Sacred places in Ussu and Cerekang, South Sulawesi, Indonesia: Their history, ecology and pre-Islamic relation with the Bugis kingdom of Luwuq

David Bulbeck, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

Introduction

This contribution describes and analyses the sacred places in the environs of the ‘land where the gods descended’ (Reid 1990)—the twin villages of Ussu and Cerekang in East Luwu, South Sulawesi. Ussu and Cerekang were the focus of several months of fieldwork for the ‘Origin of Complex Society in South Sulawesi’ (OXIS) project undertaken by anthropologists, archaeologists and historians (Darmawan et al 1999; Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000; Fadillah and Sumantri 2000). OXIS project members documented the setting and vegetation of the Ussu and Cerekang sacred places, archaeological sites and landscape use in their vicinity, and local understanding of how these places related to stories in the cycle of epic Bugis poetry known as La Galigo. The information additionally allows an empirical assessment of the widespread belief (Andaya 1981:17–19; Pelras 1996, 2006) that the sacred places of Ussu and Cerekang encapsulate the origins of the Bugis kingdom of Luwuq during the ‘Age of La Galigo’ at the dawn of South Sulawesi’s history.

Braam Morris (1889) was the first to publish the theory that the La Galigo stories reflect the beginnings of Luwu as South Sulawesi’s original kingdom approximately a thousand years ago. The theory married two older widespread concepts — the Bugis tradition of a primordial Age of La Galigo, and Luwu’s reputation as the oldest South Sulawesi kingdom — concepts respectively established by the late seventeenth and the eighteenth century (Macknight 1993:26; Caldwell 1998). The theory is, however, absent from South Sulawesi’s early historical texts which stem from works composed after the circa fourteenth century development of the Bugis script. For instance, the ‘King List of Luwuq’, represented in 18 known Bugis texts, commences with the archetypal rulers Simpurusia, Anakaji and Wé Mattengngaémpong (Caldwell 1998), who Braam Morris treated as Luwuq’s earliest rulers post the Age of La Galigo. Detailed claims on early Luwu abound but in the guise of oral traditions. For instance, stories summarised by Darmawan et al (1999:vi; Darmawan 2000) place Luwuq’s tenth to thirteenth century origins at Ussu, prior

1 Please note this article’s use of English transcriptions of Bugis pronunciations for terms that refer to Bugis personages and political entities, and bahasa Indonesia spellings for place names. For instance, Luwuq finishes with a glottal stop (represented by a ‘q’) when the Bugis kingdom is referred to, but Luwu is the official Indonesian spelling for the three present-day regencies (Luwu, north Luwu and east Luwu) that fell within Luwuq’s domain of authority at the time it was incorporated within the Dutch colonial administration.
to shifting to Mancapai (southeast Sulawesi) during the fourteenth century reign of Anakaji, and to Noling (south of Palopo city) and Malangke in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries respectively (see Figure 1).

The present-day inhabitants of Ussu and Cerekang are Muslims, as are most Bugis following the conversion of South Sulawesi’s ruling families to Islam in the early seventeenth century. However, the mystical beliefs of the Tossuq (’Ussu people’, Pelras 1996:59) based in Cerekang differ sharply from the tenets of orthodox Islam. Tossuq adepts believe that their sacred places...
are the abode of their deified ancestors, and if they die in Cerekang they too will be deified and 
rejoin their ancestors in the world of *La Galigo* (Daeng M. pers. comm. 1998). The *La Galigo* 
heroes continue to administer Luwuq from its hidden centre in *Manurung* (‘descended from the 
sky’) in Cerekang, which pairs with Ussu—an ancient Luwuq’s visible centre (Caldwell 1993). These 
beliefs of the Tossuq mystics are contested in Wotu, which lies a short distance to the west (Figure 
1). According to Wotu tradition, the Cerekang inhabitants moved there from Wotu, bringing 
with them stories that reflect the true occurrence of the *La Galigo* events in Wotu (Darmawan *et 
al.* 1999:25–27). Be that as it may, there is a qualitative difference between Wotu, with just two 
*La Galigo*-associated sites, both accessible to the general public (Darmawan *et al.* 1999:32–33; 
Fadillah 2000), and the rich landscape in Ussu and Cerekang of *La Galigo*-associated places 
closed to unauthorised entry.

![Figure 2: Archaeological sites and sacred places in Ussu and Cerekang in the context of local land use.](source)

Source: Adapted from Bakosurtanal 1992; Gunawan 2005: Gambar 2; OXIS field notes 1997 and 1998.
The heritage significance of the Ussu and Cerekang sacred places has been recognised by South Sulawesi’s historical conservation authority, Suaka Peninggalan Sejarah dan Purbakala Sulawesi Selatan, which has appointed a Cerekang resident to act as official custodian of these places. As will become clear in due course, from the point of view of historical heritage conservation, the main value of the Ussu and Cerekang sacred places would be their enclosure of late pre-Islamic and transitional Islamic sites in untouchable condition—untouchable even to archaeologists. The Ussu and Cerekang sacred places have additional heritage value as the material representation of the Tossuq understanding of their ancestry, an example of the widespread belief in Southeast Asia of the continuing power of the past transported into the present (Byrne 2011). In addition, according to Darmawan and Dirawan (2003), prohibitions against the exploitation of these places’ natural resources exemplify the role of traditional beliefs and knowledge in conserving local natural heritage and ensuring sustainable development. The Cerekang residents rely on their forested landscape for a wide variety of natural resources, including sago, fruits and forest medicines, timber and nipa palm thatch, and fish and prawns from the tidal stretches of the Cerekang River (Gunawan 2005).

Sacred sites at Cerekang

Cerekang village lies east of the bridge on the Palopo-Malili highway over the upper tidal reaches of the Cerekang River. The Cerekang drains south into the Malili Bay at the head of the Gulf of Bone, running past belts of mangroves and nipa palms recognised by the East Luwu government as forest reserve (Figure 2). A government census of Manurung county (Cerekang) in 2003 counted 567 families, of which 430 had a primary economic reliance on gardening and 104 on fishing, while 110 included family members who were skilled in nipa thatch work. Cerekang accounts for a significant proportion of South Sulawesi’s nipa thatch production (Gunawan 2005).

Cerekang village was established in its present location in the 1930s when the Dutch colonial government built a highway through Luwu between Palopo and Malili. Prior to the 1930s Cerekang was situated further downstream, in the vicinity of the Poloe site with its evidence of seventeenth to nineteenth century habitation (Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000:41). The Cerekang sacred places are strung along both sides of the Cerekang River.

Bukit Pinsemoni

Bukit Pinsemoni is a low ridge with two peaks to the north of the Palopo-Malili highway immediately east of where it crosses the Cerekang River (Figure 2). According to Tossuq tradition this is the place where Batara Guru, the world’s first human, descended from the skies, and it is also where the gods have their palace. Cerekang adepts additionally believe that an invisible mosque on the hillside marks the Waemami spring whose pure water derives from Mecca, although this claim is disputed in Ussu (field notes 13/6/1998; Darmawan et al 1999:36,38,64–65). Details of this oral tradition recorded by Pelras (1996:58–59) are slightly different: Batara Guru had descended at the Waemami stream before building his palace that used to stand on the Pinsemoni hilltop (the Waemami stream referred to here is different from the Waemami stream, approximately 2 km to the east, where a transmigrant settlement called Atue has been established, and which passes through fishponds where it enters the Ussu River—field notes 1/8/1998, 3/8/1998). Batara Guru features in the origin story in the La Galigo cycle, whose other stories commemorate the acts of the five generations of his descendants. According to the La Galigo stories, when the god of the upper world, Daeng Patotoé, heard that the middle world was completely empty, he sent down his eldest son, Batara Guru, to populate it (Koolhof 2003).
Bukit Pinsemoni is barred from entry except to adepts of the highest degree, and the trees in the surrounding sacred forest may not be felled (Pelras 1996:59). According to informants in Ussu, this is to prevent looting of the antiques likely to lie there or any other disturbance to this place believed to be the ancient centre of Luwuq (Darmawan et al. 1999:64–65). Notwithstanding the place's secrecy, the present writer was allowed to traverse Bukit Pinsemoni on 2/1/1995. My impression that the forest there was secondary was confirmed by Geoff Hope's opinion (viewed from Cerekang) on 10/2/1999. I had been advised to expect to see megaliths at the hilltop's ritual centre, which is named Wé Mattengngaémpong (the same name as the third, female archetypal ruler in the 'King List of Luwuq'), but saw only three rocks, which appeared natural but were of a comfortable height for sitting on. These rocks lay at a clearing free of leaf litter, where, according to Anthon Andi Pangerang (pers. comm. 1995), an iron cylinder set in a tree should also have been visible.

The leaf-free clearing is indicative of continuing human attention, which is not unreasonable given that Tossuq adepts of high degree are permitted entry. Reports of artefacts suggest occupation in the past, and the secondary nature of the forest points to human utilisation in days gone by. As Caldwell (1994) noted, Bukit Pinsemoni would have had advantages as the palace centre of a trading kingdom. It occupies a naturally defensive position at a point along the Cerekang River with an anchorage depth of five to seven metres and navigable access downstream to the sea. Whether Bukit Pinsemoni played any role in Luwuq's history, and what that role may have been, cannot be ascertained owing to the extreme sanctity that surrounds the hill. While this state of affairs is unfortunate from the point of view of historical documentation, it may well be ideal from the perspective of heritage conservation, depending on the exact nature of what lies on Bukit Pinsemoni.

**Ennungnge**

Ennungnge is a sago swamp and buffer zone near the east bank of the Cerekang River immediately south of the Palopo-Malili highway (Figure 2). According to Geoff Hope (pers. comm. 1999), the buffer zone contains weedy secondary regrowth that could have sprung up as recently as the 1930s, when the Cerekang residents moved to their present location. In Cerekang, Ennungnge is known as the first garden, the place where Luwu's two main subsistence crops, rice and sago, were first cultivated. Reportedly, cultivation ceased there because the area dried up, and nowadays cultivation (or entry of any kind) is forbidden. The area dried up because it is the place where the sun rises, which accounts for its additional name of Tompoqtikka ('land of the rising sun') (Darmawan et al. 1999:37–38). Tompoqtikka features in the La Galigo stories as a contemporary of Luwuq, for instance, as the country where a son of Batara Guru, Batara Lattuq, obtained his bride (Koolhof 2003).

The OXIS archaeologists carried out excavation and survey along the levee of the Cerekang River abutting Ennungnge. The main excavation, at Katue, revealed evidence of a village involved in iron smelting and maritime trade during the first millennium CE (Bulbeck 2010). The upper deposits at Katue, along with surface finds in the vicinity, reflect the use of this area for gardening and light habitation spanning the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, as confirmed by local accounts (Bulbeck 2003). The other excavated site was Poloe which, as mentioned above, revealed traces of seventeenth to nineteenth century habitation.

The archaeological evidence points to a hiatus in occupation in the area of Ennungnge between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries. Probably, Ennungnge continued to be cultivated during the second occupation phase, between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, prior to the relocation of the residents to present-day Cerekang in the 1930s (Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000:41).
Beroe (Lengkong Malaulu)

Beroe lies inside a sharp bend of the Cerekang River on its west bank (Figure 2). It is reportedly a former village near an old graveyard, in Indonesian called To Berani (‘the brave’; Figure 3), where La Massagoni, the war leader of Sawérigading, lies buried (field notes 15/7/1998). Sawérigading, a grandson of Batara Guru, is the Bugis archetypal culture hero and the main character in the La Galigo stories. Darmawan et al heard different accounts of the same place, whose name they recorded as Lengkong Malaulu (‘bend at Malaulu’). According to these stories, Lengkong Malaulu hosts a bustling village beneath the river, and it was here that Sawérigading slipped into the Underworld to be with Batara Lattuq. The numerous crocodiles that can be seen around here are residents of the underwater village, who transform back into humans when they submerge. Cerekang people who pass by Lengkong Malaulu are forbidden to tarry here, damage the vegetation or pluck the leaves (Darmawan et al 1999: 39–40). As noted by Gunawan (2005), the Cerekang residents believe that crocodiles are of human descent, and stage an annual crocodile worship ceremony.

Figure 3: To Berani forest, photographed from the Cerekang River on 17 June 1998.

Source: David Bulbeck.

Additional information that the author recorded on 15/7/1998 was that the To Berani graveyard had been reportedly looted for antiques. On 31/7/1998 Daeng M. accompanied me to the foreshore of Beroe, which is an area of mangroves and nipa palms flooded at high tide. The sacred area behind it, where collection of timber is forbidden, appeared to me to contain secondary forest with a dispersed canopy. My question on what sort of burials lay here elicited the response that the Cerekang people were now required by Islamic custom to inter the deceased in wooden coffins and so they no longer use balubu (‘large ceramic jars’). This response evokes the pre-Islamic Bugis practice of burying the cremated remains of the deceased in large ceramic jars (Druce et al 2005) but need not imply great antiquity; the main find at Poloe was a seventeenth to eighteenth century balubu placed on the ground above a nineteenth century occupation deposit (Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000:41). In summary, Beroe may have been a former village but there is no reason to assume habitation prior to the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.
Welenrengnge (Mangkutta)

Welenrengnge (Mangkutta) is a low ridge vegetated with tall, creeper-cloaked trees around half a kilometre northeast of Beroe (Figure 2; Figure 4). Cerekang people believe this to be the place where the giant Wélenréng tree, which stood on the peak of Bukit Kemmengnge in Positana ('centre of the land'), was cut down. When Batara Lattuq and his people tried to fell the tree, first they were attacked by birds, land animals and children of the gods which were defending the tree, and then they found that their iron axe could not cut through the trunk. Wé Tenriabéng (see below) explained that the tree could be felled only with a gold axe wielded by an aristocrat. When this was done, the falling tree sliced through Bulu Poloe ('broken mountain') on the north side of Malili, and the splinters were scattered to the sea. The Mangkutta people rode the splinters and thus became the Bajau sea people who avoid staying on land (Darmawan et al. 1999:40–41). The South Sulawesi Bajau, for their part, profess origin stories that resemble the Cerekang story in their elements but differ in how the elements link together (see Liebner 1998). Some of the Bajau stories are closer than the Cerekang story to the famous La Galigo episode in which Sawérigading felled the sacred Wélenréng tree with the help of his twin sister Wé Tenriabéng. In this episode, the tree then transformed into the fleet of ships which brought Sawérigading to Cina in Wajo (Figure 1) where he married Wé Cudaiq, the princess of Cina (Fachruddin 1999; Koolhof 2003:21).

![Figure 4: Welenrengnge forested ridge, photographed from Mangkulili on 17 November 1997.](source: David Bulbeck)

In 1997, OXIS archaeologists were escorted to Welenrengnge, identified as the place where Sawérigading had felled the sacred Wélenréng tree. We were shown two locations along the southern margin, Mangkulili 1 and 2, where local farmers had reported coming upon earthenware sherdage during their gardening activities (Bulbeck and Prasetyo 1998). Because our surface survey did not encounter any definite habitation debris, and because the sites were never revisited for excavation, the implications of the sites for early habitation in the vicinity of Mangkutta, let alone on the ridge itself, are unknown.
Tomba (Sangiang Seri)

Sangiang Seri is located within an expanse of rain-fed rice fields on the west bank of the Cerekang River where it traverses north of the Palopo-Malili highway (Figure 2; Figure 5). In *La Galigo* (Koolhof 2003:16), the rice goddess Sangiang Seri is the granddaughter of Batara Guru, who turned into rice plants where she was buried following her death seven days after she was born. Another *La Galigo* story, designed to convince its audience of the respect that rice deserves, relates how all the crops (including Sangiang Seri) turned into inedible substances after the ruling couple of Tompoqtkikka threw out the rice they had cooked for a feast that no-one attended (Koolhof 2003:17).

![Figure 5: Sangiang Seri gallery forest, photographed on 17 November 1997. Source: David Bulbeck.](image1)

The Sangiang Seri site was reportedly looted in 1974 or 1975. When the residents discovered what was happening, a mob armed with bush knives chased the looters out of town. There are vague reports of *balubu* and plates having been looted, but what the residents were actually able to see was the traces left by the looters – holes to a depth of 80 cm. When OXIS archaeologists visited the site on 16/11/1997, the looted area of around 4 m diameter had the appearance of raised earth features, some of which had looter’s holes, as well as signs of general disturbance. Archaeological excavation of the site was ruled out because of its sacred nature. However, Sangiang Seri is the most likely example of a circa fifteenth to sixteenth century cemetery burial ground encountered by the OXIS team in the Cerekang area.

Turungang Damar (‘place where dammar is brought down’)

Darmawan *et al* (1999:38) recorded *Turungang Damar* as a sacred site because it was the place where Daeng Patotoé brought down the first dammar tree seeds, whence they were transported across Luwu. However, as noted by Caldwell (1993) and Bulbeck and Prasetyo (1998), it is also a small port on the upper Cerekang River used for loading dammar on to small prahus for cartage downriver (Figure 2). The OXIS team was given the go-ahead for whatever activities we wanted to undertake there, and so a team conducted a survey and excavated two test pits in 1998. In fact the field workers found a place to stay in a hut built as the first stage of a planned transmigrant settlement for *Turungang Damar*.

Excavation revealed a shallow habitation deposit with abundant charcoal, dammar and pottery, as well as stone artefacts and modern glass. Surface survey recovered imported ceramic sherds that may date only to the seventeenth century and later. A charcoal sample from the base of the habitation deposit dates at two sigma to between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries (Bulbeck 2003:17).
and Caldwell 2000:41). Accordingly, the use of *Tirangang Damar* as a transhipment point for dammar collected from the hinterland can be securely dated back to the seventeenth century but not necessarily any earlier.

**Sacred sites at Ussu**

The village of Ussu lies on the Palopo-Malili highway approximately halfway between Cerekang and Malili. The stream that courses past the village, known as the Ussu River, runs through forest and clearings before joining the main branch of the Ussu River which runs past protected mangrove forest into Malili Bay (Figure 2). Ussu is locally reputed to have been an ancient port, and there is archaeological evidence for continuous habitation at the village of Ussu since at least the sixteenth century (Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000:42), in contrast to the twentieth century relocation of the Cerekang inhabitants to their current location. In addition, the Ussu inhabitants are more orthodox in their practice of Islam than the Cerekang Tossuq, and a mosque and Islamic graves can be found in the vicinity of the village, whereas these visible markers of devotion to Islam are conspicuously absent from Cerekang. According to Pelras (1996:59), the damascene iron used in making *pamor luwuq* krisses during Majapahit and later times is specifically referred to across Luwu as *bessi Tossuq* (‘iron of the Ussu people’), and according to information told to OXIS the Ussu kris used to be handmade by the gods but not at any particular location (field notes 17/11/1997).

**Tamalippa**

Tamalippa extends for several kilometres along the Ussu River northeast of Ussu (Figure 2), although not all this area is sacred. Its other name is Tompoqtikka which, as noted above, was supposedly a contemporary of early Luwuq whose name means ‘land of the rising sun’. Ussu residents believe that this was the place where Batara Guru brought rice down from the skies to feed them, and also where sago first appeared prior to becoming the most important foodstuff for the Luwu populace. Because of its holy connotations, Ussu people choose to be buried within the vicinity of Tamalippa. Rowdy behaviour is forbidden, as is collection of timber or leaves, and the water in the streams is applied to the head and face when wishing a departing person a safe journey. The clumps of bamboo along the border of Tamalippa may be used only for making burial containers for the deceased (Darmawan *et al* 1999:61–62).

OXIS archaeologists surveyed several burial sites within or abutting Tamalippa. One site is the Ussu Islamic cemetery, which lies downslope from a forested plateau. Survey on 2/1/1995 noted over 100 graves of modern appearance and Chinese Qing ceramics postdating the seventeenth century. Our attention was drawn back to the site after we viewed six fourteenth to seventeenth century Chinese and Vietnamese wares reportedly encountered when a hole was dug for a grave, and heard that the scrub immediately north of the cemetery was often looted for antiques (field notes 8/6/1998, 10/6/1998). We excavated two test pits in this scrub area but encountered only sparse, modern remains. Closer to the Ussu River is the Tamalippa Islamic graveyard, inspected on 2/1/1995 before the OXIS team members realised it was sacred-secret. From the visible remnants the ten (or more) graves appeared to date back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and we did not record signs of looting. A third Islamic burial spot holds the commemorated graves of Opu Nenena Cimpaq, who was the Ussu headman at the time of the Dutch colonial administration (i.e. early twentieth century), and his companion. There are no restrictions on visiting the graves as such but to reach it visitors are required to remove their shoes when walking through Tandula, which is a sacred part of Tamalippa (field notes 17/11/1997). A fourth grave site, higher up the Ussu River, is the abandoned Mahkoda Islamic graveyard (*mahkoda* may refer to a ship’s captain, which is *nakhoda* in Indonesian). The remnants were still visible of approximately ten graves and these appeared to be of nineteenth century antiquity (field notes 5/8/1998).
The Mahkoda graveyard abuts Manu Manue, an area recently cleared for a garden by a man who had built a field house there. Survey and three test pits into the shallow habitation deposit yielded earthenware pottery, four stone artefacts, a pearl, and basal charcoal with a radiocarbon date at two sigma between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries (Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000:42). On the other side of the Ussu River, on the border of Tamalippa, lies Taipa, another area known as an old village. Survey and excavation proved it to be a small twentieth century settlement, perhaps a single household, with a child’s grave (Islamic) on its periphery (field notes 9/6/1998). Across the river from the Tamalippa graveyard is the sacred location of Keramat Tompoqtkkka where the Luwu rulers were reportedly installed in order to establish their authority in Ussu. OXIS team members were permitted to make a brief survey here and recorded ironstone lumps, earthenware pottery and a Qing Chinese sherd (field notes 13/6/1998). As a further indication of the recency of the disuse of Tamalippa as a habitation cum gardening area, Geoff Hope (pers. comm. 1999) noted that the secondary forest in the sacred area (viewed near the Ussu Islamic cemetery) need be no older than 50 years, and that Tamalippa’s large trees could have been left standing when the surrounding forest was cleared.

Accordingly, Tamalippa’s present land use (or rather, sparsity of land use) may date from the 1930s when the Palopo-Malili highway was built. Transport access may have encouraged a concentration of the residents in Ussu which, as noted previously, has remained occupied since at least the sixteenth century. The small dispersed graveyards in the vicinity, which include an eighteenth century example in Ussu itself (field notes 13/6/1998), were abandoned as the Ussu Islamic cemetery became a central burial place, apparently involving the reuse of a circa fourteenth to seventeenth century pre-Islamic burial ground. Whether any places in Tamalippa were sacred-secret prior to the 1930s would be a matter of speculation.

Bulu Bajo (Bukila)
Bulu Bajo (‘Bajau Peak’) is a steep peak on the north margin of the Palopo-Malili highway. The trees in the forest there are forbidden to be logged. The story given above for Welenrengnge is repeated by the Ussu people in connection with this place, to the point where the falling tree cut through Bulu Poloe. However, the story ending that results in the origins of the Bajau is different. In this Ussu version of the story, when the Wélenréng tree fell, numerous eggs from the tree fell at Bulu Bajo, which created a flood that inundated the peak and washed the inhabitants away to become the Bajau sea people (Darmawan et al. 1999:62–63). This event aligns the Ussu story with the majority of South Sulawesi Bajau origin myths, which trace the dispersal of the Bajau to the flood caused by the eggs falling from the Wélenréng tree (Liebner 1998:123). Reportedly, Bajau people still regularly visit the site (field notes 5/8/1998), as corroborated by the frequent reference to Ussu or Cerekang in Bajau origin stories (Liebner 1998).

The author was escorted along a ridge through secondary forest to the peak on 5/8/1998. On the peak was a cemented conglomerate structure which (according to information from the village head) appears to have been built by the Dutch colonial administration. Two earthenware sherds were observed on the path leading up to the ridge. The site inspection is consistent with the oral accounts of low levels of visitation to this place until the present.

Bola Merajae
Bola Merajae (‘great house’) is a forested expanse that falls within the precincts of Malaulu, which is the village between Ussu and Malili. Geoff Hope (pers. comm. 1999) advised that the forest would be at least a century old although there may have been some more recent felling of its largest trees. Depending on how large Bola Merajae is, it may impinge on the adjacent forest area reserved by the East Luwu government for limited uses (Figure 2). Bola Merajae is
sacred to the Cerekang people as the palace of Wé Tenriabéng, Sawérigading’s twin sister, and her beautiful ladies-in-waiting. The palace had a hundred halls and attractive decorations all around it. The palace’s perimeter was protected from all invaders by troops bearing krisses, spears and swords made of bessi Tossuq decorated with a supernatural pamor of exceptional potency. In addition, according to informants in Ussu, during the time of the Darul Islam insurgency in the Lwu region (1952–1965), a group of outsiders entered Bola Merajae and encountered lots of earthenware sherds and Chinese antiques, indicating that this used to be a population centre (Darmawan et al 1999:60–61).

Figure 6: Bola Merajae sacred forest where the Malaulu stream exits.

Source: David Bulbeck.

OXIS members were not granted permission to enter the site but were allowed to excavate a site on the Malaulu stream where it leaves the forest reserve (Figure 6). The two test pits yielded five radiocarbon dates and an earthenware pottery sequence spanning the period between approximately 2,000 and 300 years ago. Approximately half of the earthenware in the middle of the sequence, which would date to around the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, consisted of a peculiar kind of ware, with frequent textile impressions internally, labelled ‘soft pottery’ (Bulbeck 2003). Similar pottery, apparently made locally rather than brought from Bola Merajae, makes up around ten percent of the fifteenth to sixteenth century earthenware in Malangke and Pinanto to the west; soft pottery sherds also occur as a rare component in fifteenth to seventeenth century contexts at Katue and Poloe, near Malili and as far north as Lake Matano. Although the Bola Merajae soft pottery hardly qualifies as a palatial production, it would appear that this area was the source of the potters whose distinctive wares enjoyed considerable popularity in late pre-Islamic Lwu (Bulbeck 2009).

On 9/8/1998 a local landowner accompanied the author along the Malaulu stream to where it enters the Ussu River. The landowner stated this place was the former port of Cina, which evokes
the Cina in Wajo renowned in the *La Galigo* stories, although in the landowner’s opinion the Cina referred to here was Hong Kong. (This identification of ‘Cina’ with Chinese homelands, rather than Cina in Wajo, is also common in those places in Central Sulawesi where immigrant Bugis have introduced Sawérigading stories—see Nourse 1998; Basri and Siojang 2003). The Islamic graves and pottery (earthenware and imported) seen during the survey all appeared to be of nineteenth to twentieth century age, as did the brass crockery and iron spear which the landowner showed me as goods he had inherited from his forebears.

**Discussion**

The sacred sites of Ussu and Cerekang have a significance that extends well beyond these two villages. As noted above, when a new ruler of Luwuq came to power, Tamalippa was on the list of places where the ruler’s installation was to be re-enacted as part of the legitimisation of rulership over all the territories of Luwuq. In addition, the holy water from Pinsemoni is sold commercially by the bottle for its purifying qualities, and was used in 1998 to soothe an ethnic conflict that had erupted in the Baebunta area (Darmawan *et al* 1999:38–39). Ussu and Cerekang have considerable importance in several of the origin myths of the Bajau dispersed across South Sulawesi (Liebner 1998). Cerekang’s reputation as the place where the gods descended and Sawérigading performed his legendary feats extends not just across Luwu but throughout South Sulawesi’s Bugis lands (Andaya 1981:17).

The mystique of Ussu and Cerekang derives from the widespread belief in the great antiquity of the events recounted in the *La Galigo* stories. This is not a belief ascribed to by the Tossuq adepts themselves, since they do not embrace a linear concept of time that would make them place the *La Galigo* events before or after anything else along a chronological scale. To be sure, there were places where pivotal events in the past first happened, but these are also the places where the *La Galigo* gods — the ancestors of the Tossuq — still haunt the landscape and watch over affairs in Luwu. Tossuq adepts are aware that there was a Dutch colonial period and the present-day Cerekang village was relocated during this period, but for them the Cerekang residents of that time now dwell with the other gods in Cerekang’s sacred places. I do not know if anyone has ever asked a Tossuq mystic whether the location of the Ussu and Cerekang sacred sites is a product of the resettlement of the population following the construction of the Palopo–Malili highway, but I suspect that a question of this nature would be either answered in the negative or simply not understood.

This is, however, an important consideration for interested parties who do have a linear concept of time, particularly scholars (following Braam Morris 1889) who intellectualise the Ussu and Cerekang traditions into a log of claims on Luwuq’s origins at the dawn of South Sulawesi history. As noted above, the cessation of gardening in Ennungnge and the light utilisation of Tamalippa can be dated to around the time when the Palopo-Malili highway was built, as may also be the case with the abandonment of Beroe. A longer time may have elapsed since gardening or tree felling ceased at Bukit Pinsemoni, Bola Merajae, Welenrengnge or Bukila, but there is nothing to indicate old forest cover at any of these places. Of course, protective reservation of these places in recent centuries would be compatible with a scenario in which Ussu and/or Cerekang had hosted the birthplace of Luwuq. However, the archaeological evidence would be incompatible with such a scenario (Figure 7). The OXIS archaeologists looked hard for pre-1600 sites in Ussu and Cerekang, but could find only a weak signal for the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries (by general Luwu standards), and nothing at all for 1000–1300, the so-called Age of *La Galigo*. 
Figure 7: Chronological data from Luwu sites.

Source: Taken from Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000, except ‘Swatow’ wares dated to 1600–1700 rather than 1550–1700.
Luwu’s best archaeological evidence corresponding to the Age of *La Galigo* comes from Lake Matano (Figure 1), where the radiocarbon dates document continuous occupation from around 500 CE onwards (Figure 7). These dates reflect an evolving technology in roasting and smelting the local iron ore to produce the famed *pamor luwuq*. However, the lack of archaeological evidence at coastal Luwu sites between 1000 and 1200 CE suggests that the processed iron was traded northward, through Luwu-Banggai, during this period (Bulbeck 2010:158). Ceramic evidence from Tambu-Tambu in Wotu (no radiocarbon dates are available) points to the establishment of Wotu as a coastal trading station by the thirteenth century (Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000:52), but Wotu was a non-Bugis competitor rather than a predecessor of early Luwu (Fadillah 2000). Ceramic imports to Wotu continued to rise throughout the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, although not as markedly as Malangke. Malangke accounts for the great majority of the late pre-Islamic ‘rest of Luwu’ ceramic count (the number of identifiable tradewares, each represented either by a complete vessel, multiple sherds matched to the same vessel, or a single unmatched sherd) in Figure 7.

There is no oral tradition in support of Malangke as Luwuq’s pre-Islamic capital, but the supporting archaeological evidence is overwhelming. Relying primarily on oral sources, Darmawan (2000) did accept a sixteenth century shift of the Luwuq capital to Malangke, but this was based on the hard evidence at Malangke of the commemorated grave of Datu Pattimang Matinroé ri Wareq, the Luwuq king who in 1603 became the first South Sulawesi ruler to embrace Islam. Survey by OXIS at the Malangke site of Tampung Jawa (= Javanese graves) revealed remains of a Javanese brick temple dated to the fourteenth or fifteenth century by the associated ceramics (Hakim 2000). Excavation by OXIS at ‘old Pattimang’ yielded slag and other debris from working iron – imported from the Luwu hinterland, no doubt including Lake Matano – and fragments of iron weapons. Comprehensive survey of Malangke’s looted burial grounds pointed to an increase in the population of residents from around 3,000 in the fourteenth century to 10,000 in the fifteenth century and 15,000 in the sixteenth century, prior to a precipitous decline to fewer than 1,000 in the seventeenth century (when Luwuq’s capital moved to Palopo, as is well documented historically). Thus, Luwuq would appear to have been based at Malangke by 1365, when its status as a significant polity was known to Majapahit Java (as mentioned in the *Desawarnana*—Robson 1995), but there is no credible evidence for pre-fourteenth century occupation at Malangke (Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000:73–77). If, as appears probable, Luwuq colonised the vacant Malangke estuary to exploit trading opportunities at the head of the Gulf of Bone, from where did the colonists come?

For the OXIS chief investigators, the answer to that question is Sengkang, on the upper Cenrana Valley. Early Luwuq’s sister kingdom was Cina, whose capital (Allangkanangnge ri Latanete) contained a substantial population based on rice production by c. 1300 (Bulbeck and Caldwell 2008). As explained by Bulbeck and Caldwell (2000:103–05), locating early Luwuq in the Cenrana Valley explains a number of puzzles in Bugis historical texts. These include the claim by both Luwuq and Cina to Simpurusia as their founding progenitor, the toponymic match between the Lompoq settlement reportedly founded by Simpurusia and Lompo in Sengkang, the inclusion of three places near Sengkang amongst Luwuq’s ancestral lands, and three reported royal marriages between Luwuq and Cina spanning the fourteenth century. From this perspective, Sauérigading’s fabled trip to Cina to marry Wé Cudaiq would count as a jaunt downriver to the neighbouring kingdom (as it were) rather than the epic voyage as commonly understood.

Two other points in support of Luwuq’s origin in the vicinity of Sengkang are worth noting. One is that there is considerable historical evidence for Luwuq’s late pre-Islamic expulsion (primarily at the hands of Wajoq) from the Cenrana Valley, but no accounts whatsoever of Luwuq’s intrusion into the valley (e.g. Pelras 1996). This suggests that no such intrusion ever occurred
because Luwuq originated there. The second is that knowledge of the La Galigo stories is generally shallow in present-day Luwu, especially in Ussu and Cerekang, where the Tossuq stories reveal an idiosyncratic understanding of the acts and social relationships of the La Galigo characters. In contrast, Bugis groups along the Cenrana combine their reverence for the La Galigo material with a deep knowledge of its canonical accounts, and one group, the Tolotang Benteng in Amparita just northwest of Sengkang, consider La Galigo manuscripts sacred (Koolhof 2003). To the degree that La Galigo had an association with early Luwuq, this association was apparently with Luwuq in the Cenrana Valley, and was brought to Luwu when Luwuq colonised Malangke.

The blending of La Galigo mythology with Luwuq’s early royal genealogy is evident in the Lontaraqna Simpurusia (‘writing concerning Simpurusia’) composed by at least the late seventeenth century (Caldwell 1988:26,34). This work presents three stories that greatly elaborate on the accounts of Luwuq’s three archetypal rulers contained in the ‘King List of Luwuq’. One of the stories’ main themes is to emplace these rulers in the La Galigo cosmology. For instance, Simpurusia presented himself to Daeng Patotoé before returning to earth to commence the Luwuq royal line, and his descendants and their spouses made successive journeys between the upper-world, middle-world and underworld. In addition, the Lontaraqna Simpurusia claims that Anakaji’s wife was descended from Majapahit royalty, and it mentions an array of characters whose names have coastal or riverine meanings, including Wé Mattenggaëmpong (‘in the middle of the waves’) who was also queen of the crocodiles (Caldwell 1988:33–47). The reference to Majapahit Java and connotations of an estuarine environment evidently associate the Lontaraqna Simpurusia with Malangke.

The above interpretation of the Lontaraqna Simpurusia would agree with Macknight’s proposal that the late pre-Islamic Bugis immigrants to Luwu lacked local origin mythology and so filled the lacuna through a local application of the La Galigo stories. The need to do this would have been particularly acute at Ussu and Cerekang, which are remote Bugis enclaves within a Mori-speaking area (Macknight 2004). Local adaptation of La Galigo lore is evident in such aspects as inserting the traditional Luwu staple of sago into the story on rice’s origins, and identifying the La Galigo ancestral figures with the Cerekang River crocodiles. Despite the relatively subdued documentation that could be obtained for the late pre-Islamic archaeology of Ussu and Cerekang (Figure 7), there is good reason to believe that these communities were involved in the transport of smelted iron from Lake Matano to Malangke, and the main places involved in this transport fall within the bounds of the Ussu and Cerekang sacred places (Bulbeck and Caldwell 2000). Following Malangke’s abandonment, the economic function of iron transport was lost, and memories of the trade merged with the La Galigo-based ancestor worship practised by the Tossuq. Nonetheless, the fourteenth to sixteenth century trade in iron probably formed the original core of the sacred places in the Cerekang landscape, the abodes of the ancestors to where adepts expect to return upon their own demise.

The Tossuq beliefs, which enliven the Tossuq landscape with mystic ancestral associations, are not unusual by the standards of the belief systems in many rural communities. For these communities, their surroundings resonate with cultural memories and the physical manifestation of social relationships (see contributions in Stewart and Strathern 2003). What may be remarkable is that other South Sulawesi Bugis communities do not try to place the founding events of the La Galigo within their own lands, even though they may match the Tossuq in honouring the La Galigo stories as the wisdom of the ancestors (Koolhof 2003). These points explain the temptation amongst scholars of South Sulawesi history to place the origins of Bugis ‘high culture’ in Ussu and Cerekang, and to believe this memory was retained with the spread of Bugis high culture, explaining why other Bugis groups do not claim specific La Galigo origins for their own community. The alternative interpretation of this state of affairs, consistent with the views...
of Caldwell, Macknight and the author, is that the ‘distancing’ of the *La Galigo* mythology – separated from historical times by an ‘age of anarchy’ (Macknight 1993) – removed it from the ownership of any single community and allowed it to flourish as an ‘encyclopaedia’ of Bugis cultural knowledge (Koolhof 1999). The concept of common origins would have assisted Bugis communities to unite into kingdoms and their kingdoms to forge alliances (of variable longevity), as amply documented historically (e.g. Andaya 1981; Caldwell 1988; Pelras 1996). From that perspective, the beliefs of the Tossuq in their specific *La Galigo* origins would reflect the isolation of the Tossuq from mainstream Bugis society rather than any primordial status of Ussu and Cerekang (Macknight 2004).

Scholars of South Sulawesi agree on accepting historical associations for the Ussu and Cerekang sacred places; the divergence in opinion is whether these associations date back to the early second millennium CE or a later time. Both perspectives would affront the Tossuq as reifying, in the past, what they view as the eternal present, although I suspect the Tossuq interpret the trickle of outsiders who enquire about their beliefs as confirmation of the veracity or at least the importance of their worldview. A more serious issue in terms of appropriation of Indigenous ‘knowledge’, a charge frequently laid against archaeology (e.g. Watkins 2000; Bruchac 2005; Nicholas 2005; Smith and Wobst 2005), may be the scholarly disagreement over the reality of the ‘Age of *La Galigo*’. The Bugis and other Indonesian scholars associated with the OXIS project (e.g. Darmawan 2000; Sumantri 2000; see also Nayati 2003) have retained the traditional view, which is regarded as a sign of being knowledgeable on Bugis history, that the Age of *La Galigo* hosted the incubation of Bugis high culture. It is the Westerners associated with the OXIS project (including Liebner 2003) who have shifted toward demoting the Age of *La Galigo* to the status of myth. Overt conflict however is largely avoided by the Indonesian and Western scholars addressing their publications to different audiences.

Indonesian and Western scholars would agree that the Ussu and Cerekang sacred places enclose historical and perhaps even prehistoric sites, potentially covering much or all of the Common Era. Changes to Tossuq attitudes, or a revision of which particular locations are sacred and secret, may allow detailed investigation in the future of these sites and their exact historical significance. Fortunately for heritage interests, Tossuq practices in safeguarding their sacred sites amount to ‘best practice’ in terms of heritage protection, minimising the potential for conflict between heritage professionals and local community interests (see Miura 2010; Byrne 2011). For the moment we can feel secure that the Tossuq community is protecting a selection of its ancestral dwellings from the looter’s spade and the developer’s hoe, which have inflicted so much damage on archaeological sites across South Sulawesi.

Evidence for an early twentieth century date for the protected status of at least some of the Ussu and Cerekang sacred sites, following the construction of the Palopo-Malili highway, suggests that the Tossuq may allow external events to change the associations they ascribe to any particular place. As became clear to me on numerous occasions during fieldwork, Tossuq adepts view their dream experiences as sources of mystic knowledge, and so there is the potential for them to literally dream up a reconfiguration of their sacred landscape. None of the Ussu and Cerekang sacred places, with the possible exception of part of Bola Merajae, lie within officially gazetted forest reserve (Figure 2). Further, Cerekang residents are divided on the issue of protection of their forests, as revealed by a survey of attitudes towards a government plan to appropriate community land along the lower Cerekang for fishpond development. Forty-seven percent of respondents opted for exploitation of their forests in any way that had an economic benefit, 29 percent preferred controlled exploitation, and just 24 percent elected blanket protection (Gunawan 2005). As noted previously, around 80 percent of Cerekang families have a primary economic dependence on gardening, which revealed itself during fieldwork in terms of the expansion of
cleared land near the Palopo-Malili highway. Prohibition of the exploitation of certain belts of secondary forest within this undulating terrain currently assists maintenance of ecological diversity of this zone most at risk to forest clearance. However, community desires for local economic development may find themselves reflected in the dreams of Tossuq leaders, permitting change in the sacred lore. Accordingly, the medium to long-term stability of the Tossuq sacred landscape in its currently documented form (Figure 2) would be a topic for future research.

**Conclusion**

The Tossuq sacred places of Ussu and Cerekang are an interesting case of local heritage beliefs that intersect with a celebrated history, that of Luwuq, reputedly the founder kingdom of South Sulawesi. The conventional scholarly approach has been to use these beliefs to write an ersatz protohistory of Luwuq’s origins in Ussu, as done for instance by Pelras (1996) and Darmawan (2000). The OXIS project uncovered archaeological and early textual evidence that would place Luwuq’s origins in the Cenrana Valley, well to the south of Luwu. This more critical perspective would imply that Ussu and Cerekang were second-hand recipients of La Galigo mythology, and so place the Tossuq beliefs in their correct historical perspective. This at least is the message taken away by Western scholars associated with the OXIS project, although to my knowledge none of the Indonesian scholars associated with OXIS have followed suit. Neither the Westerner nor the Indonesian perspective would deny the Tossuq the right to treat their sacred sites as they see fit, particularly when their conservation interests are aligned with those of heritage professionals. Tossuq prohibition of clearance and exploitation of their sacred forests also helps protect the ecological diversity of the undulating terrain near the Palopo-Malili highway in the Ussu and Cerekang area. However, the Tossuq beliefs that enhance cultural and ecological heritage preservation near Ussu and Cerekang may be susceptible to alteration or dilution, and their medium to long-term efficacy would be a matter for follow-up research.

**Acknowledgements**

I extend my gratitude to my fellow team members during the Ussu and Cerekang fieldwork, notably Ian Caldwell, Bagyo Prasetyo, Moh. Ali Fadillah, Iwan Sumantri, Tanwir Wolman and Budianto Hakim. I also thank Geoff Hope, Campbell Macknight and Doreen Bowdery for their advice on the Ussu and Cerekang sites during a short visit in 1999. Campbell Macknight and Peter Lape provided valuable comments on earlier versions of the text.

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Sacred places in Ussu and Cerekang, South Sulawesi, Indonesia


