

# PATORANI OCCULTNESS, RELIGIOSITY, AND ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY TECHNOLOGY OF THE FLYING FISH HUNTERS

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**Abstract:** The term “Patorani” refers to a person who works to catch flying fish. This activity is still mostly done by fishermen in South Sulawesi. In the activity of catching flying fish, there are a number of things that work outside of human rationality wrapped with religious understanding by using simple technology that is environmentally friendly. Departing from that premise, this paper intends to reveal various occult and religiosity in catching flying fish. The method used to reveal patorani activity is ethnography through in-depth discussion with patorani fishermen. This research was conducted in Galesong sub district of Takalar regency. The results show that the world of fly fishing is full of mysticism and is influenced by the religious ideology of patorani. It is argued that it would be anachronistic if patorani fishermen practicing centuries old methods were seen as an act of "environmental destruction". The heart of the problem is not in catching the flying fish, but in its patorani culture (magic, religiosity, and technology) that keeps their activities in a controlled environment, a culture that is proven to be sustainable even though the blue revolution and world markets demand shakes it.

**Keywords:** Occultness; religiusitas; traditional technology of flying fish hunters

## 1. Introduction

Historical records demonstrate the presence of patorani fishermen in the Indonesian archipelago, especially in the Makassar Strait up to the Western and Northern territory of Australia since the 17th century. The type, size, and shape of the boat used have wide range and capability to sail in variety of marine conditions. From the 13th – 17th centuries maritime states in the Indonesian archipelago became one of the world trade centers and that link West Asia (Arab and India), East Asia (China), and Southeast Asia (Sriwijaya Kingdom). Chinese people allegedly drove the emergence of marine fisheries in the archipelago, especially catching tripang and flying fish (*torani* or *tuang-tuang*). It was reasonable then Indonesia became the world's oldest exporter of tripang and flying fish eggs.

When the Dutch defeated the Makassarese Kingdom of Goa kingdom in 1667 and implemented new trade restrictions on Makassarese communities, many of the armies fled to the Carpentaria Bay in Australia, becoming fishermen catching tripang and flying fish. This period may mark the beginning of the tripang and torani industry in

Indonesia (McKnight, 1976 in Nasaruddin, 2011). Additional evidence dating from 1803 references Makassarese patorani fishermen who spent 20 years travelling between islands near Java, south to Rote Island and finally to the Kimberly region of Western Australia (Clark, 2000; Mc Knight, 1976 in Nasaruddin 2011).



*Photo: Patorani Boat*

Flying fish and tripang hunters served as a bridge joining two cultures, the Indigenous Australian people and the Makassarese of Indonesia. The evidence of Makassarese voyages to the northwest and north coast of Australia is widely documented in the form of Aboriginal traditional paintings on the walls of caves. Other historical evidence includes canoe design and the use of vocabulary by Aboriginal people such as "balanda" to refer to white-skinned people from Europe. In addition there were also documents of tax and licensing regulations in 1882 for Makassarese fishermen in the Northern Territory. Makassarese people are additionally recognized as the founder of Sand Island (later named Ashmore Reefs).

Tripang and flying fish eggs, as well as other marine commodities, have long been exported to China. However in the early 18th century the Dutch restricted trade with China, encouraging Indonesian fishermen to carry merchandise, including fish flying eggs to Singapore and North Borneo instead. Bugis and Makassarese fisherman became key participants. In 1830 for example, as many as 180 patorani boats landed in Singapore carrying sea products from Eastern Indonesia. Indeed, Fox (2000, in Nasaruddin 2011) asserts that marine products such as flying fish eggs, tripang, shark fin and turtle may have been trading products for Sulawesi maritime traders (including Bugis, Makassar, Bajo, and Buton ethnic groups) for more than 500 years.

## **2. Results and Discussion**

### *2.1. Galesong: The Patorani Community*

Geographically, the Galesong region is on the west coast of Takalar District, South Sulawesi Province, about 40km from the city of Makassar. Galesong which used to be only one sub-district has since been divided into three sub-districts, namely: Galesong Selatan (Center for Aquaculture Activities), Galesong and North Galesong (Fishing Catching Center with Modern Rengge Catching Technology or locally known as

Parengge). Takalar regency lies on the west coast of South Sulawesi, bordered by Gowa and Jeneponto regencies. See Figure 1.

Patorani labor in Galesong is organized in a social structure locally called “Punggawa Sawi,” a social structure formed from the 'bottom' and typical for maritime communities in South Sulawesi (see Figure 2).

In the Galesong community, the “papalele” is known as punggawa darat (owner of boat and capital), whose dominant role is collecting and marketing the catch of all his marine retainers (the operational leader in catching operation). Meanwhile, boat crews (sawi) assist the catching operational manager (punggawa laut) in fishing activities. It is almost certain that the social structure of the punggawa sawi in patorani fishing has not changed much over time (except with the addition of special skills required to maintain boat engines), because teams primarily still use traditional “passive functioning” fishing technology—namely, the Pakkaja (see below).

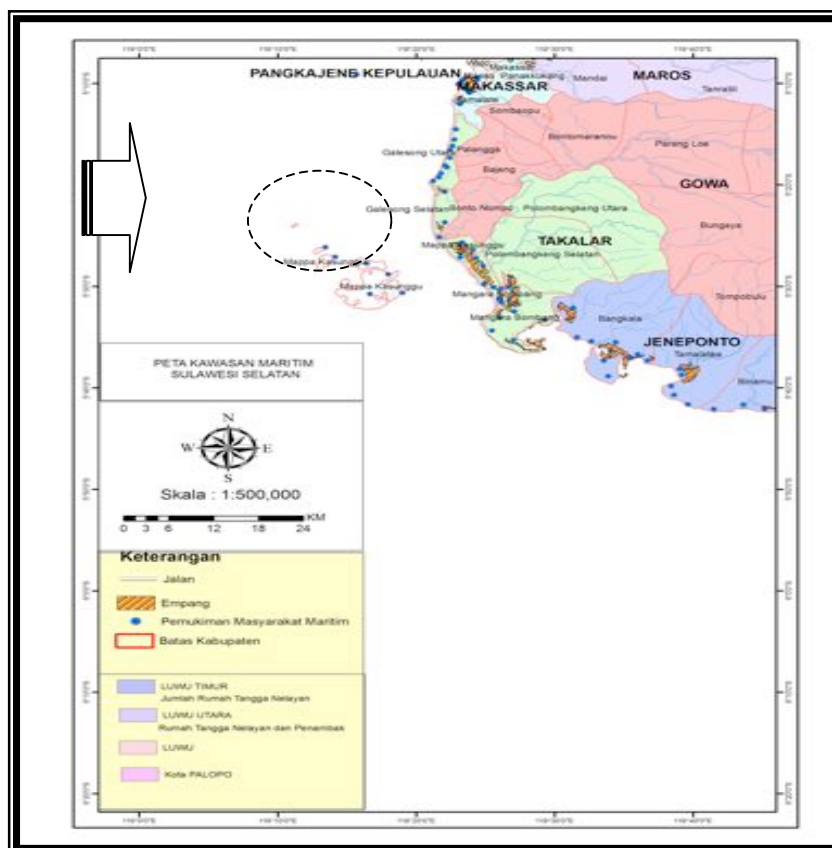


Figure 1. Location of Galesong, Takalar Regency

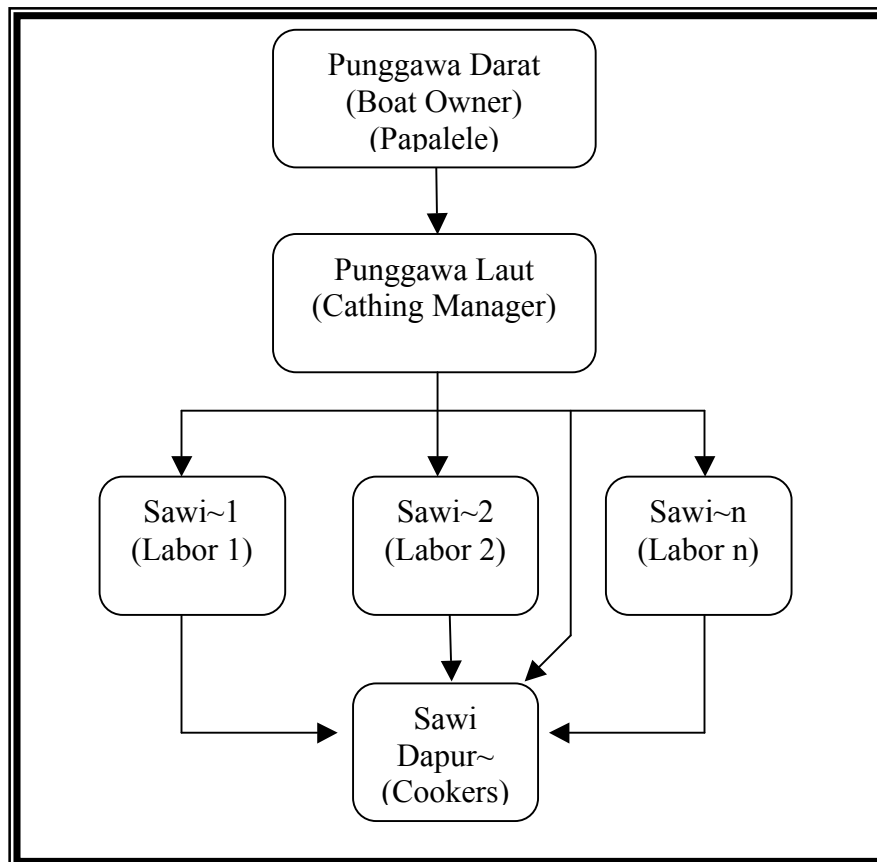


Figure 2. Organizational Structure of Punggawa ~ Sawi Patorani in Galesong of Takalar Regency of South Sulawesi

### 2.2. Wisdom and Religiosity: Micro and Macrocosm in Flying Fish Catch

The flying fish catching community (what could be called a “microcosm”), always attempts to maintain harmony with nature (or what might be called the “macrocosm”). Toward this end, both magic and religiosity are considered as powerful means of communication in establishing a dialogue between humans and the natural environment. The magic can be seen as a human effort in utilizing nature to meet their needs through magic in the form of incantations, while religiosity can be viewed as a human effort to utilize nature by subjecting or surrendering based on certain religious values or doctrines. In the fishing community magic and religiosity coalesce in their application, so explanation each separately is difficult. This entanglement is due to efforts of the local community to unify pre-Islamic beliefs with the teachings of Islam, a process often known as syncretism.

The aspects of occultation and the religiosity of ministry are included as part of the local knowledge system which was locally called *pangngassenganpa'jukukang* (Fishing knowledge). When this system of knowledge is applied in daily practice, it is known as “erang,” and is divided into two variants: *erang passimonbalang* and *erang pa'boyaboyang*. The first, *erang passimonbalang*, is concerned with general seamanship or maritime knowledge, dealing with climate, wind, currents, and waves as a source of boat propulsion and control as well as knowledge of astrology as a means of navigation. Indeed, the anthropologist Koentjaraningrat (1992) defined *erang passimombalang* as

the surrounding natural knowledge. The second, *erang pa'boyaboyang*, also known as livelihood knowledge, is referring to the knowledge related to the marine fishing system, such as the use of fishing technology and the religious aspects associated with fishing.

Hutton Webster (1948, In Demmallino, 1997) in his book *Magic: A Sociological Study*, divides magic into two types: public magic and private magic. Public magic refers to occult knowledge in the public domain, such as ceremonies to invite rain, ceremonies to treat reinforcements, pests, hurricanes and ceremonies to expect big catching. Private magic refers to occult knowledge of the individual, including the knowledge of shamans, witchcraft, and most instances of “wicked” magic and witchcraft. This classification is based on the magic’s function or purpose.

Koentjaraningrat (1992: 292 in Demmallino, 1997) classified occult knowledge into (1) occult mysticism, (2) invisible magic, (3) aggressive occult, and (4) witchcraft or fortune-telling. The discussion on the aspects of magic and the religiosity of the fishermen of the flying fish hunters here is limited or focussed on the notion of “public magic,” especially that of occult knowledge used to prevent disaster.

### 2.2.1. *Erang Pa'boyaboyang*

At the commencement of his fishing activities, each group of fishermen regularly performs ritual ceremonies led by the catching manager (*punggawa*) or *pinati*. The ritual ceremony is locally called *accaru-caru'* and *appa'rappo*. *Accaru-caru'* is a form of a request (prayer) read by a *pinati* to the god of the sea in order to be given fortune and sustenance while at sea. *Appa'rappo* instead uses a medium to stage an imaginary dialogue between the marine retainer with the boat and the rulers of the sea. Both forms of ritual ceremony are generally conducted in patterned and regular manner.

When beginning fishing activities, the catching manager (*punggawa penangkapan*) ritually recites a mantra (spell or incantation) that is believed to be of great importance and is very decisive in the fishing activity. The spells began to be read when the catching manager walked from shore to the boat. Concurrently, the sea *punggawa* recites the mantras in the following verse:

*Rammang ma'donteng irate*  
*Kupailalang sorongan*  
*Naungko mae*  
*Pirassianga tangngana biseangku*  
*Rassi ipantarang*  
*Rassi ilalang*

*Ooo ..... Nabbi Karoppo*  
*Sareanga dalle'ku ri Allah Taala siayang Nabbi Muhammad*

*Ooo..... Nabbi Pakkkere' Nabbi Hedere'*  
*Sareanga dalle'ku ri Allah Taala siayang Nabbi Muhammad''*

Translation:

Clouds clump on top (sky)  
 I put it in a drawer  
 Get down here  
 Centered my belly  
 Mounted outside (on a boat)  
 Mounted inside (boat belly)

Ooo ..... Prophet Karoppo '  
 Give me my sustenance from Allah Taala  
 and from Prophet Muhammad SAW.

Ooo ..... Prophet Pakkere'; Prophet Khaidir (Prophet Breaker or Sustaining  
 Provider for the Servant of God)  
 Give me my sustenance from Allah Taala (God)  
 and from Prophet Muhammad SAW.

The Galesong fishing communities, especially patorani fishermen, firmly believe that the fortunes of the voyage and the catch size (or lack thereof) has been determined by God (Allah), a belief expressed by the term “dalle,” similar to the Indonesian notion of “rejeki” which refers to “fortunes” or “luck.” Although it has been predetermined by God, the “dalle” for a voyage is given through the intercession of the prophets or the god of the sea, namely the *Prophet Karoppo* 'and the *Prophet Pakkere*' (Prophet Khaidir). In the local fishing community the title of Prophet Khaidir is *Nabbi Hellere*'. On the basis of that belief, local fishermen ask for sustenance through the intercession of the prophets or gods. By using personification language, the pre-determined catch is described as a cloud which must first be captured, taken and stored in a drawer by magical means prior to fishing activities. This is called *accaru 'caru*'.

The second spell is then read when the marine punggawa walks towards the boat, precisely when in the position of dealing with the stern of the boat before stepping into the boat. The intended mantra (spell) is pronounced with the following verses:

*kau irumpa*  
*Areng tojennu ri Allah Taala*  
*Inakke bitti lukung*  
*Army tojenku ri Allah Taala*  
*Ri langi 'tumabattunu*

Translation:

You are irumpa (name for boat)  
 Your true name from Allah Taala (God)  
 I bitti lukung (title name for marine retainer)  
 In the sky where you came from

After the spell is pronounced, the punggawa performs an ablution with both palms of his hands. By the time the two palms have been filled with sea water, the sea punggawa continues his spell reading with the following verses:

*Ikau irumpa  
 Areng tojennu ri Allah Taala  
 Allah Taala ampa'jariko biseang  
 Allah Taala bahupahi  
 Ibunga Dg riboko  
 Bunga intang ri tangngana  
 Rumpakki dalle'nu ri Allah Taala siagang Nabi Muhammad  
 (Diucapkan sebanyak 3 kali)*

Translation:

You are irumpa (the title for the boat that personificate as beautiful woman)  
 Your true name from Allah Taala  
 Allah Taala who made you a boat  
 Allah Taala who furnished you  
 Flower from behind  
 Flower in the middle  
 Pick up your provision from Allah and from the Prophet Muhammad.

After the spell is pronounced 3 times by the punggawa, the water that is on punggawa palms is thrown into the stern of the boat (personified as a beautiful woman from behind) as the boat is washed with water with both hands. This process is known by the local term appa'rappo.

If the first spell mentioned above contains a statement of the belief (or value) that the "dalle" or success of the voyage comes from and has been determined by the Almighty, then the second and third spells (contents) refer more to a human dialogue between punggawa with his boat about his existence in front of God (supernatural).

It is important to note that although the second and third spell mentioned above may be understood as magic with roots in pre-Islamic beliefs, they both also contain important elements of religious meaning within Islam. Thus, it can be concluded that the micro and macrocosmic relationships in the Galesong fishing community is made up of a nuanced syncretism or a fusion of pre-Islamic beliefs with those of Islamic religiosity.

Because it is common in the Galesong fishing community when one asked about the success of his business or fishing, he/she is always answered: "battuji ri dalle'ka", which means "it depends on *dalle*" or "it depends on fortunes." Dalle 'for them is very dependent on God; God has predetermined everything for everyone, a notion expressed in language by the community: "Nia tau nia' mentong dalle'na battu ri Allah Taala, nia tong tena manna tong poso abboya" (There are indeed people who are given many "dalle" from Allah Taala, on the contrary, there are also people who are not granted good "dalle", though the concerned have worked hard). Alternatively, it might be said: "Sikontu dalle 'hallalatta anulebba' napattantumi Karaeng Allah Taala, battumi mami ri katte, antekamma bateta anngatorikki natena kikala'busang" (all your halal "dalle", although already determined by Allah Taala, depend on you how to arrange your "dalle" so it does not run out).

Another saying which expresses the relationship between Allah and "dalle" says: "Manna bassi nibuang ri je'neka ammawanji" (Although iron is thrown into the water, it

can float), or "Manna gabusu 'nibuang ri je'neka laburu'ji " (though the corks are thrown into the water, they can sink. If it is not our fortune, we will not receive it.

2.2.2. Erang Passimombalang

As stated earlier, that the fishing knowledge system (pangngassengan pa'jukukang) of the Galesong fishing community consists of erang pa'boyaboyang (livelihood knowledge) and erang passimombalang (knowledge of fishing), the erang passimombalang is not fully grouped into the occult knowledge, but in its execution begins with magic rituals, especially magical rituals intended to protect the voyage from harm or unpredictable dangers.

Symbolically, the occult ritual in the erang passimombalang begins at the time of preparation for departure, which is at the beginning of the boat repair and renovation activities. This rite begins with "straight bamboo logging" at a time which is considered a good day (allo baji) for subsequent use as a material for making or repairing pakkaja and shipping tools. Then followed by assorong maca (prayer readings), especially in the home of the punggawa. In pre-Islamic tradition, the assorong maca activities were usually led by Pinati (mantra reader), however since the arrival of Islam, the activity of assorong maca is led by teacher (ustadz) or imam of the village. In the course of assorong maca offerings are presented, including umba-umba cake (floating cake) and other cakes and other fruits that are considered important (such as banana). The selection of a good time can be done through Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Good Time to Start an Activities Including Fishing Activities in Galesong Community.

Day	Time (hour)											
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Friday		3	x	III	[ ]		3	x	3	x	III	[ ]
Saturday	[ ]	x	3	III		[ ]	x	3	x	3	x	
Sunday	III		x	[ ]	3	[ ]	III		III		III	3
Monday	x	[ ]		III	3	x			[ ]		III	3
Tuesday		3	[ ]	x	III		[ ]	3	3	[ ]	x	III
Wednesday	[ ]		III	3	x	[ ]		III	III		3	x
Thursday	[ ]	[ ]	III		x	3	[ ]		III		x	3

In principle, all day is good as taught in Islam, but about the business of earning a living, a patorani believes that there is a specific time (hour) in each day considered the best time to begin to do an activity including fishing. Conversely, if fishing activities start at a bad time: the day of Naas. For example, if fishing activities conducted on Monday, then based on the belief of the patorani, the best time is at 5: 00 or 10: 00 (see sign |||||: Hope) or at least at 08.00 or 15.00 (see Tanda III: Half Hope). If fishing activities begin at 6: 00 am, at 11: 00 or 13: 00 (see Mark 3), it believed the yielded only for family meals. If fishing activities begin at 9 am or 4 pm (see Empty Mark) then the operation is thought not get results. Unfortunately, to this day we have not got a rational explanation of why at a specific time is considered good and other less good or not good.

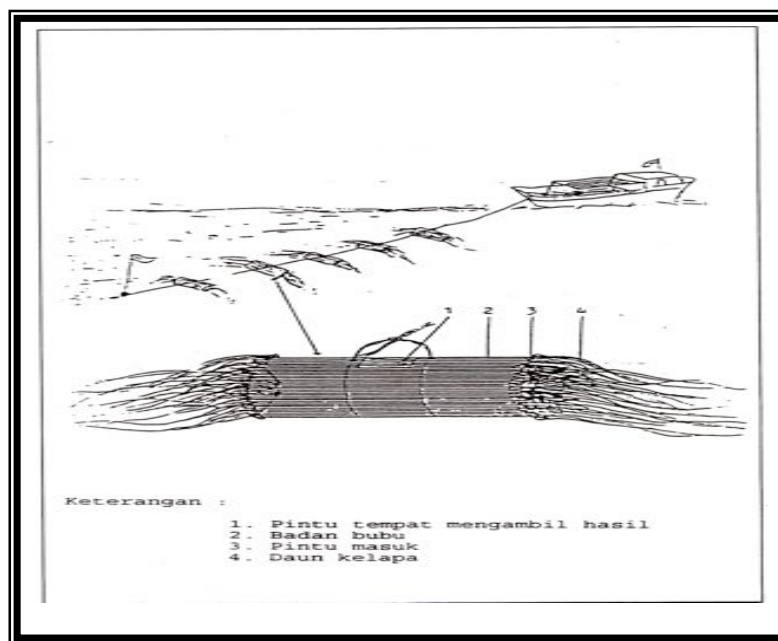
The climax of the ritual to repel danger is an exercise known as the appassili ceremony or appa'rappo, a form of ritual which is meant to ward off danger in any form.



Therefore, all boat crews are required to participate in the ritual ceremony including their family, especially families of *punggawa* who usually active in the preparation and execution of this ceremony. Implementation of this ceremony is usually done on the boat, ie when the boat is declared really ready to sail. On new boats, usually, a ceremony like this begins with the animal embroidered, such as goats, cows, and the like. This danger repellent ceremony is not only aimed at fishing with technology *pakkaja* but in the capture of modern technology (active technology) is also still implemented.

### 2.3. *Pakkaja: Eco-Friendly Technology*

The traditional technology used to capture flying fish is the “*pakkaja*”. *Pakkaja* is a type of portable floating trap which is specifically intended to catch the flying fish and at the same time to catch the eggs of the flying fish. Patorani communities are very familiar with this device, and the *pakkaja* is manufactured locally, made from woven bamboo-shaped cylinders and decorated with coconut leaves (See Figure 3). The *pakkaja* can easily be altered or modified according to need.



As pointed out earlier, *pakkaja* can be categorized as a portable or drifting trap, so called for its ability to be passively drifted along with the boat following the current. This type of trap has 1 or 2 entrances doors and 1 exit door. The length is 57 - 80 cm in diameter from 40 to 47 cm. This tool is operated by 3 - 5 people with a 2 - 5 ton (2 - 5 tons) or 2 - 3 - meter (2 - to - 3 - foot) boat and a width of 2 to 3 meters. The *pakkaja* is mounted on a string between 20 - 30 meters. A float is secured to the end of the rope to mark the location of the device and to show the direction of the current. The other end of the rope is secured to the boat. The woven bamboo portion serves to trap the flying fish, while a section decorated with coconut fronds serves as a spawning place for the fish to lay their eggs, allowing both the fish and the eggs to be harvested simultaneously.

This tool is used by incorporating elements of soul knowledge (*pangngassengan*) especially erang pa'boyaboyang. This type of pangngassengan is intended to "invite, coax and stimulant" so that the flying fish can gather and spawn in a place that the pakkaja provided. The *Pangngassengan* was pronounced as follows:

*"Pole torani .....  
 Pole torani .....  
 Pole torani .....eee.....  
 Ri alla'na bombing  
 Ri tekona arusu  
 Ri balembengna taka  
 Battuaseng mako mae  
 Ripakkare'karenanna bainennu  
 Ipantara' mintu tulolonna satangnga  
 lompoa pongko'na*

Literally can be translated as follows:

Come .....!  
 Come .....!  
 Come oh torani fish  
 Through the crevices of the waves  
 Through the current flow  
 Through the crevice of coral  
 Come all  
 To your wife's game place  
 Beautiful girls,  
 girl big hip (sexy).

The spells above are recited prior to deploying the pakkaja. Once the pakkaja is deployed, the crew waits, hoping to spot the flying fish approaching the pakkaja. If one of the crew members sees the fish approaching, then the punggawa will recite the following spell:

*"Ia ri olo  
 Ia angngallei bungasa'na  
 Ia ri boko  
 Ia angngallei pallateanna"*

Translation:

Who comes first  
 He who got his virgin  
 Who came later  
 He who got his former

In view of the Galesong fishing community, torani fish is perceived as a brave fish that has long been on the battlefield and who has left family behind, and having long been away from family is. Because of that to him, I was called a torani fish (a brave fish) who, having long since left the family, he was thirsty for sex. Through this

assumption then the pakkaja used to catch flying fish (torani) was perceived as a place to play with their new wives, understood to be attractive and beautiful young women.

Furthermore, while waiting for pakkaja to sink, indicating that pakkaja has been filled with flying fish and eggs, the boat crew sings "pornographic songs" (in Makassar language) which are usually accompanied by a rhythm of lyre and drums, interspersed with games of dominoes or pole fishing to pass the time.

In part, the sexual meaning ascribed to the process is also meant to amuse the patorani fishermen amidst the isolation of life at sea, to stave off longing for the family they themselves left behind. Each deployment of the pakkaja takes about 15 days in total. However there is no definite time at which the pakkaja will be raised; the amount of time necessary for the trap to fill up can vary significantly from trip to trip.

#### *2.4. Pakkaja: Eco-Friendly Technology*

Long before the Indonesian independence, since the 13th century, patorani fishermen had spread all the way from the Malacca Strait to the waters of Northern and Western Australia, in search of torani fish and eggs to be traded to China, Singapore, and Malaysia. However following Dutch colonization of Indonesia, and especially after the Bongaya agreement between the Dutch and the Gowa Kingdom of Makassar, the capture of flying fish was slowly concentrated in the western peninsula of South Sulawesi. The catching season generally takes place throughout the season of easterly winds, from roughly May until September, until the transition to the season of westerly winds around October. Communities begin preparing for the season before the end of the westerly winds, between February and April.

The development of fishing technology, motorization, in particular, led them to expand their roaming areas to the south and east of South Sulawesi and even to the island of Papua, especially during the the western season (November to March). Thus now the roaming base of catching flying fish activities stems from the west coast of South Sulawesi to Eastern Indonesia, and expeditions may take place all year long.

#### **Conclusion**

As long as the macro and microcosmic relationships in the context of magic and religiosity are still in harmony as they are still rooted in the socio-cultural structure of patorani, the local eco-technology will remain sustainable. Even though ship motorization has colored the activities patorani fishermen and even though there has been an increase in the number of traps and the expansion of catchment areas related to market demands, patorani methods remain subject to influence from magic and religion, remaining in a harmonious macro and microcosmic relationship. It seems that patorani culture has lasted from the 13th century until now (21st century), approximately eight centuries.

This paper recommends the capture technology of pakkaja as an environmentally friendly local technology deserving of special recognition in our time of maritime modernization, especially for the harvest of torani fish eggs, which have remained a prized commodity in the international market for eight centuries.

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