of society. Missionary preachers (*da'i*) gained protection from the kings but on the other hand they were required to avoid the occurrence of clash between the tradition and religion that could interfere the social system. Such was the method adopted by the missionary preachers, especially the three scholars (Datuk) from Sumatra, when facing the Bugis Makassar society. They were very cautious in facing the subjects of their preaching.

When there was a tradition or social institutions that are contrary to Islam, they did not tear it down at once. Rather, they wisely seek positive replacements, such as “*sikkirijuma*” (Friday *zikir*) every Friday night in the palace was adopted as a substitute for “*nynyian bisu*” (a ritual performed by a tans gender who took care of the *arajang* in the palace), which was performed once a week in pre-Islamic period and was meant to worship sacred tools preserved by the kingdom.<sup>25</sup>

Tradition or custom is so essential in the life of the society in South Sulawesi that in the early stage of the introduction of Islam, “more precisely on Friday 19 of Rajab 1016 AH /10 Novembre 1607 M, there was an event of signing a Charter between indigenous tradition and Islam, wherein the king and the members of indigenous tradition were represented by the King of Gowa - Tallo Sultan Alauddin and Sultan Awwal al-Islam on the one hand, and Datuk Ribandang represented Islam on the other.”<sup>26</sup>

Local culture is so deeply penetrated into the life of the society, to the extent that the advance of civilization and modern life are not capable to entirely wipe out local cultures. Instead, local cultures can even find ways to adapt to the

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<sup>25</sup>Sugira Wahid, *op.cit.* p. 60.

<sup>26</sup>For the precise formulation of the decree, see *ibid.*, p. 61.

progress of time in order to preserve their existence in the society.

A traditional ceremony is an integral portion of the community's culture, as it serves as reinforcement for the norms and cultural values that have been applied in the society from generation to generation. The norms and cultural values are presented symbolically in the form of a ceremony conducted with full of wisdom by its supporting community. The virtues contained in the traditional ceremony performed fasten people's solidarity as they feel the sense of having a common interest. The ceremony, which is full of meaningful symbols, serves as more friendly tools for connection and communication among the society members. Among the local cultures in South Sulawesi that have been acculturated with Islam is "Bungamale"

According Sugira Wahid, "value can be regarded as the result of an assessment / judgment of 'good or bad' on something that is then used as the basic reason for doing or not doing something. Something is said to have a value when it is useful or true (has truth value), it has the value of beauty (aesthetics), and religious values"<sup>27</sup>

Subsequently, something valuable does not only comprise tangible material objects, but also something that is non-material or abstract. To some extent abstract subjects are much more valuable to human beings compared to material objects.

Values are formed on the basis of creativity, taste, intention, and beliefs of a person or group of society. Theoretically the formation of value is through a certain process and on the basis of awareness and confidence.

The virtues contained in a traditional ceremony bind the feeling of solidarity in a society who feels they share interest. The ceremony, which is full of meaningful symbols serve as friendlier connection and communication tools among

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<sup>27</sup>See *Ibid.*, p.44.

the member of the society. Among the local culture of South Sulawesi that has been acculturated with Islam is “Bungamale”

In Muslim lunar calendar there is a month called Rabi’ul Awwal, which is better known as “*Ulung Maulu*” in the society of South Sulawesi. This month is considered important for the Muslim community as it is regarded to be a glorious month to commemorate the life history and the struggle of the Prophet Muhammad.

The significance of the month Rabi al-Awwal is based on the belief that this month is the month of the Prophet Muhammad’s birth day. The month is usually referred to in commemorating the birth of the Prophet, more precisely on the 12th of Rabiul Awwal.

*Bungamale* is a traditional dish (local culture), made of boiled chicken or duck eggs that have been colored variously and decorated with artificial flowers made of colorful paper and then hung on an end of a piece of bamboo stick that has been prepared and its other end is inserted into a banana trunk, which is also decorated according to the art taste of the decorator. Alternatively, the bamboo stick can also be inserted to sticky rice (*Sokko* in Bugis language or *songkolo* in Makassar language) filled in a container such as a small bucket, basins, or others. *Bungamale* is among the tradition of Muslim community in South Sulawesi. It is prepared and taken to the ceremony commemorating the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad every year in the month of Rabiul Awwal.

The ceremony presented in the commemoration of the birthday of the Prophet has some similarities with the tradition of “*berkat mauludan*” (the Prophet’s birthday blessing) in Krajen Purworejo, Purworejo regency, in the province of Central Java. In this tradition, however, different kind of dish is served instead.

According to findings from a study conducted by Arwani, the ceremony presented in the commemoration of the tradition of *berkat mauludan* in Purworejo is performed in various modes:

Some people only provide special dishes to be sent to some neighbors, some organize simple celebrations in

their homes, some perform a rather large ceremony such as that held in mosques, and some even organize a massive celebration attended by tens of thousands of Muslims. Some parts of the community recite *Barzanji* or *Diba* (similar to the *Barzanji* book), or include a variety of religious activities such as performance *hadarah*, or celebrate with certain contests.<sup>28</sup>

Religious rituals wrapped in the form of tradition are carried out heritably and continuously within a certain period of time, even until an acculturation with the local culture occurs. The activities of *mauludan* conducted in Purworejo, as mentioned above, is identical to the birthday memorial ceremony held in South Sulawesi called *maulu*, especially in terms of procedures.

Honestly the author has never found references on the history of the emergence of *bungamale* as the local culture of South Sulawesi, and on the value contained the *bungmale* tradition, except mouth to mouth stories from parents, community leaders, religious leaders, and the reality observed at every commemoration of the birthday of the great Prophet Muhammad every year. To the author's perspective, however, the *bungamale* presented as a decoration on the celebration of *maulid* contains some positive values. Among these values are such as serving as a medium of communications catch the attention of Muslims, especially children, so that they all come together and listen to religious lectures especially about the history of life and the struggle of the Prophet Muhammad, which is significantly useful to their lives for the preservation of the practice of Islam. In addition to enlivening the event, the *bungamale* also brings about joy among the attendants as they will get a share of the *bungamale* (eggs) to take home when the celebration is over.

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<sup>28</sup>Irawan Abdullah et.al (Ed), *Agama dan Kearifan Lokal dalam Tantangan Global*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2008), p. 187.

Another positive value contained in the *bungamale* is in building a sense of mutual cooperation and collaboration among people of different RT, RW, neighborhood, village, and even sub-district. As the *bungamale* normally designed with great variety of ornaments and in a large form, it is usually prepared with collaborative participations of the society. Afterward, the *bungamale* collected will be distributed to the guests or visitors as a gift or souvenir to take home.

The event of *Maulu*, with *bungamale* as its attraction, is a local culture that has been acculturated with the teachings of Islam, and it in the point of fact contains message symbols as a tribute to the Prophet Muhammad as an “*uswatun hasanah*” to be followed for he has an extensive loveliness in every aspects, especially in the beauty of his character. Therefore, his birth is commemorated with a ceremony with the symbol of “*bunga male*” (*male flower*), which is loaded with beauty. Although it is true that among the existing Muslim organizations there are some who consider the ceremony of commemorating the birth of the Prophet as an act of heresy that had never been conducted at the time of the Prophet, so there is no need to carry it out at present.

Such a view is of reasonable points and should not lead to a conflict, for basically the purpose of commemorating the birthday of the Prophet is to take lessons and wisdom so that Muslims can take up the values contained in it, as indeed he was sent by God to be an example to all mankind, as Allah says in Surah al-Ahzab / 33: 21

Translation:

Certainly you have in the Apostle of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much.<sup>29</sup>

The commemoration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, or *maulu* in Bugis language, is among the religious

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<sup>29</sup>Departemen Agama RI, *op.cit*, p. 595.

ceremonies carried out by the Muslim community of South Sulawesi. This is an Islamic tradition that is originated on the birth day of the Prophet, which then transformed into a tradition or local culture, but it has a sacred purpose, as the objectives to be achieved at a *mauludan* ceremony in Purworejo:

First, to disseminate religious symbols and to enliven the birthday of the Prophet. Second, to give gratitude (*tasyakur*) on the birth of the Prophet Muhammad as the last Messenger who has brought about the path of truth for mankind. Third, to recall the history of the life of the Prophet to take him in as a role model for every member of the society. Fourth, to improve the society's *mahabbah* or love to the Prophet. Fifth, to strengthen the bound of *silaturraahim* among the societymembers.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the noble objectives mentioned above, in this *maulu* performance some people simply follow the activities and attend the ceremony on the basis of tradition alone. That is, they collaborate to participate to make *bungamale* merely to preserve the traditions that have been handed down by their predecessors. Although in reality they do not know exactly what the purposes and functions of the activities are, they will not approve if the ritual is eliminated.

In addressing the local culture, we have to see whether the culture is an element of “tradition” or “traditionality,” as in the assertion of Nurcholish Madjid mentioned above, including the *bungamale* which has become a local culture to Muslims in South-Sulawesi in the implementation *maulu* or the birth day of the great Prophet Muhammad.

With reference to Nurcholish Madjid's perspective, the author views that the local culture of *maulu* with the symbols of *bungamale* is an indigenous culture or wisdom the South Sulawesi Muslim community that have been acculturated

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<sup>30</sup>Irwan Abdullah et.al, *loc.cit.*, p. 187.

with Islam. The circumstance should not be disputed upon, given that the objectives are not contradictory to the teachings of Islam. As long as the implementation is based on truthful motivation or *niyah* (*nawaitu*), procedures (*kaifiyat*), and objectives (*gáyat*), God willing, it will worth worship of Allah the Exalted.

### **Conclusion**

Acculturation is the process of integrating Islamic values with a local culture to the extent that, whether realized or not, the local culture appears as if it is a part of the Islamic teachings.

Indonesia consists of a series of clusters of islands inhabited by many ethnic groups, whose culture and customs vary and differ from one another. Above all, difference is an asset that should be preserved, nurtured and developed into a solid strength.

In a global world scope, the meeting between Islam and the local culture together with the traditions accompanying it makes Islam in Indonesia has many faces. Differences in perspective of and responses to the presence of Islam in Indonesia can be understood from the Islamic expression reflected in people's lives, be it in the form of thoughts, rituals, or Muslim organizations.

To build and foster a sense of unity between the tribes, it is necessary to get to know each other in all aspects of culture in order to develop mutual respect in attitude, outlook and behavior. Although the uniqueness in the life governance of every ethnic group needs to be studied and introduced.

Local culture is so deeply penetrated into the life of the society, to the extent that the advance of civilization and modern life are not capable to entirely wipe out local cultures. Instead, local cultures can even find ways to adapt to the progress of time in order to preserve their existence in the society.

A traditional ceremony is an integral portion of the community's culture, as it serves as reinforcement for the

norms and cultural values that have been applied in the society from generation to generation. The norms and cultural values are presented symbolically in the form of a ceremony conducted with full of wisdom by its supporting community. The virtues contained in the traditional ceremony performed fasten people's solidarity as they feel the sense of having a common interest. Even more, the local culture has already become part of the teachings of Islam and is always displayed.

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