

Preface

Sue O'Connor, David Bulbeck and Juliet Mayer

Sulawesi has a unique place in the archaeology of Island Southeast Asia (ISEA). During the Pleistocene, when lower sea levels created a continuous land mass from Sumatra to Borneo, Sulawesi remained isolated by sea, but its long coastline, rich ecology and proximity to Borneo made it a promising destination for colonists and an ideal way station for onward seaborne travel to the east. When sea levels rose during the Holocene, producing the current geographical configuration of ISEA, Sulawesi's central location placed it at the crossroads of the maritime migrations that spread new languages and technological skills across this island realm. Numerous Sulawesi communities began to convert to Islam and Christianity in the 17th century, but even in the 20th century European explorers ventured upon remote communities who practised ancestor worship unaffected by influences from world religions. These attributes of Sulawesi inspired the successful application by Sue O'Connor, Jack Fenner, Janelle Stevenson and Ben Marwick for an Australian Research Council Discovery Grant ('The archaeology of Sulawesi: A strategic island for understanding modern human colonization and interactions across our region', ARC DP110101357), with the aim of documenting cultural change in Sulawesi within the parameters of local and regional environmental change.

The first step was to consult the Makassar Archaeology Office whose jurisdiction for archaeological research included the location earmarked for the project's fieldwork. Muh. Husni, the then director of the Makassar Archaeology Office, and project personnel subsequently met with National Research Centre for Archaeology staff in Jakarta to establish a formal agreement for implementing the project. Site survey, excavation and analysis proceeded with the participation of numerous archaeologists from the Makassar Archaeology Office, the National Research Centre for Archaeology and The Australian National University, as well as the project's nominated investigators. In keeping with the project's aim, and related advances in archaeological research on Sulawesi, the occasion seemed opportune to stage a symposium on current knowledge on Sulawesi's archaeology. Accordingly, between 31 January and 3 February 2016, under the joint auspices of the ARC project and the Makassar Archaeology Office, the symposium 'The Archaeology of Sulawesi – An Update' was held in Makassar.

As described in the chapter by Irfan Mahmud, who was promoted to directorship of the Makassar Archaeology Office in late 2015, 30 papers were presented at the symposium with a geographical coverage that extended from the Talud Islands at the far north of Sulawesi to Muna Island, which lies off Sulawesi's southeastern arm. Not all of the presented papers were subsequently prepared for inclusion in this volume, in some cases because their content was published in journal articles shortly before or after the symposium. This volume's chapters nonetheless provide a taste of current archaeological research in Sulawesi, including contributions by Indonesian researchers (translated from the original Indonesian) that may not otherwise reach an international audience. The chapters also include two site reports on the archaeology of the Walandawe District, in Southeast Sulawesi, where the ARC project focused its fieldwork.

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