



The Archaeology of Sulawesi: Current research on the Pleistocene to the Historic Period

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Book Review

The Archaeology of Sulawesi: Current research on the Pleistocene to the Historic Period

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The Indonesian island of Sulawesi has been a hot spot for new discoveries in archaeology in the past few years. It is the home of what is some of the earliest rock art in the world (Aubert et al. 2014) and one of the few places with evidence of early hominins east of the Pleistocene Sunda continent (van den Bergh et al. 2016). For later times, including the Neolithic, Metal Age, and early historic period, Sulawesi has an abundance of sites of critical importance for the history of the wider Asian region.

This volume gives what the editors accurately describe as a “taste” of archaeological and related paleoenvironmental research. The 20 chapters originated from a conference titled *The Archaeology of Sulawesi—an update* held in Makassar in early 2016. The chapters cover the main island of Sulawesi, as well as the offshore islands of Talaud and Manu, which are

quite distant from (though administratively part of) Sulawesi. Authors include both Indonesian and foreign scholars. Particularly useful for those who want an introduction and overview of the region are chapters by Mahmud, who provides a general overview of the archaeology of Sulawesi, Bulbeck, who covers the Holocene occupational history, and Tacon et al., who review rock art research.

Macknight's chapter on the history of the 1969 joint Australian-Indonesian archaeological survey in south Sulawesi provides insights into some of the first archaeological work on the island (both pre- and post-Indonesian independence in the mid-1940s), conducted by researchers who later went on to become prominent scholars and leaders in the field in both countries. This early work established focus on some sites that are still of intense interest today, such as the Maros caves and the Karama River sites like Kalumpang. This kind of history of research is rarely published, but critically important for understanding why and how the archaeological record looks the way it does. It would have been useful to have a companion chapter that brought that history

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forward in more detail, particularly from the Indonesian side, covering how and why, for example, Balai Arkeologi offices were established in Makassar and Manado, and the history of the establishment of the archaeology program at Universitas Hasanuddin.

Several chapters have an environmental focus. These include a detailed overview of vegetation and climate history around the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM), a period still relatively poorly understood in the tropics. Other chapters focus on faunal records, including vertebrate fauna from Gua Sambangoala (Fakhri), and fauna of the Talaud Island sites (murids by Louys et al., and general marine and terrestrial fauna by Ono et al.).

In addition to Tacon's overview of rock art mentioned above, three other chapters go into greater depth and/or make regional comparisons between the rock art of Sulawesi and that of the wider Southeast Asian region (chapters by Hays and van den Bergh, Oktaviana, and Hakim et al.). The remaining chapters provide site reports of a number of places on Sulawesi, either previously unreported in English, or with new data from previously published sites. These reports cover sites ranging in age from Pleistocene age to early Islamic

periods (sixteenth–eighteenth centuries CE in Sulawesi).

The Terra Australis series fills a critical niche in academic publishing, between the shorter length journal articles and increasingly rare book-length monographs. This Sulawesi volume is double blind peer reviewed, is well organized and edited, and includes very high quality color figures and clear maps. By some miracle, it is available as a free download from ANU press (<https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/series/terra-australis>), or one can purchase nice quality print versions for relatively reasonable prices. The *Archaeology of Sulawesi* is an excellent addition to the series and to our understanding of the archaeology of Southeast Asia.

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