

## MALACCA AND MING DYNASTY IN 15TH-16TH CENTURIES: A DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND REGIONAL STABILITY

**Budi Darmawan\*, Erasiah, Lukmanul Hakim**

Imam Bonjol State Islamic University, Padang, Indonesia

### **Abstract**

*This study investigates the intricate relationship in diplomacy of Malacca with the Ming Dynasty of China during the 15th century in the Malacca Strait, with a focus on its impact on Diplomatic Relations. Employing a comprehensive historical methodology, including heuristic exploration, critical examination of sources, data interpretation, and historiographical analysis, the research reveals the significant consequences of mutually beneficial diplomatic engagements and trade interactions the bond from two region China and Malacca. When faced with threats came from Majapahit and Siam, Malacca found assistance from China (Ming Dynasty), resulting in the formation of a robust alliance. This diplomatic collaboration commenced with the arrival of Chinese delegated Yin C'ing in 1403 AD and was further reinforced by the influential visit of Cheng Ho in 1409 AD, solidifying the relationship between them. This mutually beneficial relationship not only safeguarded Malacca and elevated its trading stature but also facilitated China's access to valuable spices, while providing military protection from the Ming Dynasty. The deep relations Malacca had with China during the 15th century shows how their strengthened political association, connections and security also helps their cultural interactions.*

*Keywords: Diplomatic relation; Ming Dynasty; Strait of Malacca.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Southeast Asia holds a significant position as a major international crossroads, resulting in a steady flow of influences externally. Strategically situated between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, this region holds immense importance as a pivotal junction of geography, anthropology, and economy. Its strategic positioning not only marks a geographical crossroads but also serves as a significant melting pot of diverse cultures and traditions. Economically, it acts as a vital hub for trade routes, facilitating global economic exchanges on a substantial scale. Its unique location not only connects two distinct areas but also delineates them. The region's existence plays a vital role in facilitating trade flows and cultural exchanges, while also impacting the social and economic dynamics of the surrounding areas (Gaynor, 2014). Throughout history, from ancient times to the present, the Malay Peninsula and several of Indonesia's mainland islands have been pivotal in maritime activities, serving as essential transit zones for shipping and trade routes. This centrality in global navigation has profoundly shaped the cultural and economic landscape of the region (Barbara Watson Andaya, 2017).

By the 15th century, the Malay Peninsula and northern Sumatra Island had firmly established themselves as pivotal centers of subregional trade. These areas were not just geographically strategic but also culturally significant, acting as vibrant nodes in the extensive network of maritime trade that spanned across Asia. The coastal towns along the Malay Peninsula and northern Sumatra flourished as bustling marketplaces, where goods, ideas, and cultures from the East and West converged. These towns, such as Malacca on the Malay Peninsula, became renowned for their prosperity and cosmopolitan nature.

---

\*Correspondance Author: [budi.darmawan@uinib.ac.id](mailto:budi.darmawan@uinib.ac.id)

Article History | Submitted: 12 Desember, 2023 | Revised: 22 Mei, 2024 | Accepted: 20 Juni, 2024 | Publish: 03 Juli 2024

HOW TO CITE (APA 6<sup>th</sup> Edition):

Darmawan, Budi., Erasiah., Hakim, Lukmanul. (2024). Malacca and Ming Dynasty in 15th-16th Centuries: A Diplomatic Relations and Regional Stability. *Juspi: Jurnal Sejarah Peradaban Islam*. 8(1), page.48-60

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.30829/juspi.v8i1.18491>

They facilitated the exchange of a diverse range of commodities including spices, and other valuable goods. This trade brought wealth and economic growth to the region, further enhancing its significance as a commercial hub. Moreover, the continual influx of merchants from many regions, including China, it turned these coastal towns into melting pots of culture and innovation. The interactions among traders, scholars, and artisans from diverse backgrounds led to a rich exchange of knowledge, technology, and cultural practices. This cultural intermingling helped to spread religious ideas, linguistic elements, and artistic influences across the region, contributing to a unique and dynamic cultural landscape (Vann, 2014).

The significance of these trade centers extended beyond commerce, they were instrumental in spreading diverse cultural and religious beliefs, including Islam, which gained a strong foothold in the region through the efforts of traders and missionaries. The blend of indigenous cultures with these external influences fostered the development of distinctive local traditions and a rich cultural heritage that continued to evolve over the centuries (Shuhaimi & Rahman, 1991). Because of its advantageous and strategic location, the region was ideally suited to function, serving as a hub for trade and a key transshipment point, facilitating the efficient movement of goods from multiple directions. The vibrant cities in coastal area along the Malay Peninsula together with northern Sumatra Island emerged as significant hubs for the distribution and warehousing of goods. These cities solidified their status as essential logistics hubs, playing a pivotal role within the subregional trade network of the time. Their development as key points in the trade routes underscored the region's significance in the economic landscape of the era (Suyani, 2013).

The Malay Peninsula, along with the Malacca Strait, was an essential center for Ming Dynasty commerce, linking maritime activities in China's region with the trade centers of Southeast Asia. This strategic location facilitated the exchange of goods, culture, and ideas, enhancing economic prosperity and fostering cultural interactions between China and Southeast Asia (Lewis, 1969; Tanjung, Sakdiah, & Harahap, 2021). The area connected a variety of regions extending from Japan and India to west Asia, East Africa, and Western Europe. Monsoon winds from the Indian Ocean made the Malacca region a favored trade route, while trade winds from the China Sea necessitated stops for ships. Ships voyaging eastward found respite in the tranquil expanse of the Indian Ocean, while those navigating southwestward across the South China Sea would halt their journey to await favorable winds, ensuring safe and efficient passage. This strategic pause allowed for strategic planning and preparation, enhancing the efficiency and safety of maritime trade routes in the region (Ricklefs, 2013).

Commerce thrived during the 14th and 15th centuries, facilitated by trade within the territories of Malacca and the Kingdom of Siam. Maritime kingdoms along the Malacca Strait capitalized on their strategic geographic and maritime conditions to attract traders from both eastern and western regions to the archipelago (Wade, 2010). Malacca, celebrated for its vibrant commercial activities, stood as a central point for the reception and exchange of a wide array of products originating from the eastern shoreline of Sumatra. This bustling trade encompassed a diverse range of good quality commodities. Upon visiting Malacca, traders would procure an extensive selection of merchandise, including Chinese porcelain, silk, Indian textiles, Middle Eastern perfumes, and an assortment of foreign goods, enriching both the local economy and cultural landscape through vibrant exchanges (Hussin, 2007).

Before its peak in the 15th century, Malacca was preceded by China, renowned for its advanced civilization and dominance in trade. Chinese ceramics and metal coins were common along Sumatra's north coast, illustrating China's trade sway Throughout many regions in Asia Continent, encompassing the Malacca Strait. This widespread presence of Chinese goods highlights extensive trade routes, facilitating exchanges of goods and ideas, enriching interconnected societies economically and culturally. The detailed maritime network is extensively documented, with references to the Portuguese dominance over Malacca during the 16th century, as chronicled in Tome Pires' *Suma Oriental* (Lapian, 2008).

During its initial stages, Malacca was subject to the dominion and governance of the Siamese Kingdom, which exerted control over the city-state and its surrounding territories. Under

Siamese rule, Malacca experienced a period of political influence and oversight from the kingdom, shaping its early development and socio-political landscape. This period marked a significant chapter in Malacca's history, characterized by the interaction and integration of Siamese governance within the region (Syifa, 2021).

Parameswara, who maintained strong ties with the Srivijaya Kingdom, initiated a rebellion to emancipate Malacca from external control. This pivotal moment in history saw Parameswara's defiance against outside authority, leading to the liberation of Malacca from the grip of external powers. As a figure with connections to the Srivijaya Kingdom, Parameswara's actions not only symbolized a quest for independence but also signaled a shift in regional dynamics as Malacca emerged as a sovereign entity in its own right (Groeneveldt, 2018). Hence, Malacca faced potential threats from the Siamese and Majapahit Kingdoms, prompting it to forge ties with the powerful Ming Dynasty of China for security and safeguarding its sovereignty. China, aspiring for dominance in Asia, secured the safety of Malacca from external dangers, including piracy, while also enhancing its own trade interests. This symbiotic relationship fostered established a reciprocal reliance between Malacca and Ming's China (Kang, 2007).

Initially, Malacca functioned as a pivotal service hub for passing The main function of Chinese traders in the Malacca region was to furnish water, supplies, and merchandise to Chinese merchants before their onward voyage across the Indian Ocean. Serving as a crucial stopover, Malacca offered vital assistance to mariners and merchants from China, fostering expansion of the economy and facilitating cultural interchange in the area (Hall, 2019). During the early 15th century, Emperor Yongle of the Ming Dynasty initiated a significant naval voyage aimed at enhancing diplomatic relations. This interaction continued until the Malacca kingdom's decline in the 16th century. With an influx of Chinese merchants, offerings had to be more substantial, prompting Malacca to appoint a dedicated Syahbandar to oversee the trading groups from China (Marzali, 2011). Therefore, the diplomatic relations linking Malacca and China can be interpreted as a mutually beneficial alliance involving collaboration both politically and economically, with each party depending on the other. This topic will be investigated in greater detail in the author's forthcoming paper.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The study primarily employs the historical method., selected for its requirement of historical data. This method encompasses a meticulous investigation and examination of historical documents and artifacts, comprising four key stages: heuristic inquiry, critical authentication, interpretation, and historiography, carried out sequentially (Abdurahman, 2007). The initial phase entails heuristic inquiry, where the researcher gathers data on historical occurrences in the Malacca Strait, focusing on Ming Dynasty-China and Sultanate of Malacca interactions. Historical sources are categorized into primary sources, encompassing contemporary oral and written records (Abdurahman, 2007). This article utilizes documents, articles, books, and archival materials to explore the historical relationships between Malacca and China in the Ming Dynasty era. These sources are categorized as either primary (directly from the events or individuals) or secondary (indirectly related) (Daliman, 2012).

The second stage, the researcher examines the gathered data to evaluate the dependability and precision of the data provided by the sources. This assessment consists of two aspects: external scrutiny, which seeks to verify the authenticity of the source or document, and internal analysis, which is employed to gauge the reliability of the information contained within the source (Sjamsuddin, 2020). The third phase encompasses data analysis, during which information gathered from field investigations and literary examinations will be scrutinized to identify causal relationships and categorized according to the typology of sources based on the research subject. Meanwhile, the fourth phase involves historiography or historical narration, where data that has undergone the preceding three phases will be synthesized by the author into a paper. This historical account seeks to provide a thorough overview of the progression of research starting from its beginning to its conclusion, encompassing the formulation of conclusions (Abdurahman, 2007).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Malacca Strait and Ming Dynasty's Influence

At least two obstacles need to be overcome for Arkounian's thinking model to be implemented: first, the study's primary focus should be on the Al-Quran and Hadith. Second, there is a historical sedimentation or division of layers of Islamic thinking among Muslims (the holy mission of the Prophet has been reinterpreted into many forms of *aqidah*, *fiqh*, *tarekat*, and so on). Islam is being more and more politicised and biased, which leads to a generalised ideology and mythologizing of Islamic doctrines. The importance of prophetic morality was diminished, and Islamic history was distorted with a focus on universal principles. This presents a clear dilemma: religion must first be particularised before it can be fully appreciated. However, hasty specificization can ultimately take away from prophecy's general message. Additionally, Islamic political ethics and reasoning can be distinguished from theocratic and humanistic political ethics and reasoning by a number of Theo-Humanistic hues based on Arkoun's holistic Islamic study methodology.

China became aware of Malacca's rise through reports from Muslim traders from South India. These traders expressed their hopes for the port's expansion in the Malacca Strait, which they considered more advantageous than the Ayutthaya port, particularly for merchants journeying from western regions. Recognizing the strait's strategic importance as a trading hub and a superior port sparked China's initial interest in the region (B W Andaya & Andaya, 2001).

Prior to the 15th century, China had founded diplomatic ties with several nations across Southeast Asia, laying the foundation for enduring ties characterized by political cooperation, trade agreements, and cultural exchanges (Wong, 1984). During the Ming Dynasty era, China did not employ coercion to establish diplomatic relations with other nations; rather, nations that sent representatives to meet the ruler of China did so willingly. To maintain these diplomatic ties, China presented offerings or tributes, particularly regions in both Northeast and Southeast Asia experienced advantageous outcomes from the policies of China. As a result, these nations strive for and take pride in fostering positive relationships with China (Yakoob & Ismail, 2017).

Throughout the annals of history, the Chinese have garnered a reputation as intrepid mariners, driven by an insatiable curiosity to explore the farthest reaches of the world. Armed with scales as one of their primary instruments, they embarked on maritime journeys, eagerly acquiring every trace of pepper they encountered along their voyages. With meticulous precision, they assessed each batch, estimating its quantity before proceeding to negotiate a fair price for their purchase. This enduring tradition of maritime exploration and trade underscored the Chinese penchant for venturing into distant lands and engaging in commercial exchanges that spanned vast oceans and continents (Dunn, 2011).

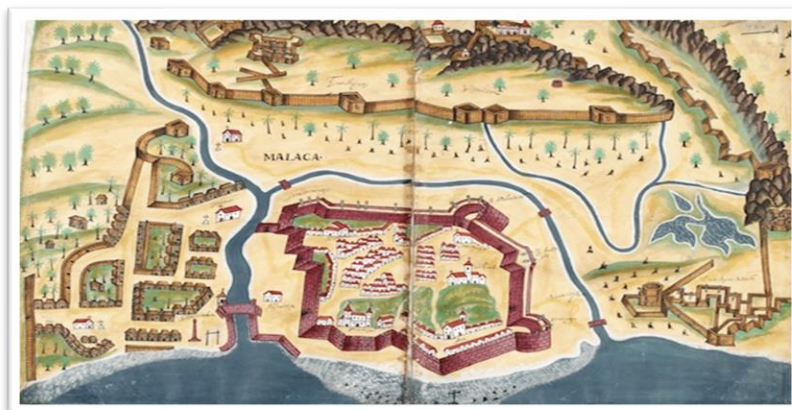


Figure 1.1 Map of Malacca Made by Pedro Barreto de Resende (British Library, 2013)



Figure 1.2 View of Malacca from sea made by Francois Valetijn (Vann, 2014).

During the Ming Dynasty, maritime trade thrived in Southeast Asia, drawing envoys from various areas such as South Asia, Southeast Asia, and even parts of East Africa to pay homage to the China. In response, the Chinese Emperor dispatched fleets led by Cheng Ho to build alliances with local leaders. The fleets from Liujiagang in Suzhou departing traversed Wuhumen in Fujian before arriving at the shores of Central Vietnam (Culao-Re and Qui Nhon) (Yulian Putra, Susanto, Unila Jalan Soemantri Brojonegoro No, & Lampung, 2018). The maritime route covered vast territories from regions including Borneo, Java, Siam, and Malacca to the southernmost point of the Malay Peninsula, extending to Sumatra, Aceh, the Bay of Bengal, and Sri Lanka. Additional branches reached significant points like Some ships ventured to Africa, the Arabian Coast and many other nations. These expeditions, orchestrated by the Ming Dynasty, solidified Malacca's position as the region's central trading hub. This phenomenon underscored China's significant influence over Southeast Asia, as evidenced by its strategic positioning and economic prowess in shaping regional trade networks and fostering diplomatic relations (Purnawibowo, 2010).

Archaeological discoveries in the Malacca Sultanate area reveal ceramic fragments dating back to the Qin and Han Dynasties, indicating the Malay Peninsula's vital role in maritime trade between China and India. These findings highlight cultural exchanges between local communities and Chinese traders, showcasing the region's rich historical trade connections (Sukkhram, Muhamad, & Pereira, 2021). Leonard Andaya proposes, after examining the Ming Shi-lu records, that Malacca was the initial harbour or port got visited by the Chinese especially Ming Dynasty In the tenth month in 1403 AD, as indicated in these historical sources. This assertion is corroborated by accounts from Indian traders, who depicted Malacca as a thriving trading center during that era. To solidify the nascent political ties and showcase Ming's prosperity, the Ming Dynasty dispatched many of its troops for diplomatic mission. Yin Qing's report also mentions a Malaccan leader known as Pai-li-su-ra, or Parameswara, emphasizing Malacca's significance as a recognized trading hub during that period (B W Andaya & Andaya, 2001).

Malacca's political structure did not conform to a traditional kingdom with a monarchy; rather, it was governed by a regional leader under the authority of the Siamese territory. Consequently, Malacca operated within a governance framework devoid of local kingship, wherein regional leaders held sway over administrative matters and local policies. This arrangement delineated Malacca's relationship with Siam (Gungwu, 2005). Malacca was required to pay annual tribute, consisting of 40 gold tahlil, as a symbol of acknowledging Siamese authority and legitimacy. Failure to meet this obligation granted Siam the right to retaliate or exert pressure through military means. This dependence on Siam for tribute underscored the intricate political and economic dynamics shaping Southeast Asia in inter-regional relations at that point in history (Iskandar, 2017).

In the initial years of the Sultanate of Malacca's founding, its founder, Parameswara had a hard time, faced challenges shortly after leaving the Srivijaya Kingdom. While Srivijaya faced attacks from the Majapahit Kingdom of Java, Malacca experienced hostility from Siam, also known as Sharu'n-nuwi, a Persian term for Ayutthaya. Parameswara sought refuge in Malacca after eliminating the general of Tumasik Singapore, who happened to be the son-in-law of the Siamese King, thus seeking protection from Siam (Cortesao, 2016; Gin & Tuan, 2015).



Established in 1351, Ayutthaya became a thriving port city in Southeast Asia. Yet, increasing competition from neighboring ports endangered its commercial dominance. To safeguard Malacca's interests, Parameswara sought protection from the Ming Dynasty emperor. China responded by aiding Malacca aiming to uphold tranquility and order in the Malacca Strait. This alliance not only bolstered Malacca's defense but also solidified its diplomatic ties within the region, positioning it as a key player in the maritime trade network of the era (Tai et al., 2020). In September 1405, Malacca's delegates visited Nanjing, China's capital. The Emperor conferred the title of King of Malacca upon Parameswara, along with a seal, silk robe, and yellow umbrella. Parameswara expressed his desire to align Malacca with the empire, promising annual tribute and highlighting Malacca's natural defenses. The Emperor agreed, ordering poetic inscriptions and a monument on a mountain peak to symbolize their alliance, alongside other projects (Sudrajat, 2015).

In the early 15th century, during a period marked by dynamic exchanges and diplomatic overtures across the region, the Ming Dynasty, a dominant power in East Asia, dispatched envoys to the burgeoning port city of Malacca. This gesture of diplomatic engagement underscored the Ming Dynasty's strategic interest in fostering relations with key maritime trading hubs in Southeast Asia. The arrival of Ming envoys in Malacca signaled a significant chapter in the history of inter-regional interactions, where cultural, economic, and political exchanges played pivotal roles in shaping the trajectory of regional dynamics (Vann, 2014).

As Emperor Zhu Di's envoy, Cheng Ho delivered a crucial message to Malacca's ruler, accompanied by two historic silver seals and lavish gifts representing the Ming Dynasty. Cheng Ho initiated the construction of a new city, symbolizing the rise of a prosperous empire and bringing an era of peace, halting Siam's aggression. Parameswara, appointed directly by the Ming Emperor, was greatly honored and visited China to express his gratitude personally. Bringing tributes symbolizing Malacca's prosperity and abundance, Parameswara presented them to the emperor. The emperor graciously accepted the tributes and ensured Parameswara's safe return to his kingdom aboard a Chinese ship, allowing him to govern Malacca with renewed dedication (Groeneveldt, 2018).

Admiral Cheng Ho, along with his expeditionary force, embarked on an ambitious exploration of the Malacca region, displaying remarkable vigor and zeal in their endeavors. Their exploratory missions extended far and wide, as they meticulously charted the terrain and navigated through the intricacies of local politics and alliances. With diplomatic finesse, Cheng Ho and his troops fostered alliances with the indigenous leaders of the region, establishing cordial relations built upon mutual trust and cooperation. Through these strategic alliances, Cheng Ho's expedition not only expanded the Ming Dynasty's influence but also facilitated cultural exchanges and economic partnerships, laying the groundwork for enduring inter-regional cooperation and prosperity (Yuanzhi, 2011).

Led by Cheng Ho, an extensive fleet embarked on ambitious expeditions covering 30 nations or more spanning in Asia, Africa, and beyond, under the commission of During the initial decades of the 15th century, the Ming Dynasty. These monumental voyages pursued multiple objectives, including the restoration of China's prestige, the regulation of global trade networks, and the expansion of Chinese influence throughout the Indian Ocean region and beyond. Through skilled navigation and diplomatic exchanges, Cheng Ho's expeditions not only showcased China's wealth and power but also facilitated cultural exchange, technological transfer, and the establishment of diplomatic ties with foreign nations, leaving an enduring legacy on the course of maritime trade and diplomacy (Adha, Gulo, & Erwani, 2023).

Malacca's allure extends far beyond its shores, captivating the interest of the Chinese for centuries. Beyond its strategic location, Malacca emerged as a pivotal waypoint offering vital resources essential for maritime expeditions spanning from China to the distant reaches of East Africa. From provisioning fresh supplies to replenishing water stores and sourcing essential wood for ship repairs, Malacca's pivotal role facilitated the success and sustenance of Cheng Ho's ambitious voyages across vast oceanic expanses. Thus, Malacca's unique charm resonated deeply

with the Chinese, cementing its status as an indispensable nexus in the tapestry of maritime trade and exploration during that era (Menzies, 2006).

Utilizing Malacca as his primary port of departure, Cheng Ho embarked on exploratory voyages across the expansive Indian Ocean region. In addition to overseeing the maintenance and provisioning of his fleet, he meticulously attended to all logistical requirements to ensure smooth sailing and comprehensive support throughout his travels. In a mere six weeks' time from the commencement of their journey, Cheng Ho's fleet successfully reached the bustling port of Malacca, having set sail from China. This crucial harbor, initially founded by China, acted as a central hub for gathering valuable spices sourced from the Moluccas Islands, particularly the famed Spice Islands, now recognized as Maluku in Indonesia. Beyond its role in spice trade, Malacca's association with the Ming Dynasty extended to encompass multifaceted interactions, including political diplomacy and the facilitation of lucrative economic exchanges (Wade, 1997).

With the establishment of relations between China and Malacca, it becomes evident that there exists a complex web of intertwined national interests spanning both regions. While the Sultanate of Malacca demonstrated a significantly heightened level of interest compared to China, both parties reciprocated with crucial engagements during reciprocal visits. At the heart of the relationship between China and Malacca lay two primary missions: diplomacy and trade. These missions served as the cornerstone of their interactions, fostering mutual understanding and facilitating economic exchanges that contributed to the prosperity of both entities (Al-Aboudi, 2021). During the early 15th century, China engaged in a vigorous southward expansion and actively pursued extensive trade networks. Chinese diplomatic missions even ventured westward, reaching as far as the Persian Gulf. To guarantee the success of these endeavors, China deployed thousands of troops and also big naval fleet. Cheng Ho's arrival in the Strait of Malacca bolstered the city's status as a tributary state of China, ensuring reciprocal benefits. In exchange for Cheng Ho's role, China while venturing into the Indian Ocean, it attained increased for ensuring the safety of its harbors (Dar, 2016).

### **Ming Dynasty's Politics and Malacca Region Establishment**

It appears that a structured political network or diplomatic ties were founded under the reign of Ming Emperor Cheng Zhu (1403-1424) in China. As he sought to showcase the might and prosperity of his reign, Cheng Zhu also harbored ambitions to emulate the achievements of his predecessor, Hwui-Ti, who vanished following Cheng Zhu's victory (Groeneveldt, 2018). Upon discovering Malacca's rise as a major global trading center, muslim traders originated from part of South India, while at the Chinese port around Canton, promptly acknowledged Malacca's opportunity to foster diplomatic relations. Consequently, Malacca emerged as a focal point of interest for ambitious South Indian merchants keen on cultivating enduring diplomatic ties with Chinese authorities (Gungwu, 2005).

In the 15th century, the Ming emperor proactively worked to strengthen diplomatic ties with the Kingdom of Malacca, seeking to enhance the amicable relationship between the two nations. This effort included dispatching envoys to promote collaboration and underscore the common lineage between the two, underscoring the depth of their relationship (Dar, 2016). The Ming Dynasty rulers gained renown through their practice of dispatching emissaries to forge robust diplomatic connections with the kingdom of Malacca, thereby deepening their friendship. This proactive approach showcased both goodwill in fortifying bilateral relations and astute strategic vision in promoting regional cooperation. To facilitate and optimize this interaction, The Ming Emperor utilized both diplomacy and emphasized familial ties, asserting the legitimacy and historical rights of the Ming Dynasty in the region to strengthen their diplomatic efforts. By combining these claims with skilled diplomacy, the Ming Emperor effectively strengthened and legitimized the bonds between China and Malacca, ensuring mutual respect and cooperation. This multifaceted approach highlighted the strategic depth of the Ming Dynasty's foreign policy, blending tradition with pragmatic governance to foster stable and prosperous regional relationships (Kuhn, 2021).



Figure 2 Map of Strait of Malacca (Durand & Curtis, 2013).

The assertion of lineage tracing back to Iskandar Dzul Karnain served a dual purpose: it not only provided a basis for historical legitimacy but also Strengthened the ethnic bond, fostering a deeper connection beyond mere political alliance, encouraging greater engagement and understanding between the two (China and Malaca). It emphasized a familial bond, enhancing diplomatic ties and setting the foundation for long-term collaboration (Shellabear, 1995). In response, the Ming Emperor quickly dispatched an envoy named Yin C'ing for their political affairs in Malacca, with the emissary arriving in the city in the year of 1405 AD. This mission was part of a broader effort to establish and strengthen diplomatic relations, ensuring that the initial interactions between the two realms were conducted smoothly and effectively. Yin C'ing's arrival marked the beginning of a formal and strategic partnership between China and Malacca, setting the stage for future collaborations and exchanges (Gungwu, 2005). Yin Ching reached Malacca in 1405 AD after traveling through Java and Palembang, having navigated a route via India and the Ocean. His mission was to collect Malaccan envoys and escort them back to China (Abdullah, 2013).

Sultan Iskandar Syah warmly received the Chinese envoy in Malacca, seeing a chance to break free from Siamese influence. Recognizing China as Asia's dominant power, Iskandar Syah sought protection from Siam's pressures. Consequently, Malacca declined to pay Siam's demanded tribute of 40 gold crowns, prompting a stern warning from Siam. This strained Malacca-Siam relations, as Malacca looked to China for support in safeguarding its sovereignty and resisting external pressures (Qasim, 2019).

In the year 1403 AD, Malacca took the proactive step of sending a delegation comprising three envoys to China, aiming to relay concerning news regarding Siam's ominous preparations to launch an attack on Malacca. This diplomatic initiative sought to find a resolution to the imminent threat looming over Malacca's sovereignty. Two years later, in 1405 AD, Malacca reiterated its concerns by dispatching another set of envoys to China. This time, the envoys conveyed Malacca's earnest wish to align itself as a vassal state under the auspices of China, seeking protection from potential Siamese aggression. Through these diplomatic overtures, Malacca sought to forge a strategic alliance with China, recognizing it as a formidable power capable of safeguarding its interests and ensuring its security amidst regional tensions (Yuanzhi, 2011).

Furious about the developments, The Siamese reacted by deploying their military to Malacca, leading to the confiscation of the royal seal and ensuing chaos. Yet, Cheng Zhu, the emperor of Ming intervened firmly, compelling Siam to give back the seal. By 1408 CE, official envoy Cheng Ho facilitated mediation efforts, successfully brokering a peace deal with backing from the Chinese monarchy. In acknowledgment of China's central role in resolving the dispute, Siam



dispatched an envoy to China, offering apologies to the emperor and expressing gratitude for the conflict's resolution. This diplomatic resolution underscores China's significant contribution to regional stability and peace (Ennis, 2023).

Subsequently, the Ming administration maintained a vigilant stance in safeguarding Malacca against potential adversities emanating from neighboring kingdoms, with particular emphasis on the looming specter of Siam's ambitions. This enduring commitment underscored Ming China's dedication to fostering stability and security in the region, as well as its strategic interest in upholding Malacca's sovereignty and integrity. Through a combination of diplomatic overtures, military deterrence, and economic cooperation, the Ming government forged a robust shield around Malacca, deterring external encroachments and ensuring the city-state's continued autonomy and prosperity (Kheng, 2012).

Following the resolution of Malacca's crisis, Cheng Ho formally acknowledged Parameswara as the legitimate ruler, dismissing assertions of authority and The possibility of hostile actions from Siam and Majapahit towards Malacca. This gesture not only affirmed Malacca's autonomy but also underscored Cheng Ho's recognition of its sovereignty (Lim, 2017). In the year 1405 AD, the Chinese Emperor presented Malacca with a stone letter, symbolizing recognition of its sovereignty. This significant act made China the initial nation to officially acknowledge Malacca's independence, a significant milestone in its journey since its establishment in that very year. This act not only affirmed Malacca's status as a sovereign entity but also signified the beginning of a new chapter in its diplomatic relations, highlighting the importance of China's role in shaping the geopolitical landscape of the region. Through this symbolic act, China underscored its commitment to fostering friendly ties with emerging powers in Southeast Asia, laying the groundwork for future cooperation and collaboration between the two nations (Usman, 2009).

When Cheng Ho reached Malacca, Parameswara and a group of around 450 people, including ministers, journeyed to China for an official visit, receiving a warm reception. In the year 1409 AD, admiral Cheng Ho revisited Malacca, delivering imperial decrees directly to the Sultan. Alongside the decrees, Cheng Ho presented two silver seals, a cap, a sash, and a garment to symbolize the growing connection between China and Malacca. Furthermore, Cheng Ho constructed a monument to affirm Malacca's sovereignty and independence (Kuhn, 2021).

This crucial juncture marked the formal acknowledgment of the territory as The revered Malacca Kingdom symbolized the culmination of deep diplomatic and cultural connections linking Malacca and China. This significant milestone not only affirmed Malacca's status as a sovereign entity but also underscored the depth of the relationship between the two realms. It symbolized a zenith in their diplomatic interactions, reflecting the mutual respect and admiration shared between Malacca and China. This momentous occasion laid the groundwork for strengthened cooperation and collaboration in various spheres, including trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange, paving the way for a prosperous and enduring partnership between the two entities (Wheatley, 2010).

The ruler Ming Dynasty and Sultanate of Malacca fostered a robust relationship based on peace and justice, prioritizing friendship over hostility and laying the groundwork for fruitful cooperation. Both leaders upheld the importance of maintaining amicable relations with neighboring nations, actively seeking constructive solutions to any arising issues. The Ming Dynasty adamantly opposed unauthorized encroachments, underscoring its dedication to sovereignty and international norms (Burhanudin, 2017). This stance not only advocated for peace but also emphasized the value of diplomacy in conflict resolution. Consequently, Their method nurtured a cooperative and advantageous association between them (Al-Aboudi, 2021). This became Emperor Ming's top priority, focusing on enhancing diplomatic relations, this relationship is seen as the most formal and structured partnership compared to previous interactions. This elevated level of association signifies a significant milestone in the history of their interactions, marking a shift towards more formalized and enduring relations. This heightened level of diplomatic engagement reflects the mutual respect and commitment to cooperation between the

two powers, laying the foundation for enhanced collaboration and mutual prosperity in the years to come (Wahyuni, 2019).

The enduring connection that the Malacca Malay Sultanate had in Southeast Asia with the Ming Dynasty is a natural extension of their historical ties, showcasing a sustained connection rooted in shared history, cultural exchange, and diplomatic collaboration (Burhanudin, 2017). The amicable bond established is recognized as a profound connection in the historical narrative of both nations, dating back to the early 15th century (Wahyuni, 2019).

Throughout a century-long span, the strong camaraderie between the two entities was prominently evidenced by frequent official visits and the positive rapport maintained between Malacca and Ming. The Malaccan Kingdom notably dispatched envoys to China on 13 occasions between the years 1411 AD and 1424 AD. Historical records indicate that Parameswara, who ruled over Malacca for three generations, personally journeyed to China in endeavors aimed at fortifying bilateral ties, and also included after that era, such as Megat Iskandar Syah and Sri Maharaja (Kuhn, 2021; Yuanzhi, 2011).

The formerly strong interconnection between Malacca and Ming Dynasty, which endured until 1435 AD, experienced a downturn starting from 1434 AD. This shift occurred when the Chinese government altered its policy, ceasing official visits to Malacca. Likewise, the Sultan of Malacca avoided trips to China, except for Radin Bala's expedition in 1435 AD under Sultan Mansur Syah's rule (1456-1477 AD). This era marked China's implementation of a temporary closure policy prompted by significant economic hardships aggravated by the deaths of Maharaja Yung Lo and Cheng Ho. Stringent regulations enforced by the Chinese authorities on sailors and merchants impeded maritime endeavors, resulting in a reduction of Chinese maritime expeditions abroad (Gungwu, 2005; Pulungan, 2022).

The diplomatic ties between China and Malacca provided crucial protection against Siamese aggression and secured China's recognition of Malacca's sovereignty. The amicable rapport between the nations proved mutually advantageous. Malacca enjoyed Chinese protection, facilitating unhindered trade and commerce while shielding it from external dangers (Yakin, 2015). On the flip side, China gained prestige by showcasing its prowess in mediating conflicts between nations, bolstering the Emperor's reputation and the nation's image. These diplomatic ties were crucial for enhancing Malacca's strength and influence, This enabled it to assert dominance in the area and rise as a significant force. Furthermore, they offered Chinese traders chances to engage in Malacca's commerce, a move welcomed by the Malaccan administration to uphold official relations. Unfortunately, this mutual dependence was disrupted when Malacca fell to Portuguese forces in 1511 AD (Wahyuni, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

Malacca, strategically positioned as a vital trading center in Southeast Asia, holds immense importance, located along the international maritime route connecting the strait of Malacca, stands as a vital nexus for trade between nearby countries. This strait has become a significant conduit for commerce, Connecting many nations from China, to Europe. Prior to reaching its zenith in the 15th century, China had already established itself as a major commercial power with longstanding trade relationships. Parameswara, the individual credited with establishing Malacca, sought to strengthen his kingdom and defend against threats from Siam and Majapahit by establishing ties with China's Ming Dynasty. China extended protection assistance for Malacca forged strong diplomatic ties and help Malacca gained its stability. Cheng Ho's 15th-century expedition from the Ming Dynasty to Malacca further solidified diplomatic relations, as he used Malacca as a base during his voyage, offered security, and acknowledged Malacca's independence. This research adopts the historical methodology. It meticulously scrutinizes the intricate evolution of relations between Malacca and China, with a strong emphasis on their diplomacy relations. The diplomatic alliance established in the 15th century proved to be crucial, serving as a bulwark against the looming threats posed by Siam, while also securing formal recognition of Malacca's statehood from China, thereby fostering reciprocal advantages for both parties. While this alliance held greater significance for Malacca, China also reaped substantial benefits from the relationship. However,

This diplomatic relationship abruptly ended in 1435 AD when China stopped coming to Malacca, possibly due to ongoing economic difficulties. Nonetheless, this symbiotic association played a pivotal role in propelling Malacca's ascendance as a formidable political and commercial entity, effectively mitigating threats emanating from neighboring nations and ensuring stability and security in trade endeavors. Thus, the Malacca-China relations of the 15th century epitomize a harmonious synergy of mutual benefit, fundamentally shaping Malacca's trajectory as a dominant force in both commercial and political spheres within the Malacca.

## REFERENCES

- Abdullah, S. (2013). Effect of Malay-China Trade Relations During the Malacca Sultanate on the Emergence of Chinese Peranakan Community. *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization*, 3(4), 143–149. <https://doi.org/10.5829/idosi.wjihc.2013.3.4.3401>
- Abdurahman, D. (2007). *Metodologi Penelitian Sejarah*. Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media.
- Adha, T. K. R., Gulo, D. T., & Erwani, I. (2023). *Budaya Dagang Etnis Tionghoa dengan Etnis Nias*. Uwais Inspirasi Indonesia.
- Al-Aboudi, N. K. M. (2021). The Islamic Sultanate of Malacca: A Study of its Inception and the Factors of its Development Into a Global Trade Center in the First Half of the 15 Th Century. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 18(5), 491–510.
- Andaya, B W, & Andaya, L. Y. (2001). *A History of Malaysia*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Andaya, Barbara Watson. (2017). Seas, oceans and cosmologies in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 48(3), 349–371. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/S0022463417000534>
- British Library. (2013). *Sejarah Melayu: a Malay masterpiece*.
- Burhanudin, J. (2017). *Islam dalam arus sejarah Indonesia*. Prenada Media.
- Corteseo, A. (2016). *Suma Oriental Karya Timo Pires: Perjalanan dari Laut Merah ke Cina dan Buku Rodrigues*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak.
- Daliman, A. (2012). *Metode penelitian sejarah*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak.
- Dar, K. B. (2016). Preserving the Cultural Bond towards Strengthening Sino-Malaysian Friendship. *International Journal of the Malay World and Civilisation (Iman)*, 4(3), 87–96.
- Dunn, R. E. (2011). *Petualangan Ibnu Battuta: Seorang Musafir Muslim Abad Ke-14*. Yayasan Pusat Obor Indonesia.
- Durand, F., & Curtis, R. (2013). *Maps of Malaysia and Borneo: Discovery, Statehood and Progress*. Continental Sales, Incorporated.
- Ennis, T. E. (2023). The Chinese in Malaya by Victor Purcell. *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 8(3), 371–373. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2049365>
- Gaynor, J. L. (2014). Not Just a Crossroads. *Education About ASIA*, 19(2).
- Gin, O. K., & Tuan, H. A. (2015). *Early Modern Southeast Asia, 1350-1800*. Routledge.
- Groeneveldt. (2018). *Nusantara dalam Catatan Tionghoa, terj: Gatot Triwira*. Depok: Komunitas Bambu.
- Gungwu, W. (2005). The Opening of Relations between China and Malacca, 1403–05. In L. Suryadinata (Ed.), *Admiral Zheng He and Southeast Asia* (pp. 1–25). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Hall, K. R. (2019). *Maritime Trade and State Development in Early Southeast Asia*. Humanities Open Books program, a joint initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.
- Hussin, N. (2007). *Trade and Society in the Straits of Melaka: Dutch Melaka and English Penang*, 58 | **Juspi (Jurnal Sejarah Peradaban Islam)**, 8(1) 2024

1780-1830 (Vol. 100). NUS Press.

- Iskandar, M. (2017). Kurun Niaga dan Keruntuhan Tradisi Maritim di Jawa 1500-1680. *Abad Jurnal Sejarah*, 1(2).
- Kang, D. C. (2007). *China Rising: Peace, Power, and Order in East Asia*. Columbia University Press.
- Kheng, C. B. (2012). Ming China's Support for Sultan Mahmud of Melaka and Its Hostility towards the Portuguese after the Fall of Melaka in 1511. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 85(2 (303)), 55-77.
- Kuhn, F. (2021). Much More Than Tribute: The Foreign Policy Instruments of the Ming Empire. *Journal of Chinese History*, 5(1), 59-82. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/jch.2020.43>
- Lapian, A. B. (2008). *Pelayaran dan perniagaan nusantara abad ke-16 dan 17*. Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu.
- Lewis, D. (1969). The Tin Trade in the Malay Peninsula during the Eighteenth Century. *New Zealand Journal of History*, 3(1), 52-69.
- Lim, T. W. (2017). The Cheng Ho (Zheng He) Cultural Museum in Malacca (Melaka): Its historical importance and contemporary symbolisms. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 3(3), 232-245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/205789117746768>
- Marzali, A. (2011). Pemetaan Sosial-Politik Kelompok Etnik Cina Di Indonesia. *Masyarakat Indonesia*, 37(2), 47-84.
- Menzies, G. (2006). *1421: Saat China Menemukan Dunia*. Ciputat: PT Pustaka Alvabet.
- Pulungan, S. (2022). *Sejarah Peradaban Islam*. Jakarta: Amzah.
- Purnawibowo, S. (2010). Perspektif Perdagangan Maritim Di Selat Malaka Berdasarkan Data Baru Hasil Observasi Di Situs Pulau Kompei. *Berkala Arkeologi Sangkhakala*, 13(26), 262-273.
- Qasim, R. (2019). *Di Balik Runtuhnya Majapahit Dan Berdirinya Kerajaan-kerajaan Islam Di Jawa*. Araska Publishing.
- Ricklefs, M. . (2013). *Sejarah Asia Tenggara dari Masa Presejarah sampai Kontemporer*. Depok: Komunitas Bambu.
- Shellabear, W. . (1995). *Sejarah Melayu*. Kuala Lumpur: Fajar Bakti.
- Shuhaimi, N. H., & Rahman, N. A. (1991). Port and polity of the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra (5. *International Seminar Harbour Cities Along the Silk Roads*, 1-27.
- Sjamsuddin, H. (2020). *Metodologi Sejarah*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak.
- Sudrajat, A. (2015). Perkembangan Islam di Singapura. *Kertas Kerja Prodi Ilmu Sejarah FISE UNY, Yogyakarta*.
- Sukkham, A., Muhamad, A., & Pereira, C. (2021). Ceramic Assemblages from Shipwrecks in Southeast Asia from the Last Half of the Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries. *Journal of Maritime Archaeology*, 16(3), 277-331.
- Suyani, I. (2013). Arti Penting Selat Malaka Dan Selat Bangka Bagi Sriwijaya dalam Memperlancar Perdagangan Antara Cina, India, Dan Arab. *Seminar Pendidikan Nasional*, 782-814.
- Syifa, I. R. (2021). Dampak Hubungan Kerjasama Tiongkok dalam Membangun Perekonomian di Pelabuhan Malaka Abad XV. *Sindang: Jurnal Pendidikan Sejarah Dan Kajian Sejarah*, 3(2), 132-137.
- Tai, Y. S., Daly, P., Mckinnon, E. E., Parnell, A., Feener, R. M., Majewski, J., ... Sieh, K. (2020). The impact of Ming and Qing dynasty maritime bans on trade ceramics recovered from coastal settlements in northern Sumatra, Indonesia. *Archaeological Research in Asia*, 21, 100174.
- Tanjung, S., Sakdiah, H., & Harahap, A. (2021). Bandar Dagang Kuno Kota Cina: Kajian Historis dan Penerapannya dalam Pembelajaran Sejarah Abad 21. *Seminar Nasional Universitas Negeri*

*Jambi*, 96–115.

- Usman, A. R. (2009). *Etnis Cina Perantauan Di Aceh*. Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Vann, M. G. (2014). When the World Came to Southeast Asia. *Education about ASIA*, 19(2).
- Wade, G. (1997). Melaka in Ming Dynasty Texts. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 70(1 (272)), 31–69.
- Wade, G. (2010). Early Muslim expansion in South-East Asia, eighth to fifteenth centuries. In D. O. Morgan & A. Reid (Eds.), *The New Cambridge History of Islam: Volume 3: The Eastern Islamic World, Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries* (pp. 366–408). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/CHOL9780521850315.012>
- Wahyuni, I. (2019). *Pengaruh Tiongkok dalam Perdagangan Maritim di Pelabuhan Malaka Abad XV* (Vol. 01). Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah.
- Wheatley, P. (2010). *The Golden Khersonese*. Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Malaya Press.
- Wong, J. (1984). *China's Economic Relations with Southeast Asia: Changing Dimensions BT - The Political Economy of China's Changing Relations with Southeast Asia* (J. Wong, Ed.). London: Macmillan Education UK. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27929-6\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27929-6_1)
- Yakin, A. U. (2015). Hukum Pernikahan di Kesultanan Melaka Abad ke-15 dan ke-16 M. *Ulumuna*, 19(1), 1–32.
- Yakoob, M. K., & Ismail, S. (2017). Hubungan Diplomatik Melaka-China pada Abad ke 15 dan Kesenambungan kerjasama Melaka -China Abad ke 21. *Jurnal Sains Sosial, Malaysian Journal of Social Science*, 2(August), 130–143.
- Yuanzhi, K. (2011). *Cheng Ho Muslim Tionghoa: Misteri Perjalanan Muhibah di Nusantara*. Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Yulian Putra, D., Susanto, H., Unila Jalan Soemantri Brojonegoro No, F., & Lampung, B. (2018). *Peranan Laksamana Cheng Ho dalam Penyebaran Agama Islam di Semarang Tahun 1403-1433*. (01).