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An Early Chinese Description of the Philippines

James A. Robertson wrote of Chao Ju-kua, author of the following excerpt: "He was inspector of the salt gabel in the province of Fo-kien, and his title was probably Shih-po, which means 'Superintendent of Sea Trade.' As this post existed in Fo-kien only during the years 1277-1287, it is probable that those dates fix the period of Chao Ju-kua. His work is called the Chu-fan-chi (A Description of Barbarian Peoples), and the greater part of his notes are copies from older records. His position, however, gave him opportunity to gather information personally from the traders who anchored at his port. At that time more foreign traders frequented Chinese ports than either before or after, and it would be comparatively easy to gather information. The Chu-fan-chi contains more geographical information than do the court records" (The Philippine Islands, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 183-184).

The country of Ma-i [Philippine archipelago] is to the north of P'o-ni [Borneo]. Over a thousand families are settled together along both banks of a creek (or, gully). The natives cover themselves with a sheet of cotton cloth, or hide the lower part of the body with a loincloth.

There are bronze images of gods, of unknown origin, scattered about in the grassy wilderness. Pirates seldom come to this country.

When trading ships enter the anchorage, they stop in front of the officials' place, for that is the place for bartering of the country. After a ship has been boarded, the natives mix freely with the

Chao Ju-kua, His Work on the Chinese and Arab Trade in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, entitled Chu-fan-chi, trans. F. Hirth and W. W. Rockhill (St. Petersburg: Printing Office of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1911), pp. 159-162.

ship's folk. The chiefs are in the habit of using white umbrellas, for which reason the traders offer them as gifts.

The custom of the trade is for the savage traders to assemble in crowds and carry the goods away with them in baskets; and, even if one cannot at first know them, and can but slowly distinguish the men who remove the goods, there will yet be no loss. The savage traders will after this carry these goods on to other islands for barter, and, as a rule, it takes them as much as eight or nine months till they return, when they repay the traders on shipboard with what they have obtained (for the goods). Some, however, do not return within the proper term, for which reason vessels trading with Ma-i are the latest in reaching home. . . .

The products of the country consist of yellow wax, cotton, pearls, tortoise-shell, medicinal betel-nuts and *yü-ta* cloth [abaca textiles]; and (the foreign) traders barter for these porcelain, trade-gold, iron censers, lead, coloured glass beads, and iron needles. . . .

The San-sü (or "Three Islands"), belong to Ma-i; their names are Kia-ma-yen [Calamián Island Group between Mindoro and Palawan], Pa-lau-yu [Palawan], and Pa-ki-nung [Busuanga Island, largest of the Calamián Islands], and each has its own tribes scattered over the islands. When ships arrive there, the natives come out to trade with them; the generic name (of these islands) is San-sü.

Their local customs are about the same as those of Ma-i. Each tribe consists of about a thousand families. The country contains many lofty ridges, and ranges of cliffs rise steep as the walls of a house.

The natives build wattled huts perched in lofty and dangerous spots, and, since the hills contain no springs, the women may be seen carrying on their heads two or three jars one above the other in which they fetch water from the streams, and with their burdens mount the hills with the same ease as if they were walking on level ground.

In the remotest valleys there lives another tribe called Hai-tan [negritos]. They are small in stature and their eyes are round and yellow (brown), they have curly hair and their teeth show (be-

tween their lips). They nest in tree tops. Sometimes parties of three or five lurk in the jungle, from whence they shoot arrows on passers-by without being seen, and many have fallen victims to them. If thrown a porcelain bowl, they will stoop and pick it up and go away leaping and shouting for joy.

Whenever foreign traders arrive at any of the settlements, they live on board ship before venturing to go on shore, their ships being moored in mid-stream, announcing their presence to the natives by beating drums. Upon this the savage traders race for the ship in small boats, carrying cotton, yellow wax, native cloth, cocoanut-heart mats, which they offer for barter. If the prices (of goods they may wish to purchase) cannot be agreed upon, the chief of the (local) traders must go in person, in order to come to an understanding, which being reached the natives are offered presents of silk umbrellas, porcelain, and rattan baskets; but the foreigners still retain on board one or two (natives) as hostages. After that they go on shore to traffic, which being ended they return the hostages. A ship will not remain at anchor longer than three or four days, after which it proceeds to another place; for the savage settlements along the coast of San-sü are not connected by a common jurisdiction (i.e., are all independent).

The coast faces south-west, and during the south-west monsoon the surge dashes against the shore, and the rollers rush in so rapidly that vessels cannot anchor there. It is for this reason that those who trade to San-sü generally prepare for the return trip during the fourth or fifth moon (i.e., in May or June).

The following articles are exchanged in barter: porcelain, black damask and various other silks, (glass?) beads of all colours, leaden sinkers for nets, and tin.

P'u-li-lu [Polillo Island near Luzon] is connected with San-sü, but its settlements are more populous; most of the people are of a cruel disposition and given to robbery. The sea thereabout is full of bare ribs of rock with jagged teeth like blasted trees, their points and edges sharper than swords and lances; when ships pass by they tack out in time in order to steer clear of them; from here come coral-trees . . . but they are very difficult to get.

The local customs and commercial usages are the same
San-sü.

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