



ECLIPSES IN SIAM, 1685 AND 1688, AND THEIR REPRESENTATION

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Abstract

The Jesuits as part of their conversion strategy sought to impress royal courts and nobles with their mathematical and astronomical knowledge. The first French Jesuits to come to Siam in 1685 were on their way to China for this purpose. They profited from a lunar eclipse to demonstrate their science to King Narai. One of their number, Tachard, instead of going to China returned to France and brought back in 1687, supposedly at King Narai's request, fourteen more mathematical Jesuits, this time destined to stay in Siam. The following year they observed, separately from the king, a lunar eclipse on 16 April at a crucial juncture of events for the French in Siam, when General Desfarges had refused to advance to Lopburi to support Phaulkon in his bid to check the impending revolt of Phetracha. There was also a solar eclipse witnessed on 30 April 18 days before the coup led by Phetracha; this was witnessed by the king and the Jesuits, but only one text remarks on this.

The lunar eclipse of 1685 and the solar eclipse of 1688 were both (probably imaginatively) illustrated contemporaneously, and the contents of the collection of naïve watercolours in which the solar eclipse is found, in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, are examined.

The first French embassy to Siam, led by the Chevalier de Chaumont and seconded by the Abbé de Choisy in 1685, was accompanied by six Jesuits, led by Fr de Fontaney, and comprising Bouvet, Gerbillon, Le Comte, de Visdelou and the intrepid Guy Tachard, who was to play such an unfortunate role in Franco-Siamese affairs. None of the Jesuits, who as well as being mathematicians were also astrologers, was destined to remain in Siam; they were on their way to China, to impress the court, as the full title of Tachard's record of the embassy shows, here given as in



the 1688 London edition: *Relation of the Voyage to Siam performed by six Jesuits sent by the French King, to the Indies and China, in the Year 1685, with their Astrological Observations, and their remarks of Natural Philosophy, Geography, Hydrography, and History*. Siam was only a stopping-off place; the real aim was China, where Matteo Ricci had worked so effectively from the end of the sixteenth century.

The first batch of Jesuits sent to China via Siam in 1685 did not waste their time. Apart from all the prayers and masses on board, they took out their instruments at the first opportunity and did not hide their light under a bushel. They impressed the Dutch governor at the Cape with their calculations, and when in Batavia some went ashore to take observations at night. Only Choisy, though, mentions that on 16 June, nine days after leaving the Cape for Bantem, there was a lunar eclipse.

We observed this evening a lunar eclipse... The penumbra began at 6.15 in the evening, and the eclipse at 6.43 and 26 seconds. You can see that Father de Fontaney and I go into the greatest details. The eclipse was total for one hour ten minutes. We saw the reddish disk of the moon, smaller than when illuminated; with the telescope we saw a sort of vast plume covering the whole body of the moon. Our poor mandarins,¹ who make so much ado about the moon, came out of their lair, from which, in parenthesis, they never emerge, and came to see the piteous state it was in; they could not bear the sight of it, and went back to bed. (Choisy 1993: 89)

The other chroniclers of the outward journey, Chaumont, Forbin, Bouvet, and even Tachard, pass over the event in silence.

In Siam the Jesuits had to wait until they were in Lopburi for an occasion to show off their knowledge, for a lunar eclipse took place on 11 December 1685 and this time Tachard, the self-appointed recorder of the six Jesuits, did not hesitate to devote several pages to a description of the occasion and how much King Narai was interested in astronomy. Choisy is, as usual, more succinct: his entry for 11 December reads

¹ The returning *khunnang*, Khun Pichit Maitri and Khun Phichai Walit, sent to France in 1684 to discover what had happened to the embassy of 1680 (lost a total wreck off Madagascar about the end of 1681).

Last night there was an eclipse of the moon, which began at a quarter past three in the morning. Father de Fontaney and his companions set up all their telescopes in a room next to that of the King, and His Majesty observed everything with them. He left behind on this occasion his seriousness, and permitted them to be at the same height as he, and showed himself much pleased. (Choisy 1993: 215)

Tachard's prolix account shows that the viewing of the eclipse took place at "Thlee-Poussonne" (Tale Chupson), a kind of Siamese Trianon a league outside Lopburi. The Jesuits

went to the Gallery where the observation was to be made. It was then near Three of the Clock in the Morning... We prepared a very good Telescope for [His Majesty] five foot long, in a Window of a Room that looked into the Gallery where we were... The King expressed a particular Satisfaction, seeing all the Spots of the Moon in the Telescope... He put several Questions to us during the Eclipse. He had a mind to look in a Telescope twelve foot long... He suffered us to rise and stand in his Presence, and would look in the Telescope after us, for we must needs set it to its Point when we presented it to him... (Tachard, 1688: 236-8)

This scene is visually recorded in his first *Voyage de Siam...* (1686, with many reprints). Van der Cruysse (1995: 459) noted that much of the success of Tachard's volume lay in the 'dozen very mediocre engravings' it contained (in fact there were thirty, though only thirteen dealt with Siam, the rest covering the Cape of Good Hope, Bantam, and Batavia). Engraving XXVI has as its legend a banner, in French, flying above *The Palace of Louvo from where the King of Siam observes a lunar eclipse*. The night scene shows King Narai at a balcony, looking into a long telescope, with a shadowy figure beside him probably meant to represent the Levantine favourite Constantine Phaulkon, six variously prostrating courtiers to the left, and to the right six squatting Jesuits looking through their instruments at the moon.

Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'h, in his catalogue of the exhibition *Phra Narai, Roi de Siam, et Louis XIV* held at the Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris, in 1986, notes that the vignettes in Tachard's book were drawn by Pierre-Paul Sevin and engraved in Paris by Cornelius-Martin Vermeulen, neither of whom accompanied the Jesuits, nor formed part of the ambassadorial retinue of Chaumont. The drawings and engravings were probably made in great haste after a few casual descriptions gleaned from the manuscript or possibly Tachard in person, and perhaps sketches which he



The lunar eclipse, illustrated in Tachard (1686)

may or may not have seen. The text of the book was probably ready for publication by the time he and the Chaumont embassy returned to France in June 1686, leaving the other five Jesuits in Siam to continue their journey to China, which they did with some difficulty.

A second French mission to Siam, led by the envoys extraordinary La Loubère and Céberet, was decided upon in Paris, and left Brest in March 1687 together with an expeditionary force commanded by General Desfarges with secret orders to take the ports of Bangkok and Megui by force if necessary. Also on board the five vessels taking the mission were the returning Tachard, with fourteen other royally-appointed Jesuits (one of whom was to die en route) skilled in mathematics and astrology, selected to impress King Narai with their knowledge; Phaulkon, then wielding much influence at the Siamese court, had suggested in a letter of December 1685 taken and recorded by Tachard (1688: 245) to Fr de La Chaize,

Louis XIV's confessor, that twelve mathematical Jesuits would give the king much joy; Phaulkon doubtless hoped they would be useful in aiding the king's improbable conversion to Catholicism.

Tachard and his fellow-Jesuits in 1687 were able to witness a solar eclipse on 11 May at sea near the Tropic of Capricorn. They had been alerted to this by the director of the Paris observatory, Cassini, before their departure from France. Tachard's account of his second journey to Siam is stuffed with extracts taken from the writings, usually acknowledged, of others; in this case it is Fr Richaud who provides the text describing the eclipse (Tachard 1689: 30-31). But Tachard's *Second Voyage...*, which had very little success and no relevant illustrations, only covers the period from the departure from France to Tachard's leaving Siam at the beginning on January 1688, as the personal representative of King Narai to Louis XIV and Pope Innocent XI. On his departure Fr Le Royer became the superior of the remaining twelve, who appear to have mostly stayed together close to the court in Lopburi, where three spent their days in Thai monasteries learning the royal language, *rajasap*.

There were no less than three eclipses visible in Siam in 1688. The first occurred at a crucial juncture of events for the French. Phaulkon had summoned Desfarges to Lopburi on 31 March or 1 April 1688 to discuss what to do about the plot being hatched by Phetracha against himself and King Narai. Phaulkon managed to arrange a brief audience with the king, Desfarges agreed to return to Bangkok, select around eighty men (the number varies, though Desfarges himself says seventy men and five officers) and return to Lopburi to nip the plot in the bud (Smithies 2002: 28). He selected his best men, got as far as Ayutthaya, and there allowed himself to be persuaded by V ret, the head of the French East Indies Company godown in Ayutthaya, who detested Phaulkon, and the Abb  de Lionne (then also Bishop of Rosalie), maintaining that the city was full of rumours that King Narai - whom Desfarges had seen a couple of days previously - was dead, that it was a plot of Phaulkon's to have the French support him at this moment of crisis, and that the way from Ayutthaya to Lopburi was full of troops ready to attack the handful of French. Louis Laneau, Bishop of Metellopolis, the head of the French Foreign Missions in Siam, sensibly suggested sending a messenger to Lopburi to find out the truth of the situation. Lieutenant Le Roy was selected and arrived in Lopburi, without meeting any troops en route, to find everything quiet. The relevant texts give details.

The usually reliable, and still unpublished anonymous text *Relation des principales circonstances qui sont arriv es dans la R volution du Royaume de Siam en l'ann e 1687* (with a clearly wrong date probably added by someone other

than the author), is very informative in the matter of the lunar eclipse:

It was therefore resolved to send an officer to Louvo to see if the warnings of Véret were justified, to inform M. de Constance of the cause of his [Desfarges'] delay in arriving, and during the interval M. Desfarges would leave [the city of] Siam with his troops to go and station himself two leagues below the city. An infantry lieutenant was selected to take the letter [of Desfarges], and after taking all precautions which a man could take who did not want to be surprised, he hid it in the knot of his wig, and only travelled through the fields. But he was quite astonished to see that these precautions were pointless, and all he met with on his journey were elephants, horses, barges and palanquins which M. de Constance had sent half-way to receive M. Desfarges and his troops. As soon as this officer had arrived at Louvo, where he expected to see at least great agitation and people under arms, he was very surprised to find everything completely quiet, both at the house of the Jesuit Fathers, who were observing a lunar eclipse at the same time as the king was doing the same thing in his palace, and he sent questions to them from time to time about this eclipse, and at the house of M. de Constance everything was quite normal. (BN Ms Fr 6105, ff.12r-v)

The king and the Jesuits watched the lunar eclipse (since it was at night it could not be otherwise), but the king did so separately in his palace, and the Jesuits in their house. There is no mention of Phetracha, and Phaulkon was not indicated at being present at the viewing of the eclipse.

The anonymous, badly spelt and poorly penned *Relation de se qui cest passé a Louvo...* confirms that

Mr Desfarges sent a lieutenant who found everything calm in Louvo and saw no disturbance. He went first of all to the Jesuit fathers who had observed that night a lunar eclipse, about which the king himself had asked for explanations which these Fathers gave him; from there he went to the residence of Mr Constance where he found everything calm. (AN Col. C1 24 f.142r)

The Missionary Fr Martineau, writing to the Directors of the Mission Etrangères in Paris on 12 July 1689 to summarize events which had occurred in 1688 and subsequently, wrote that Desfarges, after selecting his men to take to Lopburi, 'arrived in the town of Siam on 15 April, being Maundy Thursday'.

(Launay, 1920: 202) Le Roy is not named as messenger, but is said to have met on the way to Lopburi (where he arrived at midnight) 'many armed men' which caused Desfarges to decide to return to Bangkok. Nothing is said about the eclipse or its observation, but we are given a firm calendar date.

Two Jesuits, de Bèze and Le Blanc, both in Lopburi at the time, left detailed accounts of events in 1688. De Bèze's text was not published until 1947.² His comment is relevant: after listening to Laneau's advice, to explain to Phaulkon the rumours circulating in the capital,

one of the officers, Mr Le Roy, was sent off with a letter from the General to Constance... The bearer of this letter arrived in Louvo at 1 a.m. on Good Friday, but Constance had not yet retired to bed. After joining our [i.e. the Jesuits'] party in order to observe an eclipse of the Moon, he had then engaged in devotions before the Holy Sacrament, exposed in the Chapel...(Hutchinson, 1969: 84³)

His fellow Jesuit, Le Blanc, published in 1692 his account of events of 1688. He does not name Le Roy, but says an officer was secretly sent to observe the state of affairs on the way to and in Lopburi.

He arrived at midnight...[and] reached the city gates... but he was very surprised to find the gates open as usual... He found no one in the streets, but everywhere a total silence and darkness. He went to the house of the Jesuit Fathers where he was still more frightened, when he found the outer door open, and was in no doubt that everyone had perished. But he was soon reassured on hearing the laughter and voices of the French workmen who lived in a courtyard of the house. There was that night a lunar eclipse. The Fathers had observed it, M. and Mme Constance with two Portuguese relatives of theirs had out of curiosity taken part in the observation. The king was also observing the eclipse in his palace with his Brahmin astrologer, and even sent to the Fathers a mandarin to ask them several questions. In this measure was the court in total tranquillity, since the night was spent in such a peaceful occupation. (Le Blanc, 2003: 30-31).

² It badly needs reprinting; only one copy apparently exists in Paris.

³ There is an editorial parenthesis at the time of 1 a.m., '[16 April 1687].' Hutchinson may have checked this in the texts or in a perpetual calendar, but made a proofing error in the year.



The 1688 solar eclipse

The two Jesuits make clear that the lunar eclipse was observed by the Jesuits at their house in the company of Phaulkon and others of his party. De Bèze supplies indirectly a date for the event (16 April). Le Blanc gives no date, but specifies that Desfarges arrived in Ayutthaya from Bangkok on 15 April. He also makes clear that the king observed the eclipse in his palace, and sent a mandarin with some questions about the event to the Jesuits, though his text does not indicate if the mandarin was sent once or several times, as Anon.6105 claims.

Other relevant texts (of Beauchamp, Saint Vandrille, La Touche, Véret, the pro-Dutch *Relation succincte...*) make no mention of the lunar eclipse on 15-16 April though do deal with the departure of Le Roy for Lopburi.

According to a perpetual calendar (see note 4 below), another lunar eclipse was visible in Siam on 9 October 1688. No reference to this has been found by us in any text. The French, holed up in their fort in Bangkok, were undoubtedly far too preoccupied with the unexpected arrival of Madame Phaulkon in the fort on 4 October, only to be forced out, on Desfarges' orders, by Beauchamp on 18th (see *Relation de se qui cest passé...ff.162r-164v*).

There was yet another eclipse to be seen in Siam in April 1688, this time solar. Astonishingly, only Beauchamp appears to note this, when still in Lopburi, eight pages after mentioning the Le Roy mission:

Mr Constance, who only saw the king with difficulty, though every day he went to the palace, to dissuade me of the view held that he was dead, took me with him, and when His Majesty was passing to see his elephants he presented me to thank him for the thousand *écus* he had caused to be given me. This monarch was in a chair carried on the shoulders of four men, accompanied by Phetracha. Mr Constance took advantage of this occasion to speak to him about an eclipse of the sun which was to occur in a few days; he asked if his health was strong enough to allow him to witness it, and [if so] the Jesuit Fathers would give him this pleasure. He replied he was, and he should bring them when the eclipse was to occur. Mr Constance brought the Jesuit Fathers to the palace; they set up their telescopes before the king who spent at most less than half an hour with them because the weather was not as good as one would have hoped. After that eclipse Mr Constance did not see the king... (Beauchamp ff.518v-519v)

This eclipse is confirmed, for China, by Le Comte (1696: 456-463), one of the six Jesuits who went to Siam in 1685. He witnessed it 'at the end of April in the year 1688' in 'Kiam Chéou...in the province of Chansi' (probably Changchih in Shansi), and notes it was also visible in other parts of China, namely 'Pekin and Ham-Chéou' (Beijing and Hangchow). The date of 30 April 1688 is also confirmed by a perpetual calendar program available on the internet,⁴ which indicates the solar eclipse was visible in Siam. For Siamese, who disliked eclipses as much as Le Comte indicated the Chinese did (believing that the moon or sun was being devoured by a dragon, to avoid which they made as much noise as possible to frighten the dragon away), to have both a lunar and a solar eclipse within a couple of weeks must have increased a sense of general foreboding among the populace. Choisy's observation of the reaction of the two returning *khunnang* to the lunar eclipse of 16 June 1685 has already been noted.

There exists an often reproduced naïve watercolour by an unknown artist showing King Narai watching this solar eclipse from a window in his palace, with a standing Jesuit nearby handing him an instrument, ten other Jesuits seated in a circle round a long telescope, a seated European wearing a wig in the circle on the palace side, and a small figure close to the telescope in the foreground, each of the two flanks of the circle decorated with six prostrate courtiers apiece, their heads bowed to the ground and their hands joined in reverence.

The legend for the solar eclipse scene reads (in French), after the title 'The eclipse of the sun at Siam in 1688 in the month of April',

This was viewed by the Missionary and Mathematician Jesuits sent by the King to the East Indies in 1687. It was at Louvo in the King's palace that it was observed in the presence of this prince who was at a window of a large Hall of His Palace seated in an armchair, and the Jesuits with Mr Constance who acted as interpreter for them were seated with their legs crossed on a large Turkish carpet. One saw on both sides a row of prostrate mandarins with their heads bowed down to the ground. On this occasion a fine parallactic machine, which is a kind of clock to which is attached a telescope that follows the Movement of the Sun, was used. There can be seen the mandarin Opra Pitratcha who came to see this machine close to. It is he who seized the Kingdom of Siam and chased out the French. (Van der Cruysse 1995: 461)

⁴ For this information and for the textual reference for Le Comte, I am indebted to Monsieur Bernard Suisse, who notes that the program is called Calendar Magic, the site of which is http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,944,00.asp.

This confirms Beauchamp's account (though does not give a precise date either), but whether Phetracha was present is doubtful; he was already suspected by Phaulkon of plotting against the king, and is unlikely, as a declared supporter of the Buddhist clergy ('pagodiste', as Le Blanc has it) to have welcomed being in the presence of several Jesuits. On the other hand, he may have chosen to go to the palace to keep an eye on what Phaulkon might say to the king, and, as seen from Beauchamp's text, was wont to accompany the king at a time when Phaulkon's star may have been waning.

The garrison adjutant Beauchamp had little time for Phaulkon once he saw which way the wind was blowing, and still less for the engineer Vollant des Verquains, who remained in Bangkok while Desfarges and then Le Roy were travelling to Lopburi. Vollant gives two entirely different versions of events in Lopburi on 16 April. In an unpublished letter written from prison in Middelburg, dated 17 November 1689, probably addressed to the Marquis de Seignelay, he notes

The Sieur Le Roy ... first went to the Jesuit Fathers, where Mr Constance was just leaving with his lady, having gone there to observe that evening a lunar eclipse. (AN Col C1 25 f.85v)

But in the 1691 published version of his record of events, *Histoire de la Révolution de Siam...*, he has the unnamed officer with Desfarges' letter concealed in his wig expecting the worst but being pleasantly surprised:

He was deceived on entering Louvo; he saw the palace externally in complete tranquillity... The king was as absolute as ever there, and amusing himself by observing in his palace a lunar eclipse with the Jesuit Fathers, to whom he gave the honour of asking explanations of various points concerning astronomy. In short, everything was calm and the situation ordinary, but particularly at the house of Mr Constance, who was relaxing on the assurance he had been given and who was expecting to see himself shortly delivered of a redoubtable enemy. (Vollant 1691: 31; Smithies 2002: 113)

Clearly Vollant is confusing the lunar eclipse of 16 April with the solar eclipse of 30 April; as he was not present in Lopburi that is perhaps not surprising. What is surprising is that neither de Bèze nor Le Blanc, neither inclined to pass over any Jesuit entrée with the king, makes any mention of the solar eclipse of 30 April and the Jesuit presence in the palace to observe it.

The illustration of the solar eclipse was published as item 99 in Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'h's catalogue of the 1986 Orangerie exhibition. The item was titled *Usages du Royaume de Siam, cartes, vues et plans: sujets historiques en 1688* (Customs of the Kingdom of Siam, maps, views and plans: historical subjects in

1688). Jacq-Hergoualc'h noted it was in 'small folio, and comprised 33 watercolours and two pages of writing, one Chinese, one Persian.' The watercolour shown was listed as number 7, the dimensions were given as 40 x 28.5, and the source the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, Cabinet des Estampes, Od. 59.

The catalogue entry went on to comment (in French):

There are numerous similarities between these watercolours and the engravings in the *Voyage de Siam des Pères Jésuites...* published by Tachard in Paris in 1686. When the astronomic observation shown in this watercolour was made, the revolution was a few weeks away; its instigator, Petracha, is shown, as is C. Phaulkon, who talks with the Jesuit Fathers and Phra Narai at his window. Other observations of the same kind took place during the two French embassies, notably of a lunar eclipse on the night of 10-11 December 1685, in the presence, again, of the king. The watercolour (24 x 19) carried a detailed legend... (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 1986: entry 99)

It is perhaps worth considering a little more closely this collection. Dirk Van der Cruysse (1995: 459-462) published in his edition of Choisy's *Journal* as an annex a note on the sixteen colour illustrations concerning Siam appearing in the text between pp.240 and 241. The collection of watercolours reproduced in Van der Cruysse includes, in addition to the eclipse, two scenes, *The Tavoy River between Mergui and Pegu* (number 15), and *The Fortress of Bangkok* (number 16 in the original, misplaced in the Fayard edition to number 6) dealing with events which took place after the coup of May 1688. These were the Tavoy blockade, in which Beauregard and d'Espagnac were captured and from which du Bruant only escaped with difficulty, in June or July 1688 (and not known about by the French in Bangkok or Pondichery until February 1689), and the siege of the Bangkok fort from June to November 1688. The other watercolours deal with Ayutthaya (number 2 the customs house, number 6 the Great Temple, and number 14 the city plan), barges and barge processions (numbers 1, 3, 5); inevitably elephants, their stables, the method of catching them, and fighting with a tiger (numbers 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12); and the observatory and church built for the Jesuits (number 13) at Lopburi, though the legend does not indicate the location. This last shows the observatory as a completed structure, which it almost certainly never was, but the church only has its foundations. The original accompanying legends are in each case faithfully reproduced in modern French in Van der Cruysse's annex.

The artist (stylistically there is some unity, and one assumes only one artist is involved) is unlikely to have had access to Beauchamp's manuscript, assembled

in the prisons of Middelburg from the end of 1689 (when the garrison adjutant's memory of events might have dimmed), and only published once, in 1861. The watercolour of the solar eclipse, for want of other information, should probably be assumed to be accurate, howsoever surprising the presence of Phetracha may seem.

There remain three further points to be discussed, namely the subjects of the remaining illustrations found in the small folio folder Od.59 in the Cabinet des Estampes in Paris, their dating and authorship.

Seventeen other illustrations exist in Od.59, in addition to the two pages of writing, in fact both Chinese, though the folio contents listing indeed indicates one as being Persian. Number 17 shows the siege of Pondichery by the Dutch in 1693, with two fleets flying Dutch flags drawn up on either side of a fortified settlement bristling with cannons; the detailed caption is written in a crabbed hand, and in a different one at the end appear the words 'Cette prise n'est pas juste et trop grossièrement dessinée...' (This scene is not exact and crudely sketched). Number 18 shows a 'Plan de la Ville et Forteresse de Pondichery'. Numbers 19, 20, 21, 22, 28, 29, 30, 31 all deal with fauna found on the Coromandel Coast (respectively flying cats, catching fish with birds, dancing snakes, hunting birds, a kind of hedgehog, ditto, bats, and an animal yielding musk), in much the same way as so many of the thirty illustrations in Tachard's first *Voyage...* dealt with strange beasts and humans found at the Cape of Good Hope.

Number 23, reproduced in Morgan Sportès' volume, *Ombres Siamoises* (n.d.[?1994]: 53), is entitled 'Catamaron' (sic) and accompanied by a detailed description of the construction of such a craft, without specifying location or date. The watercolour shows a Jesuit being transported on a catamaran across a river or bay, with two seated servants behind him, and in front six rowers, three on each side, wearing pointed conical caps. The scene appears to be on the Coromandel Coast, as catamarans are virtually unknown in Siam.

Number 24 is extremely interesting, showing the 'Jesuit house and garden at Chandernagor... in 1696'; the caption notes 'what can be seen above are clouds of locusts which covered Bengal in 1696 for eight days; these insects ate everything where they landed and to save the gardens one had to bang on frying pans'. This was reproduced in Smithies and Bressan (2001: 123) and is of importance since this was the last resting place of the intrepid Fr Tachard, who, on his virtual expulsion from Pondichery in 1710 by its new governor, went to Chandernagor and died there in 1712.

The remaining illustrations no more live up to the title of the collection than the others from numbers 17 on. Number 25 shows an architectural sketch of the

façade of the Jesuit church in Chandernagor, number 26 a cross-section of the same church, number 27 gives a plan of the French godown in Bengal, number 32 shows a map of a part of India, and the last, number 33, illustrates the course of the 'River of Ava'.

Known to us are copies of two other watercolours, apparently in the same naïve style, and with similar handwriting in the legends below. Both are of religious subjects: one shows the funeral procession of a Malabar Christian on the Coromandel Coast (bearing two numbers, 11 and 13); the other is divided into two views, the upper one showing the hill 'a short league' from Meliapur⁵ on the Cormandel Coast 'in which is found the cave where St Thomas was martyred' and the lower one showing the church of Our Lady two leagues from Meliapur where is found 'the famous cross of St Thomas on which he fell when he was killed' (this sheet is numbered 20, with the numbers 24 and possibly 21 crossed out; it contains no legend). It is not known from which collection these two illustrations are taken; they are not in small folio Od.59.

Jacq-Hergoualc'h (1986) thinks that the barge procession engraving in Tachard's first *Voyage to Siam...* (plate 18), has its source in the naïve watercolour of the event found in Od.59. The occasion was the solemn entry of the French ambassadors into Ayutthaya by barge, and their audience, occurred on 18 October 1685. There is no reason why the artist who painted this event need actually have witnessed it (there were several published descriptions available from 1686), and the watercolour may simply have been another version of an event already illustrated in Tachard's 1686 volume and found in other prints, as in the bilingual engraving by Delsenbach.

If all the watercolours in Od.59 are by the same artist, and if Jacq-Hergoualc'h is correct in attributing the barge procession to the first embassy of 1685, then the artist may have been in the region from 1685 to 1696. But there is nothing in the captions to the illustrations that specifically links any of them to the first French embassy of 1685, and the eclipse scene (number 7), the plan of Ayutthaya (number 14) with its reference to an Augustinian Father being in residence in 1688 in a hermitage shown there, the Tavoy river escapade (number 15), and the siege of Bangkok (number 16) are all specific to 1688. This makes us think that the artist was in fact only present at the time of the second embassy of 1687; he may have been, somewhat improbably, with the French troops, or in the entourage of the envoys, or more likely part of the Jesuit phalanx, though not necessarily a Jesuit himself. The emphasis on the Jesuits in their observatory and church in Louvo

⁵ São Tomé de Meliapur is close to Madras, above Pondichery.

(number 13), as well as the solar eclipse, the catamaran scene and the Chandernagor Jesuit house, all point to a keen interest in Jesuit affairs on the part of the artist.

Interestingly, the capture of Pondichery in 1693 and the Jesuit residence in Chandernagor, as well as all the events in Siam except those dealing specifically with 1688 (the solar eclipse, the siege of Bangkok, and the capture of Tavoy), where some imagination seems to have prevailed, involve Tachard. He was present at the elephant hunts in Siam, he was in Pondichery when it was captured by the Dutch (he was taken, with Martin, the governor, and his wife, to Batavia, but Tachard was retained on an offshore island, whereas Martin and party were allowed to go to Chandernagor in Bengal), and as noted he moved to Chandernagor after a conflict with the new governor of Pondichery in 1710. We would certainly not go so far as to propose Tachard was the artist of these illustrations, but it might have been someone in his train: the Jesuit La Breuille comes to mind. A more likely person is Tachard's secretary-assistant Moriset (sometimes Morisot or Moricet), who however was with Tachard in Europe in 1688. At this distance in time, though, we are unlikely to discover the identity of the naïve anonymous watercolourist.

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