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La nature informe des systèmes politiques de l'Asie du sud-est insulaire : centres restreints, périphéries étendues

Pierre-Yves Manguin

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The amorphous nature of coastal polities in Insular Southeast Asia: Restricted centres, extended peripheries

Pierre-Yves MANGUIN*

In the past two decades, authors writing on the history and the archaeology of Southeast Asia have often dealt with the concepts of centre and periphery, within the overall structure of space during the state formation process, with emphasis put either on the construction of their landscape or on that of a functional model.[1] The following essay purports to supplement the evidence presently at hand by examining the way in which local textual sources from coastal or *pasisir* societies express the spatial relationship between the various components of Malay World polities. There are significant limits to the availability and the scope of such local (*i.e.*, mostly Malay) sources for the pre-17th century period, and to the kind of information that may be extracted from such literary or epigraphic texts. Rather than start from a pre-ordained model and try and fit into it whatever evidence there is, I will therefore remain deliberately empirical in my approach: I shall present here a medley of cases where concepts of space are either clearly signified or simply suggested in the available texts, or again where centripetal forces that epitomise processes of socio-spatial structuring are shown in operation. Whenever possible, other historical or archaeological data will be summoned to provide a context for such textual statements. The functional models submitted by earlier authors will be examined when necessary in the light of the evidence brought to light.[2]

* P.-Y. Manguin, a senior research scholar with École française d'Extrême-Orient, specialises in the history and archaeology of Southeast Asia's coastal political systems.

Confluents, Bends, and Reaches: The Harbour-city and its Riparian Periphery

Malay literary texts, known to have been put into written form after the 15th century, have in their repertoire a variety of metaphoric means to convey the concepts of a periphery befitting a harbour-based city-state, the abode of a ruler.[3] One such metaphor is repeatedly found in texts such as the renowned epic *Hikayat Hang Tuah* or the more historically minded *Sejarah Melayu*, when their narrators need to convey the concept of the polity taken in its entirety. It is then, in most cases, the two standard phrases *anak sungai* and *teluk rantau*, alone or in combination, which convey the notion of a political entity compliant towards the centre. A few examples shall suffice:[4]

> "Maka terdengarlah kepada segala **anak sungai dan teluk rantau** yang banyak itu bahawa sekarang negeri Bentan itu telah adalah raja…" [Thus it was heard in all the numerous **confluents, bends and reaches** that the polity of Bintan now had a ruler…] (HHT: 18)

> "Maka Bendahara (…) mengerahkan segala orang besar-besar yang memegang **anak sungai dan teluk rantau** itu suruh bawa rakyatnya berhimpun ke Inderapura." [The Bendahara (…) summoned all the prominent people who controlled the **confluents, bends and reaches** to require that their (own) people gather at Inderapura] (*HHT*: 445)

> "… segala rakyat dalam negeri Melaka itu sampai habis pada segala **teluk rantau dan anak sungai** jajahan yang takluk ke Melaka itu." [… all the people in this polity of Melaka, to the last one, in all the **confluents, bends and reaches** that submit to Melaka…] (*HHT*: 517)

> "… jadi tiada diambilnya negeri dengan segala **anak sungai**nya itu oleh Wolanda yang duduk di Melaka dan Jayakatra itu…" [… so the Dutch who had their seat at Melaka and Jayakarta/Batavia did not succeed in taking over the polity with all its **confluents**…] (*HHT*: 525)

> "Maka (...) dirusakkannya segala **teluk rantau** jajahan Melaka." [All the **bends and reaches** under the control of Melaka were ruined.] (*SM*: 145)

> "… pada zaman itu rakyat dalam Melaka juga sembilan laksa banyaknya, lain pula rakyat segala **teluk rantau**…" [… at that time the people in Melaka, in number ninety thousand, not included the people in the **bends and reaches**…"] (*SM*: 225)

These phrases clearly convey the notions of a centre (the *negeri* of Bintan, Melaka, or Indrapura in the examples above, the abode of the current ruler) and a periphery constituted of dependencies (*jajahan)* submitted (*yang takluk*) to this centre. The first phrase used to designate these regions is *anak sungai*, a confluent, *i.e.*, a "secondary" or "tributary stream" in a river basin. The *teluk rantau* phrase (literally, the "bends and reaches" of a stream) illustrates very much the same geographical notion.[5] When used together, the redundancy of these two phrases appears to reinforce the metaphor for the polity's extension. Together or alone, they stand for the various settlements strewn along the rivers, creeks, and inlets that constitute the river basins under the control of the centre of power.

One of the models submitted by archaeologists to explain the functioning of Malay World polities is the hierarchic upstream-downstream organisation involving a primary focal centre downstream from one major river, and a series of upstream secondary (and tertiary, etc.) centres along the same major river basin. This model has been clearly exposed and adapted to the Southeast Asian scene by Bennet Bronson in his 1977 trend-setting article. It is difficult not to appreciate that the above evidence from Malay literary texts fits in reasonably well at first sight into such a scheme, then constructed "on abstract, *a priori* considerations."[6]

Archaeological research carried out since the 1980's along the Musi and Batang Hari river basins (South-Sumatra and Jambi provinces), from the coast to the upper navigable stretches of the two major rivers, has now brought to light enough evidence that is in agreement with the upstream-downstream model.[7] With a political centre resolutely situated at Palembang at foundation times in the late 7th century and again (possibly after a still undefined gap) between the 9th and the 11th century, Sriwijaya clearly established firm relations with the upstream river system: Temples were built over most tributary streams of the main Musi River, usually at a confluence of two rivers, some of them in the early phase of the history of the polity. No settlements attached to these temples have so far been recognised, far less investigated, by archaeologists: This makes it difficult to speculate on the true political position of these sites within a riverine network of polities. The significant size of these brick temples, though, implies that a large workforce was available to build them and that rituals conducted in them must have been opulent, in turn implying that political power over a settlement was present. Wealth deriving from the exploitation of the resources of Sumatra's hinterland (mainly gold and resins) and from riverine trade no doubt formed the basis of this power.

Still earlier in time, some of the coastal polities that emerged in the late first millennium BC on the west coast of the Malayan Peninsula appear to have entered into a relationship with upstream populations engaged in gold mining, to complement their own command of downstream tin deposits and feed these two metals into Indian Ocean and probably also regional trade networks.[8]

These river basin systems, when considered in isolation from neighbouring systems, already required that a complex network be constructed between the central place downstream and the multiple secondary centres upstream. The main harbour-city found itself in a position to control the flow of merchandise entering or being exported from the whole river basin; when occupying such a strategic site, it therefore acquired a geographically dominant, key position. This meant that it had to enter into a relationship with upstream societies that had access to the hinterland's productions. One must include among such upstream societies those that had thrived and benefited from overseas contacts in areas far removed from the sea before a central place was established downstream (the Pasemah, Ulu Musi, and Kerinci upper valleys were settled during the late prehistory and the proto-historical period by complex societies that had access to such foreign goods as Dông-son bronzes and Indian Ocean beads). These upstream societies would have become dependent on the harbour-city for the acquisition of marine and overseas prestige productions that they had grown used to in earlier times. It is impossible, at this early stage of archaeological research in the upstream sites of Sumatra, to ascertain which mode of relationship was favoured by the Sriwijaya rulers at Palembang or later at Jambi. It probably varied depending upon the period considered and the societies involved. Forceful means may have been used to implement the central polity's dominant position, if we accept that the discourse on military operations in the 7th-century inscriptions was also directed against such upstream polities, which is far from established. However, the general content of the central inscription at Sebokingking and its peripheral *maṇḍala* inscriptions is more reminiscent of the implementation of some kind of alliance or bond that would have been renewed in oath-taking rituals comparable to those said to have been implemented in much later times between the sultans at Palembang and neighbouring societies.[9] The hierarchy or ranking in such discrete river-basin systems would have then been mainly felt in terms of their geographical position. All the societies in the system would have been largely dependent on each other for the system to work, and the central place downstream would not have been in a position to compel the remote upstream polities to enter into such relationships by military force alone (these would probably have turned away from the Musi or Batang Hari system and gained access to the Indian Ocean shores of the present Bengkulu province).

The general credo among historians of the pre-European and European periods of the history of the city-state of Melaka, however, does not conform to the upstream-downstream model: The city is said by most of them to have been only an entrepôt, without a hinterland; it produced no rice at all and thus had to import, among others, most of the food and provisions needed to feed its large population. This general agreement is based on similar assumptions of early 16th-century Portuguese authors, who were clearly unaware of the true extension of Melaka's political and economic power. Possibly due to the fact that the small Melaka river could not possibly give access to a productive hinterland, and that the territory surrounding the city-state is always described as uncultivated in contemporary sources, this general assumption has rarely been questioned. Archaeologists, too, have given credence to this "city without a hinterland" model and argued for its validity for the whole area, and the assumed condition of Melaka was then also an argument called upon.[10]

One article that objects to this creed is that by Anderson and Vorster: Basing themselves on the reading anew of contemporary historical sources, these authors propose to see Melaka's hinterland as a regional trade sphere extending a few hundred miles around its centre. In the discussion that followed the presentation of their paper, it was proposed that this "hinterland" – which was neither "behind" nor necessarily contiguous to the port-city – should rather be described as an "umland" that lay "beyond the entrepôt" and was irrigated by Melaka's network of "waterways," both riverine and maritime. These waterways would have been the places from which products of the sea, the forest, and the mine would have been extracted, and rice produced to feed the large population of the central place.[11]

In the light of the textual evidence given above, the various river basins (the *anak sungai dan teluk rantau*) that constituted this "umland" must have enclosed other polities that had then entered into various degrees of reciprocal alliance or dyadic bond (kinship, economic, etc.) with the rulers at Melaka: These would have included, at the turn of the 16th century, not only a number of places on the Malayan Peninsula, but also port cities such as Pasai, Pedir, Siak, and Inderagiri on Sumatra, all of them polities large or small, some of them earlier central places on their own. When seen from the point of view of the then thriving central place of Melaka, they are said to be "in dependence" upon the city-state, to which they "submit" (*jajahan Melaka* or *jajahan yang takluk ke Melaka*). Sriwijaya similarly kept in its "submission," over time, a variety of polities away from its own original Musi river basin, among which the Jambi/Melayu polity, with its own Batang Hari river basin, looms large (the Sanskrit term *bhakti* is used in the Old-Malay inscriptions for outlying polities: In this context, it conveys the same idea of "submission," or "paying homage to").[12]

This is where Bronson's model needs to be extended to include this multi-centred landscape that does not fit in well with a rudimentary hierarchic upstream-downstream scheme constructed within a single river-basin system. In his original model, neighbouring river basins were seen as discrete systems competing for a share in the same network or market. In fact, these neighbouring, discrete systems could also be part and parcel of the encompassing *anak sungai dan teluk rantau* polity, at least as it was viewed from its foremost city-state. They would have exported their own productions to this central place on the primary river basin, which was then alone in a position to sell the whole production of this regional network to merchants functioning within larger-scale (or longer-distance) trade networks (see Fig. 1).

The geo-political magnitude of the polity referred to is never indicated in geographical terms in the standard discourse. For the authors or compilers of these texts, the message to convey is only that representatives and manpower are summoned from the periphery and are meant to gather at the centre, around the ruler. This central place, therefore, must have taken precedence over the others. It is clear indeed from the textual evidence brought to light that, at any one time within one single sphere of economic activity (*i.e.*, a multi-centred coastal polity, with one central place surrounded by its "umland"/periphery), there was always one such place: This is where the ruler (*raja*), from whom the above statements describing centripetal movements emanated, had his abode, which had its own people (*rakyat*); it functioned as the symbolic centre of the polity's space. To achieve this *primus inter pares* status, the ruler must have been imparted with some measure of legitimacy and/or endowed with enough charisma (derived from "prowess," "divine radiance," "soul-stuff," or *śakti*)[13] to build up local networks of alliance and exchange and assume authority over a potential harbour-centred polity; then, and then only, could he have lured, retained, and regulated overseas exchange at his port to provide foreign income, and mobilise, manipulate, and redistribute the subsequent wealth as a political weapon, to extend his authority

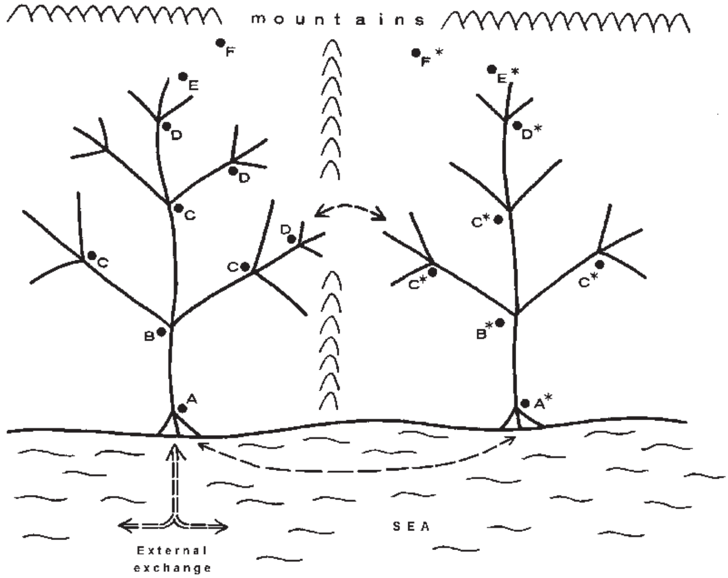

Figure 1. Multi-centred upstream-downstream model (adapted from Bronson 1977).

and attract a still larger clientele.[14] The differentiation or ranking in the system was therefore primarily political: The power to transmute a port-city – geographically interchangeable with most other neighbouring ports – into *the* central place of the time, rested in the ruler's hands alone.

The riparian metaphor for the coastal polity discussed above, as expressed in classical Malay literature, is built upon geographical representations. The landscape thus depicted epitomises the spatial integration of the polity. However, it does in no way convey the notion of a topographically well defined territory. The polity is defined primarily by a centre (the *negeri Melaka* or the *kadātuan Śrīwijaya*), and by its relationship with a periphery (the *anak sungai dan teluk rantau*). The lack of a territorial perception of the polity and the pivotal position of the ruler are even more apparent in a second set of motifs selected from the same literary genres.

Fleets as Representations of the State: Centres on the Move

References to boats and fleets of vessels are often found in a multiplicity of textual contexts in insular Southeast Asia. I have studied elsewhere in greater detail the metaphorical role assigned to the boat and fleet in various societies of insular Southeast Asia: As a rule, the boat, or gathering of boats, has been imparted a symbolic potential signifying and validating social order at different levels, from the household up to the whole social group.[15]

One is thus struck by the recurrence in written or oral literature of long, often florid, lists of boat names. Such lists appear in early inscriptions, such as the 923

AD Old-Balinese charter of Sembiran, and they are found again in later Javanese texts such as the *Dewa Ruci*.[16] They are sometimes mentioned in a rather matter-of-fact way (particularly in inscriptions dealing with taxes), but more often than not they accompany narratives of momentous events in the history of a given polity. These are specific occasions, such as foundation times, wars, marriages or deaths of rulers and prominent people, when rites of passage are normally staged.

Such occasions clearly call for special care by the authors of the texts where they are recalled. This is when remarkable descriptions of "fleets of state" are to be found in Malay literature. In the *Sejarah Melayu*, a historic narrative recalling the story of the Melaka Sultanate, the multiple episodes depicting crises between polities strewn along the Straits area or the Javanese *pasisir* often convey a similar, almost graphical, image: After the decision is taken to attack a rival polity, or only to show off the strength of the polity, every *orangkaya*, every *raja* ruling over peripheral polities "submissive" to the central city-state calls upon his own followers and asks each one of them to ready his own ship(s) and manpower. A large fleet is thus assembled in a short time, and the chronicle then systematically indulges in a colourful description of the multitude of vessels assembling around the ruler. The whole fleet and its crew thus provide the metaphor for the global, ordered political system. One such example taken from the *Sejarah Melayu* clearly reveals the ubiquitous symbols of rank and hierarchy, as well as the image of the wholeness of the social group in motion around its centre. The occasion is that of the momentous foundation of Singapura by Sri Tri Buana:

> So vast was the fleet that there seemed to be no counting of it; the masts of the ships were like a forest of trees, their pennons and streamers were like driving clouds, and the state umbrellas of the Rajas like cirrus. So many were the craft that accompanied Seri Teri Buana that the sea seemed to be nothing but ships. (...) And the whole fleet – royal *lancang pelang* for royal slumber, court *jong*, *bidar* that were paddled, *jong* with the royal kitchens, *teruntum* for fishing with the *jala* net, *terentang* for bathing [?] – put out to sea with a countless host of escorting vessels.[17]

One other episode in the *Sejarah Melayu* recalls how the Sultan of Aru seeked the hand of Raja Puteh, the beautiful daughter of the Sultan of Melaka exiled at Bintan. The latter only accepted him as a suitor under the menace of violence and war. The Malay author of the chronicle remarks that the war chiefs from Aru, who had not earlier accompanied their Sultan to Bintan,

> came continuously from Aru to join their Sultan [in Bintan]. Every day brought a ship or two. And they all gathered together (*berkampung*), in number a hundred.[18]

The usage in this passage as in others, of the term *berkampung* to describe the gathering of the fleets around the Sultan is significant: The action associated with *kampung* is that of gathering around a centre (hence only the secondary meaning of a "village," synonymous of *desa*). In an episode of the *Sejarah Melayu,* in an emergency situation, it is stated that after the ruler summoned "all the people from the *teluk rantau* downstream to Melaka, all converged (*berkampung*) there."[19] This probably indicates the etymology of the very common term *kampung* (now meaning a village) and thus also sheds an interesting side-light on spatial organisation in the Malay World.

In the *Kidung Sunda* (a Sundanese text, written in Javanese, and dating from the 16th century), the episode of the princess taken to East Java to marry the King of Majapahit is the occasion for a similar detailed description of the fleet of two hundred large ships and two thousand smaller ones, that metaphorically carried "to the last man" the people of Sunda, the King and the Queen, all the princes, ministers, and their followers, the whole army with arms, buffaloes, horses and elephants, gamelans sounding, and banners in the wind.[20]

This is possibly the time to recall that the Chinese, Chao Jukua, wrote in 1225 about the king of Sriwijaya:

> They are skilled at fighting on land and water. When they are about to make war on another state they assemble and send forth such a force as the occasion demands. They (then) appoint chiefs and leaders, and all provide their own military equipment and the necessary provisions.[21]

This statement recalls the gathering of vessels to constitute a fleet around the central ruler and other foreign descriptions recording such preparations of war fleets: The ruler of the central place had no fleet or army of his own and the onus of providing the ruler with war vessels was traditionally borne by his clientele of *orangkaya* and outlying dependent *rajas*. In the 17th-century *Bustanu's-Salatin*, the king of Aceh, wanting to depart on a pilgrimage to Pasai, was still said to have to wait for the Acehnese people to complete the harvest, as ships could not be made ready sooner.[22] This provides an excellent example of the mutual dependence between the ruler of the central place and the *anak sungai dan teluk rantau* social groups conventionally said to be under his control.

It may not be too far fetched, considering the previous 13th-century reference to the fleet of Sriwijaya, to move back another six centuries in time and compare all these texts with a lone statement found in the skimpy corpus of Sriwijayan Old-Malay inscriptions. O.W. Wolters, to provide an example of the local participation of marine populations in the workforce of the polity, cited the gathering of the fleet and land forces of Sriwijaya recorded in the Kedukan Bukit inscription of 682 AD.[23] The care taken, in one of the very few inscriptions left for posterity by the rulers of Sriwijaya, in recording the details of this summoning of the fleet around the ruler may be an indication that the message conveyed here was of the same kind as that intended in the statements so common in later Malay texts.

The image of a powerful state is thus conveyed by describing the periphery converging towards the centre of power: When such potentially critical transformations in the polity occur, a centripetal movement has to be initiated. The centripetal forces that allow for the cohesion of the polity are displayed at work, almost literally, on a stage. It is this theatrical performance, as much as the more tangible military might, that shall eventually bring victory or success and therefore, after the crisis is resolved, re-ascertain the political and spatial order, with the ruler clearly placed at its centre. This centre is perceived in relation to itself, not to particular spatial landmarks: If it moves in space, the periphery keeps converging towards it, as if it were a powerful magnet.

The sequence of multiple abodes of the line of Malay rulers, as perceived in texts composed at Melaka, provides once more a good example of such a mobility. The foundation of Singapura by Sri Tri Buana, coming in turn from Palembang/Andelas (*i.e.*, from the waning Sriwijaya), is perceived as an unsuccessful episode in a quest for a fitting place for a new polity.[24] The site of Melaka ends up being selected, but only until it is abandoned to the Portuguese, after which a brief episode at Bintan follows, before a new and more stable settlement is secured at Johor. During all these episodes – from foundation times at Andelas to the more recent episodes included in these texts – the rulers who are the main protagonists of the literary text remain the centre against all odds, and constantly re-ascertain their power by summoning the periphery to gather around them, wherever they stand surrounded by the symbols of political power that validate their claim to sovereignty.[25] As the Malays themselves see their history, the centre kept moving within the overall space over which it exercised some form of control, with little regard for the place where the ruler actually stayed and, undoubtedly, with no concern for geographically defined territorial boundaries.[26]

Also of relevance here is the uniqueness within the Austronesian world of the Malay (and Javanese) directional system: It is based on the concept of an ego-centred orientation system with fixed cardinal points, as opposed to one based on topography or the celestial sphere.[27] On this basis, H.M.J. Maier remarked that, for the Malays, space is always perceived in relation to their ruler's or their own compound, a further confirmation of the representation of space that we have inferred from the textual statements quoted above.[28]

Sriwijaya: Restricted Centre, Extended Peripheries

The Sumatra-based polity of Sriwijaya is exemplary in many different ways of the kinds of problems that should be raised when discussing notions of centres, peripheries, and of the structure of space in the Malay World. The long-lived polity (7th-13th centuries AD) is the first large-scale maritime state of insular Southeast Asia. It produced relatively few inscriptions and practically all of them come from the very first phase of the foundation of the new polity. These inscriptions, however, were the first ever to be written in a vernacular language of insular Southeast Asia, *i.e.*, Old-Malay (albeit with a strong Sanskrit lexical input) and are therefore presumed to convey a largely localised (if not local) view of the situation.

A set of these inscriptions happens to provide us with an almost graphic description of the structure of the early polity. Based on these texts, early historical interpretations stated that Sriwijayan power encompassed a vast "kingdom," or even an "empire."[29] The Europeo-centric concepts that were attached to such terms (territory and frontiers, and the political domination attached to these) were misleading. A new reading of the small corpus of Old-Malay inscriptions produced by this polity, of Chinese sources reporting on the trading state, and of the data produced by recent excavations in Palembang allows for a scaled-down image of its centre to be reconstructed.[30]

After re-examining the 7th-century central Sebokingking inscription and the copies of it that were placed at the periphery, Herman Kulke concluded that "an impressive patrimonial staff at the centre [...] should not be equated with the existence of a far-fledged empire." The Malay (not Sanskrit) term *kadātuan* used in Sriwijayan inscriptions (usually in the phrase *kadātuan Śrīwijaya*) is now understood as an equivalent of modern Javanese *keraton*, thus literally referring only to the "place of the *datu*," *i.e.*, the politically weighty, but spatially limited symbolic centre of the polity. Similarly, the term *wanuā* (also from the Austronesian stock) in the same inscriptions is now read as referring to the urban environment of the *kadātuan*, rather than to a "kingdom" or even an "empire" (as in Cœdès or de Casparis). This urban concentration would only have included, apart from the *kadātuan* itself, religious buildings and parks (both alluded to in the inscriptions), markets and the semi-rural or riparian villages (the various *kampung* of more recent cities). This first circle, or core area, is depicted in these inscriptions as surrounded by another circle referred to as *samaryyāda*, a Sanskrit term conveying the notion of vicinity. Within this circle, one finds localities (*desa*, a term of Sanskrit origin) ruled by local leaders ("trusted with the charge of a *datu*" by the now more powerful *datu* at the centre). Archaeological research in South-Sumatra – and the difficulties inherent to the identification of 7th-century sites – has not yet brought to light enough data to indicate with any precision which and where exactly were the polities incorporated into this neighbourhood of the earlier concentric *wanuā* and *samaryyāda*.

Still in concentric fashion, we then find the various *maṇḍala*, under their respective *datu*, described as powerful local magnates ruling over their own *wanuā*, but uneasily recognising the authority of a *primus inter pares*, the ruler of Sriwijaya. These outlying *maṇḍala* formed the outer reaches of the polity of Sriwijaya (referred to as *bhūmi Śrīwijaya*).

This representation of space can be schematically depicted in the following diagram (see Fig. 2). Five almost identical copies of the central inscription of Sebokingking – which Kulke calls the "*maṇḍala* inscriptions" – happen to have been found in Palembang proper (1), on a tributary of the Batang Hari upriver from Jambi (1), at Kota Kapur in Bangka (1), and in South Lampung (2). These inscriptions, therefore, appear to indicate the spatial limits of one outer circle of largely autonomous *maṇḍala*.

The only such "*maṇḍala* polity" to have been clearly identified by archaeologists in the field is that of Kota Kapur, on the western coast of the island of Bangka, facing the Musi River delta across the Straits of Bangka. Research carried out on the site in 1994 and 1996 makes it clear that this polity pre-existed the foundation of Sriwijaya. It was a relatively small coastal settlement, but it appears to have been part of a large-scale Vaisnavite trade network reaching as far as West Java, the Malay Peninsula, and Cambodia. The main sanctuary there and the Vaisnavite statues predate the foundation of Sriwijaya by at least a few decades; it was built, however, above an earlier metal-working site dating from the 5th century AD. The

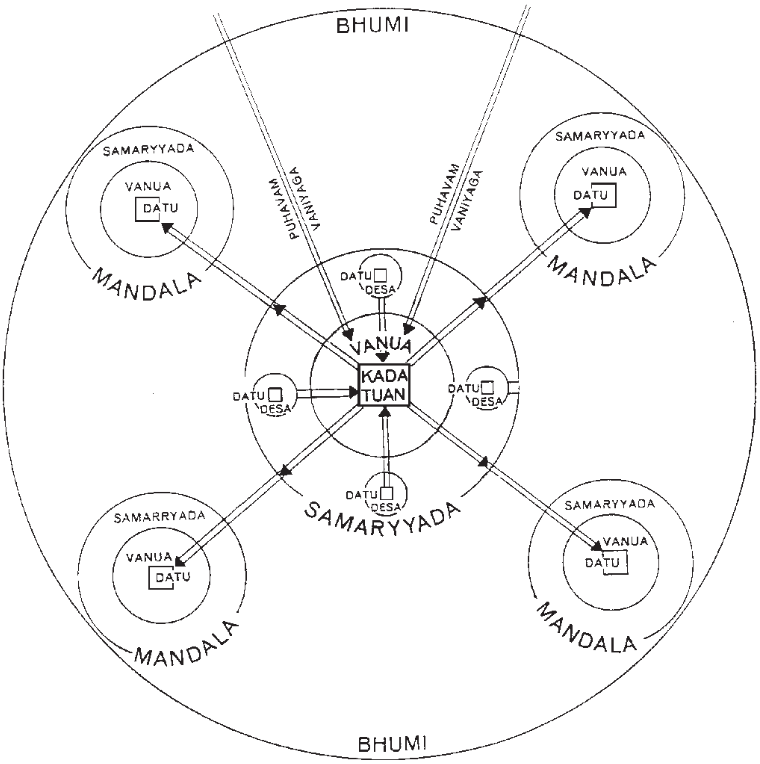

Figure 2. The structure of the Sriwijayan polity, as represented in 7th-century AD Malay inscriptions (from Kulke 1993: 172, after simplification).

Kota Kapur inscription, therefore, seems to have been set up on the site in 686 AD by the polity newly established at Palembang, precisely to signify the incorporation of this formerly autonomous polity into the *bhūmi* of Sriwijaya.[31]

Despite the fact that such archaeological discoveries appear to provide a tangible landscape for the geometrical construction obtained in the above *maṇḍala* diagram – in other words, a measure of referentiality for the textual statements produced – this should not be taken entirely at face value. The inscriptions do not purport to describe the polity's territory in geographical terms. As already noted by Nicole Biros, Kulke was somehow carried away by his model and the fact that the inscription texts proceed from the centre towards the periphery.[32] In the light of the preceding examples taken from later Malay literature, it appears that the fundamental statement in this group of *maṇḍala* inscriptions is about a centre and its peripheries perceived as a set of complex political relations with the political power at the apex, *i.e.*, the ruler in his *kadātuan*.

Losing control of one of these outposts would have meant either letting it pass under the control of another central place or, worse, losing the *primus inter pares* position to one of these, since they would have been structurally almost identical to the original centre. The former centre would have remained as a *kadātuan*, within a multi-centred global entity that could still be called the *bhūmi* of Sriwijaya; but it would no longer be permitted to claim all of the constituent elements of Sriwijaya's authority. In northern Sumatra, Samudra-Pasai provides another good example of such political shifts: The city-state lost its central status, acquired with the coming of Islam in the 13th century, to the emerging Melaka during the 15th century, only to pass forcibly under Aceh's control in the 16th century. This is also what appears to have happened in Sriwijaya in the last quarter of the 11th century, when the centre of power was moved further north to Jambi and the Batang Hari river basin.[33] The Chinese records suggests that the Chinese were aware of the change but continued referring to the polity as Sriwijaya (*San fo qi*). The archaeological record shows that the volume of trade declined sharply in Palembang during and after the 11th century, and increased conversely in the Batang Hari sites; the old city-state on the Musi nevertheless retained a fair share of economic activity. In other terms, the centre of power of the polity perceived by the outside world as "Sriwijaya" switched harbour-cities, moving from Palembang on the Musi to a presently unknown site on the Batang Hari – archaeological research there has remained unsystematic, and surveys and a few spot excavations during the past decade have revealed a number of important sites from the coastline all the way up to present-day Jambi.[34]

This particular disposition of Malay World political systems may well be at the origin of one distinctive urban feature of their pre-modern cities. One is struck by the fact that these city-states – some of them known to have been large urban centres – have not left a strong imprint on their respective environments. Indeed, these cities are well known to have left few traces of their pre-16th-century urban features on the ground for study by archaeologists (except for traces of economic activities such as sherds of trade ceramics). The perishable wooden structures that formed most of the urban sites of insular Southeast Asia and their degradation by nature and men (many earlier sites are still occupied) no doubt account for part of the difficulties encountered by archaeologists when tracing back such sites.[35] However, I believe that there is more to it. Rulers at Palembang in Sriwijayan or early Sultanate times, at Melaka, at Aceh, or at other sister cities have, as a rule, not deliberately acted in such a way as to alter the original landscape in which they settled. They rather seem to have adapted their urban structures and environments to the pre-existing geographic features of the place that they chose as their abodes. Nowhere in coastal cities of the Malay World does one witness the unrelenting, large-scale transformation of the landscape meant to conform it to religious cosmogony, which is so characteristic of an inland city such as Angkor.[36] Now, although a specific locale, given favourable geographical or political conditions, may function for a long period of time as the centre of a sphere of political and economic activity, it may easily be abandoned by its rulers should these conditions change (the urban centre may go on functioning, albeit diminished, as a simple hub of economic activity). One is therefore entitled to offer as a hypothesis that there is a correlation between this excessive mobility of the urban centres of power and this refusal to durably modify the environment: Physical transformation of the landscape is kept to a minimum, the construction of urban landmarks in durable materials remains scarce, even though the site may have been used for an extended period of time.[37]

Two more concentric circles need be considered in order to provide a somewhat complete structural model of the Sriwijayan polity (see Fig. 3).

These are not apparent in local textual sources. But we know, chiefly from contemporary foreign sources (Chinese, Indian, and Arabic) that the economic activities of Sriwijaya reached much further than just the regional structure described above. Sriwijaya's principal trade networks extended as far as China in the East and India and the Persian Gulf in the West, and probably further west to the East African coast and Madagascar. The archaeological record is particularly clear when it comes to wares imported from China, such as ceramics: Thanks to their excellent preservation, ceramics constitute the chief marker of post-8th-century Southeast Asian sites. Other artefacts, such as Middle Eastern ceramics or Indian glass, in far lesser quantities, have also been found in sites. Perishable goods such as textiles, pepper, or resins have not been well preserved, which makes it exceedingly difficult to identify sites from outside Southeast Asia that traded with the region. However, there is more than just contemporary foreign testimonies or artefacts found in archaeological sites to substantiate the foreign relations of the Sriwijayan polity.

One may also bring into this picture the consecration of three temples on behalf of the Malay rulers: in Bengal (at the great Pala Buddhist centre of Nalanda, in the 9th century), in Canton (a Taoist temple, 10th century), and in Coromandel (at the Cola city of Negapatnam, twice in the early 11th century, under two successive Cola kings).[38] The bilateral religious dimension of long-distance economic exchange is further emphasised by an event recorded in Chinese chronicles for the year 1003: Two ambassadors of the court of Sriwijaya told the Chinese that a Buddhist temple had been erected in their country, where people prayed for the long life of the Chinese emperor; in return, two bells were cast for them to bring back to the temple and an edict was issued to give the temple the name of "Ten thousand years of receiving from Heaven."[39] Still in the early 11th century, decidedly a phase of vigorous religious activity and international ritual exchange, an iconographic Nepalese manuscript mentions the fame in the Buddhist world of a statue of Lokanatha that was revered in the "city of Sriwijaya."[40] Sriwijaya, as early as the 7th century, had become an important centre for Mahayana Buddhist teaching – the polity shared this role in the archipelago with the Javanese state known as *Heling* (*Ho-ling*) in Chinese sources.[41] The overseas foundations and the other religious exchange, as evidenced in Chinese, Indian, and Nepalese sources, affirm the importance of religion to consolidate economic ties. They therefore may be considered as indicators of the outer limits of one further sphere of interaction between Sriwijaya and the outer world. This tangible dimension of Sriwijaya's religious outreach is unique in the pre-modern Southeast Asian world. To the best of my knowledge, no other contemporary polity of the region can be claimed to have been at the centre of such an extended web.

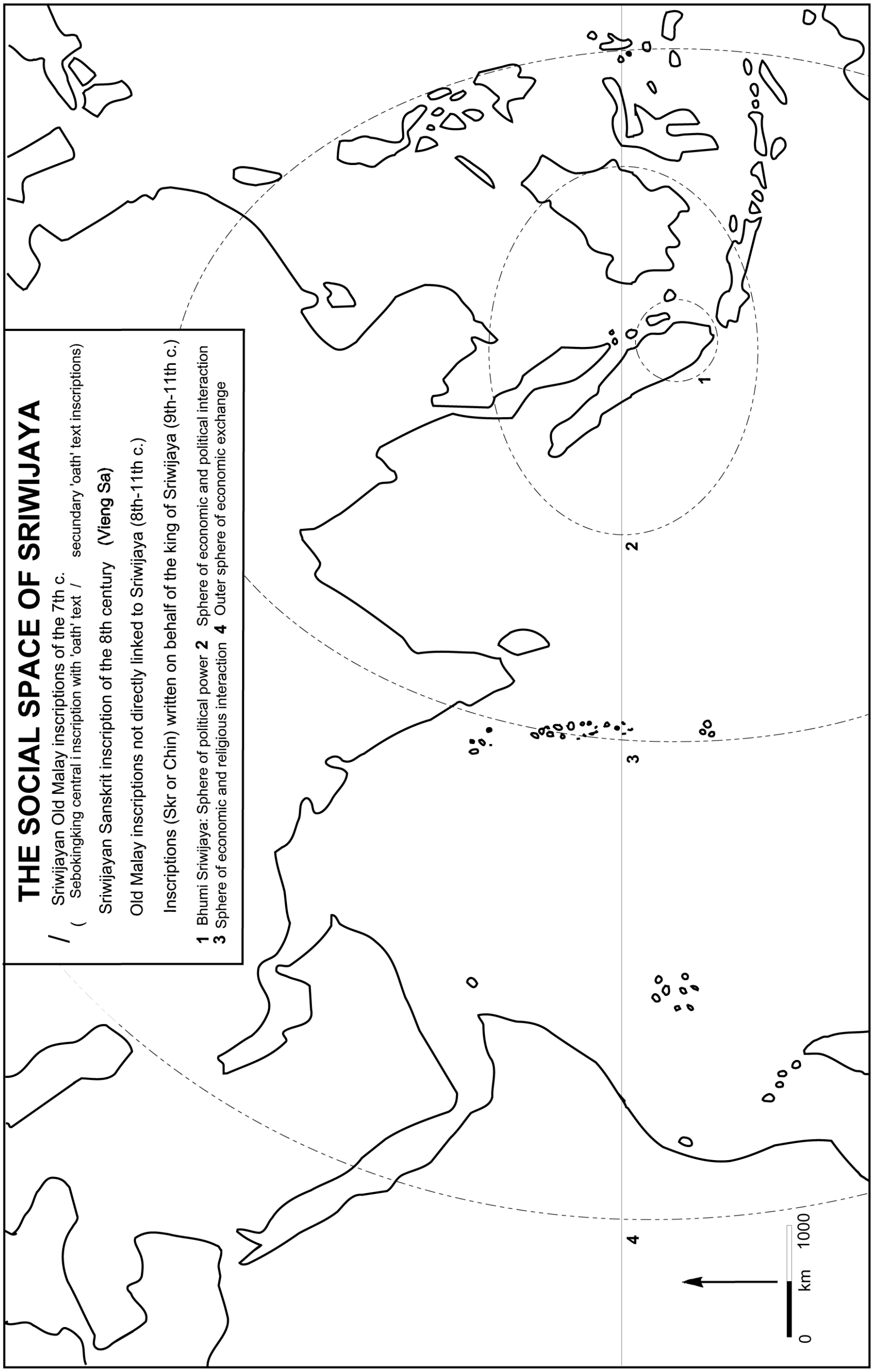

Figure 3. The social space of Sriwijaya.

The outermost reach of Sriwijaya's spheres of interaction with the outside world, in the western half of the Indian Ocean, is the domain of merchants and seamen alone (see Fig. 3; the case of Madagascar stands apart, as will be seen below). Numerous sources from Western India and the Middle East mention Sriwijaya and the visits that foreign merchants and travellers paid to its rich ports.[42] Visits by Malay merchants and seamen abroad are less easy to document but are usually indirectly inferred from the same set of Asian sources.[43]

At this point, one gets an overall view of the extent of Sriwijaya's varying degree of interaction with the other coastal societies of Asia, from the geographically most restricted space of the *kadātuan* at Palembang, the centre of political power, to an outer circle encompassing much of Asia, east and west of the Malay polity. In each of these concentric circles, relationships were established with outside systems, taken at different levels: regional or long-distance political and economic networks, world economies, world religions, too, as we have seen. The sum of all these specific spaces constitutes the global social space of the polity of Sriwijaya.[44] The rapid survey above has highlighted the intimate relationship between the economy and other specific social spaces: As suggested by Georges Condominas, the economy (here in the form of regional and long-distance trade) in fact represents, for a polity such as Sriwijaya that has reached state status, the principal system of relationship and the best instrument to broaden its social space and give it a true political dimension.[45]

The case for Madagascar and the Austronesian contribution to its civilisation is well proven when assessing the end result of the process, but remains largely enigmatic when the modalities of this process are considered: The origins and identity of actors behind this strong input, their motivations, the routes followed across the Indian Ocean, and the dating of the process remain very much a matter of debate. This is of course not the place to discuss such broad and still difficult questions. However, in the light of the above evidence, a point could be made for trade as the main motivation of the original Austronesian-speaking settlers of Madagascar, so far off the main networks of the Old World. Indeed, we now know that their languages, though they belonged to the (non-Malayic) Barito family, were strongly influenced by Malay-speaking groups. On a linguistic basis, K.A. Adelaar made a convincing case for the role of Sriwijaya in this process.[46] It is too early, though, to define with any precision the range of interactions between these two southern extremes of the Indian Ocean.

This raises the question of the early use of Malay as an indicator of the reach of Sriwijaya's social space. Admittedly, there is very little evidence for this in epigraphy. However, the recent discovery of a 10th-century-AD Old-Malay inscription in Laguna de Bay, south of Manila, proves that the linguistic space of the Sumatra-centred Malays extended as far as trading centres in the northern Philippines.[47]

Trade as a Structuring Process

An oft-repeated stereotype is that of the role of trade in the process of state formation in insular Southeast Asia. The decisive growth of commercial activity in the region during the economic boom that took place in the Old World in the 16th and early 17th centuries has been authoritatively described by Anthony Reid.[48] It is now clear that this resulted in the multiplication and overall growth of harbour-centred city-states during that period. For an earlier period, O.W. Wolters had already demonstrated that the growth of 4th- to 7th-century polities in the region of the Straits of Melaka was a similar response to opportunities within the global Indian Ocean trade network: In Sumatra, it was the ability to procure forest products for export to China that allowed pre-Sriwijayan polities to grow; for coastal polities, this no doubt meant establishing some kind of economic relationship with upstream peoples. It is this economic boom that later resulted in a consolidation of political and economic power into the Sriwijayan polity.[49]

Recent archaeological research has permitted the rewriting of the proto-history of western insular Southeast Asia very much along the same outline: A reassessment of earlier finds and some recent archaeological research on early sites along the main trade routes of maritime Southeast Asia confirm that incipient states in southern Thailand, along the western coast of the Malayan Peninsula, the eastern coast of Southern Sumatra, and the northern coasts of Java and Bali had established trading links with both India and Vietnam as early as the last few centuries BC. As noted above, some coastal polities of the Malayan Peninsula appear to have developed from their command over a relationship with upstream populations engaged in gold mining and from their own direct command of tin mining and of the export of these two metals to the Indian Ocean. These early trade networks – some involving long-distance exchange patterns – were thus clearly forged in Southeast Asia before Indian influences significantly transformed the religious scene and the state formation process around the third century AD at the earliest.[50]

There are no local written sources ascribed to this early stage of state formation that could provide us, for later times, with statements similar to those quoted above. However, a close look at one foundation myth of harbour-polities that appears in the opening chapters of the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and *Sejarah Melayu* (to quote only the earlier Malay texts), and that are pervasive in many a folktale told along the coasts of insular Southeast Asia, shows the very special relationship that these states sustained and encouraged between overseas trade and political power.[51] In such texts, we come across a series of motifs that are the constitutive parts of the myth: A local character with exceptional powers presides over a favourable spot; then comes an overseas ship fully laden with rich merchandise (usually under the captainship of shipmaster Dampu Awang, alias Sampo); the ship gets stranded and a competition takes place between the local ruler and the merchant, the stake of which is the ship cargo; the local character wins over the riches in the ship and thus acquires considerable wealth, after which he rules over his now prosperous country. This myth expressed and explained – in symbolic or metaphoric terms – concepts that were critical to all harbour-based polities, *i.e.*, the economic mechanism leading to the foundation of a state: The statement appears to be about overseas merchants and trade and the fact that these are a prerequisite of the kind of prosperity considered befitting a successful polity. In the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, for example, it is said that the founder of the dynasty, shortly after descending from heaven to Bukit Seguntang in Andelas/Palembang, became widely known as a king bestowed with many qualities, among which loomed large the fact that "he was very fond of all merchants;" Bukit Seguntang/Palembang is later said to have become a large country: "Many merchants came and went to trade there. And all the people from countries without a *raja* congregated there."[52]

The existence of such trade-oriented political myths underscores the fact that commerce played a prominent role in the early formative stages of coastal, harbour-centred political systems. The shipmasters and merchants who carry overseas trade in fact also figure prominently (under the names of *puhawang* and *wāṇyaga*) in inscriptions of both Sriwijaya and Java, where they often appear as power-brokers.[53] Trade is thus seen as a prerequisite for a centre of political power to become a full-fledged state: It can be said to play a structuring role for these harbour polities.

In the light of the present essay, the fact that polities come into existence when and only when a merchant from overseas moves into the picture is worthy of note. This is when the pre-existing or potential central places are put in touch with their peripheries, that is, the various circles that constitute their social spaces. It is in fact the dramatic broadening of social space brought about by such direct involvement in far-ranging trade networks that would probably have given birth to myths establishing an explicit relationship between sea-going merchants, trade, and the founding of a viable polity.

Conclusion

In the case of Sriwijaya, the picture obtained in the pages above is far removed from that of the "imperial" state implied by earlier historians. We hope the evidence presented here makes it clear that the structure of the Sriwijayan polity is in fact akin to that of later city-states of the Straits area or the Java Sea, the "Sultanates" and harbour-cities of the 15th- to 17th-century "age of commerce," which had hastily been said to have developed only in such late times.[54]

O.W. Wolters wrote in 1982 that the political identity of Sriwijaya "is a striking instance of the amorphous nature of the great *mandalas* in earlier Southeast Asian history." This, however, he ascribes in part to the "notorious uncertainty about its geographical span and political identity," as if a more thorough knowledge of these characteristics would allow for this ill-defined nature to somehow be better delineated.[55] We have seen in the pages above that this amorphous nature of Malay World polities appears to be, as it were, inscribed into the representations that these social groups convey of themselves in their own literature. The confrontation of such statements with historical and recent archaeological data tends to confirm that such amorphous and flexible characteristics of Malay World coastal polities are structural.

Joyce White's recent essay on the application of the concept of heterarchy to the socio-political structure of prehistoric mainland Southeast Asian societies may turn out to be of great help to further interpret and integrate the evidence on coastal polities produced above, and their function as central places.[56] Heterarchy, as defined by White and other authors in the same volume, includes such structural forms as the membership of elements in a variety of systems of ranking, whereby the same element occupies different ranks in the different systems, or two or more discrete hierarchies that interact as equals, on the basis of continually renegotiated alliances. In such a scheme, competitive, neighbouring multi-centric "umlanden" could have partly overlapped within the overall distribution network of the Southeast Asian economy. Ranking among such coastal societies would have then depended on the period, context, and viewpoint. Such states may also not have been the mutually exclusive, bounded entities expected in the strictly hierarchic system usually postulated for Southeast Asia. A marginal polity could possibly have participated in two different networks, and found itself in a "vassal" position towards two centres. A heterarchical system would also allow for increased societal choices: This would for instance explain how an archaeological site such as Kuala Selinsing (Tanjung Rawa, on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula) would have remained active in long-distance trade during the whole first millennium AD without undergoing Indianisation, whereas its neighbours in Kedah, only some distance to the north, opted for a different kind of society and adopted Indic religions.[57]

This concept of heterarchic systems appears to be well suited to guide further research on the societies of Southeast Asia examined in the preceding pages: It may help reconcile the seeming contradistinction between the undeniable complexity of societies actively participating in world economy, perceived by other participants in these worldwide networks as rich, powerful, and prestigious, and their nevertheless unequivocally flexible, unstable, and amorphous condition. In other words, it could help accept the fact that an extended global social space can be centred on a geographically very restricted space.[(58)] This, however, in Joyce White's own words, is "an emerging research agenda."[(59)]

Notes

1 A first version of this article was completed in the 1990s, and circulated among some colleagues (it was originally meant to be included in a book that ended up not being printed). Meanwhile, the largely revised edition of Oliver Wolters' *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (1999) and some of my own articles (2000, 2000a, in press) were sent to press or published, which took into account some of its assessments. In this updated version, I have amended quotations and references to take into account these responses to the first version, as well as other recent developments in the fields involved. I wish to thank the late Oliver Wolters, Muriel Charras, Bernard Sellato, and Roy E. Jordaan for their comments, which have significantly contributed to improve this final version.

2 By far the best reappraisal of early and ongoing theories and data on state formation in insular Southeast Asia is found in the study by Jan Wisseman Christie (Christie 1995).

3 On the Weberian concept of city-state and its application to Malay World urban polities, see Reid (2000) and Manguin (2000, 2000a).

4 Examples are taken from the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (*HHT*; 1964 edition) and the *Sulalatus Salatin* or *Sejarah Melayu* (*SM*; 1979).

5 I wish to thank Henri Chambert-Loir for checking that, in various Malay usages, the phrase *teluk rantau* could only express this very notion of "bends and reaches," *i.e.*, the totality of a stream.

6 See Bronson (1977: 43).

7 For a summary of the work carried out by the joint Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional and École française d'Extrême-Orient archaeological programme in the Musi river basin, see Manguin 1993. A full report by Manguin and Soeroso is forthcoming. Data on the Batang Hari basin has been gathered by Indonesian archaeologists: see Bambang Budi Utomo (1990), Eka Asih Putrina Taim (1996), Retno Purwanti (1997-98 and 2001), and Lucas P. Koestoro (1999); see also McKinnon (1992) for a summary analysis on the question.

8 See Christie (1990) and Leong Sau Heng (1992).

9 See Andaya (1993) for an analysis of the complex relationship between the later "brother" sultanates of Palembang and Jambi (and particularly the places referred to in the index under "oaths" and "contracts, indigenous").

10 See Bronson & Wisseman (1976: 235).

11 See Anderson & Vorster (1985: 1-6; apart from this unfortunately rather skimpy article, see pp. 24ff for a discussion, specially p. 38, in the same volume). Paul Wheatley also addressed this "hinterland or no hinterland" question in a discussion of the Palembang evidence at hand in the early 1980's (Wheatley 1983: 244) and, with K.S. Sandhu, in relation to Melaka (Sandhu & Wheatley 1983, vol. II: 495ff and figs. 1-5). Wheatley's answer, however, is that the hinterland of Melaka "encompassed most of Southeast Asia and certainly the full extent of the Malaysian world as far east as Banda or Ternate," which in fact overshoots the problem.

12 It may be relevant that the two most common terms successively used in Malay epigraphy and literature to denote the "control" of peripheral places or their "submission" to the central place both have a foreign etymology: *bhakti* is of Sanskrit origin and *takluk* is Arabic. This is not the place, however, to further elaborate on these concepts, as a thorough review of the vocabulary used in such circumstances would be called for. Again, one is reminded here of the intimate links between political power and religion. The term *bhakti*, in a religious context, refers to the kind of "devotion" expected in sectarian Hinduism: One may refer to the numerous comments on the term in Wolters (1999, index, *s.v.*) and to Dalsheimer and Manguin (1998: 120 *sq.*) for the type of Vaisnava *bhakti* common in early Southeast Asian polities.

13 For a discussion of these various attributes of power in Southeast Asia, see Wolters 1999 (particularly pp. 111-117).

14 These prerequisites of the foundation of a successful harbour polity are discussed at length in Manguin 1991. The foundation myth from which evidence was gathered is also referred to further down in this essay.

15 See Manguin (1986).

16 See Brandes (1889: 44, 46) and Poerbatjaraka (1940: 9-10).

17 See Winstedt edition (1938: 58-60), Brown's translation (1952: 28-29), and my own translation for the passage with the various types of craft.

18 See Winstedt (1938: 208) and Brown (1952: 181).

19 *SM* (1979: 83): "(...) maka baginda menyuruh menghimpunkan segala rakyat di teluk rantau, mudik ke Melaka. Maka berkampunglah sekaliannya ke Melaka." On the absence of a Malay term for urban settlement and the usage of *kampung*, see also Reid (1980: 240).

20 See Berg (1927: 16-17, 76-77).

21 See Hirth & Rockhill (1911: 60).

22 See *Bustanu's-Salatin* 1966, p.52.

23 See Wolters (1979: 18).

24 See Wolters (1970).

25 In Java, too, paraphernalia attached to royal power followed a centre on the move to its new abode: Sunan Gunung Jati brought his pavilion (*pendopo*) and ceremonial stones (*batu gilang*) to Banten Lama from Pajajaran (personal communication, John Miksic, 1991).

26 Jan Christie (1990: 44) wrote of "stable traditions and unstable states" to qualify this dichotomy between moving centres and continuity of political power. Oliver Wolters (1999: 128), starting from a different set of data, proposed to use the phrase "culture of movement."

27 See Adelaar (1995: 329).

28 See Maier (1992: 12) and Adelaar (1995: 32); on the latter, see also the remarks in Wolters (1999: 126-127).

29 See Kulke's analysis of these earlier translations in the works of G. Cœdès and J.G. de Casparis (Kulke 1993: 162).

30 See Wolters (1986), Kulke (1993), and Manguin (1992, 1993, 2000a).

31 See Lucas, Manguin, & Soeroso (1998) and Dalsheimer & Manguin (1998).

32 See Biros (1992: 540-544).

33 See Wolters (1966), confirmed by recent archaeological data.

34 See references in Note 7.

35 To this one has to add the fact that only bricks were usually available for construction in the natural environment of coastal polities, and were easily re-utilised, as any archaeologist familiar with the region knows only too well. For a discussion of the perishable structures in the urban sites of the archipelago, see the works of Bronson and Wisseman (1976: 234-237), Wolters (1979: 19), and Wheatley (1983: 242-245).

36 Substantial fortifications were not part of the urban scene: Only in the late 16th century were Mediterranean warfare techniques adopted in any significant way under Portuguese and Turkish influences. The completion of a solid, fortified wall made of durable materials around the whole Portuguese settlement of Melaka was a radical innovation in Malay World warfare and urban design (see Reid 1980; Wheatley 1983: 242-243; Manguin 1986).

37 Scarcity rather than absence, for the foundations of one brick temple, at least, and a few other brick buildings covered with tiles have been excavated in various sites at Palembang (Manguin 1993).

38 See Tan Yeok Seong (1964), Cœdès (1964: 204, 259-260), Jordaan (2000), and Salmon (2002). According to the last author, the Taoist temple at Guangdong could have been built for the Chinese merchant community settled in the capital city of Sriwijaya, whose members appear to have served as intermediaries between the Malay ruler and the Chinese court and to have often travelled to the southern Chinese harbour-city. Considering the fact that the vast majority of 9th- to 10th-century Chinese ceramic exports to Palembang had been manufactured in kilns in Guangdong and neighbouring provinces, there is no doubt that this Chinese merchant community must have been very active indeed.

39 See Cœdès (1964: 259).

40 See Foucher (1900: 105, 193 n. 23).

41 Buddhist doctrine in China was influenced by schools located in Sriwijaya, Ceylon, etc. (Gernet 1972: 188).

42 In such Indian sources, the polity usually appears as the Isle of Gold (Swarṇadwīpa) or the domain of the *Mahārāja*, the royal title known to have been that of the Sriwijayan rulers. Middle-Eastern sources on 9th- to 13th-century Southeast Asia have long been known and exploited. For a useful compendium of these texts' contents, see Tibbetts (1979); and for a better grasp of the context in which they were written, see André Miquel's monumental 1967-88 study on the geographical literature of the Muslim world. Medieval Jewish merchants also traded with Southeast Asia (see the few surviving letters mentioning the region in Goitein 1973). Lesser known are the Jain sources of Gujrat, which often mention Swarṇadwīpa among the countries visited by Jain merchants, after a stopover in Kedah (see the recent contribution by Anita Sharma 1996).

43 On Malay World shipping in the Indian Ocean, see Ferrand (1919) and Manguin (1993a, 1993b, 1996).

44 See G. Condominas' introduction to his *L'espace social* (1980) and the contributions by Christian Pelras and Christian Taillard to the special issue of *ASEMI* entitled *Espace social et analyse des sociétés en Asie du Sud-Est* (1977), published after the concept had been extensively discussed in Condominas' seminar at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Pelras 1977, Taillard 1977). The concept of "social space" was crafted by Georges Condominas to get round such closed and restricted notions as "ethnic group" or "culture," felt as insufficient to account for the flexible, moving, multiform reality and the fluid margins of Southeast Asian societies. It was then defined, broadly, as the totality of the relationships bringing together the sum of the individuals or social groups to which these individuals belong.

45 See Condominas (1980: 36, 75).

46 See Adelaar (1994, 1995) and Manguin (1993a).

47 See Postma 1992. This inscription attests to the diffusion of Malay as a *lingua franca*. It appears, though, to display Javanese influence, which brings to the fore the role of the Javanese northern coast (*pasisir*) merchant communities, by then undoubtedly an integral part of the "Malay World" *lato sensu*. On a recent attempt by linguists to illustrate the outer reach of Old Malay as a language of communication in Southeast Asia, with Sriwijaya clearly situated as the centre of diffusion, see the map established by K.A. Adelaar (in Wurm, Mühlhäusler, & Tryon 1996: Map 67).

48 See Reid (1988-93).

49 See Wolters (1967) and Manguin (2000, 2000a).

50 See Ardika (1998), Ardika & Bellwood (1991), Glover (1989), and Ray (1989, 1990, 1994). A study by Jan Christie (1990) on the relationship between maritime trade and state formation in early first-millennium AD Southeast Asia provides clear examples of what is being achieved in this field; see also Christie (1995) and Manguin (in press) for a tentative synthesis on the formative period of political systems in lowland Southeast Asian societies.

51 See Manguin (1991) for an extended interpretation of such myths.

52 See *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (1964: 6, 9).

53 Kulke has integrated them in his model of Early Sriwijaya, making them an essential component of Sriwijaya's statehood (Kulke 1993: 176, n. 53; see my Fig. 2). They provide the link between the *kadātuan* and the outside world. Further elaboration on their appearance in a variety of epigraphic and literary contexts will be found in Manguin (1986: 197-200, and 1991).

54 Jan Christie (1995: 269, 272) had already suggested that one must compare Sriwijaya with "later polities in the Melaka Straits region and look for parallels and divergences in internal structure and external ambitions;" in other words, Sriwijaya was "a prototype" of Melaka. On the basis of a comparison of urban structures alone, the similarities between early Palembang and later port-cities are striking (Manguin 1993: 33-34, 2000, 2000a).

55 Wolters first wrote this in the first edition of his *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (1982: 22), before substantial progress was made in the archaeology of coastal states in Sumatra and the Malayan Peninsula. In the second edition (1999: 32), as a response to the above comment in the first version of the present paper (see Note 1), he revised this statement (1999: 130-131).

56 White (1995) deals primarily with prehistoric societies, but tentatively extends her analysis into proto- and early historical times. See also Elizabeth Brumfiel's comments on heterarchy and the analysis of complex societies in the same volume (Brumfiel 1995).

57 See Shuhaimi & Arifin (1988) for a recent update on work in Kuala Selinsing; earlier work there was carried out in the 1920's by Evans (1928, 1930, and various other articles in the same *JFMSM*). See also Christie (1990: 48).

58 This is basically – albeit expressed differently – the point made by H.D. Evers when he contrasts the present-day extended network – Southeast Asia wide – of peddlers from Pulau Raas (Tukang Besi) and the exceedingly modest environment that constitutes their home base (Evers 1988).

59 See White (1995: 119). Oliver Wolters, in an "Appendix" to his 1982 chapter on the Southeast Asian "cultural matrix" (1999: 122-125), also singled out White's use of the concept of heterarchy as one convenient means for "making sense" of Southeast Asian history. Readers are redirected to Wolters' more comprehensive comments.

References

Abbreviations

ASEMI: Asie du Sud-Est et Monde insulindien
BAIMA: Bulletin of the Australian Institute of Maritime Archaeology
BKI: Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van het Koninklijk Instituut
IJNA: International Journal of Nautical Archaeology
JESHO: Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient
JFMSM: Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums
JMBRAS: Journal of the Malayan Branch, Royal Asiatic Society
JSEAH: Journal of Southeast Asian History
JSEAS: Journal of Southeast Asian Studies
TBG: Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van de Bataviaasche Genootschap

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Abstract: This article surveys epigraphy, Malay literary texts, and the archaeological data to better understand the socio-spatial structuration process of western Southeast Asia's ancient political systems, more specifically, Sriwijaya (7th-13th cent.) and its successor, the Melaka Sultanate (15th-17th cent.). Representations of their polities, as offered by the Malays themselves in a variety of literary genres, all allude to the centre and peripheries of their city-states, as well as to the movements of their fleets, construed as metaphors of the whole social group, which provide a graphic illustration of the centripetal forces that structure them both politically and economically. The central places of these harbour-based city-states are entities loaded with symbolic values, with no marked or spatially extended territorial base. The peripheral space of such political systems, however, forms a social space extending, in concentric circles, much farther than the limits of insular Southeast Asia. These vast peripheries comprise places of exchange and international trade – each of which often commands its own periphery – and also religious places. This model once more confirms the intimate relationship between political power, trade relations, and religion in Southeast Asia.

La nature informe des systèmes politiques de l'Asie du sud-est insulaire : centres restreints, périphéries étendues

Résumé : *cet article interroge l'épigraphie, les textes littéraires malais et les données archéologiques pour mieux comprendre le processus de structuration spatiale des anciens systèmes politiques de l'ouest de l'archipel, particulièrement Sriwijaya (VII^e^-XIII^e^ s.) et son successeur, le sultanat de Melaka (XV^e^-XVI^e^ s.). Les représentations fournies par les Malais eux-mêmes de leurs systèmes politiques, dans différents genres littéraires, se réfèrent toutes aux centres et aux périphéries de leurs cités-États, comme aux déplacements de leurs flottes, conçues comme des métaphores du groupe social tout entier, illustrant ainsi visuellement les forces centripètes qui les structurent politiquement et économiquement. Les places centrales de ces cités-États portuaires sont des entités fortement chargées de valeurs symboliques liées au pouvoir politique, mais sont instables et mouvantes, sans implantation territoriale marquée, moins encore étendue dans l'espace. L'espace périphérique de ces systèmes politiques, en revanche, est un espace social élargi, en cercles concentriques, bien au-delà de la seule Asie du sud-est insulaire. Ces* *vastes périphéries sont constituées, dès le premier millénaire EC, non seulement de lieux d'échanges ou de commerce international (chacun commandant souvent sa propre périphérie), mais aussi de lieux religieux. Ce modèle confirme, s'il en était encore besoin, les liens intimes qui, en Asie du sud-est, unissent pouvoir politique, relations commerciales et religion.*

Key words: Southeast Asia, archaeology, history, political systems, social space, city-states, maritime trade.

Mots clés : *Asie du sud-est, archéologie, histoire, systèmes politiques, espace social, cités-États, commerce maritime.*