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Pierre-Yves Manguin

Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient (EFEO), Paris
&
Senior Visiting Research Fellow
Asia Research Institute
National University of Singapore

pierre-yves.manguin@efeo.net

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Asia Research Institute
National University of Singapore
469A Tower Block #10-01,
Bukit Timah Road,
Singapore 259770
Tel: (65) 6516 3810
Fax: (65) 6779 1428
Website: www.ari.nus.edu.sg
Email: arisec@nus.edu.sg

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'Welcome To Bumi Sriwijaya' or the Building of a Provincial Identity in Contemporary Indonesia

Pierre-Yves Manguin[1]

In typical Indonesian fashion, when you land at Palembang, the first public name to greet the visitor is that given to the airport: Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II, the last of the Palembang sultans, *the* provincial National Hero (*Pahlawan Nasional*), who resisted Dutch annexation, was subsequently exiled in 1821 and later died in Ternate. As you leave the airport grounds, though, you appear to move into a different world and period altogether and the other facet of Palembang's schizophrenic identity is soon made obvious. The large motto on the gates of the airport complex carries you one whole millennium back in time, as it reads: WELCOME TO BUMI SRIWIJAYA,[2] in a polyglot mode well suited to the ancient cosmopolitan polity where parrots, according to one Arab traveller of the 10th century, could speak a variety of languages.[3]

When, a few kilometres later, you enter the heart of the city, a quick glance at the signs of the local *toko-toko* on the main Sudirman Avenue and its neighbouring streets soon brings confirmation that the 7th to 13th century AD polity named Sriwijaya has acquired in Palembang an extraordinary currency. From "Toko Buku Sriwijaya" and "Sriwijaya Sports, Music & Golf", to "Intan Sriwijaya Elektronik" (a karaoke spot), dozens of shops carry the ancient name. There is no way one could harbour any doubt about the true location of Sriwijaya.

1. This working paper is a revised and updated version of a book chapter published in a volume in honour of the late Jacques Leclerc (Cayrac-Blanchard, Dovert and Durand, eds., 2000: 199-214). I am grateful to Anthony Reid for his suggestions, which were put to good use to improve this paper.

2. The name of the kingdom of Sriwijaya, as it appears in 7th century Old Malay inscriptions, is Sanskrit (meaning "auspicious victory"). *Bumi*, another term of Sanskrit origin (<*bhūmi*), was also used in contemporary inscriptions with the meaning of "realm" or "country" (Kulke 1993). The quotation on the parrots is from Ibn al-Faqih (translated in Tibbetts 1979: 30).

3. In 1993, a large poster on the facade of the Governor's office building also carried for some time this same polyglot greeting. In 2008, a few internet blogs of Palembang residents continue to use this motto as their banner.

The fashion extends to official names as well. The provincial Army Corps of South Sumatra also bears the name "Sriwijaya". The Corps headquarters are housed at the very heart of old Palembang, at Kuto Besak, Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin's own *keraton* and fortress, from which he confronted the Dutch enemy.[4] Another paramount provincial institution, "Universitas Sriwijaya," is also named after the Indianised polity.[5] The Balinese community itself, usually more attached to historical references to Majapahit and Java, has given its main sanctuary the ancient kingdom's name ("Pura Penataran Agung Sriwijaya", located in Kenten, 8 Hilir).

Though by far the most prominent among antique names in Palembang, the name Sriwijaya is not the only reference to the early polity to have gone public. Some shop and company names, such as PD Mandala Ban and a large variety of Toko Vijaya, while not actually bearing any direct relation to Sriwijaya, include terms which are now part and parcel of a large Sanskritized corpus of auspicious names (together with Hasta, Griya, Widya and Arthaloka). Moreover, the provincial government-sponsored "Hotel Swarna Dwipa" uses the early Indian, Sanskritic name of Sumatra (the "Golden Island"), that is associated with Sriwijaya in contemporary Indian sources. The largest Chinese-Indonesian owned hotel in Palembang is the "King's." Despite the crown on the logo, "King" may well be an anglicised reading of the auspicious Hokkien Chinese word for gold (*kin*) since the building also houses a "Pulo Mas [Gold Island] Shopping Centre", therefore an Indonesian rendering of "Swarnadwipa", coloured with Chinese cultural values.

Oddly enough, *Sailendra*, the dynastic name of the Sriwijayan rulers after the 8th century, does not appear to be popular. I have only been able to locate a small "Lorong Sailendra" in a remote part of town. In fact the only royal dynasty to appear prominently in Palembang is found in the name of the luxurious "Hotel Sandjaja", which therefore proudly displays (in *ejaan lama*), right in front of the Governor's office, the name of the enemy dynasty from *bumi Jawa*. The owner being a local *peranakan* Chinese, there is most probably no evil intention in this coincidence, only some historical confusion. He may be forgiven, furthermore, for the meeting room of the same hotel carries the name "Sjailendra Djaja", the

4. Hanafiah 1989.

5. The publication of a quarterly journal was initiated in 1976 by the Faculty of Law of Universitas Sriwijaya under the same name (*Sriwijaya: Majalah ilmiah Fakultas Hukum*).

"Victorious Sailendra", a definitely Sumatra-centrist point of view, since the Sailendras actually lost their power in Java to the Sanjayas during the 9th century !

Though I have not checked the proportion of "Toko Majapahit" or "Toko Singasari" in East Javanese towns, I doubt many other cities in Indonesia have such a percentage of name plates harbouring the one and only name of the local grand kingdom. Moreover, in Java, local *Pahlawan Nasional* such as Diponegoro, Imam Bonjol or Silihwangi have typically contributed their names to provincial institutions, streets, etc. There are indeed many more historical names to choose from in the Javanese historical tradition: while pre-Sultanate historical traditions of South Sumatra are exceedingly skimpy. The sole ruler of Sriwijaya to have left behind inscriptions in the province did so very sparsely: only one dozen meaningful texts are known. These were written in the mid-680s in Old Malay, but half of the inscriptions carry practically the same text (to make things even worse, part of their contents is written in a presently undeciphered language). His own name as a ruler appears only once in an inscription as Sri Jayanasa. Never, as far as I know, has this king's name been used to name a city feature in Palembang. In fact, those in charge of naming city streets and public services have to dig rather deep into the few sources available to keep milking the Sriwijayan cow.

A recent first in the Sriwijayan corpus of public names is the accretion of "Balaputra Dewa" to the already long name of the provincial museum: Museum Negeri Propinsi Sumatra Selatan. This took a rather erudite search, as this mid-9th century sovereign's title only appears in two foreign inscriptions. One of these is a 9th-century Indian inscription found in Nalanda (now in Bihar Province, India), which mentions him in connexion with the building there of a Buddhist monastery under his sponsorship. The other is a Javanese inscription of the 9th century relating his defeat in Java to Pikatan, a ruler of the Sanjaya dynasty, which prompted Balaputra Dewa to leave the island and settle in his mother's homeland (she belonged to the ruling family of Swarnadwipa, *i.e.* Sriwijaya). The Balaputra Dewa museum now houses among other artefacts one of the three local public collections of Sriwijayan statues and inscriptions.

The second such collection was still to be found in the 1990s in the municipal Museum which was given the not very fitting name of "Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin". It was composed of the leftovers from the "Algemeen Museum Palembang" created in the 1930s by Friedrich

Schnitger, a self-styled archaeologist who was largely responsible for having brought to light many Sriwijayan statues and inscriptions (after Independence, this museum carried for some decades the name "Rumah Bari"). Ironically, Sriwijaya thus found itself encroaching again upon the territory of our Pahlawan Nasional, the municipal Museum named after Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin having then absolutely nothing to show from the period of his reign, or from that of his predecessors for that matter. Ironically again, this Museum was housed in the beautiful building built in a mix of Palembang, Javanese and Dutch styles in the late 1820s, on the ruins of the third Sultanate *keraton*, by the first Dutch Residents in Palembang, after the collapse of Sultan Badaruddin's forces and the suppression of the Sultanate.

Sriwijaya has again encroached, in the grandest way, upon the Sultan's territory: President Suharto inaugurated in 1995 the so-called *Taman Purbakala Kerajaan Sriwijaya* ("Archaeological park of the Sriwijaya kingdom"), built in the western suburbs of Palembang upon the request of the Provincial Government, with the help of relevant cultural institutions at the national and local levels. Among other buildings and gardens, it now houses in a museum the third public collection of Sriwijayan artefacts of Palembang (mostly comprising replicas) and a central building enshrining a replica of the 682 CE Kedukan Bukit inscription. The latter is commonly associated with the foundation by King Sri Jayanasa of the Sriwijaya polity (*kadatuan Sriwijaya*) at Palembang. The site chosen for this recreation and educational park is that of Karang Anyar, which for a while was being investigated by archaeologists as a potential site for a Sriwijayan political power centre.[6] It soon turned out though, immediately after the first excavations were carried out in 1989, that, as it stood on the ground, with its waterways, reservoirs and "floating islands" *(balai kambang*), the site had indeed been associated with political power, but it was that of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II. It so happens that our *Pahlawan Nasional* had owned the land and had started developing the area, possibly to prepare his own burial ground, following a Palembang tradition of burying members of the ruling family on sites surrounded by water flowing into the Musi River.[7] The Karang Anyar site and its surroundings had indeed been occupied in Sriwijayan times, mainly around the 9th century CE, but the only traces left of this period are a scatter of surface finds of contemporary artefacts, mainly some Chinese ceramics, a few layers of an ancient brick wall and, possibly, one ancient canal. Nothing there has so far been found by

6. On the discovery and the early hypothesis about the site of Karang Anyar, see Manguin 1987, 1993.

7. Personal communication by Mr. Djohan Hanafiah, a former member of the Provincial Parliament and a descendant of Sultan Badaruddin.

archaeologists that legitimates the assigning of this mostly early 19th-century site from Sultan Badaruddin's hands into those of the founder of the first Sriwijaya dynasty.[8]

A sense of belonging to a community which is best defined by its remote but glorious past has also emerged in the local musical scene. The lyrics of the nightly closing tune of TVRI Palembang, as heard in 1996, were unambiguous:

> Bumi Sriwijaya / Kembang Nusantara /
> Gagah bujangnya / Molek gadisnya /
> Warga Sriwijaya / Warga yang bahagia /
> Bumi Sriwijaya yang permai / Jaga kelestariannya.9

A popular tune (by Hera Sofiyan and Karel Simon), often heard on the piped music loudly present in Palembang restaurants in 1996, carried the point a lot further. The phrase *Palembang kebangaan bangsa Sriwijaya* ("Palembang, pride of the Sriwijaya people") was pronounced a number of times. *Bangsa*, in the meaning of "people" or "nation", found itself applied to the entity "Sriwijaya", thus conferring to this ancient polity a previously unheard of modern connotation (the term *[suku] bangsa*, as we will see further down, was earlier used by Sumatran intellectuals for their own island, but soon found itself reserved for the Indonesian "nation").

Another popular tune (by Denny Ronny), heard on TVRI Palembang, gave the last Sultan a better share of the local history: the song carried the title "Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin" and told of the Sultan's resistance to the Dutch and of his being a hero of such *perjuangan* (struggle). He was quoted as being a *penerus cita bangsa Indonesia* ("a propagator of Indonesian national feeling") and a *bangsawan pendekar bangsa* ("a noble nationalist fighter") and therefore found his place among the *Pahlawan Nusantara* (the "heroes of Nusantara"). But the motto of the song also kept referring to him as a *Pahlawan Bumi*

8. The *kadatuan Sriwijay*a referred to in the most central of the 7th-century inscriptions was probably located at the other end of present-day Palembang city, near where the inscription was found, close to Geding Suro. It seems to have been partly destroyed during the building in the late 1960s of a large fertilizer plant, aptly named *Pupuk Sriwijaya (i.e.* "Sriwijaya Fertilizers"), and when intense looting took place near Geding Suro in the early 1990s.

9. A free translation of these verses would read: « Realm of Sriwijaya / Flower of Nusantara / How strong are your young men / How dainty are your girls / People of Sriwijaya / Blissful people / Beautiful realm of Sriwijaya / Let us preserve it forever ».

Sriwijaya ("hero of the Realm of Sriwijaya"). The pop author of the song thus happily, if anachronically, resolved the identity quandary: Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II found himself aggregated with his Indianised predecessors.

Despite all this, one should be reminded here that the name "Sriwijaya" is a relatively recent addition to Indonesian historiography, dating from when the above mentioned 7th-century inscriptions were brought to light early in the 20th century. No other indigenous sources other than the long-forgotten inscriptions mention the name of the ancient polity. However, one Malay text does come close to naming the ancient kingdom. In the opening chapters of the *Sejarah Melayu*, the classic Malay chronicle put into writing in the 16th -17th century at the courts of the Melaka Sultans, the original Palembang period of the history of the Melaka dynasty is related in legendary terms. The origin myths of the Malays are revealed in close association with the sacred hill of Bukit Seguntang, explicitly situated in Palembang. However, even though a precise topographical description of the landscape around Bukit Seguntang is given in these inaugural chapters of the *Sejarah Melayu*, the name "Sriwijaya" itself is never mentioned: the original, semi-mythical kingdom is called "Andelas".[10] This was already noted by Westenenk in 1923; further investigations during recent field surveys confirmed that place names described in the famous Malay text around and south of Bukit Seguntang were still familiar to older Palembang people in the 1980s. This myth of origin, popular among Malays from across the Straits of Melaka, was then officially consecrated during a number of visits to Palembang by the Governor and other members of the government of Melaka, followed by pilgrimages to the Bukit Seguntang group of mythical tombs.

In fact, the only explicit link between the name Sriwijaya and South Sumatra is provided by a late Chinese source (the 15th cent. *Yingyai shenglan*) that refers to Palembang as the ancient Sriwijaya, and appears also to be the last time Sriwijaya is mentioned by name (albeit in a Chinese transcription) in an original source.[11] This broad discontinuity in regional perceptions of the past, as well as the difficulties encountered by 20th-century archaeologists

10. The name Andelas has survived as a local name for the Island of Sumatra (now outdated), as that of a *marga* (district) in neighbouring Bengkulu province, and remains in use in West Sumatra (Padang has a Universitas Andelas).

11. Westenenk 1923, Coedès 1918; Manguin 1987. Historians and, more recently, archaeologists have linked Palembang and Sriwijaya on a variety of other, more convincing, grounds. The 15th-century reference is from J.V.G. Mill's translation of the *Yingyai shenglan* (Mills 1970: 98).

in gathering enough solid evidence, explain why it took until the late 1980s before textual data about Sriwijaya were finally solidly linked to a specific location, *i.e.* Palembang and southern Sumatra as a whole.

Contrary to that of "Majapahit" (in Java as well as in South Sumatra), the name "Sriwijaya" found itself totally obliterated from local memories. As reported from villages upstream from Palembang earlier in the century and as it is heard among keepers of the tradition nowadays, the orally-transmitted "historical" discourse is exclusively Javano-centrist (notwithstanding recent seeping of the Sriwijaya syndrome through modern education): it refers almost exclusively to Java and Majapahit as the origin of the people and of local realms, and as the source of all past glory.[12] This is no doubt a reminiscence of the history of the post-Sriwijaya period, when Majapahit took over in Java, and particularly of the Islamic period (post 15th cent.), when a very close relationship was kept with Java (which at times dominated the region politically). One should remember that Javanese had become a court language at Palembang, and that Malay dialects spoken in South Sumatra (particularly in Palembang) still use many Javanese words.

Hendrik Kern (1913) was therefore the first scholar to read and publish the name *Sriwijaya* as he found it in the 686 CE Kota Kapur inscription, written in Old Malay. However, it was George Coedès who first identified the name as that of a kingdom (in 1918) and who later (1930, and other articles) kept working at revealing the grandeur of the polity which he was convinced had been located in South Sumatra. Most of his early work was published in French in the *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient*, and therefore remained largely inaccessible to laymen in Palembang.[13] Dutch historians and archaeologists of course carried out further research on the subject until Indonesian Independence and history books carried their often contradictory conclusions regarding the Malay polity, its exact location (in Sumatra or on the Malay Peninsula) and its ruling dynasty (the *Sailendra*, of undecided Funanese, Malay or Javanese origin).

12. Such oral traditions of the various people now living in the Musi River Basin were gathered by the ORSTOM-CNRS-EFEO "Ecologie du Peuplement à Sumatra-Sud" research programme, carried out in cooperation with the Pusat Penelitian Universitas Sriwijaya and the Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional (Guillaud 2006). On the general subject of the image of Majapahit, one can refer to Supomo 1979.

13. The principal articles by Coedès were only translated into Indonesian (the first translatiun into any other language) in 1989. The first English translation appeared in 1992 in Malaysia. See Coedès & Damais 1989 and 1992.

Despite these obvious historiographic difficulties, the name "Sriwijaya" assumed in post-Independence Palembang the importance we have just observed, long before recent archaeological work confirmed that Sriwijaya as a polity had indeed been founded at Palembang in the 680s and had southern Sumatra as its original ecumene. What is it then that drives a provincial capital to emphasize the usage of a little known Indianised predecessor, rather than a (potentially) much better documented Islamic Sultanate, headed, moreover, by a National Hero?

It is strange indeed to observe that the city of Palembang is still paying little attention to the province's sultanate period, despite the fact that it figures a lot more prominently in the city's landscape. Indeed, Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin was more than just a hero of the resistance to the Dutch, fulfilling the requirements of *pahlawan nasional* in terms of service and sacrifice. He appears to have had a sense of urban grandeur, and had many projects initiated for his capital (many left unfinished but still visible on the ground), all neglected today or misappropriated by the image of Sriwijaya: Kuto Besak, Karang Anyar, Pulau Seribu, Soeka Raja, Sungei Kedukan, etc.[14] The authorities of Palembang and Sumatra Selatan were late in seeking and getting their Islamic Pahlawan Nasional (only in 1987) and this may be a reflection of the little interest the politicians of this primarily merchant city had paid until recently to its history and cultural relics, being content with the superficial "Sriwijaya" hustle mentioned above.[15] It could also be argued — in marketing terms — that the Sultanate and its last ruler were felt to be losers, therefore provided with a negative image (despite the heroism of their fight against the Dutch), whereas Sriwijaya was always promoted as a conquering,

14. Much research remains to be carried out in the field, through the study of aerial photographs and of textual sources, both local and European, to outline a comprehensive history of the last two to three Sultans in Palembang and to ascertain their role in the creation of the modern city of Palembang. The remarks above are based only on cursory observations during recent archaeological surveys and excavations, the aims of which were to locate much older urban features. The excellent booklets by Djohan Hanafiah (1988, 1988a, 1989) could provide a good start for such a research venture.

15. Sultan Badaruddin's entry to the pantheon of Indonesian *Pahlawan Nasional* dates from the 5th of January 1987 (Surat Gubernur n° 433/00024/X/1987). The case for his nomination as a national hero was put forward by Rhaden Hadjie Moehammad Akib, a local historian, in a publication sponsored in 1980 by various branches of the local government and in a typed report by a « Team perumus hasil-hasil diskusi sejarah perjuangan Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II » entitled *Risalah Sejarah perjuangan Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II*, issued by the Kotamadya Palembang in 1980. On local and national heroes in modern Indonesian political culture, see Leclerc (1973/1993), who was among the first to study the representations of these heroic figures. A recent case study in the Sumatran province of Riau will be found in Barnard 1997.

and thus positive, polity.[16] One probable, if unwritten, reason, is that the Sultans and their court were perceived as being too Javanese for the commoner in South Sumatra.[17]

The reasons for this attitude could therefore be claimed to be multiple. None looms as large, though, as the fact that Palembang and South Sumatra, unlike many other places in Indonesia, was in no need of a local hero to be represented at national level. It had more than it needed with the former grandeur of Sriwijaya, already long promoted by prominent intellectuals and by President Soekarno himself as "the first nation" of Indonesia.

Indeed, Sumatran intellectuals, swiftly following in the steps of French and Dutch scholars of the 1920s, soon incorporated the newly-revealed glorious and venerable past of their native island into their quest for identity. Scholarly squabbles about what and where exactly was Sriwijaya were promptly set aside: they harboured no doubt that Sriwijaya was in southern Sumatra, following, it must be said, the hypothesis put forward by most serious scholars of the time. Local scholars from the neighbouring provinces of Jambi and Riau also claimed that the heartland of Sriwijaya had been located in their own region. Some scholars also claimed it had been in Malaysia or Southern Thailand. These debates, however, never left scholarly circles and the image of Sriwijaya was never used there to promote provincial identity.

The history of Sriwijaya was thus integrated into the discourse of the first nationalist organizations of the Dutch East Indies. Under colonial rule, during the first quarter of the 20th century, their quest for identity was first kept at a regional level. Young Sumatran intellectuals (most of them studying at schools in Batavia) united — with mixed success — in the *Jong Sumatranen Bond* (the "League of Young Sumatrans", 1917-1930), an association which published a magazine called *Jong Sumatra*. Despite the cultural diversity of the island, these students upheld the image of a Sumatran nation (*suku bangsa*) sharing a language, Malay, and, due to its position on the shores of the essential thoroughfare of the Melaka Straits, a unique history of prosperous trading kingdoms. This provided them with enough data to counterbalance Javanese cultural nationalists of the time, who claimed supremacy of such realms as Mataram or Majapahit over Sumatra, as well as over Java. The discovery of

16. Many other Pahlawan Nasional are of course « losers », if considered only in the short term: Hasanuddin, Diponegoro, and Cut Nyak Dhien were also defeated by the Dutch.

17. The Sultans at Palembang were ultimately of Javanese descent and court culture was largely Javanized (court chronicles, for instance, were written in Javanese).

Sriwijaya had come just in time for their struggle, and articles such as that in which N.J. Krom hypothesized in 1919 a Sumatran period in Javanese history served their purpose well and fed their aggressive comments in *Jong Sumatra*, under such names as Amir, Muhammad Yamin or Muhammad Hatta. Later on, a shift from regional nationalism towards a quest for national identity became effective when the *Jong Sumatranen Bond* joined *Indonesia Moeda* in 1931.[18]

When the time came to build up the image of the soon-to-be-created Indonesian nation, Muhammad Yamin drew heavily on these breeding grounds. In his introductory speech made on 28 May 1945, during the first meeting of the "Badan untuk menyelidiki usaha-usaha persiapan kemerdekaan" ("Committee in charge of the preparation of Independence"), Yamin made it clear that Sriwijaya was to be considered as the first *Negara Indonesia* (the *negara Syailendra-Sriwijaya* was given for that specific purpose a very broad chronological life span, 600-1400; the relatively short-lived *kerajaan Majapahit*, 1293-1525, thus became the second *Negara Indonesia*). The future president Soekarno himself acknowledged a few days later that only Sriwijaya and Majapahit had attained in the past both the state of *merdeka* and of a *nationale staat* encompassing "the whole of Indonesia."[19] The congruence between the images of "empire" put forward by colonial scholars, which divide the world between great powers, and that of the *nationale staat* of the Indonesian nationalists is of course striking, as noted by Jacques Leclerc. Recent historical studies have now put back the structure of Southeast Asian large states into more convincing—less Euro-centric—perspectives: various historians, drawing largely on local representations, have described political systems far removed from European paradigms. The descriptions of "segmentary", "galactic" or "mandala" polities, of "theatre states" and other "city-states" have shied away from the territorial components of earlier descriptions of Southeast Asian state forms, which had straightforwardly been embraced by nationalists. This reached a point where, in the case of

18. See Miert 1996, from which I gathered all the data on the *Jong Sumatranen Bond* used in this essay. See also Bodden 1997 on the works of Sanusi Pane, and Foulcher 1977 on the sense of the past in Malay poetry of the 1920s. Anthony Reid provided general background information in his essays on the nationalist quest for an Indonesian past (1979) and on Sumatran identity (1987). See also Anderson (1991) and Leclerc (1975/2000).

19. Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia 1995: 11, 24, 74-75.

Sriwijaya, one has had to explain how such a symbolical, territorially-condensed form of political power could still have had such a considerable impact on the world economy.[20]

The adoption of Majapahit by nationalists as the second *nationale staat* fell within the common limits of nation-building processes. Java has a rich literary tradition, including localised Indian epics, and some other vernacular texts more specifically concerned with the reality of the state and its outreach, such as the *Pararaton* and the *Nagarkrtagama* (*Desawarnana*). [21] All were well-known in the 1940s and thus provided the literary historiography which commonly served as the foundation of nation-building discourses. In contrast, the 1918 "discovery" of Sriwijaya by George Coedès only offered—in terms of a vernacular literary tradition—half-a-dozen brief inscriptions, all written within a few years, by a single ruler (*datu*). The larger Sebokingking inscription was only published in 1956, and it is this text that gave its true dimension to the first known Malay examples of political self-expression. And so did the still later discoveries of the two southern Lampung Old Malay inscriptions with texts similar to those of Karang Berahi (Jambi) and Kota Kapur (Bangka). These allowed historians to supplement their similar textual contents with a spatial statement, after cartographic plotting of their find spots. This progressively-updated corpus of late 7th-century vernacular representations of Sriwijaya's political space later found its way into the official *National History* of Indonesia.[22] In pre-Independence times, however, in the total absence of a literary production in first-millennium Sumatra, and because the link with ancient Sumatran history and Sriwijaya had snapped, it is the narrative of Coedès and his Dutch colleagues—with all their colonial-period undertones—that served as the basis for the nationalist's choice of the Malay state as the first Indonesian *nationale staat.*

Muhammad Yamin was not to be undone by the lack of a deep, vernacular historical narrative and the accounts of Western scholars were put to almost immediate use. Ever a prolix author, he kept popularizing in overtly nationalistic terms the role of Sriwijaya, seen as a powerful empire, in the formation of Indonesia's unity. He did so in the 1950s in a variety of more or

20. See among others Kulke (1986, 1991) and, specifically for Sriwijaya, the recent works by Kulke (1994) and Manguin (2000, 2001, 2002). On state models developed in other regions of Southeast Asia, see also Tambiah 1976, Geertz 1980, and Wolters 1999.

21. The *Pararaton* was first published in 1897 by Brandes; H. Kern (1919) published parts of the *Nagarkrtagama* (the true name of which is now known to be *Desawarnana*, or "depiction of the districts"); however, its first complete, annotated translation by Theodor Pigeaud appeared only in 1960-63. See also Robson (1995) and Supomo (1979).

22. Sumadio (ed.) 1992.

less popular books, and in an exceptionally long paper presented in 1958 at the first conference of the MIPI, the ancestor of LIPI (This was a few years before *Konfrontasi*, but the work was in undisguised pan-Malay terms). He filled many ministerial positions until his death in 1962, including Education, and Culture and Information: this no doubt contributed to the broad diffusion of his views.[23] Yamin's historical atlas, published in 1956, also provided readers with a graphical depiction of the empire's alleged pan-Southeast Asian territory, a true *nationale staat*, on a par with the other Western empires presented in the same volume, from Rome to modern times. The image of Sriwijaya he outlined kept appearing subsequently in most history text books of Indonesia, in more-or-less disguised nationalistic terms. The displays under the Monas (National Monument) in Jakarta still carry very much the same historical message: Sriwijaya is depicted there in good position, as a harbour site with many sailing ships loading and unloading their precious cargoes.

During the first two decades after Independence, the nation-building myth of a *nationale staat* named Sriwijaya, first popularized by young Sumatran intellectuals of the 1920's, was now claimed back by the people in Palembang, and its memory was kept alive by such local scholars as Raden Haji Moehammad Akib.[24] This resulted in the ubiquitous references to Sriwijaya described above, despite the still largely hypothetical nature of Palembang's claim to being the capital of Sriwijaya. By the time the first professional excavations were carried out in Palembang in 1973 by a joint Indonesian-American team, the trend was well established and the ambiguous results of this first campaign did not discourage local expectancies (nor for that matter those of a variety of Indonesian and foreign archaeologists).[25] It turned out that, in the late 1980s, most of the earlier hypotheses by George Coedès and others were proven to have been right on the button. Some ten years of

23. Yamin 1954, 1956, 1958, 1960. The copy of his *Pembahasan undang-undang dasar Republik Indonesia* (« Explanations of the constitution of the Republic of Indonesia ») kept in the library of the EFEO carries a manuscript note that provides us with one good illustration of the way his ideas kept permeating Indonesian society, a few months before Yamin's death: *Pemberian Menteri Penerangan Prof. Mr. H. Moh. Yamin pada briefing petugas-petugas inti Irian Barat, di Tjibogo 5 Mei 1962* ("Gift by Minister of Information Prof. Mr. H. Moh. Yamin on the occasion of a briefing for key civil servants of Irian Barat, in Tjibogo, 5 May 1962").

24. R.H.M. Akib (also known as RHAMA) was an architect claiming descent from the Sultan's family and a city *demang* (district headman). Some of the information provided in this paper was gathered during conversations with him in the early 1980's. He was very active publicizing the greatness of Sriwijaya, very much in the vein of Mohammed Yamin, and kept investigating possible archaeological traces of the former polity. He was later active in preparing the case for Sultan Badaruddin's candidacy to the title of *Pahlawan Nasional*. See Akib 1956, 1980.

25. The results of the 1973 campaign—then construed as negative—were publicized in Bronson & Wisseman 1976.

extensive excavations and analyses have now established beyond reasonable doubt that Palembang and South Sumatra were once the centre of power of a prosperous polity named Sriwijaya, at least during founding times in the late 7th and 8th centuries, and again during the economic trade boom of the 9th and 10th centuries. The capital of the polity moved to the neighbouring province of Jambi towards the end of the 11th century, where it survived until the 13th century. During and after the 11th century, trade activities at Palembang appear to have dwindled, until they picked up again during the 16th and 17th century, when a Sultanate was established there, in the wake of a new economic boom.

This scientific breakthrough of the 1980s was claimed on the fly by a new generation of Sumatran politicians. Letjen H. Ramli Hasan Basri, Governor of Sumatra Selatan from 1988 to 1998, turned bustling and dirty Palembang into a much cleaner and better organised city than what he found when he took charge of the Province, even winning a national competition for clean cities and gaining its present motto: *Palembang Kota Bari* (with *bari/bahari*, meaning "ancient", also standing as an acronym for *Bersih, Aman, Rapih, Indah*, *i.e.* "Clean, safe, tidy, beautiful"). In this context, image building, at Palembang and at provincial levels, was again a priority.

A son of Sumatra Selatan, Governor Basri carried out his policies in a rather blunt, authoritarian, way. Historical intricacies have not been his forte and political considerations and expediency appear to have been given high priority. One example is that of the *Diskusi Panel Palembang Sebagai Pusat Sriwijaya* ("Discussion Panel on Palembang as a Capital of Sriwijaya"), convened in 1989 in Palembang by the Bappeda Tingkat I, Sumatra Selatan, to gather data on Sriwijaya and on the *hari jadi Kota Palembang* (the "birth date of Palembang"). The late epigraphist Boechari concluded there in his paper that the official foundation date of Palembang could be said to be 16 June 682, following the Kedukan Bukit inscription which indeed mentions an inauguration of sorts on that date (whether this was the foundation of the polity, of its capital, or some other major event in the history of Sriwijaya remains unclear...). The final choice of the Governor, though, was 17 June, a clear reference to the politically more auspicious *17 Agustus*, the National Day of Indonesia.

The above-mentioned *Taman Purbakala Kerajaan Sriwijaya* (*TPKS*), built in the western suburbs of Palembang at the cost of some 4 billion Rupiah, owes much to Governor Basri's drive and desire to see this monumental, cultural, and entertainment complex inaugurated by

President Suharto in December 1994. It became an *obyek pariwisata*, the kind of "tourist attraction" the province has not been too good at organizing up till then, despite all its claims to a glorious past. The deficiencies were in part due to the archaeologists' difficulties at unearthing more than scraps of the local past, while the propensity of the local business community to build its factories and housing estates on top of past remains was a contributory factor. The invisibility for laymen of most remains dating back to Sriwijaya is a recurring problem for the promotion of the kingdom's heritage and the province's image.[26] With its open *pendopo*-like central building enshrining a replica of the Kedukan Bukit inscription (carrying on its stand the "foundation" text in Old Malay, Indonesian and English), with its multiple buildings and hydraulic monuments, this Archaeological Park compensates for the absence of tangible archaeological remains accessible to a general public, and therefore achieves precisely what Sumatran intellectuals mobilized themselves for six decades ago: When it was inaugurated by the Head of State, it portrayed their own glorious history in the context of the Indonesian nation.[27]

26. A recent article in *Kompas* quotes local historian Djohan Hanafiah: "The greatness of Sriwijaya should not be identified with huge physical remains. However, it is essential for the younger generations to keep remembering Sriwijaya as the largest maritime kingdom of Southeast Asia" ("Mengais Jejak Kebesaran Sriwijaya", *Kompas*, 28 Jan. 2008).

27. Despite this highly publicised agenda, the TPKS was later left to wither away and was never a public success, except possibly at night, for unintended purposes (see, for instance, a recent interview in the *Sriwijaya Post* of 29 January 2008: "Nyaris sama seperti 14 tahun lalu"). It appears that the "Visit Musi 2008" tourist promotion has brought new funds to restore some of its now derelict buildings.

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