

## ANCIENT KEDAH: A SRIVIJAYAN MANDALA IN THE MALAY PENINSULA

### KEDAH TUA: SEBUAH MANDALA SRIVIJAYA DI SEMENANJUNG TANAH MELAYU

Muhammad Nu'man Mohd Nasir & Zuliskandar Ramli

#### Abstrak

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Ancient Kedah was a polity located in the Malay Peninsula that have been closely integrated into the Srivijaya ring of *mandala*. Based on various foreign records that were made by the Indians, Chinese and Arabs have stated that Ancient Kedah was under the influence of the polity known as Srivijaya. This study aims to discuss the relationships that exist between these two polities that have shaped the history of the Malay Peninsula and Insular Southeast Asia. Written records concerning the existence of Ancient Kedah, its relation with Srivijaya and also previous archaeological studies in Kedah have been studied to tackle this topic. Ancient Kedah and Srivijaya indeed have a close relationship which, as the former is a *mandala* of the latter. However, as a *mandala*, Ancient Kedah still retain its autonomous power to govern its polity. Through the Srivijaya sociopolitics, we can have a better understanding on some aspects of Ancient Kedah sociopolitical structure as the latter does not have any written records concerning this matter. Ancient Kedah position as a strategic port-city with lucrative economic opportunities and the religious factor, caused this polity to be closely integrated into the Srivijaya rings of *mandala*.

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**Keywords:** *Ancient Kedah, Srivijaya, Malay Peninsula, Insular Southeast Asia, Mandala*

#### Abstrak

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*Kedah Tua merupakan sebuah politi di Semenanjung Tanah Melayu yang diintegrasikan dengan rapat dalam lingkaran mandala Srivijaya. Berdasarkan kepada rekod bertulis yang dihasilkan oleh orang India, Cina, dan Arab menyatakan, Kedah Tua telah tunduk kepada pengaruh sebuah politi yang dikenali sebagai Srivijaya. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk membincangkan hubungan yang wujud antara kedua politi ini yang telah mencorakkan sejarah Semenanjung Tanah Melayu dan kepulauan Asia Tenggara. Rekod bertulis berkaitan kewujudan Kedah Tua, hubungannya dengan Srivijaya serta kajian arkeologi terdahulu di Kedah telah dikaji untuk kajian ini. Sememangnya Kedah Tua mempunyai hubungan yang rapat dengan Srivijaya, dengan Kedah Tua merupakan mandala kepada Srivijaya. Sebagai sebuah mandala, Kedah Tua masih lagi tetap mempunyai kuasa autonomi bagi mentadbir politinya sendiri. Tiada sebarang rekod bertulis berkenaan dengan struktur sosiopolitiknya, namun berdasarkan kepada sosiopolitik Srivijaya, sedikit sebanyak sosiopolitik lampau Kedah Tua dapat difahami dengan lebih baik. Kedudukan Kedah Tua sebagai bandar pelabuhan yang strategik dengan peluang ekonomi yang menguntungkan dan faktor keagamaan, menyebabkan politi ini telah disepadukan secara rapat ke dalam lingkaran mandala Srivijaya.*

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**Kata kunci:** *Kedah Tua, Srivijaya, Semenanjung Tanah Melayu, Kepulauan Asia Tenggara, Mandala*

## INTRODUCTION

Ancient Kedah was a polity that situated in the northern part of the Malay Peninsula. It is an ancient Malay polity that existed long before the establishment of the Malacca Sultanate in the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD. Geographically, the Ancient Kedah was a vast polity that stretched from Takuapa, Thailand to Kuala Selinsing in Perak, Malaysia. Even though this polity has a vast region under its control, however written records regarding Ancient Kedah are scarce. The existence of the Ancient Kedah as one of the important polities in the Malay Peninsula can be trace based on the written records and archaeological discoveries. The written records besides archaeological data are crucial for us in understanding the history and the roles played by this polity during its existence. Even though the written records concerning Ancient Kedah are existed, but it scarcely discusses this polity in great details. There are three main sources of written records regarding the Ancient Kedah, which are the records from India, China, and Arab. Between these three sources the Indian mention about the Ancient Kedah the most.

The first type of Indian written records concerning the Ancient Kedah are the Tamil literature, such as the Sillapadikaram and Pattinapalai. Sillapadikaram is one of the Tamil epics and it has been dated around second to third century AD, during the late Sanggam Age. In this epic, it is stated that the Malay Archipelago has already established trading network with the Southern India. Later in the epic, it also tells us that a cargo ship from Tondi has stop at Madurai carrying interestingly aloe woods called as *kadaravan*. The term *kadaravan* suggested that the woods came all the way from *Kidaram* (Ancient Kedah) which is in the Malay Archipelago (Braddell 1989).

Another literature piece from the Sanggam Age mentioning the Ancient Kedah is Pattinapalai, which has been dated around 190-200 AD. In this literature piece, it is stated that goods from *Kazhagam* are being traded in Puhar or in Kaveripattinam. The term *Kazhagam* in Pattinapalai is apparently conveys the same location as the Kadaram, which refers to the Ancient Kedah (Nilakanta Sastri 1975). Pattinapalai have shown clearly that trade relations between South India (Chola) and Ancient Kedah have already been established. Besides that, Ancient Kedah was also being mentioned in Parunkathai, which has been dated in 10<sup>th</sup> century AD after the Sanggam Age. Parunkathai is one of the Tamil epics, and the term *kataraththu irumpu* was being mentioned in it. The term denotes 'iron came from *Katarum*', which refers to the Ancient Kedah (Zuliskandar et al 2017).

Another type of Indian written records concerning Ancient Kedah is Sanskrit records. The Kathasaritsagara is a compilation of many stories including historical literature and Indian legends. This record was compiled by Brahman Somadeva around the year 1070 AD, and Ancient Kedah was mentioned several times in Kathasaritsagara, by using the name *Kataha Dvipa* (Wheatley 1961). The *Kataha Dvipa* in the story is a rich and real port and it has been used as a location for some of the stories such as in *Gubasena*, *Chandrasvamin*, and two princesses. This compilation shed lights on the part that Ancient Kedah is famous for its port and international trades as ships from India have sailed there beside the polity also has established diplomatic relations with Tamralipti. Furthermore, a Sanskrit drama in 8<sup>th</sup> century AD which is the *Kaudimabotsava* also mentioned Ancient Kedah using the term *Katabanagara*. In this drama it is stated that Ancient Kedah is a famous city-port and have been continuously visited by Indian traders. The *Kataha* port was connected to the port of Tamralipti in India (Zuliskandar et al 2017). Based on the Indian written sources, Ancient Kedah is synonym with international trades and its city-port is not a rare location for the Indian traders as it is one of their main stops in the Malay Archipelago.

Written records from Chinese sources also helped shed the light on Ancient Kedah during the protohistoric period of the Malay Peninsula. One of the records regarding Ancient Kedah came from the travel journal made by I Ching, a Buddhist monk who has travelled from China to India and back, besides he also stayed in Srivijaya for quite a while during the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. In 671, I Ching stops in *Chieh-cha* (Ancient Kedah) before continuing his journey to Nalanda, it was still an independent polity during that time and I Ching also stated that all his journeys were made using Malay-owned ships. On his way back from Nalanda in 685, I-Ching stopped again in Kedah and reported that Kedah was then a vassal of Srivijaya together with Malayu (Jambi). Another important Chinese record stated that *Chieh-cha* (Ancient Kedah) has sent their diplomatic mission to the Chinese court. This *Chieh-cha* is the same as the *Chieh-cha* that I Ching visited during his time in this region, and the Chinese classified the polity as a *guo* (state) (Wheatley 1961; Zuliskandar & Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 2012: 100).

From the Arab-Persian records, Ancient Kedah was known as *Kalah* or *Kalah-bar*. Abu Dulaf Misa'r stated that *Kalah* was a large kingdom surrounded by walls, flower gardens, water resources facilities, markets, and houses with a large population (Braddell 1950). He then added that the people living in *Kalah* ate animals that were not slaughtered and bathed in the river to cleanse themselves. The main food at that time was wheat, vegetables sold by weight and bread sold by quantity. In terms of clothing, they are depicted wearing very fine *firand* (silk imported from China). *Kalah* has had an organized social system in terms of justice, treatment of offenders and matters related to fines. Although there is debate as to whether the location of *Kalah* is in modern day Takuapa or Kedah, most scholars asserted that modern day Kedah is the location of *Kalah* as recorded in Arabic sources around the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (Wheatley 1961; Mohd Supian 2002; Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 2008). Other Arabic record such as the *Akhhbar as-Sin wa'l-Hind* has also stated that *al-Zabaj* or the Srivijaya has dominated the polity of *Kalah-bar* (Zuliskandar & Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 2012). Based on the written records by various foreign sources, it is safe to confirm that Ancient Kedah was an entrepot that play a major role in the international trades network that stretch from the Arab-Persian region and South Asia to China. Whereas these foreign records also attest that Ancient Kedah was an integral part of Srivijaya, hence the emergence of view that both were once a twin or a binodal polity (Zuliskandar & Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 2012; Manguin 2022b).

## ANCIENT KEDAH AND SRIVIJAYA

Long before the emergence of Srivijaya as reported by I Ching in the late 680s AD, there are other polities that have been established earlier in the Malay Peninsular and Insular Southeast Asia. These polities such as the Ancient Kedah and Malayu will later be closely integrated in the Srivijaya ring of *mandala*. One of the oldest inscriptions of the Southeast Asia, the Buddhagupta Inscription of Bujang Valley marked the period of the existence of Ancient Kedah as an early polity, even though there are other records especially from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD that loosely being associated with the emergence of Ancient Kedah. Later in 638 AD, Chinese records attests that Ancient Kedah has indeed sent a diplomatic mission to the Chinese court, and their status was put as a state (*guo*) (Manguin 2022a). The data related to the early existence of early Malay polities before the establishment of Srivijaya shows that state formation and urbanization have been going on for a long time in Southeast Asia. From the year 695 until 742 AD, the Chinese only recorded a single name that keeps sending diplomatic missions to their court, and the disappearance of the name of earlier Malay polities. This proves that these polities, including Ancient Kedah, have been absorbed or submitted to the power of Srivijaya.

### Ancient Kedah and the Srivijaya Ring of Mandala

The political model of Srivijaya and its relationship with the other polities in the Sumatra and Malay Peninsula including the Ancient Kedah is not yet elucidated. Academicians and researchers alike have come up with a few theories and explanations on this matter, whether it is overlordship or perhaps Srivijaya and the other polities came together to form a federated state between them. Srivijaya state structure according to O.W. Wolters has a very close resemblance to the 'great

mandala', that is, the geographical extent of this polity and its political identity cannot be clearly ascertained (Kulke 1993). Besides the murkiness of Southeast Asian political identity, researchers also have to curb with the vagueness of these polities socioeconomic typology. Several models have been used to elucidate the typology and to some extent, the state formations of these polities. These models include concentric, mandala-like polities; amorphous political structures with powerful, movable centers and extended peripheries; dendritic; and upland–lowland models (Manguin 2022a).

However, other inscriptions associated with Srivijaya like the Telaga Batu (Sabokingking), Kedukan Bukit, Palas Pasemah and a few of the fragmentary inscriptions, helps us to shed some light on the structure of this polity. A few terms have been identified that are crucial in rebuilding the model of Srivijaya especially during its early days, the key terms in this matter are *kedatuan*, *vanua*, *samaryyada*, *mandala*, and *bhumi*. The *kedatuan* is the place that Datu of Srivijaya reside, as discussed by Kulke (1993) and the definition of *kedatuan* has been a debate among the scholars.<sup>1</sup> Probably the *kedatuan* is being fenced off at least with wooden palisades, guarded by the gods (*devata*). Srivijaya Datu has his own army (*bala* or *vala*) and has a group of competent officers and servants (*buluntuban*) to help with his administration.

*Vanua* is the area surrounding the *kedatuan* consisting of several villages and it is a densely populated area. There exist agricultural activities, carpentry, and were bustling with commercial activities. The *vanua* along with *kedatuan*, markets, monasteries, gardens (like the Sri Sektra), and villages form the central urban area for Srivijaya. *Samaryyada* is the area surrounding the place of Srivijaya Datu and its *vanua*. In this area there are other local or princely *datu*s practicing their power, but due to the factors such as for accessing the seas and to control the forest resources, this *samaryyada* was put under the authority of the *buluntubans* who answered to the Datu of Srivijaya. The *samaryyada* can be considered as the hinterland for the *kedatuan*. While the *mandala* can be understood as the other polities that have submitted, absorbed in to the *kedatuan* (Srivijaya) or perhaps have agreed to form a federated polity.<sup>2</sup> Kulke (1993) suggests that the *mandala(s)* is in the estuaries and nearby river network, which is outside the forest area surrounding the Musi River system. The term *bhumi* (land) contains the entire polity of Srivijaya including the *samaryyada* and *mandala*.

In his *kedatuan*, the Datu of Srivijaya has absolute power and it cannot be challenged as the early Srivijaya polity has been identified possessing a strong centre, however it was surrounded by concentric rings in which the power and political control of the centre gradually decreased. The *mandalas* of Srivijaya located in strategic areas and are led by the local *datu*s. It is led by a local *datu* who is loyal to the Srivijaya Datu, and it is likely that there are at least attempts from the centre to place princes as *datu*s in the mandala. These *mandalas* were not completely taken over by Srivijaya, as they still have their own autonomous powers, and Kulke (1993) asserted that the *mandala* is a small replica of Srivijaya. We also agreed with this point of view as the polity as complex as Ancient Kedah, which was a *mandala* of Srivijaya for a part of her existence, must have its own *vanua* and *samaryyada* especially to provides food and other necessities for the local people alongside the merchants and sailors that came to Kedah. Although the mandala is seen as a replica of Srivijaya, it is the exponential growth of its city centre, bustling with various agricultural, commercial activities and its international trade networks that distinguish the greatness of Srivijaya compared to the *mandalas* under its influence.

### **A Glimpse on Ancient Kedah Sociopolitics through the Srivijaya Sociopolitics**

Local written records that have been found or unearthed in Kedah does not stated the structure of Ancient Kedah sociopolitics. Most of the inscriptions like the Buddhagupta are associated with religion and sailing. However, records from the Arabs does stated that *Kalab* (Ancient Kedah) has an organized social system and the Chinese recorded that they have received diplomatic mission from *Chieh-cha* (Ancient Kedah) before the establishment of Srivijaya. Archaeological findings throughout Kedah and Indian records have shown that Ancient Kedah was regularly visited by many traders, and its port functions as an entrepot. Through the Srivijaya sociopolitics, it can help

us to better understand the sociopolitical structure of Ancient Kedah, especially since it has become a *mandala* of Srivijaya. As a polity that handled regional and international trades, Ancient Kedah must have a well-organized structure to help them administer the trades and commercial activities, as only a complex and well-structured polity can manage international trades of such magnitude.

The Srivijaya *Kedatuan* was an important and great Malay polity in the Southeast Asia during its height. The superiority of this polity was apparent as Srivijaya has managed to control the Strait of Malacca, a part of the Malay World and dominated the trade network between the east and west in this strait. Those who adhere to the continuity in the politics of the ancient Malay kingdoms, have insisted that Srivijaya's ability to dominate the maritime trade network has been inherited by the Malacca Sultanate. In fact, Melaka also inherited some of the sociocultural aspects of Srivijaya. This view became dominant because according to the Malay Annals, it is stated that the lineage of the Melaka rulers, is from Srivijaya (Palembang) (Wolters 1970). The sociocultural foundation of Srivijaya can be traced and has been influenced by the polities that were established earlier in the Malay World, as these ancient Malay polities also already have their own political, administrative, and sociocultural systems. Even some of these polities have established diplomatic and trade relations with world powers such as China during their time (Wheatley 1961).

The supremacy of Srivijaya can be traced based on ancient inscriptions that have been found especially in Sumatra and Java. The Kedukan Bukit Inscription for example, has recorded that Dapunta Hiyam (Sri Jayanasa) was the founder of this *kedatuan* (Casparis 1975). During his reign, Srivijaya has successfully expanded its territory by conquering several areas including Malayu (Jambi). Dapunta Hiyam's military expedition started from his intention to perform the *Siddhayastra* around the year 605 Saka (683 AD), in addition he was also accompanied by 20,000 soldiers in canoes and 1,312 people who walked on land in the expedition. The expansion of power by the ruler of Srivijaya did not stop only at the southern part of the Malacca Strait. Through the records by the Chinese traveler I Ching and the Ligor Inscription, Srivijaya continued their military activities by conquering the regions located in the northern part of the Malacca Strait. I Ching has recorded that the Ancient Kedah was under the rule of Srivijaya when he has returned from India (Takakusu 1896). The Ligor inscription records that, Chaiya and several other small polities in Kra Isthmus have been under the political influence of Srivijaya by 775 AD (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 1984). In addition, the influence of Srivijaya on the region of Kra Isthmus, can be traced based on the art of Buddhist sculptures found in the region. The sculptures clearly show the reciprocal artistic influence between Srivijaya-Palembang and Kra Isthmus at that time.

The success of Srivijaya in terms of expanding its influence and territory required this *kedatuan* to have a robust political, administrative, and social organizational system. This system allowed the rulers of Srivijaya to govern their territory more orderly and smoothly. This also shows that Srivijaya has adapted the experience from the earlier Malay polity, which had an organized political and administrative organization. The political organization and administration of this polity can be examined on the Telaga Batu Inscription, which is dated around the last quarter of the 7th century AD (Casparis 1975; Bambang Budi Utomo & Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 2009). In this inscription it can be clearly seen that Srivijaya is a *kedatuan*, whose territory is divided into several types of areas or *mandala* (Wolters 1970). The *mandala* system starts from the center or the capital, then the circle expands to the regions further away from the center. Each Srivijaya *mandala* is ruled by a *datu* who is subject to the rule and superiority of the Srivijaya ruler (Casparis 1975). In fact, each *mandala* circle has its own role and give their utmost loyalties to ensure that Srivijaya can sustain their hegemony in the Malacca Strait.

As a *kedatuan* with a vast territory, Srivijaya needs an organized political and administrative system. The political and administrative system that has been created in Srivijaya was based on the *mandala* system. The ruling Srivijaya *Datu* is at the top of the political and administrative strata, followed by the *datu*s (local chiefs), the nobles and administrators, and the workers. The ruler of Srivijaya is the highest entity by being the supreme ruler who dominates the entire *kedatuan*. The ruler's role in the political aspect is to rule the *kedatuan* and its territory with the help of the

appointed officials. In fact, the Srivijaya Datu was also active in the military field, as the *Siddhayatra* inscriptions records the conquest expeditions carried out by him in the Insular Southeast Asia.

The *datu*s who ruled in Srivijaya consisted of princes as well as dignitaries and local chiefs, as stated in the Telaga Batu Inscription (Casparis 1975). A *mandala* ruled by a princely *datu* is known as *kadatuan*. While the *mandala* ruled by a *datu* who is not descended from the king is called a *pradatuan* (Casparis 1956; Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 1979). Each *mandala* may also have assistants to the *datu*, who help manage matters related to the *kadatuan/pradatuan* who are called *parvandas*, the army chief.

The dignitaries, officials and administrators include various positions that have their own duties and roles. Among these positions is the *senapati*, who acts as the head of the army. The duties and roles of this position are closer to the role possessed by the admiral (*laksamana*) in the Malacca Sultanate. Next is the position of *nayaka*, serving as officers. While the *pratyaya*, on the other hand, is the secretaries. The position of *hajipratyaya* oversees the public order within the state (police?), and the *dandanayaka* is the judge (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 1979).<sup>3</sup> Just below the ruler and the *datu*s of Srivijaya, these positions were among the leading role in the political and administrative aspects of the state. Besides that, there are other dignitaries and post that played important role in the state administration apart from the groups that have been discussed earlier, such as *murdabaka* (local headman), *tuban vatakvurah* (workmen supervisor), *adhyaksa nicavarna* (leader of the lower-class people), and *kumaramatya* (wealthy people) (Casparis 1975; Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 1979; Kulke 1993; Bambang Budi Utomo & Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 2009).

Apart from the dignitaries and administrators, there is also a working class in the political and administrative strata of Srivijaya. There are several positions that have been identified belong to this class such as *kyastha* (clerk), *sthapaka* (architect), *pratisara* (warrior), *pubawang* (shipping worker), *vaniaga* (trader), *vasikarama* (blacksmith), *marsi haji* (housekeeper), and *bulun haji* (servants or slaves of the king) (Casparis 1975; Kulke 1993; Bambang Budi Utomo & Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 2009). These four classes have their respective roles to ensure that the government and administration of Srivijaya runs smoothly.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to an organized political and administrative system, Srivijaya also has its own social organization system. There are four main social classes in Srivijaya society which are the royal class, the noble class, the independent people, and the slave class. The royal family includes the ruler of Srivijaya along with his immediate family and other relatives. Srivijaya ruler as has been discussed has power in political, administrative, military, judicial, taxation and economic aspects in his domain. Even the ruler also has a role in the spiritual aspect for his *kedatuan*, for example, Dapunta Hiyam Sri Jayanasa after carrying out a military expedition to expand the territory of Srivijaya, has built a park, namely Sri Sektra Garden to improve mental and spiritual well-being of his people (Nilakanta Sastri 1949). In addition, the ruler of Srivijaya was also involved in the construction of religious buildings inside and outside of Srivijaya, especially in India (Nilakanta Sastri 1949). Even he also has a social responsibility in expanding the teachings of Buddhism in Southeast Asia. The result of the expansion of Buddhist teachings was recognized by foreign travellers such as I Ching, who insisted that Buddhist monks from China who wanted to continue their studies in India, had to first study religious texts and practice Buddhist teachings in Srivijaya first, before continuing their journey to India (Takakusu 1896).

Futhermore, in the royal class it is also consists of four types of princes which is the *yuvaraja*, *pratiyuvaraja*, *raja kumara*, and *raja putra* (Casparis 1975). Except for *raja putra*, the three other prince types can inherit the throne of Srivijaya. Yuvaraja is the highest class among the princes in the hierarchy, with its role as the crown prince. Even though the *yuvaraja* is the immediate successor to the royal throne, he is also considered to be one of the main threats to the reign of the ruler of Srivijaya, especially if the *yuvaraja* holds power in a region that is far from the center of the *kedatuan*. While the *pratiyuvaraja* and *raja kumara* are the second and third in the hierarchical order after *yuvaraja*. As has been discussed earlier, the *datu*s of Srivijaya also consists of the royal princes beside the local nobles or dignitaries, and the three upper types of the princes can be appointed as *datu* of a *mandala* by the ruler. The *raja putra* is a type of prince that cannot inherits the Srivijayan throne as

the prince were not birthed by a royal princess. After the class of royalties, is the class of the nobility which consists of the nobles, dignitaries, and the administrator within the *kedatuan*. This class is involved and has its own influence in the politics and administration of Srivijaya.

Besides the royals and the noble class, Srivijaya society also consists of the independent citizens. Some of the working class such as *pubawang*, *vaniaga* and others are included in this group. In general, this group is the ruled group, they must be loyal to the ruler and carry out their responsibilities such as paying taxes and become workforce when called upon by the ruler. The relationship between the ruling class, especially the Srivijaya Datu, and the ruled class has been stated on the Telaga Batu Inscription (Casparis 1956, 1975; Bambang Budi Utomo & Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 2009). Both groups have their own responsibilities, and they complement each other. The king needs to provide protection, basic needs, and spiritual facilities to his people. While the people cannot disobey and commit treason to the king, and the treacherous people have been threatened with severe punishment and bad reprisal. The accords between the ruler and his people are stated in ancient inscriptions that have been found mainly in Sumatra (Casparis 1956). In addition to the accord, the legitimacy of the ruler of Srivijaya was further strengthened by the concept of deification of the king. The Srivijayan holds the belief that their king is an incarnation of *Amogapasha Avalokitesvara*. The *devaraja* cult in Srivijaya was developed from the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Slaves are the lowest class in the society structure of Srivijaya, as stated on the Telaga Batu Inscription (Casparis 1956). On the inscription there is the term *bulun haji*, which is the servant of the ruler (also can be translated as slaves). The existence of the term *bulun haji* on the Telaga Batu Inscription, which is an inscription of accord, is very interesting, because *bulun haji* was carved alongside other higher type of position in the Srivijaya socio-political structure such as the *yuwaraja*, *bhupati* and *senapati* to the lowest tier such as the slaves. All the positions mentioned in the inscription must give their allegiance to the ruler of Srivijaya. This is because these positions can challenge the ruler's authority besides, they can cause rebellion and commit treason against him. Therefore, it is not unusual for slaves to be recorded on the Telaga Batu Inscriptions alongside the higher classes in the Srivijaya society. Conspiracy and betrayal towards the ruler require a network and involvement of various parties including the slaves. The ruler's servants or slaves were almost always in close contact with the ruler and could become a security threat to him. In fact, the ruler's servants (and slaves) are also able to know the secrets of the ruler and the palace, thus there is possibility they can breach the secrets to the ruler's enemies. Therefore, through the accords between the ruler and the people, the ruler of Srivijaya obtained an oath of loyalty from every group and class that could interfere and challenge his rule.

### **The Importance of Ancient Kedah in Srivijaya Rings of Influence**

Ancient Kedah has been closely integrated into the Srivijaya political and socio-economic sphere, but why it happened? The need to include Ancient Kedah in its sphere are driven by the economic and religious factors as well as the polity location on the other side of the strait. Since the beginning of first century AD Ancient Kedah has at least an active "port" of trades. However, only in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD the Ancient Kedah became an entrepot that caters international trading activities as well as the regional trades. Like other port-cities in Southeast Asia, the development of Ancient Kedah port-city was started by a "core" that gradually evolving until it became an actual port and later an entrepot. This "core" at first, act as a supplier for necessary necessities to sailors and traders such as foods, water, and shelter. It also provides warehouse for storing trade goods and markets for commercial activities. The emergence of this "core", besides providing various needs to sailors and traders, also functioned as a collection centre of local products including spices, forest products and metals. Leong Sau Heng (1990) asserted that the early "core" in the Southeast Asia, including Ancient Kedah, may not even have a formal government or a well-organized central political system.

Since 5<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards, Ancient Kedah has catered trading activities from the East and West, becoming one of the prominent port-city in the Malay Peninsula. It has managed to attract traders from the Arab-Persia region, India, and China to stop and conduct commercial

activities at its port-city. Two of important Ancient Kedah sites are the Sungai Mas and Pengkalan Bujang, both acted as its entrepot. Archaeological excavations conducted by previous researchers in Sungai Mas and Pengkalan Bujang have unearthed various type of ceramics, both locally made and imported, glass, beads, and ancient structures throughout the area. Archaeological excavations conducted in Kedah have unearthed sherds of imported Middle East ceramics (Leong 1973; Nik Hassan Shuhaimi & Othman 1992). Besides ceramics, the presence of Arab-Persians traders in Ancient Kedah can be attests by the unearthed of Middle East glasses in large quantity (Wales 1940; Lamb 1966). The glassware found in Kedah is often in the form of bottles, containers for perfumes and in the form of glass lamps as found by Quaritch Wales (1940) at Pengkalan Bujang Site 18. The supply of perfume oil brought by Arab-Persian traders to the Southeast Asia, is also an important commodity for the Chinese market. The imported glasses from the Middle East are also used as raw material for the manufacturing of beads in Ancient Kedah (Zuliskandar 2014; Zuliskandar et al 2017).

The existence of trade network between Ancient Kedah and China can be attest by the presence of various types of Chinese ceramic that have been unearthed in Kedah. Whitewares from the Tang Dynasty have been reported to have been unearthed in Sungai Mas and Pengkalan Bujang. Besides that, a *Pao Hsiang Hua* type mirror that was unearthed at Site 12 near Bujang River manufactured during the Tang Dynasty, also fortify the evidence of the existence of trade relations between Ancient Kedah with China (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi & Othman 1992; Zuliskandar & Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 2012). In a recent archaeological excavation in Kampung Baru, Kota Kuala Muda, Kedah have also unearthed various types of imported Chinese ceramics since the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD such as ceramics *Yue* type celadon, whiteware, and *Changsha* ware from the Tang dynasty. The ceramics during Song Dynasty period such as the whiteware, celadon, and *Qingbai* are the most common imported ceramics unearthed at this site (Mori 2020: 109). These findings are parallel to the results of several series of excavations in Sungai Mas and Pengkalan Bujang as the ceramics from Song were unearthed in large quantities (Nuratikah 2020: 108; Zuliskandar & Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 2012).

The strategic location of Ancient Kedah on the other side of Malacca Strait can enhanced the hegemony of Srivijaya in this region. By absorbing the Ancient Kedah, Srivijaya can further advance their power and have a full control on maritime trades on both sides of the strait. This will greatly improve their economy as Ancient Kedah port is not just functioning as a collection centre but has developed into an entrepot since the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD and flourished ever since. The port of Ancient Kedah thus became the gateway of the Srivijaya Kedatuan and ensuring constant flow of income especially from commercial activities. However, there are no written records especially from local inscriptions that Srivijaya taxed their *mandala*. Whether they taxed their *mandala* or not, Srivijaya have gained economic and commercial advantage by absorbing other Malay polities that located in strategic locations throughout the Insular Southeast Asia and Malay Peninsula.

Furthermore, the needs to expands Srivijaya ring of power was not only driven by economic and political factors but also driven by religious factor, which is Buddhism. The devotion of Srivijaya ruler towards Buddhism can be attest as they became the protector of Buddhist monk in their city state. Until the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD, Buddhist monks were under the protection of the Malay Datu of Srivijaya. This city has always been a sojourn location for Buddhist pilgrims traveling between China and India. Here they learn the Buddhist teaching, Sanskrit, and translate religious books and *sutras*. Tibetan tradition states that in the City of Srivijaya, Dharmakirti produced a commentary on the "Ornament of Realization" *sutra*. Atisha, a disciple of Dharmakirti for 12 years, later translated the *sutra* into Tibetan. In 1025 Atisha returned to India before later returned to Tibet and became a prominent religious figure there (Manguin 2022b). Besides, the Srivijaya ruler also must ensure the network of Buddhist teachings from South India to China is always active and by expanding their ring *mandala*, Srivijaya has contributes to achieving their religious mission.



Buddhist teaching also thrived in Ancient Kedah, the unearthed of various structures and artifacts associated with Buddhism, throughout Kedah has attested to this view. The *candi* (ancient temple) such as Site 16A, Site 17, Site 21, Site 22, and the *candi* at Kampung Baru Archaeological Site of Kedah were some examples of Buddhist *candi* (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi & Othman 1992; Mohd Supian 2002; Mohd Shamsul Bahari et al 2018). The sites of Ancient Kedah are dated before the emergence of Srivijaya, and some are contemporary with it. Besides that, two important events in the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD also marked the importance of Ancient Kedah to the Srivijaya. The events are the Chola's raids in 1017 and 1025 AD on the Southeast Asia. The Cholas raids were to prevent Srivijaya from disrupting its trade relations with the Chinese. Kedah was one of the locations badly attacked by the Cholas, even a Chola inscription in 1025 also boasted that the ruler of Ancient Kedah (and Srivijaya) was captured, and its city had been seized. These attacks allowed the Cholas to be active in Sumatra politics and intensify the involvement of South Indian trade associations in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula (Zuliskandar & Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 2012; Manguin 2022b). The raids on Ancient Kedah, one of closely associated port-city with Srivijaya, was also intended to weaken the Srivijayan grasps on the strait trades and commercial activities.

## CONCLUSION

Regional and international trades is closely tied with Southeast Asia throughout the history. Early "core" was established to cater the needs of sailors and merchants that travelled along the coast of Malay Peninsula and the Insular Southeast Asia. This core then develops to extent their power to grab more opportunities that lies beyond their early territory. Ancient Kedah also emerged in location near major river that make an easier landfall for merchant ships. Archaeological projects in Kedah managed to unearthed artifacts that once were goods imported from Middle East, India, China alongside locally and regional goods. These artifacts include ceramics, glasses, beads, and figurines helped scholars to establish a firm understanding on the parts played by Ancient Kedah in the international trade networks. During its peak, Ancient Kedah was an entrepot that managed to attract many merchants to stop at its shore and conduct business here.

The presence of regional and foreign merchants in Ancient Kedah has shown its capabilities in administering regional as well as international trade networks. The emergence of early polity before the Srivijaya Kedatuan, was also driven by trades as has been discussed earlier. Ancient Kedah's position as a strategic port-city with lucrative economic opportunities, is one of the factors that caused this polity to be closely integrated into the Srivijaya ring of *mandala* in late 7<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Ancient Kedah's position as a strategic port-city with lucrative economic opportunities and the religious factor, caused this polity to be closely integrated into the Srivijaya ring of *mandala*. Srivijaya and its port-cities developed into cosmopolitans with more traders from different region, getting involved in its economy and commercial aspects of this polities. Trades and commercial activities have helped Srivijaya, Ancient Kedah alongside with the other Malay port-cities to flourish later during the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards. During this time, Indian cultural package has been received by the local polity. However, it should be stressed that even though Southeast Asia received the package through trades and maritime routes, it does not mean that they are passive recipients of the foreign culture. Instead, as attested by the inscription of Telaga Batu, apart from personal names, the ruler of Srivijaya did not use Sanskrit names to describe himself or his position like the other highest positions in Srivijaya. This shows that he was very proud of his local lineage to the extent that in all the *mandala* inscriptions in regions far from the center of Srivijaya, he used the word Datu Srivijaya as his official title.

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Muhammad Nu'man Mohd Nasir  
Department of History,  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,  
University of Malaya,  
&  
Calon PhD  
Institut Alam & Tamadun Melayu  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia  
Email: numanmuhd@gmail.com

Zuliskandar Ramli, Ph.D  
Senior Research Fellow  
Institute of the Malay World and Civilisation (ATMA),  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia,  
43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia  
Email: ziskandar@ukm.edu.my

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<sup>1</sup> Herman Kulke challenges the view that define the term *kedatuan* as *empire* or province. He argues that the *kedatuan* should bears the same meaning as the Javanese *keraton*, the place of the king.

<sup>2</sup> The idea of a federated polity between Srivijaya and other polities such as the Ancient Kedah have been discussed (talks and informal discussions) by Southeast Asian scholars such as Zuliskandar Ramli and Bambang Budi Utomo. While Amara Sricuchat also discussed the possibility of a 'Federated States of Srivijaya' in her 2014 published writing. When discussing about the 'Kedatuan Srivijaya' the term could also be understand as the whole of the polity, as the Srivijaya Kedatuan. See Pierre-Yves Manguin, 2022a, Early States of Insular Southeast Asia, in C.F.W. Higham & Nam C. Kim. *The Oxford Handbook of: Early Southeast Asia*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 765-790.

<sup>3</sup> Herman Kulke (1993) translate *hajipratyaya* as royal confidants while Bambang Budi Utomo and Nik Hassan Shuhaimi (2009) does not give translation for that term, contradicting the translation given by Nik Hassan Shuhaimi in 1979.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that *hulun haji* may be in a lower stratum because of their status as slaves.