

9 The Geopolitical Situation

The Successor Mandalas of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries

The Peninsula "Empires": Ayutthaya-based Thai and Dai-Viet.

Reading: Michael D Coe, *Angkor and the Khmer Civilization* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), chapter 8. EUL DS 554.42 Coe

The very last Sanskrit inscription, describing the accession of a king ruling at Ankor named Jayavarmadiparameshvara, dates from 1327 AD. With this event, the Classic Period of Khmer civilisation, described in lectures 6-7, comes to a close. It lingered on for some years, the capital of Cambodia being finally transferred from Angkor to the Quatre Bras region, near the Siem Reap River. This occurred in ca. 1431 when the Thai invaded and sacked the ancient city. The process of transfer was however a piecemeal one. The initial move seems to have been to Srei Santhor, about 19 miles Northeast of Phnom Penh and then briefly to Phnom Penh itself. By about 1528 the Cambodian court, of the first great post-Angkorian king, Ang Chan I, had moved once and for all to the Quatre Bras region establishing a new capital at Lovek on the Tonle Sap River, 30 miles north of Phnom Penh. The city, like Udong and Phnom Penh, was a truly international one, with foreign quarters for Malays and Japanese together with Chinese traders, the latter of whom there were said to be as many as 3,000 in the 1540s. Here Ang Chan I built a golden palace and at least four major *wats*, erecting a huge wooden four-faced Buddha, the stone foundations of which still survive. Rectangular earthen ramparts fortified the capital. Politically Cambodia had moved full circle, once more assuming the ‘Heterogenetic’ character of a small commercial city-state, with a limited agricultural hinterland. As Ankor’s power declined, its territorial integrity and even culture came under threat from neighbouring peoples who had played little or no role in its history during the Classic Period. Attacked on one side by the Thai and on the other by the Viet-nameese, Cambodia entered from the fifteenth century upon a new and perilous situation, which continued until the advent of the French protectorate and even after its collapse in 1954.

The Thai once lived in the area south of the Yangtse River, in the mountainous plateau of Yunnan, as a loose federation of farming tribes. By the first century BC these had coalesced to form the kingdom of Nanchao, whose peoples by the ninth century had begun to move south into Burma and east into northern Vietnam. Nanchao was overrun however in 1253 AD by Kublai Khan whose Mongol army drove the Thai before it, creating a ‘ripple effect’ that increased the migration of Thai speakers into mainland Southeast Asia. Here some groups became mercenaries and others settled, adopting the culture of the local majority but maintaining their language. One element, the Lao, moved into what had been Khmer territory in Laos, establishing a principality at Luang Prabang. Another, the Thai proper, overthrew Khmer rule at the imperial provincial capital of Sukothaya in the northern Mae Nam valley. Sukothaya had originally been an Angkorian outpost on the Chao Phraya Plain but after its conquest it formed the location at which Thai civilisation took form, absorbing much of the Khmer culture of the Classic period. It was also here where they first made their acquaintance with Theravada Buddhism. Further south, on an island in the Chao Phraya River, the Thai founded the city of Ayutthaya in the fourteenth century. Here again the monarchy and administration was modelled on that of the Khmer State and it was here that Theravada Buddhism became the state religion. Ayutthaya soon became the greatest power in Southeast Asia, extending by the 1280s its influence over the whole of the Malay Peninsula and according to the Royal Chronicles launching numerous attacks on Angkor, eventually reducing it from an empire to a small kingdom. Early in the Post-Classic Period Angkor lost all of its territories in what was to become Thailand, including the Khorat plateau.

The easy access of the Chao Phraya to the Gulf of Siam attracted many foreign merchants to Ayutthaya: the Chinese were there from its inception in the fourteenth century, but subsequently sizeable colonies of Portuguese, French, Dutch, English and Malay merchants were established. At first the new Thai kingdom was unassailable but in 1569 the Burmese successfully attacked Ayutthaya sacking its treasures, including those treasures that the Thai had taken from Angkor in the previous century.

Far more formidable enemies of the Thai appeared to the east of the Khorat plateau- the Viet Dai. The dominant ethnic group of south-easternmost China and the Red River delta these people, as has been discussed in lecture 5, had been conquered and thoroughly sinicised under the Han dynasty (206 BC-221 AD). China in fact ruled Bac Bo for the next thousand years, during which their subjects adopted Taoist and Confucian teachings, the mandarin-scholar system of bureaucracy, Chinese rites and writing-not always docilely and in 939 AD successful rebellion resulted in these lands cessation from the Celestial Empire. Various local dynasties then ruled Bac Bo with intermittent but ultimately unsuccessful Chinese attempts to retake these lands. The introduction from China of improved methods for growing wet rice, however, had led to burgeoning populations in the Red River delta and the Viet Dai began pushing south. The first to feel the impact of this onslaught were the Chams of Lin-yi, the Indianized kingdom, which fell to the Viet Dai in 1471. Resettled Vietnamese soldiers forced its people out. Many fled to Cambodia. The triumphant northerners later invaded the Mekong delta, which could not be defended by the feeble Khmer State and the important Khmer port of Prei Nokor passed under Vietnamese control

Thus a geopolitical pattern was laid down which has hardly changed over the past five centuries. It has always been the policy of Ayutthaya, Sukhothaya and latterly Bangkok to secure the eastern frontier of Thai territory by thwarting Vietnamese designs on Cambodia. It was Vietnam's simultaneously to resist Chinese attempts at domination and to relieve population pressure by expanding into Laos and Cambodia.

The Maritime "Empires": Malacca and the Advent of the Portuguese

Reading: Oliver W Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History* (London: Lund Humphries, 1970) EUL .9(595) Wol. *Indonesian Trade and Society Essays in Asian Economic and Social History* by J C van Leur (The Hague: The Royal Tropical Society, Amsterdam, 1967), On Early Asian Trade, Chapter 4, pp. 117-144 and *The World of Southeast Asia 1500-1650*, pp.157-245 EUL .382 (91) Leu. M A P Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence* (The Hague, 1962) NLS NF 1244.a.4

Texts: Birch, W. de Gray, *The Commentaries of the Great Afonso Dalboquerque* (London: Hakluyt Society, LIII, LV, LXII, LXIX, 1875-1884) EUL .9104 Alb; Cortesão, A. (ed. & trans.), *The Suma Oriental of Thomé Pires. An Account of the East from the Red Sea to Japan, written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515* (London: Hakluyt Society, Second Series, LXXXIX & XC. 1944) EUL Special Collections RP; Dames, M. L. (ed.), *The Book of Duarte Barbosa. An Account of the Counties Bordering the Indian Ocean and their Inhabitants...completed about the Year 1518* (London: Hakluyt Society, Second Series, XLIV & XLIX. 1918-21) EUL RB13

The early Ming emperors' reinstitution and distortion of the ancient tributary system during the early fifteenth century, discussed in lecture 8 and more fully below, posed unforeseen problems for the Malays of the Malacca Strait and postponed the day when economic prosperity and political power would be at the disposal of their overlord. Both T'ai-tsu and his Malay vassals were in the late fourteenth century anxious to resume earlier historical patterns, symbolised by the tributary system. For the latter it would remove competition from Chinese private shipping

and provide exclusive access to the China market. T'ai-tsu, however, in spite of his statement in 1371, which echoed the realities of the seventh and eighth centuries discussed in lecture 8, never intended to revive the traditional Sino-Malay relationship. As soon as Javanese interference sabotaged the Sino-Palembang negotiations he turned his back on the region. T'ai-tsu's contribution to the developing situation was the encouragement he had given to the ruler of Palembang's ambitions. Palembang could the ruler believed have again become the Malay *nagara* (overlord). Singapore could also have been that *nagara*, but T'ai-tsu's belated efforts to repair the harm caused by his neglect resulted in Iskander's expulsion from Singapore and his flight- to Malacca. In Malacca Iskander and his son continued to be victims of the Ming dynasty's distorted rendering of the tributary relationship. Now, for the first and last time in history, the Chinese emperors undertook the responsibility of "policing" the China, Indian and Arabian Seas and of handling the tributary trade in their own ships. The Yung-Lo emperor's action made it certain that Malacca would survive Thai retaliation against their disobedient vassal, but in the meantime Malacca did not develop into a great trading centre.

Chinese trade in the "China", "Indian", "Arabian" and "Red Seas" in the early fifteenth century utilised much the same seaways as had been recorded by Wang Ta-Yuan in the mid-fourteenth century. Particularly when the third ruler of this Ming dynasty, Yung-lo, evinced a similar passion for foreign luxuries, such as precious stones, fragrant woods, spices and rare objects of all kinds, to that of his Yüan predecessors that trade once again went from strength to strength. In the context of Ming isolationist policies, however, this took place in very different circumstances to before. Whilst private trade was forced to operate through illegal and semi-legal channels, the Yung-lo Emperor and his successor between 1403 and 1433 despatched at least seven major expeditions- in 1405-7, 1407-9, 1409-11, 1413-15, 1417-19, 1421-2 and 1431-3 - into the "Western Ocean". In part he was impelled by a desire to re-establish the renown of China as a leading political and cultural power and to secure its hegemony over the eastern world. He may also have desired to once again expand commerce, particularly with the countries of the Occident, trade with whom by the "Silk Road" had been cut in the late fourteenth century and the opening years of the fifteenth century by the conquests of Tamarlane. Whatever reasons lay behind the plans for maritime expansion formulated by the Yung-lo Emperor and his successors their scope was grandiose. Some of these fleets comprised as many as sixty-two ships carrying 37,000 soldiers and these ships traversed the "Western Ocean" as far to the west as East Africa and the Red Sea. As a contemporary inscription reveals they sailed in 1431/2 by the same seaways as had characterised the navigational-system of the late-thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

"In the unification of seas and continents the imperial Ming Dynasty has surpassed the three dynasties and even excels the Han and T'ang. The countries beyond the horizon and from the ends of the earth have all become subjects, and distances and routes can be calculated to the uttermost parts of the west and the farthest bounds of the north, however distant they may be. Thus the barbarians from beyond the seas, though their countries are exceeding far off, with double translation have come to audience, bearing precious objects and presents. The Emperor, approving of their loyalty and sincerity, has ordered us, [Cheng Ho] and others, at the head of several tens of thousands of officers and flag-troops, to embark on more than a hundred large ships. They are to go to confer presents [on the barbarians] in order to manifest the transforming power of the [imperial] virtue and to treat these distant people with kindness. From the third year of Yung-lo (1405) until now we have on seven occasions been commissioned as ambassadors to the countries of the Western Ocean. The barbarian countries, which we have visited are: by way of Chan-ch'eng (Campa) Chao-wa (Java), San-fo-ch'i (Djambi-Palembang) in Sumatra and Hsien-lo (Siam), crossing straight over to Hsi-lan-shan (Ceylon) in South India, Ku-li (Calicut) and K'o-chih (Cochin), we have gone to

the western regions, Hu-lu-mo-ssu (Ormuz), A-tan (Aden), Mu-ku-tu-shu (Mogadishu), altogether more than thirty countries large and small. We have traversed more than 100,000 li of the immense ocean. We have beheld on the main huge waves rising mountain-like to the sky. We have seen barbarian regions far away hidden in a blue transparency of light vapours, while by day and night our lofty sails, unfurled like clouds, continued their star-like course, traversing the savage waves as if they were a public thoroughfare..."

The accounts of Ma-Huan, a Muslim interpreter who accompanied the fourth and later expeditions (1413/15-1431/3); Fei-Hsin, a junior officer on the seventh expedition (1431/2-3) and Kung Chen, a secretary to the same seventh expedition, provide an unparalleled description of contemporary trading-systems across the "China" "Indian", "Arabian" and "Red Seas."

Departing Wu-sung the fleet in 1431 passed along the coast as far as Nan hui where it turned, sailing around the Ch'i t'ou peninsula, before traversing south-westward to enter the Min River, in the kingdom of Champa-Lin-yi (Central Vietnam). Here the ships assembled to await the onset of the Northeast monsoon. "In their trading transactions" the inhabitants of these lands "use a pale gold which is seventy per cent pure which is not silver (in spite of its appearance)." "They very much like the dishes, bowls and other kinds of (Ming) blue porcelain articles, the hemp-silk, silk-gauze, beads and other such things from the Central Country, and so they bring their pale gold and give it in exchange". Departing in January on the Northeast monsoon, after putting in at Qui Nhon, the principal port of the kingdom of Champa, the fleet sailed due south, past the west coast of Borneo, to Surabaya in eastern Java. Writing of Chao-Wa (Java) and particularly the realm of Majapahit in the eastern part of the island, it was said in the 1430s that "the people of the country" were "very fond of the blue-patterned porcelain of the Central Country, also of such things as musk, gold-flecked hemp-silks and beads. They buy these things in exchange for copper coins." An analogous situation existed in Palembang in Southeast Sumatra to which the ships next resorted in their passage westward. "For trading in their markets", the population of Palembang, like their counterparts in Surabaya, were said to "[use] the copper coins of the Central Kingdom, and they also use such things as cloth and silk". From Palembang entering the Straits, the fleet crossed the channel, and sailed up the Malay coast to Man-la-chia (Malacca)- which by the 1430s was considered by the Chinese the principal entrepôt of the South Seas.

Prior to 1409 the Chinese had not even designated Malacca as a "country". "Subordinate to the jurisdiction of (the Ayutthaya king) Hsien Lo", who controlled the east coast of the Malay peninsula down to, and including Singapore, Malacca was ruled by a chief. He "paid an annual tribute of forty *liang* (ca 48 Troy ounces) of gold; (and) if it was not paid, then Hsien Lo would send men to attack it". Then, as Ma-Huan relates,

"In the seventh year of the Yung-lo period [1409], [the cyclic year] *chi-ch'ou*, the Emperor ordered the principal envoy the grand eunuch Cheng-ho and others to assume command [of the treasure-ships]. They were to take the imperial edicts and to bestow upon this chief two silver seals, a hat, a girdle and a robe. [Cheng-ho] set up a stone tablet [in 1410] and raised [the place] to a city; and it was subsequently called the 'country of Man-la-chia'. Thereafter Hsien Lo did not dare to invade it." "The chief, having received the favour of having been made king, [he was named "Pai-li-mi-su-la", that is Permiçura (Parameswara); he took the title Sultan Iskandar Shah about 1413] conducted his wife and son, and went to the court at the capital [of China] to return thanks and to present tributes of local products. The court also granted him a sea-going ship, so that he could return [in 1411] to his country and protect his land."

By the time of the seventh expedition of the treasure-ships, 1431-1433, Malacca had established itself as a major trading port in the Chinese tributary trade.

“There is one large river (the Malacca River) whose waters flow down past the front of the king’s residence to enter the sea. Over the river the king has constructed a wooden bridge, on which were built more than twenty bridge pavilions, [and] all trading in every article takes place on this [bridge].” “Whenever, the treasure-ships of the Central Country (China) arrived there, [the Malaccans] at once erected a line of stockading, like a city wall, and set up towers for the watch-drums at four gates. At night they had patrols of police carrying bells; inside again they erected a second stockade, like a small city wall, [within which] they constructed warehouses and granaries; [and] all the money and provisions were stored in them. The ships, which had gone to various countries returned to this place and assembled; they marshalled the foreign goods and loaded them in the ships; [then] waited till the south wind was perfectly favourable. In the middle of the fifth moon they put to sea and returned home.”

The Chinese treated the cantonment, constructed at the time of their visits to Malacca, as a “foreign prefecture”. Ships, which had been despatched to the kingdoms of Champa/Lin-yi (Central Vietnam), Ayutthaya (Thailand) and Majapahit (Java) brought their goods here for storage. Separate flotillas then went to Ormuz and within a week of a pre-arranged date re-assembled at Malacca. Stored goods were loaded abroad, and when the fair wind arrived, the combined fleet sailed back to China. Malacca thus already in the 1430s was a major point of trade for the Chinese in the Southern Seas. They obtained here tin for which they exchanged “blue and white porcelain, coloured beads, coloured taffetas, gold and silver.” Far more important, however, was the city’s location at the hub of an extended navigational-system. This not only provided the base for those flotillas that traversed the “Western Ocean” to Ormuz and Jiddah but also served as a collection point for the local seaways, which spanned the China Sea.

As has been indicated above, by one of these local seaways, ships departed the Min River, in the kingdom of Champa on the Northeast monsoon, putting in first at Qui Nhon, the principal port of that kingdom. The fleet then sailed due south from Qui Nhon, past the west coast of Borneo, to Surabaya in eastern Java before passing on, along the northern shores of Java and Sumatra to Palembang from whence they crossed the channel to Malacca beyond. By another of these local seaways ships passed directly from Qui Nhon in a Southwest direction, sailing directly for some eight days with a fair wind to reach the Straits. In the 1430s, unlike a century earlier, these vessels made landfall on the southern peninsula slightly to the north of the Straits at P’eng-k’eng (Pahang) where the Chinese acquired “*huang-shou* and *shen* [varieties of] gharu-wood, flake camphor, tin and lakawood”. These were exchanged for Chinese “gold, silver, coloured silk, *Chao-wa* (Javanese) cottons, ironware and musical instruments”. From here they entered the Malacca Strait, as in the 1330s, via Lung-ya-men (Dragon-teeth Strait, the present-day Keppel Harbour passage between the south coast of Singapore Island and Blakang Mati), which Fei-Hsin described in very similar terms to those employed by Wang Ta-Yuan a century earlier.

“This place is to the north-west of San-fo-ch’i (Śrīvijaya-Palembang/Djambi). There is here a passage way between hills, which face each other and look like ‘dragons’ teeth’. Through this ships must pass. The soil is barren, the crops very poor. The climate is constantly hot, with heavy rains in the fourth and fifth moons. Men and women tie their hair in a knot. They, wear short bajus and wrap sarongs around them. They, are very daring pirates. If a foreign ship happens to pass that way they attack it in hundreds of little boats. If wind and fortune are favourable [the ship] may escape;

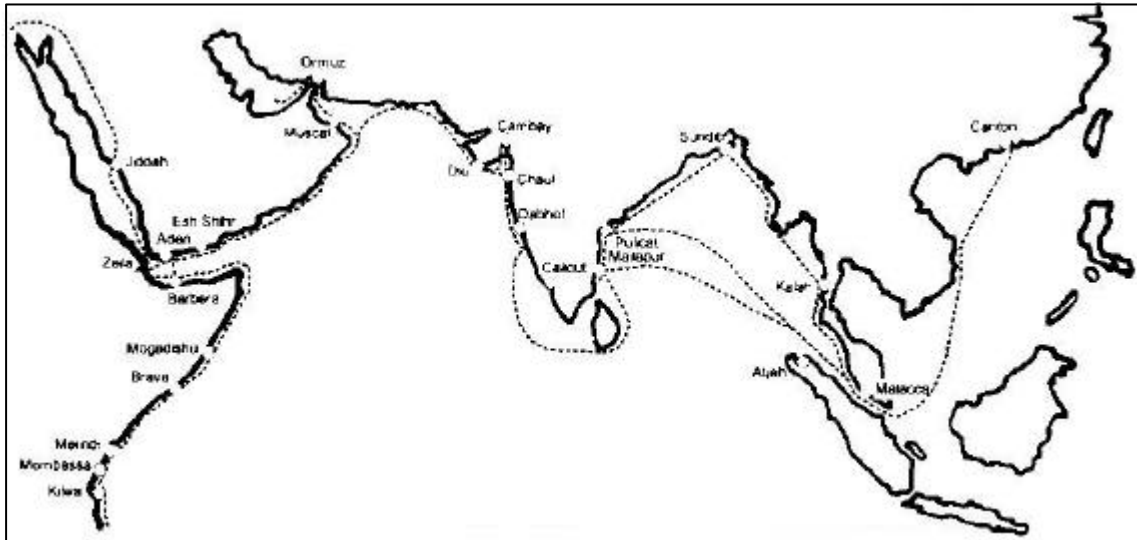
otherwise [the pirates] will plunder the ship and put both passengers and crew to death.”

Subsequent passage up the Malacca Strait to the city of that name took those ships which had escaped the depredations of the pirates a mere two days. Other vessels, sailing in a Southwest direction from Champa, after some seven days and nights with a fair wind, could make landfall at the estuary at New Straight Tower and entering the anchorage reached the capital of the Thai Ayutthaya kingdom. “In trading here (the inhabitants) employ cowries (imported from the Maldives)” in place of money. Trade here and on the “Upper Water” (Lobpuri, 27 miles North of Ayutthaya) was active and having laded their ships with local wares, the Chinese sailed south along the peninsula to join the other seaway at Pahang before travelling in consort onwards to Malacca. Ships, which had been despatched to the kingdoms of Champa (Central Vietnam), Ayutthaya (Thailand) and Majapahit (Java) all rendezvoused at Malacca, putting their goods in storage there. Here they remained until the return of those separate flotillas, which traversed the “Western Ocean” to Ormuz and which within a week of a pre-arranged date re-assembled at Malacca

Those separate flotillas, which traversed the “Western Ocean”, normally took passage up the Straits of Malacca during the months of May to September. This voyage up the Malacca Strait is described in much greater detail in the accounts of 1430s than it had been in earlier ones. Sailing Northwest the ships came to Chiu Chou (The Nine Islands = Pulau Sumbilan), before crossing the channel to its southern, Sumatran, shores. In the words of Ma-Huan “from the country of Man-la-chia (Malacca) the treasure ships go to the south-west (actually NW). After five days and nights with a fair wind they first come to a sea-side village called Ta-lu-man [in the kingdom of Su-men-ta-la or Semudera] where the ships are moored, and you can reach the capital by travelling south-east for more than ten *li* [ca 3 miles].” “At this place there are foreign ships going and coming in large numbers, hence all kinds of foreign goods are sold in great quantities in the country.” An active trade allowed the inhabitants of Semudera to enjoy the use of a coinage system whose pieces were made of imported monetary metals. As such they were quite unlike their counterparts in Java and Palembang. They, like the people of Atjeh in the Northwest of Sumatra who were visited next by ships sailing westward, all had to make do with existing stocks of “copper coins,” which had been imported more than a century before. Putting to sea from Atjeh, the ships entered the “Western Ocean”.

From the perspective of the Yung-lo Emperor, its new tributary –Malacca- had by the 1430s fulfilled everything required of it, but within the context of the trade of Southeast Asia, commercial activity at Malacca was but a side-show. The main element within Southeast Asian trade, continued, as in the fourteenth century, to be that which, travelled by seaways passing from the Spice Islands of the eastern Indonesian archipelago westward along the southern shores of the Straits to the “Western Sea”. Up to ca 1400 Tuban had remained the staple port of the eastern trading complex but at about that time the amount of East Javanese trade increased to such a point that it could not be limited to one point. These years saw the rise of Grise, which became the stapling port for the Moluccas. Japara, too emerged then as a trading centre, whilst Tuban itself continued to flourish. Around 1430 the three towns of Tuban, Grise and Surabaya together had a total population of “over a thousand families”. In this trade, moreover, thanks to Ming policies, Chinese private trade could no longer be maintained. It became restricted to Grise in the face of competition with Javanese and Malay traders who at this time carried the spices westward to Pasai-Semudera. At this port even Ma-huan was forced to admit that “there are foreign ships going and coming in large numbers, hence all kinds of foreign goods are sold in great quantities in the country.” It was from here, not Malacca, that Arab and South Indian shipping carried the products of the Spice Islands westward to satisfy a burgeoning European demand. At Malacca, levels of activity were entirely dependent on the arrival of Ming tributary fleets.

When the system of Ming tributary fleets was abandoned after the return of the seventh fleet in 1433 the third ruler of Malacca realised that he was deprived of not only Chinese protection but also of economic power. He also realised that this removal of his traditional economic crutch was taking place in a situation, which was in a state of flux due to the commencement of a “new” environmentally determined trade-cycle, which would run its course over the years 1440-1540/1570 (map 9.1)



Map 9.1 Arabian, Indian and China Sea Trading Systems, 1440-1540/1570

Once more there was a realignment of seaways. Ships arriving in the Straits now, as in the years 1040/1070-1240, passed along its northern shores until on exiting via the Southeast narrows the prevailing wind-systems drove them Northeast towards Canton. As far as Malacca was concerned this advantaged her in ways which the shrewd Portuguese apothecary Thomas Pires later described in words, which echoed those written by Chau Ju-kua three hundred years before:

“Malacca is a city that was made for merchandise, fitter than any other in the world; the end of the monsoons and the beginning of others. Malacca is surrounded and lies in the middle, and the trade and commerce between the nations for a thousand leagues on every had must come to Malacca”

To benefit from this situation the Malacca’s rulers in the fifteenth century adopted methods, which would have been familiar to his Śrīvijayan predecessor three hundred years before. Already under Iskander Shah a fleet of patrol boats, manned by Celetes, had been fitted out to force vessels into Malacca. To establish a monopoly position however it was necessary to implement- and facilitate- control of the sea by the extension of authority over the neighbouring coasts and during the mid-fifteenth century this task was accomplished by a succession of able rulers. The Sultan Muzaffer Shah acquired Myjam (Dinding) and Sēlengor, places, which supplied Malacca with both foodstuffs and tin and established it’s sway over the Batu Pahat River. Campaigns against Kampar, Indragiri and Rokan not only brought both shores of the Straits under its control but also safeguarded the flow of gold from the dynasty’s Minangkabau Highland homeland. Finally Muzaffer, despite determined Thai opposition, imposed his authority over Singapore and Bentan, pirates nests at the southern entry to the Straits. Mansur Shah continued his father’s policy. By the time of his death in 1459 the empire also included

Kedah, Perak, Bruas, Bernam, Johore, Pahang and Trengganu in the Peninsula, Rupert, Siak, Jambi and Bengkalis in Sumatra, and the Karimun Islands at the southern entry to the Strait. With the acquisition of Lingga in the reign of Ala'ud-din, 1477-1488, the empire reached its greatest extent (map 9.2)



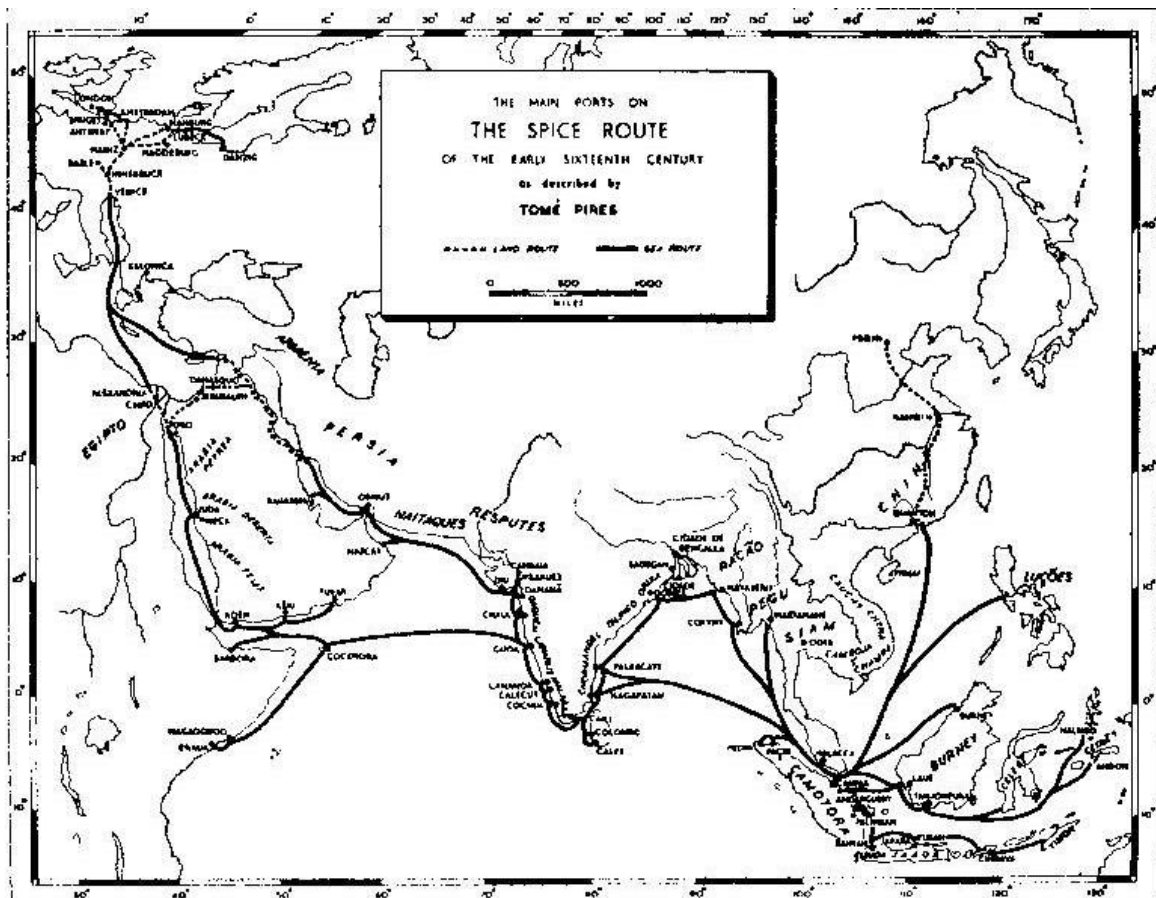
Map 9.2

The Malaccan Sultanate in the Late Fifteenth Century

By thus eliminating the bases from which the pirate-federation of Palembang, Bantan and Singapore operated and securing the seaways to Jambi, Malacca was now able to attract the Javanese-Malay shipping of the eastern archipelago. It, as a result of route realignment, now passed from Jambi via eastern Java, Bali, Bima, Timor, Solor and Banda to the Moluccas. The trade of the Spice Islands, even if accessed by different seaways, thus continued, Javanese-Malay shipping arriving at the new entrepôt, which they came to dominate in the late fifteenth century. Although the city was governed by a Malay dynasty Javanese influence became predominant. The town, which in the course of the fifteenth century evolved on the lower slopes of what later became known as St Paul's Hill that was crowned by the royal precinct, comprised two quarters- Upih and Ilir - both of which were under Javanese administration. In Upih, where the *kampung keling* was located, dwelt the traders from Tuban, Japara and its dependency Palembang, and Sunda. At Ilir dwelt the traders from Grise and its dependencies. In Malacca, these Hindu Javanese, wrenched out of their traditional environment, came into contact with the fanatically Mohammedan Gujerati who, sailing by the new seaways from the Northwest Indian ports of

Cambay, arrived in increasing numbers at Malacca at this time. The Javanese were quickly won to Islam. Throughout the late fifteenth century an intense Mohammedan fervour pervaded the city, which its rulers recognised at its inception and assimilated, in 1436 the third ruler declaring himself a Muslim. With the accession of Muzaffer in 1445 the Faith was firmly established. The growing commercial power of the entrepôt, aided by diplomatic royal marriages, carried Islam north to Kēdah, east to Pahang and south to Johore. In later years the new faith was a powerful force in shaping the cultural landscape. To every *kampong* (settlement) it gave a mosque and to nearly every holding it brought a process of subdivision. It also threatened to tear the whole political and economic fabric of the Malaccan Empire apart. The new religion rapidly spread through the merchants resident in Upih and was equally rapidly disseminated back to their home ports- Tuban, Japara and its dependency Palembang, and Sunda. It reinforced there a proselytising movement already underway, resulting in tensions with these ports' at least nominal overlord- the Hindu Majaphit Empire- which now threatened to erupt, involving the empire not only in a struggle with its vassals but also in one with Malacca- the perceived source of the infection. In 1509 tempers had reached such a fever pitch that the people of Malacca expected a Javanese naval attack, which would place Malacca under the supremacy of Java. In the event it did not materialise for only two years later, in 1511, the city fell to the Portuguese.

The Portuguese possessed not only a superior military might but also a marginally superior shipping technology, which before its adoption by indigenous shipbuilders, allowed them, though not without difficulty, to pass by seaways which were denied to Arab and Indian ships' masters (map 9.3)



Map 9.3 Portuguese Trading Systems in the Arabian, Indian and China Seas, 1440-1540/1570

On their first entry into the “Arabian” Sea, in the aftermath of Vasco de Gama’s pioneering voyage of 1498 they found a navigation-system in the “Arabian” and “Indian” seas, which, as discussed in lecture 1, was largely dictated by the intra-annual rhythmic changes of the monsoons. Ships sailing eastward across the “Arabian” Sea to India from either Ormuz or Aden, whilst usually avoiding the heavy storms associated in May-June with the onset of the Southwest monsoon, took passage, as these winds slackened during August-October. They arrived on the western coast of India, after about a month’s sailing in late September-October. Thereafter some returned immediately at the beginning of the Northeast monsoon in October. Others remained on the coast from November until February when, taking advantage of the slacker winds following its peak, they sailed home normally arriving there in March before the onset of the Southwest monsoon. Less familiar perhaps is the distinct cyclical pattern displayed by this wind-system, which, like and in conjunction with that in the Red Sea, moved about a north-south axis. Available information displays four distinct stages, spanning the contemporary and the previous cycle. The earliest available data relates to the great Chinese naval expedition of 1431-4, which, under the command of Cheng Ho, sailed during the closing phase of the preceding climatic cycle. The first phase of the new cycle (ca. 1462-ca 1494) then follows, spanning a period of recovery, which had commenced in ca. 1450 and during which the winds traversed northwards. This heralded the beginning of the second phase of this cycle, which witnessed the emergence of the new and fully developed weather-system (ca. 1503-ca 1513). Finally, the third phase (ca. 1513-ca 1527 A.D.) encompassed the beginning of a new period of inter-cyclical decline, which saw the winds move southward before the system ultimately reached its nadir in ca. 1550-1570

At the time of their entry into these alien waters the Portuguese therefore found, during the years 1503-1513, that the wind-system had shifted to its most northerly locus and a new and fully developed weather-system had emerged precipitating yet a process of route realignment in the “Western Ocean”. An intensification and prolongation of storm activity associated with the onset of the Southwest monsoon about and to the north of the 15⁰N parallel, made navigation from Aden to India extremely difficult. Even the Portuguese, with caravels employing the advanced lateen-rig, found, that sailing north-east on the monsoon in early May, they could make no headway and were forced back after a month to Muscat. Varthema, having arrived from Jiddah at Aden in late-July 1503 found at that time no Arab ships in the port to take him to India and had to wait for the next navigation season. Departing Aden on the 3rd March 1504 he sailed not to India but to Zeila, a voyage which took him a fortnight and was merely a prelude to another twelve-day passage to Barbera where he arrived on the 29th March just in time to catch the Indies fleet. He had, however, no more hope of achieving a direct passage to India by this means than in the previous year (map 9.1). When it departed on the 1st April 1504, the Moorish fleet, instead of sailing north-east to Socotra and west to Calicut as during the previous phase, passed northward to Esh-Shihr. Thereafter it sailed along the Arabian coastline, where it was said, “there is not much trade,” to arrive at Muscat on the 24th and Ormuz on the 1st May 1504. Here the fleet assembled with that of the Persian Gulf before sailing for the Indies. In the prevailing climatic conditions, however, because of stormy tempestuous weather in May-August, with much rainfall even in the northern reaches of the “Gulf of Oman”, they could not depart until late-September. At that time, moreover, they could navigate only by an extreme northerly route, which by-passed the coastline of the piratical Nodhakis, and proceeded along the coastal littoral of the Rajput lands to make landfall at Diu in about ten days or a fortnight (10th October). From mid-October there was a great concentration of shipping on the coast until November-February when those returning to Ormuz-Aden departed, leaving only those who intended to proceed on into the “Indian” Sea. The latter remained on the coast until January- April when they could pass around Dondra Head easily on the “westerlies” from Malabar to sail in May-August on the Southwest monsoon across the “Indian” Sea. In these new circumstances commercial activity for the first time focussed on Diu, which could only be accessed by land from Cambay

and Surat, and from which ships passed in about a fortnight to Chaul and three weeks to Goa. Thus when the Portuguese, having been able in their caravels employing the advanced lateen-rig to sail in March Northeast to Socotra and West to arrive at Calicut (map 9.3) they found, with the direct trade to Aden and Mecca in abeyance, commercial activity almost at a halt. The “Pardesis” merchants had long since departed and at this time conducted their business further north on that section of the coast extending from Goa in the south to Chaul in the north. Nor was the situation very different on the Malabar coast south of the once great city of Calicut for it was at this time by-passed by the vessels arriving from South-east Asia, which on turning Dondra Head sailed via the Palandura islands direct to Goa. The previously important ports of Cochin and Quilon thus decayed, their “legitimate” commercial activity becoming restricted to a local trade, undertaken in small “zambuquas” to Ceylon and Coromandel. During the years 1498-1512 of far more importance for the erstwhile merchants here, or at Honowār and Baticala, was piracy. The Portuguese in spite of superior firepower and the deployment of caravels employing the advanced lateen-rig, lacking familiarity with the constantly shifting patterns of Asiatic commerce and peripatetic urban migrations therein, thus blundered into unfortunate commercial situations in western India about which they had no market intelligence.

Nor was the situation very different when they arrived in 1511 at and conquered Malacca. As the downswing of the prevailing environmentally determined trade-cycle began to run its course at that time, the southward movement of the prevailing wind system in 1518 and 1527 caused the routes abandoned in 1494 and 1470 to be once more re-utilised. By 1550-1570 the foundations of an entirely “new” environmentally determined trade-cycle had been laid and shipping once more, as in ca 1240/1279-1368/1415, passed along the southern shores of the Straits. Even as, blinded by religious zeal, the Portuguese pursued a discriminatory policy against the Muslim traders and attempted to monopolise the trade to the Spice Islands, therefore, those Muslim traders fled and established themselves within the interstices of the of the newly emergent trading system. Avoiding the pre-existing trade route to the east of Sumatra they made their way along the west coast of the island transferring their base of operations from Malacca to Achin in Pasai, which slowly yet relentlessly attracted shipping from the West. Others settled in Bantam in western Java, where within a few years they succeeded in establishing the power of Islam with the help of Japara. From this time dates the development of Achin and Bantam, which progressively gained momentum with the southward movement of the prevailing wind system during the years 1518-1550. The Portuguese aim of crippling the trade by striking at its supposed heart in Malacca had proven in practice impossible. In the meantime moreover the old royal house of Malacca, from which the later rulers of Johore were descended, had not accepted the defeat of 1511. A part of the East Coast of Sumatra, the Riau-Lingga Archipelago and a section of the Malay Peninsula were still under its control. The continuation of the fifteenth-century struggle between Hindu Java and Muslim Achin and Johore, however, enabled the Portuguese to maintain their position in Malacca. However much they may have been harassed by Achin – in 1537, 1539, 1547, 1568, 1573 and 1575- Java- in 1513, 1535, 1551 and 1574- and Japara in 1551 they did not succumb.

As in India, however, they depended on the deployment of their caravels employing the advanced lateen-rig to penetrate to the Spice Isles (map 9.3). Yet lacking familiarity with the constantly shifting patterns of Asiatic commerce and peripatetic urban migrations therein they once again blundered into unfortunate commercial situations about which they had no market intelligence. In their first years in the East, the Portuguese in order to elude the Javanese had chosen a different route to the Moluccas, which only their ships could traverse, and passed via northern Borneo thence. A factory was established at Grise and a base at Panarukan. The “traditional” route of the Muslim traders, however, was increasingly used at this time, partly attracted by the sandalwood supplies of Timor and Solor. By 1570 the Portuguese were thus forced to abandon their attempted monopoly in the Moluccas. They never had much influence on

Banda; the Javanese Muslim centre of Hitu on Ambon had proved to be too strong for them and in 1572 they had to abandon their fort at Ternate. Their attempt to achieve exclusive control of the spices had merely been the stimulus for the expansion of the area where cloves were grown. This bound the inhabitants within this area more closely to Java, and subjected them to the intensification of Muslim activity and Pan-Islamic movements, which found new stimulus in the missionary activity of the priests. By 1570 Portuguese commercial activity at Malacca, like that of the Chinese there, a hundred and forty years earlier, was but a side-show. Although subsequently written, when it was said that,

“All those who go to the Indies and other places beyond the Cape of Good Hope, when they desire to go to Sumatra they only say that they are going to Achin, for that town and port conveys the whole name and reputation of the island, as is done on Java Major with Bantam, so that talk is only of these two kings,”

it described the situation prevailing in ca 1550-1570 perfectly. Achin controlled the pepper ports on Sumatra, Priaman on the western coast and Pridië and Pasai on the eastern, forcing the Portuguese to obtain supplies from the ports further south – Indragiri, Kampar and Jambi (map 9.2). Bantam had already made sure of the possession of Selebar in Benkulen and of Lampong for itself, and at this time was expanding in the direction of Palembang-Jambi. Shipping from the harbour potentates further east from 1565 came to dominate the trade on the Moluccas, finally displacing Portuguese influence in the area.

A new age was dawning, but for the moment not because of the advent of the Europeans. Henceforth the inland *mandalas*, centred on religiously stable Orthogenetic foci – in Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Dai – but not Java, continued to exist, sustained by a wet rice cultivation subject to constant innovation from China, which maintained output at a high-equilibrium level. The influence of an expanding trade was felt everywhere, but it was only in the Indonesian Archipelago, with the coming of the Dutch and English, that the maritime *mandelas* succumbed.