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SEXUAL ETHICS AND RITUAL IN BUGINESE MANUSCRIPT CULTURE: QUR'ANIC PERFORMATIVE PRACTICES IN THE ASSIKALAIBINENG HERITAGE OF SULAWESI

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Abstract: In Islam, sexual intercourse within marriage is framed as an act of worship. It is not merely a biological function, but a way of fulfilling the innate human need within a divinely sanctioned framework. According to hadith literature, couples are encouraged to recite specific prayers derived from prophetic traditions. Among Buginese Muslims, however, the practice has been transformed into a localized cultural tradition. Through the *Lontara* script, the text known as *Assikalaibineng* incorporates Qur'anic verses into marital preparation rituals. This study aims to analyze the Qur'anic invocations in these manuscript by, *first*, conducting a philological examination. S*econd*, applying reception theory to investigate the transmission and transformation of Qur'anic practices within the Buginese cultural context. The primary sources consist of three manuscripts preserved by Muhlis Hadrawi. The findings reveal that Buginese hermeneutical engagement with the Qur'an entails various adaptations: phonological modifications of Qur'anic recitations to suit regional linguistic structures, metaphorical interpretations of certain verses (such as the invocation of *kun fa-yakūn*), symbolic utilization of Qur'anic letters (e.g., *alif* and *bā'*), and semantic shifts that assign localized meanings to canonical text. The transmission of these practices has evolved from an esoteric, elite-centered tradition into a more communal and widely performed ritual, blending mystical symbolism with elements of cognitive intention. The Buginese believe that performing the *Assikalaibineng* ritual not only bestows spiritual merit within the marital relationship but also fosters emotional and physical harmony between spouses as it integrates the heart, soul, body, and mind. This study further highlights how the intersection of Islamic religiosity and local culture in Buginese society generates a distinct form of performative piety. It also contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the diverse expressions of Islamic tradition across cultural contexts.

Keywords: Buginese Manuscript Culture; Cultural Islam; Indigenous Hermeneutics; Lontara Assikalaibineng; Sexual Ethics

Introduction

The intersection between sacred texts and local manuscripts has become a significant area of inquiry in Islamic and cultural studies (Basid et al., 2023; Fitryansyah & Fauziah, 2024; Koburtay et al., 2023; TC, 2024). *Lontara Assikalaibineng*, a manuscript often referred to as the "Kama Sutra" of the Bugis people. It contains a unique set of practices in which specific Arabic phrases are used during marital relations. This manuscript outlines how Bugis couples incorporate Islamic teachings alongside local customs in their intimate lives (Awaru, 2020; Hadrawi et al., 2022).

Despite its potential, few studies have examined the relationship between local texts and sacred scriptures. One exception is Asep Nahrul Musadad's study which compiles Qur'anic verses found in Nusantara manuscripts through the lens of occultism. He argues

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that beyond being creative reading from past societies, these mantras also represent cultural engagements and fragments of the archipelagic history (Musadad, 2017). However, his study does not address manuscripts from Sulawesi written in the Lontara script. In part, this omission may be due to limited access to such texts and the taboo nature of their content, especially when it intersects with religious themes. Yet the discourse of sexuality and religion is a complex expression of both language and culture (Endsj©ı, 2011).

Most scholarly attention to the Qur'an and sexuality has focused on its normative content through thematic analysis of verses related to sexual ethics (Hasan, 2024; Rezi & Zubir, 2017). These studies aim to articulate the Qur'an's guidance on sexuality, often within a descriptive-analytical or theological framework that remains heavily influenced by authorial subjectivity. Another framework arises from feminist scholars where critical readings of Qur'anic narratives challenge patriarchal interpretations and advocate for gender-sensitive understandings (Barlas, 2002). While this discourse contributes significantly to interpretive plurality, it tends to focus on gender justice within Arabic-Islamic contexts and does not explore how Qur'anic ideas are transformed or rearticulated within non-Arab cultural settings.

Regarding the *Lontara Assikalibineng* manuscript, previous scholarship has made important contributions to its documentation and analysis. Muhlis Hadrawi's *Assikalaibineng: Kitab Persetubuhan Bugis* (Hadrawi, 2017) plays a key role in preserving the manuscript philologically, although his analysis is primarily textual and socio-historical. Likewise, Christian Pelras (Pelras, 2006) and Susan Bolyard Millar (Millar, 1992) examine Bugis identity and marriage rituals, yet do not address the integration of Qur'anic discourse within local sexual ethics. A more focused engagement appears in Faried F. Saenong's chapter "*Alid Piety in Bugis Texts on Proper Sexual Arts*", which sheds light on pious sexuality and the symbolic influence of 'Ali traditions. However, his study centers on the Shia-inspired dimensions rather than the broader role of Qur'anic textuality in shaping sexual norms (Saenong, 2015). Meanwhile, this research argues that the Qur'anic verses embedded in *Assikalaibineng* are essential to its authority and spiritual significance, functioning as both ethical foundation and cultural legitimacy.

Therefore, this research seeks to extend existing studies by applying reception theory to examine how specific Qur'anic verses have been received, adapted, and functionally integrated into Bugis cultural life through the *Lontara Assikalaibineng*. Rather than focusing solely on symbolic or historical dimensions, this study centers the Qur'an as a textual and performative source whose meanings are negotiated within the framework of Bugis sexual and spiritual ethics. In doing so, it highlights how sacred Islamic texts undergo semantic and functional transformation in a local, non-Arab context revealing a dynamic interplay between scripture, culture, and embodied practice. As it follows:

Original Text (Lontara Script)

ᨀ ᨊᨚᨕᨘᨉᨚᨔᨛ ᨆᨚᨑᨚᨕ ᨆᨉᨛᨆ ᨆᨚᨕᨘᨉᨘᨉ ᨆᨉᨛᨆ ᨀᨚᨑᨚᨔᨛ ᨉᨚᨑ ᨑᨚᨔᨛ ᨉᨘᨔᨛᨉᨛᨆᨀᨘᨉ ᨚᨑᨘ ᨚᨈᨛ ᨀᨚᨂᨛ ᨕ ᨀᨚᨊᨚ᨞

Lontara Romanized

Komaelo`no pogau`i alano jenne` sempajang
Nakko purano majjenne` bacani wekka asera

Laa tadrikuhul absara wahuwa yadrikuh laa abshara wahuwa lisanul habiir
Bacai kulhuwallaahu wekka tellu lattu` ri cappa`na

English Translation

When you are going to do it (have intercourse), perform ablution first. After that, recite nine times: "Lā tadrikuhū al-abṣār wa huwa yudrikuhū al-abṣār wa huwa lisān al-khabīr." Then recite Surah al-Ikhlas three times until the end.

Indonesian Translation

Apabila kamu akan melakukannya (hubungan seksual), berwudhulah terlebih dahulu. Jika sudah, bacalah sebanyak sembilan kali: "Lā tadrikuhū al-abṣār wa huwa yudrikuhū al-abṣār wa huwa lisān al-khabīr." Kemudian bacalah Surah al-Ikhlas hingga selesai sebanyak tiga kali.

This passage illustrates how Bugis sexual ethics are intertwined with both spiritual practice and cultural philosophy. Qur'anic verses are ritually performed within intimate acts, showing that their engagement extends beyond textual understanding into embodied and communal expressions (Rafiq, 2021). This engagement encompasses how the Qur'an is recited, respected, and enacted within the specific social context of South Sulawesi.

The central focus of this study lies in the Qur'anic content of *Lontara Assikalaibineng*, particularly as it reveals how Islamic scripture is interpreted and practiced in intimate, embodied, and localized feature. Since the textual element serve as the main channel of understanding and action, this study first explores the hermeneutic function of Qur'anic verses in the manuscript. Additionally, this inquiry seeks to trace how Islam has been harmonized with local Bugis customs, highlighting a dialectical process involving adaptation, contextualization, and spiritual appropriation of the Qur'an. As Morgan and Nieber argue, scripture in religious studies is not merely discursive but also material, shaping how people relate to objects, space, and the body (Morgan, 2021; Nieber, 2024). This research is therefore situated at the intersection of performativity, material culture, and sacred text, aiming to understand how the Qur'an spiritually and materially informs everyday ethics among Bugis Muslims.

To maintain focus and clarity, this study addresses three main research questions: 1) How have Qur'anic verses been transformed and transmitted in the *Lontara Assikalaibineng* tradition? 2) What forms of hermeneutical engagement are evident in how the Bugis interpret and use these verses in the context of sexual ethics? 3) How does the Qur'an interact with local culture in shaping religious meaning and practice within *Assikalaibineng*?

This research employs a qualitative paradigm with a cultural-interpretive approach, emphasizing the intersection of text and lived practice. The primary object of analysis is the use of Qur'anic verses in *Lontara Assikalaibineng* as part of marital sexual ethics. Primary sources include selected manuscripts and their Qur'anic content; secondary sources draw from literature on Bugis culture, Qur'anic performativity (Graham, 1989), and reception theory (Rafiq, 2014). Data collection combines textual analysis, historical tracing, and where possible, ethnographic interpretation. The analytical framework applies reception theory to examine how Qur'anic verses are appropriated and internalized, and hermeneutics to unpack their layered meanings and to reveal the dynamic interplay between religion and tradition in Bugis society.

Lontara Assikalaibineng: A Brief Overview

The origins of the Lontara script have long been debated. Dutch scholars proposed that the term *Lontara* is a loanword from other islands, such as Bali or Java, and possibly derived from the Javanese words *ron* (leaf) and *tal* (a type of tree). However, it is worth noting that ta in Bugis and *tala'* in Makassarese also mean "tree," and the term closely resembles the Sanskrit word *tala*. Mattes, for instance, interprets *Lontara* as referring to the leaf of the lontar tree, which later came to signify a piece of writing in Bugis and Makassarese culture.

According to Andi Zainal Abidin, the Lontara script emerged during the era of the Gowa and Tallo kingdoms. Its earliest known use is attributed to the reign of Daeng Matenre Karaeng Manguntungi, the 14th King of Gowa (1510–1546). During his rule, Daeng Pamatte, serving as *Tumailalang* (Minister of Internal Affairs), began composing the *Lontara' Pattorioloang* (historical chronicles), inscribed on *raung tala'* (lontar leaves) using a modified Makassarese script derived from the square script of Luwu'. After contact with the Portuguese in 1538, Gowa society began to adopt paper, which enabled the rulers of Gowa and Tallo to maintain written diaries by the 16th century (Abidin, 1971). Noorduyn also emphasizes that the Bugis script evolved from Indian-derived systems and became a medium for preserving a wide range of cultural knowledge, including legal codes, spiritual teachings, and poetic traditions (Noorduyn, 2008).

Caldwell observes that Lontara manuscripts are often copies of older texts that reflect a combination of oral and written traditions. Their contents are highly diverse, encompassing royal genealogies, territorial records, spiritual advice, and historical chronicles (Caldwell, 2008). Today, various types of Lontara manuscripts are preserved across South Sulawesi and are typically named according to their content. These include: 1) *Paseng*, containing ancestral advice and moral injunctions, 2) *Rapang*, compilations of customary laws and royal edicts, 3) *Attoriolong*, chronicles of royal genealogy and significant historical events, 4) *Bilang*, daily records using a traditional calendrical system, 5) *Lontara* on Laws and Regulations, including maritime *(ade' alloping-loping)* and trade laws *(bicaranna pabbalu'e)*, 6) Pau-Pau, heroic tales with legendary elements, 7) *Lontara' Pappangaja*, ethical and spiritual advice for well-being in this world and the next, 8) *Kutika*, guidelines for auspicious timing for various activities, 9) *Palakia*, divinatory texts based on astrology and experience, 10) *Assikalaibineng*, instructions on marital relations, reproductive health, intimacy, ritual prayers, and timing for conjugal activites (BRIN, 2023).

Table 1. Classification of Lontara Manuscripts in South Sulawesi

No	Type of Manuscript	Main Content Description	Relevance to This Study
1	Paseng	Ancestral messages, moral guidance, and prohibitions	Provides insight into Bugis ethical values
2	Rapang	Collection of customary laws, edicts, and leader decrees	Contextual background for social norms
3	Attoriolong	Genealogical records and royal chronicles	Illuminates historical identity and heritage

4	Bilang	Daily records using a traditional calendrical system	Reflects literacy and documentation culture
5	Lontara of Laws and Regulations	Maritime and trade law codes	Highlights customary and economic governance
6	Pau-Pau	Heroic legends and mythical tales	Reinforces Bugis collective memory and identity
7	Lontara Pappangaja	Ethical and spiritual guidance for life and afterlife	Relevant to the formation of marital ethics
8	Kutika	Divination of auspicious timing for various activities	Reflects cosmological beliefs and ritual order
9	Palakia	Divinatory knowledge based on astrology and experiences	Demonstrates belief in supernatural guidance
10	Assikalaibineng	Marital guidance, sexual ethics, intimacy rituals, and Qur'anic prayers	Central focus of this study: Qur'anic integration in sexual ethics

Table 1 illustrates the historical development of access to *Assikalaibineng* knowledge. Initially, this manuscript was highly exclusive, circulated only among Bugis aristocracy and religious elites. Over time, through the growing influence of *santri* (Islamic students) and sociopolitical transformation, *Assikalaibineng* was gradually incorporated into broader customary and legal systems. In recent decades, printed editions and digital circulation have further democratized access to the text, reflecting both the evolution of sacred tradition and the shift toward open cultural transmission.

Etymologically, the term *Assikalaibineng* consists of two elements: *lai*, meaning "man" or "husband," and *bineng* (or *bene*), meaning "woman" or "wife." Institutionalized centuries ago under Islamic influence, the *Assikalaibineng* manuscript preserves knowledge on sexuality and marital ethics in Bugis society. This knowledge has been passed down through generations, functioning as a guide rooted in cultural values that are aligned with Islamic principles. Its continued presence demonstrates the intellectual and civilizational maturity of the Bugis people, comparable to other major ethnic traditions in the Indonesian archipelago.

Qur'anic Interpretation in the *Assikalaibineng* Tradition

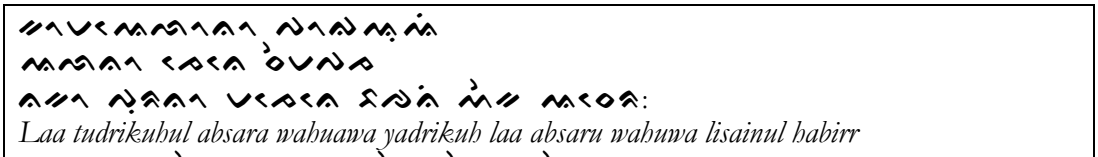
The *Catalogue of South Sulawesi Manuscripts* records at least 44 manuscripts containing knowledge related to "sex education". Among them, only 28 could be identified as Bugis manuscripts specifically discussing husband-wife relations, and of those, just 17 are still legible; the remaining 11 are too damaged to be read (Hadrawi, 2017). Considering the condition, textual integrity, legibility, and completeness, this study draws upon three of the best-preserved manuscripts, documented and transcribed by Muhlis Hadrawi under the codes ASK A (Text A), ASK B (Text B), and ASK C (Text C). However, this study focuses exclusively on the use of Qur'anic verses, and therefore, only excerpts containing these elements are presented and analyzed.

Manuscript A: "Bunga Rampai Keagamaan dan Nikah Batin" from Tanrutedong

The text excerpted here comes from Manuscript A (code ROL 30/40), which consists of 103 pages. Only a segment under the title *Nikah Batin* is included in this discussion. Through textual analysis, the research team identifies several Qur'anic fragments in the text, including verses from QS. Al-An'ām (6): 103, QS. Al-Nūr (24): 35,

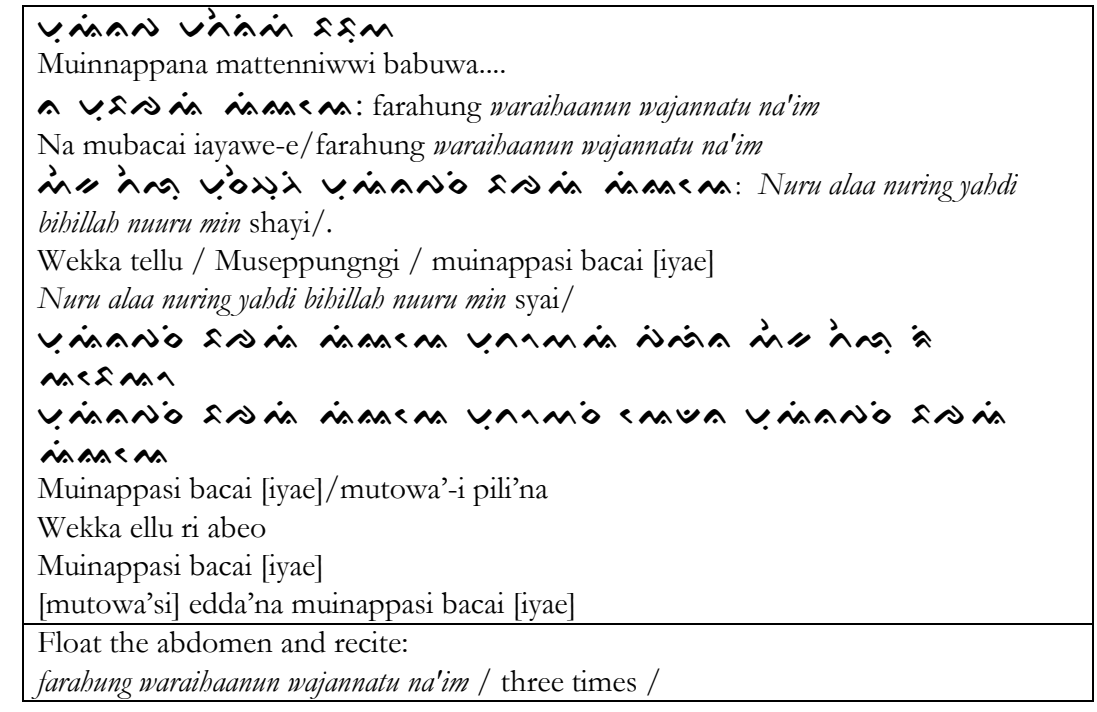
QS. Al-Fath (48): 1, QS. Al-Wāqi'ah (56): 89, and QS. Al-Ikhlas (112): 1-4. According to Hadrawi, the manuscript uses both Arabic and Lontara scripts, with oral transmission also playing a role in shaping its content (Hadrawi, 2017). Although the manuscript does not explicitly label the Arabic fragments as Qur'anic, a close analysis suggests that these phrases are indeed derived from the Qur'an. For example:

Text A:

 *Laa tudrikuhul absara wahuawa yadrikuh laa absaru wahuwa lisainul habirr* 
Komaelono poga'ui alao jenne Sempajang /nakko purano majjenne'bacani wekka asera / Laa tudrikuhul absara wahuawa yadrikuh laa absaru wahuwa lisainul habirr Bacai (kulhuwwallahu) Wekka tellu lattur' ri cappa'na/
Before intercourse, perform ablution. Once you have down wudhu, recite nine times: "Lā tadrikuhū al-abṣār wa huwa yudrikuhū al-abṣār wa huwa lisān al-khabīr." Then recite Qul Huwa-Allāhu aḥad three times until the end of the verse/

This passage references QS. Al-An'ām (6): 103. Notably, however, the phrase *wa huwa lisānul khabīr* deviates from the original *wa huwa al-Laṭīful Khabīr*. The word *lisān* means "tongue," while *laṭīf* means "subtle," a shift likely due to oral transmission or scribal error. We agree with Hadrawi that this reflects the composite nature of the manuscript's sources both oral and written which often resulted in non-standardized textual variants. The misquotation is likely unintentional and should be viewed within the context of local scribal traditions (Hadrawi, 2017).

Text B:

 Muinnappana mattenniwwi babuwa.... : farahung *waraihaanun wajannatu na'im* Na mubacai iayawe-e/farahung *waraihaanun wajannatu na'im* : *Nuru alaa nuring yahdi bihillah nuuru min* shayi/. Wekka tellu / Museppungngi / muinappasi bacai [iyae] *Nuru alaa nuring yahdi bihillah nuuru min* syai/   Muinappasi bacai [iyae]/mutowa'-i pili'na Wekka ellu ri abeo Muinappasi bacai [iyae] [mutowa'si] edda'na muinappasi bacai [iyae]
Float the abdomen and recite: *farahung waraihaanun wajannatu na'im* / three times /

blow into the hair / then recite / *Nuru alaa nuring yahdi bihillah nuuru min syai* / then kiss the left cheek three times / then recite / kiss the base of his neck again and recite /

These verses are subject to phonological shifts to fit local pronunciation. For example, *farahung* instead of *faraḥun*, and *nuring* instead of *nūrin*. This aligns with phonological patterns in Bugis language, where final /n/ is often nasalized to /ng/. It is a common form of language interference in bilingual communities (Diani & Azwandi, 2021).

Text C:

Bismillah laa iru lillahi jallahu *Kharajat ma'iatu rajulu* ᨀᨗᨔᨚ ᨅᨔᨗ Mᨒᨚᨒᨚᨔᨘ ᨕᨖᨗ ᨒᨘᨔᨚᨔ ᨒᨅᨚᨘ ᨔᨚᨈᨚ ᨒᨘᨔᨚᨔᨖ ᨒᨅᨚᨘ ᨔᨚᨔᨚᨔᨚ ᨒᨖᨚᨘ ᨔᨚᨔᨚᨔᨚ *Assalamu 'alaikum ya babar rohman* ᨔᨚᨖᨚᨔᨚᨔᨚ ᨚ ᨒᨔᨚᨘᨔᨚᨔᨚ *Wa'alaikumussalam ya sayyidal amin*
Bismillah laa iru lillahi jallahu *Kharajat ma'iatu rajulu [wekka] tellu/* Mumommoi susunna muinappa Matenniwwi posi'na/ Muinappasi mattenniwwi katauwwanna mubacai / *Inna fatahna laka fatham* mubina / Muinappasi beresellengiwi mubacai [iyae]. *Assalamu 'alaikum ya babar* rohman/ Naribalitona ri makkunraie/ *Wa'alaikumussalam ya sayyidal amen*
Bismillah laa iru lillahi jallahu *Kharajat ma'iatu rajulu* three times/ Kiss her breasts / and touch her navel / Then take hold of her farjas and recite/ *Inna fatahna laka fathan mubina /* Then give the greeting by reading *this*. *Assalamu'alaikum yaa babur rohman /* So the wife gave an answer *Wa'alaikumsalam ya sayyidal ameen /*

This reflects a shift from theological to performative-semantic usage, such as the "opening" (*fataḥna*) being interpreted literally as "physical entry" or the removal of potential obstacles during intercourse. The verse becomes a prayerful invocation for ease and harmony, repurposed through embodied ritual (Al-Asfahani, 2014).

Manuscript B: "Bunga Rampai Agama dan Budaya" from Luwu

The manuscript comes from Luwu and is catalogued under No/01/MKH/48/18/Luwu/UP. According to Hadrawi, this manuscript also exhibits errors due to mixing spoken and written forms. However, it offers clearer references to Qur'anic fragments and Divine Names, such as *ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* (QS. Al-Fātihah (1): 6), *kursiyyuhū* (from Āyat al-Kursī*), Allāhu nūru as-samāwāti wa al-arḍ* (QS. Al-Nūr (24): 35), *Lailat al-Qadr* (QS. Al-Qadr), and names from Asmā' al-Husnā, such as *Yā Hayy Yā Qayyūm,*

Yā Laṭīf Yā Samī'. These phrases are not cited with doctrinal precision but are used symbolically, often to mark specific emotional or spiritual states during or after intercourse. One striking example:

ri lewuremmu mupedecengiwi paringngaremmu ri Allah Ta'ala. Nareko lewuno niyakangngi mupari abeo ranakae. Mupari orwwi surugae. Pariaje mui letengnge Siratal Mustaqima Musarakanni mupatinro di yaraseq Korosiya Muniakanni mupangkangulu ri Laelatulekuderi.
When lying down, place Hell on your left, and Paradise on your right. Let your feet walk the ṣirāṭ al-mustaqim, and position your wife's head upon the Throne (Kursi) / with the intention that she is laid upon Lailatul Qadr

This passage metaphorizes *Sirāṭ al-Mustaqīm* as the path of the body, and *Lailat al-Qadr* as the time of spiritual consummation. Such use reflects a blend of Qur'anic cosmology and symbolic sexual ethics, rooted in both esotericism and mythic elements of Bugis culture (Abidin, 1971).

Manuscript C: "Bunga Rampai Lontara" from Watampone

What will be presented below are excerpts from Manuscripts ROL 45 and 23, both titled *Bunga Rampai Lontara*. These manuscripts represent the most voluminous among all the *Assikalaibineng* texts examined in this study. Consequently, it is not surprising that many of the Qur'anic quotations found in Manuscripts A and B also appear in these texts. According to Hadrawi, these manuscripts explore a broad range of sexual themes, including methods for conceiving male or female offspring, as well as prayers for enhancing or suppressing sexual desire. Below is an illustrative excerpt from the text, which demonstrates the use of the Qur'anic phrase *Kun Fayakūn*, along with symbolic representations of the husband and wife through Arabic letters:

Ri laleng suruga *kumpayakung*. Naiya bunge sitako makkunraimmu tapakkoro'ko riyolo. Mupakkitai mata atimmu ita alemu A. Muita lapaleng Ba i makkunraimmu. Muinappa karawai limanna (muberesellengiwi) makkedae. *Assalamu alaikum* Ali makkarawa Patima (rikarawa). Narekko muwarekkenni limanna powadani sahada'e. *Ashhadu Allaa ilahahu wa ashhadu anna Muhammad Rasulullah.*
In heaven *kunfayakun* If you and your wife are having intercourse for the first time, Begin with tafakkur / direct the eyes of your heart, See yourself as Alif and your wife as Ba. Then take her by the arm and greet her "*Assalamu'alaikum*," Ali holds, Fatimah holds.

When taking her hand, recite the Shahada. *"Ashhadu allā ilāha illā Allāhu wa ashhadu anna Muḥammadan Rasūlullāh."*

In this passage, we observe several important layers of symbolism and metaphor:

1. *"Kun Fayakūn*" (Be, and it is). This phrase appears repeatedly in the Qur'an (e.g., QS. al-Baqarah: 117, QS. Ali 'Imrān (3): 47, QS. Yāsin (36): 82), and here metaphorically linked to the act of conjugal union. In the Qur'an, the phrase signifies divine creative command; in the *Assikalaibineng*, it is reinterpreted as a symbol of marital creation or generative union, thus transforming cosmological power into intimate ritual.
2. The letters "Alif" and "Ba" are used symbolically to represent the husband and wife, respectively. This practice resonates with Sufi semiotics, where Arabic letters carry profound spiritual meanings. The vertical form of Alif has often been used to symbolize the masculine principle, while Ba, as the first letter of *Basmalah*, represents femininity and receptivity.
3. The invocation of Ali and Fatimah as ideal marital figures also reflects a symbolic appropriation rooted in religious and cultural ideals. Faried Saenong argues that such representation can be interpreted as an influence of Shi'a teachings, particularly in the veneration of the household of the Prophet (*Ahl al-Bayt*). In this context, the use of Ali and Fatimah may reflect the aspiration toward spiritual piety within marriage (Saenong, 2015).

Identification of changes or adaptations to the Qur'anic text in the *Assikalaibineng* Manuscript can be mapped as in the table below:

Table 2. Summary of Qur'anic Verses in the *Assikalaibineng* Manuscripts

No	Surah and Verse	Context of Use in the Manuscript	Adaptation/Transformation Identified
1	QS. Al-An'ām (6): 103	Recited prior to intercourse, after ablution	Phonetic distortion: *lisānul khabīr* replaces *laṭīful khabīr*
2	QS. Al-Ikhlas (112): 1-4	Recited three times after QS. Al-An'ām (6): 103	No significant alteration observed
3	QS. Al-Wāqi'ah (56): 89	Recited for spiritual purification	Phonological shift: *faruḥun* becomes *farahung*
4	QS. Al-Nūr (24): 35	Recited as symbolic purification	Slight phonetic adaptations to Bugis pronunciation
5	QS. Al-Fath (48): 1	Recited during intimate acts	"Opening" (*fataḥnā)* interpreted literally as intercourse
6	QS. Al-Fātihah (1): 6	Used metaphorically to describe bodily alignment	*Sirāṭ al-Mustaqīm* reinterpreted as sexual pathway
7	QS. Al-Qadr (97): 1-5	Used metaphorically to signify sacred timing	*Lailat al-Qadr* signifies moment of marital intimacy
8	Various (e.g., QS. Al-Baqarah	Phrase *Kun Fayakūn* recontextualized as conjugal creation	Qur'anic creation formula applied to marital union

	(2): 117, QS. Yasin (36): 82)

This table 2 provides a concise overview of how Qur'anic verses are embedded and adapted within the *Assikalaibineng* corpus. The findings reveal that the Qur'anic citations in these manuscripts do not serve merely as doctrinal affirmations, but are subject to linguistic adaptation, symbolic interpretation, and cultural reconfiguration. For instance, QS. Al-An'ām (6): 103 undergoes a subtle yet meaningful distortion as *lisān al-khabīr* replaces *laṭīf al-khabīr*, highlighting the influence of oral transmission and regional phonology on the preservation of the text. Similar shifts, such as *farahung* for *faraḥun*, also reflect the influence of Bugis language patterns, particularly the tendency to nasalize final consonants. Meanwhile, verses such as QS. Al-Fath (48): 1, QS. Al-Fātihah (1): 6, and QS. Al-Qadr (97): 1-5 are not quoted for their original theological purposes, but reimagined in ways that speak to the intimate, emotional, and spiritual experiences of marital life. These symbolic applications embody a hermeneutics of intimacy, where Qur'anic language is made relevant to the lived realities of Bugis society.

Among the most striking reinterpretations is the phrase *Kun Fayakūn*, which moves from its original cosmic and theological context to become a metaphor for conjugal harmony and reproductive hope. Here, Qur'anic discourse is not merely preserved, but it is creatively resemanticized, allowing sacred language to permeate personal rituals and embodied practices.

The integration of Qur'anic language in *Assikalaibineng* manuscripts represents a uniquely Bugis form of vernacular hermeneutics, a mode of engaging scripture that is at once reverent, localized, and adaptive. Rather than treating the Qur'an as a static text, Bugis scribes and oral transmitters have transformed it into a dynamic symbolic reservoir through which cultural ethics, spiritual aspirations, and intimate life are narrated and negotiated. Such practices reflect a broader phenomena in the Islamic world, where local exegesis and ritual embodiment often coexist with canonical interpretations. In the case of *Assikalaibineng*, this results in a form of sexual ethics that is both Islamic and indigenously Bugis that rooted in scriptural authority, yet shaped by oral tradition, local cosmology, and socio-cultural imagination.

Transmission, Transformation, and Local Adaptation of Qur'anic Texts

Islamic teachings place high value on marital relationships, articulating them through a detailed legal and ethical framework. The Qur'an itself describes marriage as a sacred bond with the purpose of preserving the human species (QS. Al-Nahl (16): 72), while prophetic traditions describe marriage as an essential part of the Prophet's *sunnah*: "*Marriage is part of my way (sunnatī).*" While some feminist critiques have viewed the Qur'an as objectifying women, within Islamic tradition, sexual ethics are explained with remarkable detail, including prescribed prayers prior to intercourse. For example, a hadith narrated by Bukhari and Muslim states:

> *If one of you (i.e., the husband) wishes to have intimate relations with his wife. Let him say: "in the name of Allah, keep us away from Satan and keep Satan away from what You have bestowed upon us."*

This hadith demonstrates that rules for sexual behavior in Islam are transmitted through a rigorous chain of narration (*sanad*), forming part of a broader tradition that integrates legal, ritual, and spiritual values. Among the Bugis people of South Sulawesi, these values have been absorbed and rearticulated through a discursive tradition known as *Assikalaibineng*, a system of knowledge that regulates marital ethics, sexuality, and spiritual intimacy.

The influence of Islamic teachings in *Assikalaibineng* is undeniable. However, in its early development, this knowledge was considered exclusive and limited to the Bugis aristocracy (Sila, 2015). The restricted ownership and transmission of these manuscripts reflect *Assikalaibineng*'s status as privileged knowledge. Historical records indicate that the 23rd King of Bone, La Tenri Tappu Ahmad Salih Syamsudin (1775–1812), even forbade ordinary people from accessing this knowledge. He sought to preserve it solely for royal and palace circles, especially those aligned with the *Khalwatīyah* Sufi order of Sheikh Yusuf.

Over time, however, the transmission model evolved. The rise of *santri* (Islamic scholars) who began to gain access to and disseminate this knowledge marked a pivotal shift. Their entry into royal courts allowed for the integration of Islamic law into traditional Bugis social norms, known as *pangngadareng*. As a result, a new hybrid form of custom emerged, that is royal practice infused with Islamic values. Today, *Lontara Assikalaibineng* plays a central role in shaping Bugis cultural and sexual ethics, especially by embedding Qur'anic values into marital practices (Hadrawi, 2017).

The Bugis system of knowledge inheritance within *Assikalaibineng* can be understood through three key stages:

Table 3. Stages of Knowledge Transmission in the Assikalaibineng Tradition

No	Bugis Term	Definition	Social and Cultural Implications
1	Dipalennnekang	The stage of acquiring knowledge through direct learning from a teacher	Emphasizes that *Assikalaibineng* is not inherited passively but pursued through active engagement with a master teacher
2	Dipabbiringeng	The stage of inherited transmission through familial or spiritual lineage	Reflects the exclusivity and hierarchical nature of transmission, where a knowledge-holder appoint a successor within trusted circles
3	Napowerei	The stage of divine revelation through dreams or spiritual experiences	Highlights the sacred and metaphysical nature of *Assikalaibineng* knowledge, perceived as divinely granted and beyond rational acquisition

These stages as shown in table 3 above reflect that the transmission of *Assikalaibineng* was never random or informal. It followed a culturally established order that

intertwines social hierarchy, spiritual legitimacy, and ritual obligations. *Dipalennnekang* underscores the learner's responsibility to actively seek sacred knowledge through study and discipline. *Dipabbiringeng* reveals the vertical, elite-based model of transmission that has historically safeguarded this knowledge from the general public. *Napowerei* attributes knowledge acquisition to divine inspiration, typically through dreams, affirming that this knowledge carries sacred metaphysical weight. This triadic structure was also affirmed by Abu Muslim who highlighted how learners undergo a gradual transformation, progressing from active seekers to recipients of divine insight (BRIN, 2023).

The *Assikalaibineng* tradition has experienced a notable transformation in its mode of transmission and reception. Thanks to philological efforts, especially those of Muhlis Hadrawi, this once-esoteric knowledge is now accessible to the wider public through his 2008 publication, *Kitab Persetubuhan Bugis*. The text includes transliterations and translations, allowing even those unfamiliar with Lontara script to study it meaningfully. For example, a young scholar named Asriady prepared for marriage by studying the book in depth, despite having limited knowledge of the original script. Similarly, Ziaudin Bahar, another reader, purchased the book hoping to embody the ancestral values it contains, with the aim of raising pious and righteous children. Though he admitted difficulty in pronouncing some metaphorical phrases, he found the guidance on initiating intercourse remarkably clear.

Viewed through the lens of reception theory, this shift illustrates a transformation in how *Assikalaibineng* is interpreted and applied. Once tightly bound to ritual secrecy, social hierarchy, and oral tradition, it is now mediated through modern textual forms, such as printed books, academic publications, and even digital media. Whereas authority over the text once belonged to spiritual elites and lineage-based custodians, it now shifts to individual readers. The meanings of *Assikalaibineng* are no longer fixed, but fluid, shaped by personal interpretation, context, and usage.

According to functional reception theory, readers do not passively receive meaning from the text, they construct it actively instead. For instance, contemporary Muslims may read Assikalaibineng as a practical guide for marital preparation, spiritual tool for enhancing intimacy or cultural symbol reaffirming Bugis identity. Thus, the text functions differently across time and context: once a mystical manual for aristocrats, now a living ethical guide for everyday believers. Its value lies not merely in its original intent but in its adaptability, making *Assikalaibineng* a dynamic and enduring component of Bugis Islamic tradition.

Cultural Confluence: Integrating the Qur'an into Bugis Social Ethics

In Bugis society, *adat* (customary law) holds a central and authoritative role (Hazmi & Saidi, 2024). It is the manifestation of the Bugis worldview and functions as the highest norm regulating community behavior and social organization. Every individual within the circle of *adat* is considered an inseparable part of the collective social unit. Social mechanisms are shaped, guided, and sustained by the customs that have been internalized and institutionalized over generations. The belief that *adat* ensures the peace and happiness of community members has led to its enduring presence despite the evolution of society (Manuputty et al., 2024).

While social and cultural contexts may shift over time, the fundamental values of *adat* remain embedded in the social fabric and structure. These values shape not only behavioral norms but also perceptions of leadership, responsibility, social justice, and one's relationship with the Divine. Violations of *adat* are typically met with customary sanctions, which, despite occasionally conflicting with formal legal systems, are often upheld by the community as fair and just.

The process of integrating the Qur'an into Bugis cultural life, particularly in the *Assikalaibineng* manuscript can be visualized through the following dialectical model:

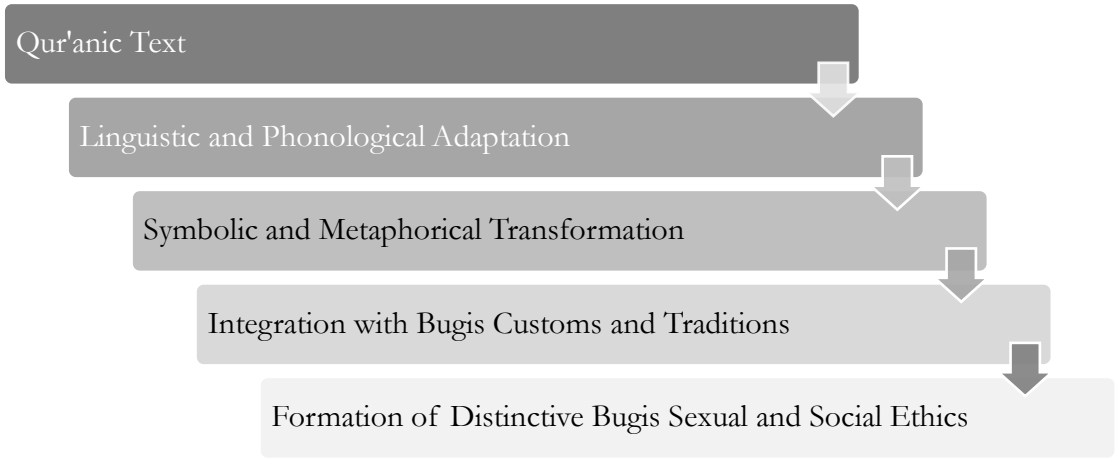


Figure 1. Model of Dialectical Interaction between the Qur'an and Bugis Local Culture in the *Assikalaibineng* Manuscripts

Figure 1 illustrates a dialectical model that captures the dynamic interaction between Qur'anic teachings and Bugis cultural values as reflected in the *Assikalaibineng* manuscripts. This interaction is not linear or unilateral; rather, it involves a multifaceted process of adaptation and reinterpretation. The process begins with the reception of Qur'anic text as the authoritative source of Islamic ethical values. However, this text undergoes linguistic and phonological adaptation to match the structural and phonetic features of the Bugis language. This adjustment reflects efforts to domesticate and vernacularize religious discourse, making it more accessible to a non-Arabic-speaking population.

Next, the Qur'anic verses experience symbolic and metaphorical transformation (Khan & Ali, 2021). Phrases such as *Sirāṭ al-Mustaqīm* and *Lailat al-Qadr* are reinterpreted within the context of Bugis marital life, signifying bodily positions or sacred intimate moments. These transformations do not undermine the sacredness of the Qur'an; rather, they demonstrate its capacity to resonate meaningfully within localized symbolic frameworks. The final stage is the integration of Islamic and Bugis values into a cohesive ethical system, particularly governing matters of sexuality, marriage, and social relationships. Through this integrative process, a distinct model of Bugis sexual and social ethics emerges, grounded in Islamic spirituality yet firmly rooted in local culture (Mahanani & Syafuddin, 2024; Said et al., 2024).

This model affirms that the interaction between the Qur'an and Bugis tradition is not a one-directional imposition of doctrine, but a reciprocal process of negotiation, cultural engagement, and ethical synthesis. The resulting tradition is one in which sacred

Islamic teachings and indigenous cultural expressions reinforce one another, shaping a unique socio-religious identity within the Bugis Muslim community (Pabbajah et al., 2021).

The Bugis people's obedience to *adat* can be seen clearly in their daily lives. A person who violates the established norms of *adat* is subject to communal sanctions, often socially or symbolically enforced. Even if such sanctions contradict formal legal frameworks or may seem punitive, the community continues to uphold them as legitimate and necessary for social cohesion. For the Bugis, adat does not merely serve as a social regulator. It is also a moral and theological system rooted in a deep belief in divine justice. The Creator (*Puang* or *Tuhan*) is the center of life, and *adat* is perceived as a manifestation of God's will. Thus, customs are not arbitrary; they are founded upon three core principles: ethics, morality, and justice. These elements form the ethical backbone of Bugis customary law (Smith & Wardatun, 2022).

Accordingly, the Bugis believe that peace, prosperity, and social harmony can only be achieved when *adat* is upheld as the guiding principle of life. *Adat* protects individuals from divine wrath, promotes justice among leaders, safeguards dignity, and prevents the spread of destructive traits such as greed, hypocrisy, betrayal, arrogance, and injustice (Fadli et al., 2024; Maarif, 2023). Despite political upheavals from colonial interventions to post-independence reforms, *adat* has not only persisted but has grown stronger. In the realm of marriage, for instance, the Bugis view the union not merely as a personal affair but as the fusion of two extended families. It involves complex considerations of social status, family honor, and communal recognition.

Marriage decisions are typically not made by the couple alone. Extended family members, including aunts, uncles, and siblings play vital roles in arranging and approving unions. Marriages conducted without family involvement are seen as *elopements* (*silariang*), and those who engage in such acts face severe social consequences, historically even punishable by death (P. et al., 1995).

The systematic transformation from exclusive knowledge to modern publications in the *Assikalaibineng* manuscript is arranged as in the chart below:

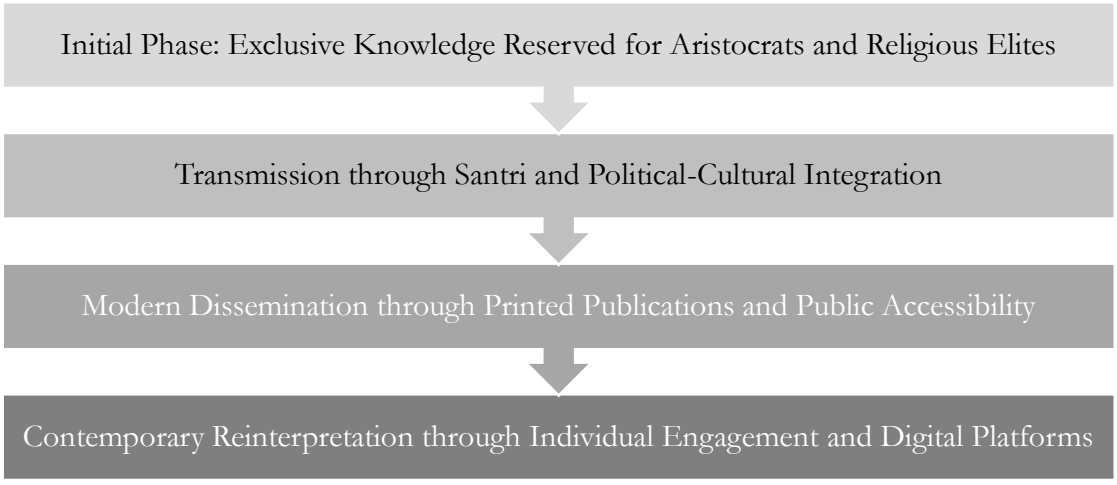


Figure 2. The Evolution of Knowledge Accessibility in the Assikalaibineng Tradition

Figure 2 illustrates the historical trajectory of *Assikalaibineng* knowledge transmission from a closed tradition reserved for elites to a democratized and widely

accessible source of ethical guidance. In its earliest phase, *Assikalaibineng* was a secretive knowledge system guarded by the Bugis aristocracy and religious elites. Access was highly restricted due to the sensitive nature of its content, especially topics related to sexuality and spirituality. The second phase saw the emergence of *santri* (Islamic students), whose engagement with Islamic learning allowed them to become knowledge-brokers. Through religious and political integration, they helped merge *Assikalaibineng* with the Bugis legal and moral framework (*pangngadareng*) thereby broadening its reach. The third phase was marked by textual publication, beginning with the philological work of scholars like Muhlis Hadrawi. His 2008 book, *Kitab Persetubuhan Bugis*, made this esoteric knowledge accessible to the general public, including those outside noble or religious lineages.

Today, in the digital era, *Assikalaibineng* continues to evolve. Platforms such as social media, digital archives, and independent study groups have played a major role in democratizing sacred knowledge. Readers now approach the text with diverse intentions: as a spiritual guide, a cultural heritage, or a practical manual for marriage preparation. This progression also marks a significant shift in authority, from traditional spiritual gatekeepers to individual interpreters. *Assikalaibineng* is no longer static; it is a living tradition, continuously reinterpreted in response to the changing needs of Bugis society.

Conclusion

The study of the performative reading of the Qur'anic text in the *Lontara Assikalaibineng* reveals the creative and dynamic interpretation of Islamic values on marriage, particularly sexual relations, by Bugis Muslims. This is achieved through a process of cultural adaptation and integration with local traditions. Such integration is evident in the semantic transformations of Qur'anic verses recited during intercourse, which involve phonological negotiation, metaphorical rearticulation, and symbolic reinterpretation. These processes illustrate how sacred texts are not merely received passively but are actively recontextualized to reflect local linguistic structures and cultural meaning systems. Originally, the *Assikalaibineng* manuscript was transmitted through mystical and aristocratic channels, deeply infused with Qur'anic allusions and Sufi symbolism. Its knowledge was guarded and considered esoteric, reserved for Bugis elites. However, over time, this exclusive knowledge has become increasingly accessible to the wider public particularly to younger generations through modern textual forms, including printed books, translations, and digital media.

Reception theory provides a useful lens through which to understand this shift, not merely as a change in access, but also as a transformation in meaning, interpretation, and function. Today, the *Assikalaibineng* text is no longer viewed solely as a rigid doctrinal manual, but as a cultural and spiritual resource that individuals engage with flexibly, whether for marital preparation, ethical guidance, or cultural identity formation. Its evolution from oral, elite-centered knowledge to a democratized textual tradition reflects a broader shift in religious authority and knowledge production in Bugis society. It also exemplifies the harmonious coexistence and even mutual enrichment of Islamic values and local wisdom.

Future research might explore the gendered reception of *Assikalaibineng*, particularly how Bugis women interpret, negotiate, or challenge the roles and meanings assigned to them in the texts. While current scholarship often centers on male perspectives

or general usage, a feminist or gender-sensitive approach could uncover how women function as agents of reinterpretation or as subjects of religious-cultural discourse. Additionally, the digital reception of *Assikalaibineng* through social media, online classes, or marriage preparation forums remains an underexplored area that could reveal how this tradition adapts in contemporary digital culture. Another important direction for future inquiry is intertextual research tracing how *Assikalaibineng* has influenced or been referenced in other Islamic texts. As preliminary evidence suggests, several Qur'anic quotations found in *Assikalaibineng* also appear in works such as *Fatḥ al-Izār*. Such findings warrant deeper investigation into the textual networks and intellectual exchanges across Islamic manuscript traditions in the archipelago.

CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

Basri: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Project administration, Resources, Software, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, and Writing – review & editing. **Moh. Azwar Hairul:** Conceptualization, Supervision, Validation, and Writing – review & editing. **Misbahuddin Assad:** Validator and Translator.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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