

## Political and trade of the Malacca sultanate and the ming dynasty XV-XVI century

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**Abstract:** *This research was conducted due to the significance of the Malacca Strait's role as a trading center, connecting the Ming Dynasty in China with various regions, which led to economic growth and cultural interaction in Malacca. The main focus of the research lies on the political and trade interdependence between the Sultanate of Malacca and the Ming Dynasty during the 15th-16th centuries. The author employs the historical methods of heuristics, source criticism, data interpretation and historiography to conduct an in-depth analysis of historical records and artifacts, with the aim of holistically investigating the political and trade interrelationships between the Ming Dynasty and the Malacca Sultanate. The research reveals that diplomatic visits and mutually beneficial trade strengthened the relationship between Malacca and China. Facing threats from Siam and Majapahit, Malacca sought refuge from the Ming Dynasty, and began a close relationship. Notably, the visit of Chinese envoy Yin C'ing in 1403 paved the way for the arrival of Admiral Cheng Ho in 1409, which strengthened diplomatic relations. This relationship not only protected Malacca, but also facilitated its thriving trade. Malacca became a trading hub, offering China access to spices, while the Ming Dynasty provided military protection. The interdependence between Malacca and China in the 15th century underscores that their relationship not only fostered political security, but also increased trade and cultural exchange in the region.*

**Keywords:** *dynasty; politics; trade; Malacca*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini dilakukan karena melihat pada signifikansi peran Selat Malaka sebagai pusat perdagangan, menghubungkan Dinasti Ming di Tiongkok dengan berbagai wilayah-wilayah, yang melahirkan pertumbuhan ekonomi dan interaksi budaya di Malaka. Fokus utama penelitian terletak pada saling ketergantungan politik dan perdagangan antara Kesultanan Malaka dan Dinasti Ming selama abad ke-15 hingga ke-16. Penulis menggunakan metode sejarah heuristik, kritik sumber, interpretasi data, dan historiografi guna melakukan analisis mendalam terhadap catatan sejarah dan artefak, dengan tujuan menyelidiki secara holistik keterkaitan politik dan perdagangan antara Dinasti Ming dan Kesultanan Malaka. Penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa kunjungan diplomatik dan perdagangan yang saling menguntungkan memperkuat hubungan antara Malaka dan China. Menghadapi ancaman dari Siam dan Majapahit, Malaka mencari perlindungan dari Dinasti Ming, dan memulai hubungan yang erat. Khususnya, kunjungan utusan China Yin C'ing pada tahun 1403 membuka jalan bagi kedatangan Laksamana Cheng Ho pada tahun 1409, yang memperkuat hubungan diplomatik. Hubungan ini tidak hanya melindungi Malaka, tetapi juga memfasilitasi perdagangan yang berkembang pesat. Malaka menjadi pusat perdagangan, menawarkan akses rempah-rempah kepada China, sementara Dinasti Ming memberikan perlindungan militer. Saling ketergantungan antara Malaka dan China pada abad ke-15 menggarisbawahi bahwa hubungan mereka tidak hanya memupuk keamanan politik, tetapi juga meningkatkan perdagangan dan pertukaran budaya di wilayah tersebut.

**Kata kunci:** *dinasti; politik; perdagangan; Malaka*

## **Introduction**

Southeast Asia is a major international crossing point, resulting in an influx of external influences. Located between the Indian Ocean and the China Sea, the region serves as a geographical, anthropological and economic boundary between two distinct regions. Since ancient times, the Malay Peninsula as well as some of Indonesia's mainland islands have been central to shipping as transit areas (Meilink-Roelofs, 2016). The Malay Peninsula and northern Sumatra Island were, by the 15th century, centers of subregional trade. Its coastal towns reinforced trade, prosperity and the spread of cultures from east and west, becoming meeting places for merchants coming from different regions (Vann, 2014). Thus, the region was ideal as a trading center and entrepot due to its strategic location between the Indian Ocean and the China Sea, facilitating the smooth flow of goods from different directions. With its trade-active coastal cities, the Malay Peninsula and northern Sumatra Island became a major focal point for the distribution and storage of goods, cementing its role as a vital logistics hub in the subregional trade network of the time (Wey & Harun, 2018).

The Malay Peninsula with its Malayan Strait has been a crossing point for China's Ming Dynasty trade activities, linking China's maritime world with the trading regions of Southeast Asia (Tanjung et al., 2021). This region involved many regions ranging from the east, Japan and India, then the Middle East, East Africa, and also western Europe. The helpful monsoon winds from the Indian Ocean made shipping in the Malacca Region the choice of traders from various regions and coupled with trade winds from the China Sea, made ships have to wait before continuing their journey. Ships to the east rested in the calm waters of the Indian Ocean, while traders to the southwest through the South China Sea also rested while waiting for the winds to the trading ports (Ricklefs, 2013). Trade activities continued and began to boom through the Kingdom of Siam and the Sultanate of Malacca in the 14th-15th centuries. The maritime kingdoms on the coast of the Malacca Strait utilized the geographical and water conditions to benefit from the arrival of foreign traders to the archipelago from the eastern and western regions (Hashim, 1989).

Malacca, as a trading center, received and traded various commodities from the eastern coast of Sumatra, including camphor, pepper, honey, wax, agarwood, gold, areca nut and other crops. After a visit to Malacca, they bought Chinese porcelain-silk, Indian cloth, perfumes or fragrances from the Middle East, and other foreign products (Al-Aboudi, 2021). Before Malacca reached its peak in the 15th century, China was the world's oldest and largest center of civilization, known as a smart society in the field of economy and trade. Chinese trade products, such as ceramics and coinage in the form of metal, are found in many locations on the coast of North Sumatra, reflecting the extent to which the influence of Chinese trade penetrated various regions including South India, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, including the Strait of Malacca. The interconnection of these maritime networks has been long established. The control of Malacca by the Portuguese during the 16th century is recorded in the book *Suma Oriental* by Tome Pires (Corteseo, 2005). In its early days, Malacca was under the domination and rule of the

Siamese Kingdom (Syifa, 2021). Parameswara, who was still closely related to the Srivijaya Kingdom, rebelled and liberated Malacca (Groeneveldt, 2018). Therefore, Malacca was faced with the danger of the risk of attack from the threatening Siamese and Majapahit Kingdoms, so he established relations with the great power of the Chinese Ming Dynasty to establish and protect his kingdom. And China, which sought power in Asia, ensured Malacca's safety from pirates and other threats, and China itself benefited from facilitating its trade activities. This relationship formed a mutual dependency between Malacca and China (Teh, 2019). In the beginning, Malacca served as a service center for the Chinese community that passed through the region.

Its primary function involved providing water, provisions and various trade commodities needed before the Chinese traders continued their expeditions westward into the Indian Ocean. As a strategic stopover, Malacca not only provided practical support for Chinese sailors and traders, but also encouraged economic growth and cultural interaction in the region (Ariwibowo, 2021). In the following years, the Yongle Emperor, leader of the Ming Dynasty in the early 15th century, organized a large maritime expedition to establish diplomatic relations. Contact between the two regions continued until near the collapse of the Kingdom of Malacca in the 16th century. Chinese merchants, coming in large numbers, had to bring larger offerings, and Malacca had a special Syahbandar to take care of the Chinese merchant communities (Leng & Choo, 2019). Therefore, the relationship between Malacca and China can be considered a bilateral partnership involving political and economic cooperation, where both needed each other. This issue will be explored further in the author's paper.

There are several previous studies on China and Malacca such as, Abdullah (2013), "Effect of Malay-China Trade Relations During the Malacca Sultanate on the Emergence of Chinese Peranakan Community". Yakoob and Ismail (2017), "Hubungan Diplomatik Melaka-China pada Abad ke 15 dan Kesenambungan kerjasama Melaka -China Abad ke 21". Akhtar (2022), "Malay Perspectives on Ming China during the Age of Exploration". Tanjung, Sakdiah, and Harahap (2021). "Bandar Dagang Kuno Kota Cina: Kajian Historis dan Penerapannya dalam Pembelajaran Sejarah Abad 21". And the last is an article by Tan (2016), "Cheng Ho and His Voyages. In China's One Belt One Road Initiative". Although there have been several previous studies that discuss the relationship between China and Malacca, there are still research gaps that have not been fulfilled. Therefore, research related to the interdependence between the Ming Dynasty and the Sultanate of Malacca in the Malacca Strait needs to be explored further. Some aspects that could be the focus of further research include the Malacca-China trade relationship to the development and political dynamics in the Malacca Strait region, further analysis of the diplomatic aspects and cooperation between the two entities, as well as its influence on the economic and cultural development at that time, which led to the situation of the two being in need of each other.

## **Method**

This research uses the historical method as its main approach. The choice of historical method is due to the need for historical data. In this context, the historical method refers to the

critical process of researching and analyzing records and artifacts from the past. There are four main steps in this historical research, namely heuristics, criticism or verification, interpretation, and historiography, which are carried out sequentially (Abdurahman, 2007). The first step is heuristics, where researchers seek and collect information about the historical developments in the Malacca Strait involving the interaction between China, represented by the Ming Dynasty, and the Sultanate of Malacca. Historical sources consist of two types, namely primary historical sources which include oral and written information originating from the same period as the historical events being studied (Abdurahman, 2007), The sources in the writing of this article include documents, articles, books, and archives related to the history of dependence and the relationship between the Malacca Sultanate and China during the Ming Dynasty.

Some of the sources that the author uses in this article range from inscriptions containing records of Cheng Ho's expeditions, drawings of maps in the Malacca Strait made by Pierre vander Aa, paintings of activities in the Malacca Strait by Francois Valentijn, or maps of ports in Malacca from the Portuguese when Malacca was under Portuguese rule and so on. On the other hand, secondary sources are information that is not obtained directly from the historical events or events under study (Daliman, 2012), such as articles, books, or other sources written about the relationship between the Ming Dynasty and Malacca in the 15th and 16th centuries. Some of the writings that the author uses in this article are Abdullah (2013), "Effect of Malay-China Trade Relations During the Malacca Sultanate on the Emergence of Chinese Peranakan Community". Akhtar (2022), "Malay Perspectives on Ming China during the Age of Exploration", Tanjung, Sakdiah, and Harahap, (2021), "Bandar Dagang Kuno Kota Cina: Kajian Historis dan Penerapannya dalam Pembelajaran Sejarah Abad ke 21", and so on.

The second stage is source criticism, in which an evaluation of the data found is carried out to assess the truth and accuracy of the information contained in the source. This evaluation includes two aspects, namely external criticism and internal criticism (Sjamsuddin, 2020). Some of the data or sources that the author can have gone through source criticism, first checking the authenticity, or validity of the data such as on a map regarding the state of the port in Malacca under Portuguese rule, which the author got from the Singapore National Library, or images about maps and activities in the Malacca Strait that the author got from a trusted encyclopedia with the title Maps of Malaysia and Borneo: Discovery, Statehood and Progress. Continental Sales, and also records from Cheng Ho's expedition to Southeast Asia, and so on. All the data or sources that the author uses, including secondary sources, have been examined for validity and come from trusted sources and legitimized journal and book publishing institutions. While in terms of content or content by applying source criticism, it is clear that all the sources the author uses, starting from primary sources such as Cheng Ho's notes and maps or previous images of the Malacca Strait, the author sees that the data contains the content of the author's study. The third stage is data interpretation, at this stage the author classifies and interprets the data and sources the author gets both primary and secondary by analyzing the content contained therein. From the sources above, the author gets new meanings and information about the relationship between China and Malacca. While the fourth stage is historiography or historical writing, where

the data that has passed the previous three stages will be compiled by the author in the form of a paper (Abdurahman, 2007), in this case it is a writing about the interrelationships and dependencies that occurred between the Ming dynasty and the Malacca sultanate in the Malacca Strait. The title that the author of the writing made after applying the historical method and seeing the problems that can be raised is "Political and trade interdependence in the Strait of Malacca between the Sultanate of Malacca and the Ming Dynasty in the xv-xvi centuries" This historical writing aims to provide a comprehensive description of the research process from start to finish, including drawing conclusions about the relationship between China and the Sultanate of Malacca in the Strait of Malacca in the 15th century AD to the early 16th century AD.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **The ming dynasty's existence in the strait of Malacca**

The existence of Malacca was made known to the Chinese through stories relayed by some Muslim merchants from South India. These narratives describe the merchants' desire to see the development of the port in the Straits of Malacca, which was considered more favorable to them than the port in Ayutthaya, especially for merchants traveling from the west. The realization of Malacca's strategic potential as a trade center and a more efficient port was the beginning of China's attention to the region (Andaya, 2021). Long before the 15th century, China had actually established relations with countries in the Southeast Asian region (Wade, 2018). China never forced other countries to establish relations with it by force. Instead, the countries that sent envoys to meet with the Chinese Emperor did so on their own initiative. To maintain diplomatic relations, China also gave gifts or tributes, especially in Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia, which also benefited from China's policies. Therefore, these countries desire and are proud to have successful relations with China (Yakoob & Ismail, 2017). For centuries, the Chinese have been known as seafarers who love to explore all corners of the world.

With scales as one of their main tools, they would buy all the pepper they encountered. After a brief measurement, they would determine the approximate amount and then make an offer of payment (Wijaya, 2022). From the time of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD), international shipping activities in Southeast Asia expanded. Kings from various regions, including Southeast Asia, South Asia, the western region, and even as far as East Africa, sent their envoys to sail and pay tribute to the Chinese Emperor. In response, the Chinese Emperor mobilized up to seven fleets of ships led by Cheng Ho. This fleet was dispatched to establish close relations with the kings of the region. The Chinese fleet departed from Liujiagang in Suzhou, crossed Wuhumen in Fujian, and headed for the coast of Central Vietnam (Culao-Re and Qui Nhon). The shipping route branched out to Borneo, Java, Siam, Malacca, and the tip of the Malay Peninsula. The journey continued to the coast of Sumatra, Aceh, the Bay of Bengal, Sri Lanka, with branches to the mouth of the Ganges, Quilon, or Cochin. Some ships headed for the Arabian coast (Dhofar) to East Africa, while others to Ormuz, Hormuz, Malindi, Kilwa, and Zanzibar in East Africa. From these journeys China, under Ming Dynasty rule gradually Malacca became the

main center in this network, reflecting China's dominance in the Southeast Asian region (Wey & Harun, 2018).

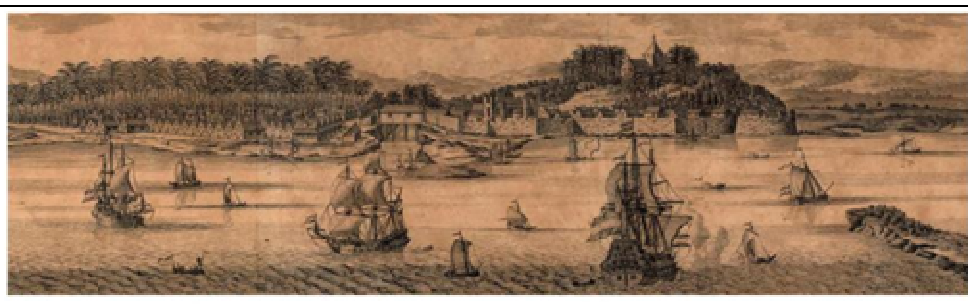
**Picture 1**

*Old Map of Strait of Malacca Made by Pierre Vander Aa (Durand & Curtis, 2013).*



**Picture 2**

*Engraving of Malacca made by Francois Valetijn (Durand & Curtis, 2013)*



Archaeological findings in the Malacca Sultanate area include various ceramic sherds from the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) and Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) found in the Johor River valley area. These discoveries illustrate that the Malay Peninsula played an important role as a vital transit point in the maritime trade network between China and India during this period. Archaeologists noted strong traces of cultural presence and interaction involving local

communities and Chinese traders in the economic and trading activities that took place in the region in the past. Ceramic ware fragments bear silent witness to the historical traces linking the Malay Land Peninsula to a rich and historic interstate trade corridor (Witkowski, 2016). Leonard Andaya, using his research from the Ming Shi-lu source as the basis for his assumptions about the arrival of the Chinese Ming Dynasty in Malacca, states that Malacca was identified as the first port visited by the eunuch Yin Qing in the 10th month of 1403, according to the records in the source. This belief is reinforced by the reports of traders from India, who described Malacca as a highly successful trading ground at the time. In an effort to strengthen the newly established political relationship and to show off China's wealth, the Ming Dynasty sent troops as a delegation.

In his report, Yin Qing also mentioned a leader in Malacca called Pai-li-su-ra or better known as Parameswara. This information highlights the importance of Malacca as a trading hub that was recognized by various parties, including China, in that period (Andaya, 2021). Malacca could not be categorized as a kingdom with a king, but was only ruled by a leader as part of the Siamese territory. For this reason, Malacca was subject to a system of government where there was no king at the local level. Instead, local leaders were responsible for administrative affairs and local policies. In its relationship with Siam (Wahyuni, 2019), Malacca had an obligation to pay tribute annually, which included a contribution of 40 gold tahlil. This obligation served as a form of recognition of the power and legitimacy of the Siamese government. However, if Malacca was unable to fulfill its obligations, Siam had the right to launch an attack as an act of retaliation or oppression. Malacca's dependence on Siam in terms of tribute reflected the political and economic dynamics that influenced relations between regions in Southeast Asia at that time (Iskandar, 2017). At the beginning of the establishment of the Kingdom of Malacca, its founder, Parameswara, had faced attacks since fleeing from the Srivijaya Kingdom.

At that time, Srivijaya was being attacked by the Majapahit Kingdom from Java but Malacca had also been attacked by the Kingdom of Siam, Sharu'n-nuwi, which is a Persian name for the city of Ayutthaya, protection from Siam because Parameswara got Malacca after killing Tumasik Singapore general who was the son-in-law of the King of Siam (Cortesao, 2016). Founded in 1351, Ayutthaya developed into a major port in the region. However, the rapid growth of other ports in the area was perceived as a threat and potential competitor to Ayutthaya. Faced with this threat, Parameswara and his followers decided to seek protection and security for Malacca by going to the Ming Dynasty emperor in China. The Chinese Empire provided assistance to Malacca to maintain peace and security in the Malacca Strait (Teh, 2019). In the 9th month of 1405, envoys from Malacca landed in the Chinese capital of the glorious Nanjing era. The Emperor paid homage to the Malacca leader and approved him as King of Malacca, through an honorable letter of appointment. The King of Malacca, or Parameswara, was not only given an honorary title, but also a historic seal, an elegant silk suit, and a magnificent yellow umbrella worthy of the emperor. During the meeting, the King of Malacca expressed his desire to make his country part of the imperial district, promising to send tribute every year. In addition, they hoped that the mountains of Malacca could serve as a formidable protection for

their country. The Emperor sincerely agreed to the request and with great wisdom ordered the creation of inscriptions that ended with verses. Not only that, the Emperor also ordered the construction of a magnificent monument at the top of the mountain as a symbol of the eternity of the agreement and other infrastructure buildings (Sudrajat, 2015).

**Picture 3**

*The Tian Fei Ling Ying Zhi Ji inscription about Cheng ho's expedition in southeast asia including Malacca (E. Tan, 2021)*



In the early 15th century, the Ming Dynasty sent envoys to Malacca (Burhanudin, 2017). Cheng Ho, who was the emperor's envoy, brought a message directly from the emperor Zhu Di and delivered it to the ruler of Malacca. In addition to the valuable message, as an envoy from the Ming Dynasty, Cheng Ho also brought with him two historic silver seals, a hat with a magnificent pattern, a graceful long robe and an elegant belt. Cheng Ho not only laid the first stone to inaugurate the establishment of a city on the spot, but also marked the beginning of a thriving empire. The existence of the city succeeded in creating peace, permanently ending the threat of attack from Siam. Parameswara, who was made king by direct appointment from the Ming Dynasty emperor, was honored and grateful. As a token of his gratitude, he traveled to China to convey his appreciation in person. Not only that, the Malacca leader also brought tributes that symbolized the prosperity and wealth of Malacca's produce. The emperor graciously accepted the tribute and sent Parameswara home on a Chinese ship, ensuring that the king could return soon and take care of his kingdom with dedication (Groeneveldt, 2018). Admiral Cheng Ho and



his troops energetically explored the Malacca region and forged alliances with leaders there (Sen, 2016). Under Cheng Ho's leadership, his giant fleet launched expeditions involving more than 30 countries around Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, East Africa and other regions. This monumental maritime expedition from China began in the early 15th century as part of Ming Dynasty policy. The goals were clear: restore China's glory, control global trade, and expand China's influence in the Indian Ocean region and all areas visited on the expedition (Adha et al., 2023). Malacca has a unique charm that is very attractive to the Chinese. Support for this claim can be found in sources that show that Malacca was not just a port built by the Chinese, but also the focal point of Cheng Ho's fleet. The port became an important hub that provided everything from fresh supplies to water to wood during the journey from China to the East African region (Al-Aboudi, 2021).

As the main port base in his adventure, Cheng Ho used Malacca as a starting point to explore the wider region of the Indian Ocean. There, he not only checked the condition of his ships and equipped them, but also ensured that all his traveling needs were well taken care of. Within six weeks of the journey, Cheng Ho's fleet reached Malacca after departing from China. This port place was first built by China to be a center for collecting spices from the Mollucas Islands, especially the Spice Island (which is now known as Maluku in Indonesia), while Malacca in the relationship with the Ming Dynasty developed rapidly and also brought political missions or diplomacy and economic or trade benefits (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2022). Since the relationship between China and Malacca was established, it can be concluded that there are intertwined national interests in the two regions. Although the level of interest formed by the Sultanate of Malacca was much higher than that of China, both sides showed each other important missions during visits to each other. The two main missions underlying the relationship between China and Malacca were diplomacy and trade (Wade, 2018). In the early 15th century, China was actively expanding southward while opening up extensive trade relations. Chinese missions even extended to the West, reaching the Persian Gulf. To ensure this success, China mobilized a large war fleet and thousands of soldiers. When Cheng Ho arrived in Malacca, his role enhanced Malacca's position as a vassal of China, and in return, China received security for its ports when sailing to the Indian Ocean (Dar, 2016).

### **Ming dynasty (China) political penetration into the Malacca sultanate**

A more formalized political network or diplomatic relationship seems to have been established during the reign of Ming emperor Cheng Zhu (1403M-1424M) in China. In his efforts to convey the power and wealth under his rule, he was also ambitious to trace the footsteps of the previous ruler, Hwui-Ti, who disappeared after the defeat by Cheng Zhu (Groeneveldt, 2018). After news of Malacca's prominence as an international trade center reached the ears of Muslim merchants from South India stopping at the Chinese port of Canton, they immediately saw Malacca as a potential target for developing diplomatic relations with the kingdom. Malacca's prominence and strategic position in the enterpot trade had captivated the attention of the merchants, who then saw a great opportunity to expand their diplomatic and trade networks by

engaging Malacca as a significant partner in Asian trade routes. As such, Malacca became a center of attention and interest for merchants from South India who were ambitious to foster close ties with the Chinese authorities through sustained diplomatic relations (Sirayasa & Yasin, 2019). In the 15th century, the Ming emperor pioneered by sending envoys to establish diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Malacca and strengthen the friendship between the two. To facilitate this cooperation and emphasize the close relationship between the Chinese Emperor and the Sultan of Malacca as a common descent (Dar, 2016). The Ming Dynasty emperors and kings made a name for themselves by taking the very early initiative of sending envoys to foster close diplomatic relations with the kingdom of Malacca, while strengthening the bonds of friendship between the two entities. Such a move not only signaled goodwill to strengthen bilateral ties, but also showed strategic wisdom in building cooperation and partnerships in the region. In his attempt to ease and streamline this process of engagement, the Ming Emperor not only relied on diplomatic arguments, but also utilized significant hereditary claims.

The claim that he was descended from Iskandar Dzul Karnain was used not only for historical reasons, but also as a strong foundation to clarify and solidify the ethnic brotherhood between the Emperor of China and the Sultan of Malacca. With this descent narrative in place, the Ming Emperor implicitly set the stage for a deeper engagement between the two kingdoms, portraying a relationship that was more than just a political alliance. It opened the door to a deeper historical connection, linking the two rulers as allies, and bringing a deep familial dimension to the dynamics of the relationship between the Chinese Emperor and the Sultan of Malacca. Thus, these steps not only established a solid diplomatic relationship, but also laid the foundation for enduring collaboration across a long historical trajectory (Ramlee & Saat, 2023). In this context, the Ming Emperor quickly dispatched a representative known as Yin C'ing to Malacca, and the envoy arrived in the city in 1405 AD (Hasan et al., 2022). Yin Ching arrived in Malacca after traveling from visits to Java and Palembang. His arrival to Malacca in 1405 AD involved a route through India and the Ocean, with the aim of retrieving envoys from Malacca and bringing them back to China (Abdullah, 2013).

The arrival of the Chinese envoy to Malacca was warmly welcomed by the Sultan of Malacca, who saw an opportunity to free himself from the pressure exerted by Siam. He believed that China had the potential to be a force capable of protecting Malacca from the Siamese threat, especially since at the time, China was considered the strongest country in Asia. In response to this, Malacca expressed its disagreement to pay tribute of 40 gold crowns to Siam. Malacca's refusal to pay the tribute triggered a stern warning from the Siamese, who threatened to take decisive action if Malacca did not fulfill its obligations. This created a situation of tension between Malacca and Siam, while Malacca expected support and protection from China as a strategic partner that was considered capable of dealing with external pressures and ensuring Malacca's sovereignty (Qasim, 2019). To overcome these problems, in 1403 AD, Malacca sent three envoys to China with the aim of providing a report on the preparations made by Siam to attack Malacca. In 1405 AD, Malacca again sent envoys to China to convey its intention to become a vassal of China and at the same time ask for protection from potential threats faced

from the Siamese (Ennis, 2023). This news had incurred the wrath of the Siamese, who responded by sending their military forces to Malacca and successfully captured the royal seal, causing instability among the Malacca people. To resolve this chaos, Ming Emperor Cheng Zhu firmly ordered Siam to return the seal to the Malacca kingdom. In 1408 CE, Cheng Ho, as an official Chinese envoy, was sent to Siam to settle the dispute between Malacca and Siam. With careful cooperation from the Chinese royalty, Cheng Ho managed to reach a peace agreement, so Siam finally sent an official envoy to China. The envoy came with the intention of apologizing to the Chinese emperor and thanking China for its participation in resolving the conflict. This action reflected thoughtful and collaborative diplomacy between the two kingdoms, and emphasized China's important role in maintaining stability and peace in the region (Zhong, 2016).

From then on, the Ming government continuously protected Malacca from potential threats from other kingdoms, especially Siam (Tan, 2016). After overcoming the crisis faced by Malacca, Cheng Ho officially recognized Parameswara as the rightful ruler, while rejecting the claims of power and potential attacks from Siam and Majapahit against Malacca. This action was also a strong recognition of Malacca's sovereignty by Cheng Ho (Mukmin, 1994). In 1405 AD, the Emperor of China gave a stone letter as a symbol of recognition of sovereignty to the kingdom of Malacca, marking China as the first country to recognize Malacca's independence since the establishment of the kingdom in that year (Dake, 2018). After Cheng Ho's arrival in Malacca, Parameswara and his consort, accompanied by around 450 retinue, including ministers, paid an official visit to China. The Chinese welcomed them with warmth and hospitality. In 1409 AD, Cheng Ho returned to Malacca with direct orders from the emperor to be delivered to the Sultan of Malacca. During the visit, Cheng Ho not only brought the emperor's message, but also presented the Sultan of Malacca with two silver seals, a hat, a belt, and a long robe as a token of appreciation for the close relationship between China and Malacca. In addition, as a further sign of recognition, Cheng Ho erected a monument affirming Malacca's sovereignty as a sovereign state. From then on, the region was officially recognized as the Kingdom of Malacca, marking the peak of diplomatic and cultural relations between Malacca and China (Al-Aboudi, 2021).

The peaceful and just attitudes of the Ming Emperor and the Sultan of Malacca facilitated and strengthened the relationship between the two parties. Both emphasized the concept of friendship over hostility, creating a solid foundation for mutually beneficial cooperation. In addition, relations between neighboring countries were also always well maintained, with active efforts to resolve problems constructively. The Ming Dynasty firmly opposed any unauthorized incursions, affirming its commitment to the principles of sovereignty and the norms of international law. This attitude not only reflected an anti-war stance, but also highlighted an interest in resolving conflicts through diplomacy and dialogue. As such, this approach helped build a strong foundation for a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship between Maharaja Ming and the Sultan of Malacca (Burhanudin, 2017). This became the main focus of Maharaja Ming. The relationship between the Malacca Malay Sultanate and the Ming Dynasty is also considered to be the most official relationship when compared to previous engagements (Akhtar, 2022).

**Picture 4**

*The shape of the fort in map of Malacca 1630 under Portuguese Colonization (Gulliver, 2009)*



The relationship that exists between the two parties is a continuation of the pre-existing relationship (Burhanudin, 2017). The friendly relationship that was formed is also known as a close relationship in the history of the two nations, starting in the early 15th century (Hamka, 2020). Over the course of a century, the intimacy that existed between the two sides was very visible through official visits and good relations between Malacca and Ming. The Kingdom of Malacca even sent envoys 13 times to China in the period 1411M to 1424M. It is reported that the Sultan of Malacca, who reigned for three generations, had visited China as part of efforts to strengthen bilateral relations, namely Parameswara and also included after him Megat Iskandar Syah and Sri Maharaja (Pulungan, 2022). The close relationship between Malacca and China that lasted until 1435 AD experienced a less smooth or declining movement, this began in 1434 AD, the Chinese government changed their policy by stopping visits to Malacca, and no visits were made by the Sultan of Malacca to China, except in 1435 AD by Radin Bala who was sent to China during the reign of Sultan Mansur Syah (1456-1477 AD). During this period, China implemented a temporary closure policy as it faced serious economic problems, especially after the death of Maharaja Yung Lo and Cheng Ho. Every Chinese shipping activity was hampered due to the restrictions imposed by the Chinese government on sailors and traders who wanted to sail abroad (Mustafa & Ibrahim, 2023). The author observes that the diplomatic relationship between China and Malacca formed a successful foundation in extricating Malacca from the Siamese threat, while gaining recognition as a state from the Chinese side. The friendly relationship that existed between the two countries provided great benefits to both. Malacca received protection from China, allowing it to freely conduct trade and business activities, and avoid external threats (Yakoob & Ismail, 2017). China, on the other hand, benefited from its enhanced reputation as a force capable of resolving conflicts between two countries while enhancing the image of the Chinese Emperor and his country. These diplomatic relations were also instrumental in cementing Malacca's position as a state that grew stronger over time,

allowing it to dominate the surrounding region and become a major power of the century. It also opened up opportunities for the Chinese community in China to participate in Malacca's trade affairs, and their presence was always welcomed by the Malacca government in order to maintain official relations. However, this interdependence between Malacca and Ming Dynasty China ended after Malacca fell to the Portuguese in the early 16th century in 1511 AD (Frarinha, 1946; Yakin, 2015). The Strait of Malacca, as a strategic maritime route connecting the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, has been a silent witness to various historical events involving the important roles of China and Malacca (Rusli et al., 2021). The material on the interdependence between these two entities (Dinasty Ming And Sultanate of Malacca) not only enriches our understanding of regional history, but also provides insights into the dynamics of economic, cultural and political relations in the past. By examining the interdependence between China and Malacca in the Strait of Malacca in history lessons, we can immerse ourselves in the complexity of global relations and unearth valuable lessons that can be applied to the contemporary context. This material not only enriches students' historical knowledge, but also promotes a deeper understanding of how interactions between nations shape the broader historical narrative.

## **Conclusion**

Malacca, as the center of trade in Southeast Asia, has a strategic position on the international traffic route between the Indian Ocean and the China Sea. Its presence in the Malacca Strait makes it an important trade center for the surrounding countries. The Malacca Strait became a major trade route for China, Japan, India, the Middle East, East Africa and Europe. Before Malacca's heyday in the 15th century, China had long had a strong trading civilization. Merchandise from China. China had trade relations that dated back to early times. Parameswara, the founder of Malacca, decided to establish relations with China's Ming Dynasty to establish his kingdom and gain protection from the threats of Siam and Majapahit. China provided security assistance and established strong diplomatic relations with Malacca. Cheng Ho's Ming Dynasty expedition to Malacca in the 15th century strengthened diplomatic relations between the two. Cheng Ho made Malacca a port base in his expedition, provided protection, and even recognized Malacca's sovereignty. This research uses the historical method to explore information from the past, with steps such as heuristics, source criticism, data interpretation, and historiography. The text discusses in detail the development of Malacca-China relations, focusing on the aspects of trade and diplomacy. The diplomatic relationship between Malacca and China in the 15th century was seen as a successful platform to release Malacca from the Siamese threat, gain recognition as a state by China, and provide benefits to both parties. Although this relationship had a higher intensity of importance for Malacca, China also benefited through this relationship. This diplomatic relationship came to a halt in 1435 CE, when China stopped visiting Malacca and there was no return visit from Malacca. Difficult economic conditions in China may have been the cause. This relationship helped Malacca become a strong state in that century, overcoming threats from neighboring countries, and providing trade stability and security. Thus, Malacca-

China relations in the 15th century can be understood as mutually beneficial and played an important role in Malacca's development as a trading center and political power in the Malacca Strait region. This Study also prompts further exploration and understanding. Firstly, it's relevant to current diplomatic relations and regional politics, offering insights into how historical dynamics shape sustainable cooperation in Southeast Asia. Secondly, the study extends to the global economy, particularly in maritime trade and marine resource management, drawing from the history of economic dependence between China and Malacca in the Malacca Strait. Thirdly, the sustainability study stimulates considerations on the Malacca Strait's role in natural resource management, serving as a basis for future development efforts. Thus, this paper acts not just as a historical record but also as a catalyst for research, thought, and action towards the future development of the Malacca Strait.

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