



## Rite and Religion: Sangia Wambulu First Indigenous Imam of Buton Sultanate

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to determine the figure of Sangia Wambulu as the first indigenous imam/priest in the Buton kingdom. The method used is descriptive qualitative techniques. Based on field research, it is known that Sangia Wambulu was one of the warlords of the Buton sultanate who was later chosen as the imam of the keratin buton grand mosque by Sangia Waero-ero as the third priest of the Buton sultanate. Sangia Wambulu had an important role in the spread of Islam in the Sultanate of Buton in the 16th century.

**Keywords:** *Buton Sultanate; Grave Pilgrimage; Sangia Wambulu*

### **Introduction**

Buton Sultanate is a maritime-style sultanate consisting of many islands, diverse tribes, and languages. Buton Sultanate region is in the midst of great power, namely Makassar, Ternate, and the Netherlands. The sultanate can still maintain its legitimacy until it reaches glory, despite the pressure of these two conditions. The glory of the Buton Sultanate is strongly influenced by the existence of the port. Buton Harbor was a very important port at that time. The sea access that stretches across the archipelago makes Buton Harbor a very important port to visit. The emergence of trade routes has triggered the establishment of trade networks and the growth and development of the central cities of the empire, with its cities since the 13-18 century AD (Tjandrasamita, 2009).

The kingdom of Butun continued to grow until the entry of Islam into Butun through Ternate in the mid-16th century AD. The change of Butun to the empire occurred in 1542 AD along with the inauguration of Lakilaponto as the first Sultan of Buton, with the title Sultan Murhum Kaimuddin Khalifatul Khamis. Buton Sultanate reached its glory in the 17th century AD. Butun Sultanate ended in 1960 during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Falihi Kaimuddin (Zuhdi, 2010). Abdul Wahid was one of the Sufi scholars who succeeded in Islamizing the kingdom of Buton around the 16th century AD (Malik, 1998). With the success of Abdul Wahid's Islamization mission in Buton, it also enabled him to come with Islamic teachings in Muna.

The propagators of Islam in the past are a characteristic inherent in themselves, because they have a high moral responsibility for the dissemination of Islamic teachings at that time, especially if the

mission in an area has been successful. Modern society is marked by advances in science and technology that continue to develop, in which there are various life phenomena that are very interesting to be observed both religious life and social-cultural life, not least in Indonesia. One of the cultural styles that also colors the Islamic tradition in Indonesia is the tradition of pilgrimage to the tombs of saints or persons deemed sacred.

Actually, every culture or tradition preserved by people in various regions of the archipelago, must have positive values, including the tradition of grave pilgrimage in Buton society. For the people of Buton, the tradition of grave pilgrimage in addition to fostering unity and unity and a sense of togetherness among fellow citizens, also to pray for the spirits buried in that place to be given forgiveness, spaciousness, and placed in a proper place in the sight of Allah SWT

Pilgrimage in the Islamic tradition is part of religious rituals and has become a culture in a society (van Doorn-Harder, & de Jong, 2001). Culture itself has an understanding of the whole way of life of society or all aspects of human thought and behavior that are inherited include and touch on various aspects of life (Li, 1999). Culture is also interpreted as a process or the creation, taste, and human initiative in responding to the challenges of life that come from the natural surroundings.

This ritual is then carried out by combining the two elements, namely elements of adat and elements of Islamic religion (Porterfield, 2009). In this case, they still retain the customs that have existed for a long time and then combine them with the teachings of Islam that they have adopted while still considering all applicable provisions without leaving their old habits. These two elements are then allowed to remain alive in their lives so that they become a form of reference to act in their daily lives.

Visitors to the tomb come not only to make a pilgrimage, but more than that aims to ask for blessings from the deceased person. In general, people have the view that the ancestral tombs have special values for the person concerned. People believe that ancestors can be asked for help. At a time when science was rapidly advancing, it turned out to be on a pilgrimage to the guardian's grave and the remnants of their legacy, many people were still intensively carried out, even by people who were already relatively high in knowledge (Ariyani, 2009). The culture of a tribe is applied in patterns of behavior and daily life, one of which is the life cycle rituals of Acciaoli, G. (1985). In traditional societies, life cycle rituals are usually intended for ancestors or prayer ceremonies, and believe in the existence of ancestors and rituals, religious, and have traditions that are still thick today.

Clifford Geertz that religion is a cultural system, because it is centered on human thoughts and feelings which are then used as a reference to take action also to interpret the reality faced (Geertz, 1992). Generally, the community already considers that the grave must be respected. This is also evidenced by the care and maintenance by the tomb caretakers. Honor is done with the assumption that the tomb is a final resting place for humans. In addition, for people who believe in a tomb can provide something that is desired for those who visit it.

During the 1610 Sultanate of Buton, Sangia Wambulu was appointed as the Imam of the Great Mosque of the Buton Palace. He was the first native son of Buton who served as an imam, previously filled with descendants of Shaykh Abdul Wahid who was the first imam of the great mosque of Keraton Buton from Medina. Shaykh Abdul Wahid himself was the first carrier of Islam in Buton, formerly from Johor because his father was the Sultan of Johor. After being considered mature in understanding his religion he was sent by his father to spread Islam in Buton, but before that, he stopped first at Adonara. Sangia wambulu tomb site is used as one of the religious tourism destinations in Central Buton Regency.

## ***Methodology***

This is a qualitative descriptive study, data obtained from information provided by key informants and additional informants relating to the problem under study. The study was conducted in the Sangia Wambulu Village, Sangia Wambulu District, Central Buton City, Southeast Sulawesi.

Data collection methods in this study are conducted on the Natural Setting (natural conditions), primary data sources, and data collection techniques more on participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observations were made by researchers to observe the activities of informants in the ongoing process of the Sangia Wambulu tomb pilgrimage ceremony since the preparation of the ceremony until the end of the preparation of the Sangia Wambulu tomb pilgrimage ceremony. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain information data from informants who have been determined through a question and answer process around the problem in the study, in this case, the researcher made a guide to simple questions that will be asked to the speakers, namely, traditional chief, priest, preacher. Documentation is done to find data by utilizing transcript records, books, journals, inscriptions, and so forth. Such as recordings, videos, interviews, and photographs.

## ***Results and Discussion***

### ***The Origin of Sangia Wambulu***

Sangia Wambulu was actually named La Ode Ali, people named him also La Silipa. He was called the son of Sangia Yi Rape, so he was the grandson of La Kilaponto - Sultan Murhum, the first Sultan of Buton. But there are also some people who think differently, that in fact, he is the son of La Kilaponto himself, related to Sangia Yi Rape. He was the fourth Imam of the Great Palace of the Palace of Buton, and became the first local person to lead the prayers at the central mosque of the sultanate. He was appointed as imam at the mosque of the Sultanate of Buton after two priests from the Syeh Abdul Wahid breed relinquished their positions. Two of the Syeh-derived Abdul Priests of the Arabs were a famous person named Lebe Pangulu or Imamu Malanga and Imamu Sangia Wa Ero-Ero. An intrigue that sparked conflict occurred with hard, spurred anomalies that flirt in the internal elite of the empire.

Based on Laode Yusril's narrative, Sangia Wambulu was the first native priest in the Buton sultanate in the 16th century. He was included as the fourth imam after Sheikh Abdul Wahid and his two children. Sangia Waero-ero was the third priest of the Sultanate of Buton who gave confidence to Sangia Wambulu to replace him as priest of the great mosque of Buton. During his time as the priest of the fame of Sangia Wambulu, it was heard to the remote corners of Buton that made the king feel entranced to his position, resulting in a dispute between the King and Sangia Wambulu. Sangia Wambulu then decided to leave the palace and chose to settle in a village called Sangia Wambulu, where he spent his years in the village until he died.

### ***Stages of Ritual Implementation***

The ritual of pilgrimage is led by Kabulosi, a kabulosi is chosen from his predecessors and fulfills the requirements of widows and menopause, women who are chosen as canulosi must give their lives to take care of Sangia Wambulu's grave. Kabulosi is also prohibited from leaving the house except for performing the pilgrimage ritual.

Before making a visit to the Kabulosi tomb, Kabulosi and pilgrims make a visit to the tomb of the guardian of the former Sangia Wambulu tomb. Before entering the tomb complex pilgrims must purify themselves with ablution water. For men, they must use sarong and kopih while for women they

must use a veil and sarong. For women who are menstruating are not allowed to enter the tomb complex. After entering the tomb of Sangia Wambulu, the Kabulosi leader will say a prayer. This ritual has been going on for three centuries. The ritual is usually carried out for 1 hour.

Based on the research informant's explanation, it is known that the ceremony should ideally be conducted at 2 pm. For pilgrims who want to perform pilgrims should use skullcap and sarong for men as a form of appreciation to Sangia Wambulu.

### ***The Meaning of the Tool or Equipment Used***

Symbols are objects, events, speech sounds, or written forms that are given meaning by humans. These symbols can be in the form of language, facial expressions, gestures, spatial planning, and ritual objects (Saifuddin, 2001). In the Sangia Wambulu pilgrimage activity, there are various ritual objects such as betel, areca nut, and matches. These objects function as a link between pilgrims and the spirit of Sangia Wambulu. Every object used as a symbol for the people of Buton. The following describes the meaning of each object: betel, areca nut, matches.

According to La Yusri, the instrument of the Sangia Wambulu pilgrimage ritual ceremonies such as betel, areca nut, matches, and coconut oil are basic skills that must be present in every ritual ceremony performed by the Buton people. According to the belief of the Butonese media used as ceremonial equipment are objects favored by the spirit so that it is easier to connect with the unseen world.

### ***Kabulosi***

Kabulosi consists of 7 people who are responsible for stealing the sangia wambulu, the number of kabulosi must be odd.



Figure 1. Kabulosi which consists of 7 old widows

Based on informant interviews it was known that *kabulosi* was a person chosen by the Buton sultanate but gradually shifted because *Kabulosi* was then chosen from the Sangia Wambulu village, there were certain criteria for becoming *kabulosi* namely having to have kinship or kinship with Sangia Wambulu. In addition, the person chosen to be a *Kabulosi* must be a widow and have been in menopause so that he will always be in a state of holiness when going to do the tomb pilgrimage ritual.

According to him, Yusri, when someone wants to be a *Kabulosi* does not necessarily immediately become a *Kabulosi*. He must have a kinship with Sangia Wambulu besides that he must also be able to illuminate the inner eyes so that when performing rituals he can connect with Sangia Wambulu.

*Kabulosi* as the ritual leader lives in a house built with non-government funds collected by the community, according to Marsali.



Figure 2. *Kabulosi*'s house

According to the informants' statement, the *Kabulosi* house was originally established by the community but in the end, got help from the government because the *Kabulosi* house is one of the religious tourism sites in Sangia Wambulu village. *Kabulosi* house is specifically for pilgrims. Before going to the tomb of Wambulu sangia, every pilgrim must stop at the *Kabulosi*'s house to find out the etiquette in the pilgrimage and give alms/compensation to the *Kabulosi* with an unspecified amount.



Figure 3. Boat owned by Sangia Wambulu

Buton Sultanate is one of maritime-style kingdoms so it is not surprising that Sangia Wambulu has a boat and a hobby of fishing as a pastime.



Figure 4. One of the ritual processions

Isonamie (taking care of all the ritual ceremonial equipment such as areca nut, coconut oil, incense including the match), Kabulosi (guardian of food and ritual implementers) and oba'a (escorting Kabulosi) touch the tomb 3 times with matters of sunset so we who live are still bright so if your eyes are closed it is the same as the setting sun becomes dark. In the parcel there are betel and areca nut to be

served to the magical creatures before rubbing the tip of the tomb 3 times using oil. So if anyone can clean the grave cleanliness depends on the community.

### ***Tomb Pilgrimage***

Pilgrimage is now a common phenomenon that is found in a society. The community knows the pilgrimage to honor relatives who have died or honor important figures who have died, such as pilgrimages to the tomb of Sangia Wambulu in Buton. Generally these pilgrimage activities aside from being a reminder of the coming of death, remembering the struggles of the saints are also not a few of the pilgrims who make a pilgrimage to seek blessings to make their sustenance, facilitated soul mate or perhaps to occupy certain positions and succeed in the election.

Based on the informant's interview results it is known that the informant believes that Sangia Wambulu has *kharomah* as an imam who broadcasts the religion of Islam, a pilgrimage to his grave is part of rites and rituals as a medium to achieve his wishes so that his prayers are answered. The blunder of sangia wambulu is proven by the fulfillment of the pilgrimage prayer in which her three children graduate to become members of the legislature.

According to informants, Sangia Wambulu's tomb pilgrimage ritual is something that has been carried down for generations and has become a local custom. The person in charge of leading the ceremony is *Kabulosi*.



Figure 5. Tomb complex of Sangia Wambulu

According to the tomb priest, Sangia Wambulu was buried in a cemetery complex along with two true guards. While the wife of Sangia Wambulu is buried separately. The purpose of the tomb pilgrims varies when political contestation takes place not infrequently many pilgrims come to ask for prayer.

Based on informant interviews it was found that Wednesday and Friday are ritual days. On Friday the ritual is usually carried out at 2 pm after Friday prayers. Pilgrims who came not only from Buton, but also came from other regions such as Kalimantan, Banjarmasin, West Kutai, Samarinda, Java, Tidore, Makassar, Mataram, Japan and China. Some pilgrims sometimes ask the tomb priest to represent his prayer. The tomb pilgrimage ritual is still well preserved even in the 9-year term of office of the tomb priest who is currently serving no time for rituals. The Tomb of Sangia Wambulu is used as one of the religious tourism destinations in Buton. Before heading to the tomb of pilgrims directed to stop at the Kabulosi's house to give alms.

The most crowded time for pilgrims is Friday night and it is not uncommon for pilgrims to even stay at the gravesite. During the month of Ramadan, the tomb of Sangia Wambulu is also crowded with pilgrims. Sometimes there are pilgrims from outside the city such as Maluku. The number of pilgrims who come to do religious tourism in the Tomb of Wambulu Sangia is inseparable from its kekharomahanya. Most pilgrims who come have the intention to ask or want something. Even when the Ambon trouble happened many Butonese who migrated to Ambon were repatriated back to Buton, they then made a pilgrimage to the tomb of Sangia Wambulu by asking for prayers and blessing to fight with Ambon. Before Sangia Wambulu passed away he had many followers in emlakuka syiar Islam, he was a charismatic scholar and had a Kharomah. Buton people interpret the grave pilgrimage as an effort to preserve customs and culture and maintain friendship with fellow humans. For the Buton people, the relationship between humans is not cut off even when humans die.

### **Conclusion**

Sangia Wamulu was the first priest of the indigenous group in the Sultanate of Buton, sangia wambulu was considered to have high charisma and charismatics. So it is not surprising that for 3 centuries the pilgrimage of the Wambulu sangia pilgrimage ritual is still ongoing. The person who leads the tomb pilgrimage ritual is called a Kabulosi. Pilgrims who came to the tomb of Sangia Wambulu did not only come from the Central Buton region, but some even came from outside the city such as Kalimantan, Java, Samarinda, Kutai, Maluku, Ternate, Tidore, Japan and China. Many pilgrims believe that the prayers or prayers offered at the tomb of Sangia Wambulu will surely be granted with the permission of Allah SWT.

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