Secret Writing in Siamese.

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The desire to conceal the true meaning of writing from third persons has, as is well known, led to different kinds of secret writing. It is the writing of cyphers and codes which long employed in diplomacy may be said to have found its greatest development in this age of telegrams in the commercial world.

Several ingenious methods of such secret writing have existed in Siam from old times, but, unfortunately as in most things Siamese, we are quite unable to fix any date. It would however appear from internal evidence, the letters employed etc., that it is owing to Indian influence that the systems have been developed.

A collection of these cyphers, if we may so call them, has been made by Hluang Prasôt Aksaraniti (Phè) under the title of Porānavākya, in which other grammatical questions are also discussed, and which has been published by order of Prince Kitiyakara Varalaksna whilst in charge of the Education Department (Bangkok 120.)

We cull from it the following specimens in which there is a combination of letters and cyphers.

We find then first the numerals 1-9 employed to designate vowels in the following way.
The following memorial verse shows how this system is to be employed,

It will be seen that none of the specific Siamese vowels find a place in this system. We give the following example and its decipherment:—

(1)  

The following table shows how this system is to be employed:
The second system is to substitute for vowels and accents consonants.

It will be seen that the r and l vowels are chosen to represent short and long i, and ü ü, and that consequently in this connection r and l are not considered vowels:
The system called פהทน or the erring Siamese substitutes one consonant for the other in the following way.

ก ข ฃ คร ฆ ง กะ กง กิ ก่ กม กน กฬ

งก ภ ผ ฝ ฟ ห ฬ ฮ

ฤ ระ ว โว วิ ภว

บ ป ผ พ ปป ปฬ ปถ ปท

ม พ ผ พผ พถ พท

It is as we would alter on a type-writer the single keys so that if we would strike the board ก we get in writing ข etc.
A system still used as a kind of intellectual exercise among children is the following:—

The consonants, leaving out the linguals and taking ข and ฃ as one letter in the same way as ฃ and ฅ, are divided into seven classes of five letters each irrespective of the grammatical class to which they belong. The series are marked by the numerals one to seven and the first letter of each series with one dot the second with two dots etc. For these dots the numerals from one to five may be substituted so that the alphabet so arranged would be as follows:—

เรื่่องที่ ๖
ใน (สมมติ) ที่ พี่

เข้าที่ ม.

ก (สมมติ) ที่ พย.

มากในบ ปลายพว  gammab

6 6 6 6 6

๖ (สมมติ) พย.

๖ ๖ ๖ ๖
It goes without saying that the systems here propounded may be combined, and that codes are not at the present time based on these systems.
Attention may be called to a system of secret writing called บุญ แปลง สาร. The hermit metamorphosing letters.—This is simply writing any given text backwards.

A system of secret writing which is of course of universal application and which is known in Siam as ไทย นับ สาม คาน  โดย ผ่าน ห้า ผล วัน ที่ จะ ยม หมู่. counting by three, and ไทย นับ ห้า คาน  โดย ผ่าน ห้า ผล วัน ที่ จะ ยม หมู่. counting by five, is the following:—

The text is written down. If we have for instance 23 words or letters we commence with the 8th letter which is written down and so on with every eighth letter. The third letter will then be the first of the original text.

It is the same when we divide

19 letters in 13
17 " " 6
26 " " 9

or counting five

19 letters in 4
21 " " 17
14 " " 3

The following may serve as examples:—
As a touch of nature makes all people kin, we may mention that the worst feature of school boys' language, the back slang, is also met with in Siam. The syllable ขั้น is added to the sentence and thus we may hear

ไปไหนขึ้น | อยู่บนขึ้น | ค่นบนแล้วขึ้น
ไปไหนข้อง | อยู่บนข้อง | ค่นบนแล้วข้อง

for ไปไหน | for อยู่บน | for ค่นบนแล้ว

It is known that in some instances we find in Indian Mss. numerals expressed by words, i.e., instead of writing the numerals themselves, words are written which are supposed to have this meaning. Cpr: Burnell, A.C.: Elements of South Indian Palaeography. London, 1878. pg. 77. Thus for "1" we find the word for sun aditya, for 2 the word for moon caudr. The numeral words are combined in the Mss. without indicating by any outward sign that they represent numbers. In writing these numbers one commences with the unit, then follows the decimal, then the hundreds etc., so that for instance the words which compose the figures 6321 would be written as 1236. It need not be pointed out that to the numerous other difficulties for a proper chronology, another is added by this cumbersome method, which may to a certain extent be compared to the chronograms in use in Europe since the sixteenth century, and in Persia and Arabia since the 9th century.
A similar secret method of indicating numbers we find also in some instances in old Siamese Mss. The method goes by the name of aksara saṃkhyā, the numeral letters. By its name its Indian origin is shown.

We find no indication at what time the system has been introduced and, although as regards secret writing it would lend itself to many combinations, it seems mostly to have been employed in astrological works.

The letters which are used for the forming of figures are those of the Indian alphabet and none of the specific Siamese letters enter into the combination. This alphabet is divided into three divisions of nine letters each called navasaṃkhyā and one of five letters pañcasāṃkhyā to indicate consonants, and the vowels with ु and ० for zero called sūnasāṃkhyā:—

We have thus to indicate the numbers from 1-9 the following

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<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<th>7</th>
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and further to indicate the numbers from 1—5 प श फ ह म

1 2 3 4 5

Whilst for Zero we have the vowels

० ० ० ० ० ० ० ० ० ० ० ० ० ० ० ०

The example is:

เขียนประมาณที่, บ, น, ม แปลค, ย, ฉ, สี,
Thus to indicate that a change of the era from the Buddhist to the Chulasakarat should take place, the word ภูมิ趴ยา is used, where ภ is the equivalent of 1, มหา of 8, ป of 1 and ผ of 1, meaning that the number 1181 is to be added or subtracted from the year of the Era.