Longyamen: Singapore's Sea Story During the Chola Period (CE 1025 - CE 1281)



Dr. Tai Yew Seng

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17th July 2025,

Oldham Theatre, National Archives of Singapore

“Malayu” in Chinese Texts

- The Chinese historical texts used the term “(Kingdom of) Malayu” to name Singapore from 645 CE to 1301 CE.
- From 1225 CE, a new name is used: Long Ya Men.

Year	Malayu	Sources
645	Mo Luo You 摩罗游	*Important Document of the Tang* 王溥《唐会要》961 *Outstanding Models from the Storehouse of Literature* 王钦若《册府元龟》1013 *New History of the Tang* 欧阳修《新唐书》1060
672	Mo Luo You 末罗游	*A record of the Buddhist religion as practised in India and the Malay Archipelago* 义净《南海寄归内法传》691
672	Mo Luo Yü 末罗瑜	*The Great Tang Biographies of Eminent Monks who Sought the Dharma in the Western Regions* 义净《大唐西域求法高僧传》691
1025	Malaiyur	Tanjore Inscription (Brihadeeswara Temple, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India)
1225	Ling Ya Men 凌牙门	*A Description of Barbarous Peoples* 赵如适《诸蕃志》（1225）
1281	Mu La You 木剌由	*History of Yuan Dynasty* 宋濂《元史》卷一十一（1370）（速剌蛮Sulaiman、苫思丁Shamsudin）
1286	bhūmi Mālayu	Padang Roco Inscription on base (National Museum of Indonesia, D.198-6468)（another inscription on back of Amoghapasa, dated 1347, found in Rambahan near Langsat River）
1292	Malaiur	*The Travels of Marco Polo* (Marco Polo, *Le Devisement dou monde*. Bibliothèque Nationale de France fr. 1116, pp. 75d-76a)
1293	Mu Lai You 木来由	*History of Yuan Dynasty* 宋濂《元史》卷一百三十一“亦黑迷失”（1370）
1293	Ma Li Yü Er 麻里予儿	*History of Yuan Dynasty* 宋濂《元史》卷二百一十“暹”（1370）
1294	Mo La Yü 没剌予【没剌矛】	*History of Yuan Dynasty* 宋濂《元史》卷二十（1370）
1299	Mo La You 没剌由	*History of Yuan Dynasty* 宋濂《元史》卷二十（1370）
1301	Ma Lai You 马来悠【马来忽】	*History of Yuan Dynasty* 宋濂《元史》卷二十（1370）
1304	Long Ya Men 龙牙门	*Canton Gazette of Da De Reign 1297 – 1307* 陈大震《大德南海志》
1320	Long Ya Men 龙牙门	*History of Yuan Dynasty* 宋濂《元史》卷二十九（1370）
1325	Long Ya Men 龙牙门	*History of Yuan Dynasty* 宋濂《元史》卷二十九（1370）

“Malayu” in Tamil Texts

- Tanjore Inscription (1030 CE)：
  - (In 1025 CE)……Srivijayam overflown with large heap of treasures, which [that king] had rightfully accumulated, and possessing the [arch called] Vidhyadhara-torana at the “war gate” of his extensive city, the “jewel gate”, adorned with great splendour, and the “gate of large jewels”; Pannai with landing ghats; The ancient Malaiyur with the strong mountain for its rampart; The great Yirudingam, surrounded by the deep sea as moat; ILaṅkāsokam (or Laṅkāsoka) that is undaunted in fierce battles; The great Pappalam, having abundant high waters as defence; the upper (or Western) Ilimbangam, having fine walls as defence; Valaippanduru, possessing vilaippanduru (cultivated land and jungle?); The premier or chief Takkolam, praised by the learned men; The great Tamalingam (or Tamalingam), firm in great and fierce battles; Ilamuridesam, of fierce strength and tempestuous nature; The great Nakkavaram, full of flower-gradens having much honey; and Kadaram (or Kataram), of fierce strength, which was protected by the deep sea……

“Malayu” in Tamil Texts



Tanjore Inscription is found in Brihadeeswara Temple, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India.

“Malayu” in Tamil Texts

- Srivijayam = (~~Palembang~~) = Jambi
- Pannai = Padang Lawah, North Sumatra
- Malaiyur = (~~Jambi~~) = Singapore
- Yirudingam = Chaiya
- Ilaṅkāsokam = Pattani （Langkasuka）
- Mappappalam = Rangoon (Pappalam)
- Mevilimbangam = (Sylvain Lévi: Karmaranga = ~~Ligor~~) = Palembang (“West” or “Upper Limbang”)
- Valaippanduru = (unknown?) = Phan Rang (Panduranga of Cham)
- Takkolam = Takuapa (Takkola of Ptolemy)
- Tamalingam = Nakhon (Tambralinga)
- Ilamuridesam = Lambri, Aceh
- Nakkavaram = Nicobar Islands
- Kadaram = Kedah

“Malayu” in Tamil Texts



Srivijaya’s Territories in Tanjore Inscription

https://maps.app.goo.gl/P6PPk3Je8YSF7JcQ8

(Clicks the photo to look at some of the ruins)

Chola in *Sejarah Melayu* *(Malay Annals 1612)*

Raja Chulan left a daughter of great beauty named Putri Onang-kiu, whom Raja Suran took to wife, and carrying her with him, advanced to Tamsak. Then, it was reported in the land of China, that Raja Suran was advancing against them with an innumerable army, and had arrived at the country of Tamsak. The raja of China was alarmed at hearing this intelligence, and said to his mantris and chieftains, " If Kling Raja approach, the country will be inevitably ruined; what method do you advise to prevent his approach?" Then, a sagacious mantri of China said, " Lord of the world, your slave will fall on a device." The raja of China desired him to do so. Then this mantri ordered a vessel (*pilu*, i. e. the Chinese mode of pronoun-

cing *prow*), to beprepared, filled full of fine needles, but covered with rust; and planted in it trees of the Casamak and Bidara (Bér) plants; and he selected a party of old and toothless people, and ordered them on board, and directed them to sail to Tamsak. The prow set sail, and arrived at Tamsak in the course of a short time. The news was brought to Raja Suran, that a prow had arrived from China, who sent persons to enquire of the mariners how far it was to China. These persons accordingly went, and enquired of the Chinese, who replied, " When we set sail from the land of China, we were all young, about twelve years of age, or so, and we planted the seeds of these trees; but now, we have grown old and lost our teeth, and the seeds that we planted have become trees, which bore fruit before our arrival here." Then, they took out some of the rusty needles, and showed them, saying, " When we left the land of China, these bars of iron were thick as your arm; but now they have grown thus small by the corrosion of rust. We know not the number of years we have been on our journey; but, you may judge

of them from the circumstances we mention." When the Klings heard this account, they quickly returned, and informed Raja Suran. " If the account of these Chinese be true," said Raja Suran, " the land of China must be at an immense distance; when shall we ever arrive at it?—If this is the case, we had better return." All the champions assented to this idea.

John Leyden, *Malay Annals*. London: Longman, 1821

Chola in *Sejarah Melayu* *(Malay Annals 1612)*

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Chola in *Sejarah Melayu* *(Malay Annals 1612)*

- The moral of the story:
  - Chola was trying to reach China (Song Dynasty).
  - Chola was in Singapore.

- *Malay Annals* stated that Chola stopped at Singapore. Did Chola reached China?

Chola in Chinese Texts: Chola in China

- （宋真宗大中祥符八年）九月，注辇国贡土物、珍珠衫帽。……己巳（6th Nov 1015），赐注辇使袍服、牲酒。（脱脱《宋史》本纪第八）
- （宋仁宗明道二年十二月）丁巳（18th Jan 1034）……注辇国来贡。（脱脱《宋史》本纪第十）
- （神宗熙宁十年）六月壬午（26th Jun 1077），注辇国朝贡。（脱脱《宋史》本纪第十五）
- 诸国朝贡……注辇、三佛齐使者至，以真珠、龙脑、金莲花等登陛跪散之，谓之“撒殿”。（脱脱《宋史》志第七十二）
- （宋哲宗元祐）五年（1090），遣使皮袜、副使胡仙、判官地华加罗来，入见，以金莲花贮真珠、龙脑撒殿。官皮袜为怀远将军、胡仙加罗为郎将。加罗还至雍丘病死，赙以绢五十匹。（脱脱《宋史》卷四百八十九“三佛齐传”）
- 蒲甘国，崇宁五年（1106），遣使入贡，诏礼秩视注辇。尚书省言：“注辇役属三佛齐，故熙宁中敕书以大背纸，缄以匣袱，今蒲甘乃大国王，不可下视附庸小国。欲如大食、交阯诸国礼，凡制诏并书以白背金花绫纸，贮以间金镀管籥，用锦绢夹袱缄封以往。”从之。（脱脱《宋史》卷四百八十九“注辇传”）

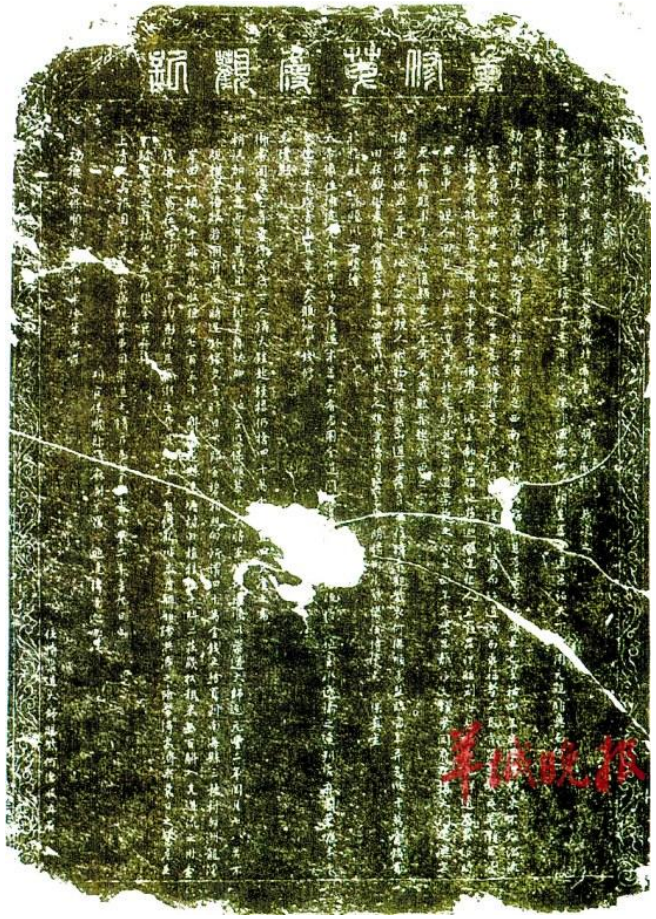
Chola in Chinese Texts: Chola in China

- 6th Nov 1015, Chola pay tribute to Emperor Song Zhen Zong
- 18th Jan 1034, Chola pay tribute to Emperor Song Ren Zong
- 26th Jun 1077, Chola pay tribute to Emperor Song Shen Zong
- “(When) Zhu Nian (Chola) and San Fo Qi (The Three Vijayas) envoys are here (to pay tribute), (they) kneed at the steps (leading to the throne) and scattered pearl, camphor, gold lotus flower and more. (They) called it ‘sa dian’ (scattering at the step).”
- “In 5th year (of Yuan You reign, 1090), (San Fo Qi, a.k.a. The Three Vijayas) sent envoy Pi Wa, Deputy Hu Xian, Assistant Deva Kala here. In the court, (they) used gold lotus to hold pearls and camphor, and scattered at the steps. (The Emperor) bestows Pi Wa with the title General Huai Yuan, Hu Xian and Deva Kala as Deputy General. On the way they return, Deva Kala passed away in Weng Qiu, (the Emperor) presented 50 pi (750 meter) of white fabric as funeral gift.”

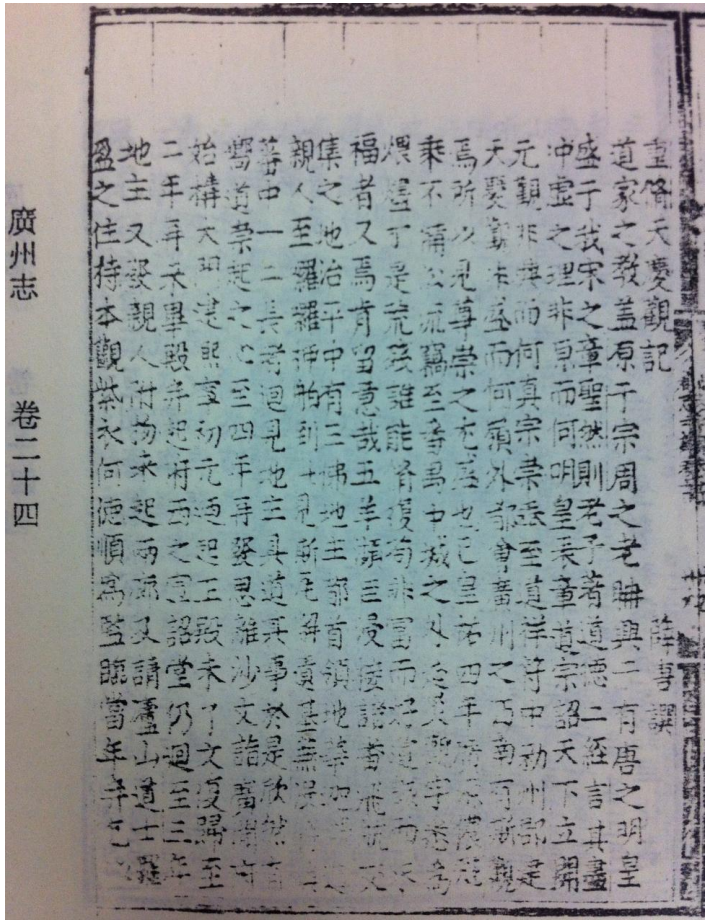
Chola in Chinese Texts: Chola in China

- Chinese texts treated Chola and San Fo Qi (The Three Vijayas，Jambi) as one.
- It means that, Chola remained in Southeast Asia as late as 1090 and 1106.

Kulottunga Chola I (1025–1122)



Chong Xiu Tian Qing Guan Ji Inscription, 1079 CE
(The records of rebuilding the Tian Qing Guan Taoist temple)



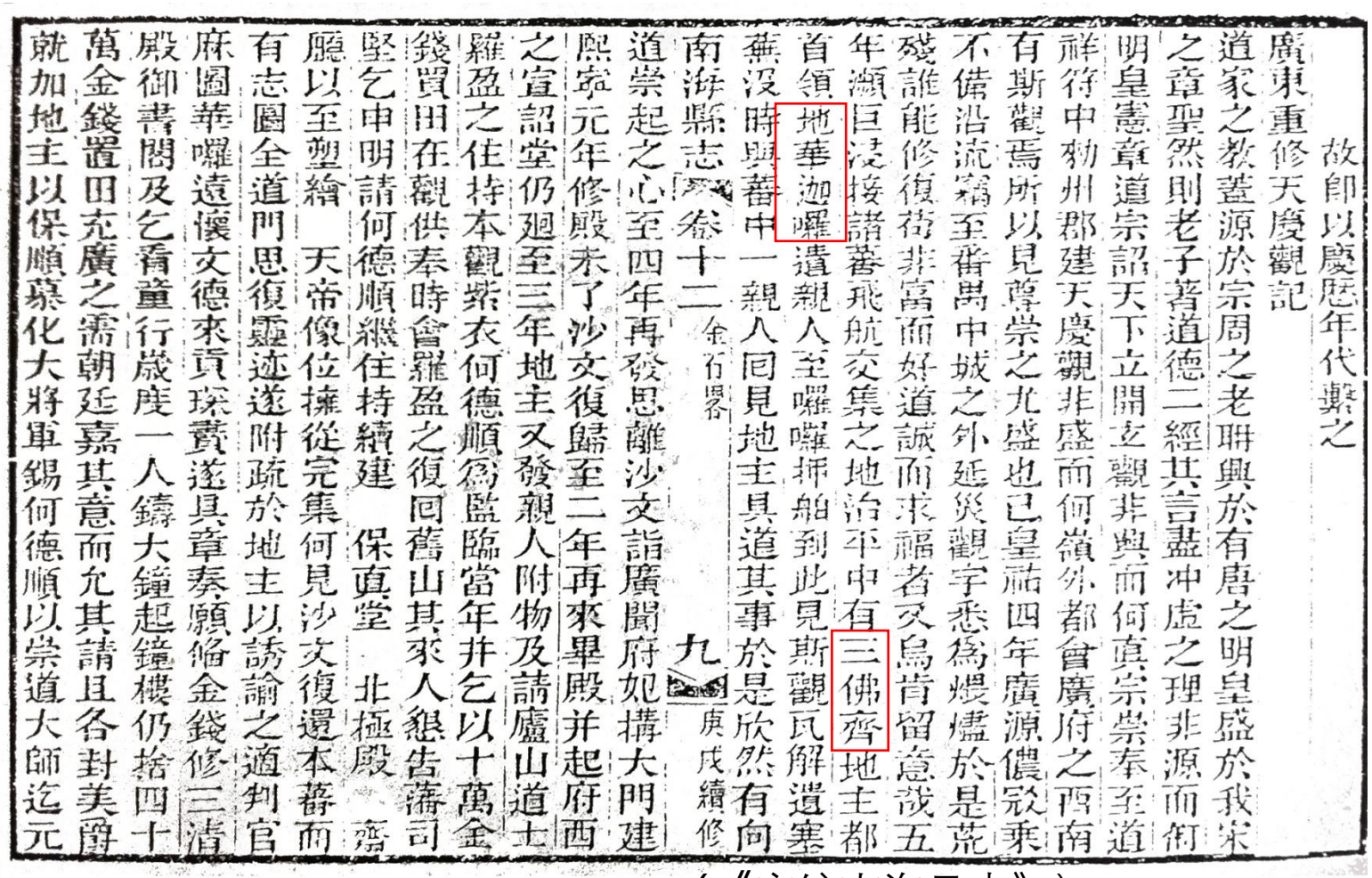
Chenghua Canton Gazette [1465-1487](《成化广州志》)

The Sri Vijayan Inscription of Canton, 1079

- Tan Yeok Seong, “The Sri Vijayan Inscription of Canton (A. D. 1079),” *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 1964 vol. 5 no. 2.
- Tai Yew Seng, “The Sri Vijayan Inscription of Canton and the Chinese inscription on the Chandi Kembar Baru gong”. Srivijiaya in Southeast Asia and South Asia Regional Context, 20 – 25 Aug 2014, Jambi.

- *Chenghua (1465-1487) Canton Gazette*（《成化广州志》）
- *Xuantong (1909-1911) Canton Gazette* (《宣统南海县志》)

The Sri Vijayan Inscription of Canton, 1079



故卽以慶歷年代繫之

廣東重修天慶觀記

道家之教蓋源於宗周之老聃興於有唐之明皇盛於我宋之章聖然則老子著道德二經其言盡冲虛之理非源而何明皇憲章道宗詔天下立開玄觀非興而何真宗崇奉至道祥符中勑州郡建天慶觀非盛而何嶺外都會廣府之西南有斯觀焉所以見尊崇之尤盛也已皇祐四年廣源儂智高不備沿流竊至番禺中城之外延燔觀宇悉爲煨燼於是荒殘誰能修復茍非富而好道誠而求福者又烏肯留意哉五年瀕巨浸接諸蕃飛航交集之地治平中有三佛齊地主都首領地華迦囉遣親人至囉囉挿舶到此見斯觀瓦解遺牆無没時興蕃中一親人同見地主具道其事於是欣然有向

道崇起之心至四年再發思離沙文詣廣闕府妃搆大門建熙寧元年修殿未了沙文復歸至二年再來畢殿并起府西之宣詔堂仍廻至三年地主又發親人附物及請廬山道士羅盈之住持本觀紫衣何德順爲監臨當年并乞以十萬金錢買田在觀供奉時會羅盈之復回舊山其來人懇告蒲司堅乞申明請何德順繼住持續建 保真堂 北極殿 齋廳以至塑繪 天帝像位擁從完集何見沙文復還本蕃而有志圖全道門思復靈迹遂附疏於地主以誘諭之適判官麻圖華囉遠懷文德來貢琛贐遂具章奏願備金錢修三清殿御書閣及乞看童行歲度一人鑄大鐘起鐘樓仍捨四十萬金錢置田充廣之需朝廷嘉其意而允其請且各封美爵就加地主以保順慕化大將軍錫何德順以崇道大師迄元

Xuantong Canton Gazette（《宣统南海县志》）

Kulottunga Chola I (1025–1122) + San Fo Qi

Kulottunga Chola I (1025–1122)

- “In the reign of Chih Ping (1064-1068), Ti Hua Ka Lo sent an envoy Chih Lo Lo by name to carry tribute to the Court. The ship was caught in a storm and almost capsized. Chih Lo Lo prayed to the Heaven (for mercy). There upon an Old Man appeared in the cloud and the storm was over. At that time the city of Canton was destroyed by Lang, the bandit. The portrait of Lao Chun was laid in the dust. Chih Lo Lo came across it. It was the picture of the Old Man whom he saw previously. When he returned home, he reported the matter to Ti Hua Ka Lo who at once sent Si Li Sha Wen to go to Canton to buy building materials and to recruit workers to reconstruct (the temple). When it was completed, Lo Yin Chih, a Taoist priest was asked to be the Residential Administrator and Ho Tek Sun, the Supervisor. An endowment fund of 100,000 cash was donated to purchase a piece of farmland located at Min Tang in the District of Fan Yu. The next year Ti Hua Ka Lo died. His nail and hair were scissored and sent to the priest who buried them at Min Tang. Sacrifice was offered even to-day.” ——Ku Yen Wu (1613-1682), *On benefit and faults of the empire's local administration*, vol. 2812. Tan Yeok Seong tr.

The Sri Vijayan Inscription of Canton, 1079

- Ti Hua Ka Lo 地华迦啰 = Kulottunga Chola I (1025–1080)
- In 1079, Chinese treated San Fo Qi = Chola; therefore, Chola remained in Southeast Asia, not leaving it after a plunder as some researchers suggested.

Sang Nila Utama

“Sang Nila Utama”

- “To this hilltop come Bichitram, Paladutani and Nilatanam princely descendants of Alexander” (Shellabear, 1915)
- “Hither to a rice-clearing, owned by Wan Empok arid Wan Malini, came on a white elephant three princely descendants of Alexander, who told them the story of Chulan's descent into the sea. The eldest, Bichitram, is styled Sang Sapurba and made ruler of Minangkabau; the next Paladutani, is made ruler of Tanjong Pura and styled Sang Meniaka; the youngest becomes ruler of Palembang and is styled Sang Utama. From foam out of the mouth of a white cow belonging to the two peasant girls is born Bath who reads a chiri or coronation formula giving the new ruler of Palembang the title Sri Tri Buana.”

(Winstedt, R. O. The Malay Annals of Sejarah Melayu. *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 16, 1938, No. 3, pp.18 – 19.)

Sang Nila Utama

- Utama was a common name among the Chola princes.

- Some of these “Utama” in Chola royal family:
  - Parakesari Uttama Chola (r. 971 – 985) : Emperor of Chola
  - Utthama Chola (Utthama Chola Lankeshwaran), the son of Rajendra Chola II (997 – 1064), Governor of the Sinhala (Sri Lanka), 1059 – 1093.

The Title of “Tribhuvana” vs “Sri Tri Buana”

- The title Tribhuvana-Chakravartin, literally "emperor of the three worlds", was used by the Cholas.
- “Lord of the Three Worlds”, the three worlds are: heaven, earth, and underworld.
- That is to say, Sang Nila Utama used a Chola emperor’s title after a ritual.

- About the story:
- When San Fo Qi (The Three Vijayas, Jambi) was under the threat of Mongol in 1292 CE, the royal family in the capital city of Jambi split into three forces and retreat to Minangkabau, Tanjongpura and Palembang.
- After the story:
- The Palembang branch of San Fo Qi contacted the newly founded Ming Dynasty in 1368 and pay tribute for about 10 times within 10 years (0 time during the Yuan Dynasty, 1260 – 1368).
- According to Tomé Pires, Paramisura was the king of Palembang and he married Paramisuri, the niece of Java king Batara Tomarill. When Batara Tomarill heard the news that Paramisura had changed his title to “Mjçura” (“Meswara” in the “Parameswara”), the Javanese attacked Palembang. Paramisura fled to Singapore and killed the king of Singapore after eight days he landed. The king of Siam was the father-in-law of the king of Singapore and he ordered an attack. Paramisura fled to Muar and later Malacca and founded the new kingdom of Malacca. (Pires 1512 – 1515: 230 – 232)
- That is to say, Palembang was under attack by Java in 1377 CE. The new title is probably “Sri Tri Buana”, which offended the Javanese King.

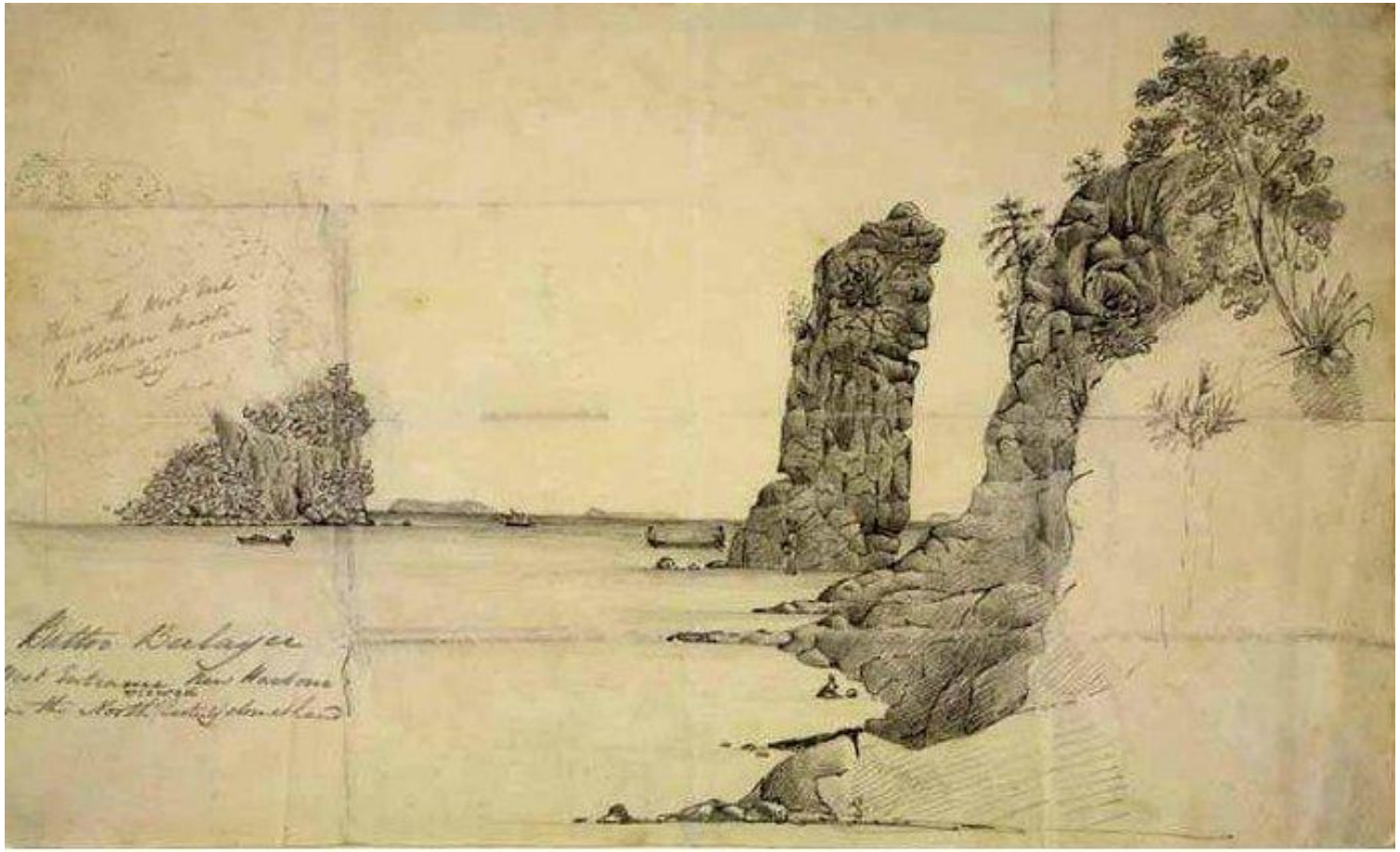
The name of “Long Ya Men”

- The name of Man Shan Shui Kou蛮山水口was used by Chola mission in Chinese record, 1015.
- The name of Ling Ya Men 凌牙门was first used in Zhu Fan Zhi (1225) by Zhao Ru Kuo.
- It was standardized as Long Ya Men 龙牙门

The name of “Long Ya Men”

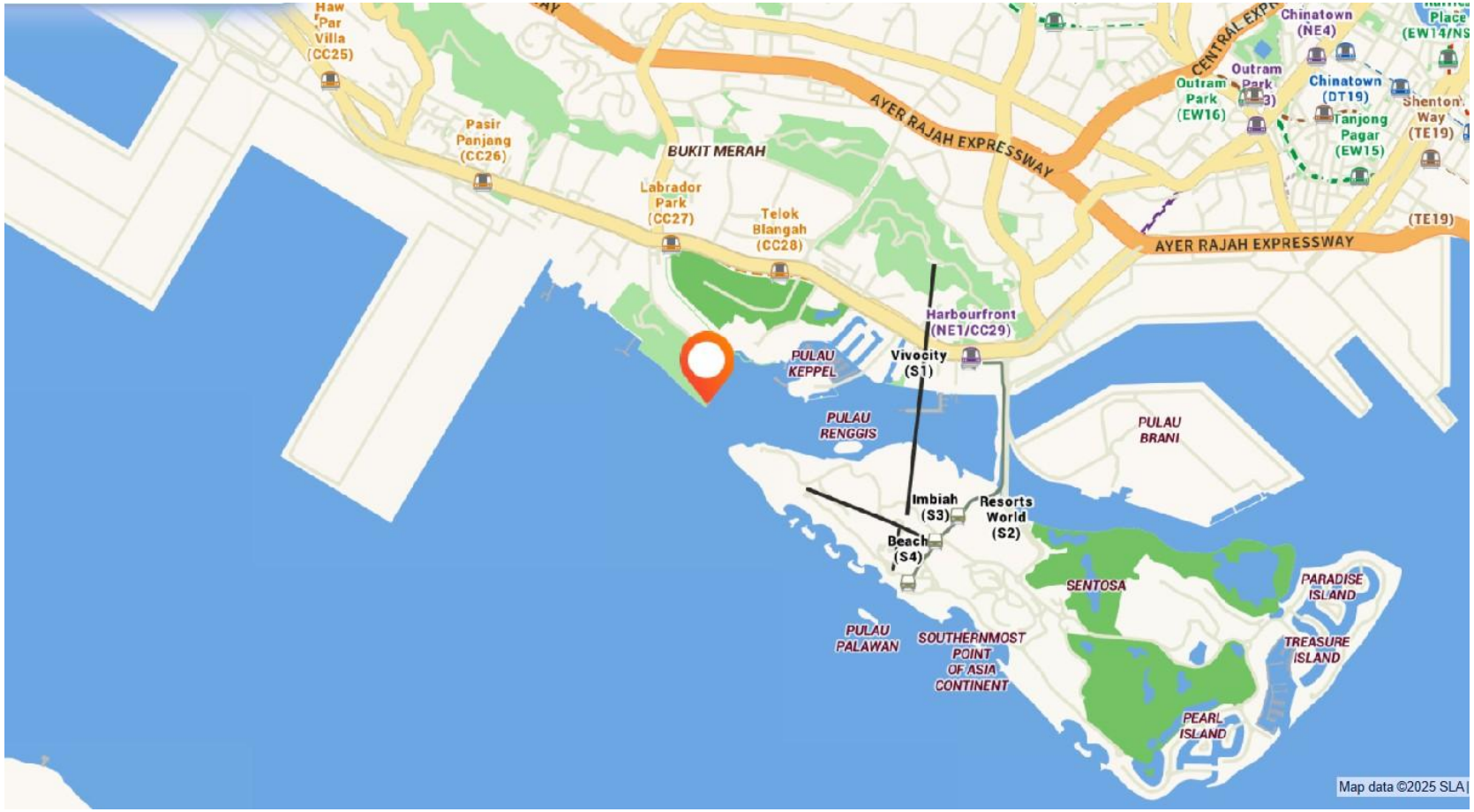
- Some suggest that “Long Ya Men” is a Chinese name. Is it?
- Most probably “Lingam”, referring to the Batu Berlayar (“Sailing Rock”), a craggy granite rock outcrop at the west entrance of Keppel Bay in Labrador Park. It is known as Lots's Wife by British, Varella del China (Chinese Stupa) by Portuguese.
- The rock was blown up by the Straits Settlement Surveyor, John Thompson, in August 1848 to widen the entrance to the "new habour".

The name of “Long Ya Men”



Drawing of Batu Berlayar, 1825

The name of “Long Ya Men”



The possible location of Batu Berlayer.

Trade of Long Ya Men during Chola Period

- “三佛齐，间于真腊、阇婆之间，管州十有五。在泉之正南，冬月顺风月余方至凌牙门。经商三分之一始入其国。……其国在海中，扼诸番舟车往来之咽喉，古用铁索为限，以备他盗，操纵有机，若商舶至则纵之。……若商舶过不入，即出船合战，期以必死，故国之舟辐凑焉。”（赵汝适《诸蕃志》“三佛齐”）
- Translation:
- “San Fo Qi (Jambi) is located in-between Zhen La (Cambodia) and Du Po (Java). It rules fifteen prefectures (states). During the winter, set sail due south of Quan Zhou, slightly more than one month come to Ling Ya Men. One third of the cargo is traded here, then enters the country (of San Fo Qi)…… It is situated in the sea, controlling the passage of foreign ships. During the ancient time, it used chain as boundary to prevent other pirates. (They) controlled it with mechanism and lowering it when merchant ship is arriving…… If a merchant ship passing by without entering its port, (they) will send ships to attack and they are all ready to die (in the battle). Therefore, their country becomes a shipping centre.” (Zhao Ru Kuo, *Records of Foreign People*, 1225)

Trade of Long Ya Men during Chola Period

- Zhao Ru Kuo was the Superintendent of Shipping at Quan Zhou. Quan Zhou was the largest port of the world according to Marco Polo (1292) and Ibn Baṭūṭah (1304 – 1377) who was at Quanzhou in 1345.
- According to the law of Song Dynasty (960–1279), the Superintendent of Shipping collects information from the foreign envoys so that the Ministry of Rites can receive them with appropriate manners. He has the firsthand knowledge of foreign countries and his record is unbiased.
- He mentioned that merchants setoff from Quanzhou would reach Ling Ya Men in more than one month. They would trade one third of the cargo in Ling Ya Men (Singapore), then proceed to San Fo Qi (Jambi). He specifically mentioned that the merchant ships “do business” [经商traded] at Ling Ya Men, not being robbed.

Conclusion

- The record of the ships from Quanzhou traded one third of the goods in Longyamen before proceeding to San Fo Qi (Jambi) and other ports proofed that Long Ya Men was a prosperous port in 1225.
- The perception that ancient Singapore was founded in 1299 or it was a fishing village before 1819 must be changed with the Zhao Ru Kuo record of Long Ya Men/Ling Ya Men trade volume.
- With the record of 200 to 300 battle ships of Long Ya Men in Wang Da Yuan's *Description of the Islanders*, the prosperity of Long Ya Men port had at least lasted from Zhao Ru Kuo held the office of Shipping Superintendent to Wang Da Yuan's voyages, which is 1224 to 1330. It is over a century.

Q & A

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