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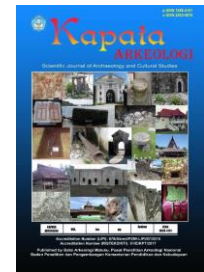


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# DATA DESCRIPTION AND EPIGRAPHY OF TIN PLATE INSCRIPTIONS IN THE SOUTHERN SUMATRA

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### Abstract

Along the Eastern coast of Southern Sumatra, from Jambi to South Sumatra is a wetland area that contains various relics from the past. Relics from the past include boat wrecks, beads, pottery, terracotta, and metal plate inscriptions made of tin and copper. Tin plate inscriptions are relatively common artifactual data found. Several tin plate inscriptions in the area are essential data to be studied using the Epigraphic method. This method includes a description of the form dimensions, the elements of the constituent materials, textual analysis of the contents of the inscription, and interpretation. Tin-based writing material became familiar when the raw materials for stone or other metals were not widely available in the area. From the X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) analysis, it is known that the tin used was pure white tin with the code Sn and only a small amount of Pb or lead. The tin material used may have come from the East, i.e., Bangka Island, Belitung Island, Singkep Island, and others. Based on the epigraphic study, the contents of the tin plate inscriptions are mostly texts of spells. A shaman has likely written the spell text for salvation purposes. The scripts used in the tin plate inscription data were identified as Old Sumatran, Ulu/Ka-Ga-Nga, Jawi, and Arabic.

**Keywords:** inscription; tin plate; spells; Southern Sumatra; Malay; Sriwijaya

## INTRODUCTION

Tin is a metal that is quite popularly used as accessories, writing material, and other daily equipment. Tin is the first metal element in the world used as a mixture with other metal elements to get a new, better type of metal (Sujitno, 1996: 6). According to Sujitno (1996: 3), tin entered Egyptian culture around 3000 BC. In China, tin has been mined since the 2nd century A.D. and in the Malacca Peninsula region began to be mined in the 5th century A.D. According to Heidhues (2008: 11), tin material is abundant in the Malay Peninsula. The existence of tin in the Southern Siam region coincided with the development of civilization there, where tin mining may have taken place centuries ago. In this area, the presence of tin was evidenced by Arab ships importing several commodities such as agarwood, camphor, sandalwood, ivory, tin, ebony, redwood, and various other spices from the Malay peninsula since the 10th century (Tasman, 2016: 77). Most tin materials from Southeast Asia are alluvial deposits. Tin material is found in the primary layer of rocks and soil layers along the riverbed (Nurhadi, 2017). Tin mining is carried out

by digging holes and bringing the excavated soil into a basket (Heidhues, 2008: 11).

Tin, which is relatively abundant in Sumatra, has become fairly popular as the primary material for making inscriptions as writing material in the past. The findings of ancient inscriptions in stone and metal plates were relatively common throughout the southern part of Sumatra. The existence of several ancient inscriptions cannot be separated from the development of ancient civilizations along the island of Sumatra. The Sumatra Island area is known as the site of the growth of many kingdoms since the early A.D. (Poesponegoro, Marwati, & Kartodirdjo, 2008). Some of the oldest Kingdoms include the Kingdom of Koying, Tupo, and Kandali around the 5th century A.D. (Rahim, 2019: 658). Based on historical chronology, around the 7th century A.D., the Melayu and the Sriwijaya Kingdom emerged (Soekmono, 1992). The Melayu Kingdom emerged in 644/645 as an independent kingdom and was then annexed by Sriwijaya forty years later. At least until the Grahi Inscription in 1183, which claimed that the Melayu Kingdom was part of Sriwijaya. Rahim (2019) explained

that the Melayu Kingdom had been separated from the Sriwijaya since the Pamalayu expedition in 1275.

The *Kedatuan* Sriwijaya or Sriwijaya Kingdom, ruled the Malacca Peninsula and was strategically positioned as a shipping lane along the Malacca and Bangka Straits (Sholeh, Sari, & Berliani, 2019). Several inscriptions found in the southern part of Sumatra are partly from the heyday of the Sriwijaya Kingdom (Boechari, 2012; Damais, 1995). The mention of the name Sriwijaya was initiated by Coedès (1918) and identified Palembang as the capital of the Sriwijaya Kingdom in the past based on the assumption of Groeneveldt (1876) (Coedès, Damais, Kulke, & Manguin, 2014). The Sriwijaya Kingdom is also mentioned in ancient foreign news sources, such as the records of Chinese and Arab seafarers from the 7th to 10th centuries A.D. (Reid, 1995). The glory of the Sriwijaya Kingdom is also reflected in the capital city of Sriwijaya in Palembang, formerly known as part of Pan Asian Buddhism (Guy, 2011). The Kedukan Bukit inscription, the Talang Tuwo inscription, and the Telaga Batu inscription, which are thought to date from the 7th century A.D., have become symbols of the glory of Palembang City as the capital of Sriwijaya Kingdom (Santun, 2013). However, the position of Palembang City as the capital of Sriwijaya was doubted by De Casparis (1975). De Casparis (1975) reasoned that it did not make sense that many ancient inscriptions contained *sapatha* or curses, and threats were placed in the capital city (Utomo, 2010: 68).

Ancient inscriptions found in southern Sumatra are stone and metal plate inscriptions. A study of five stone inscriptions by Izza (2019) showed that the inscription text was in pallawa script and the Old Malay language. This information follows the classification carried out by Kartakusuma (1993: 25), which states that political inscriptions from the Sriwijaya period all use Old Malay, while religious inscriptions use Sanskrit.

Research on ancient tin mining in Bangka Island was initiated by the Research Team of the Balai Arkeologi Palembang (2007, 2008). This study explains that in the 18th century, there were several locations for monitoring tin excavation posts called '*pangkal*' or bases. These locations were spread over a many areas on Bangka Island, such as Belinyu, Bandul, Biyat, Bunut, Rambat, Sungai Buluh, Bangka Kota, Kota Waringin, and Koba (Novita, 2008: 16). Based on a Dutch map in 1885, the cities with the most tin deposits were Belinyu, Sungailiat, Merawang, Baturusa, Pangkalpinang, Jebus, and Toboali. (Novita, 2008:16).

Andhifani (2017b) and the Balai Arkeologi Sumatra Selatan research team collected ancient inscriptions and manuscripts in the Bangka and Belitung Islands region. As a result, in West Bangka (Tin Museum), there are inscriptions made of tin plates. Meanwhile, in 2018, the

Balai Arkeologi Sumatra Selatan research team took an inventory of tin plate inscriptions in the Southern Sumatra region. About 94 tin plate inscriptions in this area are found in several locations. These locations are the Mentok Timah Museum, the Padmasana Foundation in Jambi, the collection of the Balai Pelestarian Cagar Budaya (BPCB: Cultural Heritage Preservation Agency) at Jambi (collected from agencies or foundations), and several collectors in Muntok and Palembang. Some metal inscriptions that have been studied are gold, copper, and brass inscriptions. This study describes several tin plate inscriptions in the Southern Sumatra region. This description includes information on shape, size, material elements, script transcripts, and interpretation.

## METHODS

This study applies the epigraphic method to understand the contents of the inscription through a series of relevant stages (Andhifani, 2005: 15; Dwiyanto, 1992). According to Bakker (1972), the study of inscriptions as a source of historical data must go through several stages, as follows:

- 1) investigate the truth;
- 2) conformity of the contents with other inscriptions;
- 3) compare it with ancient references abroad;
- 4) interpret its meaning; and
- 5) summarize in synthesis.

This research applies a series of stages, overall including data collection, data processing or analysis, and the formation of synthesis and presentation. Data collection was the initial activity in this research. This data collection stage includes activities to trace the existence of the inscriptions, interviews, and reference studies. In this stage, efforts were made to obtain the required data as much as possible.

Attempts to find the tin plate inscription by gathering several people used as informants. The informants selected came from the village where the plate inscription was found and collectors. Several tin plate inscriptions were collected and then recorded in full and in detail to make it easier to classify them.

The interview aims to find out information about the history, both the history of the inscription and the village's history. The informants mainly were the owners of the plate inscriptions, both in the local community and collectors. The basic information collected is the original owner's identity, the origin, the story behind the inscription, and the ancient text that explains it.

The literature study includes collecting several references related to the Sriwijaya Kingdom inscription. In addition, this study also collected various information along the east coast of Sumatra and the sources of ancient inscriptions from the Adityawarman period and Old Javanese inscriptions. References collected include books, journal articles, and previous research reports.

The outline note of references was entirely made following the standard of scientific writing. The outline note made it easier to continue the next stage of work (Andhifani, 2017b: 181). Several recorded inscriptions were then described to provide information regarding the dimensions of shape, size, and elements of the constituent materials. This study presents a textual description of the contents of the inscription and its interpretation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study recorded 80 plate inscriptions. The plate inscriptions are tin, copper, and gold, grouped based on location and owner.

### Tin Plate Inscription from the Collection of Timah Muntok Museum, West Bangka

#### Code A1

This plate inscription is rectangular, 4.2 cm long, and 3.1 cm wide. This inscription is mainly made of tin. The results of the analysis of the X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) method showed that the composition of the A1 plate inscription in percentages are: Tin (Sn) 70.983; LE 26.486; Iron (Fe) 1.760; Lead (Pb) 0.452; Copper (Cu) 0.109; Arsenic (As) 0.078; Manganese (Mn) 0.073; Iron (Zn) 0.059. The following is a legible transcript of the A1 inscription text:

#### Side A

1. .... mba ba na
2. .... nā/n
3. *ni (pa) ja ma*
4. hana ..... sa bya
5. ....liki tapi °iku ....
6. ....jā la gita

#### Side B

1. *Ta/ka ba/nā ma dyaksa*
2. .... na ga tu na

#### Code A2

This plate inscription is rectangular and broken into two pieces. This inscription measures 4.6 cm long and 3 cm wide. This plate inscription is mainly made of tin. The results of the XRF method analysis show that the constituent materials for the A2 plate inscription in percentages are: Tin (Sn) 68.460; LE 29.330; Iron (Fe) 1.674; Lead (Pb) 0.393; Copper (Cu) 0.067; Arsenic (As) 0.55; Manganese (Mn) 0.021. There is no text or figure on this inscription.

#### Code A3

This plate inscription is mainly made of tin, rectangular, measuring 17.8 cm long and 2.4 cm wide. The condition on the edges of this inscription looks eroded. The following is a legible transcript of the A3 inscription text:

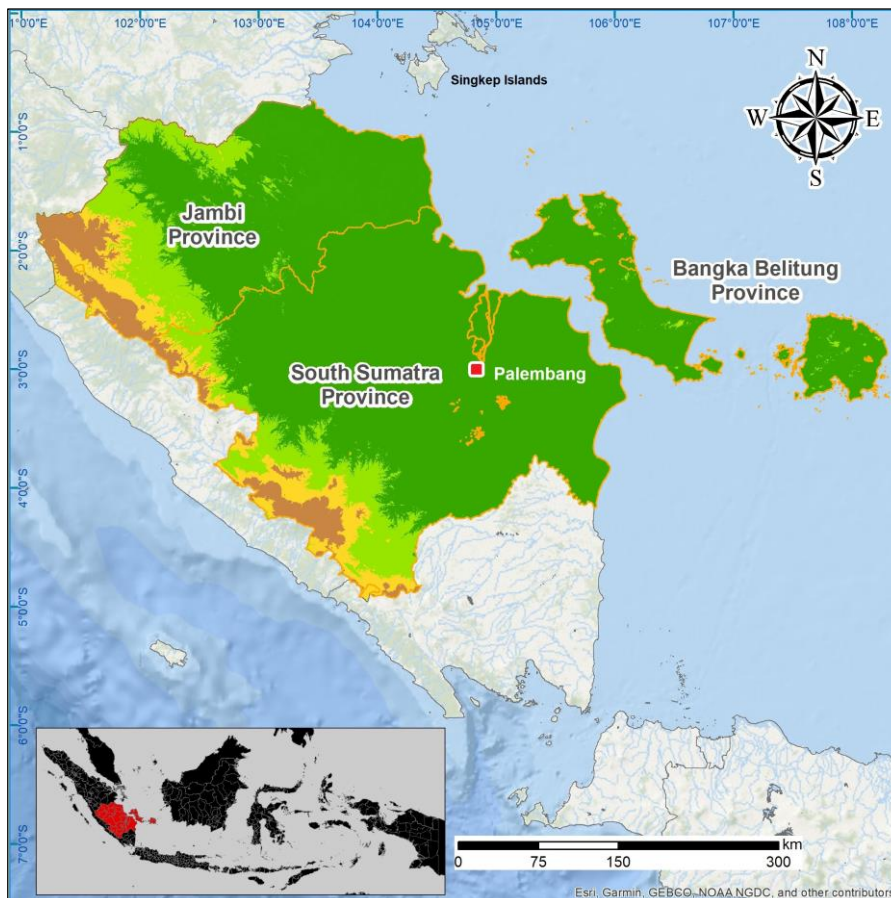


Figure 1. The southern part of Sumatra as a data collection area (Source: ArcGIS Database, 2019)



Side A

1. *Kawi ta kwa pa ka ti ta n̄a ta riḥ pa/sa wa n̄a ka n̄a ha was*
2. .... (repeat the third line)
3. ...*nara/la sa ja di ta ha.... ja (ka)/na /ta ka*

Side B

1. .... *ja wa ka dha wa ma – ja ca*

2. – *ja danta wa ta ha – – – – – dpa/mpa ta – – – – – ga – – –*

Code A4

This plate inscription is mainly made of tin, rectangular in shape, measuring 6.7 cm long and 1.5 cm wide. The text is written on two sides of the plate. The following is a legible transcript of the A4 inscription:



Figure 2. The tin plate inscriptions from the collection of Muntok Timah Museum (Source: Balai Arkeologi Sumatra Selatan, 2018)

#### Side A

1. – *la ka dha* -- --
2. – *ta pa ki – ka*

#### Side B

1. *Ha –caka la ga* -- - - - - - - -

#### Code A5

This plate inscription is made of tin, rectangular in shape, measuring 7.7 cm long and 1 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side of the plate. The following is a legible transcript of the A5 inscription text:

*om titi tas tas swaha*

The translation of the text is "hope you are in good condition and avoid or escape from all obstacles/dangers."

#### Code A6

This plate inscription is made of tin, rectangular, measuring 16.6 cm long and 2.9 cm wide. The text is engraved on two sides of the plate. The following is a legible transcript of the A6 inscription text:

#### Side A

1. // ... *ma wa sa ju sa nca be hna ma na ba om ka/ta la sa/ya ka da sa ja la da ha*
2. *Kawannda mu ku/lu n ikan jatiŋpa ri wa na sa*
3. *Ta sa ri ya na mi ku .....wa rja dah di ka ...da ....na*
4. *Ki da li ja ....dha .. ta da*

#### Side B

1. *Dya kha /o swa-- -- swarha ja je ri sa*
2. ... *h gah sa ha ga dyā mit rak ra-- -- ka -- --*
3. *Cado na pa nra °ī //*

#### Code B1

This plate inscription is mainly made of tin, measuring 8.9 cm long and 3.1 cm wide. This inscription is rectangular, with a curved top. Based on the results of the XRF analysis, the composition of the B1 plate inscription in percentages are: Tin (Sn) 52.843; LE 32.037; Iron (Fe) 1.780; Lead (Pb) 2.472; Copper (Cu) 0.646; Arsenic (As) 0.213; Sircon (Zr) 0.009. The script

is engraved on one side of the plate, and on the other, there is a figure scratch.

#### Side A

figure scratch

#### Side B

Ulu script

#### Code B2

This plate inscription is mainly made of tin, measuring 6.2 cm long and 4.5 cm wide. Based on the results of the XRF analysis, the composition of the B2 plate inscription in percentages are: Tin (Sn) 51.210; LE 35.132; Iron (Fe) 2.479; Lead (Pb) 10.881; Copper (Cu) 0.234; Manganese (Mn) 0.055; Sircon (Zr) 0.0097. On both sides of the plate inscription, there is an engraving of the Ulu script.

#### Side A

figure and Ulu script

#### Side B

figure and Ulu script

#### Code B3

This plate inscription is mainly made of tin, measuring 3 cm long, 3 cm wide, and 0.4 cm thick. This plate inscription is rectangular and folded like letter paper, so the contents cannot be identified.

### Tin Plate Inscription from Mr. Seno's Collection

#### Code SN1

This plate inscription is mainly made of tin in the shape of an irregular rectangle because one end is broken. This inscription measures 4.5 cm x 3 cm long and 4.3 cm wide. On one side, there are texts accompanied by an engraving of a half-bodied human figure with two hands. On the head of the human figure, there is a kind of crown resembling three horns.

#### Code SN2

This plate inscription is mainly made of tin in the shape of a rectangle measuring 13 cm long and 1.5 cm wide. The text is written on one side of the plate. The



**Figure 3.** The Tin Plate Inscription Code SN2 from Seno's collection  
(Source: Balai Arkeologi Sumatra Selatan, 2018)



following is a legible transcript of the SN2 inscription text:

**Side A**

1. // om ha da ra – ka – – – ta – dya ra lu pa ni /ki/bi ta da hulun ra dha na bi/ki ta  
..... da ka ni ra da na palis sa gan ga nu ban

**The Sungai Pisang Tin Plate Inscription, Cenggal**

**Code SP**

This plate inscription is mainly made of tin, rectangular in shape, measuring 13 cm long and 4 cm wide. The text is engraved on two sides of the plate. The following is a legible transcript of the Sungai Pisang inscription text:

**Side A**

1. om maktu maktu wandhap pwa ha da ka dua
2. huluk ja di da -- na ra da nan pra ti wi wi
3. wa dhak pa wik thu tti di pa ka kud ka gan ka du

**Side B**

1. -- k – di ta la tā wa
2. ka dhra t -- ke wa – dhi tri --
3. na pak ka pa go tra swa

**Tin Plate Inscription from Mr. Rudin's Collection**

**Code RD1**

This plate inscription is mainly made of tin, rectangular in shape, measuring 16 cm long and 1.8 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side of the plate. The following is a legible transcript of the RD1 inscription text:

1. omśwati wari waras wyā ya wa ra (ba) je
2. narāka sorgha

**Code RD2**

This plate inscription is mainly made of tin, rectangular in shape, measuring 14 cm long and 2.4 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side of the plate. The



**Figure 4.** The Side A of The Sungai Pisang Tin Plate Inscription, which has been digitally edited (Source: Balai Arkeologi Sumatra Selatan, 2018)



**Figure 5.** The RD1 tin plate inscription from Rudin's collection, Pasir Village (Source: Balai Arkeologi Sumatra Selatan, 2018)



**Figure 6.** One of the tin plate inscriptions from the Padmasana Foundation Collection.  
(Source: Balai Arkeologi Sumatra Selatan, 2018)

following is a legible transcript of the RD 2 inscription text:

1. *ṅ pa na ṅa ka pa ka ṅa gi ba/na lya dha na/ba ca ta*
2. *ma ma na wi na ja la ṅya ka na ti na ṅ ra la ja la*
3. *ta li ca -- ṅ waṅa ti sa wi – pa ca ṅa ti sa wi*
4. *ga sa ja ca pa taḥ ta ca ga raḥ ca ta ka –*

#### Code RD3

This plate inscription is mainly made of tin, rectangular in shape, measuring about 11 cm long and 2.2 cm wide. The condition of this inscription is broken into two pieces. The text is engraved on one side of the plate. The following is a legible transcript of the RD3 inscription text:

#### Piece 1

1. *--- -- ṅa –ta sa ga –*
2. *ta na ja ga ṅya ta ṅā*
3. *ṅa ta ṅa ta*

#### Piece 2

1. *ta na la*
2. *ta ga wa*
3. *ṅa ga na*

### Plate Inscription from Padmasana Foundation Collection

The collection of metal plate inscriptions owned by the Padmasana Foundation, Jambi, amounted to 52 plates. The Padmasana Foundation inscription collection consists of 36 tin plate inscriptions, one copper plate inscription, and 16 blank plate inscriptions without

scripts. The following are the inscriptions that have been identified.

**Padma 1** This plate inscription is rectangular, measuring 6.5 cm long and 4.5 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side of the plate, consisting of four lines. There is a figure carved at the bottom. The letter size is 0.2 cm high with 0.3 to 0.5 cm spacing. Text transcript:

1. *om halimunsaga sa*
2. *liruf buṅi bataan salaman salah*
3. *rupa salisih palyasila parta ma*
4. *lam buṅi ba<sup>o</sup>u silasiṅan swahaḥ //*

**Padma 2** This plate inscription measures 11 cm long and 2.2 cm wide. The texts are engraved on two sides of the plate, one side consists of two lines, and the other is barely legible. The letter size is 0.5 cm high with 0.3–0.5 cm spacing. This plate inscription is rectangular with a conical apex. This plate inscription is mainly made of copper. Text transcript:

#### Side A

1. *nmu ga sakṣa da mcu om ra ---ttrāt kā 7 su 1*
2. *.....tha dhe ditya dhi yā ra 1 dhan m kara (ṅa) la //*

#### Side B

1. *– ha (6)*

**Padma 3** This plate inscription measures 17 cm long and 1.8 cm wide. The shape is a rectangle with a conical apex. The text engraved on one side consists of two lines. The letter size is 0.3 cm high with 0.5 cm spacing.

**Padma 4** This plate inscription measures 11.3 cm long and 2.1 cm wide. The texts are engraved on two sides,



- side A consists of three lines, and side B consists of four letters.
- Padma 5 This plate inscription measures 12.5 cm long and 2.2 cm wide. The texts are written on two sides. The first side consists of two lines, and the second side consists of one line. The letter size is 0.5 cm high with 0.2 cm spacing. The shape of the inscription is a hexagon with the top part of a severed cone.
- Padma 6 This plate inscription measures 8.5 cm long and 2 cm wide. The letter size is 0.1 cm high with 0.1 cm spacing. The texts are engraved on two sides. The first side consists of seven lines, and the second side consists of eight lines but wears out in the last part of the text.
- Padma 7 This plate inscription measures 9.7 cm long and 1.7 cm wide. The shape of the plate is rectangular, with rounded corners. The text is engraved on one side and consists of two lines. The letter size is 0.3 cm high with 0.5 cm spacing.
- Padma 8 This plate inscription was broken in two. This inscription measures 13 cm long and 1.5 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side and consists of two lines. The letter size is 0.2 cm high with 0.5 cm spacing.
- Padma 9 This plate inscription was broken in two. The plate measures 11 cm long and 1.5 cm wide. The text engraved on one side consists of two lines. The letter size is 0.5 cm high with 0.2 cm spacing.
- Padma 10 This plate inscription is rectangular with a length of 5.1 cm and a width of 2.6 cm. The text is engraved on one side and consists of seven lines. The letter size is 0.1 cm high with 0.1 cm spacing. Text transcript:  
 1. *om siriḥ paja naja sila*  
 2. *—ras bar—yin pati ta na-i*  
 3. *maka gantas tana man*  
 4. *ri jañan digantas tanam di*  
 5. *ri maka gantas si talagah si bu*  
 6. *rkat si kadu si nirmula muji mu*  
 7. *ja ..... rakṣa*
- Padma 11 This plate inscription is rectangular with a length of 9 cm and a width of 2 cm. The letter size is 0.1 cm high with 0.1 cm spacing. The text is engraved on one side and consists of one line in worn condition.
- Padma 12 This plate inscription measures 9.2 cm long and 2.5 cm wide. The texts are engraved on two sides, consisting of one line. On one side, there are figures or scratches. The letters are 0.8 cm in height on one side and 0.7–1.7 cm on another side. The shape of the plate is rectangular with a severed cone-shaped apex.
- Padma 13 The plate inscription is rectangular, 11.2 cm long, and 1 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side.
- Padma 14 The plate inscription is rectangular, 13.8 cm long, and 2 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side and consists of two lines.
- Padma 15 The plate inscription is rectangular, 19.5 cm long, and 1.9 cm wide. The text is engraved on two sides and consists of two lines.
- Padma 16 The plate inscription is rectangular, 13.2 cm long, and 2.2 cm wide. The texts are engraved on two sides. The first side consists of four lines, and the second side consists of one line.
- Padma 17 The plate inscription is rectangular, 14 cm long, and 1.2 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side and consists of two lines in worn condition. The letter size is 0.1–0.2 cm high with 0.41 cm spacing.
- Padma 18 The plate inscription is rectangular, with a length of 11.6 cm and a width of 1.9 cm. The text is engraved on two sides, each consisting of two lines. Text transcript:  
 Side A  
 1. *— satu ta sa ka ṅaḥ sa ...*  
 2. *san °i swana °aḥ ka wa ra gu nu ma*  
 Side B  
 1. *— wa ga pa ra na ka — ta nanta ṅa ta ra nna*  
 2. *ṅun — kha ṣa pa na ssa ga ta ṅat na khaj pa //*
- Padma 19 This plate inscription measures 37 cm long and 1.3 cm wide. The text engraved on one side consists of two lines. Some of the text conditions are worn. The font size is 0.3 cm high with 0.2 cm spacing. The shape of the inscription is rectangular, with rounded corners. Text transcript:  
 .....*ha ga hu — ta n- sa ka — — — ja da*
- Padma 20 This plate inscription measures 13.5 cm long and 1.8 cm wide. The text is engraved on two sides. The first side consists of two lines, and the second side consists of one line. The letter size is 0.2 cm high with 0.2 cm spacing. Rectangular shape with rounded corners. Text transcript:  
 Side A  
 1. *om — ra na ṅa ta na .....*  
 2. *nak rā ka — ti la ta ṅi ga ra ka na — k °i*  
 3. *ṅi ṅa su — ṅa °a ra ra ta ta ...*  
 Side B  
 1. .... *ta la nik- ṅa ki ta ta — ka*
- Padma 21 This plate inscription measures 15.3 cm long and 1.5 cm wide. The text engraved on one side consists of three lines, rectangular shapes with rounded corners.
- Padma 22 This plate inscription measures 10.3 cm long and 1.5 cm wide. The letter size is 0.1–0.2 cm high with 0.2 cm spacing and a rectangular shape with rounded corners. The text is engraved on one side and consists of two lines.
- Padma 23 This plate inscription measures 8.2 cm long and 1.7 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side and consists of three lines. The letter size is 0.1–0.2 cm high with 0.3 cm spacing. The shape of the plate is rectangular with rounded corners.
- Padma 24 This plate inscription measures 8.3 cm long and 2.3 cm wide. The letter size is 0.3–0.5 cm high and 0.2–0.5 cm spacing, rectangular shape with a broken condition at one corner. The text is engraved on two sides and consists of three lines.
- Padma 25 This plate inscription is rectangular, 6.8 cm long, and 1.5 cm wide. The text is engraved on two sides and consists of five lines. The letter size is 0.2 cm high and 0.1 cm spacing.
- Padma 26 This plate inscription is rectangular, 14 cm long, and 2.2 cm wide. The text is engraved on two sides and consists of two lines. The letter size is 0.5 cm high and 0.5 cm spacing. Text transcript:



- Side A  
1. *ga ga -- nan ka -- -- -- wā ga – n ka --*  
2. *-- -- ha ha na ha ta ha – ga la -- --*
- Side B  
1. *// pa ya nā nā ga -- nā //*
- Padma 27 The condition of this plate inscription is fragmented. The plate is rectangular with rounded corners, measuring 3.2 cm long and 1.8 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side and consists of one line. The letter height is 0.2 cm.
- Padma 28 This plate inscription is rectangular with rounded corners, 9.3 cm long and 1.5 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side and consists of three lines. The letter size is 0.2 cm high with 0.05 spacing.
- Padma 29 This plate inscription measures 14.5 cm long and 1.6 cm wide. The text is engraved on two sides and consists of one line on one side, and there is a figure on the other side. The letter height is 0.3 cm. The plate is rectangular with rounded corners.
- Padma 30 This plate inscription measures 2.5 cm long and 2 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side and consists of two lines. The letter size is 0.3 cm high with 0.5 cm spacing. The plate condition is not intact in a rectangular shape with one side broken.
- Padma 31 This plate inscription measures 11.2 cm long and 2.5 cm wide. The plate is rectangular, with the top trimmed on both sides, tapering at the top. The text is engraved on one side with worn conditions, making it challenging to identify. The shape of this plate inscription is broken into two parts.
- Padma 32 This plate inscription measures 7 cm long and 1.5 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side. The condition of the plate is broken in two. The text consists of two lines but is in a worn condition. The plate is rectangular, and the letter size is 0.2 cm high.
- Padma 33 The condition of the plate inscription is fragmented, measuring 2.5 cm long and 1.5 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side and consists of one line, but it is worn out.
- Padma 34 This plate inscription is rectangular, 2.5 cm long, and 2.2 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side, and there is only one letter. The letter height is 0.3 cm.
- Padma 35 This plate inscription measures 15.8 cm long and 1.4 cm wide. The text is engraved on two sides; one side consists of two lines and one line on the other side.
- Padma 36 This plate inscription is fragmented, rectangular in shape, measuring 2.6 cm long and 1.8 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side consisting of six lines with a letter height of 0.1 cm and a spacing of 0.05 cm.
- high and 0.2–0.5 cm in space. The text is engraved on one side and consists of one line.
- R.A. 2 This plate inscription is rectangular, 9 cm long, and 4.4 cm wide. The letter height is 0.3 cm with a 0.2–0.5 cm space. The text is engraved on one side and consists of 4 lines. Text transcript:  
1. *ga ka saka marajah sa sa ma .....*  
2. *... sa ya ca mas wajra pa n sya...*  
3. *.... n tri – n praña j...*
- R.A. 3 This plate inscription is rectangular, 4.6 cm long, and 3.8 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side and consists of 3 lines. The text was identified as the Ulu script. The letter height is 0.5 cm with 0.3–0.4 cm space.
- R.A. 4 This plate inscription has the most extended size in Rudiasri's collection. The text is engraved on two sides of the plate. The plate condition is not intact, broken in some parts of the edges. However, the text condition is relatively preserved and can be recognized. The text of Side A consists of six lines, and there is a figure on the right while empty on the left. Side B also consists of six lines of writing. The letter height is 0.5 cm with a 0.3–0.4 cm spacing. The shape of the plate is an irregular rectangle. The size of the plate inscription is 23.3 cm long and 4.5 cm wide. Text transcript:  
Side A  
1. *– li ri ka wa ca dewa watu pancran ka ga yan nā pā nā sa... sa ra gu ... nā – nta nā curiga .. ta kanna ku ... ku ra la...*  
2. *... wa si wika na ka pu la wi kun ca °a cu wā pa ku pu la – kan ... ka pu la sa ka su ... si dha hayu ku pu ja nakan wan ... pu la wu ka*  
3. *....ku pu la ssa ka n wa ssa –wa ga ku pu la ssa kan wa thsi da pu la sa kan wa ssi ka da pan*  
4. *pu sa kan ka pul ra ga ka cu ra kã cu ri ta wa kal cu ri pa -- -- pa ma jak ki ta – hu ku ta om wa ...*  
5. *jañan ma – lu – miñ . ra gapsa la gi ja ñanma nā 1 la gi di ya ku . hyañ sa*  
6. *... nā °a ma t- ... –i .. ca ma yan*  
Side B  
1. (worn) .....

### Plate Inscription from Mr. Rudiasri's Collection

Mr. Rudiasri's (R.A.) collection consists of 18 tin plate inscriptions and one gold plate inscription. Gold plate inscriptions were not identified in the study. Besides that, not all tin plate inscriptions can be identified because several plates were challenging to read.

- R.A. 1 This plate inscription measures 18.9 cm long and 2.4 cm wide. The letter size is 1.2–1.5 cm

- RA 5 This plate inscription is rectangular, 14.7 cm long, and 2.4 cm wide. The letter height is 0.3 cm with 0.2 cm space. The text consists of 2 lines on one side of the plate. Text transcript:  
*..... ti ... swa la da pi – s*

- R.A. 6 This plate inscription is 6 cm long and 5.5 cm wide. This inscription contains an anthropomorphic figure. The anthropomorphic figure is depicted holding spears in both hands.

- R.A. 7 This plate inscription is rectangular, 4.8 cm long, and 3 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side and identified as the Ulu script. The letter height is 1.5 cm, spacing 0.5 cm.



**Figure 7.** R4 inscription, one of Mr. Ruidiasri's collections  
(Source: Balai Arkeologi Sumatra Selatan, 2018)

- R.A. 8 This plate inscription is fragmented, with the left part broken. The size of the plate is 6.4 cm long and 3.2 cm wide. The text is engraved on two sides. The text on Side A consists of 4 lines with letters 0.3 to 0.5 cm high and 0.2 to 0.3 cm space. Meanwhile, Side B only consists of one line with the letter height is 0.8 cm in worn condition.
- R.A. 9 The size of the plate inscription is 14.7 cm long and 2.4 cm wide. This inscription has no text, but three figurative forms are carved on one side.
- R.A. 10 This plate inscription is a rectangle, 12 cm long and 1.4 cm wide. The text is engraved on two sides. The text on Side A consists of two lines with a letter height of 0.3 cm and a space of 0.2 cm. The text on Side B consists of one line with a letter height of 0.3 cm.
- R.A. 11 This plate inscription is 10 cm long and 2.4 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side, with the letter height is 0.2 to 0.7 cm and 0.4 cm in space.
- R.A. 12 This plate inscription is an irregular rectangle, 7 cm long and 3 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side in a worn condition.
- R.A. 13 This plate inscription is 4.8 cm long and 3.6 cm wide. The text is engraved on one side. The text is in worn condition and difficult to identify.
- R.A. 14 This plate inscription is folded like paper with a rectangular shape. There are no visible figures or letters on the surface. The size is 3.9 cm x 3.4 cm with 0.6 cm thick. The plate condition is relatively fragile.
- R.A. 15 This plate inscription is folded like paper with a rectangular shape. The plate size is 3 cm x 3.2 cm with 1 cm thick. The condition of the plate is relatively good. On both sides of the surface, there is a figure of a circle identified as 'yantra.'
- R.A. 16 This plate inscription is folded like paper with a rectangular shape. The plate size is 2.6 cm x 2.1 cm with 0.6 cm thick. The tin plate is in good condition. There are no visible figures or letters on the surface.
- R.A. 17 This plate inscription is folded like paper with a rectangular shape. There are no visible figures and letters on the surface. The plate size is 2.9 cm x 3.4 cm with 1 cm thick. The tin plate is in good condition.

- R.A. 18 This plate inscription is folded like paper with an irregular rectangular shape. There are no figures and letters on its surface. The plate size is 2.1 cm x 1.9 cm with 0.5 cm thick. The tin plate is in good condition.

### Tin Plate Inscription from Balai Pelestarian Cagar Budaya Jambi

There are seven tin plate inscriptions preserved at the Balai Pelestarian Cagar Budaya Jambi (Cultural Heritage Preservation Office of Jambi Province) or BPCB Jambi. BPCB Jambi bought all the inscriptions from the people who live on the riverside of the Batanghari River. The following are the description and text transcript:

#### Lempeng 1

This plate inscription was found around the Estuary of the Batanghari River, precisely located near the mosque on the riverside. This plate inscription was found by Mr. Amran, a resident of Muaro Jambi Village. This plate inscription is made of tin, rectangular with rounded corners. The plate measures 29.5 cm long, 2 cm wide, 0.08 mm thick, and weighs 23.67 grams. Based on XRF analysis, it is shown that the content of the constituent materials of the Lempeng 1 inscription is Tin (Sn) of 91.27. The text was identified as Old Sumatran script with ancient Malay language, consisting of 2 lines. The condition of the engraved text is a bit faded, and some of the letters are not visible due to wear. The following is the text transcript:

1. *ha (da) (tal) lwa ta lta ma ya/sa su pi ta nya hu ma sya ba – ya da rma sa tsa ma*
2. *la lu lu (ru) las) swa ha // ta han) na ku si la ya la ya*

#### Lempeng 2

The Lempeng 2 inscription is relatively the same as the Lempeng 1, found by Mr. Amran near the mosque on the riverside of the Batanghari River. XRF analysis shows that the content of the constituent materials of the Lempeng 2 inscription is mainly Tin (Sn) of 90.65%. The plate measures 14.5 cm long, 21.58 mm wide, 0.87 mm



thick, and weighs 12.96 grams. This inscription consists of 4 lines and was identified as Old Sumatran script with Old Malay and Sanskrit language. The text contains the names of Hindu and Buddhist gods. The following is the text transcript:

1. *om saṅ hyaṅ na ga pa ni ... .. bha ṭa ra ... ..  
bha ṭa ra saṅ (ga) bha ṭa ra a ... pa u ta ma ma ...  
ha*
2. *bha ṭa ra keś wa ra sa ba ta th..... lo ka pa la car ta  
brah ma ha ba ka har ta tis ti ka ta*
3. *ji wā ta om brah ma..... ṭa ra hyaṅ buddha  
bha ṭa ra sadhāḥ sa ra nā ga ta*
4. *a nā sa nā swa hā //*

### Lempeng 3

Mr. Amran found the Lempeng 3 inscription near the mosque on the riverside of the Batanghari River. XRF analysis shows that the content of the constituent materials of the Lempeng 3 inscription is mainly Tin (Sn) 88.61%. This plate is rectangular with rounded corners, measures 16.3 cm long, 11.40 mm wide, 0.60 mm thick, and weighs 6.71 grams. The condition of the engraved text is a bit faded. The text consists of consonants without meaning. The following is the text transcript:

- a. Side A : *ka ta hu la ra sa ha/ka*
- b. Side B : *hu ha la la ba ba la la da ma ka pi na ka su  
ti (tē) ku paḥ ... pa/ sa/ pi ... (wa)*

### Lempeng 4

Mr. Amran found a Lempeng 4 inscription near the mosque on the riverside of the Batanghari River. This plate inscription is rectangular with rounded corners. The condition of the engraved text is faded and worn, so the overall text is difficult to identify correctly. XRF analysis

shows that the content of the constituent materials of the Lempeng 4 inscription is mainly Tin (Sn) 92.89%.

### Lempeng 5

Mr. Amran found the Lempeng 5 inscription near the mosque on the riverside of the Batanghari River. This plate inscription is rectangular with rounded corners. XRF analysis shows that the content of the constituent materials of the Lempeng 5 inscription is mainly Tin (Sn) 90.38%. The plate measures 15.5 cm long, 19.93 mm wide, 0.73 mm thick, and weighs 11.83 grams. The text consists of 2 lines, Old Sumatran script, and the language is still unidentified. The following is the text transcript:

1. *ka ya wa la ha t) śa h...a ru ka ya ... la ha*
2. *dya a na//*

### Lempeng 6

Mr. Amran found the Lempeng 6 inscription near the mosque on the riverside of the Batanghari River. This plate inscription is rectangular with rounded corners, 9.2 cm long, 17.87 mm wide, 0.68 mm thick, and weighs 6.96 grams. XRF analysis shows that the content of the constituent materials of the Lempeng 6 inscription is mainly Tin (Sn) 91.71%. The inscription text consists of one line, Old Sumatran script, and the language is still unidentified. The following is the text transcript:

1. *La/ha la/ha*

### Lempeng 7

Mr. Amran found the Lempeng 7 inscription near the mosque on the riverside of the Batanghari River. This plate inscription is rectangular with rounded corners and broken at the edges. This plate measures 8.5 cm long, 13.49 mm wide, 1.48 mm thick, and weighs 7.24 grams.



Figure 8. The collections from the BPCB Jambi tin plate inscription  
(Source: BPCB Jambi, 2014)

XRF analysis shows that the content of the constituent materials of the Lempeng 7 inscription is mainly Tin (Sn) 96.80%. The inscription text is Old Sumatran script, mixed with unknown letters.

### Interpretation

Based on the transcript text analysis, tin plate inscriptions in Sumatra contain mantras, prayers, rules, expressions of feelings, *sapatha* (curses), and ornaments, which symbolize *yantra* and *raja*. In addition, some scripts were thought to be esoteric, which might only be understood by certain people or communities (Tejowasono et al., 2019). Some of the tin and copper plate inscriptions collected, not all of them can be analyzed for text transcripts (see description above). Several texts engraved are too fragile and worn, making them relatively difficult to read. Based on some plate inscriptions that have been analyzed, there are at least three scripts identified—first, the Old Sumatran script or Adityawarman script. The second is the proto ulu script, and the third is the ulu script. These scripts are most likely used around the 14th century A.D. (Andhifani, 2017a). These scripts were derived from the parent script, namely the Pallawa script, which was developed at that time (Alian, 2013).

The language used by the people of South Sumatra today basically uses Old Malay, which dates back to the 7th century A.D. The findings of many inscriptions prove the use of the Old Malay language in the past. As the capital of the Sriwijaya Kingdom, Palembang applies Old Malay as the mother language with the addition of Sanskrit elements. Old Malay language also applies to the kingdom or territory it conquered. The mixing of the two languages can be proven and seen in the inscriptions of the Sriwijaya Kingdom.

When the Sriwijaya Kingdom fell, many people presumed that the Pallawa script and Old Malay were extinct. This assumption does not seem to be all accurate because even though the Pallawa script is no longer used, replaced with the Old Sumatran script, and it still uses Old Malay as its identity at that time. From the 14th century A.D. until now, the Malay language is still used in almost all levels of society. All tribes even use the Malay language in the Indonesian Archipelago to Southeast Asia (Andhifani, 2016; Wiyana, 2016). Meanwhile, in South Sumatra, Malay, which was once the official language of the Sriwijaya Kingdom, continues to be the official language of the Malay Kingdom (Alian, 2013).

Besides containing text, several inscriptions that have been described above contain *raja* or spells. One of them that is still clearly legible is the A5 inscription. The spell writing style found in metal plate inscriptions (tin, bronze, and gold) has its characteristics. One of them that is still clearly legible is the A5 inscription. The text on

this inscription is engraved only on one side, as follows 'Om titi tas tas swaha.' The text means, 'May you be well and safe from all dangers.' This mantra is a hope/prayer to the highest power (God Almighty) who will determine the fate of humans on earth.

Mantras can be in the form of sounds, syllables, words, phrases, sentences, or unique sentence structures that contain supernatural powers. Mantras can be contained one or several sentences or even several verses. Mantras can also be in the form of praises delivered with particular sentences. Mantra recitation is conducted at certain times and places to impact the person who recites it. The text of mantras engraved on metal plates may have the same purpose, specifically a wish or hope.

The ability to focus the mind on supernatural powers (God/Deities) worshiped by a person has different levels. Therefore, some instruments or tools can help focus the mind called *yantra*. *Yantra* symbolizes the human manifest to focus or concentrate the mind on the worshiped power. Each *yantra* has a different form and carves according to the purpose to be achieved. The *yantra* form varies depending on the person's needs, for example, circles, triangles, and rectangles. *Yantra* can be likened to a positive energy polarity that continuously affects someone.

*Raja* or *Rerajaan* is a bunch of specific texts and figures used as human and natural forces symbols. The power of *rerajaan* cannot stand alone but begins with a ritual so that the symbol can function. In religious activities in Bali, *rerajaan* is not a foreign thing. During religious ceremonies (*manusa*, *bhuta*, *pitra*, *rsi*, and *dewa yadnya*), priests wear *rerajaan*. *Rerajaan* is a visualized symbol with a specific aim and purpose. For example, the figure of *semara-ratih* is the form of a beautiful man and woman used during a wedding ceremony.

Many ancient manuscripts found in Java and Sumatra after the 16th century, containing specific figures and symbols, do not necessarily directly connect to religion, its purpose is to give a specific power to someone with a particular aim or purpose. The figure in the form of a variety of God's weapons symbolizes '*tolak bala*' or averting evil/calamity. The figure of *tolak bala* is used at the inauguration of a house or holy place. *Tolak bala* is installed in front of the house. The function of *rerajaan* is to ask for safety, as an object to prevent harmful things, as a guardian or spiritual protector. *Rerajaan* can be depicted on paper, cloth, palm leaves, metal, and other objects.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the description and interpretation of several plate inscriptions found, it is known that these inscriptions had developed in the



Southern Sumatra region, including also in the Dharmasraya area. These findings identify that the island of Sumatra has many scripts as writing systems, such as Pallawa, Old Sumatra, Proto Ka-Ga-Nga/Ulu, Ulu, and Jawi. These scripts were scattered throughout Sumatra. The script and language are an identity of the people in the Southern Sumatra region, which are still being studied. The language used in the inscription texts is Old Malay with some Sanskrit as its complement. This language is widely used today by the Indonesian people after several changes and language mixing in its development.

Writing medium in the form of metal plate inscriptions was prevalent. Tin plate inscription was used by ordinary people, while monks or officials used gold plate inscriptions. The source of tin material was relatively abundant and imported from other areas, such as Bangka Island, Belitung Island, and Singkep Island. Many tin plate inscriptions mention a spell that people used back in the time. The people could have used these spells in sailing, mysticism, and others. It is also possible that these mantras (*raja* or amulets) are given by someone who is considered dignitary at that time, for example, made by a religious or a traditional leader.

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