



Trowulan

East Java, Indonesia

The Majapahit Kingdom ruled the east of the island of Java for more than two centuries starting in 1293, exerting political, economic, and cultural influence over most of Indonesia at its peak. The kingdom had its capital at Trowulan, a city built at an inland location on Java, which communicated with ports on the island's northern coast. Majapahit traded extensively with Southeast Asia and China, fueling the growing European demand for Indonesian spices. Much of our modern knowledge of Majapahit comes from the *Nāgarakrētāgama*, a *kakawin* poem written by Mpu Prapañca in praise of King Hayam Wuruk, who ruled over the Majapahit Kingdom in the middle of the fourteenth century. Majapahit declined gradually from its peak in the fourteenth century, as the kingdom's authority over trade disintegrated. Trowulan itself was conquered in the late fifteenth century and was later abandoned. Research and excavations carried out throughout the last two centuries have unearthed thousands of artifacts, and have revealed a fragmented landscape of archaeological remains scattered across an extensive area.

While several structures were restored for the 1993 celebration of 700 years since the founding of the Majapahit Kingdom, much of the city remains buried underground. Today, the proposed construction of a new steel factory near Trowulan has prompted the Ministry of Education and Culture to take action to halt it, backed by the Indonesian Heritage Trust. In addition to this urgent challenge, it is important to extend legal protection to the entire area where the remains of the ancient city are found, and to update the conservation master plan for the site. As much remains to be discovered about Trowulan, better coordination of historical and archaeological research is also required to aid local and international understanding of the site's significance.