PhD Thesis Summary

**Study on the documents of Java
in *Siku Quanshu*
Historical knowledge and historians' point of view¹**

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PhD Public Examination, 09 January 2013

PhD in Chinese Literature

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation discusses various documents on Java collected in *Siku Quanshu* (Complete Library of Four Treasures). The documents used as the sources of this study are the ones with complete pictures and strong narration on Javanese recorded from Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD) to Ming Dynasty (1364–1644) in order to reveal what kind of historical knowledge or historical information is delivered by Chinese historians in general and what kind of point of view is used by historians to deliver the notes about Java. Through analytical reading, the readers will find that historians paid attention to three issues: the relationship between China and Java, the condition of Javanese kingdoms and their culture, and the Java land natural resources. People of China regard their country as an ancient country with long history of remarkable civilization which located in the centre of the world. The awareness of how important is their country, indirectly influences the historians' points of views. The texts analyzed indirectly prove that some areas on Java are culturally left behind and the countries beyond China, including Java, are the barbaric ones obliging their people to submit or

¹ From the original title: *Siku Quanshuzhong Youguan "Zhaowa" Wenxianzhi Yanjiu; Yi Zhishi yu Shijia Shijiao wei Fangxiang* (四庫全書中有關「爪哇」文獻之研究; 以知識與史家視角為方向)

pay tributes to the Kingdoms of China.

KEYWORDS

Java, *Siku Quanshu*, historical knowledge, historians' points of views.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

For centuries China have respected their history books and any matters dealing with history records, and this attitude of respect and of understanding the importance of documents makes the leaders in China consistently pay attention to book collection which in their opinion functions as a tool to achieve the perfection in governing a country. In the past periods, the emperors of China had a kind of policy to search various books and documents in numerous places, and even in the remote areas in his country to be saved, collected, ordered and then preserved in the palace libraries. This action unquestionably leads to a very positive attitude for both the preservation of scarce and important books in China, and a tool for scholars to do variety of researches.

In 1775, China during Emperor Qian Long (Qing Gaozong) from Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) conducted a big-scale project, commonly called *Siku Quanshu* (四庫全書) publishing, like a present encyclopedic book, to collect books or documents from numerous areas to be reprinted as a collection of scare and essential books and documents from all over China, which consists of a number of types of knowledge from both China and overseas. The way of recording the manuscripts again to be presented in the *Siku Quanshu* series uses the methods once implemented by the academicians in Ming Era in term of text analyses, commonly called *kaojü* (考據), as a descriptive and ordering method, a type of knowledge to seek facts and truths of the text content. Similarly, *Siku Quanshu* is designed to be a series of systematically and chronologically categorized books equipping scholars with the ideas that these books can be used as research reference materials. The active role and caring attitude of Qian Long on collecting and then publishing such ancient books prove that this government really understands the power and functions of books, and this attitude and understanding can be valued as the activities which are more than what several European countries paid attention to their publishing in the 16th -19th Centuries (Brookaw and Chow 2005: 17). In 1986 Taiwan Commercial Press had this hand-writing book photo-copied amounting 1,500 volumes (Ji 1991: 314), and in the next thirteen years, in May 1999, electronic *Siku Quanshu*, considered as the heritage of Chinese culture, was officially launched by Dizhi Wenhua Hong Kong Publisher in order to both globally disseminate this series and preserve it as the essence of Chinese culture (Zhang 1999: 21).

Upon the research of numerous documents on Indonesia within *Siku Quanshu*, Java and Sumatera are actually the two islands of Indonesia mostly recorded, presenting the real condition of these two islands, their traditions, government systems and relationships with China. The strong points on Java considered as a fundamental one: "In the south-east area of China Sea, Java is the centre" (Qiu 1995: 100), then, has led this dissertation to focus on the

discussion regarding Java as its key issue. Similarly, the notes on Java in *Siku Quanshu* can be considered complete with quite comprehensive documents about almost all kingdoms, important places, government conditions, nature, and traditions in Java. According to Bernard Vlekke, basically the ancient Indonesian history mostly discusses Java (Vlekke 2008: 6), and this statement is actually on the basis of what Javanese people wrote about Java, and “history” can be found in the documents their people leave in their origin to trace back the people and their own civilization. Vlekke, accordingly, argues that “history” can be digested as the records of the people and their achievements on the basis of the written documents (Vlekke 2008: 449).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

The documents on Java in *Siku Quanshu* carefully read leads to the idea that actually Java has developed itself to be connected to China for a long time. Besides bilateral relationship, what information or knowledge is delivered by Chinese historians through texts? When describing the condition of Java in the past, did these historians use a certain perspective? The answers of these two questions are revealed through text analysis results of these Chinese historians’ notes. Despite the language factor as a barrier due to the fact that these texts are written in classical Chinese (*wenyan wen* 文言文), certain number of matters which have not yet been well revealed are depicted in this dissertation. In order to get the complete understanding on the contents of the Chinese documents, the books on history written by Indonesian and overseas historians discussing the ancient Indonesian time are used as supporting information to gain the knowledge of ancient Java. Besides, several books especially those discussing ancient places names in various countries are used as references to reveal what is the recent names for these ancient places names presented in the documents.

LITERATURE SUMMARY

Books have unquestionably important roles for both writers and readers. Writers due to disseminate what they know, see, and search to the readers, they will use book as a medium. Books are the sources of knowledge and also function as a medium for someone who seeks for the knowledge s/he requires to recognize, and for enrichment of his/her knowledge. Someone who lives in the present era when has a desire to know the social conditions, cultural products, political situations, diplomacy relationship in the past, certainly looks for the relevant books with these issues to fulfill his/her needs. Books, due to these reasons, can function as agents to disseminate the past knowledge to the present day community in order to create a link between the past and the present times.

The process of producing books and disseminating knowledge to their readers is not that simple. Historians, in this case, have some certain reasons why they write their books and publishing books takes several steps. Historians are required to collect relevant information with the topics, conduct research

and make sure that the books fulfill the level of readability in order that the readers enjoy reading and digesting their contents. With regard of discussing history, method, and interpretation, William Leo Lucey urges that the task of historian is to make a heavy demand on his time and talents. There must be, first, a capacity for hardworking, guided by a deep respect for the truth and a habit of accuracy. There must be a sense of proportion, with evidence as the firm basis of conclusions. Lucey further argues that there must be an ability to understand the temper and atmosphere of an age without permitting the trends of the present age to control the selection of materials (Lucey 1958: 16). These arguments lead to the idea that historians have great number of responsibilities and the researches they conduct are not that simple. Because writing is also a kind of art, the historian must make a serious effort to write history as best as he can; if he mastered the art of writing, his book will be accepted both as literature and as history. Historian and social-scientist must not forget that their task is not completed until their findings have been communicated, until he has presented his findings either orally in lectures or in a publication (Lucey 1958: 13–14, 88).

What elements are brought with by historians when s/he writes a book? An article on the characteristics of historical matters and their objectivity written by Lionel Rubinoff argues that a history book principally contains the values of historical matters and objectivity despite the fact that this history book can still be influenced by the views of its writer themselves (Rubinoff 1991: 33–151).

The elements of history books mentioned by Lucey and Rubinoff are actually the same. Rubinoff states that the key issues are objectivity and perspectives; while Lucey believes that historians have to respect truth and do not allow trends of the present age to control the selection of materials. In other word, historians have to well pay attention to facts and keep on having real freedom to use the materials. This freedom must be determined by the historians' perspectives themselves.

The intention to learn the relationship between Indonesia and China in the ancient time and how Chinese recorded the condition of Indonesia, Chinese documents cannot be neglected. These two countries are in Asia and the efforts to reveal Chinese documents will certainly help us enrich the documents of Indonesian history with Chinese perspectives which are different from the Western or Indonesian historians' views. The same historical events differently written from different historians can be mutually filled as argued by Fu Sinian as follows: "A historical moment which takes place once may have different records and these records can be compared to a certain extent to get the one which is close to the truth; some events which have some similarities can be put side by side to get the main threads. History science is actually the knowledge of history materials with the methods of scientific comparison as the key to deal with numerous records" (Fu 2008: 2).

The records of different historians with various points of views are actually meaningful and can uniquely contribute to revealing and understanding the complete condition of a country. The objectives of recording historical notes

and the contributions given by ancient Chinese historians are principally the same as what the modern historians from other countries have done. Their intention in writing and producing the records of history is the continuous co-operation and individual contribution to the big pool of knowledge endlessly developing the understanding of the past and its interpretation (Twittchett 1997: xi).

Literature summary leads us to conclude that the hard work and intention of the historians in searching and recording in their writing help the readers to enjoy the precious knowledge of the historians and then to recognize the perspectives of their writing. Historians and their books have contributed their values to delivering past events to the next generations; the present readers, therefore, can have better knowledge on the traditions, social conditions and culture of their countries.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on the oldest three documentary narratives from Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD) to Tang Dynasty (618–907), we could find that the earliest relations or contacts were not mutual. The records were all about Javanese who went to China to pay tributes or respect, and there were no records of Chinese visit to Java in the early times. From the texts, we could determine that it was Java which took the initiative to build the relation, while the Chinese began their first journey to Java later in the seventh century. In *Hou Han Shu* (History of the Eastern Han Dynasty), chapter 6 “*Benji*” (Primary chronicle of emperor), and Chapter 116 “*Xinanyi Zhuan*” (Records of South-West Barbarian countries) it is stated that Javanese went to China in 131 AD when Yongjian Emperor ruled Han Dynasty.

On the sixth year of Yongjian Emperor (131 AD), King Bian from the kingdom of Java (Yediao) sent their envoy to pay tribute to China. And as a reward for this respect, the emperor gave Java King a golden seal decorated with purple silk ribbon.

The information above challenges Groeneveldt, who said the oldest record of Java can be found in *Records of Buddhist Countries* written by Fa Xian (Fa Hien), who by coincidence came to Java in 414 AD.

The first notice of this country (Java/Yepoti) is found in the itinerary of the Buddhist priest Fa Hien who, in the year 400 of our era, went from China to India overland and returned by sea to his native country, on which occasion he visited Java, in 414 (Groeneveldt 1960: 6).

Similar brief information on Javanese who visited China in 435 AD, when China was under the reign of Emperor Yuanjia of Song dynasty, is also written in *Song Shu* (History of early Song Dynasty), chapter 97.

In the year 435 the king of the country Zhepopoda (Java) whose name was Sri Paduka Aluopamo sent an envoy to present a respectful letter and some presents.

From this very short note, it could be seen that Java in different dynasty texts were recorded in three different names, namely Yediao, Yepoti, and Zhepopoda, all of which come from the Javadvipa name. Those names were used in texts before Chinese people travelled to Java, and the texts had not contained any description yet on how Chinese seafarers reached Java, nor was there any description about Java's condition. According to Liang Liji, Yediao came from the four-syllabic Yavadvipa's spelling that had been cut down to the two-syllabic Yediao (Liang 2012: 29). The way Chinese historians made note on Javanese names could be seen also in other texts of later periods. After searching some places in Java or names of people and some terms in the texts and read them carefully, we could see that these names had been written down directly from Javanese language spelling, instead of translated from Javanese to Chinese. Historians' inability to transfer the whole Javanese names or terms perfectly into Chinese spelling made these names sound strange, and they were not too easy to recognize. Here are some examples:

CHINESE SPELLING	CHINESE CHARACTER	JAVANESE NAME/TERM	NOTES
Pujialong	莆家龍	Pekalongan	city name
Hazhi Gedang	哈只葛當	Aji Jayakatwang	name of Daha kingdom king
Gelang	葛朗	Gelang-gelang	district name of Daha kingdom
bulatou	不刺頭	belati (beladau)	short knife
xili badalapu	昔里八達刺蒲	Sri Batara Prabu	term for King title
nala	那刺	ngalah	give way

Two hundred years later, judged from Old history of Tang Dynasty and New history of Tang narratives, we could conclude that Chinese people's earliest journey to Java happened in the seventh century. After the first experience to Java, where they saw the condition themselves, historians began to make notes on Java's geographical position and general conditions of the kingdom. Here is a short quotation about Java and its culture from New History of Tang, which never appeared in earlier documents:

Heling (Kalingga) is also called Shepo or Zhepo (Java). It is located in the southern ocean. There is Bali at the east, Batam Island at the west, and its south is a vast ocean. At the north of Java there is Zhenla (Cambodia). People of Java make fortification of wood, and the biggest houses are covered with palm leaves [...]. The land produces tortoise shell, gold and silver, rhinoceros-horns, and ivory. This country is very rich. There is a cavern which salt water bubbles up in natural way. They make wine from willow flowers or coconut palm, and when they drink it, they will soon get drunk. (*Old Tang History* wrote: made of coconut tree flowers and its taste sweet and intoxicating).

They have letters since earlier times and acquainted with astronomy. They eat without using spoons or chopsticks.

After Tang dynasty, descriptions on Java which appeared in Chinese documents, especially in historians' personal or private documents, became more complete and encompassed various aspects. One characteristic in those documents is that they always provide information on Java's natural resources. Also, we can say that Chinese documents are good references for readers who want to know more about Java's various plants or natural resources in ancient times.

(Java) climate is always warm, and harvest of their paddy fields are twice a year. Its grain is small. They have white sesame and yellow beans, but no barley or wheat. This country produces sapan-wood, diamonds, white sandalwood, nutmeg, long pepper, cantharides, the best quality of steel and iron, tortoise pipe and tortoise-shell. They have many strange birds, cockatoo as big as fowl, red-green orioles, the tailor-bird (beo) which all able to imitate human speech, pearl-chicken, the love-bird, colorful pigeon, peacocks, etcetera (Ma Huan, *Yingya Shenglan*).

Even though the description about Java's geographical position began from Tang dynasty (618–907), the complete description and the route from China to Java can be seen later from *Song Shi* (History of Song Dynasty), chapter 489. In the text's description of Java, it mentioned several places' names and made us sure that the journey to reach Java was through the east-coast of some south-east Asian countries.

Picture 1. The summary of the journey as recorded in the text of "History of Song Dynasty".

The route in Picture 1 could be said as a business route, since most of the places were ports or business towns.

Depart places: Quanzhou (泉州) or Guangzhou (廣州) → Kunlun (崑崙國) 'Condore', a small island in lower stream of Mekong River, Vietnam → Dashi (大食國) 'Tumasik', an old name of Singapore → Sanfoqi (三佛齊) 'Sriwijaya', South Sumatera → destination: 闍婆 (Zhepo), 'Java'

Depart from Java through: Sanfoqi (三佛齊) 'Sriwijaya' → Guluo (古邏) 'Kuala Trengganu' or Chailiting (柴歷亭) 'Cherating' → Jiaozhi (交趾) 'Annam', a small area in south Vietnam → return to: Guangzhou (廣州) or Quanzhou (泉州)

Other interesting things that worth noticing are how historians use some words in their books' titles or texts, especially when they categorized Java and described the relation between China and Java. The books' titles or even chapters' titles often categorized Java as a barbaric land. For example, we can take a look at the official history of the dynasty: *Old Tang Dynasty History* and *New Tang Dynasty History*, which put Java under *nan man* (南蠻) 'a South Barbarian' and *xinan man* (西南蠻) 'South-west Barbarian' categories. This *man* (蠻) word, even though it has another meaning: 'foreign country outside China', it means that the territory of Java does not belong to China, as it is referred to as 'barbaric'. In personal records, in which Java can be found, historians also used more or less the same titles. Zhao Rukuo titled his book *Zhufanzhi* 諸藩志 (Records of foreign barbaric countries), and Wang Dayuan gave the title *Daoyi Zhilüe* 島夷志略 (Brief records of savage islanders) to his book. The words *Fan* (藩) and *Yi* (夷) both have 'barbarous' or 'savage' meaning. Reader who doesn't have good knowledge of the Chinese culture will spontaneously think that these words mean that "Chinese culture and other countries' cultures belonged to different hierarchies", and other countries' cultures are not as good as Chinese. But, according to Qiu, the word *fan-guo* (藩國) in ancient times was used by Confucian scholars when they mentioned foreign countries outside China (Qiu 1995: 2-3), and in Confucius's era we should understand "China" reigned by Zhou Dynasty (770-221 BC).

In describing the relationship between China and Java, the terms that usually appeared in historians' descriptions were: *gongxian* (貢獻), *rugong* (入貢), or *chaogong* (朝貢), and *si/ci* (賜). The first three terms appeared in various documents since Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) to Ming dynasty (1368-1644), and all referred to Javanese people or envoys when they went to China to deliver goods. *Gongxian* means 'to offer something as a tribute', while *rugong* and *chaogong* mean 'envoy from a vassal state or a foreign country to pay tribute to the emperor'. In those three words, the status of foreign countries is lower than China. The specific term from China's side when they granted or bestowed a present or properties to other countries is *ci*. This word means somebody of a higher status or older generation grants a present or property to somebody of a lower status or of a younger generation. From the usage of these words, it is clear that the Chinese historians viewed "Java had lower status than China".

CONCLUSION

If we read the text's content and search for the historians' background, we would find out that the historians represent Chinese government officials or emissaries, merchants, shipmen, or religious believers (monks). Although the historians or writers had different occupational backgrounds, they had a good system in managing the materials. When they observed Javanese customs, traditions, and lifestyle, they paid attention to the part of customs which differ from their own. They sometimes made some cultural comparisons by using their own cultural standards. Historians' professional backgrounds would help them pay attention to some specific fields. For example, a Chinese monk who believes in Buddhism would make a note related to this religion, while merchants would always write about Java's local natural resources, and in great details. Historians' notes give Chinese readers some important information about various things of Java that could not be found in China. These documents also become the best materials for Chinese merchants to search for Java's merchandise.

As a non-Chinese reader, since the beginning I have known that language is the biggest barrier for me to read Chinese texts, because all the texts were written in classical Chinese. In the process of compiling, reading, and analyzing the texts, I found another barrier; it was the differences of my own Indonesian cultural background and Chinese cultural background. Because of these differences, when facing Chinese texts, which are full of Chinese cultural characteristics, I had to read the texts several times carefully. Historians, in writing and describing the relations between China and Java, often used or brought their own cultural points of view in their texts. For readers who live in these recent times, because of cultural and time distance, reading Chinese ancient documents would require a certain degree of comprehension. Without basic understanding of Chinese culture, it will not be easy to disclose the cultural values hidden inside the documents, and without this cultural knowledge, we would not be able to get maximum information from the texts. Therefore, a common language and ways of understanding cultural differences become major prerequisites in building a communication bridge between Chinese historians and myself (as a reader). If a reader has this basic knowledge of Chinese culture, they will then be easier to understand the information inside the texts. Here, I offer a communication chart describing the situation between historians and myself:

Qian Long Emperor of Qing Dynasty has already very strict to get the best scholars to join in materials verification for *Siku Quanshu*, but some data mistakes or errors could not be avoided and still appear in the texts. Furthermore, in some texts there are some descriptions of the same people or kingdoms using different writing-spelling names. Because the linguistic characteristics of the two countries are different, when Chinese historians had to write down Javanese kings' names or some places' name, and kingdoms in Java which are usually long-multi syllables, it would be very difficult for them to write those in Chinese characters that usually have only mono or two syllables. The result is that not only Indonesian people could not recognize these names, but it would not be easy either for the Chinese themselves, even though the texts are written in Chinese. Therefore, recently a lot of Chinese scholars have published books to verify and interpret many places names in different countries that appear in Chinese historian documents.

Materials on Java compiled in *Siku Quanshu* are very abundant and covering various fields. Chinese Historian records on Java which begin from Han (206 BC–220 AD) to Ming (1368–1644) dynasties afford various information and knowledge on Java: political conditions, natural resources, customs and habits, and cultural achievement. Indonesian modern historians often use Chinese historical materials that had been translated into English by foreign sinologists. Chinese historical documents directly or indirectly have helped Indonesian historians to get more information on Javanese culture, and help to reconstruct Indonesian history.

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