

SECTION III

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THE MAKING OF AN ORIENTAL DESPOT: LOUIS XIV AND THE SIAMESE EMBASSY OF 1686

RONALD S. LOVE

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

"The king of Siam knows very well how to estimate the power and qualities of the sovereigns who send their ambassadors to him," wrote Father Nicolas Gervaise in 1688:

He receives the envoys of the emperor of China, of the Great Mogul and the Grand Sophy with much more pomp and ceremony than those of neighbouring rulers. As these latter are almost all tributaries of his crown ... inferior to him in wealth and power, he makes sure that they are made aware of the difference between [him] and their own masters ...

But, continued Gervaise, "it is quite otherwise with the ambassadors of emperors and kings who are his equals:"

As soon as word is received of their entry into the country, several state *balons* [i.e., royal barges] are sent to receive them. They bring their letters of credence to the palace themselves and give them to the *barcalon* [or *Phra'klang*, minister of trade and foreign affairs] in the king's presence to be handed to his Majesty. The roads along their way are lined with armed men and richly caparisoned elephants, while mandarins in great numbers dressed in their finest clothes ... accompany them to the audience. The king receives them in his palace and entertains them there magnificently. He never allows them to depart without having made them presents rich enough to give them an exalted idea of his greatness and magnificence.¹

Such was the nature of Siamese diplomacy and protocol in the late seventeenth century, a protocol based upon ancient traditions of dominant powers and client kingdoms in a pattern that prevailed throughout the Far East. How different was the practice in Europe, where the concept of equal sovereign states was taking root and the notion of the balance of power—though

not accepted fully until the eighteenth century—was developing. Separately, the two systems worked well within their own environments, where expectations were the same and old habits of procedure were accepted. But when they came into direct contact with each other, as they did increasingly in the seventeenth century because of expanding European interests in the Far East, problems arose on both sides in trying to bridge the cultural gap that divided them. Indeed, as one modern historian of this question observes, foreign relations between Asia and Europe in this period especially must be seen "as contacts on various levels between many features of two cultures, two political and social systems ..."² Hence the interest of contemporary Europeans such as Gervaise in Asian protocol,³ for it was precisely in matters of diplomatic form that Asians and Europeans found their way toward an understanding of each other.

At no time was this interest expressed more extravagantly than in the lavish audience arranged at Versailles on 1 September 1686 by Louis XIV to welcome the three ambassadors of Phra Narai, king of Siam (1658–1688), the "ruler of heaven and earth." Held in the newly finished Hall of Mirrors, it was the most spectacular reception the Sun King ever granted to an embassy during his long reign. But what made it unique, apart from the obvious fact that receiving envoys from an Asian prince was almost without precedent in European diplomatic experience, was the close attention Louis and his protocol officers paid to copying as nearly as possible the outward forms of Siamese court ceremonial. For their purpose was to present the French monarch not as a European prince constrained by fundamental laws and the privileges of corporate bodies, but as an omnipotent Asian despot, equal to Phra Narai in power, wealth, remoteness from his subjects and even personal divinity, to give the Siamese ambassadors "an exalted idea of [Louis's] greatness and magnificence" according to eastern expectations. At the same time, however, intentionally or not the French king also impressed his own courtiers—who were conditioned to such symbolism—with a theatrical display of royal absolutism that

went so far beyond European precepts that some, such as the marquis d'Argenson, would allude to it when criticizing Louis after his death for having "raised his court on a foundation of Asiatic luxury which he could not sustain."⁴

INITIAL CONTACTS

Ever since 1664 when Jean-Baptiste Colbert chartered the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* with royal backing, the Bourbon Crown had been seeking ways to establish France as a great commercial, political and military power in the Far East, in direct challenge to Dutch hegemony. But when early initiatives in Madagascar and the Indian Ocean failed miserably over the next two decades to achieve results, French attention shifted to the strategic kingdom of Siam. There, Phra Narai—who was eager to make his realm known and recognized abroad⁵—already had taken some tentative steps toward opening diplomatic relations with the Sun King, whose reputation (it was claimed) was "esteemed throughout the world and, even in the Indies, feared by those who would lord it over other rulers."⁶ Meantime, French policy had received a further incentive in the form of assurances from the Apostolic fathers of the *Missions Étrangères* (active in Siam since 1662) that the Asian monarch was ready to convert to Christianity, having misinterpreted—or perhaps misrepresented—his benevolence toward them as a sign of his desire to embrace their faith.

Encouraged by these prospects for success, Louis XIV sent the first of two French embassies to Southeast Asia in March 1685. Led by the pious chevalier de Chaumont (who was described by his more colorful coadjutor, the abbé de Choisy, as being "more of a missionary" than the six Jesuits who sailed with him),⁷ it failed to achieve its primary goal of converting Phra Narai as anticipated, though two treaties were signed in December giving extensive privileges to the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* and protection to native converts to Catholicism. Otherwise, much of the significance of this embassy lay in the fact that the chevalier and other members of his entourage provided the French Crown with its first full descriptions of Siamese court ceremonial.⁸ It was these accounts, combined with verbal reports and other written memoranda, that were then used by Louis and his advisers to plan the audience held in September 1686 for Phra Narai's ambassadors, who had returned with Chaumont to France.

Hitherto, the only substantial narrations of Siamese protocol available at Versailles had been written in 1673 by François Pallu, bishop of Héliopolis,⁹ who had presented letters from Louis XIV and Pope Clement IX to the Asian monarch, thanking him for his generous treatment of the French priests in Siam.¹⁰ In a relation to his superiors in Paris,¹¹ as well as in separate dispatches to the Sun King and Colbert,¹² Pallu had told how the two missives had been received "with all the esteem of which this court is capable,"¹³ describing in some detail the elaborate etiquette of his audience with Phra Narai. He also had noted the changes in ceremonial that he and his fellow prelate, the bishop of Bérèthe,¹⁴ had secured after four months of heated negotia-

tion on the arrogant claim that certain Siamese customs—such as the compulsory act of the *krāp*,¹⁵ or prostration with the triple salutation of the *wai*¹⁶ before the king "from which even ambassadors are not exempt"—were deprecating to "the honour of the [Christian] religion, the dignity of their persons, and the reputation of France ..."¹⁷ Doubtless, Pallu confirmed these accounts of his experiences in Siam when, after a series of misadventures, he returned briefly to Europe three years later.¹⁸

It appears, however, that the bishop's descriptions of Siamese protocol went largely unnoticed at Versailles,¹⁹ if for no other reason than relations between the two kingdoms were still very tentative. But this began to change in late 1680 when news arrived that Phra Narai had sent an embassy to France aboard the East India Company vessel *Soleil d'Orient*,²⁰ inspired (it was said) by reports of Louis XIV's recent victories over the Dutch to conclude an alliance of perpetual friendship with his fellow monarch whom, he reportedly declared, "deserves to be king over all the kings of Europe."²¹ In order to prepare the French court to receive the Siamese ambassadors with appropriate courtesy, their chaperon, Father Gayme of the *Missions Étrangères*, wrote ahead to explain some finer points of Asian etiquette, adding that the three envoys would salute the king *à la mode de Siam*.²² About the same time, André Deslandes-Bourreau of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* (who had been posted briefly to Siam in 1682)²³ and Mgr. Pallu (who had returned to that kingdom the same year, bearing a second missive from Louis XIV to Phra Narai)²⁴ forwarded some additional details, noting, for example, that the presentation of gifts was an essential feature of Asian embassies, though it was not the practice in Europe.²⁵ Yet, ignorance of Siam and its culture—let alone its ceremonial—was still so rife at the French court at this date that the geographer Claude de l'Isle felt compelled to write a relation of the kingdom, which he based upon every published source he could find.²⁶ But his efforts were rendered ineffectual when the Siamese embassy failed to arrive, having perished in a storm off the coast of Madagascar.²⁷

THE SECOND SIAMESE MISSION

Unlike Pallu's reports of 1673, however, it appears that the dispatches he, Deslandes-Bourreau and the ill-fated Father Gayme had forwarded to France between 1680 and 1682 had been read carefully at Versailles.²⁸ For in March 1684, when two Siamese mandarins²⁹ arrived almost unexpectedly at Calais to enquire into the fate of their missing countrymen and to request that French envoys be sent to Siam with powers to negotiate a treaty of trade and alliance,³⁰ the recommendations of the three men were followed to the letter. Immediately, the marquis de Seignelay—who had succeeded his late father Colbert (d. 1683) as minister of the Marine with particular responsibility for this matter³¹—dispatched a *maître d'hôtel* to receive the mandarins with full honors and to conduct them to Paris, where they were lodged and feted lavishly.³² As for their expenses, all of these were paid for by the French Crown in accordance with royal custom in Siam.³³ Furthermore, that Seignelay was aware of

individual details of Siamese protocol, such as the act of prostration, is evident from the preparations ordered for his own reception of the Asian envoys on the morning of 27 October. Specifically, a large Turkish rug was spread on the floor of his cabinet, on which they performed their salutations.³⁴ Although Mgr. Pallu had reported sitting on just such a carpet during his audiences with Phra Narai in 1673 and 1682, it is far more likely that the marquis had been advised of this practice by Father Bénigne Vachet,³⁵ who had accompanied the mandarins to France at the request of the king of Siam not only as their interpreter, but also as his special messenger.³⁶

Yet, in spite of these efforts to emulate some of the mechanics of Asian diplomacy, it is clear from subsequent events that the French court lacked sufficient background to comprehend the deep cultural implications of Siamese protocol for the unparalleled position of Asian despotism, or its subtle reflection of social divisions. As a result, misunderstandings developed almost immediately between the visiting envoys and their European hosts. The mandarins were shocked, for example, by the apparent lack of reverence shown to Louis XIV, whom they first met informally in the Hall of Mirrors on the afternoon of 27 October.³⁷ Recalled Father Vachet:

Our Siamese, who were accustomed to the profound respect and great silence that one keeps in the presence of their king, were extraordinarily surprised to hear a confused murmuring [from the attendant crowd of courtiers], and to see how everyone pushed forward to draw nearer to the person of the prince; some in front, others behind, but the majority at his sides ...³⁸

This cannot have left a good impression on the two envoys, whose own monarch was so revered by his subjects that, on the rare occasions he showed himself in public, they were not permitted even to look at him,³⁹ let alone pronounce his name.⁴⁰ But if the mandarins were surprised by this bewildering display of royal familiarity so contrary to Siamese custom, Louis XIV found himself equally perplexed when they prostrated themselves before him "in the manner I have seen them do before the king of Siam," wrote Father Vachet.⁴¹ Asking if they would like to stand up, the astonished monarch had to be told by the French priest—with whom he had had one or two lengthy interviews already about Siam, though it appears the subject of the *krāp* never arose—that the mandarins would remain prone before him so long as they were in his presence.⁴²

Nor did their understanding of each other improve with time. For example, when the Siamese were taken to a command performance of the opera *Roland* a few days later, a fiasco developed over their seating. While the two envoys "did not know that the chairs on the lower level [reserved for them by special order of Louis XIV, just opposite his own] were more noble and convenient" by European standards,⁴³ the French were equally ignorant that according to Siamese social organization, differences in rank between individuals were reinforced by a corresponding spatial separation both in height and distance.⁴⁴ Hence, to them "the highest place is so far the most

honourable" because of the cultural significance of keeping the top of one's head—where the *khwan* (i.e., "spirit essence" or, loosely, the soul) resided—higher than that of one's social inferiors.⁴⁵ Consequently, when the two Asians tried to place themselves further up the bleachers "so that no one could sit over their head," their French attendants misunderstood their intention and attempted to re-seat them in accordance with the king's express commands. The result was an unfortunate *faux pas*. Thinking themselves gravely offended, the mandarins stormed out of the theater before Louis could arrive to begin the opera, declining ever again to expose themselves to such treatment "despite all the remonstrances, advice and threats that [Father Vachet] made them."⁴⁶ Infuriated by the incident, the French king vowed to punish those responsible for it, while his brother the duc d'Orléans and the exasperated Vachet discussed ways of avoiding such embarrassments in future.⁴⁷ But soon afterward, the French felt insulted in their turn when the two Asians refused to genuflect at the elevation of the host during a mass celebrated for the opening of the *parlement* of Paris,⁴⁸ because it did not fit their cultural patterns.

Perhaps the major contributor to this problem of mutual misunderstanding was the simple fact that the mandarins lacked ambassadorial status, being mere *officiers* of the *maison du Roi de Siam*⁴⁹ who carried no letters to Louis XIV from Phra Narai, because the latter thought it inappropriate to send a new embassy to France until the fate of the first one had been discovered.⁵⁰ As a result, the deeper implications of Siamese protocol never were addressed at Versailles, where little real effort was made to accommodate the cultural expectations of the two envoys beyond certain superficialities and *ad hoc* measures; for without official standing they were not entitled to the kind of consideration ambassadors of foreign monarchs generally received. Furthermore, because the mandarins were as ignorant of the language and customs of France as the French were of almost anything Siamese,⁵¹ it was very difficult for either party to overcome the ill-effects of their culture shock.⁵² Nor did it help matters that Father Vachet—who had been given "such great authority over [the two envoys] that ... [if] they gave [the priest] any cause to complain, [Phra Narai] would take their life on their return to Asia"⁵³—treated his wards with scant regard, even handling the official business of the mission without their participation.⁵⁴ Thus reduced to mere objects of curiosity to the French court, where "novelty ... rendered them interesting,"⁵⁵ the two men increasingly avoided their hosts, whose every misstep of protocol they viewed as a personal affront. Meanwhile, the French—including Vachet—dismissed their guests' behavior as mere "boorishness," the result of "*un goût dépravé*."⁵⁶

THE CHAUMONT MISSION

How different was the treatment given the third Siamese embassy to France two years later, when Versailles was far better prepared to receive it. For in the meantime, Louis XIV had sent his own ambassadors to Phra Narai, who had returned to Europe in spring 1686 bringing with them not only three new

envoys from the Asian monarch, but also detailed accounts of Siamese court ceremonial that were used by the French king and his ministers to prepare for the mandarins' first audience with Louis on the following 1 September. According to the royal master of ceremonies, M. de Saintot,⁵⁷ there had been much discussion of, and even some opposition to, the proposal of sending a French embassy to Siam. But what finally had convinced the king and his council to open direct contact with Phra Narai was Father Vachet's overconfident assurances—"exaggerated beyond all reality"⁵⁸—that the Siamese monarch was on the verge of embracing Catholicism, and that all he needed to take the decisive step was a personal invitation from Louis XIV to convert "as the best means to be united in this world and the next."⁵⁹ Then, Vachet had alleged, the Siamese "people would follow his example and perhaps [even] the neighbouring kings" who were his tributaries.⁶⁰ The double lure of challenging the hegemony of the Dutch East India Company in the Far East and of establishing French trade securely by means of a political and commercial alliance with Siam was offered as a further incentive.⁶¹

Thus inspired by visions of the "glory that would accrue to [him], and the merit before God, for having undertaken so noble a task"⁶²—especially at a time when Louis's credit in Europe was so low for having encouraged the Ottoman Turks to besiege Vienna in 1683 while he had used the crisis to seize pockets of territory along the Rhine⁶³—the Sun king appointed the chevalier de Chaumont as his ambassador to Siam on 15 December 1684.⁶⁴ A recent Huguenot convert to Catholicism whose deep piety was well-known, Chaumont was the ideal choice "to exhort [Phra Narai] ... to embrace the [Christian] religion and the one true God whom his Majesty recognizes himself ..."⁶⁵ His dual rank as naval captain and major general in the French squadron of the Levant was another advantage, as it increased his dignity and gave him full command of the two warships that carried his embassy to Southeast Asia.⁶⁶ At the same time, the abbé de Choisy was named coadjutor in the event of Chaumont's untimely death on the outward voyage, but with specific instructions to remain in Siam to baptize Phra Narai should he agree to convert.⁶⁷ Partly for this reason, Choisy was directed by Chaumont to learn the native language, as "it would be very advantageous to negotiate with the king ... face to face, without an interpreter."⁶⁸ Finally, the ambassador was provided with a suitable retinue of twelve young gentlemen "to increase the majesty of his embassy" (among whom was the chevalier de Forbin);⁶⁹ six Jesuits commissioned as "the King's Mathematicians" to lend greater prestige to their missionary work and scientific studies;⁷⁰ several agents of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*; a variety of servants, musicians, equerries and *valets de chambre*;⁷¹ and a cargo of rich presents for the Siamese monarch in accordance with Asian diplomatic custom.⁷²

After a voyage lasting fully half a year, the tiny French squadron anchored off the bar of Siam on 23 September 1685.⁷³ No sooner had he been informed of its arrival by Father Vachet (who, together with Forbin, had been dispatched to the court for that purpose)⁷⁴ than Phra Narai ordered preparations to receive Louis XIV's chief ambassador with extraordinary honors. By all

accounts, the Siamese monarch planned to entertain the chevalier de Chaumont magnificently and, "upon pain of [Phra Narai's] Displeasure,"

... [to] shew him all the Honour that he who represented the person of a great Prince deserved, and that they should not stand upon the Ceremonies and Customs that were observed in the reception of other Ambassadors.⁷⁵

Accordingly, on 29 September the chevalier and his suite were greeted aboard ship *à la Siamoise* by two mandarins with an impressive retinue of forty men,⁷⁶ who had been sent expressly by Phra Narai to congratulate the French envoy on his arrival, to compliment him on Louis XIV's good health and many victories over France's enemies,⁷⁷ and to assure him that the royal astrologers had been assembled to determine "the luckiest day of the Year to be pitched upon for his [official] Reception" at court.⁷⁸

At the same time, arrangements were begun for the ambassador's ascent by slow stages up the Menam Chao Phraya⁷⁹ to the old royal capital of Ayudhya, called the "Venice of the East" by contemporary European visitors because of its many canals and waterways.⁸⁰ Specifically, rest-houses (the construction of which was said to have employed 20,000 workers)⁸¹ were built at distances of fifteen miles along the river banks from its mouth to the capital, where Chaumont and his suite were to stop for meals or pass the night.⁸² Each place was staffed by two *opras* or *oyas* (translated usually as marshals, dukes or peers), seven officers of Phra Narai's household and a body of Siamese troops who patrolled constantly to prevent "noise and disorder."⁸³ Dinner was served everyday in European style for at least thirty guests.⁸⁴ As a special mark of distinction, the rest-houses were painted red—"a very singular honour," observed the French—to indicate that the ambassador was to "be treated as [the king of Siam's] own person, there being only the Royal Houses of that colour."⁸⁵ Finally, a large residence was built a league or two down river from Ayudhya, at Wat Prote Saht, where the whole party was to be lodged until Chaumont's first audience with the king.⁸⁶ After that, the ambassador and his retinue would be moved into "the fairest and most commodious house of the Town" for the remainder of their stay in Siam.⁸⁷

Thus even before 8 October, when the French began their stately journey by water to Ayudhya, an elaborate protocol was observed that deliberately surpassed in splendor the ceremonial customarily used in Siam, as Nicolas Gervaise would describe it three years later. As many as sixty-six royal *balons*⁸⁸ awaited Chaumont and his party at the mouth of the Menam Chao Phraya. A particularly splendid vessel, "all over gilt, threescore and twelve feet long, and rowed by seventy handsome men, with Oars covered in Plates of Silver," was reserved for the ambassador, Choisy and the bishop of Métellopolis.⁸⁹ "A Portuguese whom the King [of Siam] had made General of the Troops in Bangkok" (probably a mestizo)⁹⁰ also attended Chaumont as a special courtesy "[to] give orders for all things."⁹¹ As well, four ornate barges were appointed to carry the various members of the French entourage, while in two columns on

either side of the chevalier's *balon* the barges of twelve court mandarins—arranged "*en bataille*"⁹²—served as an escort.⁹³ As the flotilla entered the river, it was joined by the chief nobles of the district and, the next day, by the governors of Bangkok and Phetchaburi with their respective retinues.⁹⁴

Although enchanted by the natural beauties of Siam and the pageantry of native life along the river,⁹⁵ what most impressed the French was the extraordinary ceremonial with which Chaumont was greeted at every stage of his voyage, it being

... the King of *Siam's* pleasure, that the Ambassador of the King of *France*, should be treated with marks of distinction from all others, and even from those of the Emperor of *China*, who all over the East is reckoned the greatest Monarch of the Universe.⁹⁶

In addition to the lavish favors outlined above, he was paid the kind of respect, even reverence, that was reserved exclusively for Phra Narai. "I had the same honours shewed me," reported the chevalier, "as to the King [of Siam] when he is wont to pass on the River:"

I could see no body in the houses [along the banks], all people were in Barges, or on the sides of the River, lying flat on their Bellies, and their hands joyned against their foreheads. They reverence in such manner their Prince, that they dare not lift up their eyes to look at him.⁹⁷

At first, Chaumont was as puzzled by this foreign display of esteem as Louis XIV had been astonished by the elaborate behavior of the Siamese envoys the year before. But his perplexity vanished when the more experienced bishop of Métellopolis assured him that "this is done out of respect for his Excellency."⁹⁸ Additionally, the chevalier was saluted with artillery fire at every place he passed, "which never was done to any other ambassador ...,"⁹⁹ while at each resting stop he was greeted by local dignitaries. These mandarins then joined his cortege until, by 13 October when the flotilla finally reached the outskirts of Ayudhya, it numbered well over 150 *balons*.¹⁰⁰

No sooner had they arrived at the capital, however, than a "tedious dispute" erupted between the French ambassador and his Asian hosts over the proper ceremonial to be observed at the former's first audience with Phra Narai, scheduled for 18 October.¹⁰¹ Though Chaumont had asked for a court official to instruct him in Siamese protocol for the occasion, "the manner wherewith they were wont to receive Ambassadors ... being very different from that of *France*,"¹⁰² he found native custom demeaning "to the greatness of the Monarch by whom I was sent." He thus quickly made it clear that he "would bate nothing of the mode of receiving Ambassadors in *France*, which at length [was] granted me."¹⁰³ Indeed, it is worth noting that the Siamese monarch and his servitors were far more willing to compromise over matters of protocol than their French guests, despite strong objections from many court nobles who grumbled at the unprecedented treatment of Chaumont on the argument "that this never had been done [even] for the ambassadors of the emperor

of China, nor to those of the Great Mughal and the king of Persia."¹⁰⁴ Perhaps prior experience of Mgr. Pallu's stubbornness in 1673 had taught the Asian monarch the need for flexibility in his relations with the French.

But Phra Narai was sensitive to foreign practices in any case;¹⁰⁵ he also was eager to accommodate his prospective European allies for political reasons. Hence the care and attention he had paid to housing and feeding Chaumont *à la mode de l'Europe* during the latter's voyage up river. The Buddhist monarch even had provided the chevalier's residence at Ayudhya with a Christian chapel and had donated a gold crucifix for the altar, as well.¹⁰⁶ Meantime, Phra Narai had given his chief officials explicit orders to spare "nothing that might contribute to the dignity of [Chaumont's] reception" at court, reputedly warning that "I shall ... show my wrath against those who on this occasion have not been so willing to oblige me as they ought."¹⁰⁷ By contrast, the French found Siamese protocol either so deprecating to their Gallic sense of honor that the envoy and his retinue at first refused any compromise on ceremony; or so ridiculous that the twelve gentlemen in Chaumont's suite laughed aloud, for example, at the sight of serried ranks of mandarins performing the *krāp* before their monarch, "with their beehive hats [i.e., conical bonnets worn on official occasions as a distinction of rank] pointed up each other's ass."¹⁰⁸

Thanks to Siamese flexibility, however, the two parties quickly resolved at least the lesser details of protocol to be observed on 18 October. It was agreed, for instance, that Chaumont would wear his shoes, stockings and sword during the audience (the custom being to appear barefoot and unarmed before the sovereign); that he would make his reverence in the European fashion rather than by the ritual prostration traditionally required of envoys; and that he would begin his compliments standing erect instead of sitting on a carpet, though he had to continue his address seated on a chair, but wearing his hat.¹⁰⁹ (Ironically, Chaumont exceeded his orders here, which had instructed him only to salute the Asian monarch "in the French fashion," and to obtain permission to remain seated on cushions on the floor for the duration of the audience.¹¹⁰) Far more difficult to settle, however, was the very sensitive issue of the manner in which Louis XIV's letter was to be presented. For the chevalier insisted on handing this directly to Phra Narai as in Europe—a "pretention," noted the chevalier de Forbin, that "clashed absolutely with the practices of the kings of Siam," as well as with Asian concepts of monarchical dignity in which consisted "the principal grandeur of their sovereign power ..."¹¹¹

What Chaumont failed to understand, or perhaps refused to accept, was that the far eastern view of embassies was very different from that obtaining in Europe,¹¹² and more specifically that the centerpiece—indeed, the essential purpose of the first audience in Siam—was the presentation of royal letters sent by a foreign prince to the Thai monarch. This was seen as a form of homage or tribute paid by an inferior.¹¹³ For that reason, an envoy received little deference himself "in comparison of the respects which are render'd to the Letters of Credence of which he is Bearer," because an "Ambassador throughout the East is [regarded as] no other than a King's Messenger: he represents

not his master."¹¹⁴ By contrast, the letters he delivered on behalf of his sovereign were accorded "the same honours as [the Siamese] would give to the princes who have written them; [as] if they themselves were present."¹¹⁵ For such documents were "looked upon as the Royal Word," an extension of the monarch's own person that came directly from his own hand and contained his own thoughts.¹¹⁶ The physical character of the letter further symbolized this perception: those sent by Phra Narai to his fellow rulers, including Louis XIV, were inscribed in red ink on sheets of gold "as thin as a Leaf of Paper."¹¹⁷ They then were wrapped in layers of silk and enshrined in a set of finely wrought caskets of precious metals and lacquered wood for safe transport.¹¹⁸

Only after three days of intense negotiation did the two sides finally reach a compromise first suggested by the abbé de Choisy, who had urged his superior to be more flexible seeing that "the customs of these countries are so different from ours that at each moment it was necessary to pause."¹¹⁹ Chaumont would be permitted to present the Sun King's letter to Phra Narai after all, but not hand to hand as he originally had wanted. Instead, the royal brief was to be placed on a golden saucer affixed to a long wand also of gold, which the French envoy was to carry to the audience.¹²⁰ To facilitate his presentation still further, it was agreed that three small steps would be placed beneath the elevated throne window in the great hall of the palace complex at which the Siamese king always appeared for official events, to permit Chaumont to mount just under the base of the dais. Then gripping the bottom of the wand, he would lift the saucer over his head by slightly extending his elbow, at which point Phra Narai would take Louis XIV's letter without having to reach down or stoop to accept it.¹²¹ The advantage of this arrangement was twofold: it allowed the chevalier to present the royal brief almost directly to the Asian monarch as he had wanted, thus satisfying his European sense of dignity, while at the same time it preserved the outward forms of Siamese court ceremonial.

Everything was now in readiness for the audience, and at seven A.M. on 18 October forty mandarins, led by two *oyas*,¹²² arrived at the sumptuous lodgings of the French ambassador to escort him to Ayudhya. Entering the chevalier's presence, the mandarins immediately prostrated themselves according to ancient rite, performing the *wai* first to the protective gold casket containing Louis's missive and then to Chaumont himself. This ceremony completed, the ambassador rose from his armchair, handed the box and its contents to his coadjutor, the abbé de Choisy, and walked outside to the water's edge where the royal epistle was placed atop the elegant *chirole*¹²³ of a richly gilded "balon of the Body" for the short voyage up river. Flanking this craft were several other barges containing Louis XIV's presents to Phra Narai and a guard of honour. Next, Chaumont, Choisy and the twelve gentlemen of the ambassador's suite boarded separate *balons* behind the royal barque in accordance with their rank and importance. These were followed in turn by the various functionaries of the chevalier's household, wearing his livery. Altogether, over 200 craft "shining and covered over with gold" made up the glittering flotilla, which was saluted at Ayudhya with artillery.¹²⁴

Disembarking at the Siamese capital, the casket containing Louis XIV's letter was transferred to a "great golden Chariot which onely the King rode in" for the procession to the palace gates.¹²⁵ Chaumont, Choisy and the bishop of Métellopolis were carried behind it on three richly decorated palanquins, "painted Red, and adorned with Ivory." "I have never found myself in such state," joked the abbé, "and I thought for a moment that I was the pope!"¹²⁶ Chaumont's suite of French gentlemen followed on horseback, while the rest of his attendants walked toward the rear. Escorted by richly caparisoned war elephants and a host of finely clothed mandarins, this impressive cortege marched to the palace along a road "as long and much straighter than the rue St. Honoré" to the sound of trumpets, drums, pipes, bells and horns, "which Musick made a pleasant noise." Lining its route were double files of armed soldiers, uniformly dressed in gilt metal helmets, red tunics and the customary panung (or swaddling loincloth). Behind them watched an "incredible Multitude of People" in "profound silence," who performed "the *Zombaye*" as soon as the chariot carrying the royal letter appeared.¹²⁷

At the entrance to the palace, the French ambassador and his suite proceeded on foot "in a grave and stately manner" through a succession of five large courtyards, each lined with rank upon rank of royal guards also clad in red, who sat cross-legged "with the Butt—end of their Musquets to the ground standing upright."¹²⁸ For "in the King's Palace no Man is suffered to be up upon his Legs, unless he be going, and all the *Siam* Soldiers were squatted upon the Tail [therefore] . . ."¹²⁹ "This [was] quite pretty to the sight," recalled Choisy, adding with an air of European superiority that "I frankly believe fifty [French] musketeers easily could defeat them."¹³⁰ As a special favor, the envoys were permitted to see Phra Narai's white elephant, the most revered of all animals and the sacred symbol of Siamese monarchy, as well as the "Prince elephant"—"the largest and most spiritual [in the royal stables] . . . on which the King rides." Reaching the final courtyard, Chaumont and his suite found "a great number of *Mandarins* . . . prostrate on the ground," along with 200 soldiers of Phra Narai's lifeguard clad in royal red like the other troops, whom the first Portuguese visitors to Siam had dubbed *O's Braços Pintados* ("the Red—Arms") because of the scarlet hue of their tattooed forearms.¹³¹

At this point, the ambassador paused at the foot of the staircase leading up to the audience hall to permit his retinue to enter first "in the French manner, with their shoes on," before Phra Narai appeared at his elevated dais. They took their position just behind the low seat reserved for Chaumont,¹³² between neat rows of high-ranking mandarins who knelt on either side. Sitting cross-legged on Persian carpets,¹³³ the Europeans were to reverence the Siamese king *à la française* without standing up. The audience chamber itself was rectangular in shape, richly carpeted and exquisitely painted "with flowers of Gold from the top to the bottom." At the far end was the curtained throne window, raised about nine feet from the floor and flanked on either side by ceremonial parasols (called *supphathon*) made of cloth of gold, each several tiers high, which were additional emblems of Siamese monarchy.¹³⁴ The bishop

of Métellopolis, the abbé de Lionne¹³⁵ and Father Vachet also took their places at this time, sitting on the ground like their countrymen, but on either side of Chaumont's stool. When everything was ready "a great noise of trumpets and drums was heard," signaling the arrival of Phra Narai himself, at which point the assembled mandarins immediately performed the *krāp* to the crude amusement of their European guests.¹³⁶

Parting the curtains of his throne window, the king appeared, towering above his court in near-fabulous Asian splendor. On his head, noted the French in intimate detail, he wore a conical tiara, "all shining with precious Stones" and encompassed with three gold bands at regular intervals, while his fingers sparkled with clusters of diamond rings "that cast a great Luster." His underclothing was the color "of fire and gold," being made "of very rich flowered Stuff ... and embroider'd at the Neck and Sleeves with Diamonds," over which he wore a robe also of cloth of gold that used still larger diamonds for buttons.¹³⁷ "All of these Ornaments," wrote Father Tachard, "together with a brisk Air, full of Life, and always smiling, made him look with a great deal of Gracefulness and Majesty."¹³⁸ No sooner was Chaumont alerted by the ceremonial fanfare that Phra Narai had appeared, than he too entered the hall, followed by the abbé de Choisy with Louis XIV's letter, which had been transferred meantime from its protective casings to the golden saucer and wand.¹³⁹

Advancing four paces "and looking [directly] upon the King," Chaumont made a profound reverence, which he repeated a second time in the center of the chamber and a third time when he had reached his appointed seat, thus performing an amended form of the *wai* (as opposed to the customary *krāp*) in accordance with Siamese protocol. Phra Narai "answered every Bow he made by an Inclination of Body, which he accompanied with a serene and smiling Countenance."¹⁴⁰ The ambassador then began his address to the king.¹⁴¹ At the second word he covered his head and took his seat as prearranged, only raising his hat when he spoke of the two monarchs.¹⁴² So far, everything had unfolded according to plan. After the interpretation of Chaumont's address, however, a potentially disastrous diplomatic scene was averted narrowly when the ambassador presented Louis XIV's letter to Phra Narai.¹⁴³

The problem was that the three steps that should have been placed beneath the throne window as previously arranged were missing, probably by design to humble the ambassador.¹⁴⁴ For in order to give the Sun King's missive to the Asian monarch, the surprised Chaumont presumably would have to hold the wand of the golden saucer at its base and raise his arm very high to reach the level of Phra Narai. Thinking, however, "that that Distance suited not with his Dignity,"¹⁴⁵ the chevalier refused to "give the [Siamese] King my Letter in this manner."¹⁴⁶ Choisy even thought of moving the ambassador's stool beneath the throne window so that he could climb on it, instead. But before he could act Chaumont advanced boldly toward the royal dais, holding the wand just under the saucer and, without raising his arm or extending his elbow, he offered Louis's letter to Phra Narai as if they had been standing on the same level. This obliged the Siamese monarch to stoop down "in such a manner

as one might see his whole Body" to take up the brief.¹⁴⁷ Yet he did so with great tact, smiling and laughing all the while, "thereby showing a grace which seems to contrast favourably with the gauche manner of the ambassador."¹⁴⁸ Perhaps he was amused by the Frenchman's impudence. Whatever his thoughts, the king then raised the letter as high as his head, which "was the greatest honour he could have rendered it,"¹⁴⁹ whereupon Chaumont made another deep reverence to his royal host and returned to his seat.

The ambassador subsequently claimed credit for having upheld the honour and dignity of Louis XIV in this way,¹⁵⁰ and on returning to Paris he allowed prints to be engraved and circulated, depicting the event.¹⁵¹ But probably it was only Phra Narai's good humor on this occasion, combined with his express commands "to do the impossible to honour the Ambassador of France," that prevented Chaumont's arrogant affront from becoming an ugly diplomatic incident with potentially ruinous consequences. This certainly appears to have been Choisy's view of the whole episode.¹⁵² In any case, Phra Narai's indulgence ensured that the rest of the reception proceeded without further incident, as the Asian king and his European guest exchanged civilities for about an hour until trumpets sounded to mark the close of the audience. The curtains then were drawn across the throne window, screening Phra Narai from further view. After a sumptuous lunch the French embassy was conducted from the palace to its new lodgings in Ayudhya with the same pomp and in the same order as it had arrived.¹⁵³

Although Chaumont subsequently secured a draft treaty (signed on 19 December) with extensive commercial concessions for the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* and protection for Siamese converts to Catholicism, his embassy did not achieve its primary objective of converting the king. In fact, hardly had his small squadron anchored off the Bar of Siam on 23 September than the chevalier had discovered that everything the French court had been led to believe about Phra Narai's personal disposition toward Christianity had been exaggerated, and that he had no intention of embracing the faith.¹⁵⁴ Nor did any of Chaumont's subsequent exhortations "to live ... in the same Opinions and Beliefs" with Louis XIV as the surest means of cementing "an Union between the two Crowns" persuade the Siamese monarch to the contrary.¹⁵⁵ Thus, the mission was largely a failure. Nevertheless, direct contact had been opened between the two courts at the official level, and when Chaumont sailed for France on 22 December he took with him the members of Phra Narai's third embassy to Versailles,¹⁵⁶ whose purpose was to request a firm treaty of alliance with Louis XIV and to ask also that a small body of soldiers be sent to Siam as a special honour guard for the king.¹⁵⁷

THE THIRD SIAMESE MISSION

This time the French court was well prepared to receive the Asian envoys and their suite, whose arrival had been anticipated since the previous year. In addition to reviewing carefully the original reports of Deslandes-Bourreau, Mgr. Pallu and

Father Gayme, Louis XIV and his protocol officers had learned much from their errors of 1684 and had shaped their preliminary arrangements accordingly. They now had access, as well, to a trove of information on Siamese court ceremonial in the comprehensive relations later published by various members of the returning French legation, which they used in manuscript form to plan every detail of the forthcoming reception. It was Louis's habit, after all, developed over years of experience, to base his foreign policy decisions "on all reports ... that may have some bearing on the matter" at hand.¹⁵⁸

In fact, hardly had Chaumont's ships anchored at Brest on the evening of 18 June 1686 than he and Choisy proceeded to Versailles, where—surrounded by curious courtiers "like bears"¹⁵⁹—they were questioned extensively by the king. He appears to have been especially interested in the lavish treatment they had received from the moment of their arrival in Siam to their first audience with Phra Narai. For it was the intention of Louis and his ministers to recreate detail for detail the ceremonial observed at Chaumont's reception, using French equivalents for Siamese forms, in greeting the Asian monarch's new embassy to France. This is evident not only from the preparations already planned to welcome the three ambassadors, and the speed with which these arrangements were carried out once they had arrived. It also is clear from a separate memorandum written by the chevalier at the king's request, in which he specified the distinctions to be granted the new envoys and their suite if Versailles were to mirror exactly the honours he had been paid at Siam.¹⁶⁰ What is more, Chaumont's recommendations were followed to the letter. Significantly, after all the misunderstandings and mistakes committed on both sides during the visit of the first two mandarins to France in 1684, Louis XIV and his advisers had become far more attentive to Siamese cultural and diplomatic patterns, even if the full implications of these patterns still eluded them. They were also determined to avoid any *faux pas* that could mar the reception of the new embassy or spoil the exalted impression of the French monarch that they wanted to create.

Hence, no sooner had the Siamese ambassadors reached Brest on 18 June than they were welcomed with Asian-style pomp by their European hosts. That evening they were met aboard ship by a large party of royal officers and Breton noblemen, led by the governor of the port and the local *intendant de la marine*, who complemented them on their arrival exactly as Chaumont had been welcomed at the Bar of Siam a year before. The next day, they were saluted by more than sixty volleys of cannon fired from the citadel and all naval vessels then in port, as they were taken ashore in a "*balon* of state," improvised overnight from a ship's launch or galiot rowed by fifty sailors, decorated brightly with cloth of gold and hundreds of white satin pennants, and provided even with musicians to play music for the occasion. Between sixty and eighty smaller craft similarly adorned conveyed the lesser members of the embassy to the wharf just as the minor functionaries of Chaumont's suite had been transported at the mouth of the Menam Chao Phraya.¹⁶¹ On shore, the envoys were greeted by the leading dignitaries of the port, who escorted them between double ranks of regular

troops and militiamen to their temporary lodgings. There, they were entertained with banquets,¹⁶² tours and visits to warships—such as the impressive *Soleil Royal*—"that surpass all others in grandeur, sculpture and gilding," until the arrival in early July of the sieur Storff, a gentleman ordinary of the *chambre du roy* appointed by Louis XIV to supply their needs whilst in France, in the same way that Chaumont had been attended by a Portuguese mestizo in Phra Narai's service as a special courtesy "to give orders for all things."¹⁶³

Meanwhile, detailed preparations were made for the ambassadors' trip overland to Paris via the Loire Valley, a route selected by Louis himself no doubt to impress upon his Asian visitors the beauty, breadth, wealth and power of his realm.¹⁶⁴ In addition to arranging transportation by public or private conveyance at every stage of the journey,¹⁶⁵ the embassy's baggage—including the royal gifts,¹⁶⁶ in all about 332 large crates—was sent by sea to Le Havre and thence up the Seine River to the French capital.¹⁶⁷ Orders also were given to provide furnishings from the royal household for the chateau de Berny, just two leagues outside Paris, where the Siamese ambassadors were to lodge until their official entry into the city.¹⁶⁸ After that, they would be moved into the former Hôtel du maréchal d'Ancre-Concini on the rue du Tournon, owned by the Crown but only recently refurbished and renamed the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs Extraordinaires.¹⁶⁹

At the same time, explicit instructions were issued from Versailles to render the mandarins and their suite extraordinary honours *en route*,¹⁷⁰ according to Chaumont's recommendations. At each town through which they passed, the envoys were to be saluted at the gates with artillery and greeted by the governor, intendant and municipal officials, distinctions reserved customarily for crowned heads and sovereign princes.¹⁷¹ A company of bourgeois militia also was to guard the lodgings appointed for the mandarins' use when stopping for meals or spending the night (the French equivalent of Siamese "rest-houses"), while the provincial governors and lieutenants-general were instructed to assist the sieur Storff in providing for the ambassadors' needs when passing through their jurisdictions. A special blazon for Siam (consisting of a white elephant on a field of blue, the royal color in Europe)¹⁷² even was improvised by Versailles to lend still greater dignity to the embassy. Its costs, meantime, were to be paid by the French Crown,

since it is [now] an established principle that all ambassadors sent by rulers whose realms lie outside Europe shall be treated as guests, at the King's expense, during their stay in the kingdom.¹⁷³

Finally, every effort was made by the court authorities to adapt French protocol to the requirements of Siamese cultural patterns. For example, "as it was necessary that the letter [they brought for Louis XIV from] the king their master be more elevated than they," explained Sainctot, arrangements were made to suspend it high overhead in every house the envoys stayed;¹⁷⁴ a special shelf also was attached to the ceiling of the carriage in which the chief ambassador rode from Brest to Paris

for that reason.¹⁷⁵ As for their customs of placing fresh flowers daily on the casket containing the royal epistle and of performing the *wai* whenever passing before it—rituals that might have been viewed as either quaint or excessively elaborate in 1684—Sainctot now observed that "this respect should not seem extraordinary, for all the old courtiers during my youth saluted the king's bed on entering his chamber; ... several ladies of the old court still do."¹⁷⁶

Thus, even before 9 July, when the Siamese began their stately journey overland to Paris, an extravagant protocol—modeled after the descriptions of Chaumont, Choisy, Tachard and other members of the former French embassy—was observed that deliberately surpassed in splendor the ceremonial customarily used in France. According to Father Vachet, the envoys were met with great *éclat* at every place they stopped along their route:

The inhabitants formed a guard of honour at the gates in advance of their arrival. Cannons were fired in salute at every town that had them, while the civic magistrates welcomed [the Siamese] with speeches and gave them presents. The higher courts also sent delegations. The local chapter-houses, curés, superiors of convents and monasteries all came to complement [the mandarins] on their arrival, while the leading ladies were permitted to watch them dine. In a word, everyone, important or not, appeared to take an active role in their reception with great enthusiasm.¹⁷⁷

Nor did the French have any reason to complain, this time, of their Asian guests' behavior, thanks largely to the foresight of Phra Narai. Wanting also to avoid the embarrassments of 1684, he had directed Vachet and the abbé de Lionne (who accompanied the new ambassadors as interpreters) "to teach them European customs and manners" during the outward voyage, these "being very different from his kingdom's."¹⁷⁸ He had enlisted Chaumont's help to this end, as well.¹⁷⁹ Consequently, the three mandarins were so familiar with French ceremonial by the time they reached Brest that they easily conformed to customs that were completely alien or even opposed to Siamese practice, such as the tactile welcome they received from the leading women of the port—" ... the first time in their life," noted an amused Vachet, "that the ... ambassadors had the honour of kissing foreign ladies on the cheek for which, to avoid any unpleasant surprises, we had forewarned them."¹⁸⁰ Similarly, Kōsa Pān, the principal envoy, was versed well enough in French protocol as to play skillfully upon the imagery surrounding Louis XIV who, he once wrote, "brightens all the world like the Sun ..."¹⁸¹ Not surprisingly, therefore, the three men were praised effusively by their Gallic hosts as "the best natured People in the World, very easie and obliging, [and] good humoured,"¹⁸² whose conduct was "diametrically opposed ... to the first two mandarins who gave [us] so much trouble."¹⁸³

On 30 July the ambassadors finally reached Berny after a journey lasting just over three weeks, having been "feted and treated magnificently" all the way.¹⁸⁴ Thirteen days later, on 12

August, they made their formal entry into Paris at the head of a long procession of sixty carriages (riding in those of the king and other members of the royal family), escorted by a host of royal officials, courtiers, mounted trumpeters and various units of the *Maison du Roi* in obvious imitation of the waterborne cortege by which Chaumont had entered Ayudhya.¹⁸⁵ From the Porte St. Antoine, the procession moved slowly through the city center, along streets lined with soldiers of the *Gardes Françaises*, to the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs Extraordinaires where the mandarins were entertained once again on a lavish scale.¹⁸⁶ Three weeks later, on 1 September, they were taken to Versailles for their first audience with Louis XIV.¹⁸⁷

This time there were no disputes or missteps over protocol, which emulated in every detail the ceremonial accorded to Chaumont in Siam, but with particular attention to creating a visual image of the French monarch as an Asian-style despot, the equal of Phra Narai in omnipotence, remoteness from his subjects and even quasi-divinity, according to eastern expectations. Louis and his advisers were acutely aware of the nature and extent of the Siamese king's authority. Described as an autocrat with the power of life and death over his subjects (who themselves seemed little better than slaves to western observers), Phra Narai was "a most absolute Prince, and a Man may say him [even] to be the *Siamois* God."¹⁸⁸ For he was accorded "such honours as are usually deemed to be due only to God"¹⁸⁹—an expression of reverence, even "adoration" that was more "becoming a celestial Deity, than an earthly Majesty."¹⁹⁰ This image of his near divinity was augmented still further by the elaborate ritual of his court and by the fact that he showed himself in public only twice a year, and then with as much ceremony as possible.¹⁹¹ Called variously the "king of kings," "lord of lords," "lord of the waters" and the "ruler of heaven and earth" among other titles (although, noted the well-travelled Tavernier, "he is a tributary of the Kings of China"),¹⁹² Phra Narai was said to recognize no higher authority than his own,¹⁹³ while he presided over an "exceeding great and glorious" court that was regarded by some European visitors as "the most magnificent among all the Black Nations of Asia."¹⁹⁴

This explains the deep "prejudice" encountered by the French among Siamese royal officials just before Chaumont's arrival in 1685, when equally biased agents of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* had tried "tactfully to convince them that a distinction in terms [between Louis XIV, whom the Siamese regarded as inferior, and Phra Narai] could not be affected only in accordance with their wishes." As a result of much heated discussion, however, these mandarins had been persuaded finally "that both Kings would be accorded equal status,"¹⁹⁵ though it is clear from their rumblings against the distinctions subsequently paid to Chaumont that they remained unconvinced of the Sun King's equality. Consequently, for France's Southeast Asian diplomacy to succeed in 1686 it was absolutely essential that Louis appear before the Siamese ambassadors as an oriental despot, the equivalent of Phra Narai in every respect, and not as that of a European sovereign mobbed by unruly crowds of courtiers, which had left such a bad impression with the first two mandarins in 1684.

With everything now in readiness for the audience, very early on the morning of Sunday, 1 September, the sieur de Bonneüil (*Introducteur des ambassadeurs*) and the maréchal-duc de la Feuillade (colonel of the *Gardes Françaises*) arrived at the lodgings of the Asian envoys to escort them and their suite to Versailles, just as two *oyas* had conducted Chaumont to his reception at Ayudhya the year before. Travelling in another elaborate procession of gilt carriages, mounted trumpeters, royal guards and *équerries du roi*, the mandarins reached the palace at 10:00 A.M. after a journey lasting about six hours. Waiting on parade in the great forecourt of the chateau, with flags flying and drums beating, were five ranks of the blue-clad *Gardes Françaises* arranged opposite an equal number of the elite *Gardes Suisses* dressed in new red uniforms¹⁹⁶—a fortuitous coincidence that must have recalled vividly the color worn by Phra Narai's household troops, especially the *Braços Pintados*. Alighting in the Royal Courtyard, the mandarins entered the *Salle de Descente* or *des Ambassadeurs* between double files of the *Gardes de la prévôté de l'Hôtel*, where they were to await the hour of their audience.¹⁹⁷ Meantime, they performed their ritual ablutions "according to custom" and put on their ceremonial conical hats that were decorated at the base with

flowers made of very fine gold leaf to which several rubies in the form of seeds were attached; these flowers were so delicate that the least movement made their petals quiver.¹⁹⁸

Once word was received that the king was ready to mount his throne in the great Hall of Mirrors, the envoys were escorted in state across the courtyard into the vestibule of the Ambassadors' Staircase. Six Swiss guardsmen carried on their shoulders the ornate *mordopratinan* (a pyramid-shaped, gilt wooden structure like a portable *chirole*, on which the royal letter had been placed),¹⁹⁹ flanked by four Siamese mandarins holding ceremonial *suppathon*. In front marched the drummers and trumpeters of the *Chambre du Roi*, while walking behind were the three envoys, their French escorts and the remaining members of the Siamese legation. Inside the vestibule, Kōsa Pān transferred Phra Narai's letter to a golden saucer carried by the third envoy, before climbing the Ambassadors' Staircase to the sound of trumpet fanfares and drums "in order to imitate the custom of the king of Siam, who never descends into the audience chamber except with such music."²⁰⁰ At the threshold of the state rooms known collectively as the *Grand Appartement*, the ambassadors were received by the maréchal-duc de Luxembourg (commander of the *Maison du Roi*) and thirty officers in full-dress uniform, who led them in procession to the Hall of Mirrors.²⁰¹

In preparation for the audience, at one end of the gallery near the apartments of the Dauphine where the Queen's bedroom is today, a platform six to nine feet high had been constructed on which was placed a silver throne. The dais itself was covered over with a rich Persian carpet, embroidered with flowers of gold and silver thread to duplicate the floral *décore* of Phra Narai's audience hall. On each of the steps leading up to the

throne stood great *torchères*, or candelabra, nine feet tall and cast also of silver, to imitate the lofty umbrellas used in Siam as symbols of state. On either side of the platform's base were large silver urns and tables that served to cordon off a separate area where the eight mandarins of the Siamese retinue were to kneel during the audience. A spacious semi-circle similarly had been traced on the floor in front of the dais for the three ambassadors to salute the king *à la mode de Siam*, without being encumbered by the expected throng of spectators, later estimated by Donneau de Vizé at 1,500 persons.²⁰²

Sitting on his silver throne, Louis XIV seemed to tower above his court in near-Asian splendor. In fact, he was dressed in a suit of clothes made expressly for the ceremony from cloth of gold, set with "prodigiously large diamonds," in obvious imitation of the gem-studded robes worn in 1685 by the king of Siam.²⁰³ In one respect, however, the French monarch had made a significant departure from the protocol of his Asian counterpart. Unlike Phra Narai who always appeared alone at his elevated throne window, clustered around Louis were the male members of the royal family who were in direct line of succession to the monarchy—including the four-year-old duc de Bourgogne—as if sitting with their patriarch for a group portrait.²⁰⁴ It was, in short, the collective present and future of the French Crown. Yet, also forming part of this group were the duc de Maine and the comte de Toulouse, the king's two natural sons by his former mistress Madame de Montespan, who just recently had been legitimized by royal decree "to secure [their] state," sniped the contemptuous duc de Saint-Simon.²⁰⁵

How the Siamese envoys regarded this unexpected alteration in otherwise familiar ceremonial is unknown, but the message was not lost on Louis's court where this kind of symbolism was understood fully. What the Sun King consciously had done was to raise to the same level as himself the Bourbon princes—including the two royal bastards, whom many courtiers still despised despite their new legal status—by imitating the unparalleled position of Asian despotism. The goals of his Southeast Asian policy aside, part of his intention clearly was to emphasize and enhance in a visible way the broad social distinction that already divided royal blood, however diluted, from that of all other Frenchman, noble or common. At the same time it was a theatrical display of royal preeminence, of unrestricted sovereignty, that subtly, though nonetheless powerfully reinforced Louis's absolutist claims to sole authority in his realm in a manner that far surpassed contemporary European ideals.

On entering the great gallery, the lesser members of the Siamese cortege immediately performed the *krāp* in profound respect for the French monarch, who sat enthroned at the far end. In acknowledgment, he granted them another extraordinary honour strictly prohibited in Siam but usurped by Chaumont, declaring that they "had come too far not to be permitted to look upon him."²⁰⁶ Kōsa Pān and his two colleagues performed the *wai*, meantime, a gesture they repeated at intervals as they approached Louis's throne. At the foot of the royal dais, the ambassadors prostrated themselves in their turn, rendering the king a form of homage "that extended almost to adoration ..." ²⁰⁷ In response, Louis stood, removed his hat and

saluted his Asian guests with a polite bow before sitting down again, just as Phra Narai had acknowledged Chaumont's bows with courteous nods of his own. Kōsa Pān then began his formal address in Siamese, with his hands carefully clasped before his face in respect for the king, whom he revered periodically. Each time, Louis responded by doffing his hat.

Once his speech was concluded and the abbé de Lionne had given a French translation,²⁰⁸ the moment had arrived for the presentation of the royal letter, the centerpiece of the audience according to Asian protocol. Taking Phra Narai's missive from the third envoy, Kōsa Pān mounted part way up the dais and, with his head lowered, presented it to Louis XIV. Significantly, not only did the French monarch stand and remove his hat to receive it. He advanced two or three paces and, with a slight bow, took up the royal letter which he handed presently to Colbert de Croissy, his minister of foreign affairs. With that simple, yet meaningful gesture, he graciously atoned for the impudent manner and unbending stiffness of the chevalier de Chaumont, who had behaved so arrogantly at his audience with the Siamese monarch the year before. Notes a modern historian, "a sense of honour, even a spirit of chivalry pervaded all [Louis's] negotiations," after all, "since it formed the base of [his] reputation abroad."²⁰⁹ The French king and his Asian guests then exchanged civilities a short while longer until, the reception ending, the three envoys and their suite withdrew down the Hall of Mirrors, performing the *wai* as they went. Not once, noted observers, did they turn their back upon Louis, who remained seated on his throne until they had left the gallery. After a sumptuous lunch in the *Salle du Conseil* and one or two private audiences with other members of the royal family, the Siamese embassy was returned to Paris with the same pomp and in the same order as it had arrived at Versailles.²¹⁰

Exactly six months later, on 1 March, the three mandarins and their suite sailed back to Siam, taking with them Louis XIV's second French embassy to Phra Narai, headed this time by Simon de La Loubère and Claude Céberet de Boullay.²¹¹ Ostensibly, its mission was to strengthen the diplomatic and commercial ties already established between the two kingdoms by concluding a firm alliance. But the real goal probably was to establish a protectorate over Siam, using the 636 soldiers sent out with the new envoys as an initial holding force—hardly the small bodyguard requested originally by the Asian monarch.²¹² But this embassy, too, failed to achieve its objectives. A fresh trade treaty was negotiated, to be sure, though under very trying conditions; meanwhile, the steady growth of strong xenophobic sentiment at the Siamese court over the foreign military occupation of Bangkok and the port of Mergui on the Bay of Bengal did not bode well for the future. In fact, just six months after the ambassadors had left for France in January 1688, Siam exploded in a bloody revolution that toppled Phra Narai's dynasty from the throne, overthrew the French garrison and closed the kingdom to Europeans except for a single Dutch trading post.²¹³ By the time news of the disaster had reached Europe, Louis XIV was engaged heavily in a new war with his continental enemies and was in no position to respond. French contact with Siam thus ended abruptly for the next 150 years.

Nevertheless, the image so carefully contrived in 1686 of the Sun King as an absolute ruler of the Asian type lingered far into the next century. For some, such as Father Joachim Bouvet, S.J., who sailed with the new French embassy to Siam before joining the Jesuit mission in China, this authoritative image seemed more benevolent than that of the actual absolute monarchies of the Far East, whose grandeur long had been envied by European observers. In a relation of the Ch'ing emperor published in 1699 and dedicated to Louis XIV, Bouvet boasted with more than usual hyperbole that:

The Jesuits ... were not a little surprised to meet at the utmost corner of the Earth with what they had never seen before but in *France*, that is to say; a Prince, who, like Yourself, has improved his sublime Genius by the Greatness of Soul, which alone renders him worthy of the greatest Empire of the Universe; who has the same uncontrolled Power over his Passions, as over his Subjects, equally adored by his People and Esteemed by his Neighbours; ... In short, a Prince ... who would without question be accounted the most Glorious Monarch upon Earth, if his Reign had not been coincident with that of Your Majesty.²¹⁴

Others, however, attacked the "oriental despotism" of Louis XIV and its implicit claims to absolutism. After his death, for instance, the marquis d'Argenson criticized the excess and extravagance of the late king's court in general, as an example of unsustainable "Asiatic luxury." More aggressive still was the marquis de La Fare, who maligned his late sovereign in particular as "an imitator of the kings of Asia, whom slavery alone pleased; he ignored merit; his ministers no longer thought of telling the truth, but only to flatter and please him ..."²¹⁵ Later in the eighteenth century, such authors as the baron de Montesquieu in *Les Lettres Persanes* (1721) and the comte de Mirabeau in his *Essai sur le despotisme* (1775) criticized the Bourbon monarchy both directly and indirectly by comparing it to the autocracies of the Far East, for which they drew in part upon lingering memories of the reception at Versailles of Phra Narai's envoys. Clearly, the elaborate masquerade that was meant to overawe the Siamese ambassadors in 1686 also had impressed contemporary and near-contemporary Frenchmen far more profoundly than perhaps even the Sun King or his advisers had anticipated.

In his book *Pepper, Guns & Parleys*, John E. Wills, Jr. comments that to understand the developing relations between Europe and Asia in the seventeenth century, one must not focus exclusively on values and institutions directly tied to foreign affairs. Other factors, such as "bureaucratic routinism, internal patterns of communication and styles of personal interaction," exercised a powerful influence on diplomacy, as well. For precisely this reason, "close case studies of negotiation and interaction" are essential in order to appreciate the complexities involved in the meeting of two very different diplomatic traditions, their subsequent adjustments to novel circumstances and "the multifarious difficulties of foreign relations across [wide] cultural barriers."²¹⁶ These studies become more vital still when

set against the background of the contemporary European intellectual revolution—identified by Paul Hazard in his book, *The European Mind*—that was sparked to a large degree by Westerners looking eastward and discovering there "a vast agglomeration of non-Christian values, [and] a huge block of humanity which had constructed its moral system, its concept of truth, on lines peculiarly its own."²¹⁷ As a result, articulate Europeans were forced to recognize that they no longer could take for granted their old perceptions of the world or the place in it of western society.

It is within this broader historical and cultural context that Louis XIV's reception of the Siamese embassy to France in 1686, and indeed the whole issue of the relations that developed between the two kingdoms during the period, must be seen. For these diplomatic connections raised new questions of

transcultural contact that no European sovereign had had to consider in detail before. With time and repeated experience, however, both Louis and his advisers, on the one hand, and Phra Narai and his officials, on the other, learned to handle the situation through adjustments to diplomatic forms, and thus found their way to an understanding of each other. What is particularly striking about the events at Versailles, however, is that despite the ingrained ethnocentrism of seventeenth-century Europeans generally and Frenchmen specifically, as well as their tendency to deprecate foreign and especially non-western practices, a real effort was made to understand Siamese customs that went beyond simple political showmanship or the Bourbon Crown's need to manipulate them successfully to achieve French ambitions in the Far East by making Louis XIV into an oriental despot.

NOTES

1. Father Nicolas Gervaise, *The Natural and Political History of the Kingdom of Siam*, John Villiers, trans. and ed. (Bangkok: 1989) 227–29.
2. John E. Wills, Jr., *Embassies & Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666–1687* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1984) 172.
3. For other contemporary European descriptions of Siamese diplomatic protocol, both generally and in terms of specific audiences, see: Simon de La Loubère, *The Kingdom of Siam* (London: 1693) 55–56, 108–110, the original French edition of which was reedited and reissued recently by Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'h under the title, *Étude historique et critique du livre de Simon de La Loubère "Du Royaume de Siam"* (Paris: 1987) 359–365; comte Claude de Forbin, *Mémoires du comte de Forbin*, in F. Michaud and Poujoulat, *Nouvelle collection des mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France*, vol. XXXIII (Paris: 1854) 475–479. Forbin's Siamese experiences were excerpted and published separately as the *Voyage du Comte de Forbin à Siam (1685–1688)* (Paris: 1863). See also: Père Guy Tachard, S.J., *A Relation of the Voyage to Siam* (London: 1688), reprinted as the *Voyage to Siam* (Bangkok: 1981) 154–160; J. C. Gatty, ed., *Voyage de Siam du Père Bouvet* (Leiden: 1963) 116–120; abbé François Timoléon de Choisy, *Journal du voyage de Siam fait en 1685 & 1686*, Maurice Garçon, ed. (Paris: 1930) 149–157; François Caron and Joost Schouten, *A True Description of the Mighty Kingdoms of Japan and Siam [1671]*, Roger Manley, trans., John Villiers, ed. (Bangkok: 1986) 126–127; *Relation de l'Ambassade de Mr. le Chevalier de Chaumont à la Cour du Roi de Siam* (Paris: 1686; reprinted, Bangkok: 1985) 47–71, and the contemporary English translation, *A Relation of the Late Embassy of Monsr. de Chaumont. Knt. to the Court of the King of Siam* (London: 1687). A modern edition of Chaumont's French original, entitled "Relation de l'ambassade de monsieur le chevalier de Chaumont à la cour du roy de Siam," can be found in F. Danjou and Cimber, eds., *Archives curieuses de l'histoire de France*, vol. X (Paris: 1839). Finally, see L. F. van Ravenswaay, trans., "Translation of Jeremias van Vliet's Description of the Kingdom of Siam [1692]," *Journal of the Siam Society*, 7 (1910): 16–7, 21–6. For a modern discussion of Siamese protocol in the seventeenth century, see H. G. Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies* (London: 1931) 179–86.
4. René Louis de Voyer de Paulmy, marquis d'Argenson, *Mémoires et journal inédit du marquis d'Argenson*, 5 vols. (Paris: 1857–58) V, 352–53.
5. David K. Wyatt, *Thailand, A Short History* (New Haven, CT: 1982) 113.
6. Père Claude de Bèze, S.J., *1688: Revolution in Siam*, E. W. Hutchinson, trans. and ed. (Hong Kong: 1968) 34. For the original French version, see Jean Drans and Henri Bernard, S.J., eds., *Mémoire du Père de Bèze sur la vie de Constance Phaulkon* (Tokyo: 1947).
7. Choisy, 5.
8. The three primary accounts were those written by Chaumont himself, by his coadjutor the abbé de Choisy and by the Jesuit Father Guy Tachard. The chevalier de Forbin's account was not published until many years later, as he had remained in Siam after Chaumont's return to France, until 1687.
9. In creating bishoprics for the vicars Apostolic of the *Missions Étrangères* in Asia, the pope borrowed the names of former sees from Roman antiquity that long before had fallen into Moslem hands. Thus, François Pallu (1626–1684), one of the founders of the *Missions Étrangères*, was named bishop of Héliopolis and granted jurisdiction over Tonkinchina. His colleague, Pierre Lambert de La Motte, was created bishop of Bérythe and given jurisdiction over Cochinchina, while another colleague, Louis Laneau, was made bishop of Métellopolis with jurisdiction over Nankin.

10. Both Pope Clement's letter of 24 August 1669 and Louis XIV's letter of 31 January 1670, can be found in Adrien Launay, ed., *Histoire de la Mission de Siam 1662–1811: Documents historiques*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1920) I, 45–6. Pallu had brought the two missionaries back with him to Siam after a lengthy sojourn in Europe to obtain increased moral and material support for the *Missions Étrangères* in Paris and in Rome.
11. *Ibid.*, 43–45.
12. Mgr. Pallu, bishop of Héliopolis, to Louis XIV, 8 November 1673; and to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, 8 November 1673, Adrien Launay, ed., *Lettres de Mgr. Pallu*, 2 vols. (Angoulême: 1904–1906) II, 257–58, 258–59. (Hereafter cited as Pallu.)
13. *Ibid.*, II, 257–58. For more recent descriptions of Pallu's audience, see Mgr. Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix, *Description du royaume Thai ou Siam*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1854) II, 147–53; and Adrien Launay, *Histoire de la mission de Siam 1662–1811*, 3 vols. (Paris: 1920) I, 27–8.
14. Pierre Lambert de la Motte (1624–1679), vicar apostolique of Cochinchina, originally followed a career in law before taking holy orders in 1655. Together with Pallu, he founded the *Missions Étrangères* in 1657 and left Paris in 1660 for the Far East. He arrived in Siam two years later. He made two brief visits to Cochinchina, in 1669–73 and 1676 respectively, returning to Siam each time. It was there that he died in 1679.
15. Jeremy Kemp, *Aspects of Siamese Kingship in the Seventeenth Century* (Bangkok: 1969) 10. This was called variously the act of *sombaye*, *zombaye* and *choca* by contemporary Europeans (see La Loubère, 57–8; Gerlaise, 223–24; Tachard, 155, 273; Schouten and Caron, 126–27), all of whom noted that so long as they were in the king's presence, mandarins, ambassadors and petitioners alike had to remain prostrate.
16. The *wai* is not just a greeting; it is an action of respect made by bowing the head to meet the thumbs of both hands, palms pressed together and fingers held upward. Originally, the position of the *wai* showed that one's hands were empty of weapons; so in this respect it shares a common history with the western handshake, which was initially the clasping of sword hands. The *wai* is far more meaningful, however, because where the handshake is performed between equals, the *wai* is an expression of inequality. In essence, the social inferior—
- who always initiates the act—places himself at the mercy of his superior, while his lowered eyes and head further reduce his ability to defend himself.
17. Adrien Launay, *Documents*, II, 257. In addition to their exception from performing the *krāp*, the bishops were permitted to remain seated on a Persian carpet throughout the interview, to wear their stockings instead of appearing barefoot (though they had to remove their shoes) and to perform their civilities to the king "à la mode de l'Europe." See also E. W. Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam in the Seventeenth Century* (London: 1940) 50.
18. Pallu had tried to sail for France in 1674, but his vessel was captured by the Spaniards, who shipped the bishop across the Pacific to New Spain instead, and thence to Madrid. Thus, it took him about three years from the time of his departure from Siam to reach France.
19. Another source for Siamese protocol, though not as complete as Pallu's, was a brief report written in 1680 by André Deslandes-Bourreau, in which he described the reception Phra Narai gave to the agents of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* who had come to ask permission to establish a trading factory there. See Launay, *Documents*, I, 104–08.
20. Originally, Phra Narai had planned to send this embassy in 1674, but the war in Europe prevented him from doing so until after the Peace of Nijmegen. For contemporary accounts of this embassy and its subsequent loss, see: M. de Saintot, "Arrivées de trois Mandarins de Siam en 1684," *Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français* 14118, fol. 127; sieur Claude de l'Isle, géographe, *Relation historique du royaume de Siam* (Paris: 1684) introduction; Bèze, *Revolution in Siam*, 34; Lotika Varadarajan, trans. and ed., *India in the 17th Century: Memoirs of François Martin (1670–1694)*, 3 vols. (New Delhi: 1983) II, 678–79, 685, 733, 893, 899–900; the Phra'Klang to the directors of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, 1680, Launay, *Documents*, I, 109–10; Phra Narai to Louis XIV, 1680, Launay, *Documents*, I, 110–11; George Cœdès, "Siamese Documents of the Seventeenth Century (Archives of the Ministry of Colonies, Paris)," *Journal of the Siam Society*, 14, no. 2 (1921): 7–8. For more modern accounts, see: Charles W. Cole, *Colbert and a Century of French Mercantilism*, 2 vols. (Hamden, CT: 1964) I, 519; E. W. Hutchinson, *Adventurers*, 64–6, 92; Pallegoix, II, 166–67; Launay, *Histoire*, I, 51–2.
21. BN. FF. 5623, fol. 36vo. According to most contemporary sources, Phra Narai was attracted to a French alliance in particular because of the reports he had heard of Louis XIV's power and military success over the Dutch, whose Asian empire also threatened Siam, in the European war between 1672 and 1679. (See, for example, Bèze, *Revolution in Siam*, 34; Saintot, "Arrivée de trois Mandarins de Siam en 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 127.) This was later confirmed by the two Siamese envoys sent to France in 1684 (see Saintot, "Arrivée de trois Mandarins de Siam en 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fols. 129vo–130), as well as by Kōsa Pān, chief of the Siamese embassy of 1686, who wrote to the marquis de Seignelay in September of that year that the news of Louis XIV's victories in Europe had engendered in Phra Narai "an extreme desire" to "make an alliance of perpetual friendship with the French nation ..." (BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 195.)
22. According to Gayme, Louis was to defray all of the ambassadors' expenses while in France, just as Phra Narai did for foreign envoys in Siam; the king was to provide transportation for them gratis to Versailles, as well as lodgings along the way; and the route taken by the ambassadors should pass through the finest towns of France "to satisfy their curiosity." "In short," noted the French priest, "the king here expects all manner of generosity from His Majesty" toward the three envoys and their suite. (See Père Gayme to the directors of the seminary of the *Missions Étrangères* in Paris, 18 November 1680 and 18 January 1681, Launay, *Documents*, I, 109, 112.)
23. For Deslandes-Bourreau's trade mission to Siam, see BN. FF. nouvelles acquisitions 9380, fol. 84; Martin, II, 709–10. As a result of Siamese unfamiliarity with European protocol and French ignorance of local conditions, this mission too had met with some misunderstandings, especially with regard to French hostility toward the Dutch flag, which the Siamese had flown to honour their new guests because they had no national colors of their own. It was resolved finally that so long as the Siamese hoisted a standard totally unfamiliar to the French, the latter would condescend to acknowledge it. The ceremony followed at Deslandes-Bourreau's subsequent audience with Phra Narai also was a matter of contention, as the French envoy—like Pallu before him—had refused to prostrate himself before the Asian monarch.
24. This second royal letter was dated 10 January 1681, a transcription and translation of

- which was published by E. W. Hutchinson in, "Four French State Manuscripts relating to Embassies between France and Siam in the XVIIth century," *Journal of the Siam Society*, 27, no. 2 (1934): 196–98. It was presented by Pallu at the Siamese court in 1682 in an audience celebrated with the same pomp and ceremony that the first two missives of 1673 had received. See the "Ordres du roi de Siam pour MM. Vachet et Pascot pour les envoyés," 14 January 1684, Launay, *Documents*, I, 128; Pallegoix, II, 167.
25. See the report of Deslandes-Bourreau, 1680, and Pallu's letter to Jean-Baptiste Colbert of 15 November 1682, in Launay, *Documents*, I, 105, 116. In fact, the gifts Pallu took with him to Siam in 1682—including several paintings of religious themes, three large gilt mirrors, some fine brocade, two valuable carpets and a watch ornately decorated with enamel—were considered by some Siamese officials to be so disproportionate in value to the grandeur of Louis XIV, that to present them in the king's name, they warned, would create a bad effect. The bishop was advised, therefore, to present them on his own behalf as tokens of thanks for Phra Narai's good treatment of the French missionaries in Siam. (See Mgr. Pallu to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, 15 November 1682, Launay, *Documents*, I, 116; Pallu, II, 307–08.) Subsequently, Pallu wrote to M. Fermanel in December 1682 to advise him of the kind of gifts to be sent in future. (Pallu, I, 370.)
 26. Sieur Claude de l'Isle, *Relation historique du royaume de Siam* (Paris: 1684). L'Isle cited the names of the approximately twenty-two authors he had consulted in the introduction and the margins of his book.
 27. The *Soleil d'Orient* was the flagship of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*'s merchant fleet. Apparently, however, it was in such bad condition that it was forced to stop at the Cape of Good Hope in January 1680 on its outward voyage to India, not just to take on fresh provisions but to repair its badly leaking hull. Yet, this seems to have been done incompetently, no doubt contributing to the ship's loss on the return voyage in autumn 1681 with all aboard, including the Siamese ambassadors and Father Gayme. (See Martin, II, 678–79, 960.) Not until July 1682, when Mgr. Pallu finally reached France, did the French court learn of the disaster.
 28. The court also had access to Claude de l'Isle's book, newly revised and published, in which he gave a few general comments on Siamese protocol taken from his various sources. See pp. 127–28.
 29. Their names were Khun P'chai Valit and Khun P'chit Maitri respectively. (Bèze, *Revolution in Siam*, 35.) The term "mandarin"—which was Chinese in origin—was applied to Siamese nobles by the Portuguese, who were the first Europeans to visit the Asian kingdom. It was adopted subsequently by the Dutch, French and English, who arrived in later years. (See La Loubère, 80; l'Isle, 145.) "Mandarin," as the Chinese term implies, did not denote great individuals in the European sense of nobility, but rather great servants or titled officers of the Siamese Crown. (Kemp, 47–8.)
 30. According to François Martin (II, 900), "so ardently did the king of Siam desire the friendship of the king of France that even if some accident had befallen his emissaries [in 1680] he was willing to send other envoys, and others again, not desisting from his efforts until he had gained the friendship of our king." For the arrival and subsequent activities of the second Siamese legation to France, see: the marquis de Seignelay to M. Barillon, 4, 14 and 30 September 1684, Archives de la Marine B2 51; Bèze, *Revolution in Siam*, 35; l'Isle, n.p. (introduction); Martin, II, 944; Saintot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins de Siam en 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fols. 127vo–134; Mgr. Laneau to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, 18 January 1684, Launay, *Documents*, I, 127–28; "Ordres du roi de Siam pour MM. Vachet et Pascot pour les envoyés," 14 January 1684, Launay, *Documents*, I, 128–29, Father Bénigne Vachet, *Mémoires*, excerpted in Launay, *Documents*, I, 131–56. For modern accounts, see Cœdès, "Documents," 9; Hutchinson, *Adventurers*, 86, 92–3, 96–100; Pallegoix, II, 168–69; Launay, *Mission de Siam*, 53; M. L. Manich Jumsai, *The Story of King Narai and His Ambassador to France in 1686, Kosaparn* (Bangkok: 1987) 62–3, 69–70, 75–77 (a factually flawed account, not to be trusted); Dirk Van der Cruyssen, *Louis XIV et le Siam* (Paris: 1991) 263–84.
 31. According to Father Bénigne Vachet, Seignelay had been appointed expressly to deal with the Siamese legation by Louis XIV, even though this matter properly lay within the sphere of his uncle, Colbert de Croissy, the minister for foreign affairs. (Vachet, 139.)
 32. Apparently, Claude de l'Isle was entrusted with this duty. (See *ibid.*, 136.) It also seems that he served as their chaperone throughout their stay in France. (See the report of the Siamese envoy's expenses, dated January 1685, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 179vo.)
 33. Seignelay to M. de Barillon, 14 and 30 September 1684, Arch. Mar. B2 51, fols. 403, 418; Saintot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fols. 128–128vo.; BN. FF. n.a. 9376, fol. 110vo.; Vachet, 138. The envoys were lodged at the hôtel de Taranne in the faubourg St. Germain, where they were entertained sumptuously.
 34. Saintot, "Arrivée de trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fols. 129vo–130vo.; Vachet, 141–42. It was reported later that the same protocol was observed at the envoys' final audiences with Seignelay and Colbert de Croissy in January 1685. (See BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fols. 179–179vo.)
 35. Shortly after his arrival in Paris, Vachet went to Versailles for a private interview with Seignelay, during which he told the marquis the purpose of the new Siamese legation. (Vachet, 138.)
 36. Saintot, "Arrivée de trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fols. 127–127vo., 129; Mgr. Laneau to the directors of the *Séminaire des Missions-Étrangères*, c. 4 and 7 January 1684, Launay, *Documents*, I, 125–26, 126; "Ordres du roi de Siam pour MM. Vachet et Pascot pour les envoyés," 14 January 1684, Launay, *Documents*, I, 129; Saintot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 127; Hutchinson, *Adventurers*, 93; Pallegoix, II, 169; Launay, *Mission de Siam*, 53. In fact, Vachet—accompanied by Father Pascot, another member of the *Missions Étrangères*—acted as a third "envoy" for Phra Narai, who had entrusted to him the duty of delivering the king's letters to Colbert and Colbert de Croissy.
 37. Because the two envoys were not officially ambassadors, they were not entitled to a formal audience with Louis XIV. This "accidental" meeting was arranged in its place, to present the mandarins to the king while he was on his way to mass.
 38. Vachet, 142. See also BN. FF. n.a. 9376, fol. 10vo.
 39. Mgr. Lambert de La Motte, bishop of Bérythe, to the directors of the *Séminaire des Missions-Étrangères* in Paris, 3 December 1673, Launay, *Documents*, I, 51; Gerlaise, 215, 223; Chaumont, *Relation of the late Embassy ...*, 27; Tachard, 273; La Loubère, 30. According to Lambert, this aloofness arose from the belief that the kings of Siam would lose something of their majesty if they showed themselves

- too often to their people. Hence, only on special occasions, such as the day appointed for the river races—one of the largest and most splendid of Siamese festivals—and the royal elephant hunts, were the Siamese permitted to look upon Phra Narai, who participated in these events. Otherwise, petitioners, royal officials and even the great mandarins had to keep their face turned to the floor in the king's presence, while the common people were required to shutter their houses and lie prostrate indoors whenever the king travelled by river on his *balon*.
40. Gervaise, 183.
41. Vachet, 143.
42. Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 133; Vachet, 143. See also Philippe de Courcillon, marquis de Dangeau, *Journal*, M. M. Soulié, ed., 16 vols. (Paris: 1854–1860) I, 75; M. Turpin, *Histoire civile et naturelle du royaume de Siam*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1771) II, 80. Confirmed Gervaise, whenever the mandarins were with Phra Narai, "they are all prostrated on the ground, leaning only on their elbows and are never excused from remaining in this most uncomfortable position as long as they are in the royal presence (p. 207)."
43. Vachet, 144.
44. Kemp, 10. This was especially important for the Siamese monarch, who was seated always on an elevated throne or at a high window, overlooking those to whom he gave audience, while these people—by means of the *krāp*—were reduced to the lowest possible level.
45. *Ibid.*; La Loubère, 55. See also Kemp, 10. The *khwan* may be defined as "one's vital spirit which gives strength and health to the individual owner" (quoted in Kemp, 49). Hence, observed La Loubère in 1693: "As the most eminent place is always amongst them the most honourable, the head, as the highest part of the body, is also the most respected. To touch any person on the head or the hair, or to stroke ones hand over the head, is to offer him the greatest of all affronts ... (p. 57)."
46. BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 179. The two envoys could not escape so easily, however. When they returned to Versailles on 16 January 1685 to take their leave of Louis XIV, they found themselves trapped into sitting through a second performance of *Roland* that the king had arranged expressly for that purpose. On that occasion, they were seated in a balcony, but were made so uncomfortable by the curiosity of the audience and by having to sit above the royal head, that "they neither cast their eyes on the King nor on the actors, keeping them lowered, except to glance from time to time to the exit door." (See Vachet, 147–48; BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 179.)
47. Vachet, 144–45.
48. *Ibid.*, 147. The same thing happened when the two envoys attended another mass, celebrated by the archbishop of Paris.
49. This was the designation given the two mandarins by Claude de l'Isle in the introduction of his book on Siam. One of the most interesting aspects of Franco-Siamese diplomacy at this date was the effort to find French equivalents for the ranks of the various Siamese envoys dispatched to Versailles, to fit them within the hierarchy of European society so as to accord them the appropriate honours. Father Gayme, for example, had suggested that the chief ambassador sent with the first ill-fated Siamese embassy in 1680 be treated with the respect due to a marquis in France. (See Father Gayme to the directors of the *Séminaire des Missions-Étrangères* in Paris, 18 January 1681, Launay, *Documents*, I, 112.)
50. Mgr. Laneau to the directors of the *Séminaire des Missions-Étrangères* in Paris, January 1684, Launay, *Documents*, I, 126; L'Isle, n.p. (introduction). See also Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 130; BN. FF. n.a. 9376, fol. llovo.; Mgr. Laneau to the directors of the *Séminaire des Missions-Étrangères*, January 1684, Launay, *Documents*, I, 125; Hutchinson, *Adventurers*, 100; Pallegoix, II, 169; Coëdès, "Documents," 9. The only letters brought by the two envoys to France were addressed to Jean-Baptiste Colbert and Colbert de Croissy from the Phra'klang of Siam, not from the king.
51. The envoys spoke only Thai; however, their official addresses were translated into Portuguese—the *lingua franca* of coastal Asia—by a member of their entourage. This translation was then rendered into French by Fathers Vachet and Pascot. Otherwise, Vachet spoke directly to the mandarins, being fluent in their tongue. (See Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fols. 130–130vo.)
52. Coëdès, "Documents," 9; see also Hutchinson, *Adventurers*, 100.
53. Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fols. 127–127vo.; Vachet, 135. According to Father Tachard, Phra Narai had heard of the alleged ill-behavior of his two mandarins at the French court, and at their return to Siam he examined their conduct. Only the chevalier de Chaumont's intercession on their behalf, claimed the Jesuit, saved their lives. They were punished instead with imprisonment. (Tachard, 178.)
54. From all reports, the two mandarins believed that they were being used by Father Vachet for his own ends. (See, for example, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 179.) But according to Sainctot, the French priest denied having such authority over the Siamese envoys, complaining in his turn that they were stubborn and difficult to deal with. (Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 129.)
55. Turpin, II, 79. This was confirmed unconsciously by Vachet himself, when he recalled that "the French were as curious of [the envoys] as they were courteous" to them. (*Mémoires*, 140–41.)
56. See Vachet, 140–43. Curiously, every modern account of the second Siamese legation repeats Vachet's criticisms without ever attempting to understand the problem from the envoys' point of view.
57. Given his position at court, Sainctot was well placed to comment on and describe the treatment of the Siamese envoys in 1684 and later in 1686.
58. Forbin, 469.
59. *Ibid.*, fol. 134; Father Bénigne Vachet, "Mémoire pour être présenté à MM. les ministres d'État de France, sur toutes les choses qui regardent les envoyés du Roi de Siam, 1685," Launay, *Documents*, I, 154–54; BN. FF. 5623, fol. 37. See also André Deslandes-Bourreau, *Histoire de M. Constance, Premier Ministre du Roi de Siam* (Amsterdam: 1756) 18–19; Forbin, 469; Bouvet, 7; Martin, II, 992–93.
60. Father Bénigne Vachet, "Mémoire pour être présenté ...," Launay, *Documents*, I, 155. See also Deslandes-Bourreau, 18–19; Forbin, 469; Launay, *Mission de Siam*, I, 59; Prince Chula Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand* (London: 1960) 61–2.
61. Father Bénigne Vachet, "Mémoire pour être présenté ...," Launay, *Documents*, I,

- 155; Forbin, 469; Launay, *Mission de Siam*, I, 54.
62. Father Bénigne Vachet, "Mémoire pour être présenté ..." Launay, *Documents*, I, 155. This was the primary motive attributed to Louis by most contemporary observers, such as Deslandes-Bourreau (p. 19) and Forbin (p. 469). According to Claude de l'Isle, the king also announced about this time that his principal purpose in chartering the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* was to spread Christianity in Asia, along with his reputation (introduction, n.p.). For the 1680s represented a period in Louis XIV's life and reign when he began wrestling with his own religiosity, while moving rapidly against the Huguenots and other religious dissidents in his realm. His interest in converting Phra Narai to Catholicism at the same time as he was contemplating the revocation of the Edict of Nantes was not simply coincidental, therefore.
63. Victor-L. Tapié argues that Louis XIV saw himself as the protector of Catholicism at home and abroad in the 1680s precisely because of this political reason, and not because of any real "spiritual and religious sentiment." (Victor-L. Tapié, "Louis XIV's Methods in Foreign Policy," in Ragnhild Hatton, ed., *Louis XIV and Europe* (London: 1976) 8-9.)
64. BN. FF. 20979, fol. 7. Chaumont would have some competition here: an embassy from Shah Sulaiman the Safavid (1666-94) of Persia arrived in Siam at the same time as the chevalier, with the object of converting Phra Narai to Islam! For a contemporary Persian account of this embassy, see: John O'Kane, trans., *The Ship of Sulaiman* (London: 1972).
65. Quoted, Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 132vo. This was said by Colbert de Croissy to the two envoys during their meeting with the minister on 27 October. Chaumont was described to Vachet as "a man of rare piety and great humility ..." (*Mémoires*, 151).
66. It is clear from his orders that Chaumont was to be obeyed "in all things" by the members of his entourage and the captains of the ships that took him to Siam. These vessels were the frigates *Oiseau* of forty-five guns (Captain de Vaudricourt) and the smaller *La Maligne* of 24 guns (Captain de Joyeux). See: "Instructions pour le sieur chevalier de Chaumont ambassadeur près du Roi de Siam, 21 janvier 1685," Archives Nationales B2 52, fol. 46; "Ordre du Roi pourtant que le Chevalier de Chaumont commande le sieur de Vaudricourt dans la route de Siam, et part tout ailleurs, 21 janvier 1585," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fol. 50vo.; Dangeau, I, 69; Forbin, 469; Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 134.
67. "Instructions pour le sieur chevalier de Chaumont ... janvier 1685," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fols. 49vo-50; "Lettre de créance au Roy de Siam pour le sieur abbé de Choisy, 21 janvier 1685," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fols. 52-52vo.; Sainctot, "Arrivée des trois mandarins ... 1684," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 134; Choisy, *Mémoires*, 143; Dangeau, I, 86; Forbin, 469; Martin, II, 995. In fact, Chaumont was under strict orders not to reveal to Choisy his obligation to remain in Siam unless Phra Narai converted.
68. Choisy, 47. The abbé made little progress in the language, however, and confessed that he was able only "to jabber" in it despite his efforts to learn.
69. Forbin, 469. All of these young men were active naval officers and veterans of the Dutch war. ("Instruction pour le sieur chevalier de Chaumont ... janvier 1685," Arch. Nat. B 52, fol. 46.)
70. The Jesuits were to stay only briefly in Siam before sailing to join the mission in China. Meanwhile, they were required to make astronomical observations during the voyage and at each landing place, with a specific view to improving French naval charts.
71. "Mémoire des personnes qui seront embarquées sur le vaisseau L'Oyseau outre l'équipage ordinaire," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fols. 55-55vo. In all, seventy-six persons sailed with Chaumont, including Choisy and the two mandarins. The lesser members of the ambassador's household were to wear a "very beautiful" livery that "the Siamese found most handsome." (Choisy, 150.)
72. These gifts included: two large silver mirrors, two silver candelabra of twelve branches each, two large crystal chandeliers weighing 138 lbs. apiece, a telescope, two sedan chairs, twelve finely crafted fusils, eight pairs of pistols, twelve pieces of rich brocade of gold and silver cloth, 100 ells of cloth of various colors (especially scarlet and blue), two clocks showing the phases of the moon, three pendulum clocks marked with the hours in Siamese characters, three bureaux and three tables decorated with rich marquetry, six small round tables, two large Savonnerie carpets (made to order for Phra Narai's audience halls, according to specifications provided by Vachet), a large basin carved from a single piece of rock crystal and garnished with gold, two suits of Europe clothing in fine brocade, several pairs of silk stockings, various multicolored ribbons, several beaver hats, a variety of cravats and embroidered handkerchiefs, a finely crafted sword with a rich belt and gold buckles, a large equestrian portrait of Louis plus two miniatures painted on enamel and garnished with diamonds, and a box full of medallions and French gold currency. These gifts were sent in addition to the curiosities already purchased by the two mandarins for Phra Narai, who wanted mirrors especially in order to emulate the Great Gallery at Versailles in his summer palace at Lopburi. (See the "Passeport pour les présens que le Roy envoie au Roi de Siam, 23 janvier 1685," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fols. 53-53vo.; Dangeau, I, 115-16; Vachet, 149-50) According to Gervaise, the total cost of all these items was more than 300,000 *écus* (p. 147).
73. The French squadron had set sail for Southeast Asia early the previous March. For modern, though largely descriptive narratives of Chaumont's embassy in 1686, see: Wyatt, 113-14; Hutchinson, *Adventurers*, 101-15; Wood, 204-06; Rong Syananda, *A History of Thailand* (Bangkok: 1988) 78-9; Manich Jumsai, 74-5, 77-82; Van der Cruysse, 335-69; Raphaël Vongsuravata, *Un jésuite à la Cour de Siam* (Paris: 1992) 48-66.
74. Forbin, 474.
75. Tachard, 139. See also Choisy, 135, 144.
76. According to Father Tachard, one of these mandarins was the Siamese captain of the royal guard and the other was a personal attendant of Phra Narai, the Asian equivalent of the French first gentleman of the bed chamber. (Tachard, 139-40. See also Choisy, 133.)
77. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 20; Choisy, 133; Bouvet, 94; Tachard, 138-40, 141; Forbin, 474-75.
78. Tachard, 142. See also Bouvet, 94-5; Choisy, 133. Simon de La Loubère later criticized those Europeans who sneered at Siamese beliefs in astrology and other superstitions about such beliefs as lucky and unlucky days, writing that the latter "Folly [also] ... is perhaps too much tolerated

- amongst Christians; witness the Almanac of Milan, to which so many persons do now give such blind belief." (*The Kingdom of Siam*, 66.)
79. "Menam" (pronounced may'-nahm) is the Thai word for river, literally "mother of waters." "Chao Phraya" (pronounced chow py'-ah) is an exalted title, meaning prince or supreme commander. Hence, the name of this major river of Thailand might be translated most accurately as "Sovereign among waters."
80. La Loubère, 6. According to Gervaise, it "might even be claimed that [Ayudhya's] position was finer than that of Venice, even though the buildings are less magnificent, for the canals which are formed by branches of the [Chao Phraya] river are very long, very straight and deep enough to carry the largest vessels (p. 38)." The Dutch traveller Christopher Fryke dissented, however, preferring to compare Ayudhya (pronounced Aye-oo'-tay-ah) to the port of Rotterdam! (C. Ernest Fayle, ed., *Voyages to the East Indies: Christopher Fryke and Christopher Schweitzer* (London: 1929) 138.)
81. Choisy, 142-43. The abbé noted that seven of these houses were constructed in all.
82. Tachard, 140; Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 24; Choisy, 135; marquis de Sourches, *Mémoires*, comte de Cosnac and Arthur Bertrand, eds., vols. I and II (Paris: 1882) I, 404. Like other Siamese dwellings, these houses were built on pilings and constructed entirely of plaited bamboo. Each contained three or four apartments "very sumptuously furnished" and "hung with fine painted linen," with connecting galleries. (Tachard, 140, 152; Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 24; Choisy, 139.) "All the Furniture ... was new," noted Chaumont, adding that "the Floor of my room was covered with Tapistry [from Persia], the Chairs were curiously wrought and gilt, as also the Tables to speak nothing of the neatness of the [Chinese] Bed. . . (p. 24) . . ." "It is necessary to note," confirmed the abbé de Choisy, "that everything prepared for the Ambassador's service was brand new, the tapistries, beds, carpets, sheets, *balons*, etc." (Choisy, 140; see also Tachard, 152.) According to the chevalier de Forbin, these buildings were moveable; as soon as Chaumont left one, it was taken apart, shifted up river, and then reconstructed to receive the French embassy. (Forbin, 475.)
83. Tachard, 153; Choisy, 139.
84. Choisy, 139. Tachard put the number of place-settings at sixty for each meal. (Tachard, 152.)
85. Choisy, 140; Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 27.
86. Tachard, 140; Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 26; Choisy, 135, 136, 143; Sourches, I, 405. This probably was the house mentioned by the abbé de Lionne in a letter dated 2 October 1682 (BN. FF. 5623, fols. 36vo-37) and in the "Ordres du Roi de Siam pour M. M. Vachet et Pascot pour les envoyés" (14 January 1684), which Phra Narai had commanded to be build according to Mgr. Pallu's specifications in order to receive the envoys of Louis XIV. (Launay, *Documents*, I, 128.) The marquis de Dangeau also reported that the Asian monarch was building a magnificent palace near the capital for Chaumont's use (I, 69). A similar residence was prepared for the French embassy at Phra Narai's summer capital of Lopburi (or Louvo), north of Ayudhya, where the king planned to remove following his formal reception of Chaumont.
87. According to Tachard, this residence belonged to "a great Mandarin, a Persian by Nation." Not only had it been splendidly furnished, but extra rooms had been added purposely for the accommodation of the French embassy. (Tachard, 140, 148.) It had two reception halls hung with fine painted cloth and furnished with chairs upholstered variously in blue and red velvet, fringed with gold. In Chaumont's private chamber was a costly Japanese screen "of singular beauty." There also was a room set aside with a small fountain in the center, where one could take fresh air in the hottest weather. Yet another chamber contained a chair set beneath a great canopy of state for Chaumont's use at official receptions. Throughout the building, fine porcelain of all sizes and shapes had been placed in niches in the walls. "In a word, everything looked cool and pleasant."
88. Tachard described these *balons* as Siamese boats "of extraordinary shape," some being as long as 100 or 120 feet, but only six feet wide at their widest point. Their crews consisted of 100, 120 and even 130 oarsmen. (Tachard, 150.) Chaumont wrote, however, that the *balons* accompanying him were smaller craft of fifty to eighty feet in length, "having oars from twenty to an hundred." The Siamese rowers sat two to a bench, facing the direction in which the vessel travelled rather than the stern as in European fashion. The oar, or scull, was only four feet long. (Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 28.) Choisy noted how the oarsmen rowed in perfect cadence, the sunlight glistening off the oars—"which created a very beautiful effect ..."—singing in unison and in the same tone as their *comite*, whose sole responsibility was to lead them in song. Admired the abbé, "we heard in the same instant 100 voices accord themselves perfectly with 100 ears." (Choisy, 142, 150.) Otherwise, each *balon* carried as passenger a single mandarin, dressed in ceremonial garb, who carried with him all of his weapons "and even [his] Forks." (Chaumont, 29.) Finally, noted La Loubère, these barges were ranked according to their ceremonial role, the most exalted being the "*balon* of the King of Siam's body," reserved for his use or for transporting royal letters. (La Loubère, 41.)
89. Tachard, 149; Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 23; Choisy, 138. See also Bouvet, 116.
90. After their arrival in Siam in 1512, the Portuguese soon established a permanent settlement at Ayudhya for the purposes of trade and the spread of Christianity. As elsewhere in their Asian empire, inter-marriage was encouraged with the native population to produce a hybrid population that was able to withstand tropical diseases, while remaining politically loyal to the Portuguese Crown.
91. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 28. See also Choisy, 140; Sourches, I, 405.
92. Choisy, 138.
93. *Ibid.*, 135; Tachard, 149; Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 23; Forbin, 475. Choisy recorded that there were thirty *balons* waiting at the mouth of the river (p. 138). The flotilla also included six large barques, or *miroux*, to carry the embassy's baggage.
94. Choisy, 139; Tachard, 153; Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 24; Sourches, I, 405.
95. Father Bouvet, S.J., for example, was delighted with the fireflies that danced over the river at night, describing the sight in lyrical terms as if "the sky had fallen to the earth." He also wrote that the reflection of these insects in the water was like that of a crystal chandelier "charged with an infinite number of lights ... (p. 97)."
96. Tachard, 154. Tachard noted further that "His Majesty had already said publicly,

- that he would not have the ancient Ceremonies observed as to [Chaumont], which were used at the Reception of the Ambassadors of the *Mogul, Persia, and China* ... (p. 158)"
97. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy* ..., 27. See also Souches, I, 405. Other Siamese concealed themselves behind plaited bamboo walls covered with greenery, which had been constructed specifically for the purpose. (Choisy, 140.) According to Siamese custom, whenever the king travelled on the river, his subjects were required to leave their houses and prostrate themselves along the banks or in concealment to ensure that the top of the monarch's head was higher than their own.
98. Choisy, 142. Louis Laneau (1637–1696) was among the first to join the *Missions Étrangères* founded by Lambert de La Motte and Pallu, whom he followed to Siam in 1662, arriving in 1664. Learning the Thai language quickly, he wrote a number of religious texts for the Siamese king, while serving also as chief medical man for the French missionaries. In 1679 he was created bishop of Mételopolis, and in 1685 and 1687 he played a key role in the two French embassies sent to Phra Narai. Imprisoned by the Siamese during the revolution of 1688, he was released two years later and remained in the kingdom until his death in 1696.
99. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy* ..., 34. At Bangkok, where the French embassy spent the night of 9–10 October, Chaumont was paid another singular honour: "The streets through which he passed were perfumed with *Aquila* [probably sandal- or sappanwood] which is a very precious wood, and of a rare scent." (Tachard, 153.)
100. Choisy, 143. Gervaise wrote of such flotillas that "one can best give an idea of its splendour by comparing it to the beautiful ceremonies performed by the doge of Venice when he goes out to marry the sea." (p. 213)
101. The royal astrologers at length had assured the king that this was the ideal day and, noted Choisy, "we were told they are almost never wrong." (Choisy, 147.)
102. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy* ..., 29. See also Choisy, 144–45; Tachard, 158. In fact, Chaumont had been ordered by Louis XIV explicitly to contact the French missionaries upon arrival in Siam to learn how he would be received by the Siamese.
- ("Instructions pour le sieur chevalier de Chaumont ... janvier 1658," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fol. 47vo.)
103. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy*, 29.
104. Choisy, 144.
105. André Deslandes-Bourreau was impressed in 1680, for example, to discover how knowledgeable Phra Narai was of world geography, having had several European books translated for his personal reference, and how informed he was already of French politics and culture. (See the report of André Deslandes-Bourreau to his superiors, 1680, Launay, *Documents*, I, 106.)
106. Choisy, 143.
107. Quoted by Gervaise, 229.
108. Forbin, 476. This occurred at the very beginning of Chaumont's first audience with Phra Narai on 18 October.
109. It was arranged further that the bishop of Mételopolis and the abbé de Choisy would sit cross-legged on a carpet on either side of Chaumont, while the gentlemen of his retinue—who were allowed to witness the event contrary to Siamese custom—would sit in a similar posture in two or three ranks behind his chair.
110. "Instructions pour le sieur chevalier de Chaumont ... janvier 1685," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fol. 48.
111. Forbin, 475. To be fair, however, Chaumont was not entirely in the wrong here. As La Loubère later pointed out, Phra Narai had sent word to the envoy that if any of the court protocol did not suit him, the king would change it (p. 58).
112. The Siamese "understood not Ambassadors, nor ordinary Envoys, nor residents; because they send no person to reside at a foreign Court, but there to dispatch a business, and return." (La Loubère, 108.)
113. Hence, noted La Loubère: "All Oriental Princes do esteem it a great Honour to receive Embassies, and to send the fewest they can ..." (ibid., 110)
114. Ibid. La Loubère observed further that: "Everyone ... who is the carrier of a Letter from the King, is reputed an Ambassador throughout the East."
115. Gervaise, 228.
116. Tachard, 164.
117. La Loubère, 70.
118. The sieur de Saintot left a description of these elaborate casings. The letter sent by Phra Narai to Louis XIV with his embassy of 1686 was written, as usual, on a sheet of thinly beaten gold, "the kings of Siam never writing otherwise." The missive was then encased in an ornate gold casket, which was placed inside a second one of silver, which was placed in turn in a wooden box of rich Japanese lacquer work. In addition, each casing was wrapped in cloth of gold brocade and closed with the chief ambassador's seal of white wax. (See the sieur de Saintot, "Réception faite aux ambassadeurs de Siam in 1686," BN. FF. 14118, fol. 134.)
119. Choisy, 149. To break the deadlock, the abbé finally convinced Chaumont that they "must accommodate [themselves] to the customs of the Orient in matters that were far from dishonourable," adding that "one could not render too great respect to the king's letter ... (p. 147)."
120. According to La Loubère, "'Tis with the same Cup, that the Officers of this Prince deliver him every thing that he receives from their hands (p. 99)." The Persian envoys visiting Siam at the same time as Chaumont also noted the use of this saucer, described as a jewel studded *paidan* with a long gold handle designed to reach the throne window, or "pulpit," at which Narai sat. (*The Ship of Sulaiman*, 63–4.)
121. Forbin, 475; Choisy, 147; Tachard, 159–60. See also La Loubère, 57, 58, 99.
122. Tachard identified these noblemen as Oya Prassadet, the chief protector of all *lalapoins* (i.e., Buddhist monks) in Siam and thus one of the most important state officers, and Oya Peya Teph de Cha, a first cousin to the king of Cambodia, who was a tributary of Phra Narai (p. 161).
123. Tachard described this as "a kind of little Dome, placed in the middle [of the *balon*] ... covered with Scarlet, and lined with *Chinese* Cloth of Gold, having Curtains of the same Stuff. The Balisters [around it] were of Ivory, the Cushions of Velvet, and a Persian carpet was spread underfoot (p. 149)."
124. For descriptions of the embarkation, see: Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy* ..., 31–4; Choisy, 149–51; Tachard, 160–63; Bouvet, 116–17; Forbin, 475–76; Souches, I, 406–07.

125. According to Tachard, a mandarin—thinking he did right—removed the royal letter from its *chirole* on the barge before Chaumont could take it. But in doing so, the Siamese "committed a great fault" for which he was punished "on the Spot" by having "his Head pricked, as an Earnest of severer Chastisement" to follow (pp. 163–64).
126. Choisy, 151; Forbin, 476.
127. For descriptions of the procession, see: Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 34; Choisy, 151; Tachard, 163–65; Bouvet, 117–18; Forbin, 476; Souches, I, 407–08.
128. This entry is described in: Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 34–5; Choisy, 151–52; Tachard, 165–66; Bouvet, 117–18; Forbin, 476; Souches, I, 408.
129. Tachard, 166. See also Gervaise, 211.
130. Choisy, 151. The abbé also was unimpressed by Phra Narai's guard of Mughal cavalry, noting that their horses "were handsome enough, but badly harnessed." By contrast, Father Bouvet thought the Siamese troops were well disciplined, and that they exhibited the same mien and pride of European soldiers (p. 118).
131. These men also rowed the royal *balon*. (Tachard, 166.) Forbin thought the arms of these troops looked more blue than red (p. 476).
132. Father Bouvet described Chaumont's seat as a simple *tabouret* or stool, square in shape and without a back, covered with a small carpet (p. 119).
133. The French had been warned expressly not to show their feet to the king, as this was (and still is) a great insult according to Siamese culture.
134. According to Quaritch Wales, the *suppathon* is mentioned in the Pauranic literature of India as one of the essential symbols of kingship, while elsewhere in Southeast Asia it is regarded as part of the regalia of Buddha in the Tusita Heaven. The *suppathon* thus is one of the pre-eminent trappings of authority. (*Siamese State Ceremonies*, 93–4.)
135. Artus de Lionne (1655–1713), son of the late Hugues de Lionne, marquis de Berny (c. 1671), Louis XIV's former minister for foreign affairs. Artus had joined the *Missions Étrangères* after ordination as a priest and was sent to Siam in 1681. In 1686 he returned to France with Phra Narai's third embassy as interpreter, and while there he was named bishop of Rosalie. He returned to Asia the following year, remaining until his return to Europe in 1702, where he died eleven years later.
136. See Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 35–6, 43; Tachard, 167; Forbin, 476; Choisy, 152; Bouvet, 118–19; Souches, I, 408, 412.
137. Tachard, 168; Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 41–2; Forbin, 476; Souches, I, 411. See also Claude de l'Isle (p. 128) and Nicolas Gervaise (p. 215) for similar descriptions.
138. Tachard, 168. See Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 42, for comparison.
139. Choisy was honored to carry Louis XIV's brief, but that honour cost him dearly. Although "the Siamese regarded me with respect," he wrote, "I carried [the letter] more than three hundred feet in a gold vase [from the palace gates to the audience hall] that weighed a hundred pounds, and I was worn out by it." (p. 157) Louis's letter to Phra Narai, dated 21 January 1685, is reprinted in Launay, *Documents*, I, 159–60.
140. Tachard, 168. See also Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 36; Choisy, 153; Bouvet, 119; Forbin, 476; Souches, I, 409.
141. For the text of Chaumont's speech, see Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 39–40; Choisy, 153–54. As instructed, the ambassador assured Phra Narai of Louis XIV's friendship, but urged the Asian monarch to embrace Christianity as the most secure foundation for good relations between the two kingdoms. (See also the "Instructions pour le sieur chevalier de Chaumont ... janvier 1685," Arch. Nat. B2 52, fol. 48.)
142. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 36; Choisy, 159; Tachard, 168.
143. In fact, the bishop of Métellopolis translated Chaumont's address into Portuguese, and this in turn was translated into Thai by another court official. According to Siamese custom, ambassadors, petitioners, etc., never were permitted to address the monarch directly; they could speak to him only through an intermediary, a high-ranking mandarin whose position was sufficiently exalted that he could address the king personally.
144. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 56; Choisy, 154; Tachard, 171; Souches, I, 411. In fact, after the audience Chaumont complained about this breach of promise. But when told that the mandarins despaired of ever displeasing their monarch, the ambassador retorted coolly: "And I ... was even more embarrassed: you have only one King to please, and I have two!" (Quoted in Choisy, 157.)
145. Tachard, 171.
146. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 56; Choisy, 154.
147. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 40; Choisy, 155; Tachard, 171; Bouvet, 119; Forbin, 476; Souches, I, 411.
148. Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies*, 184.
149. Choisy, 155; Tachard, 171.
150. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 36, 40.
151. Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam*, 104.
152. Choisy, 155.
153. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 43–4; Choisy, 156; Tachard, 173; Bouvet, 119–20; Forbin, 476–77; Souches, I, 411.
154. Choisy, *Mémoires*, 149; Martin, II, 993.
155. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 38–9.
156. The three ambassadors were: P'ya Wisut Sunt'on (known commonly as Kōsa Pān), brother of the late Phra'klang of Siam, who himself would serve in that capacity during next two reigns; Ok Luang Kalayan Ruchai Maitri, an elderly man and former ambassador to China; and Ok Khun Si Wisan Wacha, a young man whose father just recently had been sent as ambassador to Portugal. The three envoys were accompanied by a suite of eight other mandarins, twelve Siamese youths who were to be educated in the language and crafts of France, twenty servants and, as usual in Siamese diplomacy, a rich load of presents for Louis XIV and his family (see note 166 below).
157. For modern, though largely descriptive, narratives of the Siamese embassy to France of 1686, see: Launay, I, 59–63; Pallegoix, II, 90–1; Hutchinson, *Adventurers*, 115–22; Syamananda, 79–80; Wood, 206; H. Belevitch-Stankevitch, *Le goût chinois en France au temps de Louis XIV* (Geneva:

- 1970) 36–48; Jules Sottas, *Histoire de la Compagnie royale des Indes-Orientales 1664–1719* (Paris: 1905) 142–43; Kontsi Subamonkala, "La Thaïlande et ses relations avec la France," unpublished dissertation (Paris: 1940) 76; Manich Jumsai, 88–125; Vongsuravatana, 79–88; Van der Cruysse, 373–408. Among these authors, Subamonkala alone demonstrates a sense of the significance of Louis XIV's reception of the new Siamese embassy at Versailles.
158. Louis XIV to the sieur de Brancas, French ambassador to Spain, 20 November 1714, quoted in Tapié, "Louis XIV's Methods in Foreign Policy," 3–4. Added Louis, "After careful deliberation [of the available information] I give my view, which I am ready to support with strong arguments since I know that it is the best course to follow."
159. Choisy, *Mémoires*, 150; Sourches, I, 401. See also Deslandes, 23.
160. "Mémoire de M. de Chaumont de ce qu'il faut faire pour rendre les mêmes honneurs aux ambassadeurs de Siam, que le roy de Siam en l'a fait à son regard," 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fols. 197–197vo. Chaumont recommended that the new ambassadors be met at Brest by royal officials; that they be paid the same honours during their journey to Paris that he had received in Siam; that they be greeted by local and provincial dignitaries along their route; that they be lodged everywhere in the best houses possible; and finally that they be saluted with artillery at every town through which they passed. Chaumont's recommendations corresponded almost exactly to those forwarded to Versailles by the late Father Gayme in 1680 (see note 22 above).
161. Vachet, 180–81; Saintot, "Réception faite aux ambassadeurs de Siam en 1686," BN. FF. 14118, fols. 133–133vo.; Donneau de Vizé, *Voyage des ambassadeurs de Siam en France* (Bangkok: 1985) 3–4, 7–8; Michael Smithies, trans., *The Siamese Embassy to the Sun King: The Personal Memorials of Kōsa Pān* (Bangkok: 1990) 17–18. See also Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 141.
162. On their first night ashore, for example, the three envoys were hosted by the intendant Desclouzeaux and his wife at a banquet held "in a superb chamber," at which the principal table was set for twenty-four persons. Six other tables seated eight more persons each. "During the whole meal," wrote Vachet, "there was a symphony, and from time to time several delicious voices sang." (Vachet, 181.)
163. Saintot, 134vo.–135; marquis de Seignelay to M. Desclouzeaux, 25 June 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 198; "Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam 1686," BN. FF. 16633, fol. 459; Dangeau, I, 354; Smithies, 19. According to Donneau de Vizé (pp. 9–10), M. Storf (or variously, Storf, Torf, Storst, Torst, Corst and Tort de Botentorf) had been selected because of his skill at handling similar missions in the past, such as the Muscovite embassy of June 1685. (See also Dangeau, I, 152.) Furthermore, noted Vachet (p. 183), he "never left the side" of the three envoys during their stay in France.
164. Originally, Louis had planned to convey the envoys by boat up the Seine River to the French capital, perhaps in accordance with Siamese practice. But he suddenly changed his mind, sending them overland instead. (Louis XIV to the sieur de Vaudricourt, 25 June 1686, and to M. Desclouzeaux, 25 June 1686, Arch. Nat. B2 56, fols. 119–119vo.; marquis de Seignelay to M. Desclouzeaux, 25 June 1686, and to M. de Montmart, 25 June 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fols. 198–198vo.)
165. "Extrait des registres des cérémonies," 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 197vo.; marquis de Seignelay to M. Desclouzeaux, 25 June 1686, and to M. de Lavardin, 26 June 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, 198–198vo.; "Ordre du Roy pour faire fournir les voitures nécessaires pour la conduite des ambassadeurs de Siam de Brest à Paris," June 1686, Arch. Nat. B2 56, fol. 149vo.; Donneau de Vizé, 10.
166. These gifts included: two ceremonial canons, cast at Siam, that were both six feet long, inlaid with silver and mounted on carriages also garnished with silver; a variety of caskets, ornate boxes and *coffres* of precious metals and scented and lacquered woods; porcelaine; silk fabrics; jewelry and so on. Many of these items came originally from Japan and China, not just Siam. There were gifts as well for the Dauphin and his wife, the ducs de Bourgogne and d'Anjou, and the marquis de Seignelay. ("Mémoire des présents que le Roi de Siam a fait au Roy et de ceux de M. Constance et de la princesse tant à Mme. la Dauphine qu'à MMggrs. les ducs de Bourgogne et d'Anjou et à MMrs. de Seignelay et de Croissy," BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fols. 146–149vo.; Michael Smithies, trans., *The Discourses at Versailles of the First Siamese Ambassadors to France 1686–7, Together with the List of Their Presents to the Court* (Bangkok: 1986) 70–96.) The value of these gifts in France was estimated at over 50,000 *écus*. (Deslandes, 23.)
167. The embassy's baggage was exempted from the various customs tolls along the river, for which special passports were issued, but to prevent tampering, the crates were also specially sealed until their arrival at Paris. Moreover, every precaution was made to prevent damage to the goods. (See Saintot, fol. 140; M. de Montmart to the marquis de Seignelay, 1 July 1686, Arch. Nat. B3 51, fol. 150vo.; marquis de Seignelay to M. Desclouzeaux, 25 June 1686, and to M. de Montmart, 12 July 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fols. 198–198vo., 199–199vo.; marquis de Seignelay to M. de Frémont, 25 July 1686, Arch. Nat. B2 57, fols. 489–489vo.; Donneau de Vizé, 13.)
168. Marquis de Seignelay to M. Lelison and to M. du Metz, 29 July 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 200; Dangeau, I, 364; Vachet, 182; Saintot, fols. 137–38. Originally, it was planned to house the Siamese legation at Vincennes, but because the maison du Roy was under repair and the medieval keep was inappropriate to house them, Berny was selected instead.
169. "Account of Baron de Breteuil, Grand Master of Ceremonies, of the Siamese audience at Versailles, 1 September 1686," in Gillette Ziegler, ed., *At the Court of Versailles*, Simon W. Taylor, trans. (New York: 1966) 238; Vachet, 183; Saintot, fol. 140.
170. Vachet, 182; Donneau de Vizé, 10.
171. Saintot, fols. 134vo.–135; "Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs ... 1686," BN. FF. 16633, fol. 459; "Extrait des registres des cérémonies," 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 197vo.; marquis de Seignelay to M. Desclouzeaux, 25 June 1686, and to M. de Lavardin, 26 June 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fols. 198–198vo.; "Lettre du Roy à mr. le marquis de Molac pour luy dire de faire tirer le canon du château de Nantes lorsque les ambassadeurs de Siam passeront par ladite ville," 25 June 1686, Arch. Nat. B2 56, fol. 120. See also the "Ordre du Roy pour faire rendre les honneurs aux ambassadeurs de Siam dans les lieux où ils passeront, 6 Octobre 1686," Arch. Nat. B2 56, fols. 193–193vo.; and Georges Lecocq, ed., *Les Ambassadeurs de Siam à Saint-Quentin en 1686* (Paris: 1874) 9.
172. Lecocq, 11.
173. Breteuil, 238. See also Saintot, fol. 140vo.; Donneau de Vizé, 49; "Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs ... 1686," BN. FF. 16633, fol. 459; Choisy, *Mémoires*, 152; Vachet, 182; Dangeau, I, 364. Doubtless this new principle was a direct result of French

- interest in Siam; it also was a very expensive policy. The total costs of the Siamese embassy from 9 July to 1 September—including transportation, food, rents, lading charges and so on—was 29,036 *francs*, not counting cash reimbursements amounting to 7,500 *francs* paid to Chaumont, Vaudricourt and Joyeuse for expenses incurred on the homeward voyage. The costs of the Siamese embassy for the month of September amounted to 18,310 *francs*. (BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fols. 200vo–201; Dangeau, I, 387.)
174. For the same reason, none of the envoys was placed in the room immediately above that containing the royal letter. (Saintot, fol. 134.) This explains, in part, why Vincennes was unsuitable for their residence prior to entering Paris. To accommodate them properly in the medieval keep, seeing that the *maison du roy* was under repair, would have required one of the envoys to occupy the chamber above the royal chamber that would have been reserved for the chief ambassador, thus placing him higher than the royal letter. This was forbidden by Siamese custom.
175. *Ibid.*, fols. 134–134vo.; Smithies, 20.
176. Saintot, vol. 141.
177. Vachet, 182; "Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam," 1686, BN. FF. 16633, fol. 459. See also the contemporary account of the journey attributed to Kōsa Pān, the chief ambassador, in Smithies, 19–25. Only at Orléans were the envoys not accorded the honours Louis XIV had ordered for their reception, no doubt to the king's great displeasure. (Saintot, fol. 135vo.)
178. Martin, II, 995; Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 134.
179. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 134.
180. Vachet, 181.
181. Kōsa Pān to the marquis de Seignelay, September 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 195vo.
182. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy*, 135–36.
183. Abbé de Lionne to Father Vachet, 19 August 1686, Laneau, I, 185.
184. Their route had taken them through Rennes, Nantes, Angers, Blois, Chambord, Orléans, Fontainebleau and Vincennes. To give an idea of the entertainments the envoys received along the way, shortly after their arrival at Berny a masked ball was held. All the guests attended in costumes supposedly representing the national dress of Siam, China, Japan and Cochinchina. Among their number was the marquis de Seignelay, who had come incognito with members of his family and other high-ranking court nobles. To avoid any missteps, however, Vachet warned Kōsa Pān of the marquis' identity and then relied on his discretion to act appropriately, "being convinced that he had sufficient presence of mind to handle it." (Vachet, 182.)
185. *Gazette de Paris*, 3 and 12 August 1686, BN. FF. n.a. 9380, fol. 200vo.; Donneau de Vizé, 45–50; Saintot, fol. 138–140vo.; Vachet, 183. A company of the *Cent Suisses* and another of the *Garde du corps du Roi* formed part of the procession, as well as eight mounted trumpeters of the *chambre du roy*—an extraordinary honour paid to Phra Narai's letter, seeing that fanfares never were sounded at the entry of ambassadors into Paris. The guards initially had joined the envoys at Vincennes and Berny "to protect the gates from the tremendous crowd of people who came to see" them. These units were to remain with the Siamese legation for the duration of its stay in France. (Saintot, fols. 137–vo.)
186. Donneau de Vizé, 48–9. Their route took them along the rues de St. Antoine, de la Verrerie, de la Ferronnerie, de St.-Honoré and de l'Arbre-sec, thence across the Seine River by the Pont Neuf to the rue Dauphine and finally into the rue de Tournon. Apparently, the sheer size of the procession caused severe traffic jams along the way, despite the presence of the soldiers to keep order.
187. Originally, the ambassadors were to have been received at court on 14 August, two days after their entry into Paris. But because of a brief illness of the king, the audience was postponed until September.
188. Chaumont, *Relation of the Late Embassy ...*, 77. See also Bourges, 160.
189. Gervaise, 67.
190. Tachard, 273; l'Isle, 128; Caron, 128; Bourges, 160. According to Prince Dhani-Nivat, however, Siamese monarchy in the seventeenth century never was considered intrinsically divine. Rather, it was paternal in nature, the king acting as father to his people, as well as lawgiver, military leader and ruler. Not only was he rewarded for his responsibilities with deep popular respect, he also was held accountable for national and even natural calamities, such as crop failures. The ideal Siamese monarch was thus the "King of Righteousness," based on the *Thammasat* tradition of Buddhism, and "Protector of the Faith." ("The Old Siamese Concept of the Monarchy," *Journal of the Siam Society*, 36, no. 2 (1947): 91–106.)
191. Bourges, 160; Tavannes, II, 290–92; Gervaise, 221. Of Siamese ceremonial generally, wrote Gervaise, "There never has been any court anywhere in the world more ritualistic than the court of the king of Siam."
192. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India*, V. Ball, trans., 2 vols. (London: 1889) II, 290; Bourges, 160.
193. L'Isle, 13–14.
194. Caron, 97; Kaempfer, 30.
195. Martin, II, 942–43.
196. These were issued and first worn by the *Gardes Suisses* on 22 March 1685. The officers, however, wore blue. See Dangeau, I, 139.
197. Saintot, fols. 141vo–143; Breteuil, 238–39; "Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam," 1686, BN. FF. 16633, fols. 459–459vo.; Souches, I, 436; Donneau de Vizé, 59–63; Smithies, 43–4. Apparently, this room was not near the Ambassadors' Staircase, regrettably destroyed in 1752 by Louis V's renovations, but on the opposite side of the courtyard near where the Queen's Staircase is today.
198. Saintot, fol. 143. See also Breteuil, 239; Donneau de Vizé, 63.
199. This "machine" had been damaged slightly on the voyage to France. Thus pleading that it would be impracticable to take it overland to Paris from Brest with the envoys, the French authorities sent it with the rest of the embassy's baggage up the Seine River. It was repaired quickly at the French capital and then transferred to Berny in time for the mandarins' arrival. Thereafter, it remained with the Siamese legation, being kept usually in the chief ambassador's bed chamber.
200. Souches, I, 436. See also, "Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam," 1686, BN. FF. 16633, fols. 459vo–460.

201. Sainctot, fols. 144–45vo.; Breteuil, 239–40; "Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam," 1686, BN. FF. 16633, fol. 460vo.; Sourches, I, 43637; Donneau de Vizé, 64–6; Smithies, 44–5.
202. Sainctot, fols. 143vo.–44; Breteuil, 234; "Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam," 1686, BN. FF. 16633, fol. 459vo.; Sourches, I, 436; Choisy, *Mémoires*, 152; Donneau de Vizé, 67–8; Smithies, 45.
203. Sourches, I, 436–37; "Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam," 1686, BN. FF. 16633, fol. 461; Smithies, 45–6. At the time, it was estimated that Louis's attire cost two million *livres*!
204. This group also included the Dauphin, Louis's son and heir; the duc d'Orléans, his brother; and the duc de Chartres, his nephew. They, too, were dressed in garments studded with diamonds, rubies or emeralds, depending upon the base color of their surcoats.
205. Lucy Norton, trans. and ed., *Historical Memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon*, 3 vols. (London: 1967) I, 62.
206. Sainctot, fol. 146vo.; Breteuil, 240; Sourches, I, 437; Donneau de Vizé, 68; Smithies, 45.
207. Choisy, *Mémoires*, 152.
208. For this address, see the *Harangues Faites à Sa Majesté, et aux Princes et Princesses de la Maison Royale, par les Ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam, à leur première audience, et à leur audience du congé* (Paris: 1687). A modern English translation of these speeches, with a facsimile of the original published French versions, can be found in Michael Smithies, trans., *The Discourses at Versailles of the First Siamese Ambassadors to France...*, 24–48.
209. Tapié, "Louis XIV's Methods in Foreign Policy," 7.
210. For the details of the audience itself, see: Sainctot, fols. 146–150vo.; Breteuil, 240; Sourches, I, 437–38; Dangeau, I, 378; Choisy, *Mémoires*, 152; Deslandes, 23; "Audience donnée aux ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam," 1686, BN. FF. 16633, fols. 460vo.–462; Donneau de Vizé, 67–71; Smithies, 45–6.
211. For this mission, in addition to La Loubère's own account of Siam published in 1691 and subsequently reissued in 1987 by Jacq-Hergoualc'h, see: Claude Boullay de Céberet, "Journal du voyage de Siam, fait par le sr. Céberet envoyé extraordinaire du Roy près le Roy de Siam; et coste de Coromandel pendant les années 1687 et 1688," BN. FF. n.a., fols. 216–267vo., since published in a modern edition by Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'h under the title, *Étude historique et critique du journal du voyage de Siam de Claude Céberet, envoyé extraordinaire du roi en 1687 et 1688* (Paris: 1992); Père Guy Tachard, S.J., *Second Voyage du Père Tachard et des Jésuites envoyés par le Roy au Royaume de Siam* (Paris: 1689); Jean Drans and Henri Bernard, S.J. eds., *Mémoire du Père de Bèze sur la vie de Constance Phaulkon* (Tokyo: 1947), published in English translation by E. W. Hutchinson, under the title, *1688: Revolution in Siam* (Hong Kong: 1968); J. C. Gatty, ed., *Voilage de Siam du Père Bouvet* (Leiden: 1963).
212. But as Tapié notes, military force was regarded at Versailles as an essential instrument of foreign policy, in order to defend what already was possessed and to acquire more. (Tapié, "Louis XIV's Methods in Foreign Policy," 5)
213. For the revolution in, and repulse of, the French from Siam, see: *A Full and True Relation of the Great and Wonderful Revolution that happened lately in the kingdom of Siam in the East-Indies* (London: 1690); *A Narrative of the Revolutions which took place in Siam in the Year 1688* (Amsterdam: 1692), reprinted by O. Frankfurter, trans., in the *Journal of the Siam Society*, 5 (1908): 1–50; Père Marcel Le Blanc, S.J., *Histoire de la révolution du royaume de Siam arrivée en l'année 1688*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1692); Tachard, *Second Voyage*; Bèze, *passim*; Père d'Orléans, S.J., *Histoire de M. Constance, premier ministre du Roy de Siam* (Paris: 1690); Bouvet, *passim*. For modern accounts, see E. W. Hutchinson, "The Retirement of the French Garrison in the Year 1688," *Journal of the Siam Society* 28 (1935): 37–77; David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven, Conn.: 1984); W. A. R. Wood, *A History of Siam from the Earliest Times to the Year A.D. 1781* (Bangkok: 1924).
214. Joachim Bouvet, S.J., *The Present Condition of the Muscovite Empire, till the Year 1699 ... with the Life of the Present Emperour of China* (London: 1699) n.p. (introduction). Bouvet also witnessed the revolution of 1688. See the relation of his voyage to Siam.
215. Charles Auguste marquis de La Fare, *Mémoires et réflexions du marquis de La Fare, Émile Raunié*, ed. (Paris: 1884) 186–87. La Fare's criticisms were hardly unbiased, however. Like Saint-Simon, he fell into disgrace when he resigned his commission in the royal army at the height of the Dutch war, for which Louis did not forgive him. No doubt this accounts for his ill-will toward the king.
216. John E. Wills, Jr., *Pepper, Guns & Parleys: The Dutch East India Company and China, 1662–1681* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1974) 211.
217. Paul Hazard, *The European Mind 1680–1715*, J. Lewis May, trans. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: 1953) 45