

THE EMPIRE OF THE SOUTH SEAS*

(Śrīvijaya from the VIIth to the XIIIth centuries)

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The part of the world which forms the subject of this talk is in the forefront of current world events, owing to its natural resources and its geographical situation.

After having been, towards the beginning of the Christian era, the "land of gold" towards which Hindu navigators used to sail, the Malay peninsula and especially the islands of the Insulinde became, a few centuries later, for Arabs and Europeans, the land of spices, camphor and scented wood, prior to being transformed, quite recently, into one of the most important producers of rubber, tin and petrol. Moreover, the geographical situation of the Peninsula and of the Insulinde renders them a place of call for navigators bound from the West and India for China or *vice versa*.

(If one looks at the map, it will be seen that) on the one hand, there is the Indian Ocean, where, to quote Silvain Lévi: "the order of currents and periodic winds which govern navigation have for a very long time past been responsible for a system of intercourse in which the African littoral, Arabia, the Persian gulf, India, Indochina, the Insulinde and behind this, China, each and all take their respective shares."

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On the other hand, there is a sort of an inland sea formed by the China sea, the gulf of Thailand and the Java sea. All the countries, whether continental or insular, which this sea washes from the inner side, have a more or less extended sea-front which favours such an intercourse, the sea being in these regions a bond rather than an obstacle. Before the arrival of foreign navigators, the coastal population of these lands, despite the diversity of their origins, had developed, as a result of their intercourse, a community of culture which gave an impression of racial unity, to such an extent that the Hindus, and after them the Chinese, in coming into contact with these people of the islands or the barbarians of the South, summed them all up under the same ethnic term: Kouen-louen, Dvipantara, Zabab.

Father Henri Bernard has very correctly described Indochina and the Insulinde as being a sort of a natural barrier: "it is only by relatively narrow sea-channels, such as the strait of Singapore or the Sunda strait, that ships coming from the West by way of the Indian ocean or from the East by way of the China sea could pass from one side to the other." But he added: "Short-cuts by land were in those days impracticable, for the deltas of the Irrawady, the Salween, the Menam, the Mekong and the Red River, now and then obstructed by tropical vegetation, are marked by a country within, hilly and hostile to such an extent, that it could be easily crossed only since the days of aviation."

On this point, I am obliged to contradict the learned Father, for one knows for certain of the existence of several land routes in use from the remotest antiquity. Deltas with their mangroves, no more than deserts nor snow-cled mountains, have never been sufficient obstacles to adventurers in search of gold, traders in quest of silk or merchants anxious to dispose of their wares, and geographical obstacles are at times less dangerous than sea-pirates. And it is precisely the prevalence of piracy in the Straits which conferred upon land-routes a real importance, as attested by texts and archeological discoveries.

From south to north, there were at first the routes which, between Kedah and the isthmus of Kra, afforded passage from one sea to the other without any difficulty, namely: the passages from Kedah to Singora, Trang to Patalung, Trang to Nakhon Sithammarat, Trang to Bandon, Kra to Chumpon, and above all that of Takuapa to Chaiya, two sites the prosperity of which in the early centuries of the Christian era have been revealed by archeological researches.

For traders coming from India, the gulf of Thailand, and the China sea, were accessible by the route which starting from Tavoy crosses the mountains by the Pass of the Three Pagodas and descends towards the delta of the Menam by the Kanburi river (Pong Tük, P'ra Pathom). Further north again an access to the Menam valley and to the Mekong was practicable from the west, by the route from Moulmein to Rahêng, at the end of which arose in the XIIIth century the first big cities of the independent Thai (Sukhothai, Savankholok, etc.) I will not speak of routes from Yunnan by way of Burma and Assam, which though relevant, are hardly within the scope of my present sketch.

The Hindus seem to have been the first to feel the attraction of the transgangetic countries. Their expansion towards the East began a little before the commencement of the Christian era, and carried Indian religions and the usage of Sanskrit up to the coast of Annam as well as to Bala and Borneo. In origin it was a commercial expansion.

The principal cause of this rush towards the lands of gold seems to have been the disturbance within the circulation of the precious metal brought about by the conquests of Alexander and the movements of the races of central Asia during the centuries preceding the Christian era. India, which produced gold only in small quantities, but had always consumed much, imported it from Siberia by the route of the North-West. From the day when this route was cut, she had to look for gold elsewhere and so turned towards the transgangetic countries, that Chrysé of the ancient, where most rivers deposit a little gold.

This enterprise was helped on by the birth and spread of Buddhism, which, by abolishing the barriers of caste and the exaggerated concern for racial purity, suppressed at the same stroke, for Hindus converted to the new religion, the fetters which the fear of pollution from contact with barbarians had formerly put upon their voyages beyond the seas.

Buddhist literature of the epoch reflects this state of affairs, in revealing to us, among the generous lay protectors of Buddhism, a whole series of navigators who had been enriched by commerce. Sylvain Lévi was able to write: "A large number of stories from the Pali *Jataka* deal "with sea-adventure; the sea and navigation clearly held a high place "in the life of India at the time when these stories were being put into "shape."

Chinese historians of the epoch have left us many details concerning the aspect of the junks of the high seas.

Navigators who came from south India into the lands of gold and avoided coasting along the side of the Bay of Bengal and preferred to risk traversing the high sea, passed through either the channel of 10° between the Andaman and Nicobar islands or the one further south between the Nicobars and the headland of Atjeh. The former reached the coast somewhere near Takuapa, and the latter towards Kedah, two very ancient sites where archeological researches have revealed images and objects dating back to the first centuries of the Christian era.

According to Chinese historians, the territory of the Malay peninsula was divided at that time into a series of small principalities, each of which no doubt corresponded with a basin of one of the coastal rivers. Those most often mentioned are the following: Lankāsuka, Tāmbralinga (in the region of Nakhon Sithammarat from where come inscriptions which could date back to the Vth century), the country of the red earth from which hailed the patron of the junk who left in the region of Kedah a curious Buddhist ex-voto in the Sanskrit language, Grahi in the region of Chaiya at the extremity of the Bay of Bandon, and others which I have no time to enumerate.

The route of the Straits passed along the coast of Malāyu between Jambi and Palembang, where a very ancient statue of the Buddha belonging to the school of Amrāvati dating back possibly to the IIIrd-IVth centuries has been found. It touched occasionally the western part of the island of Java, where reigned towards 400/450 A. D. Pūrnavarman, King of Tarumā, from whom we have four Sanskrit inscriptions found in the region where later arose the ports of Bantam and Jacatra (Batavia).

A propos of this Professor Vogel wrote: "It is significant that these ancient traces of Hindu establishments have been found exactly in that part of the island where Dutch traders set up their first factories and which became the centre from which Dutch power spread out all over the archipelago. The geographical position of the coast where Batavia is situated, when considered in reference to Sumatra and the Indian continent, and the special advantages which such a situation offers in the way of navigation and commerce are circumstances explaining away without difficulty a coincidence which is not due to mere chance."

This route, which, for navigators bound from India for China, hardly seems to us a direct one, was in fact rendered necessary by the régime of monsoons to which it had to submit. As for those whom tempests or errors in navigation turned away from the ordinary route and compelled

to substitute for it the Sunda straits, then but little frequented, they passed along the western coast of Sumatra and had to call either at Palembang or in Java.

To reach China, then, navigators had to pass in sight of Pulo Condor and the coast of south Annam at the latitude of Fāndurānga, the ancient Cham province the name of which still survives to these days in the modern province of Phanrang, so rich in souvenirs of the past.

Hindu navigators were from early times attracted by the great islands of the East, Borneo and Celebes. From the west coast of this latter island comes a very old Buddha in bronze. Another image has been discovered in Borneo in the province of Kutei, where are also the Sanskrit inscriptions of King Mūlavarman, dating from almost the same period as those of Pūrnavarman in Java, other Indian vestiges have been dug up along the river of Pontianak.

This geographical sketch has permitted me, with the aid of archeological discoveries, to identify the localities of the oldest centres which received and then diffused Indian culture, most of which have remained throughout the centuries nerve-centres of vital importance for commerce and strategy.

I wish now, not to retrace the individual histories of each of these little Hinduised states, but to study how most of them had in the end whether of their own will or through coercion, to be organised into a coherent whole, by coming under the yoke of the most powerful or most favourably situated among them. Their common culture, of which I have just made a mention, coupled with a community of economic interests, was bound to provoke the birth of an Empire of the South Seas and to promote its duration. Let us see now under what circumstances this empire was born at the end of the VIIth century, what were the landmarks of its long history of more than six centuries, and finally what has become of its inheritance after its fall.

But first of all I must recall very briefly a first attempt at hegemony which took place as early as the IInd century A. D. on the Indochinese peninsula. I refer to the great Kingdom which was centred in the valley of the lower Mekong, to which the Chinese gave the name of Fou-nan, formerly pronounced *b'iu-nan*, a transcription of the Khmer word *bhnam* (*phnom*) "mountain". In fact the monarchs of this country bore the title of *King of the Mountain*, and the capital was in the modern pro-

vince of Prei Veng, in the neighbourhood of the hill of Ba Phnom, not far from the ferry of Banam, two place-names which perpetuate the ancient name to our days.

The origin of Founan goes back to the 1st century of the Christian era. In the following century a military chief whom the great inscription of Vo-canh calls Sri Māra and the Chinese call Fan Che Man, was brought into power by the people, and became the principal artificer of the country's grandeur.

"Fan Che Man was brave and capable," so say the Chinese Annals. "By the might of his arm he attacked and subdued neighbouring kingdoms; all admitted themselves his vassals. He assumed the title of Great King of Founan. Then he had big ships constructed, and by overrunning all the high seas he attacked more than ten Kingdoms. He extended his territory to five or six thousand *li*. Then he wanted to subjugate the Kingdom of the Golden Frontier (Burma), but he fell ill."

At the beginning of the VIth century, half a century before its fall, Founan was still considered by the Court of China as a big power among the countries of the south.

Nevertheless, even after its expansion over the Malay peninsula, Founan, master of the land-routes, did not seem to have extended its power over either the straits or the islands in an effective or permanent manner. It was above all a continental power, and it was from the north that the blow came which brought its fall in the middle of the VIth century. A prince of the royal family, evicted from the throne and appanaged in the region of Bassak on the middle Mekong revolted, attacked the King of the Mountain and founded Cambodia on the ruins of Founan. But this empire, once so powerful, did not disappear at a single stroke. It transferred its capital "more to the south", said the Chinese annalists, perhaps in the Malay peninsula where the dynasty continued to vegetate for some decades.

For a century and a half, young Cambodia gave up all imperialistic ambition in order to develop the lower valley and delta of the Mekong which are covered with monuments. Even after the foundation of Angkor in 889 the Khmer kings had to disinterest themselves with the south seas in order to achieve expansion in the valleys of the Mekong and the Menam. The field was open for the foundation of an empire centred round Indonesia.

The final overthrow of Founan in the VIIth century was closely followed by the sudden appearance in the southern part of Sumatra of a kingdom which lost no time in taking up again, with more lasting success, the dreams of hegemony of Founan and even the imperial title of *King of the Mountain*, resuscitated in the VIIIth century by a Javanese dynasty.

A group of inscriptions in old Malay found at Palembang, in south-east Sumatra on the height of Batang Hari and in the island of Banka testify to the existence in 684-686 in the region of Palembang of a Buddhist state of recent creation which had just conquered Malayu (Jambi) and the isle of Banka and was getting ready to send a military expedition against Java. This new star was Śrīvijaya, the sudden ascension of which was immediately registered in the Chinese Annals which starting from the year 670 mentioned a series of embassies from Che-li-fo-che.

The Chinese monk I-tsing who travelled from China to India and from India to China between 671 and 695 spoke of this country as being a port of call having relations with India and China. He made a first stay there of six months in 671-672, another one of four years from 675 to 689 and a third on his return from Canton at the end of 689. At that time, he mentioned the recent expansion of Śrīvijaya and her conquest of Malayu. But since his first stay in 671-672 he had noticed the high degree of culture attained by this country: "There I studied by degrees the science of sounds. In the fortified town of Fo-che there are more than a thousand Buddhist priests who are devoted to study and good deeds. They research and study in every possible subject, exactly as is done in the Middle Country (India); rules and ceremonies there are identical. If a Chinese priest wishes to go to the west in order to learn the Scriptures and read the original texts there, he had better stay first at Fo-che for a year or two and practise there the proper rules: after that he could go to the Middle Country".

Palembang, the geographical situation of which I have already indicated as being privileged on account of navigation, seemed from the first to have been a necessary belt on the way between India and China, and five centuries later, in 1178, a Chinese geographer still wrote that "it is the most important maritime port of call for foreigners. Whether they come from Java, or Arabia, or from the south of India, all of them pass through it in going to China."

One century after its foundation, Śrīvijaya-Palembang was already conqueror or overlord of the whole island of Sumatra, the western part

of Java and the greater part of the Malay peninsula, where an inscribed *stela*, dated 775 and coming from Nakhon Sithammarat, commemorates the foundation of Buddhist monuments by order of the King of Śrīvijaya.

A propos of this expansionist policy, the Dutch historian Prof. N. J. Krom made these very pertinent remarks in his Indo-Javanese history :

“ For navigators in this part of the archipelago, the choice of a port of call was limited, for it had to fulfil the following conditions: it must be a centre possessing a certain degree of civilisation, it must satisfy certain geographical exigencies, it must have a well-protected harbour—within the mouth of a river for instance, and a safe anchorage. But the possession and defence of such a port of call could not be unaccompanied by resort to force. In order to monopolise his right, the possessor of this port of call had either to render his rivals neutral or subjugate them, so that he could maintain a high hand on the commerce of the strait by making his influence felt on both of its banks.”

This VIIIth century was in the archipelago an epoch of big changes. Fifty years after the foundation of the Kingdom of Palembang, we see arise in the centre of Java a new dynasty which reassumes the imperial title of the *King of the Mountain*, covers the country with monuments of Buddhism (Borobudur, Kalasan, Mendut etc.) and sends its ships to plunder the coasts of Indochina.

In 767 raids were made on Tonkin, from which the invaders who had penetrated up to the neighbourhood of Sontây were repelled and thrown back into the sea by the Chinese governor. In 774 the Indonesians ravaged the coast of south Annam, where Cham inscriptions, notably the *stela* of Po Nagar of Nhatrang, speak with horror of these *eaters of men*, saying that they were “ natives of other lands, feeding upon things more horrible than corpses, frightful, extremely black and thin, terrible and wicked as death, come on ships,” who pillaged the temple of the goddess. In 787 a new raid in the same region attributed by an inscription to the “ armies of Java which had come on ships.”

But these Javanese raids on the coasts of Indochina did not have the same success as the Sumatran conquest of the Malay peninsula, for they came up against vigorous states. Champa did not seem to have suffered seriously. As for Cambodia, the accession in 802 of Jayavarman II on the Phnom Kulên and the definite installation of kingship in the region of Ankor marked the definite release of the Khmers from all annoyance from the direction of the isles of the south.

The two young kingdoms of Palembang and Java began at first to entertain pacific relations with one another and in the middle of the IXth century, a princely issue of the Javanese dynasty came to occupy the throne of Palembang with the title of *King of the Mountain*. It was from this epoch that dates the definite consolidation of the power of the Maharaja of Śrīvijaya who, for strangers, came to be the Maharaja *par excellence*, that is just the *Maharaja*.

For the Arabs, he was the sovereign of Zābag (Jāvaka) and reigned over Kalah (Kra) and Sribuza (Śrīvijaya-Palembang), which would remain through the centuries the two poles of his power. Let us read what was written in 916 by the geographer Abu Zayd, who based his work on the story of travel in India and China which the trader Sulaymān had written in 851.

“ The town of Zābag is situated facing the direction of China. The distance between them is that of a month's travelling by sea, and even less if winds are favourable. The King of this town is known by the name of Maharaja. This king is at the same time sovereign of a large number of islands which extend for 1,000 *parasangs* or even more in distance.”

The traveller then enumerates the states which compose the empire : Sribuza, Rami, (Atjeh) Kalah “ situated midway between China and Arabia. It is to this port that ships come from Oman and it is also from this port that ships depart for the same destination. The Maharaja exercises his authority over these islands His own island, in which he resides, is as fertile as any land could be and populated districts lie alongside of one another without interruption. A person who can be trusted related that in this land when cocks begin to crow at daybreak, as they do in Arabia, others take up their response on a stretch of land extending 100 or even more *parasangs*, because the villages are contiguous and uninterrupted ”.

In 996, the geographer Masudi speaks in grandiloquent terms of “ the kingdom of the Maharaja, King of the isles of Zābag among which are Kalah and Sribuza, and other islands in the sea of China. All their kings are called by the title of Maharaja. This empire of the Maharaja has an enormous population and innumerable armies; no one can within two years, with a ship of the utmost speed, go over all these isles, each of which is inhabited. Their king is in possession of more varieties of

"perfume and aromatics than has any other king. His territory produces camphor, aloes, cloves, sandal, nutmeg, cardamom, cubeb etc."

For the Chinese, Che-li-fo-che became San-fo-ts'i (another slightly deformed transcription of the word Śrīvijaya); and from 904 this country sent numerous embassies to the Court of China. She was the uncontested mistress of the straits, through which passed all the commerce from China to India. But, having become a great economic power, Śrīvijaya seemed to have neglected the spiritual assets which attracted the pilgrim I-tsing of China in the VIIth century. In fact, while the Javanese monarchs, who were highly literary, covered their island with sumptuous monuments which still win the admiration of the world today, the sovereigns of Sumatra appeared to have been more occupied with watching over the traffic of the straits rather than cultivating literature and erecting durable religious edifices to such an extent that they have left us with nothing more than insignificant brick towers and an infinitesimal number of inscriptions. A few pieces, however, of remarkable sculpture has been met with, although I dare not maintain that they are not of Javanese workmanship.

The privileged position of Palembang could not fail to stir up dangerous rivalries especially on the part of its neighbour Java. Towards 860 the latter regained the western districts up to now occupied by Palembang, and 130 years later, an ambitious and enterprising sovereign of Java succeeded in establishing his hold on Bali and the west coast of Borneo, as well as a part in 992 of the island of Sumatra. But this last occupation was of short duration, for in 1007 Palembang took terrible revenge by carrying on a war against Java which ended in the destruction of her capital.

The beginning of the XIth century marked the apogee of the Sumatran Empire. It enjoyed relations of friendship with the Courts of south India, and a Sanskrit inscription coming from Negapatam related about the foundation in that town of a Buddhist temple by the King of Kātāha-Śrīvijaya in 1006.

The Emperor of China thus testified to his share of high regards: "In 1017", says a passage in the Annals, "Hia-teh'e Sou-wou-teh'a-p'ou-mi (Haji Sumatrabbūmi) sends to the Court of China ambassadors with a letter written in gilt characters and a tribute of pearls, Sanskrit books and slaves. By the Emperor's order they were granted an audience of the Emperor and authorised to visit several imperial edifices. When

“ they returned to their country, an edict was promulgated addressed to their king and different presents were given them with the object of pleasing him.”

But it was not long before the Maharaja's expansionist policy and methods of commerce were put into conflict with a new maritime power, that of the Colas, who were supreme on the Coromandel coast. Some incident, not exactly known, provoked from the latter, a little before 1025, a raid of reprisals which is fully related in an inscription of Tanjore. Śrīvijaya-Palembang was attacked, her king made prisoner, Pane and Malāyu occupied as well as the dependencies of the Malay peninsula, namely: Takkola (Takua Pa), Tambralinga, (Nakhon Si-Thammarat), then Lamuri, (Atjeh), the Nicobars, and finally Katāha (Kedah).

This was a simple raid, without any lasting political consequence, unless it be a rapprochement with Java. Menaced from the west, the Maharaja was reduced by force of circumstances to make the best of his neighbour of the East: the rapprochement was even sealed by a family alliance under the great Javanese King Airlanga who reigned from 1019 to 1042.

The following century was marked by the expansion of Javanese power, at the same time as that of Cambodia. The latter's influence was paramount in the north of the Malay peninsula, where the use of the Khmer language is testified by a bronze Buddha from Chaiya dating 1183.

In spite of the menace which took shape at two ends of the empire, San-fo-ts'i was still considered in the beginning of the XIIIth century by the Chinese as a very great power. But it seems that her capital had been transferred from Palembang to Jambi, in the ancient Malāyu. Here is what Tchao Jou-Koua, inspector of foreign trade at Chuah-chou, the big port of Fukien, wrote in 1225:

“ This country lies on the ocean and is mistress of the straits through which foreign traffic by sea in whichever direction must pass. Formerly there used to be an iron chain as a barrier against pirates from other lands. This chain could be fixed high or low by an ingenious disposition. When a trading vessel arrived, the chain was lowered. If a trading vessel passes by San-fo-ts'i without making it a port of call, the country's ships go out to attack it in an already prepared method, those who man them being ready to die. It is for this reason that the country has become an important maritime centre. Her dependencies are:

- " P'eng-fong (Pahang)
- " Teng-ya-nong (T'rengganu)
- " Ling-ya-sseu-kia (Lankasuka)
- " Ki-lan-tan (Kelantan)
- " Fo-lo-an (Patalung)
- " Je-loting, Ts'ien-mai, Pa-t'a (?)
- " Tan-ma-ling (Tambralinga-Ligor)
- " Kia-lo-hi (Grahi-Chaiya)
- " Pa-lin-fong (Palembang)
- " Sin-t'o (Sunda)
- " Kien-pi (Kampe-Eastern Sumatra)
- " Lan-wou-li (Lamuri-Northern Sumatra)
- " Si-lan (Ceylon ?)"

But at the very period when Tchao Jou-koua was writing, the empire of the Maharaja, King of the Isles, was beginning to crumble and show signs of internal decay. Kampe, on the east coast of Sumatra was detached from the empire since before 1225.

In 1230 a king of Tambralinga (Chaiya-Ligor) showed himself an independent sovereign by despatching to Ceylon on his own account an expedition which however failed.

The final blow was dealt by the action, not combined, but synchronous, of Java and a new Indochinese state—The Thai Kingdom of Sukhothai.

In 1275 an expedition left Java under the command of king Krtanagara, a great conqueror whose success is testified by the inscription engraved on the pedestal of a statue of the Bodhisattva Amoghapasa which was found at Jambi. According to this inscription, the statue had been brought from Java in 1286 and the Prince reigning at Jambi is called in it just a vassal of the Javanese sovereign.

The year 1292 is remarkable all at once by the passage of Marco Polo in the straits, by the foundation in east Java of the Kingdom of Mojopahit which was destined to be the leading power in the isles for two centuries and by the apogee of the Thai Kingdom of Sukhothai, whose sovereign Rama Khamheng declared himself master of the whole Menam valley and the Malay peninsula as far as Nakhon Sithammarat.

In 1295 Rama Khamheng sent to China an embassy of which the Annals of the Mongol dynasty gives the following report :

“In 1295 the Kingdom of Sien presented a memorial in letters of gold praying the Imperial Court to send an embassy to that Kingdom. The envoy returned immediately, and an Imperial order sent a mission to depart with him. As the people of Sien had been engaged in an internecine struggle for a long time past with the Malāyu, all submitted at once. There was an Imperial command saying to the people of Sien: “Do not injure the Malāyu so that you could keep your promise.”

The above puts on record the end of hostilities between the Thai and what remained of the old dependencies of Sumatra in the south of the Malay peninsula.

As for Marco Polo, he does not seem to have known that he was passing through the ruins of a dismembered empire. A propos of Sumatra which he called “Java minor”, he said: “Now know that this island has 8 kingdoms and 8 crowned kings”. He described six summarily, all situated in the north of the island: Ferlec (Perlak), Basman (Pase), Sumatra (Samudra), Dagroian (?) Lambri (Atjeh), and Fansur (Baros). Each of them has, to follow his description, “a king of its own”. There is no longer any question of the Maharaja, Emperor of the Isles of the South.

With Śrīvijaya-Zabag-San-fo-ts'i, disappeared the only empire which succeeded in dominating both the islands and the peninsula.

The reason of her power and durability was that while in command at the same time of the maritime route of the Straits and the land routes of the Isthmus of Kra, she became the absolute mistress of all traffic between the West and the China Sea. Her ruin was caused by the simultaneous pressure on two flanks, those of Sukhothai and Java, which took away from her, her continental dependencies in the first case and her insular possessions in the second. The internal weakness of the Sumatran Empire was caused by the hardness and severity of her mercantile policy which gave birth to rivalries and conflicts and the abandonment of that spiritual patrimony which provoked in the VIIth century the admiration of the Chinese pilgrim I-tsing.

I have now but to sum up very briefly what became of her inheritance. Politically, the small island kingdoms recognised the sovereignty, more or less real, of the Javanese sovereign of Mojopahit, while the principalities of the peninsula accepted that of Ayuthya. The real inheritors, however, of the commercial prosperity of the Sumatran Empire were the

Arabs who, profiting by the self-enforced seclusion of China at the end of the Mongol and during the epoch of the Ming dynasties, monopolised the trade in spices and made themselves allies and protectors of the Malay States. The most important among them, Malacca, founded in 1403 by a Javanese prince who had fled from his country, soon possessed the most frequented port of the Insulinde, and it was in full knowledge of facts that Albuquerque at the conclusion of a successful raid, installed there in 1511 the first bastion of Portuguese commerce in the seas of China. With the arrival of the Portuguese, the turn of fortune for Malaysia and the Insulinde was conditioned by the big events of Europe's history.

Hispano-Portuguese rivalry, then the formation of the Union with Spain (1580-1640) which exposed the Portuguese Empire to the activity of Dutch capital, Anglo-Dutch commercial rivalry, the Napoleonic Wars, British Imperialism—all these had the most direct repercussions on these countries situated on the antipodes of Europe.

The decadence of Malacca at the end of the XVIth century; the formation of the Dutch East Indies Company in 1602 were followed by the creation of a series of Dutch factories in Java and the Moluccas, and by the eviction from Jacatra of the English in 1618 and the establishment, in the following year and on the same site, of the fortress of Batavia, which inspired Governor-General Coen to issue this ingenious bulletin of victory: "We have planted our feet and established our power in Java. It is certain that this victory and the flight of the high and mighty English will be a high sensation all over India. The honour and reputation of the Netherlands will be enhanced thereby. From now on everybody will be seeking our friendship."

In 1641 the Dutch took possession of Malacca and becoming masters of the Straits restored for a time the commercial prosperity of the Empire of the Maharaja ;

In 1650 the Dutch East Indies Company lost its exclusively commercial character in order to become a colonial administration, and for a century and a half continued to extend its authority;

In 1793 the (National) Convention (of France) declared war on England and attacked its ally Holland, whose territory it occupied in 1794. By the treaty of the Hague signed on the 16th May 1795 the French Republic concluded an alliance with the Batavian Republic and under the Empire the Dutch colonies became virtually French. An episode of short-

duration; for in 1811 England, carrying the war against Napoleon to the Pacific, occupied the former Dutch colonies which had become French and entrusted their administration to Stamford Raffles;

The Convention of London of the 13th August 1814 restored to the Dutch their possession of the Island of Sunda and the Malay Peninsula. But five years later, in 1819, Raffles occupied the island of Singapore and established there the "settlement", which, together with the Island of Penang, acquired since 1786, were destined to become the centre of British expansion in Malaysia. Holland found herself hence forward evicted from the Continent and confined to the Islands.

I must stop this historical sketch at the beginning of the XIXth century, a period which will reveal the richness of the substrata of the Peninsula and the Islands, and the qualification of the soil for the culture of rubber, sugarcane, coffee and tea.

This retrospection is instructive, for it shows us how a small Hinduised Malay kingdom, by securing for itself both on the islands and on the peninsula, the possession of strategic points, the importance of which aviation and the methods of modern warfare have not diminished, came to be a thalassocracy, and an absolute master for six centuries of the commerce and navigation in the South Seas.

The lesson thus given us by the Empire of the Maharaja, King of the Mountain and overlord of the Islands, is worth meditating.

