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# The Religious Factors of Early Modern Portugal's Choice of Macau

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## ABSTRACT

Portugal became an important political, economic and religious center in Europe in the early modern period. After the opening of the new sea route, Portugal also took an active part in the colonization of Asia in the context of the colonial expansion of Europe. As for the choice of strategic locations in the east, Portugal chose the strongholds in India, China and Indonesia as springboards for its aggression and trade. This article attempts to stand on the religious standpoint, taking Macao as an example, from three aspects: Portugal is one of the European religious centers, Portugal has a strong sense of religious export, Portugal chose the eastern strategic location of the lack of religious culture to explain the early modern Portugal chose the eastern strategic location of the religious factors.

## KEYWORDS

*Portugal; The east; A strategic location; The religious element.*

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### 1. Introduction

In the early modern period, the European history was in an important period: the rise and development of industry and commerce made the feudal society based on natural economy gradually disintegrate. The new air route opened up, caused the commercial revolution, price revolution, people from the bondage of the soil, personal vassal relationships from the feudal fetters and closed in the feudal castle, into the towns and industrial and commercial center, the market, the rapid development of commodity economy, with its export-oriented, open characteristic greatly promote the development of productivity, commodity economy gradually replace natural economy, driving the colonial expansion of European countries actively.

Portugal, located in the Iberian Peninsula, has developed rapidly: economically, it has become the economic power of Europe on a par with Spain; Politically with Spain as a great power in Europe; Culturally, it became one of the religious and cultural centers of Europe. With the beginning of its overseas colonial expansion in the 15th and 16th centuries, Portugal successively established a large number of colonies in Africa, Asia and America. In the choice of strategic locations in the East, apart from trade requirements, Portugal fully considered religious factors.

## **2. Portugal Itself Is One of the Religious Centers of Europe**

Religion is the pupa of civilization and the core of spiritual cohesion. In Europe, carrying Christian civilization in the Middle Ages, almost everyone was a Christian. The church was the most powerful group of feudal lords and a powerful tool for the feudal class to carry out spiritual rule. People are closely related to the church from birth to death, and their thoughts and actions are tightly controlled by the church. A special period in the struggle against feudalism achieved Portugal's status as one of the centers of traditional European religious culture: historically, since the 15th century, the Catholic Church had become increasingly corrupt and an obstacle to the development of capitalism in all European countries. The broad masses, led by the bourgeoisie, demanded to break the shackles of the feudal theological system of thought and gain liberation. The corruption and embezzlement of the Catholic Church has aroused strong dissatisfaction from all walks of life. With the development of capitalism, the emerging bourgeoisie sought conditions for development, and the new bourgeoisie demanded to establish a new church suitable for the development of capitalism. It launched a social movement against the Roman Catholic Church, which was also a political movement disguised by the religious reform, namely the Reformation. Portugal stood on the position of Counter-Reformation and actively maintained the position and authority of Catholicism in Europe, which was opposed to the Reformation Line.

Portugal, meanwhile, had long been under Arab control, and it took generations to recover. The victory of Portugal was regarded as a victory of spiritual cohesion, of religion, of God's help, and the development of the situation made Portugal gradually become the traditional religious center of Europe.

## **3. Portugal Itself Has A Strong Sense of Religious Export**

In the late 15th century, Portugal has established a centralized regime, coupled with the geographical location, near the Atlantic Ocean, rich navigation knowledge, shipbuilding technology, the country has the power to organize large-scale ocean voyage, Catholicism also spread to Asia, America and Africa and other places. Brave and adventurous European sailors, in addition to the thirst for knowledge and the pursuit of wealth, there is a more noble purpose – to find the unknown world of Christian friends, as well as to bring God's holy will to the distant regions of the pagans, which is due to the strong Christian universalism and fanatical expansion spirit. More than 200 years of anti-Muslim "reconquest" have made their Christian faith more orthodox and missionary. Portugal's religious complex has led them to have unlimited religious reverence, Portugal became a synonym for fervent Christians. They set off religious fanaticism in the country, and actively spread Catholicism to the east, trying to actively expand the influence of Catholicism and convert Muslims and other infidels to Catholicism. The missionaries actively exported their religious ideology, which provided a solid cultural foundation for their foreign colonization. The belief attitude of the Portuguese was very narrow. They set up religious courts, controlled the pilgrimage traffic, and the missionaries took the initiative to land and sow the seeds of Christianity. Thus, a strong religious motivation and sense of religious mission accompanied the Portuguese seafaring and exploration career from the beginning to the end, providing them with a strong spiritual support to overcome all difficulties and the human nature of fear of the unknown world. European sailors have been supported by the Portuguese royal family, eager to find a direct sea route to the east, Portugal thus became the first country to start maritime exploration, the most enthusiastic European countries to carry out Christian propaganda and one of the earliest countries to send Catholic missionaries abroad.

In the middle of the 16th century, Portugal was the era of sea power, and it was also the era when the Jesuits, who belonged to the reformers of the old religion, followed Portugal into the strategic locations of the East and recruited a group of new people for God. In 1568, at the age of 14, Sebastien came to power. The young king was a typical religious fanatic. He had been taught that Portugal was the savior of threatened Christianity and that he had come to save it. With Portugal's overseas expansion, Jesuit missionaries, who belonged to the

reformists, actively expanded the influence of Catholicism, actively exported religious ideology and spread Catholicism to the east, which became one of the important goals of the Portuguese government.

#### **4. The Lack of Religious Culture in the Strategic Eastern Region Chosen by Portugal**

The overseas expansion in the age of great geographical discovery was conquest, and conquest was mainly for land occupation. The Portuguese who opened the sea route from India to the east were also driven by this motive [1]. When the Portuguese came to the islands of South Asia, they first had relations with China. After the Reformation in Europe in the 16th century, Spain, Portugal and other countries of the old church in Europe formed an old church alliance with the Roman Church, and in 1535, the Jesuit Society was founded, committed to reviving the power of the Holy See, so the Jesuit Society made efforts to develop overseas. In eastern China, the Portuguese first arrived at Tuen Mun Island off the coast of Guangzhou in 1514. In 1515, Portugal sent Philestro on an official diplomatic mission to China, which started the official communication between Portugal and the Ming Dynasty. The Portuguese came to China mainly for the development of trade with China, while the Ming Dynasty always carried out the policy of sea ban, which prohibited all private overseas trade except for the tributary. This kind of contradiction between China and Portugal determines that the potential of conflict is inevitable. Although the Portuguese were repeatedly driven out by the Ming army, they never gave up the idea of occupying a trading stronghold on the coast of China, and Macao, located at the mouth of the Pearl River, became their coveted target.

In 1535, the Portuguese obtained the right to dock at the wharf of Macao for trade. Missionaries also began to make their way east. The Jesuits first came to China in 1552. After the Portuguese occupied Macao, the Jesuits followed. Macao was not only the base of commerce and trade, but also the front station for European missionaries to come to China for missionary work. In 1553, the Portuguese settled in Macao by bribing the local Chinese officials on the pretext of exposing water-damaged goods on the ships. From 1557 on, they had to pay a certain rent of silver to the local Chinese officials every year in exchange for the right to live in Macao. From 1562 to 1563, five Jesuits came to Macao and began their missionary activities. In 1568, the Bishop of Nicaea, Gianelau, came to Macao as the acting minister of the Far East Mission. By this time, the number of Christians in Macao had increased from 500 in 1561 to 5,000. On this basis, on January 23, 1576, Pope Gregory XIII issued a royal decree to establish the diocese of Macao, with jurisdiction over Japan and mainland China. According to Western records, between 1578 and 1740, a total of 463 Jesuits left Lisbon for Macao; Between 1744 and 1745 alone, 90 Franciscans and 30 Austinians came to China via Macao [2]. To sum up, during the two and a half centuries from the 16th century to the 18th century, Macao, as the only international trade hub in southeast China that maintained continuity and openness and had many particularities, was always the main channel for European missionaries to enter mainland China and other parts of the Far East [3].

In 1840, the Opium War broke out. Under the aggression of western powers, the government of the late Qing Dynasty was forced to cede land and pay reparations. The Portuguese government also seized the opportunity to strike. In 1845, Portugal issued a decree declaring Macao a "free port", refused to pay the rent, seized and closed the gate by force, expelled Chinese officials and kidnapped Chinese soldiers. In 1851 and 1864, they forcibly placed the two islands under their jurisdiction, thus gradually completing the occupation of Macao.

Throughout the process of Macao being occupied by Portugal, it is related to the strategic decision of Ming Dynasty. In mid and late Ming dynasty with the focus on defense in the northern national ethnic policy, the Portuguese colonists secretly insufficient recognition of the problem of Macao, the Portuguese colonists secretly accounted for the main reason for the macau can succeed [4], but represented by Macao Portuguese choose Oriental strategically important religious culture actually is in a state of loss is also a very important reason. In addition to the traditional Confucianism and Taoism, many foreign religions, such as Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, have their adherents in China. Traditional Chinese religions, such as Buddhism, tend

to cause confusion due to their serious branches and factions. Confucianism was presented as a philosophy that tried to be a religion, but Confucianism was the scourge of theocracy. At the same time, the imperial power precedes the clerical power in China, and the clerical power is based on the imperial power. China has a huge territory, a large population, and a complex ethnic composition. There is no similar precedent in history, namely religious rule, for the reason that it is impossible to explain the doctrines and scriptures to different races. Therefore, in a sense, the religious culture of the strategic eastern region chosen by Portugal was in a state of deficiency. At the same time, Macao was only a small place for China with vast territory and abundant resources, and the Ming government did not pay enough attention to it. As a result, Portugal finally occupied Macao and became its colony.

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