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**Port and polity of the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra  
(5<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries A.D.)**

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**PORT AND POLITY OF THE MALAY PENINSULA AND  
SUMATRA (5TH - 14TH CENTURIES A.D.)**

**BY**

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Information elicited from Indian, Chinese and Arab records seem to suggest that there were several ports and kingdoms beginning from the third century A.D. along the Straits of Melaka and on Pulau Tioman off the coast of Pahang.

The Indian texts mention names such as Kataha, Takola, Kalagam and Kidaram and Indian epigraphy provides names such as Talaittakolam, Madamalingam and Kadaram.<sup>1</sup> Chinese writings have provided names of trading places, ports and kingdoms such as Tun-sun, P'it-sung, Tan-tan Kolo, Tan-tan, Fo-lo-an, Malayu, Shih-li-fo-shih and several others.<sup>2</sup> From the Arab literary sources we hear of names such as Kalah, Qaqullah and Tiyumah.<sup>3</sup> Information on the types of trading commodities, cultures and trade routes can be gleaned from these texts.

Chinese texts suggest that these early ports and kingdoms did not normally remain independent very long and were, during the course of time, absorbed by one of the more powerful centralized states that emerged in the region. In the third century, for instance, some of them became vassals of Funan,<sup>4</sup> the first great maritime power in Southeast Asia.

With the decline of Funan in the middle of sixth century, the ports experienced a short period of prosperity, as is indicated by the brisk pace of tribute missions sent to China. However, by the end of the seventh century, these kingdoms again declined, coming this time

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<sup>1</sup> The inscription was inscribed during the reign of Rajendra Cola 1 (1023 A.D.) see Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya, 1966, 179-181.

<sup>2</sup> For the discussion on the location of these ports and kingdoms, see Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, Chapter 2, and O. W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce*. Cornell University: New York, 1967 maps 3 and 4.

<sup>3</sup> See G.R. Tibbetts, "The Malay Peninsula as Known to the Arab Geographers *Malayan Journal of Tropical Geography*," 9, 1956, 21-60.

<sup>4</sup> Funan refers to the most powerful kingdom in Cambodia at any particular time. The centre of authority is known to have shifted from one family to another.

under the influence of the maritime power of Srivijaya, which held sway over them for more than 400 years until its maritime traditions were, in turn, inherited by the Melaka Sultanate.<sup>5</sup>

In order to establish control over the polities on the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, Srivijaya had first to strengthen itself militarily. By 683 A.D., the ruler of Srivijaya boasted an armed force of 20,000 followers and soldiers,<sup>6</sup> many of whom would have been the Malay sea people, referred to generally as the “*orang laut*”. In establishing its power Srivijaya had first to consolidate its position in southeast Sumatra, which consisted of a number of quasi-independent powers, before bringing new territories under its control. According to the Telaga Batu inscription from Palembang, the ruler was obliged to pacify a variety of chiefs who had control over armed followers.<sup>7</sup> Among them were the *datu*. The power of Srivijaya, therefore, rested largely on the ability of the ruler to make use of the available manpower resources, namely the ancestors of the *orang laut* or sea nomads, who lived in the isolated parts of the coast of southeast Sumatra and especially in the offshore islands south of the Straits of Melaka. Their descendants were the Celates mentioned by Tome Pires, and the *orang laut* of the nineteenth century. These groups of people have been described as “sea nomads” by David Sopher and as “aquatic populations” by the Centre d’Ethno-technologie en Milieux Aquatiques in Paris.<sup>8</sup> The *orang selat* or Celates were described by Tome Pires as “men who lived near Singapore and also near Palembang” and who carry blowpipes with their small arrows of attack hellebore which, as they touch blood, kill, as they often did to our Portuguese on the enterprise and destruction of the famous city of Melaka [in 1511].”<sup>9</sup> The relationship established by the ruler of Srivijaya with these aquatic people would have been comparable to the established by Parameswara. According to Tome Pires, Celates accompanied Parameswara in his journey from Palembang to Singapore and having settled him there they themselves went to live on karimun Island. During his subsequent flight from Singapore they followed him to Muar and then to Melaka.<sup>10</sup> They lent their support on the understanding that he would bestow upon them and their wives and children royal awards or *anugerah*

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<sup>5</sup> See O.W. Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1970.

<sup>6</sup> George Coedes, “A Possible Interpretation of the Kedukan Bukit” (Palembang) Inscription” in *Nalavan and Indonesian Studies* (ed.) J. Bastin and R. Roolvink, London, 1964. 24-32.

<sup>7</sup> O.W. Wolters, *The Fall of...*, 13.

<sup>8</sup> David E. Sopher, *The Sea Nomads: A Study based on the literature of the Maritime Boat People of Southeast Asia*, Singapore, 1965; O.W. Wolters, *The Fall ...* 13, note 40; Christian Pelras, “Notes sur quelques populations aquatiques de l’archipel Nussantarien” *Archipel* 3 (1972) : 134.

<sup>9</sup> Leonard G Andhaya, “Historical Links between the Aquatic Populations and the Coastal People in the Malay World and Celebes” in *Historia* (ed.) Muhammad Abu Bakar, Amarjit Kaur and Abdullah Zakaria, Kuala Lumpur, 1984.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid* 42-43

(anugraha), which would elevate them to noble rank or to a status equivalent to that of the *orang besar* in the traditional Malay polity. As a result of that belief, they willingly accompanied Parameswara and served him with great faith and loyalty. In return for their wholehearted support, Parameswara fulfilled their expectations. A similar pattern of events may have occurred during the founding of Srivijaya. It is probable that the ruler of Srivijaya had used his allies for seafaring expeditions and encouraged them to settle down on land in areas where their services were needed. The success of the ruler depended upon his ability to forge together the scattered populations who made up his subjects and to use the nautical skills of the *orang laut* during his expeditions. Besides having those skills, the none too docile *orang laut* were known for their great fighting abilities both on land and on sea. In the case of Srivijaya, Chou Ch'u-fei noted that "none surpasses the [inhabitants of Srivijaya] in impetuosity of attack."<sup>11</sup>

A very significant piece of evidence which might throw some light on the link between the ruler of Srivijaya and the *orang laut* is the Telaga Batu inscription, which was discovered near a well, of unknown date, in the western corner of the square shaped island of Sabukingking, about 300 metres from Geding Suro. This inscription gives an insight into the way the kingdom was organized and order and unity maintained within it. Wolters suggests that its presence at the site is an indication of a royal centre.<sup>12</sup> The inscription, which is in two parts, contains an elaborate formula of imprecation in Old Malay and a shorter imprecation, the first part of which is in what is known as Language B. This Language B according to Obdeijn, might be Old Hinangkabau; Damais recognized its similarities with Malagasy, Javanese and Cham, while Van Naerssen proposes that it was an *orang laut* language.<sup>13</sup> If we assume that the followers of the ruler of Srivijaya were Malays from the east coast of Sumatra and *orang laut*, then it would be logical to accept Van Naerssen's conclusion and to assume that the Telaga Batu inscription was addressed to these two groups. All the three imprecations, the Telaga Batu, the Kota Kapur and the Palas Pasemah, are in both Old Malay and Language B. The contents of their inscriptions can be divided into three main parts: the first part is an invocation to all divinities; the second part is a curse on all evildoers, including those who plotted against the king and the kingdom; the third is a blessing on those who submit to the rule of Srivijaya. The shape of the stone on which the Telaga Batu inscription

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<sup>11</sup> O.W. Wolters, *The Fall ...*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> O.W. Wolters, "Land Fall on the Palembang Coast in Medieval Times" *Indonesia* 20 (i) (1.975) 54.

<sup>13</sup> Boechori, "An Old Malay Inscription of Srivijaya at Pales Pasemah, South Lampung" in *Pra-Seminar Penelitian Srivijaya*, PPPN (Jakarta, 1979), 25.

was carved and the seven-headed *naga* carved in relief above the inscription indicate that it had an additional function. Since it was discovered near a well, it is believed that it must have been used for oath-taking ceremonies. Water must have been pored over the stone and collected in the depression below the inscription. The water would then have been drunk by the oath-takers, presumably the *datu*, chiefs and governors mentioned in the inscriptions. This oath ceremony must have lived on the memories of the Malays and is retold in the *Sejarah Melayu*, though in a different form. The latter refers to the oath between Sang Sapurba, representing the ruler, and Demang Lebar Daun, representing his subjects, who might have included the orang laut.

It seems that before the rise of Palembang as centre of Srivijaya, the Melayu-Jambi polity was the most powerful in southeast Sumatra. The last recorded mission to China from Melayu-Jambi was in 644 A.D.<sup>14</sup> The power of Melayu-Jambi must have been dimmed by the rising power of Srivijaya, as is attested by I Ching, who said that "Melayu", which may have been Jambi, became a part of Srivijaya.<sup>15</sup> The struggle between Melayu-Jambi and Srivijaya-Palembang for the control of southeast Sumatra did not end there, because, with the decline of Srivijaya's power at Palembang, Jambi became prominent again. Wolters has suggested that between 1079 and 1082 A.D., the capital of Srivijaya was transferred to Jambi.<sup>16</sup>

To end opposition to the consolidation of his position in southeast Sumatra, the ruler of Srivijaya had to fight rebellions, and much blood was shed, as can be referred from the fragmentary inscriptions describing battles.<sup>17</sup> An expedition was launched against Bumi Jawa, which Boechari has located in the Lampung district and was apparently not Java as suggested by other scholars.<sup>18</sup> Presumably by the year 684 A.D. the power of Srivijaya was safely established in southeast Sumatra and according to the Talang Tuwo inscription, the ruler now diverted his attention from warfare to peaceful activities, such as the establishment of a park named Sriksetra, which he dedicated to all creatures,<sup>19</sup> and the construction of a *vihara*.

After establishing itself in southeast Sumatra, Srivijaya attempted to achieve political hegemony over large areas of Southeast Asia. It established its rule on the coasts along the

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<sup>14</sup> Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce*. 234, 237.

<sup>15</sup> Takakusa, *A Record of Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago (671-695 A.D.)* by T'sing Qxford 1896 XXXIV.

<sup>16</sup> O.W. Wolters, "A note on the capital of Srivijaya in the eleventh century" *Artibus Asia*, Supp. 22(i) (1969) 225-239.

<sup>17</sup> J.G. de Casparis, *Prasasti Indonesia II*, Bandung 1954, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Boechari, "An Old Malay ..." 19-24.

<sup>19</sup> This assumption is based on the Ligor A inscription dated 775 A.D. See Nilakanta Sastri, *History of Srivijaya*, Madras, 1949. 19-21.

Straits of Melaka. The Chinese records say that in 742 A.D. Srivijaya was a double kingdom, each part having a separate administration, with Barus in northwest Sumatra belonging to “the western half of the kingdom”.<sup>20</sup> By the last quarter of the eighth century, Srivijaya's presence was felt as far as Chaiya in-southern Thailand. The limit of the Srivijaya sphere of influence on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula can be ascertained from Arab records of the ninth and tenth centuries. The merchant, Sulyman, records that Kalah-bar (Kalah) was part of Srivijaya.<sup>21</sup> Although scholars do not agree on the exact location of Kalah-bar, there is strong archaeological evidence to suggest that the entrepot described by the Arabs in their records as lying on the western side of the Kra Isthmus; in the Takuapa area, would have been Kalah-bar. Ignoring the fluctuations of Srivijaya control over its territories, the maximum limit of its sphere of political influence seems to have been as far north as Chaiya on the east coast of the Peninsula and Takuapa on the west coast, as far south as the Sunda Straits, as attested by the Lampung inscription of Palas Pasemah, and as far west as Barus and Lamuri on the west and northwest coasts of Sumatra. Within this general sphere of its hegemony, Srivijaya would have controlled the numerous islands south of the Malay Peninsula and off the shore of the east coast of Sumatra. An idea of the extent of Srivijaya territory during the tenth century can be gained from Mas’udi, who said that it needed two years in a fast sailing boat to visit its dependent island.<sup>22</sup>

From the end of the seventh century, Srivijaya possessed the necessary resources to become the most important maritime power in Southeast Asia and to control the east-west trade of the region. Under Srivijaya excellent conditions for the safe passage of ships through the Straits of Melaka and along the east coast of the Malay Peninsula were created. The subjugation of Kataha (Chiehch'a), Chaiya and many other ports helped to promote Srivijaya as the dominant trading centre in Southeast Asia. Srivijaya was able to serve as an entrepot and to regulate and control the trading activities of other ports of trade. If we are to believe the archaeological evidence, other port-states, such as Chieh-Ch'a and Kalah, seem to have been entrepots before Srivijaya became the main entrepot in the area. It is apparent that Srivijaya, by establishing control over these centres, diverted their entrepot trade to Palembang. These entrepots thus became secondary to the principal entrepot, Srivijaya Palembang, and contributed to the growth of its trading activities. It is uncertain what sort of relationship existed between the main entrepot of Srivijaya and the secondary or sub-regional entrepots. It

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<sup>20</sup> Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese...*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce*, 17.

is likely, as Wolters has suggested that this was on a patron-client basis in much the same way as the individual Harbour-principalities related to the produce-yielding pirate lairs.<sup>23</sup> The local entrepots would have been allowed to retain a substantial part of their independent status as long as they paid homage and rendered the commercial services required of them by Srivijaya.

Archaeological investigations in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra have revealed that the Takuapa area and the Sungai Emas area in the Huda River Valley were sub regional entrepots, where merchants from India, the Middle East and China met to exchange goods during the period of the T'ang dynasty. The Middle Eastern evidence includes Sassanian-Iraq-Iran types of ceramics and a large quantity of Middle Eastern glass and beads.<sup>24</sup> These probably came from the seaport of Siraf. Chinese trading contacts are represented by assemblages of artifacts comprising large quantities of stoneware and porcelain sherds and glass of T'ang types.

Takuapa area is located on the north-western coast of Peninsula Thailand and about 96 kilometres from Phuket Island, a rich tin-mining area, in the south. The area comprises Takuapa town and environs which includes Ko Kho Island. Takuapa town is on the southern bank of the Takuapa River and is about 4 kilometres from the coast. Ko Kho Island is at the mouth of the Takuapa River. It is the southern most of the tree islands which shelter the Takuapa Town and environs from the southwest monsoon and it is about 40 metres from the mainland.

Our interest in the Takuapa area is mainly because of Alastair Lamb's suggestion that it was probably a site of a pre-Malaccan entrepot in the Malay Peninsula. Alastair Lamb during his visit to the Ko Kho Island in 1961 collected archaeological finds which suggest habitation between the seventh and tenth centuries.<sup>25</sup> The finds comprise a mixture of trade ceramics from the Western Asia and China, glass fragments from Western Asia, glass beads from India and Western Asia and earthenware shreds which he presumes to have originated from India. To him the mixture of Chinese ceramics and Western Asia ceramics and glass is indeed not usual to nearly all Southeast Asian centres of developed Indianite settlements.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Andaya, "Historical Links..." 42-43.

<sup>24</sup> See Nik Hassan Shuhaimi bin Nik Abd. Rahman, "Art, Archaeology and the Early Kingdoms in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra Circa 400-1400 A.D." Ph.D. Thesis, London, 1984. Chapter 2.

<sup>25</sup> Alastair Lamb, "Takuapa: The Probable Site of a Pre-Malaccan Entrepot in the Malay Peninsula", dalam J.Bastin & R. Roolvink, (ed.), "Malayan and Indonesian Studies, London , 1964, 76-86.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 82



The assemblage from the Ko Kho Island, therefore, represents the evidence for an entrepot. In 1961, also, Alastair Lamb knew the existence of another entrepot of the Takuapa type on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula. That entrepot was at Pengkalan Bujang, on the Merbok Estuary in Kedah which produced the same kind of assemblage of wares: a mixture of glass ceramics and glass from Western Asia and ceramics from China. But he believes that the entrepot at Pengkalan Bujang developed during the late Song and Yuan dynasties period and is therefore three centuries or later than the entrepot at Ko Kho Island site.<sup>27</sup>

The archaeological evidence from the Takuapa area also satisfies the archaeological criteria for an entrepot called *Kalah* whose existence was described by the early Arab geographers. But if one looks at the literary evidence, it seems that *Kalah* can be an island, a town, a kingdom or a region. Abu Zaid for instance stated that *Kalah* was situated “midway between the land of China and the country of the Arab”.<sup>28</sup> While Masudi said that *Kalah* was the general rendezvous of the Muslim Ship of Siraf and Oman, where they met the Ships of China.<sup>29</sup> Abu’l-Fida mentioned *Kalah* as “a prosperous town inhabited by Muslim, Indians and Persians. Mines of tin can be found there”.<sup>30</sup> These descriptions of *Kalah* were vague and make it very difficult to locate its exact location on the map.

According to Alastair Lamb the term *Kalah* did not refer to a single settlement, but rather to a length of coast in which settlements of a certain type were to be found and, therefore, there may be a number of archaeological sites which meet the *Kalah* criteria. Takuapa, at any rate, is certainly a *Kalah*-type place; and no doubt, further research in its neighborhood will determine whether there are other places like the T’ung T’uk plain of Ko Kho Island with its abundance of sherds.<sup>31</sup>

In 1974 I visited the Takuapa area and saw many parts of the open grassy, sandy plain of the Ko Kho Island, covering several acres, were strewn with thousands of ceramic sherds of Chinese and West Asian origins, earthenware sherds, glass and varieties of beads and broken pieces of bricks.<sup>32</sup> The concentration of the finds in the area and the varieties of ceramics sherds led me to compare the Ko Kho Island’s archaeological finds with the archaeological finds from Sungai Mas (Kuala Muda) in the Bujang Valley. It seems that the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 82

<sup>28</sup> Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, Kuala Lumpur, 1961, 217.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>31</sup> Alastair Lamb, “Thakuapa: The Probable ...”, 84.

<sup>32</sup> Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abd, Rahman, *Art, archaeology and the early kingdoms in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, C 400-1400, A.D.*, Ph.D. thesis, University London, 1984.

materials from Sungai Mas fit in nicely with the material assemblage from the Ko Kho Island. They belong to the same period, 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.

But when Alastair Lamb wrote about the pre-Malacca entrepot in 1961, the archaeological finds from Sungai Mas and the existence of the archaeological site in the area was unknown yet. The discovery was made only in 1979. It is uncertain to us as to what effect the archaeological discovery at Sungai Mas would have on Alastair Lamb's hypothesis on pre-Malacca entrepot. Nevertheless, the Sungai Mas site on the basis of the archaeological finds and its geographical location satisfy partly the description of *Kalah*, an entrepot, before the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Just like Takuapa area, there are also tin mines in the Bujang Valley. But the tin mines in the Bujang Valley are located not exactly in the village of Sungai Mas but outside it. In Takuapa the tin mines are on the island of Ko Kho itself. Therefore, Takuapa is much closer to the geographical descriptions of *Kalah* which appears in some of the Arab/Persian writings which mention that tin mines were found in the fortress of *Kalah*.

Since 1961, besides Takuapa, several other sites including Sungai Mas have produced archaeological finds comprising a mixture of Chinese ceramics, Western Asian ceramics, beads and West Asian glass. The sites which produced that kind of assemblage are the Butuan site in the Mindanao (Philippines), Chaiya area and the area between Takuapa and Phuket. It is therefore, impossible on the basis of the archaeological assemblage alone to arrive conclusively at the idea of the location of *Kalah*.

During the months of December 1988 and January 1989 an archaeological excavation was undertaken at Ko Kho Island. The excavation was undertaken by an archaeological team from the Fine Arts Department of Thailand and the Field Museum, University of Pennsylvania, U.S. A. The Fine Arts Department group was led by Mr. Pisit Charoen Wongsadana. Dr. Bennet Bronson was the chief delegate from the Field Museum. We were also involved for a very short period with the excavation. We were fortunate to have been invited to join the excavation.<sup>33</sup> The invitation was extended to us by Mr. Pisit on behalf of the Fine Arts Department. Our trip to Takuapa was scheduled for the duration, from 18<sup>th</sup> December to 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1989.

We participated during the last phase of the excavation. It was fortunate for us because we were given access to the information gathered during the 3 week excavation and also to

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<sup>33</sup> Our sincere appreciation to Mr. Pisit and his officers and to Dr. Bennet Bronson and his wife, Wendy.

the excavated materials. The general view of the Ko Kho Island has not changed much outwardly since my visit in 1974. But many areas on the island, especially, those near to the jetty site have been dug by treasure hunters. As a result, much of the archaeological remains are lost to archaeology. The 1988/89 excavation has to work very hard to find undisturbed areas to excavate. The team managed to find 6 spots to dig trial trenches within a 400 metre square on the island.

Among the archaeological finds were various beads having white, green, yellow, black and red colours, West Asian ceramic sherds, and glass and Chinese ceramic sherds. The assemblage of archaeological finds is similar to that assemblage from Sungai Mas and to that assemblage of archaeological remains from Takuapa reported by Alastair Lamb in 1961 in terms of contents and date. In addition to the information on the ceramic sherds, glass and beads, the 1988/89 excavation also provide information on the materials used to build the monuments on the island. Basically, four types of materials were used. They were bricks, stones, tiles and woods. The sizes of the bricks and stones are different from those found in the Bujang Valley. The tiles are very small in size, and it is the first time that we have ever seen tiles of that size.

From the stratigraphic evidence, it seems that the Ko Kho Island was settled continuously for a period of about 100 years that is from A.D. 850 to 950. The thickness of the ceramic deposits observed at each trial trench was about 50 cm. Even though each trial trench, except for the one at the monument site, was dug to about 1.5 metres deep, there were no cultural remains below 50 cm. The rial trench at the monument site produced the Persian blue glazed ceramic sherds right down to the depth of about 2.61 metres which is the original layer on which the monument was built. This evidence according to the excavators provides the relative date of from A.D. 850 to 950 for the monument. In view of the fact that the mound which represents the monument has been badly disturbed, it was impossible to do a complete survey of the shape, size and style of the monument. But the presence of pillar-bases in the vicinity of the monumental site provides us with comparative evidence that can be used to compare to the types of pillar-bases used in the Bujang Valley and to arrive at certain conclusion regarding the practice and tradition of using pillar-bases for buildings. At the moment, it is believed that the tradition of building monuments with the pillar bases was very common in the early kingdom in Southeast Asia.

Another significant discovery in the Ko Kho Island is the water tank site. Could this be the tank mentioned in the Tamil inscription found in the Takuapa area? Two scholars have discussed the readings of the Takuapa inscription. E. Hultzsch<sup>34</sup> has transcribed the inscription as follows:

*The tank (by) name Sri - [Avani] – Naranam which was dug [near] Nangur by ... ravarman Gu[na] ... [m] on himself, is placed under the protection of the numbers of Manigramam and of the men of the vanguard and/cultivators.*

According to Nilakanta Sastri<sup>35</sup> the inscription should be read as below:

*The tank dug by Nangurudaian (and) called Avaninaranam (is placed under) the protection of the Manikkiramam, the residents of the military camp and ... "*

The two scholars differ on two points. E. Hultzsch suggested that *Nangur* was the site for the tank but Nilakanta Sastri said that *Nangur-udaian* was the name of the person responsible for building the tank. Another point which he took up was about the people associated with the tank. Besides the members of the merchant guild, E. Hultzsch mentioned also vanguard and cultivators but Nilakanta Sastri mentioned only one group of people, the residents of a military camp. Nilakanta Sastri believed that the residents of the military camp were the merchants who belonged to the powerful mercantile community, the *vanik-graman* in South India. The Vanik-graman may have existed in the ninth century because the word *Avani-naranan* (Visnu on the earth) in the inscription is usually associated with the title of a Pallava king called King Nandivarman III (826 -850) who ruled at Kancipuram.<sup>36</sup>

The inscription while indicating the presence of traders, soldiers and cultivators does not in any way confirm the view concerning Indian colonizing activity in the area. The Indian trading community formed an extension of the Tamil merchant guild of South India. It was a common practice among the Indian trading communities to set up trading guild in Southeast Asia as an extension of the parent guild in India. The setting up of a guild in Sumatra was recorded in an inscription found at Lubuk Tua in Sumatra which has a date of Saka 1010 (1088 A.D.)<sup>37</sup> is another example of the practice. During the Melaka Sultanate in the 15th century, Tamil merchants were given a special area to live. Therefore, the presence of Tamil

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<sup>34</sup> E. Hultzsch, "Supplementary Note on a Tamil inscription in Siam", JHBRAS, 1, 1914, 397-398.

<sup>35</sup> K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, "Takuapa and its Tamil inscription", JMBRAS, XX (i), 1949, 25-30.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-30.

<sup>37</sup> K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, "A Tamil Merchant-guild in Sumatra" TBS, 1xxii, 1932. 314-17.

merchants in large numbers in any port does not prove that the port was colonized by the Tamils.

Our visit to the Takuapa area, and especially to the Ko Kho Island, does not entitle us to say with certainty that the pre-Malaccan entrepot, *Kalah* was at Takuapa. But Takuapa and Sungai Mas are two probable sites for the pre-Malacca entrepot prior to the rise of the Pengkalan Bujang in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, it is possible that *Kalah* was at Takuapa if we were to accept the fact that tin mines were located in *Kalakh's* fortress.

Archaeological investigations in the river plains of Merbok and its tributaries, and Muda, have unearthed archaeological remains which show the possibility of the existence of an ancient polity from the early centuries of the Christian era. Presumably, the society evolved from a prehistoric settlement on the evidence of the finds from Guar Kepah in the valley of Sungai Muda. Later, this prehistoric settlement developed into a kind of land-fall port for ship coming from India. As a result of increased intra-regional and long distance trade in the Straits of Melaka, it developed into a collecting centre for Malaysian products and by the 7<sup>th</sup> century it evolved into an *entrepot*.

Archaeological investigations also indicate that the Bujang Valley was inhabited by people who had contacts with India from about the fifth/sixth centuries A.D. Four Buddhist inscriptions (the Buddhagupta inscription or the Bukit Meriam inscription, the Bukit Choras inscription, the Sungai Mas inscription, the Cherok Tokun inscription, and the inscribed tablet from Quaritch-Wales Site 2 support this conclusion. During this period the area was strongly Buddhist. The Buddhist phase continued along local lines. This continuity can be seen from the archaeological evidence the Buddha image from Site 16A, the head of Buddha from Sungai Mas, the *Hariti* image and the site at Guar Kepah which suggest a date of about fifth/sixth centuries A.D.

It seems that the settlements in the valley prospered. Archaeological finds which can be ascribed chronologically to the eighth and ninth centuries are more abundant and varied. They included imported Chinese ceramics such as T'ang white porcellanous ware with a very thick but low base ring which was also found at Samarra in the Middle East; and Middle Eastern types: Sassana-Islamic, splashed and splashed-sgraffiate ceramic types which can be dated from the seventh to the eleventh centuries. Middle Eastern glass and various types of beads were also found. Mahayana Buddhism was still popular with the people of the area.

This belief can be supported by the archaeological finds such as temple remains associated artifacts.

Among the archaeological sites which have been investigated and can be placed in the fifth to eleventh centuries cultural horizon are the Sungai mas and Sungai Trus sites, Quaritch-Wales' Sites 10, 12, 14, 16A, 17, 22 and 21 in the Sungai Bujang area. The sites in the Sungai Has are represented by the six mounds mentioned earlier. In the Kampong Seberang Trus, on the east side of the Sungai Trus, there are two visible mounds which have the same size as those mounds in the Sungai Mas area. There were also traces of mounds exposing laterite blocks in the villages on the southern banks of the Sungai Muda. They were small and made from laterites. During our visit to the area in 1980, it was noticed that only one of them was still visible in a village to the west of Guar Kepah, the rest of them were destroyed by farmers because most of the sites were in the area being converted to padi-lands. The destruction of archaeological sites in the Sungai Muda Valley is much greater and speedier than that of sites in the Sungai Bujang Valley.

The classification of the sites as Buddhist is, firstly, on the evidence of the associated finds, and secondly on the typology of the temples. Sites 10 has been regarded as a Buddhist temple because the inscriptions, one gold and six silver discs found in the foundation deposits which had been studied by Quaritch-Wales, Chakravarti and Bosch, were Buddhist inscriptions.<sup>38</sup> Chakravarti believed that they may be the epithets of Buddha and names of Bodhisattvas and may be dated to the eighth or ninth century A.D. Bosch dated it to the second half of the ninth century A.D. Site 12 has been ascribed a date of eighth to ninth centuries A.D. on the basis of the associated finds; a T'ang type mirror, and Site 14 is believed to be a Buddhist temple because of the presence of an inscribed Buddhist text and, on the evidence of a half-*dirhem* and quarter-*dirhem* of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakil found in the foundation reliquaries, it could be dated to the second half of the ninth century A.D. One of the coins has a date of 234 A.H. which is-equivalent to 848 A.D.

In view of the fact that all the structures with finds which could be safely dated to the period fifth to the eleventh centuries either have a single pit or, as in the case of Sites 21 and 22, have three structures but not the *vimana-mandapa* type, it is possible to assume that all such temples in the Bujang Valley were Buddhist. The Buddhist phase in the Bujang Valley must have existed from the fifth right through to the eleventh centuries A. D. The fifth to

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<sup>38</sup> H.G. Quaritch-Wales, "Archaeological Researches ... ".24

eighth centuries temples are those structures with single pits located in Sungai Mas, Sungai Trus, Guar Kepah, the sites in the village to the south-west of Guar Kepah, Bukit Meriam, Site 16A, and Site 17. All the sites classified as single pit structures did not produce any Song trade ceramics and thus it is possible to assume that they belonged to the pre-Song period. Such structures could have been of a *stupa* type. This assumption is based on our belief that the style of such a building would resemble, more or less, that of a *candi* carved on the shale stone with the Buddhist inscriptions from Sungai Mas.

The existing body of archaeological knowledge regarding the Bujang Valley points to Sungai Mas and the area to the south of the Sungai Merbok as being the earliest centre of the early kingdom in ancient Kedah. Besides this centre there was other settlement during this period in other parts of the Bujang Valley. If it is true that the centre was in the Sungai Mas area, *Chieh-ch'a* which I-Ching visited in about 672 A.D. - was here. The first group of archaeological evidence pointing to the area as being the centre during the fifth to the tenth centuries A. D. is the Buddhist inscriptions. Four out of five very important inscriptions found in Kedah came from this area. The second evidence is the Buddhist sculpture. They are the Buddha head, the image of *Hariti* and the votive tablet imprinted with an image of Buddha. The third evidence is the gold belt found at Sungai Trus. Quaritch-Wales considered the belt to be from the thirteenth century.<sup>39</sup> We believe that a date of about the eighth century is more appropriate. Quaritch-Wales' argument is based on the assumption that the ornament, the *kala*-head on the belt is similar to the one on the belt of the stone image of Bhairava from Sungai Langsat, Sumatra. If we compare the two ornaments, *kala*-heads, we will see that they are definitely different. The *kala*-head of the Sungai Thrus is much closer to the Dieng Plateau period of *kala*-heads and also near to the Candi Kalasan *kala*-head rather than to the *kala*-head from the Candi Djago or Candi Singasari.

The next evidence for arguing that Sungai Mas and the area to the south of Sungai Merbok was the earlier centre of the kingdom is the ceramics. Archaeological excavations at Sungai Mas and the ceramic deposits observed at the cuttings made by soil diggers digging the irrigation canal revealed that the ceramics from Sungai Mas can be classified as T'ang and early Song types for the Chinese ceramics, while the Middle Eastern ceramics can be dated to the seventh to ninth centuries A.D. Middle Eastern ceramics were found in the same layer as the Chinese T'ang types of sherds. Ceramic evidence suggests that the site was occupied from

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

the seventh century at the latest. Additional evidence is the existence of single pit structures in the area.

A further reason for believing that the Sungai Mas and the area to the south of Sungai Merbok was the pre-eleventh century entrepot is geographical. The area today is in the rice bowl region of southern Kedah. The discovery of a prehistoric site at Guar Kepah,<sup>40</sup> a site on the southern bank of Sungai Muda, and the subsequent evidence that the site was later occupied during the fifth and the later periods again support the thesis that proto-historic settlements normally evolved from prehistoric settlements on the coasts and in the river valleys. This development pattern can be seen in the evolution of proto-historic settlements at Kuala Selinsing and Jenderam Hilir at Kuala Langat.<sup>41</sup>

By the end of tenth century A.D. it seems that the area to the north, particularly the village of Pengkalan Bujang, became more prominent. This assumption is based on two factors. First, the density of ceramic finds. According to the report of Alastair Lamb, his 100 square feet sondage produced some 10,000 fragments of porcelain and larger quantities of earthenware and stoneware.<sup>42</sup> In addition to that, he discovered numerous fragments of glass, parts of a hundred small bottles of kind which was at one time widely exported from the Middle East: Egypt or Syria. Also, he discovered mixed up in the earth many beads of glass, agate and terracotta. He identified the find as Song and Yuan Dynasty types and these wares were mixed with the products of other manufacturing regions, Thailand and Indo-China, and also the Middle East. The very cosmopolitan nature of the deposit led him to conclude that Pengkalan Bujang was an *entrepot* during the Song and Yuan periods. Archaeological excavations by Leong Sau Heng in 1970 suggested that trading at Pengkalan Bujang reached its zenith during the Song period but there was evidence suggesting that earlier Chinese ceramics reached the port at Pengkalan Bujang from late T'ang, about the tenth century. The suggestion seems to concur with the discovery of the Chinese ceramics at Site 9 that can be classified as the white "Samarra" type.

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<sup>40</sup> P. V. van Stein Callenfels, "An excavation of Three Kitchen Middens at Guar Kepah, Province Wellesley", *Straits Settlements Bulletin or the Raffles, Museum*. Series B, 1. 1936, 27-37.

<sup>41</sup> For the report on Kuala Selinsing see: I.H.N. Evans, "Excavation at Tanjung Rawa, Kuala Selinsing", *Journal of the Federated Malay States Museum (JFMSM)*, 15, 1932, 79-134; and for Jenderam Hilir see, Brian C. Batchelor, Prof. "Hoabinhian coastal settlement indicated by finds in stanniferous Langat River alluvium near Dengkil, Selangor, Peninsular Malaysia", *FHJ*, 22(N.S.) 1977, 1-55; Leong Sau Heng, "Ancient finds from Kampong Jenderam Hilir", *Malaysia in History* 20, 2 (.1977), 38-47.

<sup>42</sup> Alastair Lamb, *Pengkalan Bujang: an ancient port ...*, 80.



The second factor is the discovery of a large number of temples consisting of two parts (namely *vimana* and *mandapa*) in the north. All these *vimana-mandapa* types of temples can be placed in the eleventh to thirteenth century's period. This assumption is also based on the associated finds and the study of the evolution of this category of temples. They belonged to the Saivite religion.

As far as the associated finds are concerned they can be grouped into a) ceramics b) reliquaries c) images. The ceramics which can be divided into earthenware and imported wares were normally found at temple sites. In the majority of cases the imported ceramics can be classified as Song and Yuan types. This is very true in the case of imported ceramics found at the Peng Kalan Bujang Sites 18 and 19. Here, the earliest example of ceramics found were the green celadon of Northern Song type, in addition to a few types of imported ceramics, beads and glass. Temples which are located in the upper and middle reaches of the Sungai Bujang, also along the banks of Merbok Kechil do not produce or produce very little, if any, imported ceramic finds. If there were any ceramics at the site, they were normally earthenware or the coarse type of stoneware. But whenever excavations were carried out in areas just a few metres away from the temple area, they produced a variety of ceramics which included imported wares. An example of such an excavation was the one carried out at an area about 100 metres from the main temple at Site 50. Here, included in the ceramic sherds unearthed, were imported types which can be identified as of the Song period. Nevertheless, the density of ceramic sherds discovered in the area outside Peng Kalan Bujang is very low when compared to the ceramic finds from Peng Kalan Bujang and Sungai Mas. Random finds of ceramic sherds from Sites 5, 11 and 16 also show that they belonged to the Song and Yuan periods. The identification of ceramic sherds found at those three sites by Quaritch-Wales has been questioned by Alastair Lamb. He thinks that they cannot possibly be T'ang types, as believed by Quaritch-Wales, but rather of the Song types. His conclusion was based on his study of the sherds and comparing to the ceramic collections in the Raffles and Taiping Museums. Treloar who examined chemically the mercury content of one of the nine chambered reliquaries from Site 8 concluded that Site 8, Chandi Bukit Batu Pahat may be dated to the eleventh century A.D.<sup>43</sup> The images such as the Ganesa found in Site 19 and the relief of Durga triumphing over *Mahisasura* from Site 4 can be dated to a period not earlier

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<sup>43</sup> F.E. Treloar, "Chemical analysis of some metal objects from Candi Bukit, Kedah: suggested origin and date", *JMBRAS*, 41, 1 (1968), 193-198.

than the tenth century A.D. The contents of foundation deposits or the reliquaries denote local developments.

The periodization of the settlements in the Bujang Valley shows two main phases. The first phase is the Buddhist phase which began from about the fifth century, at the latest, and ended in about the tenth century A.D. The centre for the settlements in the valley during the fifth to the early eleventh centuries A.D. must have been in the Sungai Mas areas which included also the areas on the southern bank of the Sungai Muda. The late eleventh century A.D. to the fourteenth century A.D. saw the growth of the Peng Kalan Bujang and the areas along the Merbok Kechil from the late eleventh century A.D. onwards. Thus the second period of the Bujang Valley settlement, on the basis of the development of religion, started in the later part of the eleventh century at Peng Kalan Bujang and ended probably at the end of the thirteenth century A.D. or early fourteenth century with the coming of Islam. The centre for the kingdom may have been at Peng Kalan Bujang but the Hindu religion was practiced in all parts of the Bujang Valley.

This new historical framework does not agree with those proposed by Quaritch-Wales<sup>44</sup> or Alastair Lamb.<sup>45</sup> Quaritch-Wales proposed that Sites 1 - 3, the Cherok Tokun and Bukit Meriam inscriptions discovered by Colonel James Low belong to the Buddhist phase, *circa* 300 to *circa* 550 A.D. This was his second phase of Indian colonization of the Malay Peninsula but the first visible period in the history of the Indianised settlement in Kedah and Seberang Prai. The period from *circa* 550 to *circa* 750 A.D. was the time when the area came under the influence of Hindu-Pallava colonists. The final phase or the third phase in Kedah Hindu-Buddhist period was the period, *circa* 750 to *circa* 900 A.D. During this period, Buddhist Mahayanist influence was dominant. In his arguments, he depended a good deal on the typology of the archaeological finds and also on the plan of the structures. He assigned Site 4-9, *vimana-mandapa* class of temples to the Hindu-Pallava period and Sites 10-30, which cluster in the middle reaches of Sungai Bujang, and also Site 31 at Permatang Pasir, to the Mahayanist Buddhist phase of the mid eighth to tenth centuries, and later periods down to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. He also attributed Site 11 not to the group of temples found in the two river valleys but rather to a secular group of buildings, the royal audience chamber.

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<sup>44</sup> The historical framework proposed by H. G. Quaritch-Wales is in "Archaeological researches ... ", 67-74.

<sup>45</sup> See Alastair Lamb, "Miscellaneous papers ... ", 78-86

The results of archaeological work carried out since the Second World War in the Bujang Valley have helped archaeologists to have clearer evidence for their study of the area. New evidence unearthed in the 1970's and 1980's show that many of the conclusions arrived by Quaritch-Wales are not valid. Site 31 at Permatang Pasir which Dorothy C. Quaritch-Wales uncovered was described as a "massive laterite plinth of what appeared to have been a perched building". But M. Sullivan in 1958 questioned the view about the positioning of the porch because it is unusual for a temple not to face eastwards; nearly all Indian temples, as well as those excavated by Quaritch-Wales in Kedah, are facing towards the east. It was Alastair Lamb, however, who did a thorough excavation of the site and managed to show that the porch was in fact the *vimana* of a temple of the *vimana-mandapa* type. The problem faced by Dorothy C. Quaritch-Wales and M. Sullivan was their inability to carry out a thorough excavation, and to see that although it was the *vimana-mandapa* type of temple, the *vimana* and *mandapa* were not actually joined together, or the *mandapa* really projected from the *vimana*, is very common in the Bujang Valley. Site 13, 16 and 50 and possibly 6 and 15 can be classified as that type. The *mandapa* parts of Site 6 and 15 are missing due to the incomplete excavation and ignorance of the fact that such temple types could have existed in the area.

It is therefore wrong to assume that one group of temples belongs to the Hindu-Pallava period and the other group, having the *mandapa* and *vimana*, to the Mahayana Buddhist. On the evidence of the finds and similarity in styles of plans of monuments, it is justifiable to say that they were Saivite temples and very close to each other in date. This would invalidate the suggestion that temples 4-8 are Hindu Pallava temples and that they belonged to the period from *circa* 550 to *circa* 750 A.D. and the temples at Sites 10-30 as Mahayanist dating from *circa* 750 to *circa*: 900 A.D.

Alastair Lamb on the other hand gave a different kind of periodization for the Bujang Valley. His scheme postulated four periods. This first period is the Early Buddhist period which evolved on the coast from the fourth or fifth century A.D. on the inscriptional evidence. His second period was the Srivijaya period, from seventh to ninth century A.D. The settlements were in the Bujang Valley, and the people had a closer link with settlements in Java, Sumatra and mainland Southeast Asia. From the tenth/eleventh centuries A.D. to the fourteenth century A.D. was the Peng Kalan Bujang period. During this period Peng Kalan Bujang achieved *entrepot* status. The other areas included in this period were Permatang

Pasir, Merbok, Batu Lintang and Tikam Batu. The last period was the Kuala Muda phase which began after the fourteenth century A.D.

It is quite reasonable to assume that the early Buddhist period evolved on the coast. In order for it to evolve into an acceptable religion in a particular area it must start at a centre. On the available evidence, it seems that Sungai Mas and the area to south, being on the coast during the period, could be the centre. Other settlements on the coastal area, particularly those areas in the river valleys would also come under the influence of the Buddhist religion. It is not surprising to find that settlements in the Sungai Sala Valley, to the north of the Bujang Valley, also received this influence as attested by the Bukit Choras Buddhist inscription of the fifth/sixth centuries A.D. The settlements in the Bujang Valley too received this influence, and so too did the settlements in the Kinta Valley in Perak. There were probably other similarly settlements on the coastal areas of the Malay Peninsula. Although geographically Sungai Mas did not have an anchorage as deep as the Sungai Bujang, nevertheless it was suitable enough for it to be used as a port of call. Presumably, with the increase in trading activities, the centre shifted later to the Peng Kalan Bujang area.

The shift may have taken place in the tenth century A.D. In spite of the shift of the centre, the settlements in the Sungai Has and the areas to the south did not vanish. Archaeological finds in the Huda Valley confirm this belief. It is not accurate to assume, as Alastair Lamb did that settlements were only in the north in the Bujang Valley during his Srivijaya period, from the seventh to the ninth centuries A.D. There were settlements in the Sungai Bujang Valley, just as in the Sungai Muda Valley during the period because there were temples which can be dated to the period, but they belonged to the Buddhist phase.

All other temples stylistically and religiously are very closely linked to each other. There is strong archaeological evidence which suggests that they belonged to the Saivite phase and can be dated to the period eleventh to fourteenth centuries A.D.

We concur with Alastair Lamb that beginning from the tenth or eleventh century A.D. Peng Kalan Bujang achieved *entrepot* status with international contacts. The richness and varieties of the ceramics, glass, beads, and the foundation deposits for the temples definitely show the prosperity and the innovatory culture of the people in the Bujang Valley during this period. Their innovations were in the use of local materials for building temples. They built their temples out of the available materials such as laterite, river pebbles, sandstone and timber. They made tiles and pottery from the rich clay that was available in abundance in the

river valleys. The foundation deposits show that there were local gold and silversmiths during the period because they were able to make all those foundation deposits, even in very crude form. The various gemstones found in the reliquaries indicate that efforts were made to secure them from all over Asia and the Middle East. Presumably, during the fourteenth century Kuala Muda became prominent again. But there were still people living in the other parts of the Bujang Valley as attested by the discovery of the Ming type of ceramic sherds in the various parts of the Bujang Valley.

In Sumatra it, in the Palembang area, Chinese trade ceramics dating to the T'ang dynasty has been found.<sup>46</sup> Other archaeological sites in Sumatra, such as Jambi, the Lampung area, and Kota Cina have revealed T'ang types of ceramics, although not in such quantities as those found in the Takuapa and Sungai Emas area.<sup>47</sup> In Peninsula Thailand, besides the Takuapa area, several areas on the east coast, such as Satingphra, Si Chon, Chaiya and Nakhon Si Thammarat have yielded artifacts which indicate that they were in existence even prior to the seventh century, even though there is no definite evidence of the discovery of T'ang ceramics.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to Srivijaya, the main entrepot, and the local entrepots, there were other nascent port-polities functioning as collecting centres and feeder points. On the Malay Peninsula, there are two sites that may have belonged to one or other of these categories. These are the archaeological sites at Jenderam Hilir in south Selangor and Kuala Selinsing in Perak.<sup>49</sup> These sites have yielded archaeological evidence which suggests that they were ports involved in active trade during the Srivijaya period, and probably earlier. They appear to have conducted trade with non-Indianized peoples living along the coasts and river estuaries of the Melaka Straits and also with Indianized settlements along the Straits, such as Chieh-ch'a and Kalah. One piece of evidence which suggests that Kuala Selinsing had indirect contacts with India was obtained from the discovery there of a crude manufactured Indianized object in the

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<sup>46</sup> Several reports pertaining to the discovery of T'ang types of ceramics have been published. I refer to the work of Abu Ridho, "Daftar Keramik Asing yang didapati di Sumatra mengikut Kartu de Flines" in *Pra-Seminar Penelitian Srivijaya*. PPPN (Jakarta, 1979) 105-18; The most recent discovery of Yuen type sherds at Bukit Seguntang has been reported by E. E. Me Kinnon, "A Note on the discovery of Spur marked Yuen type sherds at Bukit Seguntang Palembang" *JMBRAS* 52 ii (1979) 41-48.

<sup>47</sup> Discoveries of ceramic deposits and other archaeological finds have been reported by Me Kinnon in "Kota Tjina, a Site with T'ang and Sung period Associations: some Preliminary Note" *Berita Kajian Sumatra* 3 (1973): 46-52.

<sup>48</sup> For a report on the various Hindu and Buddhist images from Peninsular Thailand see Piriya Krairiksh, *Art in Peninsular Thailand prior to the fourteenth century A.D.* Bangkok 1980.

<sup>49</sup> See Leong Sau Heng, "Ancient Finds from Kampong Jenderam Hilir" *Malaysia - in History* 20(2) 1977: 38-47; On Kuala Selinsing see Nik Hassan Shuhaimi bin Nik Abd. Rahman, "Later Prehistory of the Peninsula Malaysia", Paper presented at Indo Pacific Prehistory Association Conference, Jakarta, September, 1990.

form of a carnelian seal.<sup>50</sup> Although there is no evidence of direct commerce between the Jenderam Hilir area and either India or the Middle East, the discovery of only a few Sung types of ceramics indicates that trade with China would have been via a sub-regional entrepot such as Cheh-ch'a during the latter part of the Srivijaya period. Tin ingots found at Jenderam Hilir suggest that the area supplied tin to the main entrepot.

In Sumatra, ports such as Barus, Panai, Kampar and Kota Cina may be classified as sub-regional entrepots and collecting centres as opposed to feeder points servicing the inland people. They were not on the east-west traffic route, but were in contact with Indians, with the non-Indianized peoples in the interior, and with the Srivijaya entrepot on the east-west route. Evidence for suggesting that they were in contact with the Indians is provided by the discovery of the Lubuk Tua Tamil inscriptions of 1088 A.D.,<sup>51</sup> states among other things that there was a Tamil trading corporation of 1500 people there. The inscription is reminiscent of the Tamil inscription from the Takuapa area, which records the presence of a merchant community (*vanik-graman*) from South India in the late Pallava period or about the ninth century A.D.

It seems that Srivijaya imposed its hegemony over some settlements that had already developed their own artistic, cultural and religious traditions and their own trading patterns. These polities and settlements had evolved as the result of an increase in shipping activities along the coasts both of the Malay Peninsula and of east Sumatra. Presumably, some of these polities started as ports of call. They were located on almost every major river estuary and island. They were chosen by virtue of their having prominent landmarks and watering places, sheltered bays and sandy beaches. The main indicator of the presence of such ports of call is the discovery of ceramics. Several sites on the east coast of Peninsula Malaysia have produced trade ceramics of Sung and Yuan types. Among these sites are Kemaman, in Terengganu and the Sungai Mulong areas, an old delta arm of the Kelantan River that continues towards the sea through Sungai Peng Kalan Datu. Then there is Pulau Tieman. According to Paul Wheatley:<sup>52</sup>

*In the South China Sea, Tioman was an important landmark and watering place, whence Arab seamen set course north-eastwards for Champa and Cambodia, but the island was apparently unnoticed in Chinese maritime records.*

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<sup>50</sup> See Nilakanta Sastri, "A Note on an inscribed Seal from Perak" JMBRAS, 14 (iii), 1936. 282-83.

<sup>51</sup> See Nilakanta Sastri, "A Tamil Merchant Guild in Sumatra", TBG, 72 (1932): 314-27.

<sup>52</sup> Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese* ... , 297.

Nevertheless, the discovery of trade ceramics of Sung and Yuan types from the island indicates that there were trading contacts with China, directly or indirectly. Besides the river valleys and islands, cave sites in Peninsula Thailand and Malaysia were also inhabited during the Srivijayan period. Mahayana votive tablets, which can be dated to between the tenth and twelfth centuries, have been recovered from Gua Berhala, Gua Kurong Satang, Gua Tampaq and several other cave sites in the Pun Pin, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Songkhla and Patthalung areas. The votive tablets from Gua Tampaq were discovered in the Neolithic layer of occupation. But other sites were already culturally at the proto-historic stage. The discovery of the votive tablet at Gua Tampaq indicates that the inland inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula, even though culturally lagging behind those living on the coastal areas, had established contacts abroad, either directly or through intermediaries.

The establishment of Srivijayan authority over these various types of settlement and people does not appear to have disrupted traditional trading activities in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, which had been going on for hundreds of years. It would appear to have superimposed its authority upon prevailing trade patterns. The significance of several primary or main entrepots such as Chieh-ch'a and Kalah was reduced by the tenth century. To judge by the density of ceramic finds, Kalah was no longer an entrepot, although Chieh-ch'a managed to sustain itself despite trading restrictions that Srivijaya may have imposed on ports in the Straits. Again, judging from the archaeological evidence, it seems Chieh-ch'a rose to preeminence only in the eleventh century. Similarly, Kota Cina became an important entrepot during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Presumably, from the seventh to the tenth or eleventh centuries, Srivijaya was the dominant entrepot in Southeast Asia, although other entrepots were allowed to exist as long as they did not challenge Srivijaya's supremacy. It is apparent from I Ching's statement that Srivijaya made use of its ships to transport travellers, including pilgrims and traders, to India and China. These ships stopped at ports such as Melayu and Chieh-ch'a, which indicates that these ports were allowed to continue to exist.<sup>53</sup>

Srivijaya, as the chief entrepot in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra region, functioned as a major entrepot for Southeast Asian products. It also acted as a transshipment centre both for local Southeast Asian products for foreign products from the Middle East, India and China. The southeast Sumatran areas became the local point for trade in western Borneo,

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<sup>53</sup> According to Professor Wolters, the existence of entrepot facilities at Palembang did not mean that Indian Ocean merchants never went to other Indonesian harbours. He does not believe that the maharaja of Srivijaya-Palembang sought to impose a permanent blockade on ports in the Archipelago outside their own dependencies. See Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya*, 19.

Java, the eastern islands, the northern Malay Peninsula and its hinterland, and the Irrawaddy River systems. The whole area became what Wolters<sup>54</sup> has called a "favoured coast", which helped in the flow of trade, as well in the marketing of products collected from various areas in Southeast Asia, providing ships and crews to connect indigenous exchange networks with the international routes. The other entrepots, which had been reduced to secondary status, continued to exist as collecting centers for indigenous products, which they received from the hinterland via feeder points. They did not themselves engage in the re-exporting of foreign goods or products, which were imported solely for their own consumption and for redistribution to their hinterlands.

Wolters has singled out three types of forest products that became the key stimulus to Srivijaya's trade with China.<sup>55</sup> These products were benzoin camphor and a resin known as *ju*. The resin *ju* was used in medicine and also as incense. In fact, trade in these products created foreign trade in the whole of insular Southeast Asia, from any part of which they could have come. F.L. Dunn, who has examined the botanical evidence, believes that these forest products are indigenous throughout Southeast Asia, and not only in northern Sumatra, as Wolters seems to think.<sup>56</sup> The presence of these products in Southeast Asia and their significance in the China trade as a whole would have induced Srivijaya to try to establish control over the centres where they were collected.

Besides these three major forest products, Southeast Asia was known for a wide range of exotic products, found in mangrove swamps, forests and cave habitats. These included kingfishers' feathers, pearls, coral, sea-slugs and various seaweeds, birds' nests, mangrove bark and wood, dye-yielding roots of forest plants, honey, beeswax, eaglewood and *damar*. Wang Gungwu has identified the trade products of Southeast Asia for the period 960-1126 A.D. He classifies them as 'drugs and spice products'. Among the various other products which he mentions are ebony, gharu-wood, laka-wood, pandan matting, ivory, rhinoceros horns and lac.<sup>57</sup> Another list of Southeast Asian products has been compiled by Paul Wheatley. The products that he lists include tin, parrots, gold and tortoise-shell.<sup>58</sup> While,

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<sup>54</sup> Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce ...*, 197-228.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-110.

<sup>56</sup> F.L. Dunn, *Rain Forest Collectors and Traders: A Study of Resource Utilization in Modern and Ancient Malaya*, Monographs JMBRAS, No. 5, Kuala Lumpur, 1975: 104-14.

<sup>57</sup> Wang Gungwu, "The Nanhai Trade: A Study of the Early History of Chinese Trade in the South China Sea" *JMBRAS* 21, ii (1958) 113.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Wheatley, "Geographical Note on some Commodities Involved in Sung Maritime Trade" *JMBAS* 32 (ii) 1959: 1-140.



according to F.L. Dunn, tin, but not gold, was carried to China during the Sung period.<sup>59</sup> Both products had entered the Arab trade between 850 and 1000 A.D. Gold artifacts have been found at several archaeological sites in Malaysia, including the Kuala Huda area, Kuala Selinsing, the Peng Kalan Bujang area and Santubong. There is also evidence of tin trade in the Jenderam Hilir area.

The demands of international markets for Southeast Asian products encouraged Srivijaya to maintain the established arrangements for procurement of these products. According to current hypothetical models, the procurement of forest produce was through a network of collectors: primary, secondary and tertiary.<sup>60</sup> In theory, the collectors of inland forest products were the hinterland communities and the indigenous people, while sea and coastal products were collected by the coastal Malays or *orang laut*, who were familiar with the habitats. Sometimes the collectors were also the primary traders, who mediated directly with traders at the coastal centres of various categories, depending upon their proximity to them. Tertiary traders were essentially the chiefs and rulers at the various ports involved in export and import. The traders at the main entrepots like Srivijaya would normally be only secondary and tertiary traders.

The tremendous significance of the role of the *orang laut* in the procurement of essential trade products has been emphasized by several scholars. They were the farmers of the sea, coastal areas and mangrove swamps. The products which they collected were in great demand especially, if not exclusively, for the China market. They were able to fulfil this role because of their familiarity with the numerous reefs and shoals which abound in their aquatic environment. They were equally at home on the forbidding coastline or in the many practically invisible rivulets which dissect the mangrove forests fringing the southern part of the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra.

Srivijaya's position in this international trade was essentially to ensure a steady flow of Southeast Asian products into international markets, especially the South China ports. As part of this function it provided servicing for ships voyaging through the Straits of Melaka, and acted both as a centre for trade along the east-west trade routes and also as a place of sojourn for traders waiting for the monsoon. It was also responsible for controlling piracy in the

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<sup>59</sup> Dunn, *Rain Forest Collectors*, 109.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid* 99-108; Bennet Bronson, "Exchange at the upstream and downstream ends: Notes toward a functional model of the coastal state in Southeast Asia" in *economic Exchange and Social Interaction Perspectives from Prehistory, History and Ethnography* (ed.) Karl L. Hutterer, Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia No. 13, Michigan 1977, 39-52.

Straits of Melaka and providing commercial facilities, and in particular a well-organized system of port control. Because Srivijaya fulfilled its role as the main trading centre in Southeast Asia so successfully, China had granted it 'preferential status'.<sup>61</sup> This meant that its ships and traders received special treatment at Chinese ports. The rhythm of change in the history of Srivijaya very much depended on the political fortunes of China. As is evident from Arab and Indian literature, it was Srivijaya's trade partnership with China and its position in international trade that made it strong and prosperous.

Another feature which is apparent in some of the polities that came under Srivijaya influence is the division of the area within the capital city into different quarters for different activities. In the case of Chieh-ch'a and Kalah, separate quarters have been identified for the religious and commercial communities. In the capital of Srivijaya, the *kraton* occupied the most important area.<sup>62</sup> According to the Telaga Batu inscription, the *kraton* housed within its interior "a treasury of gold and property". Besides these separate quarters in the capital there must have been smaller centres outside the capital, presumably villages. In the Bujang River Valley, the distribution of the various sites over a very large area in the valley tends to confirm this. The Padang Lawas area has produced several sites of temple complexes, as have the Musi, Kapar and Batang Hari River Valleys. The Kingdoms of Langkasuka and Tambralinga must also have shared this feature, to judge by the discovery of several sites in the area between Nakhon Si Thammarat and Pattani at Patthalung, Satingphra and Songkhla. There are also similar sites between Chaiya and Nakhon Si Thammarat: Wieng Sa, Srivijaya Hill and Si Chon. The foreign merchants at Takuapa and Lubuk Tua during the ninth century (Takuapa) and seventh century (Lubuk Tua) had their own separate quarters.

Apart from its political control, it is uncertain how strong an influence Srivijaya exercised over the polities of the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra. Culturally, however, Srivijaya appears to have had no significant influence over them. All the polities known to have been under her control appear to have continued to produce their own styles of Hindu and Buddhist sculpture; nor is there any evidence of any clearly defined architectural style from her capital at Palembang having been adopted in the subordinate kingdoms. The only subject that appears to be common to the art of Palembang is the Avalokitesvarn image with a tiger symbol, although even here the distribution of this particular iconography and art style seems to have been limited to Palembang, the Lampungs, Chaiya, Satingphra and the Kinta

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<sup>61</sup> Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya* ... 39-48.

<sup>62</sup> De Casparis, *Prasasti Indonesian II*, 39 note 29.

Valley. Thus it may be assumed that Srivijaya gained political hegemony over kingdoms that were already established and continued to exist with varying degrees of political and cultural independence thereafter. Chieh-ch'a and Kalah were already well established entrepots when Srivijaya imposed its political influence, while all the polities in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula which came under Srivijaya control possessed well developed cultural and religious traditions.

In Peninsular Thailand, during the period from the seventh to the ninth century, the dominant cult appears to have been Vaisnavite. This is evident from the discovery of Visnu images in almost all the archaeological sites that have been dated to this period. But this does not mean that other cults were non-existent. Saivism and Buddhism were also practiced. But Kalah has provided evidence of only one cult, Vaisnavism. From about the end of the seventh century to the ninth century, the cult of Avalokitesvara was as prominent as that of Visnu. From the tenth century onwards, Buddhism appears to have become predominant. But other Hindu and Buddhist deities were worshipped too. In Peninsular Malaysia and Sumatra, the dominant religion in the two areas followed two main trends. In Sumatra, the trend was mainly towards the development of Tantric Buddhism, while Peninsular Malaysia (Kedah) developed Saivism.