Chapter 17
Personal Reflections on Fieldwork in South Sulawesi and Engaging with the Work of Christian Pelras on the Bugis

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Abstract This chapter aims to both reflect upon my own fieldwork among the Bugis of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, and my engagement with the scholarship of the ethnologist Christian Pelras, who wrote extensively on South Sulawesi culture and history. Explicit about his task of translating one culture to another, Pelras took an 'ethnographic' approach to his research, collecting huge amounts of information that he used in order to describe. His wide focus and attempts to translate one culture to another appear to reflect the European-based attempts to understand the 'other', perhaps like a museum of ethnology. By contrast, scholars of my generation are less concerned with describing, more critical of sources, look to solve particular research problems in a context that may not necessarily be our own, and use skills, approaches and techniques developed elsewhere. In particular, I discuss my engagement with Pelras's work on orality and writing and his attempts to reconstruct the South Sulawesi past. While the chapter is critical of some of Pelras's work on the Bugis, particularly his attempts at writing history, it pays tribute to other aspects.

Keywords South Sulawesi · Bugis · Orality and writing · Christian Pelras · La Galigo

17.1 Introduction

The Bugis, the largest of the various ethnic groups who inhabit the Indonesian province of South Sulawesi (Fig. 17.1), were the subject of Christian Pelras's (1934–2014) scholarly attention for some 40 years, beginning with his first visit to the

I would like to thank Campbell Macknight for his helpful and informative comments on this chapter.

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Jérémy Jammes and Victor T. King (eds.), *Fieldwork and the Self*,
Asia in Transition 12, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-2438-4_17

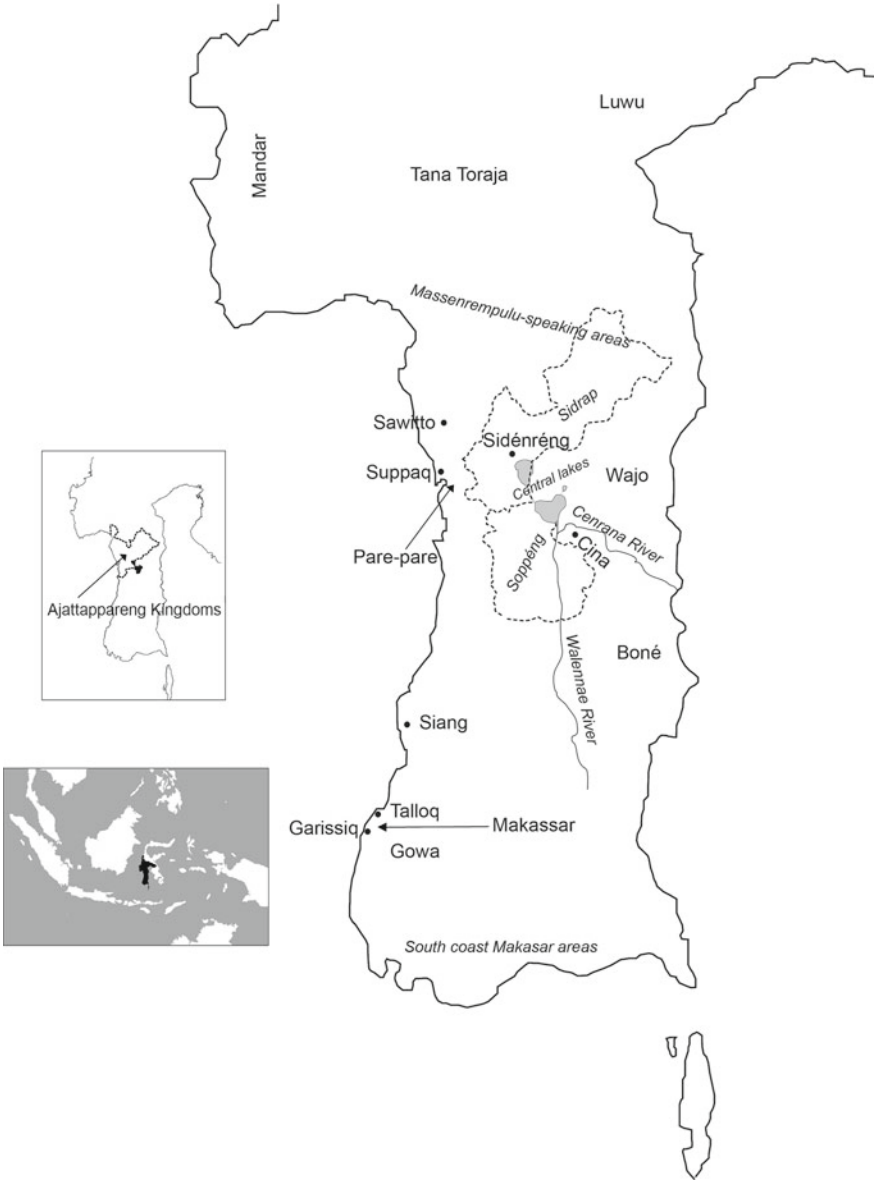

Fig. 17.1 South Sulawesi peninsula with places mentioned in the text

province in 1967.[1] His numerous publications over this long period in French, English and Indonesian reveal an expansive range of interests that one rarely finds among modern scholars, an intimate knowledge of Bugis society, culture and language, and a passion for collecting a vast range of information, particularly relating to material culture and techniques.[2] These interests are well demonstrated by the substantial selection of his papers published as *Explorations dans l'univers des Bugis: Un choix de trente-trois rencontres* (Explorations in the Bugis world: A choice of thirty-three encounters, 2010) and to a lesser extent in *The Bugis* (1996) and the later expanded Indonesian version of the book, *Manusia Bugis* (2006).

Collectively these works document and describe almost every aspect of Bugis society and culture in considerable detail, with much attention given to changes, innovations and borrowing in material culture. This large body of literature can be likened to earlier European attempts to understand the 'other', as exemplified in many museums of ethnography or 'world cultures', such as the Musée de l'Homme in Paris where Pelras began his career in the museum's Centre de recherches anthropologiques (Centre for Anthropological Research) after graduating from university in the 1950s.[3] As an ethnographer, Pelras considered his primary purpose was to interpret and translate the culture of the people he studied to others, or as he put it, 'a dialogue between our culture and the culture of others' (Pelras 2010: 7, my translation). This frequently required detailed descriptions and explanations of various cultural phenomena. His ability to translate Bugis culture to Western audiences was impressive, as was his understanding and application of the local perspective that was appreciated by many of his Bugis colleagues and friends.

When I developed an interest in South Sulawesi as an undergraduate in 1996, Pelras was the best-known scholar of this region and of the Bugis in particular. He had just published *The Bugis* and I had picked up a copy in Singapore on my way to Makassar (then Ujung Pandang) where I was to spend a year at Universitas Hasanuddin (UNHAS). From that time, I began to read and engage with many of his publications on South Sulawesi, especially in later years when I started an MA in Southeast Asian studies at Hull University, focusing mainly on history and anthropology, and then a PhD on the historical archaeology of South Sulawesi. I

[1] The Bugis in South Sulawesi number about 4 million. The best known of their neighbours are the Makasar, Toraja and Mandar peoples, all of whom Christian Pelras studied to varying degrees. In addition to these four largest groups, South Sulawesi is home to numerous other smaller ethnic groups, such as various Massenrempulu-speaking peoples who inhabit the low hill areas to the north of the Bugis (see Druce 2009: 17–23). Makasar (with one 's') refers to the ethnic group of that name and their language; Makassar refers to the historical kingdom and the capital of South Sulawesi, formerly Ujung Pandang.

[2] Pelras was born in Draveil, Essonne, France, in 1934 and passed away in 2014. Throughout much of his long career as a researcher he was accompanied by his wife, Marie-Thérèse, who like Pelras made every effort to involve herself in Bugis society and culture. From the age of three, their son Frédéric was playing with Bugis children and later in life accompanied his father as a photographer.

[3] Over his long career, Pelras made numerous contributions of artefacts with complete annotations to the Musée de l'Homme and made a number of valuable ethnographic films. Of the 1,200 artefacts he contributed to the museum from island Southeast Asia, half are from South Sulawesi (Labrousse 2014: 6).

found Pelras's ethnographical work highly informative and valuable, but was often left unconvinced by his attempts to reconstruct the South Sulawesi past, which I felt lacked a sound historical analysis. This sometimes led to poorly considered and constructed arguments and, consequently, conclusions. I think the main reason for this was that he tended to apply the same approach to historical reconstruction as he did to his ethnographic work. This often led to a descriptive presentation of the past repeated largely from information contained in the various sources he used, such as Bugis and Makasar literary texts, oral traditions and a few European accounts, none of which were subject to any stringent critical or philological analysis. He also appeared less interested in asking specific questions about the past or solving particular research problems that would concern scholars of my generation, particularly historians and archaeologists, who want to do more than just describe and who do take a critical approach to sources and all other forms of information. Unlike Pelras, we often look to solve particular research problems in a context that may not necessarily be our own, but within which we can operate and use skills, approaches and techniques developed elsewhere and, for historians and archaeologists, identify processes in order to understand 'what happened' and 'why or how it happened'.

This chapter has three main points of focus. The first is to discuss my engagement with the scholarship of Christian Pelras on South Sulawesi, in particular his work on orality and writing, and some of his attempts to reconstruct the South Sulawesi past. The second is to explain my own interest in South Sulawesi and early research experiences. This involves drawing some comparisons between our different approaches. The third is to comment on my engagement with the Bugis themselves during fieldwork. This last focus runs through much of the chapter but is also addressed briefly in a short section that proceeds the conclusion. I begin with a concise account of Pelras's career that helps to explain his approach and methods and the link between his research in France and Sulawesi.

17.2 Between France and Sulawesi

While Pelras is best known for his work on island Southeast Asia, particularly the Bugis, perhaps few outside France are aware that from the beginning this work was connected to, and sometimes overlapped with, his research in rural France, in terms of method, approach and ethnographical interests. In 1959 he undertook ethnographic work in a town in the Alsatian Vosges in eastern France while almost simultaneously exploring a growing interest in Indonesian looms and weaving he had developed at the Musée de l'Homme (Guerreiro 2014: 6). This latter interest led to 15 months of ethnographic study at the National Museum in Jakarta in 1960–1961, courtesy of an Indonesian scholarship (ibid.; Labrousse 2014: 4). Then in 1962 he began a long period of ethnographic fieldwork in the small Breton village of Goulien in northwestern France, which was linked to a large multidisciplinary project concerned with the adaption of the French agricultural and rural world to modern life (Pelras

1966: 153). The material from this work formed his doctoral thesis that he completed in 1966 at Université Paris-Sorbonne. Pelras was the sole researcher for Goulien, and Robert Gessain, the director of the Centre de recherches anthropologiques, entrusted him with this role on the advice of the prehistorian and ethnologist André Leroi-Gourhan. According to Bernard Paillard (2012), an important factor in choosing Pelras was his interest in global comparative ethnology and a desire to carry out both 'exotic' ethnographic research in Indonesia and ethnographic research in France.

Campbell Macknight (2016: 8) highlights the importance of Pelras's Goulien work in understanding his later research in South Sulawesi, and a quick look through his thesis (Pelras 1966) does indeed reveal many of the same interests and approaches he later applied to the Bugis. In Goulien, Pelras's main concern was to document the small rural community's adaption and change from the nineteenth century until the 1960s. As with his work in South Sulawesi, Pelras seemingly explains and documents almost every aspect of Goulien village life in meticulous detail and provides detailed descriptions of various elements of material culture and techniques, and related changes and innovations. This latter interest in material culture and techniques reveals the influence of Leroi-Gourhan, particularly his ideas on comparative technology. From the beginning, he appears to have been an important theoretical influence on Pelras, which continued in his later Sulawesi work.[4] Good examples of this are Pelras's application of Leroi-Gourhan's *degrés du fait technique* (hierarchised degrees in technical phenomena) that he used, for example, in his technological analysis of looms in island Southeast Asia and Bugis and Makasar houses that allowed him to reveal indigenous aspects of material culture and identify various innovations and borrowing and from where these later influences may have come (Pelras 1972, 1975, 2003).

It is possible that the appeal of the Bugis to Pelras was in some way linked to similarities that their society shared with that of Goulien. Both are predominantly rural agricultural societies, and both the Bretons and Bugis are cultural minorities in their respective countries, continuing to adapt and change in response to the encroachment of the modern world. Although to my knowledge Pelras never published a comparative Bugis–Goulien study, he did give talks on Goulien at several Indonesian universities and many talks on the Bugis at universities and in research seminars in France and other Western countries (Labrousse 2014: 4). At one talk he gave at Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya in 2005 on 'Tradisi dan budaya lokal dalam perspektif etnisitas' (Tradition and local culture in ethnographic perspectives), he drew a number of comparisons between the two societies and presented some of his ethnographic films of Goulien, as he had shown similar ethnographic films of the Bugis in France.[5] He emphasised various similarities between the two societies, noting that both represented traditional societies that had been resistant to aspects of

[4] As a student, Pelras took some of Leroi-Gourhan's classes at the Musée de l'Homme. Leroi-Gourhan was also his research director after he was recruited to the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (National Centre for Scientific Research) in 1966 (Guerreiro 2014). On Leroi-Gourhan and some of his ideas, see Françoise Audouze (2002) and Christophe Delage (2017).

[5] For a brief summary of this talk, see https://www.reaksipress.com/antropolog-bahas-masyarakat-bugis-di-iain-sunan-ampel-surabaya/.

modernisation, such as in agricultural practice, as both valued their culture and traditions and had retained many aspects of their pre-Islamic and pre-Christian beliefs. Reflecting his interest in how societies changed and adapted to modernity over time, Pelras noted that the Bugis engagement with globalisation began in the seventeenth century but for Goulien it was not until the nineteenth, which was perhaps why the Bugis were the more open of the two to the outside world and change.

As with his research on the Bugis, Pelras took a long-term approach to Goulien, returning numerous times over the years, particularly in the 1970s, and again when he retired, leading to an updated version of his original thesis, published in 2001, followed by an ethnographic film, *Goulien, le retour* (Goulien, the return). This long-term approach reflected Pelras's interest in documenting and observing change and adaption in response to national and global change. While I have not read his updated thesis on Goulien, his work on this aspect of Bugis society is authoritative and shows how the Bugis have and continue to change as they engage with modernity while at the same time maintaining crucial elements of their cultural identity (Pelras 1996: 269–339).

17.3 My Early Research Experiences in South Sulawesi

My first real experience of the Bugis and South Sulawesi dates to my year at UNHAS in 1996–1997 as part of my undergraduate degree in Southeast Asian studies and language at Hull University. During that year I was required to undertake a year research project, and Ian Caldwell, my supervisor and leading South Sulawesi scholar, suggested I work on the history of a Bugis kingdom called Sidénréng, preferably looking at the period before conversion to Islam in the early seventeenth century. Caldwell, perhaps optimistically, presented me with a couple of Bugis-language texts he thought might be useful and later posted to me an early twentieth-century Dutch article along with a Dutch–English dictionary. I could read neither language at the time but learning Bugis was on the agenda at UNHAS, and Muhlis Hadrawi, a Bugis from Boné who was then an assistant in Fakultas Sastra (Faculty of Letters, now Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Faculty of Humanities), was assigned the job of teaching me individually. Muhlis proved to be an excellent teacher and great discussant on all things Bugis. He is now a prominent faculty member and expert in his own right, and remains a close friend and colleague. At this time I was also fortunate to make the acquaintance of the late Muhammad Salim, an independent scholar of Bugis manuscripts and former head of the Sidenreng-Rappang (Sidrap) regency cultural office who had previously assisted several foreign researchers. From Salim I learned a lot about Bugis manuscripts and some of the more archaic aspects of the language. He also allowed me to access the large collection of mainly photocopied manuscripts he had accumulated over the years and took me to Sidrap where I would research my

project, and introduced me to a Tolotong family with whom I could stay.[6] Salim's direct and plain-speaking manner was also a good introduction to the Sidrap Bugis and a contrast with Muhlis, who like many Bugis from Boné had a much softer manner.

The project itself mainly revolved around a short Bugis text that listed out and through formulaic expressions divided the tributary lands attached to Sidénréng and the lands that formed the domain, or core, of the kingdom.[7] The aims were to provide a comprehensive understanding of the list and its formulaic expressions and the political relationships the list conveys. This entailed locating and visiting as many of the 31 toponyms named as possible, many of which extended to a number of related settlements and various *keramat* (a sacred place where offerings and requests to ancestors are made), recording their geographical location with a handheld global positioning system (GPS), carrying out geographic surveys, collecting oral traditions and mapping out the kingdom. I supplemented the oral and geographical data I collected with analysis drawn from several Bugis textual sources supplied by Salim and various, mainly local, publications.

Caldwell appeared impressed with the work I posted to him and offered to provide funding if I would be willing to do something similar on a neighbouring kingdom called Soppéng and write a report on the findings (Druce 1997). I agreed and spent the best part of a month travelling around Soppéng with Andi Ria Akudran (Kudu), a UNHAS graduate in Bugis and Makasar literature from Soppéng whom I met through Muhlis. Together we visited a huge number of villages, identified others long abandoned, located many other ritual and historical sites, and collected oral traditions. We used his family home in Tajuncu as a base but often slept in whatever village we found ourselves in by evening.[8] Kudu was expert in utilising and establishing genealogical links with other Bugis in Soppéng, for both research and accommodation, and I learned a lot from him about the importance of Bugis familial ties, however distant. I also encountered a number of *bissu* (pre-Islamic transvestite ritual specialists) in Soppéng and attended a *bissu* ceremony at the Bola Ridiqé (a former palace). I had met none in Sidrap and the *bissu* seemed to be absent from that regency.

Before I had left Britain, Caldwell had attempted to impress on me the fascination of research in South Sulawesi. I was now in full agreement and shortly before I returned to Britain Caldwell arrived in Makassar and, accompanied by Muhlis and Iwan Sumantri (an archaeologist from UNHAS), we spent a few collegial days together in Soppéng and Sidrap. There were several reasons why South Sulawesi

[6] The Tolotong are non-Islamised Bugis who today perhaps number about 20,000 and live mainly in Amparita and Otting in Sidrap. According to their traditions, they are from the village of Towani in the former kingdom of Wajo, but were asked to leave after they refused to accept Islam in the seventeenth century. Eventually, they arrived in Sidénréng where the ruler granted them permission to settle.

[7] For a discussion on the political structure of the South Sulawesi kingdoms, see Druce (2009: 26–32, 2014).

[8] Sadly, Kudu died in a car accident in May 2019, shortly after his third re-election to Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (Regional Legislative Council) of Soppéng.

captured my interest. As a boy I had been enthralled by the Arthurian legends and later progressed to more serious material on the topic and period, such as Leslie Alcock's *Arthur's Britain: History and archaeology, A.D. 367–634* (1971). I was intrigued by how such studies combined various sources, mainly historical and archaeological, to try and piece together the jigsaw of Dark Age Britain. As an undergraduate in Southeast Asian studies, I had developed a deep interest in another part of the world, but the attraction of finding a few pieces to add to the puzzle of early South Sulawesi history had the same appeal, as did the evident need to combine different sources and methods and to get out into the field to see what could be found.

South Sulawesi has no great abandoned ancient monuments. Instead, pieces to this jigsaw were to be found in villages, *keramat*, graveyards, rice fields, the landscape, megaliths, the people themselves and their *lontaraq* (indigenous writings in the Bugis script).[9] The past, whether of individual villages, larger political groupings or kingdoms, formerly abolished in the 1950s, was still very much alive and often linked in some way to the present. This was particularly true of the origins, or perceived origins, of various settlements and kingdoms with the place the first ruler, or rulers, appeared from the upperworld or underworld still being important ritual sites, especially during rice planting and harvesting, and where one could often find sherds of old imported ceramics and iron slag. The existence of large numbers of indigenous Bugis and Makasar manuscripts that, I thought at the time, might contain all sorts of new and wonderful historical information was also appealing. As I later came to appreciate fully, the people of South Sulawesi had never adopted Indic religions and only accepted Islam in the seventeenth century, which offered fascinating potential for anyone interested in the evolution of indigenous Austronesian-speaking societies from small chiefdoms to large political units. In this respect South Sulawesi is perhaps the only region of maritime Southeast Asia where there are sufficient written and oral sources that, when combined with archaeological data, allow us to observe this evolution and perhaps help us better understand how Austronesian-speaking societies in other parts of Southeast Asia developed before adopting Indic religions and ideas.[10]

Shortly after my final exams I returned to South Sulawesi for three months. Two of these were spent participating in The Origins of Complex Society in South Sulawesi (OXIS) project, a large international multidisciplinary project organised by Caldwell and David Bulbeck from the Australian National University in collaboration with Indonesian colleagues from Balai Arkeologi Sulawesi Selatan (South Sulawesi

[9] The term *lontaraq* is derived from the word *lontar* (palm leaf), the material originally used to record an indigenous script of ultimate Indic origin. Strips of palm leaf were sewn together and the script incised on them with a sharp instrument. These strips were then wound around two wooden spools and read as a single continuous line of text. Only about 10 palm leaf manuscripts exist today. All other Bugis and Makasar writings are preserved in thousands of paper manuscripts. Some are only a few pages in length but most are codices of 200–300 pages in length that function as depositaries for a wide range of miscellaneous independent texts or 'works' (Macknight 1984).

[10] See Druce (2017) for a comparative analysis of empirical historical and archaeological data from South Sulawesi in relation to the main theoretical models that attempt to describe early Southeast Asian political formations, such as the mandala.

Archaeological Office) and UNHAS. The main focus of the OXIS project was to investigate sites associated with Luwu, believed by many to be the oldest Bugis kingdom, and the mysterious kingdom of Cina in the Cenrana Valley area. These two kingdoms predominate in the great cycle of stories known as La Galigo and are recorded in thousands of pages of manuscripts.

One aim of the project was to investigate the possibility of an 'age of Galigo' between the tenth to thirteenth centuries followed by a short 'age of chaos' that proceeded the rise of the historical kingdoms, a scenario put forward by Pelras and others. I carried out research in Luwu, Wajo and Tana Toraja, and the Makasar-speaking areas along South Sulawesi's south coast to explore possible relations with Luwu. My role was to find, survey and record historical sites, document and photograph ceramics or other artefacts found, collect oral traditions and write a report with Caldwell, with whom I worked in several places in Luwu (Caldwell and Druce 1998). During this period, I began to learn more about archaeology and the importance and value of imported ceramic and stoneware trade wares found in habitation sites and looted pre-Islamic burial grounds.

Later that year I began an MA in Southeast Asian studies and for the dissertation element focused my attentions on a 13-page Bugis text from Sidénréng, essentially made up of 14 independent oral traditions linked only by an opening gloss at the beginning of each that attempted to associate them with the founders of the kingdom. I presented a transcription, translation and analysis of the text and attempted to explore the nature of Bugis historical sources and comment on the relationship between the oral and the written registers (Druce 1999).

The above experiences inevitably led me to embark on a PhD in South Sulawesi historical archaeology and in mid-2000 I arrived in Makassar to carry out about 15 months of fieldwork. During the previous year I had worked on my Bugis and improved my comprehension of Dutch. The former was essential for reading Bugis manuscripts and the latter mainly useful to utilise B.F. Matthes's *Boegineesch–Hollandsch woordenboek* (Bugis–Dutch dictionary, 1874) and some of his other works (1872, 1875–1881, 1881; Brink 1943), Cornelis Speelman's long and detailed 1670 report, a few important geographic and geomorphological works and a handful of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Dutch articles and reports.[11] I was fortunate in that I was already familiar with much of the local and international literature on the region and could gain access to more obscure local publications. I was also well acquainted with many of the local archaeologists and other academics, and had a number of Bugis and Makasar friends who had family homes in rural areas that I could use as initial bases for research. Importantly, I could also draw on the advice of academics with extensive research experience of South Sulawesi and use and adapt

[11] There was also a number of important works in French, particularly articles by Pelras. To read these I was fortunate to have the help of my Indonesian wife, Itut, whom I met in 1996 when she was an undergraduate in French language and literature at UNHAS. We got married in 2001.

some of their ideas and methods, in particular those of David Bulbeck, Ian Caldwell, who was my supervisor, and Campbell Macknight, all of whom were influential in different ways.

My PhD research had two main objectives. The first was to explore the rise and development of five kingdoms collectively known as Ajattappareng ([the lands] west of the lakes) from 1200 to about 1600. Three of the kingdoms were Bugis-speaking, but the two largest, Sidénréng and Sawitto, had significant and important Massenrempulu-speaking populations living in the low hills who I discovered had played important roles in the development of these kingdoms. The second objective was an inquiry into oral traditions of a historical nature in South Sulawesi, exploring their functions, processes of transmission, their use in writing history and their relationship to the written register, which aimed to build on Pelras's important work on orality and writing.

In order to achieve these objectives, I combined a range of sources and methods, including oral, textual, archaeological, linguistic, geographical sources and analysis as well as anthropology. Macknight's (1983) seminal article on the rise of agriculture in South Sulawesi, which proposed a transition from swidden cultivation to wet rice agriculture, was important for establishing a basic theoretical perspective for the study. I learned a lot from Caldwell's (1988, 1995) careful and insightful analysis of textual sources and his initial work in shifting thinking away from the chronicle model. Archaeologically, I applied the methods developed by Bulbeck (1992; Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000) for archaeological survey work in South Sulawesi that focused on imported ceramic and stoneware trade ware sherds. Careful analysis of these sherds allowed for the creation of standardised chronological histograms that broadly tracked the relative increases and decreases in ceramics over time and allowed for detailed comparative analysis between individual sites and large political groupings. These data were also fundamental for dating and linking textual and oral sources to periods and places. Another influence was some of the ideas developed by James Fox and others from the Comparative Austronesian Project and the book series that followed. In particular, Austronesian ideas of origin and precedence (see Fox and Sather 1996) brought greater clarity to many of the oral and written traditions I collected and I applied these ideas in historical and archaeological contexts. Jan Vansina's (1985) work on oral traditions was also useful in terms of developing a typology for oral traditions.

As opposed to Pelras, I was less concerned with documenting and describing, and more with the processes that led to the emergence of complex society and its progression over a period of about 400 years. This involved a constant search over a wide geographical area to find and collect various oral data, locate and document historical sites, and carry out archaeological and geographic surveys. This was in contrast to Pelras who, while certainly well-travelled in South Sulawesi, often went back to the same places and people time and again over a long period in order to document material and societal change.

17.4 Engaging with the Work of Christian Pelras

17.4.1 Orality and Writing

Perhaps because their work revolves around the written word, many academics, particularly historians, have a tendency to elevate the importance of written material and accord writing with a greater role and importance than the societies they study ever did themselves. Some have made this mistake in relation to South Sulawesi, gravitating towards the few chronicles that exist only for a small number of the kingdoms and allowing these works to shape their perception of South Sulawesi historical writings, sources and history. While the contents of these chronicles reflect indigenous concerns, the inspiration for their creation appears to have been various external models (Macknight 2000; Druce 2009).[12] These chronicles are exceptional in the corpus of South Sulawesi written historical sources, which is mostly represented by oral traditions that were written down at various points in the past and are generally no longer than one to three manuscript pages in length. Pelras (1979) had in fact already cautioned about elevating the importance of the written word over that of the oral in a 1979 article written in French (L'oral et l'écrit dans la tradition Bugis), republished in English translation by Macknight as 'Orality and writing among the Bugis' (Pelras 2016). The article is a particularly good example of the strength of Pelras's approach, demonstrating a high level of competence in both spoken and written Bugis with the results derived from long-term direct engagement with society in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the problem and collect sufficient data.

Pelras was the first to investigate the relationship between orality and writing in South Sulawesi and supported the results set out in this paper with a wealth of detailed data. Drawing on a wide range of genres, such as the La Galigo literature, folk sayings and poetry, he demonstrated that there was not simply a complementary relationship between orality and writing but continuous interaction between them, with no recognisable boundary separating the two. Pelras provided numerous examples to show how the same work of literature could be found in both written and oral form with the former often containing features of oral expression and the latter features of written expression. This movement from one register to the other was both 'frequent and unexceptional', and literature was essentially 'a single entity' with writing and orality 'inseparable forms of expression' with neither register seen as more noble or prestigious than the other (ibid.: 44). He further observed that

[12] I define a chronicle as a methodological account of past events that took place under successive rulers. While there were some longer works that can be described as chronicles produced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the four earliest, inspired by Portuguese models, were written in the seventeenth century for the Makasar kingdoms of Gowa and Talloq and the Bugis kingdoms of Boné and Wajo. For an overview of the South Sulawesi chronicle tradition and the factors that shaped later longer written works, see Druce (2016: 75–79).

while writing may be useful for preserving information, orality was by far the more common and more effective means of disseminating information.[13]

As with much of his ethnographic work, Pelras's main purpose was to document, explain and interpret this aspect of Bugis culture, and he was far less concerned with the wider theoretical implications of his findings or applying them to ask specific questions, such as how his data could challenge Great Divide theories.[14] His insights and rich data did, however, have an important impact and influence on other scholars working on Bugis and Makasar literature, perhaps more so than his other South Sulawesi papers, stimulating further intellectual inquiry. While Pelras was not specifically concerned with historical material, it was historians who were perhaps the most profoundly influenced by his work, particularly in terms of how they thought about the nature of their oral and written sources and how such sources should be approached, understood and interpreted. A particularly good example is Macknight's 1984 paper that explores the concept of a 'work' in the Bugis manuscript tradition and draws on Pelras when considering the implications this has for a 'work' that may initially have been an oral or written creation but its transmission could be through either, or both, registers.

My own research on the relationship between orality and writing is another example of the influence of Pelras, partly because it was through his work that I realised the need to examine the relationship between oral and written historical sources and the important role that orality has played in transmitting the past in society. This was very much on my mind when collecting oral traditions in Bugis, Makasar, Massenrempulu and Toraja areas of South Sulawesi and, with the help of Muhlis, trawling through the microfilm collection of Bugis manuscripts at the Makassar branch of the National Archives in search of material relevant to my study. Unlike Pelras, I was specifically concerned with oral and written sources that claimed to tell about the past and use them, where possible, to write history and link them to archaeological and other historical data and the landscape, and to understand local conceptions and perceptions of the past.

For historical material, I found that the relationship between orality and writing was not always as straightforward as 'texts', or a body of information, moving backward and forward between the two registers, although this was the case in some instances. I found that those who had read these texts would often re-disseminate the information orally but, in my experience, this was almost always from memory and the text itself referred to only if the informant considered something had not been remembered properly. While it was true that one could not focus on written historical material without taking orality into account, the reverse was not always true as many traditions and other oral historical information had never been recorded in writing. With historical material, movement was far more common from the oral to written

[13] Pelras (2016: 26) notes that in the 1970s written Makasar literary reviews often ran out of steam and folded but oral literature gatherings remained much more popular.

[14] See, for example, Jack Goody and Ian Watt (1968), Walter J. Ong (1982), Jack Goody (1987) and David R. Olson (1994), who emphasise opposition between orality and literacy and argue that writing transforms the way people think and brings about cognitive, social and institutional changes.

register, much less so the other way around, and it became clear that the vast majority of Bugis and Makasar written texts about the past were derived from oral traditions that had been frozen in writing at various points in the past. The one major exception to this were elite genealogies, which I believe were the only category of written texts about the past to have been recorded in writing before the seventeenth century, probably from about 1400 (Caldwell 1988).[15] As Macknight (1993: 11) notes, the recording of the elite to demonstrate descent would have been important in Bugis and Makasar society where status was ascribed and this appears to have been the main motive for the adoption and development of writing. Elite genealogies in oral form could be collected from most former kingdoms, smaller polities and tributary lands but, compared to written versions, I found them much less detailed and more often simply lists of rulers, and sometimes their spouses, with varying numbers of individuals missing.

While some of these recorded historical traditions were re-disseminated orally after being written down, it was often possible to collect versions of the same tradition that had continued their oral transmission. Such versions had invariably undergone significant transformations and reflected later societal changes. I also found a number of written texts containing versions of the same tradition recorded in writing at different periods in the past, with the version closest to the present having undergone considerable transformation in meaning and function.[16]

Pelras noted that the development of a printed Indonesian literature among the urban elite in South Sulawesi had begun to develop in the late 1970s but was yet to have any significant impact on more traditional forms of 'literature', and that orality remained the most effective means of disseminating literature and other forms of information. Some 20 or so years later, his point about the importance of oral dissemination remained largely true outside Makassar and perhaps Parepare, South Sulawesi's third-largest city, especially for historical material and despite the increasing availability of modern print. While printed material was having an impact in rural areas, this was largely by way of local regency governments that published edited traditions in the Indonesian language taken from local manuscript sources. Only a few people appeared to have read this material, mainly local government officials, who had inadvertently fed these edited traditions back into the oral register when they related them to others. Far more people had heard these traditions than

[15] From about the seventeenth century there appears to have been a movement to preserve various types of oral knowledge in writing, perhaps facilitated by an increasing availability of European paper. In addition to traditions of a historical nature, one can find a vast range of other topics, such as how to put up a fence, build a house, construct a boat and even choose the best type of horse for warfare. Such texts do not appear to have been created for practical purposes and it is unlikely they were ever referred to as traditional housebuilders and boatbuilders have always worked from oral knowledge and do not refer to written texts. Presumably this was also the case with fence-builders and when choosing a horse.

[16] See Druce (2009: 81–90) for examples and a discussion.

had read them and the vast majority who had heard them were not aware they came from a printed source but had assumed them to be orally transmitted traditions.[17]

Pelras's argument that orality was the most common and effective means of disseminating information is supported by the work of Sirtjo Koolhof (1999), who shows that knowledge is first sought in the oral register and consultation of written texts is only considered necessary if oral information is considered lacking in some way. My own opinion is that orality has not simply been the main register for transmitting the past and other forms of information in South Sulawesi, which remained the case some 500 years after the development of writing, but it was also the register in which the past was largely constructed (Druce 2016). While I do not agree with Pelras (2016) and Macknight (1998) that the seventeenth-century chronicles might have been adapted for oral performance, Pelras was undoubtedly correct in stating that 'Bugis is made to be heard' (Pelras 2016: 45).

17.4.2 South Sulawesi History

Given Pelras's interest in material and technological change, there was always a historical dimension to his work in both France and South Sulawesi. In an ethnographical context this was generally insightful and valuable, often revealing indigenous Austronesian aspects of material culture while providing clues on the origins of later technological influences. Over time he became increasingly interested in reconstructing early South Sulawesi history, which he wrote about in a number of articles and in his book on the Bugis. While a strength of his ethnographic work had been his ability to understand and apply local perspectives, the inability, or perhaps reluctance, to detach himself from this perspective sometimes proved to be a weakness when it came to historical work, perhaps clouding his objectivity. This was particularly true in relation to the La Galigo material that featured prominently in his attempts to reconstruct South Sulawesi's past, where he stated that 'most of my conclusions tally with the opinions of many of my elderly Bugis informants' (Pelras 1996: 51).

17.4.2.1 An Age of Galigo

Composed in segments of five syllables, the La Galigo stories provide a Bugis creation myth contained in the form of a cycle of stories contained in hundreds of handwritten manuscripts that were probably written down from the oral register from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. These stories tell of seven generations of 'white-blooded' Bugis nobles who descended or ascended to the middleworld (Earth) from the upper or underworlds. The central character of the cycle is the great

[17] Today, more and more traditions appear on various websites and blogs but how 'new media' and orality interact has yet to be examined.

Bugis culture hero Sawerigading, around whom many of the stories revolve. After seven generations, the ruling classes all return to the upper and underworlds leaving just commoners living on the middleworld.

Most scholars with an interest in South Sulawesi culture, history and literature consider the La Galigo cycle to be more of an ideological and literary expression rather than a historical source and have focused their attentions on its creation, development, structure, transmission and language. There is, however, a general perception in South Sulawesi society that the La Galigo stories do, in some way, refer to a distant past, despite the mythical nature of the stories and numerous anachronisms that appear in them. This interpretation also supports the widely held view that Luwu, followed by Cina, are the oldest of the Bugis kingdoms, despite the fact that the majority of Luwu's inhabitants do not recognise themselves as Bugis.[18] Other places in South Sulawesi, and possibly beyond, appear in these stories, but most are situated in Luwu and Cina whose political economies appear to be based on trade with other parts of the Indonesian archipelago.

Pelras acknowledged that the La Galigo material is a highly problematic source for writing history and should be 'used with caution' (ibid.: 50). He was also aware that the picture presented in these texts of Bugis society, political organisation and the physical geography of South Sulawesi was at odds with more conventional Bugis historical sources. Still, based on his reading of the texts, he argued that they are partially 'referring to an actual past reality' (ibid.: 52), a time between about 1100 and 1300 CE, referred to as an 'age of Galigo' or the 'early Bugis period', followed by a short 'age of chaos', represented by the departure of the ruling elite, that ended about 1400 with the rise of more agrarian-based polities. His reconstruction of the physical geography of the region, based largely on the La Galigo stories and supplemented by data from later European sources, was highly problematic. He argued that the area where the central lakes are located took the form of an 'inner sea' where seagoing vessels could sail across the peninsula with the southern part of Sulawesi effectively being an island. Using European sources dating from the mid-sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, he argued that this inner sea was still evident in the sixteenth century.

Pelras presented a number of arguments to justify his use of the La Galigo texts to reconstruct early Bugis history. One was that as there were no other written sources for this period they should be explored as historical sources and where possible analysis should be supplemented by data drawn from ethnography and linguistics. He also attempted to use archaeological studies to make his case but his interpretation of the results from studies, particularly those from Soppéng (Kallupa et al. 1989), stretched the data well beyond its limits. He also often relied on an outdated table of ceramic identifications produced by Suaka Peninggalan Sejarah dan Purbakala Sulawesi Selatan (Historical and Archaeological Heritage Unit of South Sulawesi) in the 1970s that both local and foreign archaeologists had long since discarded because of its flawed classifications. Another justification was based on the notion that the La Galigo texts were considered sacred and could not be modified, arguing

[18] The language spoken by the majority of people in Luwu is Bahasa Tae', which is a Toraja language.

that this strong textual and linguistic conservatism had considerable antiquity. This argument tended to ignore the numerous variations and wording between the various episodes and the revisions that had clearly taken place in the cycle of episodes as they grew and developed (see Koolhof 1999). Although Pelras acknowledged the La Galigo texts to be at odds with historical sources, he did not undertake any detailed comparative analysis between the two.

Pelras (1996: 51) was 'confident that at least some part of … [his] reconstruction will be confirmed by further research'. His main arguments were not, yet there was perhaps some truth in the La Galigo stories referring to a period in history, however ideological and mythologised, but it was not the period 1100–1300 CE. One of the aims of the OXIS project in which I had participated in 1998 had been to examine the claims for an 'age of Galigo' and 'age of chaos' through systematic archaeological investigation. This investigation focused mainly on Luwu and Cina but found no evidence whatsoever of a flourishing 'age of Galigo' or any societal upheaval to suggest an 'age of chaos'. Instead, the results were largely consistent with archaeological work carried out in other parts of South Sulawesi: the emergence of complex society in the thirteenth century, with little external trade of note before this date and demonstrable growth and progression in the centuries that followed (Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000). The results further showed that it was unlikely that Luwu was the homeland of the Bugis, who appear to have moved into this region around 1300 from the south. While Pelras was essentially wrong about an 'age of Galigo' and that the La Galigo texts cannot be used as historical sources, as Caldwell and Wellen (2017) argue, the stories do seem to contain a memory of a time when Luwu and Cina were the dominant polities in the eastern part of South Sulawesi, around the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Pelras had continually emphasised the importance of Cina in early Bugis history, a kingdom often ignored by other scholars. As recent research shows, Pelras was certainly correct about Cina's importance, although this importance was several centuries later than he had surmised (Hakim et al. 2018; Bulbeck et al. 2018).

In *Manusia Bugis* (2006), the Indonesian version of *The Bugis* (1996), Pelras referred to the OXIS project's results on a number of occasions. While there was perhaps a degree of stubbornness in his tone and some refutation in places, he did acknowledge that the new data had to be taken into account and that he would need to revise his analysis and hypothesis. He planned to present his revisions in an updated version of *Manusia Bugis.* Sadly, he was unable to complete this work due to deteriorating health.

17.4.2.2 An Inner Sea

Pelras's argument for an inner sea presented me with a problem. If he was correct then this would mean that a significant part of the Ajattappareng region would have been underwater during the period I was researching, 1200 to 1600 CE. This inner sea had not been a concern of the OXIS project and needed to be addressed, especially as Pelras had used a number of European sources from the sixteenth to nineteenth

centuries to support his reconstruction. The most important of these was a brief account left by the Portuguese visitor Manuel Pinto in a letter dated 1548, who informs us that he travelled from Suppaq to Sidénréng, where he stayed for a while with its ruler, whose city was located on the shores of a great lake. Pinto estimated this lake to have been about 20 leagues in length (110 km) and 4 to 5 leagues in width (22 to 27 km).

While there had been some changes in the physical geography of the region, which I investigated through geomorphological research, this was not one of them. In constructing his argument, Pelras did not really go beyond inferences derived from printed sources or seriously consider the implications of the annual flooding of the central lakes, Sidenreng, Tempe and Buaya, that takes place during the wet season from April to June which, as Ian Caldwell and Malcolm Lillie (2004) conclude, was probably what Pinto witnessed. During the wet season these three lakes merge into a single body of water covering some 35,000 ha (Whitten et al. 1987: 255) that from north to south can extend for about 50 km and from east to west about 25 km (Druce 2009: 96–97, Figs. 3.1 and 3.2). During the dry season the contraction of the lakes is just as startling, shrinking to about 1,000 ha (Whitten et al. 1987: 255).

My analysis of Pinto's information differed from Pelras's. While Pinto's estimate of the lake's length seems an exaggeration, his estimate of its width seems to more or less tally with the present-day situation. Pinto had also given an estimate of 27 km from the coastal kingdom of Suppaq to the capital of Sidénréng, which appears reasonable given that my own measurement was 31 km (Druce 2009: 94). Conclusive evidence that there was no inner sea during this period came from archaeological research. I located five sites in Sidénréng dating from the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries within close proximity to the lake's present-day wet season expansion limit showing that the annual expansion of the central lakes had changed little since the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries.[19] My own research was further confirmed by Caldwell and Lillie (2004: 268), who found no evidence of a lake bed on the western edge of Lake Tempe, only seasonal flooding down to a depth of two metres.[20]

17.4.2.3 The Kingdom of Siang

Partly influenced by his interpretation of the La Galigo material, Pelras tended to view different regions of South Sulawesi in the pre-Islamic period as being dominated politically and economically for periods by a few powerful kingdoms that later declined as new agrarian powers arose (see, for example, Pelras 1996: 104). There is perhaps some truth in this notion in relation to the important early role Cina played in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but the archaeological and historical data

[19] W.H.E. Gremmen's (1990: 129) work on the eastern side of Lake Tempe suggests that there may indeed once have been an inner sea but this would have been between 7,100 to 2,600 years ago when sea levels were higher.

[20] Lake Tempe is in fact a floodplain caused by the backing up of the River Bila and other sources when the River Cenrana rises to block its exit at Sengkang.

for South Sulawesi as a whole indicate that from about 1300 until around 1500 there were numerous competing polities of similar size. Arguably, the major kingdoms that came to dominate the South Sulawesi landscape only fully emerged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Along South Sulawesi's west coast, an area with which I was particularly concerned, Pelras identified Siang as the dominant kingdom. He argued that it had formerly been the most important Makasar polity and that its authority extended along Sulawesi's west coast into the Mandar area, where he claimed it still had vassals in the sixteenth century, and further into northwestern parts of Sulawesi. He also argued that its vassals included Gowa and possibly Talloq, which became the major Makasar kingdoms in the early sixteenth century (Pelras 1977, 1996). Much of this interpretation was drawn from a letter written by the Portuguese merchant António de Paiva in 1544–1545 to the Bishop of Goa, India, in which he explained several uncommissioned baptisms carried out in Sulawesi, namely that of the rulers of Siang and Suppaq.

Bulbeck (1992: 123–126), whose historical archaeological work indicates there had been no dominant Makasar polity until the rise of Gowa, presents a more careful and historically based interpretation of the section of Paiva's letter upon which was based the claim that Gowa had been a vassal of Siang. His analysis shows that the information reported by Paiva did not claim that Gowa had ever been a vassal of Siang. Rather, what Paiva did report was that the port of Garassiq had formerly been under the control of another unnamed polity and it was this unnamed polity that had once been a vassal of Siang. He also reported that Gowa had taken the port of Garassiq from this polity. This other polity may have been Talloq but, as Bulbeck notes, before the rise of Gowa alliances constantly shifted among the Makasar polities and Siang's claims of a vassal might simply reflect the memory of raid.

Paiva's letter has been published in full in the original Portuguese (Jacobs 1966) and I initially struggled through it with the help of a Portuguese dictionary but could find nothing that indicated Siang's importance or any domination over Sulawesi's west coast. I later enlisted the help of two Portuguese speakers, Raquel Losekann and Ricardo Tomaz, both of whom considerably improved my understanding of the letter's contents while confirming my initial analysis that there was nothing in the letter to indicate the former greatness of Siang or its influence over the west coast.[21]

There were several other reasons to doubt whether Siang had ever been the dominant power along the west coast, or a kingdom of any major significance. Like most of the South Sulawesi kingdoms, Siang's political economy would have been based on wet rice production and rice would have constituted an important trade good. In these terms, Siang would have compared poorly to Gowa and Suppaq, the two kingdoms that became the most powerful along the west coast in the sixteenth century. Gowa's rise to prominence was firmly rooted in its extensive and productive rice fields in the southwestern corner of the peninsula while Suppaq was linked to the major rice-producing kingdom of Sidénréng. Siang's agricultural potential, however, and that of its immediate neighbours, was limited, partly because of its relatively close proximity

[21] Brett Baker (2005) has since published an English translation of this letter.

to the western cordillera that runs through much of South Sulawesi's centre. Siang's port, which faces the Spermonde archipelago, was also inferior, with the approach a potential hazard for ships because of numerous large reefs close to the coast. By contrast, the harbours of Suppaq and Garassiq were located in open water, with the Bay of Suppa in particular providing calm waters, protection from winds and ample space for ships. Archaeological research also failed to support the claim that Siang had been a major kingdom (Fadillah and Mahmud 2000) with finds relatively small compared to Suppaq and Gowa, even suggesting that its main phase may have been the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Druce 2009: 237).

17.5 A Note on the Bugis

As Pelras (1996: 4) indicates, outsiders often view the Bugis as having a fierce character and a strong sense of honour that when challenged can have violent repercussions. While there is some truth in this stereotype, they are also highly hospitable, loyal friends, easy to engage with both socially and when undertaking research, and proud of their culture and history. I think most scholars who have carried out research in South Sulawesi would agree that this often tends to be a collaborative venture with the Bugis or other South Sulawesi ethnic groups. At times this may be with local archaeologists, philologists, other academics or students who are keen to share their own interpretations and perspectives that may well be different but not necessarily wrong. At other times it is with the people who live in the villages where one stays, and who relate traditions and other information, or accompany a researcher in search of long-abandoned villages, looted pre-Islamic sites and various *keramat*. Searching through local manuscripts in archives can certainly be rewarding but archives do not talk back, and as Pelras demonstrated in much of his work there are vast amounts of information that can only be collected through fieldwork. This is true of historical research also and any study that fails to combine serious fieldwork alongside textual research will generally be found wanting in some way.

Those Bugis not involved in the academic world also take a keen interest in their past and in my experience new finds and discoveries were often as important and interesting to them as they were to me, particularly for those who had little knowledge of their pre-Islamic past. Their knowledge was also fundamental in understanding local ethnolinguistic perceptions, and in locating important sites and informants.

17.6 Pelras and the Bugis

That Christian Pelras was wrong about an 'age of Galigo', the kingdom of Siang and other aspects of the South Sulawesi past is of concern only to a few local and foreign academics. For most Bugis aware of Pelras and his work, these facts have no bearing on his standing in South Sulawesi, or the great respect that people have

for his memory and achievements. Most will pay little attention to later research that disproves some of Pelras's ideas and at least for the present his argument for an 'age of Galigo' is sufficient proof that it existed and Siang continues to be seen as a once great kingdom, despite evidence to the contrary. This is in large part a reflection on the rich personal and academic legacy left by Pelras. Over his long period of research, he also ensured that he shared his research ideas with people in South Sulawesi in the form of local talks and lectures and through his publications in Indonesian (for example, 1973, 1982, 1983), particularly *Manusia Bugis* (2006). He also left a rich legacy in Goulien, where in 2014 the new local library was named in his honour (La bibliothèque municipale Christian Pelras). In South Sulawesi he was long ago given the Bugis name La Massarassa Daeng Palippu, which appropriately means 'He who collects knowledge, the *daeng* who makes [us] giddy'.[22]

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[22] The term *daeng* is a title found mainly among the Makasar but also in some Bugis areas. It is often used today as a term of respect and may be used to address an elder. The word *palippu* literally means 'something that makes [us] drunk' in the sense of excitement leading to disorientation.

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