

COMPLETION REPORT

The Reorientation of Ryukyu-Malay Archipelago Relations from the 14th to the 17th Century

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This research paper briefly elaborates on the main Japanese records, specifically the *Rekidai Hoan*, pertaining to the diplomatic and trade relations between the Ryukyans and the Malay Archipelago. Ryukyu's trade relations from the end of the 14th century up to the early 17th century are not only an important part of Ryukyu's history; they are also a major component of the Malay Archipelago's history as a whole. The period has been considered a watershed in the history of Ryukyu, a Kingdom situated on the eastern rim of the East China Sea and on the western rim of the Pacific Ocean. Firstly, this research detects the presence of dynamism within the relationship of the Ryukyu kingdom with the Malay Archipelago states in the period when maritime trade was greatly encouraged. Secondly, it reveals that Ryukyu's trade relations with the Malay Archipelago were very close because of the available supply of a large number of southern articles sourced from the latter. This is reflected in the trade connection of the two clusters of kingdoms which has always been seen as being much more vibrant than Ryukyu's relations with all the other countries, especially in terms of the frequency and duration of the visits of the Ryukyuan fleets to the Malay Archipelago. Thus, the results of the investigation clearly attests to the fact that apart from the Chinese, the Japanese also played an important role in expanding the maritime trade in the Malay Archipelago between the late 14th century and early 17th century.

Throughout the duration of the study, the researcher had the opportunity to conduct library research at the National Taiwan University, Taiwan and the Nanyang Technology University, Singapore. The results show that the thriving private maritime trade activities in the Malay Archipelago were operated by the Zheng family from Taiwan. However, the Zhengs' success was closely entwined with the Japanese as it was the latter that opened up considerable trade opportunities to foreign traders. The library research also reveals that there are many more important documents detailing the Malay Archipelago's trade relations with Japan that have remained unutilised by fellow researchers.

Further probe shows that detailed research on their relations by local researchers is scarce. There is the possibility that such research which is rarely conducted results in a very shallow pool of historical resources based on the Japanese sources. The basic reason lies in the fact that the trend, interest and priority of research work, that has been done so far, were focused largely on Western sources. This then, hampers the local researchers' efforts to further explore the eastern sources especially from Japan which, in the researcher's opinion, are priceless yet regrettably neglected. Therefore, the data mining and verification process of these main resources must proceed so that the relations between the Malay Archipelago and Japan, in particular Ryukyu, can be further explored to enrich and complete the existing research efforts.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)
1. Ku Boon Dar (2018). 'Ryukyu-Malay Archipelago Relations from the 14th to the 17th Century.' Paper presented in Malaysian Historical Congress III: <i>Sejarah Malaysia: Pasak Masa Hadapan Negara</i> .at Anjung Wisma Sejarah (Historical Society of Malaysia). Kuala Lumpur, 28th-29th August 2018.
Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)
1. Ku Boon Dar. (2019). Ryukyu-Northern Malay Archipelago Relations from the 14th to the 17th Century. <i>International Journal of the Malay World and Civilisation (IMAN)</i> . 7(2): 49 – 55. (https://doi.org/10.17576/jatma-2019-0702-05)
2. Ku Boon Dar (2018). The Zheng family and the Dutch in the Malay Archipelago: Competition and conflict in the 17th century. <i>Journal of Nusantara Studies</i> . 3(2):54-65. (http://dx.doi.org/10.24200/jonus.vol3iss2pp54-65)
3. Ku Boon Dar (2018). Ryukyu-Malay Archipelago Relations from the 14th to the 17th Century. In Jumaat Hj. Mohd Noor et. al. <i>Proceedings of the Malaysia Historical Congress III. Sejarah Malaysia: Pasak Masa Hadapan Negara</i> . (pp. 52-59). Bangi: Museum of Academic Heritage, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. [ISBN 978-967-2224-05-1]
Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)
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