



# Reading Song-Ming Records on the Pre-colonial History of the Philippines

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# Reading Song-Ming Records on the Pre-colonial History of the Philippines<sup>1)</sup>

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Chinese records of the Song-Ming period provide the context necessary for our understanding of the history of the pre-colonial Philippines. Rulers of chiefdoms in the region employed unique methods and formed far-reaching networks when trading with each other and with China. Trade was one of their ways to build domestic power structure and to establish their positions relative to one another in regional politics. They also organized missions to seek Chinese recognition of these power relations.

Key words: Trade, chiefdom, regional politics, Chinese-Philippine relations, history of the Philippines

Chinese records contain a wealth of information on pre-colonial Southeast Asia. Although fragmentary, these records are valuable since no other written records existed prior to the arrival of the Europeans in the region. Many of these records were based on indirect knowledge of the region. Their compilers often gathered relevant information from merchants trading to Southeast Asia or to China, envoys coming from the region, or Chinese officials working at the Bureau of Maritime Trade. A few Yuan and Ming dynasty works, such as the *Brief accounts of barbarian islanders* (*Daoyi zhilüe* 島夷誌略), the *Wondrous observations from the star raft* (*Xingcha shenglan* 星槎勝覽) and the *Wondrous observations of the ocean's shores* (*Yingya shenglan* 瀛涯勝覽), were rare eyewitness accounts. The authors either personally participated in voyages to Southeast Asia, or joined the famous Ming-dynasty eunuch Zheng He 鄭和, whose fleet stopped at various ports in Southeast Asia en rout from China to Africa. Modern scholars have availed themselves of these records in research.<sup>2)</sup> Some have also pointed out that Chinese records have obfuscated the historical reality of countries in the region, since their compilers observed these countries from a Chinese worldview. And the terminologies they used to describe the events in the region were also laden with their own political ideology.<sup>3)</sup> This author argues that the problem in using Chinese records to

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1) An early version of this paper was presented to the International Convention for Asia Scholars, 19–22 August, 2003, Singapore

2) See, for example, Oliver W. Wolters, *The fall of Śrīvijaya in Malay history* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1970). He used Chinese records extensively in this study of trade in Śrīvijaya in the fourteenth century.

3) For issues related with Chinese records on Southeast Asia, see Oliver W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Revised edition) (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1999), p. 109. See also his “Restudying some Chinese writings on Śrīvijaya,” *Indonesia*, 42 (1986), pp. 1–41. Claude Jacques, “‘Funnan’, Zhenla, the reality concealed by these Chinese views of Indochina,” in *Early Southeast Asia: Essays in archaeology, history, and historical*

study pre-colonial Southeast Asia is not that these records were produced by people of their own cultural convictions, but that we must treat these records as critically as we can, and hope that our interpretations derived from the records could better reflect historical reality. In fact, there still is room for further study of the records in question. Using Chinese records of the Song-Ming period in the context of recent archaeological and anthropological findings, this paper examines the pre-Hispanic history of the Philippines. Discussions will focus on such issues as regional and international trading activities, development of political system, and formation of alliance among local rulers.

## I Trading activities and political power

Traders from Mayi 麻逸 (present-day Mait in northern Mindoro) came to Canton as early as 971 during the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127).<sup>4)</sup> Their activities received the attention of Chinese officials at the local Bureau of Maritime Trade.<sup>5)</sup> And they came again in 982.<sup>6)</sup> In the early eleventh century, traders from Puduan 蒲端 (present-day Butuan, northern Mindanao) and Sanmalan 三麻蘭 (present-day Zamboanga, southwest of Mindanao) presented themselves as tribute-paying envoys to China. They traded with the Song court in 1004, 1007 and 1011 respectively and brought home, among other things, Chinese ceramics.<sup>7)</sup> During the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279), officials at the Bureau of Maritime Trade in Fujian reported the arrival of more merchants from various Philippine islands:<sup>8)</sup> Mayi, Baipuer 白蒲邇 (present-day Babuyan Islands),<sup>9)</sup> and Sandao 三嶋, which was known also as Sanyu 三嶼, a term that was used collectively to refer to the following three islands: Jamayan 加麻延 (present-day Calamian), Balaoyou 巴姥酉 (present-day Palawan),<sup>10)</sup> and Pulihuan 蒲裏喚 (near present-day

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*geography*, eds. R.B. Smith and W. Watson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 371–379

- 4) This chiefdom was known as Maye 麻葉 during the Yuan dynasty. It had about one thousand households; and its tribesmen built their houses along riverbanks. See Yang Bowen 楊博文, *Zhufan zhi jiaoshi* 諸蕃志校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1966), p. 141, p. 142, note 1. The original work *Zhufan zhi* by Zhao Rugua 趙汝适 was translated in Friedrich Hirth and W.W. Rockhill, *Chao Ju-kua and his work on the Chinese and Arab trade in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries* (St. Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1911; rpt. Taipei: Literature House, 1965).
- 5) Tuo Tuo 脫脫, *Song shi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1985), 186, p. 4558.
- 6) *Ibid.*, 489, p. 14093. Ma Duanlin 馬端臨, *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1986), 332, p. 2606.
- 7) *Song shi*, 7, p. 124, p. 135; 8, p. 149. For Chinese ceramics unearthed in Butuan, see William H. Scott, *Pre-Hispanic source materials for the study of Philippine history* (revised edition) (Quezon City: New Day Publication, 1984), p. 72. For traders from Butuan in 1011, see Oliver W. Wolters, “A few miscellaneous pi-chi jotting on early Indonesia,” *Indonesia*, 36 (1983), p. 59.
- 8) Zhao Yanwei 趙彥衛, *Yunlu manchao* 雲麓漫鈔 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1996), pp. 88–9.
- 9) Another transliteration for this place is Baipuyan 白蒲延. Identifications for Pulihuan and Baipuer are from Chen Jiarong 陳佳榮 et al., *Gudai Nanhai diming huishi* 古代南海地名匯釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1986), p. 293, p. 805.
- 10) Yang Bowen, *Zhufan zhi jiaoshi* (Beijing, 1996), p. 145, note 1 suggests Balayan and Bagalangit as the alternative possible locations for Balaoyou.

Manila).<sup>11)</sup> Their trading activities, especially those by merchants from Sanyu, continued well into the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368).<sup>12)</sup>

Traders from the Philippines were not merely private merchants. They were either agents for local chieftains or they themselves were potential contenders for power. Their trading activities thus had political implications. In pre-colonial Southeast Asia, power structures “did not conform to typical hierarchical models,” and lineage had often been downplayed.<sup>13)</sup> In such a society, a person could effectively build his wealth and power by trading to China. We read in a Song-dynasty record that a man from Sandao attached himself to a merchant ship to Quanzhou 泉州, China. There he used all his possessions to have his body tattooed. After he returned home, people treated him with respect. They led him to sit at the place of honor during tribal gatherings. His father and other senior people did not object to this arrangement. His elevated status was, of course, due not to his tattooed body, but to a unique tribal tradition: a man who had been to China deserved respect irrespective of his age.<sup>14)</sup> In a society where trade played important economic and political roles, people respected those who had brought home such invaluable information as the sea routes leading to China, the sailing conditions and the durations of voyages, the locations of overseas ports, the trading opportunities, and the demand for local and Chinese products. Possession of such information was sufficient for anyone to raise his status, to establish himself as a respected person, or even as a power contender.

Trade with China presented opportunities for the trading parties to amass riches. A recent marine archaeological excavation of a tenth-century Southeast Asian ship near the Intan Oil field some 150km north of Jakarta testifies to the high-volume and high-value characteristic of China trade.<sup>15)</sup> Returning from a trip to Guangzhou 廣州 and heading probably for Jambi in the estuary of the Batu Hari-Malayu River in southeast Sumatra, this ship carried, among other things, a large number of Javanese bronze fittings, Chinese glazed porcelain ceramics, Chinese lead coins and silver ingots. Besides the high values of other goods onboard, the ninety-seven silver ingots alone would weigh up to 5,000 *liang* 兩 of silver (approx. 250,000 grams), which were indeed not a small fortune.<sup>16)</sup>

Although there is no similar material evidence that would quantify the value and amount of goods that a ship

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11) Another transliteration for this place is Pulilu 蒲哩嚕. Some scholars have identified this place as the Polillo Island, southeast of Luzon Island. For maritime trade between China and Southeast Asia during the Song, see Hugh R. Clark, *Community, trade, and networks, Southern Fujian province from the third to the thirteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 127–132.

12) Sun Lian 宋濂, *Yuan shi* 元史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1976), 210, p. 4668.

13) Oliver W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Ithaca, 1999), p. 124.

14) Su Jiqing 蘇繼廣, *Daoyi zhilüe jiaoshi* 島夷誌略校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1981), p. 23.

15) Janice Stargardt, “Behind the Shadows: Archaeological data on two-way sea-trade between Quanzhou and Satingpra, South Thailand, 10th –14th centuries,” in Angela Schottenhammer ed., *The Emporium of the World: maritime Quanzhou. 1000–1400* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 309–93. See also Michael Flecker, “The Archaeological Excavation of the 10th Century Intan Shipwreck, Java Sea, Indonesia,” Oxford: Archaeopress, BAR International Series S1047, 2002.

16) Denis Twitchett and Janice Stargardt, “Chinese Silver Bullion in a Tenth-Century Indonesia Wreck,” *Asia Major* (3rd series), no. 15, part 1 (2002), pp. 23–72.

trading between China and the Philippines carried, Yuan-dynasty sources provide some information on the enormous value of pearls produced in Sulu. These pearls were greenish white in color and round in shape. The Chinese used them as jewelries. They regarded them as the best among all the pearls produced in Southeast Asia since the luster of these pearls would never fade. Large-sized Sulu pearls measured more than one *cun* (寸, 1/3 decimeter) in diameter. Of these pearls, the largest one would cost seven hundred to eight hundred silver ingots at its place of origin; a medium one, three hundred silver ingots, and a small one, ten to twenty silver ingots. When Chinese merchants brought these Sulu pearls home, they would reap a handsome profit that was ten to thirty times of their original prices.<sup>17)</sup>

## II Trading patterns and power structure

When Chinese merchants of the Song dynasty arrived in Mayi to do business, they would anchor their ships at an officially designated place (*guanchang* 官場) that would serve as a trading plaza. They were allowed to disembark from their ships and mingle with the locals. They often presented white umbrellas to the local chieftain as a way to build rapport with him. Trading practice in Mayi was unique and was based entirely on mutual trust. The tribesmen approached Chinese ships on their skin rafts. They would make several trips to transport the precious Chinese goods ashore; but they made no payment in kind or left behind anything as collateral. Total strangers to each other at first, they became acquaintances of their Chinese trading partners after they had made a few trips to unload cargos from the Chinese ships. During this operation, not a single item would be stolen or missing. Local traders then sailed off to other islands to sell the goods. They would take several months to return to the trading plaza with local products. They then negotiated with the Chinese to determine the type and amount of local products to be submitted as payment. Due to the long period of concluding the business, Chinese merchants trading to Mayi were usually the last to leave the Philippines for home.<sup>18)</sup> During the Yuan dynasty, local merchants became more sophisticated in trading. They would first negotiate with their Chinese counterparts to determine the values of the imported goods before unloading them to their rafts. And they closed a deal with the Chinese merchants by paying them local products, the type and amount of which had been previously agreed upon by them. One thing, however, remained unchanged: they were honest in all business transactions with the

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17) Su Jiqing, *Daoyi zhilüe jiaoshi* (Beijing, 1981), p. 178. For discussions of maritime trade between China and Southeast Asian countries during the early Ming dynasty, see Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 119–24. Anthony Reed, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), vol.2, pp. 4–5.

18) Yang Bowen, *Zhufan zhi jiaoshi* (Beijing, 1996), p. 141. For an English translation of this record, see William H. Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History* (Quezon City, 1984), p. 68. For trading patterns in the Philippine archipelagos, see Billy K.L. So, *Prosperity, region, and institutions in maritime China, the south Fukien pattern, 946–1368* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 211.

Chinese.<sup>19)</sup>

With business transactions conducted at a designated place and goods handled by local merchants, this trading practice at Mayi aimed at monopoly of maritime trade. Moreover, many of the imported goods were not consumed locally, but were transported and sold to other places. This consumption and distribution pattern of foreign goods indicated that some of the chiefdoms in the Philippines maintained inter-archipelago economic ties with one another.<sup>20)</sup> Through monopoly of China trade, the ruler of Mayi managed to exercise a degree of influence and control over such minor chiefdoms as Jamayan, Balaoyou, and Bajinong 巴吉弄 (present-day Busuanga). Chinese sources record them as “subordinates (*shu* 屬)” to Mayi.<sup>21)</sup> Together, they formed a “paramount chiefdom” headed by the ruler of Mayi. A “paramount chiefdom” was one that had a first-order center, which directly or indirectly controlled several second-order centers, each of which consisted of a number of local communities.<sup>22)</sup> The ways the Mayi chieftain managed the Chinese and their own traders offer us a good example of how a “paramount chiefdom” functioned during the Song period.

To break Mayi’s monopoly of their business, some Song-dynasty Chinese merchants sailed directly to Sandao and Pulilu 蒲哩嚕 (present-day Manila).<sup>23)</sup> They probably fetched higher prices for their goods. In the meantime, they, however, lost the effective protection that the powerful Mayi chieftain had once offered them. Chinese merchants now dared not go ashore after they had reached a tribal settlement. Instead, they anchored their ships in the middle of the river and announced their arrival by drumbeats. Local merchants came to meet them with their rafts loaded with local products. Goods now changed hands on Chinese ships. And the spirit of mutual trust was lost. At times, the head of local merchants had to step in to mediate disputes over the value of goods. To smooth the mediation, Chinese merchants presented him with silk umbrellas, porcelain, and rattan containers as gifts. Distrust prompted local merchants to request that one or two Chinese stay ashore as hostages, and that exchange of goods also be conducted ashore. Chinese hostages were allowed to return to their ships only after trading had been completed. Chinese merchants developed a sense of insecurity as well. They often left a tribal settlement after only a few days of trading there.<sup>24)</sup> Taking hostage thus became a unique feature of trade. And this practice continued into the Ming dynasty, albeit at a different time of the trading process and for a different purpose. The Sulu chieftain, for example, took Chinese merchants hostage not during the trade negotiation, but after the business had been completed. The purpose of this action was not to guarantee smooth exchange of goods, but to ensure that

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19) Su Jiqing, *Daoyi zhiliüe jiaoshi* (Beijing, 1981), p. 34.

20) Oliver W. Wolters used to believe that settlements in Southeast Asia existed in relative economic isolation. He later conceded that these settlements maintained trans-regional trade routes at a greater level of interaction. See his *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Revised edition) (Ithaca, 1999), p. 107.

21) Yang Bowen, *Zhufan zhi jiaoshi* (Beijing, 1996), p. 143.

22) For political structure in Philippine chiefdoms, see Laura Junker, *Raiding, Trading, and Feasting: The political economy of Philippine chiefdoms* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 65–84, p. 86.

23) Yang Bowen, *Zhufan zhi jiaoshi* (Beijing, 1966), p. 144. The exact location of this place is a matter of scholarly debate. Some suggest that it is located in present-day Polillo. See *ibid.*, p. 146, note 3.

24) *Ibid.*, pp. 143–4.

Chinese ships would come back next year to fetch the hostages, thereby bringing more business to Sulu.<sup>25)</sup>

Trading practices in Boni 渤泥 (Brunei) were similar with those in Mayi,<sup>26)</sup> but much more elaborate. They reveal in interesting details how a paramount chiefdom with two decision-making levels actually functioned. The arrival of a Chinese merchant ship was a major event for the Boni chieftain, his family members and his major assistants (*daren* 大人). They would visit the ship together three days after its arrival. Chinese merchants decorated the gangplank with brocades to welcome the local dignitaries aboard, and presented them with wine, gold and silver wares and umbrellas during a ceremony. After the ceremony, Chinese merchants went ashore. During the next couple of months, they mentioned no business to the Boni chieftain and local merchants. Instead, they entertained them day after day by feasts prepared by Chinese chefs whom they brought along. Every month on the first and the fifteenth days, they also presented them with gifts. This rapport-building would continue for several months before they eventually invited the chieftain and his major assistants to inspect and fix the values for their cargos. No goods should be traded before the Boni ruler fixed their values. Violators were punishable by a fine. Drumbeats then announced to local merchants that it was now time to trade. Upon the day Chinese merchants weighed anchor for home, the ruler would host a banquet for them. He often used this occasion to display his superior position over his Chinese guests by granting them camphor and local cloth. Just as in Mayi, merchants in Boni commanded respect from their ruler and common people. A merchant guilty of capital offence would be fined but not executed.<sup>27)</sup> This respect was extended to Chinese merchants doing business in Boni as well. A Ming-dynasty work recorded locals helping Chinese merchants who were too drunk to return to their lodge.<sup>28)</sup>

The great economic value of maritime trade and the use of such trade to build domestic power and to control neighboring chiefdoms prompted the rulers of the Philippine archipelagos to send their own traders to China during the fifteenth century. They acquired luxury goods through long-distance maritime trade and use them to boost their status at home.<sup>29)</sup> Some chieftains even came to trade in China in the name of paying tributes. The three Sulu rulers and their visit of the Ming court in 1417 were a case in point.

Baduge Badala 巴都葛叭答刺 (Puduka Patala), the Eastern King of Sulu, Mahalatu Gelamading 麻哈刺吐葛刺麻丁 (Maharaja Klainbantangan),<sup>30)</sup> the Western King of Sulu, and Baduge Balabu 叭都葛巴刺卜 (Puduka

25) Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉, *Ming shi* 明史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974), 325, p. 8423.

26) The term is a transliteration for Brunei. Some suggest Pontianak on the west bank of the Kalimantan Island as the location for this place. See Chen Jiarong et al., *Gudai Nanhai diming huishi* (Beijing, 1986), p. 672. See also Geoff Wade, "Po-luo and Borneo: a re-examination," *Brunei Museum Journal*, 6:2 (1986), pp. 13-35.

27) Yang Bowen, *Zhufan zhi jiaoshi* (Beijing, 1996), p. 136.

28) Wang Qi 王圻, *Xu wenxian tongkao* 續文獻通考 (Beijing: Xiandai Chubanshe, 1986), 236, p. 8a.

29) Laura Junker, *Raiding, Trading, and Feasting, The political economy of Philippine chiefdoms* (Honolulu, 1999), pp. 194-203. See also her "Trade competition, conflict, and political transformation in sixth-to-sixteenth-century Philippine chiefdoms," *Asian Perspectives*, 33:2 (1994), pp. 229-60. Kenneth Hall, *Maritime trade and state development in early Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1985), pp. 36-44.

30) Scholars suggest that Klainbantangan, name for the Western King of Sulu, is derived from the Klaibantangan mountain range in northeast Kalimantan; and Puduak Prabu, name for the deceased ruler of the Mountainous Tribe, from Tamparam in southern



Prabu), wife of the late King of the Mountainous Tribe (Tongwang 峒王) came to China in a joint mission.<sup>31)</sup> They brought with them not only gifts for the Ming emperor, but also goods to be sold on markets. The Ming court fixed the prices for these goods according to their market values, and allowed them to be traded without taxing them.<sup>32)</sup> This joint mission was therefore also a trading mission. Among the goods traded between China and Sulu, Chinese porcelain and Sulu pearls were particularly famous.<sup>33)</sup> These pearls were cultivated in large amount at pearl banks, which stretched from the Darvel Bay, Kalimantan Island to the Zamboanga peninsula, south of the Mindanao Island. Looking at the pearl banks in the night, one could see reflections of the moonlight by the pearls as if light was floating on the surface of water.<sup>34)</sup> The best pearls were those of large size. In 1421, the envoy of the Eastern King of Sulu presented to the Ming emperor a pearl that was said to weigh more than 350 grams. Ming officials described it as a rare object that had seldom been brought to China.<sup>35)</sup>

### III Power relations and missions to China

As early as the Yuan dynasty, Chinese writers observed that power relations existed between the Philippine chiefdoms and Borneo. The *Gazetteer of the South Sea compiled during the Dade period of the Yuan Dynasty* (*Yuan Dade Nanhai zhi* 元大德南海志) reports that Foni 佛坭 (Borneo) “administrated ( *guan* 管)” various places in the Philippines.<sup>36)</sup> They included Malilu 麻裏蘆 (present-day Manila),<sup>37)</sup> Maye (in Mindoro), Meikun 美昆

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Palawan Island. See Su Jiqing, *Daoyi zhilüe jiaoshi* (Beijing, 1981), p. 180.

31) The presence of females on the mission in question indicates political influence of females in Philippine islands. O. W. Wolters recognized the political role of women in Southeast Asian societies, which he neglected to examine in his earlier works. See his *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Revised edition) (Ithaca, 1999), pp. 165–71.

32) Yan Congjian 嚴從簡, *Shuyu zhouzi lu* 殊域周咨錄 (Taipei: Huawen Shuju, 1968), p. 314. For discussions of this visit, see Matsuura Akira 松浦章, “Min Shin jidai ni okeru Chūgoku Soroku kankeishi 明清時代における中國蘇祿關係史,” *Kansai Daigaku bungaku ronshū*, 30:2 (1980), pp. 1–8. Wang Liqi 王利器 Wang Zhenping 王貞平 and Pan Yihong 潘以紅, “Zhong Fei youhao shi shang de yijian dashi 中菲友好史上的一件大事” *Zhonghua wenshi luncong*, 4 (1980), pp. 99–112.

33) Aurora Roxas-Lim, “A preliminary study of the Butuan archaeological finds and their significance in Philippine history,” in L. Bauzon ed., *In search of historical truth* (Quezon City: Heritage Publishing, 1992), pp. 46–59.

34) *Ming shi*, 325, p. 8423.

35) Luo Yuejiong 羅曰褰, *Xianbin lu* 咸賓錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), p. 164.

36) Chen Dazhen 陳大震 et al., *Yuan Dade Nanhai zhi canben* 元大德南海志殘本 (Guangzhou: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 1991), p. 46.

37) Some scholars have identified this place as the Pollilo Island, east of the Luzon Island. It is worth noting that females of high status in Malilu were instrumental in forming alliance with other tribes by marriage. When the husband of such a woman died, the common practice was for the widow to look for another spouse among the sons and grandsons of officials in other tribes. She would not marry a commoner, and would tie the knots only with a man whose family status was comparable to that of her late husband. She would rather stay widowed if no suitable person was found, and spend the rest of her life reading Buddhist sutras. See Yang Bowen, *Zhufan zhi jiaoshi* (Beijing, 1996), p. 136.



(present-day Manukan),<sup>38)</sup> Puduan, Sulu, Shahuchong 沙胡重 (present-day Siocon)<sup>39)</sup>, Yachen 啞陳 (present-day Oton), Manaluonu 麻拿囉奴,<sup>40)</sup> and Wenduling 文杜陵 (present-day Mindanao).<sup>41)</sup> We read in Ming-dynasty sources about the power relations among various chiefdoms in the Philippines. Sanyu and Bajinong, for example, each had about one thousand households.<sup>42)</sup> Although they had no “governance and subordination (*tongshu* 統屬)” relationship with one another,<sup>43)</sup> they all subordinated (*shu* 屬) themselves to the ruler of Mayi, a powerful local magnet who used as many as thirty people as human sacrifices in his funeral.<sup>44)</sup> At the same time, several other tribes in the present-day Luzon Island were also subordinates to Mayi. They were Baipuyan 白蒲延 (present-day Babuyan, northern Luzon Island), Liyin 裏銀 (present-day Lingayen, central Luzon Island), Dongliuxin 東流新 (present-day Durorui, western Luzon Island)<sup>45)</sup> and Lihan 裏漢 (present-day Lubang, southern Luzon Island). The population and military strength of a tribe determined its relations with other chiefdoms. The Pulilu tribesmen, for example, were militant and prone to using force. Depending on their own strength, they sometimes maintained an “alliance” and at other times, a “subordination” relationship (*lianshu* 聯屬) with Sanyu.

Power relations among chiefdoms in Southeast Asia were not static. A chieftain had to guard his territories against threats by other tribes. One of the ways to achieve this goal was to seek Chinese support and recognition. The relationship between Boni and Sulu was a case in point. In early Ming Hongwu period (1368–1398), Sulu invaded Boni and expanded its sphere of influence to trading ports on the northeast coast of present-day Borneo, which ports were crucial for controlling the China-Spice Island trade. The Sulu expedition forces withdrew from Boni only after the powerful Java state of Majaphati had intervened at the request of the Boni ruler.<sup>46)</sup>

The ruler of Boni decided to seek help from China by organizing a mission to the Ming court. He hoped that Chinese support would deter his Sulu rivals from launching another military campaign against him.<sup>47)</sup> In 1405, the ruler, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, relatives, and his major supporters visited China. During a court audience, they prostrated themselves in front of the Ming emperor and told him that they wanted to be his subjects and consorts. Pleased with their show of loyalty, the emperor upgraded the receptions for the ruler of Boni

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38) Another possible location of this place is Camiguin Island, which is north of the Mindanao Island.

39) Another possible location of this place is Siaton, south of the Negros Island.

40) There are two interpretations for this term: transliteration for the Maranaw tribe, whose people lived on the Sulu islands and the Mindanao Island, or Malanu, a tribe whose people lived in Balingian, Sarawak province, Malaysia.

41) Some scholars have suggested Bantulu, Sarawak province, Malaysia as the location for this place. Some have suggested Mindoro, the Philippines. Identifications of location for Malilu, Maye, Meikun, Puduan, Shahuchong, Yachen, Manaluonu, and Wenduling are from Chen Jiarong et al., *Gudai Nanhai diming huishi* (Beijing, 1986), p. 226, p. 455, p. 592, p. 618, p. 743, p. 744, pp. 803–4.

42) Yang Bowen, *Zhufan zhi jiaoshi* (Beijing, 1966), p. 141.

43) *Ibid.*, p. 144.

44) Su Jiqing, *Daoyi zhilue jiaoshi* (Beijing, 1981), p. 33.

45) This place was located north of the Masinloc Port.

46) *Ming shi*, 325, p. 8411, p. 8422.

47) *Ibid.*, p. 8414.

ruler, treating him not as a Chinese prince, but as a duke and a marquise. At the request of the ruler, the Ming court named a mountain in Boni “Mountain for Eternal Peace and Protection of the State (Changning zhenguo zhi shan 長寧鎮國之山)”. The emperor also penned an essay to be inscribed on a stone tablet. The name for the mountain specified the Boni ruler's sphere of influence. And the stone tablet to be erected at home would serve as a material statement that the ruler of Boni now enjoyed Chinese backing. It was, however, unfortunate that the Boni ruler, having secured all the support he requested of China, died a sudden death at the Ming capital. The Ming court suspended business for three days to hold a grand funeral for him. And his son inherited his Chinese title “king.”<sup>48)</sup>

The ruler of Gumalalang 古麻刺朗 had a similar story.<sup>49)</sup> *The Dynastic history of Ming (Ming shi)* records Gumalalang as “a minor state in the Southeast Sea.” In 1417, a eunuch from the Ming court arrived at Gumalalang, carrying with him an imperial edict. He presented the local ruler with fine Chinese silk fabrics, and urged him to offer allegiance to the Ming emperor. Three years later in 1420, Ganlayi Yibendun 幹刺義亦奔敦,<sup>50)</sup> ruler of Gumalalang, came to the Ming court with his wife, his subjects and the Ming eunuch. They presented local products as a gesture of submission to the Ming emperor. In return, the Ming court raised the status of the Gumalalang ruler and accorded him preferential receptions. During an audience held in his honor, Ganlayi Yibendun told the emperor: “As your subject, I am foolish and ignorant. Although my people have chosen me (as the ruler), I have not received endorsement from your majesty’s court. I should feel honored if an imperial edict of enthronement is granted to me, and if I could continue using the title of my country.” The emperor granted his request. He was made “king” and received an imperial edict for appointment, official cap and belt, insignia for procession, harness, patterned fine silk, and ceremonial robe woven with gold threads. He left the Ming capital for home in the first month of 1421 and arrived at the seaport in Fuzhou 福州. However, he died before he could board a ship for home.<sup>51)</sup>

Many of the chiefdoms in Southeast Asia existed in geographically separated regions. But their chieftains did not isolate themselves from the outside world. They formed power relations with one another. As these relations evolved, they often tried to define their positions relative to each other by organizing a “joint mission” to seek Chinese recognition of their relationship.

The earliest of such a “joint mission” was organized in 1372. That year, an envoy from Lüsông 呂宋 (Luzon) and officials from Suoli 鎖裏 came together to pay tribute to the Ming court. In 1410, another envoy from Lüsông traveled to China, this time with a diplomat of Fengjiashilan 馮嘉施蘭.<sup>52)</sup> A few years earlier in 1405, the chieftain

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48) *Ibid.*, p. 8412.

49) *Shuyu zhoubi lu*, p. 316. *Xu wenxian tongkao*, 236, p. 10b gives Gumala 古麻刺 as the name for this place. Scholars have identified two places as the possible location for Gumala: a place in Mindanao, or the Cabarruyan Island near Cape Bolinao, Luzon Island. See Chen Jiarong et al., *Gudai Nanhai diming huishi* (Beijing: 1986), p. 247.

50) *Xianbin lu*, p. 164 gives Walaidunben 哇來頓本 as the transliteration for his name.

51) *Ming shi*, 323, p. 8379.

52) *Ibid.*, p. 8370. Suoli was the Chinese transliteration for Cola, which was an ancient Indian state and was located on the coasts of

of Maoliwu 貓裏務 (in Mindoro) attached his representative to a tribute-paying mission to China organized by Zhaowa 爪哇 (Java).<sup>53)</sup> One year later in 1406, the Eastern King and the Western King of Poluo 婆羅 also jointly dispatched a mission to Ming China.<sup>54)</sup>

The joint mission that the three Sulu rulers organized in 1417 offers more details for our study. The three rulers controlled a vast area ranging from the Palawan Islands in the northwest, the Sulu Islands, to the Kalimantan in the southwest and southeast. And they formed an unusually large delegation of more than 340 people that included their family members, their entourage, and, more importantly, heads of local groups. The major aim of this delegation was to define the power relationship among the three rulers and between the rulers and their respective subordinates. They presented the Ming court with a letter that was gilt with gold, pearls, precious gems, and tortoise-shells. The Ming court was conscious of the difficulty in acquiring reliable information on politics in the huge territories controlled by the three rulers. It therefore first regarded the three rulers as “temporarily in charge of (*qian* 權)” their chiefdoms. After weighing the situation, the court accorded the three rulers equal status by granting them the same title “king” (*guowang* 國王). This was a move to keep the Sulu islands politically divided, a situation that would best serve the Ming court’s self-interest. The Sulu rulers also received from the Ming court imperial edicts for appointment, ceremonial robes, official robes, official seals, harness, and insignia for procession. At the same time, the court confirmed the relative status of their subordinates by granting them official caps and belts of different ranks, cloth woven by gold threads, patterned fine silk cloth, and ceremonial robes. The Sulu rulers happily accepted the appointments and the items from the Ming court. Chinese titles and the insignia would serve the important purpose of prestige display to their own people. And Chinese style “king-subject” relationship was comparable with the power structure of a paramount chiefdom in the Philippines that also had two levels of decision-making. The delegation stayed at the Ming capital for twenty-seven days. Before they left for home, they again received gold, silver, copper coins and fine silks as gifts for them.<sup>55)</sup> Unfortunately, shortly after his departure from the capital, Baduge Badala, the Eastern King of Sulu, died at a relay station in Dezhou 德州 (present-day Dezhou, Shandong province) on the thirteenth day of the ninth month, 1417. The Ming emperor sent officials to hold a funeral for him, had a cemetery constructed for him and granted him a posthumous title. As a special imperial favor, the Ming court allowed his wife, consorts and ten of his retinue to stay in Dezhong for three years to observe mourning for him. The court also appointed Dumahan, 都馬含, the eldest son of Baduge

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Coromandel. Fengjiashilan was located in Lingayen, Pangasinan province, the Philippines. See Chen Jiarong et al., *Gudai Nanhai diming huishi* (Beijing, 1986), p. 296, p. 692.

53) *Ming shi*, 323. p. 8374. Maoliwu was a maritime trading center where the local regulations on commerce were fair and taxes were low. Many Ming-dynasty merchants sailed to Maoliwu to do business. A common saying among them was: “You must go to Maoliwu if you want to be rich.”

54) *Ibid.*, p. 8378.

55) *Ming shilu* 明實錄 (Nangang: Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo, 1962–68), 192, pp. 1a–3a. *Ming shi*, 7, p. 97; 325, p. 8423.

Badala, the new Eastern King of Sulu, hoping that his tribesmen would pledge loyalty to him<sup>56)</sup> What the Ming court did not understand was that leadership in Sulu, unlike in China, depended not so much on lineage, but on a person's ability of manipulating volatile alliance networks.<sup>57)</sup> The sudden death of Baduge Badala in China rendered Dumahan to a precarious position. Similarly, Baduge Balabu, wife of the late King of the Mountainous Tribe was also in a shaky position. Her husband had past away, and a new male ruler had yet to emerge at home.

The unstable positions of both Baduge Balabu and Dumahan seemed to have prompted the Western King of Sulu to send an envoy to the Ming court in 1420, merely three years after the joint mission in 1417.<sup>58)</sup> His envoy came alone, not as a member of a joint mission. Primary sources are silent on the purpose of this visit. It was, however, plausible that the Western King of Sulu now refused to regard Dumahan as his peer. He must have been particularly upset that after the death of Baduge Badala in China, the Ming court treated Dumahan as the “major” (*zhang* 長) among the three Sulu rulers.<sup>59)</sup> Regarding himself as the strongest ruler in Sulu, the Western King of Sulu wanted Chinese recognition of his perceived new balance of power in the region. The mother of the Eastern King of Sulu apparently did not want to be out-manuevered by her western neighbor. She launched her own diplomatic campaign to maintain his son's status in the region. She sent an uncle of his son as the envoy to China in 1421. He offered the Ming court, among other things, a pearl that was of unusually large size and was said to weight more than 350 grams.<sup>60)</sup> The short interval between the three missions of 1417, 1420 and 1421 indicated the shifting balance of power in the Sulu region.<sup>61)</sup> And when power relations evolved, rulers in Sulu resorted to Chinese authority to confirm the new status that they deemed suitable for themselves.

Reflecting on the death of the ruler of Gumalalang in Fuzhou in 1421, the Eastern King of Sulu in Dezhou in 1417, and the ruler of Boni in the capital in 1405, Luo Yuejiong, a late Ming-dynasty author observed: “Our court did not bother to dispatch a single envoy [to these countries]. But their rulers sailed across the sea with their wives and subjects to present gifts. They died in China thousands of miles away from home. Yet they never regretted their deeds. They would have never so wholeheartedly offered their loyalty [to China], if it was not due to the magnificent virtue [of our emperor]. Of course, China's imperial favors [for the deceased rulers], the posthumous titles, the stone tablets, and the sacrifices offered annually to their tombs in China in spring and autumn are sufficient for [their current rulers] to brag about to other barbarians.”<sup>62)</sup> This observation of Luo reveals that favor

56) *Ming shilu*, 192, pp. 4a-b; 261, p. 1b. *Ming shi*, 325, p. 8423.

57) Oliver W. Wolters, *History, culture, and region in Southeast Asian perspectives* (revised edition) (Ithaca, 1999), p. 124.

58) *Ming shilu*, 228, p. 1b.

59) Zhang Xie 張燮, *Dongxi yang kao* 東西洋考 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1981), 5, p. 2b. *Xianbin lu*, p. 164. *Xu wenxian tongkao*, 236, p. 9b.

60) *Ming shilu*, 236, p. 1b. *Ming shi*, 325, p. 8423. A record in the *Xianbin lu*, p. 164 suggests that the Eastern King of Sulu himself came to pay tribute to the Ming court in 1421.

61) A record in the *Ming shilu*, 3b, p. 3a reports that in 1424 another envoy from Sulu visited the Ming court, but does not specify which Sulu ruler dispatched this envoy. The Ming court sent a military officer to pay a return visit. He came back to the Ming capital in 1426. See *ibid.*, 12, p. 10a.

62) *Xianbin lu*, pp. 164-5.

and support from China were useful to Southeast Asian rulers in both domestic politics and regional power relationship. They could “brag about” Chinese support that they enjoyed to their competitors so as to shore up their claim for positions that they perceived appropriate in the emerging power relations in the region.

The Chinese records that we have so far examined show that chiefdoms in the pre-colonial Philippines did not exist in economic isolation. They employed unique methods and formed far-reaching networks when trading with each other and with China. Rulers of these chiefdoms were sophisticated players in power relationship. They organized missions to seek Chinese recognition of their domestic power structure and of their positions relative to each other in regional politics. And these missions reveal the existence of paramount chiefdoms in the Philippines. Chinese records not only provide the historical context necessary for our understanding of recent archaeological findings in the Philippines. They also necessitate reconsideration and revision of some of the concepts and the assumptions that western scholars have widely used in their study of maritime Southeast Asia.<sup>63)</sup>

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63) These assumptions would include: “men of prowess,” “cognate kinship,” and the process of “self-Hinduization” in Southeast Asia. “Big man” as a form of political leadership, and “political entities that existed in isolation with each other” also need to be reexamined. For a critical survey of modern scholarship on ancient Southeast Asia, see Craig J. Reynolds, “A new look at Old Southeast Asia,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, 54:2 (1995), pp. 419–46.