



The epigraphical collection of Museum Ranggawarsita in Semarang (Central Java, Indonesia)

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ARLO GRIFFITHS

The epigraphical collection of Museum Ranggawarsita in Semarang (Central Java, Indonesia)

Plans for a provincial museum of Central Java were conceived in 1975. The museum was provisionally opened under the fitting name 'Provisional museum', with one exhibition hall (C), in 1983. It inaugurated two more halls (A and B) in 1989, was officially renamed 'Ranggawarsita' in 1990, and reached its present extent with the opening of a fourth hall (D) in 1991.¹ Besides memorabilia from a more recent past, and a rich collection of 'classical' period stone and bronze sculptures that deserves systematic study,² the Museum also holds a small but significant collection of 'classical' period inscriptions on stone, bronze and gold artefacts. Some of these are still entirely unstudied, others have been published only in inaccessible media, and yet others have been reported when they were still *in situ*, without any reading or translation being offered. Several belong to the important assemblage of probably seventh-century inscriptions from sites at the Javanese north coast in *kabupaten* Batang that are of particular importance for understanding the genesis of

¹ These details are taken from the *Buku Panduan Museum Jawa Tengah Ranggawarsita*, compiled by Drs. Sunarto, edited by Drs. Puji Juharnoto, M.Pd, P.Par, and published by the government of the province Central Java (without date), pp. 6-7. The booklet mentions a website www.museum_ronggowarsita.org but this does not seem to exist. I have not found any other proper website for the museum, although at the time of this writing the museum is represented with a Facebook page. I adopt the spelling Ranggawarsita from the cited booklet.

² By way of example, let me mention just the exquisite sculptures from Candi Ngempon (see Degroot 2009:402, referring to *Laporan tahunan 1951-1952*, Dinas Purbakala Republik Indonesia / Archaeological Service of Indonesia, Djakarta 1958: Figures 34, 36, 37), the unique sitting Durgā with pendant leg from Candi Gedong Songo (OD 3781), a rare bronze Agastya sculpture, and the nice collection of bronzes from the Rejoso finds (Nugrahani et al. 1998; Hermawati and Kussunartini 1998-99; Sundberg 2004).

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early 'Indianized' polities in Central Java.³ With one exception, all the inscriptions that have previously figured in the secondary literature were held at different locations at the time the respective publications appeared. There are thus good reasons to make known which pieces are currently held in Semarang, and to give information about their contents.

I visited Museum Ranggawarsita on 19 August and again on 13-14 September 2011. The Museum's staff, particularly Mrs. Laela Dewi and Mrs. Kussunartini, have shown extraordinary enthusiasm in facilitating my study of the collection that is in their care, not in the last place by allowing me to make the inked estampages (now held in the EFEO library in Paris) that support my readings and are used to illustrate this article. A special word of thanks goes out to these kind persons.

Stone inscriptions

1. Inscribed base of Śiva's bull (Figures 1 and 2)

A rather badly preserved statue of Śiva's Bull (not to be called Nandi),⁴ hewn from a very rough type of stone, with inventory number 04.0040, found in *desa* Deles, *kecamatan* Bawang, *kabupaten* Batang, bears a short inscription on the base at the right flank of the animal. The inscription comprises two lines engraved in archaic letters possibly datable as early as the seventh but no later than the eighth century (note especially the shape of *ma*).⁵

³ The relevant publications thus far, concerning inscriptions found in Batang regency, are Boechari 1966 (inscription of Sojomerto); Satari et al. 1977:8-10 (inscriptions of Banjaran and Kebondalem = Balekambang); Satari et al. 1978:2 (inscriptions of Banjaran, Blado, Sojomerto); Suhadi and Soekarto 1986:3-7 (inscriptions of Blado and Sojomerto); Atmodjo 1994:4-5 (inscription of Wutit). As far as I know, the Indrokilo inscription (Nakada 1982:88-9) remains unpublished. See also the conclusion of this article.

⁴ This Bull, universally referred to as Nandi(n) both in scholarly literature and in popular parlance in Indonesia, ought simply to be called 'Bull', until any local sources can be adduced to prove that the animal bore another name in ancient Indonesia, because this (*vṛṣabha* and other synonyms of 'bull') is what the classical Indian texts call him. See Bhattacharya 1977 [= 2000:149-72] and 1984 [= 2000:173-80]; Sanderson 2003-04:438, note 318; Goodall et al. 2004:100-8. See also Griffiths 2009:475, note 21.

⁵ In this article, I use the following editorial conventions: graphic elements wholly lost or wholly unreadable on the stone but restorable on the basis of philological considerations are placed in [...]; graphic elements whose reading is visually uncertain but philologically probable are placed in (...); marginally added *akṣaras* are printed between +...+; readings that are merely mechanical renderings of what I think I see on the stone are printed in italics; a letter x represents one totally illegible syllable; a capital letter C indicates one illegible consonant; a raised circle ° precedes independent (*akṣara*) vowel signs; the breve sign (˘) on a vowel explicitly indicates that it is short where a long vowel might be expected.

(1) namaś śivāya

(2) janmaccheda

The text is not complete. Possibly a part has broken off on this face of the pedestal, or the text may originally have been continued on another face which would have suffered such damage that the continuation of the text is no longer visible there. One expects something like *janmaccheda[kāraṇāya]*,⁶ which would allow translating the whole as ‘Homage to Śiva, Cause of the cessation of rebirth’. I have not found any publication referring to this statue or its inscription.



Figure 1. MRS 04.0040. Śiva’s Bull.
Photo Véronique Degroot.



Figure 2. MRS 04.0040. Inscription on the base. Photo Arlo Griffiths.

2. Balekambang stone inscription (Figures 3 and 4)

Two blocks of stone, forming the upper and lower fragment of one original roughly hewn stela in andesite, bear the inventory number 04.0076. The existence of this inscription seems to have been first reported by Satari et al. (1977:10, §B.5.1a and p. 32, photo 20). Their photo shows the inscription, already cracked (but the parts are joined together) when it was still *in situ*. They recorded as administrative divisions *dukuh* Bendosari, *desa* Kebondalem, *kecamatan* Gringsing, *kabupaten* Batang, Central Java. The inscription was found at 100 m from a pond called Balekambang where several sculptures and traces of a structure were also found. This site nowadays falls in the *desa* Sidorejo.⁷ A recent publication has given it the appropriate name ‘Prasasti Balekambang’

⁶ Alexis Sanderson has commented that *-cheda* is odd Sanskrit, that he finds no parallels, and would expect *-uccheda*. He cites such expressions as *samsārocchedanam*, *prajocchedaḥ*, *sarvocchedaḥ*, *kulocchedaḥ*, *svavaṃśocchedaḥ*, *mūlocchedaḥ*, *saṃtānocchedaḥ*. Nevertheless, the reading is beyond doubt.

⁷ Information from Véronique Degroot, who has visited the site, and noted these coordinates: 06°56′41.5 S, 110°00′37.0 E.

(Noerwidi 2007:68, 70). In one piece, the dimensions of the stone are 85 × 44 × 32 cm. The inscription is composed in Sanskrit and seems to comprise a stanza in the *āryā* meter.⁸ This hypothesis underlies my attempt at restoration of this badly worn and fractured inscription.⁹

(1) [°a]yam anatibāhuvīryya(2)s sphaṭikamaṇinibha(3)ñ (j)ala(m) prathi(tavā)n ya(h)
(4) tasya Ci - - nāmnah¹⁰ (5) jīvitam etac cira(m bhava)tu

‘May this life (on earth) be long for this man the strength of whose arms is unsurpassed, who has revealed the crystal-clear water, ... by name!’

The structure, with a genitive ending in °*nāmnah* governed by *jīvitam* as subject and *ciram* as predicate with the imperative verb form *bhavatu*, is strikingly reminiscent of the textual structure of the Plumpungan/Hampran inscription, situated in *dukuh* Plumpungan, *desa* Kauman Kidul, *kecamatan* Sidorejo, *kotamadya* Salatiga, at about 65 km SE from Balekambang, as the crow flies, or about 80 km if one follows the coast and approaches Plumpungan by the easiest route. In *pādas* a+d of the Plumpungan inscription we find the same words literally or in synonym (*bhavatu jīvitam nityam*), but with several additions: *dharmmārthaṃ kṣetradānaṃ yad udayajananaṃ yo dadātiśabhaktyā ... tasyaitad bhānunāmno (bh)uvi bhavatu yaśo jīvitam caiva nityam*. ‘Eternal on earth may be the fame and the life of him called Bhānu who, for the sake of *dharma*, out of devotion for Īśa (Śiva), gives this donation of arable land, to promote prosperity ...’. This last inscription is datable to 750 CE, if we may follow Damais,¹¹ and is composed in an early form of the cursive form of writing, which scholars are used to calling ‘Kawi’ or ‘Old Javanese’ script.¹² The present inscription is,

⁸ On the use of this meter in Indonesia, almost only attested in epigraphy (and, with the exception of the Kakavin Rāmāyaṇa, not in any Old Javanese poem using Indian meters), see Poerbataraka 1932:177-8.

⁹ Especially the restoration of the first syllable in [°a]yam: the hypothetical first *aṣṣara* has been completely lost with what seems to be a part of the corner of the stone broken off, but it is not at first sight evident that the stone has suffered damage here. Dominic Goodall, Alexis Sanderson and Yuko Yokochi have provided vital criticism of my various attempts along the way to the result presented here.

¹⁰ The fracture of the stone here has brought about the nearly complete loss of the consonant sign on top of which the *i* vocalization is still perfectly visible, and with it both of the immediately following *aṣṣaras*; the third clearly comprised a consonant cluster (rendering the preceding syllable metrically heavy), but I am unable to make out what it was. It seems impossible to propose with certainty a restoration for the name that was once written between *tasya* and °*nāmnah*, but it cannot have been the same (Bhānu) as in the Plumpungan/Hampran inscription.

¹¹ Damais 1952:20-1, 1955:247-8, 1968:309.

¹² The only published reproduction of this inscription that I am aware of covers only a small part of the text, but is enough to illustrate the palaeographic difference from the Balekambang inscription: see Suhadi and Soekarto 1986:23, photo 6 [printed upside-down].



Figure 3. MRS 04.0076. The two fragments of the Balekambang inscription as exhibited in 2011. Photo Arlo Griffiths.



Figure 4. Balekambang inscription.
Composition of the two EFEO
estampages n. 2040 and n. 2039.

0 10cm

however, engraved in the stiffer script that is usually called '(late) Pallawa', and is not seen in Indonesia after the Canggal inscription of 732 CE. The present inscription would seem to be older than the Canggal inscription, for the descenders of the test letters *ka* and *ra* are still extended far below the base line, where they form a loop, and the shape of *la* is also markedly more archaic here. I estimate the Balekambang inscription to date from the second half of the seventh century.

3. Block of stone (Figures 5 and 6)

A rough block of andesite stone with the inventory number 04.1135, apparently found in *kecamatan* Tuntang, *kabupaten* Semarang, and apparently not mentioned in the previous scholarly literature, seems to represent only a part of an original larger boulder. It bears an inscription of one line, which seems to compromise the beginning of a dating formula which would have been completed on the part of the stone that is not available:

śrī 685 °asuji

For lack of comparably early numeral signs,¹³ the reading of the figure for the units is uncertain, but could hardly be anything else than 5. The unexpressed era must be Śaka. This means that we are dealing with the third oldest dated inscription of Java, after the inscriptions of Canggal, Plumpungan and Dinaya (respectively of 654, 672 and 682 Śaka, that is 732, 750 and 760 CE), and the last dated stone inscription in 'Kawi' script before the Kamalagi (Kuburan Caṇḍi) inscription of 743 Śaka (821 CE) terminates a long gap of more than 50 years without dated stone inscriptions.

Although the linguistic material comprised in this text is minimal, the month-name *asuji* is enough to determine the language as non-Sanskrit, and almost certainly Old Javanese.¹⁴ This determination yields us now an inscription that is 41 years older than what was just far considered the oldest inscription in Old Javanese, viz. the Sukabumi (Harinjing A) inscription which is a later copy of a text first issued in 726 Śaka (804 CE). The first original Old Javanese text was thus far that of the Munduan inscription issued in 728 Śaka (807 CE).¹⁵

¹³ Compare Damais' 'Tableau comparatif des chiffres indonésiens à partir du VII^e siècle śaka', appended to his 1952 study. The earliest signs for 5 included in the table date respectively from 764 and 776 Śaka.

¹⁴ On the month name *asuji*, see Damais 1951:11-2: 'Il est à noter que le Sanskrit *açvina* n'est jamais employé dans les inscriptions rédigées dans une langue indonésienne. On ne rencontre que *Asuji*, forme inconnue en Inde.' If one may read °ī instead of śrī, one obtains a variant of the Old Javanese preposition (*r*)ī, and the language is determined with absolutely certainty.

¹⁵ Compare Nakada 1982:74-5; edited in Nakada 1986.



Figure 5. MRS 04.1135. Inscription of 685 Śaka. Photo Véronique Degroot.

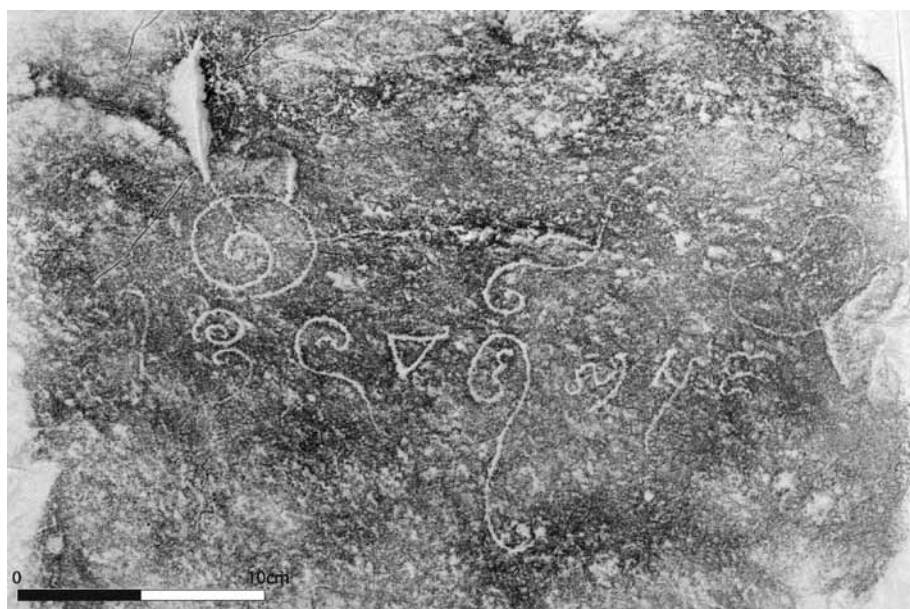


Figure 6. Inscription of 685 Śaka. EFEO estampage n. 2031.

4. *Banjaran stone inscription (Figures 7 and 8)*

The roughly hewn pillar in reddish stone bearing inventory number 04.0078 was first reported by Satari et al. (1977:8, §B3.1, and p. 30, foto 15). They observed it when it was still *in situ*, in the middle of a coffee plantation in *dukuh* Banjaran, *desa* Semampir, *kecamatan* Reban, *kabupaten* Batang, Central Java. The stone is very worn, so that not a single word can be made out with certainty, and the language cannot be determined either. The execution of the writing seems to have been sloppy to begin with. It is reminiscent of the Kepokoh (Blado) inscription, which Machi Suhadi and M.M. Soekarto (1986:3) have dated to around 700 CE.¹⁶ But after inspection of that inscription in April 2012, and on the basis of an estampage made at that time, I myself see no strong reason to date the Kepokoh inscription so early, and would be inclined to estimate a date around 800 CE for both the Banjaran and the Kepokoh inscription, if not even later.

- (1) ... ya
- (2) *sañā* x °uṃ °evuvu
- (3) *jñisūryyada* xx ryyala
- (4) *śaktibhi* xxx yaḍa
- (5) *kapuḥ* x °ijicaṃ xx
- (6) *līmañapadrakamañūraṃ*
- (7) *śi* x // 0 // *śrīvīpame*
- (9) xx habra xxx
- (10) ...
- (11) x ki ...
- (12) sva xx pu xxxx
- (13) x // x

¹⁶ The reading they have published is unreliable. The language is certainly not Sanskrit, contrary to the claim of these authors. I hope to publish it at a later occasion.



Figure 7. MRS 04.0078. Banjaran inscription. Photo Véronique Degroot.



Figure 8. Banjaran inscription. EFEO estampage n. 2034.

5. *Roughly hewn small pillar of andesite (Figures 9 and 10)*

The andesite stone with inventory number 04.0493, found near the graveyard of *dukuh* Tlasri, *desa* Giyanti, *kecamatan* Temanggung, *kabupaten* Temanggung, bears an inscription on one face, which has been flattened and provided with a frame wherein a text of nine lines has been engraved. The dimensions of the stone are roughly 66 × 41 × 38 cm. Its text has been published by Sukarto K. Atmodjo (1985:233-5), who admitted about his work (p. 231): ‘I should explain at the outset that the transcription as well as the translation below need to be studied again. [...] I hope that other specialists in the future will have more success and will be able to give a complete and final explanation.’¹⁷ His reading is without any diacritics, and does not distinguish aspirated from unaspirated consonants. While I cannot claim to be able to make any *final* statement about this inscription, it seems potentially useful to publish it again here.

- (1) // svasti śa+ka+varṣāṭīta 78[6]
- (2) °āṣāḍhamāsa pañcamī kṛṣṇapa-
- (3) kṣa paniru°an vage budhavāra
- (4) °uttarāṣāḍhanakṣatra saubhā-
- (5) gya yoga tatkāla pitāma[ha °i]
- (6) vaṃkud· manusuk sīma °i [°asa-]
- (7) p pañjaṃ vataḥ pikatan· saṃ [pa-]
- (8) (mga)t· mavanu°a °irika xx
- (9) x manukū °anak vanu°a °i xx

Variant readings per line

¹ 78[6]: 786 Sukarto (n. 35: “Angka 6 agak mirip angka 5, sehingga semula saya membaca 785”). — ⁶ *vaṃkud*: *wankud* Sukarto. The reading of the *k* and *d* are hard to make out, but Sukarto’s guess finds support in the existence of the same name in another inscription (Damais 1970: 694, see my n. 18 below). His *n* must be for *ṇ*, which Sukarto does not distinguish from *anusvāra* (*ṃ*). — ⁸ °*irika xx*: *irikanan* .. (dua huruf pecah) Sukarto. The *n* is again for *ṃ*.

Translation

Hail! Elapsed Śaka-year 786, month of Āṣāḍha, fifth of the waning fortnight, Paniruan, Wage, Wednesday, lunar mansion Uttarāṣāḍha, conjunction Saubhāgya. At that time the venerable one (*pitāmaha*)¹⁸ of Wangkud planted

¹⁷ My translation from the Indonesian: ‘terlebih dahulu perlu saya jelaskan bahwa alih-aksara (transkripsi) maupun alih bahasa (terjemahan) di bawah nanti masih perlu diteliti kembali [...] Harapan saya mudah-mudahan para ahli lainnya di kemudian hari lebih berhasil dan mampu memberikan penjelasan menyeluruh dan tuntas (*final*).’

¹⁸ On the title *pitāmaha* (attested in several relatively old inscriptions of the Dieng plateau, but not only there), see Krom 1924:214. In the Dieng inscription OJO XCIX (l. 11), we find a *guru hyai*

the boundary markers for Asam Panjang, district of Pikatan. The apanage-holding (*mavanua*) Sang Pamgat was ... Manuku, native of the village ...

Date

The last digit of the year is unreadable. J.C. Eade has informed me (email of 21/09/2011) that the only option for reading the year is with 6 in the place of the units, so 786, although even in this year the *nakṣatra* on the given date is Uttarabhadrapada, not Uttarāṣāḍha, and the *yoga* is Atigaṇḍa, not Saubhāgya. Eade explains: 'A match of 21: Uttarāṣāḍha with 4: Saubhāgya would require the month to be Bhadrapada around 10-11 waxing. And it is a mix up that has to give way to the consistency of the other data. You can, if so minded, expand what these two rogue elements are saying: Uttarāṣāḍha says that the moon is at about 266 degrees and Saubhāgya says that the sun and moon combined total about 40 degrees. This means that the sun component in the sum is about 135 degrees. And if the sun is at about Leo 15 the time of year is somewhere early in Bhadrapada, two months after Āṣāḍha; and then, if the sun-moon distance is 131 degrees, at 12 degrees/day this is about 11 waxing and not 5 waning: so the *nakṣatra/yoga* combination as given cannot be correct for the time of year.' The result of Eade's conversion of the date is Wednesday June 28, 864 CE.¹⁹

The toponym Asam Panjang

It will be noted that the text actually points to Asap Panjang, only the -p of the former element actually being preserved. No place name Asap Panjang – or any other other place name ending in °p Panjang for that matter – is known anywhere, whereas Asam Panjang is attested several times (see Damais 1970: 104). It must be noted that the attested spellings of this toponym are quite diverse, and previous scholars have not hesitated to correct other erroneous spellings (*asammañjaṃ*, *sasāpampañjang*, see Sarkar 1972:16 note 10, 25 note 17).

6. Boundary marking liṅga

The boundary marker bearing inventory number 04.0546 was published by Atmodjo (alias M.M. Soekarto) in 1994 as 'Prasasti Sang Pamgat Swang'. Titi Surti Nastiti has discovered that another pillar exists with precisely the same text on it, in the Museum Karmawibhanga at Borobudur, and will publish an article about both stones. An estampage of the inscription at Semarang, executed in two sheets, has entered the EFEO collection under numbers n. 2035 and 2036.

i vaṅkuḍ besides (as witness) a *pitamaha i hlaḍan* (see Brandes 1913:229, integrally copied in Sarkar 1972:266-7).

¹⁹ It can be independently verified by using the HIC and Pancanga programs listed at <<http://indology.info/links/soft/>>.



Figure 9. MRS 04.0493. Wangkud inscription. Photo Arlo Griffiths.



Figure 10. Wangkud inscription. EFEO estampage n. 2038.

7. Ruined stela inscription

A stela prepared in very rough composite stone, whose inscribed surface is in terribly bad condition so that the text is indecipherable, bears inventory number 04.0545. It was found in *desa* Gajihan, *kecamatan* Gunungwungkal, *kabupaten* Pati.

8. Block of stone with geometric decoration (Figures 11 and 12)

The block of stone bearing the inventory number 04.0569 is of unknown provenance. It seems as though this block may have served as pedestal for a sculpture. If such was indeed the case, the two or three lines of text that are discernible on the upper surface of the stone would have been invisible after mounting of the sculpture. The text is very hard to read, but the name of Gaṇapati, a god typically invoked at the beginning of any undertaking, is discernible and so is the word *idam*, which proves the language was Sanskrit. The third line clearly shows signs, but I do not recognize any *akṣaras* here.

- (1) °om̐ gaṇapati xx pāla bhra ...
- (2) ma x jaḥ rāja(bh/g)ṛ x m idam· l
- (3) ...

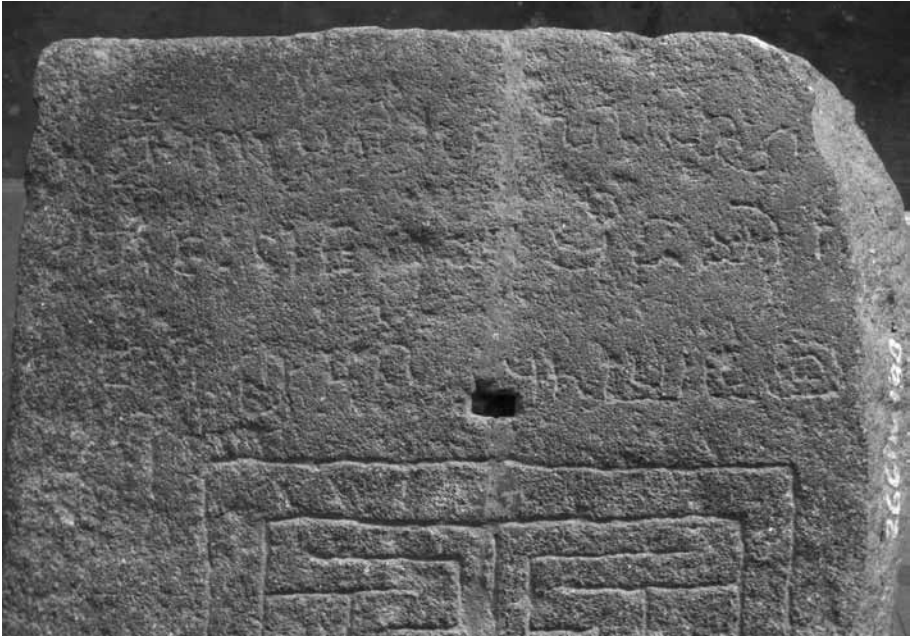


Figure 11. MRS 04.0569. Inscription on stone with geometric decoration.
Photo Arlo Griffiths.



Figure 12. Inscription on stone with geometric decoration. EFEO estampage n. 2037.

Inscriptions on bronze artefacts

The museum holds two bronze-plate inscriptions (without inventory numbers). One of them is in nearly perfect condition, and is inscribed on only one face; the other, inscribed on both faces, is severely damaged, having been broken into pieces, of which only two now remain, with loss of a substantial part (about $\frac{1}{4}$) of the text. The well-preserved inscription was published in 1982 as

the 'Luītan inscription' by Nastiti et al., who have (p. 5) given various pieces of information about the place and circumstances of its discovery together with the fragments of the plate inscribed on both faces. This second plate, which remains unpublished, consists entirely of a list of names of functionaries and gifts they received. It contains no date. Nastiti et al. rightly point out that the script on both plates is not the same, but that they must nevertheless date to the same period, for they share the names of several functionaries.

The museum further holds a magnificent bronze sculpture (inv. nr. 04.2321) of a Buddha seated with pedant legs (*bhadrāsana*) on a throne whose back is inscribed with three lines of text in Eastern Indian Siddhamātṛkā script. This sculpture and its inscription will form the object of a separate study by Nicolas Revire, Rajat Sanyal and myself.

Inscriptions on gold artefacts

The museum holds six gold artefacts with inscriptions. Provenances are recorded for several of them, which is a rare luxury in the study of Indonesian gold artefacts.

1. Gold foil (Figure 13)

A small piece of gold foil, measuring 2,7 × 2 cm and bearing inventory number 04.1011, was according to the museum's registration card recovered from *desa* Girirejo, *kecamatan* Tegak, *kabupaten* Magelang.²⁰ Its reading is as follows:

- (1) °om̐ °e °om̐ °ai
- (2) saḥ °om̐ jūjū
- (3) saḥ

This is a mantra, possibly from a Śaiva context. The final bit, on lines 2-3, looks like a variant of the Mr̥tyuñjāyamantra, *om̐ juṃṃ saḥ*, taught, among other texts, in the Netratāntra,²¹ where it is elevated to the status of an all-purpose Mantra that can be used in the worship of any deity, whether Śaiva or not, and in the Śāradātilaka.²²

²⁰ The registration card is probably in error here, for Véronique Degroot points out to me that there is no *kec.* Tegak in *kab.* Magelang.

²¹ On the nature and date of this text, see Sanderson 2005:239-70. The passage in question is Netratāntra 2.21-28ab, which is difficult to decode even with the aid of Kṣemarāja's commentary. I owe the reference to Dominic Goodall. The edition I have used is that by Shāstrī 1926-39.

²² On the nature and date of this text, see Sanderson 2007:230-3. The passage in question is Śāradātilaka 18.105-129. I owe this reference to Alexis Sanderson. The edition I have used is that by Avalon 1996. Sanderson has also provided a number of references to unpublished Sanskrit texts teaching the same mantra.



Figure 13. MRS 04.1101. Inscription on gold foil. Photo Arlo Griffiths.

2. Five signet rings (Figures 14-18)

The museum holds a small number of signet rings showing 'imitation' Nāgarī texts of the type seen quite commonly in collections of ancient Javanese rings (compare Miksic 2011:153). The imitated 'texts' we see on such rings do not constitute writing and can hence not be defined as inscriptions. The museum also holds several more or less stylized cases of the common *śrī* symbol engraved in the positive, which we shall here also leave out of consideration (compare on this type of ring, Bosch 1927; Miksic 2011:153-5). The museum further holds five rings inscribed with writing in the negative, evidently intended to be used as seals. I am preparing a comprehensive study of all known examples of this type of Old Javanese signet rings with negative writing, so will limit myself here to publishing the readings of the rings at Museum Ranggawarsita with their respective provenances recorded in the Museum, and some notes on the meanings of the inscribed texts.



Figure 14. MRS 04.1014. Inscribed signet ring. Photo Arlo Griffiths, inverted horizontally.



Figure 15. MRS 04.1015. Inscribed signet ring. Photo Arlo Griffiths, inverted horizontally.



Figure 16. MRS 04.1016. Inscribed signet ring.
Photo Arlo Griffiths, inverted horizontally.



Figure 17. MRS 04.1017. Inscribed signet ring.
Photo Arlo Griffiths, inverted horizontally.



Figure 18. MRS 04.1018. Inscribed signet ring.
Photo Arlo Griffiths, inverted horizontally.

- inv. nr. 04.1014, from *desa* Pagerdawung, *kecamatan* Gemuh, *kabupaten* Kendal: *śrahi*. I do not know any other ancient Javanese signet ring on which this sequence of *akṣaras* is engraved, and think we are dealing with a text that is a wrongly executed and incomplete version of the very commonly found signet-ring text *śrī hana*.
- inv. nr. 04.1015, from *desa* Gandrungmanis, *kecamatan* Gandrungmangu, *kabupaten* Cilacap: *dharmmān*. This could be a passive irrealis of the base *dharm(m)a*, used as verb in the meaning 'to give', in which case it would probably something like 'may it be given'; perhaps more likely, the form is a nominal derivation in *-an*, yielding the simple meaning 'gift'.
- inv. nr. 04.1016, from *desa* Pagerdawung, *kecamatan* Gemuh, *kabupaten* Kendal: *śrīlanā*. I think the engraver has here made an error caused by the fact that he was writing in the negative and that *la* is precisely the mirror image of *ha*, so that the intended text was probably *śrī hanā*. I see in this example support for my interpretation of the much more commonly found spelling *hana* as a non-overtly marked irrealis form (with suffix *-a*), so that the whole corresponds to a putative Sanskrit model *śrīr astu* 'let there be fortune' (found a such in several inscriptions).
- inv. nr. 04.1017, from *desa* Gandrungmanis, *kecamatan* Gandrungmangu, *kabupaten* Cilacap: *śrīgara*. I again hypothesize an error caused by confusion between positive/negative writing (here *bha/ga*), and tentatively propose to understand *śrībhara*, known as royal epithet in India, meaning 'endowed with fortune'.
- inv. nr. 04.1018, from *desa* Gandrungmanis, *kecamatan* Gandrungmangu, *kabupaten* Cilacap: *pralīna*. This is another text found on several other known signet rings from ancient Java. It seems to mean something like 'deceased' or 'invalid'. I do not know any convincing explanation for why this would have been in common use as text to be used on seals made of gold whose users must have been limited to the ancient Javanese elite.

Besides several small misreadings, there is a more serious problem in the Museum's registration cards for four of these items, where there is a mismatch between the photos of the rings pasted on the cards, and the readings attributed to them. The card showing 04.1015 *dharmmān* is provided with the reading 'srlata'; the card showing 04.1016 *śrīlanā* is provided with the reading 'srigara' corrected to 'srigraha'; the card showing 04.1017 *śrīgara* is provided with the reading 'pralina'; the card showing 04.1018 *pralīna* is provided with the reading 'dharmana'. I have not been able to ascertain whether it can be excluded that the mismatch is indeed only between attributed readings and the other data (including photos); in other words, there may also be a regrettable mismatch between inventory numbers, rings, and provenances. So to be prudent, for further research the most we can be sure of is the fact that

we have two provenances for these five rings, but we do not know precisely which ring came from where.²³

Conclusion

Museum Ranggawarsita in Semarang holds a valuable and diverse collection of inscribed artefacts, generally well preserved and with relatively ample documentation of provenances. It would be advisable for the competent authorities to develop this museum as a safe storage point for other inscriptions, already known or to be discovered in the future, and to act against the trend noticeable throughout the provinces of Jawa Tengah and Jawa Timur towards multiplication of decentralized collections, which goes hand in hand with a decrease in security and quality of documentation of the artefacts in question, and hence of their use to scholarship.

The most outstanding feature of the epigraphical collection is that it assembles three of the seven known inscriptions from the Batang region of Java's north coast. The importance of the north coast, and particularly the access from Batang to the ancient temple complex on the Dieng plateau, has been highlighted in the important study of Van der Meulen (1977). But this study, based mainly on (non-epigraphical) written sources, and essentially an engagement with Chinese documents, needs to be reevaluated in the light of archaeological surveys undertaken in the 1970s (Satari et al. 1977; Satari 1978), and subsequently (Baskoro Daru Tjahjono 2000), and of course in the light of the inscriptions that have since become known.

A recent article (Noerwidi 2007) builds on the mentioned archaeological surveys (while ignoring Van der Meulen) and for the first time explicitly focuses on the Batang regency as a pivotal region in the earliest history of Central Java. The inscriptions of the Batang area are elaborately referred to, but one notices how much the absence of reliable readings, or any readings at all, becomes an impetus for long discussions without any basis in fact. It is hoped that the publication of the inscriptions of Batang regency in this article may serve as a reliable basis for future research in the ancient history of Java's north coast. In this connection, the discovery of the remarkable similarity between the Balekambang inscription (from Batang regency) and that of Hampran/Plumpungan (in situ near Salatiga), which must indicate some form of cultural affinity between the two areas, is perhaps the most fascinating result presented here.

²³ According to the official website of *kabupaten* Kendal, Pagerdawung today falls under *kecamatan* Ringinarum. See <http://www.kendalkab.go.id/index.php/kecamatan/kecamatan-ringinarum/1738-ringinarum> (accessed 19 April 2012).

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