

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Kling Muslims in Sixteenth-Century Ayutthaya: Towards Aggregating the Fragments

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Abstract

This article reconstructs the history of *Kling* Muslims' contribution to the religious and ethnic cosmopolitanism of sixteenth-century Ayutthaya. This study's argument is constructed based on an aggregate of written fragments about the *Kling* in both Portuguese primary sources and the wider academic literature. We reveal that, amongst the many ways in which Siam benefited from the Iberian invasion of Melaka in 1511, the dramatic geopolitical rupture of the invasion re-routed trade across the Bay of Bengal. As a result, *Kling* merchants began arriving in Ayutthaya in greater numbers via the new network of Siamese-controlled ports and portages. Moreover, this study demonstrates the utility of greater synergy among South Asian, Southeast Asian, Thai, and Malay Studies through focusing on the exonyms employed in primary and secondary sources. Finally, this article contends that Ayutthaya's ethnic and religious cosmopolitanism was impacted by the arrival of South Asian Muslims, referred to as *Kling* in the Malay World and *Khaek* in Siam, approximately one century before Persians arrived in greater numbers. This, among others, was an unintended result of Portugal's sixteenth-century interventions into, and alliances with, the Siamese.

Keywords: Kling; Tamil Muslims; Ayutthaya; Siam; Melaka; Southeast Asian Islam

Introduction

There are very few Moors in Siam. The Siamese do not like them. There are, however, Arabs, Persians, Bengalees [*sic*], many Kling, Chinese and other nationalities. And all the Siamese trade is on the China side, and in Pase, Pedir and Bengal. The Moors are in the seaports. (Pires 1944: 104)

This article reconstructs the geopolitical and commercial developments connected to the arrival of Indian Muslim merchants (*Kling* in the Malay World and *Khaek* in Siam) in Ayutthaya at the beginning of the sixteenth century. This study introduces, analyses, and aggregates fragments written in—and about—the Coromandel Coast, Melaka, and Ayutthaya. The *Kling*'s contribution to Ayutthaya's ethnic and religious diversity spans many periods and places and includes many actors—most of which have been overlooked in extant treatments of Thailand's Muslim minorities (see Dalrymple and Joll 2021; Joll and Srawut Aree 2020; Joll 2017). This research's initial interest in Indian Muslims in sixteenth-century Ayutthaya is connected to an exploration of Ayutthaya's oldest shrine (Ar. *Maqam*) to Tok Takia, a Sufi saint.¹ Whilst this comprises the subject of a separate study, local traditions are emphatic that Tok Takia travelled to Ayutthaya, the former Siamese capital, from the Indian subcontinent, sometime between the reigns of King Ramathibodi II (r. 1491–1529) and King Chakkraphat (r. 1548–1569). This current study resulted from the growing confidence that more could—and should—be written about the local

¹The Tok Takia predates the famous shrine in Patani to the Minangkabau trader Sheikh Gombak referred to as Tok Panyae (SM. Tok Panjang), who was buried during Rajah Biru's reign (r. 1616–1624). Readers interested in this shrine should refer to the following: Bougas 1990: 134; Kathirithamby-Wells 1993: 143; Muhammad Arafat Bin Mohamad 2005: 14–15; Teeuw and Wyatt 1970: 153.

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Muslim presence during this period; indeed, both sixteenth-century primary sources and the relevant secondary literature.

John Villiers argues that there is a problematic lack of detailed Spanish and Portuguese accounts of Siam during the sixteenth century, despite the influential presence of Iberian mercenaries, merchants, and missionaries during this period. Of the accounts that do exist, many may be replete with both “prejudices, intolerance and ignorance” and tendencies to “distort, exaggerate and even invent” statistics, but none of these deficiencies preclude historians from offering “many valuable insights” (Villiers 1998: 119). In fact, Geoff Wade regards Tomé Pires’s *Suma Oriental* (Pires 1944) as “unparalleled” (Wade 2019: 118), although Sanjay Subrahmanyam refers to Pires as being frequently “cryptic” (Subrahmanyam 2011: 141). Pires also argues that there were few Muslims (or “Moors”) in Ayutthaya, and that the Siamese disliked them. Moreover, along with “Chinese and other nationalities,” there were also “Arabs, Persians, Bengalees” in Ayutthaya. Not only does Pires mention the presence of the *Kling*, but also that these Indian Muslim traders were numerically significant (Pires 1944: 104).

Siamese attitudes towards Muslim merchants in subsequent decades might explain Duarte Barbosa’s observation that local Muslims were not permitted to bear arms (Barbosa and Stanley 2010: 188). Michael Pearson’s study of religious change during the sixteenth century contends that, in the 1550s, the notoriously unreliable Fernao Mendes Pinto—whom Pearson describes as “adventurer-turned-religious”—asserted that Turkish and Arab missionaries were active in Siam and, furthermore, that they were “doing very well.” Pinto documents “seven mosques,” served thirty thousand local Muslims, which were led by foreign Muslim leaders.² Local Muslim proselytisation had “proceeded apace,” which Pinto attributed to the more detached governing style of King Chairacha (r. 1534–1547), who permitted everyone to “do what they want[ed]”, as he was a king of “nothing more than their bodies” (Pearson 1990: 59, 68–69; da Silva Rego 1947: Vol. V 372). Another anecdote recorded by Pires was that, in the local markets, *Kling* cloth “in the fashion of Siam” could be bought (Pires 1944: 108). Further substantiating Pires’s claim, Wade notes that Indian textiles were mentioned in fifteenth-century accounts of Siam (Wade 2000: 273); Baker and Phongpaichit Baker, however, point out that Indian clothing had “already . . . [been] made in southern India for export to Siam” (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 88; Baker et al. 2005: 221).

In sum, the local accounts of Tok Takia having come to Ayutthaya from the Indian subcontinent, mention in Portuguese sources of *Kling* and textiles from South Indian in local markets, suggest that fragmentary sources were no impediment to undertaking this study’s ambitious task. This research overcomes these potential obstacles (i.e., both the small number of primary sources and the fragmentary nature of references in the relevant secondary literature), in a threefold manner. First, this study pays particular attention to the sixteenth-century geopolitical and commercial context in Melaka, the Coromandel Coast, and Siam—the most important context being the Portuguese defeat of Melaka in 1511. Second, this research explores the synergy between Thai and Malay Studies specialists.³ Other scholarly silos that this study connects are South Asian and Southeast Asia Studies across the Bay of Bengal.⁴ Third, this research takes into account Joll’s anthropological background (Joll 2011, 2013) by contending that the paucity of primary sources can be compensated by homing in on the exonyms *Kling* and *Khaek*.⁵ While some *Kling* may have been Hindus, attention to how certain exonyms were employed do indeed fill some important empirical gaps about how *Kling* Muslims contributed to Ayutthaya’s ethnic and religious cosmopolitanism.

Additionally, this study focuses solely on sixteenth-century Ayutthaya for the following reasons. First, based on Persian (Muhammad Rabi ibn Muhammad Ibrahim 1979) and European sources (Gervaise 1989; Tachard 1688; La Loubère 1691; Baker et al. 2005), much has already been written about Islam’s growth in the seventeenth century.⁶ Subrahmanyam notes that early-sixteenth-century Portuguese accounts of the eastern Bay of Bengal littoral mention Iranian merchants (Bouchon and

²We note that one of these mosques was associated with Tok Takia.

³Exemplars of this approach include the following: Andaya 2017; Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit 2017; Borschberg 2016, 2020; Joll 2011; Montesano and Jory 2008.

⁴The most important synergies between South Asia and Southeast Asian include the following: Amrith 2013: 184; Feener and Sevea 2009; Feener and Blackburn 2019; Harper and Amrith 2014; Ricci 2011.

⁵An exonym is an identity term imposed by outsiders; see Andaya 2008: 11.

⁶See Julispong Chularatana 2017; Marcinkowski 2012, 2015.

Thomaz 1988: 18), describing that they remained “relatively small” in number until a “rapid florescence” during Narai’s reign (r. 1656–88) (Subrahmanyam 1992: 348). Secondly, there are few fragments referring to Muslims in Siam during the fifteenth century. Wade’s encyclopaedic analysis of the *Ming Shi-lu* (*Veritable records of the Ming Dynasty*) (Wade 1994, 2005) cites evidence linking Siam and the Indian Ocean, the first being a reference from 1403, which states that a *Ha-zhi* (Haji) from the “Western Ocean” travelled to China—a place he had heard about while in Siam” (Wade 2000: 273). Baker notes that the “Timurid chronicler,” Abd-er-Razzak (Abd-er-Razzak 1857), mentions that the “Persian Gulf port of Hormuz traded with Ayutthaya in the 1440s” (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 127), while Andrew Peacock bases his analysis on Arabic and Persian sources appearing in Ottoman geographical treatises that use the toponym *Shahr-i Naw* for Ayutthaya (Peacock 2017). Shihāb al-Dīn Ahmad ibn Mājīd, an Arab navigator, includes a description of the western coast of the Malay peninsula in his *Hawiyat al-lkhtisar ’ilm al-Bihar* (1462) (See Tibbetts 1979: 187–189). This is followed about fifty years later by a more “detailed and accurate” navigational manual by Sulaimān bin Ahmad al-Mahrī (1511). In both navigational works, especially in comparison to east coast of the Thai-Malay Peninsula, its western littoral is described in great detail. The importance of al-Mahrī’s work is twofold: first, its “growing awareness” of Ayutthaya, and the territories it controlled” and, second, that trading with Ayutthaya did not require making the “long trip round the peninsula” along the eastern littoral (Peacock 2017: 7–8).

Within this context, this article builds on other scholars’ analyses of key geopolitical ruptures and re-routing trade away from the Straits of Melaka. Chris Baker, for example, argues that it was well-known that Ayutthaya was both a predominantly urban polity (rather than agrarian) and was heavily involved in commerce and manufacturing, arising from the geographical fact of its proximity to the sea (Baker 2003, 2011). Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit’s *History of Ayutthaya: Siam in the Early Modern World* (2017) documents that the local “gradual accretion of peoples” over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had “intensified” during the seventeenth century, arguing that the intensification impacted Ayutthaya’s cosmopolitan characteristics (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 203). In fact, Much has already been written extensively on the ways in which Aceh, Johor, Banten, Makassar benefitted from the vacuum created after Melaka’s demise (Lieberman 2009: 845–853). Whilst Kenneth Hall’s research documents the gains also made by Ayutthaya, somewhat surprisingly Hall considers contributions by Persians and Indo-Persians in the seventeenth century (Hall 2014: 241–251), which may have been due to the fragmentary nature of the sources he used and which this current study introduces, analyses, and aggregates below. Another seminal contribution this study builds on is Michael Feener’s argument that a range of unintended consequences followed in the wake of Iberia’s 1511 interventions. In the fifteenth century, Melaka is widely regarded as Southeast Asia’s “preeminent entrepôt,” which was central to “expanding maritime Muslim networks.” Nevertheless, the Portuguese not only failed to achieve a “monopoly on regional trade,” but also they inadvertently catalysed diasporas, which in turn led to the emergence of “new Muslim communities across the region.” As this study explores in more depth below, this included *Kling* Muslims in Ayutthaya (Feener 2019: 5).

This article’s structure reflects its methodological approach. First, the essay begins by describing the wider geopolitical and commercial context between Melaka and Ayutthaya (before 1511), diplomacy between the Portuguese and Siamese (before 1511), and commercial and military allies in the decades that followed. This study then analyses *Siam’s* incremental acquisition of a series of ports and portages through which *Kling* merchants traded in early modern Siam. Next, the Malay exonym *Kling* and the Siamese exonym *Khaek* become this article’s focus, offering compelling reasons for why most *Kling* in Ayutthaya would have been Muslims. The third and final section reconstructs the *Kling’s* involvement in trade among the Coromandel Coast, Melaka, and Ayutthaya throughout the sixteenth century. Furthermore, this study’s careful aggregation of written fragments both establishes a context and reconstructs vital connections about key events and actors that have been overlooked in extant treatments of Thailand’s Muslim minorities—many of which begin with Persians’ and Indo-Persians’ seventeenth-century contributions to Ayutthaya’s confessional and cultural cosmopolitanism. For example, the presence of many *Kling* Muslims in Siam, which Tomé Pires documents, pre-dates the Persian and Indo-Persian writing by a century. In fact, *Kling* were involved in the growth of Ayutthaya’s Muslim community commented upon by the fellow-Portuguese Fernao Mendes Pinto.

Competitions, Conquest, and Cooperation, before and after 1511

Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit's history of early-modern Ayutthaya establishes that the competition between Melaka and Ayutthaya began in the late thirteenth century when Siamese ships sought to subjugate local rulers and demanded a share of the coastal trade after Srivijaya's demise (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 48, 50). After Ayutthaya attempted to install rulers in the 1390s, Siamese troops returned to Ayutthaya with Chinese seals and patents. These interventions sought to disrupt Melaka's trade with China's Ming Dynasty, who responded by constructing a stone tablet clarifying Melaka's status. In 1419, the Chinese again warned Ayutthaya, which led the Siamese paying tribute to China—in part to atone for attacking Melaka. In 1431, Melaka appealed to the Chinese court, which likely explains why reports documenting rogue operations by Ayutthaya along the Siamese/Malay Peninsula faded from Chinese records. In the mid-1440s, the rulers of Ayutthaya again demanded tribute, which might be connected to a failed attack on Melaka, as referenced in the *Malay Annals*. In the mid-1450s, the *Ayutthaya Chronicle* mentions another mission to Melaka, which was followed by both a "tribute mission to China," and a Melakan "mission of peace to Ayutthaya" (Baker 2003: 47–48).

Siamese attacks on Melaka may have ceased by the mid-1400s, but by 1490 Ayutthaya's campaigns against the Burmese led to them gaining control of Burma's ports and portage routes connecting Ayutthaya with the Bay of Bengal (Baker 2003: 48; Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit 2017: 117; Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 87–88). These attacks began with capturing Thaithong (north of Tavoy), but by the 1460s both Tenasserim and Mergui were also under Siamese control; Tavoy followed in the late 1480s. Notably, both Tenasserim, and Mergui were the "best natural harbour[s]" at the western ends of portages (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 87), and the value of these routes to Ayutthaya—particularly as Asian traders sought routes that avoided Melaka—increased after the Portuguese captured Melaka because Siam could be reached in ten and twenty days. Ayutthaya's control of coastal ports and portages increased its westward trade and, importantly, during the reign of Ramathibodi II (r.1491–1529), Ayutthaya also expanded its trade to southern India. The value conferred by Jacq-Hergoualc'h's reconstruction of the transpeninsular routes (Figure 1) is that they were some of the oldest portages closest to Ayutthaya and were used to conduct trade between Srivijaya and China.

In light of these events, the following question emerges: What form did Portuguese diplomacy with Ayutthaya—and its military and commercial collaboration—take, both prior to the Iberian invasion and in the decades that followed? Edward van Roy's reconstruction of Portugal's attempts to establish a presence in Southeast Asia begins with Portugal building an operational base in Goa, India, in 1510. Before Alfonso d'Albuquerque's began his military campaign on Melaka, a Portuguese envoy was sent to Ayutthaya—a "distant vassal" of Siam; he had been instructed to inform Ayutthaya's ruler of Portugal's intentions and was delighted at the Siamese raising "no objections." Notably, Portuguese accounts claim that Ayutthaya possessed "few guns," but did have the skills to manufacture them. Alfonso d'Albuquerque returned to Portugal via the overland route, which afforded him the opportunity to survey and then offer an appraisal of the "Siamese vassal ports of Tenasserim and Martaban" and their "friendly intentions" to the new Portuguese presence. In 1512, another Portuguese mission commenced—one that included Tomé Pires—leaving Goa for Ayutthaya. The convoy then remained in Ayutthaya for two years, during which time they explored trade opportunities before returning (via Melaka) (van Roy 2017: 42). Tomé Pires noted that there were "three ports in the kingdom of Siam on the Pegu Kingdom side," and he referred to Siam as "large and very plenteous" possessing "many people and cities" with many "lords" and foreign merchants." (Most of the merchants were Chinese because "Siam does a great deal of trade with China.") According to Pires, the "land of Malacca is called a land of Siam," and the whole of "Siam, Champa and thereabouts," is called China (Pires 1944: 103). Pires also asserted that the Siamese had not traded in Malacca for twenty-two years because Melaka's Malay monarchs refused to give allegiance to the kings of Siam, who claimed that Malacca "belongs to the land of Siam" (Pires 1944: 103).

In 1516, the Portuguese in Melaka dispatched another ambassador to negotiate a treaty of "friendship and commerce," which van Roy argues was the first Siamese treaty with a European power (van Roy 2017: 42). Trading posts in both Ayutthaya and other Siamese ports were then established, through which the Portuguese supplied guns and gun powder. From 1515 on, Ayutthaya's Portuguese settlement was led by

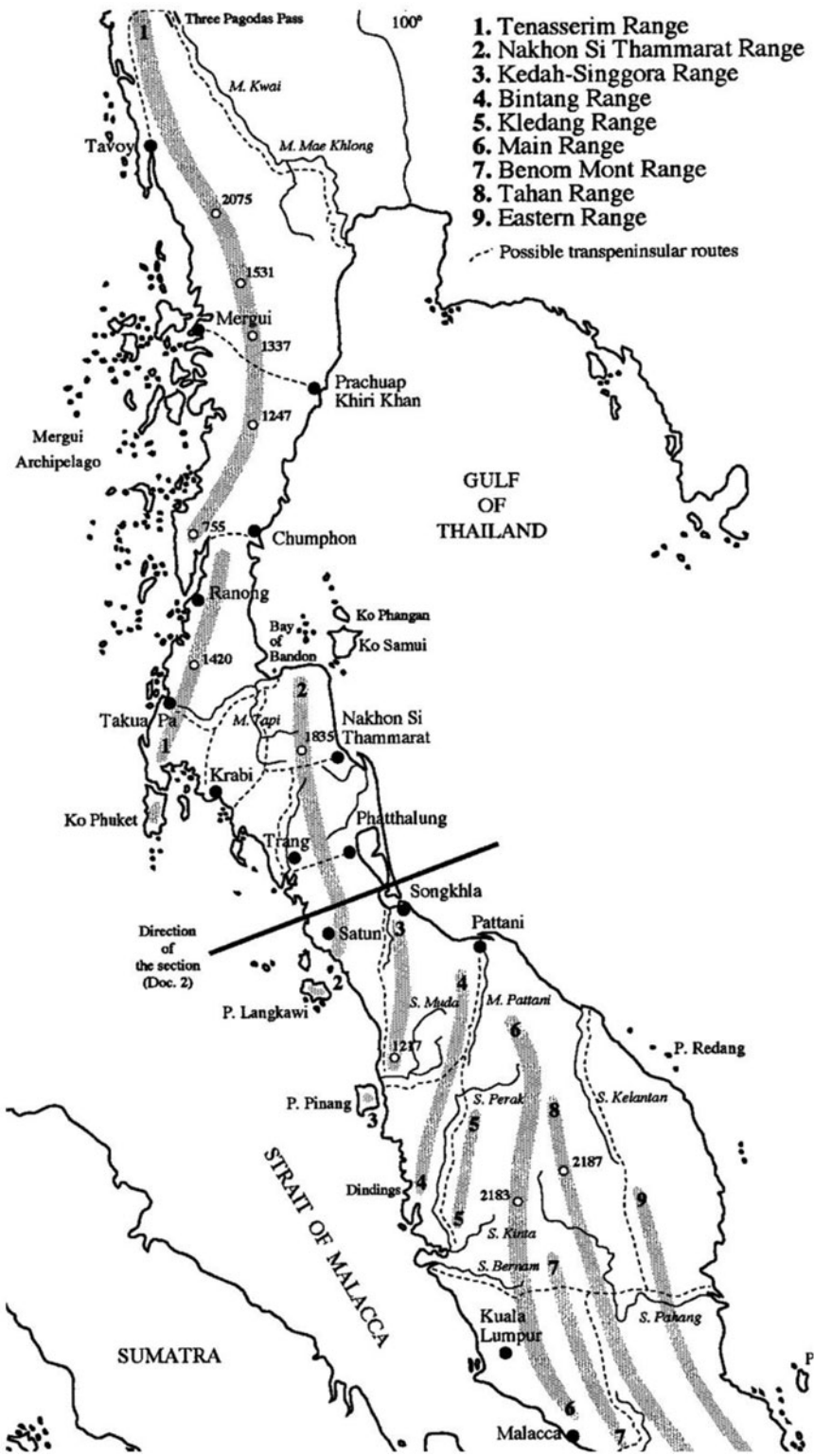


Figure 1. "Relief and possible transpeninsular routes of the Malay Peninsula" (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 684)



Figure 2. The profiling of prominent ports in Van Linschoten's *Exacta & accurata delineatio cum orarum maritimum*⁷ (1596)

a series of captains-major who were appointed in consultation with Siamese authorities from the *Estado Portugues da India* in Goa. Nevertheless, the hands-off policy pursued by the Portuguese meant that Ayutthaya was largely left to its own devices, which suited the Siamese for many reasons, including that, in 1518, the Iberians supplied “guns, munitions, and some Portuguese soldiers” as part of the third Portuguese mission. Baker and Phongpaichit note that these were co-opted in Ayutthaya’s campaign against Lanna (one of its northern rivals) (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 203). The Iberians involved may have been rewarded with permission to trade, but because the Portuguese had failed to source valuable spices, they instead concentrated on supplying “military expertise.” For instance, 120 Portuguese had joined King Chairacha’s personal guard and, later, in the 1550s, João de Barros included “the west-coast ports of Tavoy, Mergui, Tenasserim, Rey Tagala (near Martaban), and Cholom (possibly modern Phuket) among Ayutthaya’s dependencies” (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017: 48, 88, 92, 93). Van Linschoten’s *Exacta & accurata delineatio cum orarum maritimum* (1596) (Figure 2) is one of many portolan maps that European cartographers produced at the end of the sixteenth century; these maps identify important port-cities through a combination of adding port-cities and exaggerating harbour size—the largest being Mergui.

To summarise, although Ayutthaya played second fiddle to Melaka during the long fifteenth century, the Siamese began incrementally acquiring ports and portages to connect Ayutthaya to the Bay of Bengal. This is a likely explanation accounting for the speed with which Siam benefited by Melaka’s demise. However, but this study also documents the deft combination of diplomacy, military, and commercial cooperation between the Iberians and the Siamese, both before and after 1511. Before reconstructing how *Kling* traders from both the Coromandel Coast and Portuguese-controlled Melaka expanded their operations into Ayutthaya, this study next explores the range of exonyms employed in Malay, Thai, and European sources. Finally, this article presents compelling arguments for most *Kling* in Ayutthaya being Muslims.

⁷Downloaded from https://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/22173/exacta-accurata-delineatio-cum-orarum-maritimum-etja-van-linschoten_

Contextualising the Exonyms *Kling* and *Khaek*

Christoph Marcinkowski laments historians having no option but to work with fragments and surviving sources that use the exonym *Khaek* when referring to “non-Siamese individuals of Middle Eastern or Indian ethnic origin.”⁸ These *Khaek* were a mixture of Siamese subjects, foreign residents, and visitors and, moreover, not all *Khaek* were Muslims (Marcinkowski 2015: 38). Expressing similar sentiments, Thongchai Winichakul refers to *Khaek* and *Farang* as the best-known examples of Siamese concerns with “ill-defined” national and ethnic otherness, which he refers to as “negative identification.” In other words: anyone who was either a *Khaek* or a *Farang* was emphatically *not* Siamese. The latter term refers to Westerners, while the former denotes those from the “Malay peninsula, the East Indies, South Asia, and the Middle East without any distinction” and, more generally, Muslims (Winichakul 1994: 5).

In his 2019 doctoral dissertation, John Smith argues that the growth of foreign merchants involved in commerce in the sixteenth century increased Ayutthaya’s ethnic diversity. He cites a Siamese edict from 1599 listing foreign ethnic groups recognised by the court, which resembled an “expanded list” from the *Palace Law* (a Thai source from the fifteenth century) that specifically mentions the following as being prohibited from the rear palace: “Lao, Burmese, Cham, Javanese, Mon, Khmer and Chinese,” including the notoriously imprecise exonym *Khaek* (Pasuk Phongpaichit and Baker 2016: 86). The 1599 edict relisted those included in the *Palace Law*, but in addition to there being no mention of the Javanese, the ethnonym *Khula* (Tamils) is added (Smith 2019: 114).⁹ This term, *Khula*, is not to be confused with the later English exonym, “Chulia.” According to Baker and Phongpaichit, *Khula* (or *Kula*) is an archaic generic Thai term for ‘strangers’; along with *Khaek* and *Malayu*, *Khula* was a term for people of the archipelago (Baker and Phongpaichit 2017, 208–209). In his empirically rich, recently completed doctoral dissertation, Matthew Reeder cites a Thai source from the late-seventeenth century referring to both *Khula* and *Thamin*. The latter is a Thai ethnonym of Pali origins denoting Tamils and that *Thamin* refers to Hindu or Muslim *Khaek* is clear by its reference to these people being the “enemies of the religion.” As Reeder notes, according to the Thai records, the *Khaek Khula* had “small bodies and dark skin,” similar to “people [who were] sailors” (Reeder 2019: 189).¹⁰

Pivoting now from Ayutthaya to the Malay World, in his doctoral dissertation, “The Impact of being Tamil on Religious Life among Tamil Muslims in Singapore” (2007), Torsten Tschacher explains his concerns over historians employing the term *Kling* when referring to Tamil Muslims. Additionally, Subrahmanyam suggests that, at least etymologically, this term is derived from the toponym “Kalinga” (Subrahmanyam 2011: 141). In Portuguese and, later, Dutch sources, South Indian Muslims are referred to either as *Kling* (or *Keling*), or the generic exonym “Moor,” which specifically denoted a mixture of Arab, Persian, or Indo-Persian Muslims. Tschacher argues that the exonyms used in European “travelogues, letters, and other documents,” are highly problematic for a number of reasons. First, there is a widespread lack of scholarly attention to the socio-historical and political context from which the primary sources emerge. Specifically, although the word *Kling* may appear in sixteenth-century Portuguese and nineteenth-century British sources, Tschacher cautions against making the assumption that these terms refer to the same ethno-religious and ethno-linguistic community (Tschacher 2007: 24). Indeed, Tschacher’s concerns echo Leonard Andaya’s arguments against reading bounded ethnoreligious identities into pre-colonial Southeast Asia sources (Andaya 2014: 2008).

Tschacher contends that the term *Kling* must be appreciated as a Malay exonym (Tschacher 2007: 25). In many contexts, *Kling* refers to Tamils, yet in many others, *Kling* also refers to people from the Telugu-speaking parts of South India. Although *Kling* appears in a number of Tomé Pires’s accounts, Subrahmanyam argues that Pires employs *Kling* “far too loosely,” and possibly even confuses “merchants based in Melaka and those based in Coromandel” (Subrahmanyam 1990: 97). Abdur-Rahman Mohamed Amin and Ahmad Murad Merican note that Malay dictionaries define *Kling* as merchants from the South

⁸For a short summary of Thai sources, see Wade 2014. For the most recent translation and publication of *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, see Cushman and Wyatt 2000.

⁹Others in this 1599 edict were Shan (*thai yai*), Brahmins (*pram*), Japanese (*yipun*), Vietnamese (*yuan*), Portuguese (*farang*), English (*ankrit*) and Dutch (*wilanda*) (Smith 2019: 114).

¹⁰See also Reeder 2017, 2020.

Indian subcontinent, including Kalinga. They further point out that William Shellabear's Malay dictionary (published in the early twentieth century) defines *Kling* as people from the eastern coast of British India, especially the Telugus and Tamils. Notably, Shellabear does not specify whether the *Kling* were Muslims or Hindus. This led him to use the phrase "Kling Islam [Muslims]," most of whom were Tamils (Abdur-Rahman Mohamed Amin and Ahmad Murad Merican 2014: 178).

Abdur-Rahman Mohamed Amin and Ahmad Murad Merican's second contribution is their analysis of the sixty-six references to *Kling* in *Sulalat al-Salatin* (also known as *Sejarah Melayu* or *Malay Annals*),¹¹ an important Malay epic that documents the genealogy and history of the Malacca Kingdom between the early fifteenth century and its defeat by the Portuguese in 1511. During the reign of the Sultan Muhammad Shah, Mani Purindan, a Muslim Indian prince from Pahili, arrived in Melaka with soldiers and a fleet of seven ships. The Sultan Muhammad Shah was so impressed that he appointed the prince as one of his ministers. Eventually, the prince married Seri Nara Diraja's daughter. Mani Purindan, a Muslim Indian prince, was the first *Kling* to win an appointment as a minister of the Malacca court and, furthermore, to marry a Sultan and have a son whose name was Raja Kassim (Abdur-Rahman Mohamed Amin and Ahmad Murad Merican 2014: 180).

Such developments indeed confirm the arguments made by Subrahmanyam that *Kling* mercantile networks had already been active and influential in Melaka since fifteenth century. Leonard Andaya notes that, even before the *Sulalat al-Salatin* was composed in Melaka, the term *Kling* appears in the *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* (*The Story of the Kings of Pasai*), which was written between approximately 1383 and 1390. Whilst attributing the initial Islamisation of Pasai to dignitaries from Mecca, the *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* tells of the arrival of traders from the "Land of the Keling." According to Andaya, these were "Tamil Muslim traders" from southern India who, at the time, represented "major economic force in Southeast Asian trade." Moreover, Indian Muslim connections enabled this Sumatran polity to develop into a leading Malayu centre throughout the fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries (Andaya 2008: 113).

According to Tschacher, whilst some surmise that *Kling* specifically denotes Hindus in Portuguese sources from Melaka, scholars should not interpret this usage as a sort of "*a priori* distinction" between local Muslim and Hindu traders (Tschacher 2007: 16). Given all this, what, therefore, is the basis of arguing that more Muslims than Hindus from the Coromandel Coast were active in Melaka and Ayutthaya before 1511? Furthermore, upon what evidence could academics analyse the reason for the Hindu demographic expanding via the network of ports and portages after 1511? In his *Lendas da Índia*, the sixteenth-century Portuguese historian Gaspar Correia notes that the lower-caste Hindu Malabarists were unable to move freely, whilst those who had converted to Islam could travel "freely where[ever] they wished" because they were "outside the law of the Malabarists."¹² With regard to Tamil and Telegu-speaking Hindus representing an "interesting anomaly," James Tracy argues that more Muslims than Hindus settled abroad due to Hindu taboos against "ocean-sailing." Tracy further contends that prior to 1511, the largest Indian Muslim community in Melaka was comprised of the *Kling* and Gujaratis and that, notably, the Portuguese regarded the Gujaratis as a potential ally while considering an attack on Melaka that would "push the Gujaratis aside" (Tracey 2015: 252). Leonard Andaya notes that the size and importance of the Gujaratis population in Melaka is demonstrated by the fact that one of the four official appointed harbour masters liaising with foreign merchants was "assigned solely to the Gujaratis," who were the "most numerous" (Andaya 2008: 70).¹³ Also, in "The Impact of being Tamal on Religious Life," Tschacher argues that references to *Kling* are "too numerous to assume that the term ever referred exclusively to Hindus" (Tschacher 2007: 25). On this point, Subrahmanyam adds that Portuguese sources sometimes apply both *Kling* and the generic exonym "Moor" to the same individual (Subrahmanyam 1999: 64), which suggests that these terms may have been synonymous

¹¹These include encounters between Malays and "Keling" and references to "*benua keling*" (continent/country of the *keling*), "*hulubalang keling*" (warriors from Kalinga), "*rakyat keling*" (citizens of Kalinga), "*raja keling*" (the King of Kalinga), "*kain keling*" (Keling cloths) (Abdur-Rahman Mohamed Amin and Ahmad Murad Merican 2014: 179).

¹²Cited by Wade; see Wade 2019: 95.

¹³The second was responsible for merchants from southern India (Benua Keling), Bengal, Pegu, and Pasai. The third was responsible for traders from Java, (northern Maluku), Banda, Palembang, Tanjong Pura (Borneo), and the people from Luzon (Lucoes). The fourth engaged with traders from China, the Ryukyu Islands, and the Chams.

references to groups from the Coromandel Coast. Elsewhere, Subrahmanyam contends that whilst many Gujaratis may have been Muslims, some were not; similarly, the Tamils were a mixture of Hindus and Muslims (Subrahmanyam 2011: 146).

Subrahmanyam explains that the term *Kling* was employed in the Malay world when referring to “Tamil speakers from the Coromandel coast of southeastern India” (Subrahmanyam 2011:141). Additionally, the Malay toponym *Benua Keling* is etymologically related to the term *Kalinga*. In sixteenth-century Melaka, the term “Kampung Kling” referred to those located in the kampung of Upeh to the right bank of the Kampung River—where these settlers were concentrated. From the seventeenth century onwards, the exonym *Chulia* was used to denote “Tamil Muslim merchants on the Malay,” which was “possibly derived from Cholamandalam.” After reminding his readers that *Suma Oriental* is the “standard source” for understanding the place of the *Kling* in early-sixteenth-century Melaka, Subrahmanyam advises that *Suma Oriental* should be read alongside both the letters of Rui de Brito Patalim (Melaka’s first Portuguese captain) and Portuguese captains of the 1520s (e.g., Jorge Cabral and Pêro Barriga) and Meilink-Roelofs’ analysis (Meilink-Roelofs 1962). References to *Klings* are indeed scattered throughout *Suma Oriental*, including the names of ports and polities that traded with Melaka and the local traders who “originate from there” (Subrahmanyam 2019: 90).

Reconstructing Indian Muslim Trade among South India, Melaka, and Ayutthaya

The preceding section analysed the exonyms *Kling* and *Khaek* in a select body of sources; the previous section also cited reasons why Ayutthaya benefited from Melaka’s demise. The Siamese had not only had acquired the ports and portages connecting Ayutthaya to the Bay of Bengal but also had also formed alliances with the Portuguese. Next, this study reconstructs the history of the *Kling*’s commercial activity with the Siamese capital after re-routing trade from the Straits of Melaka.

In his treatment of southeastern India, Pires writes: “These Malabares make up their company in *Bonua Quelim* which is Choromamdell and Paleacate, and they come [to Melaka] in companies.” However, these people were referred to as *Quelins*, not *Malabares*. According to Pires, “Choromamdell and Paleacate and Naõr” were the most important ports, and he provides the following account of Choromamdell:

The first is Caile [Kayal] and Calicate [Kilakkarai], Adarampatanam [Atiramapattinam], Naor [Naguru], Turjmalapatam [Tirumalappattinam], Carecall [Karaikkal], Teregampari [Tarangambadi], Tirjmalacha [Tirumullaivasal], Calaparaoo [?], Conimiri [Kunjimedu], Paleacate.” (Pires 1944, 103)

Subrahmanyam notes that most of these routes are “identifiable” and that trade between the Tamil regions and Melaka “centred on the port of Pulicat” (“Paleacate” or Palaverkadu, north of Madras) (see Figure 3). Nonetheless, Subrahmanyam’s reference to “Choromamdell” is more ambiguous (Subrahmanyam 2011: 142); yet he also writes that it is “fairly clear” that the trade between ports in southeastern India and Melaka functioned as some sort of “funnel”. However, the sixteenth-century details of long-distance trading networks are “obscure” on account of the “paucity of data” (Subrahmanyam 1990: 95–96). Coromandel ports were directly linked to the southern parts of the Siamese-Malay Peninsula and northern Sumatra, which received a significant number of imported Coromandel textiles. While the principal port may have been Melaka, Subrahmanyam does not rule out other connections among ports in Coromandel Coast, Perak, and Kedah. Pires also refers to Pase (Pasai) as a “rich kingdom,” possessing “many inhabitants and much trade.” After the Portuguese punished Malacca and given that Portugal is at war with Pedir, Pasai had become “Prosperous, [and] rich, with many merchants from different Moorish and Kling nations” who did a “great deal of trade.” The most important of these trading partners were the Bengalees, which are mentioned in Pires’s brief description of Siam, but Pasai also identifies “Rumes, Turks, Arabs, Persians, Gujaratees Kling, Malays, Javanese and Siamese” (Pires 1944: 103). This anecdote suggests that Northern Sumatra was one of the corners of the Bay of Bengal in which the *Kling* may have formed commercial alliances with Siamese traders.

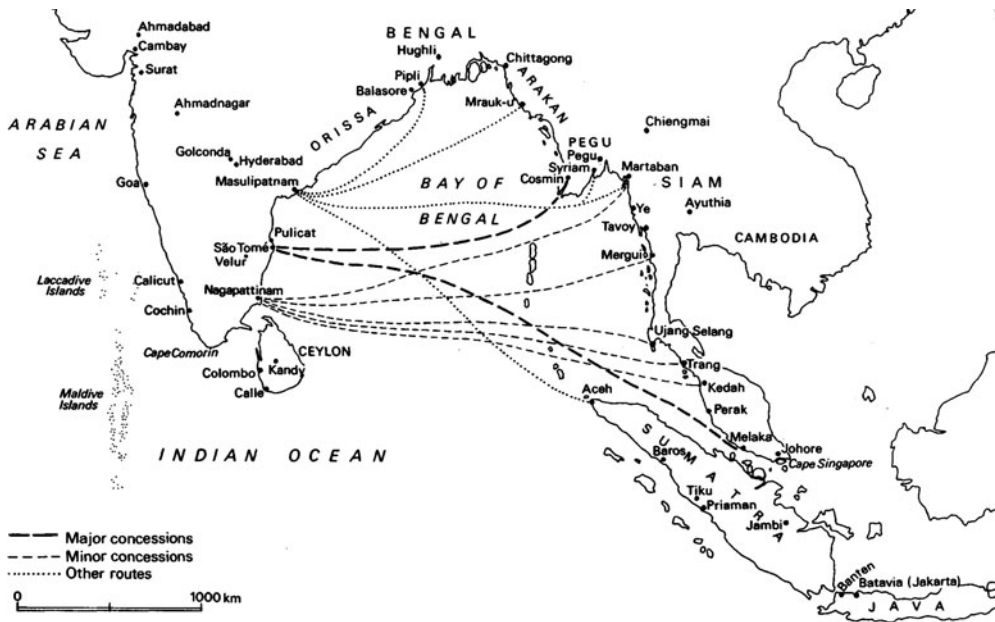


Figure 3. Concessionary routes across the Bay of Bengal (Source: Subrahmanyam 1990: 150)

Again, the ethno-religious and ethno-linguist identity of some of the actors involved in trade among South India, Sumatra, and the Thai-Malay Peninsula is “something of a puzzle.” For example, mercantile communities in sixteenth-century Pulicat were “mixed” and “cosmopolitan”; local communities lived in “separate and demarcated quarters in the port town in a manner typical of the period, and reminiscent of the well-known layout of such mercantile towns as pre-Portuguese Melaka.” This study argues that the major traders in Pulicat in the period were Muslims (Subrahmanyam 1990: 96). The ideal way to reconstruct trade routes across the Bay of Bengal during this period is to consider specific case studies from secondary literature.

Consider, for instance, an Italian man named Niccolo Da Conti whose travels in the 1420s included the Bay of Bengal and who recorded the great wealth of South Indian traders. Per his writing, the traders’ wealth was demonstrated in that they conducted their own business with a fleet of “forty of their own ships,” each of which was valued at “fifty thousand gold pieces” (Hall 2009: 128). In “The Chulia Muslim Merchants in Southeast Asia, 1650–1800” (1996), Sinnappah Arasaratnam notes that over and above the “direct import-export trade between Siam and Coromandel in textiles, sappan wood, hides, elephants, tin, ivory and gold,” Ayutthaya functioned as a “meeting point for the China and Japan trade [network].” Accordingly, Coromandel merchants may have acquired Chinese and Japanese goods, such as “copper, zinc, lead, alum and radix-china,” but they also sought entry into Cochin-Chinese and Japanese markets through contacts with “Chinese Muslim merchants coming to Ayutthaya.” Additionally, Arasaratnam recounts Dutch reports of “Moors” on Chinese and Japanese ships in the South China Sea, sailing from Ayutthaya to unknown destinations. In fact, one ship was wrecked in Tonkin and ten survivors who were Coromandel “Moors” were “repatriated to Coromandel”; furthermore, Arasaratnam raises the possibility that some may have been Chulias (Arasaratnam 1996: 131, 165).

Portuguese accounts of “Keling/Chulia trading networks post-1511” make it possible for scholars to “reconstruct good parts” of the local picture of trade during this period. For one, Subrahmanyam considers the fascinating case study of the commercial activities of a certain man named “Setu Nayinar” between 1513 and 1514. The detail that this study is interested in is that the man sent two ships to Siam through his “partnership with the Portuguese Crown”—specifically via a certain Rui de

Araújo (Subrahmanyam 2011: 142, 143, 146). Moreover, Setu Nayinar “concentrated largely (albeit not exclusively) on the textile and rice trade of the littoral ports and regions of the Bay of Bengal.” In addition the Coromandel Coast, this route also included “both Bengal and Pegu” (Subrahmanyam 2011: 143). What is more, before the Iberian invasion “Tamils and Gujarats” dominated both “numerically and in terms of economic and political power.” Furthermore, the Portuguese narrative claims that, upon their conquest of Melaka, “Gujarati merchants fled the port in large numbers.” In contrast, the Tamils “largely remained” (Subrahmanyam 2011: 146). He adds that some Tamil merchants—including the aforementioned Setu Nayinar—may have also supported the Iberian invasion. Either way, they had been “well-placed to take advantage of the situation” (Subrahmanyam 2011: 146).

Nevertheless, “If the great *Keling* merchants such as Setu Nayinar had imagined in late 1511 that the new regime would share power in a reasonable arrangement with them, they were soon disabused of this idea”:

Initially, the Kelings had much to offer the Portuguese and they did so, notably in the form of sharing crucial commercial information by way of the “joint-venture” voyages they undertook with the Portuguese Crown to ports such as Martaban and Pulicat. But this was clearly an affair with diminishing returns, and once the Portuguese factors had grasped some of the tricks of the trade, it was clear that such ventures would cease, at least in their initial form. Further, the Portuguese power structure itself was deeply fragmented, and Setu Nayinar’s close alliance with Rui de Araújo, for example, meant that he was not necessarily well-placed after the latter’s death with regard to other Portuguese actors. (Subrahmanyam 2019: 96)

This poses an important question: Had all Muslim traders actively avoided the Straits of Melaka after the Portuguese arrived and piracy increased? Indeed, the secondary literature suggests that some tweaks are necessary. Some Indian merchants trading among the Coromandel Coast, Melaka, and Siam worked with—as well as benefited from—the Portuguese in Melaka. Moreover, the mercantile communities from the Coromandel Coast were the winners and the Gujaratis were the losers. As Andaya notes, the Coromandel Coast communities had the advantage because of their large population and their involvement in defending Melaka. Arun Dasgupta refers to Gujaratis as being “bitterly opposed [to] Portuguese penetration” because they wished to preserve the “freedom of high-seas navigation” so they could control trade in the middle Indian Ocean.” Finally, having been marginalised by the Portuguese, the Gujaratis moved their operational base to Aceh (Dasgupta 1982: 426).

What, therefore, could one rightly conclude from Subrahmanyam’s case studies of the *Kling* who engaged in these trading networks, including Ayutthaya? In *Cross-cultural trade in world history* (1984) Philip Curtin rejects claims that the Portuguese destroyed existing trade networks; rather, Curtin contends that Iberian naval power “reinforced certain trade opportunities,” and either “suppressed or distorted others (147).” Further, Curtin suggests that the Portuguese’s anti-Muslim bias is what led them to attempt to regulate trade across the Bay of Bengal. While continuing to trade with Muslim Gujaratis in some places, they in fact wanted “Muslims out of the trade between India and Southeast Asia.” One way to accomplish this was to encourage *Kling* merchants from the Coromandel coast to “take their place” (Curtin 1984: 147). This explains why *Kling* traders came in greater numbers to Ayutthaya, although eventually the Portuguese’s need for additional local business allies led them to revisit this policy, which in turn led some *Kling* relocating to Melaka (See Hall 2009: 129). From the 1530s, the spice trade from local ports controlled by the Portuguese to the Red Sea revived significantly, forcing the Portuguese to revisit its “anti-Islamic posture” in favour of a policy that would lure “Muslim shipping back to that port.”

Conclusion

Muslim communities in Ayutthaya had already grown in population before the Persians and Indo-Persians arrived in the seventeenth century. While there may have been relatively few Muslims in Ayutthaya at the beginning of the sixteenth century (who were disliked by the Siamese), Tomé Pires (in addition to Arabs, Persians, and Bengalese) comments that the *Kling*—who were locally referred to as *Khaek*—were numerous. Such mentions of the *Kling* in sixteenth-century Ayutthaya are reminders

that, when it comes to the Islam's spread locally, there were more than Arabs or Persians involved.¹⁴ During the reigns of King Ramathibodi II (r. 1491–1529) and King Chakkraphat (r. 1548–1569), local disciples of the Indian Tok Takia established Ayutthaya's earliest shrine (Ar. *Maqam*) to their Sufi Sheikh approximately a century before the Tok Panyae shrine was established in Patani during Rajah Biru's eight-year reign, which ended in 1624.

In the mid-sixteenth century, Mendes Pinto described Ayutthaya's cosmopolitan cohort of Muslim missionaries as having established at least seven mosques, which served thirty thousand Muslims. Notably, one of the mosques was associated with the Tok Takia Shrine and, perhaps, benefitted from Chairacha's hands-off attitude towards Ayutthaya's growing religious cosmopolitanism. The focus of recent work by scholars, such as Matthew Reeder and John Smith, has been the ethnic elements of Siamese cosmopolitanism. For example, they argue that some of the *Khaek* appearing in late-sixteenth-century Siamese sources that mandated the management of Ayutthaya's increasingly diverse mixture of sojourners and subjects were *Khula*, which may have referred to Tamils.

This study has argued that the growth of Ayutthaya's ethnically diverse Muslim communities during the sixteenth century can rightly be explained by the range of diplomatic manoeuvrings, geopolitical ruptures, and trade re-routing after the Iberian invasion of Melaka in 1511. These factors confirm the veracity Feener's argument that the Portuguese had contributed unintentionally to creating new Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. They also confirm Chris Baker's insistence that Ayutthaya's strength arose from maritime trade via the Bay of Bengal, not via agriculture. In other words: Ayutthaya's prominence as polity is deeply connected to Melaka's fall. After Ayutthaya gained control of the most important ports connecting it to the Bay of Bengal; although a mixture of Tamil- and Telugu-speaking Indians (who were mainly Muslim) may have traded with Ayutthaya, it was in fact *Kling* merchants (e.g., Setu Nayinar) who comprised the greater number of traders after 1511. Furthermore, greater awareness of commercial opportunities in Ayutthaya (including textiles) facilitated by military, diplomatic, and commercial alliances between the Siamese and Portuguese increased contact between the *Kling* and Siamese across the Bay of Bengal—including North Sumatra. Reasons behind the increasing interest in trading with Ayutthaya amongst Muslim *Kling* range from their desire to avoid Melaka, using a more direct trading from the Coromandel Coast, and exploiting the cooperative relationship between the Siamese and Portuguese.

In addition to these empirical findings, this study also demonstrates the utility of both exploring the synergy among South Asian, Southeast Asian, Thai, and Malay Studies and analysing the exonyms employed in primary and secondary sources. Feener's approach to Southeast Asian Islam in tandem with Baker's wide-angle and *longue durée* lens to Thai Studies led this research to trawl for, introduce, aggregate, and analyse a mixture of the few primary sources that exist and the extensive array of secondary sources. The lack of extensive primary sources should not stymie religious historians in researching and publishing on overlooked periods, places, and actors. In fact, by homing in on such frequently imprecise exonyms, scholars can highlight the contributions of Indian Muslim in ways that profile the *Khaek* as overlooked pioneers in establishing a Muslim presence in sixteenth-century Ayutthaya. This study, by seeking greater synergy among diverse scholarly silos, has brought into greater focus the presence and impact of *Kling* Muslims in early-modern Siam before the Persians and Indo-Persians arrived from across the Bay of Bengal. Although the Persians that Pires mentions, along with Bengalis and Arabs, were present in Ayutthaya at the beginning of the sixteenth century, this study contends that other actors, specifically Muslim *Kling*, had a significant impact on the ethnic and religious characteristics of Siamese cosmopolitanism during the early 1550s.

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¹⁴Feener (2010) and Wade (2019) provided the revisionist approaches to the growth of Southeast Asian Islam between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries have been provided. Those interested in the legacy of Indian Muslim entrepreneurs could consult Younus Ahmed Mushtaq Ahmed and Norasikin Basir 2019: 279; regarding the role of Chinese Muslims, see Wade (2010) and Wain (2017).

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