

## THE DIPLOMACY OF ISLAMIC POWERS IN THE MALACCA STRAIT

Mohammad Saeri<sup>1</sup>, Purwasandi<sup>2</sup>, Herry Wahyudi<sup>3</sup>, Nur Luthfi Hidayatullah<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Riau, Indonesia  
m.saeri@lectuer.unri.ac.id

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Riau, Indonesia  
purwasandi@lecturer.unri.ac.id

<sup>3</sup>Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji, Indonesia  
herrywahyudi@umrah.ac.id

<sup>4</sup>UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia  
nur.luthfi.hidayatullah@uinsa.ac.id

### ABSTRACT

The Strait of Malacca has been a strategic route for the meeting of economic, cultural, ideological and political interests since thousands of years ago. One of the impacts of this strategic meeting was the emergence of Islamic powers in the form of large Islamic kingdoms in the early 9th century. The existence of the Islamic powers of the Malacca Strait was revealed through a search of both primary and secondary documents. The results of this study prove that the emergence of Islamic powers in the Malacca Strait occurred through economic and cultural diplomacy, making it easier to strengthen the influence of Islamic ideology among the people along the Malacca Strait, both in Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia. This strong and widespread influence of the Islamic religion became the basis for the establishment of large kingdoms which formed governments based on Islamic political principles. The clash of economic, cultural, ideological and political interests continued between the Islamic forces of the Malacca Strait and the Western powers as new arrivals which ended with the collapse of the Islamic forces of the Malacca Strait.

**Keywords:** Islamic Power, Malacca Strait, Diplomacy, Islamic Kingdoms

### INTRODUCTION

The Strait of Malacca is one of the most strategic straits for world trade transportation. This strait is also called the "silk route" of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that connects the East and West. For hundreds of years before Western colonialism, Indians, Chinese, and Arabs had used this Strait as a trade route and to spread religion. The Srivijaya Kingdom controlled the Malacca Strait during its reign and actively traded and exchanged goods with China and India through the Malacca Strait (Cleary & Goh, 2000).

Islam entered Southeast Asia around the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD (Syamsu AS, 1999 p. 9) through three phases. First, the transit phase of Muslim traders at ports along

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the Malacca Strait area; second, formatted Muslim communities around the Malacca Strait; third, the establishment of Islamic kingdoms in the Malacca Strait area (Yatim, 2017 p. 193). Islam was readily accepted in the Malacca Strait region because it spread politely and without political upheaval, but through trade, marriage, preaching, and assimilation of the Arab, Persian, and Indian Muslim communities with indigenous communities (Helmiati, 2011). Thomas W. Arnold, in his book *The Preaching of Islam*, noted that Islam's spread and historical development in Southeast Asia took place peacefully (Arnold, 1896 p. 42). Azumardi Azra emphasized that the model of spreading Islam in the Southeast Asian region never involved military force (Azra, 2000).

During the heyday of the Islamic Kingdoms, each kingdom was able to play a role as a new power in the Malacca Strait. The Perlak Kingdom was founded in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Hijriyah century or 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (Hamka, 1994). The Samudra Pasai Kingdom was the ruler of the Malacca Strait, a trading city, and a center for spreading religion and science. The Malacca Sultanate was successful for 150 years, dominating the economic, political, and cultural sectors and the most important international trade center (Y, 1975 p. 27). The Arabs called it *malakat*, or the gathering of all traders. The Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam is also the Qibla of Islamic teaching and the center of knowledge in Southeast Asia, which was internationally recognized as one of the leading Muslim countries. Since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Islamic dominance of the Malacca Strait declined with the arrival of the Portuguese and the Dutch in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the British in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Cleary & Goh, 2000).

## METHOD

The theory used to analyze diplomatic activities in this research is the multidimensional theory of diplomacy, encompassing maritime diplomacy, strategic alliances, and cultural diplomacy. Initially, maritime diplomacy theory emphasizes the role of sea routes and ports in bridging diplomatic and economic relations between nations. This diplomacy focuses on negotiation and cooperation between maritime powers in the surrounding region, to build regional solidarity and cooperation, thereby strengthening sovereignty and shared interests in the maritime region. Christian Le Miere divides maritime diplomacy into three forms. First, Cooperative Diplomacy, which uses soft power such as port visits, joint exercises, and humanitarian assistance to build trust and cooperation. Second, Persuasive Diplomacy, which builds prestige and international recognition through displays of maritime and naval strength, such as by showing the flag. Third, Coercive Diplomacy, which is the use of maritime military force, such as warships, to secure national interests and uphold state sovereignty (Le Miere, 2014).

Next, the theory of strategic alliances and power competition illustrates how local actors approach diplomacy by building coalitions to challenge foreign powers. Strategic alliance theory is a diplomatic pattern that involves the formation and utilization of political, economic, and maritime networks between regional and external actors for the

sake of security, control of trade routes, and strengthening regional positions (Das & Teng, 2000). These alliances take the form of formal and informal coalitions, trade agreements, political marriages, diplomacy, and military cooperation, rooted in strategic interests to control and secure vital routes, particularly the axis of global trade.

Furthermore, cultural diplomacy theory is one perspective on the use of soft power in International Relations, positioning culture as a tool or instrument of a nation's diplomacy to advance its national interests. According to Milton C. Cummings, cultural diplomacy is the exchange of cultural aspects such as art and information between nations to foster mutual understanding. Cultural diplomacy is a subset of public diplomacy that uses a soft power approach, namely the power of persuasion and cultural appeal, rather than violence or military threats, to subtly persuade and influence other nations (Cummings, 2003). Hence, cultural diplomacy involves the exchange of ideas, information, art, language, and other cultural aspects between different nations or societies with the goal of building mutual understanding, trust, and a positive image of a nation on the international stage.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### Diplomatic Relations of Islamic Kingdoms in the Malacca Strait Region

The establishment of an Islamic kingdom indicates that the arrival of Islam in the archipelago was no small matter. There was an "Islamization" agenda in the form of burden sharing and distribution of power or influences carried out by the Islamic Caliphate in the Middle East to the archipelago. Even Al Attas, in his book entitled *Historical Fact and Fiction*, believes that spreading Islam to the archipelago was a direct order from the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him (Al Attas, 2011). This is also strongly supported by Shaykh Syamsuddin Abu' Abdillah Muhammad ibn Talib ad-Dimasyqi, also known as Shaykh ar-Rabwah, in the book *Nukhbat ad-Dahr fi 'Aja'ib al-Barr wa 'l-Bahr*, stating that Islam has entered the archipelago through Champa, currently known as Cambodia and Vietnam, since the time of Caliph Uthman, approximately in the year of 30 Hijriah or 651 AD (7<sup>th</sup> century) (Tibbetts, 2002 p. 63). This opinion, reviewed by Syed Muhammad Naquib al Attas, in his article entitled "Islam in the Archipelago: Historiography and Methodology". Al Attas's viewed that Islam entered the archipelago in the 9<sup>th</sup> century or earlier (Arif, 2012), dismissing mainstream opinions which stated that Islam entered the archipelago in the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, after the collapse of the Abbasid dynasty following the invasion of the Mongol army in 1258 AD (Hurgronje, 1923 p. 361).

In its development, Islam was easily accepted because of its polite spread. Therefore, Islam became very dominant, and overpowered the influence of Hinduism and Buddhism in the Malacca Strait area. In a relatively short period, many kingdoms were formed with Islamic identities. The decline and then collapse of the Srivijaya Kingdom was also a factor that accelerated the progress of the Islamic Kingdoms in the archipelago.

### **Diplomacy of the Perlak Sultanate (840-1292 AD)**

The first and oldest Islamic Kingdom in the archipelago was the Perlak Sultanate, which was founded in 840 AD. The text "*Hikayat Aceh*" reveals that the spread of Islam in the northern part of Sumatra was carried out by an Arab cleric named Syaikh Abdullah Arif in 506 H or 1112 AD (Iskandar et al., 1997 p. 85-95). The existence of the Perlak Sultanate was strengthened by the famous Venetian traveler Marco Polo a century later. When Marco Polo returned from China by sea in 1291, he stopped in the country of Ferlec, or Perlak, which had converted to Islam (Polo et al., 1993).

The first Sultan of Perlak was Sultan Alaidin Syed Maulana Abdul Aziz Shah, who was a Shiite of Arab descent, who married a local woman. He founded the Perlak Sultanate in 1 Muharram 225 AH (840 AD) (Iskandar et al., 1997). He also changed the name of the royal capital, from Bandar Perlak to Bandar Khalifah. This Sultan and his wife, Princess Meurah Mahdum Khudawi, were then buried in Paya Meuligo, Peureulak, East Aceh.

One of the diplomatic practices of the Perlak Sultanate was the merger of the Perlak Sultanate with the Samudera Pasai Sultanate. The Kingdom of Samudera Pasai was established at the beginning of the 13th century. Afterwards during the reign of Sultan Makhдум Alaidin Malik Muhammad Amin Syah II Johan Berdaulat, the Kingdom of Samudera Pasai began to grow into a potential power in the Malacca Strait area, so much so that the cultural diplomacy approach through marriage further guaranteed the security of the two kingdoms. The Perlak Sultanate formed an alliance with the Samudera Pasai Sultanate using the 'political marriage' method. The 17<sup>th</sup> Sultan of Perlak, Sultan Makhдум Alaidin Malik Muhammad Amin Shah II Johan Berdaulat (r. 1230 – 1267), carried out a policy of friendship by marrying two of his daughters to the ruler of the neighboring country of Peureulak: 1) Princess Ratna Kamala, married to the King of the Kingdom of Malacca, Sultan Muhammad Shah (Parameswara); 2) Princess Ganggang, married to the King of the Samudera Pasai Kingdom, Al-Malik Al-Saleh.

Perlak was a kingdom with a fairly long reign, approximately 452 years, starting from the year 840 until 1292, or more than four centuries from the 9<sup>th</sup> century to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Based on its growth and development period, the Perlak Sultanate was the first Islamic Kingdom on the Island of Sumatra. This kingdom grew larger and stronger, not only because of the government's military and economic arrangements which had reached a good level, but it was also supported by the cultural values of the society, which were firmly based on Islamic principles. This case proves that Islam had quite a strong influence on society at that time. Another factor that is also very important in supporting Perlak's progress is the kingdom's ability to control maritime affairs, including the Malacca Strait, so this strait area contributed greatly to the glory of the Perlak Sultanate. The disappearance of Srivijaya Buddhist power in the Malacca Strait area made it easier for Perlak to play an important role as a new power in the Malacca Strait.

The Perlak Sultanate was ruled by Muslim kings who really understood the importance of maritime areas, i.e. the oceans for political, economic, and diplomatic strategy purposes. Therefore, the kings who once ruled this Sultanate confirmed the role of the Perlak Sultanate as a maritime power, especially in the Malacca Strait and Indian Ocean areas. The main role of the Perlak Sultanate at that time, was as a new power in the Malacca Strait, that filled the power vacuum in the region after the collapse of the Sriwijaya Kingdom. The role of the main power in the Malacca Strait was then balanced by the presence of the Hindu Majapahit power, which began to expand to the Malacca Strait area and Thailand (Iskandar, 1978).

The development of Islamic civilization became the main characteristic of this Sultanate, and became one of the basic strengths in carrying out diplomatic relations with other countries. The Malacca Strait and the Indian Ocean are very important diplomatic strategy areas for the Perlak Sultanate. This means that the security of Perlak and the sustainability of the Islamic civilization built within it are greatly influenced by the security of the waters of the Malacca Strait and the Indian Ocean. These strategic values were used as a basis by the kings of the Perlak Sultanate to determine the basis for the state, and two important bases were taken, namely the development of Islamic education as a basis for developing civilization and strengthening diplomatic relations with parties and countries that have similar cultures. These two principles are thought to have brought the Perlak Sultanate to a glorious period, and the peak of glory was during the reign of Sultan Makhdum Alaidin Malik Muhammad Amin Syah II Johan Berdaulat, who ruled in 622-662 H/1225-1263 AD (Hill, 1963).

The Perlak Sultanate has implemented multi-dimensional diplomacy practices. This can be seen in the diplomatic contact between Perlak and the outside world, which occurred not only on the part of the government (political aspect) but also between fellow citizens, both Ulama as an epistemic community and civil society (religion), especially between the Perlak people and immigrants from Arabia and Persia. In fact, this people-to-people diplomacy contact occurred much earlier and had a wider influence than formal diplomacy by the royal governments. The general migrant population were traders who entered Perlak via the Indian Ocean route and the Malacca Strait, so these two sea routes played an important role in the development of diplomacy carried out by the Perlak Sultanate. The relationships established with foreign traders have brought two major influences, namely economic and cultural influences. Economic influence has made Perlak a developed port city and has its own currency. The Perlak currency found was made of gold (dirham), silver (kupang), and copper or brass. Perlak was also known for its wealth of natural resources, which was supported by its strategic location. Perlak was very well known to be a producer of Perlak wood, which is a type of wood that is very good for making ships. It was this kind of resource that attracted traders from Gujarat, Arabia, and Persia to this area.

The cultural influence caused by the entry of foreign traders, especially Gujarati, Arab, and Persian traders, was the absorption of the Islamic religion by the local

community, so that this religion spread throughout the Perlak society and became the basis for the formation of culture in the Perlak Sultanate area and its surroundings. The formation of a culture based on Islam in the Perlak Sultanate made an important contribution to the formation of Islamic civilization in the Malacca Strait region, because after good development in the Perlak region, Islam also developed rapidly in Aceh and even in Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia. Islamic civilization in the Malacca Strait region later emerged in the form of the splendor of the Sultanates of Malacca, Johor, and Tumasik.

One of the ways of spreading Islam in Perlak was through marriage between Muslim traders from Persia, Arabia, and Gujarat with women from local residents. This method has made it easier for Muslim traders to carry out business and, at the same time, carry out Islamization missions to the local population. This kind of process actually applies not only to the Perlak area but also to almost all centers of growing civilization in the Malacca Strait area.

Sultan Makhdum Alaiddin Malik Abdul Aziz Johan Berdaulat (r. 1267-1292) was the 18<sup>th</sup> and last Sultan of Perlak. After he died, Perlak was united with the Samudera Pasai Kingdom under the rule of the Sultan of Samudera Pasai, Sultan Muhammad Malik Al Zahir, son of Al-Malik Al-Saleh (Hill, 1966).

### **Diplomacy of the Sultanate of Samudera Pasai (1267-1521 AD)**

The diplomacy of the Samudera Pasai sultanate in the Malacca Strait area was recorded in the classic manuscript entitled "Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai". This manuscript was owned by Kiai Suyadimanggala, who then handed over the Javanese language manuscript to Sir Stamford Raffles in 1814. "Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai" was written during the collapse of the Srivijaya kingdom, the rise of the Singosari and Majapahit Kingdoms, and the expansion to the South by the T'ai across the Malay peninsula, which began in 1280 (Hill, 1966). Based on diplomacy and strategic perspective, this text tells how the Majapahit Kingdom confronted the Samudera Pasai Kingdom in controlling the Malacca Strait. This text tells us that Majapahit grew into a very strong maritime power. This text also talks about the diplomatic relations between the Sultanate of Samudera Pasai and China, especially with immigrants who sailed from China through the Strait of Malacca.

Another text that also records the history of the diplomatic development of the Samudera Pasai Sultanate is "Negarakertagama". This text says that Samudera Pasai grew into a major power in Southeast Asia. Its influence was not only on securing the Malacca Strait area and its surroundings, but also on the Islamization carried out by the Samudera Pasai Sultanate, which had "changed the face of Southeast Asia" from being very oriental into becoming Islamic (Hill, 1966). Samudera Pasai was able to develop and spread its influence in terms of politics, socio-culture, and trade. All of this uses the Strait of Malacca as the main route and entrance. The key lies in securing this area.

The diplomacy strategy carried out by the Samudera Pasai Kingdom by strengthening its armed forces, especially at sea, is based on a correct geostrategic perspective. The Kingdom's location on the coastline of the Malacca Strait was very open to facing various problems related to economics, politics, and security. Economically, the Samudera Pasai Kingdom had the potential to become a very important growth center in the Malacca Strait area, and a trade destination for Siam, China, the kingdoms of Java, India, and the Middle East. In the political aspect, the Samudera Pasai Kingdom also realized the importance of a strong and stable government, as well as controlling the elements of power, including the economy and the military. In the aspect of the diplomatic strategy of the Samudera Pasai Kingdom, efforts must be made to ensure the security of the surrounding area, especially the Malacca Strait.

The basis of the diplomatic strategy carried out by the Samudera Pasai Royal Government was clearly for several long-term diplomatic goals. Firstly, to become the center of economic growth in the Malacca Strait area. Secondly, to face possible threats or attacks from other powers, such as the Kingdom of Siam and Majapahit. Thirdly, to become a military force in the Malacca Strait area that other large kingdoms take into account, and ensure the security of the Malacca Strait as a trade route in and out of the Samudera Pasai Kingdom.

The Samudera Pasai Kingdom increased its diplomatic strategy efforts by establishing diplomatic relations with the Chinese Kingdom as a strategy to protect itself from threats of the Siam Kingdom, whose territory reached as far as the Malacca Peninsula. Cultural elements were also used as a diplomatic force to support diplomatic strategy efforts. Integrating the surrounding area into one common culture will make it easier to achieve broad goals, including economic, political, and security goals. For this purpose, the Samudera Pasai Kingdom established Islamic study centers, which became the focus of education for local residents and Islamic students who came from outside. They trained them to become reliable scholars and sent them to various regions in the archipelago. The Royal Government then sent these Ulama to spread Islam to Minangkabau, Jambi, Malacca, Java, and even to Siam (Thailand). This cultural diplomacy was actually carried out by the Perlak Sultanate, but the Samudera Pasai Kingdom took a step further by integrating it into the basis of the Kingdom, which had a clearer target, namely the conversion of areas adjacent to the Samudera Pasai Kingdom. One of the successes of this strategy was the sending of one of the clerics of Bumi Putra Pasai named Fatahillah, who became Commander in Chief of the Demak Kingdom and later became King of the Banten Kingdom.

The Samudera Pasai Kingdom truly became an important trade center in the Malacca Strait area. The Kingdom built ports, which became destinations and stop overs for every world trader who crossed the Malacca Strait. The ports in the Samudera Pasai Kingdom function to increase supplies for the next voyage and take care of ship repairs and permits for entry and exit. Kenneth R. Hall in "Upstream and Downstream Unification in Southeast Asia's First Islamic Policies: The Changing Sense of Community

in the Fifth Century "Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai" Court Chronicle" states that the Islamization of the Samudera Pasai Sultanate has encouraged the increasing hegemony of Samudera Pasai in the Malacca Strait region (Hall, 2001 p. 199). The inclusion of Samudera Pasai in the 'international Islamic community' coupled with Samudera Pasai's strategic position in the field of textile trade has made Samudera Pasai the center of international trade for Islamic kingdoms in the Southeast Asian region. In the 'Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai' it is said that there were six reasons why the cloth was important and valuable at that time in the international trade constellation, specifically as payment for services, as war booty, royal ceremonial displays, diplomatic exchange, local mythology, and initiation of changes in the history of Samudera Pasai (Hall, 2001 p. 216).

Samudera Pasai was the first Islamic Kingdom capable of building a port government, or Port-Polity as a manifestation of the hegemony of the Malacca Strait international trade route. The success of this Kingdom was also recorded by Ibn Battuta, who came from Morocco. According to Battuta, in 1345, Samudera Pasai was a prosperous trading kingdom. Many traders from Java, China, and India came there. The currency was gold coins called *deureuham* or dirham. The year 1350 AD was the peak of the glory of the Samudera Pasai Kingdom. The Samudera Pasai Kingdom then experienced a decline after being controlled by the Malacca Kingdom, and the center of economic growth and trade was moved to Bandar Melaka.

### **Diplomacy of the Malacca Sultanate (1405-1511 AD)**

The Malay Archipelago, i.e. the Strait of Malacca and the Archipelago between the Indian Ocean and East Asia had become the richest, most diverse, and politically important region. The medium that facilitated interactions in this area was Islam. Islam made interactions in the region more intense, with a peaceful Islamic nuance. This region has given birth to many great Indonesian scholars who have made many contributions to the life of the state and society (Alkhateeb, 2014).

One of the kingdoms that became the center of trade in the Malacca Strait area after Samudera Pasai was the Malacca Sultanate, which became a port city in what is now known as Malaysia. What the Sultanate of Malacca and Samudera Pasai have in common is that these two sultanates both used the security of the Malacca Strait trade route as a basis for regional hegemony. The second similarity is that these two sultanates both used Islam as a basis for political interaction in the region (Alkhateeb, 2014 p. 2). Regarding Islam, the Malacca Sultanate also experienced a revival after going through the Islamization process. The Kingdom of Malacca was founded by King Parameswara in the 14th century A.D. Parameswara was originally a King in Tumasik (Singapore) in the 1390s. This country was then attacked by Java and Siam, which forced Parameswara to flee to the north, to the Malaysian Peninsula, and established a new kingdom there, namely the Kingdom of Malacca, in 1403. Parameswara asked for help from the Kingdom of China, which was then under the rule of the Ming Dynasty, to protect the Kingdom.

Parameswara then embraced Islam and married Ratna Kumala's daughter from the Perlak Sultanate. After embracing Islam, King Parameswara had the title King Iskandar Syah. King Parameswara's reversion to Islam was told in the writings of Admiral Cheng Ho, who visited Malacca in 1409. The writing explains that at that time, Parameswara was still in power, and he, as King and the people of Malacca were already Muslim. In 1414, Parameswara was succeeded by his son, Megat Iskandar Syah.

The Islamization process in the Malacca Sultanate then developed into a process of unification of the Islamic authority in the region, as happened in Samudera Pasai. The Islamic unification that occurred was colored by the treasures of Malay culture. The spread and unification of Islam in this region was also heavily influenced by the presence of Admiral Cheng Ho, who carried out an expedition from China. Geoff Wade states that diplomatic relations between the Malacca Sultanate and the Ming Dynasty strengthened Islamic authority in the Southeast Asian region, especially around the Malacca Strait region, as recorded in the classic Ming Dynasty text entitled *Ming Shi-Lu* (Wade, 1997 p. 41). This shows that diplomacy between Islamic kingdoms in the Malacca Strait has made the Chinese Kingdom (Ming Dynasty) one of the partners for diplomacy and cooperation. It is recorded that almost 30 diplomatic envoys were exchanged from both sides of the Kingdom in economic and security diplomacy missions from 1409 to 1521 AD (Wade, 1997 p. 68).

There were three strategic values that made the Malacca Sultanate one of the great centers of civilization, which developed into one of the largest Port-Polities in the Malacca Strait region. Firstly, its strategic position is a destination for immigrants from Sumatra, Bugis, Arabia, India, Chams, Java, Persia, etc. Secondly, Malacca as an area of cultural and spiritual diversity (Islam) which at that time was a trending topic among society. Finally, Malacca was a region that had many international links, and continues to develop as an independent region (Wade, 1997 p. 55).

P.E. de Josselin de Jong and H.L.A. Van Wijk explained that changes in the distribution and power structure of the Malacca Sultanate can be seen from two sides, economics and defense-security. From an economic perspective, the Malacca Sultanate was able to become the largest Islamic Kingdom in the Malacca Strait through international trade. Its position around the Malacca Strait makes this region an area with the largest economic turnover. Additionally, in terms of defense and security, the distribution and changes in the power of this Sultanate can be seen from the war with the Kingdom of Siam and the arrival of the Portuguese, who brought the colonization agenda to Southeast Asia after becoming a new maritime power in the archipelago (de Josselin & Wijk, 1960).

During the time when Sultan Mahmud Syah ruled the Kingdom of Malacca, European nations entered Southeast Asia; by carrying out political diplomacy and fighting against each other and division, they usurped the power of the kingdoms in this region. They realized that by controlling the Strait of Malacca, they had controlled one of

the world's most important shipping and trade routes. The European immigrant nations competed with each other to gain influence and power in the Southeast Asian region, and controlling the Malacca Strait was one of their goals. Therefore, in 1511, the Portuguese troops under the leadership of Alfonso de Albuquerque attacked Malacca. The attack began for ten days in August 1511, and succeeded in capturing Malacca after 24 days in August 1511, thus ending the reign of Sultan Mahmud Syah and the glory of the Kingdom of Malacca.

Sultan Mahmud Syah fled to Bintan Island and founded a new capital there. In 1526, the Portuguese burned Bintan to the ground, and the Sultan then fled to Kampar, where he died two years later, specifically in 1558. His son, Muzaffar Syah later became the Sultan of Perak, while his other son, Alauddin Riayat Syah II founded a new kingdom, namely Johor.

The weakness of the Malacca Kingdom was that after successfully conquering the areas around the Melaka Strait, this Kingdom no longer paid serious attention to strategic security issues related to the Kingdom and its surroundings. Malacca City, as the capital of the Kingdom, was a port city located on the coast of the Malacca Strait, which had developed into an important center of economic growth in the Southeast Asia region. Meanwhile, the Strait of Malacca was a very important world shipping lane and a strategic defense area. All these conditions attracted the attention of European settlers, who wanted to expand their power to this region, in order to achieve the goal of large economic profits and instill their cultural influence for long-term goals.

Islamic principles have also animated cultural life, and are in solidarity with Malays. This case is proven by the use of Malays as a symbol of Islam. The real manifestation of this symbol in people's lives was the acceptance of the same good understanding. Within the Malay community and the non-Malay community, Malay means Islam, so when a non-Muslim person converts to Islam, they are said to have "entered Malay". At that time, the Malay language also became a symbol of the cultural glory of the Kingdom of Malacca, present in the midst of interactions between nations in several strong forms, including becoming the official language of instruction used by the Kingdom. Another form is writing, which was combined with Arabic culture, into the writing system known today as "Jawi", also known as "Malay Arabian" writing in Indonesia. Literary culture was also very well developed and presented in Malay speech in the form of sagas, and one of the most famous is the Hangtuah saga. However, the success of Malay culture based on Islam was not accompanied by the development of Islamic education. The Kings of Malacca did not seriously develop Islamic education centers and focused more on trade affairs.

Efforts to guard the Strait of Malacca were absolutely necessary to guarantee the sovereignty of the Kingdom. For this purpose, it was necessary to develop a large military force, especially a marine army. However, this was not done by the Kingdom of Malacca, so this Kingdom was not ready to face attacks from the Portuguese troops. The Kingdom

of Malacca fell into the hands of the Portuguese colonialists in just a short period of 14 days (Wilkinson, 1935 p. 68-69).

### **Aceh Darussalam Sultanate (1496-1903 AD)**

The Aceh Sultanate emerged in 1496, was the longest-standing and most powerful Sultanate in the northern region of Sumatra. The Aceh Sultanate also controlled the Malacca Strait area by securing trade routes and unifying Islamic authorities. The founder of this Kingdom was Sultan Ibrahim, whose title was Ali Mughayat Syah. He ruled for approximately 32 years, from 1496 to 1528. The center of government was in Kutaraja, known today as Banda Aceh. The decline of Samudera Pasai and the collapse of Malacca caused a change in the center of economic growth. The City of Malacca, which was controlled by the Portuguese, was no longer attractive to traders because of the greed of the Europeans who had practiced a monopoly system in trade (Hadi, 2003 p. 11-13). Traders who have long known the port cities of the Aceh region came to Aceh more often, which developed the Kingdom into a new center of economic growth.

Aceh's rise as a regional power could be seen in four areas, specifically in military, politics, economy, and Islamic intellectual tradition. Aceh, which had become a new regional power in the Malacca Strait, was motivated by two driving forces. First, direct drives, namely Aceh's victory over the conquest of Daya (1520), Pidie (1521), and Pasai (1524). Second, contextual drives, namely the presence of Portuguese military-economic power in the Malacca Strait area. Aceh was different from Pidie and Pasai in establishing diplomatic relations with Portugal. While Pidie and Pasai were establishing good relations and helping the development of the Portuguese, Aceh actually saw the Portuguese as a competitor, even the main enemy who threatened security in the region (Hadi, 2003 p. 21-22). Aceh's strength was also greatly supported by the presence of diasporas of Middle Eastern Muslims after the Mongols conquered Baghdad, who then continued to live in Aceh. Subsequently, as a result of the Portuguese conquest of Malacca, many of the Malaccan Malay Muslim diaspora emigrated to Aceh (Gibson, 2007 p.41).

The military strength of the Aceh Sultanate was focused on the strength of its naval fleet, consisting of a combination of artillery and traditional weapons with strong warships. These weapons were obtained from China, which also had diplomatic relations with Aceh (Hadi, 2003 p. 25). Even though Aceh had risen as a regional maritime power, it was still unable to conquer the Portuguese. The following are the reasons why Aceh could not beat the Portuguese. Firstly, the 15th-16th century AD was the century of the rise of European technology, including weapons technology. In fact, Portugal was one of the countries that took advantage of those opportunities in its colonial mission. (Pannikar, 1970 p. 29). Secondly, the Acehnese Navy was far behind the Portuguese. Aceh was considered reckless when fighting with the navy; as John Davis said, "having no defensive arms, but fighting naked" (Davis, 1880 p. 150).

Additionally, Aceh was also one of the largest Islamic empires capable of building Islamic institutions in the region. There were three foundations that Aceh had strengthened which enabled it to build Islamic institutions, which are: 1) the role of the Ulama; 2) harmony of Islamic law and customs that could be managed well, and 3) the concept of Jihad as the main defense doctrine of the Aceh Sultanate in every war faced by the kingdom (Hadi, 2003 p. 147).

Finally, Aceh experienced rapid progress during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636). During his reign, Aceh even controlled Johor, Pahang, Kedah, and Perak on the Malay Peninsula, as well as Indragiri, Bintan Island, and Nias. Apart from that, Iskandar Muda also drafted a governance law called Adat Mahkota Alam (Hadi, 2003 p. 37). After Sultan Iskandar Muda, there were no other sultans capable of controlling Aceh. Therefore, Aceh experienced a decline under the leadership of Sultan Iskandar Thani (1636-1641). He was then succeeded by his queen, Putri Sri Alam Permaisuri (1641-1675).

## CONCLUSION

Maritime diplomacy conducted by Islamic Kingdoms in the Strait of Malacca from the 9<sup>th</sup> until the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries played a strategic role in controlling trade routes and the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia. These maritime-based diplomatic relations encompassed aspects of trade, the dissemination of Islamic religious values, and the building of political and military power to control trade routes and protect their maritime territories. The maritime diplomacy of Islamic kingdoms in the Strait of Malacca combined economic power through control of maritime trade, military power for territorial security, and Islamic cultural-religious power, which collectively strengthened the kingdoms' positions as key actors in international shipping routes and centers for the spread of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago and Southeast Asia from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Furthermore, from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Islamic Kingdoms of the Strait of Malacca also had strategic alliances in the form of a combination of mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral political relations, creating a strong defense and trade network, and strengthening the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia. This strategic alliance served as an important instrument to maintain sovereignty, expand influence, and secure control over the main trade routes in the Strait of Malacca. The strategic alliance also involved a network of control over the surrounding region that integrated the Islamic powers of Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia, as well as influence on the Islamic Kingdoms of the archipelago to secure the spice trade routes and maintain political stability.

Besides that, cultural diplomacy conducted by Islamic kingdoms in the Strait of Malacca from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century also focused on spreading and strengthening Islamic values while developing Malay culture. Malay served as the official language of trade and diplomacy, serving as the region's primary cultural identity. The Islamic

kingdoms of the Strait of Malacca, from the Samudra Pasai Sultanate to the Malacca Sultanate, became centers of Islamic learning and the spread of Islamic culture, involving scholars, traders, and missionaries from various regions such as Persia, India, and Arabia.

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