

Social-cultural impacts of Bugis-Makassar diaspora in Malaysia (1666–1669)

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Abstract

This study examines the Bugis–Makassar diaspora in the Malay Peninsula during 1666–1669 and its role in shaping sociocultural relations in Southeast Asia. This study aims to identify the historical factors driving migration, describe patterns of settlement and social interaction, and analyze the long-term socio-cultural impacts of the diaspora. Using a qualitative historical approach based on archival and documentary analysis, the findings show that Bugis–Makassar migrants established extensive settlements and maritime trade networks in regions such as Johor, Selangor, Kedah, and Riau. The interaction between Bugis migrants and local Malay communities encouraged adaptation, intermarriage, and cultural acculturation, contributing to the emergence of hybrid Bugis–Malay identities. The diaspora also played an important role in regional economic activities through maritime trade and interregional commerce. In the long term, these migration processes contributed to the formation of enduring socio-cultural relations between Indonesia and Malaysia, as reflected in the continuity of Bugis cultural traditions, language, and kinship networks within diaspora communities. This study highlights the Bugis–Makassar diaspora as a form of transnational sociocultural connectivity that contributed to regional integration within the historical Malay world.

Abstrak

Dampak sosial-budaya diaspora Bugis-Makassar di Malaysia (1666–1669)

Penelitian ini mengkaji diaspora Bugis–Makassar di Semenanjung Melayu pada periode 1666–1669 serta perannya dalam membentuk relasi sosial-budaya di Asia Tenggara. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor historis yang mendorong migrasi, mendeskripsikan pola permukiman dan interaksi sosial yang terbentuk, serta menganalisis dampak sosial-budaya jangka panjang dari diaspora tersebut. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif historis berbasis analisis arsip dan dokumen sejarah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa migran Bugis–Makassar membentuk jaringan permukiman dan perdagangan maritim yang luas di wilayah Johor, Selangor, Kedah, dan Riau. Interaksi antara migran Bugis dengan masyarakat Melayu lokal mendorong proses adaptasi, perkawinan campuran, dan akulturasi budaya yang berkontribusi pada terbentuknya identitas hibrida Bugis–Melayu. Diaspora ini juga berperan penting dalam aktivitas ekonomi regional melalui perdagangan maritim dan jaringan perdagangan antardaerah. Dalam jangka panjang, proses migrasi tersebut menghasilkan hubungan sosial-budaya yang berkelanjutan antara Indonesia dan Malaysia, yang tercermin dalam keberlanjutan tradisi budaya, bahasa, dan jaringan kekerabatan Bugis dalam komunitas diaspora. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa diaspora Bugis–Makassar merupakan bentuk konektivitas sosial-budaya transnasional yang berkontribusi terhadap integrasi regional dalam dunia Melayu historis.

Kata Kunci:

Diaspora Bugis–Makassar; Malaysia; migrasi; interaksi sosial; pertukaran budaya

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1 Introduction

The migration of the Bugis–Makassar people represents one of the largest mobility phenomena in the history of Nusantara and Southeast Asia (Mukrimin, 2019; Pelras, 1996). Since the seventeenth century, communities originating from Bone, Wajo, Luwu, Soppeng, and Sidenreng have undertaken large-scale movements driven by the weakening of royal political structures, reduction of agricultural land, and escalation of internal conflicts (Hendraswati et al., 2017; Setiyanto, 2019). During this period, the term “Bugis” was generically used by host regions to refer to anyone arriving from South Sulawesi, without strict distinctions between Bugis, Makassar, or Mandar groups, reflecting the strong influence of these migrant communities across various destination areas (Abidin 1983; Rahmawati 2020).

From the perspective of mobility studies, migration should not be understood merely as physical relocation but as a dynamic process involving the circulation of people, identities, economic practices, and socio-cultural values across interconnected regions (Mansyur, 2016). Historically, maritime mobility in Southeast Asia has enabled the formation of transregional networks linking ports, kingdoms, and trading communities (Andaya, 2008). In this context, Bugis–Makassar migration can be viewed as part of a broader transnational maritime system that connected South Sulawesi with the Malay Peninsula and other parts of Nusantara.

Beyond material factors, Bugis–Makassar mobility was also shaped by cultural values, particularly the concept of *siri'*, which emphasizes honor, dignity, and moral integrity as fundamental principles guiding social behavior (Idrus, 2014; Ridho & Nugraha, 2024). When personal or collective honor was perceived to be threatened, migration was regarded as a legitimate strategy for preserving social identity and communal continuity (Jamaluddin, 2018; Mattulada 1982). Traditional historiographical sources such as *I La Galigo* indicate that Bugis seafaring traditions long predated the Islamic period, suggesting that maritime movement had already become an integral aspect of Bugis cultural identity (Kern, 1993). These cultural foundations reinforce the argument that Bugis–Makassar migration was not solely economically motivated but also embedded within deeply rooted sociocultural and moral structures (Salsabila & Baharuddin, 2025).

The Gowa War (1666–1669) marked a critical turning point that accelerated large-scale migration in South Sulawesi. The defeat of the Gowa–Tallo Kingdom by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) resulted in political collapse, economic restrictions, forced labor, looting, and increasing social insecurity (Gonggong 1992, pp. 78–79). Consequently, nobles, merchants, warriors, and ordinary people migrated to safer regions in search of political stability and economic opportunities. Owing to its geographical proximity and strategic maritime position, the Malay Peninsula emerged as one of the primary destinations for Bugis–Makassar migrants.

Subsequently, Bugis–Makassar communities established settlements in Johor, Selangor, Kedah, and Riau, where they became influential actors in local political and economic structures. Their maritime expertise, trading networks, and kinship-based leadership systems enabled them to integrate into Malay society while simultaneously preserving important elements of their cultural identities. Intensive interaction between migrants and local communities encouraged adaptation, acculturation, and intermarriage, resulting in the emergence of hybrid Bugis–Malay identities that persisted across generations. In this sense, the Bugis–Makassar diaspora can be understood not merely as population displacement but as a process of transnational sociocultural formation that reshaped regional relationships within the Malay world.

Recent studies have explored various aspects of Bugis–Makassar migration and the diaspora (Salim, 2024; Sari, 2023). Mukrimin (2019) examines contemporary Bugis migration as part of ongoing mobility traditions, while Koh (2017) analyzes maritime mobility and diaspora networks within the eighteenth-century Malay world. Salim (2023) discusses Bugis diaspora diplomacy,

alliance, and assimilation in the Malay Peninsula during the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. Other studies have focused on Bugis migration in specific regions, such as Bengkulu (Setiyanto, 2019) and Pagatan (Hendraswati et al., 2017), emphasizing issues of cultural resilience and migrant adaptation. Classical works by Pelras (1996) Pelras (1996) and Andaya (2008, 2015) provide important historical insights into Bugis society, maritime trade, and political transformation in South Sulawesi.

Although these studies have contributed significantly to our understanding of Bugis–Makassar migration, they have several limitations. Existing scholarship tends to emphasize political history, maritime trade, or contemporary diaspora identity, while relatively little attention has been paid to the formative phase of migration during the Gowa War period (1666–1669). Furthermore, few studies have integrated migration drivers, settlement formation, sociocultural interactions, and long-term transnational impacts within a single analytical framework. The early Bugis–Makassar diaspora in the Malay Peninsula remains underexplored, particularly when examined from the perspectives of diaspora theory, transnationalism, and socio-cultural mobility.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to:

- (1) analyze the historical factors that drove Bugis–Makassar migration to Malaysia during 1666–1669;
- (2) identify the patterns of social and cultural interaction between the diaspora and local communities; and
- (3) evaluate the long-term influence of the diaspora on sociocultural relations within the Nusantara region.

Through this approach, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the diaspora as an agent of sociocultural transformation and a foundational element in the historical relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia.

2 Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design with a historical and descriptive-analytical approach. This study focuses on reconstructing the historical processes of Bugis–Makassar migration to the Malay Peninsula during 1666–1669 and examining the socio-cultural dynamics that emerged from these movements. The historical approach is used to investigate the political, economic, and cultural contexts underlying migration, while the descriptive-analytical approach enables the interpretation of patterns of settlement, social interaction, economic activity, and cultural adaptation within the diaspora communities.

This research relies on library research and documentary analysis, utilizing both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include colonial archives, historical manuscripts, royal correspondence, travel accounts, and administrative reports related to South Sulawesi and the Malay world in the seventeenth century. These sources include VOC archival materials, *Koloniaal Verslag*, Bugis manuscripts such as *Lontaraq* and *I La Galigo*, and historical records concerning the Gowa War and Bugis maritime activities. Additional primary materials were obtained from published historical compilations, ethnographic records, and early colonial reports documenting Bugis–Makassar settlements and the trading networks in the Malay Peninsula. Secondary sources consist of scholarly books, journal articles, dissertations, and previous studies discussing Bugis–Makassar migration, the diaspora, maritime trade, transnational networks, and socio-cultural relations between Indonesia and Malaysia.

The source selection was conducted based on several criteria. First, sources were chosen according to their relevance to the research focus, particularly those discussing migration during or immediately after the Gowa War period. Second, the authenticity and historical credibility of the

sources were carefully evaluated through source criticism, including authorship verification, publication background, temporal proximity to historical events, and consistency across different records. Third, a cross-source comparison was applied to minimize historical bias and improve interpretive reliability, especially when dealing with colonial narratives and local historiographical traditions. Sources providing detailed information on migration routes, settlement formation, political relations, trade networks, and sociocultural interactions were prioritized in the analytical process.

Data analysis followed the four stages commonly applied in historical research: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The heuristic stage involved the identification, collection, and classification of relevant historical documents and scholarly materials. Source criticism was subsequently conducted to examine the validity, authenticity, and reliability of the collected data both externally and internally. External criticism focuses on verifying the originality and historical context of documents, whereas internal criticism evaluates the credibility, perspective, and consistency of the information contained within the sources.

The interpretation stage employed thematic historical analysis to identify recurring themes and sociocultural patterns emerging from the historical data. Several analytical themes were developed, including migration drivers, settlement distribution, maritime trade networks, social adaptation, cultural assimilation, kinship structures and cross-border socio-cultural relations. Through this thematic approach, historical data were interpreted not merely as isolated events but as interconnected processes contributing to the formation of transregional Bugis–Makassar diaspora networks in Southeast Asia.

The final stage, historiography, involved constructing a coherent chronological historical narrative based on the analytical findings. This process integrated empirical historical evidence with perspectives from diaspora studies, transnationalism, and mobility studies to provide a broader interpretation of the Bugis–Makassar diaspora as a sociocultural and transregional phenomenon. Through these stages, this study seeks to produce a comprehensive historical reconstruction and nuanced interpretation of the role of the Bugis–Makassar diaspora in shaping sociocultural networks in the Malay Peninsula.

3 Result

3.1 Spatial Distribution of the Bugis–Makassar Diaspora

Historical records indicate that the Bugis–Makassar diaspora developed an extensive spatial distribution across various regions of Nusantara and the Malay Peninsula following the major migration wave of 1666–1669. Bugis–Makassar settlements were established in numerous coastal and trading regions that functioned as important maritime centers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These settlements are distributed across the western, central, and eastern parts of the Indonesian archipelago, reflecting the broad mobility of Bugis–Makassar migrant communities (Acciaoli, 1989; Pelras, 1996).

Bugis–Makassar communities are found in Bengkulu and the Riau Archipelago in western Indonesia. In Kalimantan, settlements emerged in Pontianak and Mempawah in West Kalimantan, as well as in Pegatan, Kutai, Samarinda, and Bulungan in East Kalimantan (Koloniaal Verslag, 1899). Additional settlements were recorded in Donggala, Banawa, and Kaili in Central Sulawesi, while in Southeast Sulawesi, Bugis–Makassar communities occupied several coastal areas, including Kolaka, Posilui, Lassua, Lapao-Pao, and Wolo (Pelras, 1996). Their presence extended to Sumbawa, Flores, Ende, and Bali, regions that later became important areas of Bugis maritime trade and settlement activity (Parimarta, 2002; Salim, 2023).

The distribution of Bugis–Makassar migrants was also evident in Java, particularly in Surabaya, Gresik, Madura, Batavia, and Kamal Muara in Jakarta. These areas developed into significant centers

of Bugis migration and interaction with local communities from the eighteenth century onward (Heriyanti et al., 2020). Most of these settlements were located in coastal regions and near major ports, indicating a close relationship between migration patterns and maritime commercial routes.

Within the Malay Peninsula, the principal centers of Bugis–Makassar settlement were in Johor, Selangor, Kedah, and Riau (Andaya, 2004a; Rahim, 1985). Historical records show that Bugis communities established long-term settlements in these regions and became involved in political and economic activities in local Malay kingdoms. Several Bugis figures occupied influential positions in the Sultanates of Johor–Riau and Selangor, while Bugis traders actively participated in regional maritime commerce involving spices, forest products, tin, and other commodities (Koh, 2017).

The settlement pattern of the Bugis–Makassar diaspora generally followed strategic coastal zones and major maritime trading routes in the archipelago. Ports and coastal settlements functioned as centers of economic exchange, social interaction, and interregional mobility, connecting South Sulawesi with the Malay Peninsula and other parts of Nusantara. Historical evidence shows that migration routes were closely linked to maritime networks extending from Makassar to Kalimantan, Java, Nusa Tenggara, and the Malay world (Andaya, 2008; Lineton, 1975).

These settlements gradually developed into interconnected diaspora communities characterized by continuous mobility, trade, and social interaction across regions. The widespread geographical distribution of the Bugis–Makassar diaspora demonstrates the extensive reach of Bugis maritime mobility in Southeast Asia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

3.2 Historical and Cultural Factors Driving Migration

Historical evidence indicates that the large-scale migration of the Bugis–Makassar people during 1666–1669 was closely related to major political, economic, and social changes in South Sulawesi. One of the most significant events influencing this migration was the Gowa War (1666–1669), a conflict between the Gowa and Tallo Kingdom and the Dutch East India Company (VOC), allied with Arung Palakka and Bone forces (Andaya, 2004b, 2015). The defeat of Gowa resulted in the weakening of traditional political authority and the restructuring of regional power relations in South-Sulawesi.

Following the war, the VOC expanded its political and economic control of the region. Colonial intervention introduced new restrictions on trade and maritime activity, particularly through the monopolization of strategic commodities and the tighter supervision of regional commerce. Historical accounts also record the emergence of forced labor practices, taxation pressures, looting, and declining security conditions affecting Bugis–Makassar communities during the post-war period (Gonggong, 1992). These conditions have disrupted agricultural production, weakened local economies, and reduced social stability in many areas of South Sulawesi.

The collapse or weakening of several traditional political structures further contributed to the migration movements. Nobles, merchants, warriors, and followers associated with the former royal centers lost political influence and economic security after the war. In response, many groups migrated to other regions of Nusantara and the Malay Peninsula to establish new settlements and trading networks (Pelras, 1996; Robinson, 2014). Historical records indicate that members of Bugis aristocratic groups frequently migrated with followers and relatives under organized leadership structures.

In addition to political and economic pressures, cultural factors have played an important role in motivating migration. One of the central cultural values associated with Bugis society is *siri'*, a concept related to honor, dignity, and social self-worth (Mattulada, 1995). Historical sources describe *siri'* as a moral principle that influences social behavior and communal decisions, including migration.

In situations where political defeat, social humiliation, or loss of status threatened communal dignity, migration was often undertaken to preserve honor and maintain collective continuity.

Migration movements were particularly visible in Wajo, which became one of the major centers of Bugis mobility during the late seventeenth century. Historical records note that the defeat of Tosora in 1670, followed by famine and crop failure in 1671, encouraged large numbers of Wajo traders and seafarers to migrate to other regions, including Kalimantan, Makassar, Mandar, and the Malay Peninsula (Kesuma, 2004; Lineton, 1975). These migrations were conducted through organized maritime voyages led by selected community leaders or *matoa*, who coordinated settlement formation and trading activities in destination areas (Van der Klif n.d.).

The available historical evidence shows that Bugis–Makassar migration during the seventeenth century emerged within a broader context of warfare, political transformation, economic disruption, environmental hardship, and social instability. These conditions collectively contributed to the expansion of Bugis–Makassar mobility across Nusantara and the Malay Peninsula during and after the Gowa War period.

3.3 Patterns of Social Adaptation and Cultural Acculturation

Historical records indicate that Bugis–Makassar migrants who arrived in the Malay Peninsula established settlements that gradually developed into centers of social interaction, trade, and cultural exchange. These settlements were primarily located in coastal regions such as Johor, Selangor, Kedah, and Riau, which functioned as major maritime and commercial hubs during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Andaya, 2004b; Rahim, 1985). The close proximity between Bugis and Makassar settlements and local Malay communities facilitated sustained patterns of interaction in everyday social and economic activities in the region.

One of the most visible forms of social adaptation was intermarriage between Bugis and Makassar migrants and the local Malay population. Historical and ethnographic accounts describe the emergence of mixed Bugis–Malay families across several regions of the Malay Peninsula (Pelras 1996). Through these intermarriages, social relations between migrant and host communities became increasingly integrated, particularly within kinship structures, customary practices, and local social organizations.

Cultural assimilation also occurred through the adoption and adjustment of local customs and traditions. Bugis–Makassar communities have maintained several ancestral cultural practices while simultaneously adapting to Malay sociocultural environments. This interaction has influenced various aspects of social life, including marriage ceremonies, language use, dress, social etiquette, and communal traditions (Rahim, 1985; Pelras, 1996). Historical records further indicate that cultural exchange has occurred gradually through continuous settlement interactions and intergenerational social contact.

Bugis–Makassar migrants also gained political acceptance in several Malay kingdoms. In Johor–Riau and Selangor, Bugis figures occupied influential positions within royal political structures and actively participated in regional governance (Andaya 2004a; Rahim 1985). Their involvement included military cooperation, political alliances, and participation in trade administration and maritime security activities. The integration of Bugis elites into Malay political systems contributed to the establishment of long-term relations between Bugis migrant communities and local rulers.

Interactions within settlement areas also encourage the formation of collaborative social environments involving migrants and local populations. Historical evidence shows that Bugis–Makassar communities participated in trade activities, agricultural production, maritime transportation, and local economic networks alongside Malay, Arab, Chinese, and other regional

groups (Parimartha 2002). Ports and coastal settlements became important spaces for continuous social interaction, cultural exchange, and economic cooperation.

The available historical evidence demonstrates that the adaptation of Bugis–Makassar migrants to the Malay Peninsula involved multiple forms of interaction, including intermarriage, assimilation, political participation, and settlement-based social relations. These processes contributed to the development of interconnected socio-cultural communities within the broader maritime world of Southeast Asia.

3.4 Trade and the Economic Role of Diaspora

Historical sources indicate that the Bugis–Makassar diaspora played a significant role in economic activities across the Malay Peninsula and other Nusantara regions. Economic involvement was particularly visible in maritime trade, agricultural production, and the establishment of regional trading networks connecting major Southeast Asian ports (Pelras, 1996; Andaya, 1995).

Bugis–Makassar traders were actively involved in the exchange of various commodities, including rice, salt, pepper, cloves, nutmeg, coffee, tobacco, forest products, and other marine resources. Historical accounts also record the circulation of high-value goods such as woven textiles, porcelain, iron tools, firearms, and gunpowder through Bugis trading networks (Sani 2020). These commodities were transported through maritime routes linking South Sulawesi with Johor, Selangor, Kedah, Riau, Kalimantan, Java, and the eastern Indonesian regions.

Maritime trade is one of the primary economic activities of Bugis–Makassar migrant communities. Settlements were generally established near ports, coastal trading centers, and strategic shipping routes. Historical records show that Bugis–Makassar traders regularly operated inter-island trading voyages using traditional maritime vessels and navigational knowledge developed through long-standing seafaring traditions (Lineton 1975; Pelras 2006). Ports in Johor, Riau, and Selangor functioned as important commercial centers where Bugis traders interacted with Malay, Chinese, Arab, Javanese, Banjar, and Madurese merchants.

In addition to trade, Bugis–Makassar communities were involved in agriculture and plantation activities in several settlement areas. Historical evidence indicates that migrants opened rice fields, coconut plantations, and other agricultural lands to support local economic production and meet regional market demands (Pelras 2006). Agricultural activities are often organized collectively under the coordination of customary leaders or aristocratic figures who provide land access, labor organization, equipment, and logistical support for migrant communities.

Commercial interactions between Bugis and Makassar communities and other regional groups contributed to the development of interconnected economic sectors across the coastal regions of the Malay world. Trading activities included the distribution of agricultural products, maritime commodities, forest resources, and imported goods through regional port networks (Parimartha 2002). Economic cooperation between Bugis traders and local communities also supported the growth of port settlements and commercial exchanges in several parts of the Malay Peninsula.

Historical records further show that Bugis–Makassar economic activities were supported by extensive trading networks across Nusantara and Southeast Asia. Maritime routes connected Makassar with Kalimantan, Java, Bali, Nusa Tenggara, the Malay Peninsula, and surrounding islands, enabling the continuous movement of goods, people, and commercial information (Andaya 2008). These networks facilitated long-distance trade and strengthened the position of Bugis–Makassar communities in regional maritime commerce during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The available evidence demonstrates that trade, agriculture, plantation activities, and maritime commerce were important components of Bugis–Makassar diasporic life. Through these economic

activities, Bugis–Makassar communities became actively involved in regional commercial systems and coastal economic development throughout the Malay world.

3.5 Cross-Border Socio-Cultural Networks

Historical evidence indicates that the Bugis–Makassar diaspora developed extensive cross-border sociocultural networks connecting South Sulawesi with various regions of Nusantara and the Malay Peninsula. These networks were sustained through kinship relations, maritime mobility, trade, and continuous interaction among dispersed migrant communities (Lineton, 1975; Andaya, 2008).

Kinship plays an important role in maintaining connections between Bugis and Makassar communities across different regions. Migrant groups frequently traveled and settled with their relatives, followers, and members of the same social networks. Historical accounts describe how Bugis nobles, merchants, and community leaders migrated with family members and loyal followers to establish settlements in the coastal regions of Kalimantan, the Malay Peninsula, Java, Bali, and eastern Indonesia (Pelras, 1996). These kinship ties facilitated communication, economic cooperation, and mutual support between settlements separated by long maritime distances in the Caribbean.

Leadership structures also contribute significantly to the organization of diaspora communities. Historical records mention the role of *matoa* and aristocratic leaders who coordinated migration voyages, settlement formation, trade activities, and social organization within the migrant communities (Rahmat, 2019). In several regions, Bugis leaders acted as intermediaries between migrant groups and local authorities, particularly within Malay kingdoms such as Johor–Riau and Selangor (Omar et al. 2012). Leadership systems based on customary authority and kinship relations enable diaspora communities to maintain internal cohesion while adapting to new social environments.

The mobility routes used by Bugis–Makassar migrants followed major maritime pathways connecting Makassar with Kalimantan, Java, Bali, Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, and the Malay Peninsula (Andaya, 2008; Lineton 1975). These routes supported continuous population movement, commodity exchange, and social interactions among migrant settlements. Ports and coastal centers functioned as strategic points linking regional trade networks and facilitating communication between dispersed Bugis and Makassar communities.

Maritime connectivity is the foundation of these interregional networks. Historical evidence shows that the Bugis–Makassar communities relied heavily on maritime transportation and navigational knowledge to maintain regular contact between settlements. Commercial voyages and inter-island travel enabled the circulation of goods, cultural practices, information, and social relations across different parts of Southeast Asia (Pelras, 2006). Maritime connections also supported the expansion of Bugis trading activities and the development of settlements in coastal regions.

Interregional interactions occurred continuously through trade, migration, political cooperation, and social exchange involving Bugis–Makassar communities and other regional groups, including Malays, Chinese, Arabs, Banjar, Javanese, and Madurese populations (Parimarta, 2002; Acciaioli, 2010). Historical records further indicate that these interactions contributed to the formation of interconnected coastal societies characterized by mobility and long-distance relations.

The available historical evidence demonstrates that the Bugis–Makassar diaspora communities maintained extensive sociocultural networks across regional boundaries through kinship structures, leadership systems, maritime mobility, and sustained interregional interaction. These networks linked settlements throughout Nusantara and the Malay Peninsula during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

3.6 Long-Term Socio-Cultural Impact

Historical records and ethnographic accounts indicate that the Bugis–Makassar diaspora had long-term sociocultural impacts in various regions of the Malay Peninsula and Nusantara. One of the most visible outcomes was the continuity of Bugis identity among descendant communities established in Johor, Selangor, Riau, and other coastal areas since the seventeenth century (Pelras 1996; Rahim 1985).

The continuity of Bugis identity can be observed through the preservation of oral traditions, kinship systems, and collective historical memories within diaspora communities. Several Bugis descendant groups have maintained genealogical narratives, migration stories, and ancestral histories associated with South Sulawesi origins across generations (Andaya, 2008). Oral transmission remains an important mechanism for preserving communal identity and maintaining social ties between diaspora settlements and ancestral homelands.

Language use has also become an important element in sustaining socio-cultural continuity. Historical and ethnographic evidence indicates that Bugis language varieties continue to be used within certain migrant communities and family environments in the Malay Peninsula, particularly among older generations and within customary contexts (Anuardin & Syed Jaafar, 2022; Sunarti et al., 2022; Sutherland, 2001). In several regions, bilingual or mixed linguistic practices have developed through interactions between Bugis and Malay communities over long periods of coexistence.

Customary practices originating from South Sulawesi were maintained within diaspora settlements. These include marriage customs, kinship obligations, traditional ceremonies, and social values associated with Bugis cultural traditions, such as *siri'* (Mattulada, 1995; Pelras, 1996). Historical records indicate that some of these practices were preserved while simultaneously adapting to local Malay sociocultural environments through gradual interaction and intermarriage.

The establishment of enduring settlements further contributed to the long-term continuity of Bugis–Makassar communities in the Malay world. Historical evidence confirms the sustained existence of Bugis settlements and social structures in Johor, Selangor, Riau, and the surrounding coastal regions from the eighteenth century onward (Heriyanti et al., 2020). These settlements functioned as centers of social organization, economic activity, and cultural continuity for descendant communities over several generations.

Long-term interactions between Bugis and Makassar migrants and local populations also contributed to the formation of mixed sociocultural communities within the Malay Peninsula. Intermarriage, settlement interaction, and participation in regional political and economic systems facilitated the emergence of interconnected social environments linking Bugis and Malay communities (Rahim 1985). Historical evidence further shows that the descendants of Bugis migrants continue to participate actively in local social and political life in several regions of Malaysia.

The available historical evidence demonstrates that the Bugis–Makassar diaspora generated enduring sociocultural impacts through the preservation of identity, oral traditions, language practices, customary institutions, and long-standing settlements across the Malay world. These continuities remained visible in several diaspora communities long after the initial migration period in the seventeenth century.

4 Discussion

4.1 Diaspora as a Socio-Cultural Infrastructure

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Bugis–Makassar diaspora in the seventeenth century cannot be understood merely as a process of population displacement caused by wars and political instability. Rather, the diaspora functioned as a sociocultural infrastructure that enabled the

formation of interconnected social, economic, and cultural networks across the Nusantara and the Malay Peninsula. The widespread establishment of Bugis–Makassar settlements in coastal trading centers indicates that migration was accompanied by the development of durable systems of interaction linking dispersed communities through kinship, trade, leadership, and mobility.

From the perspective of diaspora theory, migration involves more than territorial movement; it includes the maintenance of social relations, collective identity, and transregional connectivity across geographical boundaries (Cohen, 2008). In the case of the Bugis–Makassar diaspora, migrant communities have preserved social cohesion through kinship structures, customary authority, and shared cultural values such as *siri'*. These elements enabled dispersed settlements to remain socially connected despite being distributed across different political and maritime regions.

The findings also reflect what Vertovec (1999) describes as transnational social formations, in which migrant communities sustain multiple forms of interaction that transcend local territorial boundaries. The Bugis–Makassar diaspora maintained continuous relations among settlements through maritime trade, inter-island mobility, family networks and political cooperation. These networks connected South Sulawesi with Johor, Selangor, Riau, Kalimantan, Java, and eastern Indonesian regions, creating an integrated sociocultural sphere within the broader Malay world.

In this context, the Bugis–Makassar diaspora can be interpreted as a form of sociocultural infrastructure operating through interconnected maritime settlements and long-distance social relations. Ports and coastal settlements functioned not only as economic centers but also as spaces for cultural transmission, political negotiations, and communal organization. Through these networks, migrants circulate commodities, cultural practices, oral traditions, language, and social values across regional boundaries.

The findings further indicate that diaspora communities can reconstruct social order beyond their homeland. The preservation of leadership systems, kinship structures, customary practices, and communal identity within overseas settlements demonstrates the ability of Bugis–Makassar migrants to reproduce socio-cultural continuity in new environments. This pattern supports broader arguments within mobility studies that migration should be understood as an ongoing process of social reproduction and network formation, rather than a single act of relocation.

Moreover, the Bugis–Makassar case illustrates how maritime diaspora communities contributed to the development of regional integration in Southeast Asia long before modern nation-state boundaries emerged. Sustained interaction among diaspora settlements facilitated economic exchange, cultural interaction, and political alliances across Nusantara and the Malay Peninsula. Therefore, the diaspora functioned not only as a migrant community but also as an active agent shaping sociocultural connectivity within the maritime world of Southeast Asia.

4.2 Transnational Maritime Networks in Southeast Asia

The findings reveal that the Bugis–Makassar diaspora developed within an extensive system of transnational maritime networks connecting various regions of Nusantara and the Malay Peninsula. Migration routes linking Makassar, Kalimantan, Java, Bali, Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, Johor, Selangor, Kedah, and Riau demonstrate that Bugis–Makassar mobility operated through interconnected maritime corridors rather than isolated local movements. These routes enabled the continuous circulation of people, commodities, information, and cultural practices across regional boundaries.

From the perspective of mobility studies, maritime movement in Southeast Asia has historically functioned as a mechanism for sustaining regional interaction and connectivity. The Bugis–Makassar diaspora exemplifies this pattern through the establishment of port-to-port networks that connect coastal settlements and trading centers throughout the Malay world. Ports were not merely

commercial locations; they also served as spaces for social interaction, political negotiation, migration coordination, and cultural exchange among diverse ethnic and regional communities.

The circulation of goods was one of the most important components of these maritime networks. Bugis–Makassar traders transported commodities such as rice, spices, forest products, marine resources, textiles, and metal goods through inter-island trade routes. These trade activities linked production centers, coastal settlements and regional markets across Southeast Asia. Simultaneously, maritime routes facilitated the movement of migrants, aristocrats, sailors, traders, and laborers, who contributed to the expansion of Bugis–Makassar settlements in various regions.

The findings further indicate that maritime connectivity supports the maintenance of long-distance kinship and sociopolitical relations among diaspora communities. Regular voyages between settlements enabled continuous communication, the exchange of resources, and the preservation of collective identity despite geographical separation. This pattern reflects transnational forms of mobility, in which social relations extend beyond single territorial or political units and remain embedded within interconnected maritime spaces.

The Bugis–Makassar diaspora also contributed to the broader processes of integration within the Malay world. Continuous interaction among the Bugis, Malays, Arabs, Chinese, Banjar, Javanese, and other maritime communities facilitated the formation of interconnected regional societies characterized by economic interdependence and cultural exchange. The existence of shared trading networks, mixed settlements, and political cooperation across coastal regions indicates that the maritime world of Southeast Asia operated through highly mobile and interconnected social systems.

In this context, the Bugis–Makassar diaspora can be understood as part of a wider transnational maritime order that shaped the regional dynamics of premodern Southeast Asia. Their mobility patterns demonstrate that maritime societies in the region were connected through flexible networks of trade, migration, kinship, and political alliances long before modern national boundaries were established. The Bugis–Makassar case highlights the importance of maritime connectivity in understanding the historical processes of regional integration within the Malay world and Southeast Asia.

4.3 Hybrid Identity Formation and Cultural Continuity

The findings indicate that the long-term interaction between Bugis and Makassar migrants and local Malay communities contributed to the formation of hybrid sociocultural identities within the Malay Peninsula. Intermarriage, settlement interaction, political cooperation, and economic integration enabled the emergence of Bugis–Malay communities that combined elements of both cultural traditions. This hybridity is evident in language practices, kinship systems, customary ceremonies, social values, and everyday cultural interactions within diaspora settlements.

From the perspective of hybridity theory, cultural identity within diaspora communities is not static or fixed but is continuously shaped through interaction, negotiation, and adaptation across different sociocultural environments. The Bugis–Makassar diaspora illustrates how migrant communities adapt to local Malay contexts while simultaneously preserving important aspects of their ancestral identity. Rather than experiencing complete assimilation, Bugis–Makassar migrants maintained cultural continuity through the preservation of oral traditions, customary leadership, kinship obligations, and values such as *siri*'.

The findings further demonstrate that adaptation did not necessarily result in the disappearance of Bugis identity. Instead, Bugis cultural elements have continued to coexist with Malay cultural practices across generations. The continued use of Bugis genealogical narratives, customary traditions, and family based social organizations within several diaspora communities indicates the persistence of collective cultural memory despite prolonged settlement outside South Sulawesi. This

pattern reflects a form of negotiated adaptation in which migrants are integrated into the local society while retaining symbolic and social connections to their cultural origins.

Hybrid Bugis–Malay identity also developed through political and social participation within Malay kingdoms and coastal societies. The involvement of Bugis elites in regional governance structures contributed to the incorporation of Bugis cultural influences into local political and social systems. Over time, these interactions produced sociocultural environments characterized by overlapping identities and shared traditions between the Bugis and Malay communities.

The Bugis–Makassar case supports broader arguments in diaspora and transnational studies that migrant identity is often reproduced through processes of cultural continuity rather than through complete cultural replacement. Diaspora communities may adapt to new environments while simultaneously maintaining transgenerational attachment to language, customs, ancestry, and collective historical memory. In this sense, hybridity should not be understood as the disappearance of the original identity, but as the emergence of new socio-cultural forms resulting from sustained intercultural interaction.

Furthermore, the continuity of Bugis identity in Malaysia demonstrates how maritime diaspora communities can preserve long-term cultural cohesion despite geographical displacement. The persistence of Bugis cultural elements within diaspora settlements illustrates the role of migration networks, kinship systems, and communal institutions in sustaining cultural continuity across regional boundaries in the Philippines. The Bugis–Makassar diaspora, therefore, represents not only a process of adaptation but also a mechanism for reproducing collective identity within the broader sociocultural landscape of the Malay world.

4.4 The Bugis–Makassar Diaspora in the Broader Southeast Asian Context

The findings of this study position the Bugis–Makassar diaspora as an important component of the broader historical processes shaping mobility, regional interaction, and sociocultural integration in Southeast Asia. The extensive migration routes connecting South Sulawesi with the Malay Peninsula, Kalimantan, Java, Bali, and eastern Indonesia demonstrate that maritime mobility has long functioned as a defining characteristic of the Southeast Asian world. In this context, the Bugis–Makassar diaspora formed part of a larger regional system in which ports, coastal settlements, and maritime trade routes connected diverse communities across political and geographical boundaries of the region.

The Bugis–Makassar case contributes to the understanding of Southeast Asian mobility history by illustrating how migration operated through flexible maritime networks rather than through fixed territorial structures. Unlike modern migration systems shaped by nation-state borders, Bugis–Makassar mobility is embedded within interconnected coastal societies linked through commerce, kinship, political alliances, and cultural exchange. These findings support arguments in Southeast Asian historiography that maritime Southeast Asia has historically functioned as a fluid and highly connected socio-economic region.

Within a comparative diaspora context, the Bugis–Makassar diaspora shares characteristics with other maritime diasporas in Asia, particularly in terms of mobility, trade orientation, kinship-based organizations, and long-distance social connectivity. However, the Bugis–Makassar experience also demonstrates distinctive features rooted in Bugis cultural values, especially the importance of *siri'*, customary leadership, and maritime traditions in sustaining migrant communities across generations. The preservation of collective identity alongside adaptation to local environments reflects the capacity of maritime diaspora communities to maintain cultural continuity in transregional settings.

These findings further highlight the Bugis–Makassar diaspora's contribution to regional integration within the Malay world. The continuous interaction between Bugis migrants and Malay

societies facilitated the circulation of commodities, social values, political influence, and cultural practices across Nusantara and the Malay Peninsula. Through trade, intermarriage, and political cooperation, Bugis–Makassar communities were integrated into broader regional structures that connected multiple coastal societies in Southeast Asia.

The Bugis–Makassar diaspora represents an important historical foundation for the long-standing sociocultural connections between Indonesia and Malaysia. Shared cultural traditions, kinship ties, language practices, and collective historical memories established through migration have contributed to the enduring relationships between Bugis descendant communities in Malaysia and their ancestral connections in Indonesia. The persistence of these cross-border cultural ties demonstrates how historical migration continues to influence contemporary sociocultural relations within the region.

Academically, this study contributes to diaspora studies, mobility studies, and Southeast Asian historical scholarship by demonstrating that the Bugis–Makassar diaspora should not be understood solely as a local-migration phenomenon. Instead, it represents a transnational maritime process that shaped regional sociocultural interaction, economic integration, and identity formation across Southeast Asia. Therefore, the findings reinforce the importance of examining maritime diaspora communities as active agents in the historical construction of interconnected regional societies within the Malay world.

5 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Bugis–Makassar diaspora during 1666–1669 was not merely a physical migration caused by war and colonial pressure but a broader socio-historical process that shaped economic, social, and cultural networks across the Nusantara and the Malay Peninsula. Political instability following the Gowa War, VOC intervention, economic disruption, and cultural values such as *siri* encouraged large-scale migration from South Sulawesi to various coastal regions in Southeast Asia.

The findings show that Bugis–Makassar migrants established extensive maritime settlements and trade networks while maintaining kinship structures, cultural traditions, and communal identity. Through adaptation, intermarriage, and political participation, Bugis communities became integrated into Malay societies and contributed to the emergence of hybrid Bugis–Malay sociocultural identities that continued across generations.

Theoretically, this study contributes to diaspora and mobility studies by showing that the Bugis–Makassar diaspora functions as a sociocultural infrastructure connecting maritime communities across regional boundaries. This study also highlights the importance of maritime mobility and transnational interactions in shaping regional integration within the historical Malay world.

Future research may further examine comparative maritime diasporas in Southeast Asia, contemporary Bugis descendant communities, and digital mapping of historical migration and trade networks to deepen the understanding of transnational sociocultural relations in the region.

Disclosure Statement

The author(s) claim there is no conflict of interest.

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