Accounts by Merchants, Travellers and Missionaries as Historical Sources for the Study of the Malay Archipelago in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century

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Abstract This paper will study the accounts of merchants, travellers and missionaries who were present in the Malay Archipelago in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Their accounts-in the form of personal testimonies and articles in diaries, books, journals and official reports-are important in helping us to better understand the socio-economic and political dynamics of the Malay Archipelago. Information on trade covers merchandise, traders, trade routes, trading policies (particularly the laissez-faire policy of the natives) as well as the impact of piracy. The policy at the time helped the foreign powers, especially the British, to implement free trade imperialism in this part of the world in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The overall situation in the Archipelago enabled the foreign powers to cultivate cordial relationships with the natives, thereby delaying colonial intervention in the native states. This was very much evident in the case of the Malay Peninsula, which only witnessed official intervention by the British in the late nineteenth century. This paper will seek to establish this argument by analysing the selected writings of the merchants, missionaries and travellers of the said period.

Keywords: history, merchants, travellers, missionaries, trade, Malay Archipelago

Abstrak Makalah ini akan mengkaji tentang muklumat yang disampaikan oleh pedagang, pengembara dan mubaligh yang berada di Kepulauan Melayu pada abad ke lapan belas dan ke sembilan belas Masihi. Muklumat yang dikumpulkan oleh ketiga-tiga kumpulan ini adalah dalam bentuk muklumat peribadi yang dicatatkan dalam diari, buku, makalah dalam jurnal dan laporan rasmi berharga yang membantu kita memahami dengan lebih baik dinamik sosio-ekonomi dan politik Kepulauan Melayu. Muklumat berkaitan dengan perdagangan meliputi barangan yang diperdagangkan, kumpulan pedagang, laluan perdagangan, polisi perdagangan (khususnya