Pursuing the Invisible

*Makassar, City and Systems*¹

Heather Sutherland

An archaeologist, trying to reconstruct an entire skeleton from a thigh bone and a tooth, works with tested structural models; the final result clearly distinguishes between the actual (bone) and hypothetical (plaster or resin). In the pure sciences the interlocking of theory and data ensures that knowledge limitations are explained. But historians are often innocent excavators, following whatever sources happen to survive, filling gaps with assumptions or, more helpfully, with clearly expressed best-guesses. Such evasions are difficult to avoid when narratives cover large swathes of the globe or many centuries. Despite sparse and unevenly distributed information, such histories must encompass very different local situations, and the need for a comprehensive story-line encourages generalization and the inflation of specific case studies to represent much wider topics. Themes and comparisons may be explained, but methodology – the sources and how they are used – is often taken for granted. It has been suggested, for example, that much world history is anecdotal, ‘not really having a principle of selectivity. As a result, courses in the subject are often a pastiche, made up of bits and pieces of research into various parts of the world and stitched together in hit or miss fashion’ (Mazlish 1998, 2001:4). On the other hand, in more focused, but no less ambitious, publications explicit theory and a comparative framework can serve to focus exhaustive research and discipline creative imaginations, as Peter Boomgaard has so ably demonstrated. Often, however, models are implicit.

Long-term narratives frequently begin with a base-line in order to track linear, evolutionary change. Here much depends on the validity of the point of departure; if this is misconceived subsequent analysis is distorted. An alternative strategy takes the present as model, working back to locate underlying continuities and fundamental structures.² This can also be risky, creating self-fulfilling prophecies. Moreover, whatever method is used, source material will be limited. Significant dimensions of the subject remain unknown, but may be

1 I am grateful to Leonard Andaya, David Bulbeck and Campbell MacKnight for their helpful answers to questions concerning the early history of Makassar.

2 A classic is Robert D. Putnam, Leonardi, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti (1992).

highly relevant. I would suggest that this should be acknowledged, and that the use of explicit models can enable us to sense the contours of the whole despite missing information.

This essay uses the history of one particular place to discuss the ways in which contextualization within a systems framework can improve our modeling of the past. The focus is upon Makassar, a port-town on the island of Sulawesi (Celebes) in East Indonesia, a region of scattered archipelagos extending over waters as wide as those of the entire Mediterranean.³ The first section gives a short introduction to the region, before considering how a simple systems perspective can help locate hidden structural relationships, if only by inference. In this light I then re-evaluate Makassar's role as an illustrative example in Anthony Reid's path-breaking study of the 'Age of Commerce', a standard base-line in many Southeast Asian histories.⁴ The third section introduces retrospective accounts of the town's locating in regional political and economic patterns, while the conclusion summarizes how an awareness of encompassing systems could better balance these narratives.

The Region

The eastern archipelagos of Southeast Asia were the peripheries of a periphery, characterized by weak formal institutions, but a rich tradition of trans-regional exchange. Unfortunately, information on Eastern Indonesia is sparse. Chinese and Arab sources are important for the very early period, but for the centuries between 1500 and 1800 it is the rather bureaucratic Portuguese, Dutch and English trading companies that provide rich documentation, although it is focused on long distance commerce in specific products and on elite politics. Histories of the region since the fifteenth century traditionally stress its 'open' nature, created by geography and reflected in long-distance trade and the absorption of new religions. The most persistent, and pernicious, assumption has been that innovation was always driven by external forces (Sutherland 1995). Southeast Asians were seen as being on the fringe, passive recipients of influence from the stronger civilizations of India, China and the West. Such marginalization once implied insignificance, but the periphery is now a fashionable place, as everywhere is 'open'. Globalization has weakened the idea of centrality, and the view from the edge now seems particularly clear-sighted.

3 If the east coasts of Kalimantan (Borneo) and Spain were aligned, West New Guinea would lie on the Syrian coast.

4 Anthony Reid (1993).

Braudel's Mediterranean has provided a tempting archetype for maritime Southeast Asia, where economic, cultural and social exchange created solidarities that transcended political boundaries (Sutherland 2003). But Southeast Asia was very different and Eastern Indonesia even more so. Firstly, the enclosed maritime basin of the Middle Sea – Braudel's basic geography – contrasts with Eastern Indonesia's many lesser seas (Sulu, Celebes, Maluku, Banda, Flores, Arafura, Java) which connected the great maritime routes linking the Indian and Pacific Oceans with the South China Sea. Secondly, when compared with Java or the Southeast Asian mainland, let alone most Mediterranean hinterlands, these islands were extremely sparsely populated. High levels of insecurity and mobility among shifting cultivators and sea-farers meant that communities were shallowly rooted and quick to shift their homes or allegiance. Trading and raiding were intertwined, local conflicts (often related to headhunting) were endemic, and punitive expeditions were central to statecraft. Thirdly, states, settlements and traders were linked by personal networks; institutions were informal and contingent. Fourthly, the most prized products shipped across these waters came not from agriculture or industry, but from foraging and fishing. Productivity was limited by poor tropical soils, limited flat land, scarcity of good harbours and, in the south-west, unreliable rainfall. The only reason that long distance shipping came to the region at all was the fortuitous existence of a few very valuable commodities growing in very limited areas.⁵

Supplies of regional products were mobilized by coercion as least as much as by commerce. East Indonesian regional maritime powers had much smaller populations and resource-bases than those in the west; almost all depended on imported foodstuffs.⁶ Successful states combined a reasonably reliable food supply with access to imports. Those rare regions with land suitable for irrigated rice fields, such as Southwest Sulawesi, were particularly lucky. But even there polities were typically kin-based federations, sanctioned by divine origin, and characterized by a rigid social hierarchy, the competitive mobilization of personal followings, conflict and constantly shifting patterns of alliance and hostility. Family ties and brute strength were crucial in determining access to power. Migration overseas was common.⁷ However, most of the eastern

5 Cloves only grew around Ambon, nutmeg at Banda, sandalwood at Timor and, Sumba while the dye-producing sappanwood was mainly from Sumbawa.

6 The most notable being Kutai on the east and Banjarmasin on the southeast of Kalimantan (Borneo); Ternate and Tidore in the Moluccas; South Sulawesi's Makassar, Bone etc.; and, on the fringe, the Balinese kingdoms and the lesser state of Bima on Sumbawa. The Southern Philippines Sulu and Mindanao Sultanates were very similar.

7 L. Andaya (1975); Sutherland (1983); Anderson (2003); Bulbeck (1996); Caldwell (1995); Cummings (2002).

archipelagos were without any over-arching authority at all. Chiefs seeking imported prestige goods and weapons competed to attract passing vessels en route to regional entrepot where valued commodities could be found. Location close to a major trade route, such as those connecting the Straits of Melaka, southern China, or island sources of spices or fragrant woods, was thus essential. It is in this context that Makassar should be placed.

The long-term history of such maritime zones can be modelled as layered, de-centred structures of inter-locking but open and non-territorial subsystems. Systems theory focuses on 'understanding the interaction of the various elements of a complex system: it [...] concentrates on modelling complex wholes rather than breaking large problems into smaller problems for individual solution' (Manning 2003:290). Relationships within systems are generally many-stranded (economic, social, political) and multiple, being neither exclusive nor fixed. Locating the centres or nodes of open systems, with their inflows and outflows, is easier than fixing their boundaries.⁸ Feedback within and between systems and subsequent adaptive behaviour ensures that 'circular causal chains help to maintain a steady state within the system'.⁹ A breakdown in adaptation heralds structural change; a steady state is not a permanent equilibrium. The popular concept of 'network' is similar in its emphasis on un-institutionalized linkages, but lacks systems theory's explicit focus on inputs, outputs and adaptation. The idea of adaptation is particularly useful as it avoids the dichotomy of continuity and change, and modifies the emphasis on the tension between fragmentation and integration as the overriding dialectic in Southeast Asian politics and commerce (Reid 1993, II; Lieberman 2003, 2009).

Port-towns offer an identifiable, but complex, point of entry. Half a century ago Brian Berry (1964:160–161) argued that 'cities may be considered as systems – entities comprising interactive, inter-dependent parts...[S]ets of cities also constitute systems. For systems of cities the most immediate environment is the socio-economy of which they are a part'.¹⁰ The main source for the following section is the VOC or Dutch East India Company (est.1602) archive, but the inspiration comes from Berry.

8 Chase-Dunn and Hall (1997:16–20); Kratoska et al.:(2005). Boundaries would logically fall at points where the relationships contained within the line are of more significance than those that cross it (Subrahmanyam 1997:740).

9 Manning (2003:292). Analysis of adaptive behaviour addresses questions of structure and agency.

10 See also Timberlake (1985); Dick and Rimmer (2003).

Looking Forward: The 'Age of Commerce' (1450–1680) as Base-Line

In the first volume (1988) of his two volume Braudelian study Anthony Reid (1988, I:6) introduced two key ideas: that of 'cosmopolitan port cities', and that of a mid-seventeenth century 'trade revolution' of rapid decline 'as indigenous cities withdrew from international commerce, or were defeated by the Dutch commercial monopoly'. By the time the second book was published (1993) this 'trade revolution' had become a more generalized 'crisis' (Reid 1993, II:23). Specifically, Reid (1993, II:303) observed that 'Makassar and Banten, conquered by the Dutch in 1666–1669 and 1682, respectively, lost their political and economic *raison d'être*, and declined to no more than a quarter of their previous populations'. He had already stated that 'the destruction of the cosmopolitan trading cities of Banten and Makassar was immensely important for the evolution of the societies of which they were the heart...they became embittered backwaters' (Reid 1993, II:281).

It was during the late sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries that a joint Makassarese-speaking kingdom rose to dominance on Sulawesi's southwest peninsula, as agrarian Gowa combined with its sea-oriented neighbour Talloq to create the combined state of Gowa-Talloq. Both the port-city and the state were known to foreign traders as 'Makassar'. The kingdoms converted to Islam in 1605, and spread the faith along with their own hegemony over much of Eastern Indonesia. Inevitably, Makassar came into conflict with the VOC which was intent on controlling the nearby Spice Islands of Maluku (the Moluccas). Makassar was finally conquered in 1667–1669 by an alliance of the VOC and local forces, which included Arung Palakka, a prince from Gowa's main Sulawesi rival, Bugis-speaking Bone.¹¹ The Gowa-Talloq Sultanates had indeed been crippled, but how devastating was this defeat to the wider economic and political systems within which Makassar had played such a crucial role?

Lieberman's suggestion (1993:478), that 'the heavy emphasis on maritime influences to explain local change [in Southeast Asia] tends to be reductionist and exaggerated', could usefully be applied to Makassar. As William Cummings (2002:22–23) writes:

Perhaps because of the important place Makassar occupied in archipelagic trading networks, the concomitant Western tradition. [sees] Makassar primarily as a port... The most sophisticated and recent such treatment is Anthony Reid's *The Age of Commerce*, in which Makassar

11 The Bugis were the other, larger, ethnic group on the southern peninsula (L. Andaya 1981).

plays a key role... Not wrong, but rather one sided, this work exemplified how Western scholars in particular have understood and described Makassarese history.

Unlike the archetypal port-city of Melaka on the eponymous Straits, Makassar was not particularly well located for long-distance shipping. However, it did have a rice surplus under royal control,¹² and rice was Makassar's only significant local export. In fact, Makassar's image as a 'cosmopolitan port city' should be supplemented by another, at least as important: of Makassar as the centre of an agrarian tributary system.¹³ In such polities products were extracted from a subject peasantry through chains of chiefs, each of whom took his cut. The rest went to the courts. Country rice fed the nobles, fighting men and slaves clustered in the city's compounds, and also entered the market, especially when the rulers and nobility sold or bartered their tributary surplus. Foodstuffs and manpower from the interior sustained fleets and armies; we should remember that for most of the 'Age of Commerce' Gowa-Talloq was on a war-footing (Cummings 2002:31–32).

Although sea-farers from around Makassar had been visiting Melaka in the early sixteenth century, Makassar itself was not then an international port-of-call. Javanese and Malays came to trade, but Melaka was the regional hub. Then, in 1511, Melaka fell to the Portuguese, and again to the Dutch in 1641. After each defeat well-connected refugees fled to other ports, including Makassar, bringing commercial expertise, access to capital and networks. Moreover, by the 1620s the Dutch were restricting free trade in the Maluku Spice Islands, and Makassar became an attractive alternative source of cloves, nutmeg and mace. These drew more Portuguese, Chinese, Englishmen, Danes and Indians to the port, where they exchanged goods from Macao, Manila and Cambodia, and textiles from India, for regional products (Noorduyn 1983; Sutherland 2004). It is this early seventeenth century traffic which exemplifies the idea of Makassar as a cosmopolitan port.

In fact, most of Makassar's trade was regional. A couple of hundred ships sailed the Sulawesi, Banda and Java seas, while an estimated twelve went to nearby Kalimantan (Borneo). About a dozen undertook longer journeys to the north (Macau, Manila and other Philippine ports) and a similar number went

12 The consensus is that after c. 1400 rice production and population growth in South Sulawesi intensified, as agriculture came to offer a stronger base for state formation than trade (Macknight 1983; Druce 2009; Bulbeck and Caldwell 2008).

13 Wolf (1982:82) emphasizes that such tributary 'modes of production' could not be understood in isolation, but only in the context of power constellations.

west (to Siam, Cambodia, Melaka and Aceh). These twenty to thirty vessels were primarily owned and sailed by immigrants, but a few high nobles also participated (Knaap and Sutherland 2004:19). The court used its political clout and links to a handful of allied foreign merchants to dominate access to high-value imports, such as American silver from Manila, and textiles from the Coromandel Coast (Sutherland 2004). But the Makassarese themselves were not traders; Malay and Bandanese refugees, and the Bugis Wajorese from Sulawesi's east coast, were the major shippers. Creole Portuguese also used Makassar as a base in their voyages between Macau and the sandalwood island of Timor.

After the conquest foreign merchants were expelled, and Makassar's commerce became provincial. Long-distance trade to the Straits of Melaka and the importing of luxury goods and war supplies was restricted by and to the Dutch East India Company. However, the VOC's ally, Arung Palakka, became ruler of Bone and developed his own commercial networks. After a difficult few decades, in the early eighteenth-century, the growth of trade with China enabled Makassar to re-create its pivotal role, albeit in north–south, rather than east–west traffic. Nonetheless, trade volume was comparable to that of the earlier period. Some routes were strengthened, though the range of voyaging was much reduced (Knaap and Sutherland 2004:21, 170). 'Smuggling' to the west grew sharply from the 1720s, as Bugis and Chinese networks expanded (L. Andaya 1991). The Dutch Company's defeat of Makassar had been a very severe blow to local trade, but within the wider, regional commercial system new links were re-established and old connections revived.

The VOC cut the political heart out of Makassar, but the reconstituted settlement had many similarities with the previous town. Gowan Makassar had undoubtedly been a pre-modern city, with a relatively dense population, a core of fortified settlements and diverse neighbourhoods. The cultural nucleus of courts and mosques provided a model that was influential throughout the region (Cummins 2002). After 1669 Makassar's wider exemplary role was assumed by Bone. But, aside from this brutal fact, was the Company's takeover as devastatingly absolute as Reid suggests? Was Gowan Makassar really so large and urban, and the VOC town so puny? Reid credits old Makassar with a population of over 100,000,¹⁴ but I would suggest the actual number was perhaps half of this. There are two main reasons for this difference of opinion: the first concerns the location of city boundaries, the second the actual calculations as to the number of inhabitants.

14 Figures for populations and city area evolve through a series of publications, see Reid 1980, 1993, II, 2000b.

The core area of the Makassar kingdom stretched over the present coastal plain of the Jeneberang River and the broad valleys of the main tributaries of the Talloq River.¹⁵ The archaeologist David Bulbeck has estimated the mid-seventeenth century population of this at c. 300,000, divided between three zones.¹⁶ Roughly equal numbers are attributed to the city, the belt of neighbouring villages, and outlying districts. The first area was centred on the Jeneberang estuary and stretched c. 3.6 km inland; this Makassar city has been described as 'a collection of hundreds of villages located around the forts'.¹⁷ Bulbeck, whose own research focused on the outer zones, adopts Reid's lower estimate of c. 80,000 for this urban centre.¹⁸ The territory of the contiguous villages extended between 3.6 and 8 km from the coast, and supported c. 90,000 people with an estimated density of 12.25 people per hectare, higher than that of the coast itself (10.47). This suggests, notes Bulbeck, a 'suburban' rather than a rural setting.¹⁹ This flourishing hinterland was divided between the two main kingdoms, Gowa and Talloq, each with c. 44,000 inhabitants. The third and outer region of some 98 square miles, extending c. 7–20 km inland, supported c. 110,000 people.²⁰

In this context Jan Wisseman Christie's description of Java's 'states without cities' is very relevant. She writes:

The underlying pattern of the growth of population in central and east Java seems to have been, during the pre-colonial period, that of short term fluctuations in very mobile urban populations balanced against long-term (though not necessarily steady) growth in density of rural populations in core regions of states. Not only did villages grow at the expense of larger enclaves, but the data suggests that as villages grew they tended to break down into two or more nucleated hamlets rather than acquire

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- 15 Bulbeck (1994: Figures 3–6); Reid (1993, II:82). In 1987 Reid viewed the city as a 10 km stretch of coast from Panakukang right up to Ujung Tanah, like the modern city, but in 1993 he defined it as 6 square kilometers lying well south of Fort Ujung Pandang.
 - 16 Bulbeck (1994). This revises conclusions in his important dissertation (Bulbeck 1992).
 - 17 Mangemba (1972:7); Reid (1993, II:82).
 - 18 He now feels that 50,000 might be closer to the mark; personal communication, October 2012.
 - 19 In the 1980s the pioneering scholar of Southeast Asian urban studies, Terry McGee (1991), described rural–urban agglomerations (*desakota*, 'villagecity') 'that posed particular challenges to urban theory'.
 - 20 Bulbeck (1994:4–6), Tables 2, 3; Figure 2.

the characteristics of small towns. Most of the towns and cities of modern Java owe their size, and many their very existence, to Dutch intervention.²¹

The relative importance of the 'suburban' zone complicates the distinction between urban and rural. Reid (1993, II:85–88) has always recognized that early Southeast Asian cities were 'green and sparsely settled' agglomerations of 'fortified urban compounds', with 'little concept of a specific urban space'. Combined with Bulbeck's findings, this suggests that a spectrum is a more appropriate metaphor for such settlement clusters than a simple city-country dichotomy. Similar gradations existed in economic roles, particularly within the coastal or inland suburban zones. Some traders, for example, would have been full-time shippers, whose expeditions could last anything from a few months to several years. But a majority of sailors would also have been fishermen or farmers, who probably only took to the boats for shorter seasonal voyages once a year. Many women would have had similar manifold roles, participating in cultivation, market trade and household weaving. Moreover, most nobles would have had their power base in the countryside, and their primary residences may well have been rural.

If the urban core of Makassar, the 'city', is restricted to those whose livelihood did not depend completely on agriculture an estimate of about 50,000 seems generous. This would include political centres,²² markets, maritime- and land-trading communities, as well as foreigners.²³ This figure is based on rather arbitrary estimates: c. 18,000 living in compounds led by men primarily concerned with politics; c. 20,000 in fishing, shipping and maritime commercial households; artisans, market people and land-trading, c. 8,000; c. 4,000 foreigners (excluding Malays, who could be considered local). Extensive areas of garden and orchards lay within the town, but purely agrarian villages

21 Christie (1991:24–25). For further discussion on cities in general, see Sutherland 2005.

22 Bulbeck (1994:6). The two main palaces covered respectively 84 and 44 hectares, but were not necessarily densely populated; 'Somba Opu, the most important, contained only the dwellings of the royal family and their retainers'.

23 Rough calculations are based on i.a. the numbers for eighteenth-century ships crews, as the volume of trade was similar to that before 1667 (Knaap and Sutherland 2004:62, 83). Archive references include early eighteenth-century figures for the noble household of Arung Teko (Nationaal Archief, The Hague, VOC collection (hereafter NA, VOC, volume and folio numbers) 1663/174–186) and the population of kampung Melayu, early nineteenth century: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Makassar Residency archive (hereafter ANRI, Makassar Archive, bundle and document numbers) Mak. 289/2.

in the hinterland and interior would be excluded. If they are not, the characterization of urban becomes very vague, and boundaries impossible to establish.

As in Christie's Java, Makassar's population would have fluctuated considerably. At times the court summoned subject lords to the city, with their very large retinues, while war concentrated or dispersed populations. Fighting, famine or disease could lead refugees to seek shelter in the centre, or safety in rural areas. Reid's population estimate of over 100,000 in 1636 is based on the assertion that 60,000 were then said to have died in the plague, a normal enough ratio. However, this loss of life is not reflected in his subsequent still higher number for 1660, which is based on a particularly unreliable source.²⁴ If we disregard this 1660 figure, then it is possible that the settled population of Makassar (ignoring temporary mobilizations) was already halved before the Dutch conquest. Nonetheless, it is clear that after 1669 the Makassarrese population was decimated by famine, Bugis mass exports of newly created slaves, and large scale voluntary emigration (L. Andaya 1981:208–227).

At first glance, detailed Company censuses for post-conquest Makassar seem to confirm Reid's suggestion of a very dramatic decrease in the number of inhabitants (to 'no more than a quarter' of the pre-1660s level).²⁵ After all, the early VOC establishment rarely exceeded 600, mostly soldiers, which was a fraction of the previous regimes concentrations of court retainers and warriors. Even when the large slave contingents, and Chinese, Malays and other settlers in the Company town were counted, the total would have been much, much lower than that of the earlier settlements. In 1676 the Dutch-governed population was only 1,382. In 1740 there were 2,128 members of European households (mostly slaves, Asian and mestizo wives and children), as opposed to 2,708 Asians in the Dutch governed *kampung*, or semi-rural villages. By 1790 the figures were 2,706 versus 4,934,²⁶ still perhaps less than 20% of the previous population. However, comparisons between the pre- and post-conquest situation must take into account the implications of Makassar's dismemberment in the late 1660s.

After 1669 both the peninsula and Makassar's core territory remained, as they had always been, a mosaic of different nuclei and jurisdictions. The VOC ruled the enclave of Makassar, nearby rice-producing provinces and the seas, while the land was (increasingly) dominated by the Bugis kings of Bone.

24 Reid (1993), II:72. Nicholas Gervaise based his account on the memories of two young Makassarrese exiles in Paris. He was, according to Lach, 'rather gullible' (Lach and Van Kley 1993:1448).

25 VOC censuses were based on detailed lists compiled by the heads of urban quarters.

26 NA, VOC 3939/123.

Company censuses only covered their own subjects, clustered in the castle and adjoining villages. Followers of independent rulers were excluded, even when they lived in the same *kampung*. Arung Palakka, Dutch ally and later Bone king, had been granted land, villages, rice-fields and salt-pans within the area of old Makassar, and he soon ruled most of northern Makassar from his palace of Bontoala. His successors also lived much of the year in the city, at Bontoala and Rompegading. When the Bone king was expelled from Makassar in 1814 about 10,000 of his people were said to have left.²⁷ Those who remained, or returned, became Dutch subjects. Consequently the counted population more than doubled between 1790 (7,640) and 1816 (16,677).²⁸ In 1828 it reached 19,007, including the sparsely settled off-shore islands.²⁹ This would suggest that in the later eighteenth century Makassar's independent Bugis may have been as numerous as Dutch subjects. Moreover, although the Gowa and Talloq courts had lost the port zone, their rice-rich hinterlands and previously conquered polities, they continued to control some shoreline and farming settlements. These rump territories, geographically separated by VOC lands, were also excluded from Dutch censuses (Stavorinus 1797:198).

This political fragmentation ensured that Company 'soul-counts' in post-conquest Makassar' core area only included part, probably less than half, of the territory's actual inhabitants. So while the total population would still have been smaller than in the comparable Gowa-Talloq area, it was not, I believe, nearly, as dramatically reduced as has been supposed. Despite formal separation, Makassarese, Bugis and Dutch settlements clustered together, and often intermingled, over much the same territory as the old urban core. Cycles of de- and repopulation, like those of the 1660s, were always common in South Sulawesi.³⁰ In any case, by the late eighteenth century the Dutch ruled zone was (once again?) densely occupied, with most rice fields controlled by Makassarese or Company subjects (including Bugis), leaving immigrants with little access to land.³¹

27 ANRI, Makassar Archive, Mak. 353/2.

28 Olivier (1834–37:199–200).

29 ANRI, Makassar Archive, Mak. 3/1.

30 This was very clear in the case of the rice-rich Northern Districts, see also Raffles (1830: Appendix F). He estimates the southern peninsula's population (c. 1815) at half a million, but concludes it must have been much higher given the evidence of abandoned settlements.

31 Beth memorandum (ANRI, Makassar Archive, Mak. 289/2). In the 1770s the Makassar area consisted of the core of old and new Gowa and the settlement of Makassar itself, which extended from 'Sambung Jawa [a kampung inland from Tanjung Bunga, just north of the Jeneberang] out to the so-called *kraal*, then to the north along the salt-pools behind

The extent to which Gowa-Talloq's Makassar could be uniformly described as 'urban' remains very uncertain. Classic definitions of cities emphasize the difference between town and country and the development of specific institutions. But Makassar's boundaries were blurred, and in all probability most aristocratic compounds and shoreline villages were not so very different from those in the interior or further along the coast. There is clear evidence, however, that at court there were some sophisticated men actively absorbing and adapting unfamiliar ideas, ranging from mathematics to Portuguese military techniques (Reid 2000a). The rulers themselves were open to new religions; they considered Christianity before converting to Islam in 1605.³² This was then imposed on subjects and conquered states alike. However, it is unclear how far such open attitudes, and the new religion, typified the town, as opposed to just (part of) the nobility. Indeed, it is quite possible that ties between like-minded people in separated settlements could be closer than local cross-class or inter-communal connections. This would apply to immigrant communities, as well as nobilities intermarrying across borders.³³ In such cases contiguity was trumped by systemic exchange, often buttressed by kinship and religion.³⁴

Within truly urban societies synergy between different groups creates an integrated culture distinct from that of the peasantry. Indeed, Reid (1988, 1:89), commenting on Makassar's Islamization, suggests: 'An unusually rapid transition occurred...perhaps because at the time...it was already a cosmopolitan city socially "overdue" for change in a bourgeois direction'. This sweeping statement conflates the courts' acceptance of Islam with a city-wide religious shift, linking complex concepts – 'cosmopolitan', 'bourgeois' and 'conversion' – in a simple causal chain.

Even if bourgeois is used in the loosest sense, to designate a merchant group, we should remember that in Makassar such men were individual clients of powerful nobles, not representatives of an established class. Oliver Wolters (1999:42) commented that 'Southeast Asian cities were not Venices or Genoas. They were royal centres, with trading ports under their shadow'. Jeya Kathirithamby-Wells (1993:136–137), writing of Southeast Asia as a whole,

Bontoala, up to the river of Patinggaloang, not far from Ujung Tanah' (Stavorinus 1797:198). 'New Gowa' was the emerging royal settlement at Jongaya, just across the river to the north of Sombaopu.

- 32 Pelras (1985). Makassar's conversion was somewhat later than many other regional kingdoms; Makassar's rival Ternate became Muslim in the last quarter of the sixteenth century.
- 33 On the close personal mid-seventeenth-century friendship between the highest nobles and the Portuguese merchant Francisco Viera, see Boxer (1967).
- 34 For a contemporary analogy see Sklair (2001).

reminds us that '[f]ree market forces and security for property and wealth, vital ingredients for commercial initiative and property accumulation, were not to be found within the framework of royal absolutism and monopoly'. Moreover, in early Indonesian towns production was unimportant, and it is for that reason that Boomgaard (1989b:317–344) downgrades Reid's estimates for levels of urbanization even in densely settled Java. Cummings revisionism, with its emphasis on syncretic practice, gives a more convincing account of conversion (Cummings 2001, 2007). Elsewhere Reid (1993, II:328) concludes that 'The most obvious, but also the most profound, changes of the Age of Commerce were in the areas of religion and mentalite'. He adds that the later 1600s were marked not only by 'a retreat from the international market but also a distrust of external ideas'. We have so little information on the internal intellectual history of late seventeenth and eighteenth-century Makassar that we cannot judge, but there is no real reason to assume that the indigenous elites, let alone the expanding Sino-Malay settlements, were more insular. Reid's own caveats deserve more emphasis.

In fact, it seems that the fall of Gowa-Talloq was a 'political crisis at the level of states'³⁵ rather than a systemic collapse. If Makassar's history is considered in isolation then its defeat in 1669 was catastrophic, and Gowa itself did indeed become an embittered and commercially insignificant kingdom. But if, on the other hand, Makassar is seen as a node in one or more systems, then systemic shifts are much less dramatic. There was no definitive decline in indigenous power or in regional commerce. On the contrary, Gowa's defeat marked the beginning of Bugis Bone's unparalleled rise. Wajo and Bone took over much of the regional trade, following the logic of supply and demand. Moreover, illicit connections with the Straits, Chinese and Western private traders were encouraged by the many new coastal settlements established by Makassarese and Buginese who fled Makassar after the conquest. From the 1720s Bugis-influenced Riau at the foot of the Straits was the most prominent link, but smaller Bugis groups throughout the archipelagos played similar, if more modest roles. After 1746 annual junk visits from Amoy (Xiamen) intensified Makassar's role as a pivotal intermediary between southern China's ports and the archipelagos' suppliers of marine and forest commodities. In the course of the eighteenth century the city recovered. For South Sulawesi, and Makassar, the 'seventeenth-century crisis' was a period of adjustment, as had happened before, and would also happen again. This long-term perspective, emphasizing Makassar's role in political and commercial systems, shows that Makassar's decline in the 1600s was not so exceptional, nor was it definitive.

35 This phrase is used by Subrahmanyam (1997). See also Sutherland (2005).

Looking Back: Reconstructions of Makassar

Nowadays Makassar's government regards the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as exemplifying the city's essential identity. The official city web-site³⁶ notes that:

[T]here was an intensification of local, regional and international trade, in the political sector and in the physical construction of the city. [...] In the space of less than a century Makassar became one of the most prominent trading cities in the world, inhabited by more than 100,000 people, with a cosmopolitan and multicultural character. Until the middle of the seventeenth century Makassar was able to consolidate its power over a large part of Eastern Indonesia. [...] Internationally, as part of the World of Islam, the Sultan of Makassar maintained close trading and diplomatic ties with the kingdoms of Banteng [Bantam] and Aceh in West Indonesia, with Golconda in India and the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East.

Here Reid's account is accepted and amplified. Makassar is removed from its context and presented as being at least the equal of contemporaneous European cities. In this seventeenth-century Golden Age Makassar epitomizes South Sulawesi's maritime and religious virtues, the glory before the fall. Official narratives of subsequent eras are much vaguer. A generalized emphasis on sea-faring traditions and Islam is followed by isolated accounts of anti-colonialism. This approach neutralizes potentially sensitive questions, such as warfare between states, the 'feudal' and exploitative nature of local polities, the strong Chinese economic presence, conflicts over religious practice, and wide-spread factional fighting between 1945 and 1965. This official history also confirms Makassar's natural right to be the commercial centre of East Indonesia. All in all, it serves its purpose very well.

From the late 17th to the mid 20th centuries Makassar, a Dutch island in a sea of independent states, lacked the anti-colonial credentials to feature in these political narratives. The city was largely irrelevant to early Islamic reformism, which was concentrated in the port-town of Pare Pare and the kingdoms of Wajo and Bone.³⁷ Makassar re-enters nationalist narratives with the founding of the city's first modern political and religious movements in the early twentieth century (Poelinggomang 2004; Harvey 1974). Even so, the colonial

36 <http://bahasa.makassarkota.go.id/index.php/sejarah-kota-makassar> (accessed 23-3-2014).

37 Mattulada (1976); Gibson (2000, 2005); Van Bruinessen (1991); Pelras (1994); Hamonic (1991); Halim (2004).

enclave was insulated from regional politics until 1942, when the Japanese abolished the city's special status. Bone, not the town bureaucrats, became their key political interlocutor. Dutch Makassar was again relatively isolated from the countryside during the turbulent periods of revolution (1945–1949) and rebellion (1945–1965). After the post-1949 Dutch withdrawal city politics changed. The old patterns of bureaucratic and communally-based negotiation were replaced by the rough and tumble of peninsular politics. These were still shaped by pre-colonial patterns, which is hardly surprising as full colonial rule had only been established after 1906. Recent anthropological accounts focus on competition and status,³⁸ while political scientists unravel personalized contemporary power-plays.³⁹

In the rather sparse economic history of South Sulawesi, Makassar's marginalization is reversed, it's commercial centrality emphasized. The more emotional accounts identify trade, and particularly the local sailing fleet, with vague but heroic maritime traditions.⁴⁰ Regional context is often lacking. Developments inland or in regional seas are ignored in favour of international linkages, despite the fact that Makassar is presented as 'the Gateway to Eastern Indonesia' (Poelinggomang 2002). The corollary, that it was always a second-tier entrepot of contingent prominence, is less commonly highlighted. In fact, for over 75 years after 1669, Makassar's traffic was focused on Batavia, until its own link to Amoy developed in the second half of the eighteenth century. The resulting China-based prosperity collapsed in the face of Singapore's success after 1819. Although trade between Sulawesi as a whole and the British free port grew, Makassar stagnated (Wong Lin Ken 1960). This decline was reversed for a few decades following partial liberalization of Makassar's trade in 1847. Yet it continued to be outclassed by Singapore, Penang and Surabaya, and after 1873 it was further undermined as newly opened regional ports claimed greater shares of long distance traffic. Only late nineteenth-century political intervention revived Makassar's fortunes, as a hub for the KPM shipping line from 1891. Then the creation of a regional customs union in 1906 confirmed Makassar's pre-eminence, as the colonial military eliminated local kingdoms' political and commercial independence (Poelinggomang 2002; A Campo 2002). The following few decades of relative peace and prosperity ended in the political crises and smuggling economy of the mid-twentieth century (1940–1965) (Harvey 1977). Subsequently, despite heavy investment since the 1970s, Makassar port has remained under-utilized, while Singapore and emerging regional ports

38 Chabot (1996). More controversially: Errington (1989); Caldwell (1991).

39 Magenda (1989); Buehler (2007, 2009); Tomsa (2008).

40 In fact the majority of trader-sailors have always been Buginese, rather than Makassarese.

go from strength to strength.⁴¹ Governments have often tried to channel traffic to Makassar, but such efforts usually proved ineffective.⁴² Makassar's exports are now primarily local cash crops, although it remains central to the illegal trade in exotic regional marine and forest commodities.⁴³

Conclusion

For centuries Makassar has been a participant in multiple, highly competitive political and commercial systems, only parts of which are documented. While successive regimes strove to control commerce, geography and entrepreneurial ambition ensured that 'smuggling' was constant, if largely invisible. Illicit trade circuits went undocumented under the VOC, and even in the mid-nineteenth century as much as half the port's traffic was not registered in the main statistical series (Sutherland 2013). Similarly, as we have seen, Dutch eighteenth-century sources missed a large proportion of Makassar's population, while pragmatic negotiations achieved political compromises that were better left unreported.⁴⁴ All parties – Dutch officials, Bugis rulers, local traders, Chinese and Malays – were tied into wider networks, and represented interests that were shaped by distant as well as local priorities. The history of Makassar – town, state and region – can only be understood if these diverse contexts are reconstructed as clearly as possible. If we accept the partial picture that survives in the documents as the full story, without testing it against an explicit attempt to model its environment, the result will be woefully curtailed. More important, premature conclusions will be drawn,⁴⁵ and fundamentally important questions will be left unasked.

41 http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTINDONESIA/Resources/Fin-Priv-sector/Makassar_Minutes_Final.pdf (accessed 23-3-2014).

42 Sutherland (2004); Dick (2002); Reid (2010).

43 For example, on timber, see 'Rogue Traders: The Murky Business of Merbau Timber Smuggling in Indonesia' (2010), <http://www.eia-global.org/PDF/Report-RogueTraders-July10.pdf> (accessed 23-3-2014); B. Glaser and M. Glaser (2010).

44 The practice of allowing Bone's representatives to work alongside Dutch customs and tithe collections was later, in the nineteenth century, seen as an example of pusillanimous surrender to Bugis pressure.

45 Huff (2012:4–5), for example, writes without qualification that by 1870 'Southeast Asia had experienced two centuries of de-urbanisation'.