John N. Miksic's book, *Singapore and the Silk Road of the Sea, 1300–1800*, is an apt title. It is a welcome addition to historians of Southeast Asia highlighting the importance of archaeological research in Singapore and heightening Singaporean awareness of their own history.

As one of the foremost authorities on Singaporean, if not Southeast Asian, archaeology, Miksic's work will be important to future generations of archaeologists in the region. His decades of research have uncovered many intriguing archaeological finds and they will be the basis of much discussion and further research. Chapters 1 to 4 of the work provide succinct descriptions on the history of maritime Southeast Asia, from the rise of island empires to Singapore’s ancient history (1299–1604). Chapters 5 to 8 are further aids to student research, as the archaeological evidence collated from the many years of excavations in Singapore and Southeast Asia presented are research inroads for the student. There is considerable material evidence that can be used to ask new questions on Southeast Asian history and archaeology. The latter chapters (9 to 12) are important as they examine Singapore in a regional context; explaining Temasik’s ancient relations with neighbouring kingdoms and 19th Century transitions. The reader is reminded again why Singapore is important in the archaeological and historical sense.

For this reader, the most important feature of Miksic’s work is that it validates the use of pre-colonial written sources, which have always been thought of in less than appreciable terms. Miksic finds value in myths and legends and does not discard them outright. Pre-colonial methods of knowledge transmission have always included the element of myth making. It is the story and meanings that are important and by bringing in an array of pre-colonial sources, especially the Malay annals or the *Sulalat al-Salatin* (*Genealogy of Kings*); he makes the book especially important to researchers of Malay language manuscripts. Miksic, by trusting (albeit cautiously) these problematic sources gained crucial information for his archaeological works. The *Sulalat al-Salatin* is problematic to the historian, as it is difficult to verify the ambiguous and mythical information it contains. The problem is well addressed by Henri Chambert-Loir’s *The Sulalat al-Salatin as a Political Myth* and he suggests that the work could be read “as political myths in the sense that they are deliberately used in order to give a certain vision of history” (Chambert-Loir, 2005: 160). However, Miksic’s work complements this approach as he actually seeks to verify myths with archaeological research.
For example, Miksic’s excavations at the Padang revealed the white sands of ancient Singapore as described by the Malay annals and that area (Empress Place and the Padang, i.e., City Hall and Bras Basah area) was the centre of ancient Singapore’s commerce and power emanating from Bukit Larangan (Fort Canning), as alluded to in the written pre-colonial Malay source. In other words, as Dr. Miksic exuberantly puts it “[...] the Malay Annals was not a pure fantasy, nor was it an attempt to falsify a period in history when the kingdom of Srivijaya in Palembang was subjugated by Malayu in Jambi. We will never know the names of the kings (or chiefs) of ancient Singapura, or why they abandoned the site, but now we know that they were not ghosts; they really existed, and Fort Canning was their home” (2013: 226).

This is an important statement as it opens up possibilities for the re-reading of other written Malay pre-colonial sources that mention Temasik or Singapura. More importantly, Miksic’s findings can possibly throw new light on the nature of power (kuasa), wealth (kekayaan) and the kingdom (kerajaan) in the Malay Archipelago. His many years of excavations since 1984 in Singapore have turned up literally tons of materials from Chinese ceramics from various Chinese dynasties and other ceramic production centres around the region and Malay pottery shards (Miksic, 1985). However, written pre-colonial Malay sources are nevertheless still problematic in terms of the nature of the writing and the information it contains and even though Miksic found archaeological evidence to corroborate the existence of fabled places and rulers in the Malay Annals, doing the same for other texts or even oral histories will remain a difficult task.

That said, Miksic’s successful use of pre-colonial written materials is indeed an inspiration for researchers of the Cham manuscripts especially in Dalukal type manuscripts, such as this reader. The Dalukal manuscripts are the Cham equivalent of the Malay Annals as it contains stories of the origins and rule of Cham kings, such as Po Rome and Po Klong Garai. Most of the genre is written in the 19th Century but it contains memories from the pre-19th Century period. The Dalukal are also written in a poetic form and is usually sung by a member of the Cham religious elite to an audience. Like the Malay Annals, the Dalukal also contains Cham concepts of power such as Ganreh, Cham memories of the polity of Nager Cam (Champa), the Cham political system and the relationship between the Cham ruler and the nobles. Cham families in Phanrang, Vietnam venerate the Dalukal and the texts are seen as sources of social prestige. More importantly, the Dalukal contains descriptions of Cham rulers (Po & Patao), their activities as well as palaces (Madhir in Cham), their locations and even forts. Perhaps, the new generation of archaeologists in Vietnam can use the Cham materials and make new and exciting discoveries.