

China's Overseas links with Southeast Asia
As Reflected In Chinese Epigraphic Materials

1264-1800

Wolfgang Franke 傅吾康

China's maritime links with Southeast Asia goes back to early times. Relevant evidence has been provided by archeological finds excavated at various places, and by literary sources. The purpose of the present paper is to present some extant epigraphic materials in situ above the earth --excluding excavated and/or easily movable materials -- which may supplement and/or corroborate what is otherwise recorded.¹ The period covered is limited to the time from 1264, the date of the earliest known Chinese inscription in Southeast Asia, to ca. 1800 when the Western maritime powers gradually began to dominate China's links with Southeast Asia.

There are, in particular, four kinds of epigraphic materials for this period in our context:

- 1) Inscriptions on a stone or - on a few occasions - wooden slab set up for the special purpose of transmitting certain facts or events to posterity.
- 2) Tombstone inscriptions providing, in addition to a date and to the name of the deceased, sometimes information on his/her or of the ancestors' place of origin in China.
- 3) Wooden tablets, relevant mainly for their dates, less for the name(s) of the person(s) who donated them.
- 4) Bronze or cast-iron bells providing often the name of a deity or of a temple and mostly the date and the name of the foundry where they have been cast in China.

There are, in addition, a few other kinds specified in each case. Most of the materials are located in Southeast Asia, but some, in particular of the first kind, in China too. The scope of this paper, however, is limited to the Asian countries: Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, and Brunei, because the present writer does not have sufficient information concerning relevant materials on the Philippines and in the other countries of Southeast Asia.

As already mentioned, the earliest relevant material known is a tombstone of A. D. 1264 in Brunei discovered a couple of years ago.² According to the inscription, it is the tomb of a Chinese official, panyuan, from Quanzhou, Mr. Pu 泉州判院蒲公. The surname Pu was quite common at that time Quanzhou, pointing to Islamic Arab or Persian origin, as in the case of the famous Pu Shougeng 蒲寿庚. Mr. Pu, however, must have been a rather important personality - perhaps an official

mission from the Song government, which was eager to get overseas support in its struggle against the southward advancing Mongols. Otherwise he would not have gotten such a large burial site with a great tombstone, apparently shipped from China. This is, so far the only known Pre-Ming Chinese epigraphic monument in Southeast Asia.

No objects dating from the Yuan period are known so far, but a few from the time of the Ming Dynasty. The earliest one is the famous large bell at Banda Aceh in northernmost Sumatra, dated Winter Chenghua 5= 1469/70. It is called Cakra Donya, "The Wheel of the World", and various legends are attached to it. No exact information, however, exists as to its origin. Probably it has been taken as trophy by the Aceh Sultan Ali Mughayah Syah in 1524 after his victory over Semudera Pasai which had its center in the region of modern Lhokseumawe. Semudera Pasai, known in Chinese sources as Xuwendana 须文达那 or Sumendala, had in the 15th century closer relations with Chinese than Aceh(Lambri), Nanwuli 喃哑里, the ascend of which began only in the 16th century. Therefore, it seems possible that the bell originally went from China to Semutera Pasai. (I A 1.1.1)³

Three tombstones and a wooden tablet of the later Ming period have so far been located. The latter is dated Wanli 2:1574, restored in 1943, and kept in the temple Lingci shengong 灵慈圣宫, other name Lin guniang miao 立娘庙, at Pattani 北大年 in Southern Thailand. The authenticity of this tablet is not entirely beyond question. Nevertheless, it may be corroborated by the tombstone of Mrs Chen Shuqin 陈淑勤, dated Wanli renchen(20): 1592, discovered some years ago at the old site of Pattani town near the sea, and now kept in the Museum of the centre of Southern Thailand Studies, Prince of Songkla University at Pattani.⁴

The other two Ming tombs date from the first half of the seventeenth century only the tombstone of Huang Wei-hong 黄维弘 and his wife Xie Shoujie 谢寿姐 dated (Tianqi) renxu: 1622, is located on the Sanbaoshan 三宝山 Cemetery, Malacca (I E 1.18.1); and the tombstone of the first Kapitan of Batavia Su Minggang 苏鸣岗, from Tong'an 同安 (Quanzhou Pref.), dated Chorgzhen jiashen:1644, the last year of the Ming Dynasty. (II I 1.25.1). Both tombstones have been later restored. Further Ming tombs have been occasionally mentioned, but no definite evidence of their actual existence is available.

Several tombstones and a stone inscription of the second part of the 17th century, the Shunzi and early Kangxi reigns of the Qing Dynasty, are known to be extant: The tombstones of the first two Kapitans of Malacca were located at Sanbaoshan Cemetery: Zheng Minghong (Fang-yang), 1632-77, from

Longxi 龙溪 (Zhangzhou Pref.), dated 1678, restored in 1937, and Li Junchang 李君常 (Weijing 为经), 1614-88, from Amoy, and his wife, not dated, probably later restored. (I E 1.18.2 and 3). Likewise at Malacca is the stone inscription in honour of Kapitan Li Wiejing set up by 37 people in the temple Qingyunting 青云亭, dated 1685. (I E 1.1.1).- Three tombstones of people originating from Haicheng 海澄 and Nanjing 南靖 counties of former Zhangzhou Prefecture, dated 1661, 1677, and 1673, have been recently discovered at Kelapadua, near Banten, West-Java, Indonesia.⁵ The tombstone of a couple originating from Changtai County, Zhangzhou Pref., dated Kangxi jiachen: 1664, has been located at Ambon, Moluccas, Indonesia and another one at Surabaya, East-Java, Indonesia⁶ the date of which, however, is ambiguous, since only the cyclical date bingzi is given, and no reign name. Probably it refers to 1696. (II L 1.11.1).

A few objects with dates of the first part of the 18th century, late Kangxi reign, 1700-1722, have been located at the following places:

Malacca: Qingyunting Temple: A stone inscription of 1706/07 set up in honour of Zeng Qilu 曾其禄, 1643-1718, a Ming loyalist from Amoy and fourth Kapitan of Malacca. The text is composed by Chen Dabin, a metropolitan graduate of Kangxi 39: 1700. (I E 1.1.3). Moreover there is a wooden tablet written by Zeng Qilu, dated yiyou, 1705. (I E 1.1. 2). Both inscriptions as well as the above mentioned Qingyunting stone inscription of 1685 give only the cyclical characters. Due to internal evidence, however, there can be no doubt as to the actual date. The two stone inscriptions have, in addition, the characters Longfei 龙飞 before the cyclical date. Longfei expresses the inauguration of a new emperor. Some authors have argued, this expression indicates that those using it wish to avoid the actual reign name, as in our case Ming loyalists wished to avoid the reign-name of the Qing emperor. This is possible.⁷ There are, however, early Qing inscriptions where Longfai is written together with the actual reign name such as on a Shunzi 顺治 - reign name of the first Manchi emperor-bell in one collection of Zhenhailou 镇海楼, Yuexiu gongyuan 越秀公园 Guangzhou.

Cirebon, West Java:

Temple Chaojuesi 潮觉寺: Three wooden tablets, donated by the brothers (or cousins) Chen Bingyuan and Bingren 秉元, 秉仁, Chen Guolong 陈国隆, and Lin Juezhong 林爵, dated 1714/15 and 1718 (II J 6.1.1)⁸

Private Cemetery: The tombstones of Xu Gongxian 徐拱献 and of Chen Kuanguan 陈宽官, both from Longxi, dated 1701 and 1702 (II J 6.4.1; 6.5.1)⁹

Much more numerous are the objects of the middle and late 18th century, covering the reign-periods Yongzhen, 1723-35, Qianlong 乾隆, 1736-95, and early Jiaqing 嘉庆, 1796-1800. They have been located at the following places:

Malacca:

Temple of the Blue Clouds, Qingyunting (Cheng Hoon Teng): A wooden tablet donated by Wang Zongdian 王宗典 from Amoy, all dated 1786. (I E 1.1.10,11,12).

Temple Baoshanting 宝山亭: A stone inscription composed by Li Yiying 李宜纓, from Haicheng 海澄 (Zhangzhou Pref.) and set up by the priest Kunshan 昆山 from Kaiyuansi 开元寺 (Quanzhou or Zhangzhou?), dated 1795. Further a wooden tablet, dated 1798. (I E 1.2.1 and 2).

Sanbaoshan 三宝山 Cemetery: Six tombstones of people from Changtai, Haicheng, and Amoy with the surname Liu 刘, Qiu 邱, Lin nee Chen 林陈氏, Chen 陈, Li 李, and Lian 连 dated 1733/34, 74, 78,79, 84, 91, 98.(I E 1.18.4-10). The fourth one is the tombstone of Kapitan Chen Chengyang (Tan Seng Yeo) 陈承阳, 1703-84.

Penang

Guangdong Cemetery 广东暨汀州义山: Three tombstones of people with the surnames Zeng 曾 Wu 吴, both from Xiangshan 香山, Guangzhou Pref., and Li 李, from Jiayingzhou 嘉应州. Dated 1795, 96, 99. (II H 1.23.1-3).

Pulau Tikus Dabogong Temple 海珠屿大伯公庙: A stone censer, dated 1792, dedicated by Li Ci 李赐, from Malacca. (II H 1.1.1)

Pekan, Pahang, Malaysia:

Bogong Temple 伯公庙: A stone with the name of the deity Da Tand Bentougong shen 大唐木头公神. Dated 1763. (II O 5.1.1)/

Songkla 宋卡, Southern Thailand:

Wat Klaun 吴王庙: A stone inscription, dated 1799. ¹⁰ Leam Seon Cemetery of the Wu Family, originating from Xi-xing 西兴, Haicheng Pref.: Together six tombstones of (1) Wu Rang 吴让 (or Yang 阳), other name Shikuang 士侃, 1717-84, appointed governor of Songkla by the Thai King, dated 1789, and of his two wives (2) nee Liu 刘, not dated and (3) nee Zhuang 庄, dated 1785. (4) Wu

Wenyao 吴文耀, son of Wu Rang, dated 1789, and (6) Mrs. Shen 沈 nee Wu, daughter of Wu Rang, dated 1800, and Shen Yingyi 沈英义 son-in-law of Wu Rang, dated 1796.¹¹

Satun, Southern Thailand: A tombstone, dated 1800.¹²

Bangkok

Temple Yongfusi 永福寺 : A wooden tablet, dated 1795.¹³

Yuan Shengdi Temple 关圣帝庙 at Thonburi: Two wooden tablets, dated 1781 and 1786.¹²

Tanjong Pinang, Riau Islands 廖内, Indonesia:

Tianhou Temple 天后圣庙 : A deity tablet, dated 1779. (I 0 6.1.1).

The Ancient Cemetery at Seven Miles Stone 七条石旧坟场 : Four tombstones with the surnames of Hong nee Lin 洪林氏, Chen nee Huang 陈黄氏, Wang 王, Xu 许, dated 1773/74, 1775, 77, 83. (II C 6.6.1-4). Unfortunately, however, only the the village names of the deceaseds' origin in China are given, allowing no exact regional identification.

Falembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia

Ancient Cemetery 老华人义山 : Three tombstones of a common tomb, dated 1784. (II F 1.9.1)

Jakarta(Former Batavia):¹⁴

Temple Jindeyuan 金德院 : An inscribed altar, donated by Fan San 范三, dated 1724, and four wooden tablets, dated 1754, 56, 67, 69. (II I.1.2.1-2).

Fengshan Temple 凤山庙 : A wooden incense burner, donated by Wang Tianci 王天赐, from Amoy, dated 1751, a wooden tablet, donated by the Changtai Association, and a pair of wooden tablets, dated 1784. (II I 1.1.1-3).

Dabogong Temple of Anchol 安植大伯公庙 : Three wooden tablets, dated 1755, 56, 61. (II I 1.3.1).

Temple Dizangyuan 地藏院 : A stone inscription commemorating the foundation of the new cemetery of Gunung Sari 牛郎沙里. (II I 1.4.1).

Chen Ancestral Temple 陈氏祖庙 : Two wooden tablets, dated 1765 and 1769. (II I 1.5.1).

Luban Temple 鲁班宫 : A wooden tablet, dated 1794. (II I 1.7.1).

Tianhou Temple 天后宮 : A pair of inscribed stone lions, dated 1788, and a stone censer, dated 1787. (II I 1.6.1-2).

Courtyard of National Archives: A stone inscription from the former Hospital Yangjiyuan 养济院 with a list of donors for the restoration of the Hospital in 1799. (II I 1.8.1).

The Islamic tombstone of a certain Mrs Cai 蔡 , dated 1792, in the courtyard of the mosk of Kebun Jeruk, and the tombstone of Mr and Mrs Wu, nee Ke 柯 , dated 1781, a remainder from the Gurung Sari Cemetery (II I 1.23.2-3).¹⁵

Further in West-Java

Banten: Tombstones in the Museum and nearby: Eight tombstones of people with the surnames Gao 高 , Lin, Cai, Huang, Guo 郭 , and Dai 戴 from Nanjing 南靖 (Huizhou Pref., Guangdong), Pinghe 平和 and Changtai (both Zhangzhou Pref.), dated 1754, 59, 81, 84, 91, 95, 97, 99. Several of these tombstones show the names of female descendants of the deceased. (I II J 2.2.1-7; 2.3.1).¹⁶

Cileungsi

Guan Yin Temple 观音亭 and Xuantan 玄坛庙 : The tombstones of Lin Zhuida 林追达 , dated 1751, and of Mr Huang, from Longxi, dated 1789. (III J 5.1.1-2).¹⁷

Cirebon

Temple Chaojuesi 潮觉寺 : An inscription of two stone slabs set up on the occasion of the restoration of the temple in 1790 and of donations made for this purpose. At the end of the second part a detailed statement of the expenses for the restoration word is given-the earliest specimen of this kind so far is known in Southeast Asia. Moreover a wooden tablet, donated by Kapitan Chen Yueying (Tan Gat Ing) 陈曰英 , from Longxi, dated 1790. (II J 6.1.1-3).¹⁸

Ancestral Temple 义祠 : A wooden tablet, donated by Chen Yueying (see above), dated 1790. (II J 6.2.1). 陈三才

Private Cemetery: The tombstone of Tumanggung Chen Sancai (Tan Sam Tjaij), from Longxim and his wife nee Lai 赖 , dated 1765. (II J 6.5.2)¹⁹

Indramayu:

Yanqing Temple 晏清庙 : Thirteen tombstones of people with the surnames Zheng 郑, Xie nee Chen 谢陈氏, Lin, Huang, Chen nee Lin, Wei 魏, Liu, Wang, originating from Haicheng, Longxi, Nanjing, Zhao ‘an, dated 1745, 50,54,60,78,86,89,90,94,95,96,97. Some are set up by the daughter(s) of the deceased. In traditional China usually female descendants were not entitled to set up tombstones for their elders. (II J 7.2.1-13)²⁰

Tanjung Kait

Cemetery of Kebon Baru: The tombstone of Mrs Su nee Luwuchi 苏卢武吃, the Indonesian, probably Balinese spouse of a Chinese, dated 1747. (II J 11.3.1)²¹

In Central Java:

Samarang:

Sanbao Temple 三宝洞 : A now cemented, former wooden tablet, donated by Lin Ze 林泽, dated 1724; a short stone inscription, donated by Kapitan Chen Wenhuan(Tan Boen Hwan, Tan Eng) 陈文煥, from Longxi, dated 1768; two wooden tablets dated 1794/95. (II K 1.1.1-3.)²²

Zehai Temple 泽海宫: Two wooden tablets, dated 1747 and 1783, the latter written by Zeng Bicheng 曾必成, from Haicheng. (II K 1.2.1)²³.

Houfu Temple 厚福庙 : An inscribed wooden altar, dated 1784. (II K 1.3.1)

Dongbi Temple 东壁庙 : A wooden tablet, dated 1782. (II K 1.11.1).

Common Tomb Site 同归所 : The collective tombstone and a pertinent stone inscription, both dated 1797. (II K 1.12.1-2)²⁴.

Lasem:

The tomb-site with the tolmestone of Han Chundu 韩纯笃, alias Han Songgong(Siong Kong) 松公, 1673-1743, from Longxi, dated 1768. (II K 11.4.1)²⁵

Tegal:

Cemetery: Seven tombstones with the surnames Xiao 肖, Wu, Ye 叶, Cai nee Chen, Su 苏, Chen, originating from Long-xi, Changtai, and Haicheng, dated 1755, 61, 65, 67, 69, 82, 99.(II K 23.2.1-7).²⁶

Ulujamei:

The tombstone of Wu Zuguan 吴祖官, from Nan'an 南安 (Quanzhou Pref.), dated 1773.(II K 25.2.1).

Yogyakarta:

Sendowo Cemetery: The tombstone of Mr. Guo 郭, set up by the deceased's daughter, dated 1799.(II K 28.3.1)²⁷

In East Java:Surabaya:

Pasar Bong Cemetery: The tombstone of Kapitan Han Zhensi 韩振泗, 1727-1778, from Longxim and his wife nee Chen. Dated 1778. (III L 1.10.1).

Banyuwangi:

Hutang Temple 护唐庙: A wooden tablet, dated 1784. (II I 3.1.1)²⁸

Paciran:

The tombstone of Mr Chen, from Haicheng, dated 1762. (II L 14.1.1).

Sumenep, Madura:

The tombstone of Mr Wang and his wife, nee Fang, dated 1794. (II L 19.2.1)²⁹

Tuban:

Museum: The tombstone of Mrs Shen nee Lu 沈卢氏, dated 1773. (II L 20.3.1)

In the Outer Islands:Pontianak, Northwest Kalimantan (Borneo):

Sansheng Temple 三圣庙: A bell, dated 1789/90. Besides the Aceh Bell(see above) and a bell, dated 1745, in the Tianfugong 天福宫 of Singapore, this is the oldest Chinese bell, so far located in Southeast Asia. Since it is dedicated to the main deity of the temple, Dabogong 大伯公, not popular in China, we may assume that the bell was made for temple at Pontianak. The date 1745, however, precedes the foundation of Singapore and of Tianfugong and therefore, must have been brought from elsewhere.³⁰

Ambon, Moluccas:

At various places six tombstones have been located, dated 1736, 38, 48 and 69.³¹

This short survey of epigraphic materials shows - disregarding the two pre-16th century inscriptions - that within the region dealt with, from the 16th century on to 1800 there were several centres of communication between China and Southeast Asia and of Chinese settlement; Malacca on the west coast of the Malay peninsula; Southern Thailand: Pattani, later Songkla on the east coast; that Riau Islands and Palembang, the northern coastal area of Java, in particular the Banten and present Jakarta area; and the Moluccas: Ambon. As far as the epigraphic materials present information on the place of origin of the Chinese settlers, the majority came from Southern Fujian, in particular from former Zhangzhou Prefecture, most from Longxi, Haicheng, and Changtai, less from the other counties. Others came from Tong'an, including Amoy, and Nan'an counties of Quanzhou Prefecture. Very few inscriptions refer to Guangdong origin: Haifeng in former Huizhou Prefecture at Banten, Xiangshan in Guangzhou Prefecture, and Jiaying Independent Department on three late 18th century tombstones in Penang. The epigraphic materials, however, give no information so as to the Chinese ports wherefrom the Chinese came to Southeast Asia; probably most were travelling via Amoy, except those from Guangdong province. All in all, the materials presented in this paper confirm once again the lively communications between China and Southeast Asia before the 19th century.

NOTES

Abbreviations

Franke-Chen: Wolfgang Franke & Chen Tieh Fan, Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Malaysia, 3 vols., Kuala Lumpur 1982-87.

Franke-Salmon: Wolfgang Franke, Claudine Salmon, Anthony Siu, Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia, vol. I, Singapore 1988; vol. II Forthcoming.

Franke, 1976: W. Franke, "Chinese Epigraphy in Thailand: A Preliminary Report". Chinois d'Outre-Mer. Actes du XXIX Congrès international des Orientalistes, Paris, Juillet 1973. Séminaire organisé par Denys Lombard, Paris 1976, pp. 29-53.

Salmon, 1976 : Claudine Lombard- Salmon, "A propos de quelques tombes chinoises d'Indonésie des XVIIe et XVIIIe Archipel 12 : 1976, pp. 207-218.

Wu Yulin, 1968 : 吴翊麟 Songka zhi 宋卡志 , Taiwan 台湾商务印书馆 .

Wu Yulin, 1985 : Xiannan bielu 暹南别录 , ibid.

JSSS : Journal of the South Seas Society, Nanyang Xuebao 南洋学报 , Singapore.

¹ For more details see Franke-Chen, Introduction pp.1 ff.

² W. Franke and Chen Tieh Fan ; "A Chinese Tomb Inscription of A.D. 1264, discovered recently in Brunei", Brunei Museum Journal 3:1, 1973, pp 91-99.

³ The numbers in square brackets behind each item refer in the case of places in Malaysia to Franke-Chen, and in the case of places in Indonesia to Franke-Salmon. The Roman numbers at the beginning refer to the relevant volume. In these works a photo, a transcript of the Chinese text, an abstract in English and further references for each item are given.

⁴ See W. Franke, "A Chinese Tombstone of 1592 found in Pattani", JSSS 39: 1984, pp. 61-62.

⁵ See Claude Guillot, Lukman Nurhakim, Claudine Salmon, "Les sourciers chinois de Kelapadua, Banten, XVIIe siècle. Textes et Vistiges. ", Archipel 39: Paris 1990, pp. 139-158.

⁶ Salmon, 1976, pp. 207-218: W. Franke, "Notes on the Chinese Community at Ambon-Epigraphic Evidence and Present Conditions", Nanyang yu Zhongguo 南洋与中国 , South Seas Society, Singapore 1987, pp. 204-205.

⁷ Cf. Jao Tsung-I 饶宗颐 , "The problem of Lung-fei and Chang-lian 龙飞与张璠问题辨正", JSSS 29: 1974, pp. 11-12.

⁸ Further Franke, 1974, pp. 36 and 41-42.

⁹ Further Franke, 1974, pp. 36 and 42; Salmon, 1976.

¹⁰ Wu Yulin, 1968, pp. 124-125; 1985 pp 159 and 162; Franke, 1976, pp. 31 and 34.

¹¹ Wu Yulin, 1968, pp. 1-7; 1985, pp. 32-44. See also the review of the former book by Harald Richter in Oriens Extremus 20: 1973, pp. 243-248; Franke, 1976, pp. 29 and 34.

¹² A photo is in the possession of the author, but not accessible at the time this paper is written.

¹³ Franke, 1976, pp. 32 and 34.

¹⁴ Further Franke, 1974, p. 35; Cl. Salmon and Denys Lombard, Les Camnoisde Jakarta. Temple et vie collective, Paris 1977.

¹⁵ Further Hibino Takeo 日比野丈夫 , "Jakarta no Gunung Sari gisho-hi ni tsuite ジャカルタの牛那沙里义士家碑について" Nampo Bunka 1: Tenri 1974, pp 41-55.

¹⁶ C. et D. Lombard-Salmon, “A propos de quelque steles chinoises recemment retrouvees a Banten(Java ouest)” *Archipel* 9 : 1975, pp. 99-127 ; Franke, 1974, pp. 32 and 35.

¹⁷ Further Franke, 1974, pp. 35 and 44.

¹⁸ Ibid. p.36

¹⁹ Ibid p.36; Salmon, 1976.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 36.

²¹ Further Salmon, 1976.

²² Further Franke, 1974, pp. 36 and 43.

²³ Ibid. p. 36.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 37; Salmon 1976.

²⁵ Ibid. pp. 37 and 44.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 36.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 38.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 39. There a wrong date is given: 1781 instead of 1784.

²⁹ Ibid. pp. 39 and 44.

³⁰ Ibid. pp. 34 and 43.

³¹ Salmon, 1976; W. Franke, 1987. See note 6.