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, 1688-1776. 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' khlæg/ 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.  naïṣṣyy náwàabthâncâwphája Aphrá' khlægphùujájná' kruŋthêebphrá'-máhnâñkhoon miimâthúrá'

2.  cîdsànînsàñèhâa maaththâcàcàbroonsëënaacâwdiînàg-phùupencâwmyântràqkaabâad dûaj

3.  phrá' bâadsômdëèdpfrá'máhâakràsàdtraathîràadcàwthîisûñujâj miipfrá'rûadchá' ooñkaanaa

89
2.4. phrá?banthuunsurásíphánāñadadnāňyakláñnyakraśārmaná

5. piivóg?ádtahsogkāpitanlēg?dogyacádsyypynná?myāntrāq-
kaabāadphambōgkhāwpajtūnu

6. klāwthuunnkrāmōmthāwāj tōgphrá?rāadchāprāsoqypynnkhāab-
silaa?iignonbhōg cyq

7. tēŋhājkāpitanlēg?dogyacádsyynná?myāntrāqkaabāad
khōhājcāwmyāntrāqkāa

8. bāadhenkēthaapphrá?rāadchāmajtrīi leemajtriichūaj-
thamnū?bamruqcdesēŋhājkāpitan

9. lēgdaįpyynnbhōgkāwmaacōgsādlālag thāacāwmyāntrāq-
kaabāadcā?tōŋkaandībūg

10. kō?hājtēŋkampānkhwamaarāb?awdiibūgkēkāpitanlēgna?-
myānthatēľēgdbōgto
g

11. phaaraa thāacă?tēŋkaannasachāŋญājśiṅkhāasīŋdajnā?-
krūŋthèebphrá?måhānåkhōonkāpri

12. tanlēgrūuraakhaajūlēw hājtēŋkampānbanthūgpyynnkhāw-
maasōĎiētēŋkruŋthèebphrá?

13. måhānākhōoncă?khīdraaakhāhājkhroōbtaamccumumuankhāapynn-
mī?hājkhāaŋkeōakhādsōnjūudāj prā

14. kaannyūthācāwmyāntrāqkaabāadcă?tōŋkampānbanthūgphan-
phānphārakhaa qaachāaŋญājśūn

15. pajkхаakhāajnā?krūŋthèebphrá?måhānåkhōon leēraakhaa-
phanphāaraakhaa qaachāaŋญājśūn

16. nē?krūŋthèebphrá?måhānåkhōonnān kāpitanlēgrūulēw-
hājtēŋkampānbanthūgkhāw

17. pajthōedrawcă?chuajthamnū?bamruqmī?hājphanphāsīnkhāa-
khōgcāwmyāntrāqkaabādkhāadkhāajjūudāj,pēn?ankhāad

18. thiidĭavnåsēyynaanā?wan?aŋkhaandyān?ajrēsmīb-
khāmcunlāsāgkārāādphanrōcīsaamsībpēdpīivōg?ādtahsōg

Notes to the text

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

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

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

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

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

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

/jàj/ 'big' is spelt with /májmalaaaj/ rather than /májmúan/, and with /májthoo/ instead of /máj?èeg/.

/krùq/ 'capital city' is in this letter consistently equipped with a /jàdnamkhàaq/.

/nákhùn/ 'city'. The first syllable is spelt with /nɔo neen/ rather than with /nɔo núu/, and the second has the vowel /ɔo/ written out instead of the /r/ serving for vowel plus final consonant.

/míi/ 'have' is spelt with a vowel symbol consisting of modern /sàrà? ñi?/ plus modern /máj?èeg/ (a combination of /sàrà? ñi?/ with both /jàdnamkhàaq/ and /fònthooq/). 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'.

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

2. /cid/ is spelt /cìdtrà/ 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.

/sànìd/ 'amiable' is spelt with final /còo caan/ instead of /thoo thàan/ or /thoo thoŋ/, the vowel is written with the general i/y.

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

/broŋ/ can also be read /bruŋ/. /saŋ/ ?əo/ and /wοŋ
weən/ are not clearly distinguished in this style.

/dinmāg/ 'Denmark' reflects Portuguese Dinamarca. The /n/
is spelt with /roŋ 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 /ii/.

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

/myaŋ/ 'city' is spelt with the usual elements, except that
the superscript symbol is the general i/y vowel (perhaps with
an added unexplained /fonθoŋ/, cf. l.5 below).

/trɑŋkaabəad/. The final consonant /d/ is spelt with /θοŋ
θāaən/, reflecting an original supradental ɗ, which comes out
as -r in Portuguese, Danish, etc. The initial /b/ in /bəad/ is
joined with the vowel /əa/ in a ligature involving the /hɔŋ/
script form of the letter /b/.

L.3 /sɔmdəd/ 'royal prefix'. The /cm/ is spelt with both
the superposed /jəənəmikhəaq/ and the /m/, thus presenting a
mixture of Siamese (/m/ only) and Cambodian (/jəənəmikhəaq/
only) conventions.

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

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

/maan/ is spelt as if it were Skt. māraṇa '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 (Photchananunrom 1950:695b) we find here
maan phrə?banthuun/ which is parallel to the preceding phrase
/mii phrə?rəadchə?oogkaan/.

L.4 /banthuun/ 'command' is spelt with /nɔŋ nů/ in the
first syllable and /lɔŋ liŋ/ in the second, where the present
official orthography has /nɔŋ neen/ and /roŋ rya/. Pallegoix
(1854:47) has /lɔŋ liŋ/ finally as in Cambodian.

/sərə/ is spelt with a long /uː/ by confusion of /sʊrə?/
'godly' with /suːrə?/ 'here'. The /r/ is doubled for no obvious
reason.
/sǐŋ/ in /sĩ próp̣nāːd/ 'lion's roar' is spelt with /iː/;
/nāːd/ with /dɔː chàːdɑː/ through confusion of 'roar' /-thɔː thānāː/ with 'dancing' (though this is normally spelt with 'long t' rather than 'long d').

/damrâːd/ 'royal speech' has final /dɔː dɛːɡ/ instead of /sɔː sỹa/.

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

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

/sàq/ 'command', no tonal marker.

/mɔrɔːšuːm/ 'monsoon'. The /ɔː/ is spelt out. /rɑː/ is spelt with the rare letter /ryy/, perhaps by false association with words beginning with /mɔːry-/., designating 'death', and also perhaps with /rỹduu/ 'season'.

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

/ʔɔːdθɔː/ '8'. The /thɔː thǎːn/ is replaced by the simpler /dɔː chàːdɑː/.

/sɔɡ/ 'year' is written with the /fannuː/ 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 /sɔː sålalaa/.

/kapitɑːn/ 'Captain'. The first syllable is spelt with /fɔntthɔɔː/ (identical with modern /máj?tɛeg/). The second syllable is spelt exactly like the word /pii/ 'year' above.

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

/sỹy/ 'buy', no tonal marker.

/pyyn/ 'gun' contains the same ligature as is used for /pii/ and /pɨ/ above.

/myan̥/. The vowel is /sãrãː /?iː/ plus /fɔntthɔɔː/; the element /jãadnãmkhǎːng/, used in 2.2 above, is missing.
/khāw/ 'enter' is written with a ligature which blends /khōo kāj/ and /sārā? a/ into one symbol.

2.6. /thāwāaj/ 'give' has a superfluous /mājhān?aa/kād/ = /mājthoo/ to indicate the short /a/.

/tōo/ 'must', no tonal marker.

/prāsōŋ/ 'desire'. The 'inherent' /o/ is indicated with /fōnhōon/, and not the /fannūu/ as in /sōg/, 2.5 above. There is no silent /khōo khwāaj/ finally.

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

/mīyn/ '10,000', no tonal marker.

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

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

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

2.8. /kēe/ 'to', no tonal marker.

/majtrii/ 'friendship' is twice spelt with /sāra? a?/. /chūaj/ 'help', no tonal marker.

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

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

2.9. /pyyn/ has been equipped with an extra /māj?ēeg/. cf. 22.5 and 6 above.

/coŋ/ 'make to be'. The 'inherent' /o/ is indicated by means of /fōnhōon/ as in /prāsōŋ/, 2.6 above.

/cā?/ 'verbal auxiliary'. In this word the /fōnhōon/ is used for the short vowel /a/ instead of the /wisānchānii/.

2.10. /kāo/ 'then' is spelt with /kōo kāj/ and no markers.

/kampānn/ 'ship', no tonal marker.
/thələŋ/ 'Place Name'. The short /a/ is spelt with /fənθoaŋ/, cf. /kæptən/, 7.5 above.

/hɔŋ/ 'six' has /jəadnəmhəŋ/ to indicate the short /o/, cf. /səmdəd/ 7.3 above.

/tɔŋ/ 'per' has the vowel written out plus a /fənnũu/ above the /t/; cf. /khoŋ/ in 7.7 above.

7.11. /chəŋ/ is written with a ligature that joins some features of /chɔɔ chəŋ/ with the /aa/.

/nəŋ/ 'meat' is spelt with /sərə? ᵃʔ?/ instead of /γy/ and has no tonal marker.

/məŋ/ 'wood' has /məjmũan/ instead of /məjməlaŋ/, and no tonal marker.

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

/dəŋ/ 'any' has /məjməlaŋ/ instead of /məjmũan/ and is equipped with a meaningless final /jũŋ jãŋ/.

7.12. /jũŋ/ 'be at', no tonal marker.

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

/səŋ/ 'send'. The 'inherent' /o/ is indicated with /jəadnəmhəŋ/ (cf. 7.1,3,10) above); there is no tonal marker.

/dəŋ/ 'can' is spelt with /məjmũan/ rather than with /məjməlaŋ/.

7.13. /kʰəd/ 'calculate' is spelt with /sərə? iʔʔ/ (or sərəʔ iʔʔ with superposed /fənθoaŋ/).

/raakhaa/ 'price' is equipped with a /məjthoo/ on the second syllable -- not used in the line above -- through confusion with /kʰaʔ/ 'price', spelt the same way later in this line, with /məjthoo/ instead of /məjʔəŋ/.

/kʰrɔb/ 'complete' has /jəadnəmkhəaŋ/ for /o/ as in several other words above.

/kaŋmuuŋ/ 'amount'. The final /-n/ is written /rɔo rya/.

/miʔ/ 'not' has the same elements as /miʔ/ in 7.1, but with the /fənθoaŋ/ closer to the /jəadnəmkhəaŋ/, which is, however, not the case in 7.17 below.
/kháañ/ 'unfinished'; no tonal marker.

/kæn/ 'exceed'. The superscript is /sàrà? ?yy/ and not /sàrà? ?i?/.

/sən/ in/khàdsən/ 'needy' has /jàadnámkháañ/ for /o/ as in /khòb/, etc., above.

2.14. /nỳq/ 'one' is spelt /nỳq/. 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 /noo neen/ in the first, but not in the second instance, whereas a /màjhàn?akàad/ is used in the first, but not in the second instance.

/pháa/ 'cloth', no tonal marker.

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

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

/nàʔ/ 'at, in' seems equipped with a /fònthèoʔ/, 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. /nàʔ/ 'that' is equipped with two superimposed markers identical with modern /màjthòo/, the lower one indicating the vowel, the upper one the tone.

/kàpìtan/ has no marker on the first syllable.


/chúaj/, no tonal marker.

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

/khōɔŋ/ 'of' is spelt with /khōɔ khûad/, which happens to be etymologically correct.

/trankaabâad/ 'Place Name'. The last syllable has a meaningless /mâjthoo/.

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

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

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


/?âsaj/ 'first', no tonal marker.

/sîb/ '10' has /sara? ?ii/ instead of /sârâ ?ť?/.

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

/râşaj/ '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 /mâj?ēeg/ is not used, but the identical /fôntoon/ indicates (inconsistently) /a(?)/ or /o/. The tonal marker /mâjthoo/ is identical with /mâjhnân ?aakâad/, while the /fannu/ occasionally marks the /o/, or is added above the consonant preceding /sârâ? ?oo/. 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
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

1.1. 'Nabob'. The Siamese form is /nawâab/, 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.

1.2. '(John?) Brown'. The Siamese text says /jooq broon (or bruan)/. 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 naib '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.

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

2.5. '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 2.5 of the Portuguese translation. As regards the calendar terms, see 2.18 below.

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

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

'Wood'. The Siamese /nỳamāj/ 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.

2.15. 'Other merchandise'. The letter says only /sën/ 'goods', the equivalent of /Sînkhāa/ in 2.11 and 14.

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

'Year of the Monkey'. /pîi wəsog/ is the ninth year in the cycle of twelve.

'Eighth Year'. /rāṭhāsọg/ is the eighth year in the cycle of ten.
Suponho esperando abençoado, receba V. E. estas minhas regozandas com alguma carinho, dizendo em primeiro lugar. Que V. E. promova feliz e unida com muitas augúrias, asseguradas felicidades de dias em dias maiores no seu nobre Estado, e feliz governo.

Veja este mês, o Capitão M. Leit neste Reino de Siam, e se somente

bela de S. Majestade, que ele diz Capitão tem comprado um Trangabar mil Espingar
gardas e apresou-se a S. Majestade, e S. Majestade ficou bastante contente com a ditas Espingardas. Se presente a Real Majestade executou ordem, como primeiro, Ministro de S. Majestade que escreveu deste Carta a V. E. pedindo que favorecesse dito Capitão M. Leit em Trangabar porque vai o dito Capitão M. Leit com ordem expressa de S. Majestade procurar mais do que Espingardas em Trangabar para que seja o bom amigo de que o Capitão L. com a facultade de V. E. aceite dita ditas Espingardas de 1200, o Ministro de S. Majestade, ditas de Capitão M. Leit, e a V. E. quiser Calas em mandar barco de 2bler, a Tomé, além receber Calasomo das mãos de Capitão M. Leit, e o dito de entre o fara por seis Espingardas, hum bar de Calasomo, e a quiser Marin, Agulha, e mais fazer-se

nas estes Reinos de Siam, o Capitão M. Leit entende, e sabe o preço das ditas fazendas, e

mandar fazer Espingardas, no barco de 2bler, em estes Reinos de Siam, e chegando se apresen-

tar as contas, puntualmente das ditas Espingardas, têm dificuldade alguma. E se pra o

mandar barco de estes Reinos de Siam o preço das ditas fazendas, e o Capitão M. Leit sabe o preço das ditas fazendas, e sabe o preço das Marin, Agulha, e mais fazendas. E estes Reinos de Siam, pode o V. E. mandar barco a comerciar neste Reino, e no Ministro de S. Majestade, de Siam ajudar, a beneficiar as ditas fazendas, e satisfazer puntualmente.

Como por haver no dito ofício mais ficar me apreciando a V. E. M. V. E. e God. Deus, mando com prazer fazer bem e felicidades como o dezo

Siam aos 7 de Dezembro de 777.

[Assinatura]

Todo o Estamento.

[Seal]
Excellentissimo Senhor


2. augmentos e [a?]ges de felicidades de dia em dia maiores no seu nobre Estado, e feliz.

3. governo.

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

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

6. gardas e apresentou a S. Majestade, e S. Majestade ficou bastantemente conten-

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

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

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


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

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

13. das deste Reino de Siam, o Capitão M.º Leit entende, e sabe o preço das ditas fazendas, e
2.17. 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 ditas 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. -- E como por horas não se oferece mais ficamos 

24. appreendo 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 affectuozio 

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.\textsuperscript{r}, 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 /hô nam/. See also Professor Simmonds' article for further bibliographic information on Francis Light.

L.15. hum, i.e. um.

L.18. alguaí, i.e. alguma.

L.19. pessas, i.e. peças.

L.20. panos, i.e. pannos.

L.24. appreçando, i.e. apreçando

\textit{muita} and \textit{maiores} are written by means of ligatures. The first one could perhaps be read \textit{melhora} instead of \textit{muita}.\textit{\textsuperscript{1}}
Translation of the Portuguese version

Most excellent Sir

2.1. 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
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 auges 'apohee', 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.

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

2.19. 'firearms' translates the Portuguese peças '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 affectuozo '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


