



Pahang in the Maritime Spice Route: Insights from Numismatics, Shipwrecks, and Cartography

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Pahang and the Sea

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Maritime Spice Route

- **Spice** Route vs Silk Road: Decolonisation efforts
- Spice as the main commodity; core driver of trade in Southeast Asia
- It was also regarded as a luxury commodities at the time



THE MOST EXPENSIVE SPICES OF THE ROUTE

PEPPER

Piper Nigrum

Original from Malabar, it has been used for more than 3000 years. It was considered for long time the most important.

CINNAMON

Cinnamomum zeylanicum Ness

It originates from Ceylon (current Sri Lanka). It was utilized to make oils and unguents. It is made from the dried crust of the tree.

CLOVES

Syzygium aromaticum

The trading of this spice was started by China, but the Arabs introduced it to Europe.

GINGER

Zingiber officinale

In ancient times it was used in China and in India. During the middle age it came to Europe and reached the same value of pepper.

SAFFRON

Crocus sativus L.

It is produced from the stigma of the iris flowers. Very much used by Muslim country such as Kashmir, Persia and Asia Minor.

NUTMEG

Myristica fragrans

It originates from the Moluccas Islands. The Muslims and the Byzantines used it as deodorant and in Europe it added to beer.

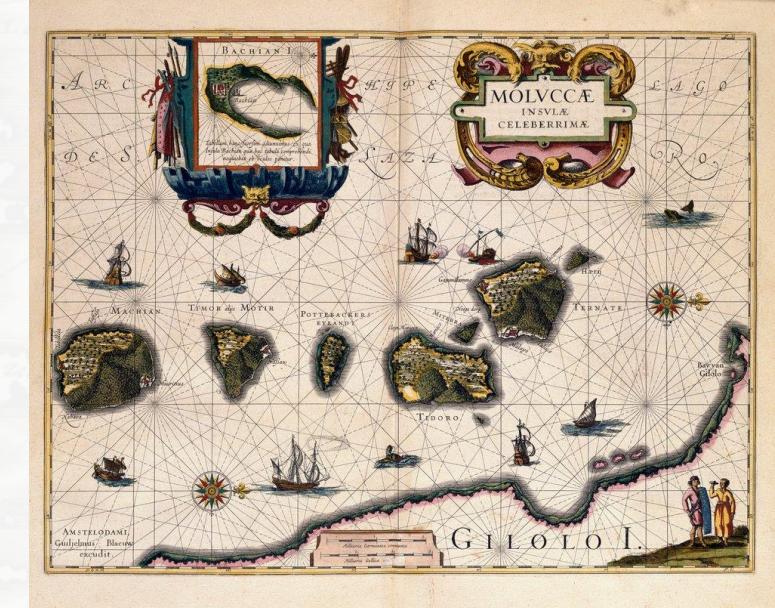
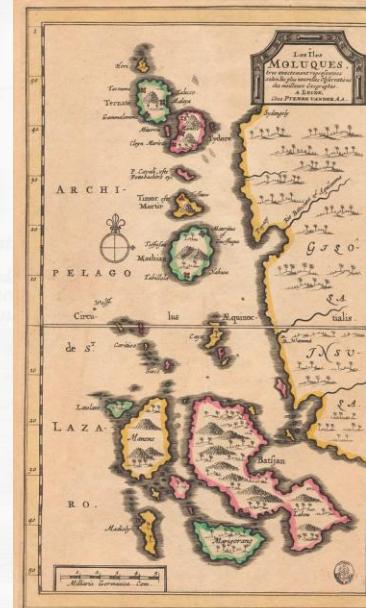
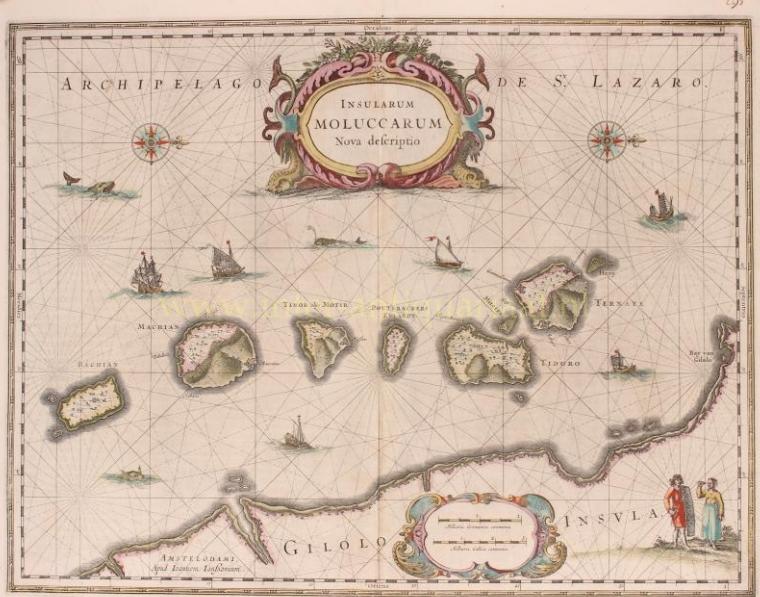
CAMPHOR

Dryobalanops aromatica

It has anti-inflammatory properties and is often an ingredient in vapour rubs, liniments, and balms. Many people use it to relieve irritation, itching, and pain.

Maritime Spice Route

“The reason why Arab geographers attempted to write on South-East Asia ... This part of the world was the source of a large quantity of **spices** and **drugs** used in Arabic medicine, and therefore the Arabic reading public had a certain interest in it. This is one of the reasons why the Arab geographers give such prominence to notices on **drugs** and **spices** and go to such lengths to explain countries of origin and methods of extracting and mining ... for **spices** and **drugs** were their main preoccupation.” G.R. Tibbets, 1979



Maritime Spice Route

“It is to Malacca that the main Arab routes go, and beyond Malacca the sailing directions seem only half-hearted. In fact the only real sailing-directions beyond are for China and Java and these are mere ghosts of the directions given for other parts of the Ocean.”

G.R. Tibbets, 1979

ORIENTAL TRANSLATION FUND
NEW SERIES VOLUME XLIV

A STUDY
OF THE ARABIC TEXTS
CONTAINING MATERIAL
ON SOUTH-EAST ASIA



BY
G. R. TIBBETS

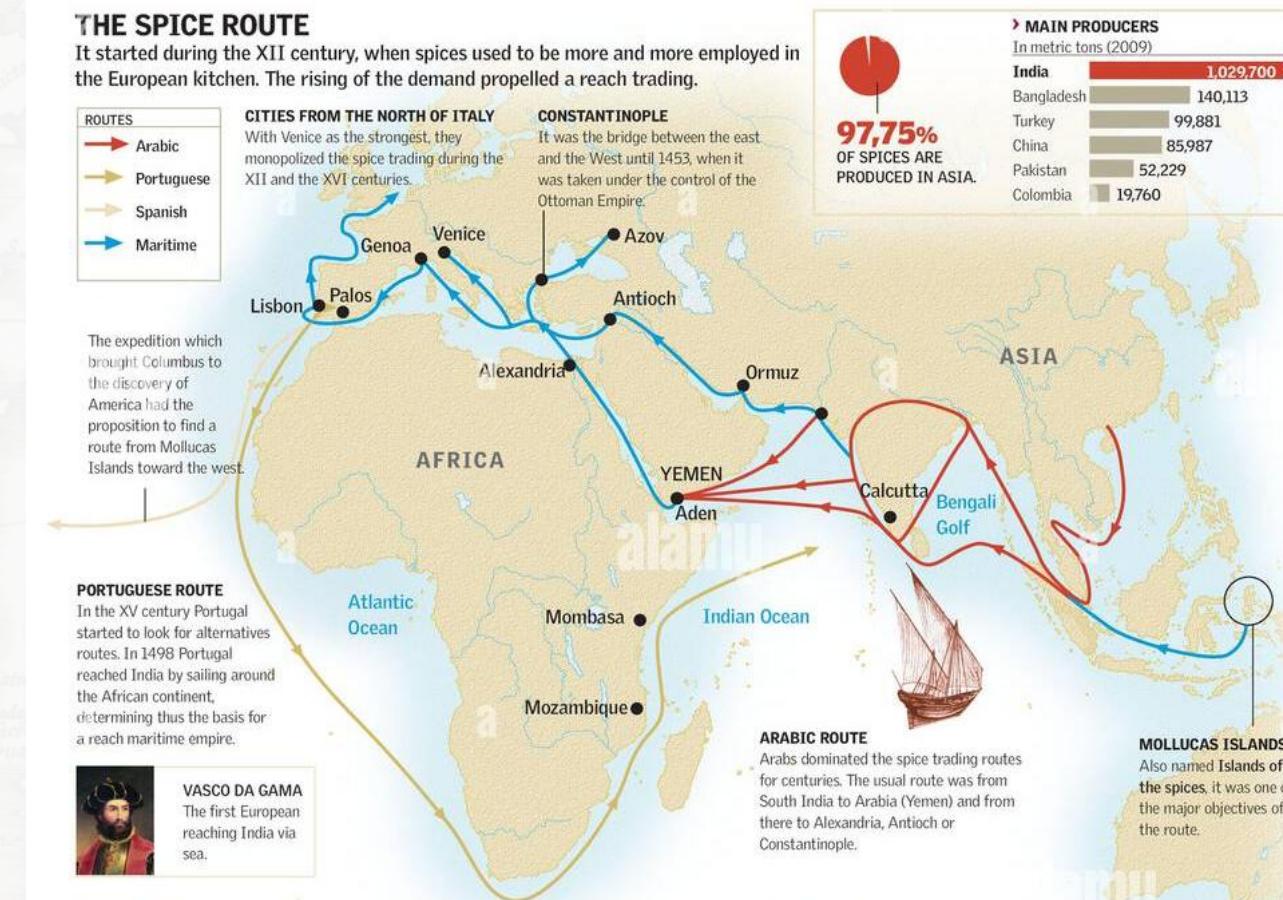
With 7 maps



PUBLISHED FOR THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY BY
E. J. BRILL / LEIDEN & LONDON
1979

Maritime Spice Route

- Southeast Asia is not merely a stopover, but also a destination
- Sense of belonging for locals
- Negeri Rempah Foundation is raising Spice Route to UNESCO



Maritime Spice Route

- Centering the discourse on the stories of **spices**
- Pursuit of science in the global world



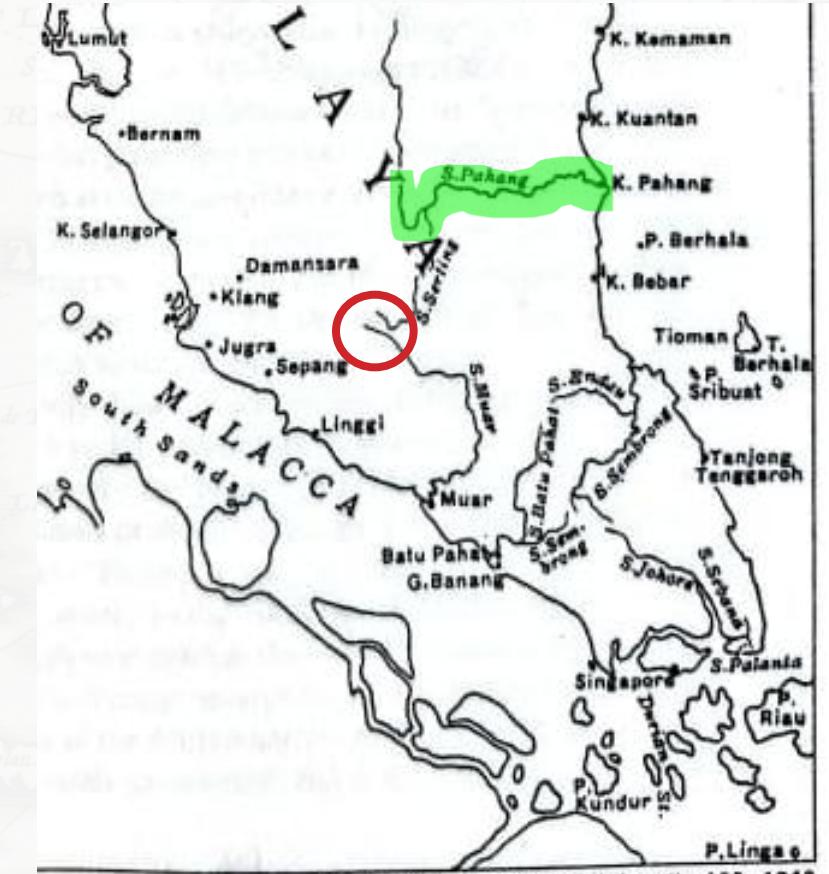
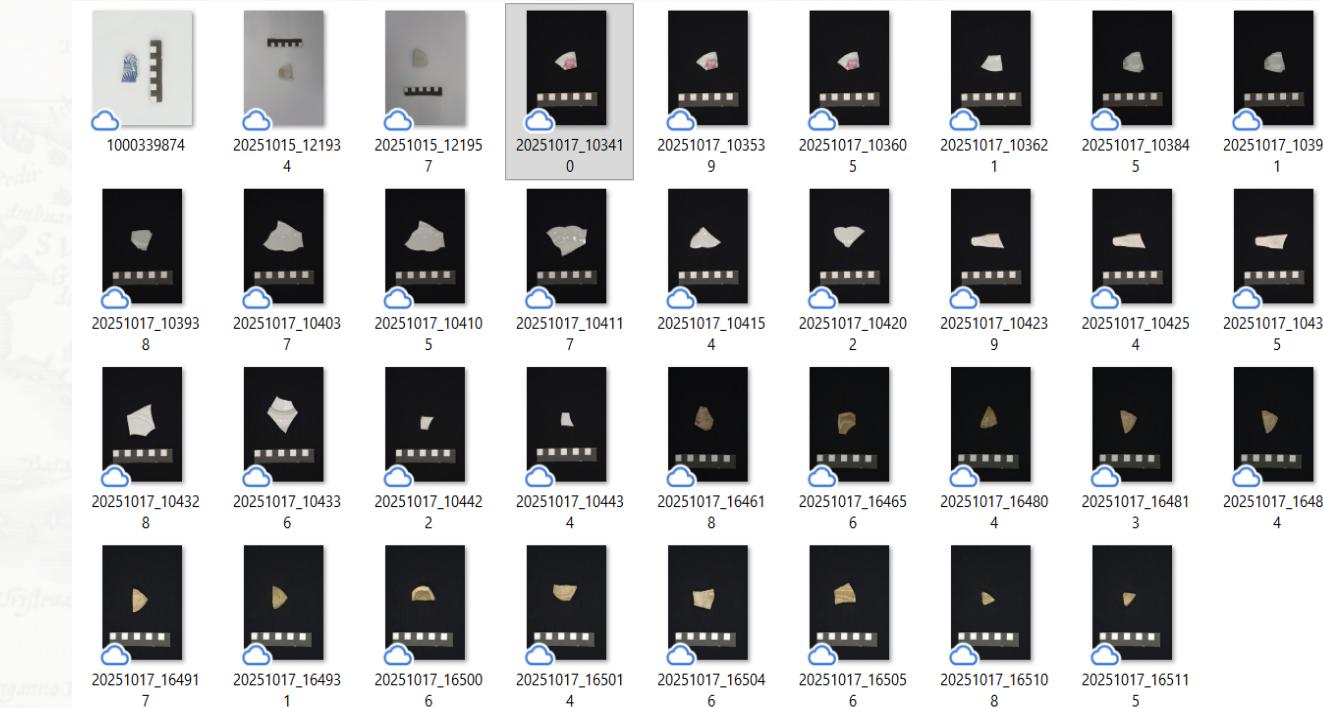
Numismatics

- Hundreds of thousands of Chinese copper coins were found in the Pahang River
- Numerous sultanate coins were also found, along with many ceramic sherds

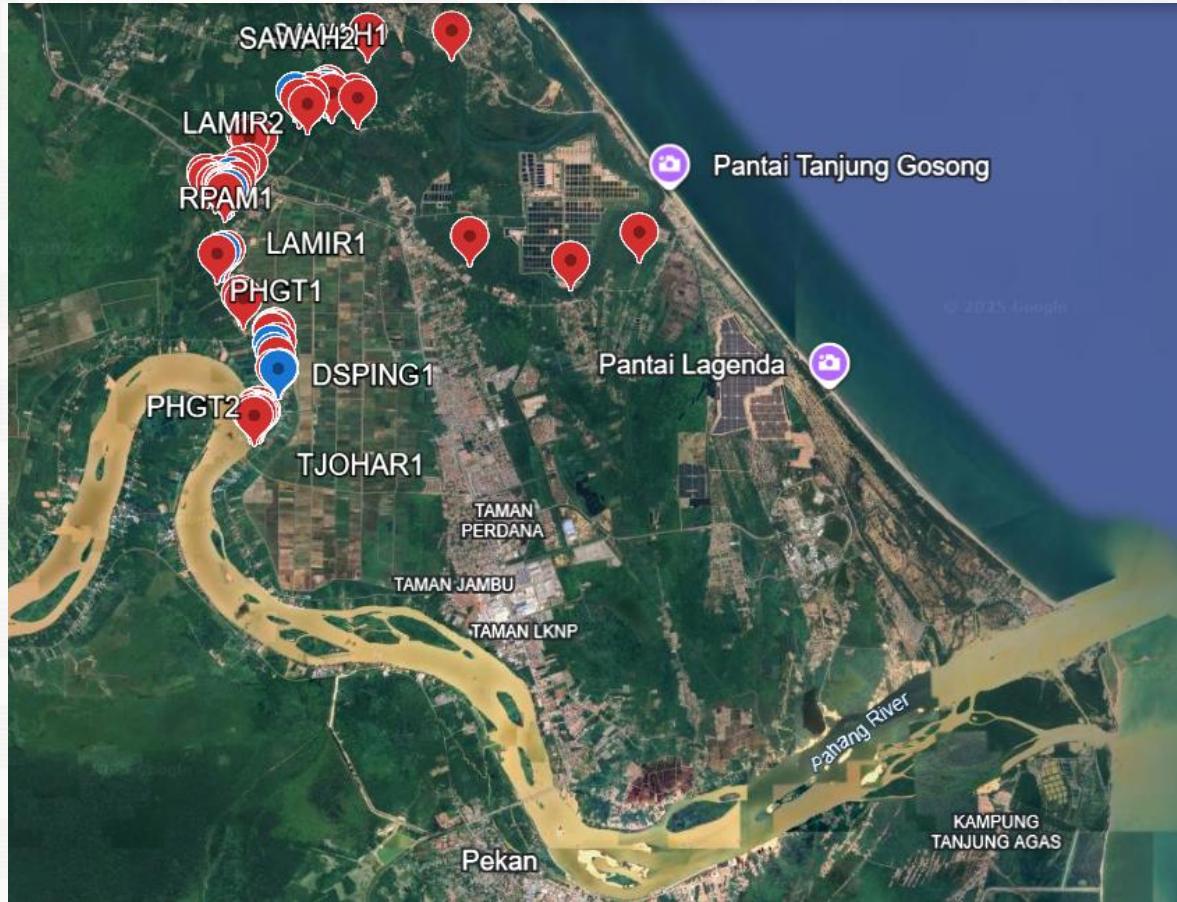


Numismatic and Ceramic Finds

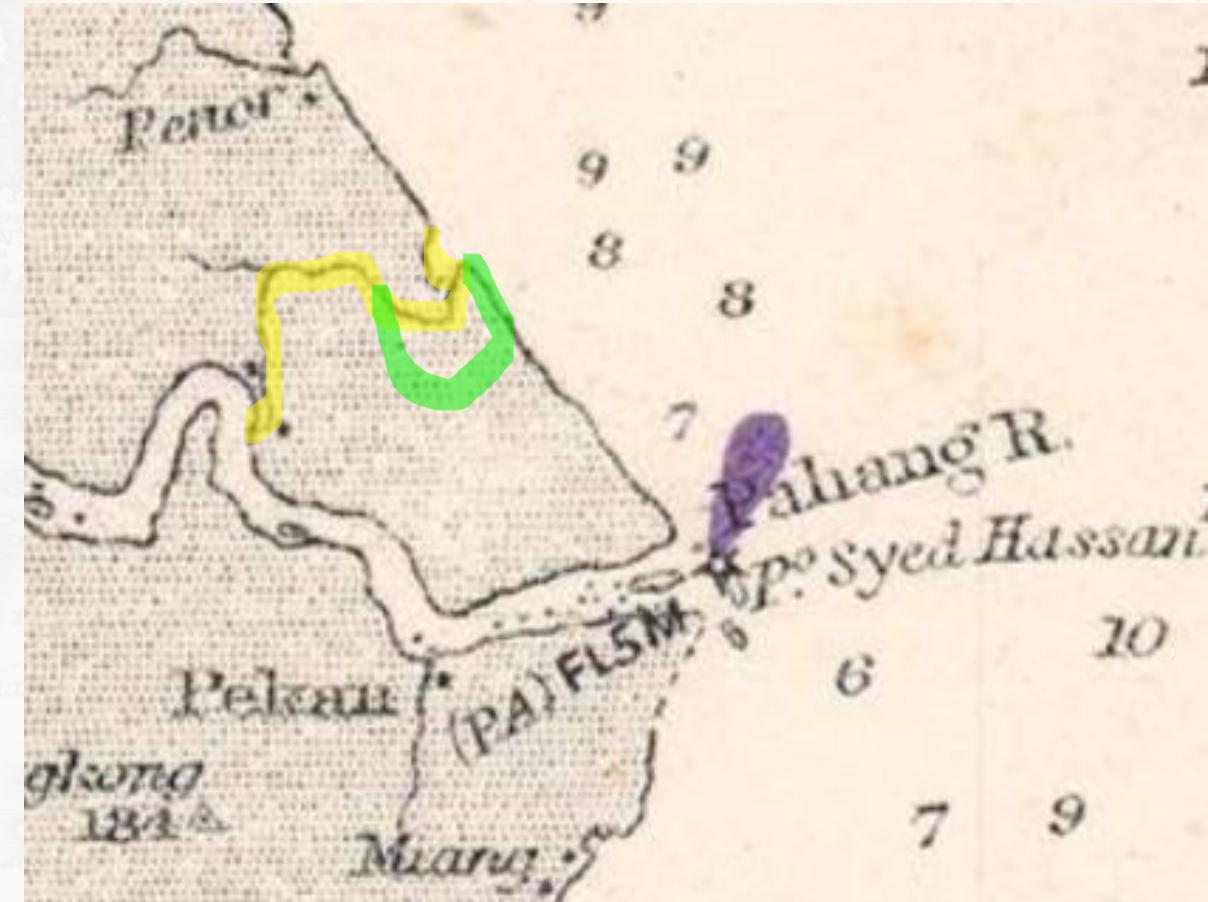
- 170 ceramic fragments were discovered along the banks of the Sungai Pahang Tua by traversing the river's edge



Numismatic and Ceramic Finds



Survey sites in Sungai Pahang Tua, 2025



Admiralty Nautical Chart, 1898



A. van Aelst. Majapahit picis; The currency of a 'moneyless' society 1300-1700.



Numismatics and Metrology

- Metrological system shared throughout South China Sea and Indian Ocean.
E.g: *Tael* (SEA) = *liang* (China) = *Suvarna* (India) = 38.7g
- The word "tael" originates from the Malay word *tahil*, meaning "weight". It entered the English language through the Portuguese word *tael*, which was derived from the Malay term.
- *Tael (tahil)*, *catty (katı)*, *picul (pikul)*, *mace (mas)*, *candareen (kenderi)*, etc.



Traditional Metrology/ Weightage System

- 1 Coupan = 0.6 g of gold
- 1 Mace = 2.4 gram of gold
- 1 Catty = 600 g
- 1 Picul = 60 kg
- 1 Candareen = 0.38g
- 1 Tael = 38.7 g
- 1 Mayam = 3.38 g
- 1 Busak = 0.338 g
- 5 saga = 1 kupang
- 20 saga = 4 kupang
- 4 kupang = 1 mas
- 4 mas = 1 paha
- 4 paha = 1 tahil
- 16 tahil = 1 kati



Traditional Metrology/ Weightage System

Mace (mas) = 2.4g



Coupan (kupang) = 0.6g



Coins of Sultans of Pahang (c. 1475 - 1615 CE)



5 Pahang Gold Coins at the British Museum

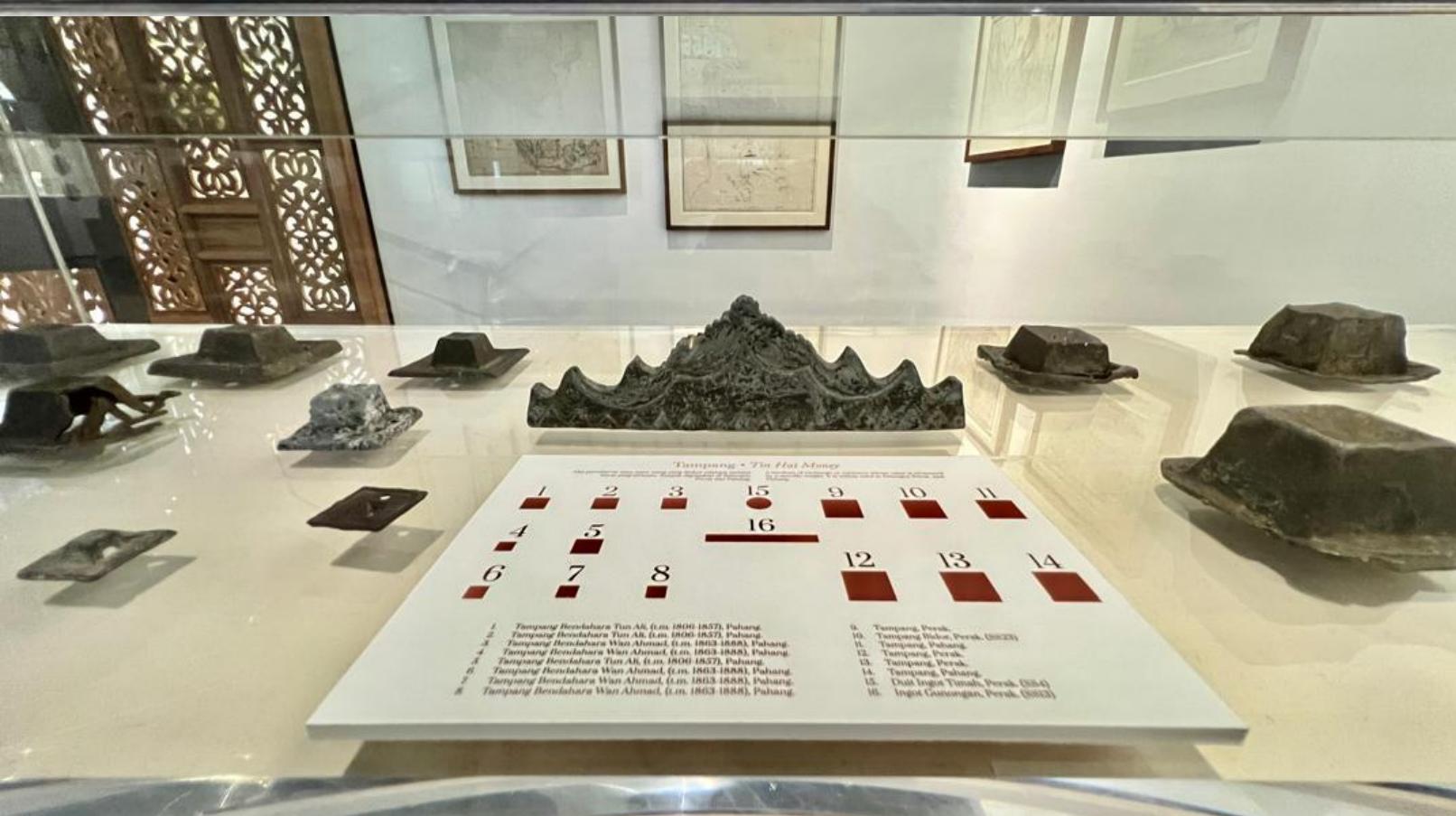


- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

1 & 2: Sultan Muzaffar (c. 1540 CE)

3, 4, 5: Sultan Abdul Ghaffar (c. 1614 CE)





1 tampang = 1 catty 8 tael
or
1 catty 4 tael

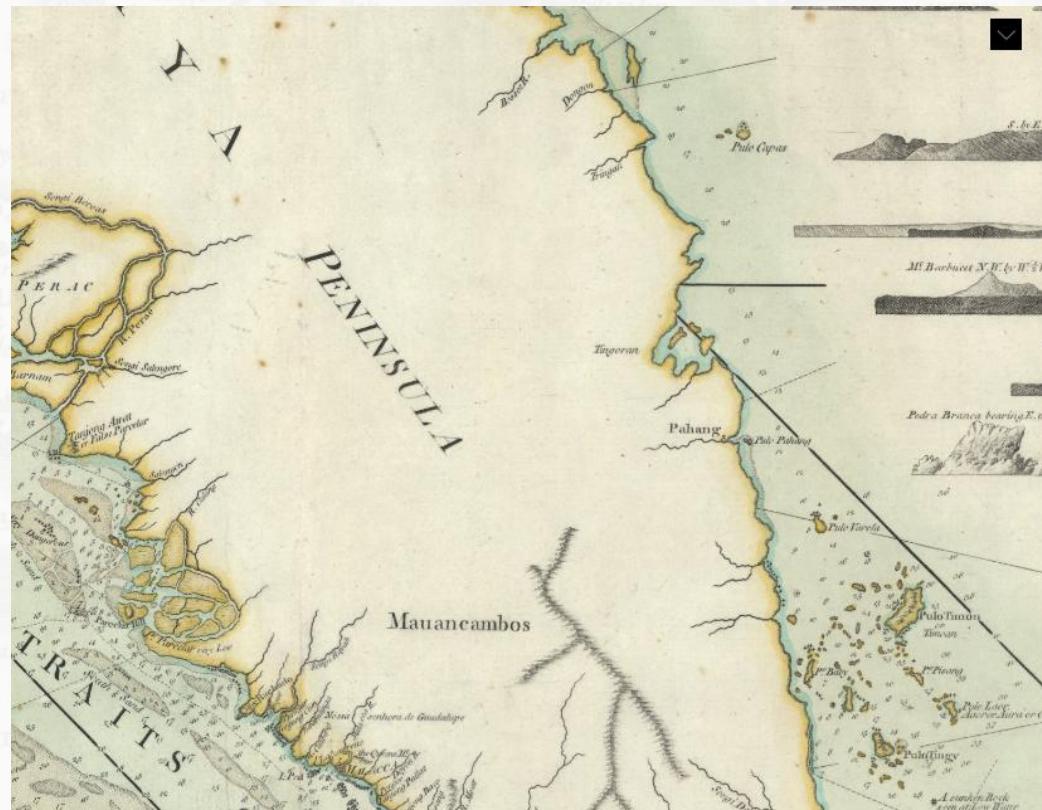
Shipwrecks

- Royal Nanhai
- Xuande
- Nanyang
- Tioman
- Bidong

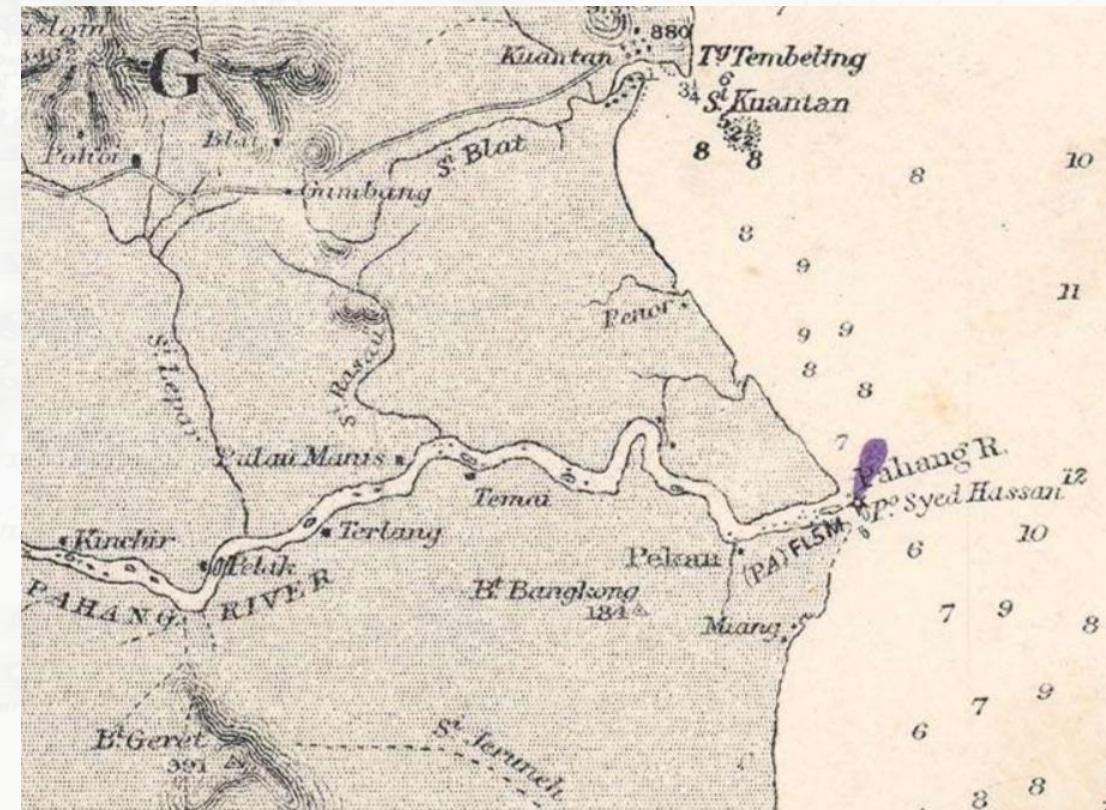


Shipwrecks

- Nautical Charts showing the Maritime Route close to Pahang waters
- Indicator from the Institute of Oceanography and Maritime Studies (INOCEM)



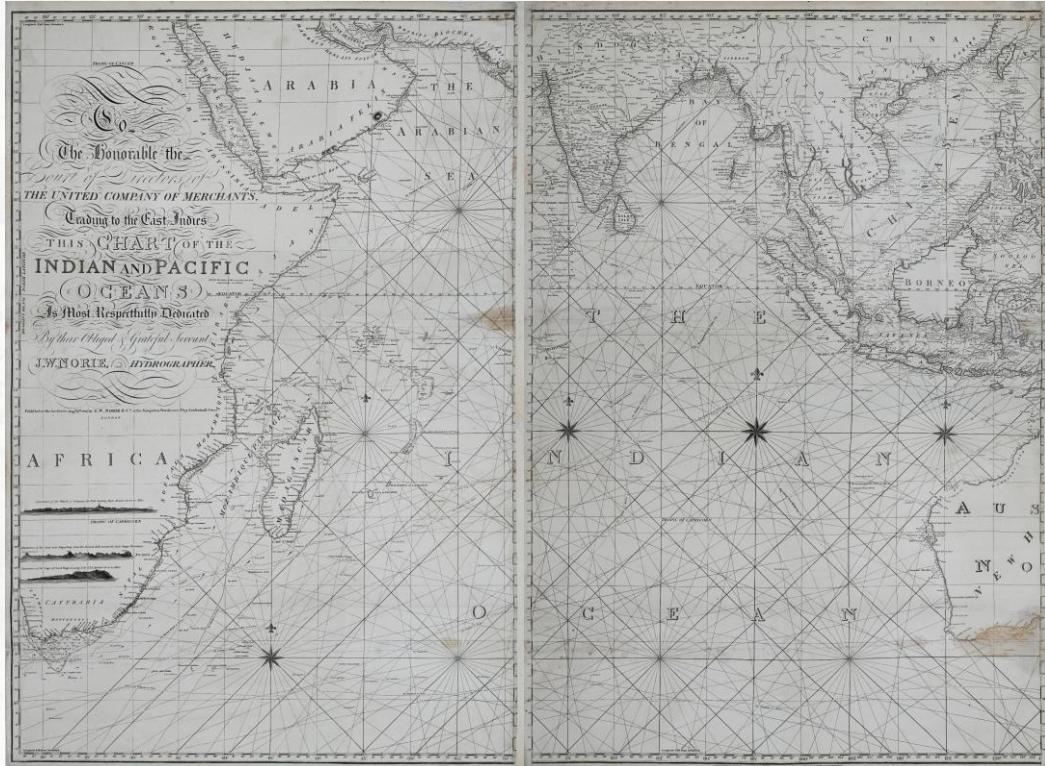
Thomas Jefferys / Laurie & Whittle, 1794



Admiralty Nautical Chart, 1898

Cartography (Pahang)

- Consistent mention of Pahang in Early European maps; Dutch, French, and English influence maps; later Nautical charts; and also local regional maps.



JW Norrie, 18th century (Muzium Pahang collection)



Pierre Mortier, 1705 (Muzium Pahang collection)

Early European Maps (showing Penarikan Route)



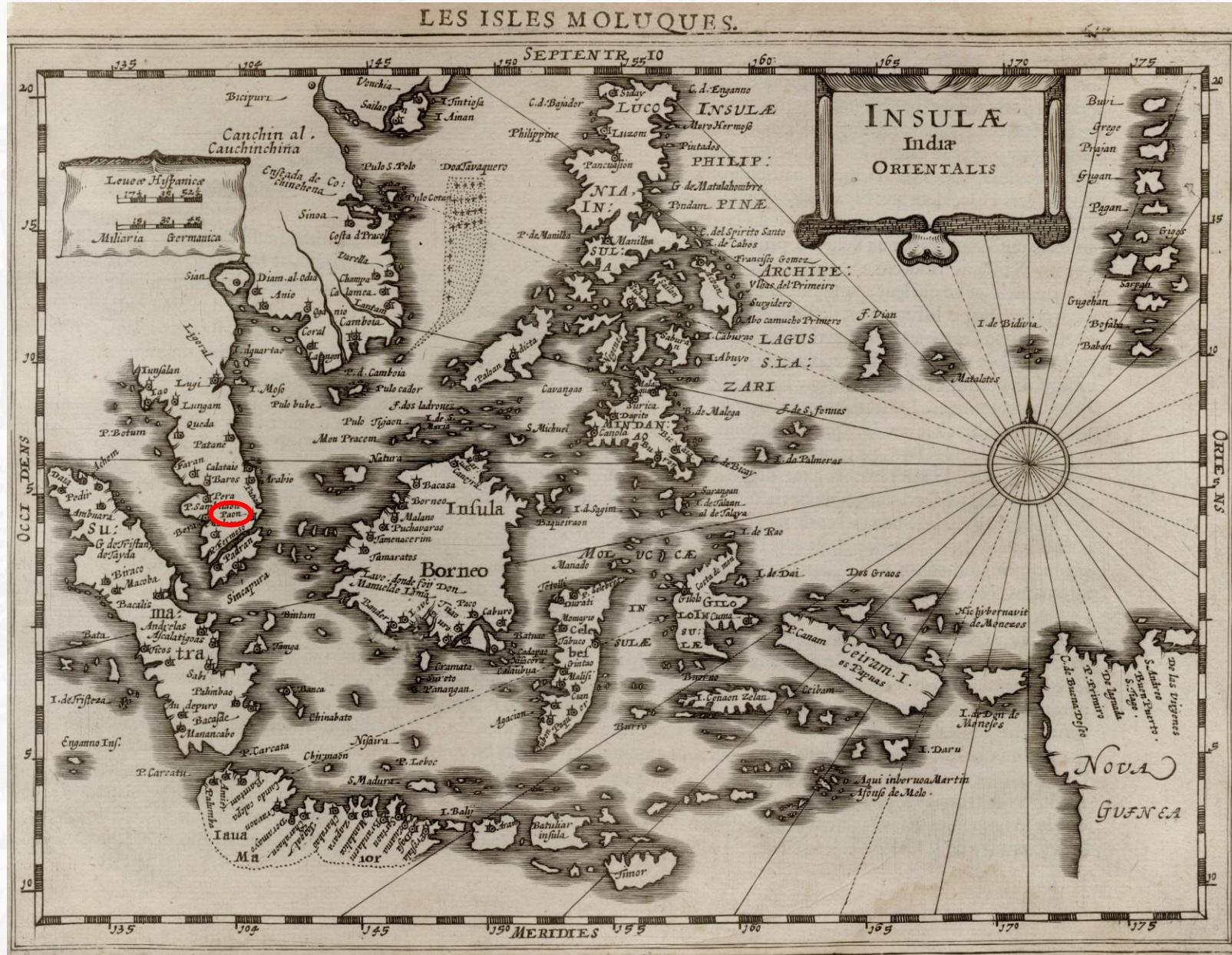
Jodocus Hondius, 1611



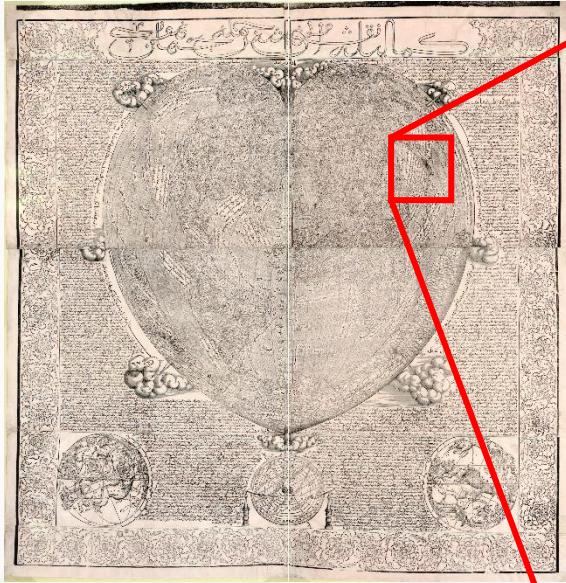
Theodor De Bry, 1596



Jan Huygen van Linschoten, 1596



Pieter van den Keere, 1700



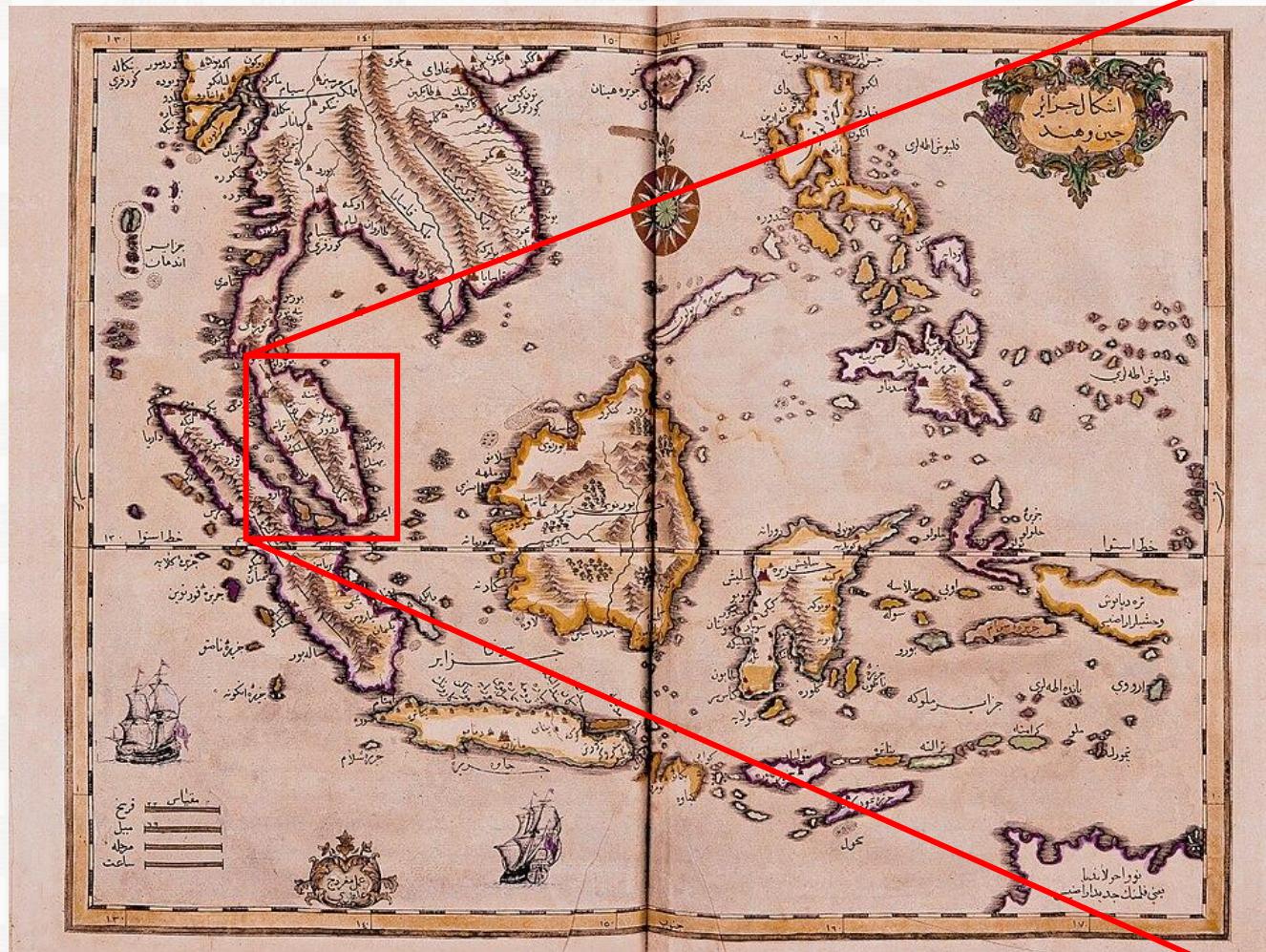
Kemāl ile Naks Olinmis
Cümle-I Cihān Nemunesi,
Hacı Ahmet Map, 1560
(Muzium Pahang collection)



پام

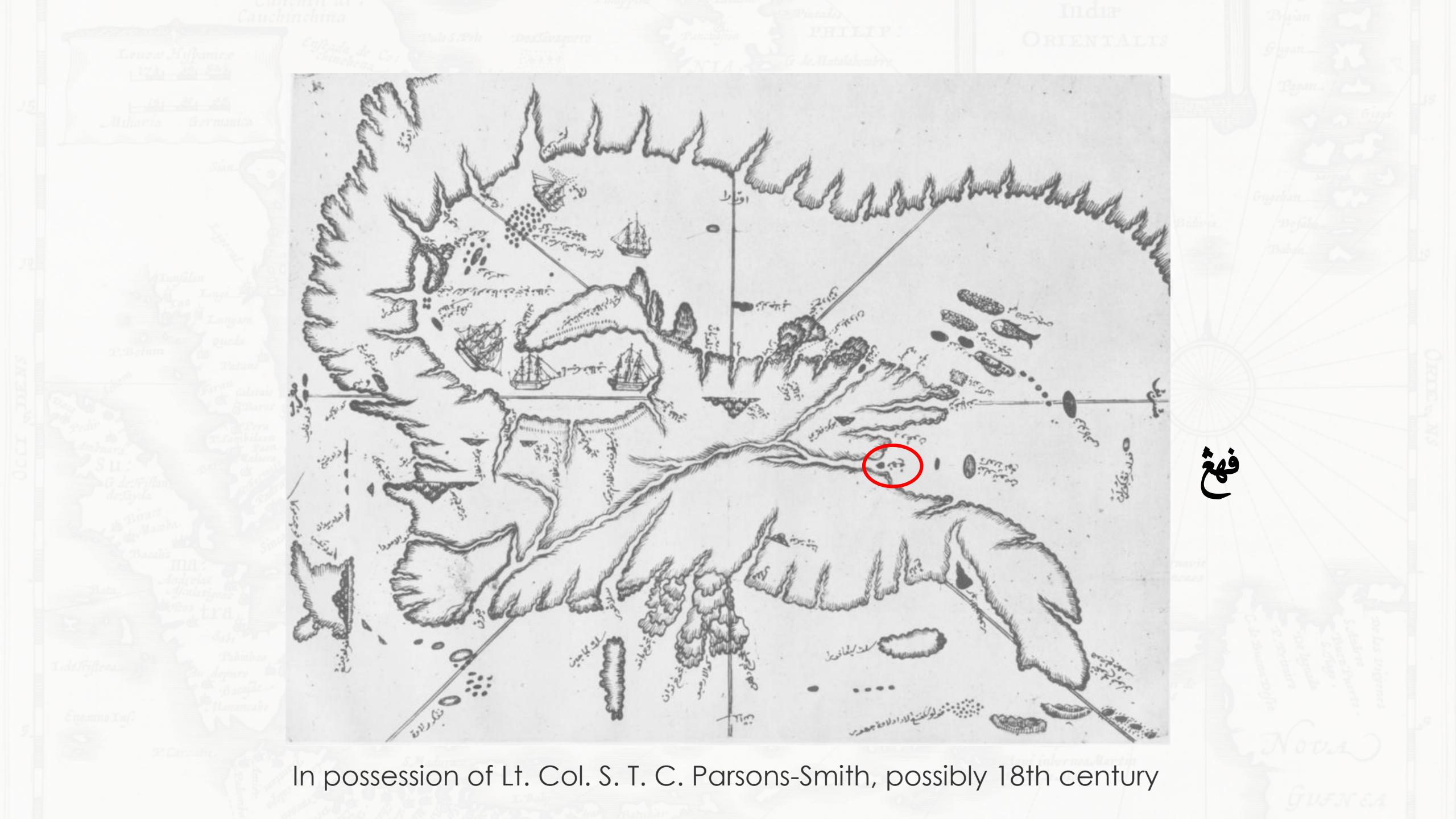
MUZIUM
PAHANG





Ibrahim Muteferrika Map, 1728

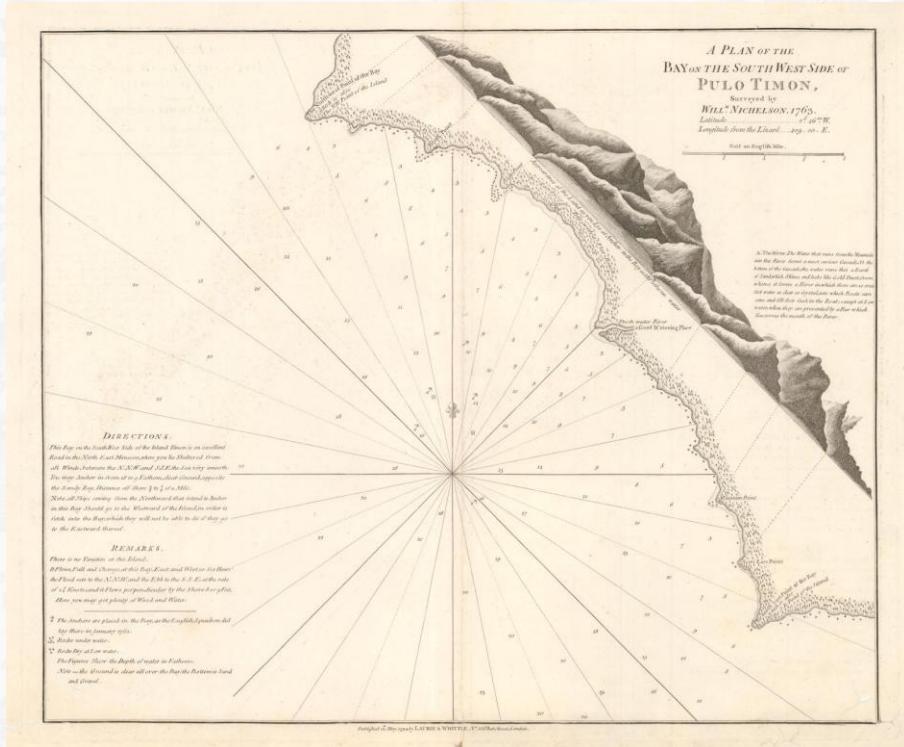
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In possession of Lt. Col. S. T. C. Parsons-Smith, possibly 18th century

Cartography (Tioman)

- Early mention of Tioman, including in Arabian maps, and consistently throughout European maps, indicating Tioman as an important strategic location for stops.



Laurie & Whittle, 1794



Boeginese zeekaart van de Indische Archipel (Bugis map on Vellum in Lontaraq), c. 1820

MUZIUM
PAHANG



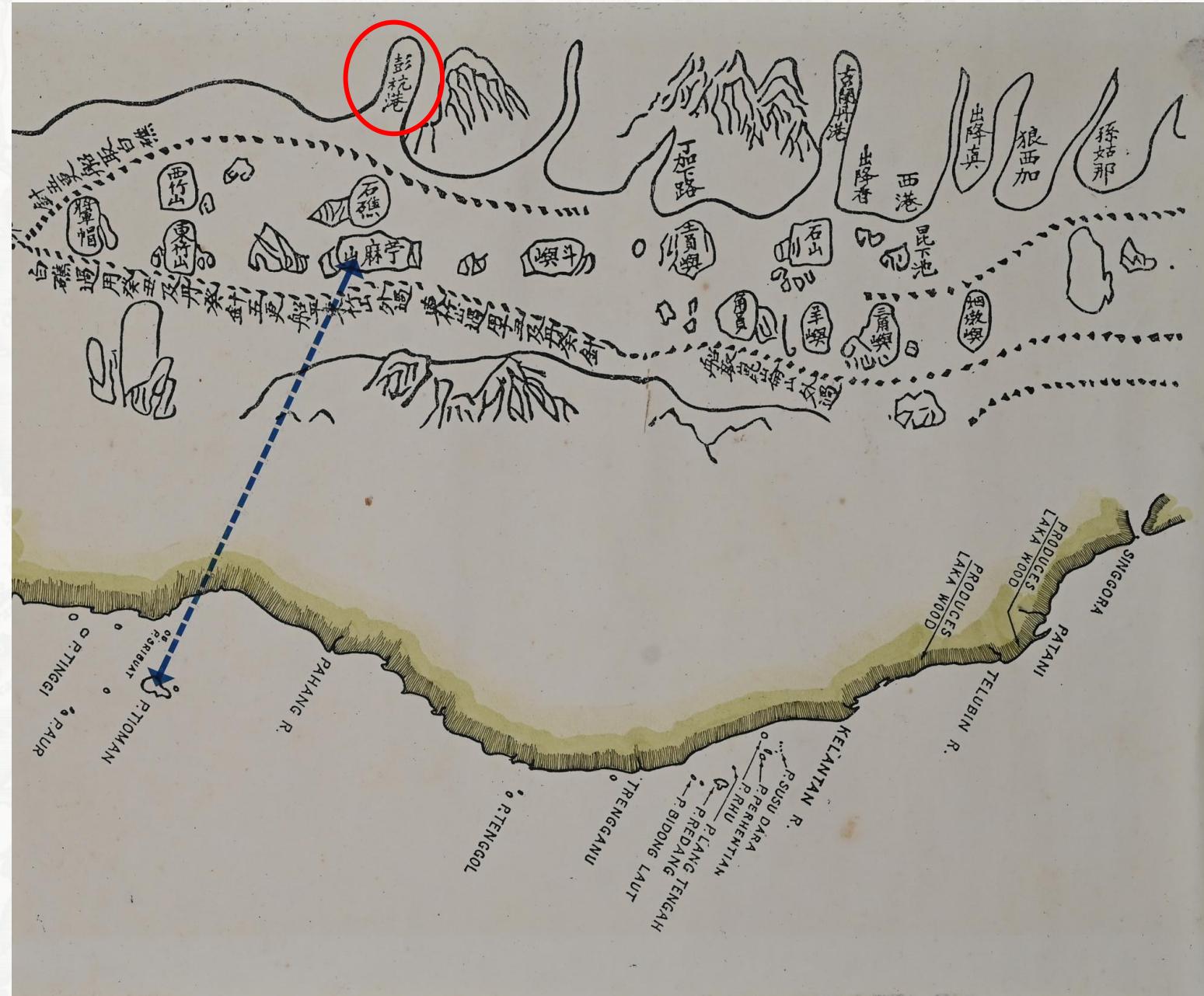
AAA
Ta ya ma

彭杭港

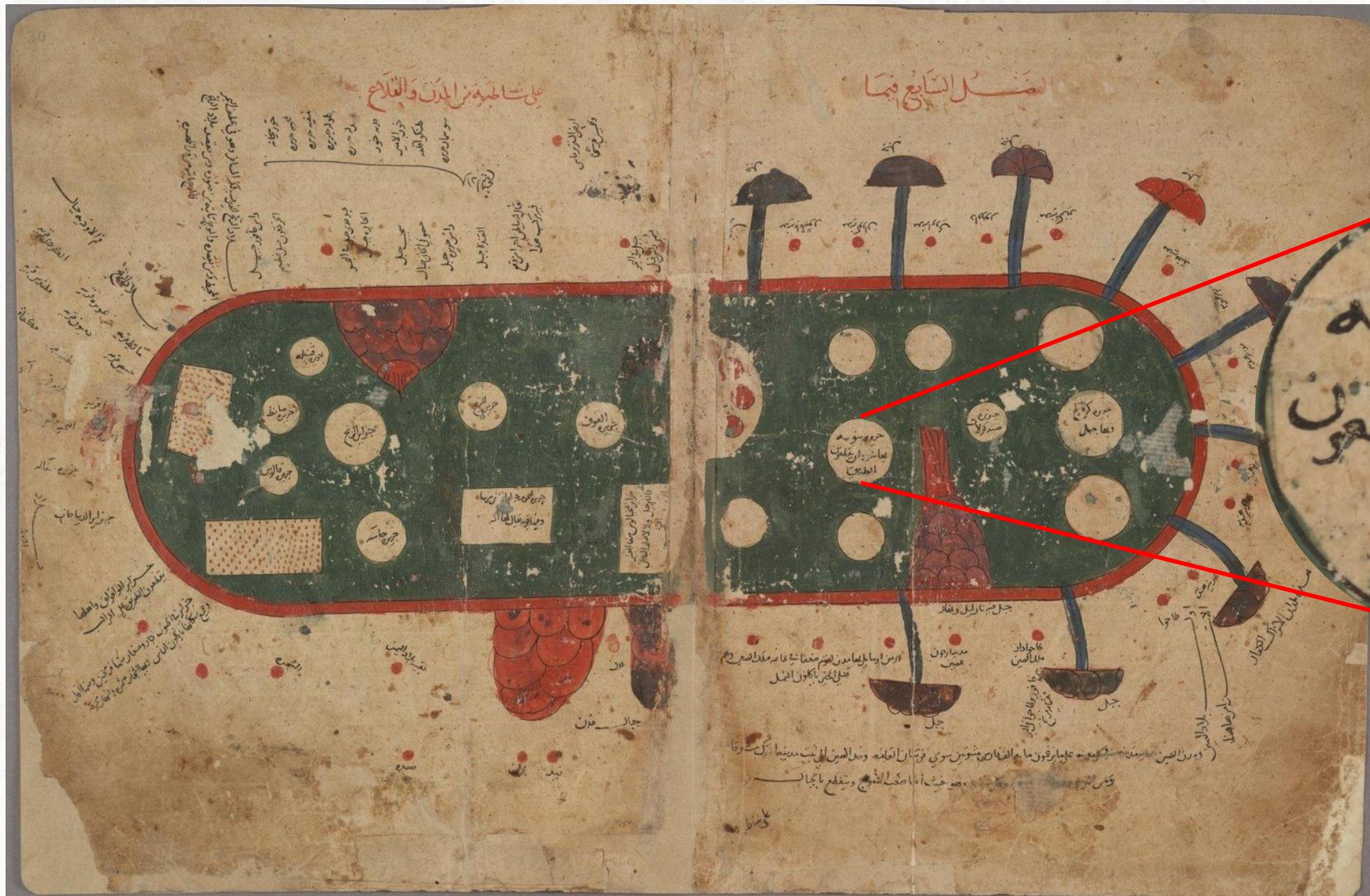
Péng Háng Gǎng

山麻苧

Zhumashan



Mao Kun Map, 1621 (Muzium Pahang collection)

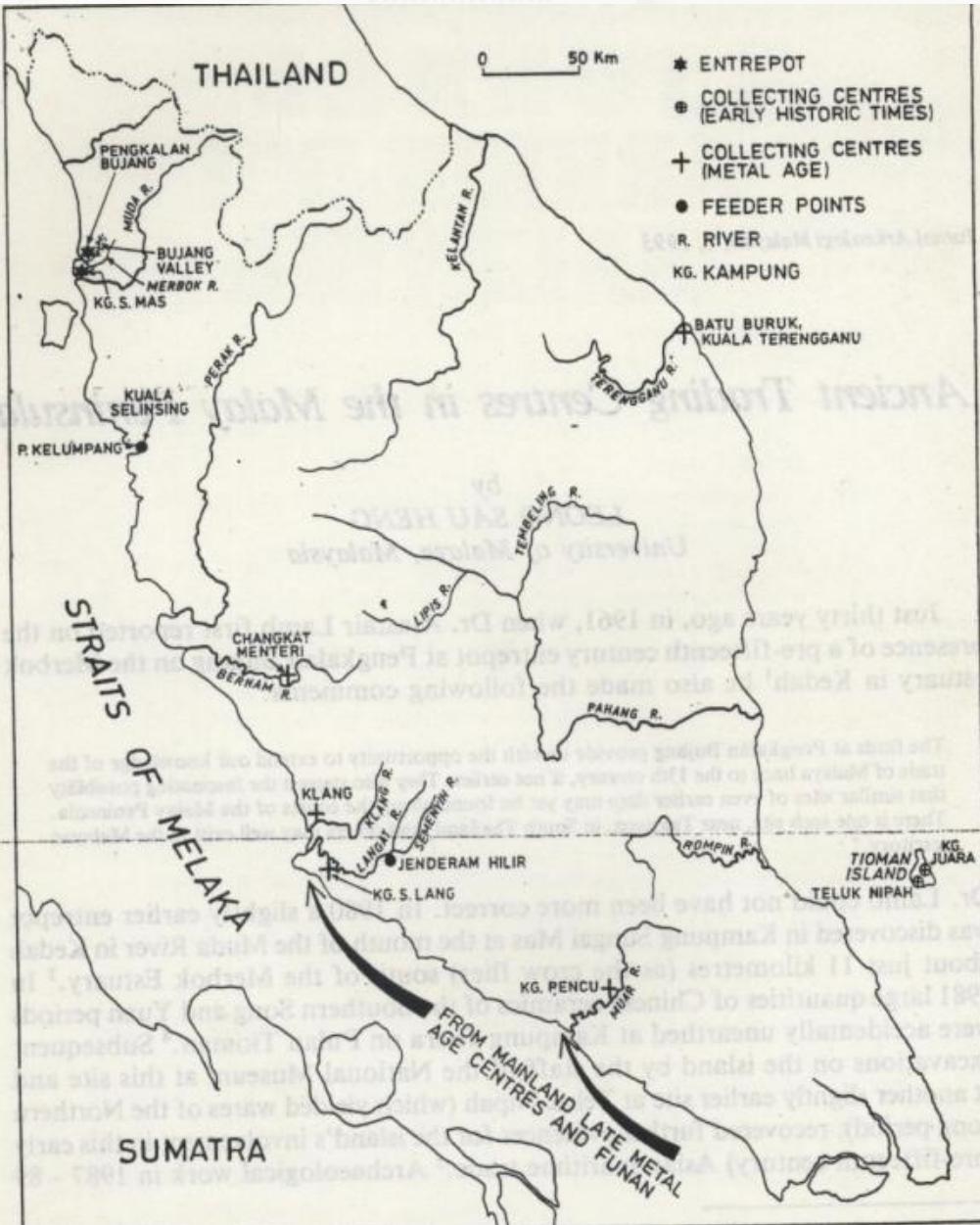


بنو مه / ټیو مه

Book of Curiosities, 12th century

Leong Sau Heng Classification (1990)

- Entrepots:
Pengkalan Bujang
- Collection centres:
Tioman
Batu Buruk
- Feeder Points:
Jenderam Hilir
Kuala Selinsing



Collecting Centres, Feeder Points and Entrepots in the Malay Peninsula, c. 1000 B.C.-A.D. 1400

Conclusion

- Drawing from numismatic, shipwreck, and cartographic evidence, this study reassesses Pahang as an active participant in the Maritime Spice Route.
- These are among the few possible material sources to substantiate that Pahang was an active maritime node in the wider Maritime Trade Route.
- Many works need to be done to properly substantiate the claims and evidence on Pahang maritime history.



Thank you!

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