



### ***Pepper and Power: Portuguese Influence on Spice Trade in 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Century in Aceh***

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**Abstract:** *The arrival of the Portuguese in the Northern Sumatra during the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries led to substantial changes in trade dynamics, particularly impacting Aceh. The consolidation of the Pasai and Pidie Kingdoms into the Kingdom of Aceh, coupled with diplomatic connections with the Ottoman Sultanate, strategically addressed the Portuguese presence. By using qualitative methods and adopting a chronological historiographical approach, this scholarly presentation systematically outlines the development of the trade conflict between Aceh and the Portuguese. Utilizing primary sources such as the travel accounts of Tome Pires, Fernao Pinto, and Alexander Hamilton, complemented by a range of secondary sources, the study dissects the geopolitical landscape and intricacies of conflicting interests that defined the Aceh-Portuguese relations. The analysis highlights the essential changes in trade dynamics and spice trade induced by the presence of the Portuguese, while illustrating Aceh's strategic efforts in responding to these changes. The research outcomes underscore the significance of interregional collaborations, exemplified by the unity of Aceh and diplomatic partnerships with the Ottoman Empire, as strategic measures in facing the challenges of global trade. This study not only furnishes a comprehensive understanding of Aceh's strategic positioning but also delves into the multifaceted complexities of conflicting interests during the specified historical epoch. Consequently, this research significantly contributes to our understanding of historical and geopolitical interactions in the region in the past.*

**Keywords:** *Trade Welfare, Aceh, Portuguese, Ottoman Empire.*

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### **Lada dan Kekuasaan: Pengaruh Portugis terhadap Perdagangan Rempah pada Abad ke 15-16 di Aceh**

**Abstrak:** Masuknya Portugis ke kawasan Sumatra Timur pada abad ke-15 hingga ke-16 membawa transformasi signifikan dalam tatanan perdagangan, terutama di Aceh. Proses penyatuan Kerajaan Pasai dan Pidie menjadi Kerajaan Aceh, serta kerjasama dengan Kesultanan Ottoman, menjadi respons strategis terhadap penetrasi Portugis. Artikel ini, menggunakan metode kualitatif dan pendekatan historiografi kronologis, menguraikan perkembangan perang dagang antara Aceh dan Portugis dan keterlibatan perdagangan di Selat Malaka. Dengan memanfaatkan sumber-sumber primer seperti catatan perjalanan Tome Pires, Fernao Pinto, dan Alexander Hamilton, bersama dengan dukungan dari sumber-sumber sekunder lainnya, penelitian ini mengupas peta geopolitik dan konflik kepentingan yang menjadi ciri hubungan Aceh-Portugis. Analisis ini menyoroti esensialnya perubahan dalam dinamika perdagangan rempah yang disebabkan oleh kehadiran Portugis, sekaligus menggambarkan upaya strategis Aceh dalam menanggapi perubahan tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan pentingnya kerja sama antar wilayah seperti kesatuan Aceh dan kerjasama dengan Ottoman dalam merespons tantangan perdagangan global. Kajian ini menawarkan pemahaman mendalam tentang peran strategis Aceh dan kompleksitas konflik kepentingan yang terjadi selama periode tersebut. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi signifikan

terhadap pemahaman kita tentang interaksi sejarah dan geopolitik di kawasan tersebut pada masa lampau.

**Kata Kunci:** Perang Dagang, Aceh, Portugis, Ottoman.

## INTRODUCTION

In the 15th century, Portugal became a new monopoly power after defeating Venice in imports of raw goods including silk, porcelain, and important spices. The Portuguese court aimed to have long sought a new route that could reduce high import and transportation costs by seeking a direct sea route to the East, in the hope of eliminating Muslim and European intermediaries. Under the support of the House of Avis and the endorsement of the Roman Catholic Church during King Manuel's reign, Portugal became the wealthiest and most powerful kingdom in Christendom (Williams, 2018). This support enabled Portugal to play a crucial role in the exploration and discovery of approximately two-thirds of the world for Europe. The culmination of Portugal's maritime advancements was the decision to navigate south along the African coast, preparing to circumnavigate the continent and sail northeast to India. This historic voyage, scheduled for 1485, represented a pivotal moment in Portugal's quest for a direct sea route to the East, challenging established trade routes and geopolitical dynamics. The Portuguese empire was a trade and sea-oriented dominion formed with a military and ecclesiastical mold (Boxer, 1969).

During this period, the Sultanate of Malacca had risen as a powerful and wealthy Muslim state in the archipelago, capitalizing on its strategic position as a major trading center in Southeast Asia. The prosperity and potential of Malacca served as a key motivation for the Portuguese, who sought to dominate the spice trade in the region, spread Christianity, and seize control of the port and city (Hadi, 1992). In search of spices, the Portuguese had determined to visit Sumatra. They sailed from India to the Far East, where the spices originated. Before entering the Straits of Malacca, they called at Sumatran ports of Pasai and Pidie in 1509. Concluding a treaty of peace and friendship with both kings (Wijaya, 2022). Trade in the region was shared between Majapahit in Java and Pasai in Sumatra, as noted by Horace Stone. The Siamese also held influence over the Malay Peninsula, particularly in locations like Old Singapore and Patani (Hadi, 1992). During this period, the Sultanate of Malacca had risen as a powerful and wealthy Muslim state in the archipelago, capitalizing on

its strategic position as a major trading center in Southeast Asia. The prosperity and potential of Malacca served as a key motivation for the Portuguese, who sought to dominate the spice trade in the region, spread Christianity, and seize control of the port and city (Hadi, 1992).

## **METHOD**

This research employs a qualitative methodology with a chronological historiographical approach. Primary sources such as the travel accounts of Tome Pires, Pinto, and Alexander Hamilton illustrate the extensive trade network of Aceh across the globe. However, the entry of the Portuguese, aiming to dominate the spice trade routes in Southeast Asia, posed a significant challenge. Following the guidelines of Berg & Lune, the research process begins with identifying the research focus, conducting a comprehensive literature review, refining research questions, and selecting historical methods as the primary data collection process. Identification of both primary and secondary data sources is crucial for establishing a solid foundation, and a rigorous evaluation of the authenticity and accuracy of these sources ensures the reliability of the information. The identified materials are then coded and interpreted in alignment with the research questions. A comprehensive data analysis yields meaningful insights and conclusions, marking the completion of the entire research process (Berg & Lune, 2012).

Previous research on the trade conflict between the Kingdom of Aceh and the Portuguese has been conducted by Amirul Hadi in his MA thesis titled "Aceh and the Portuguese: A Study of the Struggle of Islam in Southeast Asia" at McGill University, Canada. Additionally, Daya Wijaya explored a similar topic in his dissertation "Malacca Beyond European Colonialism (15<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> Centuries)" at the University of Porto, Portugal. Recent research by Mehmet Ozay, titled "Notes on Ottoman–Malay World Relations (2022)," delves into the Ottoman Empire and Malay kingdoms. These studies significantly contribute to understanding the trade conflicts between the Aceh and the Portuguese in the 15th to 16th centuries.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Trade and Warfare in Northern Sumatra: 15th-16th Centuries**

Pasai held significance in Sumatra, highlighting its pivotal role as a trade hub with Malacca, particularly in relation to the trade of pepper. As Malacca faced challenges, Pasai flourished and attracted merchants from a diverse array of Moorish and Kling nations engaged in substantial trade. Among the participants in trade with Pasai were the Bengalees, Rumes, Turks, Arabs, Persians, Gujaratis, Kling, Malays, Javanese, and Siamese (Tome Pires, *The Suma Oriental*). Pasai's primary natural resources included pepper, silk, and benzoin. The kingdom boasted a substantial annual production of pepper, ranging from eight to ten thousand bahars. In the early sixteenth century, Chinese sources recorded the price of pepper at 80 dirhams or one tael of silver for 100 caties (62.5 kg) (Ried, 1988). Another valuable asset for Pasai was the oil extracted from natural flows at Perlak, a factor that significantly contributed to the wealth of both Pasai and, subsequently, Aceh (Ried, 1988). The silk of Pasai was a particularly attractive commodity, drawing the attention of Europeans such as Alfonso de Albuquerque, the governor of Portugal at Goa. Giovanni da Empoli, sent by Albuquerque to negotiate the supply of Pasai's silk, was informed that it would cost the Portuguese one hundred thousand ducats (Hadi, 1992).

Pepper cultivation gained immense popularity in Sumatra, Java, and Kalimantan from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, two influential kingdoms in Java and Sumatra, the Sultanate of Aceh and Banten, were economically reliant on the pepper trade. Intensive cultivation practices began in various regions of western Sumatra, evolving into plantations fueled by maritime activities along the West Coast (Marihandono, 2015). The growth of pepper plantations was further influenced by rising global demand. This shift to pepper cultivation prompted inhabitants in diverse production regions to switch from cultivating food crops to this lucrative commodity. Spices from the Nusantara region were actively traded in the Mediterranean region and were first transported to the port of Malabar, India. Subsequently, Indian merchants carried them further to the cities of Rome and Venice. Following this, Arab traders utilized sailing vessels to transport these valuable spices across the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Chinese merchants played a pivotal role as key intermediaries in the spice trade from Maluku until the 13<sup>th</sup> century, with Maluku serving as its central hub. From Banda, they sailed westward through Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and Java

before traversing the Malacca Strait, heading toward the spice markets in Malabar, India (Rahman, 2019). Afterward, Arab ships transported spices across the vast Indian Ocean to reach the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, spices had finally found their way into the hands of Europeans. From 1560 to 1600, two distinct historical shifts took place. Initially, the pepper trade saw a resurgence, this time navigating through the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. This was primarily a consequence of the Portuguese inability to suppress the maritime dominance of the North Sumatran sultanate in Aceh, coupled with the ineffective naval blockade in Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. Simultaneously, the Goa government actively participated in establishing a Far Eastern extension of commercial voyages centered around the ports of Macao, Nagasaki, and the Philippines (Chaudhuri, 1985). This venture held the potential for greater profitability than the Portuguese crown's monopoly on the pepper trade ever did. The initiation of new trading voyages to China and Japan might offer an explanation for the gradual loosening of Portuguese control over Indian Ocean trade.

On the other hand, Aceh engaged in the export of elephants and horses, a topic elaborated in Adat with dedicated sections. Additionally, the mention of sulfur (*tanah cempaga*) is noteworthy, as per Europeans, it guaranteed provisions for the entire Nusantara. The majority of the forest products enumerated are likely sourced from the inland areas and were subsequently traded abroad: 1).valuable timber like sandalwood and sapang; 2). various resins including gendarukam, damar, and teban; 3). aromatic substances and fragrances such as white camphor, black camphor, chalk, root tips, camphor oil, and masui wood bark; 4). spices such as pepper, campli puteh, and clove flowers; 5. ivory; 6. resin. It is also plausible that coconut fiber ropes (*tali temah*) were subject to exports (Lombard, 1991). Cities that have evolved into major centers for long-distance maritime trade are referred to as emporiums. The term emporium is applied to trading cities that provide essential facilities such as ports, warehouses, markets, and ship repair docks to support long-distance trade activities. The existence and development of emporiums heavily depend on their strategic locations, such as being situated on major maritime shipping routes, connecting straits between two or more trading regions, or being close to commodity-producing areas (Marihandono, 2015).

By the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, Pasai declined as a major trading center due to Malacca's rise. Malacca emerged as the primary emporium in the Southeast Asian region. This port city thrived and expanded after integrating itself into the Islamic trade network. Serving as a key destination for spice commodities from various regions in western and eastern Indonesia, Malacca played a crucial role in global distribution. However, it still imported rice, produced sought-after goods like pepper and silk, attracting European powers like the Portuguese and later the Dutch. Pidie was another notable kingdom in the region. Pidie, a significant kingdom across from Malacca, was famed for its pepper trade and once influenced neighboring territories like Aceh and Lamuri. Despite initially being the greatest kingdom on the north coast before Malacca's ascent, Aceh eventually surpassed Pidie in power. Described by 16<sup>th</sup> century traveler Ludivico di Varthema as flourishing, Pidie annually sent eighteen to twenty ships loaded with pepper to China and was recognized for silk and benzoin production. Pidie had about 500 money-changers, using stamped currency (Chaudhuri, 1985). Varthema admired Pidie's strict justice system, witnessed advanced junk construction, and noted local expertise in making fireworks. Pidie continued its involvement in trade until 1500.

On the other hand, Sultan Shams Shah, son of Munawwar Shah, united Lamuri with Aceh to strengthen his leadership. He solidified his position by arranging the marriage of his son, 'Ali Mughayat Shah, to Inayat Shah's daughter. This union marked the start of a new era for Aceh Darussalam. Sultan Ali Mughayat Shah demonstrated his rule by conquering Daya in 1520, Pidie in 1521, and Pasai in 1524, gaining control over the entire northern Sumatra, later incorporated into the Aceh kingdom (Hadi, 1992). All of this definitely helped the kingdom economically, leading to progress in many areas. The process of unification had a profound impact on Aceh, turning it into a cosmopolitan entity that attracted visitors from diverse regions, including Arabs, Persians, Ottomans, Abyssinians, Pegu traders, Chinese, Indians, and traders from the Indonesian archipelago (Hadi, 1992). Aceh's role as a major exporter of pepper and its control over the gold supply in the Minangkabau port added to its significance. Positioned strategically at the northern tip of Sumatra, facing the Indian Ocean, the Sultan seized the opportunity to engage in trading ventures spanning the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. Before delving into Aceh's trade endeavors in this region, it is crucial to explore the resistance of Muslim traders to the Portuguese presence in the area

Aceh appears to have entered Red Sea trade around the 1530s, intensifying significantly by the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. Acehnese trading ships regularly sailed into the Red Sea, leading to conflicts with Portuguese fleets. In 1534, a Portuguese squadron attacked Acehnese and Gujarati merchant ships in the Red Sea. In 1546, Acehnese seized a cargo ship owned by Antonio de Sousa, prompting D. Joao de Castro to order Portuguese ships from India to Malacca to travel in convoys (Boxer, 1969). In general, the kingdom yielded around 6,000 to 7,000 bahars of pepper. As per the Portuguese visitor, this amount decreased over the last four years (at the start of the 16<sup>th</sup> century), with only about 2,000 to 3,000 bahars being sent out (Hadi, 1992). Its role as a global trading hub drew frequent visits from economic participants. Aceh's strategic importance for spice loading and wood exports led the Ottoman Empire to ally with them. In exchange for military aid against the Portuguese, Aceh offered spices. The alliance also included the Samudri of Calicut, a major player in the Western spice trade.

Upon Sultan Ali Mughayat Shah's demise in 1530, Castanheda, the historian, noted that Aceh had obtained a significant number of firearms from the Portuguese. Consequently, the sultan was perceived to possess a more substantial artillery inventory compared to the fortress of Malacca. During the mid-sixteenth century, the Portuguese confronted a significant threat from Acehnese trade and ships in the Red Sea. The trading activities of Aceh in this region intensified, culminating in around 23 Acehnese ships reaching Jidda in June 1564, carrying 1800 quintals of pepper and 1300 quintals of other spices. This surge in trade resulted in a surplus of spices in Jidda, leading to a subsequent price reduction that displeased the Portuguese, who sought to control market prices. From 1554 to 1567, the Portuguese actively worked to disrupt Acehnese and Gujarati ships in the Red Sea, deploying two fleets to the Red Sea entrance in 1554 and 1555. In 1565, Venetian sources in Cairo reported the arrival of three Atjeh ships, with two more anticipated that year. Unfortunately, one of the vessels was intercepted and destroyed by the Portuguese in the Maldivian passage (Boxer, 1969). Additionally, Jidda received twenty vessels from various Indian ports during the same period. By 1566, Jidda received five Atjeh and three Baticalao ships, bringing around 24,000 cantara of pepper. Despite Portuguese attempts between 1554 and 1567 to intercept these vessels en route to the Red Sea, they were unsuccessful. The expensive annual expeditions were abandoned around 1569, resulting in fewer reports of Portuguese

ventures to the Red Sea. Diogo do Couto, documenting a 1585-86 expedition, noted its predicted failure through Goa gossip (Boxer, 1969).

Between 1500 to 1800, Portuguese had a significant portion of royal revenue stemmed from either empire-related activities or trade facilitated by the empire, constituting over 60 percent of the total, on average, during the sixteenth century. This was driven by resources such as the gold of Mina in West Africa and Asian spices (Bethencourt, 2021). In the sixteenth century, while regional powers like Johor and Java posed no obstacles to Portuguese economic activities, Aceh sought to replace Malacca and dominate regional trade, leading to tensions with neighboring powers (Chaudhuri, 1985). Despite these challenges, the Portuguese, through military strategy and the establishment of an Indian Ocean monopoly, maintained their presence in Malacca. The Portuguese perceived Aceh's spice trade with the Red Sea as a threat to their monopoly, underscoring the persistent risk to Malacca. In 1585, Portuguese sources reported that Aceh had a thriving trade in spices, gold, and jewels with the Red Sea. It was documented that the Acehnese annually exported a substantial quantity of spices—around 40,000 to 50,000 quintals—to Jidda, using ships from Gujarat (Chaudhuri, 1985). This active engagement in Red Sea commerce played a crucial role in generating a substantial annual income for the Sultan of Aceh, estimated to be between three to four million gold ducats.

### **Aceh-Ottoman Naval Cooperation: Countering Portuguese Trade Influence**

Aceh's strategic decisions regarding Muslim powers in India and the Ottoman Empire were significantly influenced by the Portuguese presence in the region. In response, Aceh transformed into a center for Islamic studies, attracting scholars from Malacca and across the archipelago. This shift, triggered by the Portuguese arrival in Malacca, played a crucial role in shaping Aceh's ascent and reshaping the geopolitical and trade dynamics in the area. During the age of commerce, Acehnese political leaders demonstrated a keen awareness of the transformative forces of their era. Instead of passively yielding to changes brought about by trade and military conflicts involving colonial and regional powers, they actively engaged and adapted. Contrary to the perspective of certain Turkish historians, Aceh not only effectively employed its military strength against the Portuguese early on but also fearlessly embraced commercial ventures. The spice trade in the Indian Ocean had adverse effects on



the Ottomans, who, after capturing Constantinople to control oriental trade, faced an increasing pepper shortage in their territories and supporting Italian markets following the Portuguese entry into Indian trade centers (Malekandathil, 2011).

The Acehese political elites either revived alliances or explored alternative approaches to establish direct connections with trading hubs in Western India and the Arabian Peninsula (Wijaya, 2022). The official envoy from Aceh first arrived in Istanbul in 1547, although this claim is supported by only a few written documents. The majority of Ottoman sources documenting this relationship can be found in the records of Mühimme issued by Divan-ı Hümayun (Ottoman Imperial Council), which documented the arrival of Acehese envoys in the years 1562, 1566, 1851, and 1873 (Haykal, 2022). Aceh emerged as a religious and political force to fill the void of Islamic leadership in Southeast Asia after the fall of the Malacca Sultanate until a later period. Aceh's interactions with international Islamic centers can be termed as the "universalization of the Islamic east periphery." The establishment of the Sultanate of Aceh led to a beneficial alliance between the center and the periphery, driven mainly by its religious and political stance against Western powers (Özay, 2011). Considering the intricately layered involvement of the Acehese state in Indian Ocean politics, it can be confidently affirmed that the prevailing spirit of the era found expression in Acehese policies.

Subsequently, Aceh's direct connections with the Red Sea facilitated its leaders in approaching the Ottoman government for military support. During this period, Turkish arsenals were renowned for their high-quality gun foundries and skilled artillerymen. In a document from 1585 authored by Jorge de Lemos, a former secretary to the viceroy of Goa, it was highlighted that the Ottomans supplied Aceh with bronze guns suitable for siege warfare (Hamilton, 2013). The flow of commodities through the Ottoman territories diminished after the discovery of the sea route to India, with the spice trade diverting to Lisbon via the Cape route. In 1601, Pedro Alvarez Cabral obtained a shipment of 104,520 kilograms of pepper, 20,574 kilograms of ginger, and 11,430 kilograms of cinnamon for transshipment to Lisbon, increasing to 164,120 kilograms of pepper and 29,803 kilograms of ginger in 1606. Lisbon served as a distribution point for these commodities in Europe (Malekandathil, 2010).

The account of Acehnese ships arriving in Turkey isn't distinctly outlined in Aceh's own narrative of "Lada Sicupak." This pertains to sending Acehnese emissaries to Turkey to enhance bilateral relations. The cargo sent to Turkey, predominantly pepper, occupied all the ships. The tale describes that due to the lengthy voyage and numerous challenges at sea, the pepper supply was exhausted midway. Ultimately, only a fraction of the pepper could be offered as a gift to the Ottoman Sultan (Said, 1985). More prominently than ever, the Ottoman Empire emerged as the significant ally for various anti-Portuguese factions. These factions increasingly implored the sultan to intervene on their behalf. The Ottoman ruler openly suggested a collaborative effort to seize the port city of Chaul from the Portuguese, assuring that in Chaul, the Ottomans could access abundant timber and receive ample local support to construct a fleet capable of overcoming Portuguese control in India (Casale, 2004). Similarly, the subsequent year saw another diplomatic mission, this time from Ali Alauddin Riayat Shah, the Sultan of Aceh. Alauddin Riayat Shah presented his own request for Ottoman ships, artillery, and military experts to aid in an assault against the Portuguese in Malacca.

The initiative taken by the Acehnese political elite to send envoys and letters to the Ottoman court can be interpreted as a strategic alignment with the Sunni politico-religious establishment. An examination of two pivotal historical periods becomes particularly significant in understanding this alignment. The first instance is during the establishment of the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam in the 1510s, and the second is when the Ottomans developed closer ties with regions bordering the Indian Ocean, marked by their territorial influence in Arabia (Özay, 2022). Furthermore, Sultan Aceh sought the intervention of the Ottoman Empire to furnish skilled artisans specializing in cannon production. In the responsive missive, the Ottoman Sultan directed the Governors of Yemen, Aden, and Mecca to lend support to the Turkish forces en route to Aceh. Notably, the missive sanctioned the plea articulated by Aceh's emissary, Husin. Consequently, 15 galleys and two barges, accompanied by a proficient cannon maker and seven craftsmen, were dispatched from Cairo. The expedition entailed a complement of troops and an assortment of cannons. Admiral Kurtoglu Hizir was entrusted with the leadership of the expedition, specifically charged with the dual objectives of combating Aceh's adversaries, safeguarding the tenets of Islam, and securing Portuguese fortifications. Despite the enormity of the crisis in the

Ottoman Empire, the Ottomans did not abstain from deploying forces towards Sumatra. By the midpoint of 1568, Portuguese accounts documented the presence of approximately "500 Turks, along with numerous sizable bombardars, ample ammunition, a significant number of engineers, and multiple artillery experts" in Aceh (Casale, 2004).



Figure 1 : Letter from Aceh Sultanate Alauddin Al-Kahar to request help against Portuguese to Ottoman Empire (1566)

Resource : Ottoman-Southeast Asian relations (sources from the Ottoman archives)

The presence of Turkish troops unexpectedly benefited Aceh due to the unwieldy nature of Sulaiman Pasha's army, numbering 20,000, many of whom dispersed under the influence of the people of India during their unsuccessful siege of Diu in September 1538. In this scenario, the events recounted by Pinto would have to be condensed into a few months preceding his arrival in Malacca. Regardless of the timeline, it is also conceivable that, from Alauddin Riayat Shah's perspective, the Turkish connection could have legitimized his claim to the throne when seizing it from his elder brother (Reid, 1969).

### Malacca and Aceh: Navigating Trade Policies Amid Portuguese Influence

The Portuguese set out in search of spices with the objective of reaching Sumatra, the origin of these prized goods. Departing from India, they sailed eastward towards the Far East. Prior to navigating through the Straits of Malacca, the Portuguese made visits to Sumatran

ports like Pasai and Pidie in the year 1509. Diplomatic efforts resulted in treaties of peace and friendship with the kings of Pasai and Pidie. However, their initial interactions with the Malaccans turned hostile, as Malaccan merchants collaborated with officials to eject the Portuguese. Despite some Portuguese crews being imprisoned, the captain managed to escape back to India. In retaliation, Afonso de Albuquerque, the Governor of India, launched a war against Malacca in 1511. Malacca served as the Portuguese stronghold, rendering it a susceptible target for Aceh's attacks, thereby facilitating assaults on Batak and Siak. Aru and the Portuguese then formed a coalition to work together in Malacca. Representatives from the Sultanate of Aru came to Malacca with the intention of seeking military assistance from the Portuguese to confront the threat of Aceh forces planning to attack Aru. In 1539 Portuguese departed from Malacca aboard a lanchara ship carrying various items, including 15 quintals of gunpowder, hundreds of grenades, 150 cannonballs, 12 arquebus rifles, and various types of cloth and clothing for Aru (Soedowo, 2021). However, the Acehnese struggled to maintain their control over Aru. In 1540, the defeated queen of Aru garnered support from the king of Johor, leading to the successful expulsion of the Acehnese from the region. In dealing with the harshness of the Portuguese, Vlekke writes:

*The fire of the Crusades was strong enough in Albuquerque to make him capture and loot all Moslem vessels he could find between Goa and Malacca. Thus he fought the Moors while he served the Portuguese commercial interest. But it is one of the first examples of those terrible blunders which the Europeans often made when dealing with nations of which they had insufficient knowledge (Vlekke, 1959).*

Portuguese capture of Malacca in 1511, their control over the straits remained elusive. Aceh underwent a transformation into a sultanate, fostering the inclusion of Muslim merchant communities. This growth posed a threat to the Portuguese in Malacca, prompting their attempts to assert influence over Pasai. Between 1512 and 1519, Portuguese captains in Malacca sent six embassies to Aceh, engaging not only in trade but also establishing a peace treaty. Throughout the 16th century, Aceh evolved into an assertive sultanate, altering its trade route by navigating southward along the west coast of Sumatra instead of passing through the Straits of Malacca. Over a span of 120 years, Aceh transformed into a formidable kingdom with significant influence in both political and economic realms. Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah al-Kahar (1537-1571) is acknowledged as a key figure instrumental in the

growth of Aceh as a dominant political and economic force in the western part of Indonesia (Sudarman, 2019).

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the historical interactions between Portugal, Aceh, and the Ottoman Empire during the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries underscore the complex dynamics of trade, diplomacy, and military strategy in shaping the maritime landscape of Southeast Asia. Portugal's maritime endeavors, driven by economic interests and strategic ambitions, intersected with the emergence of powerful sultanates like Aceh, which actively adapted to the changing dynamics of global commerce. The quest for dominance in Southeast Asia, especially in the Sultanate of Malacca, emphasized the multifaceted goals of Portuguese exploration, from economic interests in the spice trade to the spread of Christianity. The Aceh-Ottoman alliance not only exemplified the convergence of interests between regional powers but also demonstrated the significant impact of external alliances on local politics and military strategies. As such, this historical period serves as a rich field of study for understanding the interplay between statecraft, economic competition, and cultural exchanges in the early modern era.

Moving forward, there is ample room for future research to delve into various facets of this historical narrative. Firstly, scholars may explore the socio-economic ramifications of interactions among the Portuguese, Ottoman, and Acehnese on local communities. This includes examining how these interactions influenced trade networks, livelihoods, and cultural exchanges. Additionally, there is a need for deeper investigation into the diplomatic maneuvers undertaken by Aceh and the Ottoman Empire, alongside an exploration of the underlying motivations driving their alliance. Such inquiries can offer valuable insights into the broader geopolitical landscape of the period. Furthermore, comparative studies could analyze analogous maritime alliances and conflicts across different regions during the same epoch, providing comparative perspectives on the strategies and outcomes of early modern global engagements. Through these research endeavors, scholars can enhance our comprehension of the intertwined histories of Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, illuminating the enduring impacts of these historical encounters.

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