



Michael Smithies and Dhiravat na Pombejra

Instructions Given to the Siamese Envoys Sent to Portugal, 1684¹

A full account of the troubled Siamese embassy to Portugal is given in Michael Smithies, *A Siamese Embassy Lost in Africa, 1686: The Odyssey of Ok-Khun Chamnan*.² Chamnan was one of the six mandarins accompanying the three Siamese ambassadors (the *ratchathut*, *uppathut*, and *trithut*) sent by Phra Narai to return “a very important embassy” sent to Siam by the King of Portugal, Pedro II (regent from 1667, king 1683-1706). Chamnan’s account is derived from Fr Tachard’s seventh book of his *Second Voyage*,³ but the dates and periods of time the embassy spent waiting for ships often do not agree. According to Chamnan, as recorded by Fr Tachard, the Siamese left “towards the end of March 1684”, spent more than five months reaching Goa, missed the Portuguese fleet to Lisbon, and had to wait “nearly eleven months in Goa” for the next. They were said to have left Goa (on the *Nossa Senhora dos Milagros*) on 27 January 1686 and were shipwrecked off Cape Agulhas about midnight on 27 April. On 28 May they arrived at the Dutch settlement on the Cape after an arduous journey overland during which

the first ambassador had to be abandoned and several of the party died; the survivors spent “nearly four months” at the Cape recovering and waiting for a ship to take them to Batavia, embarked (on the Dutch ship *Sint-Martensdijk*) early September, reached Batavia in November, and waited until June 1687 for a ship to take them to Siam, which they reached in September.⁴

Professor Van der Cruysse, in his *Louis XIV et le Siam*,⁵ indicates that a trader from Macao, Pero Vaz de Siqueira led an embassy from the Portuguese viceroy at Goa to Phra Narai in 1685; it was received in Lopburi and left Ayutthaya 23 June without having obtained its request for extraterritoriality for Portuguese subjects and without having settled the disputes with the French missionaries (of the Missions Etrangères in Paris). He held that the king of Siam therefore decided to send “the following year an embassy to Portugal” and it was this mission which boarded the *Nossa Senhora dos Milagros* which was shipwrecked in April 1686.⁶ This raises considerable problems of dates; it would have been impossible for Chamnan and the

embassy of which he was a part to have left Siam in 1686, spent nearly a year in Goa, and still be shipwrecked off southern Africa in April the same year.

However, the embassy to Portugal was apparently not sent in return for the Siquiera/Goa mission. In a letter from Arnout Faa and council to Cornelis van Quaalberg and council in Malacca, dated Siam 13 November 1684 (VOC 1407), Faa relates (fs 2808v-2809) that King Narai's embassy to Portugal had left Ayutthaya, at a date unspecified, for Goa. Chamnan/Tachard's date for departure of March 1684 is therefore possibly correct, and the instructions given to the embassy must date from before 13 November 1684, possibly by as much as seven months. Certainly the embassy left some time between March and November, and it seems likely that Chamnan and the rest of the Siamese embassy did indeed leave Goa late in January 1686 on the ill-fated *Nossa Senhora dos Milagros* to be shipwrecked towards the end of April off Cape Agulhas.

There exists the remote possibility that there is confusion between the sending of a Siamese mission to the Portuguese viceroy in Goa and an embassy to the king himself in Lisbon. It would seem that, however much Phra Narai was anxious to establish and maintain contacts with European monarchs, he is unlikely to have been so extravagant as to send two missions effectively to the same ruler so close to each other. Quite simply, it would seem that King Narai had intended to send an embassy to Portugal before receiving the Siquiera mission from Goa, doubtless to cement relations with a long-standing (if distant and impoverished) ally. We lack, though, information about the "very important embassy" sent, according to Chamnan/Tachard, by the King of Portugal to Siam, probably before 1684.

All embassies depart with written, and sometimes (often secret) verbal instructions. The Siamese were no exception in this matter. What we are examining here are the written instructions, not in the Siamese original but in an incomplete French translation, given to the

Siamese mission to Lisbon which, all agree, suffered shipwreck in 1686 and which failed to reach its destination.

The text below, written in French, is located in the archives of the Missions Etrangères in Paris (AME 854, ff.721-727). It was first published in full in Alain Forest's *Les Missionnaires français au Tonkin et au Siam, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles*, Bk 1, *Histoires de Siam* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1998), pp.429-436. We should like to record our thanks to Professor Forest and to his publisher L'Harmattan for their agreement to translate this extremely important document.

Professor Forest writes: "This text certainly inspired some accounts written subsequent to the Franco-Siamese embassies [of 1685-88], notably that of La Loubère. The document is very difficult to read; La Loubère moreover made a number of errors in transcribing the proper names in it. But I have certainly committed some errors myself and I leave to linguists the task of eventually transforming these into a more correct transcription than that of the missionaries of the seventeenth century, whose 'pp', for example, should be read 'ph', 'tt' stands for 'th', 'aa' should be 'â', 'ae' should be 'ay' and so on."

Additions in round brackets are by Professor Forest; those in square brackets are ours. Professor Forest's footnotes are included with the prefix AF; all others are ours.

(721) If you are asked what rank you have,

Reply that one of you is *ookphra* (okphra), another is *ooklouang* (okluang) and another *ookon* (okon) [okkhun]; that *ookpra* is similar to a marquis, *ooklouang* similar to a count, and *ookon* is similar to a man of noble birth.

If you are asked what positions and functions you hold at court,

Reply that you were serving under the colours and in the army.

If you are asked about the health of the king of Siam,

Reply that he is in good health.

If you are asked how are the princess, the princes, all the most important mandarins, and all the court

Reply that all the court is in perfect health and happy to be under the rule of the great king of Siam. The first minister (*phra khlung Lek*?⁷) who governed the state for more than twenty years with quite extraordinary wisdom and prudence died a few months ago from a rather long illness.

If you are asked the name of the king, how he is addressed, and his age,

Reply that when he was crowned he was called Sommedethia Ppra Naareyya (Phra Narai) Raachaattirat Chaadi Souriauwongsa. Since his coronation, he is called Sommedethia Ppra Maahaa Kresatritti⁸ Raacha Thian Ppou Yä. But when he writes letters to some other kings he takes yet another name which describes all his qualities. He is fifty years old.

If you are pushed to pronounce and explain the name of the king,

Say that all the words which constitute it are in Pali and very difficult [ones], and you fear being unable to explain it adequately and of making yourselves guilty on this account.

If you are asked of what royal race is the reigning king, if it is ancient, if the city of Siam [Ayutthaya] is ancient or recently built, and what are the most ancient towns in the kingdom,

Reply that the reigning king descends from the great king Sommedethia Ppra Pattarma Souria Naaranissavoora Boppitra Seangae⁹ who reigned in the city of Chaya Ppaha Mahanokora (Angkor)¹⁰ in 1300 (of the Buddhist era) [AD 756-7] and there were ten kings after him in the city. Then King Sommedethia Prayasouttora Ttarrena Ttepperaraacchaatti built the city of Yassouttora Nacoora Louang¹¹ and twelve kings reigned there. Then the king Sommedethia Pprappanom Tteleiseri Maahesa Voruaarinti Raacha Boppitra¹² went to dwell in Soucouthae (Sukhothai). And in the year 1731 [AD 1157-8], he constructed the city of Pochebouri

[Phetchaburi] where four kings reigned in 163 years. Finally, after that, the king Sommedethia Ppra Raamaattibodi Bopptra¹³ who succeeded him [sic] constructed the city of Siam in 1894 which is today the capital of the kingdom and is called Krong Tteppa Ppra Maha Nacoora Sri Outeyaa [Krungthep Phra Maha Si Ayutthaya] and where he reigned a further twenty-seven years. Thus there were fifty kings in 926 years.

(722) If you are asked from what point you calculate... (unreadable) [your calendar?],

Reply that it is from the death of the god Sommanacoodom (Gautama) [the Buddha] and his entry into nirvana, which took place 2,226 years previously.¹⁴

If you are asked how many sons, and princes of the blood the king has,

Reply that he has a daughter,¹⁵ two brothers,¹⁶ and there are several princes of the blood and royal race.

If you are asked about the age of the princess, the daughter of the king, and the princes,

Reply that the princess is twenty-five years old; one of the princes of thirty-nine years old, and the other is twenty-nine.

If you are asked how the palace is built and if it is big,

Reply that it has three walls of brick and stone, that the palace is very big, spacious, and elevated; that in the middle there is a very high tower or pyramid constructed partly in stone, brick and wood and gilded all over; that the roof is covered in calin.¹⁷ There is also in the palace a fine garden with flowers, handsome rows of trees and a number of fountains: this is in the third enclosure. In the other two enclosures there are also gardens with all kinds of flowers, large ornamental lakes with their fountains, many principal buildings, chambers entirely covered with calin and gilded, with a menagerie comprising several different animals.

If you are asked if the city of Siam is large,

Reply that it is on an island surrounded by a broad and fine river which is called Meenam, that is, Mother of Waters. It is surrounded by a brick wall. The circumference of the city is 6,000 spans or 300 *senne* (*sen*).

If you are asked if it is hot or cold in Siam,

Reply that there are three seasons in the year, the hot which is not...(unreadable), the cold, and the rainy season.

If you are asked why the king goes to Louvo (Lopburi), and what is this city like,

Reply that three hundred years before it was the place where the kings resided and that it was left almost entirely ruined, but the present king has caused it to be rebuilt; he has had a palace constructed there in which he nearly always remains, and also this place is close to the forests where he goes to distract himself hunting elephants, tigers, and other beasts.

If you are asked to which countries the king of Siam sends ambassadors,

Reply that formerly he sent and received ambassadors from China, Japan, Persia, Ava [Burma], and [the] Lao. At present embassies with Japan, Ava, and Laos are suspended. Recently, a new mission has been sent to France, whose ambassadors have not yet returned.¹⁸ The country is at war with Ava and Laos. Concerning Japan, the embassies sent there are very rare, but ships go there every year.

If you are asked if there are many elephants in the kingdom,

Say that there is no kingdom in which there are finer nor more numerous beasts, that there are two white elephants to which much respect is shown, that there are in the city of Siam at least 400 pavilions for the finest, that there are also outside the city many others, that even in all the important towns there are many. Not a year passes without the Moors¹⁹ buying for the Mogul²⁰ two to three hundred.

There are horses but not in such great numbers. Moreover they are not necessary, since when one goes to the hunt or to war, normally one has to pass through dense forests, which horses cannot do so easily [as elephants].

(723) If you are asked if the kingdom of Siam is populous,

Reply that it is heavily populated²¹ and that in the capital there are many foreigners from all [manner of] kingdoms.

If you are asked what are the tributary kingdoms of Siam and what are the kingdoms adjacent to it, and how many provinces there are,

Reply that there are eight provinces²² in the upper part, or the north. The first province is that of Porcelouc, Pissenoulouc (Phitsanulok) is the chief city. It has ten other towns which depend on and are included in that province, by name the towns of Mueang Nacoor Ttae (*muang* Nakhon Thai), Mueang Chaatetaan (Chattrakran?),²³ Mueang Chaebonne, Mueang Seri Ppram, Mueang Trenom, Mueang Chomsora Samdeng, Mueang Séeng Soncramme [Chumsaeng Songkhram], Mueang Pippat Songcramme, Mueang Ppiboune, [and] Mueang Nacoora Paamaac.

The second province is that of Sevanne Loucka (Sawankhalok), with the chief city of the same name, where there are eight towns, being Mueang Ppissetcousanne, Mueang Pissanechaesat [Phiset Chaisat], Mueang Ppiren Songramme, Mueang Ppirao Morenarongt, Mueang Seraae Ppraam, Mueang Rekaa, Mueang Chivitabouri, [and] Mueang Sippana Maat.

The third province is that of Soucouthae (Sukhothai), whose chief city has the same name, where there are seven towns, by name Mueang Nacoora Yong, Mueang Cooracraat [Kongkralat?], Mueang Quiriamaat (Khirimat), Mueang Raachattani,²⁴ Mueang Seri Songcramme, Mueang Raamappichit, [and] Mueang Ritti Reuchae (or “Venchae”?).

The fourth province is that of Camppeng Ppet (Kamphaeng Phet), whose chief city has the same name and which has ten towns,²⁵ by name Mueang Ttesse, Mueang Traetreung [Traitrung],²⁶ Mueang Bouraane Raachaa [Boranrat], Mueang Chieng Ngeune [Chiang Ngoen], Mueang Chieng Ttong [Chiang Thong],²⁷ Mueang Koussamme Ppuanne [Kosamphinin], Mueang Baanne Pperabouri, Mueang Taat (Tak), [and] Mueang Chieng Leudet.

The fifth province is that of Raachasimaa [Korat] whose chief city is Nacoorna Raachasimaa (Nakhon Ratchasima), which has five towns, by name Mueang Ppimae (Phimai), Mueang Pachom [Pak Chong?], Mueang Chaia Vadaanne [Chaibadan], Mueang Campper(r)aane, [and] Mueang Ppeong [Pon?].

The sixth is that of Pocheboune (Phetchabun), whose chief city has the same name, and which has two towns, Mueang Thiantta Vanao and Mueang Crae Nacoora Et.

The eighth²⁸ is Pichaia (Phichai), which is the name of the chief city and which has seven towns, namely Mueang Bang Ppon, Mueang Hang, Mueang Lablee [Laplae], Mueang Ppipat [Muang Phiphat], Mueang Ppateboune [Muang Pattabun], Mueang Trevantri Soune, [and] Mueang Phiboune Patthiimme.

In addition there are twelve other towns²⁹ to the north which do not depend in any way on those we have already named. They are the towns of Mueang Ppithitaoa, Mueang Nacoora Savanne (Nakhon Sawan), Mueang Chaenaat (Chainat), Mueang Outtaya Ttaani (Uthai Thani), Mueang Manouromme (Manorom), Mueang Inttabouri [Inburi], Mueang Prommabouri (Phromburi), Mueang Louppabouri (Lopburi), Mueang Sourabouri (Saraburi), Mueang Nacoora Naayoc (Nakhon Nayok), Mueang Prathiine (Prachin), Mueang Ang Ttong (Ang Thong), Mueang Kannebouri [Kan(chana)huri?], Mueang Chattrreung Tteraa [Chachoengsai?], Mueang Chaeyouc [Saiyok?], Mueang Seri Souassedi [Si Sawat], Mueang Ttong Pattoume [Thong Phaphum?], [and] Mueang Ttong Ttaatri [Thong Thaphi].

This is roughly the list of the towns in the upper part.

There are also those in the lower part. The first province there is that of Yohorre (Johore), formerly a [separate] kingdom. The chief city bears the same name. It has seven towns, by name Mueang Pahang, Mueang Inttaquiri, Mueang Bangcali, Mueang Sia, Mueang Trang Kaanu (Trengganu), Mueang Coungonne, [and] Mueang Dili.

The second province is that of Taani (Pattani). The chief city has this name, [and] it has eight towns (724), by name Mueang Klannettanne [Kelantan], Mueang Saae, Mueang Pinkra, Mueang Plessout, Mueang Meong, Mueang Krevann, Mueang Tteppao (Thepha), [and] Muang Sacomme Si Ttarema.

The third, the chief city of which bears the name Mueang Naccora Si Ttaremaraacha (Nakhon Si Thammarat), has twenty towns, by name Mueang Sangcalaat [Songkhla/Singora],³⁰ Muean Chaiaa (Chaya) [Chaiya], Mueang Ttamttong [Tha Thong], Mueang Ppouneppin (Phunphin), Mueang Chaacram, Mueang Klaae, Mueang Ppichienne, Mueang Ppenang [Pak Phanang?], Mueang Kour?, Mueang Proome, Mueang Trang, Mueang Ttelang (Thalang), Mueang Bangcali (Phangnga) [Bangkhli], Mueang Texoua (Takua), Mueang Ppoungaa [Phangnga], Mueang Ppouket (Phuket), Mueang Ttaasong [Thung Song?], Mueang Chaiamontri, Mueang Ttaebouri (Thaiburi),³¹ [and] Mueang Maieng.

Mueang Trenaouseri (Tenasserim)³² is the chief city of the second province of the same name³³ and has twelve towns, namely Mueang Merit (Mergui), Mueang Socoorabouri, Mueang Meenam,³⁴ Mueang Thing, Mueang Langcereüi, Mueang Plo, Mueang Pelaa (Palaw), Mueang Kantooc, Mueang Tvac, Mueang Pee (Pe), Mueang Pela (Pala), [and] Mueang Kouttee.

The third province is that of Chianteboune (Chantabun). The chief city has the same name, [and] it has seven towns, namely Mueang Reyong (Rayong), Mueang Clong (Khlung), Mueang Kleeng (Klaeng), Mueang Traat (Trad),

Mueang Uenne, Mueang Bang Lemong (Bang Lamung), [and] Mueang Bang Pra.

The fourth is the province of Ppatlong (Phattalung). The chief city has the same name; it has eight towns, by name Mueang Chaerat, Mueang Sannetang, Mueang Vangseung, Mueang Pequeut, Mueang Pleuennane, Mueang Ppetong, Mueang Pleuongsa, [and] Mueang Ratappoumi (Ratphum).

The fifth province is that of Chaevonne (Chaya?).³⁵ The chief city has the same name; it has two towns, by name Mueang Satonne and Mueang Thiangou.

There are, in addition to the above-mentioned towns, thirteen other towns³⁶ which are not dependent on nor below any of the said provinces. By name these are Mueang Nonnettabouri (Nonthaburi), Mueang Ttonbouri (Thonburi), Mueang Ppet Pradeeng (Phetchaburi),³⁷ Mueang Suacoorabouri [Sakhonburi],³⁸ Mueang Chonebouri (Chonburi), Mueang Nacooraquirii (Khiri), Mueang Kouiabouri (Kuiburi), Mueang Prannebouri (Pranburi), Mueang Chommepoonne (Chumphon) [and] Mueng Ppenom.³⁹

All the chief cities, or rather, [all the] governors of these towns either bring or send each year, in recognition, a gold and a silver flower,⁴⁰ and all the other towns which are not chief cities either bring or send each year a specific sum of money in local currency [?], as has been agreed.

The kingdom of Siam has to the north Chiengmae (Chiangmai). From Chiengmae one goes, further up, to Mueang Quemeraacha [Muang Khemarat], and from there to Mueang Meenne Naaou, and from Meenne Naaou to China. To go to Ava, from Chiengmae, one goes to Muang Ttaatang, from there to Mueang Hang, from there to Mueang Chiang Hong, from there to Mueang Naae, from there to Mueang Yonghou, from there to Mueang Kangtaa, and finally from there to Vatenaboura Angua,⁴¹ or Ava; from Ava [one goes] to Keechee, from there to Requeung (Chittagong), from there to Racang

[Arakan?],⁴² [and] from Racang to Bengal, which belongs to the Mogul.

To the west is the kingdom of Ttevaae (Tavoy) which ... (unreadable).

To the south, there is Ligor or Nacoorra Si Ttaremaraacha (Nakhon Si Thammarat). From there one goes to Ppattalong (Phatthalung), then to Taanni (Pattani), to Yohor (Johore) where... (unreadable); then one is outside the limits of Siam. From there, one goes to Mueang Predolla.

To the west, one goes to the town of Kannethiabouri (Kanchanaburi) which is the last town [in Siamese territory]. From there one goes to Mueang Lacleung [Molamleung, or Moulmein?] and to Mueang Motema [Motama, that is Martaban], from there one goes to Ttongssaa, to Mueng Toong Ou (Toungoo), [to] Mueang Pronne (Prome), and finally to Ava.

(725) From Porcelouc (Phitsanulok) to reach Tonquin [Tonkin], one goes from the town of Porcelouc to Mueang Ppae (Phrae), to Mueang Nanne (Nan), to Mueang Cheinrong [Chiang Rung], [and] Meenam Quiaou⁴³ which is on the frontiers of Tonquin.

When one goes from Siam to Koorasema (Korat) and one goes up, one passes Pochebonne (Phetchabun) which is at the extremity of the country.⁴⁴ From there one can reach the kingdom of Seri Sattanaac or Louanne Chang (Lan Xang). From there, one can go to Tonquin, China, Cocinchine [Cochin-China], [and] Ciampa (Champa).

To the east, one enters the province of Camppucheattibodi (Cambodia)⁴⁵ which is at the limits of Louanne Chang if one goes to Cocinchine or Ciampa.

When one leaves the kingdom by sea and one goes by the eastern seaboard, there are several towns along the coasts, among which one of the most important is the town of Chantaboune



(Chantabun). From there one goes to Paacnam (Paknam),⁴⁶ that is, in the roads of Camppat-chaottibodi.

To the west, one comes across the roads of Ppochebouri (Phetchaburi), Ligor, Ppatlong (Phattalung), Tani (Pattani), Yohorre (Joghore), Malakaa [Malacca], Mueang Clang (Kelang), Mueang Prè, Mueang Cherae, Mueang Trang, Mueang Ttelong [Thalang] or Joncalan (Jongselan) [Phuket], Bangari (Phangnga) [Bangkhli], Tenaouseri (Tenasserim), Ttevae (Tavoy), Siriang (Syriam), Settouai (Sitwe), Requeung (Chittagong) or Racang,⁴⁷ and finally Mueang Het.⁴⁸

If you are asked why the king of Siam sends ambassadors to Portugal, what he desires, and if he has need of anything,

Reply that he is only sending you to establish a strong and stable friendship between the two crowns of Portugal and Siam; but that they [sic] have the design of some items which the king desires to obtain.

If you are asked what trade goods and what unusual items there are in the kingdom

Reply that one finds in the mountains...(words missing), that one also finds in... (unreadable) of fowls, tin, calin, lead, saltpetre, [gun]powder, gold, sandalwood, ... (unreadable), wax, incense, cheran,⁴⁹ gamboge,⁵⁰ birds' nests, loquat fruits,⁵¹ pepper, elephants' teeth,⁵² areca [nuts], coconut oil, deer and cow skins, spun and raw cotton, ray⁵³ skins, teak wood, rice, and salt.

If you are asked if the Siamese sometimes go to war,

Reply that they do, and have taken several towns and won many battles.

If you are asked how warfare and attacks are conducted in Siam

Reply that normally... (a word is missing: the army?) has its general who has fifteen regiments.

In addition there are the advance guard and the rearguard which form sometimes fifteen

battalions, sometimes nine. Sometimes only one person commands nine and ten battalions, some only command seven, others five, others three according to necessity. Each battalion has its chief. There are also the left and right flanks. The advance guard and the rearguard also have a right and left flank. Each battalion has (726) several companies, and here too are advance and rear guards.

And nearly all the officers in the army are mounted on elephants trained in war. There are no officers who do not have several other elephants in their retinue. In addition to that, there are many elephants, some used for carrying baggage, others munitions, others firearms, sabres, lances, and others cold steel [weapons]; yet others are loaded with small artillery pieces which are fired from them with two Siamese inch (calibres?). Others are used to transport victuals for the army.

The cavalry or those mounted on horses follow those mounted on elephants and are armed with muskets, sabres, [and] short swords. The foot soldiers are armed with arrows, sabres, and lances. To transport the [main] artillery, buffaloes and oxen are used.

If you are asked how one fights,

Reply that when one is within reach of the cannons or muskets one... (unreadable), but also after that one uses cold steel and sabres. Those mounted on elephants fight against their enemies on elephants, the cavalry fight the [enemy] horsemen, and the foot soldiers the enemy foot soldiers.

If you are asked if there is a difference in the army when the king is present,

Reply that there is no difference, except that there are more people and there is greater magnificence either in the arms or in the uniforms.

If you are asked if cannons are cast in the kingdom of Siam or if they are obtained from elsewhere,

Reply that they are cast in Siam itself, in all sizes, from [the time of] the coronation of the

present king, and there are as many as is needed for the defence of the kingdom.

What should be done to be raised to the rank of mandarin, what service must one have given the crown,⁵⁴

Reply that those who are military officers have only reached this rank through their good service; that those who are not military officers acquired or continue to acquire this rank through the services they render the kingdom, through their talent, good conduct, prudence, and other qualities of great men.

If you are asked if there are many mandarins and how many ranks there are,

Reply that it is the custom in Siam to have six principal [persons] on whom the king depends for the whole kingdom. They are the barcalong (*phra khlāng*) who looks after the king's revenues (?), the taxes and contributions, the stores and the chief and most important cities of lower Siam, that is to the south, who is even above the governors, who is responsible for the foreigners, who receives ambassadors, and who replies to the letters of the said Amb... (sic). The second is the praklaahom (*phra kalahom*) who is the supreme general of all the armies and at the same time the grand master of the artillery, and who has charge of all arms and war munitions. The third is the maaha (or "semouha"?) naayoc (*chakri*)⁵⁵ who commands and is placed over all the governors of the towns to the north (727) and is in charge of the police and highways. The fourth is the pprayoomeracha (*phra yomrāt*) [Phraya Yomarat] who is the great... (unreadable).⁵⁶ The fifth is the superintendent of the palace.⁵⁷ The sixth is ppolletop (*polethep*) [Phonlathep] who has charge of the land.⁵⁸

All the other mandarins have also their offices.

If you are asked if the soldiers are paid, and how much they are paid,

Reply in the affirmative and that the salaries are very different, some receiving more, some less.⁵⁹

If you are asked if the country is fertile and plentiful,

Reply that it is extremely so, and supplies victuals to all the neighbouring kingdoms. It also abounds in all kinds of fruits.

If you are asked how one builds in Siam,

Reply that structures are built with bricks and wood.

If you are asked if there are many foreigners in Siam,

Reply that there are Portuguese, Spaniards, French, English, Dutch, Chinese, Japanese, Moors and Malays, and several other nations. Some are in the king's service, others are merchants on their own account.

The merchants in Siam, where do the conduct their trade,

Reply that they go to all the principal cities in the Indies.

If you are asked what the foreigners who come to trade bring to Siam,

Reply that the Moors from Surat,⁶⁰ the English too who are accustomed to the trade,⁶¹ the Persians, the Moors from Bengal and Masulipatam⁶² bring fabrics, textiles, drugs, carpets and other things from their countries. The Chinese bring gold, silk fabrics and brocades, [raw] silk, porcelain, tea, ... (unreadable), and several other items. The Cochin-Chinese bring copper, calambac,⁶³ silk fabrics and raw silk. The Japanese bring gold, silver, copper, and porcelain. Those from Macao bring silks, porcelain, and tutaneg.⁶⁴ Those from Manila bring silver filigree work, precious stones, [and]... (unreadable). The Malays bring pepper, rattans, cayans,⁶⁵ eagle-wood,⁶⁶ ... (unreadable), sappanwood [and] ... (unreadable).

If you are asked what all these merchants take from Siam to their countries,

Reply that they take calin, lead, iron, saltpetre, sandalwood,⁶⁷ wax, gum benzoin, gamboge, birds' nests, cheran,⁶⁸ loquat fruits, pepper,

elephants' teeth, dried areca, coconut oil, deer and buffalo skins, rice and salt. A lot of merchandise is found there which comes from outside [the country].

If you are asked what is the nationality of Mr Constance,⁶⁹ where he comes from, and what office he holds,

Reply that he is Greek by nationality, [but] came from England, that he (offered himself?) for... (here is a break and the text ends).

The text unfortunately stops when it begins to become particularly interesting. One would very much have liked to know how the position of Phaulkon was to be explained away to the Portuguese, as well as, possibly, that of other foreigners working for the crown.

But it must be noted that the very fact that the French missionaries were able to lay hands on this document, and find the time to translate it in part, indicates they had very well placed agents at court; in short, their spy service was excellent. They had no particular interest in the details of Lusinato-Siamese relations, except in so far as it concerned the Portuguese claim to a pre-emptive right to missionary work in the Indies, by virtue of the *padroado*, an agreement worked out by Pope Alexander VI in 1494, but the Siamese were unlikely to broach the religious question in their mission to Lisbon.

This document then not only provides the form of instructions given to embassies during the reign of Phra Narai, exceptional in itself, but also details of replies to anticipated questions. Many replies were clearly evasive; the question of giving the king's name is fudged, the extent of and towns in the kingdom is obviously meant to overwhelm the listener, the details of the organization of the army are vague, and some replies are downright untruths (e.g. Siamese troops were not paid).

It is nevertheless a most precious document for historians of Siam, for its like does not, as far as is known, exist in the reign of Phra Narai, or in the following century.

Note

¹ The document is undated, but is thought by Professor Forest to be from about the end of 1684.

² Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 1999.

³ *Second Voyage du Père Tachard et des Jésuites envoyez par le Roy au Royaume de Siam...*, Paris, Horthemels, 1689.

⁴ On 16 February 1686 the Dutch vessel *Stavenisse* was shipwrecked slightly to the east of the point where two months later the *Nossa Senhora dos Milagros* was wrecked. The account of those who survived was published in 1922 in Vol. XX of *Linschoten Vereniging (Reize in Zuid-Afrika in de Hollandsche tijd*, t. III, pp. 50-68). We are indebted to Professor Van der Cruysse for this information.

⁵ Paris, Fayard, 1991, p.297.

⁶ This information was based on Dhiravat na Pombejra's PhD thesis, *A Political History of Siam under the Prasathong Dynasty*, University of London, 1984, making use of a letter of Joannes Keijts in Siam to the Governor-General in Batavia, dated 17 December 1685 (VOC General State Archives, The Hague).

⁷ Okya Kosathibodi Lek, whose service Phaulkon joined soon after arriving in Siam, according to Fr de Bèze (E.W. Hutchinson, *1688 Revolution in Siam*, 1968, pp.13-15) pocketed a bribe of 1,500 *livres* offered by persons bound to provide unpaid *corvée* services for building new fortifications which Phaulkon designed, saying there were not necessary. The king learnt of this, Lek was flogged, fell ill, and died soon after in disgrace.

⁸ Somdet Phra Maha Krasatriyathirat, a general appellation for kings after coronation.

⁹ Most probably Somdet Phra Pathuma Suriyawong, an early, legendary king of Sukhothai.

¹⁰ We doubt this.

¹¹ This is definitely Angkor.

¹² Unidentifiable, but since he reigned in Sukhothai he must have been of Si Intharathit's dynasty.

¹³ Somdet Phra Ramathibodi Bophit, Ramathibodi I, r.1351-1369, or King Uthong.

¹⁴ AF: This seems to be an error, as the entry of the Buddha into nirvana took place in 543 BC for the Siamese or 544 BC according to Westerners, so one should be in the year 2227-2228 of the Buddhist era.

¹⁵ Kromluang Yothathep, Phra Narai's only child, Chao Fa (Princess) Sudawadi. She was forced to become queen to the usurper king Phetracha.

¹⁶ In fact half-brothers; the elder was known as Chao Fa Aphaitot, and the younger as Chao Fa Noi.

¹⁷ An alloy of tin.

¹⁸ This refers to the 1680 embassy which was lost at sea, and the follow-up mission of *okkhun* Pichai Walit and *okkhun* Pichit Maitri which left in 1684 and returned the following year with the Chaumont embassy.

¹⁹ Muslim Indians.

²⁰ Aurangzeb, the Great Mogul, b. 1618, r. 1658-1707.

²¹ By general agreement it was thinly populated until very recent times.

²² AF: In reality seven; the text goes directly from the sixth to the eighth.

²³ AF is uncertain of this; we confirm it.

²⁴ Probably Muang Ratchathani, i.e. royal city, or the old capital.

²⁵ Only nine are named.

²⁶ On the Ping, south of the provincial capital.

²⁷ Muang Chiang Ngoen and Muang Chiang Thong are both listed in some old Thai documents.

²⁸ AF: The text therefore makes no mention of the seventh province.

²⁹ Eighteen are listed.

³⁰ We propose this since Songkhla/Singora is not mentioned elsewhere.

³¹ We think this might be Saiburi, i.e. Kedah.

³² Tenasserim in Thai is Tanaosi.

³³ AF: One returns to the "second" province in the south, after that of Nakhon Si Thammarat, as if the kingdom of Johore and the principality of Pattani had been added to the list.

³⁴ This is obviously a town on a river, but which river, where?

³⁵ We do not think this is Chaiya, since Chaiya is already classified as a *muang* under Ligor.

³⁶ Only ten are named.

³⁷ We disagree; this seems almost certainly to be Phra Pradaeng.

³⁸ That is, Samut Sakhon.

³⁹ What the Portuguese, had they (or anyone else) heard this list, might have made of it is speculative.

⁴⁰ They were in fact miniature gold and silver trees.

⁴¹ The formal Thai appellation of Ava is Ratanapura Angwa.

⁴² If Racang is Arakan, then it should come before Requeung, if the latter is Chittagong. See note 47 below.

⁴³ AF: Probably a stream called Quiaou.

⁴⁴ The concept of definite, mapped borders did not exist in Siam, as has been demonstrated by Thongchai Winichakul in *Siam Mapped* (1994).

⁴⁵ Kamphuchathibodi is indeed Cambodia.

⁴⁶ The mouth of the Chantaburi river rather than Paknam at the mouth of the Chao Phraya.

⁴⁷ This appears to contradict what we were told above, namely that Requeung (Chittagong) and Racang (Arakan?) were two different places.

⁴⁸ Again, this collection of names would have been largely meaningless to a Western audience.

⁴⁹ Probably chunan, prepared lime.

⁵⁰ A gum resin used as a yellow pigment and as a purgative.

⁵¹ "loucquebaou" in the original, probably *luk krabao*. *Krabao* is given as "a tree of the genus *Hydnocarpus*, closely allied to the *chaulmoogra*", in So Setthabutra's *New Model Thai- English Dictionary*. The fruit is edible, while the seeds produce a certain kind of oil used, like the *chaulmoogra*, to treat leprosy and skin ailments.

⁵² Tusks, i.e. ivory.

⁵³ "plaa quebéne" in the original.

⁵⁴ The translator here, and a little later, varies the formula.

⁵⁵ *Samuha nayok*, the Chakri minister.

⁵⁶ La Loubère: "The President of the Tribunal of the City of Siam, to whom all the Appeals of

the Kingdom go, they call *Yumrat*” (London, 1693, p.88).

⁵⁷ La Loubère gives his title as *Oc-ya Vang* [ok-phra Wang].

⁵⁸ La Loubère: “The Country Revenues are received by *Oc-ya Polatep*” (1693, p.93)

⁵⁹ This is untrue. The troops received nothing.

⁶⁰ An important trading port on the north-west coast of India.

⁶¹ Or “to trade in Surat”.

⁶² Another important trading post, to the north of Madras on the Bay of Bengal.

⁶³ One of the many names of the fragrant resinous heartwood used as incense, also known as eagle-wood, agalloch, aquilaria, and aloes-wood. It was also one of Siam’s chief exports at the time.

⁶⁴ Zinc.

⁶⁵ A Malay word, *kacang*, meaning beans. Gerrit J. Knaap, in *Shallow Waters, Rising Tide* (Leiden, 1996), a book on shipping in late eighteenth century Java, mentions there were mainly two kinds of *kacang* traded, the green type and the peanut variety.

⁶⁶ Also known as aquilaria, agalloch, calambac, and aloes-wood; it was also one of Siam’s chief exports at the time.

⁶⁷ *Mai fang*, used as a dye wood and for its fragrance, it sold particularly well, as a Siamese export, in Japan in the seventeenth century.

⁶⁸ Presumably La Loubère’s *cheyram*, a gum or varnish yielded by a tree.

⁶⁹ Phaulkon, Chao Phya Wichayen, holding the position but not the title of *phra khlang*.