

## Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari: Political Exile, Religious Authority, and Historical Legacy in South Africa

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### ABSTRACT

The history of Islam in Southeast Asia and Africa cannot be disentangled from the dynamics of migration, colonialism, and spiritual resistance to subjugation. Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari (1626–1699 CE) a nobleman, Islamic scholar, Sufi master, and anti-colonial resistance fighter from Makassar, South Sulawesi represents one of the most consequential transnational figures in the global history of Islam. This study aims to reconstruct the historical trajectory of Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari, from his political captivity under the Dutch East India Company (VOC) to his enduring role as a foundational figure of Islam in South Africa. Employing a library research methodology integrated with the historical research method, comprising heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. This study systematically analyzes primary and secondary sources pertaining to Shaykh Yusuf's life, exile, and legacy. The findings reveal that despite being forcibly exiled to Ceylon (1684) and subsequently to the Cape of Good Hope (1694), Shaykh Yusuf succeeded in establishing the first consolidated Muslim community in South Africa through the clandestine transmission of Khalwatiyya Sufi teachings, thereby earning recognition as the "*Father of Islam in South Africa*" — a legacy later celebrated by Nelson Mandela as the foundational inspiration of South Africa's anti-apartheid and anti-colonial struggle.

### Keywords

Cape Malays; Islamic Diaspora; Islam in South Africa; Political Exile; Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari.

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## Introduction

Throughout the postcolonial and postmodern era — a period marked by the emergence of nation-states — numerous scholars have produced extensive scholarship on the social and political histories associated with colonized communities. While some have analyzed the attitudes of these communities toward their colonizers, others have assessed the contributions of key inspirational individuals: those who courageously resisted colonial domination. Governments across nations have paid tribute to these valiant and intrepid figures; in recognition of their bravery and heroism, they have been formally acknowledged as national heroes for their significant contributions to the liberation of their peoples.

Their audacious efforts and remarkable capabilities in confronting colonial powers placed them at the vanguard of resistance — among those who helped shape and direct the development of their colonized communities. Through their sincere anti-colonial endeavors in influencing and defining the identities of these communities, they not only motivated transformation and change but also inspired subsequent



generations to emulate and follow their example. They accomplished this while remaining embedded within societies that were still largely traditional and undergoing various forms of secularization during the colonial period (Haron & Arby, 2021, p. 21).

The history of Islam in Southeast Asia and Africa cannot be disentangled from the currents of migration, commerce, colonialism, and cultural and spiritual resistance to subjugation. Within this context, Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari emerges as one of the most pivotal figures, demonstrating how a scholar from the Malay Archipelago (*Nusantara*) was capable not only of playing a formative role in local Islamic propagation (*da'wah*) but also of exerting a profound impact across the broader Indian Ocean world (Sudarman et al., 2015). Born in Makassar, South Sulawesi, in 1626, Shaykh Yusuf was raised within the aristocratic milieu of the Gowa Kingdom — an environment that placed considerable premium upon education and religious values. His Islamic education eventually carried him to Mecca, Medina, and Yemen, where he studied under eminent scholars and cultivated a pronounced Sufi orientation, most notably within the Khalwatiyya Sufi order.

Yet the life of Shaykh Yusuf was by no means confined to the spiritual domain alone. He engaged actively in the struggle against Dutch colonial domination — in Banten as well as in his homeland of Sulawesi. This resistance rendered him a primary target of the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC), which ultimately arrested and exiled him, first to Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and subsequently to the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) in 1694. The Dutch intention to isolate him from the influence of local populations, however, proved fundamentally unsuccessful. In the land of his exile, Shaykh Yusuf became a revered spiritual authority and laid the foundational groundwork for the Muslim community in southern Africa.

The exile of Shaykh Yusuf by the VOC constitutes one of the most significant chapters in the intertwined histories of colonialism and global Islamization. He became not only a symbol of resistance against colonial subjugation but also a crucial agent in the formation of the first Muslim community in South Africa. His followers — comprised predominantly of enslaved persons and political prisoners drawn from various VOC colonial territories, including Indonesia, India, and Sri Lanka — adopted the Sufi teachings and values of social solidarity that Shaykh Yusuf disseminated. This community subsequently evolved into the progenitor of what would later be known as the *Cape Malays* — one of the most influential ethno-religious groups in the modern history of South Africa.

It is beyond dispute that Muhammad Yusuf al-Makassari — one of the most consequential reformers of the Muslim tradition in the Malay Archipelago — leads us across an extraordinarily vast geographical and intellectual terrain, from South Sulawesi and West Java to Arabia, Ceylon, and South Africa. To more fully comprehend al-Makassari's role in the development and advancement of Islam across these diverse sites, it is equally necessary to consider the religious and intellectual life of Muslim communities in each of these regions. Al-Makassari undoubtedly represents a paradigmatic exemplar of postcolonial Muslim intellectualism and activism (Haron & Arby, 2021, p. 47).

The scholarly study of Shaykh Yusuf is significant not merely from the standpoint of Islamic history or biographical inquiry, but equally from a broader set of perspectives encompassing global Islamic history, forced migration, and social transformation under colonialism. His presence in South Africa constitutes a vivid

manifestation of the Islamic diaspora — one formed not exclusively through voluntary commercial mobility or missionary enterprise, but critically through colonial deportation and suppression. Yet within these conditions of alienation, Shaykh Yusuf succeeded in creating a productive spiritual and social space: establishing informal systems of religious education and constructing a religious identity of remarkable durability that persists to the present day.

The following paragraph is talk about literature review similiriaty topic about Sheikh Yusuf al-Maqassari. The first, George Quinn (2009), *Where History Meets Pilgrimage the Graves of Sheikh Yusuf Al-Maqassari and Prince Dipanagara in Madura*. The article revealed about the “true” burial places of the two figures are in the city of Makassar, but their “alternative” graves in Madura are sites of vibrant stories that give expression to local history, local story-telling conventions, local nationalist aspirations and the authority of Islam. The vitality of the alternative graves with their alternative origin stories raises several interesting questions about the connection between sites of religious importance and the construction of local identity and history (Quinn, 2009, p. 249).

Erman research find the shift remembering occurred after Nelson Mandela proclaimed his struggle to abolish apartheid politics in South Africa was inspired by Sheikh Yusuf's ideas and teachings. Human right by Sheikh Yusuf required and reproduced according to the present needs. The positive implication of it is remebering Sheikh Yusuf translated into real programs, such as the awarding the title of hero to Yusuf and others agenda (Erman, 2012, p. 118).

Sheikh Yusuf is a pioneer in the spread of Islam in South Africa. His spread of Islam was carried out through clandestine preaching to foster a sense of shared destiny, regardless of any discrimination. Sheikh Yusuf's struggles were immortalized in his name with the title of National Hero and Mahaputra Adhipradana. Even after his death, Sheikh Yusuf's name remains revered. This is evident in Nelson Mandela's 1994 speech, which described Sheikh Yusuf as the father of South African communities that opposed racism and colonialism, which exploited fellow human beings. His two tombs, located in South Africa and South Sulawesi, are still visited by the public (Kurniawan et al., 2023, p. 137).

Furthermore, the diaspora of al-Makassari's religious moderation teachings has emanated and proliferated from Gowa through three teachers (murshids) and his descendants (1940s-2022), notably Sheikh K.H. Sahib Sultan (d.2022), and his parents across South Sulawesi and Kalimantan, extending even to the entirety of the archipelago. Notably, these adherents distance themselves from any form of religious extremism. This research underscores the substantial impact of the *ṣūfī* Order (*Ṭarīqa*) in mitigating radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia. Consequently, understanding and practicing al-Makassari's teachings on religious moderation emerge as crucial for fostering a safer, more prosperous, and peaceful future for Indonesians (Sahib et al., 2024, p. 2). Sheikh Yusuf's accommodationist attitude vis-a-vis the Netherlands is solely in order to prevent political disturbances and disturbances that harm society and maintain the continuity of Islamic law as desired in the political understanding of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*; In his efforts to implement Islamic law effectively in the archipelago, this Betawi cleric has also succeeded in compiling Islamic family law

materials (marriage, divorce, and inheritance).(Mas'ud & Fadlurrohman, 2022, p. 1881).

Moosa (2024) finds the life of Sheikh Yusuf can be an effective means to foster a sense of patriotism and nationalism in the younger generation in building the identity of the Indonesian nation, which can be seen from loyalty to religious values and the motherland, the spirit of struggle in life, interfaith tolerance, and cross-cultural brotherhood, the importance of education and learning, cultural diplomacy and international relations, to respect for cultural and historical heritage. Through the narratives and values contained in Sheikh Yusuf's life trajectory, the younger generation can gain a deeper insight into the strengths and potential of the Indonesian nation. Thus, they can be inspired to actively contribute in building a strong and competitive national identity (Moosa et al., 2024, p. 449).

Furthermore, the enduring influence of Shaykh Yusuf in South Africa illuminates how Islamic identity is shaped not solely by the internal dynamics of Muslim communities, but also through their interactions with colonial power structures, local cultural practices, and complex socio-political challenges. An understanding of Shaykh Yusuf's role within the South African context thus offers a richly nuanced lens through which to reread the relationship between the Malay Archipelago and Africa within the broader narrative of global Islamic history.

This article therefore seeks to rehabilitate and reassert the figure of Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari — not merely as a preeminent Islamic scholar of Indonesian origin, but as a transnational figure who played a formative role in the dissemination of Islam, the construction of diasporic communities, and the spiritual struggle against colonialism. Through a cross-regional historical approach integrated with cultural studies methodology, this study elucidates how the legacy of Shaykh Yusuf constitutes a shared heritage between Indonesia and South Africa, while simultaneously illuminating the dynamics of Islam within the marginalized spaces of the global order.

## **Method**

This study employs a literature review method, encompassing the systematic collection, analysis, and synthesis of relevant and credible literary sources pertaining to the subject under investigation. This research adopts a library research design (*penelitian kepustakaan*), in which the study is conducted by gathering data from scholarly works and scientific writings, and by critically examining relevant bibliographic materials that correspond to the research topic. In its most fundamental formulation, library research constitutes a series of interconnected activities relating to the method of collecting bibliographic data, reading, recording, and processing research materials (J. S. Putra, 2021a)

The data utilized in this study are drawn from books, peer-reviewed journals, academic articles, and primary documents or archival sources addressing the historical trajectory and legacy of Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari in South Africa. The procedural steps undertaken include systematic literature searches employing specific keywords, evaluation of source credibility, thematic categorization of information, and the construction of analytical frameworks designed to address the central research questions. This method is intended to trace the historical process of Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari's formation and enduring influence in South Africa.

More specifically, this study applies the historical research method as its primary analytical framework. Louis Gottschalk defines the historical method as a process of examining and analyzing historical testimonies in order to discover authentic and credible data, and of subsequently synthesizing such data into a coherent historical narrative. The method of this discipline involves the elaboration and formulation of general principles through comparative analysis of historical facts. The procedural framework of historical research encompasses four sequential stages: heuristics, involving the collection of primary and secondary materials and sources; source criticism, comprising both internal and external critique of source authenticity and reliability; interpretation, entailing the classification of data and the identification of causal relationships; and explanation, presented in the form of historiographical narrative (Putra, 2021b).

## Result and Discussion

### A Brief Biography of Shaykh Yusuf Al-Makassari

Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari was born in Makassar, Sulawesi, on 8 Shawwal 1036 AH, corresponding to 3 July 1629 CE (Mukti et al., 2025, p. 181). In one of his own written works, he recorded his name in Arabic as "*al-Makassari*" — a toponym derived from the name of his city of origin in South Sulawesi (Ujung Pandang). From an early age, Shaykh Yusuf demonstrated a pronounced and enduring passion for Islamic scholarship. Within a remarkably short period, he had completed the memorization of all thirty *juz* of the Holy Qur'an. Having completed and committed the Qur'an to memory, he proceeded to pursue a broad range of additional disciplines, including *nahwu* (Arabic grammar), *bayan* (rhetoric), *ma'ani* (semantics), *badi'* (stylistics), *balaghah* (eloquence), and *mantiq* (logic), among others. He further studied *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *ushuluddin* (the fundamentals of religion), and immersed himself deeply in the science of *tasawwuf* (Islamic mysticism) — the discipline that most deeply resonated with his spiritual temperament and intellectual disposition (Renold & Badollahi, 2019, p. 67; Suhaeni et al., 2021, p. 17).

Shaykh Yusuf was conferred the honorific title *al-Shaykh al-Hajj Yusuf Abu Mahasin Hadiyatullah Taj al-Khalwati*, and was widely venerated under the appellation *Tuanta Samalaka ri Gowa* — meaning "Our Revered and Supreme Teacher from Gowa." Each component of this compound honorific carries distinct semantic significance (Sahib et al., 2024, p. 8). The designation *al-Shaykh*, within the tradition of Sufi orders (*tariqah*), signifies that the bearer has received formal authorization (*ijazah*) from his master to transmit and teach the *tariqah* to others. *Al-Hajj Yusuf* invokes the name of the Prophet Yusuf (Joseph, peace be upon him), renowned for his physical beauty and exemplary moral character. *Abu Mahasin* denotes one endowed with manifold virtues and wisdom — an epithet conventionally applied to individuals of advanced spiritual and temporal stature. *Taj al-Khalwati* — literally "the Crown of the Khalwatiyya" — designates one who has attained the highest spiritual station (*maqam*) of proximity to God within the Khalwatiyya Sufi order. Finally, *al-Makassari* identifies his region of origin in South Sulawesi (Suhaeni et al., 2021, pp. 17–18).

Shaykh al-Makassari received religious instruction from an early age. He commenced his Qur'anic education under Daeng ri Tasammang, a local religious teacher, under whose guidance he completed his Qur'anic studies. He subsequently deepened his learning in Arabic language, *ilm al-sarf* (morphology), *ilm al-nahw* (syntax), *ilm al-mantiq* (logic), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *tawhid* (Islamic theology), and

*tasawwuf* (mysticism) under the tutelage of Sayyid Ba 'Alwi ibn 'Abdallah al-'Allamah al-Tahir, an itinerant Islamic scholar based in Bontoala (Mas'ud & Fadllurrohman, 2022, p. 1885). At approximately the age of fifteen, he studied for several years under Shaykh Jalaluddin al-Aidid, an Islamic scholar of Acehese origin. He subsequently contracted a marriage with a Makassarese woman in Kutai, East Kalimantan, before eventually settling and establishing an Islamic educational institution in Cikoang around 1640 CE (Renold & Badollahi, 2019, p. 68).

Upon completing his studies in Cikoang, Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari contracted a further marriage — this time with the daughter of Sultan 'Alauddin, the ruling sovereign of the Gowa Sultanate (r. 1591-1636 CE / 1001-1046 AH). Shaykh Yusuf subsequently demonstrated a resolute and unwavering determination to pursue advanced religious studies in the Middle East. This powerful intellectual drive appears to have been significantly stimulated by the Arab scholars under whom he had previously studied (Arif, 2024, p. 61; Quinn, 2009, p. 251).

Following an extended period abroad, Shaykh Yusuf returned to Gowa, where he witnessed widespread moral and social deterioration within his native society. Having tendered counsel to the King of Gowa — counsel that was ultimately rejected — he resolved to depart once again, this time journeying to Banten for a second sojourn. Upon his arrival in Banten, Shaykh Yusuf was appointed by his close associate, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, as Royal Counsellor to the sultanate. Over the course of the ensuing two decades, Shaykh Yusuf served simultaneously as an Islamic preacher, *tariqah* master, *mufti*, and royal adviser (Arif, 2024, p. 60; Moosa et al., 2024, p. 453; Z. A. Putra, 2018, p. 40).

### **The Battle of Banten and The Exile to Ceylon and South Africa**

Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa was equally renowned as the most implacable adversary of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). The ascension of Prince Surya to the throne of the Banten Sultanate — succeeding his father, Sultan Abu al-Mafakhir Abdul Qadir — reignited the protracted and deeply entrenched conflict between the people of Banten and the VOC. It is well documented that the two parties had previously engaged in armed confrontation on two separate occasions, in 1619 CE and between 1633 and 1639 CE respectively. The peace agreements concluded in the aftermath of these conflicts proved insufficiently durable to sustain a lasting cessation of hostilities (Putra, 2018, p. 45). It was therefore unsurprising that Bantenese forces under the command of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa subsequently launched a series of offensives against VOC outposts in Sumatra. Furthermore, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa transformed Banten into a secure sanctuary for resistance fighters from across the Malay Archipelago (*Nusantara*) who were engaged in armed struggle against the VOC, as well as for fugitives who had escaped from VOC detention facilities. From the VOC's perspective, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa thus constituted a formidable obstacle and existential threat to their ambitions of territorial expansion throughout the Archipelago (Arif, 2024, p. 61; Kila, 2018, p. 243; Quinn, 2009, p. 252).

On 27 February 1682, civil war erupted. The forces of Sultan Ageng launched a direct assault upon the seat of Sultan Haji, while the VOC *loji* (trading post) was tenaciously defended by the VOC in concert with the forces of Sultan Haji. As Sultan Haji and the VOC found themselves overwhelmed by the intensity of Sultan Ageng's offensive, the VOC dispatched an urgent request for reinforcements from Batavia — contingent upon Sultan Haji's granting the VOC exclusive trading monopoly rights. On 7 April 1682, VOC reinforcements arrived from Batavia and ultimately succeeded in

relieving the besieged VOC *loji* and liberating the palace at Tirtayasa from the encirclement of Sultan Ageng's forces (Erman, 2012, p. 107).

The VOC subsequently expelled all competing commercial powers — including the English, French, and Danish — replacing them with wealthy Chinese merchants from Batavia. Sultan Ageng's failure to capture the VOC *loji* left him capable only of maintaining his position at his headquarters in Margasana, sustained by the support of Makassarese, Bugis, Balinese, and Malay allies. However, when this stronghold was captured by the VOC and its ally Sultan Haji, Shaykh Yusuf accompanied Sultan Ageng in a strategic withdrawal to Tirtayasa, leading a contingent of approximately 1,500 to 2,000 troops (Kartodirjo, 1992, p. 244). Tirtayasa too subsequently fell to VOC forces, compelling Sultan Ageng to retreat further into the interior (Kila, 2018, p. 244).

The VOC's pursuit of Shaykh Yusuf's guerrilla route eventually led their forces to Pamotan, at the mouth of the Citandui River. Shaykh Yusuf's defensive position was overrun; however, he and his remaining forces succeeded in escaping and entrenching themselves at Pandarang. Upon receiving intelligence that reinforcements for Shaykh Yusuf were en route from the sons of Pangeran Kidul, the VOC commander Van Happel launched an assault upon Tongilis — Shaykh Yusuf's primary defensive stronghold, which he held jointly with the King of Bima and Aria Kusuma. Fierce fighting ensued, resulting in substantial casualties on both sides, including the death of Pangeran Kidul, Shaykh Yusuf's brother-in-law. Shaykh Yusuf himself sustained wounds in the engagement but nonetheless succeeded in evading capture (Arif, 2024, p. 61; Kila, 2018, p. 245). In the aftermath of this battle, Shaykh Yusuf concealed himself for an extended period in the region of Mandala, at the foot of Mount Cirinai. Finding themselves unable to apprehend Shaykh Yusuf and his forces through direct military means, the VOC resorted to the expedient of taking his children and wives hostage. Unwilling to countenance the inhumane treatment of his family, Shaykh Yusuf ultimately surrendered to the VOC in 1683 and was subsequently imprisoned in Batavia. The VOC harbored profound apprehensions regarding his continued incarceration in Batavia, given his immense popular influence — he was regarded both as a preeminent spiritual authority and as a hero of Bantenese independence (Erman, 2012, p. 107; Kila, 2018, p. 245).

With the capture of al-Makassari, the Banten War effectively came to a close. News of his detention spread throughout Batavia and the surrounding regions; he was venerated as a great hero of the struggle against Dutch expansionism. Such was the degree of his popular reverence that his followers reportedly retrieved and preserved as sacred relics even the betel nut he had chewed and spat out. It was therefore entirely understandable that the Dutch harbored fears of a Muslim uprising to secure his liberation. In September 1684, he was exiled to Ceylon, accompanied by two wives, several children, twelve disciples, and a number of attendants (Haron & Arby, 2021, p. 56; Putra, 2018).

It should be noted that, beyond the boundaries of the Malay Archipelago, Ceylon — administered by the Dutch between approximately 1640 and 1796 CE — served as the second principal site of exile, after the Cape of Good Hope, for Malay-Indonesian political exiles. Given its relative geographical proximity to the Archipelago, the Dutch preferred Ceylon over the Cape of Good Hope, the latter appearing to have been reserved for exiles deemed to pose a greater political and security threat. The Dutch evidently began transporting substantial numbers of Malay-Indonesian exiles to Ceylon shortly after consolidating their authority there. Comparatively little is known of the lives of these exiles prior to the seventeenth century; yet it is beyond dispute that al-

Makassari was the most prominent Malay-Indonesian figure ever to have been exiled to Ceylon by the Dutch (Haron & Arby, 2021, p. 57).

During his exile in Sri Lanka, Shaykh Yusuf devoted himself to teaching the sciences of the *tariqah* and various other Islamic disciplines. Within a short period, he had established a scholarly reputation not only among Islamic religious scholars and *tariqah* practitioners, but also — remarkably — within Buddhist religious circles. Shaykh Yusuf further utilized his period of exile in Sri Lanka to compose numerous treatises and scholarly epistles (Mas'ud & Fadllurrohman, 2022, p. 1885). Throughout his nine years in Sri Lanka, the Dutch continued to harbor suspicions that Shaykh Yusuf was perpetually inciting resistance against the Dutch East Indies. Apprehensive of the further political and religious ramifications of al-Makassari's ongoing contact with his compatriots, the Dutch colonial authorities resolved in 1693 CE to banish al-Makassari to a yet more remote destination — the Cape of Good Hope, situated at the southernmost extremity of the African continent. He was sixty-eight years of age when, once again, he was compelled to board the vessel *De Voetboog*, which transported him and his entourage to the Cape. Following his arrival in South Africa and approximately six years of further exile, Shaykh Yusuf consolidated and systematized his religious teachings among all of his disciples (Putra, 2018; Suhaeni et al., 2021, p. 18).

### **The Political Struggle and Legacy in South Africa**

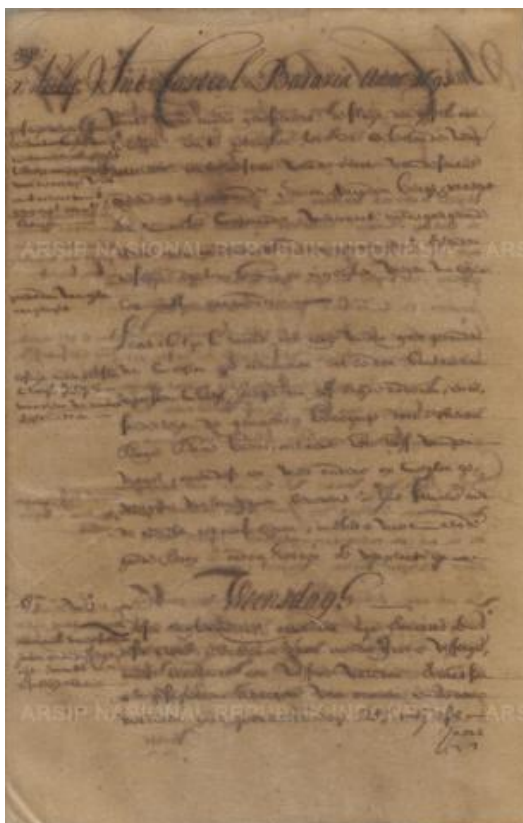
Apprehensive of potential civil unrest among the populations of Batavia, Banten, and Cirebon — who were fully aware of Shaykh al-Makassari's status as a Dutch captive — the VOC government took the initiative in September 1684 CE to transfer Shaykh al-Makassari, together with several family members and twelve of his disciples, to a location far removed from the Malay Archipelago: Sri Lanka (Ceylon). Shaykh al-Makassari resided in Sri Lanka for approximately nine years, until around 1693 CE, when the VOC authorities resolved to banish him to a yet more distant destination — South Africa — transporting him aboard the vessel *De Voetboog* to the Cape of Good Hope (Putra, 2018, p. 45; Quinn, 2009, p. 252).

For those of Archipelago origin, the Cape of Good Hope was the most notorious site of exile. Since its colonization by the Dutch in 1652 CE, several eminent Malay-Indonesian figures — those deemed most dangerous by the Dutch authorities — had been banished there. However, as in Ceylon, not all Malay-Indonesians brought to the Cape were political exiles; some were enslaved persons put to work on Dutch agricultural estates in the territory. Prior to al-Makassari's arrival, both early exiles and enslaved persons constituted the nucleus of a small Muslim community that subsequently came to be known as the "*Orang Melayu Tanjung*" (Cape Malays). While all scholars of the South African Muslim community are in agreement that al-Makassari was the most significant Malay-Indonesian exile ever banished to the Cape, other notable figures — such as Tuan Guru — also merit acknowledgment. Al-Makassari arrived at the Cape of Good Hope on 2 April 1694, accompanied by a retinue of approximately forty-nine individuals, the majority of whom had previously accompanied him to Ceylon. Two months after his arrival, the Dutch colonial authorities relocated him and his entourage to Zandvliet — an agricultural settlement at the mouth of the Eerste River — so that, as Jeffreys observes, he "would not be in contact with former adherents of the regime." Owing to its historical association with al-Makassari and his followers, the area is today known as Macassar, while its coastal

zone is referred to as Macassar Beach (Haron & Arby, 2021, p. 58; Kurniawan et al., 2023, p. 136).

In general, al-Makassari received courteous and respectful treatment from the Dutch colonial authorities at the Cape. Governor Simon van der Stel, and subsequently his son Willem Adriaan, cultivated a cordial personal acquaintance with him. Nevertheless, the Dutch remained acutely aware of the potential political difficulties he could pose. Accordingly, they endeavored to isolate him and his followers from other Malay-Indonesian exiles who had preceded them at the Cape — an effort that ultimately proved unsuccessful. Once again, al-Makassari became a focal point for the Malay-Indonesian community — not as a catalyst for rebellion against the Dutch, but as a force for the intensification of Islamic faith and practice. Al-Makassari and his twelve disciples — now designated as *imams* — together with other exiles, conducted teaching sessions and religious worship in clandestine gatherings within their quarters. Through such activities, al-Makassari succeeded not only in preserving the Islamic faith among his fellow exiles, but also in attracting a substantial number of new adherents.

The arrival of Shaykh Yusuf in Cape Town as a political exile was received with notable respect by Governor Simon van der Stel, who accorded him a degree of honor unprecedented among earlier political exiles. As I.D. Calvin recorded in *The Romance of South Africa* (1897, pp. 165-175): "*The veneration that has persisted for two hundred years among the Malays of Cape Town allows us to imagine that Shaykh Yusuf was no ordinary man.*" He was not merely of noble lineage, but a man of profound piety and measured disposition — simultaneously a warrior, a prolific author, a scholar, and a man of deep religious learning (Kurniawan et al., 2023, p. 136).



Picture 1. Decision of Governor General of Batavia to transfer the religious figure, as the rebellion leader, Chiegh Joseph (Sheikh Yusuf) together with his family and his followers from Bugis and Makasar from Ceylon to Cape Town South Africa (ANRI, 1693).

Above picture tell about the strategic shift in historical remembrance surrounding Sheikh Yusuf was significantly catalyzed by the 1693 decision of the Governor General of Batavia to transfer the religious figure and rebellion leader from Ceylon to Cape Town, South Africa, alongside his family and followers from Bugis and Makassar. This forced migration eventually transformed into a powerful political and social symbol, particularly after Nelson Mandela proclaimed that his struggle to abolish apartheid was deeply inspired by Sheikh Yusuf's teachings.

Shaykh Yusuf and his entourage arrived at the southernmost point of South Africa on 2 April 1694 at 3:00 PM local time — unshackled and formally received by Company officials. He was escorted to the Castle in Cape Town, in close proximity to the harbour. Upon arrival at the site of his exile, the retinue performed their first *Maghrib* (evening) prayer at the Castle — an act widely regarded as the inaugural formal attestation of Islam's presence at the Cape. Shaykh Yusuf resided at the Castle (Fort) for seventy-two days, during which time he socialized with Indian soldiers employed by the Company and Castle workers, who gradually came under the influence of his remarkable personality. Concerned that the Castle would descend into disorder, the authorities resolved to relocate him to the area of Zandvliet, near the mouth of the Eerste River — thirty-six kilometres from the Cape Town city centre. The farm of Pastor P. Kalden was situated in this district, near Faure Hill and overlooking False Bay — the southernmost bay, where the Indian and Atlantic Oceans converge. The VOC regarded Zandvleit as a suitably secure site of exile, distancing Shaykh Yusuf — viewed as a "mortal enemy" of Dutch power in the East Indies — from the broader population (Kurniawan et al., 2023, p. 136).

The development of Islam in South Africa is inseparable from the role of Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari — an Indonesian Islamic scholar revered as the "Father of the Muslim Ummah" in the region. The history of Islam in South Africa is intimately intertwined with the presence of the Malay community in that territory, a connection evidenced by striking parallels between Muslim religious practices in Indonesia and South Africa. These include, for instance, the ceremony of shaving a newborn infant's hair — a ritual still observed in Muslim communities in South Africa in a form virtually identical to its Indonesian counterpart. Similarly, the practice of *tahlilan* — communal Qur'anic recitations and prayers held nightly from the first through the seventh day following a death, subsequently continued on the fortieth day and the thousandth day — mirrors Indonesian Muslim funerary traditions. Those who gather for *tahlilan* are served communal meals prepared through the collective effort of community members, principally women (Marzuenda, 2021, p. 5; Putra, 2018).

Al-Makassari has been celebrated by South African Islamic historians as the founder of Islam in the region. The term "founder," however, may be somewhat misleading, given that Islam — or, more precisely, a Malay-Indonesian Muslim community — demonstrably existed at the Cape prior to his arrival. It is therefore more accurate to characterize him as a *reformer* or *reviver* of Islam at the Cape specifically, and in South Africa more broadly. His unwavering resolve to sustain and preserve the Islamic faith among his fellow exiles constituted one of the most consequential factors contributing to the survival and subsequent flourishing of Islam in the region. Furthermore, as Zwemer has noted, three Sufi *tariqah* orders were present among South African Muslims: the Qadiriyya, Shattariyya, and Rifa'iyya. It is highly probable that al-Makassari was responsible for introducing these orders to South Africa, given that he held the rank of *khalifah* within all three. As early as 1772 CE, Thurnberg documented a ritual among the Cape Malay community that is unmistakably identifiable as *dhikr*;

and in the 1860s, Mayson provided a vivid firsthand account of the celebrated practice among Rifa'iyya adherents of demonstrated imperviousness to fire and sharp weapons (Haron & Arby, 2021, p. 59).

Al-Makassari passed away at the Cape on 22 Dhu al-Qa'da 1111 AH / 22 May 1699 CE, and was interred at Faure, in the sand hills overlooking False Bay, in close proximity to the Zandvliet farm. His tomb subsequently became known as the *Karamat* (literally, "miraculous shrine") of Shaykh Yusuf. Between 1903 and 1913 CE, the tomb of al-Makassari was extensively renovated by Hajj Sulayman Shah Muhammad — a wealthy South Asian philanthropist who had settled at the Cape. A magnificent domed mausoleum was erected over al-Makassari's grave, subsequently supplemented by additional structures, including the tombs of four of his principal disciples. The *Karamat* of al-Makassari stands as one of the most architecturally distinguished and historically significant funerary monuments on the Cape Peninsula — a central gathering point for the Malay-Indonesian community and the preeminent site of Muslim religious pilgrimage at the Cape. As du Plessis aptly observed, it has become "*the Mecca of the South, where thousands of pilgrims annually pay their last respects to the memory of an exiled nobleman*" (Suhaeni et al., 2021, p. 18).

The propagation of Islam in Africa — and in South Africa in particular — is inextricably bound to the role of the Indonesian Islamic scholar Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari. Exiled to South Africa by the Dutch as a consequence of his sustained resistance to colonial domination, Shaykh Yusuf became the pioneering figure through whom Islam first took root in South Africa. He actively taught and transmitted Islamic doctrine to his followers, extended his influence to other exiles and enslaved persons, and conducted clandestine nocturnal religious gatherings in which participants deepened their understanding and practice of Islam, free from external interference. Through these covert *da'wah* activities, he gradually consolidated and expanded a Muslim community that grew steadily in both size and cohesion (Kurniawan et al., 2023, p. 137; Ritonga & Putra, 2021).

In South Africa, Shaykh Yusuf taught the Khalwatiyya *tariqah*, which was subsequently adopted by the Muslim community of the Cape. It should be noted that prior to his arrival, other Sufi orders — including the Qadiriyya, brought by Shaykh Mahmud and Abd. Rahman Matabe — were already present. Through the teachings of the Khalwatiyya, Shaykh Yusuf cultivated a profound sense of shared solidarity among his followers, transcending distinctions of race, lineage, skin colour, and social origin. The conviction that all human beings are equal before God reinforced the internal cohesion of the community, affirming that divine judgment is predicated not upon physical difference but upon the depth of each individual's piety and *taqwa* (God-consciousness). Communal nocturnal gatherings continued to be held, centered upon the practice of *dhikr*, conducted discreetly so as to evade detection by the Dutch colonial authorities (Putra, 2018).

On 2 April 1994 — marking the tercentenary of Shaykh Yusuf's arrival in South Africa — Nelson Mandela delivered a landmark address at the De Goede Hoop building in the heart of Cape Town, in which he declared that Shaykh Yusuf was the foundational architect of communal solidarity in South Africa, and the father of its anti-racist and anti-colonial communities — communities united in their opposition to all forms of colonial exploitation. In recognition of his extraordinary contributions, Shaykh Yusuf was officially designated a National Hero of South Africa in 1925. In Indonesia, in addition to the title of National Hero, he was further honored with the distinguished

decoration of *Mahaputra Adhipradana* (Kurniawan et al., 2023, p. 137; Moosa et al., 2024, p. 453).

Nelson Mandela, the preeminent figure of the anti-apartheid struggle, declared of Shaykh Yusuf:

*"He is a son of South Africa and the inspiration for the anti-apartheid struggle. He was the initiator of the establishment of the South African community. I got inspiration from him that the black and white are the same, that the nobles and slaves are not different. What makes men different before God is the value of their faith"* (Suhaeni et al., 2021, p. 19).

The history of Islam in South Africa is as old as the history of the Dutch presence at the Cape in the second half of the seventeenth century. The formative struggles of early Muslim communities to establish and consolidate Islam in the face of formidable obstacles — first at the Cape, and subsequently in KwaZulu-Natal, where Islam was introduced in the late nineteenth century — constitute a rich and underexplored field of historical inquiry. Estimates of the contemporary Muslim population of South Africa range between 500,000 and 1,000,000. Based on the most recent census data and the geographical concentration of Muslim populations across South Africa's provinces, it may be reasonably inferred that the majority of this population comprises Muslims of Malay origin (approximately 45%, concentrated predominantly in the Western Cape) and Muslims of Indian origin (approximately 45%, concentrated in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, and Mpumalanga). The remainder consists primarily of Muslims of African origin, with only a negligible proportion of European or Arab Muslims present in the country (Dangor, 2003, pp. 204–205).

## Conclusion

The life trajectory of Shaykh Yusuf constitutes an extraordinarily effective vehicle for cultivating patriotism and national consciousness among younger generations within the construction of Indonesian national identity. This is most clearly discernible across several interconnected dimensions, including fidelity to religious values, the spirit of struggle in the face of adversity, and the promotion of cross-cultural fraternity. Although his presence in South Africa resulted from political exile by the VOC, his role transcended geographical boundaries and colonial oppression, rendering him a crucial catalyst in the formation of the Muslim community in Cape Town. His most enduring contribution was that of a pioneer and founding architect who fundamentally laid the groundwork for Islam in that territory, as affirmed in scholarly literature. Furthermore, his teachings through the Khalwatiyya tariqah exercised an abiding impact, providing an essential spiritual lifeline and functioning as an anchor of identity and communal cohesion within a profoundly hostile colonial environment.

As a figure of multiple, overlapping roles—prince, *'alim* (Islamic scholar), mujahid (freedom fighter), and Sufi shaykh—Shaykh Yusuf commanded a moral and spiritual authority of unparalleled weight. His capacity to engage clandestinely with enslaved persons and fellow exiles, initiating them into his tariqah, demonstrates a remarkable degree of adaptability and resilience in the propagation of da'wah under severe Dutch colonial constraint. Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari was far more than a historical figure of biographical interest; he was a spiritual architect who, through his leadership and indomitable perseverance, profoundly shaped the demographic and

religious landscape of the Muslim community in South Africa. The shift in remembering him as a global human rights icon was further solidified when Nelson Mandela proclaimed that his own struggle was inspired by the Shaykh's teachings. In summation, he bequeathed a legacy that remains deep and enduring, bridging the history of Indonesian resistance with the foundational roots of Islam at the Cape.

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