Primary Source Collection #1: *Ming and Portuguese "Systems"*



Introduction

Included in this collection are three primary sources relating to Ming and Portuguese relations with Melaka. The first is written by Ma Huan, who accompanied Zheng He on his treasure voyage. The texts offers some descriptions of Melaka, as well as describes relations with the local ruler, Parameswara. The second was written by Tomé Pires, a chronicler who describes the Portuguese conquest of Melaka, and the third source is an excerpt from the Ming Shilu, an annal chronicling events that occurred during the Ming era. The selections provided describe the actions of the Portuguese and their conquest of Melaka. Discussion questions are also provided for each source to help guide your reading.

PRIMARY SOURCES

INTRODUCTION

MA HUAN ON MELAKA

TOMÉ PIRES ON MELAKA

THE PORTUGUESE IN THE MING SHILU

Primary Source 1: *Ma Huan on* Melaka

The first source comes from the famous Chinese Muslim chronicler Ma Huan who accompanied the grand admiral Zheng He on his treasure voyages. As explained in the reading for this week, the treasure voyages marked an era of maritime expansion and engagement during the early Ming Dynasty in China when the Yongle Emperor ordered the construction of a massive "treasure" fleet to sail to ports in Asia and the Indian Ocean. Along with Zheng He, Ma Huan visited numerous entrepôts, recording information he thought would be important for merchants, navigators, and others who followed him. He compiled his notes into a volume known as the Yingya Shenglan, or Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores. The section of this volume that appears below describes the customs, climate, wares, people, and location of the state of Melaka, which is in present-day Malaysia in Southeast Asia. Ma Huan



Sculpture of Zheng He in Melaka

also chronicled Zheng He's enfeoffment of the local ruler of Melaka, Parameswara. As you read, think about how both Zheng He and Parameswara navigated the tributary "system."

Source: Ma Huan. Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan 'The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores. Translated by Feng Ch'eng-Chün. London: Cambridge University Press, 1970. Pp. 108-114. Footnotes derived from the originals of the translator, Feng Ch'eng-Chün, but are written by History 21.

Discussion Questions:

- What type of information does Ma Huan include in his brief account of Melaka? Who might find this type of information useful? Who do you think was the intended audience of this document?
- This passage provides the perfect example of the tributary "system" in action. What type of support did China offer to Parameswara, the ruler of Melaka? What tribute did China send? What is the significance of the tribute? How did Parameswara return the favor?

The Country of Man-la-chia*

Formerly this place was not designated a 'country'.... There was no king of the country; [and] it was controlled only by a chief. This territory was subordinate to the jurisdiction of Siam; it paid annual tribute of forty *liang* of gold; [and] if it were not [to pay], then Siam would send men to attack it.[†]

In the seventh year of the Yongle [period], [the cyclic year] *chi-ch'ou*, the Emperor ordered the principal envoy the grand eunuch Zheng He and others to assume command [of the treasureships], and to take the imperial edicts to bestow upon this chief two silver seals, a hat, a girdle and a robe.[‡] [Zheng He] set up a stone tablet and raised [the place] to a city; [and] it was subsequently

^{*} Melaka.

[†] *Liang* is a unit of measurement for bullion that approximately equates to one Chinese ounce.

[‡] The Yongle Emperor, who oversaw most of the treasure voyages, ruled from 1402 to 1424. The seventh year of the Yongle reign is 1409. The translator Feng Ch'eng-Chün notes that the date appears as 1408 in the Ming Shilu.

called the 'country of Man-la-chia'.[§] Thereafter Siam did not dare to invade it.

The chief, having received the favor of being made king, conducted his wife and son, and went to the court at the capital to return thanks and present tribute of local products.^{II} The court also granted him a sea-going ship, so that he might return to his country and protect his land...



The Malacca Sultanate Palace Museum, modeled after the architecture of the 15th century

The king of the country and the people of the country all follow the Muslim religion, fasting, doing penance, and chanting liturgies.



Map of the Melaka Sultinate

As to the king's dress: he uses a fine white foreign cloth to wind around his head; on his body he wears a long garment of fine-patterned blue cloth, fashioned like a robe; [and] on his feet he wears leather shoes. When he goes about, he rides in a sedan chair...

Their customs are pure and simple. Their dwellings are constructed like storeyed pavilions ... with a bed serving as a couch on which they sit crosslegged; [and] all their drinking, sleeping and cooking is done up there.**

The men mostly practice fishing for a livelihood; they use a dug-out boat made from a single treetrunk, and drift on the sea to get the fish.

The land produces such things as yellow *su* incense, ebony, *ta-ma-erh* incense, and 'flower tin'.^{††} *Ta-ma-erh* incense is in origin the gum from a species of tree; it runs into the ground; [and] when they dig it up, it looks like pine-resin or pitch....

For fruits, they have such things as sugarcane, bananas, jack-fruit, and wild litchi. For vegetables: onions, ginger, garlic, mustard, gourd melons, and watermelons–all these they have. Oxen, goats, fowls, and ducks, although they have them, are not plentiful; prices are very dear; [and] one of their water buffalos costs more than one *chin* of silver. Donkeys and horses are entirely absent.

[§] The Yongle Emperor, who oversaw most of the treasure voyages, ruled from 1402 to 1424. The seventh year of the Yongle reign is 1409. The translator Feng Ch'eng-Chün notes that the date appears as 1408 in the *Ming Shilu*. Melaka.

^I The chief was Parameswara, who took the title Sultan Iskandar Shah in 1413. The "court at the capital" refers to the new capital in Beijing. It was common practice for leaders in Asia and elsewhere to present their tribute directly to the emperor in Beijing.

^{**} One Chinese *ch'ih* is approximately equal to one foot.

^{+†} Damar incense.



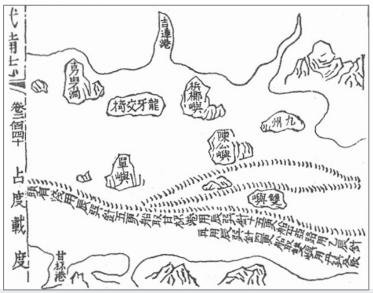
Illustration of Zheng He's fleet off a rocky coastline

In the waters at the edge of the sea there are always iguana-dragons which injure people; these dragons are three or four *chi'ih* in height, and have four feet; the body is covered with scales; on the back grows a row of spikes; they have a dragon's head and bared teeth; [and] when they encounter a man, they bite him at once^{‡‡} ...

Whenever the treasures ships of the Central Country [China] arrived there, they 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 favorable. In the middle decade of the fifth moon they put to sea and returned home.^{IIII}

Moreover, the king of the country made a selection of local products, conducted his wife and son, brought his chiefs, boarded a ship and followed the treasure ships; [and] he attended at court [and] presented tribute.***



Map of Melaka and surrounding areas, dated to Zheng He's voyage

^{‡‡}Iguana-dragons appear to be crocodiles.

^{§§} The "Central Country" is China. To this day Chinese refer to their country as *Zhongguo*, or the central country/middle kingdom.

^ⅢThis was in 1433. This marked the final of seven treasure voyages.

^{***} At this point, the king was the son of Parameswara, or Sultan Iskandar Shah, who was known as Sri Maharaja. He reigned from 1424 to 1444.

Primary Source 2: *Tomé Pires on Melaka*

Tomé Pires was a famous Portuguese apothecary and chronicler who wrote an ambitious account of Asia known as the Suma Oriental. He traveled to India in 1511 and moved around throughout Asia afterward, serving as the first Portuguese Ambassador to China in the 1520s. Though they do not know for certain, historians speculate that he died in China. His opinion of and advice for the Portuguese Empire in Asia was no doubt influenced by the expansionist-minded governor of India, Afonso de Albuquerque. Under Albuquerque's leadership, Portuguese forces conquered the strategic city of Melaka, thereby controlling the critical Straits that also bear the name. In the selection from the Suma Oriental below, Pires described conquest in glowing terms. He also devoted considerable space to justifying the conquest and describing how Portugal would benefit from holding the city.



Afonso de Albuquerque

Source: Pires, Tomé. The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires, Volume II. Translated by Armando Cortesão. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010. Pp. 278-288.

Discussion Questions:

- What type of information did Tomé Pires include in his brief account of the Portuguese conquest of Melaka? Who might find this type of information useful? Who do you think was the intended audience of this document?
- How did Pires justify the Portuguese conquest of and continued presence in Melaka? Based on this document, in what ways were the goals of the Catholic Church, the Portuguese military establishment, and private merchants aligned?

"Afonso de Albuquerque, Captain-Major and Governor of the Indies, arrived at Melaka at the beginning of the month of July, in the year 1511, with fifteen sail, great and small, in which came about sixteen hundred fighting men. At this time it is said that Melaka had a hundred thousand men-at-arms.... And the Malays had many strong palisades, and on the sea there were many lancharas, and *paraos* in the river, and on the sea many junks and Gujarat ships which were ready to fight; because there was then in Melaka a captain from Gujarat who was working for war, as it seemed to him that he alone could cope with our ships and men, all the more because of the immense number of natives, though the natives did not back the king of Melaka; because in trading-lands, where the people are of different nations, these cannot love their king as do natives without admixture of other nations.* This is generally the case; and therefore the king was disliked, though his mandarins fought, and that whenever they could.

^{*} Lancharas, *paraos*, and junks are all types of ships. Portuguese typically called the larger ocean-going vessels from China and Japan junks, while lancharas and *paraos* came from Southeast Asia.



Portuguese map of the coast and interior of Melaka

As soon as the said Captain-Major arrived with his fleet, he spent a few days sending messages of peace, trying as much as he could to avoid war. However, the levity of the Malayans, and the reckless vanity and arrogant advice of the Javanese, and the king's presumption and obstinate, luxurious, tyrannical and haughty disposition-because our Lord had ordained that he should pay for the great treason he had committed against our people-all this together made him refuse the desire for peace....

The Governor, having taken counsel, landed with his men and took the city; and the king and his men fled. The Captain-Major returned to the ships that day, and did not allow the said king to be harmed, to see if he would desist from his obstinate intention. The king was unwilling. Finally the said Governor landed again, determined now to take the city and no longer to be friends with the said king. He took the city and occupied it. The king of Melaka fled with his daughters and all his sons-in-law, kings of Kampar and Pahang....

The Captain-Major began to make a fortress of wood for want of stone and lime, and in the meantime order was given for the lime; then they began demolishing the wooden one, and they made the famous fortress in the place where it now is, on the site of the great mosque, strong, with two wells of fresh water in the towers, and two or three more in the bulwarks.

On one side the sea washes against it, and on the other the river. The walls of the fortress are of great width; as for the keep, where they are usually built, you will find few of five stories like this. The artillery, both large and small, fires on all sides. Meantime Ute-muta Raja, his son, son-in-law, and another relative, were beheaded because they were found engaged in Malayan intrigues and trying to darken the cloves.

The land began welcoming merchants, and many came....

The kings of Pahang, Kampar and Indragiri, tributary vassals; friendly vassals, who write that they are slaves of the King our Lord, the kings of Menangkabau, Aru, Pase and Pegu; friend, the king of Siam; the kings of the Moluccas count themselves as slaves, and so they have written....**



'The Conquest of Malacca', 1903

^{**} Pahang, Kampar, and Menangkabau were small states on the Malay Peninsula. Indragiri and Aru were across the straits in Sumatra. Pegu was a kingdom in Burma. The Moluccas are the Spice Islands in Eastern Indonesia.

Gujaratees have come, and Malabars, Klings, Bengalees, Pegus, people from Pase and Aru, Javanese, Chinese, Menangkabaus, people from *Tamjompura*, Macassar, Brunei, and *Luções*.^{††}

Our ships [have been] to Java and Banda; a junk to China, and Pase, and Pulicat. Now they go to Timor for sandalwood, and go to other parts. A junk of ours has already been to Pegu, to the port of Martaban.

Melaka is growing richer in junks; the Melaka merchants buy junks; they are rebuilding new godowns. The country is improving; they are beginning to pour in, and there is need for rule and ordinance at this outset, and permanent laws...



Mural of Afonso de Albuquerque at the Palace of Justice of Vila Franca de Xira in Portugual, 1964

If I am a merchant in Melaka and give you, the owner of the junk, a hundred *cruzados* of merchandise at the price then ruling in Melaka, assuming the risk myself, on the return they give me a hundred and forty and nothing else; and the payment is made, according to the Melaka ordinance, forty-four days after the arrival of the junk in port^{‡‡}...

Melaka should be well supplied with people, sending some and bringing back others.... Men cannot estimate the worth of Melaka, on account of its greatness and profit. Melaka is a city that was made for merchandise, fitter than any other in the world; the end of monsoons and the beginning of others. Melaka is surrounded and lies in the middle, and the trade and commerce between the different nations for a thousand leagues on every hand must come to Melaka.

Wherefore a thing of such magnitude and of such great wealth, which never in the world could decline, if it were moderately governed and favored, should be supplied, looked after, praised and favored, and not neglected; for Melaka is surrounded by Mohammedans who cannot be friends with us unless Melaka is strong, and the Moors will not be faithful to us except by force, because they are always on the look-out, and when they see any part exposed they shoot at it.^{§§} And since it is known how profitable Melaka is in temporal affairs, how much the more is it in spiritual [affairs], as Mohammed is cornered and cannot go farther, and flees as much as he can. And let people favor one side, while merchandise favors our faith; and the truth is that Mohammed will be destroyed, and destroyed he cannot help but be.

⁺⁺This list of visitors to Melaka covers just about all the Indian Ocean and seas surrounding China.

^{‡‡}The *cruzado* was a golden Portuguese coin worth a considerable amount.

^{§§} Moor was a derogatory term used by Portuguese and Spaniards to describe Muslims, especially those from North Africa and the Middle East.

Primary Source 3: *The Portuguese in the Ming Shilu*

The Ming Shilu, or the Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty, is a comprehensive annal covering events that occurred during the reigns of different emperors during the Ming Dynasty. The foreign affairs section contains a wealth of information on tributary exchanges and trade, piracy and rebellions, promotions and demotions, and political intrigue from the beginning of the Ming in 1368 to the Dynasty's fiery end in 1644.

The National University of Singapore and the Asia Research Institute have translated and made available a database of references to Southeast Asia from the Ming Shilu at the following website: <u>http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/introduction</u>.

The sections below, which come from this database, pertain to the Portuguese (rendered as Fo-lang-ji in the Ming Shilu) and their conquest of Melaka. Officials who wrote memorials, or reports to the emperor, tended to favor strong action against the Portuguese, who were depicted us unreliable, violent, and conniving.

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A section of the Ming Shilu, or Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty

Sources: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore. "Zheng-de: Year 15, Month 12, Day 5." Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu. Translated by Geoff Wade. Accessed January 22, 2019. <u>http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/zheng-de/year-15-month-12-day-5</u>.

Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore. "Zheng-de: Year 16, Month 7, Day 30." Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu. Translated by Geoff Wade. Accessed January 22, 2019. http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/zheng-de/year-16-month-7-day-30-0.

Discussion Questions:

- What happened when the Portuguese and Chinese strategies for controlling and securing trade and political influence collided? Or, in other words, how did Chinese officials respond to Portuguese encroachments into a Chinese-enfeoffed state in Melaka?
- What type of reputation did the Portuguese appear to have based on the entries below? Based on your reading of the Pires and the *Ming Shilu*, how might the Portuguese have earned that reputation?
- What solutions did the Censor He Ao offer to the emperor to counteract the Portuguese? And how did Chinese attitudes toward the Portuguese evolve from January to August 1521?



Watercolour illustration of Malayan people of Melaka, 1540

Ming Shilu Zheng-de: Year 15, Month 12, Day 5 (January 13, 1521)*

The overseas Fo-lang-ji [Portuguese] had, prior to this time, not had contact with China.[†] Not many years previously they had seized Melaka and subsequently the king of the country had sent envoys to offer tribute and to request enfeoffment. It was commanded that they be permitted to come to the capital. Those who remained at the Huai-yuan postal relay station subsequently began to kidnap and purchase people and erect houses and a stockade intended for longterm residence.

Melaka also memorialized requesting help, but the Court did not take measures in this respect.[‡] A while later, the Investigating Censor Qiu Dao-long memorialized: "Melaka is a country which offers tribute and which has been Imperially enfeoffed. The Fo-lang-ji have annexed it and, enticing us with gain, are seeking enfeoffment and rewards. Righteousness will certainly not allow this. It is requested that their tribute be refused, that the difference between according and disobedience be clearly made known and that they be advised that only after they have returned the territory of Melaka will they be allowed to come to Court to offer tribute. If they refuse and blindly hold to their ways, although the foreign *yi* are not used to using weapons, we will have to summon the various *yi* to arms, proclaim the crimes and punish the Fo-lang-ji, so as to make clear the Great Precepts of Right Conduct." §

The Censor He Ao also memorialized: "The Fo-lang-ji are marked by their cruelty and by their guile, and their weapons are better than those of all the other *yi*." In recent times, they sailed here in their large ships and came abruptly into Guang-dong province. The sound of their guns shook the city and suburbs. The persons they left at the postal relay station violated the ban on communication, while those who came to the capital were fierce and reckless and vied for supremacy. Now, if their private ships are permitted to come and go in trade, it will certainly lead to fighting and injury and the calamities of the south will be endless. In the time of the Imperial ancestors, when the *yi* from the four directions came to Court, their tribute frequency was fixed and the forces engaged in defending against the Japanese pirates were extremely strict in their guard. If a *fan* ship arrived and they falsely claimed that they had been blown to the anchorage by the wind and wanted to trade, they were subject to verification through investigation, after which details were memorialized.** They were also subject to a proportional tax in accordance with the regulations....

^{*} The Zhengde Emperor reigned from 1505 to 1521.

[†]The Chinese referred to the Portuguese as "Fo-lang-ji" among many other terms. The writer means that the Portuguese had sent no official representative to the capital in Beijing to offer tribute.

[‡]A memorial was an official report or communication sent to the emperor. Emperors spent much of their time processing and ruling on these memorials.

[§] The term *yi* has sometimes been translated as "barbarian," though, as historian Lydia H. Liu has pointed out, this translation doesn't capture the complexity of the term, which sometimes, but not always, had a negative connotation. ^{II} He Ao was a minor official. Censors were part of the Censorate, which provided oversight of the government and reported on potential corruption.

^{**} The term fan, like yi has sometimes been translated as "barbarian," though, "foreign" is perhaps a better term.

Thus, frequency restrictions were ignored and the goods of any ship which arrived were taxed. This has resulted in *fan* ships continually coming to our coastal bays and in *man* and *yi* residing together in our subprefectural cities. Also, as the laws and the defenses have been neglected, these people have become increasingly familiar with the routes. These Fo-lang-ji have taken advantage of this situation to rush here.

It is requested that the old regulations be examined and restored, that all the *fan* ships in the bays and all the *yi* persons who have secretly entered and reside there be expelled, that private communication be prohibited and that strict defenses be firmly instituted, so that in that region all will be in its place."

The Ministry of Rites re-submitted the memorial, noting: "... They should wait until the envoy from Melaka arrives and then together with official interpreters investigate the reason why the Fo-lang-ji *fan* invaded neighboring countries and brought great disturbance to the area. They should then memorialize detailing advice of action suggested. The grand defender and grand coordinator should be instructed to arrest and punish those seal-holding officials of the three offices of Guangdong and the administration and circuit officials, the patrolling inspectors and the defense officials responsible for guarding against the Japanese pirates, who have been unable to provide tight defense. In the future, the prohibition must be tightly enforced. As to the *yi* persons who remain at the postal relay stations, they are not to be permitted to engage in private communication or trade, while those *fan* ships which come at a time other than the appropriate tribute year are to be chased far away, and are not to be subject to the proportional levy. Ting-ju's proposals have led to these troubles. The Ministry of Revenue should be instructed to examine the precedents and remove him."

It was Imperially commanded that all matters be handled as proposed.^{††}

⁺⁺In other words, the emperor agreed to follow the advice as outlined here.



Ming Shilu Zheng-de: Year 16, Month 7, Day 30 (August 31, 1521)

During the Zheng-de reign, maritime *yi*, by name the Fo-lang-ji [Portuguese], drove away Suduan Ma-mo, the king of the country of Melaka, and occupied his territory.* They then sent the envoy Jia-bi-dan Mo and others to offer tribute and request enfeoffment. Not long after, Wei-xiying, an envoy from the country of Melaka, also came to offer tribute and requested that the kings of the various countries be advised and instructed and that commanders and supplementary troops be sent to assist in the recovery of his country.[†] The Ministry of Rites had already proposed that the Fo-lang-ji be refused and that their tribute envoy be sent back....

The matter was referred to the Ministry of Rites which further memorialized: "Fo-lang-ji is not a tribute-bringing country.[‡] Further, it has invaded a neighboring fief, acted barbarously and violated the laws. Now their people have brought goods to engage in trade and are falsely claiming that they have come to provide supplies. The *yi* sentiments are difficult to predict. They have been encamped for a long period and it is suspected that they are spying and looking for opportunities. The grand defender and grand coordinator should be Imperially ordered to quickly drive them away so that they do not enter the borders. In the future, if the various overseas *fan* come to offer tribute, and their arrival is in accord with the stipulated tribute frequency, they are to be proportionately taxed in accordance with the regulations. If they do not carry a tally-slip or come with goods at other than the stipulated frequency, they are to be refused. As to Melaka's request for assistance, the matter should be submitted to the Ministry of War for deliberation.[§]



Subsequently, the Ministry of War proposed: "It is requested that Imperial orders of castigation be sent to the Fo-lang-ji, instructing them to return Melaka's territory. Also, Siam and the other various *yi* should be instructed in the righteousness of assisting those in distress and showing sympathy for their neighbors. If the officials who are engaged in maritime patrols and those engaged in defense against the Japanese pirates do not swiftly memorialize when they hear of changes in the situations of the *yi*, they should be arrested and prosecuted."

The Emperor approved all of these proposals.

Entry gate of A Famosa, the Portuguese fort in Melaka

^{*}This was likely Sultan Mahmud, the eighth sultan of Melaka.

[†] In other words, representatives of Sultan Mahmud and the Portuguese crown sent opposing tributary missions to China to attempt to gain recognition and the trading rights it ensured.

[‡]The Ministry of Rites oversaw tribute and titles. It was one of the six bureaus of the Ming government.

[§] The Ministry of War oversaw raising an army and navy and conducting defensive and offensive operations. It was one of the six bureaus of the Ming government.

Image Citations:

Page 1:

World Map of the Portuguese Empire, World History Encyclopedia, Public Domain, <u>https://www.worldhistory.org/image/14123/</u> <u>portuguese-colonial-empire-in-the-age-of-</u> <u>explorati/</u>

Page 2:

Monument of Admiral Zheng He, in the Stadthuys, Melaka, CC BY-SA 2.0, hassan saeed,

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