

Mingshi 明史 28/325/8411-5¹

Translation by Johannes L. Kurz, permission to post graciously granted February 28, 2016.

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Boni 淳泥 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.² 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 Zhi³ reproached him, did he come down from his seat, fell on his

¹ Cf. the translation by W.P. Groeneveldt in "Notes on the Malay Archipelago and Malacca Compiled from Chinese Sources" (Jakarta: C.V. Bhratara, 1960), 110-115. This piece was originally published in *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 39 (1880).

² 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, *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/502>, accessed 16 April 2005.

³ Groeneveldt has: "...one of the envoys...".

knees and received the imperial orders. At the time this country had been invaded by Sulu 蘇祿, 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 to 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. Zhi⁴ 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 the envoys followed Jingzhi and the others to court. The letter was made from gold, the memorandum was made from silver;⁵ the characters [on them] resembled the Huihu 回鶻 [-script]. [Both documents] were engraved with them for submission [to the throne].⁶ The emperor was pleased and rewarded them very generously with a banquet. In the eighth year [of the Hongwu era

⁴ Groeneveldt translates: "...the envoy...".

⁵ 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.

⁶ Groeneveldt translates: "...: they were all engraved." On this problematic translation by Groeneveldt see also Carrie C. Brown's commentary in "An Early Account of Brunei by Sung Lien", in *Brunei Museum Journal* 2.4 (1972): 229, note 21.

(1375)] 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 麻那惹加那 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,⁷ 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

⁷ Note that the Chinese text in the *Zhonghua shuju*-edition wrongly punctuates this sentence by separating the two characters *gao* and *chi*. The comma or rather pause should be placed after *chi*.

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 consorts⁸ 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 rank⁹, 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

⁸ 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.

⁹ These were items such as banners, halberds and pennants.

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 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 cattles 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 Java 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:¹⁰ “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 stele¹¹ and ordered Qian and the others to carve it on a stele on top of it.¹² 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

¹⁰ Groeneveldt translates this as an indirect speech.

¹¹ Carrie C. Brown states that apart from Boni only Japan, Malacca, and Cochin were given this honour. See Brown, “Two Ming Texts Concerning King Ma-na-je-cha-na of P'o-ni [*sic*]”, in *Brunei Museum Journal* 3.2 (1974): 222. She does not give the source for this information. It is certainly not contained in the *Mingshi*.

¹² 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.

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 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 a common subject of the Son of Heaven through and through. 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!"¹³

In the ninth month of the eight 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.¹⁴

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 Interpreters Institute, and the Court of Imperial Entertainments provided them with food and drink.¹⁵ The following day the emperor entertained the king at the Fengtian gate, and the mother of the king was also given a banquet.

¹³ Cf. the translation of this inscription in Brown, "Two Ming Texts", 226. I have made some modifications to Brown's translation.

¹⁴ This mission is confirmed by *Mingshi*, 6.88. No further particulars are provided there.

¹⁵ The translation for the character *jiu* is alcoholic beverage, 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.

After two days, again they were given banquets, and [the emperor] conferred a cap, a 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)¹⁶, but after that their tribute bearers gradually came less often.¹⁷

In the ninth year of the Jiajing era (1530) the supervising secretary Wang Xiwen 王希文¹⁸ said: “The five countries of Xianluo 暹羅, Zhancheng, Liuqiu, Jawa, and Boni, when bringing tribute, all pass through Dongguan 東莞¹⁹. Later,

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ No further tribute missions are mentioned in the *Mingshi*.

¹⁸ Groeneveldt has: “... one of the functionaries in the capital...” See *Notes*, 114.

¹⁹ The place is identical with modern day Baoan which is situated in the estuary of the Pearl river, southeast of Guangzhou (Guangdong).

because they privately took merchants [with them],²⁰ 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 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].²¹

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²² 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

²⁰ 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.

²¹ This is an excerpt of a much longer memorial dated October 25, 1530, found in the *Ming Shizong shilu*, 118.2b-3a. See the translation of this text in Wade, *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/1877>, accessed 16 April 2005.

²² 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*.

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.²³

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 of Dani to conduct it.

For all the customs and products see the *Songshi*.

²³ 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.