

History and dynamics of the development of Lontaraq script

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This talk is about the writing systems of South Sulawesi. It begins with the history of writing in Sulawesi, some scripts that were previously found in South Sulawesi, and specifically describes the *lontaraq* script.

In South Sulawesi, there are 4 kinds of scripts that had been used, namely 1) *lontaraq* script, 2) *jangang jangang* or 'bird' script, 3) *bilang-bilang* script, and 4) *serang* the Arabic script.

When placed in the frame of Bugis culture, then *lontaraq* has two meanings contained therein, namely:

1) *lontaraq* as history and science, 2) *lontaraq* as writing. How we distinguish the two terms is dependent on the context of its placement. The word comes from the Bugis language *lontaraq* meaning palm leaves, so called because the text was originally written on palm leaves.

Unlike the *lontaraq* script that was spread throughout the regions of Bugis and Makassar influence, even in Ende (Flores); the *jangang-jangang* script was limited to Makassar manuscripts, and only a small proportion of those. The rest were written with *lontaraq* and *serang* (Malay/Arabic) scripts.

The *bilang-bilang* script was created by Retna Kencana Colliq Pujie Arung Pancana Toa, an aristocrat of Bugis-Malay descent. She became queen in Pancana, a subordinate kingdom of Tanete located on the coast. *Bilang-bilang* script was a secret means of communicating with followers, and she also created several syair (poems) using the *bilang-bilang* script as a form of resistance to the Netherlands, which until the mid-20th century were still used by fighters as the source of inspiration against Dutch colonisation.

The Arabic script *serang* when the Bugis-Makassar had become Muslim, it is similar to Jawi script.

Of the four scripts, only *lontaraq* survives until the present day.

The discussion then focuses on *lontaraq* script, the connections with some other scripts of the archipelago, as well as the genetic descent from the Indian Pallava letters, which then by the local genius of the Bugis became *lontaraq* script.

In conclusion, the talk will discuss the fate of *lontaraq* now, and the response by society.