
The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rtap20

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Available online: 24 May 2012

To cite this article: Andrew McWilliam, David Bulbeck, Sally Brockwell & Sue O'Connor (2012): The Cultural Legacy of Makassar Stone in East Timor, The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology, 13:3, 262-279

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2012.674054

*The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*
*Vol. 13, No. 3, June 2012, pp. 262–279*



# The Cultural Legacy of Makassar Stone in East Timor

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*During research on the archaeology and ethnohistory of fortified settlements in East Timor, a series of old graves was recorded with masonry features that local Timorese referred to as 'Makassar stone' (M:* Batu *Makassar, or Makassar* mataru *in the Fataluku vernacular). Oral histories of Fataluku-speaking communities associate the grave styles with traders from Sulawesi who developed a major maritime network from the late sixteenth century. While the stone used in the Timorese graves is clearly of local origin, the use of similar stonework for grave construction in seventeenth-century Makassar graves in Sulawesi suggests the possibility of close links between the two societies, including the extension of Islamic influences into East Timor at this time. In the following paper, we evaluate a range of evidence for these associations, including a seventeenth-century Islamic burial of a high-born Sulawesi woman near the port of Hera in East Timor.*

*Keywords: Makassar; East Timor; Graves; Fortification; Dressed Stone*

## Introduction

During research on the archaeology and ethnohistory of fortified settlements in East Timor,[1] a series of old graves was recorded with masonry features that local Timorese referred to as 'Makassar stone' (M: *Batu* Makassar, or Makassar *mataru* in the Fataluku vernacular). These graves are frequently associated with indigenous fortified settlements that are found widely in the forested hinterland of far-eastern Timor and

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ISSN 1444-2213 (print)/ISSN 1740-9314 (online)/12/030262-18

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2012.674054

generally date from a restricted period between the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries. The graves all reflect a common structural or design element that is absent in earlier and later expressions of burial practices in the local region.

The phrase, Makassar stone (Makassar *mataru*), makes explicit reference to the Makassar region of South Sulawesi which lies some 800 km to the northwest of Timor across the Flores Sea. By the early seventeenth century, Makassar had become a powerful entrepôt for a maritime trading power of archipelagic proportions following the conversion of the rulers of Makassar to Islam in 1605. There is also substantial evidence that Makassar and allied Sulawesi-based political domains were actively engaged in trading relationships with Timorese coastal settlements from the late sixteenth century, which continued well into the nineteenth century. In this paper, we explore this relationship between the historical emergence of Makassar as a prominent centre with imperial ambitions and its material and narrative connections to far eastern Timor, especially the possible Islamic influences on Timorese cultural history.



## Characteristics of 'Makassar Stone'

The Timorese [Fataluku] phrase 'Makassar *mataru*' refers in the first instance to the flat, dark and often dressed siltstone that is used to extend and decorate the upper layers and surfaces of certain large Timorese ancestral graves. Frequently these finely finished surfaces overlay a platform of roughly shaped limestone blocks that form the foundational base. Others are composed entirely of rectangular style stone formations. The graves are typically associated with high-status ancestral burials of prominent Fataluku clan groups (*ratu*) and remain important sites of periodic sacrificial veneration among members of the affiliated agnatic community. Many of the graves are located within the confines of former Fataluku settlement sites (*lata paru: lata irinu*) including the massive dry stone walled fortifications (*pa'amakolo*) that are found scattered through the forested hinterland on prominent hilltops and other strategic defensive positions in the region of Lautem, the most easterly district of contemporary East Timor. Recent archaeological investigations of these sites indicate that the principal period of defensive fortification occurred between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries[2] (Lape & Chao 2008, see also O'Connor et al. 2012), which provides a general time frame for the popularity of the 'Makassar' style grave constructions.[3]

In these fortified locations the number of Makassar stone graves varies from large single or double grave structures, some of which reportedly contain multiple burials, to clusters of large stone graves packed into the walled confines. Estimates of the total number of graves that feature this style of decorative finish are difficult to gauge, and no attempt has been made at comprehensive surveys. There may be fewer than thirty examples of the prominent grave designs, the majority of which are found on the far northeast coast of the island near the contemporary settlements of Com and Moro-Parlamento. A number of outliers have also been located in the Vero River Valley

some 10 km to the south in the foothills of the Paichao mountain range and a damaged but distinctive single example in Laclo much further west in Manatuto District (See Figure 1).

One expression of this cultural form can be found in the massive fortified bluff known as Macapainara that lies east of the coastal port of Com. This prominent site forms a two-level complex some 175 m above sea level. The upper level is known as Ili Vali (Vali mountain) and contains a stone complex including a ceremonial circle and dancing space (*sepu*) along with a number of graves decorated with dressed stone, and several large flat and circular shaped stones (see Figure 2) made of the


**Figure 1** Makassar Stone Graves in East Timor. (a) Asi Reno grave; (b) Mai ana; (c) Com Fort Grave; (d) Laclo Grave; (e) Macaainara; (f) Vasino.

**Figure 2** Circular and Dressed Ceremonial Makassar Stone.

fine-grained sedimentary rock that are also referred to as Makassar stone (Makassar *mataru*). Contemporary Fataluku custodians of the site guided us through the complex and offered detailed cultural exegesis on the origins and mythic history of the site.

The lower level of the complex at Macapainara forms a second ceremonial space with a surrounding stone wall and steeply incised access points. This complex contains a number of burials including a massive double grave which local history commemorates as that of the former ruler of the political community. The grave is 3-m long, 2.2-m wide and 1.5-m high and features the distinctive Makassar *mataru* structural form of shaped limestone blocks topped with dressed sedimentary stone.

A second example of the style of grave is located in the fortified walled site of Vasino on a hill top above the current settlement of Moro-Parlamento, some two kilometres inland from the north coast. Like Macapainara it is also built on two levels. The lower level contains a large 'Makassar stone' style grave and a standing stone that forms a ritual focus for sacrificial activity.[4] The large grave is associated with the ancestor ruler of Vasino and is said to be a form of grave known as a *poké poké* which contains multiple burials and allowed for the grave to be opened to accommodate additional burials and then be resealed.

A third example of the grave style can be seen in the old settlement site known as Asi Renu in the coastal village of Com. Asi Renu occupies an elevated position above the strategic anchorage of Com but does not appear to have been fortified in the formal sense. Here there are numerous Makassar stone style graves which are said to 'follow' (replicate) the original grave which forms a large rectangular and somewhat separate construction from the other burials. The large stand alone grave is a substantial size at 3-m long, 1.8-m wide and 1-m high. It also features a prominent north facing headstone (see Asi Reno grave in Figure 1).

Despite its name the Makassar stone itself is evidently of local origin, and could have been sourced widely across the district from the uplifted sedimentary formations within the dominant karst surface geology of the region. Its reference as 'Makassar stone' is widely recognised among local Fataluku people, but few are able to offer any detailed insights into the origin or significance of the name or its association with Makassar in South Sulawesi.[5] In the coastal village of Com, however, there is a local mythology that makes direct reference to alliances between Makassar traders (usually referenced as Buton-Makassar), and the receipt of a series of large circular and dressed 'Makassar stone' that found their way into the old fortified settlements of clans in the area, and remain there as eroding relics of the ancestral past. The exact nature of the relationship between these markers of alliance and the subsequent use of similar dressed stone on local Timorese ancestral graves remains uncertain but is clearly significant. In this regard we note the related and relevant issue of stone working skills and the possibility that the reference to Makassar stone may incorporate and commemorate technologies of production and the transfer of masonry skills to Timorese allies.

**The Makassar Empire and Expansion**

The region of Makassar rose to power in the mid-sixteenth century following an alliance between the two principal Makassar-speaking kingdoms of Goa and Talloq that bordered the port city and entrepôt of the same name. The allied kingdoms began exerting their influence and imperial ambitions with military conquests over other polities in the South Sulawesi peninsula, including Bugis-speaking kingdoms to the immediate north. By 1605, with the conversion of the Makassar rulers to Islam, the military empire had expanded offshore and extended from southeastern Borneo to Bima in Sumbawa as well as much of Sulawesi and its surrounding islands (Map 1, based on Cummings 2007). As detailed by Andaya 1981 (Chapters 1 & 2), Goa and Talloq operated in a coordinated fashion to maintain the power of the Makassar maritime empire operating across much of eastern Indonesia during the early to mid-seventeenth century.

In southeast Sulawesi by the early seventeenth century, the island of Buton was an important and fortified port along eastern Indonesia's maritime trading routes. Conquered by Makassar in 1626 it remained under Makassar's suzerainty for most of the following years until 1667 when the Netherlands East India Company (VOC) and pro-Dutch, Bugis forces from Boné defeated Makassar following their naval advance on the fortified trading port of Makassar itself. There was, however, a brief interlude dating approximately to the reign of the sixth Buton ruler, Sultan La Buke (r. 1632–45), when Buton forged a successful alliance with the VOC against Makassar that allowed the VOC to place a garrison in Buton and for Buton to shore up its defences (Cummings 2011, pp. 7–8; Nur & Rustam 2010, p. 54; Roever & Brommer 2006, pp. 198–201).

Following the occupation and defeat of Makassar by the VOC and their Bugis allies from Boné, the Sultanate of Buton attained considerable autonomy and developed its own maritime trading interests that extended across eastern Indonesia. It was not until 1873 that the Buton Sultanate was eventually integrated into the Netherlands East India colony (Southon 1995, p. 11). Accordingly, local references in East Timor to Makassar-Butonese traders could either refer specifically to the periods ca.1630 and ca.1645–67 when Makassar controlled Buton, and/or may involve a conflation of both Makassar and Buton-based seafarers who independently traded as far as East Timor over a longer period from the onset of the seventeenth century to the late nineteenth century.

By the early seventeenth-century Makassar was a cosmopolitan, pluralistic city (Reid 1983), with fine masonry construction introduced to the city around this time. In addition to the skillfully dressed masonry walls and paving at the palaces of Somba Opu (Goa) and Talloq (Bulbeck 1998), the Islamic tombs of the royal families of numerous Makassar and Bugis sultanates were constructed with stratified layers of finely dressed masonry blocks, embroidered with elaborate shaped and carved head- and foot-stone markers (Ambary 1985). This became known as the 'South Sulawesi' style (pers. comm. Hasan Ambary to David Bulbeck, 31 July 1986) and is exemplified

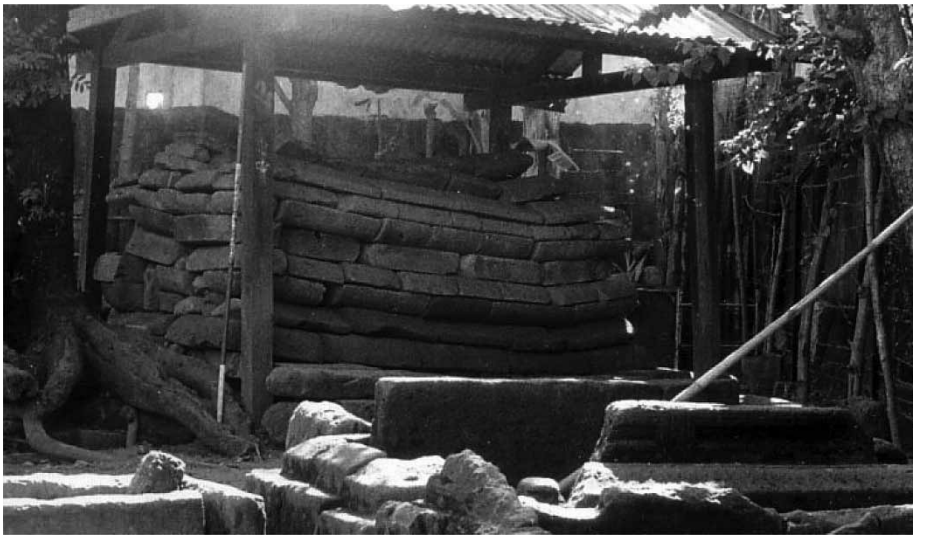


**Figure 3** Grave of the Goa-Talloq noble, Karaeng Katinting.

in the seventeenth-century royal tombs of Goa and Talloq, especially that of the of the Goa-Talloq noble Karaeng Katinting (see Figure 3), and his illustrious relative, Karaeng Kanjilo Sultan Mudhaffar Tumammaliang ri Timoroq who is memorialised for his successful maritime military expedition to Timor in 1641 (Cummings 2007, p. 92) (see Figure 4). Sultan Mudhaffar had little time to savour his victories in Timor as he died suddenly from illness, ten days after returning to Makassar. The fragmentary history of that expedition and its potential impact on Timorese populations provides a range of clues and possibilities about the influence of an assertive expansionary and newly Islamic Makassar engagement with Timor.

A distinctive feature of the South Sulawesi-style tombs is the use of finely worked, flattish, rectangular blocks for the upper tiers and sometimes virtually the whole of the grave. These flat, layered stone constructions very much evoke the 'Makassar stone' stylings recognised in East Timor (see Figure 1). Most of the South Sulawesi and East Timor graves can be readily distinguished from one another, but there are some remarkably similar constructions, such as the tomb of the Karaeng Katinting (the seventeenth-century son of a Goa Makassar king buried at Talloq) and the Makassar stone graves found at Maiana or Vasino (see Figure 1).

## Evidence for Islam on Timor

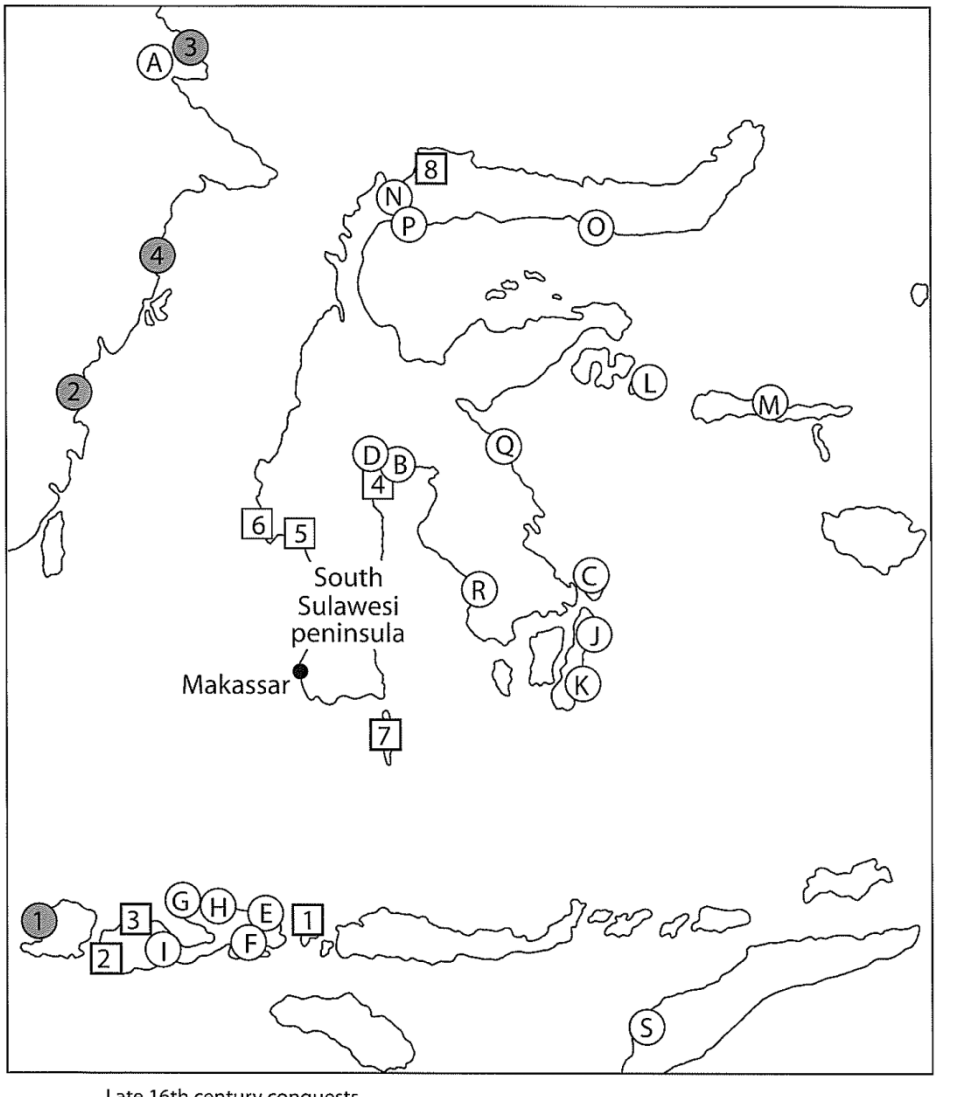
The records over much of the long history of trading relations that linked Timorese ports to the wider Indonesian archipelago are fragmentary and often silent over long periods. But from available documentary evidence it is clear that there has been a direct and continuing engagement between Timorese and Islamic traders from early times. Artur de Sá, for example, drawing on the Dominican archives, notes that there

**Figure 4** Grave of Sultan Mudhaffar in the 'South Sulawesi' Style.



are records of 'Muslim traders (Mouros) arriving in Timor via Makassar seeking sandalwood (*sandâlo*), beeswax (*cera*) and slaves (*escravagem*) on the north coast of Timor by the late sixteenth century' (1956, p. 489). This period corresponds with the early period of Portuguese colonialism in Timor when trading opportunities were accessed from their fortified base on nearby Solor Island and later Larantuka (eastern Flores). This period ushered in a long phase of intense rivalry for control over the sandalwood trade and for Christian souls across the island, where the influence of Islam—to the extent it rates mention at all—tends to be obscured by more extensive writing on the successive but often unsuccessful efforts to establish Christianity.[6]

The attack in 1640 by the Karaeng (Ruler) of Talloq, Sultan Mudhaffar, is an exception to this general feature of archival documentation on the engagement with Islam. Mudhaffer initially targeted the fortress at Larantuka (Flores) [the original community at Solor having shifted to a more secure base] with a reported fleet of some 150 ships and 6000 men. He then sailed on to Timor where his party plundered Portuguese and Timorese settlements taking effective control of the northeast coast[7] and maintaining a coercive authority over the area for decades. The traders from Makassar offered cloth in return for the long-prized commodities from Timor, beeswax, sandalwood, amber and human slaves (Roever 2002, p. 235; Reid 1983). They also defended their trading interests with force against Portuguese and Dutch rivals. According to Roever some of the chiefly rulers (*Liurai*) of East Timor were offering annual tribute to Makassar that included fifty slaves as well as stockpiles of sandalwood. It is also reported that the Makassar traders came yearly with five, six or more ships seeking (bees)wax, sandalwood, tortoiseshell and amber in return for




Late 16th century conquests.
1: Soloka. 2: Endea. 3: Sandao. 4: Luwuq. 5: Samanggi. 6: Mandar. 7: Selayar. 8: Toli-Toli.

Early 17th century conquests. A: Bilusu. B: Bilawa. C: Wawonio. D: Lemo. E: Bima.
F: Dompu. G: Kekelu. H: Sanggar. I: Sumbawa. J: Buton. K: Pancana. L: Banggea.
M: Sula. N: Buoloq. O: Gorontalo. P: Tobong. Q: Tubungku. R: Tobea. S: Timor.

Early 17th century protectorates. 1: Salaparang. 2: Pasirika[n]. 3: Baroa. 4: Kutea.

**Map 1** Military expansion of Makassar beyond the South Sulawesi peninsula according to the Goa and Talloq Chronicles.

cloth (see also Generale missiven 1968–88, III, p. 930). A sense of the influence of Makassar's presence in eastern Timor over the period is illustrated in the recorded experience of a Dutch East Indies official, VOC Lieutenant, Jacob Pietersz van den Kerper who anchored off the coast at Manatuto on 19 May 1663 and sought to induce the local people to enter into trade arrangements for beeswax. However, his efforts met with little success as the inhabitants were fearful that any dealings with the Dutch would 'incur the wrath of the Makassarese of Karaeng [Talloq], and of the Portuguese *capitão mor* of Lifau, who insisted that the local chiefs were not to undertake anything without his permission' (Hagerdhal 2007, p. 556).

Makassar trade dominance of northeast Timor appears to have continued relatively uncontested until the 1667 submission and its conversion into a VOC-controlled trading state. From that time on there was renewed rivalry for political and trading influence in Timor as the Portuguese sought to re-assert their authority through firearms and force. Nevertheless, Makassar retained its position as a major entrepôt under Dutch control and was able to develop its influential maritime trading activities as an allied agent of VOC operations that included long-term trading arrangements with Timorese coastal communities in the eastern extremities of the island. As late as the mid-nineteenth century, for example, British author George Earl writes of the 'great slave mart of the Bughis and Macassar traders' at what he refers to as the 'Kapalla Tanah, or the Land's-End' of far eastern Timor (1853, pp. 181–2).



## Engaging Islamic Makassar in Timor

The active historical presence of Makassar, and later Bugis and Buton-based maritime traders in the Timor region, clearly identified from the scattered references of their activities, provides little insight into the nature of the relationship sustained between the two communities. One of the questions that arises here is whether forms of conversion to Islam and Islamic practice might have accompanied this sustained engagement. In this respect the discovery of an old Muslim gravestone dated to the same period near the port of Hera, east of the East Timor capital, Dili and documented by Spillet (1990) raises some interesting questions.

The burial and gravestone was found to be inscribed with both Arabic script which dates the burial to AD 1632 and a Bugis language inscription with the name, Wehiriya which may be translated as 'We' an honorific referring to a Bugis woman of royal status, named 'Hiriya' (Spillet 1990, p. 89). At the site of the grave, a matching foot-stone made of the same locally quarried stone was also subsequently discovered which, according to Spillet, confirmed that the grave was oriented north-south, allowing for the deceased to lie on their right side facing Mecca (in this case to the west) and consistent with the practice of Muslim burials in Southeast Asia.[8]

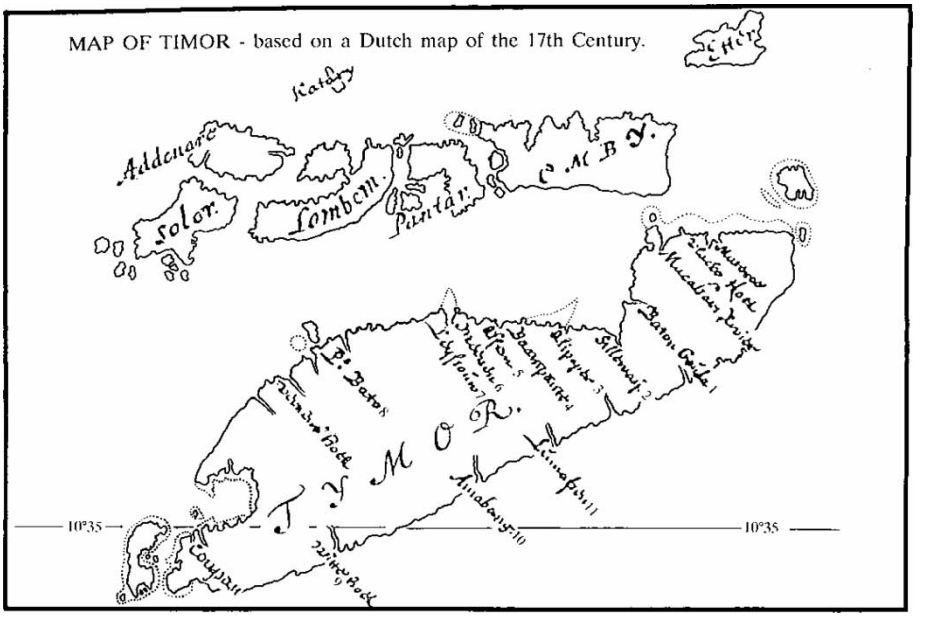
The circumstances of the grave suggest at least two Bugis persons, Wehiriya and the person who engraved her headstone. That the latter person was literate, a rare ability at the time, as well as a mason, suggests the presence of a seventeenth-century Bugis colony at Hera. The grave style is entirely different from the South Sulawesi style of

tombs, and may indicate a South Sulawesi presence in Timor independent of whatever influences resulted in East Timor's Makassar stone graves. Either way, it emphasises the multiple connections between South Sulawesi and Timor that are evident in the seventeenth century. Further examples include the well-documented historical site in the enclave of Lifau—Oe Cussi, where the Portuguese established their early principal settlement, and which was referred to as 'Macassar beach' (Pante Makassar). Moreover, Spillet has drawn attention to a seventeenth-century Dutch map of Timor that shows the name, 'Macassars River' in the general vicinity of where one would expect to locate the port of Hera (Map 2). The reference to 'Macassars' here might reflect the fact that Bugis and Makassar traders historically worked the same routes in the Moluccan region (see Andaya 1993, pp. 86–7, 158, 205) and their cultures are similar enough to justify the concept of Bugis-Makassar society (Andaya 1981, pp. 11–17).

Alternatively they could indicate the existence of Makassar as well as Bugis settlements in the region maintaining long-term mutually beneficial relationships with Timorese coastal communities, articulated through trade and sustained in spite of Portuguese efforts to evict them.[9]

## Trade and Islamic Conversion

There is no direct documentary evidence that Timorese rulers or settlement chiefs ever converted to Islam in response to Makassar entreaties. Most contemporary Timorese are strongly resistant to the idea, particularly given the strength of Catholicism in East Timor. However, Muslim traders are sometimes recorded in the regional literature as favouring conversion to Islam among local rulers and trading partners as part of an ongoing trade relationship.[10] The expansion of the Makassar political influence and authority in the wider region was accompanied by the conversion to Islam among the leadership of various prominent subject domains (e.g. sultanates in Bima, Sumbawa, and Buton in Southeast Sulawesi), and there were clearly advantages in doing so. Conversion, however minimally embraced, offered favoured status for trading opportunities and importantly, protection from enslavement under Islamic law. As Reid noted, the Islamisation of Java and the extension of *Shari'a* law forbidding enslavement, meant that the major Muslim cities from late sixteenth century were supplied with slaves from beyond the frontier of Islam. Certain small sultanates, notably Sulu, Buton and Tidore, began to make a profitable business raiding for slaves in eastern Indonesia (1988, p. 133). This included non-Islamicised areas, such as Timor which had a number of distinct advantages, not least because 'slave exports (were) almost invariably linked with internal disunity, [and] the stateless societies and micro-states of eastern Indonesia, New Guinea, Bali and Nias were consistently among the exporters' (1988, p. 133). But it also meant that strategic conversion to Islam, or at least the minimal expression of adherence to the faith, served the interests of both the Muslim traders and their




**Map 2** Seventeenth-Century Timor Map (reproduced with permission from Spillet 1990).[11]

Timorese hosts on the coasts who could mediate transactions with interior slave suppliers.

In respect of Islamic conversion, Jones (1979) has drawn attention to the absence of authoritative contemporary external sources on the adoption of Islam by Indonesian states from the end of the thirteenth century and the difficulty of therefore ascribing compelling explanations for patterns of conversion. However, on the basis of his analysis of ten conversion myths from different regions of Indonesia, Jones draws the conclusion that the Islamisation of Indonesian states, proceeded not by usurpation of the rulers by a Muslim antagonist, but by the conversion of the existing ruler to Islam (1979, p. 153). And if not full conversion to Islam, it is possible that elements of Islamic practice were nevertheless adopted by ruling Timorese elites as expressions of their allegiance to Makassar and as forms of emulation of power and symbolic resonance. The adoption of new forms of burial practice through the use of finely dressed stone may be one example. Memories of former close engagement with Makassar-based maritime traders are retained among some Timorese coastal communities. In the small port of Com in the north east of Timor, local mythologies recall a time when, what they refer to as 'Buton Makassar', presented a series of large circular and dressed, black slab stones as a gift of restitution following a failed attempt to kidnap a young woman and sail away. They also refer to these heavy stone discs as 'Makassar stone' (Makassar *mataru* or *Batu* Makassar) which were then distributed among the allied settlements of the area and remain to this day within

the crumbling walls of the old fortified sites as charged ancestral (*tei*) objects (see Figure 2). What use was subsequently made of these circular stones remains the subject of further enquiry, but evidently they point to the creation of some form of political alliance or allegiance with their powerful seafaring counterparts (see McWilliam 2007 for further consideration of this question). The impact of these events can be inferred from the continuing practice among members of the resident senior Fataluku clan group of Com, of giving ancestral names to their children that commemorate the connection, namely, *Lau kassare, Paian kassare* for their daughters, *Ze kassaro, Kei(n) kassaro* for their sons. In Figure 2, the larger round stone is set in association with a short, dun-coloured standing stone that gives the appearance of a ceremonial altar. According to one version of the local mythology:

> . . . a 'Buton Makassar' boat having completed their trade exchanges, kidnapped a pretty girl from Com, lifted anchor and began to sail away. Alarmed, the people ran to the nearby senior house of Com, the C*alu Kono* (clan ancestor Konu) for help. Smoking a cheroot as he listened to their anguished cries that their guns could not reach the departing boat, the Konu ancestor responded by flicking his smoke into the adjacent small creek where it transformed into an ancestor dolphin (*roinu*), that swam out to the ship and punched a hole in the hull. As water rushed in, the 'Buton Makassar' had no choice but to return the ship and the girl to the shore. Later in compensation and as a sign of their future good faith, they offered the six black stones to Konu Ratu, which were then divided between the elder and younger sibling houses and to the family of the political ruler, the *Cao Hafa Malae* in the nearby stronghold of Ili Vali (Macapainara) (McWilliam 2007).

The settlement of Com also features a number of sites with the distinctive decorative graves associated with the Makassar stone styling. All of these graves identified to date face north but it is not clear whether this reflects a specific Muslim convention consistent with the Hera grave orientation or other influential cultural practices. In the old settlement of Asi Renu overlooking the deep water anchorage of Com, there is a line of half a dozen stylised Makassar stone graves with their headstones facing north towards the sea. Running parallel at one end of this line of graves, also with their headstones to the north, are two more recent burials which are clearly Catholic in religious denomination. According to local respondents the orientation to the north has nothing to do with Islam as such, but rather, conforms to the conventions of the ancestors that preceded them. Another alternative viewpoint offered was that the burials were oriented to the sea because of the strong mythological and sacrificial connections of the resident senior clan group Konu with their saltwater origins (McWilliam 2007). In similar fashion even a brief survey of Timorese grave orientation in the wider region reveals that the direction of the headstone is highly variable. While most graves face east and the rising sun (*mua cao*: the head of the land), there is no attempt at uniformity and graves can be aligned to all points of the compass. This may also be attributed to the more pragmatic consideration that burial alignment may reflect the available space in the raised

limestone subsurface which forms an irregular base of solid rock interspersed with depressions and clefts.

A comparison of features between Makassar stone and other Islamic graves with South Sulawesi-style tombs reveals a number of interesting points (see Table 1). Certain features such as the type of stone used reflect locally available resources. Technical features of South Sulawesi tomb construction are usually better expressed in the Makassar stone style than other Timorese graves and certain features (such as the construction of tiers) are not found in Timor, apart from a basal stepping occasionally observed on non-Makassar stone graves. This may suggest a broader influence from Makassar on masonry techniques in Timor than the application of the term 'Makassar stone' to a particular type of masonry product would indicate. Critically, ritual aspects of South Sulawesi tombs, such as their dedication to a single deceased occupant and their north-south orientation according to correct Islamic practice in the Indonesian region, appear to have been irregularly transmitted to the ritual aspects of graves in East Timor.

Moreover, during the seventeenth-century Bugis-Makassar communities were often nominally Muslim and maintained strong elements of local customary ritual



**Table 1** Comparison of East Timor Masonry Graves with Seventeenth-Century Tombs of Islamic Nobles in South Sulawesi

| Feature | *Batu* Makassar stone graves | Other East Timor graves | South Sulawesi tombs |
|---|---|---|---|
| Raised rectangular grave shape | Always | Sometimes (some are low heaps) | Usually tiered |
| Stepped | Not observed | Occasionally | Basal tier the largest |
| Upper level of dressed, flattish rectangular blocks | Always (variable upper level as proportion of height) | No | Always (variable upper level as proportion of height) |
| Capping of dressed, flattish rectangular blocks | Always | No | Always |
| Fine-grained sedimentary rock for upper level | Always (dressed, these equal Makassar stone) | Occasionally (but not dressed) | No (usually andesite) |
| Lower level of dressed squared-off blocks | Typically | Occasionally | Lower blocks thicker than upper levels |
| Limestone for lower level | Always | Usually | No (usually andesite) |
| Coursed masonry | Occasionally | Occasionally | Always |
| Standing stones at both ends | Usually | Often | Always |
| North-south orientation | Sometimes | Occasionally | Always |
| East-west orientation | Sometimes | Usually | Never |
| Number of burials | Can be multiple | Can be multiple | Always single |

practice (Ambary 1985; Pelras 1985). The influence of Makassar traders on religious beliefs in East Timor, and particularly the conversion of local allies to Islam, is therefore one for which compelling evidence is generally lacking, despite their potential influence on local masonry techniques which reveals important correspondences.

## Conclusion

The existence of venerated Timorese graves, bearing a striking resemblance to similar structures in Makassar, Sulawesi, suggests that during the seventeenth century the active trading networks that linked the two regions may have extended to the adoption of Islamic burial practices among prominent groups in eastern Timor. The phrase Makassar *mataru* (Makassar stone) signifies that historical exchange and cultural memory.

Oral testimony has not produced any corroboration of Islamic conversion or adoption according to the annals of collective Timorese group memories. Nevertheless it remains a possibility that ruling elites of Timorese fortified settlements in the relatively circumscribed area of far eastern Timor may have taken on some of the practices of Islam in order to facilitate harmonious relations with their more powerful maritime allies or to emulate their status. The combination of finely dressed Makassar stone, and the shaped limestone foundations also suggests and reflects material evidence for the introduction of masonry techniques to East Timor from South Sulawesi, particularly given the comparatively sophisticated shaping of the stone blocks, and the evident decline in the expression of the technology over subsequent years.

In its heyday in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Makassar was a magnet for craft-workers and technicians in a huge range of skills including, iron smelting, firearm manufacture, fort construction and the working of stone. Timorese graves both before and immediately after the 'Makassar stone' period do not reveal the same level of workmanship and finesse, but confirmation that masonry techniques were transferred from Makassar traders and settlers to Timorese allies around the seventeenth century is a subject that requires further study. We have to date found no Timorese interlocutors who acknowledge any connection.

On balance, our working conclusion on the subject is that the link between the Makassar in South Sulawesi and East Timorese graves of a certain period, is probably stylistic and based on a strategic association rather than any active religious conversion. We leave open the option that new technologies of burial practice carried with them religious and cosmological resonance. Either way the evidence points to an interesting legacy of the distinctive Makassar stone burial style in far eastern Timor; one that marks early Islamic Makassar influence on the ancestral religion of the Timorese population and points to a time when Makassar, not Portugal, dominated political allegiances in East Timor.

## Notes

[1] The research was conducted under an Australian Research Council Discovery Project entitled, *Cultural and Environmental Shifts in East Timor: Evidence for Climate Change over the Last Millennium.* We acknowledge the support of the Government of Timor-Leste, the Australian National University and numerous Fataluku colleagues in East Timor. We are grateful for the comments and suggestions of two anonymous reviewers.

[2] These dates reflect the period when the majority of Timorese indigenous fortifications were established.

[3] Local sensitivities and the spiritual significance of these old graves preclude the possibility of excavation and direct dating.

[4] Standing stones such as these are representational markers of spirit guardians of place (*tei, rai nain*) and remain important sites of periodic sacrificial veneration.

[5] Ethnographic information on which the present paper is based, derives from a wide range of discussions and interviews with local Timorese residents and archaeological assistants drawn from the villages of Pitilete (Tutuala), Com, Moro-Parlamento, Laclo and, more recently, the township of Laleia where field research has been conducted over 2007–11. Methodologically the information gathered on the Makassar stone material has been based on a broadly consistent set of observations and commentary by multiple Timorese interlocuters in relation to the provenance of the material they refer to 'Makassar stone'. It forms part of an evidently shared cultural memory, even if the details and origins of the term itself remain obscure to the majority. No Timorese we spoke with identified the occupants of the Makassar stone graves as anything other than Timorese ancestors.

[6] The first recorded Portuguese proselytising on Timor is associated with one Frei António Taveira, thought to be from the Franciscan order, who was sent to the island in 1556 by his senior, Frei António da Cruz, from their base on the island of Solor (Sousa 1767, p. 282; Lobato 2000, p. 358). It is not clear where Taveira pursued his missionary activities, but he is reported to have converted up to 5000 'pagan souls' (Fernandes 1992, p. 10). A later effort was mounted in 1589 by Frei Belchior da Luz, who landed at Mena on the northwest coast and persuaded the local ruler to adopt Christianity and construct the first recorded church on the island (Gunn 1999, p. 73). Six months later the efforts were apparently abandoned. A number of poorly documented missionising attempts followed, until the more concerted and successful efforts of Frei António de São Jacinto in 1641–2 who, with his Dominican colleagues, won converts and firmly established their order in a number of Timorese 'kingdoms'(*reino*) from Luca in the southeast of the island to Kupang (Cupao) in the far west (Gunn 1999, pp. 73–78; de Sá 1952, pp. 62–65; Matos 1974, pp. 109–10, Leitão 1948; Fernandes 1992, pp. 13–4). By the middle of the seventeenth century Timor was reported to have some 22 established churches (Felgas 1956, p. 225; see also Rouffaer 1923 for notes on the chronology of the Dominican mission in the Solor-Flores region).

[7] Sultan Mudhaffar is accredited in Makassar texts with 'conquering' Timor in 1640. See also Spillet 1999 *The Pre-Colonial History of the Island of Timor Together with Some Notes on the Makassan Influence in the Island.*

[8] Spillet has provided a scanned image of the headstone which allows for independent corroboration of Bugis lontara script and its reference to Wehiriya. We note that a correction to the date of burial is warranted given that AH 1052 actually began on CE 1 April 1642 and not 1632 as asserted by Spillet (pers comm. Campbell Macknight). The revised date actually fits well with the chronology of Makassar-Bugis engagement outlined in this paper.

[9] To give just one example that highlights the duration of these relationships over long periods of time, Pélissier reports on a punitive Portuguese Colonial expedition to the region of Sama in eastern Timor (located to the west of present day Lautem) in September 1847 against the presence of Macassar or more likely Bugis pirates and slave traders operating along the coast

there. The Bugis evidently got the better of the Colonial force and subsequently, Pélissier reports that 70 Bugis managed to resist the attack of a 3000 strong armed force of Timorese auxilliary troops for four and a half months. The Portuguese Governor at the time, Julião José da Silva Vieirra (1844–48), suspected complicity between the Bugis and local Timorese of the Fataluku kingdom (*reino*) of Sarau (which included the area of Lautem and Moro-Parlamento) and ordered a further expedition to punish the *reino* and exact vengeance for their collusion (Pélissier 1996, p. 25).

[10] Torres, for instance, commenting on maritime trading strategies in the Arafura Sea, and possibly referring to traders out of the powerful Sultanates of Ternate or Tidore in 1607, noted that: 'At the extremity of this country (Maluku) we found some clothed Moors, with artillery for service, such as falconets and swivel guns, arquebuses and white weapons. They go conquering these people who are named Papuas and preach to them the sect of Mahomed'. (Markham Sir C. 1944, p. 464, Letter of Luis Vaez de Torres, 12 July 1607).

[11] One possible source for Spillet's reference is the seventeenth-century map by Isaac de Graaf (ca.1667–1743) entitled *Kaart van Timor en de Kleine Soendasche Eilanden* (Timor and Lesser Sunda Islands), ca.1695. [Leupe Catalogue, National Archives of the Netherlands, No. Vel 0453]. A later version by Jasper Gentet (1739) *Kaart van de oosterlijke Kleine Soenda-Eilanden* [Chart of the Eastern Lesser Sunda Islands], is very similar with the same positioning of the reference to 'Makassars River' (see Roever and Brommer 2008, p. 223).

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