Pre-modern Chinese Sources in the National History of Brunei: The Case of Poli

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Abstract
The article deals with the appropriation of pre-modern Chinese sources by R. Nicholl and others for the national history of Brunei. It provides an analysis of the relevant sources and argues that Poli, a country described in the Chinese texts, was not a precursor of Brunei.

Keywords
pre-modern Chinese historical texts, pre-modern historiography China, modern historiography Brunei, fabrication of history Brunei, Poli

Introduction: The State of History in Brunei Darussalam
Since acquiring independence from Great Britain in 1984, local and expatriate scholars have worked to create a national history for the modern sultanate of Brunei located in northern Borneo, one of the last existing absolute monarchies. By far the most active writer on Brunei history has been Robert Nicholl, who had been in the service of Sarawak but transferred to Brunei when his services where no longer required in Sarawak. It was largely due to his efforts that the national history incorporated pre-modern Chinese descriptions extending the existence of pre-Islamic Brunei to the sixth century. Among the places described by the Chinese sources were Poli 婆利, Jinlipishi 金利毗逝, Shilifoshi 室利佛逝, and Boni 渤泥 (also 勃泥), all of whom Nicholl (who lacked expertise in classical Chinese and relied on translations only) identified as precursors of Brunei. Nicholl’s

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1 On Nicholl and his scholarly work see Horton 1995.
2 For a critical discussion of the entries on Boni in Chinese works see Kurz 2011.
history—presented in an unpublished work—established long standing relations between ‘ancient’ Brunei and the imperial court in China without any solid textual, archaeological, or other evidence to support it. Nevertheless, it has been accepted generally by most local Bruneian historians and has been incorporated into the national history without much further questioning.

In Brunei, whose small population has thrived on oil profits, ideas of nationalism are actively supported by a number of government agencies, among which two deal with the history of the country.

The Brunei History Centre (Pusat Sejarah Brunei) was established in 1982, two years prior to the proclamation of independence from British rule that had existed since the installation of a residential system in 1906. The Brunei History Centre regularly publishes work on Brunei history following and reinforcing guidelines set up by the national ideology of a Malay Muslim Monarchy (Melayu Islam Beraja, MIB) in its Jurnal Darussalam. The Academy of Brunei Studies (Akademi Pengajian Brunei) was founded in 1990 as an independent research unit within the national university, Universiti Brunei Darussalam (established in 1985), but since has mostly contributed to the teaching of MIB.

Like the Brunei History Centre the Academy of Brunei Studies watches over the correct interpretation of Brunei history. Both institutions are state-sponsored and are part of the government structure, and their members who are government officers themselves are bent to reproducing history accurately.

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3 The manuscript, produced in the 1980s, entitled “Sources for the early history of Brunei” that Dr. Hj. Yusop Bin Hj Damit kindly provided is unpaginated. Nicholl numbered entries and counted pages within the individual entries. He briefly refers to the question of Poli and Borneo in Nicholl 1980:221.

4 Mohammed Jamil Al-Sufri states: “… Brunei… had diplomatic relations with China in the years 517, 522, 616, 630, and 699 AD… (Mohammed Jamil Al-Sufri 2000b:1)” In the footnote to this statement he refers to Groeneveldt 1960:80. As a matter of fact, Groeneveldt does not mention Brunei there, but translates passages on Poli. Jamil Al-Sufri repeated his allegations about the early history of Brunei in another publication (Mohammed Jamil Al-Sufri 2000a:1-4). Derek Heng similarly mentions five embassies from Poli to China giving Wolters 1967:214, as a reference (Heng 2009:23). Pages 214-218 in Wolters’ book are, however, dedicated to a study of the country of Ho-ling (Heling) and not Poli. The correct page number is 164.

Graham Saunders also cursorily touches upon the Poli question (Saunders 1994:14-15).
based on the accepted historical account. Apart from the two government agencies, Brunei also has a historical society (Pesabar) which functions as another means to uphold the principles of MIB. The national history as published in articles, books, and school textbooks nationally is not a continuous narrative, but organizes ‘facts’ and ‘evidence’ in a chronological manner which facilitates memorization.

It seems strange that in the late twentieth century a country in South-East Asia should have adopted a form of history-writing that developed in Europe during the rise of nation-states in the nineteenth century. At a time when nationalist histories in Europe have been replaced by more sophisticated works applying different concepts to the understanding of states and societies since the end of the Second World War, one would have thought what has been termed ‘unashamedly apologetic historiography’ (Berger, Donovan, Passmore 1999:6) had disappeared for good. However, the national history in effect is one of the pillars upon which the administration of the absolute monarchy rests, as official historians are indistinguishable from government officials.

Apart from the national history as a means to create an awareness of belonging among the population, there are a number of holidays to celebrate the religion, the nation, the state, and the ruler, such as the Prophet Mohammed’s birthday, Independence Day on 23 February, Armed Forces day on 31 May, and the Sultan’s birthday on 15 July. These all help to support the idea of MIB and together with the national history constitute a

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5 See for instance the papers produced by local scholars contained in Davies 1996. All of these reiterate the early history of Brunei along established lines such as Abdul Latif bin Haji Ibrahim 1996 who relies heavily on the third-hand interpretations of pre-modern Chinese texts.

6 Their latest publication is a collection of working papers entitled Menyusuri sejarah nasional: Kumpulan kertas kerja seminar sejarah Brunei, edited by Md Hadi bin Muhammad Melayong and Hj Rosli bin Hj Ampal (Bandar Seri Begawan: Yayasan Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah dan Persatuan Sejarah Brunei, 2010). I would like to thank my colleague Dr. B.A. Hussainmiya for pointing me to and providing this publication.

7 On how anthropology served the national enterprise in Brunei, see the informative essay by Frank Fanselow 2013.

8 Some of the ideas expressed below have been inspired by Berger, Donovan, and Passmore 1999:3-14.

9 Full independence was granted on 1 January 1984. The reasons why the national day is feted in February are not clear to me.
deliberate means to define the state and the nation very narrowly and to reinforce an exclusive definition of the form of government (Monarchy), the ethnic composition of the population (Malay), as well as the main religion (Islam).

It is in this vein that one has to understand Mohammed Jamil Al-Sufri, the current head of the History Centre, who defined the purpose of the national history to emphasize the importance of the Brunei Malays, Islam, and the sultanate. He furthermore established ‘criteria’ which should be followed by ‘history writers in Brunei’ [sic!]:

1. An endeavour for the truth, and a balanced approach relevant to the political, economic, social, and cultural traditions, and the thinking of the people, leaders, and rulers of Brunei.
2. Studies of history should focus on meeting the overall objective of creating one national identity and one Brunei Nation based on the philosophy of Malay Islamic Monarchy (Mohammed Jamil Al-Sufri 1996:32, 43).

Hence history was and still is pressed into a constricted framework that was and is defined by MIB. Reflections about the consequences of such a limited view of history like the exclusion of the history of ethnic minorities do not occur publicly and are subject to MIB anyway. Currently unthinkable in the Brunei context is an open and intellectually stimulating discourse on national history such as exemplified in the Writing the Nation Series, which at present comprises six large volumes whose publication is supported by the European Science Foundation.

Whereas in Europe in the nineteenth century, national histories were contested by variant histories, the field of historiography in Brunei has remained remarkably static. This is understandable in so far as the national character of the country is subsumed under ‘peace, harmony, and prosperity’ and the voicing of critical attitudes in the public arena would severely endanger this ideal state of affairs. Works that have dealt with Brunei history and have been deemed as ‘sensitive’ in nature, that is, those that challenge the official national history, are known to have been banned from sale in Brunei. Brown observed in the late 1980s already that “outsiders produce more history and historical materials on Brunei than do Bruneis” (Brown 1988:75).
In addition to its obvious political function, the national history presents Brunei as the oldest documented state in Southeast Asia with an unbroken line of Islamic rulers from the reign of the first sultan Muhammad Shah who allegedly ruled from 1363 to 1402 to the present twenty-ninth sultan Hassanal Bolkiah who ascended the throne in 1968. All Brunei sultans were already numbered when information on a ruler of Boni (渤泥, 勃泥), another purported early Brunei sultan, reached the relevant history institutions in the 1980s. With the adoption of Boni through Brown’s identification of Boni with Brunei (Brown 1972) Brunei’s early history reached back to the tenth century. It was Nicholl who made the connection between the Boni ruler and Brunei (Nicholl 1984:35-45). This ruler was found to have traveled to Nanjing, the then capital of Ming China, and upon his death there in 1408 received a mausoleum which can be visited today within the Brunei-China Friendship Park south of Nanjing. Mohammed Jamil Al-Sufri ‘identified’ him as a Brunei sultan by the name of Abdul Majid Hassan (ruled 1402-1408) (Mohammed Jamil Al-Sufri 2000b:42).

The alleged sultan who in the Chinese texts is referred to as Manarejiana 麻那惹加那 or Manarejianana 麻那惹加那乃 and his son who also made the voyage in 1411 were not incorporated into the succession of numbered rulers which may have caused undue problems of court protocol in any case.10

The Adoption of Poli by the National History of Brunei

Interestingly, there was and still is room for historiographical maneuvering within the pre-Islamic history of the country, and that is where Poli has come in. The only local sources, two genealogical tables of rulers (Brown 1988: 75-85), with some imagination can be stretched to cover 600 years of history back to the first sultan, Muhammad Shah. Any history before his reign is open to interpretation if not speculation and if constructed in the right way may even extend Brunei’s early history further back into the past. Pre-modern Chinese descriptions of countries and places in Southeast Asia lend themselves easily to this kind of retrospective project.

10 See the translations of the entries on Boni in the Ming shilu (Veritable Records of the Ming) by Wade 2005. Some of these are referred to in Kurz 2011:34-44.
The number of Chinese texts relating to the alleged precursors of Brunei such as Poli and Boni is limited, and these texts already have been scrutinized multiple times. Nicholl provided the clues to the Chinese sources together with a favourable interpretation concerning the identity of Poli and Boni. The beginning of friendly diplomatic relations in the 1990s between the People’s Republic of China and Brunei was crucial for it provided Brunei with a number of Chinese scholars who were willing to work on the Chinese sources on the basis of the accepted premises. The Chinese cooperation with official backing from both sides cannot be overrated since among local scholars there are none with a Chinese studies background.

The ambiguity of the sources still makes it possible to claim descriptions of countries for exactly such purposes as the national history of Brunei, as no one can with complete accuracy pinpoint their identity and location.\(^{11}\)

The writing of the national history of Brunei, once its major features had been established, has become repetitive. Consequently, there have never been any attempts to critically re-assess the sources which may have led to new insights and findings. Within this self-contained and self-referential system, even work published under official auspices is very quickly ‘forgotten’ as illustrated in the example of a volume commemorating the fifteenth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Brunei and China, entitled *Zhongguo yu Wenlai guanxi shiliao huibian* 中国与文莱关系史料汇编: *The collection of historical documents related to bilateral relations between China and Brunei Darussalam*.\(^{12}\) The year 2006 initially was also celebrated as the six-hundredth anniversary of Sino-Bruneian relations based on a tribute mission from Boni to the Ming court in 1406. This date appears to have been chosen randomly since the Boni mission in fact had arrived in 1405 and 1406 marked the mission’s return to Boni (Kurz 2011:36), but it is well possible that this event was overlooked by the organizers.

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\(^{11}\) Interestingly, scholars in Singapore also have used Chinese sources to provide their country with a history reaching back far into the past. See for instance Arthur Lim Joo-jock 1991:4. Accordingly, the precursor of Singapore would be as old as Brunei, and date old Singapore (Temasek) to 1365 thanks to its mention in a Javanese text, the *Nagarakertagama* of 1365, as well as its identification with a place called Longyamen 龍牙門 in the *Daoyi zhilüe* 島夷誌略 by Wang Dayuan 汪大淵 (fl. 1311-1350).

\(^{12}\) Edited by Liu Xinsheng 刘新生 and published by Shijie zhishi chubanshe in Beijing in 2006.
The *Zhongguo yu Wenlai guanxi shiliao huibian*—in Chinese and English—consisting of translations of entries dealing with alleged precursors of Brunei in Chinese sources is ignoring all available scholarship on the topic, but in turn is not mentioned in a volume entitled simply *Boni 渤泥: Brunei dalam sejarah China* (Boni: Brunei in Chinese history) that does work along the same line.\(^\text{13}\)

A recent addition to the two works mentioned is a publication launched on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Brunei and China, entitled *Menjejaki sejarah hubungan Brunei-China* (Tracing the history of relations between Brunei and China) by the information department at the prime minister’s (the sultan of Brunei’s) office. It is based on a documentary in fifteen parts shown on Radio Televisyen Brunei since September 2011, and was written by the acting deputy director of Museums, Pg Karim bin Pg Hj Osman. The work treats “P’o-lo, P’o-li, P’o-ni, Wen-lai dan (and) Bun-lai” as Chinese terms referring to Brunei in Chinese sources from the sixth to the sixteenth centuries and thus again is following the path trodden by earlier works.\(^\text{14}\)

All these works emphasize the more recent friendly relations between the two countries and are serving diplomatic and economic ends. After all, Bruneian oil was considered important enough by the government of the People’s Republic of China to even warrant a state visit by President Hu Jintao in 2005 (Percival 2007:73) to the tiny sultanate. Therefore one cannot expect the texts mentioned to be objective in the sense of critically approaching the Chinese sources and to subject them to close scrutiny. In all these publications Poli occupies a prominent place because—and one can only guess in the absence of any detailed discussion—Nicholl had identified it as an early precursor of Brunei.

\(^{13}\) Compiled and translated by Wu Zong Yu, published by the Brunei History Centre, Bandar Seri Begawan, in 2010. It provides pages copied out of the originally published works in Chinese, with translations into modern Chinese and Malay. Wu Zong Yu (Wu Zongyu 吴宗玉) is a professor of Malay at Beijing Foreign Studies University where he heads the Malay Research Centre (Malai yanjiu zhongxin 马来研究中心), and he has served as external examiner at Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

\(^{14}\) See Pg Karim bin Pg Hj Osman 2012:3. On the following page P’o-ni is also referred to as B’o-ni which is neither a correct transcription according to the Pinyin nor to the older Wade-Giles system. Incorrect transcriptions of Chinese characters are a recurring annoyance in works produced locally.
Robert Nicholl and Poli

In the general framework of studies on early Southeast Asian history, the correct identification of Poli has been one of the great problems\(^\text{15}\) and to this day, opinions widely diverge about its location.\(^\text{16}\) The focus of this part of the present article is not to determine the exact geographical location of Poli; what it will highlight is how Chinese historians have worked with very limited material to construct ‘descriptions’ of Poli from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries.\(^\text{17}\) The underlying hypothesis is that any given Chinese source may either refer to a place under different names or apply the same designation to different places.

Nicholl appropriated mainly entries in the official histories (zhengshi正史) of the Liang, Sui, Tang and other dynasties, as well as works on documents and institutions (huiyao會要), and encyclopedias (leishu類書) as evidence for his assumption that Poli was located in Borneo. In his argumentation Nicholl followed the work of Roland Braddell who as early as 1949 had found ‘proof’ that Poli had to be in Borneo (Braddell 1949:1-12). Braddell’s assumption needs to be treated with caution since he merged Poli and Poluo婆羅 into one.\(^\text{18}\) Geoff Wade has convincingly argued that Poluo did not refer to Borneo (Wade 1986:3-35).

\(^{15}\) See for instance the rebuttal of Étienne Aymonier’s identification of Poli with Baria in modern Baria-Vungtau province in Vietnam in Pelliot 1903:285-288.

\(^{16}\) Han 1954:94-99 finds Poli in the border area between China and India. Liu 1996 suggests Burma. One of the first to summarize the variant Poli locations (Puli, Bali, Pati, Sumatra) was Tjan Tjoe Som 1965:200. Bali, Borneo, and Jambi are offered by Chen, Xie, and Lu 1986:730. For a more recent treatment of Poli, see also the discussion of Srivijaya in Ptak 1998:120-128.

\(^{17}\) Bielenstein provides a short entry on Poli and its missions found in Chinese texts in Bielenstein 2005:58.

\(^{18}\) Braddell among a number of references made use the work of Tan Seok Yeong. In addition to the mission from Poluo to China in 669 that is referred to in the Xin Tangshu entry on Poli, Tan listed missions for the years 642 and 711. I was unable to check Tan’s sources for these as I have not had access to the article entitled “Preliminary report on the discovery of the hoard of Hindu religious objects, near Sambas, West Borneo”, Journal of the South Seas Society 5.1 (1948):31-38. Heng identifies two missions from ‘Polo’ for the years 642 and 649, but his reference for this, Cefu yuangui 970.11398b (correct is 970.8a-b (11398)), does not include any relevant information on these missions (Heng 2009:23). Note that Heng does not identify the edition of the Cefu yuangui. The edition I have used is Wang Qinruo王欽若, Cefu yuangui冊府元龜 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994).
Nicholl obviously worked under the impression that the various official histories were written during the dynasties they are dealing with, and he never discussed the nature of these works.

Groeneveldt had viewed the evidence he found in the dynastic histories as hinting at a definite location for Poli on the northern coast of Sumatra (Groeneveldt 1960:84). Nicholl, though consistently making use of Groeneveldt’s work, rather consulted an even older work, namely that of E. Bretschneider, to make his point. By omitting a question mark from Bretschneider’s translation of the *Jiu Tangshu* (Old History of the Tang, 945) entry Nicholl was able to identify Poli with Borneo. The actual text in Bretschneider’s work reads: “婆利 P’o-li (Borneo?) is in a South-eastern direction from 交州 Kia-chou….”. In the footnote to this sentence Bretschneider is hesitant about the correct Chinese designation of Borneo which he believes to be ‘波羅 Po lo’ [sic] (Bretschneider 1871:18). Bretschneider in fact does not place Poli in Western Kalimantan as Nicholl would have us believe (Nicholl 1990:27). Ignoring the evidence pointing to the contrary, he accepted Braddell’s point of view of a Poli in Borneo.

Nicholl like Braddell certainly was hampered in his attempts to interpret the Chinese texts by his lack of proficiency in classical Chinese and therefore had to revert to translations by the early pioneers of Southeast Asian history. Some of these translations are dated and for this reason I provide new translations of the relevant texts in the Appendix.

The Textual Evidence

*The Records on Poli in the Tang Dynasty*

The first dynastic history to describe the country of Poli was the *Liangshu* (History of the Liang Dynasty [502-557]).

19 Prior to its appearance in the *Liangshu* the designation Poli is found in the *Songshu* (History of the Song Dynasty, 420-478), but the *Songshu* does not provide any further information. Listed under the first year of the Yuanzheng era (473) of emperor Hou Feidi (ruled 473-476), the entry reads: “Poli sent envoys who submitted local products.” See Shen Yue 沈約 (441-513), *Songshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 9.179.
founding emperor Taizu 太祖 (ruled 618-626), into lifelong house arrest, and eliminated all his brothers as potential threats to his rule (Wechsler 1979:182-187).

The *Liangshu* was part of a set of dynastic histories that were designed to show the legitimate claims of Taizong to the throne, and to rally the scholar-officials behind him. These dynastic histories were produced in an official institute, which Taizong established in 630, known as the Institute of Historiography (*shiguan* 史館). Until the end of imperial China in 1911 all official history was handled there by selected scholars.

With very few exceptions, such as the *Liangshu* by Yao Silian 姚思廉 (?-637) and the privately compiled *Wudai shiji* 五代史記 (Historical Records of the Five Dynasties) by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072), all dynastic histories have been compiled by teams of scholars. All scholars appointed to compile the dynastic histories during the Tang dynasty were members of the imperial bureaucracy in the capital Chang’an (MacMullen 1988:165-168).

At the time of the compilation of the *Liangshu*, the histories of the other dynasties preceding the Tang, namely the Chen 陳 (557-589), Northern Qi 北齊 (550-577), Zhou 周 (557-581), and Sui 隋 (589-618) were being prepared as well. These efforts resulted in the following works: *Chenshu* 陳書 (comp. 622-629, presented 636); *Bei Qishu* 北齊書 (comp. 627-636, pres. 636); *Zhoushu* 周書 (comp. 629, pres. 636); *Suishu* 随書 (comp. 629-636, pres. 636).

In an additional batch of works, the *Nanshi* 南史 (History of the Southern Dynasties), covering the period from 420-589, and *Beishi* 北史 (History of the Northern Dynasties) covering the period from 368-618, were compiled (630-650). Both of these were presented in 659 to Taizong’s successor Gaozong 高宗 (ruled 649-683). Another history, the *Jinshu* 晉書 (History of the Jin Dynasty (265-419)) had been submitted prior to the *Beishi* and *Nanshi* in 646.

The *Liangshu* deals with Poli in the section on ‘barbarians’ (*zhuyi* 諸夷) and focuses on the king and his court, but does not provide much information on the people of the place. Kaundinya (chin. Jiaochenru 憍陳如), the name of the king, hints at the possibility of Poli being an offshoot of the kingdom of Funan 扶南 whose king is also referred to as Kaundinya.

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20 On this see Twitchett 1992. For an overall survey of Chinese official history writing see Yang 1961.
in the *Liangshu*. The ruler’s statement that one of his ancestors was the wife of Suddhodana (Baijing wang 白淨王) and hence the mother of the Gautama Buddha, seems somewhat far-fetched. It must be regarded as an attempt to assume a long and meaningful ancestry in the obvious absence of written records, since the ruler did not have any knowledge of the line of his ancestors nor his own age.

A large section of the entry is taken by the letter of the Poli ruler sent to emperor Wudi 武帝 (ruled 502-549) of the Liang in 517. The entry does not specify in which language the letter was written, but we learn that the ruler was a devout Buddhist and that he held a lot of respect for the Liang emperor likening him to a Buddha. Though Poli never had had any contact with China the ruler has information about it, such as the name of its capital and the size of the Yangzi. One wonders how he had obtained this information. He obviously received nothing in return for his letter and his gifts, nor did his alleged successor Pinjia 頻伽 get anything out of the Chinese court in 522. The metal helmets and the glazed vessels submitted as tribute pose another problem. If these had been made locally than the people of Poli would have possessed basic technologies; however, there may be a possibility that these items had been acquired from somewhere else and the Poli ruler simply submitted these as his most valuable possessions. The animals, the *gubei* 古貝 / *jibei* 吉貝—probably cotton, and the cups made from conches because of their appearance and origin much more firmly fit the idea of a country in maritime Southeast Asia.

In the *Suishu*, a work compiled by Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580-643) and others, Poli is the last country to receive a brief description in the chapter on the southern barbarians (*nan man* 南蠻) which includes Linyi 林邑, Chitu 赤土, and Zhenla 真臘. The Chinese at that time subsumed all people that lived either in the south of China or even further south as southern barbarians. The idea they had of the south is illustrated by the term ‘southern wilderness’ (*nanhuang* 南荒). In fact, what we nowadays refer to as the south of China comprising

21 Yao Silian, *Liangshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972), 54:789. The identification of Jiaochenu with Kaundinya goes back to Paul Pelliot’s translation of the *Liangshu* entry on Funan. See Pelliot 1903:269.
22 For more on Linyi see Stein 1947; on Chitu see Wheatley 1957; on Zhenla see Jacques 1979.
such provinces as Guangdong and Fujian only became an integral part of the Chinese empire from the tenth century onward.

The Suishu gives the itinerary to Poli from Jiaozhi 交趾, that is, modern northern Vietnam, in contrast to the Liangshu that had referred to Guangzhou 廣州 in Guangdong as the port of embarkation. The size of the country, that is not necessarily located on an island, but quite a long distance from Guangzhou, is considerable. In contrast to Kaundinya in the Liangshu, the king of Poli in the Suishu is well aware of the history of his family’s rule and his name consists of a family and a personal name, namely Chaliyejia 剎利耶伽 and Hujiannapo 護濫那婆, respectively. The bureaucracy is marked by a hierarchy in which higher officials are referred to as Dugayana 獨訶邪挐, and lower officials as Dugashina 獨訶氏挐.

The war equipment of the Poli people is largely the same as that of the Chinese, with the exception of a round throwing knife that the local people expertly use. They are related to the people of Zhenla, having customs similar to those of Zhenla, and they produce items similar to those of Linyi.

That the Chinese did not really know where the place was, is evident in the last section on Dandan 丹丹 and Panpan 盤盤. All that the historians in Tang times knew from hearsay was that these two countries were almost the same in terms of customs and products, but that this was not certain.

It seems odd that in the century between the last mission from Poli mentioned in the Liangshu and the only mission from Poli recorded in the Suishu, the people had acquired the skill to use the round knife and that a basic hierarchy of bureaucrats was in place. In the roughly three generations that had passed one would have expected the people of Poli to have had some recollections of earlier contacts with the Chinese, which obviously they did not.

The text in the Nanshi is copied in its entirety from the Liangshu—but omits the letter from the Poli ruler to the Chinese emperor—whereas the text on Poli in the Beishi is copied from the Suishu entry. This arrangement provides a glimpse into the compilation processes of these two works that certainly were dictated by practical reasons such as saving time and

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23 For a study on Dandan and a cursory treatment of Panpan see Hsu 1947:47-63.
24 See Li Yanshou 李延壽, Nanshi (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 78.1960, and Li Yanshou 李延壽, Beishi (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 95.3164.
manpower. Thus, for lack of new material, the compilers used what was available to them, namely the two older dynastic histories.

Du You 杜佑 (735-812) in the Tongdian 通典 (Comprehensive Institutions, completed in 801) is straightforward in placing Poli in the ‘southern wilderness’. Du emphasizes the low cultural degree of Poli as compared to that of the Chinese by describing the local people as ‘black’ which in the context has to be understood as darker as a Han Chinese of the time. Instead of one main text as his source of information, Du merged material from the entries in both the Liangshu and the Suishu. The Tongdian is a good example of how historians arranged and rearranged information in creative ways in order to produce a new record, or a ‘cut-and-paste-history’.

Liu Xu 劉煦 (887-946) and his colleagues when compiling the Jiu Tangshu during the short-lived Later Jin 後晉 dynasty (936-947) had to deal with a number of problems affecting their work, chief among them the lack of properly transmitted material. Like Du You before them they either copied passages verbatim or in paraphrased form from the Liangshu and Suishu. The mission from Poli to the Tang court in 630 is not mentioned in the annals of emperor Taizong in the Jiu Tangshu. However, there are some new details that are worth mentioning. First of all the Jiu Tangshu, apparently based on the distances given in Liangshu, establishes the extent of Poli as ‘several thousand 里’. Secondly, the cap of the Poli ruler is likened to a leather crown (pibian 皮弁), a headgear worn by Chinese emperors during audiences with their officials. Thirdly, the Poli males wear their hair in a top knot and they dress in a sarong made of gubei 古毆. The latter one is specified as being a plant from whose blossoms is made a garment, the thicker of which is referred to as gubei, while the thinner is referred to as baidie 白氎.

I have not been able to trace the origin of this new information, but it certainly helped to give the ‘Polinese’ a distinct inferior ethnic identity. In the early texts this was only subtly implied, but in the Jiu Tangshu the idea of the cultural inferiority of the people that had started with Du You is reinforced. In the context of the times this makes sense because the Chinese empire that had flourished under the Tang and had been accommodating people of various ethnic backgrounds had declined.25 In its stead a number

25 On the classification of ethnic identities and the treatment of the Other during the Tang dynasty, see Abramson 2008.
of states ruled over the northern and southern halves of the former Tang territory, and some states in the south, such as Min 闽 (909-945) in the modern province of Fujian or the Southern Han 南漢 (917-971) in the modern province of Guangdong had declared their independence and established their own regional empires. These provinces for a long time had had contact with not only Persians, Arabs, and Indians, but also with people from Southeast Asia; however, in the middle of the tenth century they were still regarded by many officials as exotic places untouched by Chinese civilization. Many officials as a punishment were exiled to these regions until even the Song dynasty.26

Poli in Song Dynasty Works

The Tang huiyao 唐會要 (Important Documents of the Tang), presented to Taizu 太祖 (ruled 960-976), the founding emperor of the Song, in 961, has the shortest of all descriptions of Poli taking as its main sources the Liangshu and the Jiu Tangshu. Poli is not referred to as an island, but as a place located to the southeast of Linyi that can be reached by boat. The compilers obviously struggled to understand the form of the royal headdress and thus addressed it as a blossom cap (huaguan 花冠).

The Taiping yulan 太平御覽 (Imperial Digest, pres. in 983), an encyclopedia compiled on orders of the second Song emperor Taizong 太宗 (ruled 976-997), is even more non-committal in its description of Poli as the previous texts, but in contrast to them identifies the original sources, namely the Nanshi and the Suishu.27 At the time of the compilation the imperial library was not yet fully operational and the book holdings were comparatively small. This may explain why the compilers used the Nanshi rather than the Liangshu account.

The Taiping huanyuji 太平寰宇記 (Universal Geography of the Reign of Great Tranquility, pres. in 987) is a geographical work that apart from giving information on the territory of the Chinese empire such as the administrative structure of provinces and districts, also included entries on countries that at one point or another had had dealings with China. Its

26 One famous example of an official being punished with an exile in the south of China is Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) who was banished to Guangdong and Hainan Island from 1094-1100 (Hargett 2000).

27 See Li Fang 李昉, Taiping yulan 太平御覽 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 787.6a-7a (3486-3487). For more on this encyclopedia see Kurz 2003:51-87, and Kurz 2007:44-56.
author Yue Shi (樂史) had formerly served the Southern Tang (937-976) dynasty that had ruled over parts of southern China and he prepared the text that ultimately comprised 200 chapters (of which 193 are extant) between 979 and 987. The main sources for the entry on Poli in the Taiping huanyuji are the Liangshu, Suishu, Tongdian, and Jiu Tangshu.

The Cefu yuangui (冊府元龜, Models from the Archives, pres. 1013), a handbook on government ordered by Zhenzong (ruled 997-1022), the third emperor of the Song, arranged passages from the Liangshu, Suishu, and Jiu Tangshu under various headings such as foreign states (guoyi 國邑), local customs (tufeng 土風), tributes (chaogong 朝貢), and official titles (guanhao 官號). The scholar-officials—at which the work was directed in the first place—willing to learn something about Poli were given a general outline of the country, and then would be introduced to specific topics.

The Xin Tangshu (新唐書, History of the Tang,), compiled by Ouyang Xiu and others, originally was entitled Tangshu. It is now commonly referred to as Xin Tangshu, to distinguish it from the older work which it came to supersede. After sixteen years of work the compilers presented the complete text in 1060 to the throne.

The entry on Poli follows previous works for the main narrative, but adds that Poli was to the southeast of Huanwang (環王). Keith Weller Taylor has located this state in central Vietnam, obviously following a remark in the Xin Tangshu that “Huanwang originally was Linyi” (Taylor 1983:198). The work goes on to report that Poli was a big island and since there were many horses it was also known as Mali (馬禮). This is the only instance in the historical literature in which horses are mentioned as a feature of the place. Furthermore the country of the Luocha that first appeared in an individual entry in the Tongdian, here forms part of the description of Poli.

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28 Entries on Poli are found in Wang Qinruo (962-1025), Cefu yuangui (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), 957.8a (11259); 957.9b (11260); 960.2a-b (11291); 962.4a (11316); 968.17a-b (11384); 970.18b-19a (11384-85); 970.3a (11396); 970.6b (11397). On the compilation of Cefu yuangui see Kurz 2003:171-214; and Kurz 2007:56-66.

29 The entry on Huanwang is found in Ouyang Xiu (comp.), Xin Tangshu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 222C.6297.

30 Du You, Tongdian (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 188.5101. See the discussion of Luocha in Pelliot 1963:767. Pelliot suggests that Poli refers to Bali. Cf. also Wheatley 1969:85-110.

31 For descriptions of Luocha in Tongdian, Tang huiyao, Taiping yulan, and Taiping huanyuji, see the relevant texts in the Appendix.
The Luocha people are described as truly horrifying creatures with red hair and black bodies, and the imperial court of the Sui dynasty received accidental knowledge of them through the mission of Chang Jun 常駿 to Chitu (Wolters 1967:173-175).32

This would indicate that the Luocha were not just seafaring people or orang laut, as Nicholl suggests,33 but that they were resident people. The Cefu yuangui, after remarking on a mission received in 616 from Poli,34 goes on to report on a Linyi mission in 631 that submitted flaming pearls. It states further: “[Linyi] received them from the country of Luoli 羅利.35 Poli sent envoys that had followed those from Linyi, to submit local products.”36 While Luoli most likely is a xylographical error and has to be read Luocha correctly, in this entry nothing connects Luocha with Poli; however, Luocha is definitely referred to as a country and not just a specific ethnic group. This is supported by the fact that the Taiping huanyuji devotes an entry to the description of the people of Luocha which focuses its attention on the flaming pearls, saying that some people believed that these objects came from Luocha, while others maintained they came from Shiziguo 獅子國.37

Groeneveldt’s translation of the entry in the Xin Tangshu is incorrect (Groeneveldt 1960:83-85). Unfortunately, he did not indicate the edition of the Xin Tangshu he used. Nicholl was unaware of this and was led to believe that Poli had to be somewhere in Borneo. As we can see from the correct entry, the place in question could be anywhere. The additional information about the horses makes identification not much easier.

32 The Suishu says that Chang Jun undertook the voyage with his colleague Wang Junzheng 王君政 and other unknown officials. See Wei Zheng, Suishu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 82.1834-1835. Chang and Wang themselves had submitted the plan for a mission to reach Chitu. Chang held the position of secretary in the state farms section (tuntian zhushi 屯田主事) and Wang that of secretary in the bureau of forestry and crafts (yubu zhushi 虞部主事) at the time. The entry in Suishu in fact does not mention any encounter between the Chinese envoys and people from the country of Luocha.

33 Nicholl, “Sources”, ‘15 Tu Yu—The Lo-ch’a A.D. 607’, 2 and 3.

34 Cefu yuangui, 970-3a (11396).

35 This clearly quotes the Tongdian.

36 Cefu yuangui, 970.6b (11397).

37 Yue Shi, Taiping huanyuji (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 177-3377. According to Edward Schafer fire orbs (huozhu 火珠) were not only obtained from Rākshasa (Luocha), but also from Bali, Dvāravati, Kashmir, and Japan (Schafer 1963:237-239).
In any case, Chitu and Luocha appear to have been situated near each other, so that the Sui envoy could contact Luocha, when he traveled to Chitu. This suggests that Chitu and Luocha were situated in the same region or island and that Poli was a close neighbour.

Conclusion

The Liangshu and the Suishu, the two Urtexts for information on Poli locate it in two different places that do not relate to one another. None of the texts compiled after the Liangshu and the Suishu take advantage of all the information provided in the officially and privately compiled works.

On the basis of the information provided by these two texts it is impossible to arrive at a coherent picture of the structure of government and society because they are obviously reporting on two different countries within a span of 100 years. All the other texts on Poli of Tang origin vary in their location of the place depending in their choice of original source, as do their successors in the Song dynasty.

The case of Poli permits to make one important observation in regard to the composition of its description in the dynastic histories. The earliest extant description of Poli is in the Liangshu and this work provides the structure for all following descriptions down to the Wenxian tongkao. Added to this are bits and pieces of information coming from the Suishu which are likewise ‘recycled’. Hence when scholars like Nicholl speak of information on Poli found in different dynastic histories this is not completely correct because later texts merely copy from the earliest sources. As a result, the only truly ‘original’ texts are the Liangshu and the Suishu, and they are the only truly verifiable locations of Poli.

The ambivalent nature of the original Chinese texts in addition to them being interpreted imaginatively by non-specialists like Nicholl and state-sponsored academics such as Wu Zongyu, facilitated the transformation of assumptions about Poli into facts.

The main purpose of this essay was to demonstrate how it is possible to deconstruct distorting assumptions by a close reading of the original sources. That an Englishman should have initiated the adaptation of Chinese sources to enhance the history of Brunei ultimately borders on irony.
Appendix

Liangshu 梁書

Poli is situated on an island in the ocean to the southeast of Guangzhou. From Guangzhou one travels two months. One travels fifty days from the eastern to the western borders of this country, and twenty days from south to north. There are 136 settlements. The climate is hot like the midsummer in China. They harvest twice a year, and plants and trees are constantly blossoming. The sea produces tortoise shells and red cowries. There is a stone called hanbeiluo 蚶貝羅, which is soft when one picks it up, but after one has cut it to make things and dried it, it is very hard. The people make gubei 古貝 into a fabric, making a douman 都縵 (sarong) of it.39

The king uses coloured silk cotton to adorn his body with tassels, and on his head he wears a golden hat that is more than a chi 尺40 high and formed like a cap (bian 弁), to which are fastened adornments of seven gems (qibao 七寳). He carries a golden ornamented double-edged sword, sits inclined to one side on a golden high seat, and rests his feat on a silver footstool. His female servants are adorned with golden flowers and various precious gems, some of them carrying white decorated fly whisks or peacock-feather fans. The king goes out in an elephant carriage. The carriage is made from various fragrant woods, on top it has a canopy made of feathers and curtains made from precious pearls. He is preceded and followed [by people] blowing conches and beating drums. The family name of the king is Jiaochenru 慣陳如, in the past he had not communicated with China (zhongguo 中國). When he was asked about his ancestors and his age, he could not remember it, but he said that the wife of Baijing wang 白淨王 had hailed from his country.

38 The correct characters should read jibei 吉貝 (cotton) but throughout the majority of the texts, gubei is used instead. Where gubei appears in texts it is a clear hint that the compilers copied from the Liangshu.

39 The same fabric is found in the description of the customs of Linyi where it is referred to as ganman 干漫. See Liangshu, 54.785 and Nanshi, 78.1949.

40 A chi is approximately 30cm.

41 This refers to a cap Chinese males were given when reaching adulthood.

42 Groeneveldt translates this name as Kaundinya; Kaundinya was the name of an uncle of Buddha Gautama. The identification of Jiaochenru with Kaundinya is provided also in Soothill 1937:433.
In the sixteenth year of the Tianjian 天監 era (517)⁴³ they sent envoys who submitted a letter which read:

“We maintain with humility that the sage king upholds the Triratna,⁴⁴ and that he has built pagodas and temples, decorated and adorned, everywhere in the country. The thoroughfares are smooth and clean without filth, terraces and pavilions are scattered all over, resembling Heavenly palaces, so subtle and delicate, that nothing in the world compares with them. When the sage king leaves his palace, he is surrounded by soldiers on all four sides; banners made of feathers are carried in front of him and behind him, covering his retinue completely. The men and women in the capital wear beautiful dresses and bright adornments. The stores in the markets are plentiful, and abound with exquisite goods. The royal laws are strict and just, and no stealing occurs there. Students go there striving to collect the triyana (Three Teachings), diffusing the true law (dharma) like clouds overhead and inundating rain. It extends to all four corners of the earth and links the myriad kingdoms. The vast Yangzi (Dajiang 大江) is clear and cool, deep and wide, nurturing life and nothing can pollute it.

When Yin and Yang are in harmony, disaster and calamities do not occur. Yangzhou, the capital of the sage king of the Great Liang is unique. He administrates the state with great benevolence and looks after his people as if they were his own children.

He bears slander with equanimity, and he does not distinguish between those who bear a grudge against him and those who are close to him. He gives to all who are poor, and does not keep anything for himself. His light is shining everywhere like the brightness of the sun; and he is making everyone happy, like the bright moon.

His ministers are able, his officials are faithful, and they all serve the ruler with the utmost loyalty, thinking of nothing else.

I maintain with humility that the emperor is my true Buddha. I am the ruler of Poli and I do respectfully bow my head and do obeisance at the feet of the sage king. I only want the great king to know my feelings. I have harboured these feeling for a long time already, and they are not recent. Separated by mountains and seas I have not had the good luck to come to

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⁴³ This mission is listed in autumn of that year in the annals-section of the Liangshu. The envoys from Poli appeared at roughly the same time as those from Funan. See Liangshu, 2.57. Groeneveldt incorrectly gives the year 518.

⁴⁴ Buddha, dharma (law), and sangha (community of monks).
you myself, and therefore I have sent envoys to submit a golden mat and other things, and have written this letter with devotion."

In the third year of the Putong era (522)\(^45\) their king Pinjia 頻伽 again sent an envoy,\(^46\) called Zhubeizhi 珠貝智, with tribute consisting of several tens of specimens, among them white cockatoos, green reptiles,\(^47\) metal helmets (doumou 兜鍪), glazed vessels (liuliqi 琉璃器), gubei, cups made out of conches, various perfumes, and medicines.\(^48\)

Suishu 隨書

The country of Poli can be reached by going by sea southwards from Jiaozhi 交阯, passing Chitu 赤土 and Dandan 丹丹. From its eastern to its western borders one travels four months, from south to north forty-five days. The family name of the king is Chaliyejia 刹利耶伽, his personal name is Hujiannapo 護濫那婆, and [the family] has occupied the throne for generations. Officials are called Dugayana 獨訶邪挐, lower officials are called Dugashina 獨訶氏挐. The people of this country are skilled in throwing a round knife which is as big as a [hand held] mirror; it has a hole in the middle and its outer edge is like a saw; and when they throw it from afar at people, they always hit. Their other weapons are approximately the same as in China. Their customs resemble those of Zhenla, their products are the same as those of Linyi. They cut off the hands of murderers and thieves. They fetter the feet of adulterers, but after one year they free them. They sacrifice on the last day of the lunar month (yuehui 月晦), by floating liquor, meat and fish dishes that they put in trays, on water. Each eleventh month they organize a big sacrifice. The ocean produces corals. There is a bird called sheli 舍利 that understands human words.

\(^{45}\) Groeneveldt incorrectly gives the year 523.

\(^{46}\) This mission like the previous one arrived in the autumn of this year. The name of the envoy is not given in the annals-section, but it says that the Poli mission arrived together with one from Baitiguo 白題國. See Liangshu, 3.66.

\(^{47}\) The Hanyu dacidian 漢語大詞典 suggests on the basis of a quotation in a Tang work that qingchong 青蟲 refers to a piece of jade carved into the form of a snake that could be worn as a belt pendant. See Hanyu dacidian vol.11, p. 561 (Shanghai: Hanyu dacidian chubanshe, 1993). As this item follows the birds, however, I take the literal meaning of the two characters to be the correct one.

\(^{48}\) Liangshu, 54.796-797. See also the translation of the text in Groeneveldt 1960:80-82.
In the twelfth year of the Daye reign era (616) they sent envoys with tribute, after that they stopped this.

Around the same time existed the two countries of Dandan and Pan-pan in the southern wilderness, which also brought local products as tribute. Their customs and products are greatly similar, so it is said.

**Tongdian** 通典

Contacts with the country of Poli existed since Liang times.

*(Nanshi)* Poli is situated on an island in the ocean to the southeast of Guangzhou. *(Suishu)* From Jiaozhi one arrives there sailing southwards, passing by Chitu and Dandan.

*(Liangshu)* From Guangzhou one travels two months. One travels fifty days from the eastern to the western borders of this country, and twenty days from south to north. There are 136 settlements. The climate is hot like the midsummer in China. They harvest twice a year, and plants and trees are constantly blossoming. The sea produces tortoise shells and red cowries.

There is a stone called *hanhuo tanfan beiluo* 蚶火談反貝羅 which is soft when one picks it up, but after one has cut it to make things and dried it, it is very hard.

*(Suishu)* There is a bird called *sheli* that understands human words. Its inhabitants are all black and they wear earrings.

*(Liangshu)* The people make *gubei*, making a *douman* of it. The king uses coloured silk cotton to adorn his body with tassels, and on his head he wears a golden hat that is more than a *chi* high and formed like a cap, to which are fastened adornments of seven gems. He carries a golden ornamented double-edged sword, sits inclined to one side on a golden high seat, and rests his feat on a silver footstool. His female servants are adorned with golden flowers and various precious gems, some of them carrying white decorated fly whisks or peacock-feather fans. The king goes out in

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49 The annals of emperor Yangdi 炀帝 (ruled 604-618) only list a mission from Zhenla early in this year. See *Suishu*, 4.90.

50 *Suishu*, 82.1838. See also Groeneveldt 1960: 82-83; and Hsu 1947:353.

51 Where possible I have marked the earliest source of information in brackets before the relevant sentence or paragraph in this and the following texts.

52 Note the slightly different designation of the material here that otherwise is called *hanbeiluo*. 
an elephant carriage.\textsuperscript{53} [...] It has a canopy made of feathers and curtains made from precious pearls. He is preceded and followed [by people] blowing conches and beating drums.

\textit{(Suishu)} The people of this country are skilled in throwing a round knife which is as big as a [hand held] mirror; it has a hole in the middle and its outer edge is like a saw; and when they throw it from afar at people, they always hit. Their other weapons are approximately the same as in China. Their customs resemble those of Zhenla, their products are the same as those of Linyi.

\textit{(Liangshu)} The family name of the king is Jiaochenru; in the past he had not communicated with China.

During the Tianjian era (502-529) of emperor Wudi 武帝 the country submitted tribute.

\textit{(Suishu)} During the Daye era of the Sui they send envoys and once again submitted tribute. Their king’s name at the time was Chaliyejia 剎利耶伽.

During the Zhenguan era (626-649) of the Great Tang they sent again envoys to the court with tribute.\textsuperscript{54}

\textit{Jiu Tangshu 舊唐書}

\textit{(Suishu)} The country of Poli 婆利 is situated on an island in the sea to the southeast of Linyi.

Its territory extends for several thousand lǐ.

\textit{(Suishu)} To reach there one has to travel by sea southwards from Jiaozhi, and pass by Linyi, Funan, Chitu, Dandan and several other countries.\textsuperscript{55}

Its inhabitants are all black and they wear earrings.

\textit{(Suishu)} The king’s family name is Chaliyejia, his personal name is Hulunapo 護路那婆,\textsuperscript{56} and [the family] has occupied the throne for generations.

\textit{(paraphrased from Liangshu)} The king wears a kind of leather crown (\textit{pibian} 皮弁) [on his head] that has the form of a blossom, his dress is embellished with tassels made of real pearls, and he sits on a golden bed.

\textsuperscript{53} The text omits here part of the description of the carriage.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Tongdian}, 188.5097.
\textsuperscript{55} The text adds Linyi and Funan to the original route from the \textit{Suishu} entry.
\textsuperscript{56} Note that the second character is changed from the original Hujiannapo in \textit{Suishu}.
His female servants are adorned with golden flowers and precious threads, some of them carrying plain fly whisks or peacock-feather fans. When [the ruler] goes out he rides on an elephant. Sounding gongs, beating drums, and blowing conches, they make music.

The men all do their hair in a top knot, which is fastened with a piece of gubei-cloth, and they cover their waist with a horizontal cloth.

The climate is very hot, and is continually like the midsummer in China. They harvest twice a year.

There is a plant called gubei. They gather its blossoms to produce cloth. The thick one is called gubei, the thin one is called baidie. In the fourth year of the Zhenguan era (630), the king sent envoys that followed those of Linyi to submit local products.

Poli is an uncultivated country in the south. It is to the southeast of Linyi, 10,000 li across the sea. Its territory extends for several thousand li. The king’s family name is Chaliyejia, his personal name is Hulunapo, and [the family] has occupied the throne for generations.

The people are all black and they wear pendants in their ears.

The king wears a blossom cap (huaguan), which is embellished with tassels made of real pearls. He sits on a golden bed.

When [the ruler] goes out, he rides on an elephant.

Drums are beaten, and conches are blown.

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57 For Nicholl it does not make any sense for the king to be travelling “in a car drawn by an elephant” because rulers ride on elephants. See Nicholl, “Sources”, 17, 6. The nature of the word jia is ambiguous in the sense that it means to drive or direct a vehicle or an animal.

58 Liu Xu, Jiu Tangshu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 197.5270-5271.

59 The cap certainly refers to the form of the ‘crown’ of the Poli ruler.

60 Wang Pu, Tang huiyao 唐會要 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1989), 99.1769.
Contacts with the country of Poli existed since Liang times. It is situated on an island in the ocean that one reaches by traveling approximately 10,000 li southeastwards from Linyi.

From Jiaozhi one arrives there sailing southwards, passing by Chitu and Dandan.

From Guangzhou it takes two months of daily travels. The country’s boundaries extend for fifty days from east to south, and for twenty days from south to north. There are 136 settlements. The territory extends from south to north for several thousand li. The climate is hot and continually like the midsummer in China. They harvest twice a year. Plants and trees are always blossoming. The sea provides tortoise shells and red cowries. There is a stone called hanbeiluo. If one picks it first, it is very soft, and one can carve it into things. After it has dried in the sun it becomes very hard.

There is a bird called sheli, which understands human words.

The people are all black, and they wear ear pendants.

They wrap their heads with gubei [cloth].

The people of this country are skilled in throwing a round knife which is as big as a [hand held] mirror; it has a hole in the middle and its outer edge is like a saw; and when they throw it from afar at people, they always hit. Their other weapons are approximately the same as in China. Their customs resemble those of Zhenla, their products are the same as those of Linyi.

The king’s family name is Jiaochenru. In the past they have never had communications with China (Zhongxia 中夏). During the Tianjian reign era (502-519) of emperor Wudi [of the Liang dynasty] they came to submit local products. During the Daye era (605-618) of the Sui they also came.

The king’s family name [at that time] was Chaliyejia.61

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61 The facsimile edition of a block printed text published by Wenhai chubanshe has Pinjia here and the commentary notes that the Liangshu does not provide a family name for King Pinjia. It continues to say that the family name Chaliyejia should be inserted, since the edition of the Taiping huanyuji was full of typographical errors. See Taiping huanyuji (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1993) 176.12b (513). The modern edition published by Zhonghua shuju in 2007 does not explain that the old text had Pinjia.
(Jiu Tangshu) In the fourth year of the Zhenguang era [of the Tang] (630), they sent envoys with tribute to the court.62

Xin Tangshu 新唐書

Poli is straight to the southeast of Huanwang 環王.

(Suishu) Sailing from Jiaozhou 交州 one reaches it, passing Chitu 赤土 and Dandan 丹丹 and all the other countries. It is a large island (dazhou 大洲),64 and there are many horses; therefore it is also called Mali 马禮. From north to south it extends over several thousand 里.65

There are many flaming pearls, the biggest of which have the size of a hen's egg. They are round and white, and they shine for several feet. If one exposes mugwort to the pearl in the middle of the day, it immediately starts to burn.

(Liangshu) [Local] products include tortoise shells and spotted conches; there is a stone called gan 坑 which at first is soft and can be molded, but after it is cut it becomes hard.

(Suishu) There is a bird called sheli that understands human words. Their bodies are black, they have red hair (Jiu Tangshu) which they wear in a topknot.67

They use the claws of eagles68 and the teeth of wild beasts as ear pendants,
(Jiu Tangshu) and they cover their waists with a horizontal piece of gubei cloth. Gubei is a plant. They gather its blossoms to produce cloth. The thick one is called gubei, the thin one is called baidie.

Usually they hold their markets at night, and they conceal their faces. (Suishu) The king’s family name is Chaliyejia, his personal name is Hulunapo, and [the family] has occupied the throne for generations. (Jiu Tangshu paraphrase) His dress is embellished with tassels made of cowries and he uses stringed pearls as ornaments.

(Liangshu) He sits on a golden couch (ta 檞), and his attendants hold plain whisks and peacock feathers. He goes out in an elephant cart, which has a feather canopy and curtains made of pearls, and gongs are sounded, drums beaten, and conches blown for music.

To their east live the Luocha, that have the same customs as the Poli. Sui Yangdi (ruled 605-617) sent Chang Jun 常駿 as an envoy to Chitu, and consequently they have communicated with China.

Entering the ocean from the southwest from Chitu one reaches Poluo 婆羅. In the second year of the Zongzhang era (669) [of the Tang] their king Zhandabo’s 旃達鉢 envoys together with those from Huanwang came to court.

To the south of Huanwang is Shunai 殊柰. Sailing two months from Jiaozhi across the sea one reaches there. They have the same customs as Poluo. In the second year of the Zhenguang era (628) their envoys submitted local products. In the ninth year [of the Zhenguang era (635)] envoys from Ganchang 甘棠 came to court. This country is situated in the south-

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69 The Suishu has Hujiannapo hence the Xin Tangshu must have received its information via the Jiu Tangshu that also refers to Hulunapo.

70 Why Ouyang Xiu introduces Poluo here is difficult to fathom. Poluo may be a different designation for Poli or it may refer to a neighbour of Poli.

71 The entry on Shunai in Tang huiyao reads as follows: “Shunai [is inhabited] by the Kunlun 昆侖 and it is situated south of Linyi. From Jiaozhi it takes more than three months of daily sailing to reach there. Their customs and script are the same as those of the Poluomen (Brahmin). Since they are so far away they have never in the past communicated with China. In the tenth month of the second year of the Zhenguang era of the Tang (628) their envoys arrived at the court with tribute”. See Tang huiyao, 98.1754 and also Taiping huanyuji, 177.12b (520).

72 The Tang huiyao lists a mission from Ganchang under the tenth year (636), and goes on to report that on the same day envoys from Zhujubo 朱俱婆 were received. Ganchang is identified as a place in the south of the “great ocean”, and its inhabitants are described as Kunlun. See Tang huiyao, 99.1775. Kunlun according to Taylor refers to Malays (Taylor
ern ocean. In the twelfth year [of the Zhenguan era (638)] the envoys of
the four countries of Senggao 僧高, Wuling 武令, Jiazha 迦乍, and Jiumi
鳩密 brought tribute. Senggao is straight from the northwest of Shui Zhenla
水真臘 and it has the same customs as Huanwang. Afterwards king Huli-
jiumo 戶利鳩摩 of Jiumi again sent envoys with tribute together with the
envoys of king Shelitipobamo 尸利提婆跋摩 of Funa 富那 and others.73
Senggao and the other countries were incorporated into Zhenla after the
Yonghui era (650-655) [of the Tang].74

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1983:182, 188). See also Wilensky 2002 and Wyatt 2009:110–111. Zhujubo is referred to as Zhu-
jubo 朱俱婆 in Taiping huanyuji, 177.12b (520).

73 I have not been able to trace more information on Wuling, Jiazha, Jiumi, and Funa.

74 Xin Tangshu, 222B.6299. See the translation in Groeneveldt 1960:83-84.
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