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Chinese Maritime Politics in the 13th Century, Malay States and Javanese Imperium

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Abstract

This study aims to explain about the rise of the Chinese trading culture, which is considered original at first then change progressively based on the internal process, and become damaged after making contacts with the native civilizations, is completely dissatisfying, though part of the truth is explained. Based on the critical analysis approach from the historical facts written by some scholars, the result of this study shows that the political and cultural changes were absolutely a sign of remarkable shock. Mongol conquests were contributed to these changes, though indirectly. Indian civilization was accepted by the native people, which then also influenced by the native culture. While the Islamic Nuance in Indian Ocean had been colored by Islamic nuance for approximately two centuries, wherein the trades in the middle and Chinese oceans were united naturally. Meanwhile Southeast Asia had grown rapidly after being involved in the hectic trading traffic. There were new social groups with the wealth of mobile capital, with a new spirit as the trades, in which in its development, there was a new form of state which was called as sultanate. One of the most important facts of that period is the rise of Java as a great sea power.

Keywords:

Chinese politic, Trading, Civilization

Introduction

George Codes proposes an interesting opinion about the immense crisis and significant changes in Southeast Asia in the 13th century. In politics, the immense crisis happened alongside with the enormous expeditions of Mongol to Indian Ocean, particularly to Southeast Asia.

The crisis and changes damaged the countries which were influenced by indianization. The Angkor Kingdom retreated; Vietnam thrived above the destruction of Campa, while the Thai tribes released themselves and formed independent kingdoms. In Nusantara, Sriwijaya experienced deterioration. As a consequence, this condition benefitted Majapahit. There was also a significant adjustment in the cultural field. The influential factors of Hindu and Budha Mahayana were changed with the new ideology of Budha Theravada. This situation developed in Indochinese peninsula. Meanwhile, Islam spread and found its glory in Nusantara.

The political and cultural changes were absolutely a sign of remarkable shock. Mongol conquests were contributed to these changes, though indirectly. According to George Codes, this condition was due to the acceptance of Indian civilization by the native people. Relatively, the Indian civilization was influenced by the native culture. At the same time, the noble families, who supported Sanskrit culture, were vanished (Lombard, 2008). The interpretation that a culture, which is considered original at first, will change progressively based on the internal process and become damaged after making contacts with the native civilizations is completely dissatisfying, though part of the truth is explained. This situation invites a question: should one of the most important causes of the aforementioned immense changes be sought within the rise of the Chinese trading?

In China, the south Song dynasty is the pioneer of maritime politics. The maritime politics was then taken over and continued by Yuan dynasty and the first Ming dynasty's emperors. In the discussion of Muslim influential traders, Pu Shougeng, (Jitsuzo, 1928), Kuwabara provides a well-constructed description, analysis, and consideration about the role handled by Muslim elites during the ascending of the throne of Mongol dynasty. The fact shows that the Muslim elites supported the advisors of Kubilai Khan to conduct immense military expeditions to Japan,

Campa, Vietnam, and Java. These Muslim elites were traders in Fujian port. The conquests of the provinces in South China by the Mongolians and the delivery of the expeditions, formed by the sailors and soldiers recruited from the southern part of the empire, probably accelerated the movements of Chinese immigrants to Southeast Asia (Gernet, 1972).

Seven immense sailings, which were the trading maritime expeditions of Admiral Zheng He or Cheng Ho conducted from 1405 until 1453, visited the ports of Nusantara and Indian Ocean to Sri Lanka, Quilon, Kocin, Kalikut, Ormuz, Jeddah, Mogadiscio, and Malindi. This fact proved the extensive interest and enthusiasm of the government of the first Ming's emperors, particularly Emperor Yongle. The important thing is that the trading business in Ming dynasty at that time was arranged by the skillful merchants from Muslim community. Zheng He is a son of a hajj from Yunnan. Some of his friends, such as an interpreter named Ma Huan wrote the story of those sea voyages, are also Muslims. However, these immense expeditions are, once more, the formal and amazing sides of Chinese penetration which had long been started and continued wordlessly. Around 1345, a wanderer named Maghribi Ibn Battuta told about the importance of Chinese traders in Calicut. He reported that there were 13 boats (Voyage 'Ibnu Battuta). Based on a number of sources from the 15th century, it is figured out that there were a Chinese trading branch and a warehouse in the same city (Willetts, 1962)(Filesi, 1972)(Schafer, 1967)(Duyvendak, 1953)

Alongside with the era of immense trading in China in which the Muslim communities had important roles, the Muslim communities in India had already been developed (Dien, 2011; Hefner, 2010; Jacq-Hergoualc'h, Supajanya, & Krisanapol, 1998). Turkey Ilbrani and Afganistan Khilji tribes consolidated Delhi sultanate in the north. Muhammad bin Tughluk (1325-1351) dislocated the border to the south in the downstream of Kaveri River. He founded Daulatabad as the capital city in the eastern part

of Bombay. For some years, he had been succeeded in conquering almost every part of India under his sovereignty. This attempt was important for Southeast Asian countries as within the center of the indianization of Islam, lately, Islam tended to replace Hindu. The invasion of Timur Leng and the destroying of Delhi by his soldiers in 1398-1399 caused the fall of Tunghlik dynasty and the emergence of many kingdoms; some of them were maritime kingdoms. Bengali, for instance, and particularly Gujarat at that time were led by Ahmad Shah (1411-1441) and Mahmud Baikara (1458-1511) experienced vast development. In Dekan, Vijayanagar kingdom was the home of the Hindu people. They survived from the attacks of Bahmanid Syi'ah people until 1556. However, in Malabar ports, most of the influential trading shifted to the Muslims of Mappilla. They conducted the trades in Arab, Ormuz, and Maladewa (Appadorai, 1936).

The Islamic Nuance in Indian Ocean

It can be said that Indian Ocean had been colored by Islamic nuance for approximately two centuries (Radimilahy & Crossland, 2015). In Indian Ocean, the trades in the middle and Chinese oceans were united naturally. Ibn Battuta gave admirable testimonies about the networks spread from Maghribi to Far East. In almost all cities he had visited, he always stayed in one of his Muslim friends', princes', or traders' house. While wandering, Ibn Battuta did not only report about the trade routes and activities but also tell about *syiekh* as well as pious scholars who became the reputable roles in the spread of Islam. Ibn Battuta left Calicut with a *jung* (boat) whose person in charge was a Muslim named Suleiman. All chambers of Suleiman's boat were rent by Chinese traders. After that, Ibn Battuta sailed from Zaitun, or Quanzhou, in Gujian region, to India with a *jung* owned by King Zahir, the king of Samudra Pasai, in which the cabin crews were Muslims. Another part of Ibn Battuta's story stated about his sojourn in Benggala in which he visited a hermit named Jalaluddin, a *syiekh* from

Tabriz who lived for a quite long time in Baghdad. Soon after that, after his arrival in Khanbaliq (Beijing), he met Sheikh Burhanuddin who had ever lived in India and been appointed by Khan Agung as the leader of all Muslims in his country. The news spread fast as Burhanuddin had got a letter from his relative, Jalaluddin, who informed about the coming of Ibn Battuta (Lombard, 2008).

The Emergence of the New States: Malay Sultanates

Southeast Asia had grown rapidly after being involved in the hectic trading traffic. There were new social groups with the wealth of mobile capital. There was a new spirit within this new social group. Their spirit was not represented in the rich rice fields they owned but they tended to live near the sea which became their source of life. They also choose to live in the ports and trade cities which lately became the center of new civilization. As the trades became very important, the new cities were not under the authority of the former capital cities, which were located in the agrarian hinterland. In the development, there was a new form of state which was called as sultanate. This political structure was firstly occurred in the northern part of Sumatra. It was Samudra Pasai around the late of the 13th century. It was then followed in Java and most parts of Nusantara (Indonesia).

In northern Sumatra, the graves of the first Sultan Samudra-Pasai, Malik al-Salih (1297 or Ramadhan 696 H), and his successor Malik al-Zahir (1326 or Dzulhijah 726 H); and four other stone inscriptions from the 14th century justify the story of Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta who reported the importance of the sultanate in the western peak of Nusantara (L.-Ch. Damais, 1968). In the northern Borneo, in Brunei, the place of Magellan armada in the early of the 14th century, were trade cities. There is also a grave with Chinese letters of a Muslim from Quanzhou named Pu or Abu who died in 1264 (Chen Tieh Fan & W.Franke). Furthermore, there

are also inscriptions written in Arabic letters, in which the oldest is in the year of 1432 (Carey, 1933). In the eastern part, in Jolo, Sulu islands, the oldest Arabic inscription is the grave of Tuhan Maqbalu or Muqbalu on the hill of Bud Dato written in 1319, Rajab 710 H. The current inscription is around 1489, a beautiful grave of Sharif ul-Hisham, the first Sultan of Sulu. The ornaments of the grave are inspired by Chinese culture (Majul, 1973). Pasai, Brunei, and Jolo were three new ports which were open for immense trades; three new areas occurred in the map of Nusantara and continually felt the arrival of Islam. Islam was at first influenced by the culture of China. According to Denys Lombard, the study of Islamic epigraphy from the 13th century until 15th century, although the mappings are not comprehensive, shows that there are two areas recognized by skillful sailors and wanderers: Malay Peninsula and eastern Java. According to Syed Naguib Al-Attas, the famous Trengganu Stone, containing a piece of law text in Malay language, is probably from 1303 Rajab 702 H. This is the only inscription found in the peninsula since the 14th century (Blagden, 1924) (Al-Attas, 1970). On the contrary, there are some inscription from the 15th century, they are from Pengkalan Kempas from 1467/8 (1385), (Callenfels, 1927)(Wilkinson, 1932) the grave of the first Sultan Pahang, Muhammad Shah, from 1475; the grave of the second Sultan Malaka, Mansur Shah from 1477.

In east Java, there are some of the oldest Arabic inscriptions: Leran from the 11th century and the grave of Malik Ibrahim which is probably a merchant from Gujarat. This inscription dates back to 1419 and is located in Gresik, near Surabaya (Ph.S. van Ronkel, 1911) (Th.Juynboll, 1911). However, it is found that in the site of the former capital city of Majapahit, now near Mojokerto, in the old graves of Trowulan and particularly in Tralaya, L-Ch Damais found the most interesting Islamic graves (L-Ch. Damais, 1957). There are some inscriptions containing the short sacred written in Arabic. However, the name of the people buried in

the cemetery is not mentioned, except one in Trowulan. It is a grave which is, according to the tradition, named as the grave of Princess Campa. The inscription dates back to 1370 Saka or 1448/9 M.

Muljawa: Java as a Commerce Country

The east part of Java Island was the crossroads of the sea in the area. It is connected with Gujarat as well as with Indo-Chinese. One of the most important facts of that period is the rise of Java as a great sea power. Even She-po from Chinese sources always referred to Java Island. However, Javaga from Arab sources more often referred to Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, which were occupied by Sriwijaya. Furthermore, Java has its own traits which would be called Java Major. Ibn Battuta called it Muljawa, the true Javanese, to recognize its superiority. In the Malay Peninsula, Arabic script adapted to Malay is still called Jawi, while Latin script is called Rumi. Maybe it is as a remembrance of the time when the writing was introduced to the rest of Javaga. However, the name Java was mainly used for most of the eastern island, so it referred only to that island alone. To refer to its large neighboring island, the sailors who came from the West first called it Taprobane. Then, after realizing their mistake, they changed it into Sumatra. This change was based on the name of an ocean in Pasai Ocean (Miksic & Goh, 2016; Sim, 2014; Wade, 2010).

In the political arena, in 1222, Kediri Dynasty collapsed and a man named Ken Angrok whose origin was not very clear, ascended the throne with the title Rajasa, and in many texts later referred to as the son of Girindra the Legendary. He proclaimed some of the Javanese areas under his ruling, placed his capital in Singasari and established a new dynasty that would last until the early 16th century. Raden Wijaya established the City of Majopahit in 1293 and preserved the relationship with the kings of Singasari, but many historians were mistaken for a new dynasty.

Denys Lombard explains that the most important government is the reign of King Kertanegara, the fifth and last king of Singasari (1254-1292), for at that period Javanese political efforts began to appear toward a colonization on other nations. The precious NagaraKertagama religious in *pupuh* (Javanese traditional poem) 13-15 (Th.G.Pigeaud, n.d.) contain a list of areas that were required to pay taxes in 1365, when the book was being compiled, and there is a list in *pupuh* 41 and 42 (Th.G. Pigeaud) of the conquests of Kertanegara. Although this list is shorter, it appears that Majapahit's expansionist goal had begun approximately three-quarters of a century earlier. The Javanese troops are said to have not only been subjugating Pasundan, Madura, and Bali in the second half of the 13th century, but also Bakulapura which was commonly associated with Tanjung Pura, on the southern coast of Borneo, Gurun which here refers to some of the Maluku Islands of Gorong in eastern Seram, (Nagarakertagama,...) and especially Pahang and Malayu, a point that clearly shows that East Java was almost dominating the competing trading offices of the Peninsula and Sumatra, which until then had traditionally remained under the authority of Sriwijaya. The text even mentions the exact date of the expedition sent against the Malays in 1197 Saka or 1275 (Nagarakertagama). Moreover, in Central Sumatra, in Padang Roco, a 1.63-meter-long Amoghapaca statue had been found, with an interesting inscription from 1286 which explains that the statue was a gift of Kertanegara sent from Java to please the Malays and their king (Kempers, 1959).

Testimonies of political and cultural influences should be linked to what is known from other sources about the rapid progress of Javanese commerce. The writings of Zhufan zhi composed sometime in the middle of the 13th century by a customs officer in Fujian, Zhao Rugua, highlighted the country's wealth, the abundance of agricultural produce, such as rice, chrysanthemum, cotton, and all kinds of fruits, the abundance of spices and exotic goods in its ports, such as ivory, pearls, camphor, sandalwood,

cloves, sappan, betel nut, and especially pepper. Chinese traders, according to the same manuscript, made such huge profits on Chinese copper which were smuggled out to be traded in Java with pepper (Hirth, Fr. & Rockhill, W.W., 1966). In *Zhufan zhi*, there is also a detailed list of names of places that are subject to the King of Java which is not easy to be interpreted (Hirth, Fr. & Rockhill, W.W., 1966), but some of whom may once refer to the islands in eastern Indonesia, for it is asserted that the Javanese brought in nutmegs from those places, which they then offered to foreign traders (Christie, 1996; Koh, 2017; Lockard, 2010).

Traders of Zaho Rugua had been confirmed brilliantly as well as unexpectedly, when archaeologists in 1974 found ancient olives at the port of Quanzhou, the remaining of 13th century Chinese wooden boat (*jung*) in which there were some of the cargo of betel nut, timber and pepper. It is natural to imagine that the *jung* sank when returning to a port in the South China Sea, which was perhaps from the port of Java. Chinese *kepeng* (ancient currency) was first discovered in 1271 so that the wreck could be known from the last decades of the southern Song dynasty and from the triumph of the Singasari Kingdom (Lombard, 2008).

Marco Polo, who unfortunately never stopped in Java, but spoke fluently about Javanese power on his way home, while sailing to North Sumatra in 1291. The island is very rich. There were pepper, nutmeg, lemongrass, galangal, cubes, cloves, and all the rare spices in the world. The island was visited by a large number of ships and merchants who made a huge profit. On the island, there were so many treasures that no one in this world could count them or tell them all. And we need to take into account that the Great Khang could not get it because of the far and dangerous shipping to get there. From the island the Olive merchants (Quanzhou) and Mangi (Southern China) had gained a great deal of treasures and that happened every day (Polo, 1955)(Lombard, 2008).

Marco Polo sailed on the high seas through Java just a few months before the fall of Singhasari and a little over a year before the Chinese-Mongolian attack. Although brief, the main causes of the expedition of 1292-3 could be traced. Based on very different documents, Nagarakertagama, Pararaton and especially the Kudadu inscription from 1294 (Brandes, 1920) and *Yuan Shi* (Groeneveldt, 1880), historians have succeeded in rearranging the chronology of the events (Muljana, 1976): *the Jayakatwang rebellion, the king of Kediri, against Singhasari and the killing of Kertanagara, the clearing of the place which later became Mojopahit by a Rajasa descendant, Raden Wijaya, who intended to establish a base against the intruders, then the Chinese army arrived in May 1293, their temporary alliance with Raden Wijaya against Jayakatwang, a combined attack on Kediri and their victory, eventually Raden Wijaya had a change of heart and suddenly attacked the alliance and forced them to sail back so that Raden Wijaya became the unrivaled single ruler in Java.*

Mongol Expedition to Java: Monetary Balance

In general, the principal cause of the expedition was never questioned. The general presumption of the expedition was seen as part of Mongolian imperialist politics. Denys Lombard (Lombard, 2008), on the other hand, explained that the expedition was not merely imperialism. Of course, he asserted, the expedition should be re-placed in the framework of a global plan that after the mainland trade routes were ruled, Kubilai Khan intended to control the oceanic route. While all the trade offices in the South Sea declared their subservience to Kubilai Khan, Java, Marco Polo said firmly, was not willing to abide by the system. However, there was a more detailed explanation. Kertanegara's recent expedition against Malayu was clearly disturbing the old balance that had been in effect for centuries. Sriwijaya hegemony, which always followed and obeyed the rules and wanted to maintain good relations with China, got a nuisance. East Java, which took the advantage of its position, was very fortunate because of

its location which is close enough to the islands of East Indonesia which produced cloves and nutmeg. East Java then developed into the center of the most important spice market. Zhao Rugua reports that during the 13th century Javanese trade had inflicted violations of the Chinese Kingdom's official rules that prohibited the export of large amounts of Chinese copper. It is understandable, then, that the more vigorous Yuan Dynasty than the late Sung dynasty, predicted to take control of the other end of the sea roads that endangered their monetary equilibrium. Finally, and most importantly, Javanese had a reputation to be a land of wealth which in previous centuries had accumulated great wealth. So much so that no one in the world could count or tell it.

It is clear that the Mongols sought to return it all into circulation to fill the shortfall. It can be said that they were successful because they still had time to ransack before leaving Kediri. The loot was apparently quite large. Chinese commissioned officers of the Emperor, according to Yuan Shi, (Groeneveldt, 1880) made an inventory of all the valuable goods: incense, perfume and fabrics which were brought home by Shibi, one of the generals who led the expedition. All were assessed to reach 500,000 silver tahlil. For the Chinese Masters, he also brought a letter written on a golden slab, so as goods made of gold and silver, rhino horn, ivory, and many other items. If seen from the amount of the plunder, the expedition was not a mere failure, as was often told by historians ever since.

Java lost its property and wealth due to the expedition of the Mongolian. However, its autonomy remained. Furthermore, Java in the 14th century reached its glory in both the political sphere and the cultural realm. The victory of the kings of Majapahit, particularly the triumph of Hayam Wuruk or Rajasaneegara 1350-1389 is in line with the prosperity of Singhasari. It can be explained from the development of agriculture and large trade which were combined cleverly. The second point is actually quite interesting. Many sources do not actually talk much about Java trades

(Th. Pigeaud, Java in The Fourteenth Century). Foreign traders who came from India Jambudwipa, Cambodia, Vietnam Yawana, Campa, South India Karnataka, Bengali Goda, meaning Gaur, and Siam are mentioned more often (Nagarakertagama *Pupub* 83, stanza 4, lines 1-3).

betunyanantara sarwnjana ika saken anyadeca prakirna, nang jambudwipa khamboja tiongkok yawana len cempa kharnnatakadi, goda mwan syangka tang sankanika makahawan potra milwing wanikh sok. That is why traders kept on coming from various countries, such as India, Cambodia, China, Vietnam, and Campa, Karnataka, Gaur, and Siam. From all these regions, they came on crowded and packed boats; they were the crowds of *wanikh* merchants.

Their ships were coming to the most important ports of East Java: Tuban, Gresik, and Surabaya (Nagarakertagama, *pupub* 17 stanza 5 line 4, Surabhaya Pigeaud: 122). Near the capital of the Majapahit kingdom, on the banks of the Brantas River that connects the capital to the sea, laid a commerce suburb of Bubad. The plural society in this area had their fixed trading offices. Nagarakertagama in *Pupub* 86 illustrates that the place was built on Sasok mapanta, its adjacent houses were supposedly in contrast with the less sparsely occupied in the capital. Bubad is especially famous because of its annual fair held in *caitra* month, on the vacant, properly flattened, grassed land provided for that sole purpose and located on the edge of a major highway, *rajamarga*. So traders came from everywhere, and the king himself came in solemn convoys to attend a series of matches and sports competitions held on the occasion.

Commerce by Majapahit State

The trade of Majapahit had similarities and resemblance to the commercial pattern in China in the days of Song or Ming, or Siam of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Viraphol, 1977). Huge trades were held for the sake of the country. That is, trades that occurred were not free trades. Trade activities were handed over to the employees who must

bring profit for the country. A Javanese prose text of the 14th century (approximately), *Nawanatya*, which deals with the organization of the palace (Lombard, 2008) suggests that the most important role is the *rakryan kanuruhan* or high chancellor, who must take care of foreign merchants or who come from other islands of the archipelago. He must receive them with great respect, like the king's guests, accommodate them, feed them and make all their necessities (Lombard, 2008). *Rakryan Kanuruhan* must know all languages (Th.G.Pigeaud, n.d.). It can be imagined that there was a language center which reminded us of the *Si-yi-guan* which was famous with its Translator's Office, which was well known in China (Lombard, 2008). Finally, it is said that *Rakryan Kanuruhan* took money from the merchants as an income for himself and that he did not hesitate to lose money or earn money, so it may be assumed that some of the taxes levied on trade were his right, and that he was also permitted to do some business for his own sake. Thus, *rakryan kanuruhan* is similar to the *syahbandar* service which was very important and strategic in the sultanates.

The partial explanation is mostly described in *Nagarakertagama* is a description of the commercial organization between Java and the taxpayer countries. In *pupub* 13 and 14 is listed 98 regional names. Those areas depended on Majapahit. If the names of the area were placed on the map, (eg Pigeaud Volume IV: 29-36, and Volume V map), then they could cover the entire territory of Indonesia now. There are 2 countries which are equal to the whole of Sumatra. The list starts with Malay, Jambi, and Palembang and then mentions Minangkabau, Siak, Kampar, Batak areas, trading offices in the north of Samudra and Lamuri and ends with Lampung and Barus. 24 countries are said from the south, west and north coast of Kalimantan, i.e. Kutai, Pasir, Baritu, Kuta Waringin, Lawai Kapuhas, Sambas, Buruneng which should be the same as Brunei. There are 16 countries that may be located on the Malay Peninsula such as Pahang, Lengkasuka, Kalanten, Tringgano, Tumasik, Kelang, and Kedah. Finally there are 33 to be placed

in the east of Java Island and in the Nusa Tenggara Islands, namely Bali, Lombok, Domp, Bhima, Sumba, Sulawesi, Luwuk, Makasar, Butun and Salayar. In the Maluku Islands: Gurun, Seran, Ambwan, Maluku and Timor, and Wwanin which is supposed to be Onin in Irian Jaya.

These trade offices were not directly managed by Majapahit employees. It was actually a commerce network. Explanations about this main information are contained in *pupub* 15 and 16 who said that, as a submission, at every season of *anken pratimasa*, the mentioned areas were to send all kinds of crops, and that to them was sent princes and high level officials to levy tributes (Th.G.Pigeaud, n.d.). It is asserted that the greatest of the bhujangga's virtues, including the religious clergy of Shiva, must abandon the desire to engage in private commerce. (Th.G.Pigeaud, n.d.) Thus, during the negotiation period, the Majapahit government tried to apply a particular country's trade form, whose responsibilities were left to religious leaders who acted like employees. If there was a taxpayer country rebelling against the central authority, it means trying to trade for its own interests without going through Java, then a crusading expedition and high-ranking maritime officials may be ordered to restore order and punish them (Th.G.Pigeaud, n.d.).

Conclusion

The political and cultural changes were absolutely a sign of remarkable shock. Mongol conquests were contributed to these changes, though indirectly. This condition was due to the acceptance of Indian civilization by the native people. Relatively, the Indian civilization was influenced by the native culture. At the same time, the noble families, who supported Sanskrit culture, were vanished. The Islamic Nuance in Indian Ocean had been colored by Islamic nuance for approximately two centuries. In Indian Ocean, the trades in the middle and Chinese oceans were united naturally. Southeast Asia had grown rapidly after being

involved in the hectic trading traffic. There were new social groups with the wealth of mobile capital, with a new spirit as the trades, in which in its development, there was a new form of state which was called as sultanate. One of the most important facts of that period is the rise of Java as a great sea power.

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