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# Southeast Sumatra in Protohistoric and Srivijaya Times: Upstream-Downstream Relations and the Settlement of the Peneplain

Pierre-Yves Manguin

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From Distant Tales:  
Archaeology and Ethnohistory  
in the Highlands of Sumatra

Edited by

Dominik Bonatz, John Miksic, J. David Neidel,  
Mai Lin Tjoa-Bonatz

**CAMBRIDGE**  
**SCHOLARS**  

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

From Distant Tales: Archaeology and Ethnohistory in the Highlands of Sumatra,  
Edited by Dominik Bonatz, John Miksic, J. David Neidel, Mai Lin Tjoa-Bonatz

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# SOUTHEAST SUMATRA IN PROTOHISTORIC AND SRIVIJAYA TIMES: UPSTREAM-DOWNSTREAM RELATIONS AND THE SETTLEMENT OF THE PENEPLAIN

PIERRE-YVES MANGUIN<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

When the polity of Srivijaya appeared in the historiography of Sumatra, first in George Coedès' ground breaking article (1918) and in Nicolaas J. Krom's quick rejoinder (1919), and then during much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was termed a "kingdom" or an "empire", concepts that conveyed the notions of an extensive territory, and little thought was then given to the likely indigenous features of the local state development process. The late 7<sup>th</sup> century inscription of Karang Brahi, found near a tributary of the middle Batanghari valley, was in fact the only indication retained to assert an inland extension of the polity that was already thought to be centred at Palembang, where the majority of the contemporary inscriptions had been found.<sup>2</sup> Not much was then made of the few other

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the field data on which this essay is based was gathered during two cooperative research programmes carried out under various auspices from the late 1980s and until recently: the *Archaeology of the Musi River Basin Programme* (Pusat Penelitian dan Pengembangan Arkeologi Nasional (Puslitbang Arkenas)/Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO), the *Settlement Ecology in South Sumatra Programme* (Puslitbang Arkenas/Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD/EFEO/CNRS). The Balai Arkeologi Sumatra Selatan and the Balai Pelestarian Peninggalan Purbakala were set up respectively at Palembang and Jambi during the 1990s, when archaeological data started accumulating at a fast pace in southeast Sumatra. They have been engaged in a considerable amount of field work in parallel with the above-mentioned projects, which they continued on their own after the collaborative work came to a stop. Their many field reports and those of the above mentioned programmes remain for the most part unpublished. The titles of these reports will be quoted in full in reference notes; other published sources will be quoted in the usual manner.

<sup>2</sup> The inscription was first published by Krom (1919-1921); his translation was revised by Coedès (1930).

reported upstream sites of which little was known apart from the fact that they had yielded some statues or terra cotta reliefs, which had found their way to the Batavia museum in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

It took some more decades for the structure of the new Malay state to be reassessed, based on the indigenous perceptions of its social and political space conveyed by 7<sup>th</sup> century old Malay epigraphy and by later classical Malay literature, and for these representations to be matched up to recent progress in field archaeology.<sup>4</sup> These articles, by and large, concluded that Srivijaya, like many modern Malay polities, did not directly control a vast territory: the old Malay term *kadatuan* (like its modern Javanese well known equivalent *keraton*) did not designate a “province” or an “empire”, only the palatial grounds at the centre of the polity and the restricted territory under its immediate control.<sup>5</sup> It now appears, however, based on empirical observations, that the polity of Srivijaya, centred at Palembang, like many other such harbour-cities of Southeast Asia, was more than just a harbour polity. It was a true city-state in the sense that, immediately after foundation times, it extended its sphere of influence far upstream into one of the largest river basins of Insular Southeast Asia. This, and other characteristics, allowed one to categorize it

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<sup>3</sup> Only Resident Louis Westenek (1920, 1921, 1922, 1923), ever a keen observer of the Sumatra terrain and literature, paid attention to upstream sites and their potential for the history of Sumatra: His work was our main guide during our initial surveys of the Palembang hinterland in the 1990s.

<sup>4</sup> Edwards McKinnon (1985) wrote the first articles bringing together the archaeological evidence available in South Sumatra just before large scale excavations at Palembang and field surveys in all of South Sumatra were carried out in the 1980s and 1990s. See also Miksic (1980, 1985) for other early, more general presentations of Sumatran archaeology and trade structure. The useful and often quoted dendritic, upstream-downstream model proposed by Bronson (1977) for Southeast Asian coastal polities is general in character, and was admittedly not based on empirical data. Dunn (1975: 100 sq.) had adapted a similar model to modern peninsular Malaysia forest collecting and trading, based on ethnographical observations; he however considered that there were no secondary trading centres between the coast and the inland forest collectors in pre-modern times. This model and its applicability to the area and times under consideration will be discussed further in this essay (and in Miksic, *infra*).

<sup>5</sup> On which see the ground breaking article by Kulke (1993). Nobody took notice, however, that Damais (1949), ever respectful of the indigenous meaning of epigraphical vocabulary, and always keen on exposing europeo-centric or other biases in historical interpretations, had sensed this very problem in one of his first epigraphical articles: “Wij vragen ons af of het woord *kadatuan* in de oorkond van Kota Kapur, door Coedès met ‘province’ vertaald, niet eerder de Oud-Javaans betekenis moet hebben.”



as a true city-state (as defined by Max Weber).<sup>6</sup> This implied that its relationship with its hinterland had to be taken into deep consideration; this led me to characterize the amorphous nature of such coastal polities, and explain how a state which ruled directly over a restricted territory could hold sway over such extended peripheries in Southeast Sumatra (or for that matter overseas), how it could establish a commanding economic position and attain a broad integration into world economy.<sup>7</sup>

This essay will concentrate on the hinterland (or rather the *Umland*) of Srivijaya's earliest central place in southeast Sumatra, i.e., Palembang. For the first time it will attempt to bring together in some detail results of archaeological fieldwork carried out over the past 15 years, site by site; recent data on protohistoric and pre-Srivijaya sites downstream from Palembang will complement and support our interpretation of the upstream sites that will appear in the succeeding period.<sup>8</sup> Poor as it still is, this empirical data will then be juxtaposed to the current models, during different periods of Srivijaya history. In doing so, this essay will attempt to provide chronological depth and a measure of referentiality to often disincarnated theoretical constructions, by further documenting, among other sites, the peripheral polities designated by the term *mandala* in the inscriptions, which may now be associated with the southeast Sumatra landscape.<sup>9</sup> Three schematic maps, rather than true models, will be produced to further illustrate the three periods under consideration.

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<sup>6</sup> This was established in a workshop at the Polis Centre in Copenhagen during which most world candidates to city-state status were examined. See Manguin (2000a, 2000b) for a discussion of pre-modern coastal Southeast Asian urbanism, and Reid (2000) for a similar approach to modern Weberian city-states in Southeast Asia. The theoretical considerations are presented in Mogens Hansen's introduction to the Polis Centre volume in which these articles were published in 2000.

<sup>7</sup> On these recent interpretations of new field data, see Kulke (1993), Manguin (2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2002b).

<sup>8</sup> Late prehistoric and protohistoric sites in the high valleys of Pasemah and Ulu Musi areas need not be described in detail in this essay, as recent research there is described in other chapters in this volume (Guillaud et al., *infra*).

<sup>9</sup> I use *mandala* in this article by adhering strictly to the text of the 7<sup>th</sup> century Srivijaya inscriptions: it designates those outlying polities that were brought under the control of the newly founded state, but were still ruled by their own, formerly more autonomous, *datu*. In Srivijaya epigraphy at least, *mandala* does not designate the whole polity which is being formed by the new ruler (*datu*) Jayanasa with his own *kadatuan* at the centre (i.e., at Palembang). To be significant, the meaning of such terms should be restricted to their use in local, internal vocabulary and discourses. The local representation of the state provided in these inscriptions may furthermore not be valid for the second and third phases of Srivijaya history, after the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

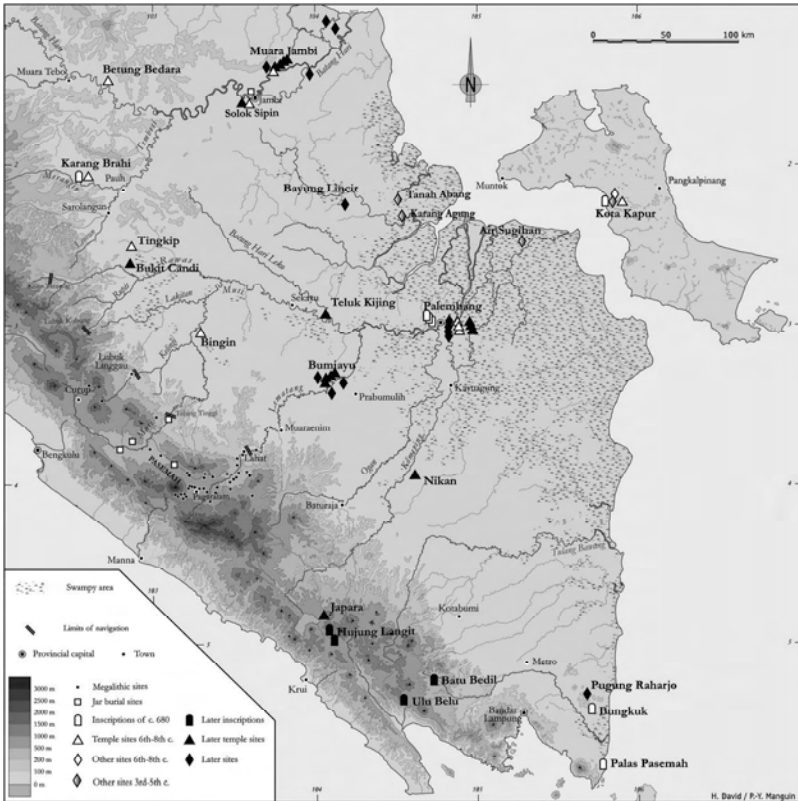


Fig. 19-1: Southeast Sumatra: general map with all sites mentioned in the text (Map: Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient)

## Early Coastal Sites of South Sumatra

The low, marshy lands downstream from Palembang were totally ignored by historians and archaeologists until the 1970s; indeed, there was then no reason to take them into consideration, as they were thought to have lain underwater, and the coastline to have been situated in Srivijaya times at the limit of the tertiary peneplain, some 80 km from the present day coast, thus turning ancient Palembang into a true coastal city. This theory, based on flawed readings by V. Obdeijn of ancient maps, on chronologically fallacious geological observations, and on circular reasoning took a long time to die. In fact, it took the discovery of

settlement sites in the back mangrove zone to once and for all refute these unfounded speculations.<sup>10</sup>

This discovery in South Sumatra, on both shores of the Strait of Bangka, of proto-historic coastal sites comparable in nature and in age to those brought to light earlier on along the coasts of the Thai-Malay peninsula (Kuan Luk Pad, Kuala Selinsing) and of Vietnam (Tra Kiêu) has provided a missing link between the latter sites and those of Batujaya and of Sembiran, on the north coasts of Java and Bali. These sites are situated on the major thoroughfare between the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Java Sea, where much of the economic and political development of following centuries would take place. During the 1980s and 1990s extensive areas of freshwater swamp forest along the east coast of South Sumatra, peopled only by Kubu hunter-gatherers until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were cleared to make place for transmigration settlements (on the Kubu, see the chapter by Handini, *infra*).<sup>11</sup> A few kilometres away from the coast, the area situated between Air Sugihan and Air Saleh, east of the Musi River main estuaries, was thus brought to the attention of archaeologists in the late 1980s. Due to extensive looting, however, all that could by then be gathered was an array of artefacts lacking context, roughly dating from late prehistoric to early historic times: coarse pottery, rather crude gold ornaments, large glass and bronze bangles, and a quantity of glass and stone beads of various forms and colours. Remains found at a new transmigration settlement cleared in the same fashion during the 1990s, northwest of the Musi and Banyuasin estuaries, were brought in time to the attention of Indonesian archaeologists; extensive surveys and test excavations were conducted there by the Balai Arkeologi Palembang before too much looting took place. At the site of Karang Agung, finds of local pottery were scattered over an area of some 400 ha,

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<sup>10</sup> Two earlier refutations on this theory, based on a reassessment of historical sources alone, will be found in Wolters (1975) and Manguin (1982 with all references to the debate). Still earlier coastal Paleo-Metallic sites, north of the Sungei Lalan, situated on an ancient beach ridge along the Sungei Sembilan, were surveyed by the Balai Arkeologi Palembang and the EFEO in 2002 (see Manguin 2004: 286). Considering the new hypothesis of Malays moving out of their homeland in West Borneo and settling in coastal settlements of Sumatra some time in the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE, we now have to admit the distinct possibility that these earlier Sungei Sembilan sites, followed by those of Karang Agung, could have been among the first Malay settlements in Sumatra (Blust 2006: 76, 84-86).

<sup>11</sup> On the new archaeological sites described below, see Tri Marhaeni (2002, 2006), Yusmaini Eriawati (2004). A summary of the evidence available for these sites in 2002 will be found in Soeroso (1999, 2002), Manguin (2004: 283-289). On the recent resettlement process in South Sumatra, see Charras/Pain (1993).

predominantly along ancient river beds. This area yielded many remains of wooden house poles, the largest some 30 cm in diameter. Two such poles have been radiocarbon dated to between 220 and 440 CE.<sup>12</sup> Tin net sinkers and fragments of boat timbers and a rudder belonging to the ancient Southeast Asian stitched plank and lashed lug tradition point to fishing and sailing activities. Gold ornaments with practically no decoration were found, and unverified information indicates that a gold leaf eye-cover was found in a burial together with beads, bones, and teeth. At Karang Agung, these indigenous artefacts are accompanied by a broad variety of foreign objects. Again, as in Air Sugihan, bronze and glass bangles are often found. Two small tin pendants appear to have come from Oc Eo in southern Vietnam, where many comparable ornaments made of bronze or tin have been excavated and have been proved by Louis Malleret to be locally manufactured (Malleret 1959-1963). Some polished black sherds with a pinkish-grey paste also appear to have been imported from India (though no rouletted ware has so far been identified). The abundant array of high quality beads of all sizes and qualities, made of stone or glass could indicate contact with India or with production sites in Southeast Asia. The local pottery assemblage, like that of many other comparable sites of coastal Indonesia, comprised both the coarser cord-impressed type and some finer ware with incised or punctate decoration, including tall necked *kendis* with a red polished slip.

Facing these sites across the Strait of Bangka, on the coast of the island bearing the same name, the site of Kota Kapur was a smallish 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century coastal settlement with two diminutive Hindu temples complete with their statuary, a 1.5 km long earthen wall protecting it from outside attacks, and a gathering of riparian settlements. It was built on top of an earlier iron-working site dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, which exploited the local ferruginous laterite. The two temples are simple stone platforms (respectively 5.6 m and 2.8 m square) on which, in all probability, wooden structures would have been erected to provide shelter to the images. Statues found in the main sanctuary belong to the Vaisnava cult encountered in most coastal states of Southeast Asia, starting in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century CE. These were dated to the late 6<sup>th</sup> or early 7<sup>th</sup> century, based on both stylistic considerations and radiocarbon dates from

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<sup>12</sup> These radiocarbon dates (financed by EFEO) were so far unpublished; larger post: Wkt 10,420, 1,696 ± 50 BP, Cal AD (220-440); smaller post: Wkt 10,421, 1,624 ± 50 BP, Cal AD (260-560). Sampling was done on the outer rings of the trees, thus minimising the “dead wood” error factor. The two posts appear to be contemporaneous, based on the excavation context: a 220 to 440 calibrated date has therefore been retained.

stratigraphic excavations. The secondary temple contained a coarse *linga* made of an uncarved natural stone (fig. 19-2). This coastal settlement was therefore one small link in a long chain of Vaisnava settlements, strewn from the Mekong delta, to the Thai-Malay peninsula, to Sumatra, and to Cibuaya (West Java); this network ran parallel to the similarly widespread Buddhist network, and, like the latter, must have been associated with merchant communities.<sup>13</sup> It clearly was singled out by Buddhist Jayanasa, the first ruler of Srivijaya, when he sent a fleet there in 686 CE to bring the site under control: this is indeed one of the half-a-dozen sites where he had an inscription erected to make public his aggressively expansionist policy and his domination of the newly subjugated *mandalas*. It is therefore tempting to conclude that this Vaisnava trade network was an unacceptable competitor and that the small Kota Kapur polity needed to be incorporated into the newly founded *bhūmi Śrīvijaya*.<sup>14</sup> Our excavations at Kota Kapur, however, could not prove (or disprove for that matter) if tin and iron ore, mainstays of Bangka exports in later times, were then exploited or not.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See Lucas et al. (1998) for a published report on the 1994 campaign, and Soeroso (1998a); the final results of the 1996 campaign remain to be published (P.-Y. Manguin, *Programme Archéologie du Delta du Mékong; Programme de recherches archéologiques sur Srivijaya: Rapports sur les campagnes 1996*. Paris: Commission consultative des recherches archéologiques à l'Étranger/EFEO, 1996); see Manguin/Dalsheimer (1998) for further discussion of the dates of the site, and Manguin (2004: 302-306). On the Buddhist network, see principally Ray (1994).

<sup>14</sup> Two other inscriptions with almost the same text, i.e., a subset of the central Sebokingking inscription from Palembang were found in Lampung province, at the southern tip of Sumatra (Bungkuk and Palas Pasemah inscriptions; Sukarto Kartoadmodjo (1992, 1994a, 1994b)). In the absence of accompanying archaeological evidence, little more can be said about them apart from the fact that they probably marked the southern limit of the group of *mandala* polities which then came under the sway of Srivijaya.

<sup>15</sup> Heidhues (1992), like most historians of modern times, repeats that tin was only exploited after the 17<sup>th</sup> century, without ever proving this point. In fact, this is when written sources become available and, with them, the first references to trade in tin. Tin is known to have been exploited in the Thai-Malay peninsula deposits in Srivijaya times. Tin mining in Southeast Asia probably started as a by-product of the exploitation of ferruginous laterites: Such an activity was revealed during our 1996 excavations at Kota Kapur, in layers dating back to the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century CE.

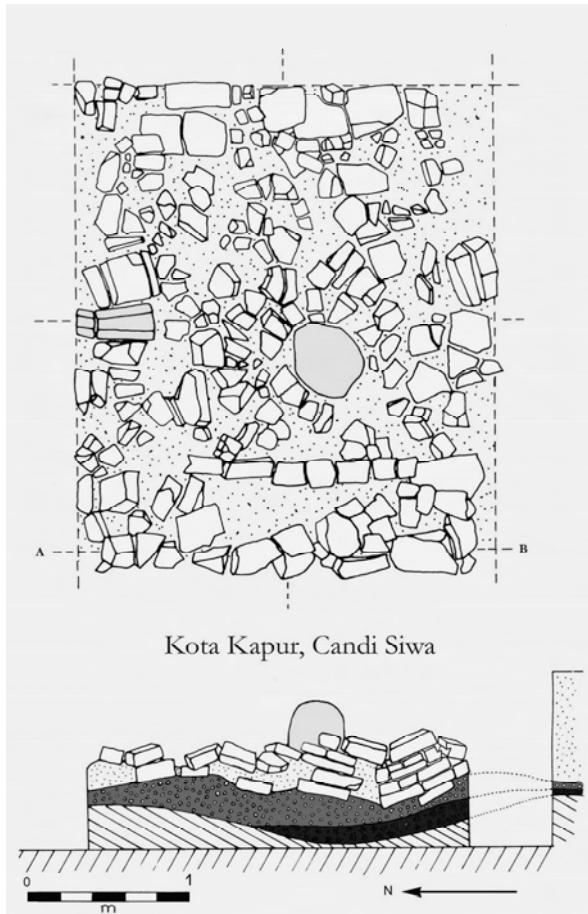


Fig. 19-2: Candi Siwa, Kota Kapur, plan and section, 1996 excavations  
(Drawing: P.-Y. Manguin/EFEO)

Most of these finds in South Sumatra and Bangka are clearly indicative of well populated coastal settlements dating back to the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium CE. At Air Sugihan, finds of a few isolated artefacts such as two 6<sup>th</sup> century Chinese green glazed ewers appear to indicate that occupation continued into the historical period (see fn. 17 below). We will refrain from trying to associate these new sites to place names referred to in Chinese sources for this same period, and from the exercise in map making that usually accompanies such endeavours. These “countries” (*guo*) appear to

fall, geographically speaking, along the “favoured coast” postulated by Oliver Wolters in southeast Sumatra. They were among the 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century polities which first sent tribute to China, among them *Ganduoli* (*Kan-t’o-li*), the most likely candidate for the area under consideration here, whose rulers carried a name in *-varman* and played host to Buddhist monks. The difficulties encountered in precisely situating these place names on a map remain daunting, however (Wolters 1967: 159-160, 222 sq).

The key location of these sites near the estuary of the Musi River, astride the obligatory sailing lane passing through the Strait of Bangka, appears to have provided these settlements with the opportunity to act as intermediaries between sea-trading groups and the contemporary societies of the upper valleys of the extensive Musi river basin. Excavations recently conducted by Indonesian and French (IRD) archaeologists in the higher valleys of the Musi river (Ulu Musi and Lintang) have complemented the evidence gathered in the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on the well documented but little known Pasemah and Lahat megalithic and slab grave cultures (these sites have so far not been precisely dated: van der Hoop 1932, Ayu Kusumawati/Haris Sukendar 2000). Evidence for neighbouring but culturally different populations practising jar burial rituals was thus gathered during excavations.<sup>16</sup> Other sites are now associated with earthen works. No absolute dates could be determined for jar burial sites, but one excavation carried out near an earthwork (possibly also associated with a destroyed burial) points to the occupation of these higher valleys during the end of the Neolithic and the Bronze-Iron Age, i.e., approximately during the last few centuries of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE and the 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century CE (Guillaud 2006: 44-46; Guillaud et al., *infra*).

During the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium CE we therefore now have data that indicates that both the higher valleys of the Musi River basin and the coasts near the mouths of this river, some 250 km downstream, were simultaneously occupied (at least for some centuries) by different, relatively complex societies, that show clear signs of having been ranked. At both extremities of the river basin, artefacts associated with these sites show that both groups had access to long distance exchange networks. Beads, Dongson artefacts (or iconographical references to them) and red polished tall-necked *kendis* have been found in the Pasemah megalithic

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<sup>16</sup> See the paper by Guillaud et al., *infra*, and the relevant passages in Guillaud (2006). See also Soeroso (1997), and the unpublished reports edited by Soeroso (*Survei dan Ekskavasi Situs Kubur Tempayan Desa Kunduran dan Muara Betung, Kecamatan Ulu Musi*, Balai Arkeologi Palembang, 1996; *Situs Kubur Tempayan di Desa Muara Betung, Kecamatan Ulu Musi*, Balai Arkeologi Palembang, 1996).

complex and in the Ulu Musi jar burial sites. The coastal sites would have provided the upriver (*hulu*) sites with vital salt and textiles (as always happened in better documented later periods), and would have kept a hold over the flow of alluvial gold and forest products from the upstream valleys. Located in an area still rich in natural commodities only a few decades ago (elephant tusks, deer antlers, tortoise shell, tiger skins, valuable timber, and possibly also rhinoceros horns) the downriver settlements may well have also fed local productions into the exchange networks. It appears therefore reasonable to assume, on the basis of the evidence at hand, that the coastal people served as intermediaries between those groups living in the highlands and the outer world (in the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century, therefore still in pre-Srivijaya times, the presence of three Sui Dynasty (581-618) ewers, two in Air Sugihan, and one reportedly from Bengkulu offer a fragile corroboration of such upstream-downstream exchange).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The Bengkulu ewer belongs to the Museum Nasional collections (inv. no. 1728); one Air Sugihan ewer found its way into the now dispersed Adam Malik collection, and the other was kept in the South Sumatra office of the Ministry of National Education in Palembang. A white porcelain Chinese vase, of the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century, in Sassanid taste, allegedly found in Pasemah was acquired by Orsoy de Flines (Museum Nasional inv. no. 3068); one should also mention an incense burner and a vase dating back to the Han, also acquired by Orsoy de Flines (Museum Nasional inv. no. 159 and 3317) and said to have been collected from upstream Batanghari (Kerinci and Sarolangun). Had the information on the find spots of these superb ceramic finds been reliable, which I doubt, they could have brought some solid evidence of upstream-downstream contact in the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium CE in the neighbouring river basin and in mid-1<sup>st</sup> millennium in South Sumatra. See Abu Ridho (1975, 1979, 1982) for descriptions of these finds, with no critical review of their origin (Orsoy de Flines only acquired Chinese ceramics that were reported by antique dealers to have been found within the Netherlands East Indies; it is common practice, in such circumstances, for the “history” of valuable artefacts to be adapted by the seller to better suit the requests of the buyer; information gathered in Jakarta seems to confirm that this was the case for Orsoy de Flines and one of his usual providers).



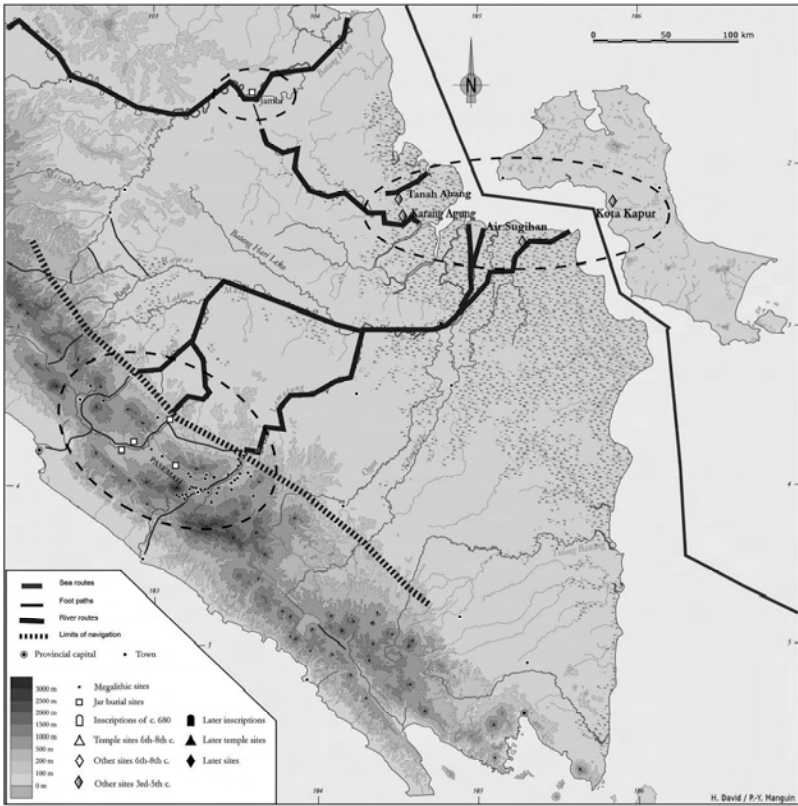


Fig. 19-3: Southeast Sumatra: schematic map, protohistory to 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century CE (Map: Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient)

Despite now countless surveys and many test excavations carried out over more than a century and the accelerated pace of data gathering after the 1990s in both the flood forests between the east coast and Palembang and the peneplain upstream from Palembang, there is so far no evidence for significant, dense late prehistoric or protohistoric settlement sites comparable to those known on the coast or in the upper valleys.<sup>18</sup> The upstream-downstream model attached to this period should therefore show no intermediate stages between the coastal sites and those in the highlands

<sup>18</sup> In the foothills of the Ogan valley, near Baturaja, some Metal Age artefacts were found above pre-Neolithic and Neolithic layers, in a cave; they however appear to have been historic rather than protohistoric (Forestier et al. 2006).

(fig. 19-3), at least in the Musi River basin. One should be reminded, however, that negative evidence of this sort can only be tentative, considering the fact that the archaeology of South Sumatra remains very much in a pioneering phase. In the town of Jambi, for that matter, protohistoric jar burial sites were excavated in 1996 and 1997, which yielded the usual array of stone and glass beads, and iron tools.<sup>19</sup> Protohistoric settlements were active far inland along the Batanghari course, which is geologically quite different from that of the Musi, downstream and upstream from Palembang. Known coastal sites near the estuary of the Batanghari all appear to date from a post-9<sup>th</sup> century period.

### Palembang and Early Historical Upstream Sites

Some time in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, before the well known group of inscriptions appeared in the 680s, the focus point of lowland activities shifted from the back mangrove terrain where they appear to have been concentrated until then towards Palembang, 80 km inland from the present (and past) coastline. Geographical determinism, in this case, must have played a key role: At the head of the Musi delta, the future urban site was predestined to play a major historical role. It allowed control over the whole South Sumatra riverine network, standing as it does at the focal point of the Musi drainage system. With the economic support of the growing trade with China, an aristocracy must have emerged by the 7<sup>th</sup> century, which was capable of building on a monumental scale. Palembang developed precisely at the point where the tertiary penepain presents the last true solid ground before plunging under the quaternary alluvial flood plain to its north. Coming from the sea, this is the first place where brick temples could be built on the higher tertiary hills, leaving the rest of the population to dwell on the river banks, as true Malays. Other ecological factors could also be brought to reinforce these arguments: this was a benzoin producing area (the most valuable resin in Srivijaya trade, obtained from *Styrax benzoin*); it was close to areas where *sagu*, then certainly the staple food for local Malay communities, grew in abundance;

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<sup>19</sup> Sunarto (2001) for a summary description of the Jambi finds, and two detailed unpublished reports: Eddy Sunarto et al., *Laporan Ekskavasi Penyelamatan Temuan Tempayan Kubur Situs Lebakbandung, Kecamatan Jelutung, Kotamadia Jambi, Provinsi Jambi*. Jambi: Suaka Peninggalan Sejarah dan Purbakala Provinsi Jambi, Sumatera Selatan dan Bengkulu, 1996; Eddy Sunarto et al., *Laporan Ekskavasi Penyelamatan Temuan Tempayan Kubur Situs Lebakbandung, Kecamatan Jelutung, Kotamadia Jambi, Provinsi Jambi*. Jambi: Suaka Peninggalan Sejarah dan Purbakala Provinsi Jambi, Sumatera Selatan dan Bengkulu, 1997.

it also provided areas for both *lebak* (wet) and *ladang* (dry) rice growing.<sup>20</sup> No site has yet been brought to light in controlled excavations at Palembang proper that would correspond to the early phase of Srivijaya (all sites excavated so far start with the second phase of Srivijaya history, around 800). The multiplicity of 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century artefacts found all over modern Palembang is nevertheless remarkable, be it Buddhist statues or inscriptions (some of the latter clearly referring to Buddhism); once systematically mapped into the ancient landscape of Palembang, they have allowed us to outline the structure of the first capital of Srivijaya, with its various focal points of activity.<sup>21</sup>

Similar inscriptions and statues in comparable, contemporary styles were also found in southeast Sumatra quite a distance upstream from Palembang and on the Batanghari and its tributaries. Their mapping will similarly allow us to identify those sites that, until recently, were only known because of just those isolated artefacts, but which have now also yielded brick structures, an unmistakable sign that temples and/or settlements were to be found near those find spots.

The Buddha statues belong to one single broad stylistic family deriving from Gupta Indian art, which spread over continental and western insular Southeast Asia. Such images have been found in particular in late Funan, pre-Angkorian and early Dvaravati contexts, between the early 7<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>22</sup> They may have filtered to other Southeast Asian areas, both continental and insular, from a centre in Cambodia, as hypothesized by Robert Brown (1992, 1994); the Thai-Malay peninsula, however, may have acted as a stepping stone, to Sumatra, Thailand, and Cambodia, as others have suggested (starting with Quaritch Wales' many works after the 1930s, and recently by Manguin/Dalsheimer 1998). As already noticed by Pierre Dupont, this family of standing Buddha images, with the close fitting monastic robe covering both shoulders, resulting in frontal, symmetrical representations, comprise rather scattered groups that lack uniformity. They however share common characteristics that set them apart from later, post-8<sup>th</sup> art forms, such as, in Sumatra or the Thai-Malay peninsula, the Sailendra style (also termed "Srivijaya" or "Indo-Javanese"

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<sup>20</sup> The study of Palembang's ecological niche was the subject of a yet unpublished paper presented by Muriel Charras at the September 2007 EuroSEAS conference in Naples, in a panel dedicated to settlement ecology of Southeast Asia (Charras 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Setiani (1994); Soeroso (1998-1999); Manguin (1987, 1992a, 1992b, 1993, 2000a, 2000b); see also Nik Hassan Shuhaimi (1992) for a good overall survey of statues in Palembang and Sumatra.

<sup>22</sup> On comparable cultural parallels between Srivijaya and Indochinese polities, see Manguin (2002a).

style).<sup>23</sup> Earlier authors such as Krom, reporting in 1931 on recent finds in Sumatra had already sensed that some images then known had, to his surprise, “quite a different and absolutely un-Javanese style”, and may have been associated with the 7<sup>th</sup> century inscriptions of the early Srivijaya period; Krom failed to explain their particular character and workmanship, however.<sup>24</sup> Coedès, in a skimpy paragraph of his standard work on Indianised states devoted to the archaeological context of early Srivijaya inscriptions, mostly dismissed all this evidence, stating that these images were “broadly speaking, posterior to the period under consideration”.<sup>25</sup>

A systematic study of early Buddhist art in Sumatra remains to be carried out, when a reliable inventory and good pictures of all existing statues are made available (which may then permit further discrimination between mid to late 7<sup>th</sup> and early 8<sup>th</sup> century images). However, these images already do provide good archaeological markers for this early historical period (early Srivijaya or immediate pre-Srivijaya). The surveys and excavations carried out in the past two decades in southeast Sumatra, which brought brick structures to light in sites where only statues were until then known to exist, prove without doubt that most if not all these seemingly isolated find spots (when they can be determined with any certainty) do correspond to temple sites (and, most probably, to settlements, but this remains to be documented).

Within a few years only of the erection in the mid-680s of the remarkably political Sebokingking inscription, positioned at the *kadatuan*, i.e., at the power centre of the new polity in eastern Palembang, the founding ruler of Srivijaya made public a set of peripheral inscriptions, transcribing a reduced version of the fuller text at the centre.<sup>26</sup> Had we only had the central inscription at Sebokingking to consider, we would have remained in the domain of vernacular representations of the state. The fact that this text was, as it were, distributed over a tangible territory provides this conceptualisation by the founding ruler of Srivijaya of his newly created political space a crucial empirical substantiation. Three such peripheral inscriptions were set up at Kota Kapur (in Bangka, dated to 686 CE), and at the southern

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<sup>23</sup> Brown (1992: 12-13; 1994; 2007); on these Buddhist statues and their sites, see among others: Dupont (1955, 1959); Griswold (1966); Piriya (1980); Woodward (2005).

<sup>24</sup> Krom (1931: 29-33); Ghosh (1934, 1937) confirmed their early dates.

<sup>25</sup> Coedès (1964: 160).

<sup>26</sup> Kulke (1993), Manguin (2002b). The Sebokingking inscription was formerly known as the Telaga Batu inscription; this was corrected when its original find spot was identified.

tip of Sumatra in Lampung province. Another similarly inscribed stone was erected at Karang Brahi, the only upstream such site, not far from the banks of the Sungai Merangin, a tributary of the middle Batanghari (in Jambi province, some 230 km from the eastern coast of Sumatra).<sup>27</sup> The site has long been known for its inscription only. However, test excavations by Indonesian archaeologists in 1993-1994 have revealed the remains of a variety of small brick and stone structures.<sup>28</sup> Not enough is known to understand the usage of these structures, or even to determine with any certitude if they are contemporary with the inscription of the 680s. The large size bricks, and the fact that no Chinese ceramics were found may indicate, however, that they were built before 800 and should then be related in some way to the erection of an inscription in their vicinity. No statues were recovered.

This site of Karang Brahi therefore bears witness to the fact that, together with coastal sites, upstream localities were explicitly incorporated into the Srivijaya system during the first years of the polity. The site, moreover, does not belong to the Musi River basin, but to the Batanghari catchment area further north. One should remember here that the Malayu polity, which, according to Yijing, “became Srivijaya” during those same years, has always been placed in an undetermined location along the Batanghari.

There is scarce but convincing archaeological confirmation in Jambi province of the existence of other 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century sites. These will allow us to further define the circulating space of the early Srivijaya polity. Far downstream from Karang Brahi, a Buddha in post-Gupta style was found at the river side Solok Sipin site, near the Masjid Agung in the modern town of Jambi, where remains of a ruined brick structure were brought to

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<sup>27</sup> One last such inscription was found at Palembang (possibly because it did not get to be sent to a peripheral site; it was inscribed on a transportable stone boulder). For these various inscriptions, see Coedès (1918, 1930); Casparis (1956); Boechari (1979); Sukarto Kartoadmodjo (1992, 1994a, 1994b).

<sup>28</sup> Retno Purwanti (2005), and unpublished reports: Retno Purwanti, *Laporan Ekskavasi Penyelamatan di Karang Brahi, Kecamatan Pamenang, Kabupaten Sarolangun Bangko, Propinsi Jambi*. Palembang: Balai Arkeologi Palembang, 1994; *Laporan Ekskavasi Penyelamatan di Karang Brahi, Kecamatan Pamenang, Kabupaten Sarolangun Bangko, Propinsi Jambi*. Jambi: Suaka Purbakala Jambi, 1994; Ignatius Suharno, *Progres Report Ekskavasi Situs Karang Brahi, Kecamatan Pamenang, Kabupaten Sarolangun Bangko, Propinsi Jambi*. Jambi: Suaka Purbakala Jambi, 1995; Ignatius Suharno, *Laporan Ekskavasi Situs Karang Brahi, Dusun Batubersurat, Desa Karang Brahi, Kecamatan Pamenang, Kabupaten Sarolangun-Bangko, Provinsi Jambi*. Jambi: Suaka Purbakala Jambi, 1995.

light.<sup>29</sup> Other early Buddha stone statues were found in a variety of sites along the Batanghari: their bad state of preservation, and the deficient documentation do not allow yet for a detailed stylistic analysis, but they again belong to the post-Gupta style described above, which clearly brings us to the earliest period of Srivijaya or even possibly some time before the new polity was founded, in pre-Srivijaya Malayu (the latter, it should be reminded, sent an embassy to China in 644).

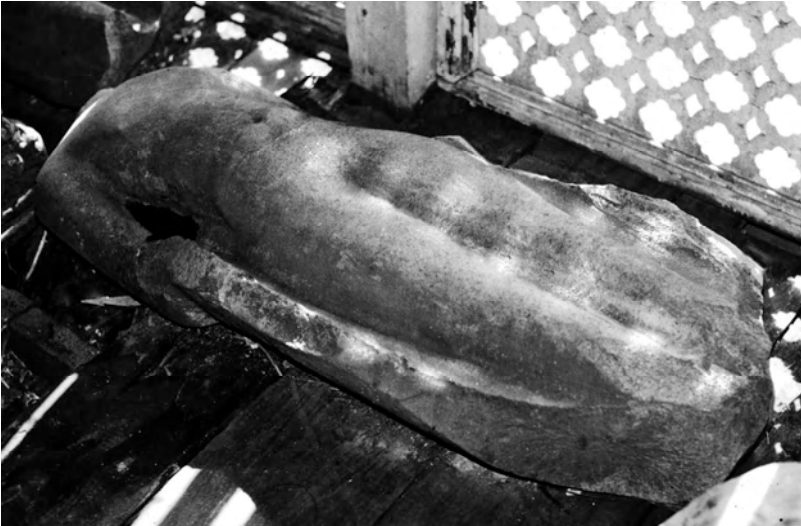


Fig. 19-4: Buddha (from the city of Jambi?), photographed at Rumah Bari, Palembang, 1985 (Photo: EFEO)

Two of these statues are said by A. J. Adam to have been removed from Muara Jambi in 1906 and then displayed at the resident's office in Jambi; he obtained this information from hearsay when he was there in 1921, 15 years after the alleged removal; E. P. Tombrink, however, had already seen "a pair of rough stone images" in Jambi in the early 1860s, in front of the pavilion (*pendopo*) of the former Sultan, that were said to come "from the time of the princes of Talanai", i.e., most probably from Jambi itself (fig. 19-4). Friedrich Martin Schnitger's confidence of their Muara Jambi origin cannot be accepted at face value (such images could

<sup>29</sup> Schnitger (1936a, 1937: 7 and pl. XI, now in the Museum Nasional in Jakarta). For an earlier summary of the evidence available for the Batanghari, see Edwards McKinnon (1985).

also have been brought to the Buddhist site of Muara Jambi in its heyday from earlier, abandoned sites along the Batanghari). We are thus left in doubt about their true provenance, though I would certainly favour Jambi, which has produced other contemporary artefacts, and is known to have been occupied in protohistoric times; Muara Jambi, which has been intensively surveyed and studied, has so far yielded nothing significant that would date from before the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>30</sup>

Of more interest to us here, because they were found further upstream in the gold bearing Sungai Tebo area, are two fragments of stone images that again belong to this 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century style of Buddhist statues. One fragment comprises the legs and feet of an image wearing a thin robe; it was found by Schnitger in 1935 at Betung Bedara (40 km downriver from Muara Tebo), and was said to have earlier been kept at the sultan's *istana* at Sungai Aro (still further downstream) (fig. 19-5).<sup>31</sup> More recently, the upper part of the torso of a Buddha of the same family found its way to the Museum Jambi and is also said to come from Sungai Aro (it may link with the above legs, but an intermediate part would then still be missing).

Finally a Buddha head was very recently found at Muara Timpeh, much further upriver near Rambahan, which appears to date from this same period; it is so far, however, an isolated find and it would be premature to conclude on this flimsy evidence alone that the area known as Dharmasraya in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century was already in contact with

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<sup>30</sup> Tombrink (1870: 45); Adam (1921: 194, 196, photos 9, 10); Schnitger (1937: 7). Schnitger wanted Muara Jambi to be the location of Yijing's Malayu. He dismisses all evidence from the town of Jambi by saying it was brought there from Muara Jambi, and he says he never found bricks in Jambi. Bricks were still visible in the high bank of the Batanghari at Solok Sipin when I visited the area in 1981, after recent test excavations (Mohamed Nazir 1980: 29). To complicate things further, Schnitger transported these two statues to his Algemeene Museum at Palembang. They were still kept there at the Rumah Bari, and later at the Museum Badaruddin, in the 1980s and early 1990s, when we did a new inventory of Indic statues in Palembang (we then lost track of them; they may have now been returned to the Jambi Museum, as was then planned). Schnitger, his Dutch predecessors, and his successors (not to mention the Jambi sultans) have maintained over the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century a regular habit of constantly relocating statues, making it very difficult for present day archaeologists to track down their precise origin. Some small bronze statues gathered along the Batanghari, between Muara Tebo and Jambi, may also date from this early Srivijaya period. However, such isolated small, portable artefacts cannot be used as site indicators when no context is available; we have not taken them into consideration here.

<sup>31</sup> Schnitger (1936: pl. II, 1937: 10). It is now in the Museum Jambi.

centres of power very far downstream as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 19-6).<sup>32</sup>

By mapping these finds of 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century stone statues and one inscription, it is therefore possible to delineate with a degree of certainty an area along the Batanghari and its southern tributaries, some 100 km east to west, from Jambi to Betung Bedara and Karang Brahi, where early Srivijaya or pre-Srivijaya (Malayu?) centres of Buddhist worship and possibly some settlements and a polity (or multiple polities) would have existed (fig. 19-7). No more can be said about them before additional surveys and systematic excavations are carried out at such sites. It is nevertheless tempting to link the existence of those upstream sites with the upper Batanghari and Kerinci gold producing areas, and thus to explain their ruler(s) interest in the region (gold is also said to have been abundant near Karang Brahi, and was found mixed in the soil during excavations). The same reasons would have accounted for their passing under the control of Sri Jayanasa shortly after he founded his new polity of Srivijaya at Palembang.

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<sup>32</sup> Personal communication by Don Longuevan, to whom I am grateful for sending recent pictures of this new stone head and of the body fragments now kept in the Jambi Museum. Other sites along the Batanghari and its tributaries, such as Dusun Tuo Sumai (in Bungo Tebo District), Melako Kecil (Batanghari District), should be further investigated, as they have yielded small bronze Buddhist images, brick structures, or other ancient artefacts; not enough data is available to include them in this essay (Krom 1912: 50; Mohamed Nazir 1980: 26-30; Edwards McKinnon 1985: 30-31; Lucas P. Koestoro, *Jambi dan Situs-Situs Penting di DAS Batanghari*, Palembang: Balai Arkeologi, 1994, unpublished report, and Miksic, *infra*).





Fig. 19-5: Buddha from Betung Bedara (Schnitger 1936), now at the Museum Jambi



Fig. 19-6: Buddha head from Muar Timpeh, 2007 (photo by Don Longuevan)

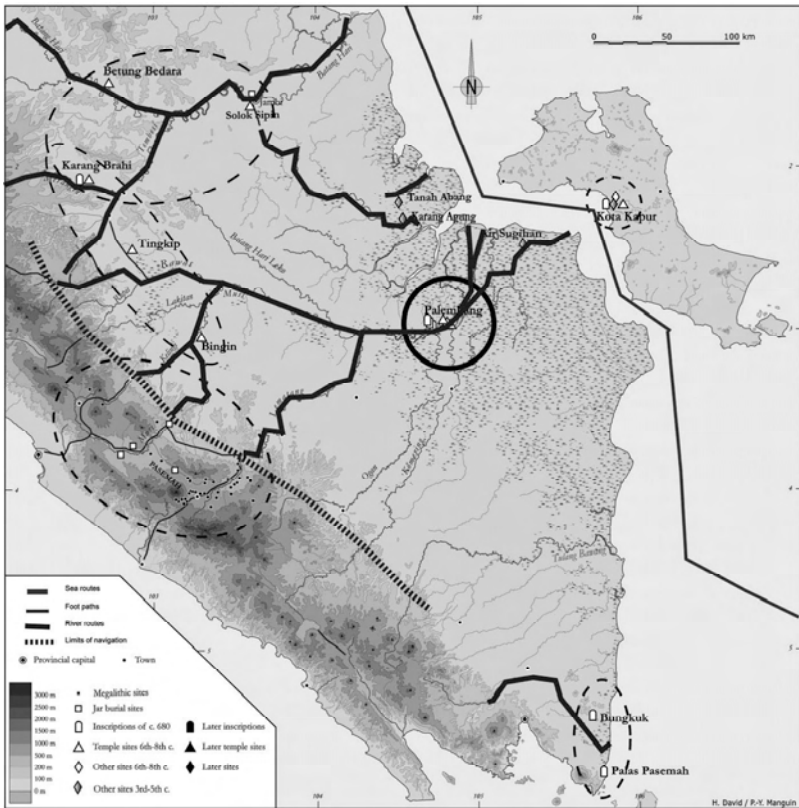


Fig. 19-7: Southeast Sumatra: schematic map, late 6<sup>th</sup> to mid-8<sup>th</sup> century CE (Map: Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient)

This early link with Srivijaya is strengthened by the discovery of the temple site of Tingkip, immediately south of the dividing line between the two catchment areas. The position of this site, after our survey there in 1993, struck us as unusual, as it was situated far from a navigable stream, and not, like many other similar sites, at the confluence of two rivers (the banks of Sungai Tingkip are not far from the site, but it is a small stream at this point, far from its confluence with the Musi Rawas further south). In fact, the existence of a temple (and a settlement?) in this place can best be explained if we consider the fact that forest paths linking the two river basins are known to have passed just west of this area (the fertility of the

area may have also been a factor).<sup>33</sup> A Buddha in a style comparable to that of the above mentioned statues, carved out of what is apparently not a local sandstone, was first found at the site of Tingkip in 1980 by new settlers, and later brought to Palembang (fig. 19-8).<sup>34</sup> We surveyed the site in 1993 and it was excavated in 1998 and 1999 by Indonesian archaeologists. It yielded a portion of a middle sized brick structure (approx. 7,60 m square); it has no openings, and a single staircase on the east side gives access to what was most probably a terrace. Its profile is typical of Buddhist temples (fig. 19-9). The area may have been used long after the Buddha statue was first brought there, as some 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century Chinese pottery sherds were found on the surface during surveys (Edwards McKinnon 1985: 23). Further south, the Bingin (or Bingin Jungun) site, on the banks of the Musi, has been known for long for its two large stone statues: an unfinished sitting Buddha (now at the Museum Balaputradewa in Palembang), and a beautiful standing Avalokitesvara (Museum Nasional, inv. no. 247).<sup>35</sup> The latter's style is different from that of the Buddha images described earlier. It can be paired, however, with other images of Bodhisattvas found elsewhere in Sumatran and Southeast Asian sites, which can also be dated to the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century, hence again to the early Srivijaya period. The Avalokitesvara image at Bingin has a short inscription on its back, paleographically dated by Boechari to the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The position of foot paths here and further down in this paper were mainly determined thanks to the earlier work by Oki (1986), from survey work in the area, as well as from a variety of 19<sup>th</sup> century travelogues and late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Dutch maps consulted in the National Archives in Jakarta (maps E5, E33, E38, F14) and the archives at Den Haag (the latter were kindly provided by Dominique Guillaud).

<sup>34</sup> This statue was first published in Satyawati Suleiman (1983: 200-201), who also compared it to the Dvaravati style of Buddhist statues. See also Nik Hassan Shuhaimi (1992: 24 and pl. 2.22), who agrees with this early dating. It is now in the Museum Balaputradewa in Palembang (its broken left hand, in *varadamudra*, is kept in the museum reserves). Reports on the excavation at the Tingkip site remain unpublished: Tri Marhaeni S. B., *Ekskavasi di Candi Tingkip, Kabupaten Musirawas Ulu, Provinsi Sumatera Selatan*. Palembang: Balai Arkeologi Palembang, 1998; Tri Marhaeni S. B., *Laporan Penelitian Arkeometri di Candi Tingkip, Kabupaten Musirawas, Provinsi Sumatera Selatan*. Palembang: Balai Arkeologi Palembang, 1999.

<sup>35</sup> Westenek (1920, 1921, 1922, and specifically 1923: 224-226); Schnitger (1935: 9, 1937).

century.<sup>36</sup> A short distance south of the present day village, on the right bank of the Musi, our 1993 survey revealed a small earthen mound and a surrounding earthen wall. Test excavations were carried out in 1997 by Indonesian archaeologists. Part of a brick structure was then revealed under the mound. Again, it is not possible, with the scanty data at hand, to confirm that the statue, the brick structure and the earthen wall are contemporaneous. The site, moreover, may have been used for some centuries, as some sherds of Chinese ceramics dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries have been found during surface surveys.<sup>37</sup> This site is not situated near the confluence of major rivers. It is however situated at a point in the Musi course where navigation was broken off by a stone outcrop (fig. 19-10).<sup>38</sup> In other words, this must have been a transshipment point on the river route between downstream and upstream sites, which largely explains the presence of the temple and, no doubt, of a settlement in its vicinity.

The distribution of early Srivijaya sites described above makes it obvious that the new political structure set up in the mid-680s under king Jayanasa from his base at Palembang included in its circle of *mandala* polities those centres at the threshold of the higher valleys. The sites on the Rawas and the upper Musi controlled exchange points on the route to the

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<sup>36</sup> This Avalokitesvara image was first published by Westenenk (1921: pl. 5). The curly locks on the nape and shoulders and the hairdress are particular features of this family of images: they may be compared with a fragment of a head from Bukit Seguntang in Palembang and to a lower part of a body that may be part of the same statue (Schnitger 1937: pl. II), with the famous image from Rach Gia, or with others from Angkor Borei, in the Mekong Delta (Dupont 1955: pl. XII, XIII, XVI). Dating of the two statues at Bingin is not consistent among authors: Satyawati Suleiman (1980, 1983: 209) thought the Avalokitesvara belonged to the Sailendra art style (8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>); Ghosh (1934, 1937) insisted on close parallels with Srilanka art and influence from Pallava art, and Nik Hassan Shuhaimi (1992: 101, pl. 2.6) compared it to the Sarangwati Avalokitesvara in Palembang, and to preangkorian art. Both Ghosh and Shuhaimi date it from the 7<sup>th</sup> to early 8<sup>th</sup> century (on which see also Boisselier 1957, who argues for a 7<sup>th</sup> century date for the earlier statues of this group). The overall similarities in style with preangkorian statues in continental Southeast Asia effectively tilt the balance in favour of a 7<sup>th</sup> or early 8<sup>th</sup> century date.

<sup>37</sup> Edwards McKinnon (1985: 21). Tri Marhaeni S. B., *Laporan Penelitian Eksploratif di Situs Bingin Jungut, Kabupaten Musirawas, Propinsi Sumatera Selatan*, Palembang: Balai Arkeologi Palembang, 1997.

<sup>38</sup> This *batu napal* bank was blown up by the Dutch to facilitate navigation. This information and the map are drawn from a note in the *Jaarverslag van den Topographischen Dienst in Nederlands Indië*, 1919.

fertile and probably still prosperous upper valleys of Musi Ulu and Pasemah. Via the neighbouring Batanghari catchment area, they also would have provided access to richer gold bearing areas. As reported by Yijing, the Malayu polity was thus absorbed by the new emerging power. At this point in time, therefore, the dendritic model with its secondary centres upstream from a central place (at Palembang) starts applying to southeast Sumatra.



Fig. 19-8: Buddha from Tingkip, Museum Balaputradewa, Palembang  
(Photo: EFEO)

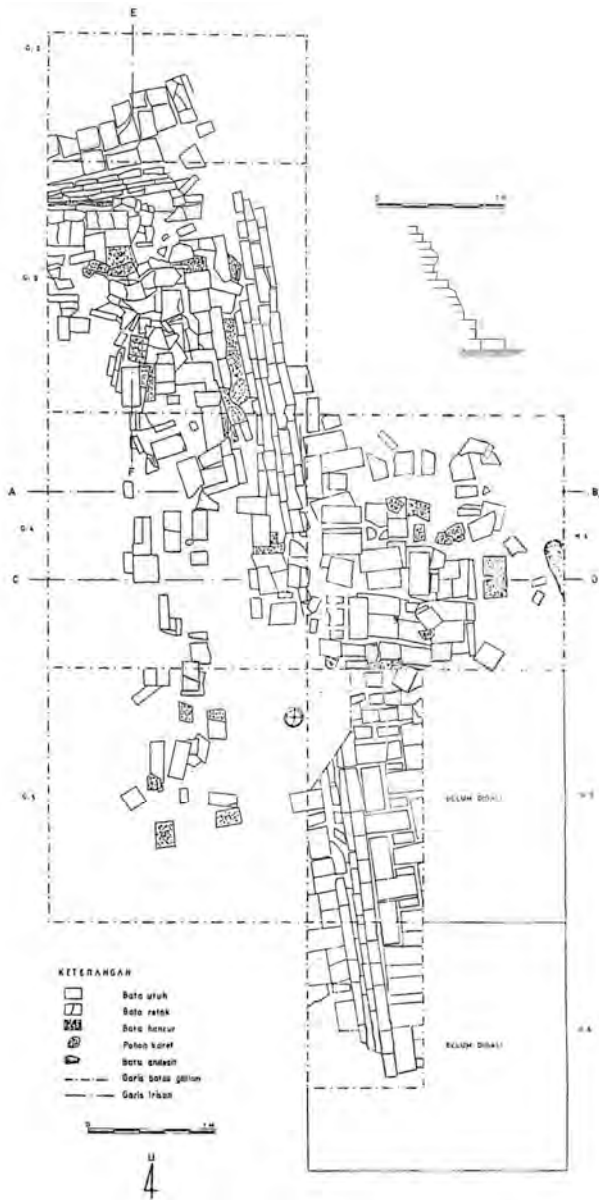


Fig. 19-9: Candi Tingkip, plan and profile, 1999 excavations (courtesy Balai Arkeologi Palembang)

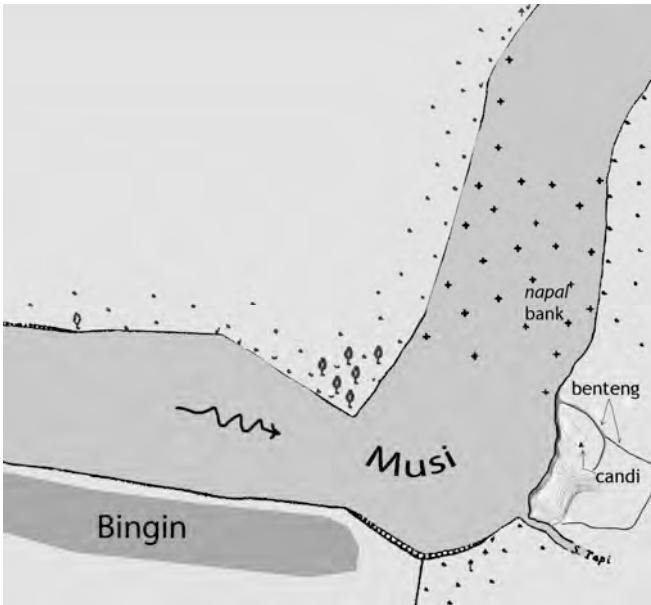


Fig. 19-10: Sketch map of Bingin (Pierre-Yves Manguin, Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient; after Topographische Dienst and Balar Palembang plans)

No sites with early Srivijaya markers have yet appeared in South Sumatra south of Palembang (only the two 7<sup>th</sup> inscriptions much further south in Lampung province may be ascribed to this period). This would leave the Lematang, Ogan, and Komering River valleys outside Srivijaya's sway in foundation times. Negative evidence of the sort is not to be fully trusted (as will be seen further down); however, if one further takes into consideration the fact that, following Yijing, the prominent regional polity of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Malayu) was situated to the north of Palembang, hence along the Batanghari, it makes sense to leave these valleys outside of Srivijaya's reach during the first decades of its formal existence (fig. 19- 7).

### Later Upstream Sites

The later part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century remains very much a blank for Srivijaya history in Sumatra (no more embassies were sent by *Shilifoshi* to China after 742). By the early 9<sup>th</sup> century, however, Palembang was thriving as a commercial centre and as the full fledged capital city of

Srivijaya, reborn under the Sailendra, after Balaputradewa's return from Java (until the capital of the polity shifted to Jambi, towards the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century). Temples were built at Palembang proper, as attested principally by the number of statues known to have come from a variety of sites within the city, and by the few remains of brick structures and architectural remains that could be brought to light in the interstices of the thriving modern capital of South Sumatra (Manguin 1987, 1992a, 1992b, 1993, 2000a, 2000b; Nurhadi Rangkuti 1989; Setiani 1994; Retno Purwanti et al. 1996; Tri Marhaeni 2001).

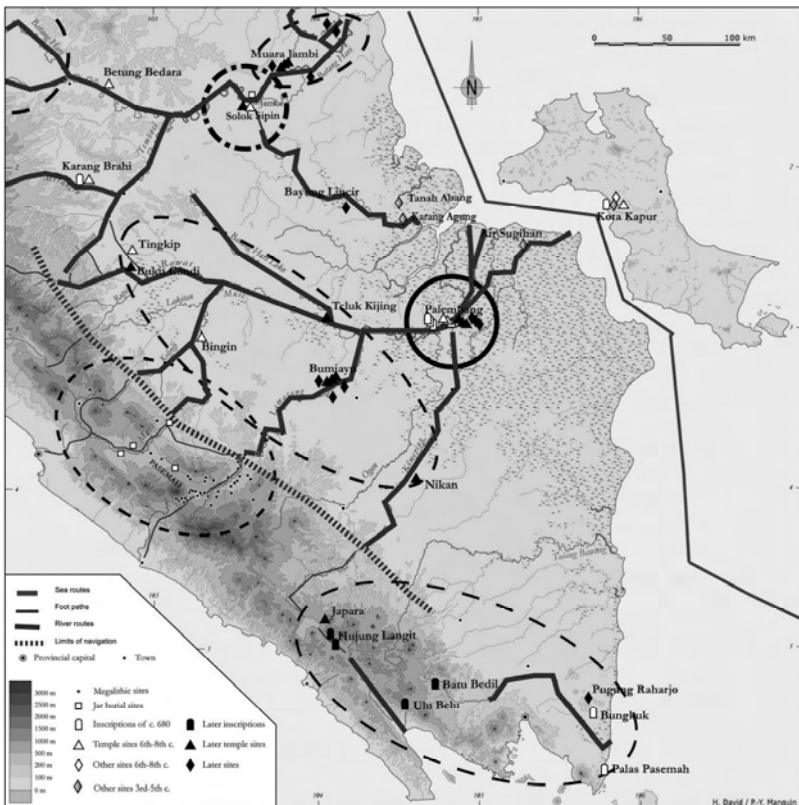


Fig. 19-11: Southeast Sumatra: schematic map, 9<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries CE (Map: Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient)





Fig. 19-12: Candi 3 under restoration at Bumiayu (Photo: EFEO)

Upstream from Palembang, our surveys of the early 1990s and later test excavations by Indonesian archaeologists (re)discovered sites that had been signalled by late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Dutch colonial officers, and brought to light a few new ones in the process. They further demonstrate that the Sailendra rulers of South Sumatra (of which we know so little, since they left us no inscriptions) kept some sort of relationship with the upriver sites that commanded various river basins, confluences, and access, certainly, to the higher valleys in the Barisan range. The city-state at Palembang was then as much dependant on its hinterland as it had been earlier on. The grid of settlements, judging from the evidence at hand, was densified, and the valleys south of the Musi now became part and parcel of the city-state's hinterland (fig. 19-11).

The temple complex of Bumiayu (formerly known as Tanah Abang), on the left bank of the Lematang, some 80 km upriver from Palembang, is by far the largest of these later sites, and the only one that has been thoroughly investigated by Indonesian archaeologists. The site was visited by E. P. Tombrink as early as 1865 (together with the neighbouring sites of Modong and Babat, now destroyed), resulting in a series of pieces of stone and terra cotta architectural decor being sent to the Bataviaasch

Genootschap in Batavia (fig. 19-12 until 19-14).<sup>39</sup> The site was surveyed again by A. J. Knaap in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>40</sup> Surveys and test excavations carried out during the EFEO-Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional programme brought back this long forgotten site to light; excavations were then repeatedly carried out there by the Balai Arkeologi Palembang (some large temples were cleared and restored).<sup>41</sup> The site extends over some 15 ha and comprises ten earthen mounds with brick structures, three of which turned out to be temples, and the rest are thought to be secular buildings. The temple structures are between 9.5 m and 14 m in width. Two temple sites yielded Saivite images and one only yielded two minute bronze Buddhist images, not a very convincing piece of evidence regarding the religion practised on this sanctuary. These temples were richly decorated with terra cotta high reliefs, sculptures, and plaques. Temples were built and rebuilt during various phases. The surviving Saivite statuary is comparable to Kediri style statues (hence late 11<sup>th</sup> century), but much of the terra cotta decor gathered during clearing appears to be related to late Central Javanese art (9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>42</sup> This corresponds well with the Chinese ceramics recovered in significant

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<sup>39</sup> Tombrink (1870: 36 sq.); the statues, mainly from Modong, included a Siva and a Brahma; I have not been able to locate them, but a temple finial and some terra cotta plaques decorated with garlands are still exposed in the Museum Nasional, side by side with contemporaneous terra cotta pieces from Candi Angsoka in Palembang.

<sup>40</sup> Knaap (1904: xliv-lij and illustrations), with a comment by Brandes (1904); Westenenk (1920, 1923), also reported on the Tanah Abang sites.

<sup>41</sup> Sondang Siregar (2005a) is the most recent and complete description of the temples and their statues; see also Sondang Siregar (2005b); Sri Soejatmi Satari (2002); Retno Purwanti (1994, 1995, 1996, 1998). Unpublished reports: Suaka Purbakala Jambi, *Candi I Bumiayu*, Jambi, 1993; Retno Purwanti, *Bata Berhias Candi I Bumiayu di Tanah Abang, Muara Enim*, Palembang: Balai Arkeologi Palembang, 1993; Tim Balai Arkeologi Palembang, *Laporan Ekskavasi Candi 2 dan Candi 3 Desa Bumiayu*, Palembang: Balai Arkeologi Palembang, 1994; Sondang Siregar, *Laporan Penelitian Ekskavasi Gundukan Tanah 10, Situs Bumiayu, Kabupaten Muaraenim*. Palembang: Balai Arkeologi Palembang, 2002; Sondang Siregar, *Laporan Penelitian Pemukiman di Das Lematang, Desa Bumiayu, Kabupaten Muaraenim*. Palembang: Balai Arkeologi Palembang, 2003; Sondang Siregar, *Laporan Penelitian Arkeologi, Tata Letak Bangunan Kompleks Percandian Bumiayu 1, Situs Bumiayu, Kabupaten Muaraenim*. Palembang: Balai Arkeologi Palembang, 2004. Sondang Siregar, *Laporan Penelitian Arkeologi, Permukiman Kuno di Sekitar Candi Bumiayu 3, Situs Bumiayu, Kabupaten Muaraenim*. Palembang: Balai Arkeologi Palembang, 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Retno Purwanti (1995, 1996); I am grateful to Marijke Klokke who examined our pictures of the terra cotta decor from Bumiayu and confirmed its links with Central Javanese art.

quantities in various areas at the site, which do not start before the late 9<sup>th</sup> or the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The ceramic sequence is practically uninterrupted until modern times. Bricks, including those bearing a garland decor (reused upside down!) were recycled at an undetermined period to build a platform-like structure locally known as *pendopo*. This may be related to the traditions gathered there by Knaap and Westenenk about a kingdom of Kedebong Ulu or Kedebong Undang, said to have had its centre at Tanah Abang. Among the regalia (*pusaka*) now kept at Bumiayu, and locally said to come from this kingdom, I was shown a sword, a bamboo with *rencong* script, and a 16<sup>th</sup> century bronze Portuguese helmet (which may provide a flimsy indication for the date of this kingdom).

There are no inscriptions in South Sumatra for the later phases of Srivijaya history that would provide us with a local representation of the state of affairs, and nothing of note in foreign sources as regards the hinterland of the capital(s). Despite all the work carried out on the site, we do not have a precise chronological sequence for the major temple complex at Bumiayu. There is therefore not enough data to allow us to understand what role this primarily Brahmanical complex played in relation to the predominantly Buddhist central places of Srivijaya at Palembang, and then at Muara Jambi, except to hypothesize, as usual, that the site controlled an essential riverine communication route to the interior. Was this temple complex, so close to Palembang, the central place of a polity in Srivijaya's orb, comparable to the *mandalas* of the 7<sup>th</sup> century? Was it a strictly religious complex? In fact, we cannot even be sure that the state structure described in 7<sup>th</sup> century inscriptions still applies to this period of Srivijaya history.

Still less is known about the other sites on which only little research has been carried out in the past decade. Again, I will be able only to provide here enough information to show that the occupation of the hinterland progressed between the 9<sup>th</sup> century and the demise of Srivijaya in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (further limiting myself to the Musi River basin, as the post-11<sup>th</sup> century period along the Batanghari is dealt with elsewhere in this volume, Miksic, *infra*). Surface finds of Chinese ceramics tend to indicate that some activities were going on at those early Srivijaya Buddhist sites we have examined north of the Lematang. Statues there, however, were all of the early period. The following sites have unfortunately not yielded religious images (only two stands), and we therefore have to base ourselves mainly on ceramic markers to date these sites (a very risky exercise, since no Chinese ceramics are present in Sumatra that would allow us to date the pre-9<sup>th</sup> century sites, and since functional sites may still have been used and settled after the desertion of earlier temples).



Fig. 19-13: Terra cotta with garland décor, Candi 3, Bumiayu (Photo: EFEO)



Fig. 19-14: Siva statue from Modong (near Bumiayu), now lost (Knaap 1904)

One site signalled by Westenek as a possible “candi” site, along the Klobak, a tributary of the Sungai Lalan (technically not part of the Musi basin, as it flows into the Banyuasin) could not be found during our surveys, probably due to the dense secondary growth in a forest known for its benzoin production.<sup>43</sup> In the general area known as Bayung Lencir, not far from desa Pangkalan Bayat, and in the hilly area of Talang Sri Menanti, scattered but regular surface finds of Chinese ceramics, mainly from the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century, appear to indicate some form of activity in Srivijaya times.<sup>44</sup>

Back to the Musi catchment area, we have the Lesung Batu (or Bukit Candi) site, at a short distance on a hillock from the Musi Rawas valley, not far from Candi Tingkip.<sup>45</sup> It was discovered during our survey of the area in 1992 and then excavated by Indonesian archaeologists who revealed the foundations of two structures. One brick building with an inner chamber still kept a massive square stand with a *somasutra*, probably a *yoni*. The small size of the bricks and the alleged Majapahit style of the stand, seem to indicate that the site is late (dating back from when the Srivijaya central place was already in Jambi, or even after the fall of Srivijaya). Another tufa stone building nearby bears no indications for its dating. No Chinese ceramics were found on the surface or during the excavations.

Further down the Musi, at the confluence with the Batanghari Leko, one important site signalled by Westenek at Teluk Kijing was surveyed in 1994. An earthen mound some 20 m in diameter at Makam Puyang Candi, a hundred metres away from the river bank, appeared to contain some brick structure, and an earthen wall closed off part of the site on its eastern side. Test excavations of 1995-1996 confirmed our early finds (fig.

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<sup>43</sup> Westenek (1923: 225); on benzoin, see among others Sturler (1843: 43-53); Edwards McKinnon (1985: 25).

<sup>44</sup> Pangkalan Bayat is on the Sungei Klobak, which used to be sailed by paddle wheel vessels, as still remembered locally.

<sup>45</sup> Bambang Budi Utomo (1994), and the following unpublished reports: Tim Penelitian arkeologi Situs Bukit Candi Lesung Batu, *Penelitian Arkeologi Situs Bukit Candi Lesung Batu, Kecamatan Rawas Ulu, Kabupaten Musi Rawas, Propinsi Sumatra Selatan*. Palembang: Proyek Penelitian Purbakala Palembang, 1993/1994; Lucas Partanda Koestoro, *Laporan kegiatan Arkeologis di Situs Bukit Candi Lesung Batu, Rawas Ulu, Musi Rawas, Sumatra Selatan*. Jakarta: Puslit Arkenas, Balai Arkeologi Palembang, 1993.

19-15).<sup>46</sup> Foundations of a temple built were indeed revealed and its large bricks could indicate a relatively early site. Finds of Chinese ceramics were abundant on the surface, particularly at the foot of the river bank and at the back of Kampung Air Rumbai (together with scattered brick fragments nearest to the temple remains): the vast majority of these ceramic sherds, however, dated back to the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century. The consistency and the rare density of the finds may not be sufficient to reliably date the temple structure, but they no doubt indicate an active riverine site in the last phase of the history of Srivijaya (at a time when Palembang, though still economically active, was no longer the capital of the Malay polity).

The Ogan valley has so far yielded no comparable site for the historical period. We have to move further south to the Komering valley to find another significant temple site, at the village of Nikan, 150 km upriver from Palembang. This was first discovered during a 1994 survey, and test excavations were carried out to confirm surface finds by the Balai Arkeologi Palembang in 1999.<sup>47</sup> A large and high earthen mound, obviously covering an important brick structure, the edges of which can be spotted in various places, is surrounded by the old Komering village, made of very large traditional houses on stilts. One of these beautiful houses (Rumah Pokong Ulu) is built right on top of the mound, together with two revered places (*kramats*). It overlooks the confluence of the small Sungai Nikan with the Komering. Some of the large bricks found on the surface carried a carved decoration. A damaged, large, round lotus stand (*padmasana*) made of andesite was kept in the shed covering the Kramat Mulajadi, overlooking the mouth of the Nikan (fig. 19-16). No statues and no ceramics were found on the mound. A few surface sherds of the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century were found at the southern foot of the mound and one whole Yuan 14<sup>th</sup> century Longquan bowl was kept in a village house as an heirloom. The 1999 test excavations confirmed the existence of the brick structure.

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<sup>46</sup> Further excavations were planned for 2005-2006 by the Balai Arkeologi Palembang on this potentially important site. The site is situated at Kampung Air Rumbai, near a sawmill. Unpublished reports: Suaka Purbakala Jambi, *Laporan Peninjauan Situs Teluk Kijing, Kecamatan Pembantu Lais, Kabupaten Musi Banyuasin, Propinsi Sumatera Selatan*, 1995; Endang Sri Hardiati, *Laporan Penelitian Arkeologi Klasik Situs Teluk Kijing, Desa Teluk Kijing II, Kecamatan Perwakilan Lais, Kabupaten Musi Banyuasin, Propinsi Sumatera Selatan*. Jakarta: Puslit Arkenas, 1996.

<sup>47</sup> Unpublished report: Haris Susanto, *Laporan Penelitian Arkeologi Klasik di Situs Nikan, Kecamatan Buay Madang, Kabupaten Ogan Komering Ulu, Propinsi Sumatera Selatan*. Pusat Arkeologi, Balai Arkeologi Palembang, 1999/2000.

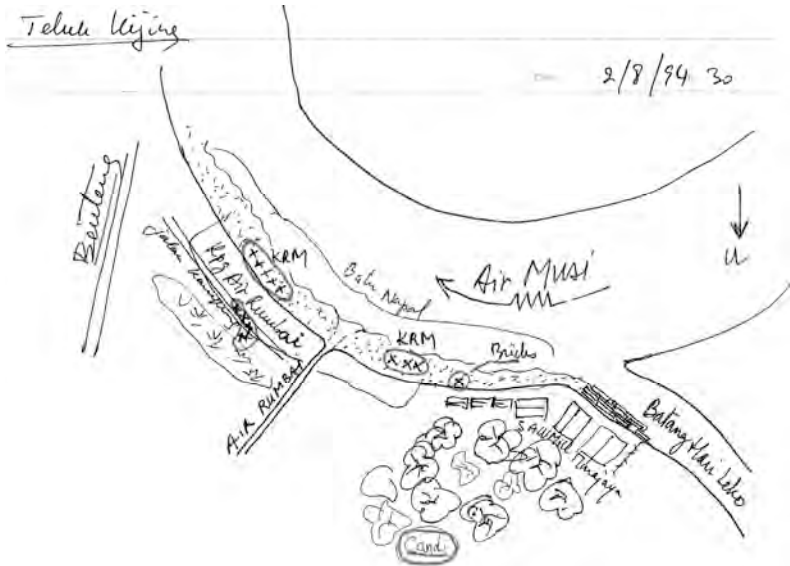


Fig. 19-15: Sketch map of Teluk Kijing (field notes, 1994, Pierre-Yves Manguin, Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient)



Fig. 19-16: Candi Nikan: earthen mound with visible brick structure, 1994 (Photo: EFEO)

Some 130 km further upstream, at the source of the Komering, on the southern bank of Danau Ranau, the ruins of the small Jepara stone temple have been known and excavated for decades.<sup>48</sup> It is also known that the stones were pilfered to build the district roads in Dutch times. The little that was left of the temple foundations appears to be comparable to Javanese temples of the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century, according to the 1954 visitors and the excavators of 1984. No statues were found so far. Only when this temple and that of Nikan are dated more precisely will we be able to prove a correlation between these two Komering River sites, and consequently securely associate Jepara with the Srivijaya polity.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, all we can ascertain is that it must have been related to the neighbouring 997 CE inscription of Hujung Langit (or Bawang), written in old Malay, but with a paleo-Javanese script (the full contents of its text have not been published yet). It may also bear some relation with the two rather puzzling inscriptions of Batu Bedil and Ulu Belu in southern Lampung (one in Sanskrit, Buddhist, probably dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the other in old Malay, Vaisnava, from the 10<sup>th</sup> century; both in paleo-Javanese script and showing strong Javanese influence).<sup>50</sup> It must be noted that, in geographical terms, this site of Jepara is an oddity in ancient South Sumatra, being the only one built above the 100 m line, at an altitude of 500 m, for reasons so far unexplained. The site could also be considered as the hinterland of Krui, on the coast, an important centre for Lampung

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<sup>48</sup> The ruins had been visited (and a photo published) during the memorable 1954 survey of South Sumatra by Soekmono, Satyawati Suleiman, J. G. de Casparis, L.-Ch. Damais, Boechari, etc. (Soekmono 1955). Unpublished reports of later excavations: Machi Suhadi/Soeroso, *Laporan Penelitian Arkeologi Klasik di Situs Jepara, 20 Mei-2 Juni 1984*. Jakarta: Puslit Arkenas, 1984; Rr. Triwurjani et al., *Survei Arkeologi di Situs Danau Ranau, Sumatra Selatan*. Jakarta: Bidang Arkeometri, Puslit Arkenas, 1993.

<sup>49</sup> A 19<sup>th</sup> century *piagam* (charter) of the Palembang sultan was still kept in Jepara when the above mentioned group visited the place, which confirms that some form of linkage to the lowland power was plausible (Damais 1962a). Some oral traditions consider the people at Danau Ranau to have originated from Pasemah (Collins 1979: 58-59). However, the Ranau area also has people speaking Lampung languages (personal communication by Ms Darsita Suparno, Pusat Bahasa, Jakarta). The people now occupying the Komering valley near Nikan, where the temple described above was found, are Lampung speakers, not Malays. All these could be relatively late settlements, however, which would tell us nothing of what was going on in Srivijaya times.

<sup>50</sup> On these three inscriptions and their dates, see Damais (1962a, 1962b). In the report by Triwurjani quoted in the preceding note, there is a reference to another unread inscription close to that of Hujung Langit, seemingly contemporary.



culture, which, however, never produced artefacts of interest to us here. On the other hand, if the Jepara site and these inscriptions can be linked to Javano-Sundanese history rather than directly to Srivijaya, as claimed by Claude Guillot, this ecological disparity could also possibly be explained.<sup>51</sup>

## Conclusions

As seen in the above pages, dependable evidence on southeast Sumatra during the first millennium CE is far too skimpy to yet develop fully reliable, empirically based models. The three schematic maps drawn for this essay can only make sense of the patchy evidence presently at hand. We are far from fully understanding how much shifts in political history and instability at the core of Srivijaya affected the periphery, or how much administrative efficiency and military strength associated with a centralized power modified peripheral economies. Three distinct periods may now nevertheless be perceived, which mark three different stages in the occupation of the Musi river basin and its neighbouring drainage basin, along the Batanghari. The archaeological data presented above, however skimpy, does now provide convincing evidence for the development of the circulating space of the evolving political systems of southern Sumatra.

Ironically, thanks to remarkable new discoveries in coastal sites downstream from Palembang, to an exceptional group of Old Malay inscriptions of the late 7<sup>th</sup> century, and to some statues that can be linked to better known contemporaneous developments elsewhere in Southeast Asia, we appear, for the purpose of this essay at least, to have gathered more irrefutable evidence for the first two phases than for the subsequent Sailendra period of Srivijaya history.

In the protohistorical period, we now appear to have an exchange network that functions with two poles only (fig. 19-3): a group of significantly populated coastal sites, straddling the various mouths of the Musi, with one emerging site across the Strait of Bangka, on the island of the same name; two (or more) neighbouring groups of settlements on the slopes of the Barisan Range, the Lematang and Musi valleys, and in the higher valleys of Pasemah and Lintang. Nothing so far indicates that there

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<sup>51</sup> Guillot (1996: 114-116). The association of the Jepara temple and the Lampung inscriptions with the 992-993 Javanese expedition to Sumatra has long been suggested (see the discussion of this possibility in Damais (1962a), who then no longer believed in it; none of the other South Sumatra sites described in this essay were then known, and we know by now that Javanese influence has been pervasive in Srivijaya after Balaputradewa's return from Java in the 9<sup>th</sup> century).

are intermediate nodes between these two groups. This situation is comparable to that reconstructed by F. L. Dunn for the forest collectors of the Malay Peninsula in pre-modern times, based on ethnographical data.<sup>52</sup> This period probably lasts until the 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century CE.

Due to a lack of archaeological evidence for the transition to the economically vibrant early Indianised polities of the “favoured coast” defined by Wolters, we have to rely on Chinese sources alone: they describe many polities (*guo*), some of which must have thrived somewhere in the lowlands of the Batanghari, the Musi, and probably also along the western coast of Lampung (Tulang Bawang?).<sup>53</sup> When Srivijaya coalesces as a city-state at Palembang in the last quarter of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, combining into a coordinated network socio-economic enterprises scattered until then among small, seemingly autonomous polities, all reliable evidence available so far indicates that the bulk of the effort of the budding polity was directed along two main axes.

In the Sumatra hinterland, it is still difficult to determine whether the first datable archaeological evidence available (mainly Buddhist statues) should be associated with the immediate pre-Srivijaya polities, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century (among them Malayu, on the Batanghari), or with the early Srivijaya period (between the 670s, after the integration of Malayu, and until the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century). Whichever interpretation becomes accepted after more archaeological research is carried out in the area, it appears that efforts are being concentrated on the northern part of the Musi drainage basin, on the paths linking this area to the Batanghari valley, and on the latter’s middle river basin, between Jambi, Muara Tebo, and the Merangin valley further south (fig. 19-7). Immediately after the foundation of the new state, therefore, secondary nodes appear in the landscape, within each river basin, and in between the two basins. Some earlier sites would have come under the control of the central power at Palembang (one such node at least is turned into a *mandala*, as recorded in the Karang Brahi inscription). Some were probably newly created at that point in time. As in later times, they were situated at confluences, at transshipment stages, or at focal points of an ecological niche and its productions. They no doubt acted as trading control centres on the way to the older centres in the upper valleys, including those rich gold producing areas in the upper Batanghari. Indeed, they allowed the two drainage systems to come under the sway of one *datu*, a *primus inter pares* settled at the now burgeoning urban centre at Palembang. The new power was thus almost immediately able to rise

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<sup>52</sup> See fn. 4 above.

<sup>53</sup> This is of course the central argument of Wolters’ (1967) thesis on early Indonesian commerce and the origins of Srivijaya.

above the geographical limits of physiographic macro-regions defined in terms of drainage basins; macro-regional economies were no longer contained within a river basin.

The second thrust of the incipient state unmistakably targeted the control of sea traffic between the Straits of Malacca, the South China Sea and Java, the complementary facet of the newly established power in international trade networks. On the south coast of Bangka, at Kota Kapur, controlled excavations identified a late 6<sup>th</sup> to mid-7<sup>th</sup> century Vaisnava temple site, within a moated settlement. Again, in 686, as illustrated by the erection of the Kota Kapur inscription and the demise of the earlier Vaisnava settlement, the fleet of Srivijaya took control of this other strategic *mandala*. It most probably acted likewise to integrate earlier polities at the south tip of Sumatra (as evidenced by the Bungkok and Palas Pasemah *mandala* inscriptions); and this probably was implemented by the same 686 fleet, on its way to *bhumi Jawa* to require that the latter paid homage (*bhakti*) to the new power (if the Kota Kapur inscription is to be taken literally).<sup>54</sup>

The economic and political rebirth of Srivijaya under the Sailendras marks the third period considered in this essay, after Balaputradewa, defeated in Java in the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, returns to his mother Tara's place at Palembang. The progressive densification of the grid of upstream secondary centres, whichever the exact political relationship of the latter with the central place at Palembang, must no doubt be assigned to the renewed political power positioned there until the late 11<sup>th</sup> century. Excavations at various sites in Palembang (as elsewhere in the areas considered to have then entered the Srivijayan sphere in coastal Southeast Asia) have brought ample evidence for a trade boom in the 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century. Jambi, after the shift of the capital to the Batanghari in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century, clearly takes over until the demise of the Srivijaya state in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It remains as yet difficult to break down this broad period into different chronological phases, due to the inadequate evidence considered in this essay (i.e., mainly data on the upstream temple/settlement sites recently identified in South Sumatra, most of them still lacking reliable dates).

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<sup>54</sup> Coedès (1964: 158) was the first to propose West Java as a target of this naval expedition. Tarumanagara was a Vaisnava polity during the 5<sup>th</sup> century and sent its last embassy to China in 669 (the Tarumanagara inscriptions are clearly Vaishnava, and the Cibuaya site produced 5<sup>th</sup> to early 6<sup>th</sup> century Vishnu statues of the "mitred" family). The recent discovery and excavation of the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century Vaisnava settlement at Kota Kapur does reinforce this hypothesis, but it is far from proving it.

Some sites in South Sumatra, if the provisional dates retained for our peripheral sites are correct, must have continued to prosper after Palembang lost its prominent position. This checks with the fact that excavations at Palembang reveal that economy was maintained at a steady level until the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century despite a noticeable drop in trade activities after the 10<sup>th</sup> century high; Musi River basin temple/settlement (polities?) were not abandoned after the shift of the “capital” to Jambi. In fact, some appear to have prospered after the demise of Palembang as a central place, possibly because they could regain some of their economic autonomy and increase their share of the hinterland trade. We may not be able, at this point, to dependably grasp the particulars of the local history of these riverine sites during our third chronological period; we can nevertheless discern the overall pattern of settlements and occupation of Palembang’s hinterland. Secondary nodes have by now appeared upstream from Palembang on all major rivers except the Ogan; by then, the Musi River basin network has expanded its grid to cover most of the penepain (the Jepara temple site, at 500 m altitude, remains an unexplained exception). We know from the surface finds of Chinese ceramics found on most sites that people did maintain at least a measure of economic activity in the hinterland of South Sumatra until late Srivijaya times (and of course in later times, though it appears from our brief surveys that the 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries are not well represented in upstream sites; 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century ceramics are present in many of them, which corresponds to the revival of Palembang under the Sultanate).

For lack of space as well as for reasons of coherence in the use of sources, I have not tried in this essay to consider the alternative routes linking the coastal lowlands to the highlands. The maps published with this essay only represent, in simplified form, the major foot paths that are known from modern historical and ethnographical sources to have prolonged river routes across the Barisan Mountains or linked the Musi and Batanghari drainage basins.<sup>55</sup> The same sources (maps and texts) do however describe or represent other paths that criss-cross most of southeast Sumatra, even in the lower regions where navigable waterways have dominated, or even monopolized traffic flows. Foot paths were used in the higher valleys, when rivers are no longer navigable, or in the piedmonts and the penepains between valleys and drainage systems. Other paths followed rivers all the way down to the lowlands, and were probably used locally in parallel to river transport. Transport on men’s or animals’ backs or in carts is not an alternative to river shipping: only the

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<sup>55</sup> See fn. 33 above for references to sources used to plot these paths and the upper limits of navigation on the major rivers.

latter can carry at low cost bulky merchandise such as salt, textiles, pottery, iron implements, rattan or timber over long distances, downstream as well as upstream. Supplying such a large urban concentration as Palembang with provisions alone needed the rivers to be kept open to traffic.<sup>56</sup> Despite considerable distances and high mountains, going from Bengkulu to Palembang across the Barisan Range, by foot when needed, and by boat as soon as one reached navigable streams, took surprisingly little time: only 12 days.<sup>57</sup> Land transport of valuable merchandise carried in small volumes (such as precious resins or gold) would have been economically viable, and must have complemented river transport along its banks. However, had land transport been a true alternative to river transport, rather than only a complement, sites would by now have been brought to light at crossroads in the lowlands, away from rivers. Why would almost all the nodes in the dendritic model described above at different periods, as evidenced by archaeological sites, be situated on river banks, at confluences of navigable rivers, or at transshipment points, if rivers had not played such a role?

In the body of this article, I have tried as far as possible not to veer from strictly archaeological and epigraphic sources. There are grounds, however, at this point, to briefly consider the local world views, from upstream (*hulu*) as well as from downstream (*hilir*), as expressed in Palembang Sultanate texts or in Pasemah oral literature. They appear, to say the least, to fit well with the preliminary evidence presented above. This will provide a hypothetical context to the situation in Srivijaya times, and substantiate the role of the Musi river basin system and of that of Palembang's role as a central place until recent times.

Many Western authors, working from Palembang with local informers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, have noted the *hulu-hilir* complementarities in the Musi River Basin.<sup>58</sup> The "Batanghari Sembilan", (the "Nine Rivers") as the Musi drainage system was locally referred to, is perceived as the *ekumene* of the Sultans (together with the Bangka and Belitung islands); 19<sup>th</sup> Malay texts from Palembang define this social space in unambiguous terms: the *raja* rules "(...) in the polity (*negeri*) of

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<sup>56</sup> Sultan Badaruddin cut off such supplies to Dutch occupied Palembang from a point 150 km upstream (four days by boat); he had to be dislodged to allow for supplies to be available again "in their usual course" (Court 1821: 19-23).

<sup>57</sup> Salmond (1822). An upriver trip from Palembang with a heavily loaded vessel, and at least two transshipments (to rafts, then to land transport) would of course have taken a significantly longer time.

<sup>58</sup> Praetorius (1843); Sturler (1843); de Clercq (1877); Alkemade (1883); Roo de la Faille (1929). See also recent studies by Andaya (1993) or Colombijn (2005).

Palembang, with all its upstream countries of the Batanghari Sembilan, as well as with its outlying *negeri* such as Bangka, Mentok, and Belitung; all these are governed by the *negeri* of Palembang”.<sup>59</sup> When Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin fought against the Dutch at Palembang, he is said to have taken refuge upriver to renew alliances among the Malay people there, “and he assembled all the clans (*pucukan*) of the Musi, the Beliti, the Batu Kuning, the Kikim, and the Rawas. The chiefs of all these clans had taken an oath by sacrificing a buffalo and eating with the Sultan, and swore to live and die with (=in the service of) the Sultan.”<sup>60</sup> The key term is *sumpah*, those oaths that appear to have been constantly renewed between the Sultans and the Malays settled upriver, along the banks of the Batanghari Sembilan, during ceremonies where the *piagam* (charters of investiture) were bestowed, and then brought back upriver by the local chiefs. In the Shellabear version of the *Sejarah Melayu*, the essential relationship with the *hulu* people is emphasized by the fact that one ancestor of the rulers of Palembang married a mythic princess from upriver.<sup>61</sup> These references, however, appear to have mostly referred to those Malay settlers of the Musi Rivers basin that were the true subjects of the rulers at Palembang, to which they paid taxes. At the risk of being anachronistic, I would say to simplify that these people would have been the “descendants” of those settlers of the peripheral *mandala* polities referred to in 7<sup>th</sup> century inscriptions, those who would have built and established the sites where statues and temples were brought to light. The hypothetical parallel is reinforced by the fact that the Sebokingking text and its subsets in the various *mandala* are strongly worded imprecations that repeatedly refer, in old Malay, to oaths being pronounced. The same term *sumpah/persumpahan* is used and clearly defines relations with people from outside the central *kadatuan*.<sup>62</sup> The shape of the central

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<sup>59</sup> “[...] didalam negeri Palembang, dengan segala huluan Batangari Sembilan dan negeri yang di luar seperti tanah Bangka dan Mentok dan negeri Belitung itu; dan semuanya yang tersebut itu dibawah perintah negeri Palembang sekaliannya.” (Woelders 1975: 74).

<sup>60</sup> “[...] serta mengumpulkan sekalian orang pucukan Musi, Beliti, Batu Kuning, Kikim, Rawas. Sekalian pucukan itu orang yang kepala-kepalanya sudah bersumpah memotong kerbau makan bersama-sama Sultan serta berwacat mati sama mati, hidup sama hidup.” (Woelders 1975: 162). I am grateful to Bapak Hasan Junus, of Pekanbaru, for elucidating the two Malay dialectal terms *pucukan* and *wacat*, which are not found in standard or in classical Malay.

<sup>61</sup> *Sejarah Melayu* (1915: 30). See also Andaya (1993: 41).

<sup>62</sup> Coedès (1930), Casparis (1956) and the glossaries therein. *Sumpah* was translated by Coedès as “curse”, given the violence of the text, but “oath”, in this context, is probably closer to the original meaning.

Sebokingking inscription, with a spout that can only have been there to gather the water used in stone bathing rituals, to be drunk by those taking the oath, checks nicely with the ethnographic evidence.

The people in the highlands, further upriver, were not under the administration of the sultans, to whom they did not pay taxes. They appear, however, to have considered themselves as part of this same ekumene, at least if one listens to their way of describing it in their extraordinary oral epics, as recorded by William Collins in the 1970s (Collins 1998). They are also known to have “gone down river to pay homage” (*milir sebo*) to Palembang and its rulers three times a year and *bersumpah* at Bukit Seguntang near the “tomb” of Sekandar Alam (Roo de la Faille 1929). In Pasemah oral tradition, the *raje* (standard Malay *raja*), as opposed to the local chief (*pasirah*), resides downstream, in Palembang, where the dangerous forces reside, and where commercial expeditions must regularly be organised, during which *piagams* are renewed. The Pasemah recognize that Palembang has always been a great downstream centre for commerce and government. It is the distant seat of the *raje* who sits at the port, at the distant end of all the rivers of the region (the Sungai Sembilan). He represents a larger order in which the highlanders took part. Traditionally, Pasemah people say, forest products like timber, rattan, aromatic resins, and honey were sent downriver in exchange for salt and cotton fabrics.<sup>63</sup>

The final conclusion of this essay is best left to the Pasemah people’s own words; they convey more, in a few beautiful verses and their translation by Collins, than I could in the preceding graceless pages.

*Ai, selurut selipit pantai,/seliuk selinggang alam.*

Ai, the river flows to the edge of the sea,/A sheltered place and a natural place to stop

(...)

*Sate ditengah lipit pantai,/bilangan jukuh tunggu talang,/*

*bilangan lebak tunggu dusun,/banyak muare mangku gedung.*

When looking towards the sea coast, every hillock has a hamlet,/ every valley has its village,/many confluences have strong buildings.

(...)

*Tujuh pematang nyembah dusun,/sungai sembilan nyumbang ande,/*

*tumpasan dagang ilir mudik,/tenggingan musuh di layaran.*

Seven ridges radiated from the village,/nine rivers joined at the bathing place [of the king],/The goal of merchants up and downstream,/set apart from enemies at sea.

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<sup>63</sup> Collins (1979, 1998), citations below in Collins (1998, *cantos* 2 and 5); the last two verses are a description of Tanjung Larang, the mythical, heavenly abode of the hero Radin Sane, but it is obvious that it is described in terms well suited for the city of the *raje* at Palembang.

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