

## RESTUDYING SOME CHINESE WRITINGS ON SRIWIJAYA\*

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### *The Bukit Seguntang Area*

In July 1984, I had the opportunity of visiting an early settlement site at Karanganyar behind the northern bank of the Musi river and a few miles upstream from the *kota* of the former Sultanate in the modern city of Palembang.<sup>1</sup> Karanganyar is near and almost due south of the little hill known as Bukit Seguntang. The site in question is an elaborate complex of canals, tanks, and a central quadrangular enclosure of about 310 by 230 meters, known locally as "the Bamboo Fort." The central enclosure is surrounded by a man-made moat, the southern and especially the northern ends of which were once broad sheets of water. The northern end has a small artificial island exactly at its center, and numerous fragments of wafer-shaped bricks on the surface suggest that the island was originally planned to accommodate a sacral foundation. Unfortunately, farmers have disturbed the soil, and what may have been a foundation base is now irretrievably lost. A square-shaped tank of considerable dimensions lies east of the enclosure and also has an island at its center, and a small tank, with a similar island, is not far southwest of the enclosure. Miscellaneous T'ang sherds were found on the enclosure's surface, in the debris of a well, and in test pits dug subsequently at Karanganyar. We also found wafer-shaped bricks

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\* I wish to take the opportunity of thanking my friends for what they taught me on our visits to Sumatra, and I wish to thank in particular Dra. Satyawati Suleiman, who was always optimistic about the prospects for Sriwijayan research during the dreary years before the SPAFA "Sriwijaya Project" was launched in 1977. Dra. Suleiman is the godmother of Sriwijayan students today as Pelliot and Cœdès were the godfathers of earlier generations. Whether as a governor of SPAFA or as an indefatigable research worker on tour in Sumatra, she is responsible more than anyone else for the present promising stage in Sriwijayan studies.

1. I was accompanied by Drs. Bambang Budi Utomo of the Indonesian National Research Centre of Archaeology, Dr. E. Edwards McKinnon, and Nigel Wolters. I am grateful to Dr. McKinnon for his detailed comments on an earlier draft of the article and for communicating additional information discovered by Drs. Budi Utomo. For a detailed and well-informed account of the terrain and archaeological sites of southern Sumatra, see E. Edwards McKinnon, "Early Politics in Southern Sumatra: Some Preliminary Observations Based on Archaeological Evidence," *Indonesia* 40 (October 1985): 1-36. For details about archaeological discoveries in 1984-1985, see Bambang Budi Utomo, "Karanganyar as a Srivijayan Site: New Evidence for the Study of Settlement Patterns of the Srivijayan Period" in SPAFA. *Final Report. Consultative Workshop on Archaeological and Environmental Studies in Srivijaya (I-W2b)*, September 16-30 (1985) (Bangkok: SPAFA Co-ordinating unit, 1985), pp. 273-89.

alongside each other in the profile of another well in the enclosure. A test pit nearby later revealed additional bricks.

The enclosure, moat, and tank are today irrigated padi fields, tapioca gardens, houses, roads, and small factories. The landscape is changing all the time and burying the past more deeply.

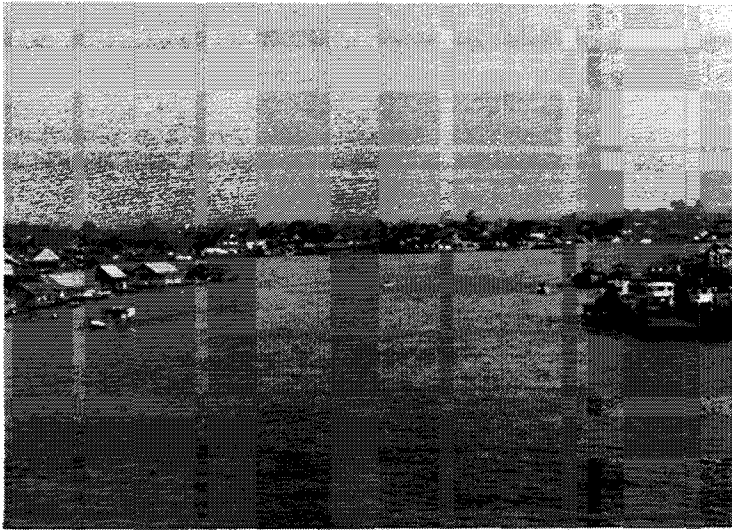
The Karanganyar site is the latest in a long record of discoveries in and adjacent to the Bukit Seguntang area. I need list only the most significant discoveries. An Old-Malay inscription of 682, mentioning Sriwijaya, was found in 1920 in the vicinity of the Sungei Tatang near Karanganyar, and also another Old-Malay inscription of 684 northwest of Bukit Seguntang in the same year. In the 1920s the trunk of a large Buddha image was unearthed not far from the southern slopes of Bukit Seguntang; the image is now attributed to the late seventh or early eighth centuries. Three bronze Buddhist images were dredged up in the 1930s from the confluence of the Musi and Komering rivers at the eastern end of the modern city of Palembang, and a bronze Bodhisattva image and a bronze Śiva image were discovered in the Geding Suro area in the city's eastern suburbs. In the 1930s, too, the Sabokingking inscription, undated but contemporaneous with the Old-Malay inscriptions mentioned above, came to light in the eastern suburbs.<sup>2</sup> In the 1960s a large statue of Avalokiteśvara was found in the same area, and a Gaṇeśa image was discovered in a garden very close to the city center in the early 1980s. Moreover, in 1978, 1980, and 1982 quantities of T'ang and early Sung sherds were recovered in the fields on and around Bukit Seguntang. The Karanganyar settlement site, with sherds of the same vintage, unmistakably belongs to the Bukit Seguntang area not only spatially but also in the sense that every part of the area shares a significant archaeological feature: remains of T'ang and early Sung stoneware and porcelain attributable to the centuries when Sriwijaya was flourishing. Nowhere else in southern southeastern Sumatra has evidence of early ceramic imports been discovered on this scale. The imports are superior in quality to anything produced locally at that time. One is now beginning to be confident that every visit to Palembang will recover more sherds of the same vintage.

I happen to be one of those for whom the question has never been whether or not the center of Sriwijaya was at Palembang but, instead, where in that area it was located. I realize that the antiquity of these princely hydraulic works is at present unknown, though the carbon dating of charcoal and wood at the bottom of the moat would soon throw light on the matter. But even in the unlikely event that these works were constructed in post-Sriwijayan times, it would be unfortunate if this were to distract from the significance of the accumulating evidence that the Bukit Seguntang area, with its seventh century inscriptions, was receiving quantities of T'ang and early Sung ware from the seventh or eighth centuries to the eleventh or twelfth. Sufficient reason already exists for regarding this area, including Karanganyar, as the focus for a major research project in the field of Sriwijayan studies.

Another reason why the Karanganyar site deserves sustained archaeological research also has nothing to do with the waterworks. The settlement is located on a terrain with a particularly favorable combination of topographical advantages, which would not have been ignored in the seventh century. The location is on the tidal waters of the Musi, near the confluences of the Komering, Ogan, and Belidah rivers, and, as I discuss below, is one of the two tracts of somewhat

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2. Nik Hassan Shuhaimi, "The Bukit Seguntang Buddha," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* [hereafter JMBRAS] 52, 2 (1979): 33-40; F. M. Schnitger, *The Archaeology of Hindoo Sumatra* (Leiden: Brill, 1937).



Confluence of the Ogan & Musi  
(Bukit Seguntang on Left)



[Photographs by  
Nigel Wolters]

Tempora Bridge at Palembang City  
(seen from Bukit Seguntang)

higher and drier land close to the Musi in the neighborhood of Palembang. The southern shore is much less stable and has changed its river bed over the centuries. The other higher and drier land is also on the northern Musi shore and east of the modern city of Palembang, but it is not far from where the river suddenly sweeps in a northeastern direction towards the sea and would be less secure than the Karanganyar site upstream from surprise attack by invading fleets. Karanganyar's location possesses strategic advantages, and they would be recognized by riverine Malays long before the waterworks were built.

Rather than presuming, as I did when I visited Karanganyar in 1984, that the settlement was a Sriwijayan creation, I prefer to identify the whole of the Bukit Seguntang area with that part of Sumatra which constituted the Sriwijayan heartland. The identification removes the difficulty of having to propose another and more probable polity to account for what is certainly an important archaeological site. I-ching, who lived in Sriwijaya in 671-672 and in the 680s until 695, knew from personal knowledge only two centers in southeastern Sumatra: Sriwijaya and Malayu. The precise location of Malayu in his day is still problematic, but the Malayu of later times was certainly on the Batang Hari river. If Sriwijaya is identified with the Palembang area, we can explain why I-ching's sailing itinerary from Sriwijaya to the Malacca Strait in 672 reveals that Malayu was north of Sriwijaya. His geographical evidence convinced me more than anything else over the years that Takakusu<sup>3</sup> and Pelliot<sup>4</sup> were justified in arguing that Sriwijaya was in the neighborhood of Palembang. The discoveries in the Bukit Seguntang area are already sufficient to make its identification with Sriwijaya a reasonable presumption, and it is mine in this essay. The locations of the imprecatory inscriptions of Bangka (686) and the contemporaneous ones of Karang Brahi on the Merangin river in the Batang Hari river system, of Palas Pasemah at the southern end of Sumatra, and of another recently discovered one at Jabung in the Lampongs<sup>5</sup> seem to represent an outreach of influence from a major center in southeastern Sumatra.

The re-emergence of the Bukit Seguntang area has changed the focus of Sriwijayan research. The future lies fairly and squarely in the archaeologists' hands, and my essay acknowledges the new development. I propose to review or, as I prefer to put it, restudy some Chinese sources in the light of what is being disclosed about the lower reaches of the Musi river and especially the Bukit Seguntang area, and I shall consider whether Chinese details now become more intelligible.

The historiographical tradition in Sriwijayan studies over many years has been to consult Chinese sources for useful data about Sriwijaya's location. These sources, in my opinion, can now be read in a more relaxed mood and for more modest purposes. I shall restudy them to consider not only how far they make better sense when read alongside the topography and artifacts of the lower Musi river valley but also to remind archaeologists of what the sources profess

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3. J. Takakusu, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D. 671-695) by I-Tsing* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1896), p. xliv. The Chinese text is known as the *Nan-hai chi-kuei nei-fa chuan*. Tripitaka. Chinese version (Ta tsang ching) (Tokyo: Society for the Publication of the Taishō Edition of the Tripitaka, 1924-32), No. 2125. I refer to it as the *Nan-hai*.

4. P. Pelliot, "Deux itinéraires de Chine en Inde à la fin du VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* [hereafter BEFE0] 4 (1904): 348.

5. Personal communication by Dr. McKinnon, July 10, 1985.

to tell us and, more important, what they do not. But the same sources can be approached more curiously and for their own sake, and this is why "restudying" seems an appropriate expression. As specimens of Chinese writing, they possess narrational features such as the conventions of various *genres* and idiosyncratic linguistic usage. These features are responsible for what can be expected from the sources and should be taken into account in recuperating their meaning. A critical approach on these lines is less concerned with what historical geographers have regarded as ambiguities, gaps, and bias than with ways in which statements on matters of historical geography are formulated. What will interest me may appear to be trivial details, but I hope that sometimes possibilities may suggest themselves to those who study the most important "text" of all, which is the terrain itself. Archaeologists try to read what the terrain is telling them by means of multiple and related signs on the ground, and the Chinese sources should similarly be read as systems of signification before they are read alongside the archaeologists' text. Such, then, are the limits of enquiry I have set myself.

### *I-ching, the Pilgrim*

My sketch of the sixty or so miles of the Musi river valley from the Bangka Strait to Bukit Seguntang takes as its point of departure what I-ching knew of "Sriwijaya" in the second half of the seventh century. Though he supplies little information, what he writes is an indispensable contribution to our knowledge. I have already noted that he clarifies the geographical relationship between Sriwijaya and Malayu when he was sailing up the east coast of Sumatra in 672. I shall suggest in this article that he is probably the most perceptive of all Chinese writers on Sriwijaya whose works have survived, and I shall bear him in mind when I have occasion to mention later Chinese works and make a few discursive comments in the light of what we now know from other sources, chiefly archaeological. But first I wish to introduce I-ching. He was a pilgrim and not a geographer, and our expectations of what he has to offer should be based on who he was.

I-ching (635-713), born in northern China, was thirty-seven years old when he sailed from Canton on December 7, 671, and reached Sriwijaya within twenty days.<sup>6</sup> He proceeded to India *via* Malayu six months later and returned to Sriwijaya after 685 and before 689; the date of his return to Sumatra is unknown. In 689 he visited China for three months and again visited Sriwijaya, which he finally left in 695.

I-ching is the only Chinese writer known by name who actually lived in Sriwijaya, and he provides snatches of information in three books. His *Record*, written there in 691-692, was intended to correct Chinese misinterpretations of the Buddhist discipline (*vinaya*). His *Memoir*, also written in 691-692, comprises short accounts of contemporary Chinese pilgrims who visited India; some of them studied in Sriwijaya. The third book, written in China between 700 and 703, is a translation of a Sanskrit *vinaya* text, to which he occasionally refers in the *Record*, and it is known as the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-ekasatakarmāṇa*.<sup>7</sup>

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6. E. Chavannes, *Mémoire composé à l'époque de la grande dynastie T'ang sur les religieux éminents qui allèrent chercher la loi dans les pays d'occident, par I-tsing* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1894), p. 119. The Chinese text is known as the *Ta-T'ang hsi-yü ch'iu-fa kao-sêng chuan*. Tripiṭaka. Chinese version, No. 2066, p. 7. I refer to it as the *Ta-T'ang*.

7. Tripiṭaka. Chinese version, No. 1453. I refer to it as the *Mūla*. For the

The *Memoir*, which mentions Sriwijaya most frequently, is a narrative focusing on the zeal and heroism of Chinese pilgrims who helped propagate Buddhism in China by collecting *sūtra* in India, and it belongs to the *genre* of Chinese writing represented by the works of the famous pilgrims, Fa-hsien and Hsüan-tsang, whom I-ching admired.<sup>8</sup> A Chinese reader's expectations would be hagiographical within the context of the expansion of Buddhism outside India, and he would soon realize that I-ching was edified by knowing that every generation in Buddhist history had produced those who transmitted the doctrine.<sup>9</sup> The *Record* is a detailed description of the *vinaya* as it was practiced in India and the Southern Ocean, and the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-ekasatakarma* is his translation of a *vinaya* text.

The marginal importance of Sriwijaya in the three texts is indicated by I-ching's habit of relegating items of interest to Southeast Asian historians to the status of notes. The notes sometimes read as if they were intended to update his information. A conspicuous instance is when he notes what "is now" the relationship between Sriwijaya and Malayu, a matter to which I shall return later. His two longest notes are in the *Record* and the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-ekasatakarma*, and they read as illustrations of the span of the various schools of Buddhism or the maritime communications within the Buddhist world. The note in the *Record* comes after an account of the schools of Buddhism adopted beyond the boundaries of India and in the Southern Ocean, and the purpose is to enumerate the major geographical areas in the Southern Ocean. He then resumes his narrative with further information about the Buddhist schools there.<sup>10</sup> The long note in his translation of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-ekasatakarma* is inserted after the *vinaya* text's description of India's "border countries." The note includes the sailing route from India to the Southern Ocean and China, and he observes that those with good *karma* will not suffer on the journey. He adds that he is informed that many of the Southern Ocean rulers seek to accumulate good *karma*, and he seems to illustrate his point by noting that there are many monks in Sriwijaya and that Chinese monks should study there.<sup>11</sup> Rulers would naturally encourage monks to visit their territories.

I-ching's texts are pious ones, and those who read them today should not complain that he does not supply densely packed descriptions of the Southeast Asian countries he and his fellow pilgrims visited. His references to India are similarly lacking in descriptive detail unless he is writing about famous monasteries. When we read his *Memoir*, we are reading about the courage, rigorous

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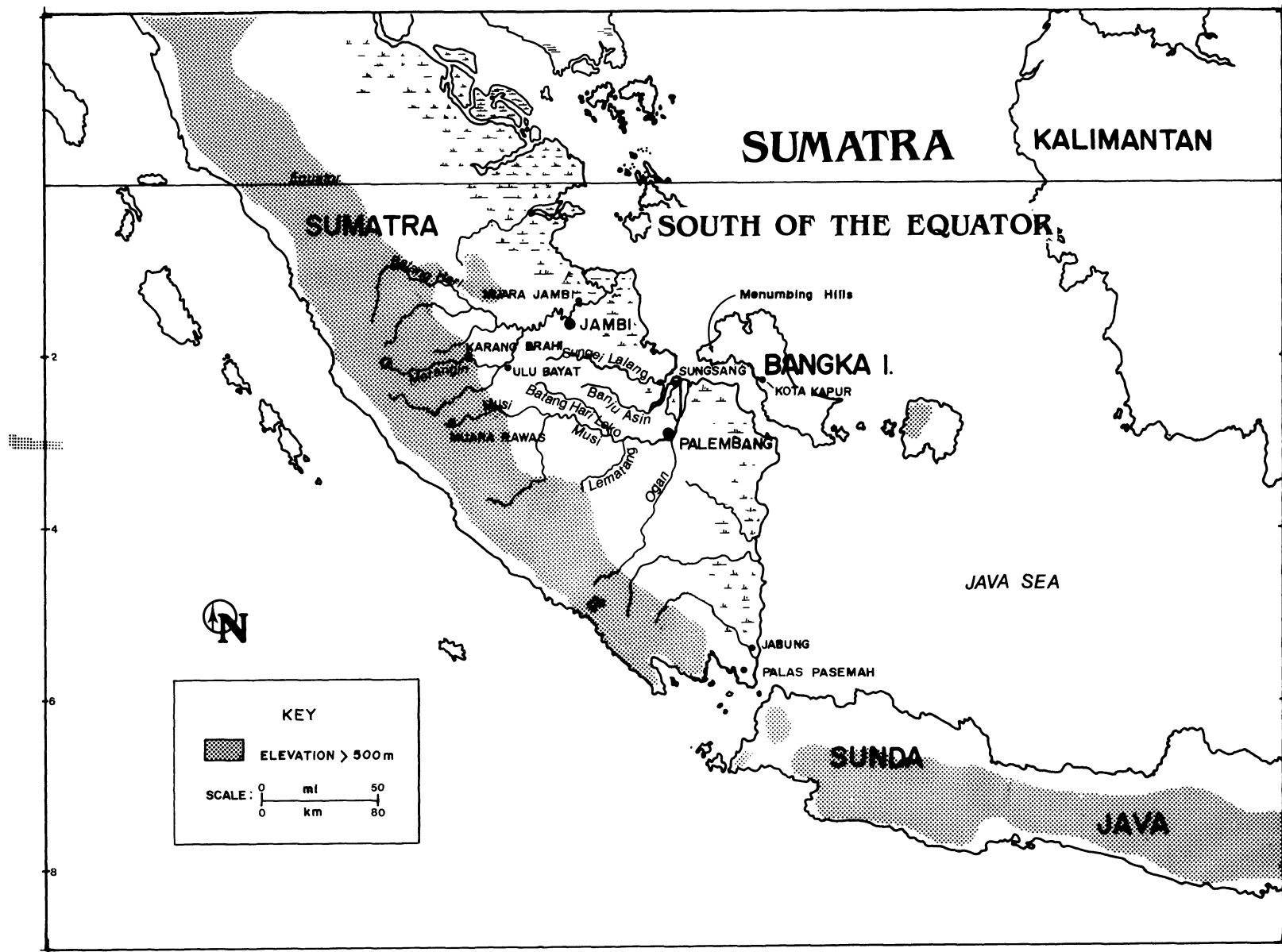
date of the translation according to the Sung dynasty *Sung-kao seng-chuan*, see Chavannes, *Mémoire*, pp. 194-95. For the dating of the *Record* and *Memoir*, see Takakusu, *Record*, pp. liii-lv.

8. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 207 (referring to Fa-hsien); p. 184 (referring to Hsüan-tsang).

9. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 153; *Ta-T'ang*, p. 9. On the hagiographical tradition followed by I-ching, see Arthur F. Wright, "Biography and Hagiography. Hui-chiao's Lives of Eminent Monks," *Silver Jubilee Volume of the Zimbon Kagaku Kenkyo sya* (Kyoto: Kyoto University, 1954), Pt. I, pp. 383-432. This text was written in the first half of the sixth century.

10. Takakusu, *Record*, pp. 10-11; *Nan-hai*, p. 205. The note begins with "Counting from the west . . ." and ends with "cannot all be mentioned here." Takakusu does not always indicate the length of I-ching's notes.

11. Takakusu, *Record*, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv; *Nan-hai*, p. 476. The note begins with "Roughly speaking . . ." and ends with "then proceed to Central India."



self-discipline, and scholarly pursuits of those who went overseas. The narrative structure of the passages on Sriwijaya is uniform and terse: the aspirations of the pilgrims, the dangers they faced on their voyages, and their religious preoccupations when they made landfall. Their heroic enterprise was bound to be accompanied by disturbing experiences. I-ching wrote a poem before he sailed in 671, and the language expresses his expectation of unhappiness when traveling long distances:

When I travel myriads of miles,  
a hundred layers of unhappy thoughts will weigh me down.  
How shall I compel myself  
to walk alone within the borders of the Five Indias?<sup>12</sup>

His friends in Canton shared his apprehensions, and he uses Buddhist language to express his debt to Fêng Hsiao-Ch'üan, an official in southern China who helped him obtain a shipping passage to Sriwijaya. Fêng is described as a *dānapati* (檀主), or host and benefactor of monks. I-ching may also be conceptualizing the gifts from Fêng and Fêng's family in Buddhist terms when he says that they "bestowed parting gifts" (資贈) to provide the necessities of life to alleviate his suffering when traveling;<sup>13</sup> "bestowing" something on a departing pilgrim is the equivalence of a pious deed. Monks and laity "bestowed" provisions when he left Canton on December 18, 689, to return to Sriwijaya.<sup>14</sup>

The hazards of foreign travel are emphasized in early Chinese secular writings,<sup>15</sup> but I-ching uses different conventions in describing them. For example, he never says that he is traveling to "pestilential" lands, a favorite Chinese allusion to Southeast Asia. Instead, he writes as a Buddhist. A pilgrim's safety depends on his *karma*.<sup>16</sup> Waves are compared with the back of the sea monster (the *makara*).<sup>17</sup> Of his own swift voyage in 671 he says that he entered a vast abyss of water, with waves like mountains and billows that reached the sky.<sup>18</sup> His *Memoir* mentions storms and shipwrecks.<sup>19</sup> In 689 only one person in a group of prospective pilgrims finally decided to accompany I-ching to Sriwijaya.<sup>20</sup> The courage of those who crossed the sea was sustained by religious intentions; they wished to be ladders for those who suffered and be the ship which crossed the sea of desire for the benefit of mankind.<sup>21</sup> I-ching writes of himself in the *Record*: "If, as I earnestly hope, one man out of a million improves himself [by my words], I shall not be sorry for the difficulty and bitterness I endured. . . ."<sup>22</sup>

12. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 115; *Ta-T'ang*, p. 7.

13. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, pp. 116-17; *Ta-T'ang*, p. 7.

14. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 179; *Ta-T'ang*, p. 13.

15. O. W. Wolters, *The Fall of Śrīvijaya in Malay History* (London: Lund Humphries, 1970), pp. 23-24.

16. Takakusu, *Record*, p. xxxiv; *Mūla*, p. 477.

17. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 53.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 76, 108.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

22. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 95; *Nan-hai*, p. 219.



I-ching was willing to face hardship but did not feel obliged to record profane information about the countries he visited. As soon as he reached Sriwijaya, he began to study Sanskrit texts. His books never distinguish the cultures of India and Sumatra except in respect of a few minor Buddhist practices. When in the *Record* he refers to the countries of "the Southern Ocean," he has in mind the Indonesian lands and probably the only area he knew, which was Sriwijaya.<sup>23</sup> Here he writes of the lavish celebration of the six fasting days each month when an image was carried in procession and music played. This did not happen in India.<sup>24</sup> The closest he gets in the *Record* to recognizing more substantial differences is when he records that in the Southern Ocean those who were ill dieted for only two or three days rather than anything up to a week as in India, and he explains the difference in terms of "territory, customs, and the constitution of the body."<sup>25</sup>

Because I-ching was a zealous Buddhist pilgrim, one need not expect him to provide ample information on matters of historical geography. Nevertheless, as we shall see, his religious preoccupations do not disqualify him from providing some valuable details on this subject; in fact, they contribute to the value which we should attach to his geographical observations.

In the first place, his linguistic usage is likely to have been systematic and exact. He was a distinguished Sino-Sanskrit scholar and therefore concerned with the correct definition of Sanskrit technical terms. In the *Record* he states that one needs an exact knowledge of the Sanskrit texts in order to read them as they should be read: "one has to rely on [them] and give up [lit. 'block out'] individual inclinations."<sup>26</sup> Texts, he would insist, should not be interpreted by reading between the lines. I-ching's concern for linguistic accuracy has persuaded Professor Wheatley that he had acquired "a rare expertise in the transcription of foreign words."<sup>27</sup> A concern for accuracy explains why he includes a long and detailed description of the great Nālandā monastery and even draws a model "to avoid error."<sup>28</sup> No Chinese visitor to Sumatra would be better qualified to describe what he knew with a discriminating use of language, and we shall not be disappointed when we come to examine the distinctions he observes when he is defining the outline of Indian and Southern Ocean geography.

In the second place, and of particular concern to historical geographers, he had a special reason for being exact when supplying geographical relations within the Buddhist world. He was an experienced traveler and knew that the patchwork of countries he visited or heard of from fellow pilgrims constituted

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23. He describes Sribhoga (Sriwijaya) as being in the Southern Ocean; Takakusu, *Record*, p. 184. For I-ching's brief reference to countries on mainland Southeast Asia, see *Record*, p. 67, where he distinguishes the twenty *kuo* (polities) extending from the Mahābhōdi temple in India to what is today northern Vietnam from the more than ten *kuo* in the Southern Ocean; *Nan-hai*, p. 214. Takakusu translates the "*kuo*" in the Southern Ocean as "islands"; the text gives "*kuo*."

24. Takakusu, *Record*, pp. 45-47.

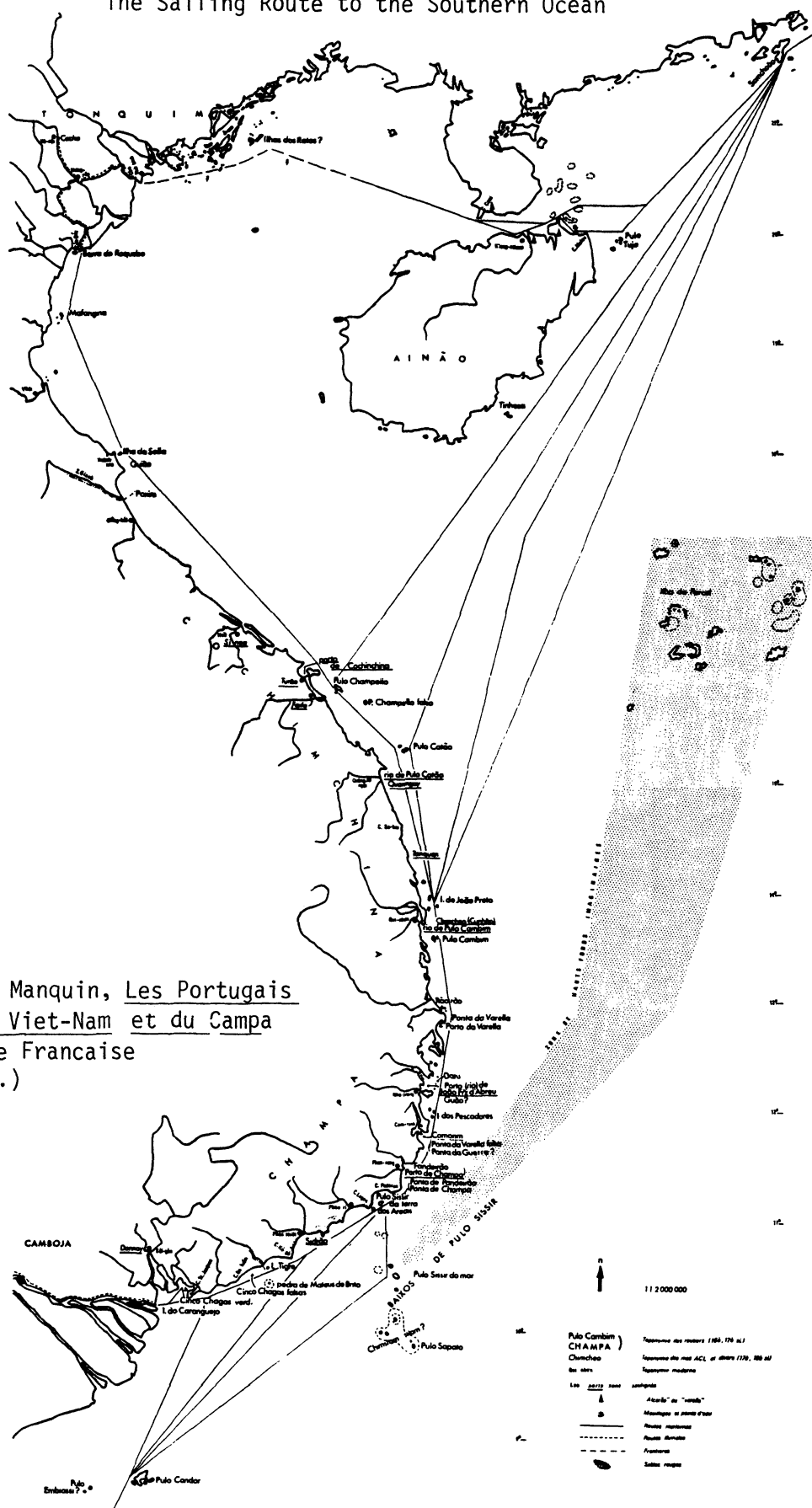
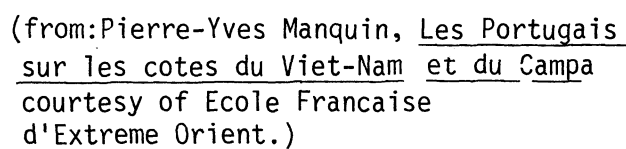
25. *Ibid.*, p. 137. I-ching observed brahmins in India but not in the Southern Ocean; *ibid.*, p. 182.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 142; *Nan-hai*, p. 225.

27. Paul Wheatley, *Nāgara and Commandery: Origins of the Southeast Asian Urban Traditions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Department of Geography, 1983), p. 147, n. 2.

28. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 93; *Ta-T'ang*, p. 5.

## The Sailing Route to the Southern Ocean



Carte n° 3. — La toponymie portugaise des côtes vietnamiennes et annamites (XVI<sup>e</sup>, XVII<sup>e</sup>, XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles).

the map where the four schools (*nikāya*) of Buddhist doctrine were situated, though, as he points out, "the number of votaries in each school is unequal in different places."<sup>29</sup> The location of the various *nikāya* was of great importance to him, for each *nikāya* used its own texts, which Chinese pilgrims had to identify, collect, and translate for the benefit of those who did not leave China. Thus, he had a religious obligation to describe the communications and traveling directions which linked the overseas Buddhist centers with each other and with China.

I-ching's linguistic expertise and preoccupation with pilgrim itineraries encourage us to suppose that his geographical information, though sparse, would be meticulous and systematic.

I shall now follow I-ching on his pilgrimage as far as Sriwijaya and begin with his voyage from Canton.

### *The Voyage from Canton to Sriwijaya*

Two interesting details appear in I-ching's otherwise conventional accounts of the voyage from China to Sumatra. The first concerns the itinerary his ship followed at the end of 689. The voyage's duration is not given; in 671 it had taken less than twenty days, though other voyages could last longer. But the route was always the same and off the Cham coast of what is now southern Vietnam. I-ching identifies this itinerary when he was sailing in 689. He says, according to Chavannes's translation, that the pilgrims on board ship were determined to arrive in Sriwijaya "par une longue route" (長 經). He is using figurative speech; the meaning of "a long route" in this passage is "pressing on with" the voyage as an act of Buddhist zeal, and he goes on to say that the pilgrims wanted to be a ship for carrying mankind over "the ocean of desire." The detail is worth noting because I-ching's personal observation of the shipping route off the Cham coast is consistent with Dr. Manguin's conclusion that the direct route out to sea from southern China to the south was never used, and the reason was the dangerous reefs of the Paracels, feared by sailors.<sup>30</sup>

Because I-ching is reliable about this part of the voyage, we can believe the other detail implied in his account of the voyages: the absence of piracy in Indonesian waters as a hazard facing pilgrims. This circumstance may reflect the maritime influence of the Sriwijayan rulers, whose own ships were sailing to Kedah and India in the second half of the seventh century. The situation was otherwise when pilgrims approached Tāmlapṭi in northeastern India and knew that their ships might be plundered.<sup>31</sup>

Yet I-ching traveled incuriously unless he was interested in Buddhist practices or heroic pilgrims. He takes the voyage to Sumatra for granted and ignores the final lap of his journey to Sriwijaya, when, I am assuming, he entered the Musi estuary. The Musi is south of the Batang Hari river, always associated with Malayu; according to I-ching, Sriwijaya was south of Malayu.

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29. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 8.

30. For I-ching's voyage in 689, see Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 179; *Ta-T'ang*, p. 11. Pierre-Yves Manguin's study of the route over the South China Sea is in "La traversée de la mer de Chine méridionale, des détroits à Canton, jusqu'au 17<sup>e</sup> siècle (La question des îles Paracels), *Actes du XXIX<sup>e</sup> Congrès international des Orientalistes*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1976), pp. 110-15.

31. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 71.

When, therefore, he mentions the estuary ( 口 ) of "the Vijaya river," he is surely referring to the Musi estuary. He states that in the summer of 689 he boarded ( 升 ) a merchant vessel in this estuary in order to send a request to China for assistants and writing materials.<sup>32</sup> A strong wind suddenly took him out to sea as an involuntary passenger to Canton, where he arrived on August 10. He may have traveled to the estuary in a small local craft. When still ashore upstream, he could have heard that a merchant ship was about to sail, and thereupon hurried downstream, perhaps on an ebb tide, to deliver his errand.

Today something more, however, can be said of the Musi estuary. Ming sailing directions encourage one to suppose that this part of the Sumatran coastline did not change significantly in historical times, and two Landsat images, taken in 1978, support the view.<sup>33</sup> The images disclose that the Musi watercourse, after it sweeps northeastwards beyond Palembang, has not in the past meandered. The contrast between the lower Musi and the watercourse upstream from Palembang is distinct. When a river meanders, it deposits sediment carried downstream and causes changes in the river banks. The Musi as it approaches the sea has not been affected in this manner. Upstream sediment has not altered the shape of the lower reaches. Minor changes in the coastline are merely the result of sediment deposited by offshore currents very gradually over time. The likelihood is, therefore, that an estuarine settlement existed at the mouth of I-ching's "Vijaya river" in the neighborhood of the present-day fishing village of Sungsang. I-ching's merchant ship could have anchored in the small channel to the southwest of Sungsang and off the northern shore of the river. Perhaps, too, in Sriwijayan times a guard post was maintained at the estuary and also on the other side of the Bangka Strait near the site of the Kota Kapur inscription of 686. The Sultans of Palembang maintained a guard post at Sungsang.<sup>34</sup> The identification of subcenters in the Sriwijayan sphere of influence is one of the archaeologists' targets.

The commercial contacts between Bukit Seguntang and T'ang and Sung China attested by the ceramic remains also permit a more confident reading of a passage in the *Sung-shih*, which records the sailing itinerary of the Cōla envoys to China in 1015 and throws light on the same estuary. The envoys left San-fo-ch'i, always the Sung name for the major center in southeastern Sumatra, and "crossed the strait by the *Man* hill." The envoys then sailed in the direction of Pulau Tioman off the Pahang coast on the Malay Peninsula and towards the Cham coast. "The strait by the *Man* hill" suggests that the ship came in sight of the Menumbing hills on northwest Bangka. The hills are clearly visible from Sungsang.<sup>35</sup>

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32. Ibid., pp. 176-77.

33. O. W. Wolters, "A Note on Sungsang Village at the Estuary of the Musi River in Southeastern Sumatra: A Reconsideration of the Historical Geography of the Palembang Region," *Indonesia* 27 (April 1979): 33-50. The Landsat images are in the possession of Dra. S. Suleiman. I am grateful to Professor Ta Liang for helping me to obtain and interpret the images. Professor Liang is Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Emeritus, Cornell University.

34. M. O. Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang, 1811-1825*, Verhandeligen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, 72 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1975), passim.

35. O. W. Wolters, "Landfall on the Palembang Coast in Medieval Times," *Indonesia* 20 (October 1975): 47. I have slightly modified my translation. The Cōla envoys sailed from the Sumatran to the Cham coast, and Dr. Manguin has shown that this was bound to be the case.

The Bukit Seguntang settlement, with its sherds, unquestionably existed in 1015. My reading of the passage in the *Sung-shih* implies that the Bukit Seguntang polity was already known as "San-fo-ch'i" in early Sung times and therefore before the toponym came to be associated later in the eleventh century with a polity on the Batang Hari river to the north.

Chinese sailors in the first half of the fourteenth century identified the Musi estuary in another way. Wang Ta-yūan, who was overseas in 1330 though he did not necessarily visit Palembang, states in his section on "the Old Harbor" (Palembang area) that ships sailed from the "Fresh Water Channel" into the Bangka Strait.<sup>36</sup> The "Fresh Water Channel" is certainly the equivalence of the Musi, and Wang may be using the nickname for a feature of the estuary which helped Chinese pilots plot the correct approach to Palembang from the sea. This part of the coast has several estuaries very close to each other, and pilots had to be careful in distinguishing the correct one. The toponym "Fresh Water Channel" suggests that they had observed a reduced saline content at the Musi estuary and knew that they were not entering the Banju Asin ("Salt River") estuary a little further north. The contrast in the water content of the two estuaries would have impressed itself on Chinese pilots. The need to identify the correct approach to Palembang is also emphasized in the Ming sailing directions, where pilots were instructed to take care in spotting the entrance to the Musi by means of an "island" on the northern shore. The "island" was probably Sungsang.<sup>37</sup>

I-ching knew of the Banju Asin estuary and refers to it as "Mukha Asin" or "Saline Estuary."<sup>38</sup> He mentions this place in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-ekasatakaman*, where, in a note, he enumerates the major geographical regions, or *chou* (洲 = *dvīpa*), on the east coast of Sumatra. A *chou* is a land mass which borders on the sea. The *chou* in question were "Barus" in the northern part of Sumatra, "Malayu" north of Sriwijaya, and "Mukha Asin."<sup>39</sup> If he had told us that Sriwijaya was in the region of the Mukha Asin *dvīpa*, he would have saved historians a great deal of speculation about Sriwijaya's location. He did not do so because, in this passage, he was only concerned with delineating large tracts of coastal hinterlands where, according to him, Buddhism flourished. He was not concerned in this passage with locating political centers.

The prominence I-ching gives to Mukha Asin need not be surprising. Portuguese pilot charts in the early sixteenth century reveal "a wider and deeper opening of the Sungei Banyuasin than that represented nowadays on nautical charts."<sup>40</sup> This part of the coast would be an even more prominent topographical feature when I-ching sailed along it on his way to India.

I-ching gives a glimpse of the Musi estuary in 689 only because he visited it to obtain assistance in continuing his translations in Sriwijaya. In 671 he

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36. W. W. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean during the Fourteenth Century, Part II," *T'oung Pao* 16 (1915): 135.

37. Wolters, "Note on Sungsang Village," pp. 36-39.

38. O. W. Wolters, "Studying Śrīvijaya," *JMBRAS* 52, 2 (1979): 30-32. I now follow Professor Paul Wheatley's advice and translate "Mukha" to read "Estuary"; Wheatley, *Nāgara and Commandery*, p. 256, n. 45.

39. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 10. "Mo-ho-sin" in this passage is Mukha Asin.

40. Pierre-Yves Manguin, "Sumatran Coastline in the Straits of Bangka: New Evidence for Its Permanence in Historical Times," *SPAFA Digest* 3, 2 (1982): 25.

had sailed upstream from the same estuary, but we do not know where he disembarked from the merchant ship that brought him from Canton. A passage in the *Hsin T'ang-shu*, however, mentions an important shipping center associated with Sriwijaya, and what is now known of the Bukit Seguntang area again invites us to read a Chinese source more confidently. The reference cannot be dated but is likely to be early in the ninth century.<sup>41</sup>

The *Hsin T'ang-shu* mentions *B'luət-d'ai* (佛代).

This country is on a river whose tributaries number 360. The king's name is [?] Śrī Samitra. There is a stream (𣶒) called *Si-lji-b'ji-lji-ñiwaī*. The soil produces many rare aromatics. In the north there is a market, and trading ships of different countries gather there. Java is reached by crossing the sea [from *B'luət-d'ai*].<sup>42</sup>

In 1975 I suggested that *B'luət-d'ai* was an attempt to transcribe *B'luət-liāi*, or "Vijaya," and that the name of the stream could be restored as "Śrī Palembang."<sup>43</sup>

When I commented on this passage I had not yet rejected Obedijn's hypothesis that the lower reaches of the Musi took their present shape only in late historical times, when an ancient gulf of the sea, reaching as far inland as Palembang, receded as the result of sedimentation from upstream. What is today known about the geomorphology of this part of Sumatra and of the lower reaches of the Batang Hari river makes it certain that Obedijn's hypothesis is a figment of

41. George Cœdès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, ed. Walter F. Vella; trans. Susan Brown Cowing (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968), p. 106.

42. Wolters, "Landfall on the Palembang Coast," p. 53. I have modified my translation.

43. Ibid., pp. 53-54. I have wondered whether the early eighth century Korean pilgrim Hye ch'o (慧超) referred to "Vijaya" in the account of his pilgrimage to "the countries of the Five Indias." (The term "Five Indias" is discussed in the next part of this essay.) Hui-lin's *I-chieh-ching yin-i* (Tripitaka. Chinese version [Tokyo] No. 2128, p. 926b) cites Hye ch'o as mentioning *Puāt-tiei* (播提). In Hui-lin's list of words cited from Hye ch'o's description of his voyage from China to India *Puāt-tiei* appears immediately after the "Khmer" country. The toponym which follows *Puāt-tiei* in Hui-lin's list is "Kāt-la city = Middle *Lāng-kāt*," a transcription which suggests Kalāh, identified by Professor Wheatley with the Mergui area, though others have identified it with Kedah. Unfortunately, this part of Hye ch'o's text is lost. Could *Puāt-tiei* be another rendering of *B'luət-d'ai* in the *Hsin T'ang-shu*, which I have suggested means "Vijaya"? If this were so, Hye ch'o's itinerary, as far as it is available, reproduces I-ching's down the coast of mainland Southeast Asia to Sriwijaya and then northwards to a port on the Indian Ocean, which, in I-ching's case, was Kedah. One can suppose that early in the eighth century ships from China would frequently make their way to Sriwijaya. Sriwijayan missions were being sent to China at that time. I do not know, however, how Koreans in the eighth century sounded Chinese characters; linguists may comment on the plausibility of my identification of *Puāt-tiei* with *B'luət-d'ai*. On the other hand, Hye ch'o could have traveled with Chinese pilgrims, heard them pronounce "Vijaya," and then supplied the Chinese characters which he considered would reproduce the sound he heard. On Hye ch'o see Jan Yun-hua, "Hui-Ch'ao and His Works: A Reassessment," *The Indo-Asian Culture*, 12, 3 (1964): 177-90. I am grateful to Dr. Insun Yu for introducing me to Hye ch'o.

the imagination, and I am more confident that the "stream" could be the "Sri Palembang" somewhere in the vicinity of Bukit Seguntang. Another reason why *B'luat-d'ai* has every chance of being Sriwijaya is suggested by a conventional structural feature in early Chinese texts about southeastern Sumatra. From I-ching's day into the fourteenth century Chinese writers monotonously describe southeastern Sumatra as being on the route to or close to Java, as *B'luat-d'ai* was.<sup>44</sup> The compilers in question probably heard of the navigational importance of the Bangka Strait, a facility that continued to be used as late as the sixteenth century.<sup>45</sup> Ships sailing from the Malacca Strait and bound for Java did not sail off the Bangka east coast and away from Sumatra. The Chinese writers would naturally stress Sriwijaya's proximity to Java. The *Hsin T'ang-shu* may therefore contain the earliest known mention of the name "Palembang."

The origin of the name is unknown, but we can bear in mind that a creek on the northern bank of the Musi and east of Karanganyar is called "Palembang." Indonesian place-names are often of great antiquity; "Asin" in the present-day Banyuasin is a place-name as old as the seventh century. The Palembang creek may repay investigation by archaeologists. The Tatang creek east of Karanganyar should undoubtedly be investigated, if only because it leads to the artificial tank close to the eastern side of the Karanganyar enclosure. The *Sejarah Melayu* associates "the Muara Tatang" with Demang Lebar Daun, the Palembang ruler who became the faithful ally of the founder of Malacca.

We observed that the *Hsin T'ang-shu* mentions a trading center to "the north" of *B'luat-d'ai*. I suggest that the direction should be corrected to "northeast" to conform with the Chinese geographical convention that one sailed "south" from China and not "southwest" when a ship made its way to western Indonesia. But the harbor's location need not be accepted literally. Only archaeologists will be able to discover possible harbor sites in the Bukit Seguntang area, and much will depend on improved knowledge of early watercourses there. I shall return to this question later.

We have now followed I-ching to Sumatra in 671. The next matter concerns an important feature of his writings on Sumatra: how he signified the organization of Sumatran space and situated Sriwijaya within it.

#### *I-ching's Definition of "Sriwijaya"*

His Sumatran destination in 671 and 689 was "the *kuo* 國" of Sriwijaya. What did the term *kuo* mean to him in this particular context? Chavannes, Takakusu, and Pelliot translated it in various ways: "country," "kingdom," and "state."

When the term appears in Chinese writings, it has optional meanings. The term can certainly signify a "kingdom/state" or "a country," and this meaning is usually preferred by the compilers of the Chinese imperial histories when they want to account for as much geographical space as possible in the non-Chinese world. The so-called "kingdom of Funan," in reality only an agglomeration of chieftainships, is an example of the usage.<sup>46</sup> The *Hsin T'ang-shu*

44. Viz.: I-ching, Chia Tan, *Sung-shih*, Chou Ch'ü-fei, Chao Ju-kua, and Wang Ta-yüan. We have to reckon, however, with copied information.

45. Manguin, "Sumatran Coastline in the Straits of Bangka," pp. 24-28 and p. 49. Manguin's study is based on the Portuguese Roteiros.

46. C. Jacques, "'Funan,' 'Zhenla.' The Reality Concealed by These Chinese

follows the same usage in its section on Sriwijaya, which is depicted as being more or less the equivalence of the island of Sumatra.<sup>47</sup> Sriwijaya is said to have "fourteen cities" and to be divided into two *kuo* for administrative purposes; its "western" unit (= northwest) was "Barus" at the northern end of the island. A remarkable feature of this account is that the breadth and length of Sriwijaya are recorded (1,000 by 4,000 *li* [3 *li* = about 1 English mile]). Details such as these resemble the description of a modern state in their exactness. Another passage in the *Hsün T'ang-shu* contains extracts from Chia Tan's geography, compiled about 800. Chia Tan notes that much of the east coast of Sumatra belonged to Vijaya *kuo*.<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand, a *kuo* in the Chinese imperial histories may mean a specific place in the form of a "capital city." Professor Wheatley cites the example of Langkasuka *kuo* in the Singora area on the Thai isthmus and considers the word *kuo* in this instance to mean "capital" or simply "city," and he goes on to define quite precisely the nature of the political unit involved as "a polity in which a focally situated settlement exercised direct control over a restricted peripheral territory and exacted whatever tribute it could from an indefinite region beyond."<sup>49</sup>

Before we consider whether the Sriwijaya *kuo* as I-ching knew it resembles the *Hsün T'ang-shu*'s notion of a Sumatran-scale *kuo* or only a Langkasuka-scale one, we have to bear in mind that well-traveled Chinese pilgrims were familiar with Indian geographical conceptions and were able to describe India in language which made sense to those who knew the subcontinent.<sup>50</sup> I-ching's predecessor, Hsüan-tsang (c. 596-664), visited India and, adopting the Indian convention, writes that India comprises "the regions (地) of the Five Indias (五印度)." The "Five Indias" were grouped around Central India in the four directions, and their circumference was more than 90,000 *li*.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, according to him, this vast span of land is "divided into seventy and more *kuo*."<sup>52</sup> He reserves the term *kuo* for smaller territorial units, corresponding with political ones and situated within the large areas signified by "the regions" of the Five Indias.

I-ching follows the same usage when writing about India, though he chooses to refer to "the lands" (地) of the Five Indias. His poem, written just before he left Canton in 671, mentions "the Five Indias," and in the *Record* he writes that "the lands of the Five Indias are wide and remote; roughly speaking,

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Views of Indochina," *Early South-East Asia: Essays in Archaeology, History, and Historical Geography*, ed. R. B. Smith and W. Watson (New York, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 371-79.

47. *Hsün T'ang-shu*, Po-na edition, ch. 222 C, p. 5a.

48. *Ibid.*, ch. 43 B, p. 18b.

49. Wheatley, *Nāgara and Commandery*, p. 233.

50. As long ago as 1871 Cunningham noted Hsüan-tsang's indebtedness to Indian notions of geography; Alexander Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India*, new ed. (Varanasi: Bhartiya, 1975), pp. 9-11.

51. Samuel Beal, *Si-yu-ki. Buddhist Records of the Western World. Translated from the Chinese of Hsüan Tsiang* (A.D. 629) (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1906), vol. 1, p. 70; Hsüan-tsang, *Ta-T'ang hsi-yü chi* (Shanghai: Jen-min pan-shê, 1977), p. 32.

52. Hsüan-tsang, *Ta-T'ang hsi-yü chi*, p. 32.



the east, west, south, and north are all four hundred *yojanas* (one *yojana* = 16 to 40 miles) [from Central India].<sup>53</sup> Unlike Hsüan-tsang, he does not attempt to estimate the number of *kuo* in the Five Indias, though he visited some of them.<sup>54</sup> Occasionally he states that the rulers of *kuo* provided pilgrims with escorts through their territories.<sup>55</sup> He pinpoints the location of a *kuo* in terms of distances. The Tāmralipti *kuo* was between sixty and seventy *yojana* east of Nālandā.<sup>56</sup> He also mentions the smallest unit of space in India; this was the "city" within a *kuo*. He tells us how far a monastery or temple was from a royal city.<sup>57</sup>

By the seventh century the notion of "the Five Indias" was a familiar one in China. The "Five Indias" represented geographical space, and in each "India" there were smaller and political units, known to the Chinese as *kuo*. A *kuo* was a kingdom or, as I prefer to translate it, a polity. "Polity" is a neutral term and begs no questions about its institutional form. The pilgrims' knowledge of India was sufficiently confident for them to use such terms as "circumference," "divided," measured distances, and "roughly speaking." But a similarly exact knowledge of Indonesian geography was not available in China before I-ching's day; Hsüan-tsang did not visit the archipelago, and geographical details in the imperial histories were limited to indistinct references to *kuo* in the Southern Ocean and vague sailing directions between them. A more systematic map of Indonesia emerges only with I-ching, and its significant feature is that it closely parallels what Hsüan-tsang and he write about India. We can suppose that I-ching had been guided by Indian spatial definitions and transferred them to the Southern Ocean because they made sense to him there.

Thus, I-ching, writing about the Southern Ocean, distinguishes between large geographical areas and small political units and leaves one in no doubt that he sees both India and the Southern Ocean from the same perspective. And so he writes of "the lands ( 地 ) of the Five Indias and the *chou* ( 洲 ) of the Southern Ocean where the people speak of the four *nikāya*."<sup>58</sup> *Chou* is the Chinese word used to render the Sanskrit term *dvīpa*, or land bordering on the sea and an appropriate term in the setting of maritime Indonesia. *Dvīpa* becomes the Indonesian equivalence of the "lands" of the Five Indias; both terms represent large geographical areas.<sup>59</sup> I-ching also uses "islands" ( 島 ) as an equivalence of *chou*. For example, he writes that "in the ten 'islands' of the Southern Ocean and in the Five Indias of the western *kuo* people do not use wooden pillows to raise the head."<sup>60</sup> Elsewhere he writes of

53. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 43; *Nan-hai*, p. 210. I-ching uses "lands" elsewhere in the *Record*; for example, *Record*, p. 128 and *Nan-hai*, p. 223.

54. The *Sung kao-seng chuan* states that I-ching visited more than thirty countries; Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 193.

55. For example, Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 20. I-ching gives several instances of Indian rulers who honored Chinese pilgrims; *ibid.*, pp. 15, 24, 31, 39, 46. Except on p. 39 the Chinese text always refers to a *kuo*, or political unit.

56. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 97.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 97. The royal city is Kouśāgārapura near Nālandā.

58. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 205; *Nan-hai*, p. 8.

59. I-ching was familiar with the rendering of *dvīpa* as *chou*. We shall observe below that he uses the expression "Gold *chou*" to signify "Suvarṇadvīpa."

60. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 112; *Nan-hai*, p. 221.

"the ten *chou*" in the Southern Ocean.<sup>61</sup> *Chou* and "island" refer to large geographical space.

The parallelism in the description of India and the Southern Ocean is maintained when I-ching refers to the smaller and political units in the Southern Ocean. He mentions only one city and by inference in a famous note to which I shall return; he says that the monks in Sriwijaya lived "in the suburbs" (郭下). "Suburbs" imply a "city."<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, he writes of the "more than ten *kuo* in the *chou* of the Southern Ocean."<sup>63</sup> His statement is the Indonesian equivalence of Hsüan-tsang's that the regions of the Five Indias contained seventy and more *kuo*. I-ching admits that he cannot describe the circumference of the Southern Ocean *kuo*; only those who travel in merchant ships can do so.<sup>64</sup> His observation reflects brisk trade in the archipelago and his assumption that every *kuo* possessed a trading harbor. We have to remember that I-ching knew only southeastern Sumatra and did not travel inland as he did in India. But he traveled up the Sumatran east coast, and this is why one of his notes records the names of the three Sumatran *dvīpa*: the *chou* of Barus, Malayu, and Mukha Asin.<sup>65</sup> He and other pilgrims visited Sriwijaya and Malayu, and one pilgrim visited Barus,<sup>66</sup> and these passages consistently depict pilgrims as sailing out at sea past the *chou* but sailing to the *kuo* at the end of their voyages.

I-ching's systematic use of Indian geographical conventions to structure his account of the geography of the Southern Ocean enables him to conceptualize Sriwijaya's place on the Sumatran map. Sriwijaya would not have been a *dvīpa*-scale polity; instead, it would have been one of a number of *kuo*. To this extent Professor Wheatley's definition of Langkasuka *kuo* ("a polity in which a focally situated settlement exercised direct control over a restricted peripheral territory and exacted whatever tribute it could from an indefinite region beyond") could apply equally well to Sriwijaya *kuo*.

A note in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-ekasātakarman* confirms that I-ching knew Sriwijaya as being only one of the Sumatran polities (*kuo*). In the note he describes the sailing route from Tāmralipti in northeastern India to China, and he states that Malayu *chou* (洲) "has now become one of Sriwijaya's many *kuo*"; a change had occurred, and this is why he adds an emphatic sign (矣).<sup>67</sup>

61. Takakusu, *Record*, pp. 45 and 49 (where Takakusu omits "ten"); *Nan-hai*, pp. 210 and 211.

62. Takakusu's translation of this note is in *Record*, p. xxxiv. The note is in *Mūla*, p. 477.

63. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 10; *Nan-hai*, p. 205. Also see *Nan-hai*, p. 214; "more than ten *kuo* in the Southern Ocean," which Takakusu translates on p. 67 as "more than ten countries [islands]." *Nan-hai*, p. 228, states: "there are more than ten *kuo* in the islands of the Southern Ocean," which Takakusu, p. 163, translates as "there are more than ten islands in the Southern Sea."

64. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 11.

65. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 10; *Nan-hai*, p. 205. In this note the character for *chou* ("Malayu *chou*") is 州 and not 洲. The two characters are interchangeable. I-ching calls Sri Lanka a 洲 in the *Record* (p. 122; *Nan-hai*, p. 221), but in the *Ta-T'ang*, p. 9, he refers to it as a 州 (Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 9).

66. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 36, in respect of Barus.

67. Takakusu, *Record*, p. xxxiv; *Mūla*, p. 477. I have modified Takakusu's translation.

Here he happens to refer to Malayu as a *chou* but only because his topic is an itinerary; he is describing a sailing route, and this required him to use language appropriate for geographical description. Landmarks are conveniently indicated by the *dvīpa* coasts skirted by ships.<sup>68</sup> But I-ching knew that Malayu was also the name of a *kuo* as well as of a *chou*; he himself visited it in 672. A passage in his *Memoir*, mentioning his visit to "Malayu *kuo*," has a note which states that "[Malayu *kuo*] has now become Sriwijaya," and the note again ends with an emphatic sign (是). Each of I-ching's three notes on the relationship between Malayu and Sriwijaya contains "now" and an emphatic sign in order to stress the important change in the relationship which occurred when he was overseas.<sup>69</sup>

When he was writing his *Record* and *Memoir* in the 691-692 period, I-ching was aware that Malayu *kuo* had, in an undisclosed way, been subordinated to Sriwijaya *kuo*. Malayu would not have been a solitary example of a subordinate *kuo*. Kedah *kuo* on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula was, according to I-ching, a "dependent" of Sriwijaya.<sup>70</sup> Historians have often wondered about the significance of his statements concerning the relationship between Malayu and Sriwijaya. There need be no mystery. The explanation is provided in the note in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-ekasatakarmāṇa*, quoted above: Malayu *chou* has now become one of Sriwijaya's many *kuo*." The notes in the *Record* and *Memoir* read as abbreviated versions of the same statement.

I-ching knew from his traveling experience that Malayu was north of Sriwijaya. I shall not discuss the problem of Malayu's location, which I am sure was on the Batang Hari.<sup>71</sup> I am concerned with I-ching's definition of Sriwijaya

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68. A clear instance is in one of his notes in the *Record*. He is enumerating the *dvīpa* in the Southern Ocean in order to indicate areas hospitable to the different schools of Buddhism, and he again states that Malayu *dvīpa* is "now Sriwijaya *kuo*" and ends with an emphatic sign (是); Takakusu, *Record*, p. 10; *Nan-hai*, p. 205.

69. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 119; *Ta-T'ang*, p. 7. See the previous note for the juxtaposition of "now" and an emphatic sign in I-ching's note in the *Record*. Another instance of the use of an emphatic sign (是) to stress an unusual situation is when he observes (see below, page 29) that teachers from India smile when they see the cloth used for kneeling to perform salutations in the Southern Ocean; Takakusu, *Record*, p. 111; *Nan-hai*, p. 221. Malayu was undoubtedly the name of a *kuo*. In 644 it sent its single mission to T'ang China; *T'ang hui-yao*, Chung-hua shu-chū edition (Shanghai, 1957), ch. 100, p. 1790. The pilgrim Ch'ang-min sailed to Malayu *kuo*, though the date of his voyage is unknown; Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 43; *Ta-T'ang*, p. 3.

70. Takakusu, *Record*, p. xxxiv; *Mūla*, p. 477. I do not accept Takakusu's translation of this passage.

71. Neither Takakusu nor Pelliot was prepared to identify Malayu. Historians subsequently agreed with Rouffaer's view in 1909 and 1921 that Malayu was on the Batang Hari, though he relied on evidence from later times. Rouffaer proposed Kota Jambi as the location in question. Historians today prefer Muara Jambi, about twenty miles downstream from Kota Jambi. Muara Jambi is the site of a magnificent complex of Buddhist *stūpa*, and one can suppose that this site was associated with Buddhism in I-ching's day. Several pilgrims, mentioned in the *Memoir*, visited Malayu. Two small rivers at Muara Jambi are known today as the Malayu and the Jambi. Jambi sent missions to China in 852 and 871. Recently a gold plate inscription has come to light at Muara Jambi and been attributed

*kuo*, which he knew as the name of one polity on an island with an unknown number of polities, many of which became subordinated to Sriwijaya. His perspective resembles that of students of early Southeast Asia today who emphasize the multiplicity of centers in the region. More interesting, his perspective also resembles that of the Old-Malay inscription of Sabokingking, discovered to the east of Palembang city and written about the time of the Kota Kapur inscription of 686.<sup>72</sup> The inscription is in the name of the ruler, who refers to himself as "I" (*Aku*) and also refers to his *kadatuan*, which Professor de Casparis renders as "empire."<sup>73</sup> The *kadatuan* is signified in a particular way: *sakalamandalāña kadatuan-ku*, or "the large number of *mandala* of my *kadatuan*." Professor de Casparis understands the expression to mean that "the empire" was divided into a considerable number of *mandala*, each of which was under the authority of a *dātu*.<sup>74</sup> We can suppose that the Sriwijaya ruler possessed his own *mandala* (regarded by I-ching as a *kuo*) and was also the overlord of the other *mandala* in his *kadatuan*. Each *mandala*, no doubt, comprised its own dependent settlements, which boosted its *dātu*'s power and justified the use of the Sanskrit term *mandala*, or circle. The inscription makes it clear that the ruler of the *kadatuan* feared disaffection; the loyalty of not all the *dātu* could be taken for granted. Some are likely to be *mandala dātu* now in involuntary subordination to the ruler of Sriwijaya.

I-ching probably returned to Sriwijaya from India not long after this Malay inscription was written. He later updated his knowledge of the relationship between Sriwijaya and Malayu by means of footnotes to emphasize that a change had "now" occurred, the result of which was that Malayu had become one of Sriwijaya's "many *kuo*." The new situation seems to correspond with the description of the ruler's *kadatuan* in the Sabokingking inscription as "a large number of *mandala*." I suggest that I-ching's definition of Sriwijaya should be rendered in Malay as a *mandala* in the sense of meaning the ruler's own *mandala* and one of the numerous *mandala* under his control. Malayu and Kedah were examples of subordinate *mandala*. I-ching wrote very little about Sumatra, but what he wrote was perceptive. In 1904 Pelliot considered the relationship between Malayu and Sriwijaya in the late seventh century and could not decide which one "annexed" the other, but he did not take into account I-ching's note that Malayu was "now one of Sriwijaya's many *kuo*." The Sabokingking inscription was unavailable to Pelliot. In the multi-centered context of Sumatra, Malayu would have retained its political identity, albeit a subordi-

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to the so-called "standard" Kawi script of the middle of the ninth to the beginning of the tenth century. See Boechari, "Ritual Deposits of Candi Gumpung (Muara Jambi)," SPAFA *Final Report*, September 16-30 (1985), pp. 237-38. On Muara Jambi and the lower reaches of the Batang Hari, see McKinnon, "Early Polities in Southern Sumatra," pp. 28-30.

72. J. G. de Casparis, *Prasasti Indonesia II. Selected Inscriptions from the Seventh to the Ninth Century A.D.* (Bandung: Masa Baru, 1956), pp. 15-46. Professor de Casparis notes that the script of this inscription is "virtually similar" with that used in the Kota Kapur stone of 686, and he suggests that the two inscriptions are roughly contemporary; de Casparis, "Some Notes on the Epigraphic Heritage of Sriwijaya," SPAFA. *Final Report. Consultative Workshop on Archaeological and Environmental Studies on Srivijaya (I-W2A)*, Indonesia, August 31-September 12, 1982, Appendix 4h.

73. De Casparis, *Prasasti II*, p. 18, n. 10.

74. *Ibid.*

nate one, and would not have been amalgamated with Sriwijaya as Pelliot supposed.<sup>75</sup>

I have suggested that I-ching's perception of a *kuo* resembles that of a *mandala* as signified in the Sabokingking inscription. The *kuo* were as numerous as the *mandala*, and this implies that the territories of a *kuo/mandala* need not have been extensive. In the following section of the essay I shall consider how far the Sriwijayan polity, if it is identified with the lower Musi valley, resembles Professor Wheatley's definition of the Langkasuka *kuo*, with its "focally situated settlement,"<sup>76</sup> its "restricted peripheral territory" which it directly controlled, and its "indefinite region beyond" over which it sought to exact tribute. At this stage we need conclude no more than that, if the subordinated Malayu was on the Batang Hari, as I believe it was, it would belong to the "indefinite region beyond," and that the reach of the "Vijaya" river between the sea and the ruler's residence would be under the latter's direct control.

Before I discuss possibilities for identifying Sriwijaya in terms of a particular terrain, I wish to restudy two more of I-ching's miscellaneous details which bear on his definition of Sriwijaya as a *kuo* and one of many *kuo*.

Though he recognized Sriwijaya as a *kuo*, on three occasions he refers to it as a *dvīpa*, even though the context is that of a specific sailing destination and not a geographical expression appropriate when describing stages in an itinerary or the span of Buddhist-influenced areas in the Southern Ocean. The first of these occasions is in the *Memoir* when he mentions the arrival of a Chinese envoy to "Sriwijaya *chou* (洲)" in 683.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps he wrote this passage carelessly, or he may have chosen to embellish Sriwijaya's size so that it would seem an appropriate destination for the envoy. The other two occasions when he refers to Sriwijaya as a *chou/dvīpa* need not cause any difficulty. He calls Sriwijaya "the Gold *chou/dvīpa*" (金洲) in two passages which record his destination when he returned to Sriwijaya from China in 689 with

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75. Pelliot, "Deux itinéraires," p. 348. Sanskrit inscriptions of seventh century Cambodia describe the ruler as the master of "the *mandala*"; A. Barth and A. Bergaigne, *Inscriptions sanscrites du Cambodge et de Champa* (Paris: Institut national de France, 1885), pp. 40 and 42 (verses 3); G. Cœdès, *Les inscriptions du Cambodge*, vol. 4 (Hanoi and Paris: EFEO publication E. de Boccard, 1952), pp. 7 and 9 (verses 2). Here *mandala* means a large unit of space and is a conventional literary expression, drawn from early Indian literature, to eulogize the Khmer ruler's influence. In my *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1982), I used the term in this sense as a convenient metaphor for conceptualizing subregional history. On the other hand, *mandala* in Indian writings can also signify a small unit of space; P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, vol. 3 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1973), pp. 138-39. The Javanese Ferry Charter of 1358, an administrative document, uses *mandala* as meaning a small-scale unit, translated by Pigeaud as "district": "all districts of the island of Java (Yawadwīpa)"; T. G. Th. Pigeaud, *Java in the 14th Century. A Study in Cultural History. The Nāgara-kērtāgama by Rakawī Prapañca of Majapahit, 1365 A.D.* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1960), vol. 1, p. 110; vol. 3, p. 158. The Sabokingking inscription, another administrative document, follows the same usage.

76. Dr. McKinnon has suggested to me that the Kedukan Bukit inscription of 682, discovered near Karanganyar, celebrates the establishment of a settlement at the Karanganyar complex after the submission of Malayu.

77. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 159.

companions.<sup>78</sup> He is using figurative speech to describe his destination. "The Gold *dvīpa*" is the Chinese equivalence of the Sanskrit expression "Suvarṇadvīpa," an ancient Indian literary allusion to the wealthy Southeast Asian lands awaiting merchants who dared to cross the sea. The expression was already current in Buddhist as well as in Hindu Sanskrit literature before the beginning of the Christian era.<sup>79</sup> In 689 I-ching knew that he was returning to a Sumatran center associated with valuable Buddhist texts, and he wanted to exalt its fame by means of hyperbole. "The illustrious Mahārāja" Bālaputradeva, the Javanese prince who established himself in Sumatra in the middle of the ninth century, had a similar notion of the grandeur of his center when he made himself known to the Pāla ruler as "the king of Suvarṇadvīpa."<sup>80</sup>

I-ching's use of the grandiloquent expression "Suvarṇadvīpa" may be noteworthy for a further reason. 689 is only a few years later than the 682-686 period, when the Old-Malay inscriptions in the extreme south of Sumatra reveal Sriwijaya's militancy. There is also a Sriwijayan inscription from Karang Brahi in the upper reaches of the Batang Hari river system. I-ching may therefore be signifying by means of figurative speech the political status acquired by the famous Buddhist center since he first arrived there in 671.

I do not think that I-ching's reference to Sriwijaya as "Suvarṇadvīpa" is inconsistent with his otherwise systematic definition of Sriwijaya as a *kuo* and therefore a specific location in Sumatra.

One more miscellaneous detail deserves to be reconsidered. My understanding of this detail is based on my confidence that I-ching always regarded Sriwijaya *kuo* as a specific place and also on my assumption that he was in the Bukit Seguntang area when he was writing his books in 691-692.

According to Takakusu's translation, I-ching states in the *Record* that the sun was immediately overhead in Sriwijaya *kuo* in "the middle" of the second and eighth lunar months in the Chinese calendar.<sup>81</sup> As usual his context is that of Buddhist practices. He is describing the care Buddhists have to take wherever they live in identifying the exact time for their midday meals according to the rules of the *vinaya*. "If the monk," writes I-ching, "fails in this, how can he carry out other precepts?"<sup>82</sup> He goes on to quote an Indian saying: "he who observes the water and the time is called a Vinaya-teacher."<sup>83</sup> Drinking clean water and eating at midday were a monk's essential obligations.

The first question is whether we should translate the Chinese character for "middle" (中) as meaning literally "in the middle" of the relevant lunar month. I doubt whether this is the correct translation. The lunar calendar is a variable one, and adjustments have to be made periodically by adding an extra, or intercalary, lunar month in certain years. The sun could never be overhead anywhere on the same day in the lunar calendar. Instead of translating

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78. Ibid., pp. 181 and 186; *Ta-T'ang*, pp. 11 and 12.

79. The ancient Indian literature on Suvarṇadvīpa, epitomized by Professor Wheatley as "a beckoning eldorado," is summarized in *Nāgara and Commandery*, pp. 264-67.

80. Cœdès, *Indianized States*, p. 108.

81. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 143; *Nan-hai*, p. 225.

82. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 144.

83. Ibid. I refer to the "water" practices in the next section.

"middle" as meaning the exact middle of the lunar months, I prefer to translate it as "during" those months.<sup>84</sup>

Takakusu believed that Sriwijaya was at Palembang, but he was reluctant to use this passage to plot Sriwijaya on the map because he did not know which calendar I-ching used to date the equinoxes in Sumatra.<sup>85</sup> I suggest that a distinction should be made between his use of the Chinese lunar calendar when writing in Chinese to instruct monks in China and how, when he himself was overseas, he chose to identify the exact time for observing Buddhist festivals and especially for breaking his fast at midday. When he was writing for monks in China, he was meticulous in providing Chinese dates.<sup>86</sup> But for his own purposes overseas he is likely sometimes to have adopted local dating systems. In India he would have been guided by the clepsydrae in the monasteries "for the purpose of announcing hours" to the monks.<sup>87</sup> But he had a further means at his disposal for ascertaining when it was midday. He says in the *Record*: "Eminent men . . . who preach and carry out the laws, and who are not surprised at the minute and complicated rules, should take a dial (圭) with them even when traveling by sea, much more so when they are on the land."<sup>88</sup> And he tells us, in fact, that it was by means of a dial (圭) that one could observe the position of the sun overhead during the second and eighth months in Sriwijaya *kuo*. He would have done so himself in order to know when he could eat his midday meal on those days and discharge his personal responsibility as a Buddhist. He would have been at a particular place at a particular time, and the place would be among the monks of Sriwijaya and the year, I believe, was in 690 or 691. These are the only years when we know for certain that he was in Sriwijaya during every month of the year. We do not know when, sometime after 685, he returned from India to Sriwijaya, where he was in 689, but we know that he sent his *Record* and *Memoir* to China on June 2, 692.<sup>89</sup> 690 and 691 are likely years when he made his observations and when he was writing or about to write the *Record*, which preserves his information about the position of the sun during the second and eighth months. The information would have been fresh in his mind.

In 690 and 691 I-ching was certainly south of Malayu and about two and a half degrees south of the equator. If he wrote in the Bukit Seguntang area, we can establish the days when he observed the positions of the sun at midday in the second and eighth lunar months. In 690 at the time of the spring equinox

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84. If I-ching had meant "in the middle," he could have written 月之中 . See Takakusu, *Record*, p. 143, n. 2, for an instance of this usage for signifying "the center" (? Central India). In the passage on the equinoxes he renders "midday" as 日中 , but here the context makes it clear that he is referring to "noon." Ibid., p. 143.

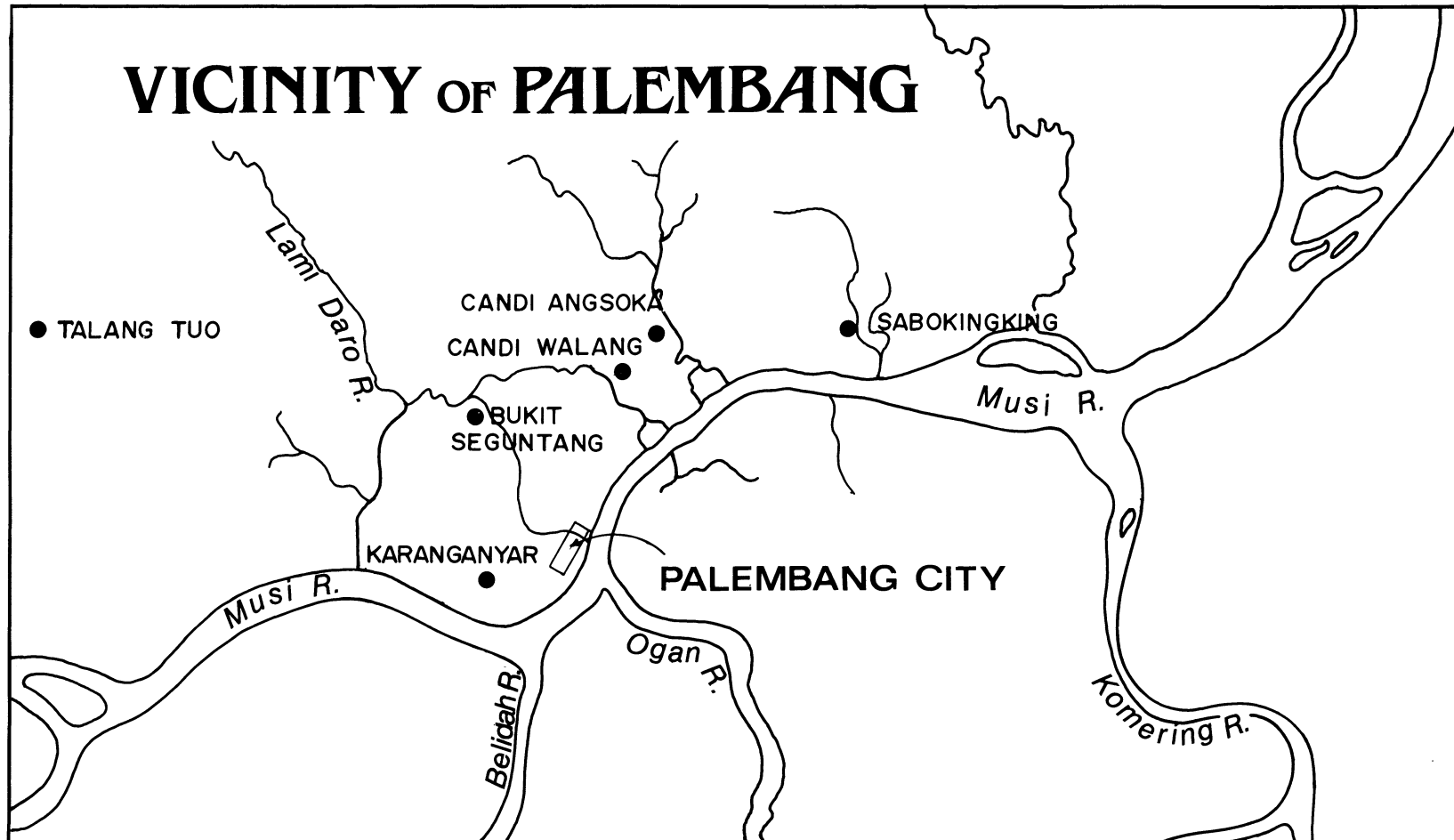
85. Ibid., p. 143, n. 3.

86. He took the trouble to use the reign-period of the "Chou" ruler (690-704), the emperor Kao-tsung's wife and successor. References to the "Chou" ruler in I-ching's narrative as well as in his footnotes persuaded Takakusu that the notes were written by him and not by a monk living under the tenth century Chou dynasty, as Chavannes had supposed; Takakusu, *Record*, pp. 118 and 214, n. 3.

87. Ibid., p. 144.

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid., pp. liii-lv, for a detailed discussion of the time when I-ching was writing in Sriwijaya.





the sun was exactly overhead at Bukit Seguntang on the fourteenth day of the second lunar month and a day corresponding to March 29. In 691 the day in question was the twenty-fourth day of the same lunar month. In 690 at the time of the autumn equinox the sun was exactly overhead on the twenty-fourth day of the eighth lunar month and a day corresponding to October 1. In 691, however, October 1 corresponds with the fifth day of the ninth and is not during the eighth lunar month. In Bukit Seguntang I-ching could have made his observations only in 690, and he would have recalled them to illustrate the *vinaya*'s rule that "the hour is determined according to midday at respective places."<sup>90</sup>

Whether or not I-ching was in the Bukit Seguntang area on March 29 and October 1, 690, his statement about the sundial readings was based on the observations he was required to make because he was a monk. When he recorded the sundial readings in "Sriwijaya *kuo*," he was not thinking about anywhere in Sumatra south of the equator. For him a *kuo* was not a vague *dvīpa*-scale tract of territory but a specific location, which is how he consistently defines the Sriwijaya *kuo*.

I-ching's definition of Sriwijaya supplies no more than a sense of its limited territorial scale; it was only one of the Sumatran polities. I shall now consider the territory with which it was associated and return for this purpose to the Bukit Seguntang area. I am not alone in conjecturing that here was Sriwijaya. Professor de Casparis, reviewing the contents of the Sabokingking inscription found in the eastern side of Palembang city and written when I-ching was overseas, has suggested that the administration of the oath to the *dātu*, commemorated on the inscription, took place in the neighborhood of the ruler's seat of power. The engraved stone, he says, "must have stood at not too far a distance from the capital,"<sup>91</sup> and he goes on to observe that "this inscription strongly indicates that the capital was in the Palembang area during the period when the stone was in use for the oath ceremony."<sup>92</sup>

The Bukit Seguntang area, with its T'ang and Sung artifacts, was unquestionably flourishing in Sriwijayan times, and this circumstance has encouraged me to consider the territorial scale of a Sumatran *mandala* which had its heartland there. I shall not ignore what I-ching has to say about the Sriwijayan *kuo*, and I shall also be guided by what Professor Wheatley has written about the Langkasuka *kuo*.

*The Bukit Seguntang Area in Sriwijayan  
Times: Glimpses and Possibilities*

I shall begin with Karanganyar's terrain but not on account of its hydraulic works. Landsat images, taken by satellites in 1978, indicate that the distance between Karanganyar and the northern shore of the Musi has always been more or less half a mile, though at some unknown and perhaps very remote time in the past a small promontory or cape jutted almost immediately in front of the

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90. I am grateful to Professor L. Pearce Williams, John Stambaugh Professor of the History of Science, Cornell University, for guidance in calculating these dates.

91. De Casparis, "Some Notes on the Epigraphic Heritage," p. 33.

92. Ibid. Referring to the Karanganyar area, Dr. McKinnon considers that "enough remains to be seen on and in the ground to suggest that the location of an ancient seat of power in the Palembang area soon will no longer be a mystery"; McKinnon, "Early Politics in Southern Sumatra," p. 17.

settlement into what would be a loop of the river.<sup>93</sup> The northern bank of the river near Karanganyar, with the exception of the promontory, has been stable, and the land behind is relatively high and dry and certainly not water-logged. The advantage of the terrain can be compared with what the Landsat images reveal about the site of the modern city of Palembang, especially its western end, and also about the southern bank of the river. Palembang city is on swampy land and needs drainage canals. Canals were until recently a major means of access to much of the area. As for the southern bank, considerable changes in the rivercourse have occurred. For example, the present lower reaches of the Ogan river are of fairly recent formation; the Ogan's confluence with the Musi was once a few miles further south. Mud, clay, organic materials, and fine silt, deposited in meandering water, have left alluvial soil behind the southern shore. These conditions explain why a Dutch account in 1822 refers to the lower reaches of the Ogan as "the thousand islands."<sup>94</sup> The northern shore has not, of course, been wholly immune from sedimentation, but the sediment would be in the form of coarse materials such as gravel, sand, and other heavy substances and would account for the silting of its tributary rivers to create the creeks there today.

One of the Landsat images throws into relief a detail slightly west of Karanganyar, where the somewhat higher and drier land is broken by a sizeable expanse of moist soil, and this might once have been an important watercourse and correspond with the Lami Daro river, which flows from the northeast close to Bukit Seguntang. Perhaps a harbor was here in former times.

In spite of patches of inundated land observable today in and around the Bukit Seguntang area, the terrain has not, it seems, been disturbed by major changes in the Musi waterbed. The area with numerous watercourses and small islands was a favorable one for permanent settlement. A royal residence somewhere here is more than likely in Sriwijayan times, and it would be what Professor Wheatley calls a "focally situated settlement."

I-ching never mentions a royal residence, although Takakusu translates him as referring to "the fortified city of Sriwijaya."<sup>95</sup> The closest the pilgrim gets to mentioning a residence is when he refers to the "suburbs" (郭下) in which more than a thousand monks lived.<sup>96</sup> Takakusu transferred to Sriwijaya the Chinese model of a walled complex of imperial palaces. The model is inappropriate. Stone, though not laterite, is in scarce supply, and laterite bricks were probably reserved for religious foundations. Wooden palisades may have been used, and their postholes could be identified. Chinese histories sometimes mention wooden palisades in Southeast Asia. \*B'uân-b'uân on the Thai isthmus is an example.<sup>97</sup>

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93. I again acknowledge Professor Ta Liang's assistance in interpreting the images.

94. *De Heldheftige bevrediging van Palembang* (Rotterdam: Arbon en Krap, 1822) [by an anonymous writer], p. 16.

95. Takakusu, *Record*, p. xxxiv and quoting I-ching's note in *Mūla*, p. 477.

96. Ibid. The Taishō Tripiṭaka notes that 郭, the character in the text, means 郭. Professor Wheatley translates the term as "an enclosed settlement"; *Nāgara and Commandery*, p. 239.

97. Wheatley, *Nāgara and Commandery*, p. 234. Dr. McKinnon, in a letter dated July 12, 1985, suggests a thick natural palisade of thorny bamboo. There would be no postholes but, instead, a line of denser organic matter where the roots were and perhaps posts at the entrance or gateways.

The "suburbs" would represent a scattered and unwalled stretch of dwellings and fields extending indefinitely beyond the royal residence and its adjacent official buildings, and here the monks lived. The "suburbs," in my opinion, comprised the Bukit Seguntang area itself. I-ching was impressed by the size of the Buddhist community. He mentions only one larger one, and this was at Nālandā in northeastern India and the most famous center in the Buddhist world. According to him, more than three thousand monks lived there.<sup>98</sup> Sriwijaya would therefore be, in his judgment, the second largest Buddhist center outside India. But one should not accept his numbers too literally. One scholar suggests that I-ching overestimated the number of monks at Nālandā; the surviving archaeological remains would not accommodate three thousand and more monks.<sup>99</sup>

Identifying the exact site of the monks' quarters is likely to be difficult if not impossible, unless concentrations of particular types of sherds and other artifacts come to light. All the same, details in I-ching's *Record* should not be disregarded. When, no doubt drawing on his experiences in Sriwijaya, he describes the numerous fasting days in "the ten *chau* of the Southern Ocean," he states that the host of the feast at the end of the fast would go to "the monastery (寺)," apparently a specific location, to announce that the exact time for feasting had come.<sup>100</sup> But I-ching also refers to the monks' "apartments" (房), the word used to signify the rooms where monks and nuns actually lived; holy images were sometimes erected in the apartments.<sup>101</sup> The apartments could have spread over considerable space. I follow Dra. Suleiman's view that the monks lived in flimsy wooden huts, leaving no traces behind.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, one detail in the *Record* is worth noting: "What we call a monastery (寺)," he writes, "is a general designation for the place of residence [for the Sangha], the whole of which may be regarded as a monastic kitchen. In every apartment raw and cooked food may be kept."<sup>103</sup> Kitchen utensils need not have entirely disappeared.

In this context attention should be given to what I-ching says about the use of water by those who occupied the apartments. The Buddhist discipline enjoined monks to be careful in using clean water for drinking purposes. I-ching insists on earthenware and porcelain, and he mentions *kundī*, or water jars.<sup>104</sup> *Kundī* were also used by the monks for washing their hands when they were about to attend feasts after they had fasted.<sup>105</sup> Water used for the ritual bathing of images would have come from these containers. The monks' apartments have disappeared long ago, but fairly dense concentrations of broken domestic ware and especially of water jars may point to possible sites where the monks dwelt, and the following passage is worth bearing in mind: "When

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98. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 154 and n. 2.

99. S. Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries in India* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1962), p. 340.

100. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 46.

101. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

102. Wolters, "Studying Śrīvijaya," p. 19.

103. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 84. I-ching writes that there were three hundred apartments at Nālandā; *ibid.*, p. 154.

104. *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 27-30, 36, 37, 48, 190.

105. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

earthenware utensils have been already used, they should be thrown away into a ditch."<sup>106</sup> We should not assume that all rubbish ended up in the Musi.

It would be surprising if the site occupied by I-ching's monks ceased to have religious associations after I-ching's day. Sriwijaya continued to be an important Buddhist center until at least the beginning of the eleventh century and probably later. Atīśa, the tantric missionary to Tibet, studied there under the renowned teacher Dharmakīrti. Sherds of a later vintage may therefore point to where I-ching's monks lived.

But in spite of these possibilities a particular circumstance will hamper the search for the monks' debris. The monks were not the only inhabitants, and it may be difficult to distinguish their sherds from those of their Malay neighbors. Laymen as well as monks would use Chinese jars for storing water if they could afford them, and especially when imports of stoneware became increasingly available in Sung times. The monks were not an isolated section of the population. For one reason, they had to beg for alms. I-ching gives an example of a young Chinese monk who sought alms when he was learning Sanskrit texts in Sriwijaya.<sup>107</sup> Another reason for supposing that there were close contacts between monks and their Malay neighbors was that some monks known to I-ching could speak Malay (k'un-lun).<sup>108</sup> One Chinese monk who did so decided to become a layman and remained in Sriwijaya.<sup>109</sup>

The *Record* gives further evidence of contacts. I-ching asked laymen why they made offerings to a Buddha image. "To earn merit," was the reply.<sup>110</sup> He refers to "monks and laymen" in the Southern Ocean who accompanied images on a carriage;<sup>111</sup> he probably saw this scene in Sriwijaya. In the same passage he describes how girls and boys flanked the images during the fasting ceremony; these would be the children of Malay Buddhists. In the Southern Ocean, according to I-ching, monks and laymen alike chanted the *Gātakamālā*, the stories of the accomplishments of the future Buddha.<sup>112</sup> Or again, during the fasting ceremonies monks offered prayers on behalf of the *nāga* and spirits, and these would be local divinities.<sup>113</sup> In these ways, Sanskrit vocabulary and Buddhist meditative techniques such as the use of tantras, mentioned in the Sabokingking inscription, would become familiar to the Malays.

A final point may be made about the monks. One must not assume that there were many Chinese in the Sriwijaya monastery. I-ching only mentions a few in his day. The great majority of the monks were probably Malays and Indians. For example, according to I-ching, the famous Indian teacher, Sākyakīrti, who had studied in the Five Indias, lived there.<sup>114</sup> He also notes that teachers from

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106. Ibid., p. 36.

107. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 189.

108. Ibid., pp. 63-64 (the monk decided to resume a lay life in Sriwijaya); p. 159 (the monk understood K'un-lun in Sriwijaya); p. 183 (the monk did likewise).

109. Ibid., p. 64.

110. Takakusu, *Record*, p. 46.

111. Ibid., p. 45.

112. Ibid., p. 163.

113. Ibid., p. 48.

114. Ibid., p. 184.

India smiled when they saw the cloth used for kneeling to perform salutations.<sup>115</sup> When I-ching, after returning to China for the last time, recommended that Chinese monks bound for India should first study the Buddhist rules in Sriwijaya,<sup>116</sup> as he had done in 671-672, the reason must be that he knew that Indian scholars were to be found there. The same reason would explain why he saw so little to distinguish Buddhist practices in Sriwijaya from those in the Five Indias. His longest digression about Southern Ocean practices concerns the celebration of fasts, and the elaborate details he records suggest that he witnessed the ceremonies and probably participated in them when he was studying and writing in Sriwijaya.

The presence of only a limited number of Chinese will probably make the search for their durable artifacts even more difficult, especially if we suppose that Indian and Malay monks also used Chinese stoneware and porcelain. On the other hand, the relationship between the Buddhist center at Sriwijaya and Indian Buddhism was probably close and continuous, and the monks' residential area is likely to have retained its identity for a considerable time and left evidence of itself on the soil.

The monks were wedged in a patchwork of straddling Malay settlements. The settlements would comprise dwellings on piles on the banks of streams behind the northern shore of the Musi and at the edges of relatively high and dry terrain. They may have been quite numerous. Abū Zayd Ḥaṣan early in the tenth century, reporting merchant gossip, writes that the soil [of Sriwijaya] "is as fertile as any land can be,"<sup>117</sup> and Wang Ta-yūan in the fourteenth century writes about the Palembang soil in similarly glowing terms.<sup>118</sup> Abū Zayd also records "that it is worthy of belief that the cocks of this country begin to crow at dawn and reply to each other over a hundred and more *parasang* (one *parasang* is about 6.25 kilometers) because the villages are contiguous and succeed each other without interruption."<sup>119</sup> Arab traders were unlikely to travel far inland, and the statement may incorporate a Malay figure of speech to describe the density of population in the area. A Karanganyar inhabitant in the twentieth century used a similar figure of speech when he said that cats could move from Karanganyar to Batang Hari Leko, about forty miles upstream, without touching the ground.<sup>120</sup>

Abundant supplies of fish, prawns, and bivalves would support a considerable population. Crops would be cultivated, and palaeobotanical research may assist in identifying them. The terrain, though by no means entirely waterlogged, is sufficiently moist to preserve organic data for laboratory analysis. The whole area would resemble a garden suburb, and the monks may have chosen to live on the lower slopes around the Bukit Seguntang hill where the land was suitable for fruit trees rather than crops.

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115. Ibid., p. 111.

116. Ibid., p. xxxiv, quoting *Mūla*, p. 477.

117. G. Ferrand, *L'empire sumatranais de Śrīvijaya* (Paris: Geuthner, 1922), p. 57.

118. Rockhill, "Notes on Relations and Trade," p. 135.

119. Ferrand, *L'empire sumatranais*, p. 57.

120. L. C. Westenenk, "Boekit Segoentung en Goenoeng Mahameroe uit de Sedjarah Malajoe," *Tijdschrift voor Indische taal-, land- en volkenkunde* 63 (1923): 223.

The role of the hill in Sriwijayan times cannot be determined at present. Bukit Seguntang, albeit under a hundred feet high, is the only tall landmark close to the Musi and may have been venerated in ancient times and its religious fame enhanced in Sriwijayan times as a result of Buddhism. The earliest reference to it is in the *Sejarah Melayu*, where it is the scene of the miraculous appearance of Sri Tri Buana. I once suggested that the signs of his appearance are reminiscent of a bodhisattva's attributes.<sup>121</sup> If this were so, the hill could have acquired Buddhist associations. Buddhist imagery and greatly disturbed old bricks, the remains of a *stūpa*, have been discovered on or near the hill.

Estimating the extent of the inhabited land in the Bukit Seguntang area when Sriwijaya was flourishing is a fruitless endeavor until extended archaeological research has been undertaken. Cultivation would increase over the centuries. Perhaps the cultivated lands in the seventh century were somewhere within a zone of approximately four miles along the northern shore of the river and about two miles inland, a stretch of land which includes the site of the 684 inscription to the northwest and the land extending north, east, and south-east of Bukit Seguntang. To this heartland should be added the ridge of land lying behind the swamps of the modern city of Palembang and leading to relatively high land east of Palembang city in the shape of a spur or peninsula that extends northwards.<sup>122</sup> My friends and I have, perhaps prematurely, become accustomed to regarding the eastern part of the area as a "holy land." Several important religious finds have come from here: the remains of the Angsoka and Walang *candi*, a group of bronze statues, a bronze statue of Śiva, and statues of Avalokiteśvara and Gaṇeśa. The Sabokingking inscription, a shaft of votive *stūpika*, and *siddhiyātra* inscriptions have also been found east of Palembang city.<sup>123</sup> Wang Ta-yüan wrote that there were "many brick *stūpa* along the roads."<sup>124</sup> If these *stūpa* were east of Palembang city, they would catch the merchants' notice when sailing up the river. Finally, in the same area an inscribed stone was found in the 1930s. The inscription would be very close in time to the period of the Old-Malay inscription of 682 in the Bukit Seguntang area, and it refers to "the Vihara in this country (or village)."<sup>125</sup>

The archaeological yield east of Palembang city could suggest that the royal residence was here. I do not take this view, because the area is too close to the northeastern sweep of the Musi and would be exposed to surprise attack. Moreover, the Bukit Seguntang area has much more inhabitable land close to the river. The Sriwijayan heartland had several subcenters, each with its own function, and McKinnon has suggested that the area east of Palembang was, among other things, an assembly site.

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121. Wolters, *Fall of Śrīvijaya*, ch. 8.

122. I discuss this feature in "Landfall on the Palembang Coast," pp. 43-45 and map 12 facing p. 39. When I wrote this article, I still accepted Obedijn's notion of a deep inland gulf which reached Palembang from the sea.

123. The shaft was discovered in 1974 and is described in *ibid.*, p. 45.

124. Rockhill, "Notes on Relations and Trade," p. 135.

125. De Casparis, *Prasasti II*, p. 14. Damaïs thought that *wanua ini* might mean "this village"; L. C. Damaïs, "Bibliographie indonésienne," *BEFEO* 54 (1968): 426. Dr. McKinnon suggests that a priestly presence nearby could be an essential element in the oath-taking ceremony.

So much for glimpses or possibilities of the heartland or "focally situated" part of the Sriwijayan polity. Where would have been its "restricted peripheral territory," over which control could be exercised?

Whatever else it was, we are dealing with a polity knit together by the tide, which affected the heartland and periphery alike. The Sirāf writer of the early tenth century, Abū Zayd Ḥaṣan, records that the ruler's palace faced a small lake fed by tidal water,<sup>126</sup> as, in fact, the Karanganyar settlement site does. Communications in this part of Sumatra would be almost exclusively by river. Early in the nineteenth century *perahu* from Muara Rawas rather more than a hundred miles upstream from Bukit Seguntang reached Karanganyar in four days,<sup>127</sup> but paddlers on the lower reaches of the Musi could maximize the advantage of the tide and reduce the effect of distance. At Palembang the rate of the ebb tide is generally two knots and the flood tide from one to one and a half knots.<sup>128</sup> The tide affects not only the lower reaches of the Musi but also some of its long tributaries, such as the Komering and Ogan, whose confluences are close to Bukit Seguntang, and their tidal reaches would be part of the "restricted peripheral territory."

The riverine polity would represent a considerable amount of space, but space within which swift tidal communications assisted the exercise of political authority. At the same time, alluvial deposition as a result of sedimentation from upstream would support a large population. One can visualize a genuine unity based on shared environmental conditions. The periphery would not be difficult to control.

Finally, Professor Wheatley in his Langkasuka model proposes "an indefinite region beyond" both the center and the periphery and a region where tribute could be exacted. Riverine communications should again be taken into account, and I shall suggest one example of what could be part of "the region beyond." In July 1984, my companions and I visited Ulu Bayat, a small village on the tidal Sungei Lalang and more than a hundred miles upstream from the Banju Asin estuary where the Lalang waters reach the sea. Ulu Bayat is about seven miles from the site of a ruined *candi* in the jungle near the Sungei Klobak, a tributary of the Sungei Lalang. The Ulu Bayat inhabitants told us that their forebears had to make special deliveries of benzoin to the Sultans of Palembang.<sup>129</sup> On the map the village seems closer to the Batang Hari river in the north, but the direction of the watershed required the people as a matter of course to look southwards towards the Sultanate on the distant Musi. Ulu Bayat may be an instance of somewhere beyond the Sriwijayan heartland whence tribute could be exacted. A study of the *candi* in the jungle might throw light on the possibility. The *Hsin T'ang-shu* notes that "the land (土) of B'juet-d'ai has many rare aromatics," and Wang Ta-yüan lists benzoin and gharuwood among the local products of the Old Harbor, Palembang.

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126. Ferrand, *L'empire sumatranais*, pp. 57-58.

127. Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang, 1811-1825*, p. 180.

128. *Eastern Archipelago Pilot*, 4 (London: Hydrographic Office of Great Britain, 1890), p. 64.

129. Westenenk, "Boekit Segoentung," p. 225, mentions the *candi*. For a nineteenth century reference to benzoin from the Sungei Lalang area, see W. L. de Sturler, *Proeve eener beschrijving van het gebied van Palembang (Zuid-oostelijk gedeelte van Sumatra)* (Groningen: Oomrens, 1843), pp. 43 and 109.

The location of other territories beyond the periphery can only be surmised at present. Evidently in I-ching's day Malayu was one of them. The locations of the Sriwijayan inscriptions far up the Batang Hari river system on the Merangin river and at the extreme south of Sumatra must have been within the Sriwijayan sphere of influence at that time. The inscriptions mention "those who have been invested by me" with the charge of the *dātu*, and this suggests that the local chiefs were now in vassal relationship with the Sriwijayan ruler and were probably *dātu* themselves. The upper reaches of the Musi and its long tributaries were from time to time almost certainly part of "the beyond." Fragments of brick *candi* and Hindu-Buddhist statuary at confluences of rivers such as the Batang Hari Leko and up the Lematang river indicate influences beamed upstream from the heartland to create a degree of cultural unity.<sup>130</sup> Those who today discuss Sriwijaya emphasize the importance of the hinterland's natural wealth and warn us not to attach exclusive weight to the entrepot wealth of Sriwijaya, with its trade goods from the Middle East and India. Dr. John Miksic suggests that "ceremonial centers, and also inscriptions, may indicate strategic points on ancient communication and transport routes" and help us "map out a methodology which may eventually provide us with a picture of internal Sumatran political and economic institutions. . . ." <sup>131</sup>

Relations between the center and "the beyond" would be complex. Sacral ties such as a Sabokingking-type oath and the royal gifts associated with magical sanctity would represent sanctions based on the overlord's personal prestige. In 684 the Sriwijayan ruler disclosed himself to his subjects as a bodhisattva. Kinship ties would supply another and less stable form of relationship. The Sabokingking inscription frequently mentions "families" and "kin" as capable of incurring the ruler's wrath. Professor de Casparis disagrees with Professor Boechari, who argued that the ruler would have little to fear from his own relatives.<sup>132</sup> I am sure that Professor de Casparis is right, and the reason is that a ruler's relatives would include many as the result of marriage alliances with members of the families of *dātu*, the most eligible and powerful of all families. The *dātu* would never be prepared to accept indefinitely the political status quo enforced by the Sriwijayan rulers. Family ties in a society organized by means of cognatic kinship provided a convenient means of

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130. Westenenk, "Boekit Segoentung," p. 224, observed the remains of a stone edifice on a small hill near the confluence of the Leko and Musi. Bennet Bronson discusses the economic role of confluences in "Exchange at the Upstream and Downstream Ends: Notes Toward a Functional Model of the Coastal State in Southeast Asia," in *Economic Exchange and Social Interaction in Southeast Asia: Perspectives from Prehistory, History, and Ethnography*, ed. Karl L. Hutterer, Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, no. 13 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1977), pp. 39-52.

131. John Miksic, "Classical Archaeology in Sumatra," *Indonesia* 30 (October 1980): 65. Jane E. Drakard has recently illustrated how a critical reading of Sumatran texts may contribute to the study of trading routes in the Sumatran hinterland. Her two texts are situated in Barus and the Batak interior, and their function is to elaborate arguments on behalf of the status of two princely families. The arguments reveal, among other things, claims to the loyalty of specified inland and strategically located centers for collecting camphor and benzoin, famous trade products in studies of this part of Sumatra; Jane E. Drakard, "A Malay Frontier: The Adaptation of Malay Political Culture in Barus" (M.A. thesis, Monash University, 1984).

132. De Casparis, "Some Notes on the Epigraphic Heritage," p. 33.



binding the center and "the beyond" by tributary relations but were also, at the same time, a potential threat to the ruler's authority.

I have tried to sketch the outline of a *mandala/kuo* based on Bukit Seguntang in Sriwijayan times and availed myself of guidelines provided by Professor Wheatley's Langkasuka model. I happen to believe that I have been writing about Sriwijaya itself. One should not, of course, imagine that there were ever fixed boundaries. Varying degrees of influence would be exerted from the center in different times, and the waxing and waning of Sriwijayan power is a matter for historical research. Only one feature of the geopolitical situation is likely to be permanent. There would have been a riverine core of settlements, knit together by the Musi's tidal waters.

Sriwijaya is the object of endless study. By way of conclusion, I wish to take the opportunity of revising something I once wrote on the best-known aspect of Sriwijayan history: the connection between its power and international trade. I am interested in reconsidering a passage written by Ma Tuan-lin (c. 1250-1325), the Chinese encyclopaedist, and quoted by Groeneveldt as long ago as 1876. According to Ma Tuan-lin, "the barbarians [foreigners] of the islands only brought tribute because they sought the advantage of trade and imperial presents."<sup>133</sup> I-ching will once more be my point of departure.

#### *Trade and Diplomacy in Sriwijayan Times*

Merchant ships were sailing regularly between Canton and Sriwijaya when I-ching's fellow-monks visited Sriwijaya. When Fêng Hsiao-ch'üan, a local official in southern China and I-ching's *dānapati*, introduced him to a shipowner in 671, I-ching probably assumed that Sriwijaya was an established facility for pilgrims on their way to "the Five Indias." If this were so, he would not have been disappointed when he reached Sumatra, where the ruler showed him sympathy by providing shipping space to enable him to sail to Malayu and on to India. I-ching describes the king as "bestowing [a gift] at the time of departure (贈支持送),"<sup>134</sup> and he uses the same term when his *dānapati*'s family in Canton "bestowed" gifts on him in 671 and when monks and laity in Canton did likewise in 689.<sup>134</sup> He recalls in the *Record* the famous Buddhist teacher, Nāgārjuna, who dedicated a letter in verse to a southern Indian king who had been his *dānapati*.<sup>135</sup> I-ching does not describe the Sriwijayan ruler as a *dānapati*, but he uses language for the king's service appropriate in the context of assistance bestowed on a pilgrim. The ruler's conduct was in the hospitable tradition of the Indian rulers mentioned in the *Memoir* and would not have been cultivated overnight.<sup>136</sup>

I-ching's continued respect for Sriwijaya is shown when he calls it "Suvarṇadvīpa." The T'ang envoy's visit in 683 is another sign of Sriwijaya's

133. W. P. Groeneveldt, *Notes on the Malay Archipelago and Malacca Compiled from Chinese Sources* (Batavia: n.p., 1876), p. 61, n. 1.

134. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 119; *Ta-T'ang*, p. 7.

135. Takakusu, *Record*, pp. 158-59.

136. Spencer makes a similar comment: "The hospitality accorded to Chinese monks in Śrīvijaya suggests that its rulers were not unaware of their realm's significant cultural, as well as geographical, position between India and China"; George W. Spencer, *The Politics of Expansion. The Chola Conquest of Sri Lanka and Sri Vijaya* (Madras: New Era Publications, 1983), p. 109.

fame.<sup>137</sup> A pilgrim accompanied the envoy and brought gifts of *sūtra* and images. Perhaps the gifts graced the mission.<sup>138</sup> The ruler was evidently regarded as a worthy recipient and must have been recognized in China as the ruler of an important Buddhist polity.

Nevertheless, in spite of regular trading relations between Sriwijaya and China, the Sriwijayan rulers had not yet established tributary relations with China when I-ching was overseas.<sup>139</sup> This circumstance may seem surprising when we read in the *Memoir* of the special respect the ruler paid to two pilgrims when he realized that they came from the T'ang empire. The ruler valued the connection with China.<sup>140</sup> Yet the first verifiable mission from Sriwijaya was as late as 702; others followed in 716, 724, 728, and 742. Before I-ching's time the most recent mission from anywhere in Indonesia had been from the Javanese polity of Ho-ling in 666.<sup>141</sup> Indonesian missions after Sriwijaya's in 742 were resumed by Ho-ling in 767, though one side of the Ligor inscription on the Thai isthmus and dated 775 extols the ruler of Sriwijaya's title. Sriwijaya's tributary relationship with T'ang China was brief.

But a lean tributary record need not be the only measure of the scale of Sriwijayan trade in T'ang times. In 684 K'un-lun merchants in Canton killed the governor, Lu Yüan-jui, because "he tried to cheat them of their goods,"<sup>142</sup> and another source states that the governor's staff was "licentious and extortionist."<sup>143</sup> I-ching uses the word "K'un-lun" when he refers to the Malay language spoken in Sriwijaya.<sup>144</sup> Again, in 695 the T'ang Court issued regulations for provisioning foreign merchants in China, and Sriwijaya and Ho-ling were among the countries to benefit.<sup>145</sup> Trade between Sriwijaya and China was probably continuous in the last thirty years of the seventh century and before missions were sent, even though the T'ang government was tardy in realizing that suitable administrative arrangements were needed in Canton to protect its

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137. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 159.

138. The circumstances of the mission are unknown. The *Memoir* states that the mission was sent in the second year of the *Yung-ch'üan* reign-period. There is only one such year, and the year in question must be the single year of the next (*Hung-tao*) reign-period (February 2, 683-January 22, 684). The envoy, unnamed, could have sailed with the northeast monsoon towards the end of 682 or 683. The T'ang emperor Kao-tsung died on December 27, 683, and had lost interest in Buddhism many years earlier, but his wife, who succeeded him on the throne, had already become the patroness of Buddhism. Perhaps she sent the envoy. Alternatively, the envoy was sent by a senior official in southern China.

139. According to the *Hsin T'ang-shu*, Po-na edition, ch. 222 C, p. 5a, Sriwijayan missions were sent from the 670-673 to the 727-750 reign-periods, but only the *Ts'ê-fu yüan-kuei* records the years when missions were sent, and these were in the first half of the eighth century.

140. Chavannes, *Mémoire*, p. 75.

141. Wang Gungwu, "The Nanhai Trade. A Study of the Early History of Chinese Trade in the South China Sea," *JMBRAS* 31, 2 (1958): 122.

142. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

143. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

144. See page 28 above.

145. *T'ang hui-yao*, ch. 100, p. 1798.

economic interests and those of foreign merchants. The T'ang response came at an unknown time before 714 when the post of Superintendent of Merchant Shipping was established in Canton.<sup>146</sup> Even then not all was well. The *Hsin T'ang-shu* states that sometime in the first half of the eighth century a Sriwijaya ruler complained through his envoys that the Canton officials misbehaved.<sup>147</sup> The complaint would have been made during one of the missions between 716 and 742.

Were, then, tributary missions and commercial exchange closely related activities, as Ma Tuan-lin insisted? What happened in the second half of the seventh century does not support this view. Nevertheless, I had long supposed that the tributary system provided the mechanism for giving access to the Chinese market and that Sriwijaya's prosperity depended to a large extent on the willingness or ability of the Chinese emperors to receive missions from their "vassal." The missions, I assumed, were commercial occasions which brought wealth to the Malay rulers and helped to reassure merchants using Sriwijaya's harbors that the rulers were respected in China and that merchants would be accorded a satisfactory reception in Chinese ports. When the internal situation in China was disturbed, the rulers would no longer send missions and merchants would be reluctant to sail to China. According to Abū Zayd Ḥaṣan, many foreigners were massacred during Huang Ch'ao's rebellion in 878. The rebellion scared merchants and kept them away from China.<sup>148</sup>

On the basis of this hypothesis, I suggested that the operation or abeyance of the tributary trade constituted a rhythm in Malay history.<sup>149</sup> When the imperial government was strong, the China trade nourished the Malay overlords' power. The rhythm ended only in the twelfth century, when the expansion of the Chinese mercantile marine enabled Chinese merchants to trade with Southern Ocean centers of production at will. This development diminished the economic importance of the Sriwijayan entrepot. Moreover, by the twelfth century the emperors themselves were no longer interested in tributary trade. Missions petered out, the entrepot lost its economic role, and the Malay rulers forfeited their influence in Sumatra.

My interpretation of the relationship between the tributary system and the China trade depended, however, on an arbitrary distinction or opposition between the tributary trade and Chinese private trade. I am now no longer convinced that the distinction is correct. As a result of discussions with Chinese historians during a visit to Xiamen University in the spring of 1985, I became aware that Chinese merchant ships from southern China were sailing to Southeast Asia as early as the tenth century and long before the tributary trade was falling into abeyance in the twelfth century.

The information brought to my notice is miscellaneous and lacking in geographical detail but none the less interesting. In Xiamen, I was told that texts reveal that merchants from Fukien province in southern China were sailing south for trading purposes at the time of the Five Dynasties (907-960), during the interval between the fall of T'ang and rise of Sung when there was no

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146. Wang Gungwu, "Nanhai Trade," pp. 99-100.

147. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

148. G. Ferrand, trans., *Voyage du marchand arabe Sulaymān en Inde et en Chine . . . rédigé en 851 suivi de remarques par Abū Zayd Ḥaṣan (vers 916)* (Paris: Editions Bissard, 1922), pp. 75-76.

149. Wolters, *Fall of Śrīvijaya*, ch. 4.

strong government in southern China.<sup>150</sup> One merchant, I was told, had porcelain in his cargo. The situation had not changed by the end of the tenth century. In 992 a Javanese mission to the Sung Court reported that a shipowner and important merchant, Mao Hsü from Chien-ch'i in Fukien province, had come to Java on several occasions. The Javanese ruler availed himself of the opportunity provided by the merchant's presence in Java to organize the mission of 992.<sup>151</sup>

Further materials are available as the result of the Sung government's reestablishment of the Superintendency of Merchant Shipping in 971 in an effort to impose an official monopoly on particularly valuable imports arriving in Chinese as well as in foreign ships. In 982 ocean-going ships of Chang-chou and Ch'üan-chou in Fukien province were prohibited from sailing elsewhere on the China coast to trade in certain goods, including frankincense.<sup>152</sup> In 989 the government required "merchants going out to sea to trade with foreign countries" to obtain travel documents at the Chekiang Superintendency of Merchant Shipping before being allowed to import "valuable goods."<sup>153</sup> Chekiang is north of Fukien on the coast.

Finally, a poem by Hsieh Li in Wang Hsiang-chih's thirteenth century geography extends these glimpses of Chinese shipping in Southeast Asia into the middle of the eleventh century. Hsieh Li was an official in the neighborhood of Ch'üan-chou at that time.<sup>154</sup>

#### The Ch'üan-chou Song of the South

The Ch'üan-chou population is dense. The mountains and valleys are barren.

The people want to till, but there is no land to open up.

To the south lies the ocean, vast and limitless.

Every year they build ships and go to foreign lands.

The glimpses of Chinese overseas shipping are interesting for several reasons. They bring Fukien province into prominence from the early tenth century onwards, and archaeologists may be able to identify Bukit Seguntang sherds as products of Fukien kilns. Moreover, in 985<sup>155</sup> and 1028<sup>156</sup> the Sung

150. I thank Mr. Liao Dake, of the Nanyang Institute, Xiamen University, for bringing the new information to my notice. His dissertation on the subject of early Chinese shipping in the Southern Ocean will, when published, be of considerable interest to Southeast Asian historians.

151. *Sung-shih*, Po-na edition, ch. 489, p. 17a; Groeneveldt, *Notes on the Malay Archipelago*, p. 18.

152. *Sung hui-yao chi-kao*, photolithographic reprint of the Chai yeh t'ang copy in the Peking Library, Chung-hua shu-chü edition, vol. 4, *chih-kuan*, 44, p. 3364.

153. *Ibid.*

154. Wang Hsiang-chih, *Yü-ti chi-sheng*, Wên-hai ch'u-pan shê, 1971 printing, vol. 2, ch. 130, p. 692. On Wang Hsiang-chih, see *A Sung Bibliography* (initiated by Étienne Balazs and edited by Yves Hervouet) (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1979), p. 130. On Hsieh Li see *Chung-wên ta tz'ü-tien* (Taipei: Chung-hua Ta-hsüeh, 1982), vol. 8, p. 1103. I am grateful to Mr. Liao Dake for bringing the poem to my notice.

155. *Sung hui-yao chi-kao*, *chih-kuan*, 44 p. 3364.

156. *Ibid.*, pp. 3365-66.

Government despatched its envoys to the Southern Ocean to persuade foreign traders to bring frankincense and other natural produce to China. The needs of the market were so considerable that there would be opportunities for private as well as tributary trade. But the feature of the new evidence which concerns me is evidence of Chinese trading ships in the Southern Ocean two hundred years before about 1100, which was, I had supposed in 1983, the earliest certain time when such evidence was available.<sup>157</sup> Chinese private trade had overlapped with the tributary trade for about two hundred years.

The sharp distinction I formerly proposed between the tributary trade and Chinese private trade seems to be no longer tenable. There need have been no competition. Both forms of trade would benefit the Sriwijaya entrepot, and a clear instance is provided by the *P'ing-chou k'o-t'an*, which states that, about 1100, Chinese going to the Middle East repaired their ships and exchanged goods in San-fo-ch'i. "Merchants from distant places congregate there. This country is therefore considered to be very prosperous."<sup>158</sup> Chinese merchants during the previous two centuries would likewise be attracted to a well-known entrepot where frankincense was readily available from the Middle East. Almost every Chinese account of Sriwijaya associates it with the frankincense trade. The Sriwijayan rulers' own merchants<sup>159</sup> and foreign merchants, including Chinese, would cooperate in maintaining the trade, especially in Sung times when the Chinese government depended increasingly on revenue from imports reserved for resale under its auspices.

What, then, was the purpose of the tributary missions? The missions were certainly occasions when the rulers could trade with China, but I believe that the rulers had another and more important intention. In 1983, when I was discussing the missions from San-fo-ch'i in the last twenty years of the eleventh and in the twelfth centuries, I already suspected that these missions had diplomatic objectives. Foreign rulers in Sung times were anxious for imperial favors which signified their seniority vis-à-vis other Chinese vassals and especially those who were their neighbors and potential rivals. Distinctions of rank were part of the political culture of Southeast Asia<sup>160</sup> and, when granted by the emperors, helped to establish status among Southeast Asian rulers whose spheres of influence overlapped.<sup>161</sup>

Today, after taking into account what I-ching wrote about the multicentered situation in Sumatra, and no longer satisfied with my earlier distinction

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157. For my view in 1983, see "A Few and Miscellaneous *pi-chi* Jottings on Early Indonesia," *Indonesia* 36 (October 1983): 57.

158. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

159. A ship owner from Sriwijaya is mentioned in 985; Groeneveldt, *Notes on the Malay Archipelago*, p. 64.

160. Wolters, "A Few and Miscellaneous *pi-chi* Jottings," pp. 58-61. Prapañca attributes such a sentiment to Hayam Wuruk of Majapahit: "Whosoever he may be, he shall be my enemy in the world if he is an equal on earth"; Pigeaud, *Java in the 14th Century*, vol. 3, canto 51, stanza 7.

161. In 1077 the Sung emperor, conferring a high rank on the Sriwijayan ruler, stated that he did so in order to embellish his loyal vassal's reputation and honor his country with a special favor; *Sung-shih*, Po-na edition, ch. 489, pp. 14a-b. The Malay ruler would have the same intention when he honored his own subordinates and would certainly understand the significance of the emperor's favor.

between tributary and private trade, I am coming to the view that the status associations of the missions--and not their commercial associations--were always important. Missions would be sent to enhance and verify the prestige of the rulers and not merely to demonstrate the trading pretensions of what George Spencer has called "the dominant port."<sup>162</sup> The missions did not in themselves create prestige any more than the erection of temples in India during the early eleventh century did for the Sriwijayan rulers.<sup>163</sup> Prestige was the consequence of the rulers' achievement in controlling rival Sumatran polities and surviving the dangers reflected in the Sabokingking inscription. Missions to China and temples in India projected the rulers' own notion of their relative importance among their neighbors. Thus, for example, the Sriwijayan missions from 702 to 742 would reflect the rulers' earned status in Sumatra to which one can suppose that the subordination of Malayu and Kedah contributed more than anything else. Malayu had sent a mission to China in 644.<sup>164</sup>

If one thinks of missions as "diplomatic" measures against a background of a restless inter-polity situation in Sumatra itself, and not as what George Spencer calls "commercial diplomacy,"<sup>165</sup> some Chinese notices about Sriwijaya may make better sense. Though I-ching contradicts the *Hsin T'ang-shu's* impression of Sriwijaya as constituting most of Sumatra,<sup>166</sup> this may be precisely the impression which Malay envoys wished to leave in the mind of the T'ang Court. Similarly, the invariably extravagant language used by Arab writers in the ninth and early tenth centuries to praise the "Maharaja" may reflect the ruler's own notions of his greatness. We do not know how long after the 742 mission the rulers were able to maintain their overlordship, but the missions from Jambi in 852 and 871 should not be ignored. In the middle of the ninth century Bālaputradeva describes himself in the Nālandā inscription as the ruler of "Suvarṇadvīpa."<sup>167</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know whether he was ruling on the Batang Hari or Musi river. The interesting detail is that he chose to invoke the illustrious name of Suvarṇadvīpa to communicate his status abroad.

When T'ang fell in the first years of the tenth century, Malay trading with southern China did not cease. Foreign and, by now, some Chinese merchants maintained it. But the rise of Sung in 960 was a favorable opportunity for the Sriwijayan rulers to advertise in China their status in Sumatra. According to the Cōlā envoys' itinerary in 1015, the rulers' center seems at this time to be on the Musi,<sup>168</sup> and the sudden currency of "San-fo-ch'i" as the Chinese name for the dominant Sumatran polity may be an instance of the rulers' insistence on their unique status. "San-fo-ch'i" is not a transcription of "Sriwijaya," though the name "Sriwijaya" continued to be *en vogue*; the name appears in a southern Indian inscription of the early eleventh century.<sup>169</sup> Some years ago I suggested that "San-fo-ch'i" means no more than what it means literally in

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162. Spencer, *Politics of Expansion*, p. 107.

163. Cœdès, *Indianized States*, pp. 141-42.

164. *T'ang hui-yao*, ch. 100, p. 1790.

165. Spencer, *Politics of Expansion*, p. 109.

166. See page 14 above for the *Hsin T'ang-shu's* description of Sriwijaya.

167. See page 22 above.

168. See page 13 above.

169. Cœdès, *Indianized States*, p. 142.

Chinese: "the Three Vijayas."<sup>170</sup> If this explanation is correct, during the mission of 960 the Malay ruler promptly identified himself as the overlord of the three parts of Sumatra or of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula which were customarily associated with the illustrious name "Vijaya" (Fo-ch'i).<sup>171</sup> Another instance of a Malay ruler's concern to project his local status overseas is the title he used during his mission of 1917; he describes himself as the ruler of "the Ocean Lands."<sup>172</sup> This was when the ruler's fame was well known. 1017 is in the period when the future reformer of Tibetan Buddhism, Atiśa, was attracted to Sriwijaya, described as "Śrīwijayanagara, in Malayagiri, in Suvarṇadvīpa."<sup>173</sup> The exact significance of "Malayagiri" is not clear, but the Tanjore inscription of 1031, recording the Cōḷa ruler's victories in Southeast Asia, distinguishes between "Sriwijaya" and "Malaier."<sup>174</sup>

In early Sung times the Sriwijayan rulers seem to have insisted on their suzerain pretensions when they sent missions to the Chinese Court, and the titles and courtesies conferred on them during the missions between 960 and 1028 suggest that they made a successful impression. We do not know whether they were facing difficulties in maintaining their local hegemony in these years. According to the *Sung-shih*, between 988 and 992 Sriwijaya was invaded by Javanese. This episode may have threatened the Malay ruler. M. Shiraishi has suggested that missions from Sriwijaya had nothing to do with such conventional matters as changes in Chinese and Malay rulers, and in 1983 I assumed that the missions in early Sung times were no more than important commercial occasions.<sup>175</sup> But if the possibility is borne in mind that the missions were frequent when the rulers had particular reasons for affirming their reputation as overlords, one is encouraged to take into account what is known of other happenings in Sumatra and Java which could cause the rulers to be anxious.

I was already beginning to consider the diplomatic aspects of the tributary missions when, in 1983, I wrote about the final phase of the tributary system when San-fo-ch'i had become the Chinese name for the Malay center at Muara Jambi on the Batang Hari.<sup>176</sup> The first missions from the Batang Hari between 1092 and 1094, I argued, would be intended to convince the Chinese that the Muara Jambi princes occupied the status formerly enjoyed by the rulers on the Musi river. The missions of 1157 and 1178 were similar diplomatic gestures.<sup>177</sup>

The Musi polity of Bukit Seguntang has been the focus of this essay, and there I shall end my sketch of the tributary relationship. Chao Ju-kua includes

170. Wolters, "Studying Srivijaya," p. 23.

171. An early eleventh century Cōḷa inscription describes the ruler as the king of Sriwijaya and Kaṭāha (Kedah on the Malay Peninsula); Cœdès, *Indianized States*, p. 142. A mission had come from "Vijaya" in 904. Wang Gungwu suggests that it reached a port in Fukien; Wang Gungwu, "Nanhai Trade," p. 86.

172. P. Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, vol. 2 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1963), p. 839.

173. Cœdès, *Indianized States*, p. 144.

174. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

175. Wolters, "A Few and Miscellaneous *pí-chí* Jottings," p. 58.

176. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57, 60-61.

177. See Robert M. Hartwell, "Tribute Missions to China, 960-1126" (manuscript, Philadelphia, 1983), pp. 176 and 180, for a discussion of the Chinese materials for the Sumatran missions of 1079.

"Palembang *kuo*" among the fifteen "dependencies" of San-fo-ch'i.<sup>178</sup> Sumatran tributary trade was now a thing of the past and had been overtaken by Chinese private trade, but this circumstance made no difference to the Musi emporium. The *Sejarah Melayu* makes a great deal of Bukit Seguntang. Not much evidence has been discovered of settlements in that area from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, but numerous sherds of later Sung and Yüan vintage are concentrated in the eastern suburbs of Palembang.<sup>179</sup> Moreover, Chinese sources record the presence of many overseas Chinese in the Palembang area towards the end of the fourteenth century. Ming sailing directions of the early fifteenth century ignore the Batang Hari estuary but not the Musi estuary.<sup>180</sup> In 1377 the Javanese destroyed completely and utterly the Muara Jambi *kraton* and all the settlements on the lower Batang Hari, and for many years thereafter no successor government on the Batang Hari was able to attract traders.<sup>181</sup> The situation on the Musi was very different. The Javanese destroyed the Palembang *kraton* in the 1390s, but a sufficient number of overseas Chinese lived there to survive and fill the vacuum created by the Javanese attack. The Musi emporium had become too well established over the centuries to disappear.

I have digressed from the subject of I-ching and the Bukit Seguntang area in order to contest my earlier view that Sumatran missions to China should be accounted for simply in terms of commercial transactions. Yet I would not have done so if I-ching and the Sabokingking inscription had not persuaded me to envisage the Sriwijayan polity in its initial Sumatran setting as being on a relatively small territorial scale and, to that extent, somewhat fragile. The "Sriwijaya" of the history books tends to be seen as a far-flung and long-enduring empire and with a history not easily associated with a small-scale polity. Yet, we need not underestimate its advantages: a favorable riverine location, natural resources in its hinterland, and access to the international shipping route through the Malacca and Bangka Straits. These advantages were protected by local naval power and also by the conservatism of merchants from distant parts of maritime Asia who had become habituated to the trading amenities they could expect in the Sriwijayan harbor. The Musi entrepot was not an ephemeral one. Nevertheless, the rulers' relations with other princely families on the island, or, more accurately, with kinship networks organized through female as well as male branches of the families, can hardly have been stable throughout the centuries. This sociological feature of the situation is why I suggest that sequences of tributary missions do not represent trading ventures but rather, as I put it, projections overseas of the Malay overlord's domestic status in Sumatra, which he maintained in spite of the multicentered character of the Sumatran political scene.

### *Conclusion*

The time span covered in this essay has extended from the second half of the seventh to early in the fifteenth century, but its point of departure was

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178. Friedrich Hirth and W. W. Rockhill, *Chau Ju-kua* (St. Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1911), p. 62.

179. The sherds were recovered during an archaeological survey in 1974; see Wolters, "Landfall," pp. 2 and 35.

180. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

181. Dr. McKinnon has informed me that recent archaeological evidence suggests that several settlements in the area came to an abrupt and complete end at about this time.



I-ching. I-ching deserves the benefit of the doubt as an accurate, if limited, source of information. When he traveled in Indonesia his Buddhist training, his interest in the different schools of Buddhism, and his knowledge of India meant that he wrote systematically and therefore informatively. I tried to identify some of his writing conventions and especially those he used for defining geographical and political units of space. I also discussed the functions of his notes and instances of Buddhist-influenced language and figurative speech. More could be done on these lines.

I believe that I-ching's texts and the text provided by the Bukit Seguntang terrain tend to complement each other, though I have been careful to insist that a better knowledge of Sriwijaya depends on archaeologists. The terrain is now the superior text in Sriwijayan studies. Archaeology on the lower and middle reaches of the Musi river system will, I hope, one day become not only a massive undertaking but also exciting because unexpected information will come to light and encourage new lines of enquiry. I benefited from Professor Wheatley's Langkasuka model; space in the Bukit Seguntang polity seems to be similarly organized. On the other hand, one should not assume that there were no differences among the riverine settlements in the Malay world. Professor Wheatley has observed that the settlement pattern now being revealed in the Musi valley is what one would expect throughout ecosystems developed in the narrow valleys of the uplands and along the rivers and sea faces on the Sunda platform: "dwellings interrupted, typically, at infrequent and irregular intervals only by spatially restricted nuclei of administrative, religious, and service facilities."<sup>182</sup> Archaeologists should remember these words when they ask themselves questions about their discoveries. Does it, they may ask, make the slightest difference whether Sriwijaya was in the Musi valley or elsewhere in the Sumatran coastal lowlands? For example, would the relationships between downstream and upstream in the Musi and Batang Hari river systems have been identical? Or did the dominant polity in the Musi valley possess particular features which distinguished it in scale and coherence from the neighboring polity on the Batang Hari? Research in both valleys may contribute to the comparative study of settlement patterns in the Malay world. And if archaeologists and others eventually succeed in defining particular advantages of the Musi terrain, what would we then learn about the human agency in the local culture responsible for developing the advantages and making these particular "spatially restricted nuclei" cohere? Onerous demands will be made on archaeologists in particular, but the archaeology of "Sriwijaya" is an unusually rich subject for its own sake.

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182. Wheatley, *Nāgara and Commandery*, p. 245.