

The culture of outrigger boat in the Malay Archipelago: a maritime perspective

Abstract

Many discussions by the Western scholars on the history of traditional boats in the Malay archipelago focus on one specific territory or country. Apparently, there has been no effort in doing a total review on these discussions. Vague facts on the prehistoric history of maritime in the Malay archipelago, Pacific and Indian oceans as well as the blind passion of the countries in Southeast Asia in promoting their great historical "bahari" culture have made it difficult for us to solve the question on the actual origin of boats and outriggers that are still being used and become a proud maritime heritage of some countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Oceania Islands. Therefore, the objective of this article is to review the history of the early origin and culture of boat and outrigger in the Malay archipelago before the 15th century during the reign of traditional governments and before the coming of Western powers such as Portuguese, Dutch, English and Spanish. According to archeological records and traditional maritime of the Malay archipelago, boats and outriggers were first used by sailors and traders in the Malay archipelago sea in order to carry various goods, mainly spices to be traded in other territories in the Malay archipelago as well as Madagascar and west coastal Africa.