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Pakon. A Forgotten Tradition from Lombok**Abstract**

This article discusses an unknown tradition from the Malay Archipelago, namely the island of Lombok. The article describes a spirit possession ceremony, as it was practised in East Lombok before being subject to a ban in 1984. It also explains the reasons for prohibition and explores a recent revival of the tradition. The discussion draws a parallel with similar traditions from late colonial Malaysia. Aside from similar functions as healing rites, the traditions many times use the same ceremonial equipment during the ceremonies and have identical symbols. This encourages us to look for connections between the Sasaks in Lombok and the Malays in Malaysia and Sumatra. The article suggests some direct connections between the two, but also takes indirect connections into consideration, for example, the rule of the Bugis-Makassarese people, who played an important role in both of these corners of the archipelago.

Keywords: spirit possession, healing rites, dance performance, Lombok, Malay peninsula, Bugis-Makassarese, Islamic law

While the traditions of the Malay Archipelago attract many scholarly debates and a considerable amount of research, we must be aware of the fact there exist certain points of particular interest that draw much more attention than other, less researched, fields. The geographical focus of a great proportion of scholarly papers is Java, Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, which between them form only the western part of this vast geographical area, leaving out thousands of other islands and ethnic groups. Although there are of



course scholars whose research focuses on these more remote regions, their numbers are still relatively low compared to those who focus on the aforementioned ‘centres’ of archipelagic Southeast Asia. The island of Lombok is part of this less researched area, with most of the scholarly attention directed to its western neighbour, Bali. Apart from a handful of articles and books dedicated to the original inhabitants of the island, in the majority of works Lombok tends to appear only in comparison to Bali – perhaps owing to the connected history of these two islands. Lombok used to be under direct Balinese control¹ from 1740, at the latest, until the arrival of the Dutch in 1894. This means not only that the culture of the Sasaks – the indigenous people of Lombok – is influenced by Bali, but also that there are still small groups of Balinese living in western Lombok.² In many scholarly works, the traditions of the Sasaks (who are predominantly Muslim)³ are mainly mentioned in contrast to that of the Hindu Balinese. This means that many Sasak rituals remain obscure. Although one finds a considerable amount of material on customs influenced by Hinduism, other parts of traditional life and ceremonies are less known. In this article, I intend to give a brief account of a Sasak ceremony of East Lombok, which I came across during a visit in July 2019. To the best of my knowledge, this tradition, called *Pakon*, has not been discussed in detail in academic papers up to date.⁴

A description of *Pakon*

I first heard about *Pakon* in the village of Pengadangan, located in the Pringgasele subdistrict in East Lombok. The village itself is going through a cultural revival directed by village elders and the local government. Their goal is to attract more tourists, for which reason they started to promote their regional culture by staging wayang performances and different musical ensembles. Although the repertoire was quite impressive, one art form was conspicuously missing, and so I asked representatives if there were any traditional dances in the village. The reply that there used to be one, but they do not wish to revive

¹ Lombok was conquered by the Balinese in two stages, with the first conquest – that of West Lombok – taking place around the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, and the second phase – that of East Lombok – around the year 1740. Different scholars give different dates, regarding their own researches. Some of these can be found in David D. Harnish, ‘Tensions between Adat (Custom) and Agama (Religion) in the Music of Lombok’, in: David D. Harnish and Anne K. Rasmussen (ed.), *Divine Inspirations. Music & Islam in Indonesia*, New York 2011, p. 88; David D. Harnish, ‘New Lines, Shifting Identities. Interpreting Change at the Lingsar Festival in Lombok, Indonesia’, *Ethnomusicology* 49/1 (2005) p. 3; Dr. Erni Budiwanti, *Islam Sasak. Wetu Telu Versus Waktu Lima*, Yogyakarta 2000, p. 9; Alfons van der Kraan, ‘Selaparang under Balinese and Dutch Rule’ (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1976), pp. 5–7.

² Budiwanti, *Islam Sasak*, pp. 6–7.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ I have found only one Bachelor’s Degree thesis on this tradition in Indonesian, submitted in 2017 to the University of Mataram, Lombok. However, because the website of this university is only accessible for the university’s faculty, I could not consult it. In any case, I give here the bibliographic details of the work: Fathullah Huzami Rapsanjani, ‘Nilai Sosial Ritual Tari Pakon Desa Lenek, Raman Biak, Aikmel, Lombok Timur’ (Bachelor’s degree thesis, Universitas Mataram, 2017).

it, because ‘it contradicts the laws of Islam’. This was *Pakon*. They seemed to be content with most of the young people not knowing this dance anymore, as since the 1980s the practice has been banned and abandoned. For the younger generation, the name *Pakon* does not sound familiar anymore. I was told, however, that the old practitioners of *Pakon* are still alive and well, and if I was interested I could meet them.

Later that day I met Bapak L. who, although never having been a *Pakon* dancer, had immense knowledge about the practice because he used to be among the musicians who play music for every *Pakon* ceremony. He described to me⁵ that *Pakon* was a spirit expulsion ceremony. It was held when someone from a village, mainly an elderly woman, had pain in their waists or knees. According to the tradition of Pengadangan these women could only be healed with the help of supernatural powers brought along by a spirit. For this, they needed a special person – a medium, called *koro* in the local dialect – who could communicate with these entities. He would invite the spirit to the body of the patient, and ask it to cure the sick person. After this, however, the spirit never wanted to leave the body again, and this was the reason why *Pakon* was called for. During *Pakon*, the old woman possessed by the spirit would dance for three, seven or nine consecutive nights, only resting during daytime. The exact time of the dance would vary according to the traditions of the particular village, as Bapak L. told me *Pakon* was not only held in Pengadangan but in other nearby villages as well. In Pengadangan, the dance would start during the evening and last until 4 a.m., but in other places it could last until noon the following day.

After the *koro* had invited the spirit with the smoke of incense, the patient would fall unconscious and could only be awakened with a melody played by a flute (*suling*). From this moment, the woman was possessed (*roganidar*), and would immediately start to dance. Her dance was wild and energetic, containing moments when she cut her own arm with a Javanese dagger (*keris*), and drank her own flowing blood. At other moments she would dance barefoot upon hot embers. In both cases, the woman’s skin was unharmed after the ceremony, as if it had never been hurt (a sign of the power of the spirit, according to Bapak L.). *Pakon* was regarded as an attraction in the village. The ceremony attracted everyone, and every night the area around the dancer would be crowded with spectators. This was due to the fact that in a small village like Pengadangan, one would not find many amusements. Village life, such as it is, is usually not very eventful, so the people look for entertainment anywhere they can. Bapak L. emphasised this to me explicitly. On the other hand, I found another obvious reason for its popularity. The ceremony’s main purpose was not entertainment, but healing. As I have noted before, the invited spirit had to cure the woman in question – but she was not the only person to be cured during these days. Throughout the dances, anyone who was suffering from any kind of illness or pain could step forward and ask the dancer (or, the spirit in the dancer) to cure him or her. The dancer would to hit any parts of her body that were causing trouble with

⁵ The coming section, unless indicated otherwise, is based upon the interview I conducted with Bapak L. on 09 July 2019 in Pengadangan.

palm blossoms (*mayang*). Anyone coming to ask for some remedy for his or her illness was also hit with these palm blossoms. They believed that the blossoms channeled the healing powers from the spirit to the patient. I believe that this aspect of *Pakon* could attract even more people, as this was not only a spectacular ceremony, but also a useful one, whereby the sick can be healed.

The ceremony also served as a kind of a special gathering as well, because the inhabitants of the village always had to participate in the preparations of the ceremony. To invite the spirit, they needed to make a large offering of chickens, with the exact number depending on the type of spirit. For the strongest spirits, the number of chickens required was so high – up to 27 chickens – that many households had to cooperate to reach the required number. On other occasions, people in Pengadangan would make offerings of other kinds of food, such as rice, coconut and sugar canes. The contribution of musicians was also crucial, as the spirit would always wish to dance. For a *Pakon*, skilled musicians with high stamina were needed, as the dancer could dance constantly for two hours, only stopping to resume again soon after. Bapak L. who was always among the musicians during *Pakon*, told me that it was the most exhausting job, as after playing for hours the musicians were always out of breath. Among the instruments there had to be one cymbal (*rincik*), two big drums (*gendang beleq*), one flute (*suling*), a kind of a percussion instrument (*tepuk*) and a trumpet (*preret*). Gongs were never played. The end of the last day of the ceremony is of particular interest. For this climactic moment, a paper model of a boat or an airship was prepared. At the culmination of the ceremony, it was believed the spirit left the body of the dancer and moved into the paper model. This was due to the belief that a spirit had to leave not only the body of the person in question, but the whole village as well. As most of the spirits were not from the village, or not even from Lombok, they needed a boat or an airship for their journey home. This moment was called ‘the sailing away’ (*berlayar*) of the spirit, indicating the importance of long distance transportation, hence the foreign origin of many spirits.

As I have pointed out, *Pakon* was an important part of village life, because it did not just provide entertainment and a reason for a big gathering, but was also a means of curing the sick in the village. Considering this fact, the disappearance of *Pakon* during the 1980s might sound surprising. On the other hand, Bapak L. – and every person of the same age – agreed that it is much better without *Pakon*, because it ‘contradicted the laws of Islam’ (*bertentangan dengan agama*). He explained to me that during earlier times, Islamic education in the village was not widespread, therefore the people of Pengadangan did not know much about the rules of religion. During the 1980s, the situation improved, and after a while it became clear that on religious grounds *Pakon* could not be tolerated any more. Local governments even officially banned the practice in 1984. There are various reasons for the ban, of which I will only mention the most important one. As I have shown, the ceremony was centred around the invitation of a strong spirit, for whom a great offering was made. While belief in spirits is part of the Islamic faith, in this case it was the veneration of them that was condemned. Many people in the village saw spirits as minor deities (*dewa*) and worshipped them. Most of the people who became

Pakon dancers also conducted rituals worshipping magical artefacts and other spirits with magical powers besides that of God. This could be understood as a sign of unbelief in God: choosing to worship these deities instead. By this they would violate the first pillar of Islam, the *shahāda*, which states ‘there are no other gods besides God’. Furthermore, the spirits contacted through *Pakon* were always evil spirits (*jin kasar*) or even unbelieving spirits (*jin kafir*), and asking help from such entities is always condemnable.

The downfall of *Pakon* in Pengadangan falls well within the tendency of the rise of modernist Islam in Lombok. Islam was never a unified religion on the island, as from the introduction of the faith there were two main versions. The first wave of Islamisation⁶ came to northern Lombok in the 16th century with the arrival of Javanese saints, who spread Islam in its mystical, Sufi form, which was tolerant with local traditions. The second wave⁷ came not long after this, from Makassar, to the eastern part of the island. The Makassarese people brought a much stricter and more orthodox style Islam compared to that of the Javanese. Later on, these two versions of Islam spread through the whole island, with the syncretic form becoming strong in the northern and western parts of Lombok, while the more orthodox form in the east, centre and south. Although this distinction is present since the beginning, these two forms did not start to divide inhabitants until the 19th century, when more and more Sasak could travel to Mecca for pilgrimage.⁸ These people saw the differences between Islam in the holy city and in their village, so they opened schools and started to teach what they considered ‘pure’ Islam. This led to the rise of a new social class, the so-called *tuan guru* (religious teacher),⁹ who were trying to introduce a more orthodox approach of Islam to their fellow Sasak, and to root out religious syncretism. It was partly because of them that Islam became the main ideology accompanying calls for freedom from the Hindu Balinese rulers.¹⁰ After the Dutch took control of Lombok in 1894, the *tuan gurus* started an even stronger resistance against the new oppressors, and Islam quickly emerged as a cardinal point of identity for the Sasak.¹¹ This not only led to the propagation of Islam against the Christian Dutch rulers, but *tuan gurus* also agitated against local pre-Islamic traditions (*adat*), still practiced among the majority of the population.¹² It was during these times when the terms *Waktu Telu*, and *Waktu Lima* emerged.¹³ These terms made the distinction between syncretic and orthodox Islam almost official, thus dividing the Muslim inhabitants of Lombok into two groups. The adherents of *Waktu Telu* (or *Wetu Telu*), whose religious life mixes Islam

⁶ Budiwanti, *Islam Sasak*, pp. 286–288.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 288 and David D. Harnish, ‘Worlds of Wayang Sasak. Music, Performance, and Negotiations of Religion and Modernity’, *Asian Music* 34/2 (2003) p. 94.

⁸ Harnish, ‘Worlds of Wayang Sasak’, p. 94.

⁹ Budiwanti, *Islam Sasak*, pp. 10–11.

¹⁰ Harnish, ‘New Lines’, p. 14.

¹¹ Harnish, ‘Worlds of Wayang Sasak’, pp. 91–94.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 95.

¹³ No one really knows when did these categories appear first, but they certainly did not exist before the 20th century. Many locals think that this distinction was invented by the Dutch to divide the Sasak population. *Ibidem*, p. 116, endnote 19.

with many pre-Islamic rites and practices, such as Sasak ancestor worship¹⁴ and Hindu traditions, forms one group,¹⁵ and the adherents of *Waktu Lima*, whose Islam is more strict and orthodox, forms the other.¹⁶ After the Indonesian declaration of independence, the followers of *Wetu Telu* were stigmatised as being an uncivilised and backwards people, who do not know Islam correctly,¹⁷ so their numbers started to drop, but they were still the majority population up until the middle of the 20th century,¹⁸ Because most of them were farmers, many were killed during the political upheaval of 1965–1966, while most of the others converted to *Waktu Lima* out of fear.¹⁹ This drastically decreased their numbers, and *Wetu Telu* syncretic practices were condemned by the *Waktu Lima*. Although during the 1980s the local government tried to preserve some *Wetu Telu* traditions,²⁰ their numbers are rapidly decreasing ever since. *Wetu Telu* holy places are disappearing and the few remaining ones started to emphasise their connections with Islam, rather than with ancestor worship.²¹ It is not uncommon that more orthodox Muslims try to agitate against *Wetu Telu* rites on the basis they are un-Islamic.²² While at the beginning of the 20th century *Wetu Telu* was still the majority, by the beginning of the 21st century, the followers of *Wetu Telu* consisted less than 2% of the population.²³ As previously pointed out, *Pakon* is strongly connected to spirit worship, and as such it is part of the *Wetu Telu* tradition, which met its downfall at the same time when *Waktu Lima* was on the rise. As religious education became more widespread in the village, the people of Pengadangan came to the conclusion that *Pakon* as part of the *Wetu Telu* tradition should be removed from their life.

After the ban of 1984, *Pakon* completely disappeared from the village. As my informants were all from Pengadangan, I cannot tell about the situation in other villages of eastern Lombok, but I have reason to surmise the situation might have been similar elsewhere too. This is because, according to an internet article²⁴ to be found on the Lombok-based website LombokPost, *Pakon* was ‘revived’ (*meghidupkan kembali*) in 2016. But the revival did not take place in Pengadangan (where it is still not in practice) but in another village in East Lombok called Lenek.²⁵ If it had to be ‘revived’ in another

¹⁴ Budiwanti, *Islam Sasak*, pp. 7–8.

¹⁵ Ibidem, pp. 134–135.

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 7–8.

¹⁷ Harnish, ‘New Lines’, pp. 14–15.

¹⁸ David D. Harnish, ‘Music, Myth, and Liturgy at the Lingsar Temple Festival in Lombok, Indonesia’, *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 29 (1997) p. 103, endnote 3.

¹⁹ Harnish, ‘New Lines’, pp. 14–15 and Harnish, ‘Worlds of Wayang Sasak’, pp. 94–95.

²⁰ Festivals and religious ceremonies were protected and advertised by the government at Lingsar and Bayan, both important sacral places for the *wetu telu*. Budiwanti, *Islam Sasak*, p. 64 and Harnish, ‘New Lines’, p. 15.

²¹ Harnish, ‘Music, Myth, and Liturgy’, p. 80.

²² Ibidem, p. 83.

²³ Harnish, ‘New Lines’, p. 5.

²⁴ *Festival Paer Lenek* (2016), viewed 19 October 2019, <<https://www.lombokpost.net/2016/09/06/festival-paer-lenek-hidupkan-kembali-aura-magis-tari-pakon/>>.

²⁵ It might be interesting to mention, that Harnish briefly tells us about this village as well. In 1989 he met an individual called Rahil in Lenek, who was proud of his adherence to *Waktu Telu*. He was a leader of an arts

village, it can be assumed it also fell out of practice beyond Pengadangan. Although a detailed description is not given in the report, it seems obvious that the dance in question is the same *Pakon* that Bapak L. described to me. The article informs us about elderly women dancing on top of embers, about flowers and incense and about the magical aura surrounding the whole performance. It also mentions the dance's strong connections with healing, and the fact that during the performance the dancers are possessed by spirits. The article is proud to tell us that a long-lost tradition of East Lombok has been revived. The revival did not stop here. A short news programme broadcasted in 2019 informs us²⁶ that *Pakon* was held again in the same village, Lenek, during a festival. In this video we can witness some elderly people dancing on embers, and see the offerings. Although we can see some differences between this performance (adding some Balinese flavour and changing the original music ensemble to that of a gamelan) and the description of Bapak L., the differences are only minor and can be ascribed to the intention of making *Pakon* more palatable to tourists. As we learn from the broadcast, *Pakon* is a dance performance which could encourage more tourists to visit Lombok. The changes could also be a response to old accusations from a religious point of view. Desacralising this dance might be a good – though not perfect – defence against accusations on religious grounds. On the other hand, it is an interesting fact that neither the internet article nor the broadcast mentions anything about Islam. They both mention that *Pakon* is an old healing dance that has disappeared and been revived of late, but they do not connect its disappearance with Islam. While the article says nothing about the reasons of *Pakon's* past downfall, the broadcast blames modernisation and negligence on the part of the younger generation.

Searching for the origins

If we examine the different spirit possession ceremonies of the Malay Archipelago, we can find many related to *Pakon*. While some of them are only partially similar, with only the fact of the possession as a common feature, others share so many details with *Pakon* that it begs attention. In some occurrences, one is tempted to think these traditions might be related. One such example can be found in the Malay Peninsula. Walter William Skeat's *Malay Magic*, first published in 1900, gives many accounts on peninsular Malay ceremonies. In a section on healing rites, he describes the belief of peninsular Malays that illnesses were caused by evil spirits (*badi*),²⁷ who were descendants of a certain jinn

organisation in Lenek. Though *Pakon* is not mentioned explicitly in this article, but we learn that this organisation sought to preserve traditional Sasak arts, which might give us a clue why *Pakon* was revived here and not in another village. Harnish, 'Worlds of Wayang Sasak', pp. 102–103.

²⁶ *Pakon, Seni Tari Ritual Pengobatan dari Desa Lenek* (2019), viewed 5 November 2019, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1pOvO6v68E>>.

²⁷ William Walter Skeat, *Malay Magic. An Introduction to the Folklore and Popular Religion of the Malay Peninsula*, London 1900, pp. 427–429.

called Ibn Ujan (or Ibnu Jan). If someone suffered from some kind of illness, they would perform a ceremony to expel the *badi* from the patient's body, curing the afflicted person.

Skeat describes many different healing ceremonies in detail, of which two require our special attention. In one of these,²⁸ a special object was needed as a new home for the exorcised spirit. While this object could have many different shapes, it was usually a small model of a boat. This boat (*lancang*)²⁹ was fastened to the wrist of the sick person with a long thread, which functioned as a bridge between the boat and the patient, where the spirit could move. To appease the spirit, incense was lit and offerings of different kinds of food were also made to encourage it to move from the person to the boat. As the Malays said, the spirit needed this vessel to go to another country, to its original place (*ke tempatnya*).³⁰ In another healing ceremony described by Skeat³¹ we can find even more parallels with *Pakon*. Here, just as in the Sasak ceremony, a stronger spirit, the so-called Tiger Spirit, was summoned to help cure the patient. A ceremony was held on three consecutive nights with assistance of outsiders, who had to be present in an odd number, with a preference for the number nine. Tambourine music was part of the event, with songs in which the 'spirit-boat' was explicitly mentioned. Although here it was the medicine man (*pawang*), and not the patient, who was possessed by the Tiger Spirit and fell into a trance, he used the healing powers in a way similar to the *Pakon* dancer in Lombok. The ceremony is described by Skeat in minute detail, giving attention to every single element of it. One of these elements is the use of palm blossoms. The *pawang* fumigated three bouquets of areca-palm blossoms with incense and then, with utmost excitement, he started to stroke the patient vehemently with these blossoms. After this, the Tiger Spirit came into complete possession of his body so the *pawang* acted like a tiger, with wild leaps and growls. Then, with a *keris*, he would draw blood from his own arm while fighting against the evil spirit. After this, he reverted back to the vehement stroking of the patient with the palm blossoms. At the very end the *pawang* had to lay down due to exhaustion. Comparing the aforementioned two ceremonies to *Pakon*, we can observe remarkable similarities. For curing the sick, a strong spirit is required, which has to be summoned, then exorcised from the body. For the expulsion, a small model of a boat is used as the spirit has to go home to another country. Incense is always lit, and offerings of food are made. The healing itself commences with the use of palm blossoms where the flowers channel the healing powers by hitting or stroking the sick person. During the performance, violent things happen, such as drawing blood from one's own arm or hand. The whole ceremony takes place in consecutive nights with a preference for odd numbers.

²⁸ Ibidem, pp. 432–436.

²⁹ When Skeat's book was published there did not exist an official spelling for Malay in the Latin alphabet yet, so he used an English based transcription. He spelled the spirit-boat as *lanchang*. In this article, however, I will always use the official spelling of modern Malaysian.

³⁰ Skeat, *Malay Magic*, p. 641. appendix 204. In the spelling of Skeat: ka tempat-nya.

³¹ Ibidem, pp. 436–444.

Although spirit possession ceremonies are common throughout the Malay Archipelago, the similarities between these Malay rites, and the Sasak *Pakon*, seem to be more than mere coincidences. But is there a common origin? If there is, where does this custom originate from? In order to find an answer to these questions, we should first look for connections between these two ethnicities. If these existed, traditions could have been transmitted through them. As for the Malays, we can immediately see their long-distance trade relations with most of the wider archipelago. One of the greatest Malay commercial hubs was Melaka,³² whose seafaring merchants were well known all over Southeast Asia. During the 15th century, Melaka controlled trade in the region, and through trade not only merchants but traditions could travel too. But Melaka is not the only Malay state that had a cultural and commercial impact on the other islands. Before Melaka, the Sriwijaya Empire was the leading power – both politically and commercially.³³ This Malay state, which existed between the 7th and 14th centuries, acquired its immense wealth through trade, and made a long-lasting cultural impact on the archipelago. It was because of this Sumatra-based empire that Malays became firmly established in the Malay Peninsula, and that the Malay language became the *lingua franca* in the archipelago.³⁴ Although direct connections between Malays and Sasaks during the time of Melaka are possible, there is no explicit mention of them. We have evidence, however, of the trade link between the two ethnicities from the time of the Sriwijayan trade network,³⁵ proving a connection through which not only merchants and trade goods, but ideas and traditions as well could travel.

This, however, is just one possible way for transmitting a tradition. Besides direct connections, the possibility of indirect ones may be considered as well. Upon examining the possibilities, we have to think about other ethnic groups who had contact with both regions. While these can play the role of transmitters, they could also be the original source of cultural influences as well. There exist many ethnicities who were in contact with Sasaks and Malays, of which I will only consider one in this paper. The important role of the Bugis-Makassarese in the history of both Lombok and the Malay Peninsula is undeniable. Although two different ethnicities, the Bugis and the Makassarese of South Sulawesi have lived together and intermarried to the extent their cultures became similar and people will often refer to them as the Bugis-Makassarese.³⁶ Like the Malays, they are a seafaring people, who controlled trade in the eastern part of the archipelago

³² Keith W. Taylor, 'The Early Kingdoms', in: Nicholas Tarling (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia Vol. 1. From early Times to c. 1800*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 175–176.

³³ Ibidem, pp. 173–174.

³⁴ Mestika Zed, 'Hubungan Indonesia-Malaysia. Perspektif Budaya dan Kesorumpunan Melayu Nusantara', *Tingkap* 11/2 (2015), p. 148.

³⁵ We even know the name of a certain regional governor in Lombok, who refused to pay his debt to a Malay merchant, but with the help of the Sasak king, he received his just punishment from the Sriwijayan authorities. Jamaluddin, 'Sejarah Tradisi Tulis dalam Masyarakat Sasak Lombok', *Ulumuna* 9/16-2 (2005), p. 373.

³⁶ Mustaqim Pabbajah, 'Religiusitas dan Kepercayaan Masyarakat Bugis-Makassar', *Jurnal Al-Ulum* 12/2 (2012), p. 398.

in the 16th and 17th centuries.³⁷ The Bugis-Makassarese can be directly linked to the aforementioned Malay healing ceremonies, as in many chants, when the Malay medicine man asks the spirit to leave in the small boat, he explicitly mentions ‘the land of the Bugis’ as their home.³⁸ Early Bugis-Malay relations can be connected to the spread of Islam in Sulawesi. The religion was spread there by missionaries who can be linked to the court of Johor³⁹ in the Malay Peninsula. We also know that the first mosque in the region was built in the Kingdom of Gowa⁴⁰ following a request to the king made by Muslim Malay traders who were living in the area. Later, when the Dutch conquered Makassar, Bugis traders started to set up commercial ports outside of Sulawesi, and by the end of the 17th century we can find them in the Malay Peninsula.⁴¹ Here they became entangled in the political life of the Malay sultanates, and some Bugis individuals rose to power. One example is Daeng Marewa, who during the succession crisis of the Johor-Riau Sultanate was a supporter of one of the claimants. At the end of the power struggle in 1721, this claimant ascended the throne, and Daeng Marewa was rewarded with the newly created and hereditary title of a ‘lesser king’ (*yang dipertuan muda*). These ‘lesser kings’ held great political power later on. This means close connections between the Bugis and the Malays, which involves not only political relations but cultural ones as well, were an atmosphere suitable for sharing traditions.

The relations of the Sasaks with the Bugis-Makassarese are likewise close. Before the defeat by the hands of the Dutch, Makassar was a strong kingdom that could conquer other islands, for example Sumbawa⁴² in 1618. From Sumbawa they crossed to Lombok, and established their control over the eastern part of the island.⁴³ These Makassarese propagated Islam here and converted many Sasaks to the faith.⁴⁴ Although Makassarese power was already crushed in 1678 by the Balinese in Lombok,⁴⁵ the people who moved there from Sulawesi did not disappear. While the subject of the Hindu Balinese, the Muslim Sasaks were always connected to the Muslim *umma* through the eastern port of Labuhan Lombok.⁴⁶ We also have evidence of manuscripts from Lombok written in the

³⁷ Anthony Reid, ‘Islam in South East Asia and the Indian Ocean Littoral, 1500–1800: expansion, polarisation, synthesis’, in: David O. Morgan and Anthony Reid (ed.), *The New Cambridge History of Islam. Vol 3. The Eastern Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries*, New York 2010, pp. 455–456, 464.

³⁸ Skeat, *Malay Magic*, p. 641, appendix 204.

³⁹ Reid, ‘Islam in South East Asia’, p. 455.

⁴⁰ According to Pabbajah, this mosque was built sometime between 1546 and 1565. Pabbajah, ‘Religiusitas dan Kepercayaan’, p. 407. Reid on the other hand thinks that it was only built around the year 1580. Reid, *Islam in South East Asia*, p. 455.

⁴¹ Reid, *Islam in South East Asia*, p. 467.

⁴² R. Michael Feener, ‘South East Asian localisations of Islam and participation within a global umma, c. 1500 1800’, in: David O. Morgan and Anthony Reid (ed.), *The New Cambridge History of Islam. Vol 3. The Eastern Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries*, New York 2010, p. 480.

⁴³ About the Makassarese conquest of Lombok, and their later war with Bali see Kraan, ‘Selaparang’, pp. 5–7.

⁴⁴ Budiwanti, *Islam Sasak*, p. 288. Although this was already the second wave of Islamisation.

⁴⁵ Kraan, ‘Selaparang’, pp. 5–7.

⁴⁶ Harnish, ‘Tensions’, p. 88.

Bugis language,⁴⁷ and a small minority of Bugis people still reside in the island.⁴⁸ All this implies that Malays and Sasaks were connected not only directly, but indirectly as well, and different traditions could travel through these connections too.

Closing remarks

This discussion suggests a connection, both direct and indirect, between these two peoples. I have not sought to produce hard evidence as to the respective origins of the aforementioned Malay ceremonies and *Pakon*. For a discussion of the latter, we should provide a deeper analysis of Bugis and Makassarese traditions as, if there be a connection through the Bugis-Makassarese, there must be some trace of it to be shown. This analysis, however, is beyond the scope of the present discussion; here, my main concern has been to give a preliminary description of *Pakon*, a tradition from Lombok which, to my knowledge, has not been discussed to date in detail in academic papers. I also wished to raise some suggestions concerning the relations among a few different peoples and rites in the archipelago, which might prove useful if we are to find the origins of this remarkable ceremony. We must not forget, however, that the Bugis-Makassarese connection is just one of many possible links between Malays and Sasaks. The role of the Javanese or the Balinese, who also had a lasting influence on Lombok, was completely omitted from the present discussion. In another forthcoming article, I plan to give a fuller and more detailed description of the *Pakon* ceremony and examine the traditions of other ethnicities worthy of consideration in searching for the origins of *Pakon*.

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