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To cite this article: Mukrimin (2019) The Bugis and their '*Téllu Cappâ*' in contemporary Indonesia's decentralization, South East Asia Research, 27:3, 238-253, DOI: [10.1080/0967828X.2019.1669968](https://doi.org/10.1080/0967828X.2019.1669968)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0967828X.2019.1669968>



Published online: 11 Oct 2019.



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## The Bugis and their '*Téllu Cappâ*' in contemporary Indonesia's decentralization

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### ABSTRACT


This article evaluates the development of decentralization in Indonesia over the last two decades. The significance of ethnic and cultural politics in Indonesia's contemporary decentralization is examined by focusing on the role of Bugis leadership in the establishment of new districts in Sulawesi. By employing ethnographic tools of enquiry, the article argues that the Bugis settlers play their roles and pursue their interests through the process of forming new provinces and districts. Empirically, they continue to pursue and assert their interests through the commodification of their cultural values in decentralized Indonesian regions. However, the Bugis roles in governance denote a contradictory pattern. On the one hand, they are reluctant to be ruled, and even to a certain extent resist being ruled or led by non-Bugis in their homeland, while on the other hand, they make use of traditional principles of assimilation, penetration and domination – *téllu cappâ* (three tips) – to pursue power and authority outside their homeland. In Indonesia's changing political landscape, the Bugis see decentralization as a good opportunity to exert their authority.

### KEYWORDS

Bugis; decentralization; ethnic politics; *téllu cappâ*

Indonesia is characterized by regional, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity.<sup>1</sup> Many commentators have seen its version of decentralization as particularly profound, because it goes further into the lower levels of state authority, to the district level (Aspinall and Fealy 2003; Rasyid 2005, 16–17; Mukrimin 2012; Warman 2016; Nasution 2016; OECD 2016; Pierskalla 2016; Pierskalla and Sacks 2017). The decentralizing of governmental systems has shifted the balance of power and the hierarchical management between the central, provincial and local administrations. Firstly, the people directly elect the governor and the mayor of district and municipality. Secondly, due to the transfer of power, the branches of ministries also come under the responsibility of local governments (Rasyid 2005; Eckardt 2008, 5; Carnegie 2008; Hadiz 2010; Mukrimin 2018).

The main purpose of this article is to assess the significance of ethnic and cultural politics in Indonesia's decentralized regions. In other words, has decentralization brought about what its prominent advocates yearned for? How do 'decentralizers' (to borrow

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<sup>1</sup>In this article, Indonesian terms are given in italics, Bugis and other local languages are given in bold and italic. All informants' names are pseudonyms.

the term of Crook and Manor 1998, 2) play their roles in re-actualizing or reinventing their local identities? How has local identity emerged within the state's territory? In answering these questions, firstly, I discuss how local identities have been re-actualized in the name of local autonomy. I analyse the role of a particular ethnic group, the Bugis, in shaping state formation, by examining the cultural dimensions of their attaining authority. Finally, the article addresses shifts in the Sulawesi political landscape in the context of decentralization.

This study focuses on the Bugis in Northern Mamuju (Mamuju Utara, **MaTra**) and Central Mamuju (Mamuju Tengah, **MaTeng**) of West Sulawesi (Sulawesi Barat, **SulBar**), and uses the Pohuwato ethnic group of Gorontalo as a comparison. The Bugis is an ethnic group that originally and dominantly occupies the lowlands of South Sulawesi (**SulSel**) Island in Indonesia (Acciaioli 1989, 2000; Pelras 1996; Mukrimin *forthcoming*).

Decentralization here means 'a transfer of the authority to perform public service from an individual or agency in central government to another which is closer to the public to be served' (Turner and Hulme 1997, 152). Importantly, decentralization in Indonesia is sometimes equated with '*pemekaran*' (literally, 'blossoming' or 'mushrooming'), which is the expansion of administration through splitting or proliferation, due to local autonomy. In the range of its governmental forms, Indonesia has changed remarkably (Aspinall and Fealy 2003; Erb, Sulistiyanto, and Faucher 2005; Nordholt and van Klinken 2007, 19; Carnegie 2008; Morrell 2010; Kimura 2013; Holzhacker, Wiltek, and Woltjer 2016; OECD 2016), and has consequently experienced significant local governmental 'blossoming' over the last two decades.

Ethnic politics, in this study, is defined as 'the mobilization or utilization of ethnic categories based on recognition of difference to capture state power, influence policy or structure state institutions' (Aspinall 2011, 291–292). This occasionally occurs in Indonesia's decentralization when 'local communities and their burgeoning advocacy networks are engaged in a collaborative process of constructing local identities and cultures in order to increase their political leverage, and bolster their bargaining position vis-à-vis the state' (Tyson 2010, 172).

### The Bugis 'three tips'

For the Bugis, the way of exercising political (and economic) authority is mainly through assimilation, penetration, domination and ruling the existing communities through the way known as *tellu cappâ* (three tips). They have successfully articulated this cultural dimension by transforming a frontier settlement into a district, as will be seen in other sections of this article. To rule and exercise authority, a Bugis will translate their cultural values into the abilities, qualifications and achievements of leadership. This is particularly common among men (*pongawa*, the Bugis local leader), either within or outside the homeland. Those who settle outside their homeland are attributed to 'have made major contributions as traders, diplomats, political refugees, sojourners and land settlers due to their determination, desire, perseverance, courage and open-mindedness' (Omar et al. 2012, 926). In this regard, the Bugis are widely acknowledged to implement:

Two of these strategic factors, marriage and military force, [which] can be likened to what the Bugis call *tellu cappaq*: the tongue, blade and penis. The tongue is first used as a means of

persuasion in order to achieve or obtain something. If this does not work, then the blade (force) is used. The third tip, which the Bugis says is the preferred method of integration, is marriage. (Druce 2009, 31)

In fact, the Bugis themselves express the ability to be a leader or ruler based on the sharpness of the *téllu cappâ* (Brawn 1993; Acciaioli 2000, 216; Pelras 2000, 26).

Reflecting on the pre-colonial era, there are a number of examples of how the Bugis exercised their authority through the *téllu cappâ*. A famous example is La Madukkelleng, a prominent Bugis king and leader of their diaspora in Kalimantan during the 1740s and 1750s, who triumphantly pronounced his accomplishment as ‘the gentleness of my tongue, the sharpness of my weapon’s point, and the curve of my penis’ (Lontara Sukkuna Wajo, ff. 230–231 in Anderson 2003, 203–204). Therefore, when a Bugis arrives somewhere new, he will attempt to assimilate with settlers. If this direct assimilation fails, he will move to the next step, which is to marry a local woman. If these two steps fail, he will eventually attempt to exercise the final way: war, namely *cappâ kawali* (Moein 1994, 139). In contemporary decentralized Indonesian regions, the implementation of the *téllu cappâ* remains pivotal among the Bugis. Before going through how the *téllu cappâ* is practised, the three ‘tips’ will be described in turn.

The first, which is *cappâ lila*, refers to the tip of the tongue: any Bugis willing to lead must possess a sharp tip of a tongue. The sharpness is expressed through fluency in communicating or expressing one’s will to govern, lead, be heard and followed. Therefore, I see *cappâ lila* as more than a matter of speech. It is sometimes claimed that the stronger the *moso* (pungency *taji*) (Errington 1989, 62) of the *cappâ lila*, the more influential the authority of the leader. Subsequently, it is constantly and continuously sharpened in order to attain authority. How to give an order and be followed is a matter of leadership among the Bugis. The ability to speak powerfully means ‘the ability of the person to impose their will on another’ (Brown and Levinson 1987, 77 in Mahmud 2013, 59). An informant in Bone further stated that whoever wishes to lead a community must have the so-called *paggérrâ*, a local knowledge by ‘bluffing’ with a specific words or mantra. The *moso* of the person’s speech is constantly improved. Hence, the *cappâ lila* is more than rhetorical attainment.

The second is *cappâ katawang*. The term literally means ‘the tip of genital’. Meaning, to gain authority, a Bugis (mainly) man might apply this symbolic way by marrying a certain woman. Traditionally and contemporarily, such a model of marriage is called ‘*politik ranjang*’ (bedroom or marriage politics). It means either literally using one’s genital for political purposes or marrying a particular woman with the aim of pursuing political power (see also Caldwell 1995, 408; Pelras 2000, 26). It should be noted that the *politik ranjang* is associated with – yet slightly different from – *mabbéne pattûjung* among the Bugis. The *mabbéne pattûjung* occurs when a man (who comes from an ordinary family) marries a rich woman. Therefore, it is exercised for the goal of accumulating multiple resources (mainly for economic welfare). An informant mentioned that his neighbour practised this model of marriage as a (spontaneous) young immigrant who married a former transmigrant’s daughter from a relatively wealthy family. Once he got married, the man also became wealthy. This happens even if neither the bride nor bridegroom knew or loved each other before marriage.

There are many examples of how the Bugis wield authority through the *téllu cappâ* way, using marriage. In the pre-colonial era, Opu Daeng Rilaga and his predecessors

played pivotal roles in how the Bugis exercised their authority in Malay kingdoms and even reached Cambodia during the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries (Andaya 1995, 125–126). Another example is Arung Palakka, who famously applied the *téllu cappâ*. Soon after the Bongayya Treaty was signed in 13 November 1667, he was labelled '*datu tungkenna tana Sulawesi*' (the only one who rules Sulawesi) to describe his power over several kingdoms in Sulawesi (Andaya 1981, 107; Rismawidiawati 2015).

Nowadays, many Bugis local leaders still apply the *cappâ katawang* through *politik ranjang*. This is particularly true among the elites and nobles, the *pongawa*. However, in terms of authority, such marriages are modified through inter or cross marriage. In previous times, nobles married people of the same level, the wealthy married wealthy partners, and so on. But now the pattern has remarkably changed: the wealthy may marry nobles and vice versa if such *politik ranjang* aims to augment authority. However, unlike their predecessors who practised polygamy – due to the practice of *cappâ katawang* penetration – Bugis leaders nowadays mostly get married just once. This pattern is a remarkable change among the Bugis leaders in contemporary Indonesia. If polygamy is practised by a leader (e.g. a village head), the public will react negatively. In fact, during my fieldwork I never came across a *pongawa* who practised polygamy.

Finally, the third tip is *cappâ kawali*. It is the tip of the Bugis dagger (*keris*, *badik*). Stephen Druce (2009) writes that this is mainly used to undertake a campaign a war if negotiation for authority has failed. Ethnographer David Brawn explained the *kawali* as:

[...] the weapon of choice for most men (women being far less likely to carry weapons) in South Sulawesi, being a narrow triangular-bladed dagger with a pistol grip. The lengths range from an extremely short three inches [...] to almost two feet. *Badik* representing these extremes have almost no practical use as weapons or tools. However, given that the shape of the grip necessitates a very short tang, the knife is rendered useless for any sort of chopping or carving. A typical *badik* is, then, between eight to twelve inches long, easily hidden by being tucked into the waistband of one's pants, and is useful primarily for stabbing people. (Brawn 1993, 82)

Even in the contemporary era, the Bugis, particularly leaders, headmen and so on, still usually possess some sort of *kawali*, whether exposed or not. Nevertheless, due to changes within Bugis society, it is against common law to kill anyone using a dagger. Hence, they articulate the point of the dagger through the potency of 'pen', 'stamp' or 'seal' of authority (see Gallop 2016, on seals of the Bugis). The more pungent or potent a leader's pen or stamp, the more influential the authority s/he possessed. In fact, possession of the *kawali* and stamp to highlight strong leadership is still prevalent.

The implementation of all three of the *téllu cappâ* is still practised to gain power among Bugis leaders. Their application will be elaborated following an overview of Bugis politics in Indonesia.

### Ethnic politics and Bugis political networks

Although the Bugis is not the dominant majority ethnic group nationally, they play a significant role in Indonesia's politics today. A recent study shows that they are among the top five most populous of Indonesia's ethnic groups (Arifin et al. 2015, 244–246). They have a rapidly growing presence in national-level authorities, so that

it is common to see Bugis bureaucrats or high-ranking officers occupying ministerial/departmental positions in Jakarta. Furthermore, many proudly claim that the Bugis are politically the only ones capable of equalizing Javanese and Sundanese in Indonesia's contemporary political constellation. This indicates that they are a significant minority (compared with Javanese, Sundanese, or other top five Indonesian ethnic groups) (BPS 2010, 2015) in exercising their authority and contributing to the shape of the political landscape.

Ethnic group divergence has undeniably shaped the provincial constellation within decentralized Indonesia. A recent survey reveals the largest ethnic group in each province (see Table 1). The Gorontaloese is a substantial majority among the ethnic groups in the province of Gorontalo, constituting 89.1% of the population. Meanwhile, the Mandar constitutes less than 50% of the population of West Sulawesi (SulBar). However, ethnic composition and identity have shaped both provinces. Furthermore, on the provincial formation, ethnic identity in both provinces features different patterns. Given that Gorontalo is predominantly ethnically homogenous, this province faced less potential internally horizontal conflict after the split. By contrast, in SulBar, as the Mandar are not solely dominant (majority), the province is ethnically more heterogeneous; therefore, there is

**Table 1.** The percentage of the population comprised of the largest ethnic group in each province in Indonesia.

Province	Largest percentage	Ethnic group
Central Java	97.7	Javanese
Yogyakarta	96.5	Javanese
Gorontalo	89.1	Gorontalo
West Sumatra	87.3	Minangkabau
Bali	85.5	Balinese
East Java	79.7	Javanese
South Kalimantan	74.3	Banjarese
West Java	71.9	Sundanese
Aceh	70.7	Acehnese
West Nusa Tenggara	67.6	Sasak
Lampung	64.1	Javanese
Bangka Belitung	52.7	Bangka
Central Kalimantan	46.6	Dayak
West Sulawesi	45.4	Mandar
North Sulawesi	45.2	Minahasa
South Sulawesi	45.1	Bugis
North Sumatra	44.8	Batak
Banten	40.7	Bantenese
Jambi	40.4	Malay
Jakarta	36.2	Javanese
West Kalimantan	34.9	Dayak
Riau	33.3	Malay
Bengkulu	32.1	Malay
Riau Archipelago	30.2	Malay
East Kalimantan	30.2	Javanese
South Sumatra	27.4	Javanese
Papua	23.3	Dani
South East Sulawesi	22.8	Butonese
Central Sulawesi	21.5	Kaili
East Nusa Tenggara	19.9	Atoni
West Papua	14.8	Javanese
Maluku	12.7	Butonese
North Maluku	10.8	Tobelo
Indonesia	40.2	Javanese

Source: Arifin et al. (2015, 241) in Ananta et al. (2015), BPS (2010, 2015). Adapted by the author.

more potential for conflict. The integration of ethnicity into an integral nation-state is essential because Indonesia has had bitter experiences in areas such as the Moluccas and West Kalimantan.

The Bugis is the main component of the *Kerukunan Keluarga Sulawesi Selatan* (KKSS), an ethnic organization comprising South Sulawesi's main ethnic groups such as the Bugis, Makassarese, Toraja, Luwu and Engrekang. The KKSS exemplifies 'diasporic clientelist networks' (van Klinken 2008, 40). Thus, in this case, particularly the Bugis' networks, Gerry van Klinken explains:

It does this, first, by abstracting certain interests of the typical South Sulawesi emigrant, such as the need for personal support in an alien environment, protection from ethnic rivals, contact with home, even marriage partners. And secondly, it scales these interests up into programs applied throughout the country, including political programs. (van Klinken 2008, 40)

Locally, as regards SulBar, the Bugis play an even more significant role. SulBar is unique, compared to other Indonesian provinces where the Bugis are settled, firstly because the idea of decentralization was echoed and supported primarily by the ethnic majority there, the Mandarese (see Table 1). This was mainly because the Mandar had been economically, politically and socio-culturally marginalized by the Bugis and Makassar in South Sulawesi, during the Old and New Order of Indonesia's regime. The SulBar Bugis at that same time were initially not opposed to the splitting from South Sulawesi, and even supported it. For the Bugis, decentralization was and is still perceived as a good opportunity to exercise their authority (particularly in economy and politics) (Mukrimin 2012, 2018; Tol, van Dijk, and Acciaioli 2000).

The aftermath of this decentralization is interesting to examine. During the first five years following the governmental and territorial split, the Bugis allowed the Mandar decentralizers to gain what they had long called for: 'freedom' from South Sulawesi. During the new province's first years, the Bugis took a back seat to observe developments. In the meantime, they prepared their stronghold (Mukrimin 2012, 63–68; Mukrimin 2018). They also called on their fellow Bugis and families who had settled elsewhere (particularly not from the homeland) to come to fill suitable governmental positions in various departmental sectors, such as bureaucrats (*PNS* or *ASN*), teachers and others. This pattern subsequently created chain-migration among the Bugis in SulBar (Mukrimin forthcoming).

A similar pattern can be seen in the SulBar district of MaTra, where the Bugis have been prominent decentralizers since the early days of the split processes. A village head in Baras said:

Without the establishment of MaTra, it would have been difficult to split the province of SulBar from SulSel. This is because, in order to establish a new province, you need at least five districts. And importantly, you have to propose to Jakarta a condition guiding the split from the former province, and there must be natural resources to explore in order to be self-reliant as a new province. Frankly speaking, the natural resources in SulBar are concentrated in the northern region where MaTra and the youngest district, MaTeng are located. Therefore, the bargaining position of these two districts for SulBar is influential. And the Bugis are now mushrooming in these districts. (Haji Ponggawa, *personal communication*, 2014)

The following section highlights how ethnic identity re-emerged during decentralization, and how local leaders enthusiastically established new provinces or districts.



## Decentralizing Sulawesi: the rise of two provinces

I have argued elsewhere that ‘the notion of ethnic identity plays a crucial role in shaping the political constellation in South Sulawesi, and consequently, the landscape of regionalism (*kedaerahan*) features remarkable phenomenon of ethnic competition during the *Reformasi* era’ (Mukrimin 2012, 45–46). As a consequence of decentralization during this era, there was a shift in the governmental landscape of Sulawesi. Prior to the *Reformasi* era, the island comprised of four provinces: North, South, South East and Central Sulawesi. It now has six different provinces, with Gorontalo and SulBar being the newly established ones. The territorial borders of provinces and districts also changed subsequently (Morrell 2005; Brown 2009; Mukrimin 2012).

### Gorontalo

Gorontalo became a province on 16 January 2001, following the split from North Sulawesi. Initially, it consisted of only two districts and one municipality: Gorontalo District, Boalemo District and Gorontalo Municipality. In less than three years, this region underwent remarkable ‘blossoming’ (*pemekaran*) into six districts and one municipality. The new autonomous districts are North Gorontalo, Pohuwato and Bonebolango (Muhammad 2007, 65–70; Mukrimin 2012, 2018). The split resulting in the establishment of these six districts fulfilled one of the main requirements of establishing a new province.

It is hard to deny that the underlying reason for splitting from its ‘mother’ province (North Sulawesi, *SulUt*) was a religious and cultural identity. The vast majority of SulUt populations are predominantly Christians (the Manadonese and Minahasan ethnic groups). The minority of Muslims who inhabited the western part of the region was formerly under the jurisdiction of Holondalo kingdom and its petty states (along the Tomini Gulf). Prior to decentralization, access to power and economic resources at the old province was dominated by the Manadonese and Minahasan (Kimura 2013, 2006, 2010, 427; Hill 2007, 8; Morrell 2010, 53). Once the decentralization spirit emerged, the Gorontaloese (predominantly Muslims) were among the first to embrace it enthusiastically. At this stage, Gorontaloese socio-cultural and Islamic identities, which were thought to have been lost, re-actualized and then emerged to be accommodated within the nation-state.

During the first period of the split (2001–2005), many people claimed Gorontalo to be one of the success stories of decentralization in Indonesia. Led by Governor Fadel Muhammad, the new province implemented the original form of Indonesia’s decentralization because the paradigm of local government had changed from rural areas to the provincial level (Sabar 2006, xii). Supporting decentralization, the Gorontaloese campaigned using the slogan ‘*Dulo ito momungu lipu*’ [Let’s develop our region]. Decentralizers in Gorontalo maintained that the people were not the object but the subject of the split. Most Sulawesians refer to the new region as ‘the corn province’ (*provinsi jagung*) due to its massive corn production.

It is worth noting that Gorontalo is the only province in Sulawesi that does not have ‘Sulawesi’ in its name: it is ‘Gorontalo’, and not ‘Sulawesi Gorontalo’. This is socio-culturally understandable because, firstly, it is the only province in Sulawesi to claim a single religious identity: almost 100% of the population is Muslim. Gorontaloese have labelled their region ‘the veranda of Medina’ to symbolize their strong religious identity.



Furthermore, Gorontalo is culturally and linguistically distinctive among the rest of Sulawesi's provinces, with 89% of its population comprised of Gorontaloese. It is characteristically a homogeneous society.

### SulBar

West Sulawesi (SulBar) is Indonesia's thirty-third province. It officially became an autonomous province on 5 October 2004 based on the Act XXVI/2004 on *Pembentukan Sulawesi Barat* [The Establishment of West Sulawesi]. Prior to its establishment, elites (both local and national, mostly from Polman, Majene and Jakarta) formed the so-called Action Committee for the Formation of the SulBar Province (*Komite Aksi Pembentukan Provinsi SulBar*, KAPP-SulBar) on 10 November 1999 in Galung Lombok of Polman district. The movement to form a new province accumulated in the mass meetings (*rapat akbar*) of SulBar's decentralizers; firstly in Wonomulyo of Polman on 12 January 2000, and secondly in Assamalewuang of Majene district on 9 April 2000. The local aspirants subsequently proclaimed the establishment of the new province in the DPRD II Mamuju with the Decree No. 42/I/SK/DPRD/2000 on 6 October 2000. The decree also stated that Mamuju was to be the capital city of SulBar (Kusuma and Kunandar 2006, 67–69).

Before the separation from South Sulawesi, the region consisted of five districts: Polman, Mamasa, Majene, Mamuju and North Mamuju. The Mandar mostly inhabited this region (see Table 1), especially in the first four regencies. North Mamuju had been a transmigration area since the 1980s, and was thus quite multi-cultural. Several of Indonesia's ethnic groups were represented in SulBar: the Bugis, Javanese, Balinese, Madurese and few indigenous ethnic groups. SulBar is bordered by Central Sulawesi (*Sulawesi Tengah*, *SulTeng*) to the north, South Sulawesi (*SulSel*) to the south and east and Straits of Makassar to the west (Mukrimin 2012).

This province also shows how ethnic identity became a dominant force in establishing a new province (Mukrimin 2012). The Mandar, the dominant ethnic group in the peninsula, had been marginalized for a long time by their counterparts (particularly the Bugis and the Makassarese) in the old province, SulSel. The domination of Bugis and Makassarese over the region since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been explained by prominent historian Leonard Andaya:

Mandar is divided into Downriver Mandar (*Pitu Babana Minanga*) and Upriver states (*Pitu Ulunna Salo*). Downriver Mandar was historically drawn into the vortex of South Sulawesi politics due to its strategic location on the northwest coast of South Sulawesi. It offered alternative harbours to Makassar, the principal port of the West Coast, and became known as a transshipment centre of trading goods to and from the East Coast of Kalimantan, outside the official channels. In earlier centuries, it was therefore often a target of invasion for the Bugis and Makassar kingdoms in the south. (Andaya 1978, 61)

Hence, it is hard to deny that the rise of ethnic and cultural identity, along with the opening door of decentralization and *pemekaran*, featured in the establishment of SulBar. As regards the Mandar, Kambo (2009, 56) states that decentralization is seen as 'a political space facilitated by the state', and it was therefore 'a golden opportunity that must be taken into account'. Hence, the decentralization to the Mandar (particularly and primarily in Polman and Majene districts) was a gift to govern their own territory.

In the early days of decentralization, Mandar local figures like Anwar Shaleh and Salim Mengga claimed to represent the cultural heritage of *ke-Mandaran* [the Mandareseness] because they are *putra daerah* ('son of the soil', or local people). Pak Anwar is from Mamuju, while Pak Salim's base is Polewali-Mandar, a district that zealously initiated the establishment of SulBar. This pattern is similar to those of other Indonesian regions where decentralization gave rise to the issue of *putra daerah* who demanded privileged rights to resources and power in their local arena (see also Aspinnall and Fealy 2003; Erb, Sulistiyanto, and Faucher 2005; Nordholt and van Klinken 2007). The SulBar case, therefore, confirms Jan Pierskalla's argument that local elites

are essential contributors to the process of the jurisdictional boundary change. Above and beyond a local demand for boundary changes, local elites' capacity to facilitate institutional change at the national level is a vital component of understanding the process of administrative proliferation. (Pierskalla 2016, 265)

In the case of SulBar, given the opportunity of being autonomous from South Sulawesi, there seems to have been a lack of capability, particularly human resources, to manage the governance. When SulBar became a new province, in order to run the administration local decentralizers immediately recruited people from outside the province, mainly from SulSel, which arguably had better human resources. An informant from Mamuju affirmed that, in recent times, almost 60% of lucrative positions at the provincial level have been in the hands of Bugis and Makassar (A. Ibrahim, personal communication, 2017).

It was in this context that the local Bugis leaders materializing their *téllu cappâ* in Indonesia's decentralization became significant.

### The Bugis decentralizers in three districts

Nils Bubant (2004) and Jan Pierskalla (2016) have suggested that tradition, culture and local elites play pivotal roles within the decentralized Indonesian regions. For the Bugis, the idea of power will involve 'an evolving response by its members in their attempts to exploit state projects that encourages assimilation as a means of social control' where they can subsequently 'maintain political and moral authority, not only over other migrant Bugis but also over the indigenous peoples among whom they settled' (Ammarell 2002, 54). The stories of Bugis local leaders in the following districts highlight such a pattern.

#### *Pohuwato of Gorontalo*

Ethnically, the Bugis settlers in Gorontalo are not dominant. However, a few Bugis decentralizers have played vital political and economic roles in this province. For example, one prominent Bugis figure is Zainuddin Hasan of Pohuwato district (Suryani 2015, 95; harco.co.id 2016). Pak Zainuddin was a former PNS (government employee) and had a 'second job' as an entrepreneur in Gorontalo municipality and Pohuwato, he engaged in local politics in the 2000s. He married a rich Gorontaloese, who ran businesses such as hotels and kiosks in Gorontalo municipality. Once the idea of decentralization was raised in the region, Pak Zainuddin immediately supported it and became a decentralizer from the frontier settlement, Pohuwato. He was eventually elected as the *bupati* of Pohuwato from 2005 to 2010. His people consider him a good leader because he always

makes use of persuasive ways in his policies. Furthermore, after being famously successful at Pohuwato's *bupati*, Pak Zainuddin was called on to return to his home origin, Bulukumba of South Sulawesi, to lead the district. He eventually became the *bupati* of Bulukumba for one governmental period, and after finishing his job as district head, he returned to Gorontalo to run for a higher political position, governor of Gorontalo. Yet, in the recently concluded governorship election, he did not emerge as the winner (KPU 2017) as he led and ruled Pohuwato smoothly one decade ago.

### MaTeng

Similar to the case of Pohuwato of Gorontalo, MaTeng of SulBar was split from Mamuju (SulBar's capital), and local decentralizers supported this proliferation in 2013. The local elites were those who had invested their interests before the new district was officially established. In MaTeng, Aras Tammauni (locally called *we'* Aras) played a remarkable role (TribunNews 2015). Born with Bugis blood, he migrated permanently, so-called moving the kitchen out (*mallekke' dapureng*) (Mukrimin forthcoming), to Topoyo 'in search of good fortune', to borrow the term suggested by Acciaioli (1989, 2000). He married a local entrepreneur, so he also considered himself as *orang lokal* (local people). Engaged in the trading of clove, cocoa and other profitable goods in Topoyo and Tarailu, Pak Aras controlled the supply chain of goods and was a land-holder (*tuan tanah*) in the frontier. In the early 2000s, he continued to expand his business as a major middleman, merchant and entrepreneur of goods to and from Makassar and Palu and also engaged in the emerging palm oil business. He was successful with many followers, and joined a political party, becoming a decentralizer in the newest district of SulBar. One of Pak Aras' remarkable achievements is that he gathered a very significant vote in MaTeng's 2015 *Pilkada*. Gaining almost 98% of voters in the first district head election is an Indonesian *Pilkada* record since direct elections were implemented (TribunNews.com 2015), and is evidence of his popularity.

### MaTra

MaTra is a more heterogeneous district in SulBar. Ethnically, together with locals (Mandar, Baras, Kaili and others) and new settlers (Balinese and Javanese), the Bugis in MaTra continue to dominate the district. In MaTra, notwithstanding the role of other decentralizers, the prominent figure in the formation of this district is Agus Ambo Djiwa (Maras 2009; Djiwa 2016). On one occasion, Pak Agus said:

I started my career from zero here in this Pasangkayu. Before the 2000s, this was still a *kecamatan*, and literally isolated from Ujung Pandang. If you look at the map of Sulawesi in the 1970s to 1980s, you will not find MaTra there. Really, ground-breaking of this district was from zero, from the bottom. With other founders of this district, we tried convincing folks that in order to have a better and brighter future, we must be autonomous from Mamuju, and in all governmental matters that will lead us to be self-reliant. Now, you see that decentralization really makes a significant difference. (Agus A. Djiwa, personal communication, 2014).

During my stay in the field site for about nine months in 2014 and intermittent visits until 2017, my impression of Pak Agus' leadership is that he has been applying all the elements

of the *téllu cappâ*. Notably, at the grassroots level, an informant stated that almost 70% of village heads in the three newest *kecamatan* at MaTra are Bugis. A similar situation is found in Pasangkayu, where about 70% of the higher administrative positions are filled by non-local people (mainly new settlers from SulSel) (A. Ibrahim, personal communication, 2017).

Generally, the roles of Bugis in these three new districts highlight two trends in Indonesia's contemporary decentralization. First, their involvement in merchandise has been a pathway to becoming a *bupati*, as in the case of Pohuwato and MaTeng. Meanwhile, the case of MaTra shows that a local leader can be born from activism and PNS. However, achievement in both politics and economics is always interconnected in the local landscape. This is partly due to the cost of direct local elections. Hence, the phenomena of the so-called *KKN* (*korupsi, kolusi, nepotisme*, corruption, collusion and nepotism) remain critical and tend to be more localized. Importantly, the question of 'who gets what' in decentralized Indonesian regions indicates that the country's experience of decentralization is messy and shambolic. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to say that decentralization or regionalism leads to a failed state because these are still continuing processes of democratization through Indonesia's local autonomy.

Second, the cases of Pohuwato, MaTeng and MaTra exemplify that local leaders can be born from the bottom layer of the community. This phenomenon is a new trend in Indonesia's decentralization: commoners can become leaders (district head, mayor or governor), positions that before 1999 were monopolized by aristocrats. Again, over the last two decades of Indonesia's decentralization, the Bugis 'continue to pursue their interests and assert their claims throughout the Indonesian archipelago (and beyond!) with their own exemplary synthesis of authority and enterprise' (Tol, van Dijk, and Acciaioli 2000, 12). Ultimately, decentralization brings direct impacts to political change in the region.

## Conclusion

Local people participate in the decentralization of Indonesia today. Local elites have hijacked the opportunities offered by decentralization, seeing it as a highway to regain, obtain and maintain their power. One analyst warned, '[...] with democratization and decentralization, such local power brokers were given unprecedented opportunities to "capture" state offices and agencies' (Sidel 2005, 67).

The Bugis have played their roles. Unlike other Indonesian outsider residents in decentralization elsewhere, the Bugis settlers did not oppose, and even to some extent, supported and helped, the desire of local people to establish the new province and districts. They waited and watched the decentralization process. Eventually, they reached an understanding that the reformation could be a good opportunity for them to participate. Crucially, this opportunity was played through reinventing and re-actualizing their traditional belief that the Bugis are supposed to lead others. In this sense, they have reclaimed and reinterpreted the exemplary authority of their predecessors 'during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' who 'were able to create a successful diaspora government based on an effective assimilation of Bugis political institutions and cultural values within a local framework' (Andaya 1995, 136) through their *téllu cappâ*. In this political transformation, the Bugis in MaTra (and to a certain extent in MaTeng and Pohuwato) considered

themselves as ‘insider’ settlers (*penduduk asli* or *pribumi*) who had equal rights with the indigenous people to run the district and provincial governments.

Hence, what happens to the Bugis contemporary leadership or rulership is contradictory and changing from the pre-Islamic era where ‘the right to rule was a prerogative of status, and not of achievement or place’ (Caldwell 1995, 408). Equally important is that the perception of ‘the importance of ascriptive status as a prerequisite for political office’ (Caldwell 1995, 407) has shifted. It shifted because this status is achievable. Empirically, the evidence from SulBar and Gorontalo show that local leaders can be born from the bottom layer of society. These leaders, in fact, rematerialized their traditional principles in a modern state.

It has to be noted that this is a remarkable change from previous regimes (both the Old and the New Order) in the districts of the Bugis homeland, SulSel, when all headmen (no woman had been *bupati* or *walikota*) were appointed by the central government. Under those regimes, the Bugis did ‘not allow’ outsiders (particularly non-Bugis) to become a *bupati* in their districts. During the authoritarian New Order era, there was even assassination of a military-appointed *bupati* of Bone, who was murdered by his gardener because the people of Bone Bugis were unwilling to be led by an outsider (Brawn 1993, 133–147). In fact, to the best of my knowledge, there are no non-Bugis *bupati* or *walikota* in Bugis main areas, such as Bone, Wajo, Soppeng, Sidenreng Rappang, Sinjai, Barru, Pare-pare and Pinrang, given that the position is directly elected. Ambiguously, however, the Bugis who settle outside South Sulawesi are continuously encouraged, supported and even applauded to lead wherever they are. Moreover, a woman can become a district head, mayor or governor: a significant change in Indonesia’s decentralization today.

It has been shown that supporters and prominent advocates of local autonomy – decentralizers – are those who were and are, *de facto*, becoming the governors, mayors, district heads, or at least those who have direct access to resources. The cases of MaTra, MaTeng and Pohuwato in Sulawesi generally reveal that the struggle for a new administrative position has remained the ambition of these elites. The desire and attempt to separate (for instance in the case of West Sulawesi from South Sulawesi and in the case of Gorontalo from North Sulawesi) often arise from disappointment and political, cultural and economical marginalization (mainly by Bugis, Makassarese, Manadonese and Minahasan in respective provinces). Importantly, the cases of MaTra, MaTeng and Pohuwato prove that within decentralized Indonesian regions, local leaders are emerging from bottom layers of the community. For the Bugis concerned, the profile of local elites are not always from aristocratic strata (or military backgrounds); instead, they might be commoners who believe they have the rights to run the state. Therefore, to these local actors, decentralization is an opportunity to exercise their authority. Finally, I suggest that politically and economically the Bugis will continue to dominate the regions in the next decades.

## Acknowledgements

This article is a section of the author’s doctoral thesis. The author is grateful to his supervisors, Professor Greg Acciaioli and Professor Lyn Parker for their critical feedback on the manuscript of this article. Appreciation also goes to Dr. Annabel Gallop of the British Library for her useful commentary and suggestions. The data presented in this study were collected in 2014 and intermittent visits until 2017 in North Mamuju of West Sulawesi and Bone of South and Gorontalo, Sulawesi of

Indonesia. Survey and interviews were conducted among a wide array of local people and officials. The study and field research were made possible thanks to financial support from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) Indonesia, under DIKTIS Program 5000 Doktor, and a fieldwork grant from Graduate Research School (GRS) of the University of Western Australia.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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