GENERAL COMMUNICATION

ABORIGINAL AND MAKASSAN RELATIONSHIPS

PETER SPILETT (DAENG MAKKULLE)
Northern Territory Museum of Arts & Sciences
GPO Box 4646, Darwin, NT 0801, Australia

ABSTRACT

This research note is a resume of work completed on the history of the Makassan voyages to Australia since the seventeenth century and the relationships established between the Makassan sailors and the Aboriginal Communities. In addition it outlines current research into the nomenclature of Makassan camp sites and other places and presents the results of the work recently carried out in Groote Eylandt.

KEYWORDS: Aborigines, Arnhem Land, history, historic sites, Makassar-Makassans, Marege, perahus, place names, trepang.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I wish to recount some of the research carried out over the last six years on what I call the Makassar-Marege connection. This research has covered the history of the Bugis Makassar people of South Sulawesi and the voyages carried out by fishermen to Marege or north Australia.

Studies have also been carried out into the type of vessel used on the voyages and the routes taken and the relationships between the Aborigines of Arnhem Land and the Makassan sailors. The study of genealogies of both Makassan and Aboriginal families has helped establish and renew the family ties broken in 1907.

In addition, I wish to identify and record the Makassan sailors’ trepang processing sites, and other places.

BACKGROUND

Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, and probably long before, the fishermen of South Sulawesi from the Sultanate of Makassar have been recorded as sailing to Marege and Kayu Java to fish for the ‘fruits of the sea’, of which trepang has been one of the major items of commercial value (see Spillett 1987). The voyages reached as far as Cape York area of north Queensland and to King’s Sound and beyond in Western Australia. However, in the main, the voyages commenced from the city of Makassar or neighbouring towns to Bira on the south-east coast of South Sulawesi to Selayar, Flores, Alor and Kisar. There they would reprovision and water before the long sea passage to Melville Island, across to the Cobourg Peninsula, Arnhem Land, Groote Eylandt and into the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The vessels used were the traditional type of perahu called the “Padewakang”, being anything from 20 to 50 tons or more, using the traditional plaited palm leaf sails, with the crew using the time honoured navigational methods of stars and sun, winds and tides. The voyages commenced with the onset of the north westerly monsoon in November and December. On reaching the north Australian coast, camps were set up, trepang was collected in the shallow bays and processed by boiling, smoke drying and sun drying. As soon as the men had a full cargo, or when the south easterly monsoon set in, in March and April, the ships would return to Makassar and the trepang sold to merchants for the China market.

As would be expected, relationships were established between the Makassan sailors and the Aboriginal communities, and intermarriage took place, descendants of which are living today in a number of towns and outstations on the Arnhem Land coast. As part of the
1988 Australian Bicentenary Commemorations the Historical Society of the Northern Territory proposed a project of historical research, reconstruction of a traditional Makassan perahu and re-enacted voyage to Australia. The project was carried out under the sponsorship of the University of Hasanuddin, Makassar (Dr. Fachruddin, Rector) and the Northern Territory Museum (Dr. C. Jack-Hinton, Director).

In mid-July 1987, the reconstruction of the traditional Makassan perahu ‘Padewakang’ took place at Tanah Beru, based on my earlier researches and with the advice of Nick Burningham of the Conservation Department of the NT Museum, and sailed from Makassar on 17 December 1987. Thirteen Makassan sailors and myself were on board the Hati Marege, as she was named, and sailed to Bira, Selayar, Alor and Kisar for revictualling and watering. From there she sailed to Melville Island and along the Arnhem Land coast to Gove.

On board, as one of the crew of the Hati Marege was Mansyur Muhayang Daeng Ngewa, a grandson of Husein Daeng Rangka, a folk hero in the ‘dreamtime’ of the Yulngu people of Arnhem Land. On landing at Gove and on being introduced to his nephew Matjiwi Burrawanga, great grandson of Yocing (Husein), from Elcho Island, a great family reunion took place and dances of welcome were performed for the crew of the Hati Marege. Prior genealogical research had been carried out into the family histories of both the Makassar and Yulngu families and, as a result, direct and living proof of these family relationships were established.

Great ceremonies of welcome were performed and family re-unions took place in Yirrkala, Elcho Island and Milingimbi, and at Elcho Island, Mansyur was initiated into the Irritja family in a highly emotional ceremony.

CURRENT RESEARCH

The Hati Marege sailed to Darwin from Gove, stopping at Elcho Island, Milingimbi and Port Essington. After a brief period of rest in Darwin the crew returned to a hero’s welcome in Makassar and the Hati Marege to a place of honour in the forecourt of the NT Museum of Arts Sciences, Darwin. But the research still goes on. As a result of a grant graciously provided under the Northern Territory Government’s History Award Scheme, I was recently enabled to carry out research in Groote Eylandt, in order to establish possible family relations, locate, identify and record Makassan camp sites and other places, and record those stories about the visitors which might survive from times past.

However, no Makassar Warnindilyaugwa relationships were identified from my studies, although stories relating to the visits by the Aboriginal people to Makassar and the Makassar people to Groote Eylandt were recorded (see below). In addition, and very importantly, sites have been identified and recorded on Groote Eylandt, Bickerton and Woodah Islands. The attached map (Fig. 1) indicates the identified sites and provides the Anindilyaugwa place names as well as the Makassar names for those places. Another list on this figure (Fig. 1 last column) provides the English interpretation of those names. Further research is currently planned for other areas of Arnhem Land at Milingimbi, Goulburn and Croker Islands and follow up visits to Yirrkala, Elcho Island and Melville Island. As a result of those researches it is planned to prepare a map of north Australia which will indicate those places visited by the Makassan sailors many years ago and the stories associated with them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In this particular work, I wish to thank my informants for their patience and advice: Murabuda Numananga, Natditala Wurrmarra (Nadj), Badj, Arangari Wurrmarra, Lilina, Jambana Lalara, Bobby Nungumadgbarr, Judith Stokes, Julie Waddy, Susan Fadgeon and the C.M.S. staff and the Council of Angurugu. In addition I would like to thank Richard Herbert, Nambuk Mamrika, Mike Hersneys of Umbakumba, Jennifer Baird from Alyangula and my brother Jaymila of Elcho Island. Finally I thank Robin Knox of Darwin and Nurdin Yatim of Makassar.

REFERENCES


This paper is an abstract of a seminar held in the State Archives, Darwin, 4 July, 1989.
Aboriginal and Makassan Relationships

MAKASSAN SITES

MAKASSAR NAME
MANGKASSARA

1. Lambi Bingkuru
2. Batu Lompoa
3. Lembana l Manpgo
4. Guru Lufeng
5. Baco Oni
6. Ulai ripa
7. Pattenangang
8. Palu Toya
9. Makkanacapa
10. Carap
11. Laiand Nalis
12. Luiang Aroro
13. Pulau Iningalumajie
14. Lambi Mangngwia
15. Lemba Kurolong
16. Pulau Daeng Lompo
17. Pungongdang
18. Bapa’ Tamboro
19. Manggalle Naya
20. Pulau Daeng Muntu
21. Bapa’ Pasi
22. Sali’ Panana
23. Lemba Berua

ABORIGINAL NAME
ANINDIL YAUGWA

1. Antumumanja
2. Bartelumba
3. Ambumarja
4. Amakilyuwa
5. Awarkita
6. Enongbunumarja
7. Yanyma
8. Barumumurnarja
9. Amungkewula
10. Angyima
11. Walinya
12. Yingind Yumanja
13. Mangiwangji
14. Umba’ Umba’
15. Kuratu - Yandarma
16. Angwarikba
17. Dayboro - Angwarikba
18. Mangelleyawa
19. Woodsh
20. Yiyakwamanja
21. Angninamanja

ENGLISH NAMES

1. Mangrove Bay
2. Great Rock
3. Bowl Bay
4. Black Teacher
5. Young boy name
6. Aboriginal place name
7. Old Cooking Place
8. Poison Island
9. Don’t worry
10. Bloodletting
11. Nela’s Island
12. Aroro’s Island
13. Iningalumajie Island
14. Shark Bay also Ombek-
    turbulent water
15. Spotted Fish Bay
16. Village of Pungongdang
17. Father Tamboro
18. Murder alias
19. Daeng Muntu’s Island
20. Father Peg
21. Pancana Strait
22. New Bay.

View This Item Online: https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/247847
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5962/p.262851
Permalink: https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/262851

Holding Institution
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

Sponsored by
Atlas of Living Australia

Copyright & Reuse
Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.
Rights Holder: Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
License: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Rights: http://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions

This document was created from content at the Biodiversity Heritage Library, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org.