

Writing and reading Makassarese

Anthony Jukes

ILCAA research fellow /CRLD, La Trobe University

Makassarese is a language spoken by approximately 2 million people in the province of South Sulawesi in Indonesia. Over the centuries the language has been represented orthographically in many ways: with two indigenous Indic or aksara based scripts, a system based on Arabic script known as serang, and a variety of Romanised conventions. This paper gives an overview of writing in the Makassarese language, discussing what Makassarese people have written (the types of manuscript and genres of writing that are found); and how they wrote it (concentrating on the two writing systems indigenous to South Sulawesi). It also discusses the experience of reading Makassarese manuscripts, and the challenges of interpreting them.