SURVEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WATERS AROUND SABAH VIA A PARANGKANG SAILING EXPEDITION

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Abstract

Sabah, one of the states of Malaysia in the northern part of Borneo, is surrounded by South China Sea in the west, Sulu Sea in the east, and Celebes Sea in the southeast. History has proven that the tides of these three seas played a significant role in the formation of modern Sabah. Focussing on the importance of maritime aspect, some sailors from the University of Malaysia in Sabah (UMS) in cooperation with various agencies made use of traditional boat known as parangkang among the Bajaus in navigating the aforementioned seas around Sabah on April 11–May 6, 2009. The objective of this expedition was to determine and consider some questions on maritime Sabah which must be addressed by researchers and other important agencies. Part of the results of this expedition showed that the three seas are not only worthy of its salinity but also as an identity marker of what Sabah is due to the fact that it is dynamic and always changes just like its tides.

Keywords: Sabah, Parangkang, Bajau, Identity & Maritime

Introduction

Sabah, which is situated on the north islands of Malaysia, is the only state in Malaysia that is surrounded by three main seas, namely South China Sea (on the west coast), Sulu Sea (on the east coast) and Celebes Sea (on the southeast coast). History has shown that the high-low tide of these seas plays a significant role to the formation of modern Sabah today. Taking into account the importance of maritime in Sabah, an expedition sailing around Sabah waters was done on 11 April until 6 May 2009 by sailors of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) with the collaboration of various agencies. The expedition was done using a traditional Bajau prahu or boat known as Parangkang. The purpose of this expedition is to identify and examine a few questions on Sabah maritime which need to be considered by researchers and related agencies. It is found that the seas are indeed play a significant role in defining Sabah that is dynamic and versatile following the rise and fall of the sea level surrounding it.

According to ancient records, the formal making and use of prahu as a part of the lifestyle of people in Sabah has existed about 500 years ago or even earlier especially during the Sulu Sultanate reign (Jolo) who had succeeded to take control of the north and east coasts of Sabah from the Brunei Sultanate. To ensure the