

History of Economic Relations Between Oman and The Malay Archipelago Via Maritime Networks

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Abstract

This study aims to determine historical economic relations between Oman and Malay maritime networks. The history of the economy between the two countries started from the ancient centuries then extended and developed to the recent time years, this is obviously shown in the commercial exchange activities between Malaysia and the Sultanate of Oman. This study intends to discover the impacts of Omani maritime trades on international relations especially with the main nations in Southeast Asia India, China, and the Malay Archipelago. The central claim of this documentary is to collect the information by using the library review method. The result of the study concludes that the history of Oman- Malaysia is a wealth of the economic activities which made the trade exchange strong between them and each country affected the other in the level of social life generally and economic side in specific.

Keywords: Maritime Networks, Sultanate of Oman, Malay Archipelago

INTRODUCTION

Based on the importance of the Sultanate ports and their locations, extending from the north of Musandam Governorate to the south of Dhofar Governorate, the Sultanate of Oman potentially played a significant role in the development and implementation of the belt and road initiative, especially around the Gulf region and the Indian Ocean. This is supported by Oman's character as the only Arab state to have held an empire with its maritime strength. (Aljabri, 2012). Moreover, Oman's strategic site has enabled it to serve as a bridge for interaction between ancient Iraqi, Indian, Chinese, Persian, and Egyptian civilizations. (Al Hadj & Aziz as cited in Al Ghailani, 2017).

On the other hand, with the rise of the Islamic Emirate in the 7th century CE and further in the 8th century, the Abbasids saw Arabs and Persians dominating this economic network where vessels visited India and Song China. In order to reach the latter, they had to pass through Southeast Asia as the home of the early Malay kingdoms (Osman et al., 2021). In the late 15th

and early 16th centuries, it was then followed by the era of European control over Asia and Africa and the establishment of the American State. More specifically, the Omani Empire was established by its founder Sultan Said bin Sultan. Since its establishment, the Omani kingdom has extended its political influence in the region stretching from Bahrain and the eastern Arabian Gulf coast to Mozambique in Africa. They even reached the Cape of Good Hope. This took place as Omani navigator Muslim Ben Masood Ben Ali Alaloui, in his attempt to discover the unknown and in search of new markets for his trade, arrived at Cape Town in South Africa (Al Ghailani, 2017).

Geographically, Oman shares its borders with the Republic of Yemen in the southwest, with Saudi Arabia in the west, and with the United Arab Emirates in the north. On the eastern side, it is surrounded by the Oman and Arab Seas, followed by several islands in the Arabian Sea such as the island of Masirah, the islands of Khuriya Muriya (Halaniyah), the islands of Daymaniyat, Umm al-Ghanam, Bawshar, al-

Khail, Salama and its daughters, Abu Rashid, Daidamar and Fanco which are located in the Sea of Oman and Strait of Hormuz (Al Ghailani, 2017). The Omanis of the coastal cities have played a clear and visible role in ancient and modern Omani history. One of the significant indicators of this role is the transfer of the Busaidi State's status as the government from the interior of Oman to coastal Muscat. (Al Ghailani, 2017). From these coastal cities, commercial Omani naval fleets and military forces have been launched, roaming the seas of the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean led by Omani boatswains and sailors.

Moreover, the role of these coastal cities was not limited to sailing operations. Rather, the armies carried by Omani ships had the priority to first hunt pirates, defend the nation, protect its political and commercial gains, or assist friendly States against attacks by their assailants. One example of this important role is the Omani campaign to free Basra from the naval blockade by the Persian fleet under Imam Ahmed bin Said, the founder of the Busaidi State. (Al Ghailani, 2017). Furthermore, the Busaidis took an interest in the naval fleet, making ships, supplying them with weapons from guns and rifles, preparing a naval army ready to defend the homeland, protecting the Omani maritime trade, and marching brothers and friends. (Yusuf et al as cited in Al Ghailani, 2017).

However, Oman remained geographically, historically, and politically isolated from the major currents of Arab history due to the demise of its empire in 1862 until 1970. (Kelly, 1980 as cited in Aljabri, 2012). Because Omani navigational history is linked to Omani civilization, this shows the significant historical role played by Omani coastal cities like Muscat, Sohar, Sur, Sumhram, and Musandam Governorate (Al Ghailani, 2017). Though it is not in terms of the present wealth and power, Oman is the most important and is the most interesting of the minor states of the Gulf (Kelly, 1980). For that reason, this paper aims to explore the connection between Oman and the outside world by asserting that Oman has a direct impact on the maritime history of Omani through Omani naval centers. (Al Ghailani, 2017).

3.1. Omani Maritime Trade and Its Impacts on the International Relations

In the present time, Omani ports have become important sites in the economic world. Globalization, commerce, and the global economy have all benefited from these ports. This necessitates bolstering the national efforts of Omani governance to further grow and enhance this sector and its specialities, such as shipping, unloading, submerging, transit, and tourism. Additionally, the Sultanate of Oman is trying to integrate and cooperate with all governorates to spread the benefits of the ports across the country. (Al Lawati, 2018). Accordingly, the Persian Gulf has been always at the centre of the great powers of global policy (Yazdani, 2020). Many regularly traded and imported goods and materials that arrive at Oman's ports are then distributed to both domestic and international customers by truck, rail or boat to those living on islands such as Masirah and the Halaniyats. (Aljabri, 2012). As the capital city, Muscat is connected to the country's major ports and cities as part of Oman's ambitious plan to build a national railway network. (Aljabri, 2012).

Likewise, the history of Omani maritime relations has been primarily linked to maritime routes across the Indian Ocean. In this case, sailing the Gulf and the Indian Ocean has always relied on the fact that the winds occur in a predictable annual series. (Nicolini, 2016). Moreover, Oman's foreign ties have traditionally been conducted by sea. However, it should be noted that Omani contacts and exchanges were also extensive on land. In the past, the coastal maritime trade, as well as long-distance trade, were manifestations of a sophisticated, developed, and coordinated economy. (Nicolini, 2016). Today, Oman is connected to an international maritime transport system where cargo moves between more than 3,000 major commercial ports. (Stopford as cited Aljabri, 2012). Because of the strategic importance of these ports and their positions, several countries expect to expand their cooperation with the Sultanate of Oman. In doing so, several conferences were conducted resulting in key recommendations for improving Omani port infrastructure, including the rapid establishment of maritime trade corridors with emerging markets to benefit from the countries' high economic growth rates and achieve the required

economic returns. This is in addition to improving industries that sustain these ports and

implementing new technology. (Al lawati, 2018).

Figure 1 Early map of Arabian Gulf & Arabian maritime trade with India Kedah and China



(Yaapar, 2021)

3.2. Omani-Indian Trade Relations

Oman has a strategic location because it is situated between Indian and European continents. Consequently, it has been an important part of commercial commerce, as well as intercultural and intellectual engagement from the dawn of time. This strategic location has a long and illustrious history in the world. It has been the target of western colonization since the 16th century, in which the Portuguese was the first to arrive in this area. (Al-Hashimy, 2015). Despite the lack of a definitive date for the start of Omani-Indian interactions, various pieces of evidence suggest that historical relationships and contacts between the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian Subcontinent dated back to prehistoric times. (Al-Mubarkburi & Al-Qadi Athar Al-Hindi as cited in Al-Hashimy, 2015). As previously noted, the trade links between India and Oman have a long history. In the past, Omani ships served as an intermediary in the transfer of products and commodities between the Arabian Peninsula and India. More importantly, Oman-India commercial links dated back to the pre-Islamic era, during which the trade between Majan, Dilmun, and Malukha flourished. During the Islamic era, the trade in spices, perfumes, and rare woods flourished between the two countries. (Al-Masu'udias cited in Al-Hashimy, 2015). On the other hand, the period of Portuguese domination of the Indian Ocean reveals extensive information on Indian commercial activities in Oman and Muscat. (Pradhan, 2013). The Omani ships suffered a major setback in navigation

during the Portuguese domination over the Indian and Peninsula coasts for over a century and a half. It resulted in considerable economic stagnation and depression in the two regions. Nonetheless, the Omani navigation restored its activities once Omanis rescued their country and the Gulf from Portuguese colonization in the mid-17th century of the early imams of the Ya'rubi Dynasty. (Salih, al-Nabi & Ali as cited in Al-Hashimy, 2015).

During the 18th century, the Ya'ariba ruled over a thriving trade empire that was tightly tied to East Africa's coastal cities and major islands. (Nicolini, 2016). Imam Ahmad bin Said Al Bu-Saidi inherited the burden of the Ya'ariba Dynasty, which had been plagued by civil warfare in Oman between 1719 until its final demise in 1749. (Al-Hashimy, 2015). After rescuing Oman from the Persian occupation, Imam Ahmad established the foundations of his state. Imam Ahmad then reestablished the contacts with the rest of the globe, including India. The political ties between Oman and India's princes, particularly the Emirate of Duyool in Sindh, Saiyid Sa'id bin Sultan Al Bu Sa'id vitalised an important mercantile empire in the Indian Ocean. (Nicolini, 2016). As a result of the turmoil in Persia, Omani ports such as Muscat had become the principal entrepôts between the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean commerce network by 1775. (Nicolini, 2016). Al Bu-Saidi rulers were keen to consolidate their relations with the rulers of Mysore and to have agents representing their country's business interests there. This policy was a continuation of

the distinctive business activity of the Ya'ariba.(Tamam, 2017). From the beginning of his reign, Tipu Malik began to expand his relations outside the Indian Ocean and became Muscat's most important partner based on the ties established by his father. He set up a commercial warehouse in Muscat in 1785 and appointed two officials to oversee it as the most important of all of Mysore's commercial warehouses abroad(Tamam, 2017). Omani economic agreements and representations abroad, expanding since the 1990s, both focus on Indian Ocean countries.(Wippel, 2015). As in the case of Omani-Indian relations, the development of bilateral ties is still as vital as the development of multilateral ties. This is in line with the Sultanate's branding as an Indian Ocean state, which demonstrates the Sultanate's long-term ties to the burgeoning international region.(Wippel, 2015).

3.3. Omani-Chinese Trade Relations

The Arabian Peninsula has been considered as the transfer station and the bridge for the communication of the African countries and Asian countries. Because Oman is situated in the southeast corner of the Arabian Peninsula, it plays an inevitable role in distributing the goods and becomes a center for the business activities between the East and the West. Due to its close situation to East Africa, India, Iran, Pakistan, Yemen, and the greater Indian Ocean region than other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, Oman is of immense strategic value to China's efforts to revive ancient maritime trade routes. Oman's strategic location (on the axis of the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Gulf) enables it to act as a regional hub between Asia and the GCC states. It boasts accessible trade routes and rapid transit times to the world's most attractive emerging markets.(Yazdani, 2020). The British historian, Vere Gordon Childe, wrote that the southern coastal areas of the Arabian world, particularly the areas around Oman, are the birthplace of navigators who did business with Ethiopia, Sindh, and the Gulf.(SAADI, 2012).

Oman and China's friendship history dated back to ancient times. Their interactions have never ceased for thousands of years. Particularly, Sohar served as a major hub for friendly ties between ancient Arab countries and China. In his book, Dictionary for Names of Places, Arab geologist Yagoot Hamayw referred to Sohar as "the gateway to China" (Wilkisonas cited in

SAADI, 2012). Omani people have been known for shipbuilding and navigation since ancient times. Therefore, Oman's handicraft industry and sector were thriving(SAADI, 2012). During the Han Dynasty, for instance, Chinese people led the way in navigating overland traffic from East Asia to West Asia. At that time, Zhang Qian discovered the traffic between China and Central Asia directly. The Arabs then carved out a shipping path from the Red Sea and the Gulf, passing through the India Peninsula and the Malay Peninsula on their way to the south of China(SAADI, 2012). The Arab navigator Suleiman wrote a book in the middle of the 9th century detailing the route sailing east from Oman to China, starting from the Gulf, passing through the Arabian Sea and India, and then from India's Malabar coast, passing through the Malacca Strait, the Bay of Bengal, the South China Sea, and finally arriving in Guangzhou. This famous maritime trade route, known as the "Spices Road," was as important as the "Silk Road."(SAADI, 2012).

During this period, China was a major player in the Indian Ocean sailing scene. Chinese ships were seen not only in the Gulf but also in the Red Sea and even off the coast of East Africa. In an examination of maritime traffic between China and the Arab world during the Tang and Song dynasties, it was discovered that before the Sui and Tang dynasties, Chinese monks often travelled overseas by foreign vessels. Those foreign businessmen came to China primarily by Chinese boats during the Tang and Song dynasties, particularly the Song dynasty(SAADI, 2012). when China's merchant ships also opened up a new "Spice Road" which started in Guangzhou (or Quanzhou) and travelled straight across the Indian Ocean, bypassing India from Sumatra to Dhofar. By taking this route, not only was the distance reduced but the Indian Ocean's monsoons could be fully utilized. This way could save more than a third of the travelling time.

Consequently, the opening of new routes has bolstered trades and friendly ties with Oman(SAADI, 2012). According to Masudi, an Arab historian and geographer, Chinese merchant ships visited the Gulf regularly in the 6th century. They could travel directly to Oman, Bahrain, Basra, and other destinations and vice versa. More specifically, Sohar was one of the main freight stations on the sea route connecting

East African countries with China (SAADI, 2012). However, because of Portuguese colonialists' military aggression, expansion, and piracy, Chinese merchant ships almost vanished in the west of the Malacca Strait after the mid-16th century. During that time, China was cut off from the Arab world. As a result of their relentless expansion and piracy, the economy withered, the commerce plummeted, and trade routes were cut off (SAADI, 2012).

The Chinese government was also interested in Oman because of its large consumer market and lucrative investment opportunities. Aside from the free trade zones, Chinese investors are drawn to Oman because of its relatively flexible investment policies and strategic and geopolitical location. Furthermore, Muscat provides Beijing with a forum from which to expand its presence in the Middle East. Because of China's unprecedented economic development, trades with the Persian Gulf countries, including Oman, has become a core part of the country's foreign policy (Yazdani, 2020). Furthermore, since the late 1970s, China's economic growth has been the top priority on Beijing's national agenda. This has been a driving force behind Beijing's strategies in the Persian Gulf region.

At present, the Chinese government has launched a "Go Global" plan to invest its substantial foreign exchange reserves in the Asia Pacific, America, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. To put it another way, as China's global presence increases, so does its ties with countries outside of its traditional sphere of interests. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is made up of the Persian Gulf states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Enayatollah Yazdani, 2020)¹. In spring 2015, China's top economic planning body, The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), issued a new action plan detailing key aspects of the policy. It included the construction of land and maritime "economic corridors." (Yazdani, 2020). Even though the oil industry unquestionably dominates China-Oman relations, the two countries' links have extended well beyond hydrocarbons such as on the subject of energy, defence, trade, and the Belt and Road Initiative. This demonstrates that

the people of Oman made significant contributions to the establishment of a sea link between the East and the West.

3.4. History of Economic Relations between Oman and Malaysia via Maritime Networks

3.4.1. Historical Dimension of The Economic Relations Between Oman and Malaysia

The relationship between the Middle East and Southeast Asia has existed since the sailors from the Malay Archipelago and the Middle East began to engage in maritime trades which include wealthy Southeast Asian items such as spices, metals, and aromatics. According to history, huge fleets of Malay ships sailed back and forth to Aden and other Middle Eastern ports as early as the first century CE. On the other hand, the Southeast Asian littorals, or the Malay Archipelago, have been known to Arabs collectively as Zabaj/Sabag since the Islamic Caliphate. Malay people, especially Malaysia, are one of the countries that have aligned positively with Omani communication. At this point, the Omani Sea ride was not limited to trade purposes. They have played important roles in spreading Islam in Africa, Comoros, China, the Malay Archipelago, and other countries. This is evidence of Omanis' skill in shipping, their knowledge of sea paths, and their excellence in shipping. Therefore, the commercial maritime nation of Oman has a long history and a wider cultural sphere which were found almost anywhere in the societies they had travelled to and communicated with (Osman et al, 2018).

3.4.1.1. Malay-Omani Navigators and Maritime Traders

Large fleets of Malay outriggers sailed between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Aden, including Aden, as early as the first century CE. Their primary goal was to supply cinnamon (*kayumanis*) and coco-yams (*keladi*), two popular Malay Archipelago goods, to the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean markets. Furthermore, the huge Indian Ocean and Pacific became highways where sailors, traders, and travellers moved about for various purposes as early as the Mesopotamian Era in the 3rd century BCE. (Yaapar, 2021). On the other hand, vessels from the Arabian Gulf went to the Indus Valley

for exotica exchanges of high demand such as silver, bronze, iron, ivory, pearl, etcetera (Yaapar, 2021)². During that time, Suhar, Sur, Ormuz, Muscat, and Qalhat became ports of call for all ships travelling via the ports of the classical Malay kingdoms such as Ancient Kedah, Pasai, and Malacca. They connected Chinese ports like Qinzhou and Guangzhou on one end and Abbasid ports like Aden and al-Basra in the Gulf on the other. As a result, the Omanis and the Malays, respectively, commanded crucial chokepoints in history, particularly in the Straits of Ormuz and the Straits of Malacca. (Yaapar, 2021).

The Omani situation is essentially identical to that of the Malays, who controlled the world's most important chokepoint, the Strait of Malacca, for a long time via Srivijaya and the Ancient Kingdom of Kedah. The rise of the Islamic Emirate in the 7th century CE and the Abbasids in the 8th century CE effectively assigned the Persians and Arabs, including the Omanis, the dominant role in this economic network in which vessels visited India and faraway China, all of which must pass through Southeast Asia, particularly Srivijaya, including Ancient Kedah. (Yaapar, 2021). The Srivijayan thalassocracy had ancient Kedah or Kalah as a prominent partner. Meanwhile, Arabian sailors from al-Basra, Siraf, Bushahr, Suhar, Sur, Qalhat, Muscat, Julfar, and other ports in the Greater Omani Region flocked to the port. Unfortunately, in academic research, the Omani sailors were always ignored in favour of a more generalized Arab-Persian classification. (Yaapar, 2021) Many of the Middle Eastern historical documents of nautical contact with the Malay littorals, notably Ancient Kedah, came from Omani-native sailors, Omani sailors based in Persian ports, and non-Omanis working in Omani ports. (Yaapar, 2021).

Kedah fell out of favour after the Chola invasion in 1025. The peninsula was divided between the Siamese (Thai) and the Javanese dynasties of Singosari and Majapahit, with the Malay inheritors caught in the between. The Malay kingdoms of Pasai and Ancient Singapura rose from this interregnum in the 13th century, and the Malacca Sultanate was created in 1411. The Sultanate would later dominate the entire Malay Peninsula, Sumatra's eastern coast, and the Riau

Archipelago, Malacca, dubbed as the "Venice of the East," was an important maritime commerce partner of the Omani-Persian kingdom of Ormuz in the Arabian Gulf from its founding until 1511. (Yaapar, 2021). In parallel, in the north, under the yoke of the Siamese and Malaccans, Ancient Kedah's suzerainty changed over time. However, it remained autonomous at times, dominating the Peninsula's north-eastern coast until 1821 when Thailand invaded and reduced its autonomy until 1842. It remained under Siamese authority until the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 when it was eventually given up to the European colonial power, Great Britain. (Yaapar, 2021).

Early Arab-Persian sailors came into touch with the Malay Archipelago via two maritime pathways. The first route is through the Red Sea, while the second goes through the Arabian Gulf. The early establishment of Islam in the Hejaz highlands, as well as the region's proximity to Red Sea ports such as Tihamah and Yemen, aided the region's development as a launching place for early Muslim traders and chroniclers sailing to the East. (Yaapar, 2021). The deep Arab-Islamic oriental corridor connected Basra's coastal polities to other port cities, some ancient and some recently created such as Bushahr, Siraf, Suhar, Julfar, and Sur where early Oman and its colonies could be located. (Yaapar, 2021). Abu Zaid of The kingdom of Kalah, which spanned the whole Malay Peninsula, was regarded as the important nexus of maritime trade between Arabia and China. (Yaapar, 2021). The Golden Age of Arabic Literature coincided with the busiest nautical activity to the East, which always passed through ancient Malay ports along the Strait of Malacca and the trans-peninsula landmass that is now known as the Malay Peninsula.

3.4.1.2. Trade Exchanges Between Oman and Malaysia During 1970-2020

Several similarities activated the commercial exchanges between Malaysia and Oman. These likenesses include historical, political, and strategic features. Historically, since Islam entered Malay, Arabs, including Omani, have become closer and more harmonious. Politically, both countries have a similar system of government (Sultanate, Sultans).

Strategically, both countries have vital waterways. Currently, Oman and Malaysia have been keeping good and sophisticated national and regional security policies, diversification of economic sectors, and national identity. It can be predicted that there are many promising relationships of friendship and cooperation between the two countries in the future.(Alnofli,2021). Oman and Malaysia for years had an improving and developing good policy regarding national and regional security, diversifying respective economic and trade sectors and polishing the internal identity and integrity for the sake of surviving.(Osman et al., 2021).

Omani people traded with many ports, including those of the Eastern Asian Archipelago. They returned with the following goods that include copper utensils, lead, fabric dyes, rice, sugar, spices, medicine, certain types of cereals, carpets, and textiles.(Alnofli,2021). On the other hand, according to historical sources, dates were one of the most Omani's important exports to active markets in Asia such as India and China which also found its arrival to Malay markets like frankincense, pearl, incense, fishes, horses.(Alnofli,2021). The total trade between the two countries increased from \$28.1 million in 1995 to \$1.06 billion in 2006, with Malaysian exports to Oman increasing from \$26.4 million

to \$108 million and imports expanding from \$1.7 million to \$956 million.(Alnofli,2021).

In 2009, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Malaysia and the Sultanate of Oman to improve the coordination of trade and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).(Alnofli,2021). The trade reached approximately RM500 million from January to October 2010, with Malaysia's main exports to the Sultanate of Oman being food oil, machinery, appliances, spare parts, wood products and electrical and electronic products..(Alnofli,2021). Since 2015 and 2016, the latter has increased their presence in the Indo-Pacific region under the "String of Pearl" plan, which has sparked a dynamic and competition that requires proper reflex and reflection, with Oman serving as the guardian of the Strait of Hormuz and Malaysia serving as the guardian of the Strait of Malacca.(Osman et al, 2021). Malaysia and Oman have signed an agreement to import frozen chicken from Malaysia at a cost of RM120 million..(Alnofli,2021). According to the United Nations COMTRADE database on international trade, Oman imports from Malaysia was US\$196.48 Million during 2018. Table 1 shows the data of Oman imports from Malaysia in 2018.(Trading Economics, 2021).

Table 1. Oman Imports from Malaysia

| Oman Imports from Malaysia | Value | Year |
|---|----------|------|
| Machinery, nuclear reactors, boilers | \$61.61M | 2018 |
| Wood and articles of wood, wood charcoal | \$27.78M | 2018 |
| Animal, vegetable fats and oils, cleavage products | \$26.87M | 2018 |
| Articles of iron or steel | \$18.56M | 2018 |
| Electrical, electronic equipment | \$12.80M | 2018 |
| Furniture, lighting signs, prefabricated buildings | \$8.36M | 2018 |
| Plastics | \$6.34M | 2018 |
| Cereal, flour, starch, milk preparations and products | \$3.45M | 2018 |
| Optical, photo, technical, medical apparatus | \$2.64M | 2018 |
| Miscellaneous chemical products | \$2.55M | 2018 |
| Miscellaneous edible preparations | \$2.07M | 2018 |

| Oman Imports from Malaysia | Value | Year |
|---|--------------|-------------|
| Rubbers | \$2.05M | 2018 |
| Aluminum | \$1.85M | 2018 |
| Iron and steel | \$1.75M | 2018 |
| Milling products, malt, starches, inlin, wheat gluten | \$1.63M | 2018 |
| Stone, plaster, cement, asbestos, mica or similar materials | \$1.47M | 2018 |
| Salt, sulphur, earth, stone, plaster, lime and cement | \$1.40M | 2018 |
| Meat, fish and seafood preparations | \$1.33M | 2018 |
| Dairy products, eggs, honey, edible products | \$1.11M | 2018 |
| Ceramic products | \$1.02M | 2018 |
| Footwear, gaiters and the like, | \$943.3K | 2018 |
| Paper and paperboard, articles of pulp, paper and board | \$789.44K | 2018 |
| Cocoa and cocoa preparations | \$745.36K | 2018 |
| Soaps, lubricants, waxes, candles, modelling pastes | \$650.14K | 2018 |
| Essential oils, perfumes, cosmetics, toileteries | \$613.37K | 2018 |
| Vegetable, fruit, nut food preparations | \$572.98K | 2018 |
| Glass and glassware | \$531.95K | 2018 |
| Vehicles other than railway, tramway | \$530.90K | 2018 |
| Coffee, tea, mate and spices | \$425.86K | 2018 |
| Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers | \$423.47K | 2018 |
| Copper | \$366.65K | 2018 |
| Live trees, plants, bulbs, roots, cut flowers | \$274.71K | 2018 |
| Organic chemicals | \$256.14K | 2018 |
| Wadding, felt, nonwovens, yarns, twine, cordage | \$246.23K | 2018 |
| Ores slag and ash | \$244.84K | 2018 |
| Albuminoids, modified starches, glues, enzymes | \$218.59K | 2018 |
| Pharmaceutical products | \$200.57K | 2018 |
| Inorganic chemicals, precious metal compound, isotope | \$199.04K | 2018 |
| Sugars and sugar confectionery | \$188.58K | 2018 |
| Beverages, spirits and vinegar | \$158.67K | 2018 |
| Articles of leather, animal gut, harness, travel good | \$139.03K | 2018 |
| Meat and edible meat offal | \$117.94K | 2018 |

| Oman Imports from Malaysia | Value | Year |
|--|--------------|-------------|
| Edible fruits, nuts, peel of citrus fruit, melons | \$106.60K | 2018 |
| Miscellaneous articles of base metal | \$100.10K | 2018 |
| Fish, crustaceans, molluscs, aquatic invertebrates | \$73.92K | 2018 |
| Other made textile articles, sets, worn clothing | \$73.78K | 2018 |
| Miscellaneous manufactured articles | \$71.67K | 2018 |
| Articles of apparel, knit or crocheted | \$69.10K | 2018 |
| Toys, games, sports requisites | \$68.66K | 2018 |
| Articles of apparel, not knit or crocheted | \$64.61K | 2018 |
| Articles of apparel, not knit or crocheted | \$64.61K | 2018 |
| Mineral fuels, oils, distillation products | \$48.48K | 2018 |
| Bird skin, feathers, artificial flowers, human hair | \$43.67K | 2018 |
| Commodities not specified according to kind | \$40.90K | 2018 |
| Aircraft, spacecraft | \$39.80K | 2018 |
| Headgear and | \$38.03K | 2018 |
| Tanning, dyeing extracts, tannins, derivatives, pigments | \$24.32K | 2018 |
| Tools, implements, cutlery of base metal | \$20.96K | 2018 |
| Nickel | \$19.86K | 2018 |
| Clocks and watches | \$19.55K | 2018 |
| Pearls, precious stones, metals, coins | \$19.28K | 2018 |
| Live animals | \$17.66K | 2018 |
| Printed books, newspapers, pictures | \$10.46K | 2018 |
| Cotton | \$8.95K | 2018 |
| Vegetable plaiting materials, vegetable products | \$7.94K | 2018 |
| Photographic or cinematographic goods | \$6.64K | 2018 |
| Umbrellas, walking-sticks, seat-sticks, whips | \$2.83K | 2018 |
| Railway, tramway locomotives, rolling stock, equipment | \$2.02K | 2018 |
| Manufacturers of plaiting material, basketwork | \$1.82K | 2018 |
| Musical instruments, parts and accessories | \$1.21K | 2018 |
| Silk | \$871 | 2018 |
| Tin | \$644 | 2018 |
| Zinc | \$247 | 2018 |

| Oman Imports from Malaysia | Value | Year |
|---|-----------|------|
| Impregnated, coated or laminated textile fabric | \$104 | 2018 |
| Special woven or tufted fabric, lace, tapestry | \$80 | 2018 |
| Oil seed, oleagic fruits, grain, seed, fruits | \$321.02K | 2017 |
| Cereals | \$12.64K | 2017 |
| Manmade filaments | \$148 | 2017 |
| Manmade staple fibers | \$31 | 2017 |
| Ships, boats, and other floating structures | \$888.12K | 2016 |
| Residues, wastes of food industry, animal fodder | \$771.53K | 2016 |
| Lac, gums, resins | \$109.63K | 2016 |
| Cork and articles of cork | \$25.72K | 2016 |
| Carpets and other textile floor coverings | \$7.34K | 2016 |
| Pulp of wood, fibrous cellulosic material, waste | \$1.80K | 2016 |
| Lead | \$290.31K | 2014 |
| Wool, animal hair, horsehair yarn and fabric | \$22.36K | 2014 |
| Tobacco and manufactures tobacco substitutes | \$101.67K | 2012 |
| Works of art, collectors' pieces and antiques | \$1.14K | 2012 |
| Fertilizers | \$60 | 2012 |
| Base metals not specified elsewhere, cermets. | \$23 | 2012 |
| Raw hides and skins (other than furskins) and leather | \$1.08K | 2010 |

(Trading Economics, 2021)

CONCLUSION

This article has highlighted the history of economic relations between Oman and Malaysia via maritime networks. The Sultanate of Oman has the potential to play a key role in the development and execution of the belt and road initiative, particularly in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean regions. More specifically, the Omani maritime trades have significant impacts on international relations. Omani ports have grown in importance in the global economy in recent years. This needs to reinforce Omani governance's national efforts to expand and improve this industry and its specialities, such as shipping, unloading, submerging, transit, and tourism. In addition, the Sultanate of Oman is attempting to integrate and collaborate with all

governorates to disseminate the benefits of the ports throughout the country.

In terms of the Omani-Indian trade relationship, Oman enjoys a strategic location because it is positioned between the Indian and European continents. As a result, it has always been a significant aspect of commercial trade, as well as intercultural and intellectual exchange. This crucial place in the world has a long and distinguished history. Despite the lack of a precise date for the beginning of Omani-Indian exchanges, evidence suggests that historical relations and encounters between the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian Subcontinent stretch back to prehistoric times. Omani ships used to act as a middleman in the trade of goods and commodities between the Arabian Peninsula

and India. More crucially, commercial ties between Oman and India extend back to the pre-Islamic era, when trade between Majan, Dilmun, and Malukha thrived. Spices, perfumes, and rare woods were traded freely between the two countries during the Islamic era. The growth of bilateral connections is still as important as the development of multilateral links in Omani-Indian relations. This aligns with the Sultanate's branding as an Indian Ocean state, emphasising the Sultanate's long-standing ties to the rapidly developing international region.

With regards to the Omani-Chinese trade relationship, Oman plays an important role in the distribution of goods and serves as a crossroads for trade between the East and the West. Oman is of enormous strategic relevance to China's ambitions to resurrect old maritime trade routes because of its proximity to East Africa, India, Iran, Pakistan, Yemen, and the larger Indian Ocean region compared to other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. Oman's strategic location allows it to serve as a regional hub for Asia and the GCC states. It has easy access to international trade channels and short travel times to the world's most appealing emerging markets. The bond between Oman and China dates back to ancient times. For thousands of years, these contacts have continued unabated. Sohar, in particular, was an important crossroads for amicable relations between ancient Arab kingdoms and China. Since ancient times, the Omani people have been famed for their shipbuilding and nautical skills. As a result, Oman's handicraft industry and sector flourished. China was a key player in the Indian Ocean sailing scene during this time. Ships from China have been spotted not just in the Gulf, but also in the Red Sea and off the coast of East Africa.

Finally, Oman and Malaysia have had a history of economic relationships via maritime networks. The Middle East and Southeast Asia have had a relationship since sailors from the Malay Archipelago and the Middle East began trading affluent Southeast Asian commodities like spices, metals, and aromatics on the high seas. Oman, a commercial marine nation, has a lengthy history and a diverse cultural sphere that can be found practically anywhere in the societies with whom they have interacted. Lastly, two maritime routes brought early Arab-

Persian mariners into contact with the Malay Archipelago. The Red Sea route is the first, while the Arabian Gulf route is the second. The Hejaz highlands' early introduction of Islam, as well as the region's closeness to Red Sea ports like Tihamah and Yemen, assisted the region's development as a launching point for early Muslim traders and chroniclers travelling to the East.

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