



# 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

*Cinnamomun zeilanicum* 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 Mollucas Islands. The Muslims and the Byzantines used it as deodorant and in Europe it added to beer.

### CAMPHOR

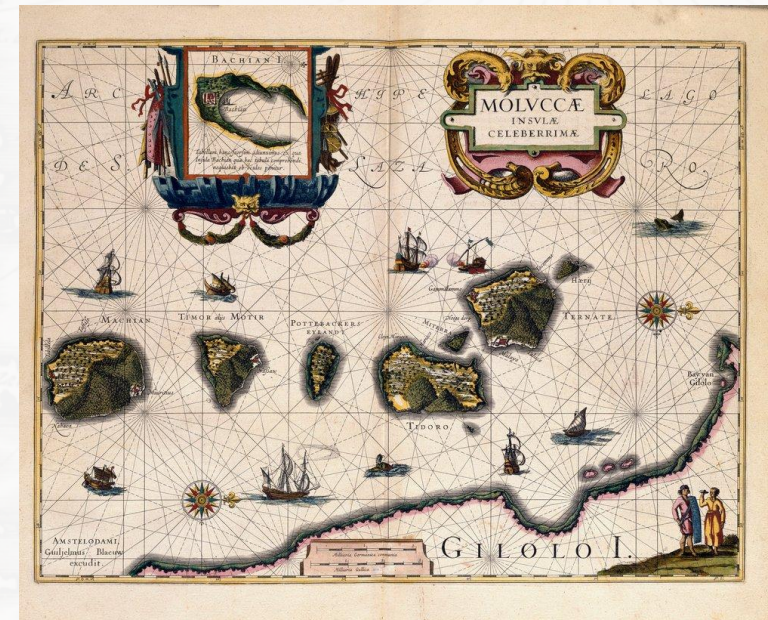
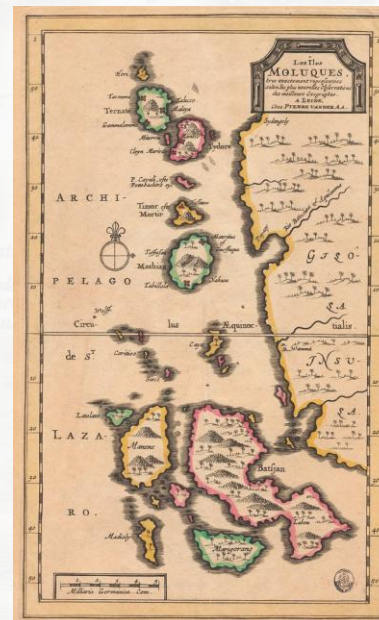
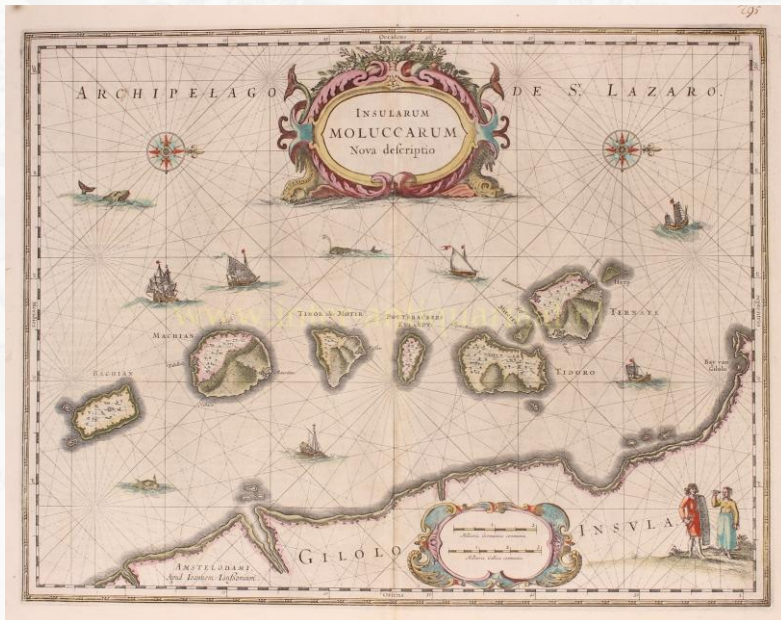
*Dryobalanops aromatica*

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

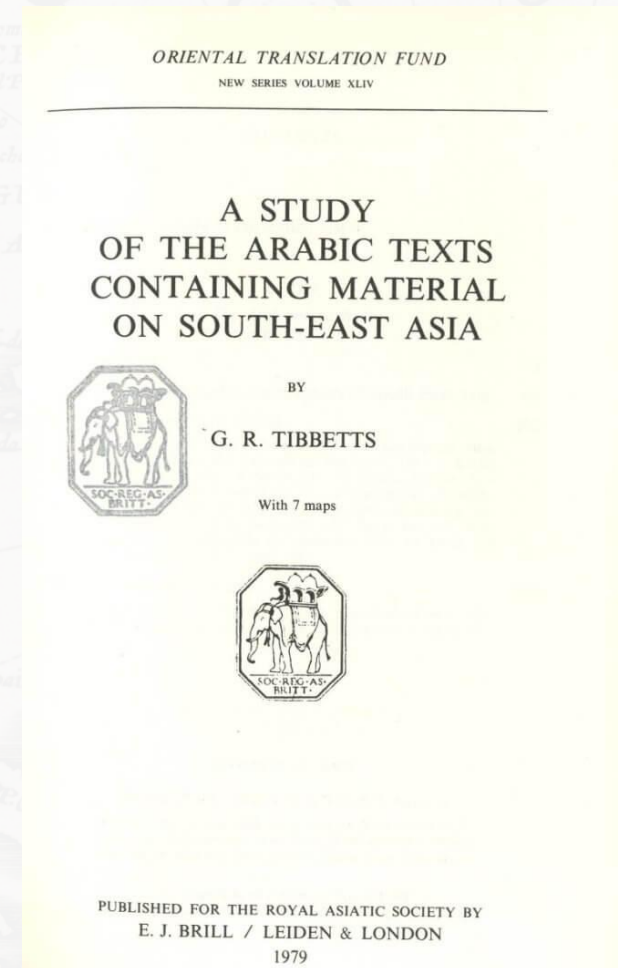




# Maritime Spice Route

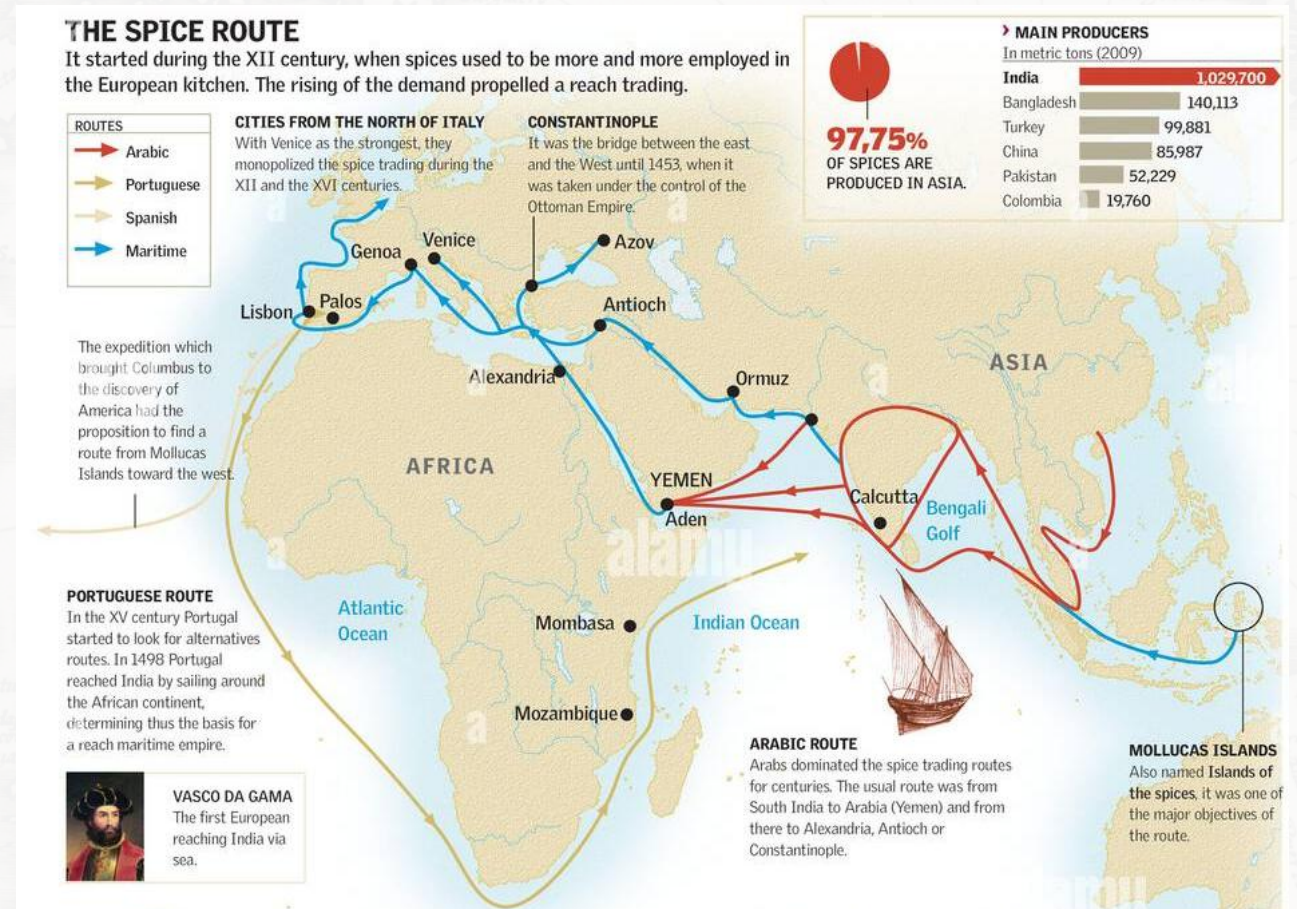
“It is to Malacca that the main Arab routes go, and beyond Malacca the sailing directions seem only half-hearted. In fact the only real sailing-directions beyond are for China and Java and these are mere ghosts of the directions given for other parts of the Ocean.”

G.R. Tibbets, 1979



# 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

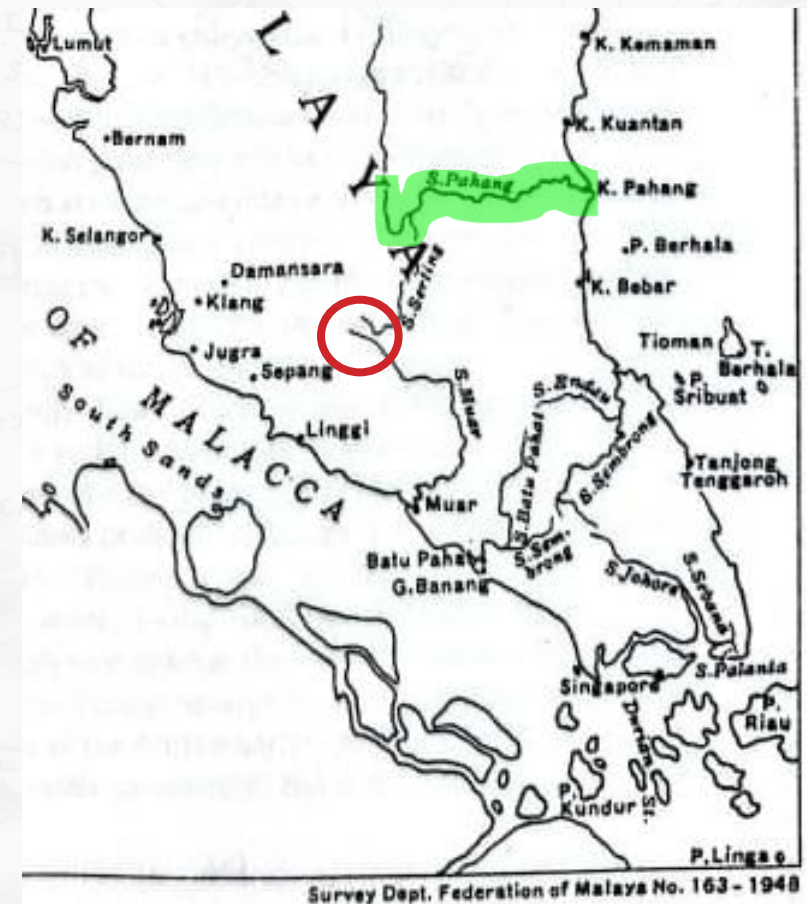
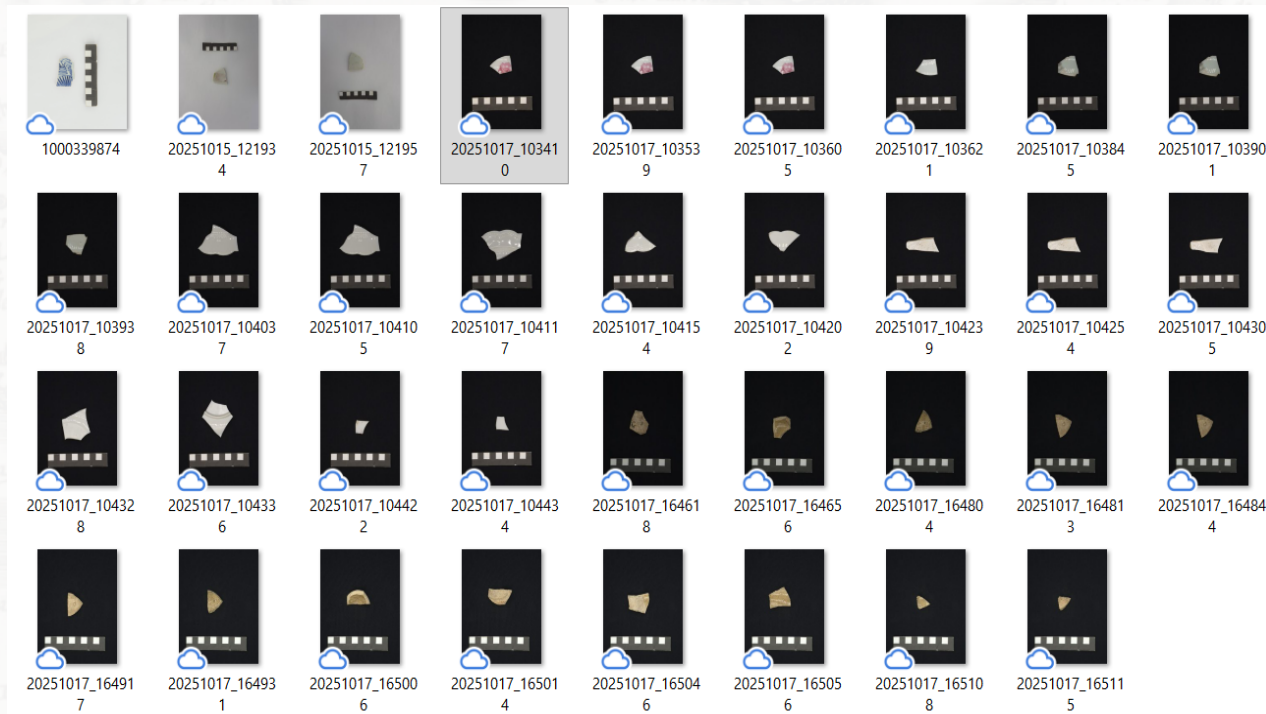
- Hundreds of thousands of Chinese copper coins were found in the Pahang River
- Numerous sultanate coins were also found, along with many ceramic sherds





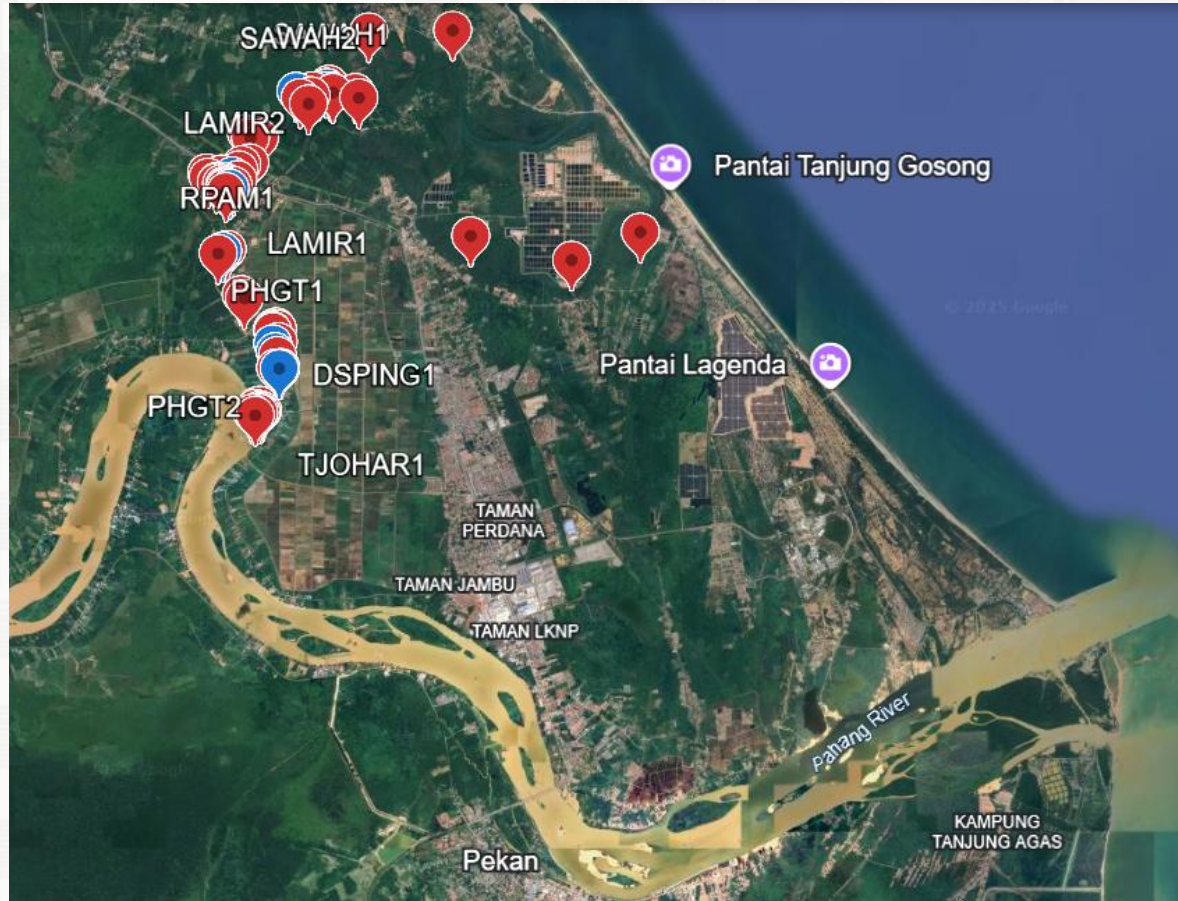
# Numismatic and Ceramic Finds

- 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

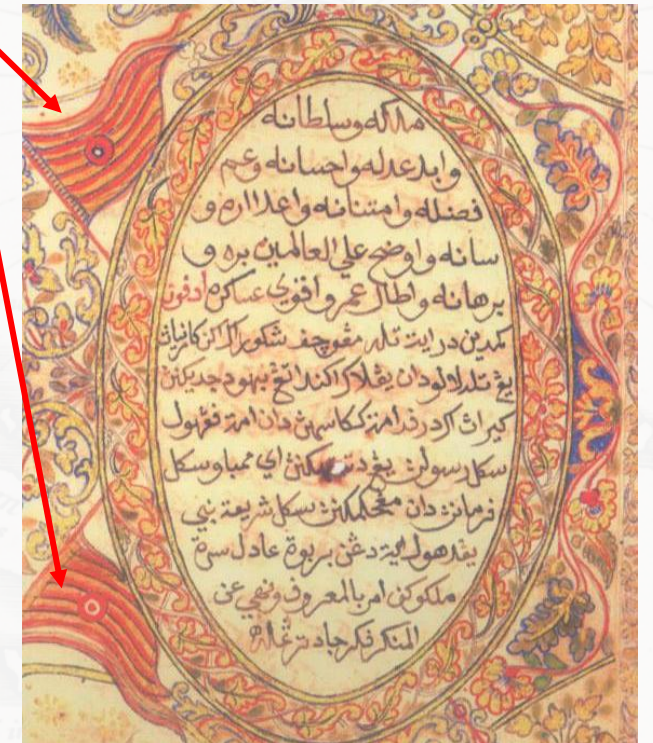
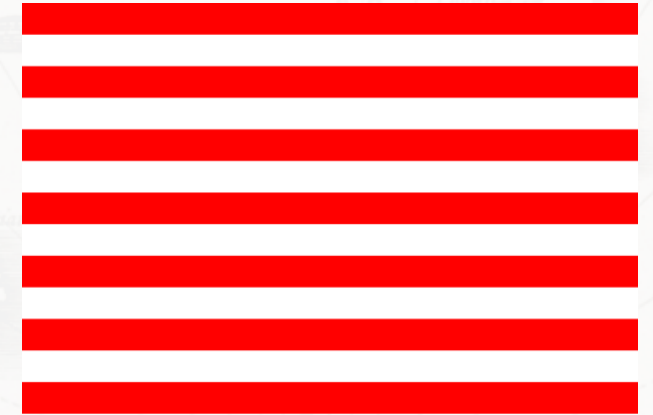


Admiralty Nautical Chart, 1898





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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* (*kati*), *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 tahlil
- 16 tahlil = 1 kati





# Traditional Metrology/ Weightage System

Mace (mas) = 2.4g

Coupan (kupang) = 0.6g





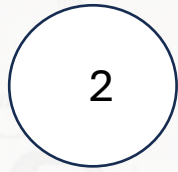
# Coins of Sultans of Pahang (c. 1475 - 1615 CE)









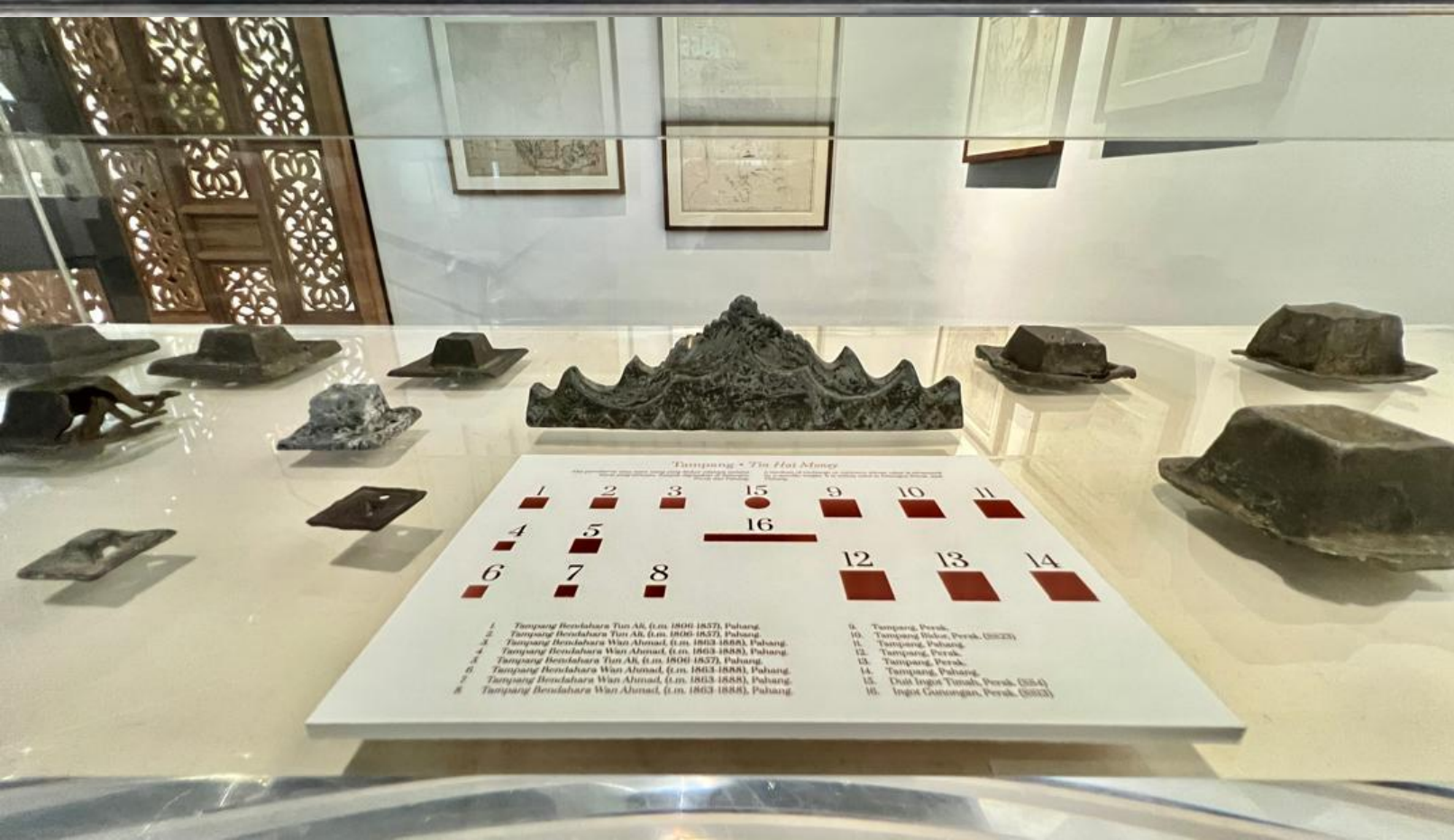


1 & 2: Sultan Muzaffar (c. 1540 CE)

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

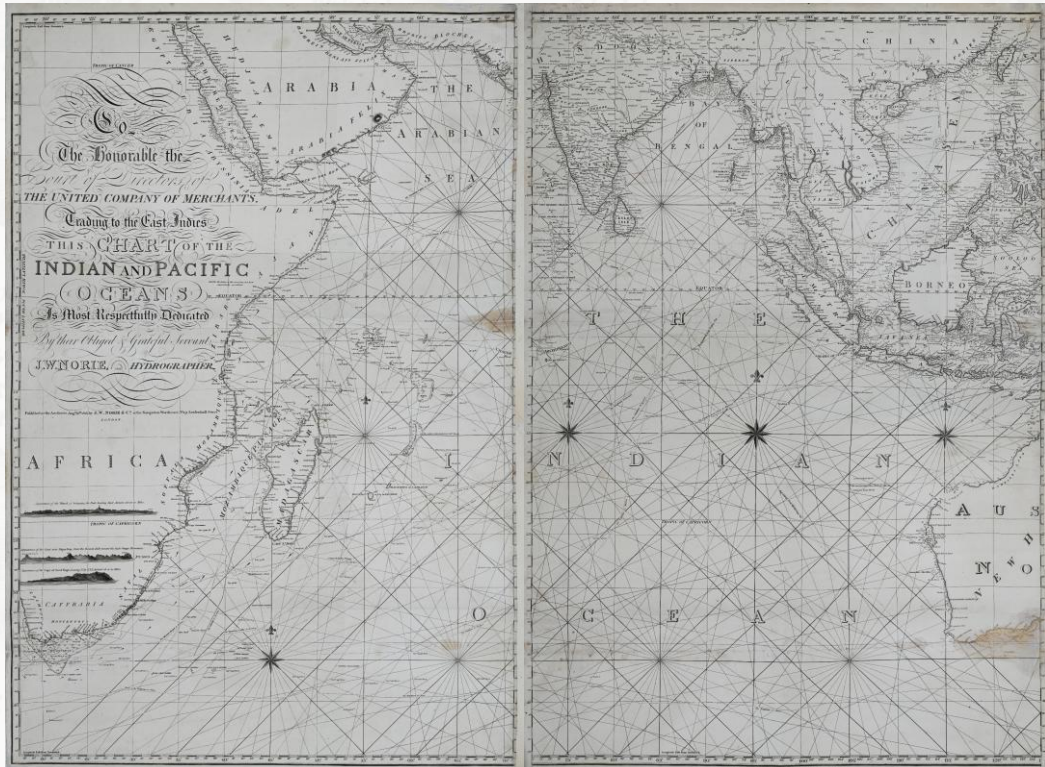


Admiralty Nautical Chart, 1898



# 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, 18<sup>th</sup> 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

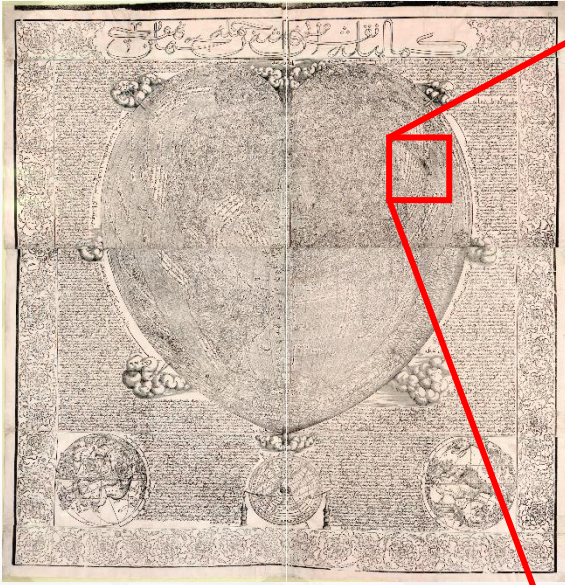


Paon



Pieter van den Keere, 1700

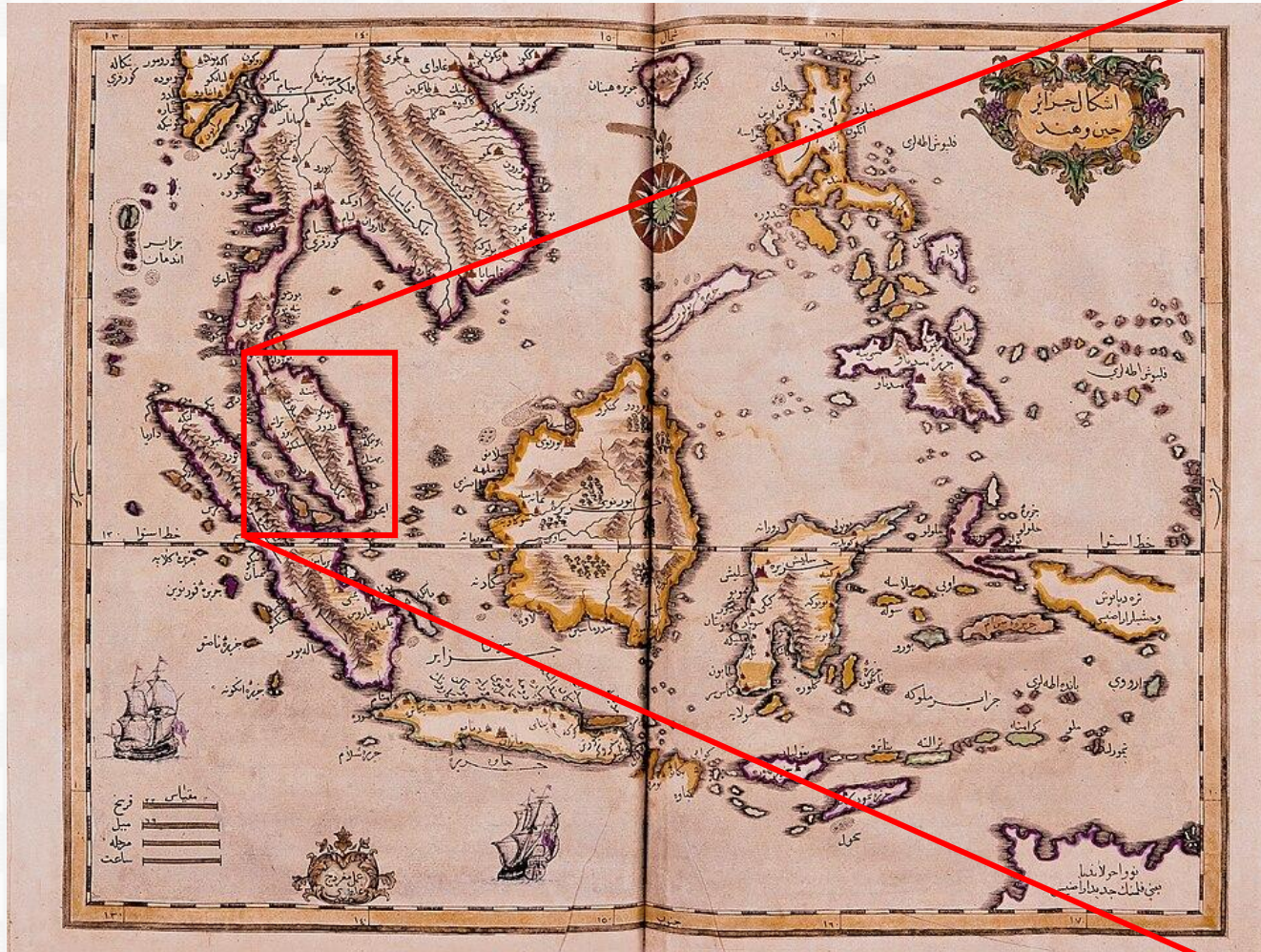




Kemāl ile Naks Olinmis  
Cümle-I Cihān Nemunesi,  
Hacı Ahmet Map, **1560**  
(Muzium Pahang collection)



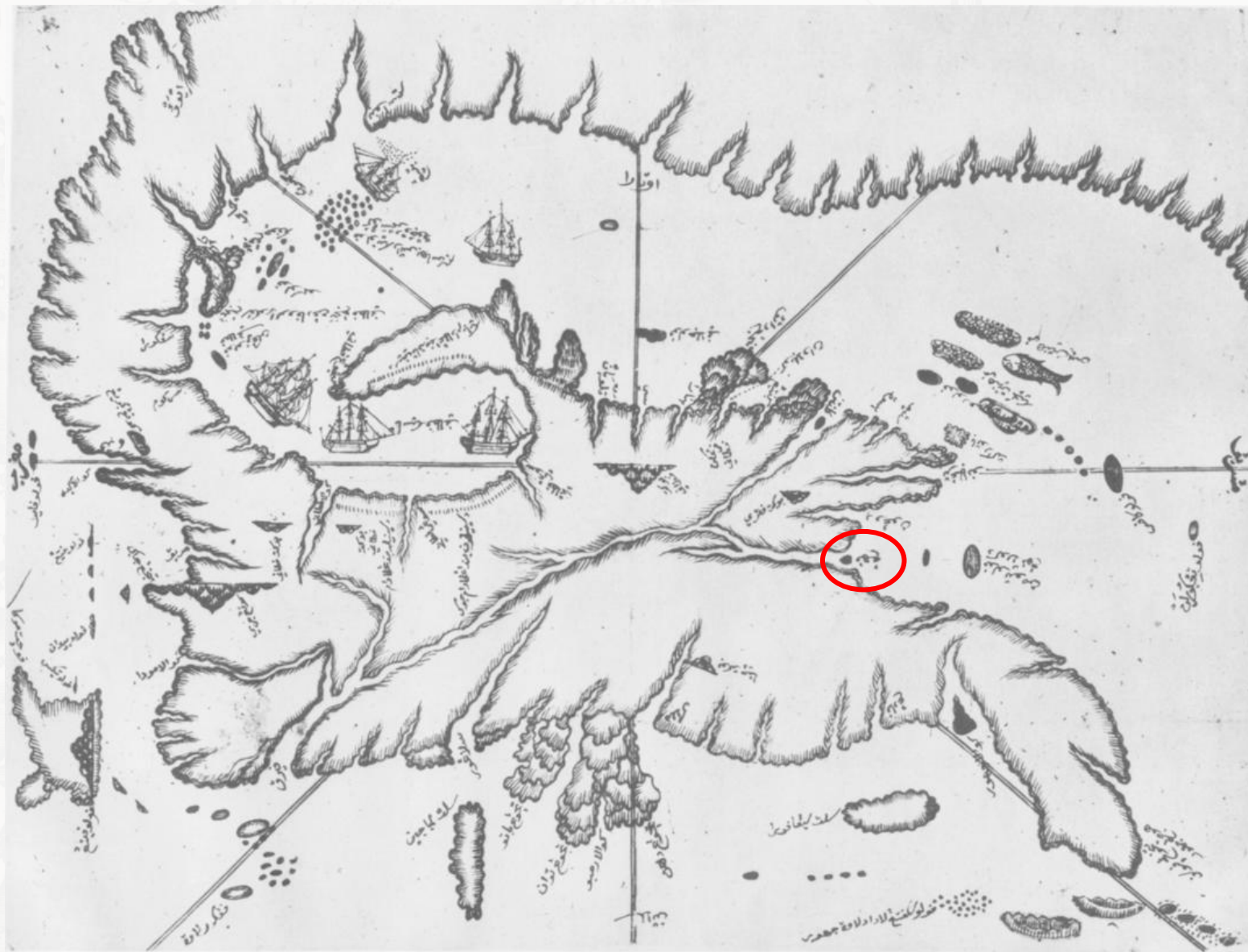




Ibrahim Muteferrika Map, 1728

هنگ





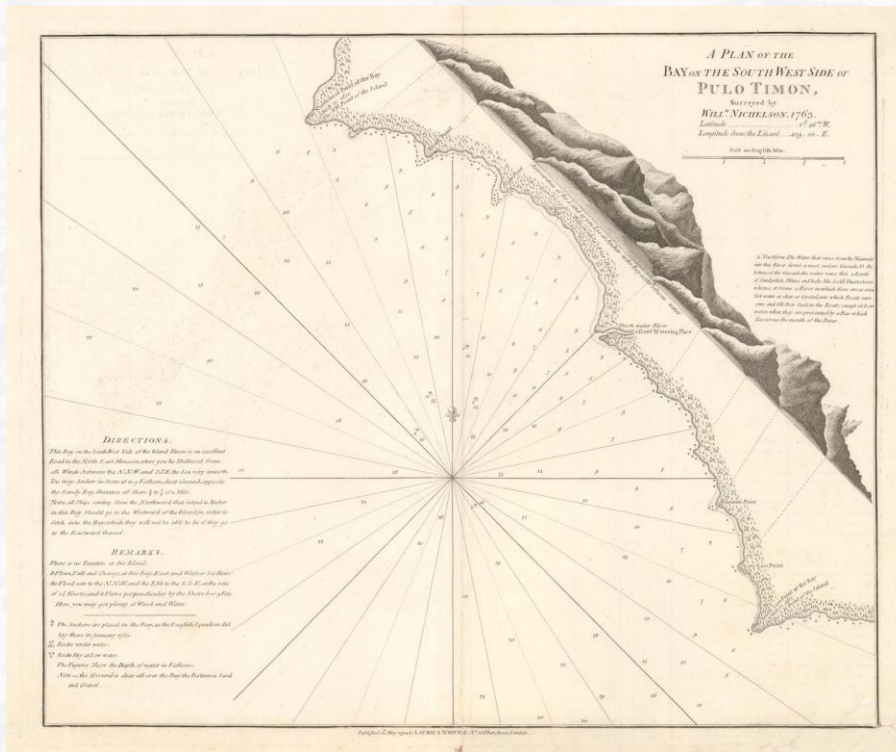
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In possession of Lt. Col. S. T. C. Parsons-Smith, possibly 18th century



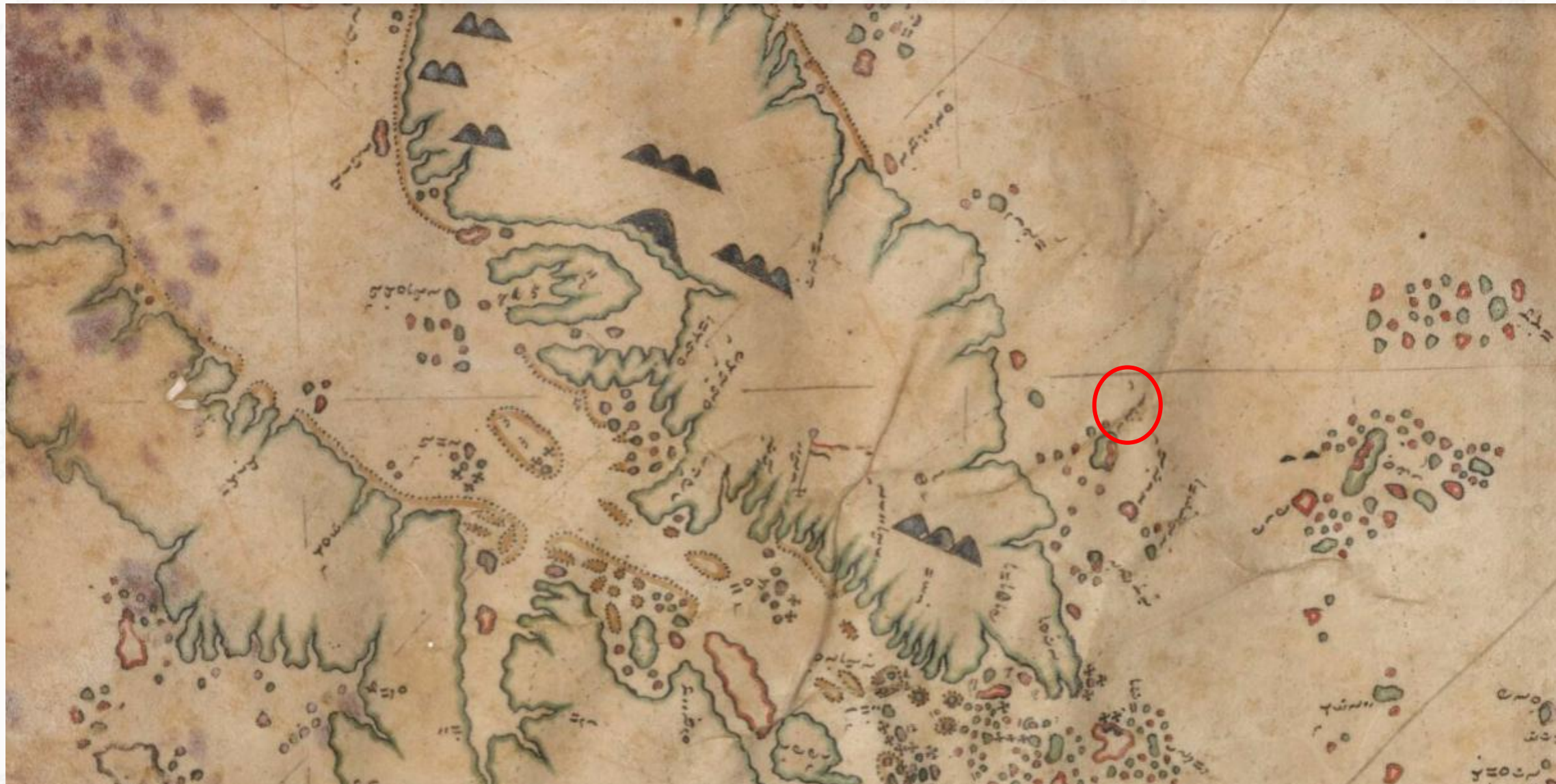
# Cartography (Tioman)

- 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

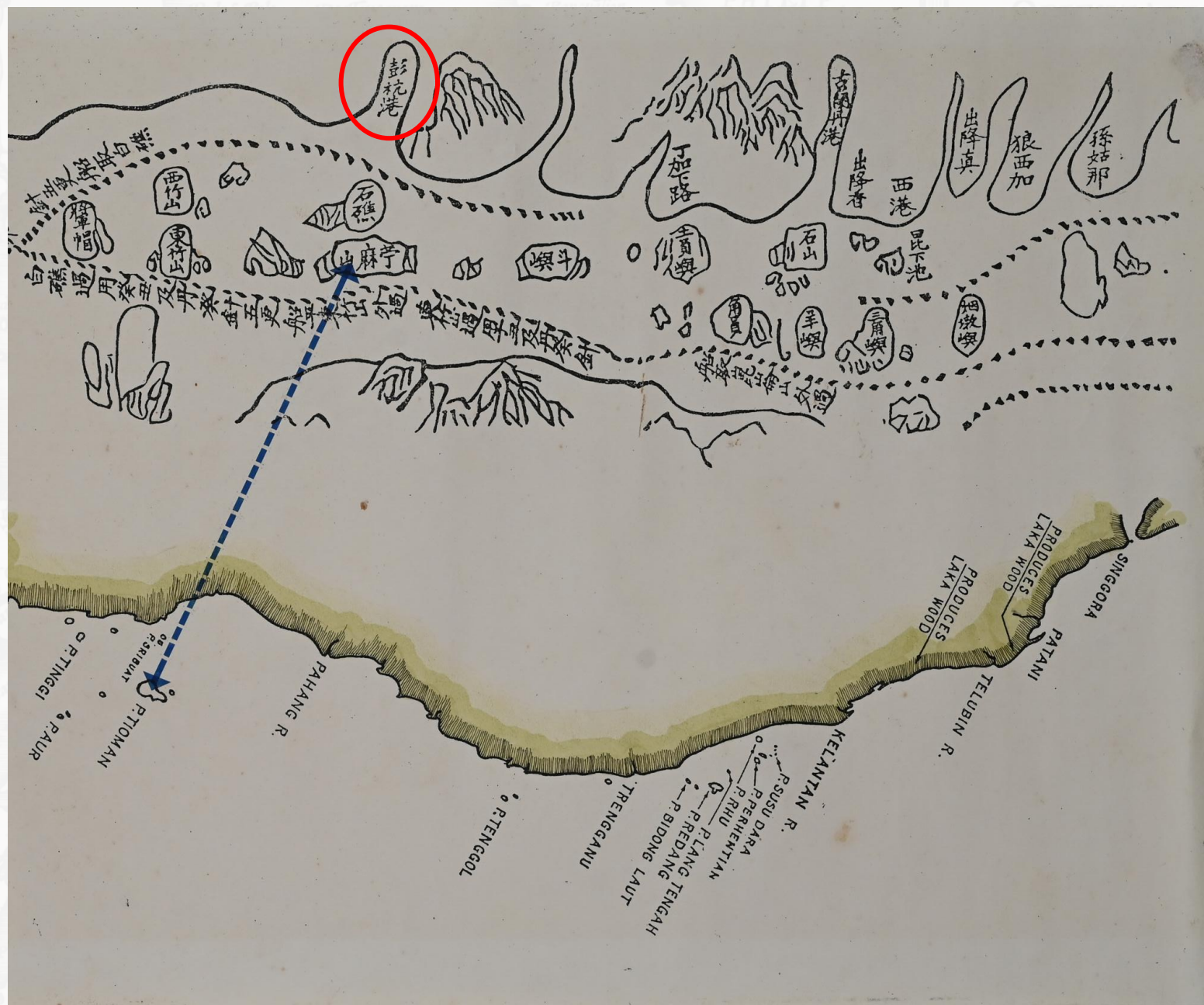


彭杭港

Péng Háng Gǎng

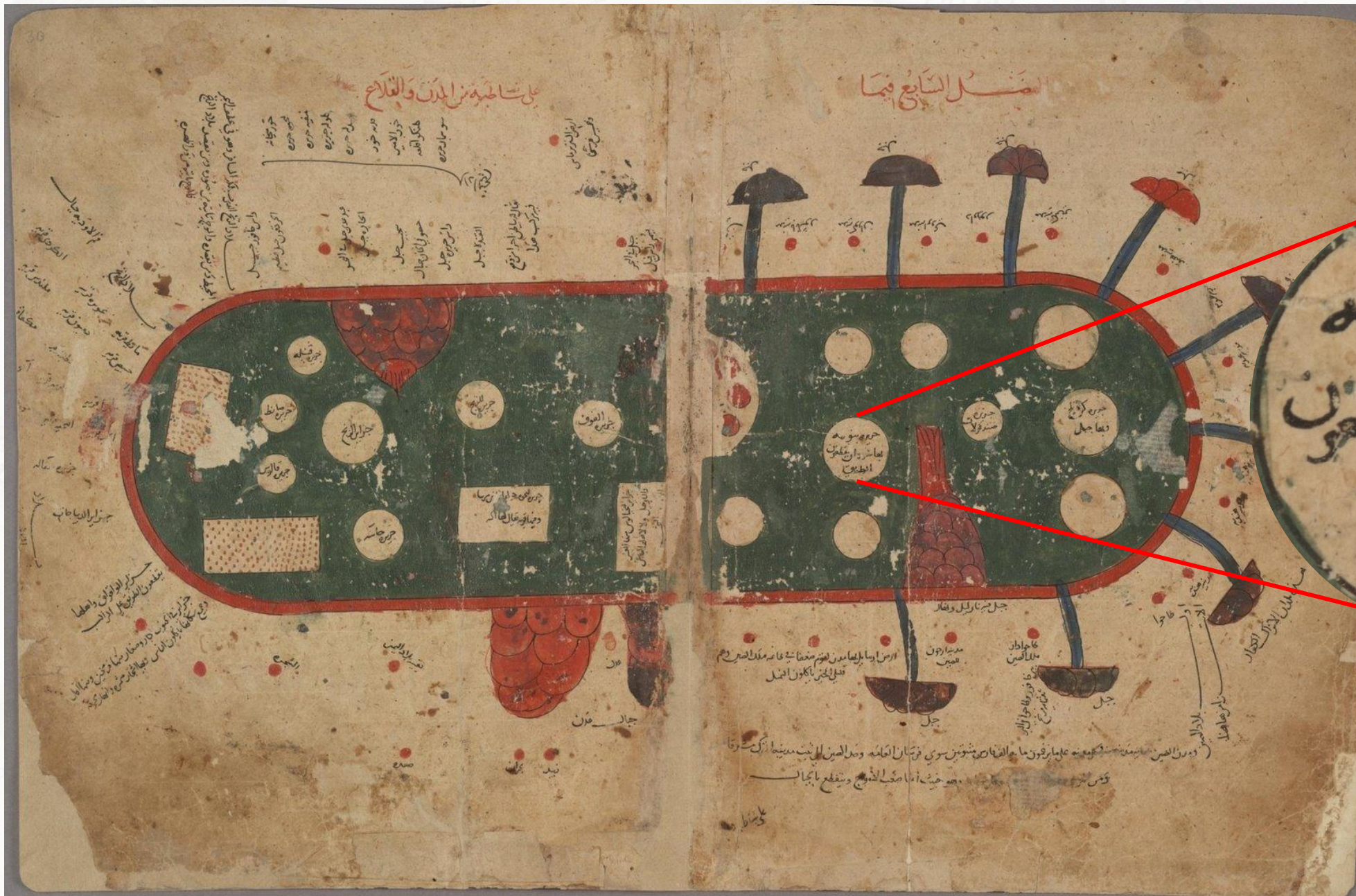
山麻苧

Zhumashan



Mao Kun Map, 1621 (Muzium Pahang collection)

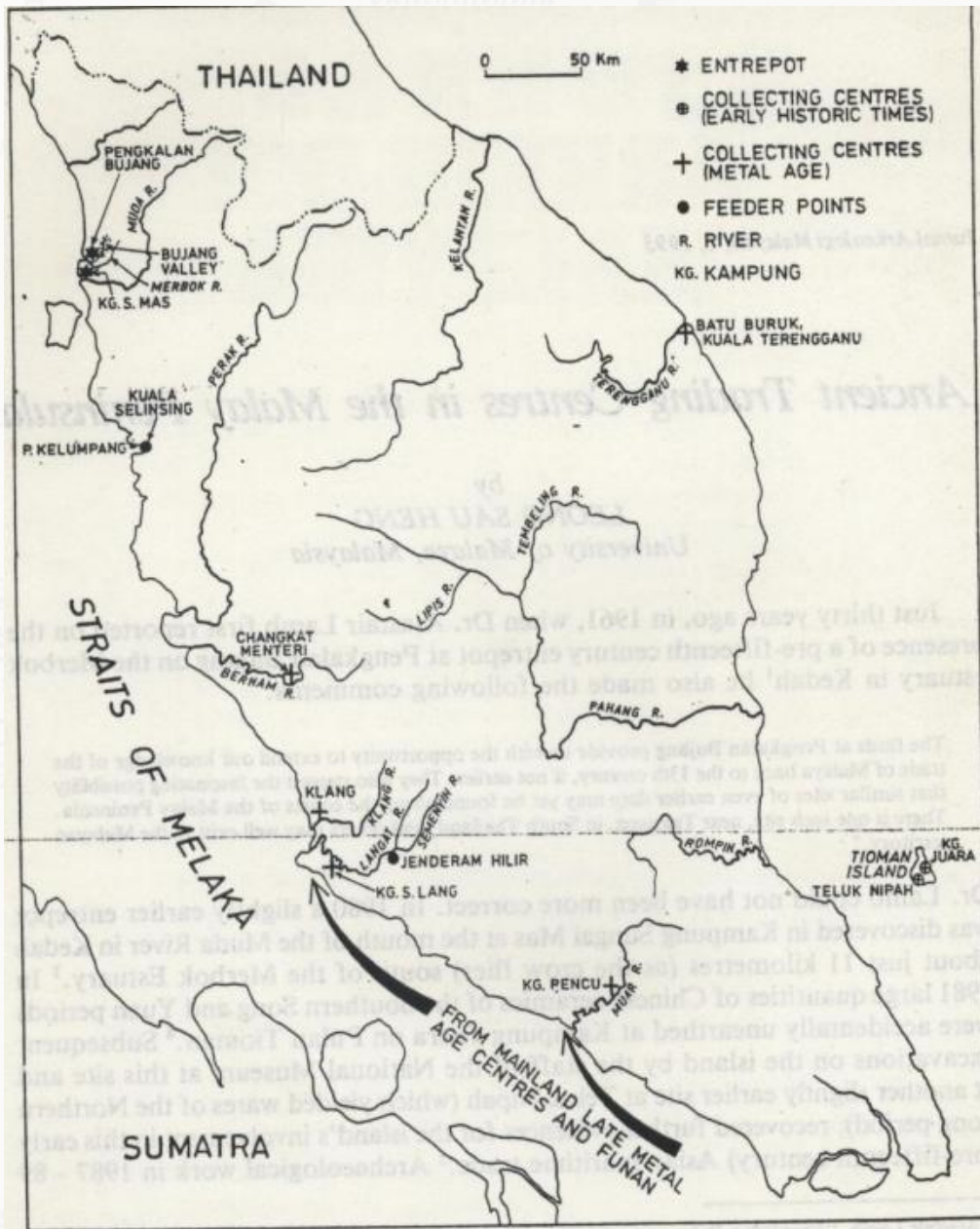




بنومه / تيومه

Book of Curiosities, 12<sup>th</sup> century





Ancient trading sites in Peninsular Malaysia during the late metal age and early historic times.

# 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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