THE PORTUGUESE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AND THE RULERS OF MAKASSAR IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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Abstract

This article examines relations between the Portuguese Catholic community and the rulers of Makassar in the seventeenth century, focusing on maritime trade, political power, and religious pluralism in Southeast Asia. During this period, Makassar emerged as one of the region's major port cities, attracting merchants and foreign communities from across Asia and Europe. The Portuguese played an important role in this trading network, supported by their extensive commercial connections and close ties with Makassar's rulers. Drawing on historical methods and approaches from social and maritime history, this study analyses VOC archives, colonial treaties, travel accounts, missionary records, and historiography on South Sulawesi. It argues that the rulers' relations with the Portuguese were shaped not only by economic interests but also by political pragmatism and their efforts to maintain Makassar as a cosmopolitan port open to diverse ethnic and religious communities. Although Islam had become the kingdom's official religion, the Portuguese were permitted to maintain their religious institutions and activities, including churches and Jesuit missionary work, within the kingdom's political and social framework. However, the VOC's growing monopoly power and the Makassar War (1666–1669) fundamentally transformed the city's political and economic order. The fall of Somba Opu and the implementation of the Treaty of Bungaya contributed to the decline of the Portuguese Catholic community in Makassar and marked the end of its presence in the city.

Keywords: *Cosmopolitan Port, Makassar, Portuguese Catholic Community, Seventeenth Century*

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INTRODUCTION

In the seventeenth century, Makassar developed into one of the most important port cities in Southeast Asia, bringing together diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious communities within a cosmopolitan maritime setting. Its strategic location along trade routes connecting the Moluccas, Java, Malacca, India, and the South China Sea made it an international trading hub frequented by Malay, Arab, Gujarati, Chinese, British, Danish, and Portuguese merchants. Makassar's openness to foreign communities was reflected in the open-port policy pursued by its rulers. The Corpus Diplomaticum records that the 1637 treaty between the Kingdom of Makassar and the VOC affirmed that "everyone shall be free to practice their religion without compulsion" (*dat ijder zijn gelooff zall vrij hebben, sonder daer in eenighsints geconstringeert te werden*) (Heeres, 1907). This provision suggests that religious diversity was an integral part of Makassar's social and political life at the time. In practice, Makassar served not only as a center for distributing regional commodities but also as a meeting point for local Muslim communities and foreign non-Muslim groups, including Portuguese Catholics, who had been active in Southeast Asian trade networks since the Portuguese conquest of Malacca in 1511 (Andaya, 2004; Reid, 2011). Makassar's development as a port city was therefore closely linked to the interplay of trade, political power, and religious diversity in the eastern Indonesian archipelago.

Relations between the rulers of Makassar and the Portuguese community began to develop in the sixteenth century, when Portuguese merchants became the first Europeans to establish regular trading links with the Kingdom of Makassar. Following the Portuguese conquest of Malacca in 1511, Portuguese trading networks expanded further into the eastern Indonesian archipelago, including Makassar, which subsequently emerged as an alternative port beyond the reach of the VOC's monopoly. In the seventeenth century, particularly after Malacca came under VOC control in 1641, many Portuguese traders, members of Asian Christian communities, mestizos, and Eurasians moved to Makassar. The city thus became both a trading center and a place of refuge in the eastern Indonesian archipelago (Sutherland, 2001). Under the protection of Makassar's rulers, the Portuguese Catholic community flourished not only as a trading group but also as a socio-religious community with its own church, settlement, and religious networks linking it to Macao, Malacca, and Goa, India. This development suggests that relations between the rulers of Makassar and the Portuguese community were shaped by mutually beneficial commercial interests, diplomatic engagement, and political pragmatism.

Studies of seventeenth-century Makassar have generally focused on maritime trade, the formation of the Gowa and Tallo polities, Islamization, and the regional political dynamics of South Sulawesi. However, several primary sources indicate that the Portuguese community occupied an important position in Makassar's social and political life during this period. Antonio de Cardim's account suggests that Karaeng Pattingalloang protected the Portuguese community and supported the Jesuit mission in Makassar (Jacobs, 1988). VOC records and accounts by European merchants also indicate that the Portuguese community played a significant role in international trade and diplomacy, as well as in defending Makassar against VOC pressure. The relationship between the Portuguese Catholic community and Makassar's rulers should therefore be understood not merely in commercial terms but also as part of the kingdom's political strategy to preserve Makassar as an international port open to diverse nations and religious groups.

Against this background, this article examines relations between the Portuguese Catholic community and the rulers of Makassar in the seventeenth century, focusing on Makassar's development as a cosmopolitan port city in Southeast Asia. The study employs historical methods and draws on social and maritime historical approaches to analyze primary colonial sources, travel accounts, VOC archives, and historical scholarship on Portuguese trade and diaspora in Southeast Asia. It argues that the close relationship between Makassar's rulers and the Portuguese Catholic community formed an important part of the kingdom's political and economic strategy to maintain an open-port system amid global trade competition and the expansion of the VOC's monopoly. In this context, the presence of the Portuguese Catholic community not only highlights the cosmopolitan character of seventeenth-century Makassar but also illustrates how local rulers in the Indonesian archipelago used relations with foreign communities to strengthen their political and economic positions within early modern international trade networks.

Literature Review

Studies of seventeenth-century Makassar have primarily focused on maritime trade, political power, and Islamization. Anthony Reid (2011) highlights Makassar's role as a major entrepôt connecting the Moluccas, Java, Malacca, and the eastern Indonesian archipelago, while Leonard Andaya (2004) examines its maritime power and confrontation with VOC expansion. Heather Sutherland (1980, 2004a, 2004b) further situates Makassar within regional networks of trade, migration, and multiethnic port communities. Studies by Christian Pelras (1985), William Cummings (2007), and Jacobus Noorduyn (1987) explore Islamization and the political and social transformations of South Sulawesi, including the relationships between Muslim networks, local elites, and the consolidation of royal power. Collectively, these studies establish Makassar's significance as a maritime and political center but devote less attention to the experiences and position of its Portuguese Catholic community.

Research on the Portuguese presence in Southeast Asia has largely examined commercial networks, diaspora, and colonial rivalry. C. R. Boxer's (1967) Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo: A Portuguese Merchant Adventurer in South East Asia (1624–1667) provides important insights into Portuguese commercial and political activities, while Jacobs's (1988) The Jesuit Makassar Documents (1615–1682) offers documentary evidence of Jesuit missions and Catholic communities in Makassar. More broadly, Subrahmanyam (2012) examines the Portuguese diaspora as a network of commercial and cultural exchange, while Pradjoko (2015) discusses Portuguese and Catholic traditions in Flores, Solor, Larantuka, and Timor. These works provide essential context for understanding Portuguese mobility and Catholic networks in the region but offer limited insight into the relationship between the Portuguese Catholic community and Makassar's political and religious order in the seventeenth century.

Taken together, the existing literature leaves a gap at the intersection of Makassar's maritime history, political relations, and Portuguese Catholic life. Although Makassar has been studied as a trading center and a site of competition between the VOC and European commercial powers, while Catholic communities in eastern Indonesia have primarily been examined through missionary activities and local religious traditions, the connections between these historical contexts remain insufficiently explored. In particular, the political accommodation of the Portuguese Catholic community by Makassar's rulers, its position within the kingdom, and its connections to regional trade and

subsequent migration to eastern Indonesia warrant further investigation.

This article addresses this gap by examining the Portuguese Catholic community in seventeenth-century Makassar in relation to maritime trade, political power, religious identity, and VOC expansion. Rather than treating Makassar merely as a commercial outpost or a site of colonial rivalry, it examines the city as a political and social setting in which the Portuguese Catholic community established and maintained its presence before growing VOC pressure reshaped the community's circumstances and mobility across the eastern Indonesian archipelago.

Conceptual Framework

Port cities in early modern Southeast Asia, including Makassar, served not only as centers of commodity exchange but also as spaces for social and political interaction, bringing together diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious communities within international trade networks. From this perspective, Makassar is understood as a cosmopolitan port that enabled foreign communities, including Portuguese Catholics, to participate in the city's social and economic life.

The concept of maritime power provides a complementary perspective for analyzing how Makassar's rulers maintained an open port amid intense trade competition in the seventeenth century. Relations with foreign communities in Southeast Asian maritime states were often shaped by political pragmatism and commercial interests. Accordingly, the Portuguese Catholic community in Makassar is understood not merely as a commercial diaspora but also as part of the rulers' political strategy to sustain international trade networks and counter pressure from the VOC's monopolistic policies.

The concept of religious identity in multiethnic port societies further helps explain the position of the Portuguese Catholic community amid the political dominance of Islam in Makassar and the growing influence of the Protestant VOC. In early modern maritime societies, religious identities were not necessarily exclusive; rather, they could be negotiated through trade relations, political patronage, and social interactions among communities. The political accommodation extended to the Portuguese Catholic community illustrates how Makassar's openness as a port city encompassed not only economic exchange but also social and political relations.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a historical method and a social-maritime historical approach to examine relations between the Portuguese Catholic community and the rulers of Makassar in the seventeenth century, situating these relations within Makassar's development as a cosmopolitan port city in Southeast Asia. The social-historical approach is used to investigate the interplay of trade, political power, foreign communities, and religious identity in early modern port societies. Accordingly, the study examines the Portuguese Catholic community not only as part of a maritime trade network but also as a socio-religious community with political and economic ties to Makassar's rulers. It also investigates political changes associated with VOC expansion and their implications for the community's continued presence in Makassar and its subsequent migration to eastern Indonesia.

Data were collected through library research using both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included VOC documents, colonial contracts and treaties compiled in the *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlando-Indicum*, the *Dagh-Register*, the *Generale Missiven*, European archival materials, and travel accounts concerning seventeenth-century Makassar. The study also drew on local sources, including *lontara* manuscripts, and historical

scholarship on South Sulawesi. Secondary sources included books, journal articles, and research studies on Southeast Asian maritime trade, the Islamization of South Sulawesi, the VOC, the Portuguese diaspora, and Catholic communities in eastern Indonesia.

The data were analyzed using the four stages of the historical method: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. During the heuristic stage, sources concerning the presence of Portuguese Catholics in Makassar and their migration networks in eastern Indonesia were collected. Source criticism and triangulation were used to assess the provenance, potential biases, and political and religious interests reflected in the sources. Rather than seeking identical accounts across all documents, triangulation involved combining complementary evidence from different perspectives to develop a more comprehensive historical interpretation.

VOC records, including the *Generale Missiven* and the *Dagh-Register*, provide substantial information on commercial activities but must be read in light of the VOC's trade rivalry and anti-Catholic biases, which shaped its representations of the Portuguese as a threat. Jesuit records, including accounts by Cardim and Rhodes, provide detailed information on royal protection and religious life, although they reflect missionary perspectives. European travel accounts by Vieira, Navarrete, Jourdain, and Tavernier offer further insights into flexible trade networks that did not necessarily conform to the Dutch monopoly. Meanwhile, local Makassar historiography, particularly the *lontara* tradition, emphasizes royal sovereignty, expressed in the phrase *se'reji ata na rua karaeng*, and customary law rather than European religious rivalries. By combining these sources and using their complementary evidence to address gaps in the historical record, the study develops a more comprehensive account of Makassar's open-port polity.

In the interpretation stage, the collected evidence was examined within the sociopolitical context of seventeenth-century Makassar, particularly its relations with the VOC and foreign communities in the port area. The final stage, historiography, involved constructing a historical narrative that presents Makassar as a significant setting for understanding the transformation and mobility of the Portuguese Catholic community in early modern Southeast Asia.

DISCUSSION

Historical Context: Maritime Restructuring, Political Integration, and Makassar's Open-Port Policy

Makassar's emergence as a major international port in the seventeenth century was shaped by both external changes in Southeast Asian maritime trade and internal political consolidation in South Sulawesi. Externally, the Portuguese conquest of Malacca in 1511, the expansion of the Mataram Kingdom along Java's northern coast, and the Dutch East India Company's (VOC) enforcement of a spice monopoly in the Moluccas disrupted established trade routes. These developments encouraged Asian and European merchants, including Malays, Javanese, Gujaratis, Arabs, Danes, English merchants, and Portuguese traders, to seek an alternative trading hub beyond the Dutch sphere of influence. Strategically located at the intersection of the Makassar Strait, the Java Sea, and the Flores Sea, Makassar offered a safe harbor and a free port (entrepôt) connecting the spice-producing regions of the eastern Indonesian archipelago with wider commercial networks across Asia and Europe (Andaya, 2004; Dwidjoatmojo, 1966; Reid, 2011).

This maritime expansion was underpinned by the political integration of the twin kingdoms of Gowa and Tallo.

Gowa, with its agrarian hinterland, and Tallo, oriented toward seafaring, had initially existed as separate political entities. The two kingdoms were subsequently united under the constitutional principle of *se'reji ata na rua karaeng* ("one people, two kings"). Under this dual-monarchy system, the King of Gowa held the title of Sombaya (supreme ruler), while the King of Tallo served as *Tumabicara Butta* (first minister or chancellor) (Rismawidiawati, 2012; Stapel, 1922). This political stability enabled the rulers to consolidate state power, relocate the royal seat to the coastal fortress of Somba Opu, and establish a consistent maritime policy to protect international trade. The *lontara* tradition also records a political oath prohibiting attempts to undermine the alliance between Gowa and Tallo, indicating that their political unity was regarded as a foundation of regional stability. The oath states:

> *"Ia iannamo tau ampesiewai Gowa-Tallo iamo nacalla rewata"* (Wolhoff & Abdurrahim, 1969).
>
> *Meaning: "Whoever sows discord between Gowa and Tallo shall be cursed by the Gods."*

This political framework was further transformed by the formal adoption of Islam in the early seventeenth century. The conversion of the ruling elite took place in 1605, when Karaeng Matoaya of Tallo (Sultan Abdullah Awwalul Islam) and King Alauddin of Gowa embraced Islam. By 1607, Islam had become the kingdom's state religion. This Islamization did not necessarily lead to religious exclusivism; rather, it coexisted with political pragmatism and economic considerations. Makassar's rulers recognized that the kingdom's prosperity depended on an open-port policy that accommodated diverse merchant communities. This pragmatic approach was reflected in diplomatic arrangements, including the 1637 treaty with the VOC, which affirmed the principle of port neutrality and rejected exclusive commercial monopolies.

The *Corpus Diplomaticum* records an agreement between Sultan Alauddin and Antonio van Diemen dated June 26, 1637, which addressed the treatment of the ruler and his subjects in the context of the port's neutrality:

> *"...that the Dutch, even during this period of peace, shall not be permitted to show hostility towards His Majesty or anyone under his authority, with the exception that they may, against his subjects in non-free waters, namely around Malacca, on the coast of Seram, and so on, they shall be permitted to attack and capture them as enemies, which shall not be considered a breach of this treaty" (van der Hagen, 1907; Heeres, 1907).*

Through the interplay of political stability, formal Islamization, and negotiated political accommodation, Makassar established itself as a cosmopolitan maritime power. By protecting foreign communities and maintaining relatively open commercial access, the rulers of Gowa and Tallo sustained Makassar's position as one of the most active and open trading centers in early modern Southeast Asia.

Tavernier provides an account of an episode in which the ruler of Makassar requested that both Muslims and Portuguese Jesuits present their most learned religious representatives so that he could compare their teachings before making a decision. Tavernier recounts:

> *"But the Mussalmans made more haste than the Christians, and eight months afterwards, when they brought two learned Mullas from Mecca, the King, as the Jesuits sent no one, embraced the Law of Muhammed. It is true that three years afterwards, two Portuguese Jesuits arrived at Makassar, but it was too late, as the King by then no longer inclined to become a Christian"* (Tavernier, 1889)."

Tavernier's account suggests that Makassar's Islamization unfolded amid international political, commercial, and religious competition rather than in isolation. The arrival of religious scholars from Mecca, relations with Johor and Aceh, and the activities of Malay Muslim communities in Makassar's port indicate that Islamization was closely connected to Indian Ocean trade networks. In this

context, Islam offered broader political and economic advantages by strengthening Makassar's connections with Muslim trading networks extending across the Red Sea, India, and the Indonesian archipelago. At the same time, Portuguese influence in several Southeast Asian ports faced challenges associated with monopolistic practices and conflicts with local merchants.

Despite the adoption of Islam as the kingdom's state religion, Makassar's ties with the Portuguese were not immediately severed. The rulers continued to maintain an open trade policy and permitted the Portuguese Catholic community to conduct trade and practice its religion in Makassar. This coexistence suggests that Islamization proceeded alongside political pragmatism and the kingdom's maritime commercial interests. An account by an English merchant who visited Batavia in 1625 provides further evidence of the Portuguese presence and religious accommodation in Makassar:

> *"An English merchant from Makassar who called at Batavia in 1625, reported that between ten and 22 Portuguese galliots called at Makassar yearly from Macao, Malacca and ports on the Coromandel coast, there being sometimes as many as five hundred Portuguese ashore, where the Moslem Sultan allowed them the free exercise of their religion"* (Boxer, 1968: 177).

The Seventeenth-Century Portuguese Catholic Community in Makassar

Makassar's development as an international port in the seventeenth century was marked not only by expanding trade but also by the settlement of foreign communities in the port city. Among these groups, the Portuguese Catholic community was one of the most influential in Makassar's economic, social, and political life. Its presence was closely linked to changes in Southeast Asian trade networks following the Portuguese conquest of Malacca in 1511 and the subsequent capture of the city by the VOC in 1641. Against this background, Makassar emerged as an alternative destination for Portuguese traders, Asian Christian communities, Eurasians, and mestizos who had lost their positions in established trading centers.

Relations between the Portuguese and Makassar had already developed by the mid-sixteenth century. During the reign of Tunipalangga Ulaweng (1546–1565), the Portuguese became the first Europeans to obtain permission to establish a trading post in Somba Opu. Portuguese ships had been visiting Makassar since 1538, bringing commodities such as ebony, gold, and firearms (Stapel, 1922). These connections developed further in 1544, when Ruy Vaz Pereira, the Portuguese governor of Malacca, sent Antonio de Paiva to the west coast of Sulawesi to procure sandalwood, which was in high demand in the Malacca market. After visiting Suppa and Siang, de Paiva returned to Malacca with the goods obtained through this trade (Baker, 2005). According to François Valentijn, the Portuguese subsequently established a permanent trading post in Somba Opu (Valentijn, 1858). These accounts indicate that, by the mid-sixteenth century, Makassar had become connected to Portuguese trading networks linking Malacca, India, and the eastern Indonesian archipelago.

In the seventeenth century, these relations intensified as Makassar strengthened its position as a free port in the eastern Indonesian archipelago. One of the leading figures in the Portuguese community was Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo, a wealthy merchant who resided in Makassar for an extended period, until 1661. Vieira played a significant role in connecting Makassar to extensive Asian trading networks. His commercial activities involved sandalwood from the Lesser Sunda Islands, cloves from Ambon, gold from China, the Philippines, and Sumatra, tortoiseshell from Makassar, and Indian textiles from Gujarat and the Coromandel Coast. He collaborated with Sultan

Malikussaid, Karaeng Pattingalloang, and Pedro de la Mata, the Spanish resident in Makassar, particularly in trade involving Macao and the Coromandel Coast (Boxer, 1967: 7–8). These commercial connections demonstrate that the Portuguese community was not merely a merchant enclave but an integral part of a trans-Asian trading system linking the Indonesian archipelago, India, China, the Philippines, and the Iberian world.

The Portuguese community in Makassar expanded particularly after the VOC captured Malacca in 1641. Following this event, many Portuguese traders, members of Asian Christian communities, and Eurasians moved from Malacca to other trading centers in eastern Indonesia. Makassar became one of their principal destinations because it maintained an open trading system and offered protection to foreign communities (Sutherland, 1989: 101). The Portuguese community in Makassar thus comprised not only Europeans of Portuguese descent but also mestizos, Indian Christians, and other Asian Catholic communities connected to Portuguese networks across Asia. Their presence further reinforced Makassar's cosmopolitan character as a multiethnic port city where diverse commercial and cultural networks converged.

The presence of the Portuguese Catholic community in Makassar is illustrated in António de Cardim's account of the situation following the fall of Malacca. He wrote:

> *"When the Portuguese left Malacca after it was captured by the Dutch and lost their trade relations with Macao, many Christians, both Portuguese and Indian, moved to Makassar under the protection of Prince Karaeng Pattingalloang. He granted them a plot of land to build a church within the city"* (Jacobs, 1988).

This account indicates that Makassar's rulers not only accepted the Portuguese as trading partners but also provided protection for their social and religious activities.

However, Cardim also notes that the Portuguese community's first church was burned down amid tensions with the local Muslim community. The destruction of the church within Somba Opu highlights the potential for socioreligious friction between the local Muslim population and the growing Catholic presence. Rather than indicating state-sponsored persecution, this incident was followed by a pragmatic response from Karaeng Pattingalloang. To ease local tensions while maintaining strategic ties with the Portuguese, he relocated the Catholic community outside the royal fortress to *Borrobos*. By granting the community land on which to build a larger church and inviting Jesuit priests from Macao, Pattingalloang sought to preserve social stability while maintaining the economic and technical benefits associated with Portuguese trade.

Cardim's subsequent accounts reveal increasingly close relations between the Portuguese community and Makassar's ruling elite. He wrote:

> *"Dissatisfied with the vicar they had, the Portuguese asked Prince Karaeng Pattingalloang to write a letter to Macao to Father Manoel de Azevedo asking him to send priests of the Society of Jesus to guide them"* (Jacobs, 1988).

This account suggests that Karaeng Pattingalloang did more than provide political protection for the Portuguese community; he also actively supported the continuation of its Catholic religious institutions. This request was fulfilled in 1646, when Father Ambrosio de Abreu and Gonçalo da Fonseca were sent to Makassar to establish a Jesuit residence. Cardim writes:

> "*Forao os Padres bem recebidos do principe e rey; deu-lhes sitio e cazas entre os portugueses...*" (Jacobs, 1988).
> *Meaning: "The priests were well received by the prince and the king; they were given land and houses amongst the Portuguese community."*

Karaeng Pattingalloang's attitude toward the Catholic community is described in greater detail in Jesuit accounts. The French Jesuit missionary Alexandre de Rhodes noted:

> *"Indeed, he usually attends all the sermons personally, especially on the principal feasts of the year, and brings his whole court. He follows our processions, particularly during Holy Week, with such modesty and devotion one would take him for a very zealous Catholic"* (Hertz, 1966: 209).

This account suggests that relations between Makassar's ruling elite and the Portuguese Catholic community extended beyond commercial interests to include respect for the community's religious practices. However, Karaeng Pattingalloang's attitude should not be interpreted as evidence of his conversion to Catholicism. Rather, it reflects Makassar's character as a cosmopolitan maritime kingdom that accommodated people of different nationalities and religious beliefs. As *Tumabbicara Butta* and a leading intellectual figure in the kingdom, Karaeng Pattingalloang recognized the importance of maintaining good relations with the Portuguese community, which played a strategic role in international trade, military technology, diplomacy, and Asian maritime information networks.

The Jesuit mission in Makassar further illustrates how the kingdom's rulers accommodated Catholic religious activities within an Islamic political framework. This suggests that Islamization in early seventeenth-century Makassar did not necessarily entail religious exclusivism but coexisted with political pragmatism and maritime commercial interests. The rulers recognized the importance of the Portuguese community to international trade and the kingdom's diplomatic relations.

Sultan Muhammad Said and Sultan Hasanuddin reportedly guaranteed the Portuguese freedom to practice Catholic rites and receive the sacraments. A diplomatic report from the viceroy of Goa in 1638 notes that Makassar's rulers welcomed the Portuguese and allowed them to receive the sacraments without hindrance (Boxer, 1967).

These arrangements suggest not only a degree of religious freedom but also a deliberate form of political accommodation. By permitting religious practices and access to the sacraments, the sultans helped maintain Makassar's position as a relatively safe and accessible international entrepôt for diverse foreign trading communities.

Political accommodation also extended to intellectual exchanges at the palace and within elite diplomatic circles. Fray Domingo Fernandez de Navarrete and Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo were frequent visitors to the palace of Tumabicara Butta Karaeng Karunrung, a learned statesman who owned a library of European books and a collection of Western-made table clocks. During a theological discussion about Islam and the Prophet Muhammad, Vieira, a devout Catholic, openly expressed his doctrinal views. Karaeng Karunrung responded without anger or persecution, demonstrating a willingness to engage with differing religious perspectives. As Boxer records his response: "Do not say so, captain" (Boxer, 1967).

These socioreligious connections also extended to the royal family. One notable example was Francisco Mendes, the royal secretary for Portuguese affairs, who was a knight of the Order of Christ. Mendes, described as a devout Catholic and "a good Christian," was the son of former Gowa ruler Sultan Malikussaid and a local woman (Boxer, 1967). This kinship connection linked the Muslim royal household with the Catholic commercial elite, further integrating the Portuguese community into the political and social structures of Gowa and Tallo.

Outside the palace, everyday interactions between Muslim and Christian communities in seventeenth-century Makassar reflected a considerable degree of social flexibility and openness. Navarrete observed relationships that crossed religious boundaries, including interactions between Christian men and Muslim women and between Muslim men and Christian women (Boxer, 1967). At the

lower levels of port society, domestic female slaves also navigated religious boundaries to pursue their own interests. When disputes arose in the households of Portuguese residents, Christian female slaves sometimes fled to the local Muslim community, reportedly declaring their intention to "go away to the Moors." Some renounced Christianity, using religious conversion as a means of asserting agency and escaping slavery (Boxer, 1967). These accounts suggest that urban life in Makassar before the establishment of VOC control was not characterized by rigid socioreligious segregation alone but also involved negotiated coexistence, cross-cultural relationships, and forms of social mobility.

Alongside the Portuguese, British and Dutch VOC communities were also present in Makassar. In 1613, John Jourdain obtained permission from Sultan Alauddin and Karaeng Matoaya to establish a British trading post in the city. In his notes, Jourdain wrote:

> *"...we were to observe the customs of the country, as the Hollanders and other Christians did..."* (Foster, 1905: 293).

This account suggests that Makassar's rulers required foreign trading communities to observe local customs. Portuguese, English, Dutch, and Asian merchants could conduct trade within the kingdom, provided they complied with its rules and customs. Makassar thus developed not as a port monopolized by a single foreign power but as a multinational trading center connecting diverse international commercial networks.

A VOC report from 1638 further illustrates the competition among foreign trading communities in Makassar:

> "*Onse residentie in Maccassar is den Portugesen, Engelsen ende Deenen geheel teghen de borst ende practiseren, sooveel connen, omme ons aldaer odieus te maecken...*" (Coolhaas, 1960: 669).
> *Meaning: "Our residence in Makassar was deeply resented by the Portuguese, the British, and the Danes, who did their utmost to make us unpopular there."*

This report highlights the intensity of international commercial rivalry in Makassar. The Portuguese, English, Danes, and VOC competed for access to the spice trade and Southeast Asian shipping networks. The rulers of Gowa could use these rivalries to preserve their economic autonomy and strengthen their bargaining position. By allowing multiple trading communities to operate simultaneously, Makassar's rulers sought to avoid dependence on any single foreign power.

The Portuguese Catholic community in seventeenth-century Makassar should therefore be understood not merely as a group of foreign traders but as part of a trans-Asian maritime network linking Malacca, Macao, Goa, the Coromandel Coast, and Manila. Its presence illustrates Makassar's development as a cosmopolitan port where diverse foreign communities could coexist under the protection of the rulers of Gowa and Tallo. In this context, the rulers' open-port policy was a key factor in enabling the Portuguese Catholic community to maintain its presence while reinforcing Makassar's position as one of Southeast Asia's major international ports during the seventeenth century.

The Makassar War, the Decline of the Portuguese Community, and Changes to the Port in the Late Seventeenth Century

Makassar's development as an open international port eventually came into direct conflict with the VOC's interests, particularly its efforts to establish a trade monopoly in the eastern Indonesian archipelago. From the early seventeenth century, the VOC regarded Makassar as a major obstacle to its control of the spice trade because the port continued to accommodate non-VOC traders, including the Portuguese, Malays, English, and other Asian trading groups (Hamid, 2022). From the VOC's perspective, Makassar's open-port policy enabled free trade to flourish,

undermining the Dutch monopoly in the Moluccas.

Tensions between the VOC and Makassar intensified following the fall of Malacca to the VOC in 1641 (Dwidjoatmojo, 1966). Many Portuguese traders and members of Asian Christian communities moved to Makassar, strengthening its position as an alternative trading hub beyond Dutch control. By 1660, when the Portuguese community faced expulsion, the population of Portuguese and Eurasians, together with their supporters and enslaved people, had reportedly reached approximately 2,000. Makassar thus served not only as an economic rival to the VOC but also as a refuge for Portuguese trading networks in Southeast Asia. VOC reports continued to portray Portuguese commercial activities in Makassar as a threat to the Dutch monopoly over the spice trade in the Moluccas.

The conflict between Makassar and the VOC was not simply a commercial dispute; it also reflected competing political and economic principles. Makassar's rulers upheld an open-port policy that allowed merchants from different nations to trade freely. The VOC, by contrast, sought to restrict trade beyond its control and impose a monopoly system. This fundamental difference contributed to the prolonged conflict between the two powers.

The Portuguese Catholic community was also involved in the kingdom's political and military affairs. Many Portuguese served as merchants, interpreters, advisers, weapons makers, and military specialists who contributed to Makassar's defense. The close ties between Makassar's ruling elite and Portuguese networks were particularly evident during the reigns of Sultan Malikussaid and Karaeng Pattingalloang. Both rulers maintained close connections with Portuguese and Spanish networks in Asia. Karaeng Pattingalloang was also known for his fluency in Portuguese and his interest in European knowledge (Hertz, 1966). Manuel Pinto likewise described Karaeng Pattingalloang as a ruler who maintained close relations with the Portuguese community and showed an interest in European science and technology.

These connections heightened the VOC's suspicions about the Portuguese presence in Makassar. The Dutch regarded the Portuguese not merely as foreign merchants but also as members of a network that helped Makassar preserve its political independence. The VOC's concerns were reinforced when, reportedly following Vieira's advice and promises of assistance, the Sultanate of Makassar supported the Moluccan uprising against the VOC between 1651 and 1656. In response, the VOC pursued military action and imposed a naval blockade on Makassar from 1653 to 1656, disrupting the importation of Indian textiles (Boxer, 1967).

The VOC sought to expel the Portuguese community from Makassar even before the outbreak of the main Makassar War (1666–1669) (Abbas et al., 2023). Political and military tensions escalated in 1660, when VOC forces attacked Makassar and captured Panakkukang Castle (see Figure 1). This military defeat pressured the Sultanate of Makassar to negotiate a peace agreement between August and December 1660. One of its principal provisions required the expulsion of Portuguese residents and their followers from Makassar. The following passage appears in a letter from the viceroy of Goa to the Portuguese Crown dated December 29, 1662:

> *"The pressure experienced by the King of Makassar forced him to make peace, with the obligation to expel Francisco Vieira and all the Portuguese from his kingdom. After that, he pretended to comply while strengthening his defenses, with the intention of defending himself if they attacked him again. This king is our friend, and Francisco Vieira is a very loyal servant to His Majesty* (Boxer, 1967)."

Figure 1. The Conquest of Panakkukang Castle near Makassar



Source: https://www.rijksmuseum.nl, accessed June 2026

However, the expulsion clause was not implemented immediately. Sultan Hasanuddin and other palace officials delayed its execution, while Hasanuddin defended the Portuguese community before VOC representatives by arguing that its members had lived peacefully in Makassar for more than 80 years. This reluctance reflected the Portuguese community's established political patronage, commercial contributions, and social integration within Makassar's port society. Nevertheless, mounting diplomatic pressure and the threat of further VOC military action eventually led to the gradual departure of Portuguese residents between 1661 and 1665. Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo, a prominent Portuguese merchant, left Makassar for Larantuka in early 1665 with his family and followers, taking their possessions with them.

The Makassar War intensified during 1666–1669. Two major turning points were the signing of the Bungaya Treaty on November 18, 1667, and the fall of Fort Somba Opu in June 1669 (Muhaeminah, 2016). In this context, the treaty's restrictions on Portuguese and other European traders formalized and extended the expulsion policy initiated under the 1660 agreement. Article 6 of the Bungaya Agreement explicitly required the expulsion of Portuguese residents, their followers, and the English, and prohibited their return for trade or other activities within Makassar's jurisdiction. It also restricted the entry of other European trading powers acting independently or through intermediaries. The relevant provision states:

> *"..... all Portuguese persons and their followers, without exception, found to be under the government of Makassar; and since the English are to be regarded as the principal instigators and the cause of the breaches of the treaties that have been established, the said government shall expel them and all their followers from its jurisdiction at the earliest opportunity, without any of the nations in question or their henchmen being permitted to return to trade or carry out any other activities anywhere within the territory of Makassar, either now or in the future; nor shall they be permitted to remain beyond the latest date of [...]; furthermore, the aforementioned government shall never again permit, authorize, or grant permission to any European nation or anyone acting on their behalf, whoever they may be or whatever their name, without exception, to trade or engage in any other activities anywhere within its territory, either now or in the future"* (Stapel, 1922).

These provisions demonstrate the VOC's efforts to eliminate Portuguese and other competing European commercial influence from Makassar. The expulsion was not merely a political measure; it formed part of a broader Dutch strategy to dismantle the free-trade networks that had previously flourished in the port. By removing the Portuguese and restricting the activities of other European traders, the VOC sought to consolidate its control over trade in the eastern Indonesian archipelago.

The decline of Makassar's maritime power also transformed the character of the port city. Before the VOC's ascendancy, Makassar had functioned as a cosmopolitan center in which diverse communities and international trading networks converged. Portuguese, Malay, Arab, Gujarati, English, Danish, Chinese, Bugis, Javanese, and other merchants participated in its relatively open trading system. Under VOC dominance, however, this system became increasingly restricted and subject to Dutch commercial and political control.

The decline of the Portuguese Catholic community in Makassar must

therefore be understood in the context of broader political and economic changes in Southeast Asia during the late seventeenth century. The Makassar War and the VOC's victory weakened Makassar's maritime power and undermined the open-port system that had supported its multiethnic and multireligious society. The history of the Portuguese Catholic community illustrates how the development of Southeast Asian port cities was shaped by the interaction of international trade, the policies of local rulers, and competition among European colonial powers.

CLOSING

The history of the Portuguese Catholic community in seventeenth-century Makassar demonstrates that the development of this port city was shaped not only by commercial activities but also by the complex interplay of political power, international maritime networks, and socio-religious dynamics. Makassar developed into a cosmopolitan port where diverse foreign communities could live, trade, and practice their religions under the protection of the rulers of Gowa and Tallo. The Portuguese Catholic community thus formed an important part of the Asian trading networks that connected Makassar with Malacca, Macao, India, the Philippines, and the eastern Indonesian archipelago.

Relations between the rulers of Makassar and the Portuguese community illustrate how the kingdom's open-port policy reflected political pragmatism and maritime economic interests. The Islamization of the kingdom did not preclude political accommodation with foreign religious communities. Instead, the rulers' protection of the Portuguese community, provision of land for churches, support for Jesuit missions, and incorporation of Portuguese actors into commercial and political networks reflected a pragmatic approach to maintaining Makassar's position as an international trading center. This flexibility was one of the factors that supported Makassar's cosmopolitan character during the seventeenth century.

However, Makassar's openness eventually came into conflict with the VOC's efforts to establish a trade monopoly in the region. Following the VOC's attack on Panakkukang Castle in 1660, the VOC and the Kingdom of Makassar entered into a peace agreement that included a provision requiring the Portuguese community and its followers to leave Makassar. Although the rulers of Makassar delayed the implementation of this provision, tensions continued to escalate and culminated in the Makassar War (1666–1669). The Bungaya Treaty, signed on November 18, 1667, reaffirmed restrictions on the Portuguese presence and other competing European trading networks. Hostilities continued until the fall of Fort Somba Opu in 1669, marking the defeat of Makassar's resistance to the VOC and consolidating Dutch dominance over the port.

The history of the Portuguese Catholic community therefore reveals how seventeenth-century Makassar served as a crossroads of regional and international networks that shaped its cosmopolitan character. The community's significance extended beyond international commerce: its relations with the local rulers also illustrate how political authorities in the Indonesian archipelago engaged with foreign communities to advance their economic and political interests amid competition among European colonial powers.

This study is limited by its reliance on colonial archival materials and European travel accounts, which provide only a partial perspective on the experiences of the Portuguese Catholic community, particularly its lower-status members. Further research could address this limitation through microhistorical investigations of ecclesiastical archives in Goa and Lisbon, complemented by

archaeological research at the Borrobos settlement. Such research could provide a more detailed understanding of the material conditions and everyday lives of the Portuguese and Eurasian population in Makassar.

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