A SIAMESE LETTER DATED 7 DECEMBER 1776

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In the Danish National Archives a considerable number of documents are preserved from the files of the (Danish) Asiatic Company and from the Government of Tranquebar. The Asiatic Co. file no. 2188b has the title: Documents with reference to Pegu, Siam, Kedah, Johore, Cambodia, and Manila, 1682-1776. Only one letter in this package is written in Siamese. It is dated 7 December 1776, and is accompanied by a Portuguese translation -- or perhaps, more precisely, a Portuguese version of the letter -- under the same seal as the original, that of the Siamese King's 'Primeiro Ministro' (/phrá? khlag/ in Siamese). The recipient is the Danish governor of Tranquebar, (David) Brown. On an accompanying sheet is added information that the letters have been extracted from a bamboo tube.

The letter was registered by Henning Engelhart in 1780 together with other documents concerning Tranquebar and the following résumé of its contents was given (here translated from Danish): 'A letter in the Siamese language, from the King of Siam or his Prime Minister, to Governor Brown, containing requisitions of ammunition, inviting to trade with Siam, and promising assistance.'

In 1973 the National Archives asked Pensak Chagsuchinda, Lecturer in Thai in the University of Copenhagen, and me for a comment on the accuracy of the above résumé, and we supplied the Archives with a somewhat more detailed translation. Recently I had occasion to look at the letters again and decided to translate the original Siamese as well as the Portuguese versions and to supply some notes on both.1

Transcription of the Siamese text

1. น่าฝ่าย น้ำวัดท่าencingáwphájaaphra?khlaŋphuujájną?kruŋthêebphrá?-máŋãanakhoon mîmáthúrá?

2. คีดสันิดสันีเช้า maaththæocchoonbroonsëenaacáwdiimmág-phűupencáwmynatraŋkaaabđaad düaj


89
2.4. phrá?banthuunsûrásìnhàndamrûndnàyaklhàwnyakrûmmàmsâuyâma nà?mocràsûm

5. piìwìgò?âdthàsòggàpîtanlèg?dòggàmacâdsûpyûnnâ?myåntraq-kaabàdphanbìggàkhàwpajthuun

6. klàwthuunkràmòmethhawàj tòqphrá?râadchápràsòqpyûnkhàab- silaa?fiqìnìyùbòog cyq

7. tòqfàjìkàpîtanlèg?dòggàmacâdsûynâ?myåntraqkaabàd khàfàjìcàwmyåntraqkàa

8. bàadhènkkësthaaphhrà?râadchàmajaïtri lëèmajtriichùaj-thamnû?bàmrûgàcàdcèsègkhàjìkàpîtan

9. lègàjìpyûnìyùbòogkhàwmaacoûsdàduag thàacàwmyåntraq-kaabàdadcà?tìqìkaandìlibug

10. kà?hàjìte̊nkampànkhàwmaaàrb?awdùìbùggìèkàpîtanlègòna?myà̊ntòllàwàddògòròtìò

11. phaaraa thàacà?tìqìkaantaachàqàmàqûjìsìnkhàasiqàdàjìnà? krůntheebphrà?màhàànàkhocñàpì

12. tanlègùurraakhaajùullàew hàjteęgkampànbanthùgpyûnkhàw-màsôdûdàjìtheàqkůntheebphrà?

13. màhàànàkhocñà?khàdraakhaahàjìkhàrbtaamcammuankhàapyyûn- mfì?hàjìkìaàqìkoènkhàadsonjùudàj prà

14. kaannûnþìacàwmyåntraqkaabàdadcà?te̊gkampànbanthùgphàncàfàrçaephansìnkhàakìhàw

15. pàjìkhàakhaajà?krůntheebphrà?màhàànàkhocñà lëèraakhaa-phàncàraraakhaàqàaçaaghàpûnìjìsìn

16. nà?krůntheebphrà?màhàànàkhocñònnàn kàpîtanlègùrùullàew- hàjte̊gkampànbanthùgkhàw


Notes to the text

2.1 /nàngsìy/ 'letter'. The /a/ is written by means of the diacritical sign which is now reserved for the tonal marker /màjthoo/. In this letter no distinction is made between /màjñhàn ?aakààd/ and /màjthoo/. This will not be pointed out
in every single case in the following notes.

/náwəab/ 'Nabob'. The first syllable is spelt with the letter /nəɔ neen/ as if it meant 'at, in'. The scribe may well have misunderstood the expression, thinking that /wəab/ was a noun designating something like 'residence, domicile'. But cf. /nákhoon/ below.

/thān/ 'title'. This title is spelt with a long /aa/ as in the modern orthography, but without the tonal marker /máj?ëeg/.

/cāw/ 'lord'. In this word the /májthoo/ has its usual force. All examples of this will not be pointed out below.

/phājaa/ 'title' is written with a conventional ligature.

/phrāʔ/ 'honorific prefix' is written with a ligature in which the /r/ does not take on its usual shape.

/jāʔ/ 'big' is spelt with /májmálaaj/ rather than /májműan/, and with /májthoo/ instead of /máj?ëeg/.

/kruq/ 'capital city' is in this letter consistently equipped with a /jàadnámkhāaq/.

/nákhoon/ 'city'. The first syllable is spelt with /nəɔ neen/ rather than with /nəɔ nū/, and the second has the vowel /əɔ/ written out instead of the /r/ serving for vowel plus final consonant.

/miːʔ/ 'have' is spelt with a vowel symbol consisting of modern /sərəʔ ʔʔʔ/ plus modern /máj?ëeg/ (a combination of /sərəʔ ʔʔʔ/ with both /jàadnámkhāaq/ and /fōnthooq/). This symbol is used in this style for any of the vowels /i/, /ii/ or /yy/. We shall call it the 'general i/y vowel'.

/máthūrəʔ/ 'sweet'. Both of the short /a/ vowels are indicated with the /wfsənchánii/. There is not much consistency in the use or non-use of this symbol in this style.

2 /cid/ is spelt /cîdtrâ/ even though the meaning is probably 'mind, heart' rather than 'variegated, wonderful'. The two are not consistently kept apart in modern usage either. The word is spelt with the general i/y vowel.

/sənd/ 'amiable' is spelt with final /cəɔ caan/ instead of /thoo thánʔan/ or /thoo thoŋ/, the vowel is written with the general i/y.

/sənəehəa/ 'friendship' has the vowel /ee/ placed between /s/ and /n/ and is written without a tonal marker.
/thₙəŋ/ 'reach' is spelt with a combination of preposed /sərə? ʔee/ plus the general i/y. This combination could not indicate any other vowel than /əə/.

/broɔn/ can also be read /bruən/. /sərə? ʔee/ and /wəu ʔən/ are not clearly distinguished in this style.

/diinmág/ 'Denmark' reflects Portuguese Dinamarca. The /n/ is spelt with /rəu rya/ (see also the discussion of the Pidgin Portuguese forms for 'Denmark' in Egerod 1958:111-14). The vowel is spelt with the specific symbol for long /iː/.

/pen/ 'to be'. The vowel shortener /mátəjkhūu/ does not appear in this text.

/myən/ 'city' is spelt with the usual elements, except that the superscript symbol is the general i/y vowel (perhaps with an added unexplained /fənthəm/, cf. 7.5 below).

/trəŋkaabəad/. The final consonant /d/ is spelt with /thən thāːaːn/, reflecting an original supradental -q, which comes out as -r in Portuguese, Danish, etc. The initial /b/ in /bəad/ is joined with the vowel /aə/ in a ligature involving the /khəm/ script form of the letter /b/.

7.3 /səmdəd/ 'royal prefix'. The /cm/ is spelt with both the superposed /jəadnəmkʰəaq/ and the /m/, thus presenting a mixture of Siamese (/m/ only) and Cambodian (/jəadnəmkʰəaq/ only) conventions.

/krəsəd/ 'king' has an unetymological /-r-/ (Skt. ksatriya) /səo rya/ rather than /səo rysii/. The /i/ of /-athfrəad/ is the general i/y.

/thif/ is spelt in exactly the same way as /thyy/ would now be spelt.

/maan/ is spelt as if it were Skt. mārαna 'killing'. The word is, however, of Cambodian origin and is the equivalent of Siamese /mii/ 'to have'. The example used in the Thai Royal Academy dictionary (Photchathānûkrom 1950:695b) we find here /maan phrā?banthuun/ which is parallel to the preceding phrase /mii phrā?râadchā?oogkaan/.

7.4 /banthuun/ 'command' is spelt with /nəo nũu/ in the first syllable and /lən liŋ/ in the second, where the present official orthography has /nəo neen/ and /rəo rya/. Pallegoix (1854:47) has /lən liŋ/ finally as in Cambodian.

/sūrə/ is spelt with a long /uu/ by confusion of /sʊrəʔ/ 'godly' with /suurəʔ/ 'hero'. The /r/ is doubled for no obvious reason.
/sǐŋ/ in /sǐŋhàn̄n̄aad/ 'lion's roar' is spelt with /ii/;
/nâaad/ with /dŏo chááaa/ through confusion of 'roar' /-thôo thânnān/ with 'dancing' (though this is normally spelt with 'long t' rather than 'long d').

/damrâd/ 'royal speech' has final /dŏo đèg/ instead of /sŏo sǐy/.

/ña/ 'above' has superscript /ii/ rather than /yy/ the first time, the general i/y the second time.

/mɔm/ in /kramɔm/ 'top of head', no tonal marker.

/sâq/ 'command', no tonal marker.

/moɔrâsûm/ 'monsoon'. The /ɔɔ/ is spelt out. /râ/ is spelt with the rare letter /r̄y/, perhaps by false association with words beginning with /mɔɔry-/ , designating 'death', and also perhaps with /r̄yduu/ 'season'.

2.5. /piι/ 'year' is written with a special ligature combining features of the superscript part of /pɔɔ plæa/ and the superscript vowel which serves the same purposes as the general i/y symbol.

/?aâḏthâ/ '8'. The /thɔɔ thâan/ is replaced by the simpler /dŏo chááaa/.

/sôg/ 'year' is written with the /fannûu/ or 'rat's teeth' (also so named in Cambodian) to indicate the short, otherwise 'inherent' /o/. The two consonants are joined in a special ligature with a lower than normal position of the upstroke of the /sŏo saalaa/.

/kâpîtan/ 'Captain'. The first syllable is spelt with /fɔŋnɔŋ/ (identical with modern /mâj?èeg/). The second syllable is spelt exactly like the word /piι/ 'year' above.

/lèg/ 'Personal Name'. Since no vowel shortener is used in this style, we do not know whether /lèg/ or /lèeg/ is intended. Whichever it is, it is likely to be wrong (see below: Notes to the translation).

/sûy/ 'buy', no tonal marker.

/pyyn/ 'gun' contains the same ligature as is used for /piι/ and /pî/ above.

/myan/. The vowel is /sârâ/?ī/? plus /fɔŋnɔŋ/; the element /jãadnãmkhaan/, used in 7.2 above, is missing.
khāw/ 'enter' is written with a ligature which blends khōō khāj/ and sārā? ?aa/ into one symbol.

7.6. /thāwāaj/ 'give' has a superfluous /mājhān?aakāad/ = /mājthoo/ to indicate the short /a/.

/tōo/ 'must', no tonal marker.

/prāson/ 'desire'. The 'inherent' /o/ is indicated with /fōnthoong/, and not the /fannūu/ as in /sōg/, 7.5 above. There is no silent /khōō khwāaj/ finally.

/sīlāa/ 'flintlock' is nonsensically spelt with initial /sī/ 'prefix of splendour' -- the guns could not have been that exceptional!

/māqyn/ '10,000', no tonal marker.

/cyy/ 'then', with general i/y.

7.7. /tēg/ 'arrange' has /mājthoo/ instead of māj?ēeg/.

/khōō/ 'ask' is spelled with /khōō khūad/, which would be etymologically correct for the homophonous word meaning 'hook'. There is a /fannūu/ over the consonant.

7.8. /kēja/ 'to', no tonal marker.

/majriii/ 'friendship' is twice spelt with /sāraʔ̖ʔ? /j?/.

/chūāj/ 'help', no tonal marker.

/thammuʔ̖ʔ?/ 'tend', spelt with /nōo neen/.

/ccēj/ 'prepare' is spelt with /mājthoo/ for no obvious reason.

7.9. /pyyyn/ has been equipped with an extra /māj?ēeg/. cf. 77.5 and 6 above.

/coq/ 'make to be'. The 'inherent' /o/ is indicated by means of /fōnthoong/ as in /prāson/, 7.6 above.

/cāʔ̖ʔ?/ 'verbal auxiliary'. In this word the /fōnthoong/ is used for the short vowel /a/ instead of the /wīsānchānii/.

7.10. /kōʔ̖ʔ?/ 'then' is spelt with /kōō kāj/ and no markers.

/kambān/ 'ship', no tonal marker.
/tha:l’aŋ/ 'Place Name'. The short /a/ is spelt with /fônthoo/, cf. /kâ:p’tan/, 2.5 above.

/hôg/ 'six' has /jâ:dan’khâaŋ/ to indicate the short /o/; cf. /sôm’dêd/ 2.3 above.

/töö/ 'per' has the vowel written out plus a /fann’u/ above the /t/; cf. /khöö/ in 2.7 above.

7.11.  /chaaŋ/ is written with a ligature that joins some features of /choo chaaŋ/ with the /aa/.

/n’ya/ 'meat' is spelt with /sâ:râ? ʔɨ?/ instead of /ʔyy/ and has no tonal marker.

/mâj/ 'wood' has /májmûan/ instead of /májmâlâaŋ/, and no tonal marker.

/sîn/ 'goods' is spelled with the general i/y symbol, as is also /sîg/ 'thing' (no tonal marker).

/dâj/ 'any' has /májmâlâaŋ/ instead of /májmûan/ and is equipped with a meaningless final /joo jâg/.

7.12.  /jûu/ 'be at', no tonal marker.

/banthûg/ 'load'. The official orthography writes double /rco rya/ to indicate /an/, a convention not followed here.

/sôq/ 'send'. The 'inherent' /o/ is indicated with /jâ:dan’khâaŋ/ (cf. 2.2, 3.10) above); there is no tonal marker.

/dâj/ 'can' is spelt with /májmûan/ rather than with /májmâlâaŋ/.

7.13.  /khfd/ 'calculate' is spelt with /sâ:râ? ʔii/ (or sâ:râ? ʔiʔ/ with superposed /fônthoog/).

/raakhaas/ 'price' is equipped with a /májthoo/ on the second syllable -- not used in the line above -- through confusion with /khâa/ 'price', spelt the same way later in this line, with /májthoo/ instead of /májʔeŋ/.

/khröb/ 'complete' has /jâ:dan’khâaŋ/ for /o/ as in several other words above.

/camnuan/ 'amount'. The final /-n/ is written /rco rya/.

/miʔ/ 'not' has the same elements as /mii/ in 7.1, but with the /fônthoog/ closer to the /jâ:dan’khâaŋ/, which is, however, not the case in 7.17 below.
/kháaŋ/ 'unfinished'; no tonal marker.

/kēən/ 'exceed'. The superscript is /sàrà? ʔyy/ and not /sàrà? ʔʔ/.

/sɔn/ in/khàdsɔn/ 'needy' has /jàadnámkháaŋ/ for /o/ as in /khrŏb/, etc., above.

2.14. /nỳŋ/ 'one' is spelt /nỳŋ/. This is often the actual pronunciation in modern Thai; the word has a complicated history with dialect variants contradicting each other as to tone and initial consonant category.

/phan/ 'kind, sort' is lacking the final /nɔo neen/ in the first, but not in the second instance, whereas a /mâjhãn?aakãad/ is used in the first, but not in the second instance.

/phàa/ 'cloth', no tonal marker.

/phrasing/ 'silk' has double /rɔo rya/ for no obvious reason, surrounded by two occurrences of /phan/, correctly spelled with double /r/.

2.15. /khãaj/ 'sell'. The initial plus the vowel are written by means of a ligature combining /kho kùad/, not etymologically correct, and /aa/.

/nàʔ/ 'at, in' seems equipped with a /fɔnthɔoŋ/, differently from 2.1 and 16.

/raakhaa/ is spelt as in 2.13; /phan/ as in the first instance in 2.14.

/nỳa/ is written with the general i/y vowel, differently from 2.11.

2.16. /nán/ 'that' is equipped with two superimposed markers identical with modern /màjtusso/, the lower one indicating the vowel, the upper one the tone.

/kàpitān/ has no marker on the first syllable.

2.17. /thàød/ 'final particle' is spelt with /thōo thànǎan/ rather than /thōo thùŋ/ and with superscript /sàrà? ʔyy/ rather than /sàrà ʔʔ/.

/chùaj/, no tonal marker.

/mǐʔ/ seems equipped, on top of the general i/y vowel, with a meaningless /màjtusso/.
/phanphâa/ is spelt as in 7.14.

/khǎad/ 'of' is spelt with /khɔɔ khùad/, which happens to be etymologically correct.

/tran̂kaaβáad/ 'Place Name'. The last syllable has a meaningless /májthoo/.

/khàad/ 'lack' begins with the same ligature as /khàaj/ in 7.15, again not etymologically correct. The last syllable of /?ankhàad/ 'absolutely' seems to be spelt the same way. The words in between /khàad/ and /?ankhàad/ are hard to make out, because of the seal which is superimposed upon them.

7.18. /thìi/ 'instance' is spelt like the modern /thyy/.

/ɑŋkhaaṅ/ 'Mars, Tuesday' is spelt with a long vowel /aa/ found in the first syllable as well.


/?saj/ 'first', no tonal marker.

/sìb/ '10' has /sara? ?iī/ instead of /sàrâ ?i?/. 

/phan/ '1000' is written with final /r/, differently from 7.5 above.

/ròɔɔ/ '100', no tonal marker.

The orthography in the present letter, besides being old-fashioned, is also extremely inconsistent. The usage of the superscript vowels, including the general i/y symbol, is completely haphazard. The tonal marker /mājʔẽeg/ is not used, but the identical /fõnthoo/ indicates (inconsistently) /a(?)/ or /o/. The tonal marker /májthoo/ is identical with /májhan ?aakâad/, while the /fannu/ occasionally marks the /o/, or is added above the consonant preceding /sàrâ? ?ɔɔ/. Several now obsolete ligatures are employed.
Translation of the Siamese text

1.1. This is a letter from the Nabob, the Lord Grand Minister of the Treasury in the mighty city of Krungthep, with kindness

2. and affection to (John?) Brown, Danish officer who is the Governor of Tranquebar, to the effect that, in accordance with

3. H.M. the King and Supreme Ruler's order and

4. command uttered by him; during this monsoon

5. of the Year of the Monkey, the Eighth year of the Decade, Captain Leit went to arrange for the purchase of 1000 flintlock guns in the city of Tranquebar and has reported back

6. to H.M. and made delivery. As the King now wishes further 10,000 guns, so

7. I have charged Captain Leit with sailing to Tranquebar and arranging for the purchase there. I ask you, Lord Governor of Tranquebar,

8. for the sake of H.M.'s friendship to be good enough to assist and take care of arranging for Captain Leit

9. to acquire the 10,000 guns and get them safely here. If you, Lord Governor of Tranquebar, should want tin

10. you may arrange for a ship to come and receive the tin through Captain Leit in Phuket, delivering 6 guns per

11. load. If you should want ivory, wood, or other kinds of merchandise from the mighty city of Krungthep, Captain

12. Leit is informed about the price. Please arrange for the ship to load the guns and carry them to the mighty city of Krungthep.

13. We shall calculate the price in full agreement with the total value of the guns so that there is no deficit or inadequate pay. Furthermore,

14. if you, Lord Governor of Tranquebar, will arrange for the ship to carry various sorts of cloth and silk as well as other merchandise
7.15. to be traded in the mighty city of Krungthep, then as for
the price of the cloth (as compared to) the price of
ivory, wood, and other merchandise

16. in the mighty city of Krungthep, Captain Leit is already
informed about it. Please arrange for the ship to be
loaded and carry

17. the merchandise here. We shall assist and see to it that
none whatsoever of your merchandise, Lord Governor of
Tranquebar, will remain unsold.

18. This letter was written on Tuesday, the First Lunar Month,
the Tenth Day of the Waning Moon, in the Year 1138 of the
Lesser Era, the Year of the Monkey, in the Eighth Year of
the Decade.

Notes to the translation

7.1. 'Nabob'. The Siamese form is /nâwâab/, very close to
Urdu nawâb*, and Malay nawab*. The usage of this Mogul title
does not seem to have been common in Thailand; it is not
recorded in the dictionaries.

'Minister of the Treasury'. /klaq/ is the Treasury, but
the actual function of this official was, at the time, more like
a Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Portuguese version says
'primeiro Ministro'.

'Krungthep'. In 1776, when this letter was written, the
capital was at Thonburi, alternatively called T'anaburi and
Dhonburi (see Hall 1966). Taksin installed himself as king in
Thonburi in 1767; Chakri was crowned in Bangkok, across the
river, in 1794).

7.2. '(John?) Brown'. The Siamese text says /joöq broon (or
bruän)/. The name of the Governor of Tranquebar in 1776 was
David Brown, a member of a Scottish family which had settled in
Denmark. David Brown lived from 1734 till 1804 and was Governor
of Tranquebar for the period 14 February 1775 - 17 January 1779.
His elder brother John Brown (1723-1808) was a well-known
merchant and shipowner. In 1776 the Danish king bestowed upon

* nawâb, from the broken plural of the Arabic naïb 'deputy'
was treated as a singular by the Persians, and exported as such
by them. (See also Yule 1886:467a-9a). (Ed.).
him the honorary title of Commissioner-General of War. John Brown served as a member of the Board of Directors of the (Danish) Asiatic Company in 1770-75 and 1779-85; he carried on private shipping with East India from 1774. It seems that the author of the letter had somehow mixed up the two brothers. Tranquebar was Danish from 1624 till 1845.

L.3. 'The King of Siam' was Phaya Taksin (1767-1782).

L.5. 'Captain Leit'. The Siamese text has /lè(e)g/, but the Portuguese translation says Leit. The final /-g/ may have seemed more natural to the Thai letter writer, since there is no Thai word /lèd/. Were the Captain a Dane, Leth would be a likely guess, but cf. to L.5 of the Portuguese translation. As regards the calendar terms, see L.18 below.

L.10. 'Phuket'. The Siamese text has /thālāaq/, i.e. Ujong Salang or Junk-Ceylon (see Yule 1886:361b).

L.11. 'Load'. The Siamese text says /phaaraa/ from Skt. bhāra (= 20 tulā or 'quintals').

'Wood': The Siamese /n'yamāj/ means the 'flesh' or grain of the wood, the wood stripped of the bark. The Portuguese translation makes it clear that the fragrant 'eagle-wood' is meant.

L.15. 'Other merchandise'. The letter says only /sīn/ 'goods', the equivalent of /Sīnkhaa/ in L.11 and L.14.

L.18. The 'Lesser Era' (L.E.) or Minor Era /cunlāsāgkārāad/ began in A.D. 638, so L.E. 1138 = A.D. 1776 or 'Buddhist Era' (B.E.) 2319.

'Year of the Monkey'. /pīi wŏsŏg/ is the ninth year in the cycle of twelve.

'Eighth Year'. /pāthŏsŏg/ is the eighth year in the cycle of ten.
Siam aos 7 de Dezembro de 1797

M. de G. M. D. F. X.
Excellentissimo Senhor

7.1. Supost esperando a boa aceitação, receba V.E.ª estas minhas regras, com alguma carícia, deixando em primeiro Lugar Logre V.E.ª prospera, e feliz saude com muitos augmentos e [a?]ges de felicidades de día em día maiores no seu nobre Estado, e feliz.

4. governo.

5. Veio nesta monção o Capitão M.º Leit neste Reino de Siam, e fez som-

6. baya a S. Majestade, que elle dito Capitão tem comprado em Trangabar mil espin-

7. gardas e apresentou a S. Majestade, e S. Majestade ficou bastantemente contem-

8. te com as ditas Espingardas: de presente S. Real Majestade executou ordem

9. a mim primeiro Ministro de S. Majestade que escrevesse esta Carta a V.E.ª pedindo que

10. favoreça ao dito Capitão Mº Leit em Trangabar, porque vai o dito Capitão M.º Leit

II. com ordem expressa de S. Majestade procurar mais dez-mil Espingardas em Trangabar:

12. peço a V.E.ª por boa amizade, que o Capitão Leit com a faculdade de V.E.ª se ache elle dito

13. Capitão Leit as ditas dez-mil Espingardas, e se V.E.ª quizer Calaem mande barco

14. de V.E.ª a Jonkseilão receber Calaem das mãos de Capitão M.º Leit, elle dito se entre-

15. garâ por seis Espingardas, hum bar de Calaem, e se quizer marfim, aguilla, e mais fazer-

16. das deste Reino de Siam, o Capitão M.º Leit entende, e sabe o preço das ditas fazendas, e
17. V.E.ª mande trazer espingardas no barco de V.E.ª a este Reino de Siam, e chegando se ajus-

18. tará as contas puntualmente das ditas espingardas sem dificuldade alguma; e se praz V.E.ª 

19. mandar barco à este Reino de Siam o preço das roupas, e pessoas, etc. o Capitão M.º Leit sabe 

20. ja o preço dos ditos panos, e pessoas, etc. e também o dito Capitão M.º Leit sabe o preço de mar-

21. fim, e outras mais fazendas deste Reino de Siam, pode V.E.ª mandar barco a comeciar 

22. neste Reino, e nós Ministro de S. Majestade de Siam ajudar, e beneficiar as ditas fa-

23. zendas, e satisfazer puntualmente. -- Ecomo por horas não se oferece mais ficamos 

24. appreciando a V.E.ª muita vida, saude com maiores progressos de bens, e felicidades como lhe dize-

25. ja com devidos respeitos quem sempre he

De V.E.ª 

Todo affectuozo 

Assignamos com nosso sello 

Siam a os 7: de Dezembro de 1776 

Notes to the Portuguese version

7.1. V.E.ª, i.e. Vossa Excellencia

Lugar Logre. In the transcript, the capitalization of the original has more or less been followed, and these two words are clearly capitalized in the original. There are, however, quite a few cases where it has been impossible to decide whether an initial consonant represents a stylistically enlarged small letter or a true capital. For the interpretation, this, luckily, plays no role.

7.3. [a?]ges. Because of a fold in the paper, the word is not clearly legible.
M., i.e. Mister. Ms Diana Matias has kindly called to my attention the recent article by Professor E.H.S. Simmonds (Bull. Sch. Or. Afr. Stud. 50 (3), 1987, 529-531) entitled 'A letter in Thai from Thalang in 1777' which describes a transaction very similar to the one treated in the present article. No doubt our Capitão Leit is identical with Captain Francis Light in the 1777 letter. In both letters the Siamese transcription is /lèg/ with /hɔn nam/. See also Professor Simmonds' article for further bibliographic information on Francis Light.

hum, i.e. um.

alguã, i.e. alguma.

pessas, i.e. peças.

panos, i.e. pannos.

aprecando, i.e. apreçando

muita and maiores are written by means of ligatures. The first one could perhaps be read melhora instead of muita.
Translation of the Portuguese version

Most excellent Sir

1. Hoping for your kind acknowledgement, I ask your Excellency to receive these lines of mine with some

2. favour, while at the same time I express the wish that you may enjoy a prosperous and joyous health with much

3. success and plenty of happiness increasing day by day in your noble state and felicitous

4. government.

5. During this present monsoon the Captain Mr. Leit arrived in this Kingdom of Siam and paid

6. obeisance to His Majesty, [reporting] that he, the said captain, had bought one thousand flintlocks in Tranquebar,

7. and he delivered them to His Majesty, and His Majesty was rather satisfied

8. with the said flintlocks: now His Majesty has issued an order

9. to me, His Majesty's Prime Minister, to write this letter to Your Excellency, asking you

10. to favour the said Captain Mr. Leit in Tranquebar, so that he

11. with His Majesty's express order shall procure further 10,000 flintlocks in Tranquebar:

12. I ask Your Excellency, for the sake of good friendship, that Captain Leit through your authority acquires

13. the said 10,000 flintlocks, and if Your Excellency wants tin,

14. send a ship of yours to Junk-Ceylon to receive tin from the hands of Captain Mr. Leit, who

15. in exchange for six flintlocks will deliver one load of tin, and if you wish ivory, eagle-wood and other merchandise

16. from this Kingdom of Siam, Captain Mr. Leit is acquainted with them and knows the price of the said merchandise, and

106
2.17. Your Excellency should order the transfer of the flintlocks on your boat to this Kingdom of Siam, and when they arrive

18. the accounts for the said flintlocks will be settled without any difficulty; and if it pleases your Excellency

19. to send a ship to this Kingdom of Siam, [as regards] the price of linens, firearms, etc., Captain Mr. Leit knows

20. already the price of the said cloth, firearms, etc. And as the said Captain Mr. Leit also knows the price of ivory,

21. and other further merchandise of this Kingdom of Siam, Your Excellency can direct a ship to trade

22. in this Kingdom, and we, Minister to His Majesty of Siam, [will] assist and facilitate the said dealings,

23. and give satisfaction punctually. -- And since, for the time being, there are no more items of business at hand, we shall continue

24. to esteem highly a long life for Your Excellency, good health and greatest progress in possessions and happiness, such as

25. with due respect we wish for you that it may always be.

Your Excellency's
devotedly

we endorse with our seal

Siam, the seventh of December, 1776

Notes to the translation

2.3. 'plenty of'. This translation is based on a reading auge 'apogee', for [a?]ges, suggested to me by Luis de Vasconcelos.

2.6. 'obeisance'. Translates sombaya, probably from Malay sembah or sembahyang.
2.12. 'friendship'. From the Portuguese version of the letter one could gain the impression that the Minister and the Governor were well acquainted. The Siamese original says, however, expressly, 'His Majesty's friendship'.

2.13. 'tin'. The term is calaem, from Arabic.

2.14. 'Junk-Ceylon', i.e. Phuket, from Malay Ujong Salang. (See also Yule 1886:361(b).)

2.15. 'load'. The Portuguese version uses bar, corresponding to the Siamese original /phara/, both from Skt. bhāra.

'elephant-wood' translates Portuguese aguilla. (See also Yule 1886:258ab who traces the word to Malayalam.)

2.19. 'firearms' translates the Portuguese pecas 'pieces, firearms', here evidently referring to the flintlocks already mentioned.

2.24. 'long' translates muita. If we read melhora instead, the meaning will be 'best possible'.

'devotedly'. The Portuguese says todo afeccuozo 'totally devoted'.

NOTE

1. I have benefited from correspondence with Dr Theraphan L. Thongkum and, through her, Professor Freecha Changkhwanyuen, concerning the Siamese text; as well as with Palle Kroman M.A. and, through him, Lecturer Luis de Vasconcelos, concerning the Portuguese text. The final responsibility is, in all cases, my own.
REFERENCES


