

PADUKA BATARA
(d. 1417)

Royal Visitor to China

The Philippines and China have had a long history of friendly relations and trade dating back to at least a thousand years. Although the earliest mention by the Chinese about the Philippines appeared in 977 A.D., during the Sung period, there was evidence that they knew about the country as early as 400-100 B.C., during the Han period. Chinese traders conducted their activities through the port of Tongkin. Many parts of the country were well-known in China for their products. This was especially true of the Sulu area, whose exquisite pearls were much sought after in the Celestial Kingdom, as China was called. Trade between China and the Philippines intensified during the Ming period (1368-1644 A.D). Principalities from Sulu and other kingdoms in Southeast Asia sent missions to the imperial court in Beijing to pay tribute. The payment of tribute did not mean the surrender of their political authority to the Chinese since China never ruled any part of Asia far from its borders. It was simply an acknowledgement of the superiority of civilization of China. In return, the Chinese emperor accorded the tribute-paying "barbarian" countries trading privileges, which provided them with great prosperity.

The Ming Shih, or the Annals of the Ming period, preserves a pleasant episode in the friendly relations between Sulu and China:

In 1417, the 15th year of the reign of Emperor Yung Lo (Pinyin, Yung, and Le), a Sulu chieftain named Paduka Batara came to the imperial court to pay tribute. ("Paduka" is not really a name but a title of Malay nobility.) Known in the Ming Shih as Pa-Tu-Ko-Ha-La (Patugohada), the eastern king of Sulu, Paduka was accompanied by the western king, Ma-Ha-La-Chiq-Ko-La-Ma-Ting (Maharajah) and the queen of the cave king Ba-To-Ko-Pa-La-Pok (Paduka Prabu) of Ka-La-Ba-Ting (Klaibatangan or Kinabatagan). The Eastern Kingdom appears to be Jolo and, the western kingdom, Tawi-Tawi. Klaibatangan, or Kinabatagan, is in North Borneo. They arrived with their families and headmen numbering more than 340 persons. After presenting to the Emperor their tribute, which consisted of a letter with gold characters inscribed upon it, along with pearls, precious stones, tortoise shells, and other articles of value, the two chieftains were confirmed as rulers of their respective kingdoms and were each presented with a seal, a commission, a complete court dress, a cap, a girdle, a horse with trappings, insignias of their rank and title, and other things. They were also provided with quarters inside the imperial palace, and attendants were assigned to them at their disposal. (In some accounts, the cave king, or the king of the mountain of Klaibatangan, Paduka Prabu, was also present during the visit; thus there were three chieftains, instead of just two.)

After staying in China for 27 days, the two rulers signified their intention to return to their homelands. The emperor, Yung Le, provided each of them with a girdle adorned with precious stones, a hundred teals of gold, 2,000 teals of silver, 10,000 teals in paper money, 200 pieces of plain silk, 2,000 strings of cash (small money denomination), a robe embroidered with golden snakes, another embroidered with dragons, and a third embroidered with kilins, a mythical Chinese beast resembling a unicorn.

While journeying from Beijing to the coast, Paduka, the eastern king, fell ill. He was taken to the imperial hall in Tekchow in Shantung (Pinyin, Shandong) province, where he died. Upon learning of his visitor's death, the emperor ordered the authorities concerned to take care of the funeral rites and to build a monument in honor of the late king. He also bestowed upon the Paduka the posthumous title of "Reverence."

Paduka's widow, concubines, and a retinue of 10 persons stayed behind in the Chinese province to care for the tomb and observe a three-year mourning period while his eldest son, Tu-Ba-Hap (Tumahan), returned to Sulu to assume his Father's throne. After completing the mourning period, most of Paduka's relatives returned home, too, leaving only his second and third sons, An-Tu-Luk (Antulu) and Wun-Ha-La (Wenhala), to conduct the sacrificial rites for their father and to take care of his tomb and monument. Their descendants adopted their family names "An" and "Wun" (Wen), respectively. Thus, the Ans and Wuns of Tekchow were of Suluan extraction.

During the Ching period (1644-1911 A.D.), the reigning sultan of Sulu, Mahmud Badr-ud Din, sent an envoy in June 1733 to Emperor Yong Cheng with a memorial expressing his gratitude for the kind treatment his ancestor Paduka had received during his visit to China 300 years earlier. It also conveyed his request for the tombs of Paduka's descendants to be repaired while his descendants who were still alive be bestowed with proper pensions.

The emperor referred the matter to his minister of protocol who, after a period of study, recommended that the sultan's requests be granted. The emperor then issued an order to the authorities concerned to locate the positions of all the monuments, temples, and honorary gateways connecting Paduka's tomb and those of his descendants that needed to be repaired. Also, a representative for each was elected to take charge of the sacrificial rites for their ancestors, and bestowed crowns and belts. Henceforth, the practice of sacrificial rites by both families became an official rule observed traditionally in the Celestial Kingdom.

References:

De la Costa, Horacio. Readings in Philippines History. Manila: Bookmark, 1965.

Majul, Cesar A. "Celestial Traders in Sulu", in Filipino Heritage, The Making of A Nation, edited by Alfredo R. Roces. [n.p.:]Lahing Pilipino Publications, Inc., 1977

Zaide, Gregorio F. Documentary Sources of Philippine History Volume 1. Manila: National Book Store, Inc., 1990. Pp. 15-16.