

# The Indonesian Word ‘*Kapur*’ (果布) in the Chinese Texts *Shiji* (史記) and *Hanshu* (漢書)

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## 1. Introduction

The oldest surviving examples of Indonesian (Malay)-language writing are the Sojomerto inscription of Central Java and the so-called Srivijaya inscriptions of southern Sumatra; both are written using South Indian script. The former has been identified as dating from the early 7<sup>th</sup> century (Boechari 1966; see also Fukami 2001b: 295), while the latter can be identified from the date given in the inscriptions themselves as being from the latter years of the same century (cf. Fukami 2001a: 270–273). All inscriptions found in maritime Southeast Asia that predate these two are from the 5<sup>th</sup> century (with the exception of a small number from the 1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries), and are written in an Indian language (either Sanskrit or, in one case, Tamil) using South Indian script (Karashima 2001: 316–320). For the record, the oldest surviving inscription in mainland Southeast Asia written in a local language is thought to be a Khmer-language one dating from 611 (Ishizawa 1982: 29).

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**Key words:** Guobu, Camphor, Kapur, Pisang, Maritime history

However, the two inscriptions mentioned above are by no means the oldest examples of Indonesian words, for we can find even older instances in classical Chinese texts. Hitherto it has been accepted that the word *pizong* (皮宗), which appears in the *Hanshu*'s (漢書) 'Treatise on Geography' (地理志), is the earliest Indonesian word identifiable in Chinese texts, but the author has recently come across what appears to be a still older example. The present article will explain this conjecture and add a few observations.

## 2. *Pizong*

It has been generally accepted that the place-name *Pizong* mentioned in the *Hanshu* is a Chinese transliteration of the Indonesian word *pisang*, meaning "banana". The reference comes toward the end of the Yue section (粵地, referring to present-day Guangdong and the surrounding area) in the 'Treatise on Geography':

During the Yuanshi (元始) years (1-5 CE) of Ping Di's (平帝) reign, regent Wang Mang (王莽) usurped power. Seeking to demonstrate his virtue and benevolence, he sent emissaries with large quantities of gifts to the king of Huangzhi (黃支) and requested that king to send tribute in the form of live rhinoceroses. The ships from Huangzhi reached Pizong after some eight months at sea, and after a further two months' voyage arrived in the vicinity of Xianglin Prefecture (象林県) in the Commanderie of Ri'nan (日南郡). (Cf. Nagata 1988: 306-7)

The arrival of a mission from Huangzhi is recorded in *juan* (卷) 12 of the *Hanshu*, in the section on Ping Di's reign: "In the spring of the second year [of Yuanshi], Huangzhiguo sent tribute in the form of live rhinoceroses."

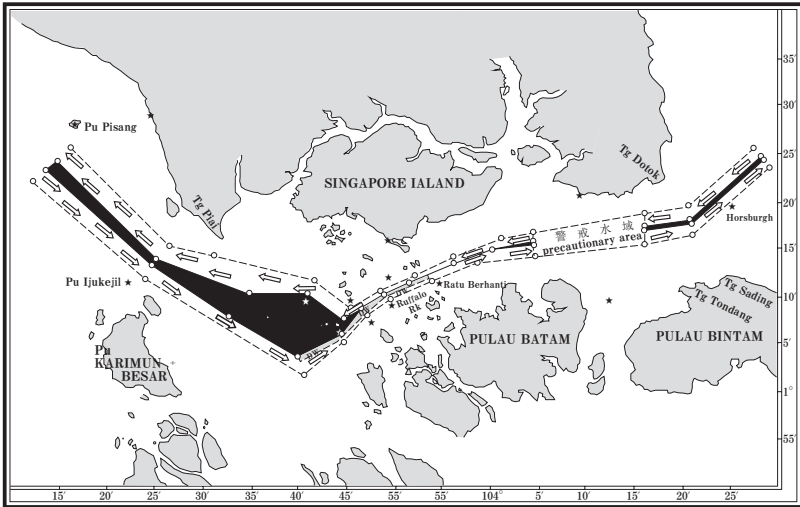
Since the Huangzhi mission arrived at the Han capital in the second year of Yuanshi, namely 2 CE, it must therefore have called in at Pizong some time in the year 1 CE.

The Yue section further states that, following his defeat of Nanyue (南越国) in 111 BCE, the Han emperor Wu Di (汉武帝) had established nine new commanderies (郡) in the newly-conquered territories; it was from the southernmost of these, Ri’nan, that emissaries of Wu Di had set out for Huangzhi.

According to Nagasawa (1989: 59), the first serious attempt to identify the countries through which these emissaries passed, together with the original names of the places called by the Chinese “Huangzhiguo” and “Pizong”, was Fujita Toyohachi’s 1914 article, ‘Records of Ocean-Going Communications on the Southwestern Seas during the Former Han Period’. (The article was later included in Fujita’s collected works; see Fujita 1974: 95–135.) Fujita identified “Huangzhiguo” with Kanchipuram in southern India, and “Pizong” with the island of Pisang which lies roughly westward of the Singapore Strait. Although there is disagreement in some quarters with Fujita’s thesis, the lack of pertinent source materials has led most scholars to go along with it, and so in the present essay I too propose to accept it in its generality without dwelling on details. While there has been no accurate identification of the places called by the Chinese “Ri’nan” and “Xianglin”, there can be no doubt that they were in the central section of what is now Vietnam, probably in the vicinity of Hue.

The identification of *pizong* as the oldest example of an Indonesian word in Chinese documents is based, of course, on its similar pronunciation to the word *pisang*. Whether the Chinese word *pizong* was pronounced 2000 years ago as “*pisang*”, or whether the modern Indonesian word *pisang* was already pronounced in the same way 2000 years ago, are matters beyond the present

Map 1: Pisang Island (From Kaijo hoancho 1990: 220)



Singapore Island is at the centre of the map, with Pisang Island (Pu Pisang) to the west and Karimun Besar Island (Pu KARIMUN BESAR) to the southwest.

author’s sphere of knowledge, but for the purposes of the present essay he will go along with the assumption that this was in fact the case<sup>1)</sup>.

The island of Pisang in the Malacca Strait is situated to the NNW of Karimun Besar Island, at north latitude of 1 degree 28 minutes and east longitude of 103 degrees 15 minutes. Located seven nautical miles off the coast of the Malay Peninsula, its maximum elevation is 134 metres, and, with a lighthouse at its highest point, the island continues to serve as a beacon point for ships using the passage between Pisang and Karimun Besar. (Kaijo hoancho 1990: 50, 217-18, 220; see also map 1)

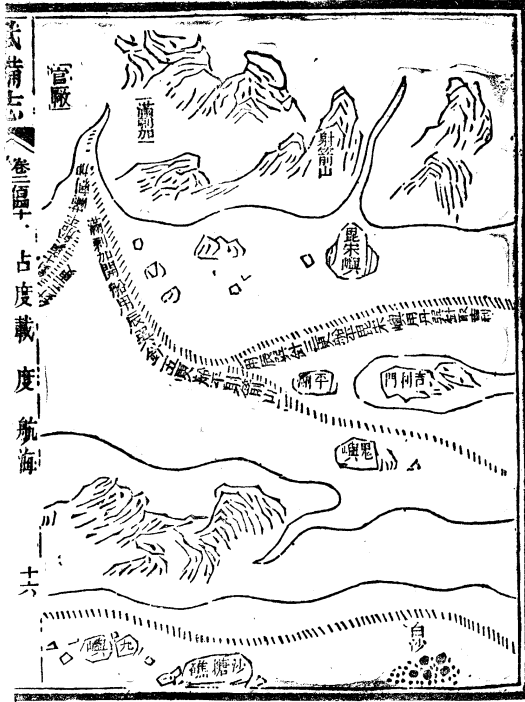
The author is unable to say whether or not the island was already being referred to 2000 years ago by the name of Pisang. Fujita, in his previously-mentioned article, argues that the island was well known and even of some

importance for oceanic voyagers in the Sui (隋) period, suggesting that *Bisong* (比嵩), cited as one of the countries known to the Sui rulers in the *Biandou* (辺斗) chapter of part 2 of the 'Southern Barbarians' (南蛮) section of *juan* 188 of the *Tongdian* (通典)<sup>2)</sup>, like *Pizong* in the *Hanshu*, was a transliteration of the name Pisang.

It is beyond the author's ability to pass judgement on the validity of the above argument, but Fujita's further identification of the *Pisong* (毘宋) found in the *Map of the Voyages of Zheng He* (鄭和航海圖) with Pisang can be more readily confirmed on the basis of the geographical relationship among the three places referred to in that document (see Xiang 1961: 50): *Jilimen* (吉利門; i.e. Karimun Besar), *Pisong* Island (毘宋嶼), and *Manlajia* (滿刺加; i.e. Melaka or Malacca). There seems little doubt that *Pisong* was indeed a Chinese transliteration of the name Pisang. (See map 2)

There is another reference to Pisang Island in the '*Manlajia*guo' (滿刺加國) section of the *Xiyang chaogong dianlu* (西洋朝貢典錄), where it is transcribed as the "Island of *Pizong*" (披宗之嶼) (Xu 1982: 36). Furthermore, the "*Pisong* Island" (毘宋嶼) mentioned not only in the '*Xiyang zhenlu*' (西洋針路) section of *juan* 8 of the *Dongxiyang kao* (東西洋考) but also in the *Shunfeng xiangsong* (順風相送) and *Zhinan zhengfa* (指南正法) as lying between the islands of Karimun (吉利門, 吉里汶, 吉里問山) and Melaka (滿喇咖, 麻六甲, 麻六甲), can also be taken as referring to Pisang<sup>3)</sup>. We can deduce from the foregoing data that this important navigational point for ocean-going vessels was known to the Chinese by its name of "Pisang" at least up to the compilation of the *Map of the Voyages of Zheng He* in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4)</sup>.

Map 2: Pisang Island, from *Map of the Voyages of Zheng He* (鄭和航海圖)



Pisang Island (昆宋嶼) is shown in the upper-central section of the map, with Karimun Besar (吉利門) below to the right and Melaka (滿刺加) at top left.

### 3. *Guobu* (果布)

#### (1) *Guobu* in the *Hanshu* and the *Shiji* (史記)

As the foregoing account has shown, there has been general agreement up to now that the oldest word conceivably of Indonesian origin in Chinese texts is the name *pizong*, referring to the island of Pisang. However, on a recent visit to the city of Guangzhou the author came across what appears to be an

even older example; this will be the main topic of the present article.

In the Yue section of the ‘Treatise on Geography’ of the *Hanshu* cited earlier, conditions from the Qin (秦) dynasty up to the time of Han Wu Di’s subjugation of Nanyueguo are described as follows:

The military commander of Nanhai (南海) in the Qin period, Zhao Tuo (趙佗), declared independence and made himself king. In the time of the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, it is said that that country disappeared and was made into commanderies of the Han Empire. That place was near the sea, and its ports conducted a busy trade in rhinoceros horn, elephant tusks, hawksbill turtles, pearls, silver, copper, fruits, and woven fabrics. Chinese merchants who ventured there grew very rich. Pan Yu (番禺) was the centre of that trade. (See Nagata 1988: 304)

In *juan* 129 of the *Shiji* (which predates the *Hanshu*), in the ‘Description of Commercial Activity’ (貨殖列傳), it is also written: “Pan Yu is a commercial centre of that [southern] region, where pearls, rhinoceros horn, hawksbill turtles, fruits, and woven goods are traded.”

Pan Yu is the old name for present-day Guangzhou (廣州). It was known as a trading centre in the southern region, and Chinese merchants who went there to do business were said to be able to amass great wealth. The rhinoceros horn, elephant tusks, turtles and other trading goods mentioned in these texts were brought to Pan Yu from the Southern Seas, the region we now call Southeast Asia. By the time of the second century BCE, that is, the forerunner of modern Guangzhou had already become the central distribution point for merchandise brought to China from Southeast Asia.

In the relevant section of the version of the *Shiji* most commonly consulted,

there is a note inserted in the text, based on the annotated edition *Shiji jijie* (史記集解), explaining the word *guobu* (果布). It notes that according to the historian Wei Zhao (韋昭) of Wu (吳), one of the Three Kingdoms (三国), “*Guo* has the meaning of longan (龍眼), a variety of lychee (離支), while *bu* refers to arrowroot (葛) cloth.” (A note to the same effect is also inserted in the corresponding *Hanshu* text.)

The longan, a fruit similar to the lychee, grows on a tall evergreen tree native to southern China. (Morohashi 1984: 12-1116) Round and brown-coloured on the outside, its fruit is white and has a delicious taste. (Ibid: 11-1045) Arrowroot cloth is made from the fibres of the arrowroot plant. (Ibid: 9-788) Wei Zhao’s reasons for identifying *guo* and *bu* with longans and arrowroot cloth are not evident to the present author<sup>5)</sup>. While the Japanese translation by Nagata and Umehara does not follow Wei Zhao’s thesis, preferring to translate the two words as “fruits” and “woven goods”, respectively, (Nagata 1988: 304), their division of the word into two parts reflects a similar understanding<sup>6)</sup>.

## (2) The Han Huaizhun (韓槐準) Thesis

In March 2005 the author, as noted above, had the opportunity to visit Guangzhou for the first time. Among the exhibits at the Guangzhou Museum was the original text (with punctuation added) of the section of the *Hanshu* referred to above. Interestingly enough, *guobu*, rather than being divided into two constituent parts, is transcribed in the accompanying English text as “*kapar*”, indicating that *guobu* is being treated as a single word. The word “*kapar*” is a mystery, but is most likely a misprint for *kapur*. *Guobu*, that is, was considered by the Guangzhou exhibit to be a transliteration of the first



part of the Indonesian word *kapur barus*, meaning camphor.

In modern Indonesian, *kapur* (sometimes spelled *kapor*) has the meaning of lime or quicklime, and also of things associated with or similar to lime, such as chalk and mortar. Combined with the adjective *barus* to form the word *kapur barus*, it refers to the aromatic substance camphor, which is derived from the wood of an evergreen tree (*Dryobalanops aromatica*) found only in the tropical rainforest of Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, and Borneo; the name owes to its similarity to lime in both colour and texture. *Barus* is most commonly considered to be a place-name, but there is no certain evidence for this; at the very least, there is no evidence linking it to the town of Barus on the Indian Ocean side of the province of North Sumatra. (See Yamada 1976: 37–72)

According to Chen Gaohua (1997: 21, note 32), the first scholastic endeavour to reject the Wei Zhao thesis and point to *guobu* as a Chinese transliteration of *kapur* was Han Huaizhun's 1941 article, "A Study of Camphor" (龍腦香考). Han's thesis has also been introduced by Lin Tianwei (Lin 1960: 26)<sup>7</sup>.

In his article, Han Huaizhun made a close examination of Chinese sources related to camphor. According to his findings, there are two Chinese words for camphor, *bingpian* (冰片) and *meipian* (梅片). The Malay (or Indonesian) word for it is *kapur barus*, and the *guobu* found in the *Hanshu* and *Shiji*, as previously noted, is a Chinese transliteration of the first part of that word, *kapur*. Han adds that the "*polu aroma*" (婆律香) mentioned in *juan* 54 of the *Liangshu*'s (梁書) 'History of Langyaxiuguo' (狼牙脩国伝), is a transliteration of the second half of the word, *barus*. The earliest instance of the word is in a Tang-period text, Xuan Zang's (玄奘) *Great Tang Record of the Western Regions* (大唐西域記), where it is referred to as "*jiebuluo aroma*" (羯布羅

香), a transliteration of the entire word *kapur barus*<sup>8)</sup>. The “*polu oil*” (婆律膏) mentioned in Su Gong’s (蘇恭) *Tang Bencao* (唐本草) represents only the second half of the word, *barus*, while Duan Chengshi’s (段成式) *gubupolu* (固不婆律), found in his *Youyang zazu* (酉陽雜俎)<sup>9)</sup>, transliterates the entire word (Han 1941: 6–9). The first appearance of the word *longnao* (龍腦), meanwhile, is in *juan* 82, ‘History of Chituguo’ (赤土国伝), of the *Suishu* (隋書). (Ibid: 6)

Among Japanese scholars, Yamada Kentaro has undertaken detailed research on camphor (although he has not examined the work of Han Huaizhun). (Yamada 1976: 37–72) Apart from the fact that Yamada does not refer to *guobu*, and his suggestion that *kapur* is not Malay but a Sanskrit word, his findings indicate that Han Huaizhun’s work may be taken as the standard reference on this subject.

Han Huaizhun has the following to say on the subject of *guobu*. Even leaving aside the fact that *guobu* and *kapur* sound so similar, the products mentioned in each account (pearls, rhinoceros horn, elephant tusks, hawksbill turtles, etc.) are all high-value products native to the southern region, suggesting that *guobu* should be considered as meaning not “fruits and arrowroot cloth” but camphor, the highly-prized aromatic substance native to the southern regions (Han 1941: 7).

This is a strongly persuasive thesis. Put differently, it suggests that the luxury goods from afar that would allow merchants to amass great wealth referred not to the fruits and arrowroot cloth of southern China, but to the rare and valuable product camphor which was being brought in from Southeast Asia.

An examination of burial goods interred in Chinese graves in Guangzhou and surrounding Guangdong during the Nanyue period has found, alongside objects

made from rhinoceros horn, ivory and so on, a large number of incense burners (Chen Gaohua 1997: 15), supporting Han Huaizhun’s thesis, outlined in his article, that the practice of burning incense was popular at that time. Of course, the presence of incense burners does not constitute direct evidence that it was camphor that was being burned, but it does at least provide a strong hint to that effect. Furthermore, among the larger ivory articles discovered among the burial objects, some have been confirmed to have come from African elephants (Ibid.), clear evidence that the trading network stretched even as far as Africa. Under such circumstances, it becomes less surprising that objects of Southeast Asian origin should have found their way to Guangzhou.

Wu Jiahua (1993: 5), as an example of recent thinking on this topic, cites approvingly the idea that *guobu*, rather than meaning “fruits and arrowroot cloth”, should be considered as the first half of *guobu polu* (果布婆律); however, he makes no mention of Han Huaizhun. As the above-mentioned Guangzhou Museum exhibit showed, there seems to be agreement among scholars in China (at least those in Guangzhou) that *guobu* should be identified with *kapur*<sup>10</sup>.

### (3) The Etymology of “*Kapur*”

A further controversy concerns whether the origins of the word *kapur* lie in Malay or in Sanskrit. The essence of the problem lies in whether the word should be considered a local one native to the islands of Southeast Asia, or whether it was a borrowed word from Sanskrit.

According to Yamada (1976: 40–43), the origins of *kapur* lie in the Sanskrit word *karpūra*. This word found its way westward into Persian, Arabic and Medieval Latin, and from there into the languages of Europe (such as the Latin

word *camphora*). In the opposite direction, the Prakrit or vernacular form of the word, *kaṃpūra*, was absorbed by Malay, Javanese and the various languages of Sumatra.

According to many scholars including Han Huaizhun, however, the linguistic origins of *kapur* are in fact Malay. In its treatment of the word “camphor”, *Hobson-Jobson*, Yule and Burnell’s work on Anglo-Indian word origins, notes that it entered the West through the Arabic word *kāfūr*, which in turn came from the Sanskrit word *kaṃpūra*, and further suggests that the word was originally of Javanese origin (Yule & Burnell 1985: 151). Meanwhile, *Zoetmulder’s Old Javanese-English Dictionary*, which indicates clearly for each entry whether or not a word is of Sanskrit origin, confirms this for *kaṃpura*, which originated in the Sanskrit word *kaṃpūra*, but not for *kapur* or *kapura* (1982 1: 799, 810). De Casparis’ *Sanskrit Loan-Words in Indonesian*, moreover, has no mention of any of those three words (de Casparis 1997), and the *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsche-Indië’s* entry for “*Kapoer Baroes*”, while noting against the headword that it is a Malay word, does not pursue the question of its Sanskrit origins at all (ENI 2: 271)<sup>11)</sup>.

The question of whether *kapur* is of Sanskrit origins or a native Southeast Asian word is beyond the author’s ability to solve, and he proposes to leave it to the attentions of comparative etymologists. It does seem, however, that the odds are against the Sanskrit thesis<sup>12)</sup>, which would make it a rare example of a local Southeast Asian word that spread into the Indian languages and even into those of the Western world<sup>13)</sup>. Even if the distant origins of the word *kapur* do lie in Sanskrit, moreover, camphor itself was a product of the tropical rainforest of insular Southeast Asia, and the possibility cannot be denied that, by the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE (or even earlier), *kapur* was already famil-

## The Indonesian Word ‘*Kapur*’ (果布)

iar in Guangzhou as a word of Southeast Asian origin. Should it ever be proved that *kapur* was originally a borrowing from Sanskrit, the fact that it has become a part of the vocabulary of modern Indonesian means that the *guobu* mentioned in the *Shiji* is still beyond a doubt the oldest Indonesian word surviving in Chinese texts.

The next stage in the present investigation ought to be an examination of instances of the words *kapur* and *kapur barus* in local Southeast Asian texts, but the author proposes to set that task aside for the moment and simply note one or two more points relevant to the foregoing discussion. The Old Javanese verse epic *Ramayana*, which had most likely been written down by the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century, is probably the oldest mention of the word *kapur* (Zoetmulder 1982: 1-799). As for stone inscriptions, the Old Javanese inscription *Taji Gunung*, dating back to 910 CE, also includes the word *kapur* (Jones 1984: 53, 152).

### (4) *Guobu* in the ‘Wu Capital Rhapsody’ (吳都賦)

As an outsider to the fields of Chinese history and literature, the author has no knowledge of any other examples of the word *guobu* beyond its appearance in Zuo Si’s (左思) ‘Wu Capital Rhapsody’ (which incidentally is not mentioned by Han Huaizhun). The citation comes in Morohashi’s *Great Chinese-Japanese Dictionary* which, under its entry for *guobu*, gives the meaning of the word as “fruits and cloth” and quotes a passage containing the word from the ‘Wu Capital Rhapsody’. (The work is included in Xiao Tong’s (蕭統) *Selections of Refined Literature* (文選) under the title Zuo Taichong (左太冲), ‘Wu Capital Rhapsody’.) Morohashi’s entry adds a note that “According to Han, *guo* refers to citrus fruits, while *bu* refers to linen cloth”. (Morohashi 1984 6: 245)

Regarding the appearance of *guobu* in the ‘Wu Capital Rhapsody’, Li Shan, quoting the passage from the ‘Treatise on Geography’ in the *Hanshu*, adds a note that “*guo* is a kind of citrus fruit, and *bu* a kind of ramie cloth” (Cited in Xiao 1986: 219). Evidently, Chinese historical and literary circles are united in their opinion that *guobu* refers to “fruits and woven goods”.

While not seeking to assert categorically that the *guobu* in Zuo Si’s ‘Wu Capital Rhapsody’ is a reference to *kapur*, the author would at least like to point out the possibility of this being the case. The passage in question goes as follows: “Carts conveying *guobu* arrive in large numbers. Like lapis lazuli and white onyx, it is brought from afar.” This passage suggests that *guobu* was considered on a level with precious stones like lapis lazuli and white onyx. The former was said to be produced in such places as Ri’nan, Huangzhi and Daqin (大秦), while the latter was also noted as a product of the Ri’nan commandery. (Nakajima 1977: 281) “Ri’nan” corresponded to what is now central Vietnam, “Huangzhi” to southern India, and “Daqin” to ancient Rome. Lapis lazuli and white onyx were both rare and valuable products imported from distant parts, and the fact that *guobu* is listed alongside such products hints at the strong possibility that it too referred to a precious and high-value commodity produced in the southern regions, namely camphor.

Since the ‘Wu Capital Rhapsody’ was composed during the Western Jin (西晉) period (265–316 CE), this supposition, if true, would indicate that camphor, known under the name of *guobu*, was being regularly imported into China as a rare product from at least as early as the second century BCE until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. After that it would appear that the connection between *guobu* and camphor was forgotten, and the word took on the meaning of “fruits and woven goods”. In place of *longnao*, the Chinese signifiers for camphor be-

came the words *polu xiang* and *jiebuluo xiang*.

(5) A Note on the Gathering and Marketing of Camphor

As the preceding argument has shown, if *guobu* did indeed refer to *kapur*, it would mean that the aromatic substance camphor, from as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE and perhaps up until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, was being transported from the tropical rainforest of Southeast Asia to the trading centre of Guangzhou, and from there distributed throughout China. The *Shiji*'s 'Description of Commercial Activities', as we saw, gave as examples of the trade in precious commodities from afar such things as "pearls, rhinoceros [horn], hawksbill turtles, and *guobu*", while the *Hanshu*'s 'Treatise on Geography' listed "rhinoceros horn, ivory, hawksbill turtles, pearls, silver, copper, and *guobu*". These precious items can be divided into marine products (pearls and hawksbill turtles), animal products (rhinoceros horn and ivory), and mineral products (silver and copper). The 'Wu Capital Rhapsody' lists *guobu* alongside precious stones like lapis lazuli and white onyx. Among the products imported from the southern regions that were popular in China at that time, only *guobu* or camphor was a vegetable product, or, to define it in its narrowest sense, a forest product derived from the trees themselves.

Camphor is not something that is come across by chance, but a commodity that is extracted from trees by people entering the rainforest for that reason. The tree from which it is extracted, according to the *Zhufanzhi* (諸蕃志), flourishes in deep mountain valleys (Fujiyoshi 1991 : 253), and the extraction process is no easy matter. (Yamada 1976 : 55-59) How did this aromatic product of the Southeast Asian tropical rainforests come to be known in China more than 2000 years ago, and was it continuously available or only sporadi-

cally?

The appearance of independent kingdoms in maritime Southeast Asia following the mastery of monsoon navigation dates back to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. (Fukami 2001a: 261-67) We can assume that these kingdoms set about the collection and distribution of items viable as trading goods with other countries, but in fact camphor, a rare product of the tropical rainforest, had already begun to be collected for commercial purposes long before. Exported to Guangzhou as a high-value trading item, it subsequently became a highly-prized commodity for rich Chinese families. At the present time, unfortunately, there is no way of knowing just how the camphor was collected from the trees of the rainforest, how it entered the oceanic trading network, and how it found its way to Guangzhou. At the very least, however, we can assert that, by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, the tropical rainforest had already established a firm Chinese connection thanks to the emerging world of maritime Asia.

#### 4. Conclusions

As early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, the name of *kapur barus* (camphor), a product of the tropical rainforest of insular Southeast Asia, had become established as a rare international trading item and was being mentioned in Chinese texts in its Chinese transliteration of *guobu*. We can also assert with confidence that, by the early years of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, the island of Pisang, an important navigational point on the sea-route through the strategic Malacca Strait, was being referred to in Chinese texts in its Chinese rendering of *pizong*.

The fact that the earliest Indonesian words to be mentioned in Chinese texts are *kapur* and *pisang* is no mere coincidence. Rather, it illustrates the



## The Indonesian Word ‘Kapur’ (果布)

crucial role played by the Malacca Strait region — or, to put it differently, the Indonesia-Malaysia region — in East-West oceanic trading and transportation. As well as furnishing the products that would feature as the trading commodities of East-West exchange, this region also played an essential role in providing the route that made such trading activities possible. An examination of the Indonesian word *kapur barus* has revealed that the Malacca Strait region had already begun to play such a dual role in East-West oceanic trade by at least the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE.

### NOTES

- 1) According to Setsunan University (摂南大学) Professor Yamaguchi Masao (山口真佐夫), an expert on Comparative Austronesian linguistics, *pisang* was originally a Proto-Austronesian word and has probably undergone little change. (Letters to the author, 5 August 2005 and 3 November 2005)
- 2) The same text may be found in *juan* 177 of the *Taiping huanyuji* [太平寰宇記] and also in *juan* 332 of the *Wenxian tongkao* [文献通考].
- 3) Certain scholars have taken the 崑 form of *pi* as being a scribe’s mistake for the correct 毘 form. See Xie 1981: 177 and Xiang 1959: 192. 251.
- 4) With the exception of the works of Ahmad ibn Mājid, dating from the mid- to late-15<sup>th</sup> century, there has evidently been little interest shown by Arabic authors in the island of Pisang. (Tibbetts 1979: 196. See also Yajima 2001)
- 5) One possibility is that Wei Zhao had consulted the following text, which can be found in *juan* 4, ‘Biography of Shi Xie’ (士燮伝), in the section covering the last year of the Jian’an (建安 25, namely 220 CE) reign in the *Wuzhi* (吳志) of the *Sanguozhi* (三国志): 「燮每遣使詣權，致雜香·細葛輒以千數，明珠·大貝·流離·翡翠·瑇瑁·犀·象之珍奇物。異果蕉邪龍眼之屬。」
- 6) Morohashi’s entry for *guobu* translates it as “fruits and woven goods” (Morohashi 1984: 6-245).
- 7) The variety of camphor known in Chinese as *longnao* (龍腦) (sometimes

- referred to in English as “Borneo camphor”), though similar to the synthetic product (*Cinnamomum Camphora*) generally known as “camphor” in both China and Japan, is in fact a quite different substance. The latter was first developed in 12<sup>th</sup>-century China as a less-expensive substitute for the former, and eventually came to be widely produced. (See Yamada 1976: 64-65)
- 8) Han Huaizhun’s reasoning for his assertion that this is a rendering of the entire word was that the syllable following the *bu* of *jiebuluo* was omitted because it had the same *bu* sound. Yamada Kentaro’s thesis that the word was a transliteration of the Sanskrit word *karpura* (1976: 40-43) is much more persuasive.
- 9) Yamada (1976: 44) gives *gubupolu* (固布婆律), but the *bu* is surely a misprint for *bu* (不). On the topic of the camphor tree, described in *juan* 18, story #757, *Longnao xiangzhu* (龍腦香樹) of the *Youyang zazu* (西陽雜俎), see Imamura 1980: 5-246-48.
- 10) On the other hand, Chen Jiarong (1999: 75) punctuates the cited passage from the *Shiji*’s ‘Description of Commercial Activities’ as 「珠璣, 犀, 瑇瑁, 果, 布」, suggesting that even now there is still no agreement among Chinese scholars on the thesis that *guobu* equals *kapur*. The traditional view that it should be understood as “fruits and woven goods”, as seen in the discussion of Wei Zhao and of the ‘Wu Capital Rhapsody’ in the present essay, evidently remains highly favoured.
- 11) On the other hand, the purpose of the language entries is merely to indicate to which of the island languages a word belongs; whether or not a word has Sanskrit origins is not a major concern. This entry should thus not be taken as refuting the possibility of a Sanskrit origin.
- 12) In the same letters cited in Note 1 above, Professor Yamaguchi Masao indicated his belief that *kapur* is also of Proto-Austronesian origin, and that it too, like *pisang*, has probably undergone little change.
- 13) The Japanese word for camphor, *kanfuru* (カンフル), in combinations like カンフル剤 (camphor tablets) and カンフル注射 (camphor injection), was probably imported from German during the Meiji period (or perhaps from Dutch during the Edo period), but the distant origins of that modern European word lie

## The Indonesian Word ‘*Kapur*’ (果布)

in the Proto-Austronesian languages. *Kapur* is an extremely rare example of a word with Proto-Austronesian roots taking on an international dimension.

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**The Indonesian Word ‘*Kapur*’ (果布)  
in the Chinese Texts *Shiji* (史記)  
and *Hanshu* (漢書)**

Sumio FUKAMI

As early as the 2nd century BCE, the name of kapur barus (camphor), a product of the tropical rainforest of insular Southeast Asia, had become established as a rare international trading item and was being mentioned in Chinese texts in its Chinese transliteration of guobu. We can also assert with confidence that, by the early years of the 1st century CE, the island of Pisang, an important navigational point on the sea-route through the strategic Malacca Strait, was being referred to in Chinese texts in its Chinese rendering of pizong.

The fact that the earliest Indonesian words to be mentioned in Chinese texts are kapur and pisang is no mere coincidence. Rather, it illustrates the crucial role played by the Malacca Strait region - or, to put it differently, the Indonesia-Malaysia region - in East-West oceanic trading and transportation. As well as furnishing the products that would feature as the trading commodities of East-West exchange, this region also played an essential role in providing the route that made such trading activities possible. An examination of the Indonesian word kapur barus has revealed that the Malacca Strait region had already begun to play such a dual role in East-West oceanic trade by at least the 2nd century BCE.