REPORT ON A WORKSHOP ON EARLY SOUTH SULAWESI, 18-19 AUGUST, 2000

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The conclusion of the ARC-funded project on the 'Origin of complex societies in South Sulawesi' and the presence in Canberra of several key scholars provided the occasion for a workshop reviewing the present state of knowledge regarding South Sulawesi between about AD 1000 and AD 1600 and planning the lines of future research. Our understanding of this field has been radically transformed in recent years by work in several disciplines and by the co-ordination of the results of this research. This is especially significant in the light of the much wider interest in Austronesian peoples and their cultural transformations over time. Early South Sulawesi, because of the particular combination of evidence available there for the pre-Muslim and pre-European period, is emerging as a major site for Austronesian studies.

A century of research on the prehistoric archaeology of the area has provided a relatively well-understood background and this has been supplemented by much work on the Chinese, Thai and Vietnamese ceramics which flooded into South Sulawesi for most of the second millennium AD — and have flooded out into a new trade over the last half century or so. In addition, the products of indigenous literacy, which began in about the fourteenth century AD, have revealed useful historical information. Some genres of writing, such as genealogies, king lists, vassal lists or chronicles, while posing various philological problems for editors, allow relatively straightforward interpretation. Others, and especially the vast collection of texts deriving from the I La Galigo cycle of stories, pose major problems of interpretation. There is also an excellent ethnographic record from the area, spanning a century and a half.

The sessions of the workshop, which ran over a day and a half, were devoted principally to discussion, rather than the presentation of formal papers, although all participants were invited to outline their recent activities and indicate their general plans for work over the next few years. Various colleagues who could not be present also sent a brief account of their current interests. These short statements brought forward for general discussion a great deal of detailed material.

Specific attention was focused on five inter-related questions. The first concerned the history of lake and sea level changes in the Lake Tempe depression and Cenrana River valley. Claims have been made, on various grounds, for a vastly more extensive lake than at present, or even a sea passage from the Gulf of Bone right across the peninsula, as recently as about a thousand years ago. Dr Malcolm Lillie (Department of Geography, University of Hull) and Professor Geoff Hope (Department of Archaeology and Natural History, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies (RSPAS), The Australian National University (ANU)) reported that, although recent cores showed some evidence of mangrove pollen near both the lake and the river, any saline influence was earlier than about 2000 years ago and thus in a different time frame from the processes at work in the early second millennium AD. The environment over the last 1000 years had not been dramatically different from modern conditions for people occupying, early in that period, several sites recently investigated, such as Tosora, north of the Cenrana, mentioned by Dr Moh. Ali Fadillah (Balai Arkeologi, Makassar) and the sites in Cina, to the south of the river, reported on by Dr Ian Caldwell (Department of Politics and Asian

Studies, University of Hull). Both areas are — and were — suitable for extensive wet-rice agriculture. Lake Tempe and its shores clearly present great potential for longterm environmental reconstruction, though perhaps the most that can be said at this early state of research is that we should not assume the simple model of a much larger and deeper lake being infilled by sediment. Reports of enormous changes on a seasonal basis are enough to impugn the reliability of some historical and legendary accounts while, for the long term, the record of tectonic movement needs to be more clearly understood. As appeared very distinctly on a satellite image, the delta of the Cenrana is another area which deserves thorough geomorphological investigation, both as an example of a relatively low-gradient fan emptying into a calm sea and to search for evidence of heavier sedimentation arising from agricultural activities.

Discussion then moved to the economy of iron, especially around the northern shores of the Gulf of Bone. Dr David Bulbeck (Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, The Faculties, ANU) described the suite of sites related to iron recently located by himself and colleagues. Small smelting sites dating to the last 1500 years have been identified at several locations on the northern shore of Lake Matano, whereas the extensive smelting area at Matano on the lake's western shore cannot be dated any earlier than the fifteenth century. Other smelting sites have been located in the upper Rongkong River valley, but these have not yet been fully investigated. The iron was then brought down to the coast where iron working and presumably iron trading sites have been identified. The most significant of these was the major population centre of Malangke, which seems to have become the entrepot for iron both from the Rongkong valley and from Lake Matano. No doubt, it also exerted political control over much of the Luwu' plain during its heyday between about AD 1300 and 1600.

On the one hand these early sites are significant as among the earliest evidence for iron technology anywhere in Southeast Asia. They would seem to be examples of early Austronesian speakers exploring the full extent of the environments into which they had, perhaps quite recently, arrived. On the other hand, the extensive industry represented by the smelting sites in the interior and the working and export sites on the coast, especially at Malangke, is not only the key to understanding the Bugis presence in Luwu', as discussed below, but also an important element in the pattern of trade across the peninsula and the archipelago. David Bulbeck drew a distinction between trade from Malangke up the Cenrana River to the heartland of Bugis rice agriculture and trade around the south coast of the peninsula, much of which was probably destined for Java. Ian Caldwell pointed to the link between efficient iron tools and the expansion of wet-rice agriculture.

The third matter discussed in detail was the nature of the I La Galigo cycle of stories. Sirtjo Koolhof (KITLV, Leiden) introduced both forms in which the material is found. In the first place, it survives — if only just — as oral performance and Koolhof has recorded such performances. In the second place, there is a vast corpus of manuscripts and he outlined the spate of recent work on these, especially the Indonesian translations of Kern's catalogues and transcription and translation of the early volumes of Matthes' manuscript NBG 188. He emphasised that despite many variations in texts and the widespread influence of the stories in regions outside the peninsula — a matter long ago described by Professor Dr A Zainal Abidin — the cycle retains a basic core in the written texts and throughout the Bugis areas of South Sulawesi itself. The story

coheres in detail, often to an astonishing extent, as demonstrated by Christian Pelras, while the language and poetic form of the material are quite distinctive. In his own work, Sirtjo Koolhof thought it most useful to approach the texts first as literature; only then could one explore other issues. He himself drew a distinction between an historical 'Age of I La Galigo', which he did not think had any reality, and the picture of a coherent society in the minds of the creators of the texts. He saw the main use of the material for historians as showing how people saw their own past.

In relation to that general view of the past, he made the important points that Luwu', although crucial to the story as the location at which the characters descend to the Middle World, in fact plays a relatively minor part in the overall cycle and that Sawérigading's incest brings about the destruction of Luwu'. Much more of the action takes place in Cina. Campbell Macknight (Department of Anthropology, RSPAS, ANU) observed that, since our earliest texts seem to come from the eighteenth century, this suggests a date at which the details of the cycle as represented in manuscript form, such as the relative importance of Luwu' and Cina, seemed appropriate.

The discussion was much helped by the report of Professor Dr Darmawan M Rahman (Program Pascasarjana, Universitas Negeri Makassar) concerning his research into present beliefs in the Cerekang area. For certain communities, the I La Galigo figures, especially Sawérigading, had continuing significance and particular sites were regarded as sacred. This reverence precluded archaeological investigation as David Bulbeck and his colleagues had found. With or without archaeological work, however, the problem remains as to why Cerekang and other sites in eastern Luwu' far from the Bugis heartland play such a crucial role in the whole cycle, even if only a relatively small one in terms of bulk. Professor Jim Fox (Director, RSPAS, ANU) noted the contrast between the I La Galigo material and the topogenesis style of story common in eastern Indonesia. Much of the previous debate had assumed a common understanding of the political system or systems across the peninsula. Ian Caldwell raised the issue of how these entities should be best described. In his view, while categories and analogies from elsewhere certainly have value, no term in common use — such as chiefdom, kingdom, mandala state, segmentary state, domain, court, and so on — quite fits the South Sulawesi reality. Addressing the specific details of the South Sulawesi conception of political structure, he reached the formulation of 'confederations of hierarchically arranged complex chiefdoms'. This description also allowed for differences in detail between various cases across South Sulawesi. In discussion, it was pointed out that other features of these arrangements were the complex understanding of gender and the role of the bissu (priests), about both of which Sharyn Graham (School of Asian Studies, University of Western Australia) reported from her recent fieldwork and which can legitimately be applied in some measure to pre-Muslim society. The detailed picture of local entities associating to form larger scale and higher status political units also emerged from work in Sidenreng by Steven Druce (Department of Politics and Asian Studies, University of Hull) and he plans further work of this kind in Ajattaparang. Wayne Bougas and Ian Caldwell have done similar work recently in Bantaeng and Jeneponto. Darmawan pointed to the need for in the Mandar area, which has been much neglected. Jim Fox urged the usefulness of the term 'precedence' to describe the relations between individuals and between states in many Austronesian speaking contexts.

The variety of examples across the peninsula throws up the conclusion that, while political relations based on status competition may be common, there are varying economic bases for these units. As I long ago suggested for the Bone area, the expansion of wet-rice agriculture seems to have been important for the growth and internal consolidation of many areas, whereas in Luwu' the iron working and trading economy was based on sago as a staple. The relevance of small-scale, local trading patterns was illustrated by the recent work of Widya Nayati (Department of South-East Asian Studies, National University of Singapore) in modern Bantaeng. The fullest understanding of the complexity of factors involved comes from David Bulbeck's studies of Gowa and Tallo' which show the inter-relation of environmental, economic, and ideological factors over several centuries before AD 1600. One of the striking features of the situation is that there seems to be little or no difference between Bugis and Makasar political concepts and organisation, despite linguistic and other cultural distinctions.

The matter of political system is central to understanding the evolution of Luwu', which was the final question for general discussion. Dr Ali Fadillah gave a masterly summary of present archaeological knowledge of the area, much of which was also familiar from David Bulbeck's description of the sites relating to iron. The particular feature of Luwu', however, is the complexity of the cultural groups involved. Whereas the rulers of Malangke seem to have been Bugis, there is considerable evidence of Javanese presence there as well. At about the same period from the fifteenth century on, there is also evidence of some Bajau or Makasar inhumations at Malangke and at coastal sites further east. Going away from the coast, there are pockets of people at Baebunta and Wotu speaking distinct languages until today.

There was general agreement that the picture strongly suggested a move by Bugis speakers northwards up — or by boat along — the eastern coast of the peninsula and around the head of the Gulf of Bone, perhaps at some time in the early second millennium when the trade in iron became established on a larger scale. As Dr Kathy Robinson (Department of Anthropology, RSPAS, ANU) observed, this would explain very well why, although Luwu' is conventionally thought of as a Bugis area, even the Bugis there exhibit so many characteristics not typical of Bugis in other areas. There was some discussion, however, on how precisely one could fix the source, stages and date of this movement. Ian Caldwell, for instance, argued that textual evidence links particular sites in the area around Lake Tempe with others near Malangke. Others saw the process as a more generalised movement, deriving from an intensification of longstanding contacts.

An issue of the highest priority in advancing these arguments is further excavation at Malangke and it is much to be hoped that Drs Iwan Sumantri (Department of Archaeology, Hasanuddin University) can undertake the larger scale excavations which he outlined. Since the workshop, however, there have been reports of civil unrest in the area and the research may have to be delayed on this account. There is still much to learn from linguistic research and it was good to hear from Dr Darrell Tryon (Department of Linguistics, RSPAS, ANU) of plans for greater attention to eastern Indonesian matters.

Notes

While this report gives some account of the main issues discussed, the workshop also served to establish many individual contacts and, especially, to encourage those newly entering the field. In fact, its timing and nature seemed well chosen; various participants have major books in preparation and these works will incorporate many details from the discussions, as well as the general conclusions. Various mechanisms were suggested for maintaining informal contacts and these are likely to be acted upon.

The Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at ANU has a long history of research in South Sulawesi and it was good to continue this tradition in such a friendly and successful way. All participants are grateful for the generous sponsorship of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, the Division of Society and Environment and the Department of Anthropology.