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The 'La Galigo' A Bugis Encyclopedia and its Growth

The Bugis, who form the majority of inhabitants of the southwestern peninsula of Sulawesi, are the proud possessors of an extensive corpus of literature of a multifarious nature laid down in thousands of manuscripts. History, belles-lettres; mythology, technical explications, magical formulae, medical treatises, epic poetry, and instructions about good behavior are only a few of the subjects to be found in them. Almost all are paper manuscripts; less than ten manuscripts written on prepared leaves of the *lontar* palm (*Borassus flabellifer* L.) are known to be extant today. Important collections of South Sulawesi manuscripts are kept in Ujungpandang, Leiden and Jakarta. Recently a project funded by the Ford Foundation and headed by Dr Mukhlis from the Arsip Nasional in Ujungpandang, has managed to retrieve more than 3,000 manuscripts from all over the province, approximately 1,800 of them Bugis, which were all put on microfilm. Many thousands more, however, must still be in private hands, their existence, and contents, unknown to the outside world, and sometimes even to their owners.

The manuscripts written in the indigenous script, both those on paper and the few on *lontar* leaves, are commonly known as *lontaraq*, a word derived from the Javanese '*lontar*'. As mentioned above the variety of subjects treated in *lontaraq* is almost endless, not only between the different codices, but also within an individual codex. Macknight (1984:105) describes a 'typical' *lontaraq* as comprising 'a more or less disparate miscellany of items'. These different items are also of any conceivable length, ranging from a few lines to more than a hundred pages; sometimes bearing titles sometimes not; in some cases complete works, in others just longer or shorter fragments thereof.¹ Codices themselves range in size from a few odd sheets to manuscripts of almost a thousand pages. The range of subjects treated, either in one manuscript or in a collection, can be called 'encyclopedic, encompassing knowledge'. Is there, however, anything that could be referred to as a Bugis 'encyclopedia' – either in the original sense of 'a circle or a com-

* I should like to thank Campbell Macknight and Ian Caldwell for reading an earlier version of this article.

¹ For the idea of a 'work' in Bugis literature see Macknight 1984.

plete system of learning' or as a 'compendium of all available knowledge' (*Encyclopaedia* 1997)?

Knowledge in Bugis society

The knowledge recorded in Bugis *lontaraq* manuscripts is of course only part of all knowledge available to the members of society. As Frits Staal has noted in relation to the transmission of ritual knowledge in India:

Ritual is not only often transmitted without the help of *writing*; it is often transmitted without the help of *language*. Like many other features of culture and civilization – cutting, digging, aiming or planting; features of musical scales and melodies, visual patterns, motifs and shapes, dances, stellar constellations, cooking, the construction of ploughs, weapons and altars, the elements of arithmetic and geometry – ritual is often transmitted by *demonstration* (Staal 1990:372).

Although obviously demonstration – and thus imitation – plays an important role in the transmission of knowledge, especially that of a practical nature, Staal probably underestimates the role and meaning of language here. However, what surely is of importance is that a lot of knowledge, also in Bugis society, is transmitted and preserved without the assistance of writing. Therefore it should be realized that focusing on the written heritage of a society only reveals a small portion of the existing knowledge of that community. The Bugis seamen from the island of Balobaloang, for example, do not make use of any written sources in acquiring or transmitting their navigational and seafaring skills. And maps, although available aboard many ships, are never consulted during their journeys on sea (Ammarell 1994:319-29); and the boats they sail on were also built without the help of plans or drawings (Horridge 1979:1). Apart from many forms of working knowledge in the practical sphere that were not recorded in writing by the Bugis, folktales were almost never written down (except at the request of – mostly Western – scholars).

Furthermore, in a radically manuscript-oriented culture like that of the Bugis, writing serves other purposes than in our Western print culture. In a print and publishing culture like ours writing is primarily aimed at direct *transmission* of knowledge towards a reader. In the Bugis case, however, the objective is much better described as *preserving* knowledge, which eventually may or may not be communicated orally to an audience. A large number of *lontaraq* serve purely as a personal aid to memory, and as such contain data that are not in the first place meant to be communicated to others. Something that became all too clear to me at the moment a man living in the town of Sengkang (Wajo) without hesitation took a pair of scissors and sub-

sequently used it to split the manuscript he was holding in two, saying: 'You can photocopy that part, but this is only for me. And when I will not be here anymore it is for my daughter.'

Knowledge is also something that cannot be collected at random by anyone who feels an inclination to do so. Some knowledge is public, but a lot of it is not. Not all knowledge can be written down by the Bugis: some of it could be too dangerous, and if it is put on paper special precautions have to be taken. In his catalogue, Matthes (1875:79) mentions a tiny manuscript 'considered sacred by the natives' of which the paper had to be smeared with chicken blood before it could be written upon (*maccéraq*; see Pelras 1996:202). The introduction of this *lontaraq*, which contains a genealogy of the main characters of the *La Galigo*, also stresses the dangers of writing down certain types of knowledge:

Ajaq kumabusung, ajaq kumawedda-wedda rampé-rampéang puang ri oloku. Ajaq umawekka ulu, ajaq kumasennéq baba. Aga kuassimang mémeng uinappa patonang ngi ri karettasaq, sabaq na riatéyang riallupai (ms. NBG 189:1, Leiden University Library).

May my belly not swell, may I not weaken mentioning the lords preceding me. May my head not split, may my mouth not tear. I do ask permission first to put it on paper, because it should not be forgotten.

Similar introductory formulas can be found in many other manuscripts (see for example Caldwell 1988:151, 153). And not only the recording of certain forms of knowledge can cause danger, but also the consumption of it. During a ceremony in the Pangkajene area where some paper manuscripts were ritually opened one *lontar* manuscript - according to the owner containing the text of the first episode of the *La Galigo* - remained covered under a red cloth, surrounded by various ritual objects. Uncovering it was unthinkable because it would surely lead to the death of those who were witness to that act. Orally transmitting knowledge, especially that of a magical nature, can also be as dangerous as writing it down, and in some instances may turn against the one who seeks it (Acciaoli 1989:269-75).

As I have noted above the written information is not primarily aimed at being read by a reader searching for specific knowledge. If it is not noted down as an *aide-mémoire* for the owner of the manuscript, most certainly it will be communicated orally to a larger or smaller audience. This could happen either in a performance where certain poetic works are recited, or in a session where a *pallontaraq*, 'lontaraq specialist', consults his manuscripts to provide information about auspicious days for certain activities, for example, the weather forecast, or when to start working the land. The almost inseparable intertwining of the written and the oral in Bugis society has been clearly demonstrated by Christian Pelras (1979). Material which belongs primari-

ly to the written domain – various adventures of Sawérigading, the hero of the *La Galigo* epic, for example – finds its way into the oral unhindered, while primarily oral genres – for example, mantras or spells – can be found in written form in various *lontaraq*.

How oral and written knowledge relate to each other in certain practical situations is illustrated by the following examples.

During my stay in South Celebes I witnessed on several occasions how, for the arranging of important ceremonies, old diaries and note books were consulted. I can mention here the arranging of the official inauguration of a king of Bone in 1931 when the Government had decided to fill once again the office of Arumpone, vacant for nearly 25 years. For the arrangement of the ceremony, use was made of the description of the installation of a king in the 18th century that one had found described in different *sure'bilang*. And when in 1935 the old queen of Luwu' was buried, it was once again the old writings which presented pointers for the ceremonial to be complied with, and the prescribed contributions for this occasion. (Cense 1966:425.)

While this description could give the impression that (certain) royal ceremonies were usually organized on the basis of a written description in some kind of manual, in an unpublished account of the same 1931 inauguration ceremony Cense presents additional information:

Those in charge of the organization of the ceremony had no easy task. No one in Bone had ever attended an inauguration according to ancient traditional rites. In fact, it had reportedly been more than 150 years since a Bonese ruler had been given such a full-dress installation. (Cense n.d.:1.)²

After referring to Matthes who already in the last century noted that no genuine investiture took place during his stay in South Sulawesi (1848-1880) – which he blamed on changing circumstances – Cense proceeds:

Where the oral tradition regarding the customs to be observed no longer was wholly reliable, fortunately a manuscript belonging to Sulewatang Amali supplied the missing details. Although the description of an inauguration ceremony in this text is extremely brief, it even so formed a very useful guide. The manuscript was not followed in every detail, however, people deeming it advisable to leave out some of the ceremonies described. (Cense n.d.:1-2.)

From this last citation a rather different picture emerges. It turns out that the organizers of the royal ceremony only turned to the written description – even an extremely brief one (lacking a more complete version?) – because the oral and practical knowledge were not sufficient. Orally transmitted knowl-

² The cited passages from Cense's unpublished account were translated by Drs M.J.L. van Yperen.

edge does seem to be primary, even at the court of Bone, undoubtedly not an illiterate environment.

Another example of turning to *lontaraq* to complement knowledge on rituals and ceremonies I encountered in Wajo in 1996. In January of that year a woman of high noble descent was asked to organize the wedding of one of her great-nieces. There were, however, some special circumstances, which made this a rather daunting enterprise. In the first place the bride-to-be lived, and had lived her whole life, in the Indonesian capital Jakarta, which would also be the location of the wedding. Secondly, she was only half-Bugis, her father being a descendant of the royal house of Bima, on the island of Sumbawa. And thirdly, the intended groom was of Central Javanese descent and a relative of the then Indonesian president Soeharto. These ingredients, together with the explicit request to organize the ceremonies in traditional (royal) Bugis style, confronted the lady with a number of problems, not only in the purely practical sphere – Jakarta being more than one thousand kilometers away from her place of residence – but also with regard to the contents of the ceremonies and the necessary rituals and ritual specialists. Although one of the few people in South Sulawesi who still had received a traditional education at one of the Bugis courts, and thus someone with a thorough knowledge of tradition, she surely did not regard herself as an expert in the field of wedding ceremonies. Further there was the problem of 'mixed ethnic traditions': the bride was only half-Bugis, while the groom was a Javanese. Surely there had to be room in the ceremonies for non-Bugis elements. And last but not least the fact that the groom was a relative of the Indonesian president – who probably would attend the wedding in person – laid severe strains on the organizers, having to show in all perfection the value of elaborate Bugis ceremonies to the most important representatives of Javanese culture: in many respects the prototype of Indonesian 'Culture' and definitely the most dominant in these days.³

One of the first things the lady did was to sit down, recount her knowledge about traditional royal weddings from memory, and write them down – most of it in Indonesian mixed with Bugis terms, using Latin script. Although she owned a large collection of *lontaraq*, these were not the sources she turned to in the first place. For the details she was unable to recollect from memory she first consulted other specialists. One of them was an old *bissu* (transvestite ritual specialists), whom she requested to dictate one of the ritual songs to be performed as part of the wedding ceremonies. She also asked me for a photocopy of an article published in the scholarly journal

³ See for the importance of 'traditional' wedding ceremonies in contemporary Indonesia Pemberton 1994; Van Leeuwen 1997:97-108.

Archipel, which contained text and both Indonesian and French translations of *lawolo* songs (Hamonic 1980). Only then did she decide to consult the collection of manuscripts she inherited from her family, a few dozen, in various states of preservation.

All her efforts finally resulted in what can be considered a modern version of a *lontaraq*: her handwritten notes worked out on a computer and printed in the form of a scenario for the four-day ceremonies (*Rangkaian* 1996). However, as in the case of the inauguration of the Arumpone in 1931, not all components of the traditional ceremonies – be it as they are described in *lontaraq*, or as they exist in the mind of the people – could be performed during the Jakarta wedding. Adaptations had to be made. Leaving aside the problems that arose because of the fact that the couple were young, modern people, who had grown up in the metropolis Jakarta, and who had their own outspoken ideas about the design of the feast – for example, the colors they wanted to use for decoration were not in accordance with the prescribed colors of the Bugis tradition – the first problem was one of a textual nature. The intention was to present the wedding guests with an Indonesian translation of the spoken (or sung) Bugis utterances. Unfortunately the *lawolo* song she collected from the old *bissu* contained a passage mentioning the word 'Jawa' (Java or Javanese). Yet, in older Bugis texts 'Jawa' is always associated with 'barbarians, savages', and this was also the case in this text. With a Javanese man, related to the president of the nation, as the groom, this was not a very suitable passage with which to brighten up the wedding ceremonies. After much hesitation she decided not to use this text, but instead a part of the published version of the *lawolo*, which does not comprise any references to 'Jawa'.

A second dilemma, comparable to the one just mentioned, arose in explaining the various components of the traditional ceremony. One of these is the so-called *mappanré déwata*, 'feeding the gods', whereby a *sanro* (traditional healer and ritual specialist) performs a ritual during the night before the official wedding. Obviously this ritual invokes the 'animist' gods and would offend pious Muslims. In an early version of the guidelines for the wedding this rite was explained as:

Acara Mappanre Dewata

[...] dilanjutkan dengan upacara Mappanre Dewata (perjamuan spiritual). Maksud dari upacara ini adalah mengundang para Dewata turun ke bumi untuk memberikan doa restu kepada calon mempelai.

Feeding the gods ceremony

[...] continued with the *mappanré déwata* ritual (spiritual offering). The purpose of this ritual is to invite the Gods to descend to earth in order to give their blessings to the bride and groom.

The definitive version, however, reads as follows:

Acara mappanre ade'

[...] dilanjutkan dengan upacara mappanre ade' (perjamuan adat). Maksud dari upacara ini adalah memohon kepada Yang Maha Kuasa untuk memberikan doa restu, kebahagiaan dan keselamatan kepada calon mempelai.

Feeding the *adat* ceremony

[...] continued with the *mappanré adeq* ritual (customary offering). The purpose of this ritual is to ask the Almighty to give His blessings for the well-being and safety of the bride and groom.

These examples show that the orally transmitted knowledge concerning traditional ceremonies and rituals seems to be primary. Only if this does not suffice people are inclined to turn to written sources. Furthermore it becomes clear that the existing knowledge, originating from *lontaraq* or from 'tradition' as it is kept in the memory and rituals of the people, can easily be adapted to the circumstances in which it is to be brought in practice. And these adapted forms subsequently can be written down.

The La Galigo tradition

In Boting Langiq, the top layer of the Upperworld, Patotoqé 'He who destines fate' wakes up after a good night's rest and meets with three of his servants who have been away for some days. Rather angrily he asks them where they have been for so long, neglecting their duties in Boting Langiq. Their answer to him is that they have been to the Middleworld, which to their utmost surprise was completely empty,

Lé namasuaq mua na sia
 mattampa puang lé ri Batara
 mappaleq wali ri Pérétiwi.
 Tammaga Puang muloq séua rijajiammu,
 tabareq-bareq ri atawareng,
 ajaq naonro lobbang linoé
 makkatajangeng ri atawareng.
 Teddewata iq, Puang, rékkua masuaq tau
 ri awa langiq, lé ri ménéqna Pérétiwé
 mattampa puang lé ri Batara. (Salim et al. 1995:58.)

There is no one
 to call the gods Lord,
 or to offer praise to the Underworld.
 Why, Lord, don't you have one of your children descend
 and incarnate him on the earth,

do not leave the world empty,
 the earth uninhabited.
 You are not a god, Lord,
 if there are no humans
 under the heavens, above the Underworld,
 to call the gods Lord.

After consulting his wife, Patotoqé decides to send his eldest son, Batara Guru, to the Middleworld to become the first human being. This action forms the beginning of one of the longest works⁴ in world literature. The *Sureq Galigo* tells us in an elevated literary style of the adventures of the next five generations of Batara Guru's offspring. Besides matters of love, marriage, honor, and war – ingredients universally found in epic literature which probably attracted its audience the most – the *La Galigo* also contains a lot of knowledge essential to Bugis society. B.F. Matthes (1818-1908), the first Westerner to study Bugis language and literature in depth, described this feature as follows:

Although, like other products of that kind, it has no high poetical value, it is of great interest for ethnology, since one repeatedly finds in it an elaborate description of the customary ceremonies for births, weddings and other daily events held up to the present day. That is why it is deplorable that nowhere to be found is a complete copy of this poem. The natives content themselves with – from time to time, especially at the occasion of feasts – rattling off small parts of it, either written on palm leaf or on paper (Matthes 1872:250-1).

Whether Matthes' observation of the *Sureq Galigo*'s poetical value can be regarded just or not should not really bother us at this moment. Of more value are his comments on the value of this work for ethnology, and the way it was used by members of Bugis society. More recently Christian Pelras also stressed the importance of the cultural and historical information contained in the *La Galigo*, and – contrary to Matthes, who only noted that fact, but scarcely used its information – made ample use of it in his description of pre-Islamic Bugis society (Pelras 1996:50-93). He remarks that 'this literary corpus does convey to us the conception that Bugis had of their own past' (Pelras 1996:50). And it does more than that: it portrays the very origin of their ancestors and their ancestral customs. Regardless of whether this is a realistic depiction of the situation in the past, for the Bugis it is at least how it should have been, and in many respects still should be – 'the crown on South Sulawesi literature that will be employed for as long as the sun and the moon

⁴ Lacking a more appropriate term I use the term 'work' here in a general sense, and not in the more restricted one as defined by Macknight (1984) for Bugis literary products other than the *Sureq Galigo*.

shine' (Mangemba 1956:59). The acts and deeds of the protagonists are exemplary and present people with explanations and guidelines for behavior. The Bugis anthropologist Mattulada (1993:44) calls the *Sureq Galigo* 'a reference book dealing with the social and cultural background of South Sulawesi people'. And as such it can be regarded as what Havelock called a 'tribal encyclopedia' that 'provided a massive repository of useful knowledge, a sort of encyclopedia of ethics, politics, history and technology' (Havelock 1963:27).

Before further elaborating on the picture of Bugis society as it emerges from the *La Galigo* texts, it is necessary to present a short introduction to the work. While I have been talking about 'the' *La Galigo* there is no such concrete object to be found. In fact it consists of a scattered collection of manuscripts and oral stories, which all share the same characteristics that distinguish them from other literary genres: they are composed in an elaborate, flowery language (usually called Old Bugis), with an abundant use of formulas, parallelisms, and a strict pentasyllabic meter.⁵ Furthermore they all confine themselves to the adventures of protagonists who belong to the first six generations of human beings on earth, all descendants of the gods in the Upper- and Underworld. The extant manuscripts usually contain one, two or three episodes, and vary in length from about ten to many hundreds of pages.⁶ In a 'complete' form it would constitute one of the longest literary works in the world: approximately one and a half times the length of the Indian *Mahabharata*. The whole work is known under different titles: *Sureq Galigo*, *Bicaranna Sawérigading*, *Bicaranna Opunna Wareq*, *Lontaraq La Galigo*, *Sureq Selléang*. Each episode bears its own title, although these are usually not mentioned in the manuscripts. Most people who own manuscripts do not possess more than one or two episodes (of the approximately 40 to 50). Different manuscripts containing the same episode show considerable variation. Although in general the story lines are in concordance, there is an enormous difference in wording, detail, and length of the texts.

Despite the fact that nowhere is a complete version of the *La Galigo* to be found, it still seems justifiable to treat it as one work. Bugis themselves obviously conceive of it as a unity, of which the individual episodes are the constituent parts. And although most probably no one has ever had an opportunity to read, or hear, it from beginning to end, the oral recitations provide people with a more or less detailed outline of the whole, in which each episode can be situated (see also Pelras 1979:282, 1996:32-3). The catalogues of the European and Ujungpandang collections of *La Galigo* manuscripts

⁵ See for these aspects of the *La Galigo* Koolhof 1992, 1994a; Sirk 1986.

⁶ An exception is ms. NBG 188 in Leiden University Library, which is a 12-volume, 2851-page manuscript, written at the request of B.F. Matthes during the second half of the 19th century. It is estimated to contain approximately one-third of the whole work (see Salim et al. 1995).

compiled by R.A. Kern (1939, 1954, 1961) also demonstrate that the contents of the various episodes are firmly interconnected. The homogeneity of the extant manuscripts is remarkable, and the various episodes, as Kern remarks, 'fit like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle' (Kern 1954:iv). The family relationship of the protagonists in their hundreds is consistent throughout, and for most episodes the chronology is fairly easy to determine. Furthermore, the *La Galigo* has a clear beginning and ending: it begins with the descent of the first human being (*mula tau*) who is to populate the earth and concludes with the return of his descendants, the first generations of humans, to the realm of the gods, leaving the earth empty again.

The main hero of the *La Galigo* is Sawérigading, Batara Guru's grandson, who after having traveled to various parts of the universe following the return to his native country Luwuq falls in love with his twin sister, Wé Tenriabéng. The impossibility of this love forces him to leave Luwuq, and not to return there until the very end of the story. Cina, the kingdom ruled by his maternal aunt and her husband, is the place where he will spend most of his years, and where he finds his predestined bride: Wé Cudaiq, a princess of Cina, identical in appearance to his twin sister. She is also the mother of Sawérigading's son I La Galigo, who travels from Cina to various other places in the world. After returning to Luwuq with his wife, Sawérigading and his ship sink to the bottom of the sea, and the couple become the rulers of the Underworld. Shortly afterwards all humans on earth are called back to the Upper- and Underworlds, except for one couple who are to stay and rule over the kingdom of Luwuq.

Mention is often made of the fact that manuscripts containing episodes of the *La Galigo* are considered sacred and are therefore treated with the utmost respect. Manuscripts can only be opened and read after incense had been burned.⁷ Mattulada, a Bugis anthropologist, even refuses to classify the *La Galigo* under the label *lontaraq*, because

the *sureq galigo* is considered to possess sacred and religious values according to a part of the Bugis people. Because of that view of its sacredness (considered not to be created by humans), we deliberately do not place it on one line with the above mentioned *lontaraq* which unquestionably were created by human beings. (Mattulada 1985:19.)

Although, considering the subject of the texts, this attitude to the *La Galigo* is not very surprising, it does not seem to be the case generally. Certain groups, like the Tolotang Benteng in Amparita, or individuals consider *La Galigo* manuscripts sacred. Some people still remember that their parents or grandparents would burn incense before taking a manuscript and reading it.

⁷ See for example Fachruddin AE 1983:21-3; Tol 1990:10; Pelras 1996:32.

In most cases this concerned a manuscript containing the first episode, in which the creation of the world is narrated. It does not seem to have been very different in the nineteenth century. Matthes, who went through a lot of effort to collect as many *La Galigo* manuscripts as possible, mentions only once that people living in the village of Amparita 'ascribe a supernatural force to these writings' (Matthes 1943:180). The fact that he explicitly mentions this attitude towards *La Galigo* manuscripts (and undertook his trip to that village specifically for that reason) points to such an attitude being exceptional even in his day.

La Galigo as a cultural encyclopedia

Let us now return to the observation that *La Galigo*'s portrays exemplary cultural behavior and records knowledge concerning the ancestral world with its rules and customs. We will take a further look into what knowledge is transmitted by it and how.

Besides telling how and why the first human being came into existence, the *La Galigo* also describes how the narrow, vertically organized universe of Upperworld, Middleworld and Underworld gradually expands horizontally to encompass the regions on the earth known to the Bugis. Initially centered on Luwuq, the country where Batara Guru descended from heaven, the protagonists' journeys to other lands introduce the audience to an ever-expanding world. While Batara Guru traveled only in a vertical direction to the realms of Upper- and Underworld, his son Batara Lattuq sets sail for Tompoq Tikkaq, 'Land of the rising sun', to meet his bride. Along the way he introduces other countries he passes through. Sawérigading, Batara Guru's grandson, continues the expansion of the world by to even more regions, as does his son I La Galigo. In this way the *La Galigo* provides its audience with a picture of the world, of which the Bugis country is only a part. No description, however, is given of most of these countries: the protagonists merely pass by – eventually marrying one of the princesses – and continue their journey. The main message seems to be that the Bugis domains – Luwuq, Cina, Tompoq Tikkaq, and Wéwang Nriuq – are part of a larger world, a world which sometimes intrudes into the land of the Bugis, and at which the heroes can direct their heroic journeys and deeds.⁸

It is against this background that the actions of the characters take place and are described in detail, thereby explaining to the audience how various customs came into being. For example, in the first episode, *Mula tau*, 'the first human being', or *Riuloqna Batara Guru*, 'Batara Guru's descending', – by far

⁸ See for the concept of space and its role in the *La Galigo* Koolhof 1994b.

the most popular and well-known – it is told how rice originated from the body of Wé Oddang Nriuq, Batara Guru's daughter with one of his concubines, who died seven days after her birth. Her father buries her body in the hills and three days later, when he visits the gravesite Batara Guru discovers to his astonishment that the hills are covered with a kind of grass of various colors. He ascends to the Upperworld to ask his father, Patotoqé, what the meaning of this all is and receives the following answer:

Ia na ritu anaq riaseng Sangiang Serri,
 anaqmu ritu mancaji asé.
 Nonnoq mua no ri Alé Lino, Batara Guru,
 lé muala i mupaénréq ri langkanaé.
 Lé ajaq sana muajjelleq i,
 Naia sana ritu mujelleq lé wettengngé, lé bataqé,
 mempeq tinio tudang ri Kawaq. (Salim et al. 1995:180.)

That child is named Sangiang Serri,
 your child has become rice.
 Just descend to earth, Batara Guru,
 take it, and bring it into your palace.
 Do not, however, eat it,
 just eat wheat and corn,
 to keep your spirit alive during your stay in the world.

And if this short explanation from Patotoqé that the rice in fact is his granddaughter is not enough for people to understand that they should treat it with the utmost respect, in another episode the disastrous consequences of a lack of respect are described. When the ruling couple of Tompoq Tikkaq, Wé Pada Uleng and La Urung Mpesi, want to perform one of the rites of passage for their daughters, they prepare food for a huge amount of guests. However, no one shows up, and in an angry mood La Urung Mpesi throws away the cooked rice and other dishes. When that news reaches Patotoqé he declares:

Taro ni matuq tapaléléi roppo
 lipué ri Tompoq Tikkaq,
 tapadengi wi lé aratiga bannapatinna
 La Urung Mpesi, Wé Pada Uleng sipangkaukeng. (Salim et al. 1995:390.)

We will destroy
 the country of Tompoq Tikkaq,
 we will take the breath
 of La Urung Mpesi, Wé Pada Uleng, and their fellow-leaders.

Three months later he sends some of his servants to the earth to make his words come true:

Tenreq sirupa pakkaroddana To Palanroé.
 Naléléi ni roppo lipué
 ri Tompoq Tikkaq lé sipaliliq.
 Tellao polé pattaungenna to mallipué,
 mancaji batu sia lamé,
 jaji atobang lé bataqé,
 lé jaji lappu-lappui sia lé bettengngé,
 mancaji padang-padang ngi sia Sangiang Serri,
 ripoada ni mempeq tinio téa mua ni lao polé. (Salim et al. 1995:390-2.)

Manifold were the plagues of To Palanroé [Patotoqé].
 destroying the country of Tompoq Tikkaq
 and all of its surroundings.
 The country men's harvest did not succeed,
 potatoes turned into stones,
 corn turned into reed,
 millet turned into grass,
 Sangiang Serri became yet another kind of grass,
 none of the crops flourished.

Some time after this, after another insult of the gods, Patotoqé strikes Wé Pada Ulung and La Urung Mpepsi with a serious disease from which they both die. A strong reminder for the audience to present Sangiang Serri with the respect she deserves.⁹

While these – in La Galigo terms relatively short – sections relating to the rice goddess Sangiang Serri are quite well-known among the people, they differ from other important subjects treated in the *La Galigo*, of which those of love, marriage and its regulations stand out as ubiquitous. Mattulada has defined the central theme of the *La Galigo* as 'the social structure of the community and the power that regulates it' (Mattulada 1978:129). And it is precisely in the rituals on the occasion of marriages that the social and power structures of Bugis society are articulated, both in the texts of the *La Galigo* and in Bugis daily life. Weddings are the most important of life cycle rituals, and excellent events to (re)define and display social relationships between individuals and groups (Millar 1989; Acciaioli 1989:223-4). And this has been the case for centuries if we may extend Nicholas Gervaise's late seventeenth-century description of the Makasar people to their close kin the Bugis:

There are no People more cautious than the Macasarians in the Marriages which they contract, nor that solemnize 'em with more Pomp and Ceremony; as believing it to be the most Important Act of civil Life, and the most Sacred of their Religion. (Gervaise 1971:103.)

⁹ Rice is generally treated with respect by the Bugis, for example, some people always wear a *songkok* while eating, while it is generally forbidden to carry rice from the attic to the kitchen without wearing a shirt. Of course rice is never thrown away. See Pelras 1974.

Stories centring on the marriage of one of the characters make up a large portion of the existing episodes. Already in very beginning of the first episode, before Patotoqué can let his son Batara Guru descend to earth, efforts have to be made to find a suitable marriage partner to accompany him – and thus provide the gods with offspring – during his life in the Middleworld. This marriage is the first in a long series of descriptions of weddings and their preparations, of which the most important is that of the *La Galigo*'s hero Sawérigading. He grows up in the palace in Luwuq, separated from his twin sister Wé Tenriabéng, of whose existence his parents keep him unaware. On one of his journeys he is informed by a cousin that he has a twin sister who lives in a separated half of the palace in Luwuq. Some time after his return Sawérigading climbs the roof beams of the palace, sees his sister and immediately falls passionately in love with her. Of course this incestual love is strictly prohibited, and despite his efforts he is unable to convince his parents (and his sister) to allow him to marry Wé Tenriabéng, his mother telling him:

Risapā siparukkusenngédé
 taué lé massélingéreng.
 Apaḡ pajaneng mulingérang ngi solang tanamu.
 Peppeq i matti tomaégamu,
 naléléi wi roppo lipué.
 Mau sipolo tikkā taué, sikédé nyiliq,
 tempeḡding to siparukkuseng massélingéreng,
 apaḡ labū i matti lipué,
 napopo reppaḡ tenreḡ mammuti
 ttudang riLino lé tomaéga nalurenngé. (Fachruddin AE 1983:386-8.)

It is forbidden to become a couple
 for people who are siblings.
 Obviously you would call down disaster upon your country.
 The people will die,
 the country destroyed.
 Be it for half a day, an eyeblink,
 siblings cannot become a couple,
 because the country will submerge,
 it will be ruined
 none of the people in the world will be saved.

Sawérigading replies:

Taro i maté tomaégaé,
 taro i peppeq paqbanuaé,
 naé rékkua jaji mua ni nawa-nawakku,
 tongeng mua ni lé manasakku. (Fachruddin AE 1983:388.)

Let the people die,
 let the villagers be exterminated,
 as long as my wish comes true,
 my hopes are fulfilled.

After many more explanations by other people, and even by his own twin sister, Sawérigading is convinced that he has to satisfy himself with another wife. He, of course, is not the only one to be convinced; the audience also should realize the dangers of such behavior. And they do. As an old woman from Luwu explained to Shelly Errington: 'Sawerigading and Tenri Abeng were not allowed to marry, and therefore we may not. If they had been permitted, we could, too.' (Errington 1989:266.) Up till the present day the birth of a *dinrulaweng*, 'lit. golden twin, a twin of both sexes',¹⁰ is considered inauspicious. To prevent the undesirable consequences some villagers come to the house of Petta Ballasari, daughter of one of the last rulers in Wajo, to sell one of the children to her symbolically. Usually an amount of less than half a dollar is paid to the parents. If then one of the children is sold, in a sense they are not siblings anymore, and thus the danger of an incestuous relationship is avoided.¹¹ How important this is can be seen once more from Sawérigading's case. Although a long-term, officially sanctioned relationship between him and his sister is not established – and no mention is made of short, but physically intimate contacts – the context makes clear that something went fundamentally wrong. Sawérigading leaves Luwuq behind to find himself another spouse overseas in Cina. For this journey the term

¹⁰ According to Matthes (1874:395) *dinrulaweng* is derived from *dinru malaweg* 'adulterous twins'.

¹¹ An interesting parallel is found in the life of the third president of the Republic of Indonesia, B.J. (Rudy) Habibie – who was born and raised in South Sulawesi – when one time in his childhood he was suffering from a severe illness:

'During the time of their evacuation in 1942, Rudy fell seriously ill. At that time Rudy's father was close to his subordinate officer, the assistant agricultural expert in Barru, A. Haruna Daeng Rombo. He asked the latter to introduce him to the local King, Raja Bau Djondjo Kalimullah Karaengta Lembang Parang Arung Barru, whom he wanted to ask for help in curing his ailing son Rudy. The Raja then gave some holy water, in which he had read some sacred formulas. And with Allah's help, Rudy recovered.

The Buginese believe that a son who closely resembled his father would bring bad luck, either the father would die, or the son must succumb. If the son wanted to survive he had to be abandoned. In contrast, a daughter who looked like her father was believed to bring good luck.

As Rudy closely resembled his father, according to Buginese-Macassaran belief, the son had to be sold symbolically. And so Rudy was "bought" by the Raja of Barru (the King of Barru), who gave a "keris" (dagger) in barter for the boy. Then Rudy was formally adopted by the Raja, and was given the nobility title "Andi". So Prof. Habibie is entitled to carry the title Andi, because Bau Djondjo, Rudy's fosterfather, was a son of the King of Gowa, Mahmud Karaeng Baroanging.' (Makka 1996:27-8.)

ripaliq is used, meaning 'to be expelled (drifting on a raft of banana trunks) after committing incest' (Matthes 1874:870). His sister ascends to the Upperworld, and is thus effectively dead. Both sanctions are explicitly mentioned as the proper punishments for committing incest (Matthes 1885:182-3; Mattulada 1985:202). That the relationship between Sawérigading and Wé Tenriabéng apparently went too far is furthermore seen in one of the following episodes in which I La Galigo, Sawérigading's son, travels to Luwuq. Upon his arrival he is told that the land is barren and that the harvests were destroyed by fire since his father left the country (Kern 1939:395). After I La Galigo's visit to Luwuq the curse on the country of Luwuq is lifted. However, in the village of Cerekang – the area where according to tradition the palace of Sawérigading once stood – the villagers believe up till the present day that their region's relative poverty is to be blamed on the incestuous affair that took place between Sawérigading and his twin sister in La Galigo times.

Following these events Sawérigading has to leave his native country Luwuq, to find himself another wife overseas. With the help of his sister the giant sacred tree Wélenréng is felled, and transformed into a fleet of ships that will bring him to Cina. A widely known episode of the *Sureq Galigo*, 'The felling of the Wélenréng tree', was mentioned to me more than once as the source for environmental awareness. The respect shown in the text for the sacred tree and its inhabitants should extend to all the products of nature until the present day.

Sawérigading then arrives in Cina, after a journey during which he had to fight seven enemies at sea. During the first three months there he pretends to be on a trading mission. On this occasion the customs regarding trade in a foreign country are explained: the ruler has primary rights to buy at favorable prices (*mabbaluq sala*, 'wrong trading'), and only afterwards the common people can make their choice and buy (*mabbaluq samaq*, 'common trading') (Kern 1939:224-5). After that period Sawérigading sends the birds he brought with him to the Cina palace, to observe if Wé Cudaiq really looks like his sister as described. As could be expected, this is the case. We are then told quite extensively how Sawérigading acts to catch a glimpse of her himself, and how his servants visit the palace to propose to Wé Cudaiq's family, an occasion at which the customs that govern marriage proposals are described in detail.

The examples given above (on attitudes towards rice and incest) are primarily aimed at behavior that should be avoided in order to uphold the social order and prevent the country from being stricken by disaster. In the description of Sawérigading's marriage proposal desirable behavior is stressed. The importance of establishing the right bride price, the assessment of the proper descent of both marriage partners, and the fixing of an auspicious day for the wedding are all described at length. Besides an overall pic-

ture of the subsequent phases of the wedding preparations, in some instances detailed information on certain matters is provided. So we learn, for example, how the bride price is divided if upon meeting each other, one or both of the partners do refuse to marry. In this case this is of special interest because at first Wé Cudaiq refuses to accept Sawérigading as her husband and part of the bride price has to be returned.

This episode of Sawérigading's marriage and the activities surrounding it certainly can be regarded of central importance to the *La Galigo*. It is the most important because it concerns the hero of the story, but not only that. It also depicts the most significant activity in a person's lifetime, both in the mythical world of the *La Galigo* and in Bugis daily life: his or her marriage. And a considerable number of episodes contain elaborate descriptions of weddings. Sometimes they are almost exact representations of what happens in Sawérigading's case: the love between a twin brother and sister, followed by a journey overseas to find another partner. For example, Sawérigading's cousin Wé Tenrirawé falls in love with her twin brother and leaves her country Tompoq Tikkaq to marry in Wadeng. However, in its roughly 300,000 lines the *La Galigo* treats much more than only weddings: extensive descriptions of rituals surrounding rites of passage (as Matthes already noted), wars at sea, at land and in the realms of the gods, cock fights, seduction attempts, and the building of palaces and ships all find a place. The audience present at recitations of *La Galigo* episodes – although most likely not understanding every single word of it – must have enjoyed the detailed descriptions of actions and adventures, while at the same time realizing once more how excellent the ways of the ancestors were. And how important it was to emulate them.

Besides presenting the audience with samples of exemplary behavior the Sureq Galigo also could be used as a source of information for purely practical purposes, almost as a manual. As someone said after reading a manuscript containing an episode in which the birth of a child is extensively described, 'one could become a *sanro* (midwife) after reading this'. Already being a *sanro* herself she added that the manuscript contained many mantras which she would certainly use in her future activities. The noble lady mentioned above who had to organize a wedding for her niece also searched for information on traditional wedding ceremonies in *La Galigo* manuscripts in the course of her preparations (although I do not know if she ultimately made use of it).

Sometimes the story offers an explanation for certain incidents or situations. I already mentioned above the explanation given by the people of Cerekang for the relative poverty of their area. In Wajo the fact that in the space of a few weeks' time two ferries sank and a large number of Wajorese died in these accidents was explained with reference to the *La Galigo*. Since

the huge ship on which Sawérigading and his wife I Wé Cudaiq sailed sank in the middle of the sea, Bugis are especially vulnerable to a similar fate.

Indonesian government institutions, like the Department for Education and Culture, also turn to the *La Galigo*, among other works, in search of traditional values and knowledge. In many of their publications on traditional literature chapters are found on 'cultural values' to be met with in the manuscripts that are relevant to the development of the nation. One of these books, for example, mentions religious, economic, scientific, artistic, and community values, all of them subdivided into various subjects (seafaring, handicrafts, flora and fauna, agriculture, trade, etcetera) (Fauziah and Hafid 1997-1998:117-37; see also Pertiwi et al. 1998).

The growth of the La Galigo

The *La Galigo* as we know it certainly 'provided a massive repository of useful knowledge' as I have stated earlier, citing Havelock. However, one wonders why it ever expanded into such a massive amount of words, spread over a massive amount of manuscripts? Northrop Frye argues in his *The Great Code* (1982) that every society owns a large body of stories, of which some

have a peculiar significance: they are the stories that tell a society what is important for it to know, whether about its gods, its history, its laws, or its class structure. These stories may be called myths. (Frye 1982:32-3.)

According to him myths have a tendency 'to expand into a mythology, and mythology has an encyclopedic quality about it: it tends to cover all the essential concerns of its society' (Frye 1982:51). This certainly seems to be the case for the *La Galigo*, but Frye's formulation still cannot explain completely its growth to such an extreme length. Maybe, even on the contrary, since it concerns the 'essential' concerns of a society, one would expect such an encyclopedia to focus on these essential matters and leave out the less important ones.

Despite the fact that no exact dating for the composition of the *La Galigo* can be established, it is certain that something like it existed long before Islam had an impact on South Sulawesi societies: the almost complete lack of Arabic (and European) loanwords in the literary language used in the *La Galigo* demonstrates this.¹² The subjects treated also point to a pre-Islamic

¹² Various dates have been suggested: Fachruddin AE (1983:31) and Pelras (1996:56) suggest that *La Galigo* first began to take shape in an oral form around the middle of the fourteenth century; Nyompa (1992:29) suggests a date similar to that of the Old Javanese Ramayana, the ninth or tenth century. The manuscripts extant today are no older than approximately two centuries,

origin of the work. It seems likely that the *La Galigo* began to take form in a period when writing was unknown in South Sulawesi, and thus was initially composed and transmitted orally. And although it existed in written form for hundreds of years, until recently it could still be regarded as fluid as an oral tradition: the enormous variation in wording and length between manuscripts that contain the same episode, its performances and the formulaic style all point in that direction. Macknight (1993:29) suggests the term 'writing composer' for the producers of manuscripts; specialists who like a storyteller composing his or her story during performance, compose their story while writing, making use of the traditional composition techniques such as formulas and parallelisms. A tradition as fluid as this certainly would have no trouble in integrating new 'essential concerns of society' without doing away with the old. In the long period during which the *La Galigo* was formed Bugis society underwent many important changes, be it in the agricultural, political or religious spheres. And these sometimes fundamental changes had to find a place in the myth.

An example of such a change and its treatment in the *La Galigo* is the story of the origin of rice I have cited above. It is highly probable that this was composed later as a reaction to a change of circumstances. Rice and agriculture do not play an important role in the rest of the *La Galigo*, and in historical reality only became significant after the rise of the Bugis kingdoms, around the 14th century (see Macknight 1983). The story as we find it in the texts of the *La Galigo* does not seem to fit very well in the rest of the narrative, and many other stories about the origin of rice – partly linked to the *La Galigo*, but definitely not belonging to it – exist. Another new phenomenon is the burial and death of Batara Guru's daughter, and of the ruling couple of Tompoq Tikkaq. Very few characters in the *La Galigo* die permanently, and none of them is ever buried. This reflects the fact that the Bugis cremated their dead until the acceptance of Islam in the early seventeenth century (Pelras 1996:29). So most probably this new way of disposing of the dead was important enough to give it its own place in the 'myth'.

The introduction of Islam in the Bugis lands during the first half of the seventeenth century of course gave rise to fundamental changes both in daily life and in religious thinking. The principles of Islam were obviously fundamentally different from the religious viewpoints presented in the *La Galigo*. So while the earlier changes I mentioned were reason to insert a story in the first and second episodes of the *La Galigo*, the conversion to Islam brought about an extra story at the end of the work. Although not mentioned by Matthes or Kern in their catalogues there exist a considerable number of

and the majority of them are no older than 100-150 years. The oldest dateable *La Galigo* manuscript is kept in the Stads- of Atheneumbibliotheek, Deventer, and was obtained in 1784.

manuscripts that describe how Sawérigading after having descended to the Underworld became the ruler over that realm. He then predicts that as soon he has finished writing the *Kitaq Porokani* (Al-Furqan = the Quran) he will travel to Labuq Tikkaq, 'the land of the setting sun', and land there together with his five servants. He will have undergone a metamorphosis and the people will not recognize him, but they must accept his teachings, laid down in the *Kitaq Porokani*. Although his name is not mentioned it is clear that Sawérigading foretells his reincarnation as the prophet Muhammad, and in fact 'sanctions' the conversion of 'his' people to Islam. As in the case of the rice stories, many other stories about Sawérigading, Muhammad and the coming of Islam in South Sulawesi exist, mostly in an oral form.

Another episode, not mentioned in either Kern's or Matthes' catalogues, is that of I La Déwata's marriage with I Wé Attaweq.¹³ During the wedding ceremonies they are invited to utter Arabic prayers: this episode is known as *Doa-doa I Attaweq*, 'The prayers of I Attaweq'. According to some this event announces the real beginning of Islam among the Bugis.

If the introduction of Islam caused essential changes in Bugis society, so did the coming of the Dutch. But the changes the Europeans brought were probably not as fundamental to Bugis thinking as those caused by the acceptance of Islam. This lesser influence is demonstrated by the fact that the Dutch, as far as I know, were not really 'incorporated' into the corpus of *La Galigo* manuscripts. But there exists an oral tradition that explains their origins and presents them with a position in the Bugis 'myth'. And although people assured me that manuscripts containing this story existed, no one was able to provide one. The story goes as follows:

Sawérigading undertakes a trip to the realm of the spirits to meet his deceased fiancée Wellé ri Cina. He wants to marry her but that is impossible since she is already dead. After staying with her sometime, Sawérigading wants to return to the earth, and take her with him, which is also impossible. Wellé ri Cina, who has become pregnant in the meantime, accompanies Sawérigading to the border between the realms of the dead and the living. Shortly before arriving there she gives birth to a child. Since that child is born from an already deceased mother it has 'glassy eyes' and a pale skin. This 'ancestor of the Dutch' was then pulled to the earth by the people thereby holding his (or her) nose. And that is the reason why the Dutch have sharp noses.¹⁴

¹³ In his 1954 catalogue Kern mentions a manuscript containing 'a bad imitation of La Galigo stories' in which I La Déwata plays a role and 'Arabic formulas are scattered around', but which he discards as 'not belonging to the La Galigo cycle' (Kern 1954:263-4). Manuscripts containing this episode can be found in the microfilm collection of the Arsip Nasional in Ujungpandang (for example, Rol 21/20, 41/4, 41/8, 47/4, 48/1), as well as in the Perpustakaan Nasional in Jakarta (NB 27a, NB 27b, NB 27c; see Behrend 1998:297-8).

¹⁴ This story was told to me in June 1996 in the village of Cerekang, Luwu. There exist *La*

These stories, and probably other episodes of the *La Galigo*, that find their origin in an adaptation to changing circumstances, can account for part of its massive growth, but certainly not for all of it. Another reason could be that 'an encyclopedic myth or great story, the powerful result of the combinatorial game, is bound to be retold' (Derks 1994:594). And, as Will Derks pointed out regarding the entirely orally transmitted Malay story *Panglimo Awang*, retelling does not mean an exact repetition of any earlier told version. Despite the relative fixity of a 'myth', the story 'only needs a kind of "torso" to be recognizable and acceptable as *Panglimo Awang*' (Derks 1994:591-5). As long as that 'torso' is retained the composer of the story can freely use his skills within the framework of the tradition to add, lengthen, delete, change, or shorten certain portions of the story. While in the case of *Panglimo Awang* this takes place around an individually defined 'torso' (that of the hero Panglimo Awang's marriage), it seems that the 'torso' in the *La Galigo* can be defined much more broadly, namely "'anyone's" marriage'. And although strictly spoken the replacing of the protagonists by others turns a story into another one, it would still be recognized as belonging to 'the' story, the *La Galigo*.

It is tempting to ascribe these differences between the Malay *Panglimo Awang* tradition, which is entirely orally transmitted, and the *La Galigo* to the fact that the latter was written down. Since the burden of remembrance was not completely dependent on the human brain with its limitations, composers and storytellers were free to add whatever episode they wanted, without being at risk of forgetting others. While this definitely could have played a role, it probably is not the only or even the most important reason.¹⁵ In the first place human memory can handle much more than we usually assume: the Kirghiz epic *Manas* appears to be longer than the *La Galigo* and is entirely transmitted orally (Shoolbraid 1975:41-2). Secondly, even though it was written, no one ever seems to have had access to all existing episodes belonging to the *La Galigo*. And of course it also would have been perfectly possible to have the various episodes scattered over the memories of many storytellers. Just as there is no one manuscript containing the complete story in detail, it would not have been necessary either to have one storyteller's memory contain it.

Galigo episodes in which Sawérigading visits the realm of the dead to meet Wellé ri Cina; however, no mention is made of her becoming pregnant (see Kern 1939:143-52; 1954:40-3).

¹⁵ . It seems likely, however, that writing or writing materials had some influence on the length of *La Galigo* texts, although probably not on the total number of episodes. Kern (1939: 583) remarks about a manuscript written on *lontar* leaves that 'the language does not differ from that in other *La Galigo* manuscripts' but that 'the redaction is short'. A comparison of the few extant *lontar* manuscripts with versions of the same episodes written on paper – which undoubtedly made much more room available for writing – could shed more light on this question.

Another possible reason for the growth of the *La Galigo* is related to the sacredness of certain characters playing a role in it and the taboos surrounding them. Next to the gods, with Patotoqé as the most important, their direct descendants like Batara Guru and Sawérigading were (and sometimes still are) also considered holy by certain individuals or groups. Some people are only allowed to speak about Sawérigading and his grandfather when their names are preceded by the honorific *puatta*, 'our lord'. Mentioning their names and knowing their descent can be dangerous to an individual, as I have illustrated earlier. In kabupaten Wajo people in general are inclined not to mention Sawérigading by his name, but rather by one of his titles, *Opunna Wareq*, 'Lord of Wareq'. In the area south of Sengkang, the capital of Wajo, where the kingdom of Cina was supposed to have been situated in La Galigo times, there even exists a complete taboo on mentioning the name Sawérigading. People either use one of his titles, or call him Sawérisompa. In Tempe, now part of the town of Sengkang, such a taboo rests on mentioning the name of I Monno, who marries I La Galigo after he has successfully ousted her husband. Standing on the top of a hill in Tempe she watches her husband sail away, and that place is still marked because nothing will ever grow there.¹⁶ The people of Tempe call I Monno by one of her other names, *Wé Tenrigangka*.¹⁷ Instead of performing stories that, either because of their protagonists, or because of the actions depicted, could be hazardous to the audience, it seems to have been more convenient to build another context around the 'torso' where other, less dangerous characters played the principal role.

Transmission of the tradition

According to some the author or composer of the *Sureq Galigo* was Sawérigading's son I La Galigo himself.¹⁸ Others, for example some of my informants in Amparita, doubt this, since someone with such a 'naughty' character would almost certainly be incapable of composing such an outstanding work of literature. Moreover, it seems extremely unlikely that its composition should be ascribed to only one 'author' or 'composer', be it I La Galigo or someone else. It is not my intention here to investigate the origins of the *La Galigo* but merely to shed some light on its transmission and spread among the Bugis. Or in other words, who were 'I La Galigo's' successors?

In many publications the *La Galigo* is supposed to be a tradition mainly

¹⁶ This place was a sacred site until the early 1980s. Many people came there to present offerings to the gods, and ask for their health and well-being. Now a telecommunication transmitter has been built at that spot.

¹⁷ For the story of I Monno see Kern 1954:76-104.

¹⁸ See Raffles 1817:clxxxviii; Mangemba 1956:58; Pelras 1975:247; Nyompa 1992:31-2.

confined to the courts, and within these specifically to women of the highest nobility. Some of these were of such pure descent as to be unable to find an equally pure-blooded spouse, so they remained single and spent their time with writing and studying manuscripts, especially those that belong to the *La Galigo*.¹⁹ Although certainly noble women living at the various courts did actively engage in the study of the *La Galigo* – for example Matthes' main informant, Arung Pancana Toa from Tanété, or Opu Senga from Luwuq, who is mentioned by Errington (1989) – it seems unlikely that they were the only or even the most important agents in maintaining the tradition. If it is accepted that the *La Galigo* is a kind of social or tribal encyclopedia, containing knowledge important to all members of society, this would challenge the idea that the tradition was restricted to court circles. The social and cultural as well as religious knowledge it contains was as important to the members of the courts as to the rest of the population, be it only to convince the latter that their rulers were of heavenly descent and as such predestined to be the rulers of the country.

That the tradition indeed was much more widespread is confirmed by the fact that a large number of manuscripts are found among common villagers in South Sulawesi.²⁰ Most *passureq*, the performers who read the manuscripts before an audience, are also not members of, or very close to, the courts. This is not too surprising if it is realized that performances take place on occasions of building a new house, births, weddings, or the beginning of the planting season: occasions more likely than not to take place in the villages than at the courts.

Concluding remarks

The *La Galigo* occupies a special place among the total corpus of Bugis literature, both written and oral. On the one hand it stands out as the most 'literary', in the sense of belles-lettres, because of its beautiful language, its meter and its performances. On the other hand it is the most encompassing, encyclopedic work regarding the knowledge important to Bugis society. Although many other Bugis texts may contain more detailed knowledge on a specific subject these are always restricted to one or a few fields of knowledge: genealogies, historiographical works like the chronicles of the various

¹⁹ See for example Kern 1939:2, 11; 1961:364; Matthes 1943:183-4; Brawn 1993:69; Macknight 1993:31-3; Fachruddin AE 1983:22-3.

²⁰ My own experience in tracing down manuscripts is that many of the *La Galigo* manuscripts were in the hands of villagers belonging to all social strata. The catalogue of the Proyek Pelestarian Naskah, which mentions the provenance of the manuscripts that were microfilmed, also shows that a large portion of the *La Galigo* manuscripts belong to common people.

kingdoms, medical or religious treatises, and collections of sayings of wise men, to mention only a few. These can be classified as manuals of importance to certain individuals, groups or regions, or as notebooks in which the owner records those things that are of personal interest to him or her. Only the *La Galigo* was of central concern to all members of society, despite the fact it almost exclusively describes and recounts the adventures of the highest nobility, and the common men and women seldom play a role in it. It provided the society with the necessary knowledge to function adequately and was the binding factor among its members. The ancestors depicted in it provided the exemplary behavior and way of thinking to be mirrored by their descendants. But the reverse was also true: the fluidity of the tradition made it possible for the ancestors to mirror their descendants. Every important change in circumstances could be integrated in the encyclopedia, thus assuring the Bugis that the way they lived was in accordance with the way of the ancestors. A system of 'continuous revision' which the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* only began to apply after its fourteenth edition in 1929.

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