

# **BONI IN CHINESE SOURCES: TRANSLATIONS OF RELEVANT TEXTS FROM THE SONG TO THE QING DYNASTIES**



Boni?  
渤泥·

Johannes L. Kurz



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# BONI IN CHINESE SOURCES: TRANSLATIONS OF RELEVANT TEXTS FROM THE SONG TO THE QING DYNASTIES

## Johannes L. Kurz

Johannes L. Kurz received his doctorate in Classical Chinese Studies from the University of Heidelberg, Germany in 1993. From 1995 to 1998 he worked at the University of Kiel, before he took up a position in the History Department of Universiti Brunei Darussalam in 1998 where he is presently serving as senior lecturer and head of department. His main research interests are in tenth-century China with a focus on the Southern Tang, intellectual developments and the history of the imperial libraries in the Northern Song. His most recent publication is *China's Southern Tang Dynasty, 937-976* (Routledge, 2011). Email: [jolukurz@gmail.com](mailto:jolukurz@gmail.com)

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### The Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace  
Pasir Panjang, Singapore 119614

TELEPHONE : (+65) 6870 4549

FAX : (+65) 6775 6264

E-MAIL : [nsc@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:nsc@iseas.edu.sg)

WEB : [www.iseas.edu.sg/nsc](http://www.iseas.edu.sg/nsc)

# Boni in Chinese Sources: Translations of Relevant Texts from the Song to the Qing Dynasties

Johannes L. Kurz

## I. INTRODUCTION

For many states in Southeast Asia, Chinese sources allegedly present the earliest historical evidence of their existence.<sup>1</sup> The case of Boni is quite special, in that it not only serves to illustrate the interpretative problems of sources, but also the ongoing process of appropriating the writing on Boni for the national history of Brunei.

Since the studies undertaken by Robert Nicholl especially in the 1980's, the following historical account has been largely accepted by official history institutions in Brunei, which include among others, the Brunei History Centre, and the Academy of Brunei Studies.

Nicholl placed ancient Brunei along the northwestern coast of Borneo which nowadays comprises two states of the Malaysian Federation, namely Sarawak and Sabah, and the Sultanate of Brunei. His reading of the sources which came to him through translations only, led him to conclude that the country of Poli 婆利 mentioned in Chinese sources of the Tang dynasty (618-907) was the precursor of the country of Boni<sup>2</sup> described in the *Taiping huanyuji* 太平環宇記 (hereafter *TPHYJ*) of the tenth century. He was thus able to reconstruct a history of constant settlement of Brunei from the early first millennium

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<sup>1</sup> For a general discussion of the problematic use of Chinese sources for the identification of places in Southeast Asia see Tjan Tjoe Som, "Chinese Historical Sources and Historiography", in Soedjatmoko. Mohammad Ali, G.J. Resink and G. McT. Kahin (eds), *An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1965), 194-205.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout his writings (1975-1990) Nicholl transcribes the characters 渤泥, 渤尼 and 勃泥 with P'o-ni following an older Western transcription system. However, his transcription of the characters is incorrect because the characters should be represented correctly by Po-ni, or Boni, according to the Chinese Hanyu pinyin transcription system.

onwards. Nicholl, however, was ignorant of the fact that Poli is described in the *TPHYJ* as well,<sup>3</sup> and is not at all connected to Boni.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the sources are never very exact in their location of Boni, so that in the following paper, the working hypothesis is that at any given time, the sources may have dealt with whatever states that existed in Borneo, and not just exclusively on its northwestern coast.

Roderich Ptak, in his paper on trade routes from China to Southeast Asia, has already described the difficulty of locating Boni, pointing out the archaeological evidence in the form of porcelain and ceramics. Furthermore, he raised important questions concerning the identity of Boni under the successive dynasties of the Song, Yuan and Ming.<sup>5</sup>

The relative ignorance of the Chinese about its existence until the fifteenth century maybe regarded as a sign of its insignificance. This is especially true in light of the fact that after official relations had been established, existing sources still are vague in locating its exact place. However, it is this confusion which leads me to think that several states existed on Borneo and a number of them were subsumed under the title Boni. In the case of Brunei, solid evidence for its existence comes only with the arrival of the Europeans in the region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I shall present several translations from Chinese sources which provide information on Boni in the order of their chronological appearance. Through these, I hope to clarify some of the questions that Ptak has raised.

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<sup>3</sup> Yue Shi 樂史, *Taiping huanyuji* 太平環宇記 (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1993), 276.11b-12b (513).

<sup>4</sup> A very insightful treatment of Poli and its presumed locations is found in Roderich Ptak, "Possible Chinese References to the Barus Area (Tang to Ming)", in Claude Guillot (ed.), *Histoire de Barus, Sumatra: Le site de Lobu Tua, vol. I: Études et documents* (Paris: Association Archipel, 1998), 120-125. On the basis of Ptak's research I tend to believe that Poli was in Sumatra or Java, and not necessarily in Borneo.

<sup>5</sup> Roderich Ptak, "From Quanzhou to the Sulu Zone and Beyond: Questions Related to the Early Fourteenth Century", in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 29.2 (1998): 269-294.



## II. BONI IN TEXTS FROM THE SONG DYNASTY (960-1279)

### Boni 渤泥 in the *Universal Geography of the Taiping [xingguo] Era (Taiping huanyuji 太平環宇記)*, 978

The earliest certain account of Boni is found in the *TPHYJ* by Yue Shi 樂史 (930-1007),<sup>6</sup> a comprehensive geographical record of the Taiping era (976-983) contained in 200 *juan* 卷 (“chapters”) written between 979 and 987. While the main body of the work deals with the geography of Chinese territory, the last chapters, 172-200, describe the countries surrounding the Chinese empire. This part of the *TPHYJ* is entitled *siyi* 四裔, which means people living at the borders of Chinese civilization. The descriptions of the countries start in the east, then turn to the south, then the west, and at last deal with the people in the north. The entry on Boni is part of the accounts on the southern barbarians (*nan man* 南蠻); in all subsequent works, this categorization of Boni has been followed. *Man* were the inhabitants of the southern fringes of the Chinese empire in the modern day provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi, so *nan man* referred to people that lived even beyond those places.<sup>7</sup>

The text by Yue Shi is the source for all other books dealing with Boni in Song times, including the *Zhufanzhi* 諸蕃志 (1225), the *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考 (1308), and the official dynastic history of the Song, the *Songshi* 宋史 (1343-1345). Hence, it probably is the “ancient source” that Robert Nicholl identifies as the source of information for the two latter works; he, however, thought this source was lost.<sup>8</sup> The entries on both Zhancheng 占城 (Champa)<sup>9</sup> and Boni are interestingly marked as “newly entered” (*xinru* 新入), which means that they had come into contact with the Chinese court only shortly before the

<sup>6</sup> On Yue Shi, his *TPHYJ*, and other writings see *A Sung Bibliography*, 128, and Johannes L. Kurz, *Das Kompilationsprojekt Song Taizongs (reg. 976-997)* (Bern: Lang, 2003), 152-154.

<sup>7</sup> For an impression of the horrors the uncivilized south of China, where people were frequently exiled, held for educated people, see James M. Hargett, “Clearing the Apertures and Getting in Tune: The Hainan Exile of Su Shi (1037-1101)”, in *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 30 (2000): 141-167.

<sup>8</sup> See Robert Nicholl, “Sources for the Early History of Brunei”, unpublished MS, 54, 8.

<sup>9</sup> For a recent treatment of the history of Champa, see Michael Vickery, “Champa Revised”, ARI Working Paper, No. 37, March 2005, [www.ari.nus.edu.sg/pub/wps.htm](http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/pub/wps.htm). Zhancheng is the only Southeast Asian country that is dealt with in the *Wudai huiyao* 五代會要 (961) by Wang Pu 王溥 (922-982). See *Wudai huiyao* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 30.479-480.

completion of the *TPHYJ*. Zhancheng, according to this, contacted China only during the Later Zhou (Hou Zhou 後周) dynasty (951-960) in 958,<sup>10</sup> whereas Boni only became known at the court in 977.

The country of Boni 渤泥 is not listed in our historical records, for foreign places often change their old names. In the eighth month of the second year of the Taiping xingguo reign era of our August Dynasty, Xiangda 向打, the ruler of that country, sent Shinu 施努, his deputy Puyali 蒲亞利, the assistant<sup>11</sup> Gexin 哥心, and others to the court. His letter was not written on paper [but on a material] resembling tree bark and being quite thin, it was glimmering and smooth. It had a subtle green colour, and it was several *chi* 尺 long and a bit more than a *cun* 寸 wide.<sup>12</sup> Rolled up, it could be held in one hand. It was wrapped in several small bags. The script was unrecognizable and the characters were delicate, arranged in horizontal lines.

On imperial order Menggu 蒙骨<sup>13</sup> translated it into Chinese (*huayan* 華言): “I, the king of Boni, Xiangda”, and so on. Because the ship of the Arab (*fanren* 番人) Puluxie 蒲盧歇 reached [them], they have now found the way and present sixty *liang* 兩<sup>14</sup> of big boards of camphor (*longnao* 龍腦), twenty *liang* of rice camphor (*mi longnao* 米龍腦), twenty *liang* of grey camphor (*cang longnao* 蒼龍腦)<sup>15</sup>, five pieces of camphor boards (*longnao ban* 龍腦板), one turtle shell (*daimei* 玳瑁), three pieces of white sandalwood (*bai tanxiang* 白檀香), two thousand *liang* of tortoise-shell, and six tusks.<sup>16</sup>

When they were asked repeatedly, the envoys of that country said: [Our country] lies in the southwest of the August Capital (i.e. Kaifeng) in the sea. Shepo 蛇婆 is forty-five days away, to Sanfoqi 三佛齊 (Srivijaya) it is forty days, and to Moyi 摩逸 (Mindanao?) thirty days. To reach Zhancheng 占城 (Champa) takes the same number of sailing days as Moyi. These calculations are all based on a steady wind, if not, the number of days can be indefinite. In our country we use wooden planks to make a city wall. Within the city walls reside more than ten thousand people. There are a total of fourteen prefectures with small mountains. The house of the king is covered with palm leaves, the houses of the common people are covered with grass. Those around the king are the high dignitaries (*daren* 大人). [The king] sits on a

<sup>10</sup> *TPHYJ* 279.16b-17a (539-540).

<sup>11</sup> All official titles have been translated according to Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> A *chi* in Song times was equal to 31.2 cm, a *cun* to 3.12 cm.

<sup>13</sup> I have not been able to trace any more information on Menggu.

<sup>14</sup> A *liang* in Song times corresponded to 40 grams. See “Zhongguo lidai hengzhi yanbian cesuan jianbiao 中國歷代衡制演變測算簡表”, in Luo Zhufeng 羅竹風 et al. (eds), *Hanyu dacidian fulu suoyin* 漢語大詞典附錄索引, (Shanghai: Hanyu dacidian chubanshe, 1994), 18.

<sup>15</sup> I have replaced the original *cang* 倉 with the character used by Zhao Rugua. See *Chau Ju-kua*, 156.

<sup>16</sup> On the significance of camphor in traditional China, see Han Wai Toon, “Notes on Borneon Camphor Imported into China”, in *BMJ* 6.1 (1985): 1-31. For a more recent treatment of camphor, its uses and its role in Asian trade, see Roderich Ptak, “Camphor in East And Southeast Asian Trade, c. 1500: A Synthesis of Portuguese and Asian Sources”, in Anthony Disney and Emily Booth (eds), *Vasco da Gama and the Linking of Europe and Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 142-166.

bedstead made of strings. When he goes out, he uses a *ruannang* 阮囊 (commentary: this is a large plain piece of cloth), which he sits upon and is carried in.

In battle they use long bows and their armour is made of brass. It has the form of a tube and it guards their backs and bellies.

The land produces camphor, tortoise shell, sapan wood (*sumu* 蘇木), betel nut, clove, and ebony.<sup>17</sup> The people eat fowl, goats and fish. They plough using oxen [*huangniu* 黃牛] and water buffalos. There is no grain, but hemp and rice. There are no silk fabrics used, so *gubei* 古貝<sup>18</sup> is used to spin cloth.

When they marry, they drink coconut liquor (*yezi jiu* 椰子酒), eat betelnut (*binlang* 檳榔), and then finger rings [are presented]. Finally presents of *gubei* cloth or a glistening knife<sup>19</sup> together with gold conclude the rites. As to their burial rites they have coffins. [Deceased] children are cremated. For [deceased] adults canopies are made from bamboo. They carry them into the mountains where they discard them. In the second month (of the Chinese calendar) they start tilling, and then they are sacrificing [to their dead]. After seven years they do not sacrifice any more. Their years end with the twelfth month and [they celebrate] the seventh day [of that month] as a holiday.

This place is hot, and has much wind and rain. The utmost joy for the people is to beat drums, blow flutes, sound cymbals, and clap the hands, and they sing and dance for their entertainment. For eating, they have no [ceramic or porcelain] vessels, so they use bamboo basketwork and palm leaves as vessels. When they have finished eating, they throw them away.<sup>20</sup>

There are several pieces of information provided by this entry in *TPHYJ* that are worthy of closer inspection. The first one is the fact that the Chinese had no knowledge of the place prior to 977. For Nicholl, the introductory remark of Yue opened the possibility that Boni was just another name for the country that he had placed in northwestern Borneo. He found evidence for the veracity of his assumption in the work of Pelliot, who ascertained that the “Boni” (勃泥) mentioned in the *Manshu* 蠻書 by Fan Chuo 樊綽 (fl. late ninth cent.) was the first occurrence of the term describing Borneo.<sup>21</sup> It is rather difficult to identify Boni

<sup>17</sup> For more information on ebony and its trade in China see Roderich Ptak, “Ebenholz in China: Termini, Verwendung, Einfuhr (ca. 1200-1600)”, in *Münchener Beiträge zur Völkerkunde* 3:17-40 (1990).

<sup>18</sup> This certainly should read *jibei* 吉貝 as in all other texts treated here.

<sup>19</sup> The commentary to *jingdao* in *TPHYJ* is indecisive. It says that the term may refer to money, but that this meaning cannot be established. I therefore have chosen the present literal translation.

<sup>20</sup> *TPHYJ* 179.17a-18b (540). Cf. also the partial translation of this text in Sei Wada, “The Philippine Islands as Known to the Chinese Before the Ming Period”, in *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 4 (1929): 127, note 2.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Pelliot, “Deux itinéraires de Chine en Inde à la fin du huitième siècle”, in *BEFEO* 4 (1904): 277-287, note 2.

with Borneo in this text, because no directions are given, nor any other more detailed information which would define the place more precisely. The sentence in question reads:

又南有婆羅門，波斯，闍婆，勃泥，昆侖 數種外道。

And then there are several peoples living in the foreign regions to the south, such as the Poluomen, Bosi, Shepo, Boni, and Kunlun.<sup>22</sup>

As to the description of the country in the *TPHYJ*, it derives from the mouths of the envoys. If the place had traded with China prior to 977, wouldn't the envoys have had recollections of that? In the end, a mere hundred years — or three generations — had passed from the alleged Boni/Borneo in the *Manshu*. Moreover, it apparently was the foreign trader who convinced the ruler of Boni that something could be gained by sending a diplomatic mission to the Chinese court. Once the contact was established, Puluxie could certainly also reap a handsome reward from Boni, as well as from the Chinese court.

Thus the absence of information on Boni in the records before the early Northern Song does not constitute sufficient evidence for the existence of a country with a different name in the same unidentified location under the Tang. As is apparent also from the *Manshu*, the names provided there rather referred to ethnic groups of people than to places because the qualifier *guo* 國 (country, state) after the names is missing. The *TPHYJ*, by contrast, refers to Boni as a country.

The statement of the envoys is puzzling in that they were able to say how to reach the neighboring countries such as Shepo, Sanfoqi, Moyi, and Zhancheng. If they really knew how to get there, it is hard to believe, that they were ignorant of the route to China. Again, there is a possibility that they in fact learnt about the distances from Puluxie, who had told them about it or even led them the way to China.

The local products that the envoys submitted are typical of the Southeast Asian region. Nicholl, again, takes the presence of camphor as evidence for the origin of the people from

<sup>22</sup> Fan Chuo, *Manshu jiaozhu* 蠻書校注, revised and annotated by Xiang Da 向達 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 6.164.



northwestern Borneo or Brunei. I think, however, that though camphor may be found in Borneo, the fact that it constituted part of the tribute presentation is not enough to anchor Boni firmly in or around Brunei Bay. The people of Boni might have acquired camphor through trade.

The identification of the people involved as Muslims is a legitimate speculation that started with the identification of Puyali as Abu Ali by Hirth and Rockhill.<sup>23</sup> Shinu has been rendered by Jamil al-Sufri as Sheikh Noh and Gexin as Qadhi Kassim, based on his reading of Groeneveldt's translation of the entry on Boni in the *Songshi*.<sup>24</sup> With the same justification we may, however, also retain the original Chinese transcriptions to refer to indigenous non-Muslim names.

Puluxie (or Pu Luxie) certainly was not a Chinese<sup>25</sup> because his designation as *fanren* hints at his being either a Persian, an Arab, or more possibly even an Indian trader. The identity of the interpreter Menggu remains mysterious as well, and it is impossible to tell in which language he conversed with the envoys. It is tempting to relate Menggu to the tribes of southern China, namely the Man, and to hypothetically establish a linguistic link of these land-based people with the visitors from overseas. However, with the very little information we have, we can easily forego such assumptions.

Interestingly the envoys at no point in their description refer to Boni as being located on an island, even though the sailing directions given suggest an insular location for the country.

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<sup>23</sup> *Chau Ju-kua*, 157.

<sup>24</sup> Jamil Al-Sufri, *Tarsilah Brunei: The Early History of Brunei up to 1432 AD* (Bandar Seri Begawan: Brunei History Centre, 2000), 9. Chen Dasheng suggests Sina for Shinu, Abu Ali for what he refers to as Buyali (Puyali), and Kasim for Gexin. See Chen Dasheng, "A Brunei Sultan in the Early 14<sup>th</sup> Century: Study of an Arabic Tombstone", in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 23.1 (1992): 11.

<sup>25</sup> Jamil Al-Sufri addresses him as a "Chinese trader". See *Tarsilah Brunei*, 9. Note that Chen addresses Puluxie as a "Chinese merchant" as well, and renders his name as Abu Ali. See Chen, "Brunei Sultan", 11.

## Boni 渤泥 in the *Record of All Barbarian Countries* (*Zhufanzhi* 諸蕃志), 1225

The *Zhufanzhi* 諸蕃志 (hereafter ZFZ), a geographical work describing overseas countries and trade goods, was written in around 1225 by Zhao Rugua 趙汝適 (1165? – after 1225).<sup>26</sup> Zhao, a *jinshi* of 1196 who had been Supervisor of Maritime Trade (*shibosi tiju* 市舶司提舉) in Quanzhou, Fujian, based his work partly on personal observations, and also on earlier works such as the *Lingwai daida* 嶺外代答 (1178) by Zhou Qufei 周去非 (? – after 1178).<sup>27</sup> The entry on Boni adds to the information given in the original first description of the country in *TPHYJ*.

Boni is situated to the southeast of Quanzhou. One travels forty-five days from Shepo, forty days from Sanfoqi, and thirty days both from Zhancheng and Mayi 麻逸. All these distances are calculated on the basis of constant winds.

In that country planks have been used for a city-wall, and within the city-walls more than 10.000 people are living. [The city] rules over fourteen prefectures. The roof of the royal house is covered with palm leaves, while the houses of commoners are covered with grass. Colour and style of the king's dress are approximately as that of [the people in] China. When he is naked and barefooted, he wears a golden ring on his upper arms, a golden silk band around the wrists, and wraps himself in a piece of cotton cloth. He sits on a string bedstead (*shengchuang* 繩床). When he goes out, a large piece of unornamented cloth is spread [over it] and he sits on it and men lift it. This is called 'ruannang' 軟囊. His followers number more than five hundred; those preceding carry single edged swords, double edged swords and other weapons; those following carry golden dishes filled with camphor and betel nuts and other things. His guard consists of more than one hundred fighting boats. When they fight, they carry swords and they wear armour. The armour is made from copper and formed like a big tube. They carry this on their [upper] bodies to protect the stomach and the back. Household utensils are often made of gold.

The soil does not have wheat, there is hemp and rice, and they take 撒 sago (*shahu* 沙湖) for grain. Furthermore there are goats, chicken and fish. As there are no silkworms, cotton (*jibehua* 吉貝花 (kapas)) is used to spin cloth. They use the juice from the inner parts of the *weiba* 尾巴 tree, the *jiameng* 加蒙 tree, and the coconut palm, to make alcohol. Women from rich households all wear [pieces of] coloured brocade or silk, the colour of melted gold, wrapped around their waist. As marriage gifts first alcohol is presented, followed by betel nuts, and then finger rings;

<sup>26</sup> For more information on the work and its transmission see Yves Hervouet (ed.), *A Sung Bibliography*, (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1978), 161. A translation of this text is found in Friedrich Hirth and W.W. Rockhill (ed., trans and annot.), *Chau Ju-kua: On the Chinese and Arab Trade in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, entitled Chu-fan-chi*, (Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1966), 155-159. This work was first published in St. Petersburg in 1911.

<sup>27</sup> This text has been translated in its entirety by Almut Netolitzky, *Das Ling-wai tai-ta von Chou Ch'ü-fei: Eine Landeskunde Südchinas aus dem 12. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1977).

afterwards, to conclude the ceremony, cotton cloth or an amount of gold and silver [is presented]. For burials they have coffins. They use bamboo to make biers and carry [the dead] into the mountains where they discard them. When they commence tilling in the second month, they offer sacrifices [to the dead], and after altogether seven years they no longer sacrifice.

They have the seventh day of the twelfth month as their New Year's Day. The place is very hot. When the people of the country have a feast, they enjoy themselves by beating drums, blowing flutes, striking cymbals, and by singing and dancing.

They have no [ceramic or porcelain] vessels, so they use bamboo basketwork and palm leaves as vessels. When they have finished eating, they throw them away.

This country is a neighbour to the country of Dimen 底門 (Timor) in which grows a medicinal tree. By cooking its root one can produce an ointment. Swallowing it and applying it on the body, one will not die, if one is wounded by weapons. The country produces plum-blossom camphor (*meihua nao* 梅花腦), far-reaching camphor (*yuan nao* 遠腦), gold foot camphor (*jinjiao nao* 金腳腦), rice camphor (*mi nao* 米腦), bee's wax (*huangla* 黃蠟), *jiangzhen* 降真 -incense and tortoise-shell. Foreign merchants barter for these [products] with trade gold, trade silver, fake silk brocade, Jianyang brocade, multi-coloured thin silk, multi-coloured silk threads, glass beads, glass bottles, tin, black lead,<sup>28</sup> ivory bangles, rouge, lacquered bowls and plates, and green coloured porcelain articles.

Three days after the arrival of a foreign ship at these shores, the king and his family lead the high dignitaries (comm.: the servants of the king are the high dignitaries) on board the ship to enquire about the hardship of the voyage. The people on board the ship spread brocade over the gang plank and welcome them respectfully. They treat them to a variety of alcohol, and give them presents of gold and silver vessels, bordered mats, and parasols, according to their rank. When the people of the ship have moored and entered the shore, the merchants give the king daily presents of Chinese food and beverages, before they can begin to barter. This is why ships going to Foni 佛泥 should bring with them good cooks. On the first and on the fifteenth day of the month they also have to attend the royal reception. [They do this] for a full month or more and after this they ask the king and the dignitaries to discuss and determine the price for the goods. After the prices are fixed, drums are beaten to make known to people near and far, that trade with them is permitted. Trading before the prices are fixed and private trade is punishable. The merchants are customarily treated with respect. If there is a trader who committed a crime that carries the death sentence, then he will not be killed. On the day the ship is to return, the king pours out alcohol and has a buffalo butchered for a farewell banquet, and gives them camphor and foreign cotton cloth as return gifts. Corresponding to he what he had received from them.<sup>29</sup> A ship, even though it may have finished trading, must wait until the preparations for the festival of the Buddha on the day of the full moon of the sixth month to leave the harbour, otherwise they risk [to meet dangerous] winds and [high] waves.

<sup>28</sup> Hirth and Rockhill translate this term as "leaden sinkers for nets". See *Chau Ju-kua*, 156.

<sup>29</sup> The modern Chinese edition of the text in *Zhongwai jiaotong shiji congkan* can be interpreted slightly differently, namely: "He praised what he had received from them." See Zhao Rugua, *Zhufanzhi jiaoshi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), 136.

Their Buddha is not different [from ours]. It is housed in a reed-covered building of several storeys that is built like a pagoda. Below it is a small shrine that shelters two pearls, which are called the Sage (*sheng* 聖) and the Buddha (*fo* 佛).<sup>30</sup>

The local people say: “The two pearls were in the beginning quite small, but they have gradually grown to the size of thumbs.” On the festival of the Buddha, the king personally makes offerings of flowers and fruit for three days, and all the men and women of the country attend.

In the second year of the Taiping xingguo era (977), he sent Puyali and others to submit camphor, tortoise-shell, ivory and sandal-wood as tribute. The memorial [to the throne] was sealed several times; its paper was made from wooden bark and it was thin. It was bright and smooth and of a subtle green colour. It was several *chi* long, more than a *cun* wide, and when rolled up it could be held in one hand.

The characters on it were tiny and small and had to be read horizontally. Their translation into Chinese reads: “I, Xiangda, king of Boni, kowtow before You, and I wish the emperor ten thousand times ten thousand times 100 million years.” It furthermore said: “As I am preparing [to submit] tribute every year, the winds may blow our ship to the territory of Zhancheng. I beg the emperor to order Zhancheng not to retain [Xiangda’s ship] from now on.” The envoys were lodged in the Foreign Relations Office (*libin yuan* 禮賓院)<sup>31</sup>, and they were given lavish presents on their returning home.

In the fifth year of the Yuanfeng era (1082) they sent a further tribute mission.

Xilonggong 西龍宮, Shimiao 什廟, Rili 日麗, Hulumantou 胡蘆蔓頭, Suwuli 蘇勿里, Madanyumanuo 馬膽逾馬喏 are located on islands<sup>32</sup> and they communicate with small boats. Their dress and food and drink are the same as that of Boni. They produce incense, *jiangzhen*-incense, bee’s wax, and tortoise-shell. Traders exchange with them white porcelain, alcohol, rice, crude salt, white thin silk, and trade gold for these products.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> As there is not much more information about the two pearls, I use the present translation. To give one name to two things, as Hirth and Rockhill did by addressing the pearls as the Sacred Buddha, appears to be rather illogical.

<sup>31</sup> According to Hucker, who relies solely on the monographs on institutions in the *Songshi*, the *libin yuan* dealt with Uighurs and other people from Central Asia. See Hucker, *Official Titles*, 306. The *Song huiyao* states, however, that apart from Central Asian people, those from the southern regions were also received there, and that the officials in this agency could communicate in their languages. See *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿, comp. by Xu Song 徐松 (1781-1848) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), “zhiguan” 職官 25, 6b-7b (2917).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. the translation of this passage in *Chao Ju-kua*, 157-158, where the places concerned are identified as “Si-lung, Kung-shī-miau, Jī-li-hu, Lu-man, T’ou-ssu, Wu-li-ma, Tan-yü, Ma-jö”. I follow in my translation the names given in the modern Chinese edition of the text.

<sup>33</sup> *Zhufanzhi jiaoshi*, 135-137.

Zhao Rugua obtained his information from merchants, while being stationed in Quanzhou, Fuzhou.<sup>34</sup> He adds important information to that available in the *TPHYJ*, namely on trade and religion. He could probably draw on the expertise of traders who had traveled there themselves or had obtained their knowledge from people who had gone there. His text, in part, reads like a commercial for merchants interested to trade with the place, as there was a good profit to be made. It also gives detailed instructions of how to deal with the indigenous people. The reason why Zhao retained Yue Shi's text at least in fragments is that it was the oldest source on Boni and could thus be used to identify the place he had heard about.

Nicholl emphasizes the fact that the country is addressed as Foni written with the character *fo* which is also used to transcribe Buddha in Chinese.<sup>35</sup> For him this is significant in that it shows that the people were Buddhists. I would rather explain Foni as a copyist's error because it does not occur anywhere else in Chinese historical records. Furthermore the text is quite explicit in saying that the people were Buddhist.

In light of this, it is rather difficult to understand why Nicholl refers to the people in Boni as "Taoists" and even makes them the "only indigenous Taoist community in South East Asia".<sup>36</sup> He arrives at this assumption by identifying the worship of the pearls with Daoist practices; in the relevant literature on Daoism, I was not able to verify this practice.

The flaming pearl in Daoism marks the transition from Daoist adept to Daoist master, as it is an emblem that is given to him upon his ordination.<sup>37</sup> Or rather, the flaming pearl is more an idea, than an actual material object worthy of worship. In Daoist temples, the flaming pearl which is contested over by two dragons on the roof represents the energy that is

<sup>34</sup> See *A Sung Bibliography*, 161, and Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 746. Nicholl says the work comes "from the pen" of Zhao Rugua which is illustrative of his understanding of Chinese culture where the brush was the common writing utensil for scholars. See "Brunei Rediscovered", 226.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Nicholl, "Brunei and Camphor", in *Brunei Museum Journal* 4.3: (1979):53; "Brunei Rediscovered", in *Brunei Museum Journal* 4.4 (1980): 225-226. In his "Notes on Some Controversial Issues in Brunei History", in *Archipel* 19 (1980): 25, Nicholl claims that the *TPHYJ* as well as the *Daoyi zhilüe* 島夷誌略 also refer to Foni. In the old edition of the *TPHYJ* and the modern edition of the *ZFZ* that I had access to, Foni is not found.

<sup>36</sup> Nicholl, "Brunei Rediscovered", 226. He repeats this assumption addressing the religion practiced as "a form of Taoism" in his "An Age of Vicissitude Brunei 1225-1425", in *BMJ* 7.1 (1989): 7.

<sup>37</sup> Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 204.



coming from the incense burner inside the main hall of the temple.<sup>38</sup> Zhao does not say anything about the roof and its construction.

It may thus not be completely wrong to accept that Boni had her own local religion with many elements of Buddhism. This coincides with the explanation Schafer gives for the admiration of pearls in Tang China, where the pearl was a symbol of the Buddha and the Buddhist law. For Daoists, pearls were an important ingredient in life-prolonging drugs, but for that purpose, they were grinded into powder. Apart from that, pearls served as decorations of dresses and furniture.<sup>39</sup> Thus Nicholl's conclusion is not very convincing after all.

Nicholl also makes much of the "more than hundred boats" that were the guard of the king, and sailed and controlled the coasts of northwestern Borneo.<sup>40</sup> The Chinese term for the vessel is too vague to warrant a translation as a sailing ship, and the "more than hundred" maybe just an exaggeration to refer to many such boats.

### **Boni 勃泥 in the *Institutions of the Song* (*Song huiyao* 宋會要)**

The works quoted above that are dealing with Boni in such detail as the diplomatic missions to China and the social and administrative conditions can be regarded as one group of texts, while a second group of texts can be discerned that deal with the missions exclusively as a part of the foreign policy of the Song. These texts are merely interested in listing the dates when the missions arrived and their composition, and therefore, deliver not so much information on Boni itself.

The *Song huiyao* 宋會要 may be recognized as the first of these works. Work on the *Song huiyao* ("Institutions and documents of the Song") started with the reign of emperor Renzong 仁宗 (1023-1063) and it is based on sources no longer available today, such as the

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<sup>38</sup> Schipper, *Taoist Body*, 21.

<sup>39</sup> For the status of pearls in Tang China see Edward H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 242-245.

<sup>40</sup> Nicholl, "An Age of Vicissitude", 8.

Imperial Court Diaries (*rili* 日曆) and the Veritable Records (*shilu* 實錄) of the Song emperors. The book follows the style of earlier works like the *Tang huiyao* 唐會要, covering the Tang period (618-907), and the *Wudai huiyao* 五代會要, covering the period of the so-called Five Dynasties (907-959) which was directly preceding the Song. The *Song huiyao* deals with institutions and events arranged in a chronological way. It records the missions from Boni 勃泥 on 4 November of the year 977, and from Boni 渤泥 on 26 March of the year 1082.<sup>41</sup> The later precise date suggests that the relevant records were still complete at that time, while those dating back to the beginning of the dynasty already were less complete. The “Veritable Records for Emperor Taizong” (998) do survive in fragmented form,<sup>42</sup> however, the part dealing with the year 977 is unfortunately lost.

Apart from the information on the two Boni missions, the work provides valuable insights into the composition and size of diplomatic missions from Southeast Asia. According to the *Song huiyao*, embassies always consisted of a head of mission (*shi* 使), a deputy head of mission (*fushi* 副使), and an assistant head of mission (*panguan* 判官). In the case of Zhancheng, Boni 渤泥 and other countries, the number of embassy members never totaled more than ten, whereas those from Shepo 閩婆 and Sanfoqi 三佛齊 never comprised more than twenty persons.<sup>43</sup>

### Boni 勃泥 in the *Sea of Jades* (*Yuhai* 玉海)

The next work to relate information on Boni is an encyclopedia titled *Yuhai* 玉海. The *Yuhai* was compiled in the thirteenth century by Wang Yinglin 王應麟 (1223-1296), and refers to Boni 勃泥, remarking on two official missions from the state, received on 4 November 978 and 26 March 1082, respectively. The latter mission is not mentioned in the basic annals of the then ruling emperor Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1068-1085) in the official dynastic

<sup>41</sup> See *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿, comp. by Xu Song 徐松 (1781-1848) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 199, “fanyi” 蕃夷 7.8a (7843), and “fanyi” 7.370b (7858).

<sup>42</sup> *Taizong huangdi shilu* 太宗皇帝實錄, comp. by Qian Ruoshui 錢若水 (960-1003) et al. (Sibu congkan guangbian). For more information on this work, see *Sung Bibliography*, 84-85, and Kurz, *Kompilationsprojekt*, 147-148.

<sup>43</sup> See *Song huiyao jigao* 199, “fanyi” 蕃夷 7.20b (7849).

history of the Song *Songshi* 宋史. Note also, that the first mission is dated 978, which puts it a year later than the other sources. This may result from a copying error which occur quite frequently in the case of Chinese block-printed books, as *er* 二 (two or second) can rather easily turn into *san* 三 (three or third). The entry in *Yuhai* reads as follows:

Boni 勃泥 brings tribute during the Taiping xingguo era.

Boni is situated in the middle of the southwestern seas and in previous times it had never brought tribute. On the *dingwei* 丁未 day of the ninth month in the third year of the *Taiping xingguo* era (30 October 978) Boni's ruler Xiangda sent envoys who submitted a letter and camphor and tortoise shells as tribute. His envoys were conferred saddles, horses, sacrificial vessels and brocades by the Hall for the Veneration of Governance (Chongzheng dian 崇政殿)<sup>44</sup>, and they were housed in the Foreign Relations Office (Libin yuan 禮賓院). On the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the second month of the fifth year of the Yuanfeng era [Boni again] brought tribute.<sup>45</sup>

This passage strips the *TPHYJ* account to the bare essentials, and provides new information only in the form of the presents that were given to the envoys. The horses and saddles were probably for use in the capital for it is difficult to imagine how they would transport them back to their home country. The name of the ruler is consistent with the earlier reports, but again the exact location of Boni remains a mystery. The date provided for the arrival of the envoys is apparently incorrect, as other sources agree on the year 977.

### **Boni 勃泥 in the *Long Draft of the Continued Mirror in Government* (Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian 續資治通鑑長編)**

In the *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 (1183) by Li Tao 李濤 (1115-1184), an annalistic history of the Northern Song dynasty covering the period from 960 to 1100, the country is referred to as Boniguo 勃泥國.<sup>46</sup> The commentary explains that this information was derived from the *shilu* 實錄 ("The Veritable Records") of emperor Shenzong, which are no longer extant. The arrival of the envoys is dated 3 November 977.

<sup>44</sup> According to Hucker, this hall was a subsection of the Hanlin Academy. See Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 195. The significance of this department in relation to welcoming foreign guests is obscure.

<sup>45</sup> See Wang Yinglin, *Yuhai* (Shanghai: Shanghai chubanshe, 1992), 154.34b-35a.

<sup>46</sup> See Li Tao, *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1983), 18.18a (221).

The date for the mission in 1082 is 26 March.<sup>47</sup> No more information is given there on the number of envoys, their names or the products they submitted, nor is the name of the ruler of Boni mentioned at that time.

### III. BONI IN TEXTS FROM THE YUAN DYNASTY (1279-1368)

#### **Boni 勃泥 in the *General History of Institutions and Critical Examination of Documents and Studies* (*Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考), 1308**

The relative ignorance with which Chinese official authorities treated the place may also be inferred from the entry on Boni in the *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考 (hereafter *WXTK*) by Ma Duanlin 馬端臨 (1254-1323).<sup>48</sup> The *WXTK*, being neither a geographical work like the *ZFZ* nor an official dynastic history, but an encyclopedia, uses the earliest account, *TPHYJ* entry, in its description of Boni extensively.

(*TPHYJ*) The country of Boni is situated in the big ocean to the southwest of the capital (i.e. Beijing). It takes forty-five days to reach Shepo, and it takes a voyage of forty days to reach Sanfoqi. Both Zhancheng and Moyi are thirty days of traveling away. All these calculations are based on a steady wind. In that country planks have been used for city walls and the inhabitants within the city walls number more than 10.000. [The city] rules over fourteen prefectures. The house of the king is covered with palm leaves, the houses of the common people are covered with grass. Those around the king are the high dignitaries (*daren* 大人). [The king] sits on a bedstead made of strings. When he leaves [his residence, the string bed] is covered with a large plain piece of cloth, and a number of men carry it. This is called *ruannang* 阮囊. The warriors carry a knife and armour. The armour, made of brass, has the form of a big tube, and they wear it on the body, so that it guards their belly and back.

In that place grain does not grow, but it produces hemp and rice, and there are also goats, fowl and fish. As there are no silkworms, cotton is used to spin cloth. [The people] drink coconut liquor. In the sequence for marriage presents coconut liquor

<sup>47</sup> *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, 313.15a (3350).

<sup>48</sup> For more detailed information see Yves Hervouet (ed.), *A Sung Bibliography (Bibliographie des Sung)* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1978), 174-175; *Zhongguo lishi dacidian: shixueshi juan* 中國歷史大辭典：史學史卷, ed. by Zhongguo lishi dacidian: shixueshi juan bianzuan weiyuanhui 中國歷史大辭典：史學史卷編纂委員會 (Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu chubanshe, 1983), 81. Note that the date 1224 given for the work in Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual Revised and Enlarged* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 526, is incorrect.

comes first, followed by betel nuts, then finger rings, and after this cotton cloth is presented or a measure of gold or silver to conclude the marriage rites.

For burials they also put the deceased into coffins and make biers of bamboo, [on which] they carry [the coffins] into the mountains where they leave them. In the second month (of the Chinese calendar) they start tilling and then they are sacrificing to their dead. The seventh day of the twelfth month is their spring festival. The place is hot, and has a lot of wind and rain.

When the people are feasting, they beat the drum, blow the flute, play the cymbals, sing and dance to make merry. They have no [ceramic or porcelain] vessels, so they use bamboo basketwork and palm leaves as vessels [and dishes], which they fill with food. When they have eaten the food they discard them.

This country is a neighbour to the country of Dimen 底門 (Timor) in which grows a medicinal tree. By cooking its root one can produce an ointment. Swallowing it and applying it on the body, one will not die, if one is wounded by weapons.

As [this country] did not pay tribute to earlier [Chinese] dynasties, the historical records did not mention it.

In the second year of the Taiping xingguo era (977) the king Xiangda sent envoys to submit an official letter and presented tribute: One big piece of camphor, shining camphor (*guang longnao* 光龍腦), azure camphor (*cang longnao* 蒼龍腦), tortoise-shell, sandalwood incense (*tanxiang* 檀香), and elephant tusks.

The letter was sealed in several small bags, and it was not [written] on Chinese paper, but on a material that resembled wooden bark which was thin. It was bright and smooth and was of a subtle green colour. It was several *chi* long, more than a *cun* wide, and when rolled up it could be held in one hand.

The characters on it were tiny and small and had to be read horizontally. Their translation into Chinese reads: "I, Xiangda, king of Bohai 渤海,<sup>49</sup> kowtow before You, and I wish the emperor ten thousand times ten thousand times 100 million years, and may the emperor live ten thousand years. We hope that You will not blame our inferior country for our unpolished behaviour.

I have now sent envoys to present tribute. I, Xiangda, heard about the [Imperial] Court, but there was no way to go there. Recently, a merchant by the name of Puluxie anchored his junk by the mouth of the river. I ordered people to invite him to come to my place. [When he had arrived] he said that he came from China (*zhongchao* 中朝) and that he was on his way to Shepo when a fierce wind damaged his junk, so he could not reach [his destination]. When our people heard that he came from China, they were full of joy. As soon as an ocean-going ship had been built I ordered Puluxie to lead the way to the court so I could present tribute there. The envoys I have sent only want to meet with the emperor in peace. I have ordered now to present tribute to the court every year. As I am preparing [to offer] tribute every year, I am afraid that the winds may blow our ship to the territory of

<sup>49</sup> Bohai certainly is a typographical error and should correctly read Boni. Bohai was an independent empire in northern China and ceased existence in the tenth century.



Zhancheng. [Therefore] I hope that the emperor will order Zhancheng not to retain Xiangda's ship there, if that should happen. Your subject [Xiangda's] country does not produce any other extraordinary things thus I beg the emperor not to be offended."

The contents of the memorial read like this.

On imperial order the envoys were lodged in the foreign relations office (*libin yuan* 禮賓院). They were given lavish presents on their returning home.

In the second month of the fifth year of the Yuanfeng (1082) the king Xilimanuo 錫理麻喏 again sent envoys with a tribute of local products. His envoys asked to take a ship from Quanzhou to return home. This was granted.<sup>50</sup>

This text supplements the *TPHYJ* account with more material about the contents of the letter of the king to the emperor of China. Interestingly, not one bit of the more colorful description of Boni from the brush of Zhao Rugua has entered the *WXTK*. However, it gives a name to the king of Boni in 1082. According to the letter which Ma Duanlin probably had access to, the king in 977 had heard of China, but did not know how to get there. This seems rather strange, since if he had known of its existence than he might have also gathered more information. As it stands now, it looks more like an excuse not to have entered into contact at an earlier date. As we see here again, if we trust the text, the people in Boni had a very vague knowledge of China as well. This contradicts Nicholl's assumption that Boni was a successor to Poli, and that the Chinese had lost sight of this alleged connection between the two countries. However, the king knew that Champa was likely to retain any tribute carrying ship that was sent to China. For him that would not only have meant the loss of the few things his country produced, but it might have jeopardized relations with the Chinese court at the same time. The anonymous envoy or envoys in 1082 asked to return home from Quanzhou, a request which suggests that at that time, people in Boni were already aware of the importance of that city as a maritime center of overseas trade and travel.

Jamil Al-Sufri claims the Boni envoy of 1082 on his return voyage was accompanied by "several Chinese officials";<sup>51</sup> no evidence for any Chinese officials escorting the envoy(s) home is provided by the sources. Jamil Al-Sufri alleges furthermore that there was a third mission from what he calls Brunei to the Chinese court in 1247, found in unspecified

<sup>50</sup> Ma Duanlin, *Wenxian tongkao* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 332.2610-2611.

<sup>51</sup> Jamil Al-Sufri, *Tarsilah*, 13.

“Chinese sources”. The chef de mission was Pu Zongmin 蒲宗閔, who according to Jamil Al-Sufri was the grandson of Puyali.<sup>52</sup> There is, however, no evidence to link the two nor to suggest that Pu Zongmin was an official envoy from the Chinese court. The basic annals of the *Songshi* as well as the *Xu Zizhi tongjian* and the *Song huiyao* do not contain any information on such a mission in 1247, nor do they refer to Pu Zongmin.<sup>53</sup> Pengiran Karim is referring to a text titled *Xishan zazhi* 西山雜誌 by a certain Cai Yongjian 蔡永肇 (1776-1835), a local scholar from Pujiang in Fujian, which mentions the mission headed by Pu Zongmin.<sup>54</sup> I have not been able to obtain a hard copy of this text, which was discovered only in the late twentieth century.<sup>55</sup> It has survived only in hand-written copies, one of which was dated 8 September 1982. Given the provenance of the text, it is difficult to prove its authenticity.<sup>56</sup> What makes it more suspicious is the fact that in the online description of the work, the solving of the “mystery” of the provenance of Pu Zongmin is a central point. If there is proof that Pu actually came from Quanzhou in China as early as the late thirteenth century, and his tombstone could be verified to be that old as well, then this would make it the oldest Chinese artifact in Southeast Asia.<sup>57</sup> However, as things stand, this claim cannot be

<sup>52</sup> Jamil Al-Sufri, *Tarsilah*, 13. He also repeatedly and incorrectly refers to Pu Zongmin as Pu Zhong Min.

<sup>53</sup> The bibliographical reference Jamil Al-Sufri gives is obscure and cannot be verified. It is given as “Zhuang Wei Ji, *Lian Tian Shi Yan jiu*, No. 2, 1990”, in *Tarsilah*, 14, footnote 1, and in its bibliography, 121. Apparently this title comes from Pg Karim’s article on the Chinese tombstone. See below. Pg Karim’s work is not listed in *Tarsilah*.

<sup>54</sup> Pengiran Karim bin Pg Haji Osman, “Further Notes on a Chinese Tombstone Inscription of A.D. 1264”, in *BMJ* 8 (1993): 4-5. The first scholars to deal with the tombstone, that nowadays is found in a cemetery in the capital, were Wolfgang Franke and Ch'en T'ieh-fan, who published their findings in “A Chinese Tomb Inscription of A.D. 1264, Discovered Recently in Brunei: A Preliminary Report”, in *Brunei Museum Journal* 3.1 (1973): 91-99.

<sup>55</sup> The following information is based on an online document [http://www.qzwb.com/gb/content/2006-02/20/content\\_1981955.htm](http://www.qzwb.com/gb/content/2006-02/20/content_1981955.htm), accessed 1 March 2006.

<sup>56</sup> Two articles deal with the *Xishan zazhi* and the identification of the provenance of the name on the Chinese tombstone. I have not had access to these works which were both published in the same issue of the *Haijiaoshi yanjiu*. See Lin Shaochuan 林少川, “Boni ‘you song Quanzhou panyuan Pu gong zhi mu’ xinkao 勃泥有宋泉州判院蒲公之墓新考”, *Haijiaoshi yanjiu* 海交史研究 20 (1991): 57-64; Gong Yanming 龔延明, “Wenlai guo Song mu ‘panyuan Pu gong’ suojie – jianping *Xishan zazhi* (shouchaoben) de shiliao jiazhi 文萊國宋幕判院蒲公所解 – 監評西山雜誌 (手抄本) 的史料價值”, in *Haijiaoshi yanjiu* 20 (1991): 65-69.

<sup>57</sup> Another online document not only discusses the use of the *Xishan zazhi* as a historical source, but also raises issues concerning its historical value, which according to the text was questioned by some scholars. Lin Shaochuan in that part of the text concedes that there are some ambiguities; but these do not affect Pu Zongmin and his alleged official journey to Boni. See Hou Donghua 侯冬華 (ed.), “Yinzang lishi mima de Qingdai qishu (zutu) 隱藏歷史密碼的清代奇書 (組圖)”, <http://www.chinaqw.com.cn/news/2006/0629/68/34380>, accessed 2 September 2006. The entry quoted from the *Xishan zazhi* under the heading of “Pu’s Gravestone” (Pu cuo 蒲厝) on Pu Zongmin reads: “During the Shaoxing era (1228-1233) of the Song there was the *jinshi* Pu Zongmin, whose post was Controller-general of Wenling; later on, he rose to the Censorate. In the *bingshen* year of the Duanping era (1236) he was sent as an envoy to Annan (modern day Vietnam), in the second year of the Jiayi era (1238) he was sent to Zhancheng (a place name in modern day

supported by solid facts. To my knowledge, no critically revised and annotated edition of the *Xishan zazhi* has been published and until this happens, any statement concerning the Pu family can be speculative at best.<sup>58</sup>

### **Boni in the *Official Dynastic History of the Song* (*Songshi* 宋史), 1345**

The *WXTK* account was almost taken over in its entirety into the official dynastic history of the Song, which was presented to the Yuan throne in 1345. The ruler's name has been rendered as Sri Ma-dja or Sri Maharadja by Groeneveldt.<sup>59</sup> No further mention of him is made in the *Songshi* (hereafter *SS*) and the mission does not appear in the basic annals of emperor Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1068-1085) ruling at that time. The work was hastily compiled by a compilation committee working close to the end of the Mongol Yuan 元 dynasty (1279-1368), in order to show the legitimacy of Mongol rule of China. Since it was not clear to the scholar-officials working on the project whom the Yuan actually succeeded as masters of China, they also compiled dynastic histories of the other two dynasties they had destroyed while conquering China, namely the Liao and the Jin.

The country of Boni lies in the southwestern seas. One travels forty-five days from Shepo, forty days from Sanfoqi, and thirty days both from Zhancheng and Moyi. All these distances are calculated on the basis of constant winds.

In that country planks have been used for a city-wall, and within the city-walls more than 10,000 people are living. [The city] rules over fourteen prefectures. The roof of the royal house is covered with palm leaves, while the houses of commoners are covered with grass.

Those around the king are the high dignitaries. The king sits on a bedstead made of strings. When he leaves [his residence, the string bed] is covered with a large plain piece of cloth, and a number of men carry it. [Their] term for this is *ruannang*.

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Vietnam), and in the seventh year of the Chunyou era (1247) he was again sent as an envoy to Boni (this is modern day Brunei). Afterwards he died in office."

<sup>58</sup> John Chaffee has dealt with Chinese Muslims with the surname Pu in a paper he delivered at the AAS Annual Meeting in 2005. I would like to thank Prof. Chaffee for granting me access to the paper entitled "Diasporic Identities in the Maritime Muslim Communities of Song-Yuan China".

<sup>59</sup> W.P. Groeneveldt, "Notes on the Malay Archipelago and Malacca Compiled from Chinese Sources" (Jakarta: C.V. Bhratara, 1960), 110. This piece was originally published in *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 39 (1880). See also Johannes L. Kurz, "A New Translation of the Entry on Boni in the Official History of the Song", in *Southeast Asia: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 2.1-2 (2001): 31-36. For reasons unknown, Jamil Al-Sufri addresses this ruler as Sa-li Mah-lui. See Jamil Al-sufri, *Tarsilah*, 13.

The warriors carry a knife and armour. The armour, made of copper (or brass), has the form of a big tube, and they wear it on the body, so that it guards their belly and back.

In that place grain does not grow, but it produces hemp and rice, and there are also goats, fowl and fish. As there are no silkworms, cotton is used to spin cloth. [The people] drink coconut liquor. In the sequence for marriage presents coconut liquor comes first, followed by betelnut, then finger rings, and after this cotton cloth is presented or a measure of gold or silver to conclude the marriage rites.

For burials they also put the deceased into coffins and make biers of bamboo, [on which] they carry [the coffins] into the mountains where they leave them. In the second month (of the Chinese calendar) they start tilling and then they are sacrificing to their dead. After seven years they do no sacrifice any more. The seventh day of the twelfth month is their spring festival. The place is hot, and has a lot of wind and rain.

When the people there are feasting, they beat the drum, blow the flute, play the cymbals, sing and dance to make merry. They have no [ceramic or porcelain] vessels, so they use bamboo basketwork and palm leaves as vessels [and dishes], which they fill with food. When they have eaten the food they discard them.

This country is a neighbour to the country of Dimen 底門 (Timor) in which grows a medicinal tree. By cooking its root one can produce an ointment. Swallowing it and applying it on the body, one will not die, if one is wounded by weapons.

As [this country] did not pay tribute to earlier [Chinese] dynasties, the historical records did not mention it.

In the second year of the reign period Taiping xingguo (977) the king Xiangda sent the envoy Shinu, the deputy envoy Puyali, and the assistant Gexin who respectfully presented an official letter to the throne and presented tribute: One big piece of one *jiadi* 家底 (kati) of camphor, eight *jiadi* of second class [camphor], eleven *jiadi* of third class [camphor], twenty *jiadi* of rice camphor, and twenty *jiadi* of grey camphor. Each *jiadi* is equivalent to twenty *liang*.<sup>60</sup> [The items further included] five boards of camphor,<sup>61</sup> one hundred carapaces of tortoise-shell, three pieces of sandalwood, and six elephant tusks.

The [accompanying] letter read: "May the emperor live thousand years and ten thousand years! We hope that You will not blame our inferior country for our unpolished behaviour."

The memorial [to the throne] was sealed in several small bags, and it was not [written] on Chinese paper, but on something that resembled wooden bark and was thin. It was bright and smooth and was of a subtle green colour. It was several *chi* long, more than a *cun* wide, and when rolled up it could be held in one hand.

<sup>60</sup> The *Hanyu dacidian* declares *jiadi* to be a weight unit used in Boni and gives the entry here as proof. See *Hanyu dacidian*, vol. 3 (Shanghai, 1989), 1466.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. also the translation of this paragraph by Han Wai Toon who focused on the part dealing with camphor exclusively and ignored the rest. See Han Wai Toon, "Notes", 17.

The characters on it were tiny and small and had to be read horizontally. Their translation into Chinese reads: “I, Xiangda, king of Boni, kowtow before You, and I wish the emperor ten thousand times ten thousand times 100 million years, and may the emperor live ten thousand years.

I have now sent envoys to present tribute. I, Xiangda, heard about the [Imperial] Court, but there was no way to go there. Recently, a merchant by the name of Puluxie anchored his junk by the mouth of the river. I dispatched people to invite him to come to my place. [When he had arrived] he said that he came from China (*zhongchao* 中朝) and that he was on his way to Shepo when a fierce wind damaged his junk, so he could not reach [his destination].<sup>62</sup> When our people heard that he came from China, they were full of joy. As soon as an ocean-going ship had been built I ordered Puluxie to lead the way to the court so I could present tribute there. The envoys I have sent only want to meet with the emperor in peace. I have ordered now to present tribute to the court every year. As I am preparing [to offer] tribute every year, I am afraid that the winds may blow our ship to the territory of Zhancheng. [Therefore] I hope that the emperor will order Zhancheng not to retain Xiangda’s ship there, if that should happen. Your subject [Xiangda’s] country does not produce any other extraordinary things thus I beg the emperor not to be offended.”

Thus read the contents of the memorial.

On imperial order the envoys were lodged in the foreign relations office (*libin yuan* 禮賓院). They were given lavish presents on their returning home.

In the second month of the fifth year of the Yuanfeng (1082) the king Xilimanuo 錫理麻喏 again sent an envoy with a tribute of local products. His envoys asked to take a ship from Quanzhou to return home. This was granted.<sup>63</sup>

This text adds the names of the envoys in 977 and gives the exact figures for the tribute products that were submitted in 1082. On account of its copying the *WXTK*, I assume that from 1082, the date of the last tribute bearing mission from Boni, and 1308, the date of the publication of the *WXTK*, no new official documents had entered the archives of the Song, which otherwise would have been incorporated into the official history. No trace of the *ZFZ* is visible in this account, a fact which hints at the selective use of sources by the official compilers, and simultaneously at the availability of this work. The edition of the text used today has been reconstructed from the early fifteenth century encyclopedia *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典. No earlier versions of the text exist.

<sup>62</sup> Groeneveldt does not translate this sentence.

<sup>63</sup> *Songshi* 489.14094-14095



Nicholl used Groeneveldt's translation of the *SS* entry extensively, but he was unaware that what Groeneveldt had translated was the *WXTK*, rather than the *SS* account, which is obvious in his omitting the names of the envoys in 977.<sup>64</sup> He furthermore assumed that the name of the king Xiangda may have been Seri Anakda, and the name of the foreign trader Puluxie Firoz Shah. He then alleged that "Firoz Shah" had brought news of a war between Sumatra and Java to Boni.<sup>65</sup> Note, however, that the text in both the *WXTK* and the *SS* does not include such information, and that therefore, Nicholl's statement is mere speculation. He first raised this issue in a previous essay, in which he addressed the king of Boni as Maharaja,<sup>66</sup> hinting at the possibility that Boni was an Indianized state. Similar to his other assumptions he never follows up with evidence. The Chinese texts are not helpful either, as they all refer to the ruler as a king, which is the most neutral of terms for anyone in a ruling position.

As we have seen above, Nicholl in later writings believed "Brunei" to have been a Daoist state; in his writings of this time, he never referred to a Hindu or Buddhist state again in the tenth century, which means that he never critically examined his own findings.

### **Boni 淳泥 in the *Brief Record of the Island Barbarians (Daoyi zhilüe 島夷誌略)*, 1350**

Another text dating from the Yuan is Wang Dayuan's book on people living in maritime Asia. In 1350, Wang Dayuan 汪大淵 finished his descriptions of foreign countries, which he laid down in a work entitled *Daoyi zhilüe* 島夷誌略 (hereafter *DZL*). This was at first attached to a local gazetteer dealing with Quanzhou, entitled *Qingyuan xuzhi* 清源續志, compiled by Wu Jian 吳鑒. Wang Dayuan's description of Boni is very short as can be seen from the following translation:<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup> See Groeneveldt, *Notes*, 108-110.

<sup>65</sup> Nicholl, "Brunei Rediscovered", 225.

<sup>66</sup> Nicholl, "Brunei and Camphor", 68.

<sup>67</sup> See the translation of the text by W.W. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean During the Fourteenth Century", part II, in *T'oung Pao* 16 (1915): 264-265. Jamil Al-sufri claims in *Tarsilah*, 13 and Appendix A (no page number), that this text described an island called Ei, referring to the *Mingshi*. That is definitely incorrect, and moreover the translation of the text in the Appendix is rather poor and faulty.

The mass of the Dragon Mountain rises to its right. The land at its base is rich and spacious, and from the fields profits are drawn.<sup>68</sup> The summer months are rather cool, in the winter it is extremely hot. Their customs abound. Men and women style their hair into a topknot, they wrap a multi-coloured cloth around their hips, and use coloured gold brocade for shirts. They rigorously worship a Buddha statue<sup>69</sup>. They have the utmost respect and affection for the people of Tang (the Chinese); if they are drunk, then they help them return to their lodgings.

The people boil seawater to make salt, and they produce alcohol by fermenting millet. They have a chieftain, who selects from his country one man who can calculate, to keep account books, calculate expenditure and income, and collect taxes, without making the smallest errors. Local products are Longzhen [-incense], bee's wax, tortoise shell, and plum-blossom and chipped camphor. This [camphor] tree resembles the fir or the juniper. They split it open and take out [the camphor]. Before they do so, they must fast and bathe. For trade they use things like silver, red gold, coloured satin, ivory boxes, and iron vessels.<sup>70</sup>

The people in this Boni were Buddhists and living on the harvests from their fields. The climate is comparable to that described in earlier texts. For Nicholl, the Longshan or Dragon Mountain is Mt. Kinabalu<sup>71</sup>. His main reason to identify the Longshan with Mt. Kinabalu are legends about the mountain and dragons.<sup>72</sup> Other than that he has no evidence to prove the correctness of his presumption, but nevertheless keeps working with it anyway. As we have seen, the text is far from fixing the place anywhere else than close to a mountain, which in fact must not be Mt. Kinabalu at all. The problem is how to interpret the first sentence in the entry. Is the right side of the mountain seen from the observer arriving on a ship from the west? Then Boni would, in fact, have been situated north of the mountain. The other option is the visitor arriving from the east, which in my opinion is unlikely. The text was written for Chinese readers describing places to the east of them and thus Wang's view is probably from China towards the east as well. At the same time, it is very doubtful if

<sup>68</sup> Rockhill translates *ji yu xiong chang yuan tian huo li* 基宇雄敞源田獲利 as "... the land stretches out in a fine plateau. Its high-level fields are a source of profit to it". See Rockhill, "Eastern Archipelago", 264-265. I have not been able to verify the translation of *jiyu* as plateau nor *tian* as high-level field.

<sup>69</sup> The climate described certainly would have been detrimental to pictures, so that the term *xiang* 象 here must mean something solid. Therefore I have chosen the present translation. Rockhill translates: "They worship images of Buddhas (or gods)."

<sup>70</sup> Wang Dayuan 汪大淵, *Daoyi zhilüe jiaoshi* 島夷誌略校釋, Su Jiqing 蘇繼墳 (rev. and annot.) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 148.

<sup>71</sup> Nicholl, "Brunei and Camphor", 53.

<sup>72</sup> Nicholl, "Notes on Some Controversial Issues", 28.

Wang Dayuan actually visited the place in autumn of 1330 as Nicholl would have him on account of a poem that Wang composed when he passed by Ceylon.<sup>73</sup>

For Nicholl the *TPHYJ*, the *ZFZ*, and the *WXTK* point to a location of Boni “on the north west coast of Borneo”. In fact, as is apparent from the texts cited above, they are far from identifying any place with certainty. Nevertheless, Nicholl goes on to cite the *DZL* as major evidence for the location of Boni.<sup>74</sup>

#### IV. BONI IN TEXTS FROM THE MING DYNASTY<sup>75</sup>

##### ***A Report about Boni Submitting Tribute (Boniguo rugong ji 勃尼國入貢記)***

One of the earliest accounts of Boni during the Ming dynasty was compiled by Song Lian 宋濂 (1310-1381). Song was an eminent scholar who served as the chief compiler of the official dynastic history of the Yuan, *Yuanshi* 元史, in 1369. Song wrote down what the envoy Shen Zhi 沈秩 told him about his experiences at the place in a text entitled “Boniguo rugong ji 勃尼國入貢記”. This piece has been translated by Carrie C. Brown.<sup>76</sup> In the following text, I provide a new translation based mainly on Brown’s translation, though with some adjustments. Song Lian’s report bears no date, but it is quite probable that it was produced not long after the envoys had returned from Boni.

I, Lian, received an imperial order while I was attached to the Hanlin Academy,<sup>77</sup> that Shen Zhi, Office Manager of the Fujian Branch Secretariat,<sup>78</sup> was to visit me.

<sup>73</sup> Nicholl, “A Note on Boni and Its Location”, in *BMJ* 5.4 (1984): 4-5.

<sup>74</sup> Nicholl, “Notes on Some Controversial Issues”, 27-28.

<sup>75</sup> There are two texts that I have not included in the following treatment of Ming sources since they are largely repeating information on Boni that is already known. The first text is the *Huang Ming siyi kao* 皇明四夷考 by Zheng Xiao 鄭曉 (1499-1566), which deals with Boni; see *Huang Ming siyi kao* (Taipei: Huawen shuju, 1968), 2.51-52 (511-512). The *Huang Ming xiangxu lu* 皇明象胥錄 by Mao Ruizheng 茅瑞徵 (*jinshi* of 1601) is more detailed than the older work; see *Huang Ming xiangxu lu* (Taipei: Huawen shuju, 1968), 4.27a-29a (249-253).

<sup>76</sup> Carrie C. Brown, “An Early Account of Brunei by Sung Lien”, in *BMJ* 2.4 (1972): 219-231.

<sup>77</sup> Brown does not translate this information. The two characters *jinlin* 禁林 are referring to the Hanlin Academy, the most prestigious scholarly institution within the imperial bureaucracy. Song Lian was promoted

[Shen Zhi] spoke: “In the eight month of the autumn in the third year of the Hongwu era (August/September 1370), I, Zhi, together with Zhang Jingzhi 張敬之, an Investigating Censor, and others, was ordered to go to Boni to deliver a proclamation. In the tenth month in the winter (October/November 1370), we took to the sea south of Quan[zhou]. On the first day under the cyclical characters *yichou* of the third month of the spring of the fourth year (18 March 1371), we arrived in Shepo. More than a month later, we only arrived there [in Boni]. Mahemosha, the king of the country, located on an out-of-the-way place in the middle of the ocean, was haughty and did not have any manners befitting a subject. I ordered an interpreter to tell him this: ‘The Emperor has conquered the Four Oceans. Wherever sun and moon do shine, wherever frost and dew fall, all of these places submitted memorials declaring themselves subjects [to the Emperor]. Boni is a small place, does it really want to oppose the Heavenly power?’ The king becoming greatly aware [of what had been said], raised his hands to his forehead and said: ‘The Emperor is the ruler of all under heaven. He is my lord and my father, how can you say that I am opposing him?’ I reprimanded him saying: ‘Now that Your Highness has come to understand the honours due your lord and father, why do You not pay respect to him as a subject?’<sup>79</sup> I had the king’s seat immediately removed and in its stead an incense table assembled, on which I placed the Imperial Order. I commanded the king to lead his officials and kneel down in the courtyard. I lifted the Imperial Order and read it out while standing, and the king listened while lying prostrate.<sup>80</sup> When the ceremony was finished I retired.

The next day the king made excuses saying: ‘Recently Sulu has raised arms and has invaded us, and they robbed my people and treasures completely. We should wait for three years, after which the conditions of the country will have improved, and we will build a vessel, to submit tribute.’ I replied: ‘The Emperor has ascended the throne already some years ago! Among the countries of the Four Barbarians, there are Japan and Korea in the east, in the south there are Jiaozhi, Champa, and Shepo, in the west there is Turfan, and in the north there are the tribes of the Mongols, whose envoys have stepped on their heels on their way [to the court]. Your Highness is already acting quite late, how can you talk then about three years?’ The king said: ‘This place is barren and its people are poor. I am ashamed that I do not have any precious objects to offer. Therefore I want to go slow, and for no other reason.’ I replied: ‘The Emperor is rich owning the four seas, so what should he be asking from your highness? What he wants is, that your highness declares yourself vassal, to demonstrate that you have no other obligations.’ The king said: ‘Allow me to discuss this matter with my ministers.’ The next day Wang Zongshu 王宗恕,<sup>81</sup> his minister, came to me and said: “Your words are good and true. We ask to proceed on the fifth day of the fifth month.’ There was a man from Shepo who talking to the king, sowed

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to the position of Hanlin Academician in 1370, after he had finished work on the *Yuanshi*. See *Mingshi* 128.3785.

<sup>78</sup> Brown refers throughout her article to Shen Zhi as Ch'en (Chen) Chih, and renders his title as Assistant Secretary of Fujian. The title in the text (*xingsheng dushi* 行省都事) in fact refers to the Branch Imperial Secretariat in which Shen Zhi was the supervisor of clerks.

<sup>79</sup> Brown has not translated this question. Furthermore, she understands the following text as being still part of Shen Zhi’s speech. The edition of the text I used makes it quite clear that the direct speech ends after the question.

<sup>80</sup> Brown has not translated the last part of the sentence.

<sup>81</sup> Brown renders this name as Wang Chung-shu (pinyin: Wang Zhongshu), which is incorrect.

discord: 'When Sulu attacked Your Highness, our army repulsed them. Now I learn that you turn your true feelings towards China and you don't have any for Shepo!' The king became doubtful. I again went to see the king, but the king feigned illness. Raising my voice I addressed Zongshu: 'Do you mean to say that Shepo is not a subject of China? Yet Shepo has declared itself a subject — what could it possibly do to your country? If I would return this morning [to the imperial court], a great army would arrive this evening, and even all your remorse would be to no avail!' Zongshu replied apprehensively: 'Respectfully I receive the order.' Thereupon he went to explain this to the king. The king gathered all his family<sup>82</sup> and all agreed to send Yisimayi and three others to come to court. When we were about to depart the king wanted to give us golden knives and cotton-cloth as presents, but I refused them resolutely. The king turned to his subordinates and said: 'Is it really possible that the envoys from China are this honest? When people from Shepo come, they make demands and are never satisfied [with what they get]. Moreover would they ever reject what is being forced on them? You should imitate [the Chinese envoys]!'

I thought that it was impossible not to record our journey of 10.000 *li* across the ocean, so both I and Jingzhi composed a poem. The king was greatly pleased and asked us to write them on wooden boards to be hung up. When we had left the king and our ship reached the mouth of the sea, the king once more became doubtful by listening to words from his entourage. He ordered someone to talk to Yisimayi: 'The envoys have not accepted the knives and the cloth, and [therefore] you certainly will not return!' As I was afraid that the king had not understood, I went back to the king's place, to again explain [the situation] to him. The king said: 'What you have said, makes me set my mind to rest!' The king raised [a bowl] with alcohol to say good bye, and sprinkling some of it on the floor, made a wish: 'May you return speedily to China, and may Yisimayi soon return to this poor country!' We arrived at the capital on the fifteenth day of the eighth month in autumn and on the sixteenth day Yisimayi and the others were led to an audience [with the emperor]. They were given a banquet at the Interpreters' Institute, and later were sent back, bestowing the king very generously with presents.

The tribute products of this place consist of: hornbill beaks and live tortoise, camphor in big boards, rice camphor, bee's wax, incense of various qualities. His memorial [to the Emperor] was written in a barbarian script, that was inscribed in golden [characters], and which was similar to the Huihu script. Its text was simple and ordinary and not worth to look at. The letter addressed to the crown prince was written in silver [characters], and the text resembled that of the memorial.

This land is hot, and has much rain and wind. They do not have city walls, and wooden palisades make a fortification. The king lives in a house that looks like a storied building, and it is covered with palm leaves. The king ties his hair in a knot and is barefooted. He wraps coloured cotton cloth around the loins. He has no carriage and horse, and when he goes out, he walks.

The population in the city amounts to less than 3.000 families. Many of the people are fishermen. They cut their hair even on the forehead. The women wear short shirts, which only conceal their breasts and backs. Around the hips they wrap coloured cloth, and they wear their hair loose and go barefooted. They produce

<sup>82</sup> Brown translates *shu* 屬 as officials.



cotton, bee's wax, incense, carapaces, tortoise shell, and betel nut. They boil seawater to make salt, and they use the juice from the pulp of the coconut palm to make alcohol. They do not have rice, but they catch fish and crabs, that they eat together with *shahu* 沙糊. *Shahu* is a thick liquid made from the pith of a tree.<sup>83</sup> When the liquid has settled they make it into a fine and oily powder. Eating it one is no longer hungry. To eat they do not have utensils and vessels, but they knit bamboo and palm leaves together to make them. Once they have eaten they throw them away. For writing they do not have brushes. They carve palm leaves with a knife for writing. They serve the Buddha very respectfully, and the thirteenth day of the fifth month is a holiday. The people in the country on this day also partake in many Buddhist activities. When they have banquets, they butcher goats, pigs, chicken and ducks, and they beat drums and sound cymbals for music. That is the general outline of that place. You sir, are a Grand Scribe [in the Hanlin Academy], and I would like you to record this in detail in order to illustrate how the Sage's [i.e. the Emperor's] influence has spread so abundantly."

I, Lian, have learnt that Boni is in the middle of the great ocean to the southwest. It comprises fourteen prefectures. From Shepo it takes 45 days of traveling to reach there, from Champa and Moyi it takes 30 days, and from Sanfoqi it takes 40 days. In past dynasties it did not submit tribute to the court and that is why it is not recorded in the historical records. In the second year of the Taiping xingguo era of the Song the king Xiangda used consequently for the first time a merchant named Puluxie, to send Shinu, the deputy envoy Puyali, and the assistant Gexin with a memorial and tribute.

In the second month of the fifth year of the Yuanfeng era (1082), the king Xilimanuo again sent envoys as before. Afterwards contact stopped and nothing was heard from them. During the more than hundred years, that the Yuan lasted, they did not come either.

Zhi, courtesy name Zhongyong, is from Wucheng in Hu;<sup>84</sup> Jingzhi, with an unknown courtesy name, is from an unknown district. The two of them were of one mind in planning, and they always traveled together. Therefore these officials were successful.

The text of the memorial [of the king of Boni] reads: "I, your vassal Mahemosha, king of Boni, thought that these last years the throne of all under heaven was not peaceful and quite. Therefore I stayed in my territory, and did not have an overlord all the same (*mei zhu di yi ban* 沒主的一般).<sup>85</sup> Now envoys that You have sent have arrived, and they have proclaimed the Emperor's Order. I have learned that the emperor has ascended to the imperial position and now is the ruler of all under heaven. My heart is full of joy. My country is an insignificant place under the administration of Shepo. So how could I have been worthy of the Emperor's attention? Several days ago, the people of Sulu having no principles sent evil men who burnt our houses and harmed every one of my people. We rely on the

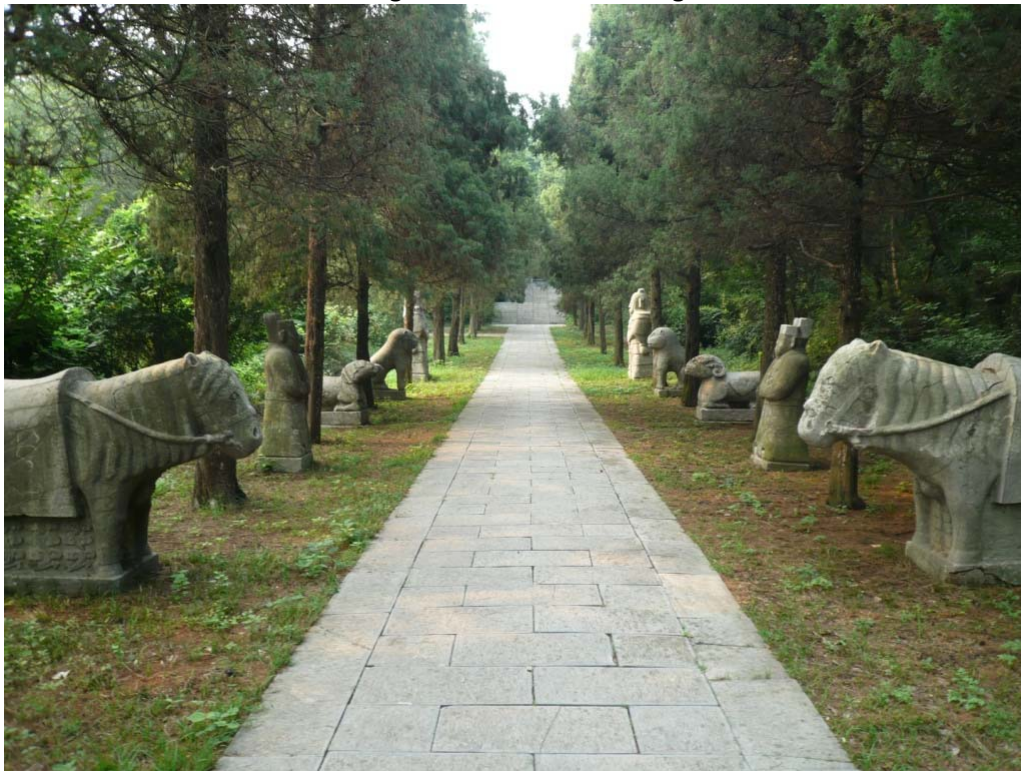
<sup>83</sup> *Shushi* 樹實 literally translated refers to the solid part of the tree.

<sup>84</sup> Wucheng was a district under the administration of Huzhou 湖州 in Zhejiang. Note that Brown omits Huzhou in her translation.

<sup>85</sup> This translation is open to discussion. Carrie Brown in her translation of the Song Lian text, has omitted it. I have chosen the present translation because it fits with the further text, in which the king becomes aware that a new emperor has emerged under heaven.

distinguished blessings of the emperor, and are happy to suffer no more harm to our family and people. Now I have [only] worthless things, and only a few useless objects, and I am about to order those who, as my head and eyes are representing me, to leave in order to follow the envoys sent by the Emperor to see the Emperor. Consequently we come with tribute to the Emperor. May Your Majesty live 10.000 times ten thousand years, and may the Crown prince live one thousand times one thousand years. Have pity on me and do not think of me as strange. Memorial by your subject Mahemosha, king of Boni, in the fifth month of the fourth year of the Hongwu era.”<sup>86</sup>

**Figure 1:**  
**Brunei-China Friendship Park in Nanjing, China**  
 Path leading to the tomb of the king of Boni



Source: Author

Like in the *TPHYJ*, we are faced again with an eye witness first-hand account describing this time not so much the country, but the negotiations between the Chinese envoys and the king of Boni. The reluctance of the king to comply with the demands of the Chinese is quite understandable given the fact that he was faced with two powerful neighbours, namely Sulu and Java. At the same time, we learn here that Boni did not know much of China at that time, even though the name of the minister mentioned, Wang Zongshu, hints at the

<sup>86</sup> Song Lian, *Song Lian quanji* 宋濂全集 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1999), Luo Yuexia 羅月霞 (ed.), *Song xue shi wenji* 宋學十文集, *Zhiyuan houji* 芝園後集, 5.1399-1401.

possibility that he was Chinese. The king may have treated the envoys differently, if he had possessed up-to-date information on the newly established Ming dynasty and the envoys would not have had to resort to serious threats in order to establish diplomatic tribute relations. Carrie Brown suggests that Song Lian, in writing up this report, used earlier texts as “models”. As a matter of fact, Song Lian did not use the *TPHYJ* and the *ZFZ* as “models”, but he copied them, as is apparent in his description of the country. Moreover, he did nothing to explain the inconsistencies of his text, such as the distances covered. Even though Shen Zhi himself declared that it took a little more than a month to reach Boni from Shepo, Song nevertheless quotes the distance found in the *TPHYJ*, that is, 45 days or one and a half months. We are still left in the dark as to where Boni was situated, for the report does not give the sailing direction. Therefore Carrie Brown’s assumption, that the text “provides undisputable evidence of Javanese dominance of northwest Borneo”,<sup>87</sup> is definitely farfetched because the text does not situate Boni in northwest Borneo, or in Borneo as such. Song Lian, as a scholar, included the oldest information on Boni that he could find. Again, the people in the Boni of the early Ming, had no recollections of contacts with the Song – at least they did not mention any.

***Stele Inscription at the Tomb of the Gongshun King of Boni (Boniguo gongshun wang mubei 淳泥國恭順王墓碑), 1408***

On the day with the cyclical characters *yiwei*<sup>88</sup> of the eighth month in the autumn of the sixth year of the Yongle era (9 September 1408), the king of Boni, Manarejiananai, leading his wife, children, younger brothers and sisters, relatives and officials, more than 150 people altogether, arrived at the capital. He submitted a memorial and local products as tribute. The Emperor received what he presented at the Fengtian Hall, after which the king withdrew. At the Fengtian Gate the Emperor ordered the king to speak with him. An interpreter translated his speech like follows: “I am your vassal from a very remote place and I boast that I was transformed through the Sage (i.e. the Emperor). I wanted to observe the pure light which I was ignorant of. I am only afraid that I dared so unceremoniously to annoy You.” Moreover he said: “Heaven covers me, Earth supports me. The Emperor has brought peace to me like a father, and to our old and our young people. That they can live in peaceful dwellings, that the food has good taste, that clothes are fitting, that for

<sup>87</sup> Brown, “An Early Account”, 223.

<sup>88</sup> Carrie Brown throughout her translation has omitted the days and their cyclical characters given in the Sibugongkan edition of this text which she used. However, in the footnotes she nevertheless provides the dates in the Western calendar including days. See Carrie C. Brown, “Two Ming Texts Concerning King Ma-na-je-cha-na of P’o-ni [sic]”, in *BMJ* 3.2 (1974): 222-229.

profit tools are provided, so that they can support their living, that the strong do not dare maltreat the weak, that the many do not dare to oppress the few – if not the Emperor who else has caused all this! The merits and virtues of the Emperor, which are like those of Heaven and Earth, have extended to me. Heaven and Earth are such, that by raising the head one can see [the former], and by crouching one can move around [on the latter]. The Emperor is far away and it is difficult to see him, therefore I could not communicate my sincerity. Your humble servant has not dreaded the dangers and the distance of the voyage and has proceeded to the capital to present his sincerity.” The emperor replied: “Ah! Heaven and my late father have entrusted me with the empire, to nourish the people. Heaven and my late father have observed the people with the same kindness. I have inherited what Heaven and my late father entrusted me with. My only fear is, that I cannot measure up to them, and thus it is not at all like you have said.” Thereupon he once more bowed his head and said: “Since the beginning of the accession of the Emperor to the throne, my country has had successive good harvests. The treasures that mountains and rivers held have appeared; plants and trees that have not blossomed suddenly have born fruit; rare birds are singing, and animals are dancing. The old folks in my country say: ‘The virtue of the Sage of China has brought [all of this] here.’ Even though my place is very distant from the capital, I believed nevertheless to be a vassal of the Emperor. For this reason I have come with all determination to attend the audience.” The Emperor was pleased with his sincerity, treated him with even more courtesy, and gave him presents very generously. At first he gave him a banquet at the Huagai-Hall, but then he several times feasted him at the Fengtian Gate. At every feast it was consequently ordered that the [king’s] wife was to be feted by the wives of dukes in a hall inside the palace. After the banquets the emperor ordered a high official to generously provide them with food. Upon daily order a high official served at the king’s lodgings. Eunuchs were specifically dispatched as his companions and [the number of people in] his retinue was increased to expand it. His grain allowance was made abundant. When he attended audiences his rank was one above the dukes. So numerous were the favours that were bestowed on him!

After a month had passed, the king suddenly fell ill. The Emperor ordered a doctor to give him good medicine to cure his illness. In the morning and in the evening he sent a eunuch to inquire about his condition. Upon daily order a high official had to observe any changes in the illness. Even small improvements, that the Emperor heard about, gave his face a happy expression. When the king’s illness grew worse, he said to his wife and his followers: “My illness has left the Emperor with sad thoughts. That I am dying now, is fate. I am from a desolate place that is far away, but I have had the luck to come to court and behold the radiance of the Emperor. Thus I can die without regret. When I am dead, my body moreover will be given a burial in China, and thus will not be a foreign soul. What I really regret is, that I cannot repay in my life all the profound favours, I have received from the Emperor, and in death I sincerely carry this burden.” He pointed to his son and said: “Since I do not get up, take my son to the audience and let him thank the Emperor: Swear an oath to never forget the favours of the Emperor in the coming generations. If you can do as I desire, I may die content and without regrets.” The king died on the first day [with the cyclical characters] *yihai* of the tenth month (19 October 1408) at the age of twenty-eight. The emperor deeply mourned for him. He suspended all court business for three days. By imperial order officials had to provide things necessary for the burial, lavish posthumous ceremonies, and the posthumous name Gongshun

恭順 (Respectful and Obedient).<sup>89</sup> The emperor dispatched officials to perform sacrifices and also sent officials to console the king's wife and children. The king's wife bowed before the officials and said: "Your obedient vassal's life was short and he was not able to bear the profound favours of the Emperor, and he could not serve the Emperor and reciprocate [for his kindness]. He left an order, 'never forget the favours of the Emperor in the coming generations'. We must follow his words, as if he had not died!" The words of the king's wife can really be called wise. On the *gengyin* day of the same month (3 November 1408)<sup>90</sup>, the king received a ceremonious burial on the Shizigang outside the Ande Gate. By imperial order a text was composed as a record to be put next to his tomb.

The king's father was named Manareshanawang 麻那惹沙那旺; his mother's name was Cishibadi 刺失八的; his wife was called Taxiye 他係邪. His son was called Xiawang 遐旺, who was just four years of age; and he had two daughters. [By imperial order] Xiawang was conferred the royal title, given generous presents [which included] a cap and an official robe, a jade belt, ceremonial items, saddles, dresses, vessels and gold and silver, silk brocades, and cash money. The king's wife was conferred an official dress, a pearl cap, silk brocade and cash money.<sup>91</sup> The others were all given presents according to their rank. The [late] king's three younger brothers, namely Shilinannanare 施里難那那惹, Shiliweiruonasha 施里微喏那沙那, and Nawanruoye 那萬喏邪,<sup>92</sup> were given official positions, to make them support Xiawang. By imperial decree a shrine was set up at the royal tomb. Three men were installed as tomb guards. On imperial order a stele was erected beneath the shrine. I, Guang, was ordered to compose the text for the stele inscription. Looking up to the August Emperor, I observe that he pacified the empire, spreading his Heavenly Virtue profusely, and embracing every place. All places where the sun and moon shine on, with a happy heart honestly turn to him, fearing only they may come in last. The countries, that have offered tribute for the first time, have caused a jam at the court, [numbering] ten thousand and more every year. The king of Boni was distant from China by several ten thousand *li*, [yet] one day he sailed with his wife and his children, his younger brothers and sisters, close relatives and officials, over the great ocean and came to court, not even considering [the voyage as] difficult. He kowtowed at the steps to the throne and gave a speech. His loyalty and honesty were abundant, and his intentions were as solid as gold. In his last words on his deathbed, he entrusted what he deeply felt to his retinue, namely to not forget the favours of the Emperor. His eminent virtue increasingly touched all hearts, so profound was it. Alas – so abundant was it! The king's wisdom and understanding, and the integrity of his loyalty and obedience were one from beginning to end. He deserved to be given all the honours and that these also extended to his successor. The reason for recording these facts, praising them in a rhymed tomb inscription, and proclaiming them without restraint, to make manifest, why the king received such generous favours, is all due to his sincerity.

The tomb inscription reads:

<sup>89</sup> Brown translates *hou xudian* 厚卹典 as "generous consolatory gifts".

<sup>90</sup> Brown gives the date as the fifth of the tenth month 24 October 1408). However, the *gengyin* day was in fact the sixteenth day of that month.

<sup>91</sup> Brown addresses the pearl cap as "a crown of pearls".

<sup>92</sup> Brown opts to add the last syllable of the second brother's name to the third brother's name, thus addressing him as Nanawanruoye. I am following here the modern edition of the text.



“The Great Ming rules all under Heaven. Which of the vassals in the ten thousand regions did not to come to present offerings, and which among them did not come to be made king?<sup>93</sup> Boni is a place remote and blazing hot, [its king] was moved to come to court as fast as the wind, as swift as the clouds. He told his wife and his children, his younger brothers and sisters and his officials, to kowtow successively, and to hurriedly knock their heads numerous times to the ground. Kneeling he said: “The Emperor is like my parents. My life and my entertainment is a blessing coming from the Emperor. Heaven covers me and Earth carries me, and they give me shelter. I raised my head to look up at the August Ming and so I came here to submit my sincerity. The Emperor said: “Alas! I am ruling over the world and I bring peace to the empire, but my virtue is insufficient.” The king kowtowed and called out ‘Ten thousand years’ [and said]: “I am submitting to Your virtue, cherishing Your kindness, that nurtured me like spring and immersed me like the sea. The mountains and rivers in my country have hidden treasures, that Your power has made appear. Barren plants and trees have dense foliage again, and brilliant blossoms, and these plants bear fruit. Rare birds sing together, stroking their wings; animals flock together and dance in rhythm. The old men in my country say, that this was achieved through imperial influence. Even though my country is very far away, I wanted to look up in reverence [to the Emperor].” The Emperor was very pleased and treated [the king of Boni] with exceptional ceremonies, rewarding him with banquets and bestowing gifts on him, all this upon generous imperial orders. Why, after just one month, did an illness unexpectedly strike him? Immediately [the Emperor] mourned, and again and again he lamented [the king’s condition]. When he was about to die he turned to those that mourned for him and said, that when he died, they should not forget the profound favours the Emperor [had bestowed on him]. Oh! The wise king surpassed all the vassals from the southwest by far. None of them could measure up to the king. When he was alive, he displayed sincerity; when he passed away, he was given a posthumous inscription. The descendants of the king were enfeoffed with titles for generations. His tomb is built like a hall, and a shrine is situated next to it, to give peace to the soul of the king, so that it will not be disturbed for eternity. Although the king could not return home, his fame spread far and wide. The favours of the Emperor [given to the king] will shine for all coming generations.”<sup>94</sup>

For Carrie Brown, the tomb inscription by Hu Guang (1368-1432) and the tomb inscription found in the entry on Boni in the *Mingshi* are almost identical. However, on closer inspection, it becomes quite evident that while the contents are the same, the “sentences and phrases” that Brown calls repetitive, are rather different in fact. The text here has been used in the 1990s to reconstruct the stele inscription that has only survived in a very few fragments.

<sup>93</sup> Brown translates: “All countries come to pledge their allegiance.”

<sup>94</sup> I have used two editions of the text, namely the original from the *Huang Ming wenheng*, and a modern edition, published on the internet. See “Boniguo gongshun wang mubei 淳泥國恭順王墓碑”, in Cheng Minzheng 程敏政 (comp.), *Huang Ming wenheng* 皇明文衡 (SBCK), 81.629-630; “Boniguo gongshun wang mubei 淳泥國恭順王墓碑”, [http://zhijyx.hfjy.net.cn/Resource/Book/Edu/KWDW/TS090039/0044\\_ts0900\\_39.htm](http://zhijyx.hfjy.net.cn/Resource/Book/Edu/KWDW/TS090039/0044_ts0900_39.htm), accessed 16 May 2006.



**Figure 2:**  
**Brunei-China Friendship Park in Nanjing, China**  
Stele in front of the tumulus



Source: Author

It is the only text that provides information on the family of the king of Boni, giving the names not only of his parents but also of his wife and his brothers. The name of the father, Manareshanawang, suggests no link to Mahemosha, the king of Boni in 1371. At the same time, it seems not too farfetched an idea to understand the first part of the name, Manare, as either a royal title or a family name of the ruling family, since it is also found in Manarejiananai.<sup>95</sup> I would see this as proof that the Boni of Mahemosha and that of Manarejiananai does not refer to one specific country, but rather to one region. This region may well have been separated into several small states with different rulers. The fact that this text here does not refer to Mahemosha and the diplomatic relations with Boni just less than forty years earlier may be regarded as another piece of evidence for the hypothesis that Boni was the term applied to the island of Borneo as a whole.

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<sup>95</sup> According to Geoff Wade, it is quite likely that Manarejiananai is a transcription of the title Maharajadhiraj which, at that time, was used by Thai rulers.

## Boni in the Veritable Records of the Ming (*Ming shilu* 明實錄)

The information that Song Lian's text provides can be supplemented by excerpts from the Veritable Records of the Ming emperors, *Ming shilu* 明實錄. These records have been made accessible online by Geoff Wade, and I follow his translations here.

The order to send out envoys to Southeast Asia was issued on 12 September 1370,<sup>96</sup> or just two years after the establishment of the Ming dynasty by Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (r. 1368-1398) posthumously known as Hongwu 洪武 emperor. Zhang Jingzhi 張敬之 and others were sent to Boni, others traveled to Sanfoqi and Zhenla.<sup>97</sup>

The following year (22 September 1371) an envoy from the Boni court called Yisimayi 亦思麻逸 arrived in Nanjing, and submitted tribute in the form of hornbill beaks (*heding* 鶴頂)<sup>98</sup>, live turtles, peacocks, plum-blossom camphor, "rice" camphor, "sugar" camphor, Western Ocean white cloth, laka-wood, and bees-wax. Furthermore he carried a letter with him from his ruler named Mahemosha 馬合謨沙 which was written in a script resembling the Huihu script.<sup>99</sup> Pelliot suggested Ismail for the name of the envoy and Mahmud Shah for the ruler.<sup>100</sup> This has been followed by most scholars ever since, as it appears to be quite plausible,<sup>101</sup> and is proof of the power of a casual remark put in a footnote.

The tribute products submitted hint at the possibility that the Boni of the early Ming was in the same region as the one of Song times. However they are not conclusive evidence that

<sup>96</sup> Brown referring to the *Ming Taizu shilu* 明太祖實錄, renders the date as 12 December 1370. See "An Early Account", 228, note 8.

<sup>97</sup> *Ming Taizu shilu* 明太祖實錄, in Huang Zhangjian 黃彰健 (ed. and rev.), *Ming shilu* (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1963-1968), 55.4a (1079). For a translation of this entry see Geoff Wade (trans.), *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: An Open Access Resource* (Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore), <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/502>, accessed 16 April 2005. I have changed all hyphenated terms given in the Hanyu pinyin transcription by Wade to conform to the non-hyphenated standard.

<sup>98</sup> For the identification of *heding* with the rhinoceros hornbill see Mills, *Ying-yai sheng-lan*, 100, footnote 100. Groeneveldt translates the term literally as "crane-crests". See Groeneveldt, *Notes*, 111. The beak of the hornbill can be used for carvings.

<sup>99</sup> *Ming Taizu shilu* 67.6b (1264). See Wade (trans.), *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/836>, accessed 16 April 2005.

<sup>100</sup> Paul Pelliot, "Le Hoja et le Sayyid Husain de l'histoire de Ming", in *T'oung Pao* 38 (1948): 268, note 347.

<sup>101</sup> For Jamil Al-Sufri, Mahemosha is the legendary Awang Alak Betatar, whom he addresses also as Sultan Muhammad Shah. See *Tarsilah*, 14.

the Boni visited by the Chinese envoys in the Ming was the successor to the state of Boni in Song times. The only information provided in the same entry in the *Ming Taizu shilu*, is at once familiar and very vague as well. It reads as follows:

Boni is in the great ocean of the Southwest and it controls 14 administrative divisions (*zhou*). It is subject to Shepo, from whence it is a 45-day journey. It produces famous aromatics and exotic goods.

This places Boni somewhere in the southwestern seas but does not give a definite clue to its location. There is no further mention of the place in the Veritable Records until the year 1375, when Boni was included in the sacrifices to the spirits of all the mountains, lakes and seas (*yuezhen haidu shanchuan zhi si* 嶽鎮海瀆山川之祀).<sup>102</sup> These were being held twice yearly in the capital until 1375 for the provinces that were responsible for the five cardinal directions, and conducted by the emperor in person. After 1375, the sacrifices were transferred to the relevant provinces. Thus, Fujian was responsible for Japan, Liuqiu 琉球, and Boni 渤泥.<sup>103</sup> A possible explanation for Boni being grouped with the latter two countries may be that the Chinese thought of Boni as a place that belonged more to the central regions of China, and not the southern regions such as Guangxi (responsible for Annan 安南, Zhancheng 占城, Zhenla 真臘, Xianluo 暹羅 (Thailand), and Suoli 鎖里) and Guangdong (Sanfoqi 三佛齊 and Java 爪哇).

A little less than 20 years later, the *Ming Taizu shilu* subsumed Boni and Liuqiu under the countries from the south who had brought tribute to the court so far.<sup>104</sup> At that time, the ceremonies for the reception of rulers from those countries were revised. On arrival they were received by an official in the Interpreter's Institute (*Huitong guan* 會同館).<sup>105</sup> The day after they were given an audience with the emperor in the Fengtian Hall for which they had

<sup>102</sup> For more detailed information on these sacrifices see *Mingshi* 49.1283-1285.

<sup>103</sup> On the inclusion of Boni in the sacrifices of Fujian see also Wade, *Southeast Asia in the Ming shi-lu*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/1422>, accessed 16 April 2005. Note that in this section the characters for Boni are slightly different from those in the description of the country.

<sup>104</sup> The other countries were Xianluo 暹羅, Zhancheng 占城, Zhenla 真臘, Annan 安南, Java 爪哇, Xiyang 西洋, Suoli 瑣里, Sanfoqi 三佛齊, Baihua 百花, Lanbang 覽邦, Penghang (Pahang??) 彭亨, Danba 淡巴, and Xuwendana 須文達那.

<sup>105</sup> This was the principal guesthouse for foreign visitors in the capital of the Ming. See Hucker, *Official Titles*, 264, and *Zhongguo lishi dacidian: Mingshi*, ed. Zhongguo lishi dacidian: Mingshi bianzuan weiyuanhui (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1995), 158.

to wear either their local dress or Chinese court clothes, if they had been provided with them. The number of bows to the emperor was set at eight, and after they had performed this, they were escorted to meet the crown prince and other imperial princes in the Wenhua-Hall. The new rules regulated the status of the foreign rulers as being close to those of marquis and earls at banquets.<sup>106</sup>

The next mission from Boni was received on 5 December 1405, and it was headed by Sheng Alie Bocheng 生阿烈伯成 who had been sent by his king Manarejiananai 麻那惹加那乃 to submit a memorial and tribute of local products. The Ministry of Rites responded by giving the envoy and his retinue a banquet and conferring Chinese silk costumes upon them.<sup>107</sup> On 22 December 1405, an envoy was sent to Boni to declare Manarejiananai king and as a sign of his authority, was given a seal, a title certificate, an imperial tally and tally-slips. Moreover, he was presented with various silks.<sup>108</sup> On 6 February 1406, Sheng Alie Bocheng, the interpreter Sha Ban 沙扮 and the other members of the diplomatic mission left the court to return to Boni. They had been given paper money and Chinese dresses already, but by flattering the relevant officials, obtained more headwear and belts. The emperor personally gave a silver belt plated in gold to Sheng Alie Bocheng and a silver belt to Sha Ban.<sup>109</sup> Apparently this mission was soon — probably in the same year — followed by another one from Boni, though the names of the envoys are unknown. Again, the king of Boni as well as his envoys were given lavish presents on 3 February 1407.<sup>110</sup> It may have been this mission that prepared for the personal appearance of the king of Boni in the year 1408.

Manarejiananai arrived on 9 September 1408, in Nanjing. He brought with him his wife, his siblings, his children, and officials. The Yongle emperor had ordered a eunuch named Du Xing 杜興 to receive them in Fujian, which suggests that they arrived there, probably in Quanzhou or Xiamen. While still in Fujian, Manarejiananai sent a memorial to the throne together with tribute consisting of among others various kinds of camphor, waist belts, hornbill beaks, tortoise-shell, rhinoceros horn, turtle shells, and other local products.

<sup>106</sup> *Ming Taizu shilu* 232.5b-6a (3394-95).

<sup>107</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 48.3a (733).

<sup>108</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 49.1a (737).

<sup>109</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 50.6a (755).

<sup>110</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 62.5a (897).

Upon introduction to the emperor in Nanjing, Manarejianarenai knelt down and said:

The Emperor has received Heaven's precious mandate and has unified the Chinese and the *yi*-barbarians. My country is a distant island in the ocean but I received Imperial grace and was enfeoffed. Since that time, in our country, the rain and sunshine have been timely, there have been successive years of bountiful harvests and the people have been without calamities. In the mountains and in the streams, precious treasures have been revealed and the plants, trees, birds and animals have all thrived. The elders of the country say that this is all due to our being sheltered by Your Majesty's great grace. I wished to gaze on the brightness of the Sun and to offer a little tribute to show my humble sincerity. Thus, not fearing the dangers and distance involved, I have personally led my family and the people of my country to the Court to express gratitude.<sup>111</sup>

Following the regulations that had been drawn up earlier, the emperor personally gave the ruler of Boni a banquet at the Fengtian Gate, while his family and retainers were conferred a banquet at the former Three Dukes Office.<sup>112</sup>

A little more than a week later, on 17 September 1408, Manarejiananai was again invited to a banquet.<sup>113</sup> Three days later, on 20 September 1408, the king of Boni received "ceremonial insignia, a throne, a water pot and a water bowl all made of silver, a parasol, and a fan, both made of white silk gauze and two 'saddled horses' plated in gold."<sup>114</sup> He was also given ten suits, made from various silks. His family and officials were given Chinese clothing too, except for the women, who were provided with clothing in their customary style.<sup>115</sup> On the same day, the Ministry of Rites remarked, that the ceremonies and rituals for the king, when meeting with the crown prince, had not been defined. The emperor

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<sup>111</sup> Wade (trans.), *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/1290>, accessed 16 April 2005.

<sup>112</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 82.7b-8a (1106-07).

<sup>113</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 82.8b (1108).

<sup>114</sup> Wade, *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/1282>, accessed 16 April 2005.

<sup>115</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 83.1a (1109).

decided that the king of Boni had the status of a feudatory minister and as such was entitled to rituals applicable for dukes, marquis and senior ministers.<sup>116</sup>

On 19 October 1408, Manarejjananai died in the Interpreters' Institute. The emperor ceased all court business for three days and had an official offer sacrifices to him. The empress and the princes also sent items for the sacrifices. An order was given to the Ministry of Works to supply an inner and an outer coffin, and the king was buried outside the Ande gate at the southern city wall. A tablet and a tomb avenue were erected, as was customary in China, and southwestern tribes people were selected to guard the tomb. In order to provide a venue for sacrifices that consisted of a sheep twice a year, a temple was built next to the tomb.<sup>117</sup> The text of the tablet was composed by Hu Guang (see above).

On 21 November 1408, the posthumous title Gongshun 恭順 (Respectful and Obedient) was conferred upon Manarejjananai. Xiawang 遐王, his son, was ordered to take over his father's position. His uncle Shili Nannananuo 施里難那那喏, younger brother of his late father, spoke for him,<sup>118</sup> asking to pay yearly tribute to China, under the condition that the court would order Java to exempt Boni from paying them annual tribute. He required further that Chinese officials escorted them back to Boni and to stay there for one year. Furthermore, he wanted to know about how often Boni was to send tribute and the number of envoys accompanying it. The emperor approved these requests, and fixed the tributes to be sent every three years, while the number of envoys was left open for Boni to decide. Dumaban 都馬板, the king of Java, was ordered to cease requiring Boni to submit camphor.<sup>119</sup>

Following the request of the king and his uncle, on 20 December 1408, the eunuch Zhang Qian 張謙 and the messenger Zhou Hang 周航 were ordered to accompany Xiawang, and his retinue back to their country. On departure, lavish presents were given to Xiawang, his family and his officials. Earlier Manarejjananai had addressed the emperor with the following request:

<sup>116</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 83.1a (1109).

<sup>117</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 84.1a (1117).

<sup>118</sup> In the text, it is the new king and his uncle who are speaking. Given the very young age of the new king however, it is more likely that his uncle represented him in addressing the relevant officials.

<sup>119</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 85.1a-b (1127-28).



I have received the great grace of the court, been enfeoffed with the title of king and all the territory of my country is subject to the control of your administration. Behind the country there is a mountain and it is humbly requested that it be enfeoffed as the protector of the country.<sup>120</sup>

Xiawang repeated this request upon departure and accordingly the mountain was given the title “Mountain Which Will Ever Peacefully Protect the Country” (*changning zhenguo zhi shan* 長寧鎮國之山). Qian and the others were to set up a commemorative tablet on top of it, the text for which was composed by the emperor himself:

Heaven has provided the base of help and instruction for our country for 10,000 generations. It ordered our August Emperor Taizu to pacify all under Heaven, to nourish the people and, in ruling and educating, to widely make known benevolence and righteousness. His brightness extended to the outer limits and the 10,000 countries in the four directions rushed to become subjects, taking the court as their hub. The mechanism of Sagely influence was as wonderful as this. I inherited the task of safeguarding the Great Plan and, in observing the patterns, I have remained respectful and in awe. Making no distinction between inner and outer, I looked on all as one. The distant and the near all became peaceful and were all able to undertake my will. Manarejiananai, the king of the country of Boni, was sincere and respectful in the extreme and he knew that which should be respected. He moved towards culture and learning and became increasingly loyal and respectful. Leading his family and ministers and not considering the tens of thousands of *li* he had to traverse as a long journey, he sailed across the ocean and came to court, thereby achieving his goal and fulfilling his wishes. Kowtowing, he spoke as follows: “Your distant subject and his wife have been greatly favoured by the grace of the Son of Heaven who has provided support and assistance and brought peace to all. I wished to see the brightness of the Sun and the Moon and thus, not fearing the dangers and distance involved, I have dared to come to court.” He also said: “Heaven covers me and Earth supports me. However, the fact that I have been given land and people, that my fields and towns are many, that I have palaces in which to dwell, that I have the pleasure of my wife and concubines, good food and fine clothing, that we have implements to assist in our livelihood and that the strong dare not attack the weak and the many do not bully the isolated — all these are conferred by the Son of Heaven. This excellent virtuous power which the Son of Heaven bestowed upon me was as great as that of Heaven and Earth. On looking up I could see Heaven and on treading down, I could feel the Earth. Only the Son of Heaven was distant and difficult to see and my loyalty could not be conveyed. Thus, your distant subject and his wife, not daring to consider themselves outsiders, crossed the mountains and seas and personally came to court to express our loyalty.” I said: “It was Heaven and my Imperial father who bequeathed on me all under Heaven and the people they had treated as their children. Heaven and my Imperial father looked on all equally. I inherited the virtuous power of Heaven and my Imperial father, but I fear that I am

<sup>120</sup> Wade, *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/1230>, accessed 16 April 2005.

not worthy and not equal to your words.” The king saluted with his hands and kowtowed, saying: “Since the Son of Heaven’s reign began, my country has been peaceful and the harvest bountiful. Treasures have flowed forth from the mountains and rivers. Those plants and flowers which do not normally bloom have burst into blossom and borne fruit. Exotic birds have chorused in harmony and animals pranced about. The elders of the country said that it was due to the fact that the virtuous power of the Chinese had reached us that all was so excellent. Although my land is distant from the capital, it is indeed the territory of the Son of Heaven, and thus I determined to come here to have an audience.” I noted the king’s fine words and reverent manner and observed that his actions did not transgress the standards. I was greatly pleased with his propriety and learning and by the fact that he had thrown off his old ways. Only those of special excellence could act thus. Ancient records were consulted and it was found that from ancient times there had been distant lands which had accorded with the Way of Heaven and looked up to the ways of culture and whose rulers had personally come to court. However, only one, the king of the country of Boni, brought his wife, children, brothers, relatives and attendant ministers to the court and bowed his head and called himself a minister before the throne. Of the various feudatory rulers in the South-west, none can match the king in terms of worthiness. The king’s perfect sincerity is as firm as metal and stone and has become known to the gods. His name is to be passed down in perpetuity and it will be said that he was illustrious. Thus, I have especially enfeoffed the mountain within the king’s country as the “Mountain Which Will Ever Peacefully Protect the Country” and am conferring a text to be inscribed in stone to record the king’s excellence. This record will thus be displayed for 10,000 years and will long endure without decay. Herewith, a poem: In the wilds of the ocean tropics lies Boni, Influenced by benevolence and transformed by righteousness, all accord and none disobey, The diligent and worthy king longed for the influence of culture, thus, guided by an envoy, he hurried to court. With his wife and children, brothers and ministers, he kowtowed before the Emperor and spoke of his feelings. He said that the Emperor is like Heaven and in bequeathing his excellence, looks on all equally, without favouring or discriminating against any. His words were insufficient to describe such rare virtuous power. In travelling through the hazards of the ocean, the king made great efforts. Ancient records of distant lands were thus examined, It was found that some rulers had personally come to court regardless of the difficulties of the seas, To do so personally is difficult, How much more difficult it is to bring one’s family! The king was truly sincere and his determination was as metal and stone. Which of the South-western feudatory rulers can match this king in worthiness? The lofty peak will protect the kingdom, And this inscription will be chiselled into stone so that the king’s virtuous power is widely known. When the king’s virtue is displayed, the kingdom will be forever peaceful, And for 10,000 years, it will look up to our Great Ming.<sup>121</sup>

After they had been away for almost two years, Zhang Qian and Zhou Hang returned to the court on 13 October 1410, accompanying another uncle of Xiawang, called Mandilihalu 蔓的

<sup>121</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 86.1a-2b (1133-36). The translation is from Wade, *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/1230>, accessed 16 April 2005.

里哈盧, and a retinue of altogether 180 persons, who offered tribute of local products.<sup>122</sup> In return they were given clothing, paper money and silk, each according to their status.<sup>123</sup> On 11 December 1410, Mandilihalu was given a banquet together with envoys from other countries in Southeast Asia namely from Pangasinan and Luzon.<sup>124</sup>

The next Chinese mission to Boni left the capital on 24 February 1411, and was again headed by Zhang Qian, who was familiar with the route and the conditions in Boni. They brought the new king Xiawang, who by now was eight or nine years old, and his officials and chieftains various kinds of silks.<sup>125</sup> This mission probably prepared the personal appearance of Xiawang in China in autumn of 1412, when he arrived with his wife, mother and officials on 14 October 1412 in Fujian. Upon their arrival, two officials, Gao Qian 高謙 and Liu Chang 柳昌, were given orders to banquet and look after them on their voyage to the capital.<sup>126</sup>

We do not know how the king was transported, but it took him two weeks to reach Beijing where he arrived on 30 October 1412. After an exchange of customary gifts, that is, local products from Boni and Chinese clothes for Xiawang and his retinue, they were invited to a banquet in the Interpreter's Institute and the Court of Imperial Entertainments upon orders from the Ministry of Rites. Furthermore, it was ordered that there was enough food and alcohol to last them from morning to evening.<sup>127</sup> The next day, a banquet was given for Xiawang at the Fengtian Gate, while his mother was entertained with a banquet at the former Three Dukes Office (*qian sangong fu* 前三公府).<sup>128</sup> The celebrations continued on 2 November 1412, with a banquet for the king, and another banquet for his mother.<sup>129</sup>

After they had received more presents (12 December 1412)<sup>130</sup> and been banqueted again (23 December 1412),<sup>131</sup> Xiawang and his mother left the court on 15 March 1413. As was

<sup>122</sup> According to Geoff Wade, Mandilihalu in the Hokkien pronunciation represents the Malay title Bendahara.

<sup>123</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 108.2b (1398).

<sup>124</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 110.2a (1411).

<sup>125</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 113.1b (1438).

<sup>126</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 131.2a (1617).

<sup>127</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 132.3a (1627).

<sup>128</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 132.3a (1627).

<sup>129</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 132.3a (1627).

<sup>130</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 134.2b-3a (1638-39).

<sup>131</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 134.3b (1640).

customary, Xiawang was given generous presents consisting of “hundred *liang* of gold, 500 *liang* of silver, 3,000 *ding* of paper money, 1,500 strings of copper cash, four pieces of brocade, 80 bolts of fine silks, other silks and silk gauzes, a suit of clothing made from patterned fine silks interwoven with gold thread and one suit made from patterned fine silks embroidered with gold thread, as well as utensils, quilts, bedding, drapes and other goods.”<sup>132</sup>

Two years later the next mission from Boni, which was led by Sheng Alie WeinuoYEShaban 生阿烈微喏耶沙扮,<sup>133</sup> arrived on 15 March 1415. It consisted of altogether 29 people, who submitted tribute from Xiawang. In return, they were given paper money and silks.<sup>134</sup> Not much further is known about this mission. The next envoy to arrive on 6 December 1417, was a grand-uncle of Xiawang by the name of Mamu 麻木.<sup>135</sup> It took some while for a banquet to be organized and this was attended by Ali Shili 阿力迭里, the envoy of the Loyal and Righteous King (*zhongyi wang* 中義王) of Hami,<sup>136</sup> and Bao Maweng 保馬翁, the envoy of king Zhanba Dilai 占巴的賴 of Champa.<sup>137</sup>

Mamu and Bao Maweng left the court together on 14 April 1418. A rather large Boni delegation, consisting of altogether 92 members, arrived on 10 June 1421. It was led by Xumayi 須麻億, the grand uncle (*shuzu* 叔祖) of the king of Boni. Xumayi and four unknown members of the mission were conferred silk gauze headwear, a gold filigree belt, two silver filigree belts and two ordinary silver belts.<sup>138</sup>

Between this and the next arrival of Boni envoys at the court in Beijing (11 January 1426) more than four years passed. No reason for this rather long break in the otherwise regular visits is given in the Veritable Records.

<sup>132</sup> Wade, *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/2031>, accessed 16 April 2005.

<sup>133</sup> Geoff Wade suggests that “Sheng Alie” is a transcription of the Javanese title Sang Arya.

<sup>134</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 161.5a (1831).

<sup>135</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 193.2b (2038).

<sup>136</sup> Wade has left this part out of his translation of the entry.

<sup>137</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 195.1b (2048).

<sup>138</sup> *Ming Taizong shilu* 237.1b-2a (2274-75).

Shanawannuoye 沙那萬喏耶, another uncle of Xiawang, was the chef de mission. The emperor felt that because he had come from a very far place and had taken great risks to travel, he should be treated especially well and generous.<sup>139</sup>

On 28 February 1426, warm clothes, among them socks and boots were given to Shanawannuoye, the chieftain Sheng Alie 生阿烈 and the other eighty six members of the delegation. Special presents consisting of copper cash, headwear and belts were received by Shanawannuoye, Sheng Alie and fifteen more members of the Boni mission. They stayed on until 13 April 1426. The emperor recalling the good relations with Manarejiananai and Xiawang, as well as the regular appearance of Boni envoys to submit tribute, ordered the Ministry of Rites to give them twice the amount of presents on their departure.<sup>140</sup>

This is the last recorded visit of a Boni envoy at the imperial court in Beijing. One later entry is rather informative because it gives information about the maintenance of the sacrifices of the tomb of Manarejiananai. Ouyang Duo 歐陽鐸, the Chief Minister of the Nanjing Court of Imperial Entertainments (*guanglusi qing* 光祿寺卿), had the following to say:

At the Fengxian Hall 奉先殿 in Nanjing, every year one lamb is used in sacrifice while for the suburban altar sacrifices four sheep are used. Sheep thus indeed have to be raised in advance. As to the sheep to be sacrificed at the tomb of the king of the country of Boni, there should be a proportional allotment for that purpose. However, there are now over 100 ewes and rams and the fodder grain expenses are incalculable. It is requested that the surplus sheep all be sold, with funds obtained going to the government. Agreements with those who shear and take the wool should be terminated.<sup>141</sup>

This shows that the sacrifices had been going on regularly, but that since the maintenance of a large herd of sheep cost some money, a pragmatic solution was sought and found.

<sup>139</sup> *Ming Xuanzong shilu* 12.1a-b (319-20).

<sup>140</sup> *Ming Xuanzong shilu* 15.4b (398).

<sup>141</sup> *Ming Shizong shilu* 116.4b (2752). The translation is from Wade, *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/1875>, accessed 16 April 2005.

What we learn thus from the *Ming shilu* is that for two decades relations were rather close between Boni and China, and that this occurred during the reign of the Yongle emperor, who had had a profound interest in Southeast Asia. After his death, the interest in this region was replaced by a turn inwards, the focus of the imperial government and the emperors turning from overseas to inland.

Interestingly all diplomatic relations in 1412, 1413, 1415, 1417, 1421, 1426, were handled by members of the royal family of Boni, and in most cases these were uncles or grand-uncles of king Xiawang, with the possible exception of Sheng Alie Weinuoyeshaban whose familial relation with the king is uncertain. Note also that while the tribute products in the later entries are never more specifically addressed as “local products”, the Chinese took great care how well they treated the envoys with presents. Thus the tribute seems not to have played such a big role, but it was the Chinese court that wanted to impress the envoys and convince them of the wealth and power the Chinese empire possessed.

The entries themselves do not help to verify the location of Boni. What is clear is, that it formed part of several Southeast Asian countries that came to the Ming court. There is no direct indication however if it belonged to mainland or maritime Southeast Asia.

**The country of Boni 淳泥 in the *Record of the Customs of the Tributaries in the Western Ocean* (*Xiyang chaogongdian lu* 西洋朝貢典錄), 1520**



In 1520, Huang Shengzeng 黃省曾 (*jinshi* of 1531) who hailed from Wuxian (modern day Suzhou in Jiangsu) finished his work on the countries that had come to the court and submitted tribute. Entitled *Record of the Customs of the Tributaries in the Western Ocean* (*Xiyang chaogongdian lu* 西洋朝貢典錄; hereafter *XCD*),<sup>142</sup> this drew on earlier works such as the *Xingcha shenglan* 星槎勝覽 (1436) by Fei Xin 費信 and the *Yingyai shenglan* 鷹涯勝覽 (1451) by Ma Huan 馬歡, and especially in the sections on local products that were included in all entries, supplemented the earlier works in more detail.

This country is situated six thousand *li* southwest of Zhancheng. It comprises fourteen prefectures (*zhou* 洲). In their customs they cultivate Buddhist teachings (*futu jiao* 浮圖教), they worship statues, and they well maintain fasting. The buildings of the royal palace are covered with leaves from the Nipa palm. The houses of the people are [covered] with grass. The men and women [wear their hair] in a topknot, they cover their thighs with multi-colored brocade and use flowered cotton cloth for shirts.

Their customs are plenty. When they happen upon a Chinese on their path, who is drunk, then they will help him return and let him sleep in their house. The climate of that place is cold in summer and hot in winter. It is rich in fish and salt. Its grain consists of rice and sorghum. It produces sorghum liquor (*shujiu* 秫酒), *duojiangzhen* 多降真 incense, and bee's wax, and there are camphor and tortoise shell. Its defending locality is called "Mountain Ever Peacefully Protecting the Country" (*changning zhenguo zhi shan* 長寧鎮國之山). (Commentary: In the sixth year of the Yongle era (1408) its king Manarejiana 麻那惹加那 addressed the emperor: "I have been enfeoffed with [the title of king and] all the territory of my country is subject to your administration. Behind the country there is a mountain and I humbly request that it be enfeoffed as the protector of the country." After the king's death, his son Xiawang repeated this request. Consequently it was given the present name, and the emperor composed an inscription for a stele to be carved in stone on top of the mountain.)

The country regularly sent tribute. (Commentary: In the fourth year of the Hongwu era (1370) the king Mamosha 馬謨沙 sent his official Yisimayi 亦思麻逸 to present a golden memorial and a silver letter together with local products. In the third year of the Yongle era (1405) an envoy was dispatched from the court to enfeoff king Manarejiana 麻那惹加那 as king (*wang* 王), giving him a seal, a tally and a title patent (*gaoming* 誥命). In the sixth year [of the Yongle era (1408)] the king leading his consort, his family and officials to court, arrived in Fujian. A court eunuch was

<sup>142</sup> See Wolfgang Franke, *An Introduction to the Sources of Ming History* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968), 221; Huang Shengzeng 黃省曾, *Xiyang chaogongdian lu jiaozhu* 西洋朝貢典錄校注, Xie Fang 謝方 (rev. and annot.) (Beijing: Zhonghua shudian, 2000), preface 5-6.

sent there to give them a banquet and reward them, and it was ordered that every prefecture that they passed through [on their way to the capital] was to banquet them. After arriving at the capital, the king submitted a memorial written in golden characters and many precious objects, while his consort presented a letter and local products to the Central Palace (of the imperial consort) and the Eastern Palace (of the crown prince). The emperor personally entertained the king with a banquet at the Fengtian Gate. That same year when the king had died in the Interpreter's Institute in Nanjing, all court business was suspended for three days, and he was given lavish sacrifices. An imperial decree conferred the posthumous name of Gongshun 恭順 (Respectful and Obedient) onto him, and his was given a burial at the Shizigang, south of the city walls of Nanjing. Southwestern *yi* 夷-people, who were registered in China, were to guard [the tomb], a commemorative stele was set up and a shrine was built, and it was officially ordered that sacrifices were to be held every spring and autumn. By another order his son Xiawang was conferred succession to the throne, and a eunuch and a messenger were dispatched to accompany him back home. Both in the twelfth year [of the Yongle era (1414)] and the first year of the Hongxi era (1425), [envoys] came with tribute to the court.) Their tribute products were as follows: pearls, gems, golden finger rings, golden silk braided rings, camphor, chipped camphor, plum blossom camphor, incense, high-quality gharu wood, sandalwood incense, cloves, cardamom, bee's wax, rhinoceros horn, tortoise shell, carapaces, snail shells, hornbill beaks, bearskins, peafowl, lories (*daoguaniao* 倒掛鳥), multi-coloured parrots, black page boys, and cutlery made from precious materials.

I comment: I once traveled to Jinling, and arriving at the Shizigang, passed by the tomb of the Respectful and Obedient king of Boni. I could not but admire the emperor's treatment of the island barbarians and celebrate his meeting the Respectful and Obedient. During the times of the August Emperor (the Hongwu emperor) the Office Manager Shen Zhi and the Censor Zhang Jingzhi upon orders went to that country to instruct them. When they had arrived there, they made the king come down from his seat and ordered him to bow to the court. Furthermore [they made] him say: "The emperor is the ruler of all under Heaven, and he is my prince and father." Such were the words that he uttered. That our two officials rejected his presents of golden knives and cotton, and that later on he would respect China and be happy to submit himself — this is extraordinary indeed!!<sup>143</sup>

The entry does not provide new or more detailed information on Boni. The opening paragraph of the text is based on the *DYZL* description of the country, recounting again, that drunk Chinese will be helped by the locals. The text then turns to describe the start of the diplomatic relations between Boni and China from 1370 to 1425. Huang mentions only two missions from Boni, namely in 1414 and 1425. The tribute products he lists, clearly are of Southeast Asian provenance, but it is rather impossible to identify the provenance of the black page boys. Huang moreover does not miss the irony of Mamosha treating the first envoys quite arrogantly, while Manarejiananai, who himself arrived as a guest, was

<sup>143</sup> XCD, 1.44-46.

receiving an official state burial in China. However, the author does not mention any contacts between Boni and China prior to the Ming dynasty, and is not referring to information found in works of Song times. Thus, it is difficult to identify the Boni in Huang Shengzeng's text with that country of the same name in the early Song. Huang does not even bother to say if the country was located in mainland or insular Southeast Asia. The only hint we get as to the place is in the commentary where Huang refers to the "island barbarians", but that is about all the geographical information the text provides. The religion that Huang refers as Buddhism is a detail from the *DYZL*, and thus does not necessarily reflect the actual religion practiced in Boni in the early fifteenth century, though Huang Shengzeng definitely thought this to be the case.

### **Boni 渤泥 in the *Record of Places Outside the Known World* (*Zhifang waiji* 職方外紀)**

The *Zhifang waiji* 職方外紀, a work written by Giulio Aleni (1582-1649), a Jesuit who worked in China in the first half of the seventeenth century, clearly specifies Boni 渤泥 as the island of Borneo and not as a specific country.

The island of Boni is south of the equator (*chidao* 赤道). It produces camphor which is very excellent. When it is ignited and thrown into the water, the fire is not extinguished, until it is completely burnt. There is a beast that resembles a goat and a deer which is called Bazaer 把雜爾, in whose stomach grows a stone that can cure a hundred illnesses. Western guests (*xike* 西客) value it very highly, and they pay up to a hundred times (of its basic prize). The king of the country relies on it to make profits.<sup>144</sup>

Based probably more on Western knowledge of the place than Chinese knowledge, Aleni correctly addresses Boni as an island. For him, this island lies south of the equator which, if Boni is Borneo, is only partially correct. The phantastic animal that he describes reflects either Western or Chinese lore about the place. The interesting detail about the stone is that it was prized more highly than the camphor, even though that is credited to have been of superior quality. The legendary stone called Bezoar was known in Europe as an antidote

<sup>144</sup> Ai Rulüe 艾儒略 (Giulio Aleni), *Zhifang waiji jiaoshi* 職方外紀校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), rev. and annotated by Xie Fang 謝方, 62.

to poisoning. Equally amazing is the total absence of any information on earlier relations between Boni and China in at least the Ming dynasty. However, it may be asking too much of a work that was definitely written to provide geographical information only. The Western guests may refer to Europeans, it may however also refer to people arriving at the place from a western direction in general. We do not know if Aleni was familiar with European records of Borneo from Pigafetta to Dr. Sande; however, he does not refer to them at all.

## V. BONI IN TEXTS FROM THE QING DYNASTY

**Boni 渤泥 in the *Explanatory History of the Remote Regions* (*Bahong yishi* 八紘譯史), 1683**

The *Bahong yishi* is a work by Lu Ciyun 陸次雲, the preface of which is dated 1683.

The entry on Boni is composed of details from Song Lian's report from the early Ming dynasty, but it also refers to older texts in its description of local products and curious items.

Boni is a vassal of Shepo and it is situated in the great ocean in the southwest. The land is hot, and has much rain and wind. Wooden palisades make a fortification. The king lives in a house that is covered with palm leaves.<sup>145</sup> The king ties his hair in a knot and is barefooted. He wraps coloured cotton cloth around the loins. When he goes out, he walks.

Many of the people are fishermen. They wear their hair loose and go barefooted. They use the juice from the pulp of the coconut palm to make alcohol. They do not have rice, but they catch fish and crabs, that they eat together with *shahu* 沙糊. *Shahu* is a thick liquid made from the pith of a tree.<sup>146</sup> [When the liquid has] settled, the powder [made of it,] can be used for cakes. To eat [the people there] do not have utensils and vessels, to write they do not have brushes. They carve Nipa palm leaves with a knife [instead]. They serve the Buddha very respectfully. For entertainment they beat drums and sound cymbals to produce music. During the Hongwu era [Boni] submitted tribute. The [accompanying] memorial read: "I, your vassal Mahemosha, king of Boni, thought that these last years all under heaven was not peaceful and quite. Therefore I stayed in my territory, and did not have an

<sup>145</sup> The original text says cowrie leaves *beiye* 貝葉, which is certainly wrong, and should instead read *beiduoye* 貝多葉 like in the older texts.

<sup>146</sup> *Shushi* 樹實 literally translated refers to the solid part of the tree.

overlord all the same. Now envoys that you have sent have arrived, and they have proclaimed the emperor's orders. I have learned that the emperor has ascended to the imperial position and now is the ruler of all under heaven. My heart is full of joy (*hao xihuan*). My country is a small place under the administration of Shepo. So how could I have been worthy of the emperor's attention? Several days ago, the people of Sulu having no principles sent evil men who harmed every one of my people. We rely on the distinguished blessings of the emperor, and are happy to suffer no more harm to our family and people. Now I have [only] worthless things, and only a few useless objects, and I am about to order those who as my head and eyes are representing me, to leave in order to follow the envoys sent by the emperor to see the emperor. Consequently we come with tribute to the emperor."

So plain and simple was the text.

Local things and products:

The *bazalan* 把雜蘭 resembles a goat and a deer. In its belly grows a medicinal stone that can cure all kinds of strange diseases. It sells hundredfold its value.

Nipa palm leaves are used to cover houses. Knitted together with bamboo they make food containers.

The root of the medicine tree is used to make an ointment. Applying it on the body weapons cannot harm it.<sup>147</sup>

The *Bahong yishi* does not provide any new information, but sums up knowledge taken from the *TPHYJ* and other works. This is apparent in the description of local products. The *bazalun* certainly is the *bazaer* of the *Zhifang waiji*; the houses covered with palm leaves is an information derived from the *TPHYJ*; and the medicinal tree for the first time is mentioned in the *ZFZ*.

The work stands in a tradition of arranging knowledge by the cut and paste method, and is thus not strictly original; however, the statement by Nicholl, that the Chinese since the early Ming referred to Boni as Wenlai has to be qualified. In the early Qing at least the *Bahong yishi* did not relate Boni to Wenlai.

<sup>147</sup> Lu Ciyun, *Bahong yishi* (CSJC), 2.23-24.

## Boni in the Official History of the Ming (*Mingshi* 明史), 1739<sup>148</sup>

The Official History of the Ming was submitted to the throne in 1739 during the reign of the Qianlong Emperor of the Qing Dynasty. The entry on Boni is based on various sources, not least the entries from the Veritable Records of the Ming, as well as Song Lian's text, and Hu Guang's stele inscription. The entry on Boni is by far the longest of all texts dealing with the country; however, it does not include all details found in the Veritable Records, nor does it follow Song Lian's and Hu Guang's texts verbatim.

Boni started to communicate with China during the reign of emperor Taizong of the Song. In the eighth month of the third year of the Hongwu era (1370) the censor Zhang Jingzhi and the office manager of the branch secretariat of Fujian, Shen Zhi, were ordered to go there as envoys.<sup>149</sup> They traveled by ship from Quanzhou (Fujian), and after about half a year reached Shepo, and after another [voyage of] more than a month they reached this country (Boni). The king Mahemosha was haughty and did not treat them according to the [proper] rites. Only when Zhi<sup>150</sup> reproached him, did he come down from his seat, fell on his knees and received the imperial orders. At the time this country had been invaded by Suoluo, and it was very weak, and the king said that he was poor and asked [to be permitted] to send tribute only after three years. Zhi explained him his great obligation, and the king thereupon agreed. Formerly this country had belonged to Shepo, and so people from Shepo interfered, so that doubts arose in the king's mind. Zhi<sup>151</sup> admonished him: "Shepo has declared itself a subject [of China] and submitted tribute since a long time, how come you fear Shepo, but adversely you do not fear the Celestial Dynasty?" Thereupon he sent envoys to submit a letter and a memorandum, offered rhinoceros hornbill, life sea-turtles, peacocks, big boards of plum-blossom camphor (*meihua dapian longnao* 梅花大片龍腦), rice camphor, cloth from the Western Ocean, and all kinds of incense as tribute.

In the eighth month they followed Jingzhi and the others to court. The letter was made from gold, the memorandum was made from silver;<sup>152</sup> the characters [on them] resembled the Huihu 回鶻 [-script]. [Both documents] were engraved with them for submission [to the throne].<sup>153</sup> The emperor was pleased and rewarded them very generously with a banquet. In the eighth year [of the Hongwu era (1375)]

<sup>148</sup> Cf. the translation by Groeneveldt in *Notes*, 110-115.

<sup>149</sup> The *Ming shilu* only give the name of Zhang Jingzhi; the correct date for the order is the twenty-second day of the eighth month which corresponds to 12 September 1370 in the Western calendar. See Wade (trans.), *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/502>, accessed 16 April 2005.

<sup>150</sup> Groeneveldt has: "...one of the envoys...".

<sup>151</sup> Groeneveldt translates: "...the envoy...".

<sup>152</sup> Groeneveldt understood *biaojian* 表箋 as a binome and thus translated the term as "letter". However, from the following sentence it is clear that *biao* and *jian* were two different documents.

<sup>153</sup> Groeneveldt translates: "...: they were all engraved." On this problematic translation by Groeneveldt see also Carrie C. Brown's commentary in her "An Early Account of Brunei by Sung Lien", in *BMJ* 2.4 (1972): 229, note 21.



it was ordered that the mountains and rivers of this country should be included in the sacrifices to the mountains and rivers of Fujian.

In the winter of the third year of the Yongle era (1405), the king Manarejiana sent envoys with tribute, and officials were sent [from the Ming court] to confer upon him the title of king, present him with a seal, official credentials,<sup>154</sup> and a tally (*fukan* 符勘), together with multicoloured silks (*caibi* 綵幣), brocade and embroidered silk. The king was very delighted and with his consort, his younger brothers and sisters, his sons and daughters took sail and came to court. When he reached Fujian, the local senior official (*shouchen* 守臣) notified [the court]. A court eunuch was sent there who entertained [the king] with a banquet. In every district and province he passed through, he was given a feast. In the eighth month of the sixth year [of the Yongle era (1408)] he entered the capital and met [the emperor] in an audience, and the emperor praised him. The king knelt and made the following speech: “Your Majesty has received the precious mandate from Heaven and You have unified the ten thousand places. I live far away on an island in the ocean and yet I have received Your favour, having been conferred rank and title. It is on account of this, that the seasons appear in perfect order; that the harvests are repeatedly plentiful; that the people are not harmed by catastrophes; that precious and extraordinary things have appeared in the mountains and rivers; and that plants and trees, birds and beasts have also all multiplied. The old men in my country all say that this came about through the protection of the sage son of heaven. I, your subject, want to behold the face of the sun and to show my humble upright sincerity. I have not feared the dangers of a long voyage, and have led my family and my officials to the capital to present my thanks.” The emperor sent his best wishes several times and ordered that the letter and the gifts of the king and his consorts<sup>155</sup> that had entered the palace, be displayed in the Wenhua Hall. The king went to the hall and proceeded to present them, and consequently the king, his consorts, and everyone below them were all given caps, belts and suits of garments. The emperor consequently entertained the king with a banquet at the Fengtian Gate, while the consorts and the others were entertained at a different place. When the ceremonies were concluded they were escorted back to the Interpreters Institute. Officials from the Ministry of Rites asked about the [proper] ceremonies for the king’s visit to the imperial princes, and the emperor ordered that the ceremonies appropriate for dukes and marquises should be followed [for the king]. Following this [the emperor] conferred upon the king insignia of rank<sup>156</sup>, chairs, silver utensils, umbrellas and fans, horses with saddles inlaid with gold, and ten suits of dresses. All the rest received presents according to their rank.

In the tenth month the king died at the Interpreters Institute. The emperor mourned his death and adjourned court business for three days. He sent officials to perform sacrifices and provided the silk [to pay for the funeral]. The heir apparent and the imperial princes sent all [officials] to perform sacrifices. Officials prepared a coffin and burial objects and [the king] was buried at Shizigang outside the Ande Gate, where a stele was erected at the spirit path. Moreover, a shrine was built at the side

<sup>154</sup> Note that the Chinese text in the Zhonghua shuju edition wrongly punctuates this sentence by separating the two characters *gao* and *chi*. The comma should be placed after *chi*.

<sup>155</sup> Groeneveldt translates: “... gave orders that the letter to the Empress...” In the text, there is no mention of such a letter and the two characters in question *wang fei* 王妃 clearly denote the ruler of Boni and his consort.

<sup>156</sup> These were items such as banners, halberds and pennants.

of the tomb, and officials [were ordered] to sacrifice a sheep every spring and autumn. His posthumous name was *Gongshun* 恭順.

An imperial edict consoled his son Xiawang, and upon imperial order he was to succeed [his father] and appointed king of the country.

Xiawang and his uncle spoke to the emperor [as follows]: “Our country annually submits forty catties of camphor to Java. We ask to be allowed to stop the yearly submissions to Java, and [instead] bring [tribute] to the Celestial Dynasty every year. We are returning home now and ask for an order to escort us [there]. We want to stay there for one year to guard it, and to look after the wishes of the people. Equally we ask to fix a time for the tribute payments and the number of people to accompany them.” The emperor agreed to everything and ordered that tribute should be submitted once every three years, and that it was up to the king, how many people should come with it. Consequently [the emperor] sent an edict to Jawa to discontinue [Boni’s] yearly tribute to them. When the king bid farewell, he was given one hundred *liang* of gold, three thousand *liang* of silver and coins, brocade, gauze, quilts and mattresses, bed curtains, and utensils. The rest [of his followers] were also given presents. The eunuch Zhang Qian 張謙 and the messenger Zhou Hang 周行 escorted them.

Formerly the late king had said:<sup>157</sup> “I, your servant, have received your favour with gratitude and been given a title. As my territory is completely under the control of your administration, I beg that the mountain that is located at the rear of my country be conferred the position of region garrison (*fangzhen* 方鎮).” The new king repeated these words, and consequently [the mountain] was conferred the title “The Mountain of Everlasting Peace Protecting the Country” (Changning zhenguo zhi shan 長寧鎮國之山). The emperor composed an inscription for a stele<sup>158</sup> and ordered Qian and the others to carve it on a stele on top of it.<sup>159</sup> The text reads: “Heaven helped and inspired the foundation of Our state [to last] ten thousand generations, and Taizu, the August Emperor, was conferred the Mandate to entirely rule all under Heaven, to nourish the people and establish peace, to govern and to teach. His benevolence and his righteousness are illuminating near and far, and the myriad states in the four corners [of the earth] rushed to declare themselves subjects, and all gathered at the court. So excellent are the stirring workings of the divine transformation! I have taken over the Great Enterprise and I am leading it according to the rules. With respect and reverence I have united what belonged together. No conflict exists between the outer and the inner [of the empire], and I observe them without differing as one body. Far and near are at peace, which also corresponds to my wishes.

The king of Boni was most sincere and respectful, he knew what was to be venerated, wishing to be enlightened, he went to the trouble to humbly leading his relatives and his officials several ten thousand *li* over the seas to the court, to express his intentions, and to lay open his wishes. He kowtowed and explained: “I

<sup>157</sup> Groeneveldt translates this as an indirect speech.

<sup>158</sup> Carrie Brown states that apart from Boni only Japan, Malacca, and Cochin were given this honour. See Brown, “Two Ming Texts”, 222. She does not give the source for this information. It is certainly not contained in the *Mingshi*.

<sup>159</sup> There is no evidence that suggests that the inscription was in fact produced in stone near or on the mountain, which some writers believe to be Mount Kinabalu.

am a vassal in a distant land, and have received great favours from the Son of Heaven, who nourished me and gave me rest, so that the people are at peace as well. I desired to see the brilliance of the sun and the moon, therefore I did not fear dangers and distances, and unceremoniously dared to come to court.” He continued by saying: “Heaven covers me, Earth supports me. It is indeed solely thanks to a grant by the Son of Heaven, that I am in charge of the land and the people, the multitude of arable lands and villages, the buildings of palaces and houses, the entertainment in the form of wife and concubines. Tasty food and good clothes, and the use of tools support my life. That the strong do not dare attack, and the many do not dare to be fierce, this indeed is the gift of the Son of Heaven. This was granted through the merits and virtues of the Son of Heaven, that measure up to Heaven and Earth. However, Heaven can be seen by raising the head, Earth can be walked on by lightly touching it. But the Son of Heaven is very far away and difficult to see, so my sincerity could not reach him. Therefore, as a distant subject who did not dare to stay away, crossing mountains and oceans, I have come to court to present my sincerity.” We replied: “Heaven and Our Late Father entrusted Us with the empire to nourish the people. Heaven and Our Late Father observed the people with the same kindness, and We are only inheriting the virtues of Heaven and Our Late Father; however, We only fear, that We cannot measure up to them, and thus it is not like you have said.” Consequently he again saluted Us with hands raised together, kowtowed and said: “From the first year of the Son of Heaven’s accession to the throne, my country has had gentle seasons and plentiful harvests; treasures, once hidden in the mountains and rivers have been overflowing; plants and trees, that never had blossoms, blossom and bear fruit; rare birds are singing and animals are dancing. The old people in our country say the virtue of the Sage of China has reached here and has brought these many auspicious signs. Though my country is far away, I am in fact a common subject of the Son of Heaven. For this reason I have come with all determination to attend the audience.” We observed that his words and manners were respectful, that his gestures were not excessive, that he enjoyed the rites, and gave up his barbarian customs. There cannot be a more noble and meritorious man. Records of the past report on distant countries, that adopted the Heavenly Principles [of conduct], revered the customs and manners of government and philosophy, and came themselves to the imperial court. When it comes to those that led their wife, brothers, relatives, and officials to kowtow and declare themselves vessels at the steps of the imperial throne, then there is only the king of Boni; he stands out among all the barbarian countries of the southwest, and there is no other as virtuous as the king. To put the king’s supreme loyalty onto an inscription, a loyalty which borders on the divine, and to order that his name will be handed down for a long time, this can indeed be called his glory. We therefore confer upon the mountain within the kingdom the title “Mountain of Everlasting Peace Protecting the Country”, and grant a text to be inscribed in stone, to make known the king’s virtues for ten thousand years, so that they never will be forgotten. The poem related to this, reads:

“Boni is situated in the wastelands of the scorching seas. Benevolent and imbued with righteousness, it is obedient and submissive. Respectful is its virtuous king, who only longs for betterment. Guided by interpreters, he followed them straight to Us. Together with his wife, brothers and officials, he kowtowed in front of the imperial palace and made a statement. He compared Us to Heaven who granted him happiness and leisure, he observed in Us the same kindness, with no bias towards the rich and the poor. We replied, that as We were deficient in virtue, he should not

praise us as he had. He steered his ship through the waves, with true effort and serious labour. In the past, foreign subjects arrived obediently but left in anger. He personally went through dangers, how much more can this be called family! The king's heart was of the real sincerity, and is as hard as metal and stone. He excelled among the barbarians of the southwest, and belonged in the category of kings and virtuous men. We make the high and steep mountain the protector of the kingdom. Having this text inscribed on stone, We strive to make known the king's virtues. May the king's virtues be known, may the kingdom enjoy peace. Respect be to Our Ming Dynasty for ten thousand years!"<sup>160</sup>

In the ninth month of the eighth year [of the Yongle era (1410)] [Boni] envoys were sent to follow [Zhang] Qian and the others to submit tribute and to express thanks for the imperial favours.<sup>161</sup>

In the following year (1411) Qian was again ordered to present the king with altogether one hundred and twenty pieces of thin brocade, silk gauze, and coloured silk and thin silk. All others below them were also given presents.

In the ninth month of the tenth year (1412) Xiawang came to the court together with his mother. Upon imperial order officials from the Ministry of Rites lodged them in the Interpreter's Institute, and the Court of Imperial Entertainments (Guanglu si 光祿寺) provided them with food and drink.<sup>162</sup> The following day the emperor entertained the king at the Fengtian gate, and the mother of the king was also given a banquet. After two days, again they were given banquets, and [the emperor] conferred cap and belt, and a robe, on the king, while the king's mother, his uncle(s) and all below them were given also presents according to their rank. In the second month of the next year they bid farewell. They were given one hundred gold ingots, five hundred silver ingots, paper money to the value of three thousand ingots, fifteen hundred strings of cash, eighty pieces of embroidered silk and silk gauze, and one dress each, made of gold brocade, embroidered silk, and embroidered gauze, quilts and mattresses, curtains, and utensils all complete.

They submitted tribute four times between the thirteenth year [of the Yongle era (1415)] until the first year of the Hongxi era (1425)<sup>163</sup>, but after that their tribute bearers gradually came less often.<sup>164</sup>

In the ninth year of the Jiajing era (1530) the supervising secretary Wang Xiwen 王希文<sup>165</sup> said: "The five countries of Xianluo 暹羅, Zhancheng, Liuqiu, Jawa, and Boni, when bringing tribute, all pass through Dongguan 東莞<sup>166</sup>.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. the translation of this inscription in Brown, "Two Ming Texts", 226. I have made some modifications to Brown's translation.

<sup>161</sup> This mission is confirmed by *Mingshi* 6.88. No further particulars are provided there.

<sup>162</sup> The character for drink *jiu* literally translates alcohol, but in the context here, it certainly means all kinds of beverages accompanying the food. In the annals of the Yongle emperor this visit is listed as a tribute mission, and not as a formal state visit. There is no mention of the king's and his mother's presence at the court either. See *Mingshi* 6.90.

<sup>163</sup> The *Mingshi* records the missions of the years 1417 (*Mingshi* 7.97), 1421 (*Mingshi* 7.101), and 1425 (*Mingshi* 9.116). No mission from Boni is listed under the thirteenth year, but we find one under the fourteenth year (1416). See *Mingshi* 7.96.

<sup>164</sup> As a matter of fact, no more tribute missions are mentioned in the *Mingshi*.

<sup>165</sup> 1010.40. Groeneveldt has: "... one of the functionaries in the capital..." See *Notes*, 114.

Later, because they privately took merchants (*guke*) [with them],<sup>167</sup> tribute was often prevented from reaching the court. During the Zhengde era (1506-1521), when the Portuguese (*folangji* 佛郎幾) had violently entered [our territory] and spread their bad influence, transactions [with the countries] ceased completely. To resume after several years the discussion about [the prohibition of trade with the Portuguese], will the damage the prestige [of the Ming] profoundly.” The memorial was handed down to the Censorate which asked to completely respect the old rules, and not allow any deviation [from them].<sup>168</sup>

During the Wanli era (1573-1619) their king died, and leaving no male heir, the relatives fought for the throne. When all the contenders in the country had killed each other, the daughter of the late king was consequently installed as queen. Before these events, a man from Zhangzhou 漳州 surnamed Zhang 張 had been made *nadu* 那督<sup>169</sup> in that country, a title that in Chinese means a high official (*zunguan* 尊官), and because of the turmoil he had fled. When the female ruler was on the throne she invited him to return. His daughter had access to the royal palace and when her mind grew afflicted by an illness, she falsely accused her father of planning rebellion. The female ruler was afraid of this and sent people to his house to inquire about this, and the *nadu* committed suicide. The people thought that he had been accused unjustly and the queen feeling regret, had his daughter strangled and made his son an official. Even though afterwards they no longer sent tribute to the court, merchants traveled there incessantly.<sup>170</sup>

The country comprises fourteen prefectures. It is situated to the west of Jiugang and one can reach it in forty days from Zhancheng. It belonged first of all to Jawa, afterwards it belonged to Xianluo, and changed its name to Dani 大泥. Chinese very often traveled and stayed there.

At the end of the Jiajing (1522-1566) era remnants of the sea pirates from Min 閩 and Yue 粵 fled there, altogether more than two thousand men.

During the Wanli (1573-1619) era the Red haired barbarians forcefully opened that area to trade and built earthen storehouses to live there. When they entered Penghu for mutual trade, they used the language/script of Dani to conduct it.

For all the customs and products see the *Songshi*.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>166</sup> The place is identical with modern day Baoan which is situated in the estuary of the Pearl river, southeast of Guangzhou (Guangdong).

<sup>167</sup> Groeneveldt translates: “..., and as often merchants had joined themselves to them in a clandestine way...”. See *Notes*, 114. It is rather obvious that it was the tribute bearing missions that made use of merchants in order to reap a profit, since otherwise they could not have been able to deal with the Chinese.

<sup>168</sup> This is an excerpt of a much longer memorial dated 25 October 1530, found in the *Ming Shizong shilu* 118.2b-3a. See the translation of this text in Wade (trans.), *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/1877>, accessed 16 April 2005.

<sup>169</sup> Groeneveldt reads this as *ladu* and states that it refers to the Malay word *Datu*, an honorific title. See *Notes*, 114. However, he gives no explanation for his variant reading and how he came to identify it with *Datu*.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. the translation of the main text in Groeneveldt, *Notes*, 110-115, and the translation of the eulogy in Brown, “Two Ming Texts”, 225-226.

<sup>171</sup> *Mingshi* 325.8411-8415.

Groeneveldt had already noted that the end of the text, the part that deals with Dani, as a matter of fact, relates information about Patani and not about Boni. I would also include the preceding paragraphs on the civil war, the queen and the *nadu*, because these persons and events cannot be verified by checking the Veritable Records of the Ming, and they are not listed in any other source dealing with Boni. Thus, I assume that the memorial of Wang Xiwen is the last information directly referring to Boni, since it is also found in the Veritable Records. The paragraphs following it, then, may or may not deal with Boni, or they might actually deal with Dani as well. This latter assumption is supported by the fact that in the *Dongxiyang kao* 東西洋考 (1618) by Zhang Xie 張燮 (1574-1640), Boni is identified as the ancient name for Dani. It then goes on to quote older references to Boni, such as the *TPHYJ*, and to mention the diplomatic missions in 1082 and during the Hongwu period. The remainder of the text describes the Nadu (Datuk), named Zhang (Hokkien pronunciation Teo), his suicide as well as the queen.<sup>172</sup>

It is worthwhile to note, that the text does not deviate so much from the earlier texts, in that it places its emphasis on the visit of the king of Boni in 1408, and not so much on the relations with Mahemosha in 1371, or the diplomatic relations with the place after the death of Manarejanaanai. The only time that Boni is mentioned again, is in Wang Xiwen's memorial on trade practices. However, this memorial certainly dealt with private trade and less with official trade relations, hence no more specific information is provided in the text.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The motivation for this essay basically was to critically examine Robert Nicholl's claims for a continuous history of Brunei, based on his reading of translations from Chinese and some

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<sup>172</sup> I am grateful to Geoff Wade for providing me with the translation from the *Dongxiyang kao* which is included in his paper entitled "From Chaiya to Kelantan: The Eastern Seaboard of the Peninsula as Recorded in Classical Chinese Texts", 45-46. The Chinese text is found in Zhang Xie, *Dongxiyang kao* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), 55-59.



Arabic texts. I cannot evaluate his use of Arabic sources, but I would like to conclude with some thoughts on the Chinese texts.

All the texts under scrutiny here, dating from the late tenth to the early eighteenth century — ranging from privately written works to officially compiled dynastic histories — share a common characteristic in their description of Boni. This characteristic consists of the general ignorance of all the authors as to where to locate Boni exactly. In the case of the relations between Boni and the Ming, this characteristic is quite evident. None of the Ming authors establish any direct relationship between Mahemosha and Manarejiananai, but merely claim, that they were ruling in the same place. That place is located somewhere in the southern seas. This means that Chinese knowledge of the place since the first description of Boni in the tenth century had not increased but had rather stagnated. Taking this as proof for the relative unimportance of the place within the network of Chinese overseas relations is just one option; another option is to understand Boni as a place or region that completely fell outside the interest of the relevant circles in China. Even though Boni provided some luxury items, they were not rare and exotic enough to create long term interest in the Chinese. After all, they could obtain these items also through other trade routes. Hence, the reference to the information of Song times in Lu Ciyun's description, and the supplementing of the text on Boni in the Ming history with information that referred to Patani.

On account of the very scarce sources and the few available texts on Boni, I believe that Boni at any given time during the Northern Song, Southern Song, Yuan, Ming and even the early Qing, referred to a rather less specified region than a very specific country or kingdom or an urban mercantile center with an unbroken continuous history spanning that same period. In other words, Boni meant different places in probably Borneo, during different Chinese dynasties; one or several of these may have been precursors of modern day Brunei, but there is no way of deciding which of these on the basis of the Chinese sources.