

Pre-Modern Cities in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera

by

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Introduction

From the Greek text, the *Geographike Huphegesis* ascribed to a Greek name Claudius Ptolemy who had lived in Alexandria, Egypt, around the mid-second A.D., we have references to trading centres in the *Golden Khersonese*, (the Malay Peninsula), namely, *Takola*, *Kole*, and *Sabara* (Sabana).¹ The study of other foreign literary sources Indian, Chinese and Arabo-Persian have led scholars to more names of trading centres and polities in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera. Hindu-Indian and Buddhist-Indian literature mention place — names such as *Kataha*, *Takola*, *Kadaram*, *Kalagam*, *Kidaram* and *Tambralinga*, and the Cola inscription of 1025 A.D. includes a list of trading ports and polities attacked by the Cola forces in the eleventh century.² Among them were *Ilangasogam*, *Talaittakolam*, *Madamalingam* and *Kadaram*. Place names such as *Tun-sun* (Tien-sun), *T'ou-chu-li* (Chu-li), *Pit-sung*, *Tan-tan*, *P'an-p'an*, *Lang-ya-hsiu*, *Ch'ih-tu*, *Chieh-cha*, *Lo-yueh*, *Ko-lo*, *Fo-lo-an*, *T'an-ma-ling*, *Kan-to-li*, *Mo-lo-yu* and *Fo-shih* are mentioned in the corpus of Chinese texts.³ Arab geographers provide references to places such as *Kalah*, *Qaqullah*, and *Tiumah* as early as the ninth century A.D.⁴

1 The location of the various trading centres has been discussed in Paul Wheatley, 1954 "Takola Emporion: A Study of an early Malayan Place-name". *MJTG* 2; and Paul Wheatley, 1961 *The Golden Khersonese: Studies in the Historical Geography of the Malay Peninsula before A.D. 1500*, Kuala Lumpur, 144 - 47 and 151 - 53.

2 Indian place-names relating to the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera are found in K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, 1949 *History of Srivijaya*, Madras; and some of the issues and problems pertaining to these place names have been discussed in Paul Wheatley, 1961, *The Golden Khersonese*...

3 For discussion on the Chinese literary sources concerning the Malay Peninsula and the location of the place-names found in these sources are Paul Wheatley, 1961. *The Golden Khersonese*... 1 - 113; Paul Wheatley, 1956. "Chinese Sources for the Historical Geography of Malaya before A.D. 1500". *MJTG*. 9; Wang Gungwu, 1958. "The Nanhai Trade: Study of the Early History of Chinese Trade in the South China Sea" *JMBRAS*. 31. ii; O.W. Wolters, 1967. *Early Indonesian Commerce: A Study of the Origins of Srivijaya*. Ithaca. Cornell University.

4 The place-names cited by Arab geographers have been discussed in G.R. Tibbetts, 1956. "The Malay Peninsula as known to the Arab Geographers" *MJTG*. 9. 21 - 60 and Paul Wheatley, 1961. *The Golden Khersonese*... 210 - 251.

Information gleaned from these foreign literary sources especially the early Chinese dynastic histories, travel records, encyclopaedias have helped scholars in their attempts to trace the evolution and development of early ports and polities. They have helped significantly in shedding light on the chronology, trade commodities, trading network and the nature of these ports and polities. In addition to these literary sources archaeology has provided extra evidence to confirm that these ports and polities did exist. But archaeology seldom provides names of these places except when inscriptions are found with names inscribed on them.⁵

According to the Chinese dynastic histories, *Liang-shu* (7th century A.D.), *Chui Tang-shu* (Tang dynasty 618-906 A.D.), and *Tung-tien* (8th century encyclopaedia), there were trading polities in the Malay Peninsula as early as the 3rd century A.D. (Paul Wheatley, 1966: 15-73). They were *Tun-sun*, *Chu-li*, and *Lang-ya-hsiau*. By the fifth century A.D. *Pan-pan* was sending trade missions to China, and *Lang-ya-hsiu* and *Tan-tan* were doing the same in the 6th century A.D., and followed by *Chih-tu* in the early part of the 7th century A.D., and by *Chieh-cha* in about the middle of the 7th century A.D. Chinese monk, I-Ching's records mention *Fo-shih*, *Mo-lo-yu*, *Lang-chia-shu*, *Tan-tan* in the later part of the 7th century A.D. (J. Takakusu, 1896).

Arahaeological researches in Bujang Valley (Kedah), Takuapa on Ko-kho Khau, Patani, Chaiya, Satingphra in Thailand have unearthed evidence that enabled archaeologists to establish the presence of large settlements of fairly long duration dating to about the 5th century A.D. at the latest.⁶ Geomorphologists working with archaeologists at those sites have shown that all of these sites, at one time were located very near to the coast.⁷ The archaeological findings from the sites have demonstrated that these settlements were involved in long-distance trade. The terminal dates for these trading polities have been established by both radiocarbon dates as well as relative dates and comparative studies of architectural styles of monumental remains, Hindu and Buddhist sculpture and the typological studies of Middle Eastern, Chinese and Southeast ceramics, beads and glass have assisted in establishing the relative dates.

The Concept of a pre-modern cities

It is apparent that these polities developed from some of the prehistoric

5 Among the inscriptions which mention place-names that can be located on the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera are:

1. The Buddhagupta Inscription of Cherok Tokun Kedah which mentions a place by the name of *Red Earthland*: see Nik Hassan Shuhaimi bin Nik Abdul Rahman and Othman Mohd. Yatim, 1990. *Antiquities of Bujang Valley*, 61.
2. The Ligor Inscription and several other inscriptions classified as Srivijayan inscriptions: See Nilakanta Sastri, 1949. *History of Srivijaya*. Madras; J. de G. Casparis, 1956. *Prasasti Indonesia II: Selected Inscriptions from the 7th to 9th century A.D.* Bandung and Boechari, 1979. "An old Malay inscription of Srivijaya at Palas Pasemah (South Lampung)" *Pra Seminar Penelitian Srivijaya*. Pusat Penelitian Purbakala dan Peninggalan Nasional, Jakarta, 19 - 42.
- 6 Information about the archaeological researches in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera can be obtained from the various reports. Among them are: I.H.N. Evans, 1932. "Excavations at Tanjong Rawa, Kuala Selinsing, Perak", *JFMSM*, 15. iii. 79 - 133; Alastair Lamb. 1961 "Miscellaneous Papers on the Early Hindu and Buddhist Settlement in Northern Malaya and Southern Thailand" *FMJ*. 6 (New Series); Nik Hassan Shuhaimi bin Nik Abdul Rahman and Othman Mohd. Yatim, 1990. *Antiquities of Bujang Valley*; E.E. McKinnon, 1977 "Research at Kota Cina, A Sung-Yuan Trading Site in East Sumatera Archipel", 14, 19 - 32.
- 7 For information on the geomorphological research in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera see: R. Soekmono, 1968. "Geomorphology and the location of Srivijaya." *Madjallah Ilmu-ilmu Sastera Indonesia*, Maret/Djuni, IV, 1 - 2, 79 - 92.

settlements. From the extreme north of the Malay Peninsula southwards to Johor and Sumatera, almost every river estuary supported a focally situated fortified either palisaded or walled settlement. These settlements were kingdoms by virtue of the fact that they adopted, even in varying degrees, a theocratic polity, based on the Indian conceptions of kingships. In theory it has been suggested that one king, identified with divine and universal authority claimed personal hegemony over other rulers who were his obedient allies and vassals (O.W. Wolters, 1982: 13) But in practice it may not be so. This is because his control over his vassals tended to be unstable and impermanent. Some of his vassals wanted to try to repudiate their vassal status when the opportunity arose, and try to build up their own network of vassals. And thus a kingdom in reality was normally an urbanised settlement having a king living in a palace and presiding over his court. Therefore, a pre-modern city in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera would refer to what the traditionalist historians called city-states or kingdoms.

The differences that occur in the use of the proper terminology may be due to the fact that,

“... The early states of Southeast Asia were equipped by modern historiography with more or less all Weberian, criteria of a modern state ... were governed by the kings through a central administrative staff which was able to uphold successfully the legitimate claim of the monopoly of physical force within a given area (1). Successful pillages of neighbouring areas often understood as an indicator of the existence of an hierarchically structured system of provinces and districts etc.” (Hermann Kulke, 1986: 1)

This kind of interpretation of early Southeast Asian history by traditionalist historians have been illustrated by Hermann Kulke⁸ when he quoted examples from two authors whose works are still regarded as standard works. (*Ibid.*: 1). About early Funan, he quotes the work of L.P. Briggs who wrote that Funan's history began as a river settlement under the legendary naked Naga princess and the conquests of the Funanese King, Pan-shi-man led to the annexations of areas that made up an empire of more than one thousand miles in extent. The other examples refers to Heine Geldern famous work on the “Conceptions of state and kingship in Southeast Asia” that quoted a relevant passage in the Chinese source, *Hsin T'ang Shu* about a kingdom by the name of *Holing*. By quoting the passage, he tried to illustrate the cosmic role of kings, courts and governments in Southeast Asia. Herman Kulke points out that recent research has shown that both examples and a few other examples “which show that some of the early empire” of this region might well be the product of modern historiography rather than ancient history. (*Ibid.*: 2)

In place of the traditional key-word “empires” it has been suggested that a “multiplicity of centres” concept should be applied when doing analytical research on the early states in Southeast Asia. (*Ibid.*: 3)

The capital of these kingdoms normally had the prerequisites of what Sjöberg considers are features of city life such as a favourable “ecological base”, advancement in technology and complex social organisation (M.A.J. Beg, 1986: 17) In the capital, there were separate areas for the court-house, for the religious

⁸ Paul Wheatley argues the possible location of the Kingdom of Chih-tu was probably in the *ulu* of the Kelantan River. *The Golden Khersonese*... 36.

centres, and quarters for the various cosmopolitan trading groups. The local populace such as padi farmers, fishermen and collectors of jungle produce lived in the villages, normally outside the walled part of the city.

The characteristics of some of the pre-modern cities or capitals of these kingdoms can be extracted from Chinese dynastic annals and records of Chinese travellers, particularly of the Buddhist pilgrims. By the late eighth century A.D., Arab and Persian writers were becoming aware of the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera and by the ninth and tenth centuries, Arabo-Persian literature provide a second, most important body of informations regarding some of the pre-modern cities and in some cases city-capitals in the region and an insight into the nature of these cities and capitals of kingdoms.

To illustrate the nature of an early seventh century capital-city of the kingdom of *Chih-tu*⁹, let me refer to the translation of a work what appeared in *Chih-tu-Kuo Chi*, a work in two Chuan (Paul Wheatley, 1966, 27). And the substance of this work is preserved in parallel passages in *Sui-shu*, the *Pei-shih*, the *Tai-ping Yu-lan* and the *Wen-hsien T'ung-k'ao*. According to the work,

"... the city of Seng-chih which has triple gates more than a hundred paces apart. On each gate are paintings of spirits in flight, bodhisattvas and other immortals ... Four men, dressed in the manner of chin-kang giants on the sides of Buddhist pagodas, stand at the gate. Those stationed on the outside of the gate grasp weapons of war ... All buildings in the royal palace consist of multiple pavilions with the doors on the northern side ..." (Paul Wheatley, 1966: 28)

There was an account of a city-kingdom called P'an-p'an in the Tuan-lin's *Wen-hsien T'ung-k'ao*. Embassies from this city-kingdom to China were reported from the year 424 - 53, 454 - 6, 457 - 527, 532, 534 and the last was in 616 in *Nan-shih*, *Sui-Shu*, *Chiu T'ang Shu* and *Hsin T'ang Shu*. The city of P'an-p'an which scholars have located in the Chaiya area in the Isthmian tract of the Peninsula was reported as having "... The people live mostly by the water-side, and in default of city walls erect pallsades entirely of wood." (*Ibid.*: 4) While in Ko-lo, the *Hsin T'ang Shu* describes the capital as follows,

"The city walls are of piled stone; the towers, the palace and the houses are thatched with straw." (*Ibid.*: 55)

The city-kingdom of Ko-lo was probably the same city-kingdom as Kalah which has been mentioned in several Arabo-Persian literary sources of the 9th and 10th centuries A.D.

According to Abu Dulaf,

"... when I arrived at Kalah, I found it very great, with great walls, numerous gardens and abundant springs. I found there a tin-mine such as does not exist in any other parts of the world except in its Qalah (fortress)." (*Ibid.*: 217)

The location of Kalah has been discussed by a number of scholars, and the most probable location was the Ko Kho Khau (Takuapa) on the west coast of

9 For the discussion on the significant and the concept of "collecting centres" I refer to the work of Leong Sau Heng, 1990. "Collecting centres, Feeder Points and Entrepots in the Malay Peninsula, 1000 B.C. - A.D. 1400", in (ed.) J. Kathirithamby Wells & John Villiers, *The Southeast Asian Port and Polity*, Singapore, 23 - 26.

Peninsular Thailand. (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi & Othman Yatim, 1989: 93 - 99).

Srivijaya: A Dominant City-Kingdom

In about the last quarter of the seventh century, the kingdom of Srivijaya came into prominence. It was known to the Chinese as *Fo-shih* or *Shih-li-fo-shih* (J. Takakasu 1896: xxxiv) and Srivijaya in the Talang Tuwo inscription (Nilakanta Sastri, 1949: 113 - 115) and the Ligor Inscription. It sent its first trade embassy to China in 670 - 673 A.D. and its last embassy came to China in 742 A.D. under the name of *Shih-li-fo-shih*. I-Ching, the famous Buddhist pilgrim, while on his way to Nalanda, India in 671 A.D. stopped at *Shih-li-fo-shih* for six months and on his return journey stayed on for another 7 years, 688 - 695 A.D. (J. Takakasu: 10). Most scholars believe that *Fo-shih* or *Shih-li-fo-shih* was located in Palembang. This kingdom appears as *San-fo-chi* in the Sung dynastic annals. The use of the term *San-fo-chi* first appeared in Chou *Ch'u-fei* writings in 905 A.D. (F. Hirth and W.W. Rockhill, 1911). According to Wolters, the capital of Srivijaya was transferred to *Malayu-Jambi* in about 1079 - 1082 A.D. after the decline of Palembang as the capital of Srivijaya, and the re-emergence of the kingdom of Malayu-Jambi. (O.W. Wolters, 1966: 237) The capital of Srivijaya was depicted by I-Ching as a "fortified city" just like other cities in the Malay Peninsula.

Malayu-Jambi and *Chieh-cha* were among the two kingdoms mentioned by I-Ching. According to I-Ching he stayed for two months in the capital city of *Malayu* on his way to India and from there he was taken to the capital city of *Chieh-cha* in Srivijayan's ship. On his return journey he reported that *Malayu* "has now become *Fo-shih*". (O.W. Wolters, 1966: 163) This may be interpreted as the subjugation of *Malayu-Jambi* by *Srivijaya-Palembag* to form a greater kingdom of Srivijaya. Prior to this event, *Malayu-Jambi* was an independent kingdom, which, as late as 644 sent an embassy to China. At about the same time, the city-kingdom of *Chieh-cha* too came under the control of Srivijaya. According to Wolters, *Chieh-cha* was reported by I-Ching to have become a part of Srivijaya when he returned there in 685 A.D. This city-kingdom, *Chieh-cha*, is believed to be the same kingdom as the Tamil place name *Kalagam* or *Kidaram* or *Kadaram* and the Sanskrit name *Kataha*. It was probably the same city-kingdom *Chia-cha* that sent a mission to China in 658 A.D.

City Division

Even though there are several city-kingdoms cited by various literary sources especially the Colas inscription of the eleventh century, the Tanjore inscription of Rajendra I, inscribed on the south wall of the Rajarajesvara temple in Tanjore (Nilankanta Sastri, 1949: 125 - 128) such as *Pannai* (Panei), *Malaiyur* (Malayu-Jambi), *Ilangasoka* (Langkasuka), *Talaittakolam* (Kalah = Takola), *Ilamuri-desam* (Lamuri or Lambri) and *Kadaram*, it is still uncertain about the limit of the political boundary of each city-kingdom nor for that matter the limit of the boundary of the capital or city. It is apparent, however, that the capitals or cities were normally located in areas that were approachable from the sea via rivers or located on the coast. If we are to accept the fact that some of the tradisional Malay annals such as *Hikayat Merong Maha Wangsa* (Kedah Annals) just like *Sejarah Melayu*

(*Malay Annals*), contain elusive but verifiable happenings in Malay history, then the capital or the city of Kedah (*Chieh-cha Kataha, Kalagam, Kadaram, Kadaram*) to which *Hikayat Merong Maha Wangsa* refers, was not located permanently at one area. The chronicler mentions that the capital or the city moved several times in its history. Archaeological evidence too indicate the possibility of these moves taking place. The capital or city was located in Sungei Mas area in the Muda River Valley in the South in about 5th to 10th centuries A.D. and after that the capital was moved to the Pengkalan Bujang area in the north. (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 1984: 232) The capital of *Chieh-cha* visited by I Ching in 671 A.D. must have been located in the Sungei Mas area. But during the period which saw *Chieh-cha* as a busy entrepot (twelfth to thirteenth centuries), the centre was in Pengkalan Bujang.

In some of the capitals or cities of the kingdoms, the religious, living and trading areas were located in separate parts. Besides these separate parts in the city, there must had been smaller centres outside the capital, the villages. In Bujang Valley, the discovery of more than eighty monumental sites in an area of over 200 sq. kilometers would confirm the general pattern of locating various sites inside and outside the capital. The Padang Lawas area in Sumatera produced several sites of temple complexes which must have been located in a different area from living and trading centres in the capital. The capitals of Langkasuka and Tambralinga in the isthmian part of the Malay Peninsula probably have the same general feature. This is due to the fact that archaeological researches have unearthed sites of different functions over large areas between Nakhon Si Thammarat and Patani. The sites are located in Pathalung, Satingphra and Songkhla. There are also sites in Chaiya and Nakhon Si Thammarat at Wiang Sa, Srivijaya Hill and Si Chon indicating different site functions. In Takuapa during the ninth century A.D. and Lubok Tua in the eleventh century A.D. the foreign merchants had their own separate areas on the evidence of the discovery of inscription located outside the city part of the kingdom. In the capital of Srivijaya the *kraton* occupied the most important area. According to the Telaga Batu inscription, the *kraton* housed within its interior "a treasury of gold and property". (De Casparis, 1954: 18).

The Rise And Development

The origin of these pre-modern cities to a certain degree, appears to be obscure. Nevertheless, historians using both archaeological and literary evidence have come to realise that it is possible to try tracing the evolutionary processes that these cities had undergone before finally arriving at the pre-modern city or city-kingdom stage. It seems that, "they each moved through a cycle of growth, florescence and decline, in the process sharing some common features but, at the same time responding and adopting independently to new opportunities and challenges and maintaining continuity with change." (J. Kathirithamby-Wells 1990: 30)

It must have taken centuries of adaptation and change for them to reach the final stage, the pre-modern city or city-kingdom status. This development may be attributed in some measures to the trading activities of the Southeast Asian chieftains that led to contacts with India, China, Arabia and Persia. Pilgrims travelling between China and India, Southeast Asia and India may also have

contributed to the knowledge of Indian religions and state craft among the settlements in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera which led their chiefs to introduce them to their settlements. Indian political and religions ideas, whether introduced by Indian traders or brought back by Southeast Asian visitors to India must have contributed to the growth of these settlements into cities and city-kingdoms, which strove to expand at one another's expense. But the variety of contacts and influences was reflected in local cultural differences. It is, therefore, a recognised fact that one of the factors that led to the rise of the prehistoric settlements into pre-modern cities and city-kingdoms resulted from increased trading activities which consequently brought about prosperity. The beginning of the pre-modern cities and city-kingdoms on the evidence of Chinese literary sources was in the third century A.D.

The pre-modern cities grew from small coastal prehistoric settlements which relied heavily on fishing and gathering of sea and mangrove products at first and later became trading settlements when people from these settlements started to get involved in barter trade with their coastal neighbours and the people living in the hinterlands. This probably took place in the first millenium A.D. In the process it led to some of these settlements to become "collecting centres"⁹ at the river mouth or some other convenient locations such as islands. These "collecting centres" were fed by "feeder points"¹⁰ in the hinterland located along river valleys and near to the mineral and forest products.

Archaeological investigations have identified a number of prehistoric trading settlements acting as "collecting centres" in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera. They were responsible for collecting special local produce in view of the fact that they were always located in or very near important ecozones from which particular local products were obtained (Leong Sau Heng 1990: 23). Among these "collecting centres" were Kampung Sungai Lang and Klang in Selangor, Batu Buruk in Terengganu, Jenderam Hilir in Selangor, Kuala Selinsing, (Pulau Kelumpang), Perak and probably a few others in the isthmian tract of the Malay Peninsula. Other sites of collecting centres are difficult to recognise because the products they were supposed to collect were normally perishable local forest products. Unless they were involved with collecting and supplying metal ores to the regional trade or intra-regional trade, then it is possible to trace these "collecting centres". Fortunately though some of these "collecting centres" grew into ports and some of them achieved great prosperity because of their strategic locations in the long-distance trade between east and west. Notable example of the "collecting centres" that grew into first "land-fall" port and later entrepot was the city-kingdom located on the Ko Kho Khau off the Takuapa coast. The city-kingdom *Chieh-cha/Kataha* in the Bujang Valley probably started as a "collecting centre" and later on became "land-fall" port when trade between China and India came into being. Ultimately in the 7th century it became a full-fledged entrepot that flourished till the thirteenth or fourteenth century A.D.¹¹ Many other entrepots such as Chaiya, Satingphra,

10 "Feeder points" has been defined as a category of trading centre and more responsible for serving the entrepots and regional collecting centres. See Leong Sau Heng, 1990. "Collecting centres, feeder points..." 29 - 30.

11 There are evidence to suggest that *Chieh-cha* grew from prehistoric settlement into a full fledged city-kingdom after going through various stages of evolutionary processes. See Nik Hassan Shuhaimi bin Nik Abdul Rahman and Othman Mohd. Yatim, 1990. *Antiquities of Bujang Valley*.

Malayu-Jambi, Kota Cina probably began as "collecting centres" and largely owing to their strategic locations were able to take full advantage of the long-distance carrying trade passing through the Straits of Malacca or across the trans-peninsular routes in the case of settlements in the isthmian part of the Peninsula, especially between Takuapa on the west coast and Chaiya on the Bay of Bandon on the east coast. These centres served not only as a half-way station for revictualling purposes, but also as local marts where local produce could be obtained. (Leong Sau Heng 1990: 23)

These pre-modern cities were great seaports and foci of communications which developed in response to the increasing volume of seaborne trade in Southeast Asian waters. Archaeological investigations at protohistoric sites in Sumatera and the Malay Peninsula confirm the belief that they were foci of trade and entrepôts whose merchants from India, Middle East and China met to exchange goods from about the T'ang dynasty period. The Middle Eastern evidence includes Sassanian-Iraq-Iran types of ceramics and a large quantity of Middle Eastern glass and beads. (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 1990: 69 note 34). These probably came from the port of Siraf. Chinese trading contacts are represented by assemblages of artifacts comprising large quantities of stoneware and porcelain sherds and glass of T'ang type. In Sumatera itself, in the Palembang area, Chinese trade ceramics dating to the T'ang dynasty have been found. Other archaeological sites in Sumatera, such as Jambi, the Lampung area, and Kota China have revealed T'ang types of ceramics, although not in such quantities as those found in the Takuapa and Sungai Mas area.¹²

In Peninsular Thailand, besides the Takuapa area, several areas on the east coast, such as Satingphra, Si Chon, Chaiya and Nakhon Si Thammarat have yielded artifacts which indicate that they were in existence even prior to the seventh century, although there is no definite evidence of the discovery of T'ang dynasty ceramics. (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 1990: Note 37)

Maritime Power

The evidence elicited from Chinese and Arab records suggest that a few of the pre-modern cities experienced rise and fall at one time or another in their history. Normally a city would become powerful and managed to force other neighbouring cities or city-kingdoms to become their vassals. This happened when a city possessed a powerful King. The vassal cities or city-kingdoms were not absorbed administratively to form an empire or a larger kingdom or a united kingdom. In fact the vassal cities would stop sending tribute when the powerful overlord king died and being replaced by a weaker ruler. And thus in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera there were multiple centres of authority. However, from the Chinese and Arab-Persian sources at about the end of the 7th century the ruler of the city-kingdom of Srivijaya by the name of Dapunta Hiyang, had the necessary power and resources to establish control over neighbouring cities and city-kingdoms based on patron-client basis.¹³ Among the city-kingdoms believed

12 For the discussion on the archaeology of Takuapa and Sungai Mas area see Nik Hassan Shuhaimi bin Nik Abdul Rahman and Othman Mohd. Yatim, 1989. "Takuapa Revisited: A Commentary on Alastair Lamb's Pre-Malacca Entrepot" *Jurnal Arkeologi Malaysia*, Bil. 2, 93 - 99.

13 This is mentioned in the Kedukan Bukit Inscription of Srivijaya as found in Palembang see Nilakanta Sastri, *History of Srivijaya*, 113.

to have come under the control of city-kingdom of Srivijaya were *Malayu-Jambi*, *Chieh-cha*, *Kalah* (Takuapa), *Pan-pan* (Chaiya), *Langkasuka* (Patani), *Pannei* and a few others. But the control was limited. These city-kingdoms were allowed to retain a substantial part of their independent status as long as they paid homage and rendered the commercial services required of them by Srivijaya.

In spite of the fact that the Chinese and Arabo-Persian sources tend to conceptualise Srivijaya as an "empire" or a kingdom with many dependencies, there are not enough evidence to support that view. The Chinese records say that in 743 A.D. Srivijaya was a double kingdom, each part having separate administration with Barus in northwest Sumatera belonging to "the western half of the kingdom."¹⁴ And Masudi in the tenth century A.D. said that it needed two years in fast sailing boat to visit all its dependent islands. (O.W. Wolters 1967: 17) But the influence that Srivijaya must have had was just on the patron-client basis. The Srivijaya influence over other neighbouring city-kingdom must have fluctuated tremendously from the 7th to the 11th century A.D. Several events took place in the 11th century to weaken Srivijaya influence over other city-kingdoms. In the eleventh century Srivijaya was at war with the Cola and the Javanese. The trade monopoly of Srivijaya was challenged by *Chieh-cha* in 1086 and Pansur in 1088 Malayu-Jambi became more dominant than Srivijaya in 1082 A.D.¹⁵ Wolters notes that from the end of the tenth century A.D. city-kingdoms in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera tended to trade independent of Srivijaya and Lamuri and Kedah were already able to handle international trade goods. (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 1990: 78) But if we are to believe the archaeological evidence, *Chieh-cha*, *Kalah*, *Malayu-Jambi*, *P'an-p'an* and many other city-kingdoms were already entrepot even before Srivijaya appeared. It is apparent that Srivijaya, by establishing trade control over them, diverted their entrepot trade to Palembang. These entrepots thus became secondary or sub-regional entrepots to the principal entrepot, Srivijaya.

During the 7th to the 11th centuries A.D. there were the main or principal entrepots, the secondary or sub-regional entrepots, other nascent port-cities functioning as "collecting centres". There were also "feeder points" on the Malay Peninsula. There are two sites that may have belong to one or other of these categories, archaeological sites at Jenderam Hilir in South Selangor and Kuala Selinsing in Perak. (I.H.N. Evans, 1932: 79 - 133; Leong Sau Heng, 1990: 30) These sites have yielded archaeological evidence which suggests that they were ports involved in active trade during the late prehistoric and protohistoric period. They appear to have conducted trade with non-Indianised peoples living along the coasts and river estuaries of Melaka Straits and also with Indianised settlements along the Straits, such as *Chieh-cha* and *Kalah*. One piece of evidence which suggests that Kuala Selinsing had indirect contacts with India was obtained from the discovery there of a crude manufactured Indianised object in the form of

14 The concept of a "double kingdom" does not suggest that the Srivijayan hegemony over that part of the Straits of Malacca was absolute. For information on the passage see O.W. Wolters, 1967. *Early Indonesian Commerce...* 17.

15 This assumption is based on the basis of the information extracted from the Lubuk Tua inscription that a Tamil merchant guild was established at Lubuk Tua in 1088 A.D. Also, according to another Tamil inscription, a revolt broke out in Kedah in 1068. See Nilakanta Sastri 1955. *The Colas. Madras*, 217 - 272.

a carnelian seal. (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 1990: 69) Although there is no evidence of direct commerce between Jenderam Hilir and either India or the Middle East, the discovery of only a few Sung types of ceramics indicates that trade with China would be via sub-regional or secondary entrepots such as *Chieh-cha* and *Srivijaya*. Tin ingots found at Jenderam Hilir suggest that the area supplied tin to the main entrepot. These two sites were probably not city-kingdom but rather "feeder points" and the rulers probably have not yet acquired the Indian kind of kingship. There is no evidence to suggest that the settlement was Indianised.

In Sumatera, ports such as Barus, Pannei, Kampar and Kota China may be classified as sub-regional entrepots and "collecting centres". There are enough evidence to show that these ports had contacts with India, with the non-Indianised peoples in the interior and also with the Srivijaya entrepot. Evidence for suggesting that they were in contact with the Indians is provided by the discovery of the Lubuk Tua Tamil inscriptions of 1088 A.D. (Nilakanta Sastri 1932: 314 - 27) which states among other things that there was a Tamil trading corporation of 1500 people there. The inscription is reminiscent of the Tamil inscription from the Takuapa area which records the presence of a merchant community (*vanik-graman*) from South India in the late Pallava period of about the ninth century A.D. (Nilakanta Sastri 1949: 25 - 30)

The Malay Peninsula and Sumatera area became the focal point for trade in western Borneo, Java, the eastern islands, and the Irrawaddy River Systems. Three main types of forest products that became the key stimulus to Malay Peninsula and Sumatera's trade with China. (O.W. Wolters 1967: 95 - 110) These products were benzoin, camphor and a resin known as *ju*. (*Ibid.*). The resin *ju* was used in medicine and also as incense. F.L. Dunn, who has examined the botanical evidence, believes that these forest products are indigenous throughout Southeast Asia. (F.L. Dunn 1975: 104 - 114)

Besides these three major forest products, Southeast Asia was known for a wide range of exotic products found in mangrove swamps, forest and cave habitats. These included kingfishers' feathers, pearls, corals, sea-slugs and various seaweeds, birds' nests, mangrove bark and wood, dye-yielding roots of stand forest plants, honey, beeswax, eaglewood and damar. Wang Gungwu has identified the trade products of Southeast Asia for the period 960 - 1126 A.D. He classified them as "drugs and spice products". Among the various other products which he mentions are ebony, gharu-wood, laka-wood, pandan matting, ivory, rhinoceros horns and lac. (Wang Gungwu 1958: 113) Another list of Southeast Asia products has been compiled by Paul Wheatley. (Paul Wheatley 1959: 1 - 140) The products he lists include tin, parrots, gold and tortoise-shell. While according to F.L. Dunn, tin, but not gold, was carried to China during the Song period. Both products had entered the Arab trade between 850 and 1000 A.D. Gold artifacts have been found at several archaeological sites such as Sungei Mas (Kedah) and Kuala Selinsing (Perak).

The demands of international market for these products encourage various cities and city-kingdoms to maintain the established arrangement for procurements of these products. According to current hypothetical models the procurement of forest produce was through a network of collectors: primary, secondary and

tertiary.¹⁶ In theory the collectors of inland forest products were the hinterland communities while sea and coastal products were collected by the coastal people or *orang laut*, who were familiar with the habitats. Sometimes the collectors were also the primary traders, who mediated directly with traders at the coastal centres, the port-cities (both sub-regional entrepôts and the main entrepôts), the collecting centres and "feeder points" depending upon their proximity to them. Tertiary traders were essentially the chiefs and rulers at the various ports involved in export and import. The traders at the main entrepôts such as Srivijaya would normally be only secondary and tertiary traders.

The tremendous significance of the role of the *orang laut* in the procurement of essential trade products have been emphasised by several scholars. They were the farmers of the sea, coastal areas and mangrove swamps and were equally at home on the forbidding coastline or in the many practically invisible rivulets which dissect the mangrove forests fringing the southern part of the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera. (Leonard Andaya 1984: 45)

The rhythm of change in the history of the pre-modern cities and also in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera very much depended on the fortunes of trades. The position of trades, intra-regional and international, would automatically be influenced by the political situations both within the region and in China.

Socio-political and Economic Organisation

As insight into the socio-political and economic organisation of the pre-modern cities may be obtained from the informations contained in the literary sources and inscriptions. But the informations are limited to a few cities only. Informations about the capital of Srivijaya may be glimpsed from inscriptions. Chinese sources inform us about *Chih-tu* and *P'an-p'an*. Since Srivijaya was the dominant polity in the region at the end of the 7th century A.D. and perhaps till the 11th centuries A.D., we would expect its socio-political organisation to be the most complex, and to provide a model, the general form of which lesser centres would follow, varying only in detail. It may be inferred that informations about Srivijaya, *Chih-tu* and *P'an-p'an* reflect to a certain degree the political and social framework of other centres elsewhere in the Peninsula and Sumatera.

Descriptions of the political and social organisation of these three centres suggest that each centre had a central administrative structure and the villages, provinces or other smaller centres subjected to its political control had either their own independent socio-political structure or a structure tied to the main centre. In the case of the political structure of *Chih-tu* and *P'an-p'an*, they show variations in their internal structure which do not replicate Srivijaya.

In the social organisation, it is clear that two classes were dominant. The first was composed of those of royal rank. To this class belonged the royal family and all those related to it, including titled princes and princesses; it was equivalent to the *kaum kerabat diraja* in traditional Malay Society. The relative rank of

16 For the hypothetical model see: F.L. Dunn, 1975. *Rainforest collectors and traders: A Study of Resource utilisation in Modern and Ancient Malaya*, MBRAS, Monography No. 5 and Bennet Bronson, 1977. "Exchange at the upstream and downstream ends: Notes toward a functional model of the Coastal State in Southeast Asia" in (ed.) Karl L. Hutterer. *Economic Exchange and Social Interaction: Perspectives from Prehistory, History and Ethnography*. Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, No. 13, Michigan, 39 - 52.

members of this class depended on the hierarchy established within it. The second class comprised the various ministers, the nobles, the members of the professional and the artisan classes, priests, free persons and slaves. For Srivijaya, the existence of a class of free persons and slaves is clearly evident from the inscriptions. There is however, no clear evidence in both literary and inscriptional sources of the existence of types of slaves other than royal slaves even though certain inscriptions such as the Talang Tuwo sometime suggests that free persons could own slaves too. (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 1990: 77) The very existence of a slave class in a city or capital was significant in traditional society, because it helped to strengthen the system through its economic and social activities. The trading community may have formed another class, as is implied by some of the Srivijayan inscriptions such as the Telaga Batu inscription and also the Tamil inscriptions of Lubok Tua and Takuapa.

The relationship between the ruler and his people was based on the concept of the king as a supernatural being, to whom were ascribed supernatural powers (*daulat*). It was believed that the rulers possessed divine attributes. In the Telaga Batu, Kota Kapur, Karang Brahi and Palas Pasemah inscriptions of Srivijaya, there are references to the eventual fate of people who were disloyal or disobedient. They were liable to die in unfortunate circumstances. In the Telaga Batu inscription, various forms of disobedient were listed: spying for the king's enemies, stealing, collaboration with the King's enemies, cruelty to others by means of black magic, spying on the king's palace and friendship with the officials of the royal treasury. But those who were obedient and loyal were promised rewards in the form of *tantramala*, prosperity and freedom from punishment after death. In order to ensure that all subjects in all classes obeyed the king, the inscriptions were set up as a warning.

In the case of Srivijaya, Wolters believes that in *Sejarah Melayu* the rulers of Srivijaya were represented as being incarnations of Avalokitesvara. (O.W. Wolters 1970) The association of a ruler with certain deity led to the rise of the cults of Amoghapasa, Bhairava and Heruka (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 1990: 78). It also led to the rise of the belief that the ruler as the incarnation of one of these deities.

From inscriptions it is evident that there were people in the city-kingdoms who were involved with trade. As implied by the Telaga Batu inscription there was a trading community and the members of this group were *tuhaan vatakvurah* (inspectors of trade), *puhavam* (shippers) and *vaniaga* (merchants or traders). (*Ibid.*: 77)

Some of the pre-modern cities were the centre of religious learning. As an example, Srivijaya was an important centre of Buddhist learning for the Peninsula and Sumatera from the seventh to the 12th centuries A.D. This assumption is based on the fact that I Ching, a Chinese monk on his way to study in Nalanda stopped at Srivijaya.

"... Buddhist priests number more than one thousand, whose minds are bent on learning and good practices. They investigate and study all subjects that exist just as in Madhyadesa [India], the rules and ceremonies are not at all different. If a Chinese priest wishes to go to the west in order to hear [lectures] and read [the original Buddhist texts] he had better stay at Fo-Che for one or two years and practice proper rules, then proceed to Central India. (J. Takakusu 1896: xxxiv)

And Atisa, as *Dipankarr Srijnana*, who reformed Tibetan Buddhism early in the seventh century, spent twelve years (1011 - 1023 A.D.) studying at Srivijaya under Dharmakirti, chief of the *sangha*, and received a book as a present from the ruler, Dharmapala. (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 1990: 78) There is also an inscription dating to about the tenth or early eleventh century which was discovered in Nepal and mentions "Suvarnapure Sri-Vivijayapure Lokanathah". Nilakanta Sastri believed that 'Suvarnapure' stands for 'Suvarnadvipa' and this represents Srivijaya (Nilakanta Sastri, 1949: 78).

There were other cities in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera that had monasteries where Buddhist monks and nuns study Sanskrit and Buddhist canon. In the city of P'an-p'an it was reported that,

"... There are ten monasteries where Buddhist monks and nuns study their canon. They eat all types of meat but abstain from wine. There is also a monastery of religious devotees who partake neither of meat nor wine ..." (Paul Wheatley 1961: 49).

Other aspects of city-life, besides religion, may be glimpsed from the literary sources especially the Chinese. There are passages in the *Ch'ih-tu kuo-chi* which mention about how state affairs were being conducted at the court of *Ch'ih-tu*. According to the report,

"The King sits on a three-tiered couch, facing north and dressed in rose-coloured cloth, with chaplet of gold flowers and necklaces of varied jewels. Four damsels attend on his right hand and on his left, and more than a hundred soldiers mount guard. To the rear of the King's couch there is a wooden shrine inlaid with gold, silver and five perfumed woods, and behind the shrine is suspended a golden light. Besides the couch two metal mirrors are set up, before which are placed metal pitchers, each with a golden incense burner before it. In front of all these is a recumbent golden ox before which hangs a jewelled canopy, with precious fans on either side. Several Brahmins sit in rows facing each other on the eastern and western sides." (Paul Wheatley 1961: 28)

Conclusion

From about the 5th century onward a number of ports and polities appeared on the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera. Traditionalist historians refer to them as city-states or kingdoms. There is little evidence to suggest, for many of them, they had reached fully fledged "states". They could not fit into the definition of "state", that is, having an elaborate system of government with a central bureaucratic machinery, a large army, sophisticated urban centres and marked hierarchical social structures (Leong Sau Heng 1990: 32). It was due to that reason that led the historians to label them as city-states or kingdoms or sometimes as incipient states. However, it is most appropriate to refer to them as pre-modern cities or city-kingdoms. In reality they were semi-urbanised settlement having separate quarters, for different activities and different social groups of people and cosmopolitan trading society. Each city occupied a vaguely definable geographical area without fixed boundaries. The political condition was unstable.

These pre-modern cities emerged from prehistoric settlements and societies which inhabited the valleys of rivers very close to the seas. The main contributive factors that led to the rise of these cities were trade, the prowess of the rulers and their foreign policy. The prehistoric settlements grew into exchange point and service centres first and for those that entered regional, intra-regional, long

distance and international exchange systems developed into ports, regional ports and entrepôts. Politically, the status of these pre-modern states rose to that of kingdoms when their rulers adopted the Indian conception of kingships. The most dominant kingdom and a maritime power was Srivijaya, and she exercised some authority in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera from the seventh to the eleventh centuries A.D. Power and authority of these pre-modern cities were unstable. Smaller cities tended to look in all directions for security. Tributary rulers tried to repudiate their vassal status when the opportunity arose and only the overlord had the prerogative of sending and receiving tributes.

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