



Inscription of the 'Ukiri' Serang as Epigraphic Archives of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque

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Abstract

The Al-Hilal Katangka Old Mosque is one of the important Islamic heritages in South Sulawesi which contains a number of inscriptions in the Serang script (ukiri' serang) on the doors and pulpit of the mosque. Previous studies generally place these inscriptions as a complement to the historical narrative of the mosque, while their function as a primary source for reconstruction of the history of development has not received much attention. This research aims to analyze the function of inscriptions as epigraphic archives in reconstructing the history of mosque construction and renovation. This research uses analytical-descriptive methods with epigraphic and historical approaches. Data was obtained through interviews, direct observation of the inscriptions on the mosque doors and pulpits, visual documentation, transliteration of ukiri'serang into Latin letters, as well as literature studies of historical sources for the Kingdom of Gowa and the development of the Al-Hilal Katangka Old Mosque. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of epigraphic reading, source criticism, historical interpretation, and reconstruction of development chronology based on the information contained in the inscription. The research results show that the Ukiri' Serang inscription functions as an epigraphic archive which stores information regarding the chronology of development, renovation actors, and memories of the reign of the Gowa Kingdom. The concept of epigraphic archives offered in this research broadens the understanding of the function of inscriptions from simply being a medium of information to being an instrument for storing historical memory which enables a more comprehensive reconstruction of the history of the construction of the Al-Hilal Katangka Old Mosque.

Introduction

Historically, the Islamization of the Gowa Kingdom was closely connected to the presence of Malay traders who had established commercial relations within the kingdom's territory. These traders also maintained relationships with merchants from Pahang, Patani, Johor, Campa, and Minangkabau. During the reign of the twelfth King of Gowa, Tunijallo (1545–1590), Muslim traders received special treatment, including the provision of a place of worship in Mangallekana (Patunru, 1983; Sewang, 2005). A mosque was subsequently established in the area and used by Malay Muslim traders living within the Gowa Kingdom. Although it has been described as one of the earliest mosques in South Sulawesi, the building did not survive following the destruction of the Somba Opu Fort, and its former location was later affected by the Jeneberang River (Nuraedah et al., 2008).

Malay Muslim traders who settled in Somba Opu also brought Islamic scholars who possessed extensive religious knowledge. Through various approaches to Islamic propagation, these scholars contributed to the acceptance of Islam among the rulers and communities of South Sulawesi. The process reached an important stage in the early seventeenth century when the rulers of Luwu and Gowa formally accepted Islam, including Karaeng Matoaya and I Mangerangi Daeng Manrabbia, who later received the title Sultan Alauddin (Sewang, 2005; Syukur, 2009). This development strengthened the position of Islam within the political and social structure of the Gowa Kingdom.

The development of Islam in the Gowa Kingdom cannot be separated from the establishment and function of mosques (Mekonnen & Tewodros, 2022; Ali, 2024; Hairuddin, 2025). Mosques have historically served not only as places of worship but also as centres of education, government, cultural expression, and community organisation. Gazalba (1994) explains that the historical development of Muslim society is closely related to the development of its mosques because mosques reflect the religious and social conditions of the communities surrounding them. Similar functions can be observed in several historical mosques in Indonesia, including the Demak Mosque, the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque in Banda Aceh, and the Jami' Palopo Mosque, which were associated with religious propagation, political authority, and community activities in their respective regions (Wahyuddin, 2013; Zein, 1999).

In Gowa, one of the most important Islamic heritage buildings is the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque. Located on Jalan Syekh Yusuf, Katangka Village, Somba Opu District, Gowa Regency, the mosque represents an important stage in the development of Islam in South Sulawesi. It is believed to have been established during the reign of Sultan Alauddin in the early seventeenth century and functioned as both a centre of worship and a representation of the relationship between Islamic development and the authority of the Gowa Kingdom (Ali et al., 2023; Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata, 2008).

The historical importance of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque is reflected in the material remains that have survived, including its building structure, pulpit, tombs, doors, and inscriptions. Among these remains, the inscriptions written in *ukiri' serang* are particularly significant. *Ukiri' serang* is a form of writing that developed through the adaptation of Arabic script to the Makassarese language following the influence of Islam on Bugis-Makassarese culture. The inscriptions are located on several parts of the mosque, particularly its doors, mihrab, and pulpit. However, compared with studies focusing on the mosque's architecture and historical background, these inscriptions have received relatively limited attention as primary historical sources.

The study of the *ukiri' serang* inscriptions is important for several reasons. First, inscriptions can function as primary historical sources because they record names, dates, events, titles, and other information associated with the period in which they were produced. Primary sources occupy an important position in historical research because they provide direct evidence for reconstructing past events (Hamid & Madjid, 2015). Second, the inscriptions at the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque contain information regarding the mosque's construction, renovation, and the individuals involved in its maintenance. Some of this information is not fully recorded in other historical sources. Third, the inscriptions represent a form of local Islamic written heritage that reflects the interaction between Arabic writing traditions and the Makassarese language. The declining ability of contemporary communities to read *ukiri' serang* may lead to the loss of the historical information contained in these inscriptions unless they are properly documented, transliterated, and studied.

From an epigraphic perspective, inscriptions are not merely decorative elements or written ornaments attached to buildings. They may also be understood as historical records preserved

on durable material media. In the context of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque, the inscriptions document aspects of construction, renovation, royal involvement, religious messages, and the participation of local officials and communities. Therefore, the inscriptions can be interpreted as a medium of historical memory that connects the mosque's physical development with the religious, social, and political history of the Gowa Kingdom.

Previous studies of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque have generally discussed its historical background, architectural characteristics, cultural symbolism, and relationship with the Islamization of the Gowa Kingdom. These studies have contributed to an understanding of the mosque as an Islamic historical building and as a product of interaction between local and Islamic cultures (Ali et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the *ukiri' serang* inscriptions have generally been treated as supporting evidence rather than as the primary object of analysis. Consequently, their function as sources for reconstructing the chronology of the mosque's construction and renovation has not been examined comprehensively.

This limitation indicates a research gap concerning the position of the *ukiri' serang* inscriptions as epigraphic archives. In this study, the term epigraphic archive refers to inscriptions that preserve historical information and enable the reconstruction of construction periods, renovation activities, historical actors, and the broader context of the mosque's development. Unlike studies that primarily examine the history or architecture of the building, this research places the inscriptions at the centre of the historical analysis. Accordingly, this study aims to analyse the function of the *ukiri' serang* inscriptions as epigraphic archives in reconstructing the history of the construction and renovation of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative analytical-descriptive research design using integrated epigraphic and historical approaches. The analytical-descriptive design was selected because the research aims not only to describe the physical characteristics and textual contents of the inscriptions preserved in the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque but also to analyze their historical meanings and functions as primary documentary evidence. Rather than treating the inscriptions merely as decorative architectural elements, this study positions them as historical records capable of preserving chronological, political, religious, and cultural information related to the development of the mosque and the Gowa Kingdom.

The epigraphic approach served as the principal analytical framework for identifying, reading, transliterating, translating, and interpreting the inscriptions written in *ukiri' serang* (Serang script). At the same time, the historical approach complemented the epigraphic analysis by situating the inscriptions within the broader historical context of the Islamization of Gowa, the political development of the kingdom, and the evolution of the Al-Hilal Katangka Old Mosque. Through the integration of these two approaches, the inscriptions were examined both as textual artifacts and as historical evidence embedded within the architectural fabric of the mosque.

Research Site

The research was conducted at the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque, located in Katangka Village, Somba Opu District, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The mosque was selected because it is one of the oldest surviving Islamic monuments in South Sulawesi and preserves a unique collection of *ukiri' serang* inscriptions carved on several architectural components, including the mihrab, pulpit, and entrance doors. These inscriptions constitute the principal sources of historical information examined in this study.

The selection of this site was based on three considerations. First, the mosque has significant historical value as one of the earliest Islamic centers associated with the Kingdom of Gowa. Second, the surviving inscriptions contain valuable information concerning mosque construction, renovation, religious practices, and political authority. Third, previous studies have largely emphasized the architectural and historical significance of the mosque while giving limited attention to the inscriptions as independent historical sources.

Data Sources

This study utilized both primary and secondary sources. Primary data consisted of the *ukiri' serang* inscriptions preserved on the architectural components of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque. These inscriptions served as the principal epigraphic evidence from which historical information concerning construction chronology, renovation activities, political authority, religious norms, and community participation was reconstructed. Supporting primary data were also obtained through direct field observations, photographic documentation, and interviews with individuals possessing historical knowledge of the mosque, including museum personnel and local custodians.

Secondary data were collected from historical literature concerning the Kingdom of Gowa, previous studies on the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque, archaeological reports, *lontarak* manuscripts, books on Islamic history in South Sulawesi, and scholarly publications addressing epigraphy, historical methodology, and Makassarese written traditions. These materials were used to verify, contextualize, and interpret the information obtained from the inscriptions.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted through several complementary techniques to ensure the completeness and reliability of the historical evidence. The first stage involved direct observation of all inscriptions preserved within the mosque. Each inscription was carefully examined to identify its physical characteristics, location, inscription medium, carving style, state of preservation, and relationship to the surrounding architectural elements.

The second stage consisted of visual documentation. High-resolution digital photographs were taken from multiple viewing angles to preserve the inscriptions in their original condition and to facilitate detailed epigraphic analysis. The photographic documentation also enabled repeated examination of inscriptional features during the analytical process.

The third stage involved epigraphic recording through transliteration and translation. The *ukiri' serang* inscriptions were systematically read, transliterated into the Latin alphabet, translated into Indonesian and English where necessary, and organized into an analytical database. Particular attention was given to preserving the linguistic structure of the original inscriptions while ensuring accurate interpretation of historical terminology.

The fourth stage consisted of documentary research through an extensive review of historical literature. Relevant books, journal articles, archaeological reports, *lontarak* manuscripts, and archival materials were examined to compare inscriptional information with other historical sources concerning the development of the Gowa Kingdom and the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque.

Finally, interviews were conducted with knowledgeable informants to obtain contextual information regarding the historical functions of the mosque, local interpretations of the inscriptions, and the traditional use of different architectural spaces within the mosque. These interviews were used to complement, rather than replace, the epigraphic evidence.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a systematic historical-epigraphic procedure consisting of four interrelated stages.

The first stage was epigraphic analysis. Each inscription was identified according to its script, physical characteristics, location, and inscription medium before being transliterated and translated. The textual contents were subsequently analyzed to identify historical information such as names of rulers, royal titles, administrative officials, dates, construction activities, religious instructions, and references to social or political events. This process produced the primary historical data used throughout the study.

The second stage involved source criticism, which consisted of both external and internal criticism. External criticism was conducted to evaluate the authenticity and originality of each inscription by examining the inscription material, carving techniques, script style, architectural context, and physical condition. Internal criticism focused on evaluating the credibility and historical reliability of the inscriptional content through comparison with *lontarak* manuscripts, archaeological evidence, previous historical studies, interview data, and other relevant documentary sources. This stage ensured that historical interpretations were based on evidence that had undergone critical verification.

The third stage was historical interpretation. Information extracted from the inscriptions was interpreted within the broader historical context of the Kingdom of Gowa, the Islamization of South Sulawesi, and the historical development of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque. Rather than treating the inscriptions as isolated textual records, this stage examined them as expressions of political authority, religious practice, cultural adaptation, and collective memory. The relationships among inscriptional content, architectural location, historical actors, and socio-political circumstances were analyzed to explain their historical significance.

The fourth stage involved chronological reconstruction. Historical information obtained from the inscriptions was synthesized with archaeological observations, documentary evidence, interview data, and historical literature to reconstruct the sequence of construction, renovation, and institutional development of the mosque. This reconstruction emphasized the continuity of architectural modifications, the succession of political and religious actors, and the evolving functions of the mosque over time. Through this integrative process, the study developed a comprehensive historical narrative that explains the role of the *ukiri' serang* inscriptions as epigraphic archives preserving the collective memory of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque.

Result and Discussion

The field observation identified six principal *ukiri' serang* inscriptions located on the mihrab, pulpit, northern entrance, central entrance, inner section of the central entrance, and southern entrance of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque. These inscriptions constitute the primary evidence used in this study because they preserve names, titles, dates, construction activities, religious instructions, and information concerning the officials and community members involved in the mosque's development. Their interpretation is supported by direct observation, photographic documentation, transliteration, interviews, and comparison with historical literature concerning the Gowa Kingdom.

The inscriptions are written in an Arabic-derived script but employ the Makassarese language. This writing tradition is locally known as *ukiri' serang*. Its use reflects the adaptation of Arabic script following the influence of Islam on Bugis-Makassarese written culture (Sewang, 2005). In the context of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque, *ukiri' serang* was not used merely as an ornamental element. It functioned as a medium for recording the mosque's physical development, commemorating the involvement of rulers and officials, communicating religious norms, and preserving historical memory.

Mihrab Inscription



Figure 1. Mihrab of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque

Source: Researcher documentation

The inscription on the mihrab contains the name of Maulana Sultan Abdul Rauf, identified as the thirtieth King of Gowa, I Mappatunru' or I Manginyarang Karaeng Lembang Parang, who ruled from 1811 to 1825. Based on the inscription and the physical context in which it is placed, the ruler was associated with a renovation that made the mihrab area more enclosed.

This finding indicates that the mosque underwent physical modification during the early nineteenth century. The inscription should therefore not be interpreted as evidence of the mosque's initial construction. Instead, it documents one stage in a longer process of maintenance and renovation. This distinction is important because the mosque had existed before the reign of Sultan Abdul Rauf, whereas the inscription specifically records royal involvement in improving one of its principal architectural elements.

The location of the inscription on the mihrab strengthens its historical significance. The mihrab is the section of the mosque that indicates the direction of prayer and is used by the imam when leading congregational worship. The placement of the ruler's name in this area suggests that the renovation was regarded as sufficiently important to be commemorated permanently. Nevertheless, the inscription primarily confirms the ruler's association with the renovation; broader conclusions concerning his motives should not be made without supporting historical evidence.

From an epigraphic perspective, the mihrab inscription functions as a compact archival record. It identifies an actor connected with a specific phase of the mosque's physical development and helps situate that phase within the succession of Gowa rulers. Its value lies in preserving information directly on the architectural element to which the renovation was related.

Pulpit Inscription



Figure 2. Pulpit of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque

Source: Researcher documentation

The inscription on the pulpit records both the construction of the pulpit and a religious instruction concerning conduct during the Friday sermon. The transliterated text reads:

Nani Pakaramula Nipare Anne Mimbaraka Riallonna Jumaka Ruangbangnginna Bulang Muharrang Ri Taung Sisabbu Antallumbilangngangna Antallu, Nanaukiriki Karaeng Katangka Sigang Tumailalang Loloa. Nani tantuammo Angkana inainai makkana-kana lino punna nai 'mo katteka ri mimbaraka tanagappai amala'na.

The inscription is interpreted as follows:

The construction of this pulpit began on the second Friday night of Muharram 1303 AH. Karaeng Katangka, together with Tumailalang Loloa, recorded a stipulation that anyone who spoke about worldly matters while the preacher was delivering the sermon from the pulpit would not receive the spiritual merit of the sermon.

The inscription provides direct evidence concerning the construction of an important liturgical element of the mosque. Because the pulpit is used by the preacher during the Friday sermon, its construction indicates that attention was given not only to the building's physical form but also to the requirements of congregational worship.

The second part of the inscription establishes a rule for the congregation. It discourages discussion of worldly matters while the sermon is being delivered. This message demonstrates that the inscription had a normative function in addition to its documentary function. It did not simply commemorate the pulpit's construction but also regulated religious behaviour within the mosque.

The reference to Karaeng Katangka and Tumailalang Loloa shows that local authorities were involved in recording and communicating this religious instruction. However, the inscription does not provide sufficient information to determine whether they personally financed, designed, or constructed the pulpit. The most defensible interpretation is that they were recognised as authorities associated with the pulpit's construction and the formulation or recording of the instruction.

This inscription therefore supports the concept of an epigraphic archive in two ways. First, it preserves chronological information about the pulpit. Second, it records a religious norm intended for future mosque users. Historical and religious information are consequently combined within a single material source.

The manuscript should verify the Gregorian equivalent of Muharram 1303 AH before publication. The current version presents inconsistent conversions of the same Hijri year. The analytical conclusion should therefore rely primarily on the Hijri date recorded in the inscription until the conversion has been confirmed.

North Gate Inscription



Figure 3. North Gate of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque

Source: Researcher documentation

The inscription on the northern entrance records an order to begin construction or restoration work and identifies the officials responsible for supervising the mosque. According to the historical information used in the study, the northern entrance was reserved for the king and members of the royal family. The transliterated inscription reads:

Nani pakaramula na suro jama karaenga masigika ri allonna sannenga risagantujuna bulan Rajab, taung sisabbu antallungbilanganna antallu taung, dallang awwala nasitujuang tutuponna anrua bulang April AD sisabbu sagantuju angkana assagantuju pulo anngannang. Nani suro antama Karaeng Katangka ri karaenga anjagai masigika siagang Tumailalang Loloe Gallarang Mangasa, Tombolo, Samata.

The inscription is interpreted as follows:

The king ordered work on the mosque to begin on Monday, the eighth day of Rajab 1303 AH. The king appointed Karaeng Katangka to supervise and maintain the mosque together with Tumailalang Loloe and the *gallarang* of Mangasa, Tombolo, and Samata.

The inscription provides several specific categories of historical evidence. It identifies the royal order, records a date, names the principal supervisor, and mentions district-level officials associated with the mosque. These details make the north gate inscription one of the strongest sources for reconstructing the administrative organisation of the renovation.

The participation of the *gallarang* is particularly important. Historical literature describes the *gallarang* as district heads with administrative responsibilities within the governmental structure of Gowa, including the representation of their territories and the mobilisation of resources or labour (Sewang, 2005). Their presence in the inscription suggests that the mosque's restoration involved coordination between the royal centre and local administrative units.

The inscription does not specify the exact technical responsibilities of each official. It therefore cannot establish whether the named individuals acted as builders, financial contributors, supervisors, or custodians in the modern sense. Nevertheless, it clearly demonstrates that responsibility for the mosque was institutionally distributed rather than assigned to only one ruler or religious figure.

The location of the inscription on the entrance associated with the royal family further reinforces the relationship between the mosque and Gowa's political authority. However, this interpretation should remain grounded in the interview and historical information concerning

the function of the northern door. The architectural location alone does not prove that the door was exclusively used by the royal family.

Accordingly, the north gate inscription functions as an administrative epigraphic archive. It preserves information about authority, supervision, territorial participation, and the organisation of mosque maintenance.

Central Door Inscription



Figure 4. Central Door of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque

Source: Researcher documentation

According to the interview with the curator of the Balla Lompoa Museum, the central entrance was used by royal officials during the period of the Gowa Kingdom (J. T. Bali, personal communication, [insert interview date]). The inscription reads:

Nani Pakaramula ni Pare Masigika ri Gowa Bulang Rajab Ritaung Dalang Nalebba, Nani Pakaramula nipa 'jumakki ri Taung Ba. Nania ngasegi karaenga a'juma sigang asengi tau gowaya pantarangngannaya niaka a'juma nassidakka karaeng, nasikamma tau a'jumaka siagang ngaseng tau ta'jumaka, siagang ia ngaseng anjamaya masigika niaka nisareangngasengi passidakka ri karaenga.

The inscription is interpreted as follows:

Construction of the mosque in Gowa began in the month of Rajab and was completed in the year of Dal. The mosque was first used for Friday prayer in the year of Ba. The kings attended Friday prayer with the people of Gowa, some of whom prayed in the courtyard outside the mosque. The king distributed alms to those who attended Friday prayer, those who did not attend, and those who had participated in the mosque's construction.

This inscription documents the transition from construction to religious use. It states that the mosque was completed and subsequently used for Friday prayer. The reference to worshippers praying outside the building indicates that the event involved a congregation larger than the internal prayer space could accommodate. However, the inscription does not provide the number of participants, and the size of the congregation should therefore not be quantified.

The record of alms distribution broadens the historical significance of the inscription. The mosque's completion was associated not only with collective worship but also with the distribution of assistance by the ruler. The beneficiaries included those who attended the prayer, those who did not attend, and people who had worked on the mosque. This suggests that the event connected royal patronage, religious celebration, and recognition of community participation.

The manuscript previously linked the Dal and Ba years directly to famine and difficult agricultural conditions. Such an interpretation may be relevant, but it requires careful differentiation between inscriptional evidence and information derived from secondary

historical sources. The inscription directly records the cyclical year names and the distribution of alms. The environmental and agricultural characteristics associated with those years are drawn from Ahmad (1992), not from the inscription itself.

A more grounded interpretation is therefore that the cyclical year references provide a traditional chronological framework, while the distribution of alms reflects a form of royal social responsibility. The argument that the alms were specifically distributed because of famine should be presented as a possible contextual interpretation rather than as a fact established by the inscription.

The central door inscription functions as an epigraphic archive of architectural completion, congregational use, royal participation, and social distribution. It is especially valuable because it records how the renovated mosque was incorporated into the religious and communal life of Gowa.

Inner Central Door Inscription



Figure 5. Inner Section of the Central Door of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque

Source: Author documentation

An additional inscription is located within the circular section of the central door. The text reads:

1302 Muharram nabawi nanapareki masigika Sultan Abdul Kadir Muhammad Aidid bin Mahmud siagang ana'na rikaraenga, Sultan Idris Adzimuddin siagang Muhammad Tahir Qadi ri Gowa.

The inscription is interpreted as follows:

In Muharram 1302 AH, this mosque was constructed by Sultan Abdul Kadir Muhammad Aidid bin Mahmud together with his son, Sultan Idris Adzimuddin, and Muhammad Tahir, who served as the *qadi* of Gowa.

This inscription identifies three principal actors associated with the mosque's construction or renovation: Sultan Abdul Kadir Muhammad Aidid, his son Sultan Idris Adzimuddin, and Muhammad Tahir, the *qadi* of Gowa. Their inclusion illustrates the involvement of both political and religious authority.

The inscription is particularly important because it indicates continuity between two generations of the ruling family. The participation of a ruler and his son suggests that the mosque's development was connected to dynastic responsibility and was not confined to a single reign. At the same time, the naming of the *qadi* indicates that religious authority was formally represented in the project.

Nevertheless, the term translated as “constructed” must be interpreted in relation to the wider inscriptional evidence. Because the mosque existed before 1302 AH, the inscription most likely

refers to reconstruction, renovation, or the construction of a particular part of the mosque rather than its original foundation. This interpretation is more consistent with the chronology presented in the manuscript.

The inner central door inscription therefore contributes to the identification of actors and the reconstruction of institutional relationships. It shows that the mosque's development involved collaboration among the king, the royal successor, and a senior religious official.

South Gate Inscription

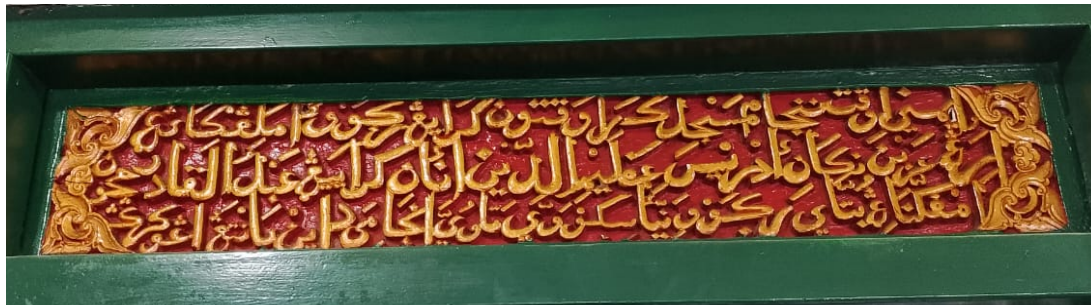


Figure 6. South Gate of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque

Source: Author documentation

The southern entrance was reportedly used by members of the general public during the Gowa Kingdom period (J. T. Bali, personal communication, [insert interview date]). The inscription reads:

Iyaminne wattu nani jama masigika riwattunna Karaenga ri Gowa I Maalingkaang areng ara'na nikana Idris Adzimuddin ana'na Karaeng Abdul Kadir Mahmud ampakajannangi buttaya ri Gowa nia sigompo tau anjamai, Daeng Bantang angngukiriki.

The inscription is interpreted as follows:

The Katangka Mosque was constructed during the reign of I Malingkaang, whose Arabic name was Idris Adzimuddin, the son of King Abdul Kadir Mahmud. During his reign, the region and people of Gowa were brought under order, and a group of people participated in the mosque's construction. The inscription was carved and written by Daeng Bantang.

This inscription associates the mosque's renovation with the reign of I Malingkaang Daeng Nyonri Karaeng Katangka Sultan Idris Adzimuddin. It also records the participation of a group of community members in the work. The inscription therefore provides evidence that royal patronage did not exclude collective involvement. Instead, the project appears to have combined royal authority with community labour.

The identification of Daeng Bantang is another important finding. Among the inscriptions examined, this text explicitly preserves the name of the person responsible for carving or writing it. This detail demonstrates that epigraphic production involved identifiable local expertise. Daeng Bantang should therefore be understood as an agent in the preservation of the mosque's historical memory, although the inscription does not provide further information concerning his background or official position.

The south gate inscription records three levels of participation: the ruler who authorised or supported the work, the community members who contributed to the construction, and the inscriber who transformed the event into a permanent written record. Its archival significance therefore extends beyond royal commemoration.

Reconstruction of the Mosque's Development

When examined collectively, the inscriptions indicate that the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque developed through several phases rather than through one construction event. The mihrab inscription points to renovation during the reign of the thirtieth King of Gowa. The inscriptions associated with Sultan Abdul Kadir Muhammad Aidid and Sultan Idris Adzimuddin record later and apparently more extensive work involving the pulpit, entrances, and broader mosque structure.

The inscriptional dates should not be treated as the original foundation date of the mosque. The manuscript's historical narrative states that an earlier place of worship had existed in Gowa before the nineteenth-century renovations. Accordingly, terms translated as "construction" may refer to reconstruction, restoration, enlargement, or the replacement of earlier building components.

This interpretation resolves an important chronological issue. The nineteenth-century inscriptions do not contradict the mosque's earlier historical origin. Rather, they document later phases in which the building was renewed, expanded, or formalised under successive rulers. The inscriptions are therefore strongest as sources for the history of renovation and institutional maintenance.

At the same time, the chronological sequence requires further technical verification. The manuscript contains both 1302 AH and 1303 AH, but the relationship between these dates and the reported Gregorian years is not consistently presented. Before publication, the author should verify each conversion and distinguish clearly among the construction dates of the pulpit, doors, mihrab, and main mosque structure.

Political, Religious, and Community Actors

The inscriptions identify a broad network of actors involved in the development of the mosque. These include the kings of Gowa, Karaeng Katangka, Tumailalang Loloa, the *gallarang* of Mangasa, Tombolo, and Samata, the *qadi* of Gowa, community workers, and the inscriber Daeng Bantang.

This range of actors demonstrates that the mosque was maintained through an institutional system that connected royal, administrative, religious, and community authority. The kings provided political legitimacy and direction. Karaeng Katangka and Tumailalang Loloa were associated with supervision and maintenance. The *gallarang* represented local administrative participation, while the *qadi* represented religious authority. Community members supplied labour, and the inscriber transformed the events into permanent textual records.

The evidence therefore does not support an interpretation of the mosque as the achievement of a single ruler. Its development was cumulative and collaborative. However, the precise responsibilities of each person cannot always be determined from the inscriptions. The study should distinguish between individuals explicitly identified as builders, supervisors, custodians, religious authorities, or inscribers and those whose exact role remains uncertain.

Religious and Social Functions of the Inscriptions

The inscriptions preserve more than architectural information. The pulpit inscription communicates a rule concerning behaviour during the sermon. The central door inscription records Friday prayer and the distribution of alms. Other inscriptions identify the participation of rulers, religious officials, and local authorities.

These findings show that the inscriptions were embedded in the mosque's religious and social functions. They instructed worshippers, commemorated construction, legitimised authority,

and recorded collective participation. Their placement on functional parts of the building—the mihrab, pulpit, and entrances—also made the information visible within everyday religious activity.

Nevertheless, the meaning of each inscription should be interpreted according to its specific content. Not every inscription performs the same function. The mihrab inscription primarily commemorates royal involvement, the pulpit inscription combines chronology and religious instruction, and the door inscriptions emphasise construction, supervision, participation, and access. Recognising these differences strengthens the argument that the mosque contains a collection of interconnected epigraphic records rather than one uniform inscriptional programme.

***Ukiri' Serang* as an Epigraphic Archive**

The findings support the classification of the mosque's *ukiri' serang* inscriptions as epigraphic archives. Their archival character is based on the historical information they preserve directly on durable architectural media. This information includes dates, personal names, royal titles, administrative positions, religious messages, construction activities, and community participation.

The term epigraphic archive does not imply that the inscriptions contain a complete or neutral account of the mosque's history. Like other historical records, they are selective. They commemorate particular rulers, officials, events, and religious messages while leaving other information unrecorded. Their interpretation therefore requires source criticism and comparison with interviews, architectural evidence, and historical literature.

Even with these limitations, the inscriptions provide information that may not be preserved in conventional written documents. They identify individuals such as Daeng Bantang, record the role of district officials, and associate particular architectural elements with specific phases of development. Their location within the mosque also connects the written record directly to the physical objects and spaces being described.

The inscriptions further demonstrate the adaptation of Arabic script to the Makassarese language. This adaptation reflects the interaction between Islamic written traditions and local cultural expression. The continued use of Makassarese language within an Arabic-derived script indicates that Islamization involved cultural integration rather than the simple replacement of local identity.

The Historical Value of the *Ukiri' Serang* Inscriptions as Epigraphic Archives

The principal finding of this study is that the *ukiri' serang* inscriptions preserved in the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque constitute an interconnected body of historical evidence for reconstructing the mosque's development. The inscriptions do not record a single construction event; rather, they document several phases of renovation, the construction or modification of particular architectural elements, and the continued involvement of successive rulers and officials. The inscriptions on the mihrab, pulpit, and entrance doors collectively provide information on dates, royal names, administrative titles, religious instructions, and community participation. When examined together, they reveal that the physical form of the mosque resulted from a gradual and cumulative historical process rather than from construction completed during one reign.

This interpretation is important because the dates recorded in the inscriptions should not automatically be regarded as the original foundation date of the mosque (Godfrey, 2022; Ghouari, & Mekkas, 2025; Gertoux, 2026). The mosque had existed before the nineteenth-century works documented in several of the inscriptions. Therefore, terms that are translated

as “built” or “constructed” may refer to renovation, reconstruction, enlargement, or the installation of a specific architectural component. The mihrab inscription records an intervention associated with Sultan Abdul Rauf, while the inscriptions connected with Sultan Abdul Kadir Muhammad Aidid and Sultan Idris Adzimuddin indicate later and more extensive phases of development. The pulpit inscription provides a date for the construction of a particular liturgical feature, rather than necessarily dating the mosque as a whole. This layered chronology strengthens the argument that inscriptions must be interpreted in relation to their architectural locations and compared with other historical evidence.

Previous research has established the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque as an important heritage of Islamization, Islamic education, and cultural development in Gowa. Ali et al. (2023), for example, discuss the mosque’s historical position and its contribution to the development of Islamic civilisation and education. The present study extends this earlier understanding by placing the inscriptions, rather than the mosque building in general, at the centre of the analysis. In doing so, the study shows that the inscriptions are not merely supplementary illustrations of a history already known from written literature. They provide independent evidence that can clarify the sequence of renovation, identify actors whose roles are not always clearly recorded elsewhere, and connect particular historical events with specific parts of the mosque.

The findings further demonstrate that the development of the mosque was closely connected to the political and administrative structure of the Gowa Kingdom (Mekonnen & Tewodros, 2022; Handoko & Subair, 2024; Madandola et al., 2026). The repeated appearance of royal names and orders indicates that the construction and maintenance of the mosque received formal support from the ruling authorities. However, the inscriptions also show that royal patronage was implemented through a broader institutional network. Karaeng Katangka, Tumailalang Loloe, the *gallarang* of Mangasa, Tombolo, and Samata, the *qadi* of Gowa, community workers, and the inscriber Daeng Bantang were all associated with different aspects of the mosque’s development. The mosque should therefore not be represented solely as the achievement of individual kings. Instead, its development involved cooperation among political rulers, religious authorities, district officials, local communities, and skilled individuals.

The participation of these different actors reveals the institutional significance of the mosque. The king provided authority and legitimacy, while officials such as Karaeng Katangka and Tumailalang Loloe appear to have been involved in supervision or maintenance. The inclusion of several *gallarang* suggests that the project was connected to district-level administration and the mobilisation of local support. Meanwhile, the presence of Muhammad Tahir as the *qadi* of Gowa demonstrates the involvement of formal religious authority. These findings are consistent with the wider historical position of Islam within the Gowa Kingdom, where political authority and Islamic institutions developed in close relationship with one another (Sewang, 2005). Nevertheless, the inscriptions do not always specify the precise duties performed by each actor. The analysis should therefore distinguish between roles explicitly stated in the inscription and responsibilities inferred from the broader administrative context.

The identification of Daeng Bantang as the person who carved or wrote one of the inscriptions is especially significant. Historical inscriptions frequently foreground rulers, officials, and patrons, while the individuals who materially produced the texts remain unnamed (Kelly, 2023; Armstrong et al., 2024; Holliday, 2024). In this case, the preservation of the inscriber’s name provides evidence of local expertise in the production of *ukiri’ serang*. Daeng Bantang was not merely a technical craftsman; through the act of carving the inscription, he transformed information about construction, royal authority, and community participation into a durable historical record. However, because the inscription provides no further biographical

information, the study should avoid making unsupported claims regarding his social status, training, or official position.

The inscriptions also demonstrate that the mosque's development involved community participation. The south gate inscription refers to a group of people who contributed to the construction work, while the central door inscription records the distribution of alms to those who participated in the mosque's construction and to members of the wider community (Kaur, 2022; Ansumali, 2023; Paksi, 2025). These details indicate that the mosque was not only a royal religious monument but also a collective undertaking. Royal authority initiated or supported the work, but community labour contributed to its completion. The inscriptions consequently preserve both elite and non-elite participation, although most community members are recorded collectively rather than by individual name.

Another important finding is that the inscriptions performed religious and social functions in addition to documenting construction. The pulpit inscription, for example, records the date of the pulpit's construction while also instructing worshippers not to speak about worldly matters during the Friday sermon. This combination of chronological and normative information demonstrates that the inscriptions were active components of religious life. They were intended not only to commemorate past events but also to guide the conduct of future mosque users (Gün, 2025; Elgendy, 2025; Lee, 2025). The inscription's position on the pulpit reinforces this function because the message was materially connected to the setting in which the sermon was delivered.

The central door inscription documents the first Friday prayer following the completion of a construction phase, the participation of the rulers and people of Gowa, and the distribution of alms. The inscription therefore preserves the transition of the renovated building from a construction site into an active communal religious space. The presence of worshippers inside and outside the mosque suggests that the event attracted a substantial congregation, although the inscription does not provide enough evidence to determine its exact size (El Boujjoufi et al., 2023; Alshammari et al., 2025; Amiti, 2025). The distribution of alms also indicates that the event combined worship, royal patronage, recognition of labour, and social assistance.

The references to the Dal and Ba years in the central door inscription require particularly careful interpretation. Ahmad (1992) associates these cyclical year designations with environmental and agricultural conditions. Such contextual information may help explain the social circumstances surrounding the distribution of alms. However, the inscription itself does not explicitly state that the alms were distributed in response to famine or crop failure. The most grounded conclusion is that the inscription records the completion of the mosque, the performance of Friday prayer, and the distribution of alms, while the relationship between these actions and adverse economic conditions remains a contextual interpretation derived from a secondary source. Presenting this distinction clearly prevents the discussion from treating an inference as direct epigraphic evidence.

The findings also support the interpretation of *ukiri' serang* as a product of interaction between Islamic written traditions and Makassarese linguistic culture. The inscriptions employ an Arabic-derived script to record the Makassarese language, thereby preserving local names, titles, administrative terms, and religious messages. Cummings (2001) argues that the Islamization of early modern Makassar was closely connected to the use and social authority of Arabic and Islamic texts. From this perspective, the inscriptions at the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque demonstrate that Islamization involved not only changes in religious belief and practice but also changes in how political, religious, and historical information was written and displayed.

At the same time, the use of Arabic-derived characters did not eliminate the Makassarese language or local political terminology. Instead, the inscriptions integrated Islamic script with local language and institutional identity. The presence of terms such as *karaeng*, *tumailalang*, and *gallarang* alongside Islamic dates, royal Arabic names, and references to Friday worship illustrates this integration. The inscriptions therefore represent cultural adaptation rather than the simple replacement of one written tradition by another. This finding reinforces the argument that Islamization in Gowa was negotiated through local institutions, languages, and forms of authority.

The concept of the epigraphic archive is useful for explaining these findings. In this study, the term does not mean that the inscriptions constitute a complete archive comparable to a modern collection of administrative documents. Rather, it refers to their capacity to preserve selected historical information on durable parts of the mosque. The inscriptions record dates, names, titles, construction activities, religious regulations, royal orders, and community participation. Their archival value is strengthened by their physical association with the objects and spaces they describe: the pulpit inscription is attached to the pulpit, the mihrab inscription is associated with the mihrab, and the door inscriptions are located on entrances connected with particular groups and functions (Baradaran et al., 2022; Coulter et al., 2023; Inghilleri, 2023).

The material location of the inscriptions is therefore part of their historical meaning. Jones (2007) explains that material objects provide an important framework through which collective memory is formed and transmitted. In the present study, the inscriptions preserve information not as detached written accounts but as texts incorporated into the mosque's architecture. Mosque users repeatedly encounter them within a functioning religious environment, enabling past rulers, renovations, religious instructions, and community contributions to remain materially connected to the present building. The inscriptions can thus be understood as instruments through which historical memory is embedded in place.

Nevertheless, the inscriptions do not provide a complete or neutral account of the mosque's history. They selectively commemorate certain rulers, officials, events, and religious messages. The emphasis on kings and prominent authorities may reflect the political and commemorative purposes of the inscriptions, while the contributions of ordinary workers are generally recorded collectively. Moreover, inscriptions can identify an actor and an event without fully explaining the actor's motivation, the financing of the work, the technical form of the renovation, or the wider social conditions. For this reason, the inscriptions must be examined through source criticism and compared with interviews, architectural observations, historical chronicles, and relevant literature.

The present findings consequently make two related contributions. Empirically, the study reconstructs several stages in the development of the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque and identifies the political, religious, administrative, and community actors associated with them. Conceptually, it demonstrates how inscriptions attached to a religious building can function as epigraphic archives. This approach moves the analysis beyond treating the inscriptions as decorative elements or supplementary quotations. Instead, the inscriptions become primary sources whose wording, physical location, language, and relationship with the mosque's architectural elements are all relevant to historical interpretation.

The *ukiri' serang* inscriptions show that the Old Al-Hilal Katangka Mosque was simultaneously a place of worship, a product of royal patronage, a site of administrative cooperation, a focus of community participation, and a medium for preserving historical memory. Their importance lies not only in the individual facts they record but also in the relationships they reveal among political authority, Islamic practice, local administration, collective labour, and Makassarese written culture. By reading the inscriptions collectively and

critically, the study provides a more evidence-based reconstruction of the mosque's development without separating its architectural history from the social and institutional contexts in which that development occurred. The revision remains grounded in the inscriptional findings presented in the manuscript.

Conclusion

The research results show that the inscription of the Al-Hilal Katangka Old Mosque is a primary historical source which has important value in reconstructing the development of Islam in the Kingdom of Gowa. Inscriptions not only function as decorative elements of religious buildings, but also as a communication medium that records Islamic values, cultural identity and religious orientation of the community at the time of their creation. The existence of religious texts in certain parts of the mosque shows that there is a conscious effort to present Islamic symbols and messages into public spaces while strengthening the function of the mosque as the center of community religious life. The use of *ukiri'serang* in the inscription shows the process of interaction between Islamic traditions and local culture which takes place in an adaptive manner. These findings show that the Islamization process in Gowa does not solely take place through changes in beliefs, but also through the transformation of written culture which accommodates local elements into the Islamic intellectual tradition. Thus, the inscription becomes material evidence that represents the process of acculturation and the formation of a unique local Islamic identity in South Sulawesi. From a historical perspective, the inscriptions of the Al-Hilal Katangka Old Mosque show that the mosque had a broader role than just a place of worship. The mosque functions as a space for the representation of power, a center for the dissemination of Islamic values, as well as a means of inheriting the community's collective memory. Therefore, the existence of inscriptions on mosque buildings can be understood as part of a symbolic strategy to strengthen religious legitimacy and maintain the continuity of Islamic traditions in society.

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