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Ong Sum Ping and the Early History of Borneo in Chinese Sources

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Lee Cheuk Yin

Abstract

Many years ago, I went to Nanjing regularly to do fieldwork on Muslim communities and mosques in Nanjing. I had the opportunity to visit the tombs of Zheng He and the King of Borneo. At that time, I believed that the person lying in the tomb was the King of Borneo. It was recorded on Chinese sources that two kings died in China following the voyages of Zheng He to China. One was the King of Sulu, buried in Shandong province. The other one was the King of Borneo, buried in Nanjing. When I came to work in Brunei, I noticed that there was a street named Jalan Ong Sum Ping. I asked my students who was Ong Sum Ping. They all said that they had no idea, and he was probably a legendary figure. As a historian, it aroused my curiosity and interest. There are few local sources on the person. However, there are many Chinese sources on the person, especially on the Chinese websites, even though many are problematic and unreliable. As a result, I was motivated to write this paper and to rectify the Chinese sources. In the course of investigation, I discovered that Ong Sum Ping and the King of Borneo buried in Nanjing are related, and that the Ming government had made a mistake.

Keywords: Brunie; Huang Sen Ping; Nanjing; Ming Dynasty; Ong Sum Ping

Ong Sum Ping and the Early History of Borneo in Chinese Sources

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Introduction*

Huang Sen Ping 王森平 (1339-1408) is rumored to be a Han Chinese who immigrated to Borneo in the early Ming Dynasty. Bruneians write "Ong Sum Ping", which is the pinyin of the Hokkien dialect, and the Chinese is translated as Huang Sen Ping, and it is also written as Wang Sum Ping. Many people in Brunei do not know who Ong Sum Ping is, and some UBD students believe that Ong Sum Ping is a legendary figure. Jalan Ong Sum Ping is the only street in Brunei named after a Chinese person, and it is where the Mahligai Apartments and Rimbun Residences, providing many UBD staff with accommodation, are located. If a street is named after him, it cannot be a legendary character.



Jalan Ong Sum Ping



Mahligai Apartments

* The author wishes to thank Professor Victor King, Distinguished Professor of UBD, for reading this paper and offering his comments. My thanks also go to my former PhD student Dr. Geng Yong 耿勇 of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences for checking historical sources in China. Needless to say, the author is solely responsible for the errors and shortcomings which may appear in this paper.

There are many rumors about Ong Sum Ping in Chinese sources, and they are based on legends and do not conform to people's beliefs in Brunei. This paper lists the different claims in Chinese sources and examines their authenticity.

Some sources refer to Sultan Ahmad's wife as "Puteri Kinabatangan", the younger sister of Ong Sum Ping. Some people believe that Ong Sum Ping is a legendary figure of the Malays, but the pedigree of the King of Brunei does record that Sultan Muhammad Shah (1363-1402), the Sultan of Brunei, gave his daughter Princess Ratnati Wei (Puteri Ratna Dewi) in marriage to Ong Sum Ping. The *Official History of the Ming Dynasty* 《明史》 recorded a popular rumour in China at that time: "During the reign of Wanli 萬曆 (1572-1620), the king of Borneo was of the Min (Fujian) people. Or that Zheng He visited Borneo, and there were Fujian people with him, because they stayed in the land, his descendants actually became kings of the country."¹ Whether the Min people occupied one side of Borneo during the time of Zheng He and became the ruler, according to Borneo history, there is no such record and requires clarification.

The most well-researched work in English on the topic is Johannes Kurz, "Making History in Borneo: Ong Sum Ping and his Others during the Late Yuan and Early Ming dynasties."² Kurz does not believe that the Brunei royal family has Chinese ancestry, and questions the claims made in Wen Xiongfei's *General History of Overseas Chinese in Nanyang*, Huang Jingchu's *Stories of Overseas Chinese Celebrities*, Huang Yao's "Ma Xing Chinese Chronicles", Chen Liefu's *Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia*, Wang Jinghong, and others. Because these books and articles are misunderstood in regard to the history of Brunei, they have been falsely disseminated and are unreliable.

¹ See Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 et al., *Official History of the Ming Dynasty* 明史, vol. 323, The Biography of Borneo, in Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1974 edition, p. 8378. See also *A History of China for 2,000 Years*, Volume 5, by Hou Yanfen, Li Zhaoxiang, Ren Mengyi, Lou Jianyong, Zhao Yumin, Liu Na, He Yang, Yue Sicong, and Gao Yanhong.

² See *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies* 14 (2): 79-104. 2018.

China and Brunei have enjoyed a long history of exchanges, and the *Official History of the Ming Dynasty* records this:

“Borneo established relations with China from the Song Dynasty Emperor Taizong period (reigned 960-976). In August of the third year of Emperor Hongwu of Ming (1371), the emperor ordered Censor Zhang Jingzhi 張敬之 and the Supervisor of Fujian Province Shen Zhi 沈秩 to visit the place. Sailing from Quanzhou, they arrived in Dupo 闍婆 (traditional place, in today’s Java and Indonesia) after half a year, and then took another month to reach the country. Its King Muhammad Shah was arrogant and impolite. They reproached him and they began to sit down and received the Imperial Edict. At that time, his country was invaded by the Sulu (today’s southern regions of the Philippines), and was depleted [in resources]. The king resigned in poverty, so he asked to send his tributes three years’ hence. The Order from the emperor said: ‘Dupo has long been a vassal state to us, and Borneo King is afraid of Dupo but is not afraid of the Heavenly Dynasty?’ Thus the country is to send an envoy to send their tribute, including the crane.³, tortoiseshell, peacock, Borneo camphor (commonly known as long brain in Chinese medicine), rice camphor, Western cloth, and incense. In August, the Borneo contingent visited the court with Zhang Jingzhi and others. The Imperial chart is made of gold, the letter is made of silver, and the words are close to Uyghur, all of which are engraved in advance. The emperor is happy, and the banquet is very rich. In the eighth year, the mountains and rivers of his country were enshrined with the mountains and rivers of Fujian.”⁴

³ Crane (in Chinese 鶴頂). May also refers to a new species of *Phaius* (Orchidaceae).

⁴ *Official History of the Ming Dynasty*, Vol. 325, The Biography of the Borneo", pp. 8411-12.

The brief history of Borneo and the tribute items were recorded in the Ministry of Rites records:

<p>貢物 金水罐 象牙 乳香 速香 檀香 片腦 胡椒</p>	<p>百花國</p>	<p>國居海中洪武十一年其王刺丁刺者望沙遣使奉金葉表朝貢</p>	<p>貢物 白鹿 紅猴 龜筒 玳瑁 孔雀 鸚鵡 倒掛鳥 胡椒 香蠟</p>	<p>三佛齊國</p>	<p>欽定四庫全書 禮部志 卷三十五 十三</p>	<p>國居海中即舊港本南蠻別種有地十五州洪武初其國王怛麻沙那阿者稱臣入貢四年遣使奉金字表朝賀六年遣賀正旦貢方物八年復遣使從招諭拂蘇國十年其子麻那者里嗣立奉表請封遣人齎駝紐銀金銀印賜之</p>	<p>貢物 火雞 五色鸚鵡 孔雀 龜筒 黑熊 白獺 諸香 米腦 苾布 兜羅錦被 胡椒</p>	<p>肉豈菹 番油子</p>
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<p>淳泥國</p>	<p>國居海中本屬開婆有地十四州洪武四年其國王馬合謨沙遣使以金表銀箋貢方物永樂三年遣使往封</p>	<p>麻那惹加那乃為王給印誥勅符勘合六年王率其妃及家屬陪臣來朝至福建遣中官往燕勞之令所過諸郡設宴至京王奉金字表獻珍物妃箋獻中宮東宮上御奉天門賜王宴是年王卒於會同館輟朝三日祭賻甚厚詔諭恭順賜葬南京城外石子岡以西南夷人隸</p>	<p>欽定四庫全書 禮部志 卷三十五 十三</p>	<p>籍中國者守之樹碑立祠命有司春秋致祭封其子遐旺嗣遣中官及行人護送歸國復從其請封其國後山為長寧鎮國之山御製碑文賜之十二年及洪武熙元年俱來朝貢</p>	<p>貢物 犀角 熊皮 生玳瑁 龜筒 寶石 珍珠 金戒指 金縷環 金銀八寶器 梅花龍腦 米</p>	<p>腦 糠腦 降香 沈速香 檀香 丁香 肉豈</p>
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蘇門答剌國		欽定四庫全書	禮部志稿 卷三十五	十四
貢物	馬幼苾布 隔著布 八的方布 花滿直	地番綿紬 直地兜羅錦 撒刺八幼賴隔著 撒	哈刺 薔薇水 降香 沈速香	
蘇門答剌國				
國濱海永樂三年其酋長宰奴里阿必丁遣使朝貢詰				
封為國王給印誥五年至宣德六年屢遣使來貢表用				
金葉十年復請封其子為王或曰即須文達那國				
貢物	馬 犀牛 龍涎 寶石 瑪瑙 水晶			
石青	回回青 錫 硫黃 番刀弓			
梭眼	木香 丁香 降真香 沈速香 胡椒			
蘇木				
西洋瑣里國				

西洋瑣里國		欽定四庫全書	禮部志稿 卷三十五	十五
國濱海近瑣里視瑣里差大洪武三年其國王別里提				
遣使奉金葉表貢方物永樂元年復遣使朝貢				
貢物	黃黑虎 馬 兜羅綿被漫折的花被 皮			
剔布	槁泥布 沙馬打泥布			
瑣里國				
西海中小國洪武五年其國王卜納的遣使奉金葉表				
貢方物并圖其地山川以獻				
貢物	馬紅八者藍布 紅撒哈刺 覬木里布			
紅番布 白苾布 珠子項串				
覽邦國				
洪武九年國王昔里馬哈刺扎的刺扎遣使奉表來貢				
永樂宣德中附隣國貢方物				
貢物	馬 孔雀 胡椒 蘇木 檀降香			
淡巴國				
在西南海中洪武十年國王佛喝思囉遣使奉表朝貢				
貢物	苾布 兜羅綿被 沈香 檀香 速香			

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The record of Borneo in Ming Ministry of Rites and the Tribute Items.⁵

⁵ See Yu Ru Ji 俞汝楫 ed., *Libu zhigao* 《禮部志稿》 Vol.35, 《景印文淵閣四庫全書》 edition, Vol.597, Taipei: Commercial Press, 1986, pp.652-653.

It can be seen that the relationship between the Ming Dynasty and Borneo in the early Ming Dynasty was still speculative: on the one hand, Borneo was relatively poor, and on the other hand, it was threatened by many enemies, and there were no extra-resources to meet the requests of the Chinese Empire. It was not until the Emperor Yongle period (1402-1424) during the Ming Dynasty that the national strength of Borneo was stabilized. The history recorded:

“In the winter of the third year of Yongle (1405), King Maharaja sent an envoy to the Ming court, who was appointed as the king and received the imperial seals, edicts, conjunctions, silk ribbons, and coins. The king was very pleased and led his concubine and his younger siblings and children to accompany the courtiers across the sea. They first reached Fujian, and the officials were informed. The imperial eunuchs were sent to hold banquets for them, and all the prefectures and counties they passed through were feasted. In August of the sixth year, he entered the capital to meet the emperor, and the emperor rewarded him. The king knelt down and said, ‘Your Majesty has won the life of heaven and unified ten thousand squares. Your subject is far away on the island, and is blessed with knighthood. From then on the rain in the country is smooth, the yields are abundant, the people are free of disasters, between the mountains and rivers, rare dew, plants, trees, birds and beasts, all proliferated. The elders of the country said that this was the blessing of the holy son of heaven. Your subject is willing to see the form of heaven with sincerity, do not worry about the danger of far away, bring the family and courtiers, and give thanks.’ The emperor comforted him again and again, and ordered that the tributes from the king and his concubine be displaced at the Wenhua Palace 文華殿. The emperor blessed the king and his courtiers with imperial crown and clothes. The emperor also feasted him at the Fengtian Gate (Gate of Serving Heaven), and the concubine and officials were fed in another place. After the dinner, they were sent back to the Foreigners’ Pavilion. The ceremonial officials asked the emperor to allow the king to be bestowed the honour of the ceremonial status of prince. The emperor allowed the ceremonial of the prince and bestowed him with the guard of honour, silverware, umbrella fans, golden saddle horses, gold weaving silks, silk, and silk clothes ten sets. In October, the king died in the pavilion. The emperor mourned and stopped court attendance for three days. The emperor sent officials to pay tribute and donate funeral fabric. The coffin and funeral vessels were buried at the Stone Ridge outside the Ande Gate 安德門. The ancestral tomb was built with an [access] passage, and there was a spring and autumn worship to the grave. He was bestowed with the ceremonial title of Gongshun 恭順. His son Xiawang 遐旺 was ordered to succeed the throne as king.”⁶

There is a misunderstanding in the historical records. In fact, Ong was not the Sultan of Borneo. When Ong Sum Ping went to China he named himself the "king". But the Ming government mistakenly thought that he was the Sultan and treated him with royal courtesy, and buried him with royal rites in Nanjing after his death and bestowed Ong’s son as the title of King of Borneo.

⁶ *Official History of the Ming Dynasty*, vol. 325, The Biography of the Borneo, p.8412.



The tomb passage of the king of Borneo in Nanjing



The tomb of the king of Borneo

Borneo has been a Muslim country for a long time, and the history records: “Borneo, also known as Brunei. Its location was at the end of the East, and where the West has also begun. During the Tang Dynasty, there was a Borneo state, and in Emperor Gaozong’s time (r. 649-683) the country often paid tribute. In October of the third year of Yongle of the Ming Dynasty (1405), he sent an envoy to bring the Imperial letter and coins to appease his king. In December of the fourth year, the two kings of the east and west of this country sent envoys to pay tribute. Next year, it was tribute again. The country is backed with mountains and facing the sea. The country enjoys freedom and abstains killing, and avoids eating pork. The king shaved his hair, wrapped in a gold embroidered scarf, wore a double sword, and went in and out on foot, with more than 200 followers. There are temples for worship, and each beast for sacrifice is costumed. The offerings include turpentine turtle, agate, clams, beads, white scorched cloth, flower scorched cloth, incense, yellow wax, and black manservants⁷. ”⁸ The customs are recorded but there is no mention that its head is a Min (Fujian) people.

There are views in China that Sultan Ahmad is Ong Sum Ping, and another is that after Ahmad's death, Ong Sum Ping's daughter succeeded to the throne as the Queen of

⁷ In Chinese it is 黑小厮, which means black boy. It should not be one of the offerings. May be the pageboys who conducted the rituals.

⁸ See *History of the Ming Dynasty*, vol. 323, p.8378.

Borneo, which is a fabrication. According to the *Batu Tarsilah*, an orthodox historical document recognized by the Borneo royal family, Sultan Ahmad was the brother of Sultan Mahammad Shah, not Ong Sum Ping, and the third Sultan of Brunei was the very famous Sultan Sharif Ali (1425-1432, ن يلفعشر). The reign of Sultan Sharif Ali was the golden period of Borneo, and today's flag of Brunei originates from this monarch. Sultan Sharif Ali is not a woman, and in the Brunei royal family there has never been a queen as the ruler.⁹

The most reliable sources for this topic are the *Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty* 明實錄 (compiled by each of the emperors of the Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644) and the *Official History of the Ming Dynasty* 明史 (compiled in early Qing Dynasty, 1644-1911). This paper draws on the most reliable sources and the Ming Dynasty materials. After Ong Sum Ping's death, the Ming Emperor Yongle ordered Hu Guang 胡廣 (1369-1418, literati and Grand Secretary of the early Ming period) to write the epitaph for him. The essay that appeared in the *Ming Veritable Record* is included below. However, Ming and Qing historical works did not make any claims and just recorded what had happened in history. This paper examines the different views of the website in Chinese sources on Ong Sum Ping, thus the opinions of different websites will be highlighted and discussed.

⁹ See https://zh.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wong_Sen_Ping/b31>&oldid=73415653. For discussions on the *Silsilah*, see Annabel Teh Gallop, "Brunei Through the *Silsilah*, *Adat*, *Hikayat* and *Syair*: *Silsilah Raja-raja Brunei* Reconsidered", in Victor T. King and Stephen C. Druce eds., *Origin, History and Social Structure in Brunei Darussalam*, London and New York: Routledge Press, 2021, pp.73-110.

御覽首各論在廷庶民于來于始學堂

帝有詔取材于蜀神木之山岷峨是屬樞樞棟橑之百
圍神用呵闔以需于茲斧斤斯入林披薄欽凡厥所產悉
呈弗掩良材九孔曼且碩載而輸之萬夫之輅屬密峭
壁巖崇崇崇深谷給呀飛流怒深有礙厥途其石搜業徐
步曳武循履偵路方謨夷險屬虛架梁人力未施木忽宵

越閭逾壑磳磳如雷巨石漸碾隨竿以開維山有神維
神昭靈默驅六丁右相 皇明神衷顯宣嘉徵斯應以兆
基萬世永盛報神有典祀事孔宜爰作新廟歲以享之醴
清性膺運豆靜潔看羞維族總節有似春蘿蔚陀秋菊靈

胡公文集 卷九

芳標薦以時禮儀有章執事駁奔秉虔以對濟濟銷銷罔
敢或懈神之來享驅霆駕風騎以鳳凰驂以龍靈旗揚
揚神既降只鼓鍾鐸鉤神醉以喜神永宅茲時雨時暘春
和報易冷作報 皇德同天幽明畢被初制靈祠以誌
神祀礪石刻銘茲山臺俾頌宣 皇德永著神休

淳泥國恭順王墓碑銘

永樂六年秋八月乙未淳泥國王麻那惹加那乃來朝率
其妻子弟妹親戚陪臣凡百五十餘人至闕下上表貢方
物

上御奉天殿受其獻退即 奉天門召與楊象通其言曰併

壤臣妾能彼 聖化思親清光靡知忌畏輒敢塵瀆又曰
天以覆我地以載我

子以又軍我我長我幼處有安居食有和味衣有宜服利
用備器以資其生強不敢凌弱衆不敢欺寡非

天子孰使之然也

天子功德暨于我者同乎天地然天地仰而見謁而履惟
以進而難見是故誠有所不通僻陋臣妾不憚險遠洋詣
闕下以達其誠

上曰春惟天惟 皇考付子以天下子養民天與 皇考視
民同仁子其承天與 皇考付畀之重惟恐弗堪弗若汝

胡公文集 卷九

言則又頓首曰白

天子改元之初載臣國慶豐和山川之靈珍寶者雪然而呈
草木之不華者藹然而實異禽踰鳴而走獸率舞也臣國

人老曰中國 聖人德教流溢于茲臣土雖遠京師然為
天子氓故矜奮而來覲 上嘉其誠優待禮隆錫予甚厚初

賜宴于 華蓋殿既連宴于 奉天門每宴則命公夫人
宴其妻子內館嚴宴勅大官厚具飲食日命大臣一人侍

于所舍中貴人專其伴職其共張豐其廩餼入朝班次上
公寵渥至矣踰月王忽忽疾 上命醫賜善藥調治遣中

貴人勞問旦暮相繼日命大臣視王疾差劇聞小瘳喜見

顏色王疾爲語其妻以下曰我疾貽

子憂念脫有大故命也我備處荒微幸入朝觀

十聲光即死無憾死又體魄託塋中華不爲夷鬼所憾者

父

子子深恩生不能報死誠有負指其子曰我即不起其以兒
入拜謝

誓世世好忘

子思若等克如我志曷目無憾矣十月乙亥朔王卒得年

二十有八上甚悼之報正朝三日勅有司治喪具厚卹

典賜諡曰恭順遣使諭祭又遣使撫尉其妻子王之妻薛

胡公文集卷九

二四

使者曰乃下臣作薄弗克負荷

天子恩深不能終事且沒有遺命以世世毋忘

子思克守其言則死猶不死矣王之妻之言亦可謂賢也

已及月庚寅以禮塋王于安德門外之石子岡勅爲文誌

其墳王父曰麻那惹沙那旺沙母曰刺失八的妻曰他係

耶子一人曰遐旺甫四歲女二人以遐旺襲王爵賜以冠

服玉帶儀杖鞍馬服物器皿及金銀錦綺錢幣甚厚賜王

妻以命服珠冠白金錦綺錢幣諸物其餘賜各有差官王

之弟龜里難那耶惹施里微哈那沙那那滿哈耶三人俾

輔遐旺詔有司立祠于王墓置守墳者三戶勅建碑祠下

命臣廣製刻文臣廣仰惟

上綬軍年內茂揚天德薄博周徧凡日月照臨之地皆心

悅誠歸惟恐或後奉琛來贊之國綴集于庭歲以爲數浮

沈王去中國累數萬里一旦舉妻孥弟妹親戚陪臣浮鉅

海來朝不以爲難叩陛陳辭忠誠溢發其心堅確有如金

石至其臨終之言尤悽悽屬其下以不忘

天子恩聖德漸廣感動於人心其深如此於平盛哉惟王

諱聰明忠順之節始終一致宜其身被寵榮澤延後嗣用

紀其實聲爲銘詩昭示無極以彰王之所以受恩深厚者

由其誠也銘曰

胡公文集卷九

二五

大明御天臣妾萬方孰不來享孰不來王猗歟淳泥邇處炎

微感化來歸風騰雲起曰婦曰子弟妹陪臣秩秩藉藉趨

朴性姓跪曰

作我父母我生我樂

天子之祐戴天履地嗚呼此懷解頤育大明邇來獻誠

吁子曰吁千載宇內綏示子寧惟德同遠王拜稽首萬歲歡

呼服德懷仁春育海隅國有山川匪其室物靈發其藏不

毀而出往萬草木惟葉茶茶煙煙者華有實其著異禽和

首鳴排其羽走獸麋麋亦踰以舞國黃者曰

化所漸臣國雖遠臣心仰瞻

顏色王疾爲語其妻以下曰我疾胎

子憂念脫有大故命也我憐處荒微幸入朝觀

十餘光即死無憾死又體魄託葬中華不爲夷鬼所憾者

入拜謝
子思深恩生不能報死誠有負指其子曰我即不起其以兒

誓世世毋忘

子思若等克如我志瞑目無憾矣十月乙亥朔王卒得年

二十有八上甚悼之報正朝三日勅有司治喪具厚卹

胡公文集卷九

二四

使者曰乃下臣祿薄弗克負荷

天子思深不能終事且沒有遺命以世世毋忘

子思克守其言則死猶不死矣王之妻之言亦可謂賢也

亡是月庚寅以禮葬王于安德門外之石于岡勅爲文誌

其墳王父曰麻那惹沙那旺沙母曰刺失八的妻曰他係

耶子一人曰遐旺甫四歲女二人以遐旺襲王爵賜以冠

服玉帶儀杖鞍馬服物器皿及金銀錦綺綵幣甚厚賜王

妻以命服珠冠白金錦綺綵幣諸物其餘賜各有差官王

之弟施里難那耶惹施里微哈那沙那耶萬哈耶三人俾

輔遐旺詔有司立祠于王墓置守墳者三戶勅建碑祠下

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紀其賢聲爲銘詩昭示無極以彰王之所以受恩深厚者

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拜姓姓跪曰

作我父母我生我樂

天子之祐戴天履地噶此據解超會大明邇來獻誠

八子曰吁千統宇內綏小下寧惟德同遠王拜稽首萬歲歡

吁服德懷仁春育海隅固育山川區其室物靈發其藏不

汲而出荏苒草木惟葉茶茶煙煙者華有實其貴異會和

首鳴拂其羽走獸麋麋亦踰以舞國黃者曰

化所漸臣國雖過臣心仰瞻

子嘉悅粹以異禮宴勞楊素有厚而首云胡某月疾忽及之於然而後復悼而悲臨終之言謂其遺體死有弗忘十渾恩於平賢王卓特起遼西南諸蕃靡堪王匠生者誠歎沒有謚銘爵于王胤世世其承有墳如堂有祠翼翼以安王重其永無敵王雖不歸王開孔彰

天子思隆萬世有光

平安南碑

太祖高皇帝戡除治定以生以育六合之廣包舉無外皇帝聖智聰明文武經緯克續克承光昭前烈仁聲洋溢

胡公文集卷九

決人心降天極地咸肩至化罔不來庭安南南微近國受命為先其王日焜嗣其先王已歷三紀懷德慕義國人用康比其季年其陪臣黎季犛子澄者陰謀內訂殺日焜及其宗族殘酷其民奄有其國上表竄姓名為胡一元子名查詐稱陳氏絕嗣查為場求權署國事

皇帝聞民無屬不逆其詐始從所請未幾求襲王爵許之遂其奸謀益肆無憚惜大名改國號正朔弗承職貢弗修放劫邊境掠廣西太平等州縣侵雲南寧遠州進取歲金掠其羣斃糾給使令事聞

皇帝遣使諭以禍福乃上表曲辨益慢占城國王畏子新

立欺其幼以偽印冠服偏之受令附已背朝占城王執義拒不從疊加兵殘伐要貢殺士占城來告急復遣使諭之愈傲復無顧忌逾年安南王孫添平始遁至京懇其寬季犛聞之懼上表請迎添平還以國四年春遣使送添平歸達其境季犛伏兵殺之并殺使者

皇帝告群臣曰夷醜逞兇悖逆于天侵軼邊疆毒虐隣國殺主殃民罔知攸畏奉行天誅予不敢赦群臣咸曰蕞爾小丑醜敵不臣數其通罪浮於九伐天討所加不可以違

皇帝曰俞乃告于上下神祇誓罪致討曰能爾為征夷將軍將師由廣西伐其左以嚴為左副將師由雲南伐其右曰

胡公文集卷九

輔爾為右副曰彬曰旭爾為左右參將其神機遊擊橫海鷹揚驍騎五將軍各率所統以從曰能爾其總統之七月

癸卯

帝臨大江鴻臚遣師誓于衆曰予奉天行伐罪惟元兇爾其毋究武勿殺盛舉暨草木亦勿剪除有或違予命雖勞弗績且廢予罰能等頓首受命師行至龍州能遣疾薨以師授輔輔率師入境賊竄安以拒首攻按隘留棚遂進賊鷄相聞唐卷王富良江賊度不支奔其殺號七百萬退奔江南築棚城九百餘里戰艦數千餘艘阻江為險驅卒東之駕來拒戰展費縣道道出宣光江彬昇舟上流督

集 28—615

The Epitaph by Hu Guang on the King of Borneo in the *Ming Veritable Records*.¹⁰

¹⁰ Hu Guang, *Hu Wenmu Gong wenji* 《胡文穆公文集》 Vol.9, in 《四庫全書存目叢書》, Book 28, Jinan: Qilu Book Company, 1997, pp.613-615.

Claim 1: Ong Sum Ping is considered a traitor of China

The Chinese source says: "Four hundred years ago, the Chinese traitor was originally the general soldier of the Ming Dynasty, but the government established a new regime in the Ming Dynasty's vassal state of Borneo, became one of the founders of the new Asian country, and were buried in his homeland after his death; Later, it was occupied by Britain and Japan in turn, and was strongly invaded by Western culture, but the country was very rich, and the friendship with China was still indestructible. This traitor is called Ong Sum Ping, and the country is called Brunei. ”¹¹

According to the data, at the end of the Yuan Dynasty and the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, when Japan entered the period of division between the North and the South, the feudal lords organized wandering samurai to plunder and attack Korea, coastal areas of China and the South Seas. In the first year of Emperor Hongwu (1368), the Ming dynasty army captured the capital of the Yuan Dynasty, ending the rule of the Mongol Yuan in China, and Zhu Yuanzhang ascended the throne as emperor. However, at this time, the power of the Japanese was expanding and the emperor sent Huang Yuanshou 黃元壽, who was brave and good at fighting and had repeatedly performed miraculous feats, to the South China Sea to encircle and suppress the Japanese in order to clean up the country. Huang Yuanshou lived up to expectations, and inflicted losses on the Japanese in the Senping Beach area of the South China Sea. The emperor was very happy, and promoted Huang Yuanshou to the chief of soldiers, and gave him the name "Senping" 森平. After that, he led a delegation to visit Southeast Asian countries to promote the benevolence of the Celestial Empire. However, when Huang Senping and his entourage were about to make landfall at the mouth of a large river in East Kalimantan, they unfortunately crashed, most of them died, and the rest of them were seriously injured. At that time, there was not enough material support for the survivors to return to the imperial court, and the task of promoting national prestige had not yet been completed, It was feared that the emperor would severely punish them if they returned. Huang Senping simply stayed in the local area and worked with the surviving Chinese to expand his own independent regime. Soon after, Huang Senping became famous for his advanced

¹¹ See: <https://www.163.com/dy/article/FR7NJRHH0543KA44.html>.

technological knowledge and military skills he brought with him from the Ming Dynasty.¹² Ironically, Huang Senping became the predecessor of Zheng He, but there is no such record in the Ming literature.

It was said that at that time that the area where Huang Senping and his party were located was in the northerly part of Borneo. The country was weakened, and was often called upon to pay tribute to Indonesia in the south, and to the Sultanate of Sulu in the east, which is now in the Philippines. At the time of the change of power in Borneo, the newly succeeded king, Sultan Muhammad Shah, was ambitious and asked for assistance from Ong Sum Ping and the Chinese led by him, in addition to rewarding Ong Sum Ping with the title of "Maharaja Lela". The Sultan even married his daughter to Ong Sum Ping, and let his younger brother Ahmad married Ong Sum Ping's sister Ong Yuan Li 王元麗. Two regimes of different nationalities and unrelated to each other became close allies because of the marital association between the rulers. Over the next 30 years, the Chinese forces led by Ong Sum Ping fought valiantly to contain the influence of the Sulu Sultanate, and then expanded from the river region to the northern coastal areas, establishing a series of towns with Chinese characteristics, including Kota Kinabalu, one of the fastest growing urban sites in what is now Malaysia. And the unprecedentedly powerful regime condensed by two different forces is today's Brunei. As for Ong Sum Ping, some Chinese literature refer to him as a "Chinese traitor".¹³

At the beginning of the 15th century, Sultan Muhammad Shah died and was succeeded by his son Hassan. Ong was said to have served as "regent" with the elder brother of Sultan Muhammad Shah. Four hundred years ago, Hassan died, and the Borneo royal family fought fiercely for the throne, and finally Prince Ahmad, who was supported by Ong Sum Ping, won and became the next sultan., Ong's position and power in Borneo were further consolidated. "But later, with the invasion of the colonial powers, the Ong clan gradually withdrew from Borneo's political scene," the record says.

¹² Mo Longjia 墨瓏甲, "Brunei: The Country Founded by the Traitor Huang Senping Four Hundred Years Ago, and the Friendship with China Is Still Indestructible" 文萊：四百年前漢奸黃森屏所建之國，現與中國之友誼依舊兼堅不可摧, see <https://www.163.com/dy/article/FR7NJRHH0543KA44.html>

¹³ See Tengxin.com 騰信網, "The only foreign king buried in Nanjing, who was deeply courteous to Zhu Di, but his real identity was a traitor to China." 唯一葬在南京的外國國王，深受朱棣禮遇，真實身份卻是中國的叛徒。
<https://new.qq.com/rain/a/20211101A01V5C00>

There are many doubts in this part of the record. It is said that Ong Sum Ping returned to China, and Ong's influence was naturally reduced. According to the Chinese source: at the beginning of the 20th century, when Borneo made the national flag, there were two black and white slashes on the flag, referring to the two founding monarchs, one of which was Ong Sum Ping. This is all a legend, the two slashes (representing the two ministers who assisted the monarch) on the flag of Borneo have nothing to do with Ong Sum Ping., The flag of Brunei was only used in 1959.¹⁴

Falling leaves returning to their homeland have been an obsession in the hearts of the Chinese since ancient times. It is said that Ong Sum Ping, who had established a regime in a foreign country and lived for half his life there, still could not abandon his hometown.: During the Ming Dynasty he had betrayed the emperor's trust and failed to complete his mission. Two years after Sultan Ahmad took power, Ong Sum Ping left his sister in Borneo, and then led more than 150 of his followers back to China to pay tribute. At this time, it was the Emperor Yongle period of the Ming Dynasty, and Zhu Yuanzhang had been dead for many years. Emperor Yongle was very happy when he saw Ong Sum Ping, and specially allowed Ong Sum Ping and his entourage to enter Beijing. The emperor also set up banquets in all prefectures and counties along the way. However, after a long journey and at the advanced age of 67-year-old, Ong Sum Ping died suddenly in joy before he could fully appreciate the changes in his hometown in his later years. Before his death, according to story, he made three requests to the Ming emperor, one of which was to "bury the body in China". The emperor not only fulfilled his last wish, but also withdrew his forces from Nanyang, thus exempting Borneo from tribute. Is this Ong's last wish before his death? History has no such record. The Ming Dynasty's withdrawal of forces from Nanyang had nothing to do with Ong Sum Ping. This was because of the death of Emperor Yongle and his successor Emperor Xuanzong had different foreign policies, such as terminating Zheng He's voyage to the West, and abandoning control of Annam. It can be seen that the claims on the Chinese internet are not credible.

¹⁴ The national flag of Brunei is hot yellow, with black and white stripes diagonally on the flag, and the national emblem is painted in the center. Yellow indicates the supremacy of Sudan. The black and white diagonal stripes commemorate the two meritorious princes. The national emblem is red. In the center is a palm tree trunk with outstretched wings and a flag at the top of the wings, surrounded by a crescent moon hook tip. Symbolizes religion and the supremacy of the Sultan of Brunei. In the center of the crescent is written in Malay "Always under the guidance of Allah, all is well." The arms on either side of the pattern represent the people invoking Allah. The band at the bottom of the coat of arms reads "City of Peace - Brunei".

Claim 2: One of the founders of the modern state of Brunei

It is said that Ong Sum Ping (1339-1408) whose original name was Huang Yuanshou 黃元壽, was born in the Xichunpu 熙春鋪 City, Quanzhou, Fujian Province. Because of Huang's outstanding achievements in the fight against the Japanese at Senping 森平 Beach in the South China Sea, Zhu Yuanzhang, Emperor Hongwu of the Ming Dynasty, gave him the name Huang Senping, and he served as the envoy to Borneo. Huang Senping and his Chinese compatriots were famous in the local area. The people of Borneo refer to Huang as "Raja", which means king, in their custom, while the Chinese call him "Army General" or Chief of Army 總兵 according to the Chinese name. It can be seen that Huang established an independent Chinese regime and a strong military force in East Kalimantan. At that time, the area north of the Broken Hand River (refer to Kinabatangan River, in today's Saba) was controlled by Indonesia in the south, to which tribute was often demanded, and to the east by the Sulu Sultanate in the southern Philippines. The newly enthroned Sultan (Muhammad Shah) appealed to the Chinese forces led by Huang Senping for help and married his daughter to Huang Senping. He also gave him the title of Maharaja Lela (roughly equivalent to the "King of the Side-by-Side" in Chinese); The Sultan also had his younger brother Ahmad marry Huang Senping's sister Yuen Lai and gave her the title of Puteri Kinabatangan. The two regimes formed a close alliance due to the marriage relationship between the rulers. Under the hard work of Huang Senping and the Chinese army, the invasion was contained, and the Borneo kingdom avoided destruction.¹⁵

In 1370, Emperor Taizu of the Ming Dynasty of China had sent envoys from Indonesia to Borneo, which further strengthened the alliance between the Borneo State and the Chinese regime of Huang Senping. The Chinese developed from the Broken Hand River valley in the east to the northern coast, and successively established cities such as Geda Jinabalu (Kota Kinabalu in Malay) and other big cities. In 1402, Sultan Shah died and was succeeded by his son Abdulla Hassan. Huang Senping and Shah's elder brother, Prince Pengiran Temenggong were the regents of the state. Brunei history generally does not refer to Hassan as the second sultan. After the death of

¹⁵See the article "One of the Founders of the Modern Brunei State," 現代文萊國之創始人之一 in: <http://m.gulishi.com/renwu/huangsenping/>

Hassan in 1406, a series of political struggles ensued, culminating in Ahmad who succeeded as the second sultan in the history of Borneo.

Huang Senping, who had struggled in Nanyang for most of his life, had never forgotten his hometown, and his sense of identity with the Ming Dynasty. In 1408, Huang Senping personally led more than 150 subordinates to return to China to pay tribute in the name of "Maharaja Lela". Emperor Zhu Di of the Yongle period of the Ming Dynasty was very happy and ordered every prefecture and county along the way of the mission to Beijing to hold banquets to entertain them, so that they could see the changes in their hometown. However, Huang Senping, who was already old, had no energy to endure the fatigue of the journey along the road, nor could he bear the great joy of returning to his hometown. After arriving in Nanjing in October of that year, he died suddenly in December 1408 at the age of 67 due to overwork from the arduous journey.

Before his death, according to the record, he made three requests to the Ming emperor: first, "the territory belongs to the emperor", and the land in Borneo and the Broken Hand River basin will be included in the Chinese territory; second, is to "bestow the mountain at the back as a dependent territory of China", and named the highest mountain in Southeast Asia (now known as Mount Kinabaru, which means Chinese widow mountain) as the town mountain of Borneo; third, is to "entrust the body in China" and allowed oneself to be buried in China.¹⁶ The Ming Emperor Chengzu installed a tomb for him in Xianghua Village 向花村 in the east of Shizigang 石子岡 outside the Ande Gate 安德門 in present-day Nanjing, and he was buried according to the royal rites. According to the author's record on the website: his son Huang Kesun (Awang) 黃克孫 was appointed as the new king of Borneo; he gave the name "Changning 長寧 (Forever Peaceful)" to the back mountain of the Borneo country, and personally wrote the inscription, and ordered the eunuch Zhang Qian 張謙 and others to go south to carve a stone monument to mark it. In 1408, the new king of Borneo returned under the escort of the eunuch Zhang Qian. Zhang Qian and others went to the foot of Mount Kinabalu to carve a stone monument, and

¹⁶ See above.

also went to Java to convey the edict of the Emperor Yongle. There were no more requests for Borneo to pay tribute. Zhang Qian and his entourage returned to China after guarding Borneo for a year.

According to records, Huang Kesun, who returned to Borneo, still inherited Huang Senping's position and influence, and always had control of the political situation of Borneo, and the local Chinese still call him "Army General". Huang Senping's wife, Li Huiniang, died and was buried in Changning Town, so this mountain was also called "Chinese Widow's Mountain" by the local people. Huang Senping's younger sister Huang Yuen Li and the second Sultan Ahmad had a daughter, Huang Gui Gu 黃桂姑. She married Sharif Ali, who is not a native of Borneo, but an Arab from Mecca. In 1425, the second Sultan Ahmad died and was succeeded by Sharif Ali as the third Sultan of Brunei.

It is said that Huang Senping "tried his best to assist the Sultan internally, and to the Chinese, he was called the king of Borneo until the Wanli period of the Ming dynasty, and the relationship did not change." But there is an error in the record here. The son of Huang Senping, Huang Kesun, was not the new king of Borneo. When Huang Kesun returned to Borneo in 1408, he was under the command of Sultan Ahmad (1408-1425), and the history of Borneo does not record Huang Kesun's deeds. As for Ong Sum Ping, he was called the king of Borneo by the people at that time, but this was just a rumour. According to Ming records, the Ming emperor rewarded Ong Sum Ping's son with 100 taels of gold, 3000 taels of silver and many gifts from China. But the whereabouts of Huang Kesun and his descendants should be an interesting topic to explore.

Claim 3: Chinese descendant who went overseas to establish political power

According to the account, this person's name is Huang Senping, formerly known as Huang Yuanshou, and he was born in Quanzhou, Fujian. Huang Yuanshou was born at the end of the Yuan Dynasty and the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, when heroes from all over the country rose up and wanted to overthrow the rule of the Yuan Dynasty. Huang Yuanshou followed Zhu Yuanzhang, who later established the Ming Empire, and because of the former's years of hard work, Huang Yuanshou was appointed as the chief soldier of the Yunnan Tengchong Guard 騰冲

衛 after the establishment of the Ming Dynasty. At that time, China's southeast coast was frequently harassed by the Japanese invaders, who occupied coastal territories when the civil strife in China was at its peak. After Zhu Yuanzhang came to power, he immediately formed an anti-Japanese navy, and Huang Yuanshou, who was known for his bravery, became the general of the army, and led his troops to repel the Japanese invaders.

At that time, there was a country in Southeast Asia called Borneo, which was small and weak, and was victimised by neighboring countries such as Indonesia and Sulu. The Borneo Kingdom was overwhelmed, so it specially prepared an official letter to the powerful Ming Empire, hoping that the latter could help them defend themselves against foreign invaders. At that time, Huang Senping was on an envoy mission near Borneo, so Zhu Yuanzhang sent Huang Senping on the spot to help Borneo avoid the invasion of other countries. In order to win over the relationship with the Ming Empire, the Sultan married his daughter to Huang Senping, and let his younger brother take Huang Senping's sister as his wife. As a result of the marriage alliances, the relationship between Borneo and Huang Senping became closer.¹⁷

Huang Senping led the Chinese army and united the army of Borneo. With his outstanding military ability, Huang Senping and Borneo won a great victory, and Sulu was defeated. Indonesia no longer dared to make a mistake, and Borneo was peaceful for a long time. The king of Borneo personally named Huang Senping as the "king side by side", and enjoyed a lofty status under one person and above ten thousand people in the country of Borneo. In the following 30 years, Borneo and Huang Senping grew closely together and the relationship between the two sides had become almost a family.

It is recorded that during the decades of his time in Borneo, Huang Senping built many Chinese towns in the area, and the Chinese influence grew. After the death of the Sultan, Huang Senping became the regent of the Borneo kingdom. Later, he returned to

¹⁷ Baidu Baike 百度百科, "Huang Senping: He once went overseas to establish political power, and now 50,000 people are descendants of China" 黃森屏：曾遠赴海外建立政權，如今五萬國民為中華後裔。See: <https://baike.baidu.com/tashuo/browse/content?id=be8f726996f4987bab86384>.

China and led his family to meet the Yongle Emperor at that time, and according to the *Official History of the Ming Dynasty*, Huang Senping called himself the King of Manajajana. As the independent ruler of Borneo, Huang Senping was deemed a "traitor" of the Ming Empire. It was not until the arrival of the European colonizers that the country became a British colony and the name of the country was changed to Brunei. To this day, there are still about 50,000 Chinese living in Brunei, who recognize themselves as the descendants of the Chinese. Brunei's prosperity today is inseparable from Huang Senping's resistance to the aggression of other countries and the development of Brunei.¹⁸

The record and narrations of the Chinese literature are debatable. Only 10 percent of Bruneians are Chinese, 90 percent are of the Malay race, and no one among the Chinese recognizes themselves as descendants of the Chinese. Most of the Chinese do not know who Ong Sum Ping is.

Claim 4: Chinese general who fled to Brunei

Ong Sum Ping (Huang Senping in Chinese, 1339-1408) was a Chinese leader of the Ming Dynasty, a native of Quanzhou, Fujian, China. At the end of the Yuan Dynasty, the Central Plains was in turmoil, Huang Senping was the army general. Because the army provisions he escorted were lost, he fled to Nanyang with his sister and soldiers, and sailed to the mouth of a large river in the east of Kalimantan Island. When exhausted, there was a shipwreck, and someone broke his arm. The natives who later moved there called the river "Broken Hand River", that is, the river where the Chinese severed their hands. Huang Senping's soldiers stayed and built a settlement there, which developed rapidly. The Chinese spread from the Broken Hand River valley in the east to the northern coast, and successively established many Chinese settlements there. Ong's prestige was also immense, with the natives customarily calling him "Laja" (king) and the Chinese customarily calling him "Commander-in-Chief". At that time, Borneo to the north was harassed by the Sulu state, and the Sultan asked Ong Sum Ping for assistance. He also married his daughter to Ong, and his younger brother Ahmad also married Ong's sister. Ong Sum Ping was given the title of

¹⁸ See Yuan Shu 袁樹, ed. *History of China's Relations with the South China Sea*. Gansu People's Publishing House, 2017, pp. 259-260

"Maharaja Lela" (equivalent to the king side by side). Ong Sum Ping led the Chinese army to defeat Sulu and save Borneo. In 1402, the Sultan died, and his son Abdul Majid succeeded to the throne. In 1406, Abdul Majid died. Ong served as Regent of the country and his position in Borneo was further consolidated. Ong Sum Ping tried his best to assist the Sultan internally, and he was called the king of Borneo by the Chinese, until the Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty, and the relationship did not change.¹⁹

Huang Senping was born in the Cao Xiang 曹巷, Xichunpu City 熙春市, Quanzhou, Fujian Province. A Han Chinese, he was one of the founders of the late Yuan and early Ming Dynasty and one of his main achievements was the building of Brunei. Because of Huang Yuanshou's outstanding achievements in the fight against the Japanese in the South China Sea, Zhu Yuanzhang, Emperor Taizu (Hongwu) of the Ming Dynasty, especially gave him the job of envoy to Borneo (Kalimantan). Huang Senping and his Chinese soldiers developed the Broken Hand River Basin, and local people used to call him "Lala", which means king, and the Chinese call him "Chief of Soldiers". According to the Chinese source, Huang Senping established an independent Chinese regime in East Kalimantan. This regime retained a military force strong enough to deter its enemies and he established his kingdom in the area.

In 1402, Sultan Shah died, and his son Abdul Majid (Abdulla Jidhasan) succeeded to the throne and was overseen as regent of Huang Sen Ping and Shah's elder brother, Prince Pengiran Temenggong. Thus, Brunei history generally does not refer to Hassan as the second sultan. 1406 Abdul Majid passed away, and Prince Ahmad succeeded to the throne and became the second sultan in the history of Borneo. Huang Senping's position in Borneo was further consolidated.

Huang Senping, who had struggled in Nanyang for most of his life, had never forgotten his hometown, and his sense of identity with the Ming Dynasty. In 1408, Huang

¹⁹ See Baidu Baike, "Huang Senping: Brunei Chinese Leaders in the Ming Dynasty" 黃森屏：明代渤泥華人領袖； See also Yuan Shu, ed. *History of China's Relations with the South China Sea*, Gansu People's Publishing House, 2017: pp. 259-260.

Senping himself took the title of "Maharaja Lela". Together with 150 of his family and subordinates returned to China to pay tribute. It was the time of Emperor Yongle of the Ming Dynasty. The Ming emperor was very happy and specially ordered every prefecture and county on the journey of the mission to Beijing to hold banquets to entertain them, so that they could see the changes in their hometown. However, Huang Senping, who was already old and weak, had no energy to endure the fatigue of the journey along the road, nor could he bear the great joy of returning to his hometown. After arriving in Nanjing in October of that year, he died of exhaustion after a bumpy journey. Before he died, he made three requests to Ming Emperor Chengzu. The Ming Emperor Chengzu should set up a tomb for him in the turtle mountain place of Xianghua Village in the east of Shizigang outside the Ande Gate in present-day Nanjing, and he was buried with the king's gift. The emperor also appointed his son Huang Kesun (Awang) as the new king of Borneo; He gave the name of "Changning National Mountain" in the back mountain of Borneo, and personally wrote the inscription, and ordered the eunuch Zhang Qian and others to go south to carve a stone monument.

In 1408, the new king returned to Borneo under the escort of the eunuch Zhang Qian and the pedestrian Zhou Hang. Zhang Qian and others went to the foot of Mount Kinabalu to carve a stone monument and also went to Java to convey the edict of the Yongle Emperor: there were no more requests for tribute from Borneo. Zhang Qian, Zhou Xing and his entourage returned to China after staying in Borneo for a year.

Huang Kesun, who returned to the Borneo, still inherited Huang Senping's position and influence in Borneo, and has always controlled the political situation in Borneo: and the local Chinese still call him the "chief of soldier". Huang Senping's wife, Li Huiniang, died and was buried in Guoshan in Changning Town, so this mountain was called "Chinese Widow's Mountain" by the local people. In 1425, the second Sultan Ahmad died and was succeeded by Sharif Ali as the third Sultan of Brunei, and since then it has been passed down to the present-day Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, for twenty-six generations. Huang Senping and his family tried their best to assist the Sultan internally, and called by the Chinese the king of Borneo, until the Wanli period of the Ming dynasty, and the relationship did not change.

According to the literature, Huang Senping gave birth to a daughter, Huang Guigu, who married Ahmad, the second sultan of Borneo, in the eighth year of Hongwu in the Ming Dynasty. After Ahmad's death, Ong Sum Ping's daughter Huang Guigu succeeded to the throne and became the Queen of Borneo. Since then, the king of Brunei has passed on the lineage of Huang Guigu's female bloodline. After the death of the first Queen of Borneo, Huang passed the throne to her daughter born to the Sultan Ahmad. The second female Queen was married to a Sheikh from Arabia to Brunei, Sherif Ali. By this century, the kings of Brunei have been passed down for more than 20 generations, and they are all direct descendants of Huang Guigu, the daughter of Huang Senping. There is still a "Huang Zongbing Tomb" (Tomb of the Huang Chief of Soldier) in Brunei, which has been repaired in successive dynasties and is worshiped by the Brunei royal family.

The record here is untrue. There has been no female emperor nor Queen as ruler in Brunei's history, and it is not correct to say that Ong Sum Ping's daughter inherited the throne.

Reflection: Ong Sum Ping's place in Borneo's history

Looking at the above various views, they are all from Chinese website sources, believing that Brunei was built by the Chinese, and the Brunei royal family has Chinese ancestry, which is wishful thinking. More than 30 Bruneian students²⁰ were asked about the history of Ong Sum Ping, including Chinese and Malay students, and they did not believe it, thinking it to be just a legend.

It's a bit like the Chinese in Malacca, although there is the street Jalan Han Li Po in Malacca. The locals claim that they were the descendants of the 500 followers of the Ming Dynasty princess Han Li Po who married the Sultan of Malacca taking Admiral Zheng He's fleet. This is all fictional; on the one hand, there is no such princess in the history of the Ming Dynasty who married in Malacca, and there is no historical record. The second aspect is that Zheng He's voyages to go to the West do not match with the history of Princess Han Li Po. According to record, Zheng He had died when Han Li Po was married to Malacca.

²⁰ Students of AH-4310 Understanding China: Past and Present at the Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

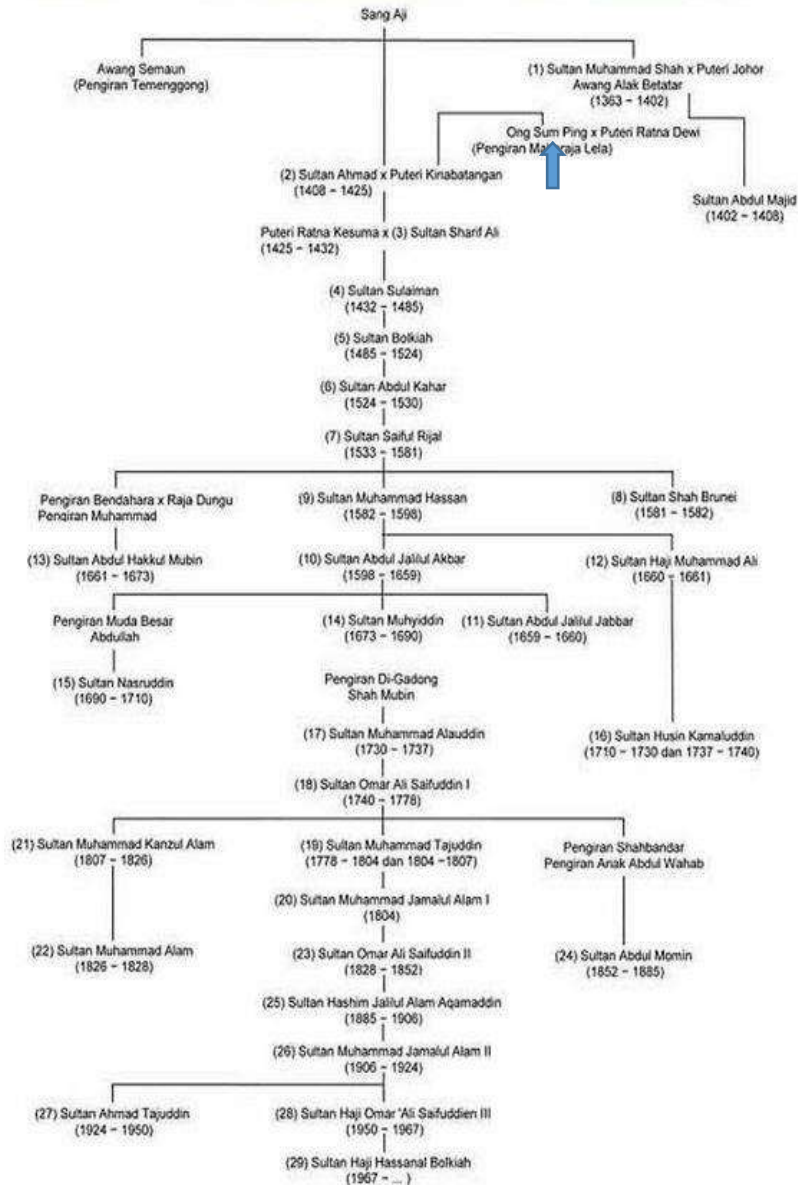
But the people of Malacca took it as a symbol of their identity, and it is cruel to shatter their dreams, and the legend becomes true over time. When the Chinese Prime Minister visited Malacca, Malaysia, they performed the musical "Princess Han Li Po" as a gift for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and China. Although it is a bit funny and inconsistent with the facts, for the sake of feelings, there is nothing to blame.

But the case of Ong Sum Ping is different from Han Li Po. Ong Sum Ping is a real figure in history. The lineage (*Silsilah*) of the Brunei royal family, there is indeed the name of Ong Sum Ping, who cannot be said to be a legendary figure. In Annabel Teh Gallop's paper, she mentioned that: "Ong Sum Ping, an officer of the Emperor of China, succeeded in his mission of stealing a jewel from the dragon of Cina Balu, but after a dispute with his Chinese companion, went on to Brunei and married the daughter Sultan Muhammad, succeeding him as Sultan Ahmad."²¹ That Ong Sum Ping stole a jewel from the dragon is mentioned in Chinese sources, but it cannot be true. The reason why Ong Sum Ping found favour with the emperor is mentioned above.

The four claims mentioned above are all from Chinese website sources. They all point to the fact that Ong Sum Ping was born in China and died in China. The claims shared many of the background as well as the speculations of Ong Sum Ping's role in Brunei history. There are a lot of repetitions in different websites, but it is difficult to say who copied whom. We can find that many of the sources have the same origin from history though the interpretations are different. They are based on the Ming and Qing historical sources but have different views. They represented different views of the authors on the person. What is not debatable is that the one who was buried in Nanjing, China, was not the Sultan of Brunei nor a Bruneian but a Chinese named Ong Sum Ping. We may say that Ong Sum Ping had contributed in defending the country from invasion, but it is a wishful thinking that Ong Sum Ping had helped to build Borneo. Borneo was there before Ong Sum Ping and continued to prosper after Ong Sum Ping.

²¹ See Annabel Teh Gallop, "Brunei Through the *Silsilah*, *Adat*, *Hikayat* and *Syair*: *Silsilah Raja-raja Brunei* Reconsidered", p.75.

SALASILAH SULTAN-SULTAN BRUNEI



Sumber: Pusat Sejarah Brunei, Kementerian Kebudayaan, Belia dan Sukan

Instagram: @HMjpubliemas



Signage of the Tomb of the King of Borneo in Nanjing



Memorial Hall of the King of Borneo Entrance to the Borneo King's Tomb

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