

EVOLUTION OF THE BOAT IN THE PABBIRING ISLANDS

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Foreign and native types of boat have sailed the waters of the Spermonde Archipelago since the 15th Century, the period when the Kingdoms of Siang and Suppa flourished as entrepots for foreign trade. The diversity of boat types we perceive today is a result of their evolution since that time. We have observed rapid developments in relation to such boats over the last quarter of a century.

The Spermonde Archipelago refers to a group of 52 islands in the Makassar Strait. Of these, 37 islands are inhabited by about 35,000 people. The archipelago is situated on a shelf rich in reefs, shoals, and sandbanks. The depth of the shelf commonly ranges from 10 to 50 m, with extremes of 3 to 77 m. The islands occupy an area of about 37×37 nautical miles.

This study on boat evolution in the Spermonde Archipelago involves a literature study, interviews, and observations. The early stage of boat evolution has been examined through the literature, while recent developments in existing boats have been traced through oral stories and the memories of the inhabitants, miniature models, photographs, and observations of different stages of development coexisting at the same time.

The trading and fishing boats serving in the islands' armada from ancient times until the 1970s were the so called '*bugis perahu*' in the western literatures. These constituted the indigenous type of boat used by the natives of southwestern Sulawesi (known generally as Bugis) throughout the Indonesian seas. The 20th Century witnessed the peak of sailing ship evolution, with its last three decades showing rapid change, following the introduction of the engine. The introduction of the engine at the end of the 1970s brought about a major transformation of the hull, propulsion, and steering system and, ultimately, of the entire design.

These boats have evolved as the community has developed, and they continue to play a vital role in the community as changes are introduced that improve utility in terms of capacity, speed, strength and function, following the needs of each era. By studying the evolution of the boat in the Spermonde Archipelago, insight into the history of community development may be gained, given that the boat is considered an agent of development through trade, fisheries, and transportation.

Keywords: Boat evolution, Spermonde Archipelago, South Sulawesi