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South Sulawesi before AD 1600

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This is a paper of guesses and hunches, but as few hypotheses as I think possible. In other words, it is like most attempts to write history. It sets out what I think we can now fairly say about South Sulawesi between about AD 1000 and 1600. Much of this account is based on evidence which has only become available or accessible in the last twenty to thirty years, or which we can now see in a new light, but there is not time to talk much about the evidence. Rather I want to say what I think it adds up to.

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The Bugis and Makasar peoples of South Sulawesi have long been renowned for their historiography — and not without reason. Sometime in the second half of the seventeenth century, someone put down an account of the past of ruling in the realm of Gowa, with a complementary account of Tallo', and then, perhaps a little later in the century, someone else did the same for Bone. These three accounts, which may fairly be called 'chronicles', are each coherent and complete in themselves, — what I have elsewhere called 'works' — though they are, of course, based on other materials. They set out the events, and especially the genealogical events, of the reigns of successive rulers of the realms over a period of about three centuries, that is, from about the fourteenth century.

These seventeenth-century chronicles of Gowa, Tallo' and Bone seem then to have served as models for others in the eighteenth century, such as one for Soppeng and possibly a number of separate works for Wajo'. Even later, there is a Tanete chronicle, and everywhere there are the materials for such attempts, particularly genealogies, lists of vassals, fragments of stories, copies of treaties, and the like. A great deal of all this material relates to the period after Islamisation, that is shortly after 1600, which is just when we also begin to get some substantial European sources, but all that is beyond our attention here. Our focus here is on the period before this date, and before useful external sources are available.

Fifty years ago, Noorduyn made a start on the history of this period before 1600 in the introduction to his edition of a Wajo' chronicle. An English translation of the Bone chronicle by Mukhlis and myself has long circulated — and will get published one day — and Bill Cummings' edition of the Gowa and Tallo' materials will shortly displace the much-used Indonesian editions. Ian Caldwell's unpublished PhD thesis provides a miscellany of works from other realms. A few other bits and pieces are also available in one form or another, but there has now been sufficient inspection of the manuscript heritage to be fairly confident that nothing else major exists.

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From all this material, it would be possible to much expand Noorduyn's account of, say, the two centuries from 1400 to 1600. Some of the main features are clear. For example, in the harsh world of war and politics, it is clear that by the middle of the sixteenth century, Luwu' had been pushed out of its territories immediately north of the Cenrana River and the central lakes by the rising power of Bone and Wajo'. Again, around the same time, Gowa began to have significant contact, both friendly and hostile, with the major Bugis polities in the centre of the peninsula and in 1582, by Noorduyn's calculation, Bone, Wajo' and Soppeng entered into a 'Three power' alliance against outside influence in the area.

In the fifteenth century, developments were generally on a more localised scale, but one can trace the consolidation of what became the main realms in the following century.

More significant perhaps than these particular political and military developments, three themes emerge from the chronicles and related writings.

The first is the concern with ascriptive status. The central message of the chronicles is that the appropriate people are in charge. Most obviously, the need to make this point explains the accounts of acceptance of the *tomanurung*, or descended ones, by the people with which the chronicles begin. The extensive genealogical information, which seems so tedious to us, is directed towards confirming the status of the successive rulers.[2] If a little selective remembering is required to confirm the actual outcome — as I have argued for the Bone chronicle — then where's the harm in that? Analysis can, however, be taken much further than that. Bulbeck's remarkable study of the descent and career of 559 individuals in the lands of Gowa and Tallo' during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shows the close, but by no means perfect, relationship between status, that is inherited position in relation to others, and rank, that is functional place in the hierarchy of power. In this Makasar context, there is a pronounced, if unsurprisingly, bias against women achieving rank; this seems more pronounced than in Bugis polities to the north, but there has been no similar analysis of the Bugis sources. Whatever the detail, all the sources show this concern with status and there is every reason to believe that it matters to the people of the time.

Another illustration of this, if one were needed, is introduction of literacy. Following Caldwell, I believe that writing was introduced to both Bugis and Makasar speakers some time in the fourteenth century. The date derives from an analysis of genealogical data which dramatically expands in bulk, that is in the detail of the record, during that century. Writing was used to show, quite literally, the tangible record of one's ancestry. There is, however, a little more to it than that. As Caldwell and I have shown in a paper looking at variation in Bugis texts — we suspect that much the same is true for Makasar materials — and following Pelras' study of modern orality and writing, literacy here needs to be understood in a very particular way. Before modern times, it was literacy in the manuscript register, not print literacy, and it was still very closely tied to orality. This meant that, in many cases, copying a manuscript involved a degree of re-creation. It is these varying degrees of freedom which Caldwell and I

[2] I differ here from Bill Cummings. He wants to claim that the writing of the Makasar chronicles and other related materials produced status difference. While I would not deny that they were designed to enhance that difference, it seems to me that status difference in societies speaking Austronesian languages long precedes any possible version of literacy.

describe as variation and which we treat in some detail. In other words, we can specify just what we mean by the introduction of literacy.

Another striking feature of the form of literacy introduced lies in the actual characters themselves, the *aksara*, from which I derive the useful term aksary to describe this writing system, ultimately derived from Indian models. The problem in tracing this derivation in detail is that we lack dated specimens of the South Sulawesi scripts, but I believe the most parsimonious explanation is as follows. The immediate origin of the concept of writing was Java, where of course literacy was well established by the fourteenth century. The fact that an Indic-style system was used, rather than Arab characters, helps to confirm the relatively early date. The process of transfer, however, involved much more than the attempt to write Makasar or Bugis using Javanese *aksara* and other conventions. Instead, there was a sophisticated re-working of the concept to fit the particular linguistic circumstances of the South Sulawesi languages. Most obviously, this led to abandoning, in general terms, any indication of final consonant in a syllable or, and this is almost the same thing, any sign of geminated consonants or the glottal stop. The deliberate nature of this re-working is confirmed by the fact that it seems to have happened twice: once for the so-called 'Old Makasar' aksary and once for the so-called 'standard' aksary. In my view — and I would be happily corrected — it is not possible to show a complete and consistent process of transformation in the forms of the *aksara* from any external model to either South Sulawesi aksary, or between these two main aksaries themselves.[3] Since there is no evidence of the 'Old Makasar' aksary ever being used to write Bugis, it seems reasonable to assume that this was created in a Makasar-speaking environment. I am particularly impressed by the signatures in 'Old Makasar' on what looks like a contemporary version — perhaps even the original — of the Bungaya Treaty. The actual forms of the aksara in 'Old Makasar' are complicated and somewhat variable. By contrast, the forms of the *aksara* in the 'standard' aksary are remarkably simple and, to a degree, logical. I accept in general terms Noorduyn's ingenious derivation of the forms from simple elements. It is also worth noting the relatively logical arrangement of elements in the *ka-ga-nga* sequence, both in phonetics and visually; studies of alphabetisation elsewhere emphasise the importance of the order of elements. All this strengthens the case, it seems to me, for a deliberate re-working of the system as suggested above.

If one is looking for a location and context for the re-working into the 'standard' aksary, then Malangke, or thereabouts, in the fourteenth century seems to have some claims. If one is looking for any relationship between the two re-workings and the direction of any influence, then it is much easier to suggest that the solutions reached for 'Old Makasar' pre-date and perhaps played some part in forming the 'standard' aksary, especially if one sees the four pre-nasalation *aksara* as supplementary aids. That then puts the 'Old Makasar' re-working back to at least the fourteenth century, but again, there is no particular reason to doubt that this was possible in the Gowa of that period.

Another element in the re-working is the surface on which the writing occurred. Before paper became available, the medium for writing in South

[3] I am aware that Noorduyn has made a start on this, but I see no reason to doubt that there was deliberate invention here, perhaps roughly guided by similarities of form in at least some cases.

Sulawesi appears to have been the palm-leaf strip-roll. It is a possible, but rather weak argument, that the 'Old Makasar' forms imply painting on some other surface rather than incising palm-leaf or bamboo, while the 'standard' forms are very suitable to incising palm-leaf.

Twenty years ago, I suggested that a crucial development of this period was the expansion of wet-rice agriculture and, since then, important new evidence has emerged to support my original hypothesis. My original argument was largely founded on textual analysis; the new evidence is mainly archaeological. By far the most important is Bulbeck's demonstration of settlement patterns across a major part of the Gowa plain at various periods. This shows steadily increasing density of settlement from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, and suggests that my date of AD 1400 for the beginning of the process should now be pushed back by at least a century.[4] At a more focussed level, a picture of early wet-rice farmers expanding their production emerges from the excavations undertaken at various sites around Tosora under Ali Fadillah's direction in 2000. This work explores the reality of the earliest period discussed in Noorduyn's thesis. The critical insight here, which is very clear in the field, is the relationship between the occupation areas on slight rises and the nearby marshes or marsh edges which were suitable for wet rice cultivation.

This is not just a matter of reading the present landscape, since there have been some changes. For example, James Brooke at Tosora in 1840 recognised that the anabranch of the Cenrana River which passes the site had once been larger. More significantly, Bulbeck shows how the Je'ne'berang captured the headwaters of the Gumanti in seventeenth century, thereby depriving settlements along the Gumanti of irrigation potential. One should not, however, exaggerate the effect of such changes. My understanding of the geomorphological work around the major central lakes is that there is no evidence for major change in the hydrology and landscape of the peninsula over the last thousand years.

The effective limit for dating sites by sherdage of ceramics imported from mainland Asia seems to be about AD 1200, though there are a few earlier pieces known, so that date does not mark the earliest imports. Using a combination of the ceramic evidence and written sources such as genealogies, vassal lists and legendary stories, with a good eye for the landscape, it is now possible to trace a pattern of agricultural and political development in many parts of the peninsula from the thirteenth century onwards. The combination of sources and particular circumstances differ from one area to another, but there has been detailed work done now in Bantaeng, in Jeneponto and Takalar, in Siang, Soppeng and Cina, and in Ajatapparang, as well the work in Bone, Wajo' and Gowa mentioned

[4] This backdating for the beginning of the process from c.1400, which was founded essentially on the extreme range of the written evidence, to c.1300, which is based primarily on the evidence of ceramic sherds, reminds us of an important methodological point. It is misleading to assume that our earliest evidence for any process or situation represents the beginning of the phenomenon. The earliest writing does not relate to the expansion of agriculture. In the same way, there is a limit to the range of ceramic evidence. Thus we may safely assume that there were agricultural communities speaking ancestral forms of Bugis or Makasar and organised according to the principles of ascriptive status living in the peninsula throughout the first millennium AD and probably longer; the absence of direct and detailed evidence for this does not mean that it did not happen. They were also probably in contact by sea with others beyond the peninsula and the evidence for that may be easier to detect.

above. Right across the peninsula, one can observe the consolidation of a system of polities or in Ian Caldwell's words: 'confederations of hierarchically arranged complex chiefdoms'.

The basic economic base of these polities was rice agriculture, but in areas such as coastal Gowa, and earlier in Siang, and around the south coast, there seems to have been continual interaction with areas beyond South Sulawesi; it is important to note that this contact was both ways since it is just as likely, perhaps more likely, that trade was carried on in vessels built and controlled in South Sulawesi as elsewhere.

The major anomaly in this picture is the history of Luwu'. Here there have been two related discoveries. The first is the evidence for the extraction, smelting and export of iron. The ore came from the hinterland, especially on present evidence from the western end of Lake Matano, but the upper Rongkong valley was perhaps of importance too. The smelting took place at various sites, and the export was by sea from the coast. The industry began in the first millennium, and by about AD 1200 the central settlement apparently controlling the trade was at Malangke, east of Palopo. The second discovery is the size and sophistication of the settlement at Malangke, with hints of Javanese influences and contacts with Makasar areas. Soon after 1600 and the introduction of Islam, the site was effectively abandoned and the political centre of Luwu' moved to Palopo. The reason for the move may well have been environmental.

Another anomaly is the dependence of Luwu' on sago, rather than rice, but then the main product was iron, not food, and there may well have been some import of rice. Lastly, there is the somewhat equivocal status of Luwu' as a Bugis realm; although often said to be the oldest of the realms, its written sources are confused and unsatisfactory. Moreover, the Bugis are only one of various groups who have clearly been around for a long time and who have links to central and southeastern Sulawesi.

The easiest explanation of these facts is to see the Bugis as, essentially, immigrants, moving up or along the coast from the mouth of the Cenrana to take advantage of the economic opportunities opened up by exporting iron.[5] Certainly, Malangke was a great and important settlement (by the standards of the time), wielding political and military power around the head of the Gulf of Bone, and no doubt displaying other signs of a Bugis polity, but it was essentially different from emerging polities such as Soppeng or Bone. There was, of course, a link in that the iron from Malangke or other northern sources could be traded for the rice surplus of the central part of the peninsula, to the benefit of both ends.

This picture of two complementary centres of economic power, Luwu' and the valley of the Cenrana roughly, seems to have applied through much of the period from about 1200 or so to 1600. It is also fundamental to the structure of the La Galigo cycle. The recent explosion of interest in La Galigo has finally clarified a few issues.

La Galigo is a tradition of performing episodes from a long cycle of stories. Its primary form is a body of knowledge in the heads of its performers, together with the appropriate techniques of performance. Though actual oral

[5] Bulbeck and Caldwell believe that genealogical evidence supports a direct link between the area around Sengkang and Luwu'.

performances are rare today — until the recent encouragement, at least — the material is also found in the form of manuscripts. Performances are essentially 'oral compositions' as understood by Milman Parry and A B Lord, and I believe that the creation of the manuscripts can be accounted for by the hypothesis of the 'writing composer'. The cosmology of La Galigo seems to be a fairly normal transformation of underlying Austronesian concepts and the basic phenomenon might trace back a long way into the Bugis past.[6] What is extraordinary is the wealth and quality of the manuscript expressions of the tradition, though there is no reason to suppose that these versions of episodes began to be written down before about the eighteenth century. For one thing, manuscripts of this bulk seem to require access to paper in considerable supply.

There has been a good deal of effort devoted to trying to derive historical information and general cultural concepts from the La Galigo material, and this is becoming easier as further slabs of text are published. There is nothing wrong with reading the material in these ways, though it is also useful to remember Koolhof's point that it is as well to start, at least, with a literary assessment. On reflection over the years, several points strike me as significant.

The first is that the La Galigo cycle is, at base, a *tomanurung* story; in the beginning, the first-generation protagonists and much else descend (or rise) into the Middle World and later characters derive their status from links with those who descended (or rose). The two centres of the world of La Galigo are 'Luwu'' and 'Cina'; it is not difficult to link these with, on the one hand, the iron-exporting region at the head of the Gulf of Bone, where we now have the archaeological evidence from Malangke and elsewhere, and on the other hand, the rich rice lands of the Cenrana valley where the site of Allangkanangngé ri La Tanété and nearby sites have yielded early sherds. To that extent at least, the archaeology supports the legend.

A complication, however, arises. There is a strong belief today that the site of palace which also descended to Luwu' is to be found in the extreme eastern part of the territory at either Cerekang or perhaps Ussu. Archaeological investigations of the sites most likely to date from the period of Malangke's importance have been hindered by this belief, but there are indications that there were settlements here, engaged in the export of iron, between about 1300 and 1600. What should we make of this belief in a very specific location for the events described in the La Galigo materials?

The solution to this question lies, I think, in the character of the stories as *tomanurung* texts, that is as texts which, by relating individuals to their ancestors from the upper and lower worlds, justify inequality of status in a particular locality. My suggestion is that the Bugis immigrants to Luwu' in pursuit of the iron industry, both in the west around Malangke and in these eastern areas, found in the La Galigo stories a useful equivalent. There is, in fact, a persistent tendency to try to forge a linkage between the conclusion to the cycle and the

[6] Elsewhere I have wondered whether the La Galigo material is a specifically Bugis expression of a wider Austronesian tradition, or whether the presence of related versions in predominantly non-Bugis areas represents a shared tradition. It seems to me more likely that the first possibility is correct and that the other versions represent influence from the Bugis. The most persuasive evidence for this is the use of the same personal names, often in very corrupted forms, which have meaning in Bugis. Other traditions have other forms of orally composed material, such as the Makasar *sinrili'*.

Luwu' genealogies. In the west, the need for this justification was lost with the abandonment of Malangke and, perhaps, the role of Islam from the early seventeenth century. It was only in the relatively remote eastern areas of Cerekang and Ussu that the linkage was preserved. In other words, it is the very remoteness of the sites which has allowed the identification of the fourteenth to sixteenth century sites with the palace of 'Luwu''. If one were interested to find a northern equivalent to Allangkanangngé ri La Tanété, it is much more likely to have been at Malangke than Cerekang, but the question is unreal.

There is, also, a deeper truth about Bugis society embedded in the structure of the La Galigo cycle. At its heart is the saga of Sawérigading, his twin sister Wé Tenriabéng, and his eventual bride Wé Cudai'. The logic of ascriptive status leads to the need to find a marriage partner of at least equal status, or even higher if possible, but if one is at the top of the range, as it were, then one cannot go beyond equality. For Sawérigading, with impeccable descent, who could be more equal or more suitable than his twin sister? The problem with this is not incest as such, for many societies cope with that to keep a royal line intact, but rather that there is no-one who is nearer than a twin; twins were, after all, together in the womb. To marry a twin is to avoid any search, any quest, any striving. Wé Tenriabéng is, at one and the same time, the ideal and the impossible spouse. The problem of suitability is solved by the fact that Wé Cudai' is the equal to Wé Tenriabéng in every way, but the real mirror which the tale holds to life is the story of Sawérigading's quest for her, with all its difficulties. The point of life for a Bugis is in the striving for the ideal partner. [One might also look at the story from Wé Tenriabéng's perspective and her 'quest' in life is as a *bissu*.]

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My purpose in this paper has been to set out as simply as possible where I think we are up to in understanding the history of South Sulawesi in the centuries before 1600. Most of what I have said is derived from the work of others, but I have not hesitated to give my opinion on various matters. The remarkable additions to the available evidence over recent years means that much detail lies behind my general statements. There is every reason to hope that the potential exists for even more material to be discovered and analysed in coming years. Just as La Galigo has found a new form and a world-wide audience in recent times, the distinctive history of South Sulawesi is likely to feature increasingly prominently in accounts of the Indonesian past, and even in more global histories.