

VATICAN PAPERS OF THE XVII CENTURY

by

THE REV. FATHER P. CARRETTO.

In the accounts of the various Thai Embassies to European shores in the days of the great King Narai, that which took place between the Thai Monarch and the then reigning Pontiff, Pope Innocent XI (1676-89), is usually either briefly mentioned without details or altogether passed over in silence.

This present article, founded on manuscripts in the Vatican Archives, aims at filling this gap.

It is a matter of regret that the death of King Narai (July 1688), followed only one year later, (August 1689), by that of Pope Innocent XI, prevented the efforts made by both sides and the high hopes entertained by them from reaching fruition.

I was very glad to find an account of the same Embassy in the Thai book *Collection of Historical Documents Vol 18* (ประชุมพงศาวดาร ภาคที่ 18) printed under the auspices of H. R. H. Prince Damrong in 2462 (1919). The account was translated by the Italian Colonel Gerini, who spent the greater part of his life in Thailand as military adviser and instructor. He does not quote the sources of his work.

For the benefit of those who cannot read Thai or find the booklet, an abridgement of the account is given here to make the narration contained in the Vatican manuscripts more complete.

King Narai sent four Embassies to Europe. The Portuguese vessel with the first Thai Ambassadors on board was wrecked near the Cape of Good Hope; all the members of the Mission perished. The second Embassy was sent to discover the fate of the first; it had no diplomatic character. The third, headed by Kosa Pan (โกสุมพิณ) was successful and returned to Thailand with the French Ambassador Monsieur de la Leubère and Monsieur Ceberet.

The fourth and last was sent soon after the return of the third, and carried home Monsieur Ceberet. The Thai Ambassadors were three, but Col. Gerini records only the name of one, Okkhun Chamnan (ออคขุนชำนาญ), who was probably the first Ambassador.

The Embassy arrived in France in July 1688 after being almost eight months at sea on a French vessel. As King Louis XIV could not grant an audience to the Ambassadors before December 15th, it was suggested that they should first proceed to Rome. They left Paris on the 5th November on their way to the Eternal City, led by Rev. Fr. Tachard. Two French ships carried them from Cannes to Civitavecchia, where they arrived on the 20th December 1688. A stately carriage of the Cardinal Vicar of Rome, drawn by three pairs of horses, took them to the palace placed at their disposal. Pontifical guards in full uniform stayed on orderly duty at the palace gate during their sojourn.

On the 23rd December they were received the first time by H. H. Pope Innocent XI. His Holiness exempted them from the kissing of the foot, asking them to follow the Thai royal ceremonial.

At the appointed time, two papal carriages by the order of the Cardinal Vicar's Secretary went to fetch the Thai Ambassadors at their palace. All the streets through which the Embassy was to pass were densely crowded with people, who cheered the Ambassadors in the most cordial way.

From the entrance gate to the Vatican Palace, Papal soldiers were ranged in two rows. H. E. Cardinal Cybo, Secretary of State, was at the foot of the staircase to welcome the Embassy. A great throng of Bishops, and high dignitaries, both ecclesiastical and lay, crowded the entrance hall.

The Thai Ambassadors alighted from their carriages bearing on golden trays the messages and presents of King Narai and of his first Minister, Constantine Phaulkon.

His Holiness was waiting for them on His throne, surrounded by eight Cardinals, seated four on each side. As soon as the Ambassadors entered the audience hall, they placed their trays on a special table and then took their places on the chairs appointed for them. Fr. Tachard advanced with the three ritual genuflections and kissed the Pope's foot. Then His Holiness invited him to stand up. He did so: he withdrew a few steps, paid his homage to the eight Cardinals and, after making a low reverence, presented the Mission to the Sovereign Pontiff.

"His Majesty the King of Siam was desirous," he said, "to form friendship with Rome, and had taken under his royal protection the Catholic Missionaries who had come to teach the Christian Religion in his Kingdom."

His Holiness expressed His high satisfaction and joy, then Fr. Tachard, taking the royal message from the table, handed it to the Pope. His Holiness unfolded it and read it at once, then passed it to his secretary, who took it into the Pope's private study.

Next, Fr. Tachard handed the present of the King, and the letter and present of Constantine Phaulkon to His Holiness. The King's present consisted of a golden box skillfully engraved by Thai goldsmiths after the Thai fashion. It was three *tamlungs* in weight. Phaulkon's present was a silver box, five *chang*s in weight, carved in Japanese fashion, on a silver tray of the same weight.

This finished, His Holiness asked Fr. Tachard to invite the Ambassadors to pay him homage. One by one, they proceeded on their knees for two or three steps then bowed their heads three times: which they repeated advancing towards the Pontiff's throne, so that at the last bow, the top of each Ambassador's pointed cap touched the Pope's feet. Then they retired in a row, where they were joined by Fr. Tachard. His Holiness gave them his apostolic blessing, and the audience was over.

The Ambassadors then went to the private apartment of H. E. Cardinal Cybo, Secretary of State, to pay him visit. This was a most cordial one, and lasted a considerable time.

As the Mission was leaving the Vatican in the Papal carriages, the pontifical band played a thrilling hymn.

KING NARAI'S MESSAGE TO THE POPE.

The King of Ayudhya to His Holiness Innocent XI, Supreme Pontiff of the Holy See,

Greetings:

Since we have ascended the Throne of Ayudhya, it has been Our wish to cultivate acquaintances with the great Sovereigns of Europe and to exchange with them correspondence in order to foster mutual friendship, which We hope might be the means of introducing into Our country the benefits of western knowledge, thereby giving enlightenment to Our people. While thus pondering and before We sent over an embassy with that object in view, Your Holiness anticipated Us by deputing the Bishop of Heliopolis to Us with Your gracious letter and presents, which We have received with great pleasure. We therefore send an embassy bearing Our letter and presents to reciprocate Your Holiness' expression of friendship and to strengthen the more the bonds thereof so that the two nations may be cemented as one golden land united and indivisible. To Our regret, however, Our embassy never succeeded in reaching its high destination, having been shipwrecked off the Cape of Good Hope and all Our presents scattered on the high seas.

We have therefore again despatched another embassy bearing Our complimentary letter and presents and have attached thereto the Reverend Father Tachard to act in a guiding capacity. By sending this mission We hope to give yet another testimonial of Our desire to cultivate Your friendship and to acquaint Your Holiness of Our constant purpose to support the Christian missionaries who have come to spread their Religion in this country as well as the people who have embraced it. We would take this opportunity to assure Your Holiness that it shall be Our duty to look after them in such a manner that You shall not need be anxious of their welfare. For this purpose We have instructed Father Tachard to inform Your Holiness in Our name of all that You may wish to know. May Your Holiness accept the presents We have much pleasure in sending

in order to strengthen the bonds of friendship existing between Your Holiness and Ourselves.

May the supreme Power in the Universe grant Your Holiness a long life for the benefit of Your Religion. May it spread gloriously throughout the world.

From Your Holiness' true friend,

(royal seal)

(countersigned) Phaulkon

A SHORT REPORT

of what happened at Rome to the Siamese Mandarins
who came with
the Reverend Father Guido Tachard, S. J., Envoy Extraordinary
of the
King of Siam, after an audience with His Holiness Pope Innocent XI.

He who knows that Rome is the head of the world, that is to say the most beautiful and noble part of it, as in every living body the head governs the limbs which are subject to it, may for himself, without relying on descriptions given by others, imagine the pleasure and satisfaction felt by the Siamese Mandarins during the few days they spent in that City.

But as it is not known to many what happened to them before their departure, and what gave them even greater pleasure, a short report thereof is here given to the curious reader.

Of these things the Mandarins declared that what gratified them most was, first, the liberal show of affection which the Holy Pontiff manifested towards them and the goodwill extended towards them on their leaving the City; secondly, the splendour and decorum of the religious services; thirdly, the magnificence and grandeur of the palaces and courts; and lastly the tokens of esteem and benevolence bestowed upon them by various exalted personages, and by the crowds that gathered to greet them wherever they had to go, and the signs of welcome so abundantly shown to them by the citizens of Rome.

In giving some details of these four sources of satisfaction, it must be said that their good fortune was great at being present on the most blissful day of the Holy Nativity, when they had the chance to see the Pontiff's Chapel and to admire the Sacred College of their Eminences the Cardinals which, both in the magnificence of their state and in the nobility of their persons, displays, the dignity of the Sovereign Pontiff of the Holy

Church in a manner that cannot be equalled in any other kingdom of the world. They saw the number and dignity of the Sacred Ministers by whom the sublimity of this earthly hierarchy so well typifies the Hierarchy of Heaven. At this sight, then, they remained astonished; and it seemed to them that they had not so much been transferred from the Siamese Kingdom into another climate as into a totally different world.

Their pleasure was increased at seeing the most celebrated churches of Rome, especially the Basilica of St. Peter which, as is well known, yields in magnificence and richness to no other architectural wonder of this world. Their joy was intensified on the first day of the year when they were present at the services held in the Gesù in honour of the most August Name of Jesus. Within the walls of the Gesù they were able to admire the beauty, mingled with majesty, of the ornaments and pictures with which the sacred edifice is adorned and to wonder at the many aids by which devotion to the Redeemer of the world is fostered. They assisted with great attention at holy Mass and solemn Vespers, enjoying to the full the music of the choirs sounding the praises and lauding the glories of the True God.

When visiting the palaces they did not so much admire the wealth of the decorations and the richness of the furniture as the magnificence of the buildings, the long vistas of rooms and halls, and the width of the apartments, things utterly strange to their eyes; because though accustomed to the grandeur of the Royal Siamese Court, they had never before enjoyed the sight of such masterpieces of architecture as those in which Rome abounds.

Leaving to the imagination of the reader the enjoyment they felt at the sight of the charming gardens, the fountains and paintings, there must be recorded here their great gratification at seeing His Eminence the Prince Cardinal Rinaldo d'Este with all his noble attendants by whom His Eminence is served at all public functions. Though used to seeing their Monarch accompanied in his public appearances by twelve thousand persons, they declared that such royal magnificence was completely overshadowed by the beauty and the sumptuousness of the Cardinal's Court. And this is doubtless true, for the magnificent carriages, the number and quality of his train in their gold and black uniforms, the variety of the liveries, the splendour of the numerous Prelates and Knights recall the glories of a Triumph in the days of the ancient senators.

In this way the Siamese Mandarins and the Tongkinese Catechists

agreeably passed their time, waited upon by the grooms of Cardinal Cybo and assisted by Monsignor Gaspare Plantamini, Secretary to the Embassy of the same Cardinal, who had been entrusted with this duty by His Eminence himself.

Their minds, however, were even more gratified than their senses at seeing their persons cheered and caressed in all the places they visited; so that the First Mandarin, a young man of elevated spirit, conversant with the French Language, and thus able to express his feelings and those of his fellows, spoke of their sorrow at being utterly unable to find words to make known the affection they had conceived for the people and city of Rome.

Among the various tokens of esteem and honour received from many, that bestowed upon them by H. E. the Duke of Ceri, Lino Odescalchi, worthy nephew of His Holiness, was peculiar; for after having accepted their expressions of respect when they visited him at his palace, he deigned to send them numerous and noble presents, besides supplying them with fragrant, cooling beverages.

They were also honoured by Prince Borghese who gave them an opportunity to admire his royal palace where they received a most cordial welcome, the Princess and other noble ladies being present at the function. They were served with an exquisite repast in which art and nature combined to manifest the sublime soul of this great prince. Their satisfaction was not decreased at visiting the sumptuous chapel of the palace, where they saw the great number of immensely valuable jewels which are treasured therein. They were shown not only the material treasures of the noble Borghese family, but also given the opportunity of bearing witness to the eminent piety of the Princess Eleonora who, depriving herself of the use of these jewels, employs them all in the service of God and of His Saints, the precious urns containing sacred relics being of skilled workmanship and adorned with them.

On the last day of the year they went to the Professed House of the Society of Jesus. There they accepted with joy the demonstrations of esteem shown them by the Fathers who were desirous not less to see them become true children of the Roman Church than to make clear to them the gratitude they felt towards the King of Siam for his Royal protection bestowed on the missionaries in his kingdom, and for the College built in the metropolis, and for the church consecrated to the holy Apostle of the Indies, St. Francis Xavier. Here they had a repast, the table being

spread with trays of cakes and sweets supplied through the love and liberality of the benefactors who longed to share in the promotion of the good deeds of the apostolic workers to engraft the truths of the holy Faith in the hearts of the heathens. For this reason, Father Firso Gonzalez, General of the Order, sent to the Catholic Indochinese Catechists, as a gift, a great many rosaries, reliquaries, and medals to be used to reward the diligence of new converts in learning the truths of Christian doctrine.

Another repast was served at the Roman College where they inspected the dispensary attached thereto, after having admired the wonderful library and the magnificent temple erected in honour of St. Ignatius Loyola by the piety of the most noble Lodovisia family. Here the guests received a present of some cases of balm and various quintessences prepared in the above mentioned dispensary.

While the Mandarins were crossing the court round which the classrooms are disposed, all the students were caused to come out of their rooms simultaneously. They, who are at present more numerous than ever, formed an edifying spectacle, for among the students there shone the noble ranks of those Roman Princes and Knights who attended the College. The students were at the same time both spectators and a spectacle; and it was impossible to judge whether the delight of being looked at with so much interest by these Mandarins was greater than the joy of seeing people arrived from a barbarian world responding to the courtesy of Rome with cordiality and love, and reciprocating the pleasure with which they were beheld.

During the days in which the Siamese Mandarins and Catechists were enjoying visits and demonstrations, Father Guido Tachard, who had set out on this journey from Siam to Rome in the character of Envoy Extraordinary to the Supreme Pontiff only in the interest of the Catholic Faith, depriving himself of the pleasure of seeing everything, and holding aloof from the party, applied himself wholly to the carrying out of the business which he had undertaken concerning the propagation of the Catholic Faith in those heathen lands, to the glory of the Holy Church and Her Supreme Shepherd, Pope Innocent XI. He therefore called on Their Eminences, the Cardinals of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, making known to them the petitions of the Christians and the needs of those kingdoms where the seed of Holy Faith sprouts notwithstanding the thorns of idolatrous superstitions. The Holy Pontiff deigned to admit him to audience several times, whence he always retired full of admiration

for the deep piety of His Holiness and his saintly intentions for the conversion of the world.

From these visits ensued the honours bestowed by His Holiness upon the Envoy and his party, as already reported in the first letter, and to which further reference will be made. His Holiness gave orders for the Mandarins to be allowed to visit the large Pontifical Palace in the Vatican and, that they might enjoy at leisure the famous Library, the Arsenal and the attached Belvedere garden, he ordered meals to be prepared there which, throughout their stay, were sumptuous. It is impossible to express the satisfaction felt by the Mandarins at visiting these places and that at being permitted one afternoon to ascend the sublime Dome of St. Peter's.

All these events were also many beams of light illuminating the minds of the three Mandarins and enkindling in their hearts such love of and faith in Christ, that they openly declared to Father Tachard that they would live subject and faithful to Rome, interested in the growth of the glory of Jesus whose amiability shines forth in the person of His Vicar on earth. They determined, therefore, on their return to entreat their King's consent to their receiving the water of Holy Baptism that they might rejoice as much in carrying on their foreheads the Holy Cross as they rejoice in the honour of being officials in this Royal Palace. And as a token of this determination, one of them had a life-sized portrait of himself painted in the attitude of holding two golden vases, out of one with the right hand he poured water on a fire while with the left hand he watered a tender tree with the contents of the other, typifying by the fire the idolatry he desired to see extinguished and by the tree the principle of the Faith he would cultivate in his heart. All three, therefore, made a request to obtain from the Pope an image of the Crucified Redeemer; and His Holiness having granted it by sending them three silver crucifixes, they received them with veneration, kissing several times the Sacred Wounds engraved on the Figures.

In this frame of mind they were led by the Father Envoy to the feet of the Pontiff on January 5th to take leave of His Holiness, after which, amid good wishes for a favourable voyage, they set sail for Siam.

This last audience brought the utmost joy to the souls of the Envoy, the Mandarins, and the Catechists; who being deeply moved with tender affection, wept at leaving him who had shown himself to be not only a munificent Prince but a loving Father; and this notwithstanding the vehement love, engendered in all by nature, which was calling them back to their motherland.

Having received the last blessings of His Holiness, they went to the apartment of Cardinal Cybo to take leave of him, who honoured them by sending them back in his carriage. From His Eminence they received good wishes and promises of his protection, a powerful aid greatly to the advantage of all Christians scattered throughout the kingdoms of the Indies.

It remains to record the answers given by His Holiness and to record the gifts he sent to the King of Siam and to his First Minister, Constantine Phaulcon. His Holiness bade three Briefs be drawn up to be entrusted to the Father Envoy. The first, addressed to the King under the title of Illustrious and Most Puissant King of Siam, expressed the Holy Father's joy at receiving His Majesty's Embassy and the heartfelt desire of His Holiness to see the King fully enlightened by the Sun of Justice, Jesus Christ, so that through the light of the Holy Faith he might become possessor of Heaven. It was written on vellum enclosed in a box of gold four inches wide and half a span long, on one side being engraved the arms of His Holiness and on the opposite the following in capitals: INNO-CENTIUS UNDECIMUS PON. MAX. AN. XIII. (Innocent XI, Supreme Pontiff, 13th year.) The box was enclosed in a plain crimson velvet satchel, bordered along the width with eight rows of gold braid. The second Brief, addressed to the Catholic Minister under the title of Beloved Son, was on parchment enclosed in a red damask satchel, adorned along the seams with gold fringe. The third Brief was an answer to the Christians of Tongking, a kingdom bordering on Siam, who now number some 300,000 souls, in whose name petitions, which were granted, had been sent to His Holiness.

To these three Briefs, His Holiness was pleased to add several presents. His Holiness entrusted Father Tachard with the duty of handing to the King, on behalf of the Pontiff, a gold medal bearing on one side the Pope's image in *basso rilievo*, and on the other a figure of Charity giving suck to two babies and bearing the motto "*non quaerit quae sua sunt.*" "seeketh not her own" (I Cor. XIII. 5). This medal was adorned on both sides with diamonds, twelve of which were of great value. His Holiness also sent to the King a telescope, 30 spans long, containing four big crystal lenses, skilfully prepared by Mr. John Baptist Dondone, whose skill in making optical instruments is known to be second to none, together with its proper tripod. This will be highly appreciated by the King who is interested in beholding the stars with such instruments and in seeing the

The above mentioned Father Tachard, a man distinguished for piety and virtue, and whom, therefore, We entrust to You with earnest entreaty, will more closely show Your Majesty the feelings of Our soul, and will at the same time express to You the proofs of the benevolence We bear Your Royal Person. It remains that Your Majesty fulfil Our expectations whilst We eagerly call down upon Your Majesty from Almighty God all Prosperity.

Given at Rome, near St. Mary Major, under the seal of the Fisherman's Ring, this 7th day of January, 1689, in the XIII year of our Pontificate.

SECOND BRIEF.**FROM POPE INNOCENT XI TO CONSTANTINE PHAULKON**

INNOCENT XI, POPE, to the beloved son, CONSTANTINE PHAULKON, greeting and Apostolic blessing.

Since a certain time We have been aware of and admire the zeal with which you burn for the propagation of the Christian Faith in the wide regions of the Far East with infatigable joy and eagerness. Notwithstanding this, We rejoice in a higher degree in knowing the same from the letters you sent Us on 2nd January last year, and from Our beloved son, Father Tachard S. J., who handed them to Us.

This new and excellent proof that We have received of your distinguished solicitude in furthering the spread of this Faith, adds greatly to the love We have already borne you; consequently We shall avail Ourselves of all possible occasions of plainly showing you how We esteem the piety and religion of your soul. As to those questions which Father Tachard so diligently discussed with Us in your name, you will fully know from him Our thoughts about them in the Lord.

In no way doubting that you will willingly submit to Our decrees and that you will, day in and day out, add new merits to the immortal merits thus far acquired by you, Beloved Son, We implore God to be your plentiful Rewarder; and We bestow on you with great affection Our Apostolic blessing.

Given at Rome, this 7th day of January 1689.

**THIRD BRIEF.
FROM POPE INNOCENT XI
TO THE CHRISTIANS OF TONGKING.**

INNOCENT XI, POPE, to the Beloved Children, all the faithful Christians of TONGKING.

Beloved Children, greeting!

We have indeed experienced an immense joy from your letter that has been brought, in the name of you all to Us by certain eminent men from among you.

From it We have, with overflowing joy of Our spirit, clearly learned how devoted and plainly filial are the feelings you foster towards this Holy See, your Mother and Mistress, in which We—though unworthy—preside over the Church of God; and also how promptly you submitted to the wise decree of this See, acknowledging as proper the Apostolic Vicars and true Shepherds established by the same.

For which, as We now bestow abundant and well-deserved praises on your piety, so We will not fail as occasions present themselves to show Our affection for you more excellently. As in your letter you expressed plainly that you ardently await the return of the Jesuit Fathers by whom, with God's help, you have been transferred from the darkness and the shadow of death to the light of the Faith and the way of eternal salvation, We did not fail to take heed of your requests, through a peculiar impulse of Our good will, and to comply with your desires, for the augmentation of your spiritual joy, by enjoining other Fathers of the same Society to come to you to replace those who have been called back. Meanwhile, with all the affection of our burning heart, We beseech you in the Lord to obey spontaneously and willingly the before mentioned Apostolic Vicars and to remain constant in the Faith which you profess; and, though you may be oppressed by heavy difficulties in this mortal life, never to abandon it, always remembering that the sorrows of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that will be revealed in us. So that you may more

easily obtain this, We bestow upon you, dear Children, with the greatest affection, the Apostolic blessing.

Given at Rome, this 7th of January 1689 in the XIII year of our Pontificate.

INNOCENT XI
POPE

