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CULTURAL APPROPRIATION AS LOCAL IDENTITY: THE CASE OF DANGDUT MAKASSAR

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ABSTRACT

This study examines cultural appropriation in dangdut Makassar. While existing studies on dangdut and cultural appropriation tend to emphasize musical hybridity or commercialization, they rarely examine the role of local community agency in transforming appropriated forms into recognized local identities. Employing a qualitative approach with data collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and literature review, the analysis was conducted using data triangulation to ensure validity. Fieldwork was conducted in Makassar through observations of live performances and community events, complemented by in-depth interviews with musicians, cultural practitioners, and audience members. The findings reveal three main factors driving cultural appropriation in dangdut Makassar: musical, economic, and socio-cultural factors. Borrowings from Malay, Arab, Sundanese, koplo, and Western musical styles appear in melodic structures, arrangements, and performance practices. Despite these external influences, dangdut Makassar is widely perceived as a distinctive local identity due to regional cultural markers such as traditional costumes, local instruments (pui-pui, kacaping, and gandrang), and the use of the Makassar language in its lyrics. Furthermore, dangdut Makassar is broadly accepted and utilized in various community contexts, including economic activities, political events, socio-cultural practices, and digital or technological spaces. These findings suggest that cultural appropriation in dangdut Makassar should be understood not as a unidirectional borrowing process, but as a socially negotiated practice through which external influences are localized, legitimized, and re-signified as markers of regional identity.

Keywords: *music, cultural appropriation, dangdut Makassar, local identity*

INTRODUCTION

Dangdut has long been recognized as a form of Indonesian popular music that enjoys broad public acceptance and is often perceived as a cultural property of the Indonesian people. Dangdut has become widely popular in Indonesia largely because its circulation is continuously amplified through television broadcasts and social media platforms, which extend its reach to broad audiences and accelerate the spread of dangdut content across regions (Rustanta, 2023). It accompanies a wide range of social activities, including weddings, circumcision ceremonies, political campaigns, commemorations of Indonesian Independence Day, regional anniversaries, and popular festivals such as night markets and local fairs, demonstrating its deep-rooted integration into Indonesian communal life.

This widespread presence has enabled *dangdut* to merge with local musical traditions in many regions of Indonesia. The interaction between national dangdut and regional musical forms has produced distinctive local variants known as *dangdut daerah*. One example of a regional musical product that has become integrated with dangdut is *tarling dangdut*, a hybrid form that blends local *tarling* traditions with dangdut idioms (Alfien & Wardani, 2025).

Hipdut or Hip Hop Dangdut can be understood as a form of appropriation within contemporary dangdut

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practice because it incorporates the aesthetic idioms and creative conventions of globally circulating hip hop into the musical framework of dangdut as an expression of local identity (Hanifah & Firdaus, 2026). In this sense, *Hipdut* does not merely represent cross-genre collaboration. Rather, it involves the selective taking up and reworking of cultural elements from another tradition to produce a new musical configuration that is subsequently produced, marketed, and normalized within local dangdut ecosystems. Consistent with Young's definition of appropriation as the act of taking over forms, themes, and creative practices by one cultural group from another (Young, 2008), *Hipdut* demonstrates how borrowed rhythmic patterns, rap vocal delivery, flow articulation, and performative and production strategies are recontextualized within the idiom of dangdut. Moreover, the sustained growth of *Hipdut* indicates that this appropriation is strongly mediated through digital platforms, which extend its distribution and accelerate its reception, particularly among Generation Z, positioning *Hipdut* as a hybrid form aligned with contemporary musical sensibilities.

The broad social acceptance of regional appropriations of dangdut across Indonesia has contributed to the emergence of new locally inflected musical genres. For example, in Sumatra, the performance practice of *bagurau saluang dendang* as an oral literary tradition has increasingly been hybridized with modern performing arts. This process has generated derivative forms such as *saluang dangdut* (Anugrah et al., 2023). Moreover, the incorporation of Banyuwangi *kendang kempul* patterns, *tarling, campursari*, and Sundanese pop idioms into *koplo* exemplifies appropriation as a widespread cultural practice that extends beyond Java to other regions, including Sumatra and Sulawesi.

Traditional performing arts have adapted dangdut music and mobilized it not only as entertainment but also as an integral component of public commemorations, including major religious holidays, national days, and life-cycle events such as circumcisions and weddings (Aditya & Muttaqin, 2025). Consequently, when performed across diverse social settings, dangdut has been shown to cultivate an atmosphere of intimacy and communal solidarity, reinforcing everyday feelings of kinship within the community. Moreover, in Makassar, dangdut is not confined to traditional performance contexts. Since the 1980s, the city's local music industry has also institutionalized and commercialized a distinctive Makassar dangdut repertoire, notably through productions released by Libel Record.

Despite the evident processes of borrowing, hybridization, and localization, existing scholarship has not sufficiently explained how cultural appropriations unfold, why they gain acceptance within local communities, and how they are subsequently consolidated into markers of cultural identity. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the mechanisms of cultural appropriation in dangdut Makassar and the socio-cultural dynamics through which such appropriations are legitimized and maintained. In doing so, it clarifies how community-based acceptance sustains the genre's ongoing development and enables appropriated cultural forms to function as recognizable local identity signifiers.

Preliminary observations further indicate that the YouTube channel of Libel Record (https://www.youtube.com/@LIBELRECORDOFFICIAL1980), one of the earliest and most influential producers of Dangdut Makassar, showcases a wide spectrum of musical styles including *koplo*, pop, and *calti*. The deliberate incorporation of these external musical elements, explicitly acknowledged on album covers as foundational to the newly branded genre Dangdut Makassar, forms the central problem addressed in this study. The framework of cultural appropriation is therefore employed to examine how borrowed musical materials from other cultures are adopted, recontextualized, and ultimately integrated into the construction of dangdut Makassar's musical identity.

Previous scholarship on regional dangdut music has generally approached the genre through socio-cultural perspectives. Notable examples include Qorib & Indra Dewi (2021) on the modern *campursari* dangdut phenomenon of *Sobat Ambyar,* and *Campurasi* as a Hybrid Music (Wahyudi et al., 2024). In contrast, other studies foreground musicality, such as Anugrah et al. (2023) examination of *saluang dangdut* in Minangkabau. Likewise, dangdut *koplo* is a manifestation of popular culture in Indonesia (Rustanta, 2023).

Despite the breadth of existing scholarship, a notable issue emerges from the mapping of past studies, including those identified through AI-driven research tools such as Scite.ai, which catalogs publications from 1970 to 2024. Much of this literature treats dangdut merely as a musical object, emphasizing stylistic features while overlooking the deeper socio-cultural mechanisms that explain why dangdut continues to receive strong public acceptance across diverse social settings. More critically, previous studies rarely address how and why communities not only accept musical borrowings but also appropriate these hybrid forms as part of their own cultural identity. This gap becomes particularly evident in the case of dangdut Makassar, where cultural borrowing is not simply tolerated but embraced, normalized, and culturally owned by the local community.

By situating dangdut Makassar within this broader scholarly landscape, the present study seeks to address these gaps through a focused analysis of how cultural appropriation operates in a regional popular music context. It examines the processes and motivations through which external musical elements are selected, adapted, and localized, as well as the cultural dynamics that enable their social acceptance. Through this approach, the study clarifies how appropriated musical materials contribute to the formation and consolidation of dangdut Makassar as a distinctive regional musical identity.

The Makassar government has consistently

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supported various national dangdut talent shows, including *Dangdut Academy* (DA), *Kontes Dangdut Indonesia* (KDI), *Liga Dangdut Indonesia* (LIDA), *Bintang Pantura*, and *Koplo Superstar*. High SMS voting from Makassar audiences has produced numerous national champions, including Selfi Yamma, who won Liga Dangdut Indonesia in 2018 and Dangdut Academy Asia 4; Safar, who achieved third place in Kontes Dangdut Indonesia in 2004; Evi Masamba, who won the second season of Dangdut Academy in 2015; and Aty Kodong, who finished in second place in the first season of Dangdut Academy in 2014. Liga Dangdut Indonesia and Dangdut Academy are national talent competitions for dangdut singers produced and broadcast by Indosiar, an Indonesian national television network. These achievements have, in turn, shaped the modern local music industry in Makassar, represented by labels such as Irama Baru Record, Libel Record, 77 Record, Swarnada Record, and Mannyingarri.

As one illustration of how nationally circulating cultural forms are reworked at the regional level, Javanese *koplo* has spread widely through information technologies and digital media. Consequently, the growing popularity of dangdut in Makassar can be examined more productively through a center–region relational framework rather than a linear model of cultural diffusion. Drawing on Stuart Hall's view of culture as a site of representation and articulation, this article conceptualizes dangdut in Makassar as an active process of re-encoding and negotiating meaning, in which nationally dominant elements are reconfigured into locally specific formations (Colpani, 2022). In this regard, the adoption of *koplo* drumming while simultaneously maintaining Makassar traditional musical elements in a dangdut Makassar track demonstrates that cultural identity is produced through difference, power relations, and localization, rather than through passive appropriation.

Understanding how dangdut operates within Makassar's cultural system thus requires an ethnomusicological perspective. The convergence of music, ritual, and communal practice constitutes a complex nexus of cultural transmission, spiritual expression, and social cohesion, warranting sustained and rigorous ethnomusicological inquiry (Dila, 2025). Within this framework, dangdut Makassar cannot be viewed merely as sonic material; it embodies behaviors, values, and conceptual meanings embedded in local cultural structures. While ethnomusicology has traditionally focused on indigenous and traditional music, investigating dangdut, a popular music genre, within this perspective becomes meaningful for understanding how popular culture functions within local identity formation. As Darlene (2024) notes, popular music in urban settings reflects the identity of communities whose cultural roots lie in both inland and coastal traditions. Makassar, as a coastal city with its own ethnocultural heritage, thus provides a relevant site for such analysis.

Budiawan et al. (2024) argue that, within the logic of the cultural industry, popular music is frequently standardized and commodified to meet mass tastes. As commercial imperatives intensify, musical production tends to become more homogeneous, often at the expense of artistic integrity and cultural depth. In a related vein, Sutton (2002) demonstrates that the pursuit of local identity through the concept of *sumanga*', as reflected in Iwan Tompo's modernization of traditional music, continues to foreground the preservation of local cultural elements within Makassar pop music. The researcher's experience during KDI 2009, when vocal coach Berta highlighted the distinctive *cengkok* of Makassar singers, further suggests a "gateway" through which traditional Makassar vocal aesthetics are embedded in dangdut performance.

Crucially, the emergence of dangdut Makassar was not immediately accepted by local performers. Its eventual acceptance, to the point where it has become an idiom of local cultural identity, raises an essential question: *why has dangdut been able to penetrate traditional cultural spaces, undergo processes of appropriation, and be embraced as a marker of local identity?* This study argues that examining dangdut Makassar through the lens of cultural appropriation is not only relevant but necessary for understanding the cultural, industrial, and behavioral forces that shape its position in Makassar's contemporary society.

METHODS

This research will analyze the cultural appropriation within Makassar's dangdut. The researcher, serving as the research instrument, will analyze the cultural appropriation of Makassar dangdut performed by local artists, which has been recognized and accepted by the community. The types of data used in this study include both verbal and written data. Verbal data consist of interview results from various research informants, while written data come from previous studies related to this research.

Data were collected through participant observation, interviews, and document studies to capture both performance practices and contextual narratives surrounding dangdut Makassar. The researcher will conduct participant observation as a dangdut singer, joining both the dangdut community and the Makassar community in the city of Makassar. The dangdut community, in this context, refers to Sambalu'na Gamasi, a fan community under the umbrella of Radio Gamasi Makassar. Meanwhile, the Makassar community in this study refers to the @Jalanbareng community, a historical community of Makassar city supported by the Makassar City Tourism Department.

Outlines the data collection strategy for examining cultural appropriation in dangdut Makassar by combining musical, verbal, and textual materials across multiple settings (see Table 1). Musical data were gathered from digital releases on selected YouTube channels, broadcasts from a local

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Table 1 Data Collection Process

Data type	Unit/ material	Data source	Data collection method
Music (audio-visual recordings)	Dangdut Makassar songs in uploaded and archival audio-visual recordings	YouTube channels: Irama Baru Record, Libel Record, 77 Record, Swarnada Record, Mannyingari	Digital observation, systematic retrieval of uploads, audio-visual documentation, classification of musical variations
Music (broadcast)	Dangdut and Makassar regional songs broadcast, including programming and curation practices	Gamasi FM (Makassar)	Broadcast monitoring, documentation of programs, field notes on curation policy, collection of recordings or playlists when available
Music: live performance	Dangdut performances across economic, political, socio-cultural, and technology-related events in Makassar	Live performance in everyday settings in Makassar	Participant observation as a dangdut singer, contextual event logging, photo/video documentation
Verbal: interviews	Narratives on the production, distribution, use, and meanings of dangdut Makassar	Musicians, singers, arrangers and songwriters, local government representatives; radio personnel, dangdut fan community, historians, event organizers, music industry actors	In-depth interviews, audio recording, transcription, field notes
Written: documents and literature	Prior research and written documents on the cultural appropriation relevant to dangdut Makassar	Peer-reviewed studies and relevant documents	Document study, literature screening, information extraction for contextualization and triangulation

dangdut radio station, and documentation of live performances through participant observation. Verbal data were produced through in-depth interviews with musicians, singers, arrangers, songwriters, government and fan community members, event organizers, and recording industry actors to trace how appropriated elements are selected, negotiated, and localized. Textual data were compiled through document analysis of relevant prior studies to strengthen contextual interpretation and triangulate the appropriation processes identified in the empirical material.

Data validity in this study was ensured through both source triangulation and methodological triangulation. By applying these complementary strategies, the study strengthened the credibility of its findings. Specifically, data from multiple sources were integrated with evidence obtained through document analysis, interviews, and participant observation. These datasets were then cross-checked against one another to corroborate interpretations and support robust conclusions. This approach aligns with Susanto et al. (2023), who define data triangulation as a technique for verifying the trustworthiness of research data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study reveal that cultural appropriation in dangdut Makassar is shaped through a multi-layered process involving artists, the musical product, and the broader community. The incorporation of musical elements from other cultural traditions, such as Malay, Arab, Sundanese, koplo, and Western idioms, does not occur solely through the creative agency of Makassar musicians. Instead, these appropriations are also driven by the interests of local recording industries and by the community's perception of dangdut Makassar as a cultural commodity with value beyond its aesthetic qualities. This dynamic becomes visible in album covers and commercial releases produced by labels such as Irama Baru Record and Libel Record, which explicitly brand these hybrid musical products as Dangdut Makassar. Such labeling demonstrates the intentional construction of a new regional genre through the merging of external musical elements.

Using Young's (2008) theory of artistic appropriation, the study initially identifies two conventional drivers of appropriation: the creative intervention of local artists and the inherent aesthetic adaptability of the musical work. However, the present research uncovers a third factor that extends Young's framework: the active involvement of the community as cultural users who legitimize and normalize the borrowed elements through their everyday engagement with the music. In Makassar, structural acceptance by audiences, ranging from traditional *dandu'na* settings to mass participation in national dangdut talent competitions, plays a decisive role in solidifying dangdut Makassar as a distinct regional genre. Community endorsement is reflected not only

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in performance practices but also in the success of regional contestants in national competitions and in the growth of local recording labels that specialize in dangdut Makassar.

Musical appropriation in Indonesia is best understood as part of a longue durée of intercultural contact that has continually reshaped local sound worlds. Building on this historical trajectory, Ramadhan & Wulandari (2023) show that *campursari* operates as a mediating genre between Western diatonic conventions and Javanese pentatonic idioms. Its formation is closely tied to practices of hybridity, wherein musicians deliberately fuse heterogeneous resources by pairing ethnic ensembles such as the *gamelan* with modern instruments including electric guitar, bass, drums, and keyboard. In this sense, *campursari* can be conceptualized as a hybrid musical product generated through the cross-fertilization of Western popular instrumentation and Javanese traditional aesthetics.

The results further identify three primary factors driving the appropriation of musical elements in the formation of dangdut Makassar, each contributing to the genre's hybrid character and social acceptance. First, appropriation occurs because dangdut itself originated as a hybrid musical form shaped by Indian, Malay, and Western influences. Its inherent adaptability allows it to absorb and reinterpret regional musical idioms. As noted by Darlene (2024), integrating traditional Nusantara musical idioms with contemporary Western elements fosters an equitable musical dialogue in which cultures interact to produce distinctive hybrid forms. In Makassar, local instruments such as *gandrang, kacaping*, and *sinrilik* merge with national dangdut rhythms, generating a stylistic configuration that marks Makassar's local identity. This fusion reflects the genre's capacity to localize external influences while simultaneously reinforcing regional expressivity.

Second, economic motivations from publishers and entertainment industries play a decisive role. Young (2008) argues that appropriation occurs not only through artistic borrowing but also when art is treated as an economic commodity. This is evident in the activities of local labels such as Irama Baru Record and Libel Record, which deliberately incorporate elements from multiple musical traditions, including *koplo* from East Java, Arab-style *Padang Pasir* rhythms, Sundanese flute and *angklung*, and Malay accordion, to produce marketable dangdut Makassar albums. Such combinations create a musical color palette that is more readily accepted by diverse audiences and financially beneficial for producers. In the digital era, as observed by Darlene (2024), music consumption has shifted to online platforms such as Spotify, iTunes, and Joox, enabling regional cultural products to reach wider markets. These platforms amplify the economic viability of dangdut Makassar by extending its distribution beyond local boundaries.

Third, community involvement emerges as a crucial factor that expands Young's theoretical framework. The people of Makassar not only listen to dangdut Makassar for aesthetic enjoyment but also use it across various social domains, including economic, socio-cultural, political, and technological spheres. The genre appears in wedding ceremonies, political campaigns, household karaoke, public festivals, and digital media circulation, functioning as a social medium that brings together different segments of society. This widespread engagement demonstrates that dangdut Makassar has become embedded in everyday life. Aligning with Fauzi & Prasetyo's (2023: 119) observation, the community's acceptance of cultural mixture indicates that music has become part of a dynamic social identity shaped by openness to cultural change.

Collectively, these findings indicate that appropriation in dangdut Makassar should be understood not as a singular act, but as a multidimensional process shaped by artistic hybridity, economic commodification, and active community participation. Each dimension operates simultaneously in producing meaning, value, and legitimacy for appropriated musical elements within local performance and reception contexts. Taken together, these factors contribute to the consolidation of dangdut Makassar as a localized musical identity situated within Indonesia's broader cultural landscape.



Figure 1 Traditional musicians perform in dangdut Makassar (source: Sri Wahyuni Muhtar)

Across Ridwan Sau's dangdut Makassar performances (see Figure 1), traditional Makassar music is consistently presented as a constitutive element rather than a decorative addition. A performance by traditional musicians within a dangdut Makassar took place at the Daia Happy Day event at Sultan Hasanuddin Field on 31 August 2025. Likewise, *Kualleanna Tallanga Natoalia* embeds traditional Makassar instruments within its musical arrangement. This pattern aligns with Muhtar et al. (2025) finding that dangdut Makassar constructs a distinctive local identity through the incorporation of traditional instruments such as the *sinrilik, gandrang*, and *kacaping*. Dangdut Makassar songs illustrate how Makassar-language lyrics can articulate local cultural values while simultaneously registering salient social realities.

Socio-cultural repurposing is equally evident. The YouTube channel *elektonmaros* features a rendition of Ridwan Sau's *Teama' Nilacci*, performed within

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the context of a *pa'buntingang* (traditional wedding preparation) ceremony (source: https://youtube.com/shorts/Q4NrnsQQyMk?si=mPaPimiMJVf-5ur-). This performance demonstrates how dangdut Makassar is absorbed into traditional communal events and adapted to fit ritual environments. The genre thus becomes part of the living cultural practice of Makassar communities, reinforcing its symbolic relevance.

Political utilization of dangdut Makassar is also evident in recent government communication practices. On 25 August 2025, the official Instagram account of Makassar's Office of Culture (@disbudmakassar) featured Ridwan Sau's *Apamo Anne* as background audio in a promotional post for the traditional *kelong pasinrilik* (source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DNxvuEX4qJV/?igsh=Y2F0ZnZsdWE3bXUx). The inclusion of dangdut Makassar in this official cultural promotion illustrates a deliberate governmental effort to reinforce cultural connectivity with local communities by adopting a musical form that resonates deeply with the public's everyday aesthetic experience.

Taken together, these findings reinforce three primary factors underlying cultural appropriation in dangdut Makassar, namely musical, economic, and socio-cultural determinants. Musical factors operate through dangdut's inherently hybrid character, which enables the genre to adapt smoothly to local idioms and performance sensibilities. Economic factors are shaped by the interests of recording industries, content creators, and digital publishers who seek commercially viable cultural products. In contrast, socio-cultural factors are evident in broad community acceptance that embeds dangdut Makassar in everyday life across ritual ceremonies, political messaging, and digital creative content.

In this context, appropriation does not function as an act of cultural exploitation but as a creative, adaptive, and communicative process. It highlights the capacity of Makassar communities to negotiate their local identity amid the evolving landscapes of national and global popular music. The ongoing repurposing of dangdut Makassar across economic, cultural, and political domains illustrates how the genre has become deeply embedded in the lived experiences of its users and continues to operate as an expressive medium within the region's dynamic cultural ecosystem.

Dangdut is widely recognized as one of Indonesia's most culturally flexible popular music genres, particularly in its ability to absorb and rework influences from other traditions. From its earliest emergence, dangdut has operated as an open arena in which global and local musical forms are continually combined, negotiated, and transformed. Hananta (2023) notes that dangdut's musical composition and expressive force have been strongly shaped by Arab, Malay, Indian, and rock influences, especially through the repertoire and sonic idioms associated with Rhoma Irama. In addition, dangdut has long interacted with regional Indonesian genres such as *jaipongan, degung, tarling, keroncong*, and *langgam Jawa*, a hybrid trajectory that later developed into *campursari* and the *dangdut* style popularized by Didi Kempot. Consequently, dangdut's openness to external elements makes it highly adaptive, yet it also increases the genre's exposure to cultural appropriation and derivative imitation. This condition is illustrated by the song *Kopi Dangdut*, which was adapted from a Venezuelan Latin musical source. Overall, these dynamics suggest that dangdut has historically evolved through sustained processes of borrowing, hybridization, and cross-cultural adaptation.

A similar process characterizes the formation of dangdut Makassar. This regional variant has evolved through continuous interaction between local Makassar musical elements and global influences from the national and international entertainment industries. The musical structure of dangdut Makassar embodies a hybrid form in which *gandrang* rhythms and coastal Makassar traditions intertwine with the arrangement patterns of modern dangdut. Rather than functioning as a mere imitation of national dangdut, dangdut Makassar represents a form of glocalization, the blending of global and local cultural forces. Glocalization refers to the interpenetration of global and local forces in which global forms are adapted and embedded within local contexts, thereby producing distinctive outcomes across different geographic settings (Abidin & Lee, 2023). This hybridity arises through dynamic interaction between local communities and global currents, producing a musical identity that is both distinct and deeply embedded in local cultural life.

An interview with Mega KDI on 16 May 2025 indicates that she has also recorded Makassar dangdut songs that incorporate cultural borrowings from other traditions, including Malay. However, the lyrics and rhythmic patterns still retain distinctive Makassar melodic ornamentation (*kelokan*), which she attributes to the rhythmic influence of the traditional *sinrilik*. Integrating Malay rhythmic foundations with influences from Indian, Arabic, and Western musical traditions, dangdut has evolved into a form of popular culture with global reach (Rubiyanto, 2025). Similarly, during a *sinrilik* workshop held on 21 October 2025 at the Losari Beach pavilion in Makassar, Andi Muhammad Redo highlighted the contribution of Encik Amin as a Malay lyricist, noting that pasinrilik practitioners have previously performed Encik Amin's verses. Historically, Malay cultural influence has been present in Makassar since the period of the Gowa–Tallo Kingdom, particularly around 1666–1669.

Bidadari, written and performed by Ridwan Sau (see Figure 2), is delivered in the Makassar language and features the melodic timbre of a Malay accordion in the introduction. Musically, the vocal filler passages reveal the influence of the *sinrilik's* rhythmic idiom through consistent 1/16 values at a tempo of 111 bpm. Thematically, the song foregrounds the idealized beauty of a woman, metaphorically framed as an angelic figure, thereby positioning her as a source of affective pleasure.

In the excerpt shown above, the rendition of the

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words *sayang* and *nyawanu* employs legato phrasing and filler ornaments that align with *pasinrilik* vocal practice (see Figure 3), thereby underscoring continuity in Makassar vocal articulation. Moreover, the cengkok in Section B of *Bidadari*, articulated through sixteenth note values, indicates that Makassar's traditional musical swing has been internalized within the dangdut vocal style. Taken together, these features suggest that even as dangdut Makassar engages with external influences such as Malay musical idioms, singers continue to sustain locally grounded vocal aesthetics as a key marker of identity.



Figure 2 Malay Makassar pop album produced by Irama Baru Record in 2010
(source: Sri Wahyuni Muhtar; song link: https://youtu.be/fXABgTvaMp0?si=z19R25ztNB3ijp1l)



Figure 3 *Pasinrilik* filler in Ridwan Sau's vocals in the song *Bidadari*

Interviews with members of the *Sambalu'na Gamasi* dangdut fan community (18 June 2025) further support the presence of Malay elements within dangdut Makassar. Fans described the genre as having "a Malay flavor," noting that the blend of Malay and Makassar styles has cultivated its own dedicated audience. This fusion strategy appears to be intentionally employed by local publishers to broaden market reach by appealing to listeners who enjoy Malay pop while maintaining strong ties to Makassar's cultural identity. The use of Malay accordion timbres across multiple recordings illustrates this targeted commercial positioning.

Borrowing extends beyond Malay influences. In a separate example, the Dangdut Makassar song Biseang Kekke'mo Paleng, popularized by Ilyas Safar, integrates Sundanese cultural elements within its arrangement. The interlude features a Sundanese flute timbre, while the refrain incorporates *angklung* textures (source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v = sXjob80nF24&list=RDsXjob80nF24&startradio =1). These incorporations demonstrate deliberate musical decisions that draw from geographically and culturally diverse traditions: Malay from Sumatra and Sundanese from West Java, recontextualizing them within a Makassar-specific sonic framework.

Together, these findings reinforce the centrality of cultural borrowing in shaping dangdut Makassar. They illustrate that borrowing operates not only at the structural or stylistic level but also through timbral choices, rhythmic patterns, and narrative aesthetics. The integration of external cultural elements Malay accordion phrases, Sundanese flute interludes, *angklung* refrains, and *sinrilik* vocal gestures reveals a complex layering of influences that contributes to the genre's hybridity. Rather than diluting local identity, these borrowings demonstrate how Makassar musicians selectively appropriate external traditions to craft a musical form that speaks to both regional heritage and broader national and global audiences.

Dangdut koplo, which has gained strong popularity among Generation Z due to its energetic rhythms and dance-oriented format (Khabibah & Gunawan, 2024), has also significantly influenced Makassar's music industry. The song *Sanna' Tabama'* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LfwUnavFbA), written by Udhin Rafflesia and produced by PT Manynyingarri, exemplifies this trend. Performed by Rasya (Dangdut Academy Indosiar), the song was uploaded to YouTube on 26 October 2015 with a duration of 5 minutes and 23 seconds and features *koplo* elements that emerge prominently after the refrain.



Figure 4 Section B of *Sanna' Tabama'* features a *koplo*-style ketipung pattern

The composition *Sanna' Tabama'* follows the structure of an *orkes Melayu* ensemble, with instrumentation including *suling, ketipung*, mandolin, keyboard, electric guitar, bass guitar, and tambourine. The incorporation of *koplo* rhythms indicates a deliberate blending of East Javanese musical idioms into dangdut Makassar (see Figure 4). In terms of themes, the song narrates a woman's disappointment in romance, but musically, it demonstrates the permeability of dangdut Makassar to external rhythmic innovations.

Dangdut music has gained substantial popularity among Generation Z, particularly *dangdut koplo*, which effectively encourages audiences to dance (Khabibah & Gunawan, 2024). In this context, publishers such as Manynyingarri, along with several other local music industries in Makassar, have appropriated Javanese *koplo* elements in producing dangdut Makassar tracks.

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As a hybrid urban musical form, dangdut Makassar functions not only as entertainment but also as a channel for expressive release through dance. This argument is consistent with L. Fauzi & Prasetyo (2024), who note that local dangdut performances at circumcision celebrations, major holidays, ceremonial receptions for high-ranking guests, and regional officials' inaugurations respond to and help fulfill the leisure and expressive needs of urban communities.



Figure 5 Makassar's urban icon at the Office of the Makassar Tourism Department and the Makassar City Government's Instagram account (source: Sri Wahyuni Muhtar)

This urban orientation is also evident in Makassar municipal branding practices, as observed in promotional materials on 30 July 2025, when the Makassar City Tourism Office prominently featured the term Urban, and the city government consistently employs the same term in campaigns such as Urban Farming (see Figure 5). Such branding signals an institutional framing of Makassar as an urban cultural space characterized by diversity, mobility, and broad public address. Within this context, the incorporation of *koplo* into dangdut Makassar mirrors the city's urban positioning because cultural borrowing is mobilized as a strategic aesthetic choice to engage a wide and heterogeneous audience.

Cultural plurality in Makassar also facilitates borrowing from Chinese musical and cultural traditions. As documented by Gossin (2000), Chinese composers have significantly shaped Makassar's regional musical heritage. Figures such as Ho Eng Jie, together with Bora Dg. Irate and Arsyad Basir, composed iconic Makassar songs including *Anging Mammiri, Ati Raja, Dendang-Dendang, Sailong, Amma Ciang,* and *Pasianteng*. Their contributions indicate that Chinese cultural presence has long been intertwined with Makassar's musical production. This connection extends into the contemporary dangdut industry, where Chinese-owned recording companies such as Libel Record and Irama Baru Record play major roles in producing and distributing dangdut Makassar. Visual evidence of Chinese cultural influence also appears in album designs; one album produced by Irama Baru Record features singer Dian Ekawati wearing a cheongsam-inspired outfit, foregrounding the symbolic integration of Chinese aesthetics into Makassar music products.

These examples underscore the depth and diversity of cultural borrowing that shapes dangdut Makassar. The genre assimilates elements from Javanese *koplo*, Malay timbres, Sundanese instruments, Chinese cultural expressions, and global popular music styles. Such processes make dangdut Makassar a highly hybridized and glocalized musical form, reaffirming that cultural borrowing serves not only aesthetic functions but also social, economic, and cultural strategies within Makassar's urban musical ecosystem.



Figure 6 Chinese language score of *Anging Mamiri* by Gossin (2000) (left), and the inauguration of Ho Eng Djie Street (right) (source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DF19CXhybQ4/?igsh=NGM5eDd0aXl3d2Ey)

The role of Chinese contributors is further evidenced through the figure of Ho Eng Djie, composer of *Ati Raja*, whose legacy remains prominent in contemporary Makassar culture. Liu (2022) notes that the traditional Chinese pentatonic scale refers to a five-tone system consisting of *do-re-mi-sol-la.* This observation aligns with the melodic structure of Ati Raja composed by Ho Eng Djie, particularly in the introduction, which outlines the same *do-re-mi-sol-la* sequence as shown in the figure above. Taken together, this musical coherence suggests that traces of Chinese influence in Makassar regional music are evident not only at the level of sonic form, but are also activated and reinforced by the historical presence and migration of Chinese communities in Makassar. In 2025, the Makassar city government named a major street after Ho Eng Djie, officiated by former mayor Danny Pomanto and supported by the board of the Persaudaraan Peranakan Tionghoa Makassar (P2TM) (see Figure 6). This institutional recognition underscores the long-standing cultural entanglement between Makassar and its Chinese-descended communities.

Historical accounts provide deeper context for this cultural integration. Gossin (2000) recounts that a mid-19th-century massacre of Chinese residents in Batavia under Governor General Valkner forced survivors to flee to other cities, including Makassar.

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However, Chinese presence in the region predates this event; as early as the 14th century, Chinese traders frequently visited Makassar to trade silk. Dutch colonial authorities later permitted Chinese migrants to settle permanently in Celebes, and by around 1850, Chinese communities were firmly established in Makassar. These historical migrations facilitated the transmission of Chinese cultural and artistic practices, including musical forms, into the region's sonic landscape.

Sutton (2002) further notes that from the 1930s to the 1950s, Ho Eng Djie emerged as one of the most influential Chinese Makassar musicians in the local recording industry, producing Makassar regional songs and collaborating with *keroncong* singers. This intersection between Makassar regional music and *keroncong* contributed to the stylistic development of local *langgam* traditions, which continue to be performed by ensembles such as Orkes Toriolo of Sanggar Sirajuddin. Through these interactions, Makassar regional music absorbed elements from Malay, Chinese, and *keroncong* traditions, enriching the musical vocabulary available for later genres, including Dangdut Makassar.

Makassar's evolution as a port city played a critical role in fostering this cultural hybridity. As a major hub of international trade, the city facilitated frequent encounters between residents and foreign merchants, including Arab, Malay, Chinese, Dutch, and others, each bringing distinct cultural practices and value systems. Rasjid in Gossin (2000) notes that such sustained intercultural interactions cultivated patterns of imitation, assimilation, and acculturation within Makassar society. This dynamic environment provided fertile ground for the emergence of hybrid musical forms, including dangdut Makassar, which continues to draw from diverse cultural sources as part of its adaptive and identity-affirming character.



Figure 7 Statue of Dewi Agung Bahari on Nusantara Street, Makassar (left), and Makmur Mekar Mosque on Sulawesi Street, Makassar (right)
(source: Sri Wahyuni Muhtar)

Field observations conducted on 26 October 2025 with historian Akbar and the community group @ jalanbarengmakassar further illuminate the historical layers of cultural borrowing that shape Makassar's musical landscape, including the development of dangdut Makassar. Several physical sites in the city function as tangible markers of past intercultural encounters. On the left side of the documented images appears the statue of Dewi Agung Bahari (see Figure 7), which signifies early Chinese presence in Makassar. The site once served as a Chinese temple located near the Soekarno-Hatta port area, indicating the long-standing influence of Chinese communities in the port's cultural and commercial activities. Meanwhile, the Masjid Makmur Melayu (see Figure 7), visible on the right side of the image set, stands as a historical testament to Malay settlement in Makassar, a community whose cultural influence remains evident to this day.



Figure 8 Makassaarsche Apotheek on Ahmad Yani Street, Makassar (left), and As'Said Mosque on Lombok Street, Makassar (right)
(source: Sri Wahyuni Muhtar)

Dutch colonial presence has also left notable imprints on Makassar's architectural and musical heritage. One prominent example is the Makassaarsche Apotheek (see Figure 8), part of NV Chemicalien Handle Rathkamp & Co., which remains one of the oldest pharmacies in Indonesia and is now known as Apotek Kimia Farma. Its Dutch architectural style reflects the cultural exchanges that occurred during the colonial period. Nearby, the Arab community's influence is represented by Masjid Arab As'Said (see Figure 8), established in 1907 by Arab traders who settled in the city. These sites collectively demonstrate that Makassar has long been shaped by intersecting flows of Chinese, Malay, Arab, and Dutch cultures, all of which have contributed to its evolving musical identity.



Figure 9 Exhibition of Music Scene Archives at the Makassar City Museum on 26 October 2025
(source: Sri Wahyuni Muhtar)

The multicultural character of Makassar is also documented in archival materials on the city's music

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history. At the exhibition *1869–2025 Music Scene Archive* held at the Makassar City Museum (see Figure 9), historical traces of Chinese musical groups were prominently featured. One such ensemble, *Hwa Kiauw Im Gak Hwee Makassar*, was founded in 1922 during the Dutch East Indies era and served as a significant cultural institution within the Chinese Makassar community. The group functioned as a medium for intercultural expression, performing classical music, Chinese repertoire, and Makassar regional songs. Their active participation in social events, community celebrations, and public performances illustrates how Chinese musicians contributed to shaping Makassar's hybrid musical traditions long before the emergence of modern genres such as Dangdut Makassar.

These findings reinforce that Makassar's position as a port city enabled sustained intercultural contact across centuries. The convergence of Chinese, Malay, Arab, and Dutch communities produced a dynamic environment where musical borrowing through instruments, scales, repertoires, and performance practices became a natural cultural process. This historical interconnectedness provided the foundation for contemporary hybrid forms such as Dangdut Makassar, which continue to draw on the city's rich history of cross-cultural exchange.

Further material evidence of cross-cultural borrowing is reflected in the presence of Western instruments within Makassar's historical urban landscape. One example is the Hohner Student IV accordion made in Germany, found on Jalan Sulawesi, an area historically known as a hub of multicultural commerce and settlement. Its existence signifies not only the penetration of Western musical technology into Makassar but also the city's role as an active site of cultural exchange during the colonial and early post-independence periods. The accordion's timbre would later become one of the recognizable sonic features adopted into Makassar regional music and, eventually, dangdut Makassar.

Archival recordings from the 1960s further illustrate these hybrid formations in several vinyl records popularized by Ho Eng Djie together with Orkes Sawerigading; regional songs such as *Anging Mammiri*, *Ati Raja, Sailong*, and *Amma Ciang* appear in arrangements that blend Chinese melodic contours, Malay timbral colorations, Arabic rhythmic sensibilities, and Western instrumental textures. These elements are interwoven with Makassar's indigenous musical components, including *kacaping, keso'-keso',* and *gandrang* patterns. The mixture of Chinese pentatonic motifs, Malay harmonization, Arabic rhythmic phrasing, and Western instrumentation demonstrates that Makassar's regional songs before the rise of dangdut Makassar were already products of intense cultural interaction.

Contemporary practices continue to reflect this multilateral borrowing, influenced not only by historical contact but also by generational listening preferences. Interviews with members of the *Sambalu'na Gamasi* community (19 April 2025) indicate that fans aged 40 and above tend to request classic dangdut Makassar songs by Ridwan Sau on Gamasi Radio, while those under 40 prefer pop-influenced and *koplo*-infused tracks by artists such as Ilyas Safar and Rika. This generational divergence suggests that borrowing is also shaped by shifting urban tastes and audience expectations. Rusnalasari's (2025) research on youth culture in Makassar indicates that cultural globalization has exerted a pronounced influence on lifestyle orientations, including preferences in fashion and music. Dangdut Makassar, enriched by diverse cultural borrowings, thus emerges as an urban musical product that carries its own unique identity.

The appropriation of dangdut Makassar is driven not only by the activities of local recording industries and publishers that produce and market regional-language songs, but also by the active participation and cultural agency of Makassar's audiences. As cultural consumers, the people of Makassar play a decisive role in sustaining the genre through their continued engagement with the music across daily social practices. Dangdut Makassar thus does not remain confined to the sphere of industry production; rather, it thrives within the lived experiences of the community, functioning as entertainment, a medium of social expression, and a channel for political and economic communication.

The incorporation of borrowed musical elements from Malay, Arab, *koplo*, Sundanese, and pop serves as a creative strategy to maintain broad public acceptance. These external influences are not replicated verbatim; instead, they are reinterpreted through local aesthetic sensibilities that foreground Makassarese cultural values. This process generates a distinctive hybrid musical form in which external and local elements converge within an adaptive and open cultural framework. As a multicultural hybrid product, dangdut Makassar is tailored to meet the diverse tastes of urban coastal audiences in South Sulawesi.

Technological developments, lifestyle shifts, and the evolving entertainment economy have further expanded the accessibility of dangdut Makassar. The music is broadcast through radio, performed in cafes, restaurants, and community gatherings, and featured at public festivals, cultural celebrations, and government events. It is also widely disseminated via digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok. As a result, the acceptance of dangdut Makassar spans all segments of society, permeating social spaces ranging from traditional rituals to modern technological environments.

Dangdut music is pervasive in everyday Indonesian soundscapes, resonating across television and radio broadcasts as well as in commercial and public settings such as shops, restaurants, karaoke venues, and public transportation. As a genre that emerged and gained wide popularity in Indonesia, dangdut's continued rise has increasingly been recognized by major media organizations as a cultural and commercial opportunity. Consequently, a wide range of dangdut programs has secured a

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dedicated presence in national television schedules. The proliferation of such programming indicates that dangdut listeners constitute a strategically important market segment within the broadcasting industry (Adriyani et al., 2024). A comparable dynamic is evident in Makassar, where locally inflected forms of dangdut circulate not only through major stages and regional television but also through intimate social spaces, including street-side stalls, eateries, public transport, and residential neighborhoods.

Dangdut Makassar is also performed across a wide range of events, including political campaigns, music concerts, wedding ceremonies, circumcision celebrations, birthday parties, cultural festivals, and product launches, whether presented live or mediated through digital platforms (interview, 19 August 2025). For example, dangdut Makassar was featured in a concert at Akkarena Beach on 19 October 2024, headlined by Ridwan Sau. The performance incorporated traditional Makassar attire and musical instruments and was broadcast online through the Ridwan Sau YouTube Channel, which reached 47.1 thousand subscribers as of October 2025.

Through these diverse modes of engagement, dangdut Makassar demonstrates a high level of social acceptance, permeating both ceremonial and everyday contexts and reflecting the genre's adaptability to various cultural needs. Its presence across multiple domains of social life- entertainment, ritual, public celebration, political communication, and digital interaction- indicates that Dangdut Makassar has become an integral cultural practice within the Makassar community.



Figure 10 Dangdut Makassar music concert at Akkarena Beach on 19 October 2024 (source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qF4uiuTbJ_Y)

The integration of dangdut Makassar into diverse social activities is further evident in the digital engagement surrounding live performances. A recap video of Ridwan Sau's dangdut Makassar concert at the Honda Bikers Day event (see Figure 10), uploaded on 22 October 2024 to the Ridwan Sau YouTube Channel, had reached 5,986 views by October 2025. The video attracted numerous likes and comments, including remarks from viewers who stated that although they did not understand the meaning of the Makassarese lyrics, the performance still evoked a sense of joy and excitement. This response highlights the capacity of dangdut Makassar to communicate affectively beyond linguistic boundaries, with its blend of traditional musical elements and contemporary performance energy contributing to the festive atmosphere of large-scale public events.

This example reinforces the notion that dangdut Makassar has become deeply embedded within the broader ecosystem of community activities. Economically, the genre provides livelihood opportunities for singers, producers, arrangers, sound engineers, and other creative industry workers involved in the production and performance of regional dangdut across public and commercial events. Politically, dangdut Makassar functions as an effective medium for mass communication, frequently employed during campaign events, state celebrations, and government activities to cultivate rapport with local audiences. In social and cultural contexts, dangdut Makassar is performed at weddings, community gatherings, neighborhood festivals, and public celebrations, serving as a source of entertainment while strengthening communal bonds and expressing local identity.

Within the technological sphere, dangdut Makassar continues to evolve through digital platforms, enabling its circulation across generations. The genre's adaptability to YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok demonstrates its flexibility in entering the digital culture of urban Makassar, thereby expanding its reach and enhancing its sustainability. Digital dissemination also fosters new modes of participation, as audiences engage with songs not only as listeners but also as viewers, commenters, and content sharers who actively contribute to the genre's visibility.

CONCLUSIONS

This research set out to examine how Dangdut Makassar emerges, evolves, and becomes institutionalized as a cultural identity within the contemporary urban context of Makassar. The findings demonstrate that the genre's development is neither a linear nor isolated process, but the result of sustained cultural negotiation involving artists, audiences, industries, political actors, and digital communities. The primary objective, understanding the mechanisms through which a hybrid musical form attains cultural legitimacy, has been addressed through evidence of (1) cross-cultural musical borrowing, (2) its transformation into a symbolic marker of identity, and (3) its wide acceptance across diverse social, political, and technological domains.

Three major insights can be underlined. First, dangdut Makassar is not a passive outcome of external musical influences; rather, it is an active reworking of multicultural elements through the aesthetic logic of Makassarese sound worlds. This confirms that cultural identity is produced through creative agency

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rather than cultural preservation alone. Second, its recognition as a regional identity is achieved through a multi-layered system involving album production, festival programming, government endorsement, and the reaffirmation of local habitus by artists and fans. Third, its acceptance across numerous everyday activities, ranging from family rituals to digital platforms and political ceremonies, shows that dangdut Makassar has become a living cultural form embedded in the rhythms of urban society.

These findings contribute to broader scholarly discussions on musical hybridity, local identity formation, and the dynamics of cultural appropriation within Indonesia's multicultural landscape. They demonstrate that regional popular music can function as a social site where cultural memory, modernity, and communal belonging converge through everyday practices of listening, performance, and circulation. In doing so, the study offers insight into contemporary cultural negotiation by showing how communities actively shape the meanings and legitimacy of hybrid musical forms.

Several pathways for future research emerge from this study. Further work may examine comparative cases of regional dangdut in other Indonesian cities to deepen understanding of how local identity and popular music intersect across different socio-historical environments. Ethnographic research involving longitudinal observation could also reveal how younger generations reinterpret dangdut Makassar in the era of algorithmic media. Additionally, digital ethnomusicology approaches could illuminate how online platforms reshape patterns of circulation, reception, and authorship within the genre. Parallel inquiries are currently underway to map the sonic aesthetics of dangdut Makassar and its relationship to emotional expression and social cohesion in urban communities.

In summary, dangdut Makassar should be understood as an evolving cultural practice shaped by hybridity sustained through community participation and continually redefined through the interplay of tradition, technology, and social life. Its persistence across contexts reflects not only artistic appeal but also the social mechanisms through which the genre is repeatedly authorized and normalized in everyday cultural use. In this sense, the endurance of dangdut Makassar lies in its capacity to articulate the cultural imagination of Makassar in the twenty-first century.

This study has a methodological limitation because the research site was confined to the mainland area of Makassar City. Therefore, the surrounding island territories were not covered in the data collection. Consequently, Makassar as an urban city is discussed only through a mainland lens, without capturing the social and cultural dynamics of nearby islands that are administratively part of Makassar. This restricted scope limits the extent to which the study can provide a fully comprehensive portrayal of the city's culture.

Future research should apply the methodological approach used in this study with careful attention to comparable corpora in different sites and research contexts. In particular, participant-based data collection combined with holistic and in-depth analysis can yield coherent and nuanced accounts of culture. This study therefore underscores the importance of sustained researcher engagement in cultural research.

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