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Business correspondence, including codes and reminder relating to subscriptions, back numbers and sample copies, should be addressed to the publisher: Routledge Publishing, Taylor & Francis, Customer Services Department, Informa UK Ltd, Shenburn Place, Colchester, Essex CO3 3LP, UK. Tel: +44 (0) 20 7017 5594; Fax: +44 (0) 20 7017 5198.

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Indonesia and the Malay World is subject to a peer review process. The journal is published three times a year (March, July and November) by Routledge Publishing, Taylor & Francis, 4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 4RN, UK. Tel: +44 (0) 1235 235 235; Fax: +44 (0) 1235 230 000. These three issues constitute one volume. An annual volume contents and author index is issued in the last issue of each volume.

ISSN 1365-3611 © 2006 Editors, Indonesia and the Malay World

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Cover Illustration: Seal of the former Sultan Abdul Jalil Saluddin of Siek, Sunan, dated 1525 (AD 1510/11) 26 x 29 mm. British Library, MSS. Eur D 742/1, f. 112.
INTRODUCTION

An international symposium on the theme, Non-Javanese, not yet Javanese, and in-Javanese: Encounters and fusions in a civilisation was held to commemorate, among other reasons, the promulgation of the Sukabumi Inscription dated 25 March 804, exactly 1,200 years before the closing date of the symposium. The Sukabumi Inscription is the oldest known text in the Javanese language.

Organised by the Department of Languages and Cultures of Southeast Asia and Oceania, Leiden University, the symposium was held at the university from 23 to 25 March 2004.

The symposium’s theme took as its starting point the views the Javanese have of themselves as a people. A few words of Javanese might elucidate these views. Not much imagination is needed to recognise the meaning 'Java' in Jawa. Besides being a toponym, Jawa is also an adjective, 'Javanese'. Durung means 'not yet'. Durung jawa, a well-known phrase, can therefore be translated ‘not yet Javanese’ – implying ‘mentally immature’.

Alongside durung jawa there are other expressions in Javanese suggesting that the word jawa includes a place name, an ethnicity, and a cultural ideal. The verb njawan means ‘to make a Javanese impression’. It signifies ways of doing things, especially with reference to someone who does not appear to be Javanese but nonetheless knows how to behave in an ideally Javanese way. It contrasts with ora njawani ‘un-Javanese’. Ora ngerti jawa means literally ‘to not understand the Javanese of it’, or more idiomatically, ‘not get it’. This use of the word jawa is of antiquity. In an Old Javanese inscription of 1140 CE, for example, mention is made of the category of persons called tan jawa, ‘non-Javanese’, in the same breath as ‘slaves’. Though Jawa may differ from non-Javanese, not yet Javanese, or un-Javanese, it is not necessarily better; witness terms like gula jawa (‘Javanese sugar’, i.e. a kind of coarse sugar made from coconut or areca palm nectar) and uiti jawa (said of a cowardly rooster that has met an inglorious end in a cockfight, bringing shame upon its owner).

In this small selection of words and expressions we find indications of a self-assured culture – a civilisation – which is in contact with other cultures and has been for many centuries, and which, when necessary, distinguishes itself from them in a positive or negative sense. The contact and the self-assurance are hardly remarkable when one takes into account that Java is fertile, lies on important trade routes, and has produced a language that is today spoken by 80 million people, most notably in Indonesia, Surinam and the Netherlands. The Javanese language is also, or has also been in use as a literary and religious medium outside the Javanese-speaking part of Indonesia, especially as the vehicle for both Hindu-Buddhism and Islam. It is a language with an impressive writing tradition that goes back to the above-mentioned inscription of 25 March 804.
Theme

The symposium was devoted to the question of how the relations between Javanese and other cultures (non-Javanese, not yet Javanese, un-Javanese etc.) have developed in the course of history and how they vary synchronically. On the one hand this question encompasses what happens or has happened during meetings between different cultural traditions: selective adoption, synthesis, influence, rejection, adaptation, interpretation, transformation. On the other hand the question also includes cultural differentiation within what is Javanese, and even intentional separations. This last-mentioned phenomenon is occurring at the moment in Indonesia: certain regional varieties of Javanese culture and language no longer commonly present themselves as Javanese but rather as Osing, Cirebonese, etc. So, in brief, the symposium was devoted to the terrains of contact, fissure and separation between Javanese and a Javanese ‘other’.

During the three days of the symposium, 22 papers were presented by scholars of different disciplines from Indonesia, Australia, the United States of America, England, Russia and the Netherlands. Eight articles drawn from the symposium were prepared for this special issue of Indonesia and the Malay World.

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WHY THE ŚAILENDRAS WERE NOT A JAVANESE DYNASTY

Archaeologists and art historians generally agree that most of the 8th- to 9th-century Buddhist temples in central Java were constructed by the rulers who claimed to belong to the Śailendra dynasty. But the unproven question pressing on the minds of scholars for many decades now is the origin of this dynasty. Drawing on a variety of arguments this study contends that the present popularity of the Śailendra dynasty’s Javanese origin is ill-founded, and urges a resumption of research into its foreign origins, whether in India, Sri Lanka or mainland Southeast Asia.

Genealogical, historical, and political considerations

Arab traders sailing through Southeast Asian waters during the 8th and 9th centuries (CE) reported the existence of a powerful kingdom that held sway over the islands of the Malaysian archipelago and occasionally sent off punitive expeditions against countries in mainland Southeast Asia. In Arab sources, this paramount kingdom was known by the name of Zābaj (also transcribed as Zābaj or Zabah), and its rulers by their title of mahastraṇja.

Writing in 1845, and basing himself on some of these Arab reports, J.T. Reinaud thought Zābaj to be centred in the island of Java and to have ruled over various minor kingdoms in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula (see Reinaud 1845, i: lxiii-lxxxv).1 This representation was reversed when G. Coedès, in his classic article Le Roijava de Črivijya (1918), had Zābaj equated with Črivijya at Palembang, identifying its rulers with the Śailendra who took special pride in carrying the mahastraṇja title. Endorsing Coedès’s views, J. Ph. Vogel (1919) and N.J. Krom (1919) independently of each other put forward the idea that Črivijya had extended its hegemony over Java, basing their theories on the Kalasan inscription of 778 and the Kélurak inscription of 782. These texts mention the foundation in central Java of Buddhist temples on behalf of Śailendra rulers. In

1 O.W. Wolters (1979: 1, n.3) suggests that Reinaud explicitly mentioned the kingdom of Saracca, i.e. Črivijya, but this is not the case, at least not in the pages specified by Wolters. However, since Reinaud had Zābaj comprising the islands of Sumatra and Java, it would of necessity have included Črivijya. Indeed, more recent studies of the Arab reports confirm that some authors had Šrivijaya (Črivijya) and Kōlāk-koṭi (Kōlāka) listed among the vassal kingdoms of the mahastraṇja of Zābaj (see, for instance, Tibbetts 1979: 33, 107, 111).
support of his theory, Vogel referred to the Kota Kapur inscription of 868 mentioning a punitive expedition by Sriwijayan forces against Java, ‘the land which had not yet submitted to Sriwijaya’, which appeared consonant with other inscriptive information on the kingdom’s expansion in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. Krom had the same expedition against Java linked with the report in Chinese annals about the transfer of the Javanese capital ‘to the East’, somewhere in the period 742–775.

However, as a consequence of the discovery, in 1921, of the Nalanda inscription (Shastri 1924), and following a spurious Dutch debate over the question of whether there had been a ‘Sumatran period in Javanese history’ (Krom 1919), or the opposite, namely a ‘Javanese period in Sumatran history’ (Stutterheim 1929), it became clear that the connection between Sriwijaya and the Sailendras was not as close as was assumed. Taking the Sailendras as scions of a northeastern Indian dynasty, R.C. Majumdar (1938) adduced inscriptive evidence to show that they had ruled over Java and over Sumatra, implying that there had been a Sailendra period in both. He also observed that the presence of the Sailendras in Sumatra could not be attested with certainty before the 11th century.

With Coedès (1934) conceding to their separation from Sriwijaya, the position of the Sailendras in central Java became more puzzling than ever, which resulted in a welter of theories on their possible origins, ranging from various parts of India, to Cambodia, and central Java itself. This mystery has yet to be solved, although the present popularity of the theory of their Javanese origin could suggest otherwise.

It is extremely difficult to follow the erratic course of the debate, not only because of the rapid turnover of different theories but also because of the fact that almost all of the leading scholars in the field (Coedès, Stutterheim, Bosch, and De Casparis) had at one point or another revised their interpretations of the over scarce and ambiguous inscriptive data, inducing them to switch from one theoretical position to another, sometimes even reverting to an earlier point of view (as did Bosch, for instance, with respect to the interpretation of the Kalasan inscription, and the origin of the Sailendra dynasty). It is not surprising, therefore, to find modern authors, apparently not familiar with all the ‘ins and outs’ of the protracted debate, inadvertently putting forward ideas that have long since been rejected (e.g. Smellgrove 2000; Hanafiah 2002, Totton 2003). Another complicating factor is that the debate has occasionally been infected by nationalistic sentiments and intellectual (self-)censorship. Well-known is the emotional outburst of Poebertjakarta that the theory about the subordinated role of the Javanese ruler Rakki Panangsakan in the construction of the Târâ temple at Kalasan reflects a common prejudice about the compliant nature of the Javanese people.8 Another renowned Old Java hand, Stockmomo, led into the nonsensical statement that the builders of the Hindu-Buddhist temples in Java must have been Javanese because modern Indonesian tourists to these monuments feel an affinity with them.9 Bamang Sunandho, for his part, while being open to the possibility that the Sailendras were of Sumatran origin, apparently

3Noteworthy is Stockmomo’s elaboration on the assumption ‘that the modern Indonesians are directly descended from the builders of the candi, and are therefore heirs to those reservoirs of the noble works of their ancestors. Such a conclusion is hard to disagree with; the candi still occupy a special place in the hearts of the Indonesian people. Their value is difficult to explicate, for it is not a rational, normative quality but an emotional and spiritual one, and can only be truly felt by the heirs themselves’ (1993: 51).

4Following Bosch’s account of the Sojomerto inscription, Sunadjo claims that it cannot be doubted that the Sailendra oligarchy mentioned therein is an Indonesianization of the name Šailendras. He continues: ‘Pusaka ini sekarang sudah spokah Gunung Sembilan itu asli berasal dari Jawa atau Sumatra, kemudian adanya kenyataan bahwa yang pertama penulis Sejarah Nasional Indonesia, cukuplah untuk membuktikan bahwa adalah penduduk asli Indonesia, bukan pelarian atau perebut kekuasaan dari luar negri’ (Sunadjo 1975: 81, n.28).

5Teori tentang adanya dua dimensi dilancarkan oleh ahi-ahi Barat [. . .] sepertinya jaga dalam bidang-bidang lain ini (hewan kita masih terperosa oleh teori-teori banga asing’ (Bosch 1989: 1).

6Personally, I find this reaction easier to understand than the reluctance of some western archaeologists and art historians to properly discuss ideas that were introduced into their field of study by relative outsiders (for particulars, see Jordan 2000, 2003b).

7Mijn sentiment in dit geval niet kunnende bedwingen roep ik uit: wat een belediging! ’Is slof de Javaan ten allen tijde tot niets anders in staat is geweest dan om ge-‘print’ d te worden door een vreemde overheerser’ (Poebertjakarta 1958: 262).
indirectly — the rival theory that the Śailendras were a foreign dynasty (see Jordan 2003a; Jordan and Colless 2004). The other reason why I think that the Śailendras were of foreign origin and not a separate dynasty from another part of the country, is that the establishment of their rule in Java was accompanied by a number of exogenous changes. In earlier publications (Jordan 1999a, 1999b), I mentioned the introduction of a new script that in Dutch colonial times was generally known by the name of Pre-Nagari (islamatisasi), the earliest issuance of the silver Sandalwood-Flower coins, bearing legends in the same script, the introduction of the mahāprajñā title and its subsequent adoption by Javanese rulers, the transfer of the Javanese capital 'to the East' (not necessarily to East Java), and the sudden blossoming of Mahāyāna Buddhist architectural art. In contrast, the departure of the Śailendras from Java was followed by such developments as the fall of Buddhism from royal favour as reflected in the disparaging remarks about Buddhist monks and nuns in the Old Javanese Rāmadhyana as well as the halt to Buddhist temple-building activities, the change from Sanskrit to Old Javanese, the shift from silver coinage to an indigenous gold currency. In my estimation, the impact of the Śailendras' departure was so great as to be a major factor in the art-historical break that can be discerned in the temple art of Java (see Jordan 1999b: 235–39, Jordan 2003b). Similar synchronic changes occurred in other parts of the Indo-Malay archipelago, which are analysed in detail in a forthcoming book entitled The Mahāprajñā of the Isles (Jordan and Colless, in press). For the present purpose, it may suffice to recall W.F. Stutterheim's (1929) analysis of the curious alternations in the pattern of tributary missions to China, with embassies from Śrivijaya being halted in 742 and replaced by missions from Java. However, whereas Stutterheim took this as evidence for a Javanese hegemony over Sumatra, we are inclined to relate this to the overlordship of the Śailendras in the archipelago. One of the indications is that the missions from Java were not dispatched by She-p'o (which was the old Chinese designation for Java) but from Ho-lang (thought to be a transcription of Walaing, a toponym that is connected with the Ratu Boko plateau, which was the site of a famous Buddhist monastery). In contrast, the decline of Śailendra power led to a resumption of missions from She-p'o, while the eviction of the Śailendra from Java and their settlement in the western part of the archipelago was immediately followed by a resumption of tributary missions from Sumatra, at first holding from Chan-pat (Jambu), in 853 and 871, and thereafter from San-fo-ch'i. We believe that this toponym was the Chinese name for the newly reconstituted Śailendra kingdom, and did not refer to Śrivijaya of old, as is commonly assumed. Henceforth, Java and Sumatra (the latter being ruled by the painters of the Śailendra dynasty) were vying with each other for recognition by the Chinese court as the pre-eminent kingdom in the region, in the Indo-Malay archipelago itself their formerly mutually beneficial political and economic relationship gave way to hostilities and war.

Socio-cultural considerations

As a detailed discussion of the historical evidence regarding the political alliance between Java and Sumatra under the aegis of the Śailendra dynasty goes beyond the scope of this paper, I will now focus on arguments more specifically related to Javanese culture and society. Hopefully, these considerations will add credence to my thesis that the Śailendras were a foreign dynasty.

First let me repeat the remark that both before and after the Śailendras the Javanese must have been familiar with the presence of 'stranger-kings', if we can rely on the fact that the Javanese have special terms for such persons, namely raja sabrang (kings from overseas) and kalana (a wandering adventurer of noble birth from abroad). Examples of stranger-kings in Java include the legendary Ají Saka and representatives of the VOC. In some Javanese mythological texts, such as the Sītā Kandā [Book of Stories], the Dutch East India Company is classed as a foreign dynasty which managed to gain ascendency in Java by capturing a sick Javanese princess; a story which is strongly reminiscent of the mythical marriage of successive Javanese sovereigns with 'king-maker' Nyai Loro Kidul, who is still venerated by numerous present-day Javanese as the goddess of the Southern Ocean. I will return to this shortly.

Footnotes:

7Presented at the International Conference on Indonesian Art, in New Delhi, 4–6 March 2003, my paper is due to be published in the proceedings of the conference, but copies can be obtained through the KITLV Library in Leiden. The final version of the paper has been updated with a postscript in which I take account of Jeffrey Sundberg's (2003) genealogical identifications in a KBI article dealing with a Ratu Boko mantra. In the meantime, an enlarged version of the postscript has been published separately in the Indonesian archaeological journal Berita Arkeologi (Jordan and Colless 2004).

8Architectural and stylistic changes in temple construction and the plastic arts tend to be more visible and therefore easier to trace than changes in philosophy and literature, the determination of which must leave to experts in these particular fields. Ultimately, they will have to decide whether my remarks about a possible connection between the traumatic historical event of the eviction of the Śailendras and the comparatively early transfer of literary functions from Sanskrit to Old Javanese (see Braginsky 1993: 16) has any factual basis or not. The same holds for my more speculative linking of this event with the growing preference of the Javanese for the Mahābhārata over the Pāndava, and their apparent awareness of the performance of Iohan from the Bhatasupahda (see C.C. Berg 1938: 53).

9In Arab reports we can detect a similar change in nomenclature, in which the names of Iban and Zobag at first stood for the island of Java (as in the earliest reports by Ibn Kurbedib and Aha Zaid), but following the move of the Śailendras they came to represent Sumatra and possibly also the Malay Peninsula. It must be admitted, however, that the Arab reports are confusing, largely because of the indirect and incomplete transmission of the information which prevented Arab writers in the Middle East from keeping pace with the important political changes occurring in the 9th and 10th centuries (for further details, see Jordan and Colless, in press).

10Long ago, Berg (1929: 12) made the same observation, but found the claims of an Indian ancestry by some East Javanese rulers unacceptable in their present form and without further evidence. Interestingly, Dr David Henley of the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) in Leiden is presently organizing an international workshop specifically devoted to the position of stranger-kings, also in Indonesian history.
In the same article where I mentioned these (and other Indonesian) examples, I have argued extensively that the 'weak' version of the so-called kṣārya theory, which proceeds from the assumption of a small group of migrants, namely a ruler and his retainers, instead of mass colonisation (as in the 'strong' version of the theory), was prematurely rejected. I showed that Bosch's alternative theory about the role of native pilgrims or 'clerics' in the development of Hindu-Javanese architecture is unsatisfactory in several respects. The most important shortcoming, in my opinion, is that it fails to explain how the Javanese pilgrims, to whom Bosch had attributed the formidable task of reassembling and unifying the elements from diverse Indian architectural traditions, had managed to achieve the architectural and stylistic unity in the Hindu-Buddhist monuments built under the Śailendras. Tellingly, Bosch himself deemed this a nearly unsolvable mystery (1952b: 22, 25). My comment was that by focusing on the individual contribution of pilgrims Bosch's theory incurs a sociological flaw, for:

How could individuals have achieved the alleged unity in Central Javanese architecture, considering their differences in personality, background, and experience abroad? In my opinion, the only unity which an individual pilgrim would have been able to recreate from the materials he had collected in India would have been in the form of a single temple, or perhaps a few related temples, probably of limited size and complexity. The re-creative activity of a number of pilgrims would have resulted in precisely such a mosaic as Bosch would have expected from various groups of immigrants. The Hindu-Buddhist temples built under the Śailendras, on the other hand, are so close to each other in time and design (from an architectural, stylistic, and religious point of view), that they could only have been the product of a large-scale collective project.

(Jordaans 1999b: 225)

If this unity in Śailendran monumental art is more likely the product of a large-scale collective project that was initiated and implemented by the foreign Śailendras, we must keep in mind that they had access to Indian architects and specialised craftsmen. Some support for this idea could be derived from the report by J. Crawford (1820: 221) that his Javanese informants were convinced that the Buddha images in central Javanese temples actually represented 'foreign priests' (pandita sabarang) who were adherents of Buddhism (agama Buda). Crawford commented on this that 'the bare use of this word [agama Buda], however, is out of the question they could invent, and certainly did not borrow from any modern source, may be considered as satisfactory evidence that they were Buddhists' (1820: 221). As a matter of fact, one such foreign priest-architect, hailing from Gaudā (i.e., Gaŗh in Bengal), is mentioned by name in the Kāhur inscription from 782 (see Bosch 1928: 29–30). This prompts me to repeat the well-known fact that the term zaman Buda is still widely used as a general designation for the pre-Islamic period in Java. It is quite conceivable, in my opinion, that the term zaman Buda has remained in use as a reference to the 'ancient period' precisely because of the close association between Buddhism and the evicted Śailendras. Quite a number of scholars have pointed to the survival of names and toponyms such as Satijaya, Seraya, Praga, Mataram, from the Hindu-Buddhist period, as illustrative of how the memory of these long past times has been kept alive.

Concerning the construction of central Javanese temples, and, in particular, the Buddhist structures/monuments, brief reference must be made to the Kalasan inscription (778) which mentions the fact of the compliance of a Javanese ruler, Rakai Panangkaran, with the request of the guru of a Śailendra king (whose name is not recorded) to build the Tirta temple at Kalasan. Without going into the philological arguments that led van Naerssen (1947) to his reading of the inscription (see also Bosch 1952a: 112, n.4), but which have been hotly contested by the proponents of the single dynasty thesis, I will confine myself to the question of why the building project would have needed the involvement of two rulers in the first place. Van Naerssen observes that as foreigners the Śailendras were not entitled to dispose of local land and labour, the necessary assets of great works such as the construction of Candi Kalasan. To acquire these they were dependent on the indulgence of Rakai Panangkaran. Supporting this interpretation is the information provided by the bilingual charter from Karangtengah (Kayumungun), dating to 824, which also alludes to the co-operation of two parties in the foundation of another Buddhist temple, consisting of the Śailendra king Samarangga and his daughter Pramadewachandari, on the one hand, and Rakai Patapa on the other (see de Casparis 1950: 24–50, 105–9). Scholars who proceed from the assumption that the Śailendras were a native Javanese royal family are generally at a loss to explain Samarangga's dependence on Rakai Patapa for the donation of the rice-fields for the upkeep of the foundation. For instance, Kusen (1996) speculates that Samarangga was the son of Rakai Panangkaran from his alleged marriage with a Sriwijayan princess. This hypothetical marriage also provides the basis for his supposition that Samarangga had never ruled in Java, and that this was the reason why his name is not included in the lists of kings in the Masyus I and Wana Tengah III inscriptions. Instead, Samarangga would have ruled in Sumatra. Kusen finds his theory confirmed in the Kayumungun inscription, in which Samarangga is interpreted as a foreigner without right to land. He might instead have procured the land through the Javanese wife of Rakai Patapa, whom Kusen takes for a Sumatran relative. In my earlier mentioned review of Kusen's work, I have demonstrated that Kusen's theory is flawed by dubious presuppositions. An illustrative example is his decision to rob Samarangga of his Javanese nationality in spite of his alleged descent from a Javanese king, Rakai Panangkaran, and to make him a foreigner in the land of his forebears without any legal access to the ancestral lands as a consequence of his father's supposed marriage to a Sumatran princess. More seriously, Kusen fails to adduce evidence for Rakai Panangkaran's marriage to this princess, let alone of Samarangga being the offspring of this union.

Another thing that can be brought to bear on the thesis of the non-Javanese origin of the Śailendras is their eviction from Javanese soil. From what I know of the Old Javanese literature, the eviction itself seems difficult to square with what was common in Java in ancient times. In the face of an impending military defeat the
losing king basically had two options: either to fight to the death or surrender unconditionally. In both cases, all his possessions, including his wives and magical objects, fell to the victor. The latter was free to decide to kill his vanquished opponent, but as often as not left his opponent on his throne (presumably because of the existence of marital and kinship ties between various royal families), provided that the vanquished king accepted a subordinate position as vassal. Vassals had to bear witness to their inferior position by paying regular tributary visits to the court of the paramount king. Seen from this perspective, the eviction of the Sailendras from the island of Java is rather strange and in need of explanation. This provides yet another reason for me to think that they were foreigners.

On the other hand, some scholars have hinted at the possibility that the eviction had something to do with religious tensions and conflict: putting the Sailendras, as staunch Buddhists, in opposition to the majority of the population who adhered to Hinduism. However, while the religious division itself seems undeniable, the derivative explanation is not convincing given that religious differences in ancient Java, in striking contrast to Europe, were far more common and tolerated, with many rulers extending liberal support to projects of different denominations. This was the case, for instance, with Rakai Panangkaran, who adhered to Hinduism himself but also supported the Buddhist cause. With respect to religious differences, Krom and other early Dutch scholars probably were biased by what was customary in their native country at the time (i.e. the period of Paserling), leading to a falsely represent Borobudur and Prambanan as rival monuments. My claim is that the construction of Prambanan began when the Sailendras were still in Java and that the building took place with their support, which fits the peaceful co-existence of religions prevailing in ancient Java. If, in spite of all this, Buddhism came to lose its dominant position to Hinduism and its adherents suffer from ridicule (as in the Old Javanese Ramayana, mentioned above), this should, in my opinion, at least partly be explained from the circumstance that the credo was closely associated with the foreign Sailendras, whose political influence was declining during the first half of the 9th century. Support for this idea can be found in J.G. de Casparis' (1956: 315, n. 20) interpretation of the Śivagaha stone inscription, dated to 856, where the revival of Hinduism is represented in terms of a national liberation.

It is interesting to see what other developments took place in Java after the Sailendras' departure from the island. Remarkable as the decline of Buddhism and the historical break in temple architecture and art was, no less remarkable was the disappearance of the name of the dynasty. To the best of my knowledge, none of their Javanese successors has ever made a reference to the Sailendras. If the Sailendras really were a Javanese royal family, it stands to reason that at least some of the central Javanese kings from the second half of the 9th century in one way or another (directly or indirectly, truthfully or fictitiously) would have tried to legitimise their position by tracing their descent from this illustrious family. In a forthcoming article, Jeffrey Sundberg writes:

It is an enormously difficult question to address how the luster of the name of this extraordinarily radiant family could have died out so quickly and so thoroughly after the issuance of the last known Javanese Sailendra inscription by Samaratungga's daughter in 824. How could the kings of the 830's and afterwards have failed to claim participation in the name of this dynasty, even when they built their younger, smaller, simpler temples in the shadow of the great temples of the Sailendra? If the 'Sailja' were truly Sailendra all along, where did their family name originate and why did the Javanese throne holders abandon it even while it persisted in Sumatra for at least two centuries?

The 'persistence' or rather the continuation of the dynastic name in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula is a significant fact which raises a number of questions, even though some can only be answered tentatively. For instance, if for the sake of argument we assume that the Sailendras were a Javanese dynasty, why is it that the Javanese people in the period between February 887 and November 894, which is referred to in the Wana Tengah III inscription as 'leaderless' (anadyek), did not invite the Sailendras to return to their land of origin? It is well known that for the Javanese a situation of 'leaderlessness' is generally put on a par with social and political unrest and lawlessness, often leading them to look for 'strong' persons whom they hope will restore public order. The passing over of the Sailendras is
of the Javanese origin of the Sailendras. Whatever can be brought to bear on this issue is much more easily explained as a derivation from Indian culture rather than from the Javanese, as is the case with ancient toponyms such as Mataram, and royal customs such as storage of bricks of gold in a lake (see Balambahanian 1935).

Conclusion and some suggestions for further research

This paper offers several new ideas with respect to the unsolved problem of the origin of the Sailendra dynasty, but the main arguments are basically the same as those put forward in other contexts, be it in a different way and for different purposes. While considering the theory of their Javanese origin unlikely, I am well aware that much remains to be investigated about the Sailendras, and that it would be foolish to think that the Wana Têngah III inscription has solved all problems of interpretation regarding the dynastic relations during their reign in Java. Indeed, as for the Sailendras, it is not without reason that they were once referred to as an 'evasive race' (Shastri 1924: 312). The unsolved questions are not just about their country of origin, but also on how the Sailendras came to settle in the Indo-Malay archipelago setting themselves up as widely respected kings for several hundreds of years, reaching the pinnacle of their reign in central Java and ending by vanishing from the scene in Sumatra. Continued research is needed on their origins in the Indian subcontinent, Sri Lanka, and mainland Southeast Asia. Preferably this research should be supported by inscriptional evidence, including renewed readings of the known inscriptions (perhaps enhanced with the aid of new detection techniques such as laser scans). As it would not be for the first time in the study of ancient Indonesian history that a particular idea was prematurely discarded, it could even prove useful to reconsider some old and neglected hypotheses. Regarding the kurjâya theory, it should noted that we no longer have to assume, as Bosch and his contemporaries used to do, that the spread of Indian influence abroad took the form of a military conquest and territorial annexation.

As for their settlement in the Indo-Malay archipelago, I will now indicate how the Sailendras' position as 'stranger-kings' could be further clarified by comparative historical research along the lines explored by Marshall Sahlins (for the Pacific region) and David Henley (on northeastern Sulawesi). Sahlins' (1981) article is especially useful for his discussion of the complex conceptual linkages between stranger-kings and the native peoples of Hawaii, Fiji and other Pacific islands, which are commonly interpreted and represented in gendered terms. As Sahlins remarks:

The 'stranger-king' is an outsider, often an immigrant warrior prince whose father is a god or a king of his native land. But, exiled by his own love of power or banished for a murder, the hero is unable to succeed there. Instead, he takes power in another place, and through a woman: princess of the native people whom he gains by a miraculous exploit involving feats of strength, ruse, raps, athletic prowess and/or murder of his predecessor. The heroic son-in-law from a foreign land demonstrates his divine gifts, wins the daughter, and inherits half or more of the kingdom.

(Sahlins 1981: 115, emphasis in the original)
Those familiar with the Javanese Pañjī stories will recognise the similarities between these Pacific exploits and the equally miraculous prize contests in ancient Java that were known by the term sayembar. Unlike the Indonesian sayembar of today, which usually pivot round material objects and money, the ultimate prize in ancient Java invariably was a royal princess, and marrying her was a sure way to gain access to the land. Pañjī is the name of the Javanese culture hero who defeats his rivals (including several balian kings) before marrying his true love.

In other Old Javanese stories, like the earlier mentioned Satri Kanda, it is the VOC’s capture of a sick Javanese princess that serves to explain the ascendency of the Dutch in Java. The sick princess from a skin disease or has a flaming womb, returns me to my early research on Nyai Lara Kidul alias Ratu Kidul (Jordaan 1984, 1987, 1997), to whom – to paraphrase my late friend Hani Resink – I have remained deeply attached. The sick princess, in my opinion, represents none other than the primeval fertility goddess of the Javanese, who, being a vaccinating goddess, under Hindu influences came to be identified both with the awesome goddesses like Durgā and Kālī (her demonic or malevolent face) and Śrī Devi or similar benevolent goddesses like Umat, Pārватi, and Lakṣmī (her benevolent face). Without going into the complex transformations in her character and appearance, the capture or possession of the sick princess was a well-known mythological motif to explain the rise to power of her lover and/or abductor, who as a rule is remembered as the founder of a new dynasty. What matters here is that real historical events are interpreted from this indigenous mythological perspective, and that historical personages are thus associated or identified with particular (semi-)divine beings. Thus, as Sahlin (1981: 107–9) explains, it is happened with the murder of Captain Cook by the Hawaiians in 1779. The mythological interpretation of this dramatic event found verbal expression by the islanders when they brought a piece of Cook’s headquarters to his ship, the Resolution, asking the crew when Lono, the god of agriculture with whom Cook apparently had been identified, would come back to them. As for pre-colonial Java, Berg has shown how the Javanese court poets tried to make sense of the military defeat of Sultan Agung in 1629 at the hands of the VOC by ‘inventing’ the story of the (temporary) capture of the sick princess. In much the same way, I assume, the Javanese would have explained the ascendency of the Sāñjendras from a mythical marriage or a real marriage cloaked in mythological
garb with a Javanese royal princess. Perhaps it was this marriage that resulted in a division of central Java, the faint echoes of which might have reached the Chinese records about the move of the Javanese capital to the East during the ten-pao period (742–755) and also the subsequent substitution of diplomatic missions of She’po by those from Ho-Ling. More significantly, in one of the three Ratu Boko inscriptions which were issued after (and presumably in commemoration of) the defeat of the Sāñjendras explicit reference is being made to Lakṣmī ‘who bears Majesty necessarily hidden in the juncture of her legs’. This strange expression, as De Casparis (1956: 266) observed, brings to mind the flaming-wombed princesses Kālikā and Vājañā. The royal version enables the conquerer Ken Angrok to become king of east Java and gain control over the fertility of the realm.

Mindful of the importance of the dictum cherchez la femme, I have often looked for evidence of a politico-religious association between the historical Tārā of the Nālandā inscription, the Buddhist goddess Tārā, to whom, it may be recalled, the Sāñjendra temple at Kalaran was dedicated, and Nyai Lara Kidul. As to be expected given the scarcity of historical information, my efforts met with little success, although enough art historical data came to light to identify Vājañā-Tārā as the presiding goddess of the Kalaran temple (Jordaan 1997). The exact historical information is and will remain scarce and fragmentary, forcing us to open up other sources. In this context, it needs to be remembered that there is at least one ancient literary text, namely the Rāmāyana Kākśīnī, that could be tapped for additional, if indirect and veiled information on the Sāñjendras and, perhaps, Nyai Lara Kidul. Research by W. Aichele (1965) has confirmed Poerbatjaraka’s (1927) early surmise that some parts of the Old Javanese Rāmāyana could

Gradually, however, the two aspects of the autochthonous fertility goddess were loosened and separated, with the darker side of Nyai Lara Kidul being associated with the fierce and heavily sexualised Durgā (thus underscoring her position of ‘king-maker’ and protector of the realm), while her benevolent side merged with the rather dull and heavily domesticated ‘Devī Śrī’ (who became the goddess of rice for the Javanese). Only in special circumstances do these associated goddesses reveal something of the suppressed side in their characters. Given their primordial unity, Nyai Lara Kidul and Devī Śrī are often attributed with the same chthonic attributes in folklore, such as a skin disease and/or a snake-like appearance. In this regard, C.C. Berg (1955a: 375) was not wide of the mark in referring to Nyai Lara Kidul as ‘the maritime version of Devī Śrī’.

The better-known examples are Ken Angrok, Raden Sambire, and Senapat. For more particular, see Pigosad (1957), Berg (1958), Jordan (1984, 1987, 1997), and Wessing (1977a, 1977b), among others.
date from the late central Javanese period since they contain all kinds of metaphorical hints to Rakai Pikatan (reign period 847–858) and his alleged deception by Buddhist dignitaries. Berg (1955: 233) was even inclined to assume that the text was written in commemoration of the destruction of the Sailendras, and that the Watugunjung story in the Beded tantrah jari was a folk myth that had ‘accompanied’ the official Rāmâyana. Those familiar with the work of Berg and his unsurpassed talent to see through all kinds of clever Old Javanese magico-literary plots and identifications, will be unsurprised to learn of his equating Rāvana with the Sailendras, and Hanumān (The White Monkey) with Viṣṇu. If indeed there is a mythico-historical basis for linking the Sailendras with Rāvana (who after all is a raja asranga), there is a likelihood of his meeting Sīta as a sick princess during her captivity in Lankā. A renewed and careful study of these ancient texts is therefore needed to establish the plausibility of these and other identifications. A new critical English edition of the Old Javanese Rāmâyana would be meritorious in itself, quite apart from its usefulness as an alternative source of historical information.

Henley’s analysis seems more useful for comparative research on the local socioeconomic and political conditions that might have facilitated the acceptance of the Sailendras’ authority by the Sumatran peoples at the end of the 7th century. Briefly summarised, Henley’s thesis is that the relatively easy introduction of Dutch rule in northern Sumatra cannot be explained from an alleged Dutch superiority in military power or their cunning application of the strategy of divide and rule, but rather from the inability of the local peoples and their rulers to put an end to their ongoing internecine conflicts and warfare. As Henley demonstrates, these internal conflicts and the peoples’ deep-seated mutual suspicion and jealousy, increasingly made them turn to the Dutch, who, being outsiders, were asked to act and/or intervene as arbiters and impartial judges. Henley (2002: 55) states that this tendency was not without consequences: ‘The rise of the colonial state in northern Sumatra, then, can be regarded in part as a deliberately accepted solution to problems of mutual cooperation which were perceived by indigenous actors as difficult to solve without the aid of a powerful and impartial external party’. In my opinion, a similar scenario could be envisaged with respect to the ready acceptance of the Sailendras overlordship in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula at the end of the 7th century. In the forthcoming book, referred to above, it is remarked that

If the family was as illustrious as the Sailendras themselves claimed to be, probably descending from a royal family that hailed from India, they had several

23 Though Henley himself focuses on the socio-political dimension of the 'strangers' phenomenon, he indicates that the mythico-religious aspects are also present. This is evident, for instance, from the fact that VOC judgments were regarded as Gedapiren ("divine verdicts" or oracles). Also relevant is Henley’s observation that royal status in northern Sumatra was often framed in an ‘idem of strangeness’, as in Gorontalo where the kings were chosen from groups who claimed descent from foreign immigrants (including characters from the Bugis epic poem Lajo Li Galgo), and partly from semi-human creatures which emerged from eggs, clumps of ratten, or shafts of bamboo long after the original people of the country (Henley 2002: 64–65). It is easy to see that such information offers a possibility of linking Henley’s analysis with that of Sahlins’, discussed above, which focuses on the cultural assumptions relating to the stranger-king phenomenon.

24 In response to Wiseman Christie’s (1990: 41) critical remarks against such views, we want to stress that we do not imply that some ‘essential’ ingredient was lacking in the south Sumatran society in question. Rather than representing a generally negative view, we would argue that the Indian contributions should be seen as ‘positive’, as enriching influences, quite similar to the cultural impact of the Pras Bhumana on the development of different West European societies.

25 Noteworthy are the remarkable (but still to be investigated) similarities between the Sailendras and the former Minangkabau royal family. For instance, they both stood apart from the surrounding society by their ‘contrapuntal’ descent and marriage rules, as well as by their heterodox and syncretic tendencies. Interestingly, the Minangkabau still maintain communal relations with Negri Sembilan, on the other side of the Straits of Malacca, which brings to mind the (marital) alliance between Kelah and Malayu during the reign of the Sailendras.

Following the interpretations of De Casparis (1956: 15–47), Wolters has inferred from this seemingly ‘paranoid’ text that ‘evidently the ruler was at that time concerned with the problem of keeping under control a disturbed realm, possibly including recently conquered territories’ (Wolters 1961: 17; cf. Wiseman Christie 1983: 296, 312; 1984: 55). It is hardly conceivable that the Śrivijaya kingdom could have bridged the long period of seven centuries of its presumed existence on the subtle and limited check-and-balance political mechanisms of indigenous Sumatran societies discussed in Kenneth Hall’s (1976) study of early Śrivijayan inscriptions (cf. Kulke 1991: 15). In our opinion, it was the alliance with the Sailendras that saved Śrivijaya’s name from oblivion (Jordan and Colless, in press).

In line with Henley’s analysis, it could be argued that the divisive and unstable conditions apparently prevailing in southern Sumatra during the 7th and 8th centuries would have contributed to the acceptance of Sailendra rule by the local communities. As stranger-kings the Sailendras were outside and above these fractious and warring communities, enabling them to act as mediators and impartial arbitrators. This need for impartiality would have been met by the religious tolerance and heterodox inclinations for which the Sailendras were known, and the ideological emphasis they put on the abstract notion of the Word as reflected in their central Javanese inscriptions. The latter resonates with the currat cap (sealed letters) of Minangkabau royalty (Drakard 1993), who as we speculate could well have been their distant descendants.25

Regrettably, we cannot, at the present state of knowledge, say whether similar socio-political conditions prevailed in central Java that would have facilitated the
establishment of Šailendra rule in this island. The only extant document prior to the arrival of the Šailendras is the Canggal inscription of 732, issued by King Siṣapa in celebration of the foundation of a śiva sanctuary, but it is precisely this inscription, in conjunction with the information derived from an Old Sundanese text, the Curita Parayuyan, that has been used as evidence of the regional supremacy of the Javanese, and to defend the identity of the ‘Siṣapa’ and the Šailendras. "While we can discard the Curita Parayuyan as a late and unreliable source of historical information, we would be wise to accept the integrity of the Wukir inscription concerning Siṣapa’s stature as a great Javanese king. This would suggest that the establishment of Šailendra rule in central Java was different from that of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, and that it may well have taken place with Siṣapa’s consent or, much more likely, with that of his son, Rakai Panangkaran (reign 746–784), who was closely involved in the construction of the Tara temple at Kalasan and presumably the first Javanese king to adopt the abdi raja title. The most plausible way for this course of events to have happened was a marital alliance of the two royal families. In the absence of pertinent information, we are left to speculate how this presumed marital alliance was arranged, allowing for the possibility that the marriage was of a rather unusual type, for instance with the two kings arranging a sister-exchange marriage, or practising some form of polyandry (see e.g. Mobs 1937: 432–44, 1939: 77–79). Comparative research on kinship and marital practices among ancient Indian dynasties could perhaps shed some light on this matter (see e.g. Singh 1978; Chakraborty 1984; Trautmann 1974, 1981). If future research does confirm the existence of a marital alliance between the Šailendras and the Javanese royal family of Rakai Panangkaran, this clearly will help to explain why the later elevation of the Šailendras had such a deep and long traumatic impact on the society and culture of Old Mataram, and Java as a whole.

Acknowledgements

Considering this is my final statement about the Šailendra in central Javanese history, and having them tentatively linked with the Javanese goddess Nyai Lari Kidul whose mysterious character has attracted me for more than 20 years, I am inevitably reminded of the intellectual and moral support received from various persons over the years. I feel especially indebted to Dr. van den Hoek and Lokesh Chandra for introducing me to the study of ancient Indian history and culture, and to Hen Reink, Haas Tceva, and Willem van der Molen for welcoming me to their field of Javanese studies. Being of Dutch-Madurese extraction and more familiar with rural Madurese people through anthropological fieldwork, I am grateful to these scholars for helping me to find my way in the court cultures and literature of ancient Java. Fortunately, they showed great forbearance towards my non-Javanese outspokesmanship and occasional fits of emotions (usually over the treatment by other Old Java specialists). Finally, I want to thank Brian Collen, David Henley, and Jeffrey Sundberg for their valuable comments on the draft of this paper.

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