

Historical Origins of Malaysian States



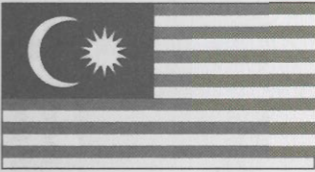
ZAKIAH HANUM

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EARLY HISTORY

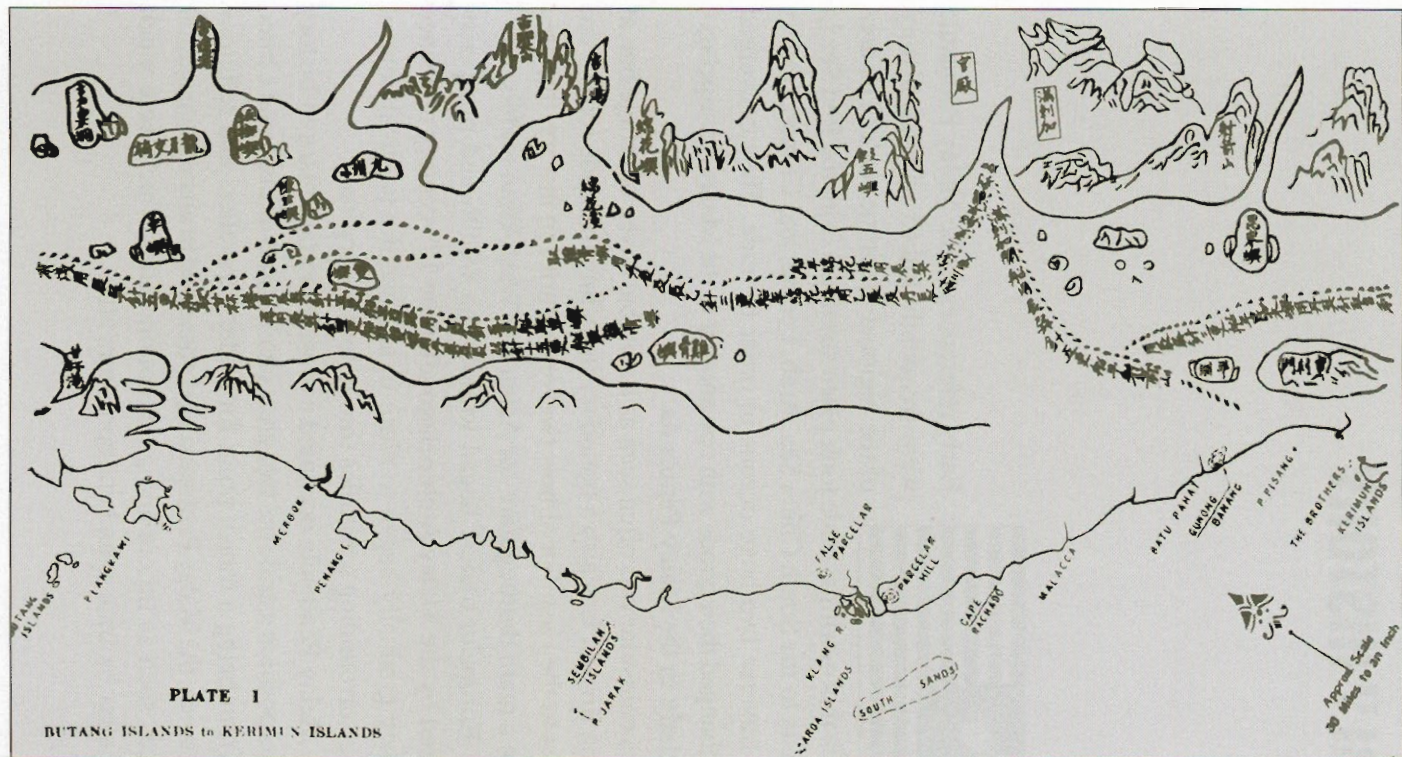


Early references to the Malay Peninsula were frequently linked with the history of the regional maritime trade. The area in which this maritime trade took place stretched from the Red Sea in West Asia to the South China Sea. Arab, Persian and Chinese traders had to traverse two huge oceans in order to trade. They converged and exchanged their goods with one another in the Malay Archipelago, particularly in the Malay Peninsula.

The peninsular was often seen as a suitable haven or refuge but, at the same time, it was also a boundary impeding the trade route from the West to the East. For almost twelve centuries in history, this area became a main thoroughfare for Asian and West Asian traders.

The European traders began to note the wealth and prosperity possessed by the Malay Archipelago after the 12th century and since then, they gradually began to close in and acquire political control over the surrounding territories throughout the region.

The Malay Peninsula occupied a most important place in history due to its position astride the two great civilizations of India and China. Apart from being a transit point for traders, travellers and religious missionaries, the Malay Peninsula also possessed in abundance natural resources such as tin ore and gold, commodities which were much sought after by traders and entrepreneurs alike.



Among the copious Chinese sources on ancient states in Malaysia was one called *The Chart of Wu-Pei-Chih*. – Copied from Plate III of the *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* Vol. 15, Part 3, with permission of the Council.