

THE SIAM OF MENDES PINTO'S TRAVELS

Michael Smithies*

Abstract

The *Peregrinação* of Mendes Pinto is an important source for the history, society and political culture of Siam in the mid 16th century. Although many doubts have been cast on its reliability, it cannot be ignored and a recent translation by Rebecca Catz (1989) gives reliable access to this difficult text for English-speaking scholars. The present article extracts all references in the *Peregrinação* which deal with Siam.

Introduction

Fernão Mendes Pinto (?1510–1583) spent twenty-one years in Asia, returning to his native Portugal in 1558. After some years in vain soliciting an official position or a pension, he wrote his huge text, *Peregrinação* (formerly spelt *Peregrinacam*), between 1569 and 1578. On his death, he willed the manuscript (now lost in all known copies) to a pious establishment, the Casa Pia dos Penitentes in Lisbon, clearly intending it should be published. This was consulted by historians and permission to publish was sought in 1603, but it still took another eleven years to appear. Rebecca D. Catz (1989), in her recent edition and the first complete translation into English of the text, advances two reasons for Pinto's hesitancy to publish and the delay in the book's final appearance in Portuguese. The first is attributed to the power of the Inquisition and the nature of the text, a tongue-in-cheek attack on religious persecution and intolerance; and the second to the form and framework of the text, full of hardly known proper names, rambling unpunctuated sentences, and its sheer size.

The purpose of this article is to highlight the references to Siam in the text, and not to enter into the disputed territory of whether Mendes Pinto was telling the truth or not¹. He gained the posthumous reputation of a liar, and was accused of invention, exag-

geration, and worse, but already he had his defenders in the seventeenth century: the Portuguese Jesuit, Fr. Cardim, who was in Ayutthaya from 1626 to 1629, wrote that 'Though the book of *Peregrinacam* of Pinto is considered to be apocryphal, he is correct in that which he writes about the kingdom of Siam.' (de Campos 1940: 17).²

Eight of Mendes Pinto's 226 chapters deal extensively with Siam in the 1540s and 1550s and there are numerous references throughout to the country, its outposts and dependencies. The article by Wood (1920: 25-39) closely examines the correspondence of dates in Pinto's text and Luang Prasert's *Pongsawadan*, and finds little agreement between the two. Both were often wrong: Pinto wrote up his narrative several years after the events he describes, and given that he had been captured thirteen times, enslaved sixteen or seventeen times (he gives both figures), and shipwrecked so many times one loses count, he is hardly likely to have had any surviving notes to consult; Luang Prasert's chronology has, furthermore, been called to question, and his record was in any case written a century after this period.

It has been known for a long time that Cogan's 1653 English translation, based itself on an imperfect French version by Figuiet, was abridged and inaccurate. In Catz's (1989) complete translation, which follows the first edition of 1614 and is done

* PO Box 1, Bua Yai, Korat 30120, Thailand.

into flowing, unaffected English with copious footnotes to enlighten the reader, one is still left with the problem of what Mendes Pinto actually saw, what he invented, and what he borrowed from earlier sources.

For, like many travellers, Pinto incorporated in his text pieces from earlier authors; the mediaeval traveller-priest Odoric is apparently one source, and Pinto's account of the kingdom of Prester John in Abyssinia seems to be another that is second-hand. Sifting out what is first-hand and what not is no easy task, and Catz does her best: but she wisely tends to let the text speak for itself.

However, it is known for certain that his travels took him to the dependencies of Goa and then Malacca, where he was certainly based for some time and became fluent in Malay. From Malacca he apparently travelled throughout the islands now constituting Indonesia, was in Pattani, Siam, Pegu and Burma (there are extensive chapters on the ruthless treatment by the Burmese of Mon uprisings), China, the Ryukyus, and Japan, which he claims to have discovered and whither he accompanied the saintly Francis Xavier. He may have gone to the kingdom of Luang Prabang, and also seen the Dalai Lama in Tibet. Mendes Pinto was definitely in Ayutthaya before 5 December 1554, for a letter survives from him giving an eye-witness account of the city (Catz 1983: 43-4).

Europeans knew relatively little of these eastern lands, of course; as Mendes Pinto writes in Chapter 143, in relation to the Ryukyus, 'what we have seen and read in the works of Ptolemy as well as the others who have written on geography, not one of them ever went beyond the kingdom of Siam and the island of Sumatra, with the exception of our own cosmographers', that is, the Portuguese, who were a little more adventurous.

The chapters on Siam

Chapters 181-187 cover the 120 Portuguese mercenaries in Siam (including, he implies,

Mendes Pinto himself) and their participation in the 1545 attack on Chiangmai; the poisoning of King Chairacha (r. 1534-1547) by his consort; an account of the good deeds of the king; the king's cremation and the usurpation by the consort and her lover of the throne; the selection of the new King Chakkraphat (r. 1548-1569), then a monk, and a Burmese invasion of Siam; the siege of Ayutthaya and final assault in 1549.

Chapter 181, 'Portuguese mercenaries in Siam,' has Mendes Pinto arriving with two Portuguese ships in Ayutthaya, to be welcomed by fellow-nationals established there. The king of Chiangmai laid siege to the unidentified Siamese city of Quitirvão and killed Oya Ok-Pyra Kamphaengphet. The Siamese king (Chairacha) ordered a general mobilization, including foreigners, who were given the choice of leaving the country or joining the Siamese army; 120 of the 130 Portuguese chose to stay in the expectation of promised favours and honours. After twelve days, the king left with an army of 400,000 men, including 70,000 foreign mercenaries. The King of Chiangmai and his allies attacked and were eventually repulsed, both sides suffering many losses.

Chapter 182, 'The King of Siam poisoned by the Queen,' starts with the King of Siam fortifying Quitirvão, making war on the unidentified Guibem because its queen had allowed passage to the King of Chiangmai and had consented to the death of Oya Kamphaengphet and his army. Guibem capitulated, paid an indemnity, and handed over the widowed queen's son. The King of Siam reached Lake Chiangmai (also known as Singuapamor or Singapamor), captured towns thereabouts, then withdrew, returning to Ayutthaya to an extravagant reception. His queen (the royal concubine Si Sudachan) in the king's absence 'had committed adultery with one of the purveyors of the royal household, and with a man by the name of Uquumchenira' (Ok-Khun Chinarat), and was four months pregnant. Afraid of her fate, 'as well she might be,' she decided to poison the king. He only sur-

vived five days. The nobles agreed to crown his eldest son (he had two sons by Si Sudachan) while the king was still alive; this was Yot Fa, (r. 1547–48). The ceremony was performed by Oya Phitsanulok, 'the highest dignitary in the land;' the boy also received the acknowledgement of the most senior priest, Quiay Pomvedé.

Chapter 183, 'The good King of Siam,' relates some of the praiseworthy deeds of the late king, particularly as they concern the Portuguese, and many of which Mendes Pinto claims to have witnessed himself 'during the years between 1540 and 1545 when I was trading in this kingdom'. An envoy was sent from Malacca to secure the release of Domingo de Seixas, and this was agreed by the late king. In 1545 a Portuguese ship was wrecked off Ligor, and the *shahbandar* (harbour master) confiscated everything; the Portuguese in Ayutthaya heard of their misfortune, and on a festival day, 'The Day of the White Elephant,' they sought redress for the Portuguese in Ligor, which was obtained. A reference to the king's *corvée* levy in 1545, and a dishonest official in Banchá is mentioned under that location later. One Portuguese less brave than his fellows in an attack on the city of Lantor was ordered to stay at home and cut his beard for his cowardice, whereas the others had their pay tripled, were exempted from customs duties and were given permission to build churches 'where the name of the Portuguese God could be worshipped.'

Chapter 184, 'The Queen and her lover usurp the throne,' begins with a description of the elaborate cremation of the late king. His ashes were placed in a silver coffer towed by priests and followed by one hundred large barges with life-like animal figures on them covered by pieces of silk, a huge serpent, and an angel-like child. The animal-idols were set on fire 'in a pagoda called Quiay Pontar' to the great noise of musket fire, bells, gongs, and shouts; this was followed by 'many clever pageants,' after which everyone in the city shut themselves up for ten days. After this, the new king was announced, and passed 'though

the entire city with great pomp and majesty'. Since he was only nine, his mother was made his tutor and president of the Council of Governors. Things were quiet until the queen gave birth to a son four and a half months later, and she decided to kill her first-born so the bastard son could inherit. She had a special guard created to watch over the young king, and began to lay hands on, and execute, some of the grandees of the kingdom. Pretending to be ill, she resigned the presidency of the council to her lover, 'leaving the way open for him to usurp the throne and make himself absolute lord of the Sornau (Siamese) empire, which yielded an income of twelve million in gold, to say nothing of its other resources, which amounted to nearly as much'. She had her lover marry her, murdered all the lords of the kingdom, confiscating their estates, and poisoned the little king her son Yot Fa. Mendes Pinto says her lover Uquumchenira was proclaimed king (Worawongsa r. June–July 1548, according to Wyatt) on 11 November 1545 but he and his queen were killed, says Mendes Pinto, by Oya Phitsanulok and a duke from Cambodia at a banquet on 2 January 1546.

Chapter 185, 'The Burmese invade Siam,' starts with Oya Phitsanulok and the duke from Cambodia selecting the monk Pretiem, a younger half-brother of the good late king, to reign (Phra Tien, r. July 1548–January 1569 as Chakkraphat). The Burmese, seeing the disarray of Siam and its throne occupied by a monk with no experience of warfare, resolved to attack from Pegu. The king (Tabinshwehti, r. 1531–1551) decided on a campaign, leaving Martaban in 1548 with an army of 800,000 men including 100,000 foreign mercenaries, among them 1,000 Portuguese. He laid siege to the unidentified fortress of Tapurau, then set out for Sukhothai nine leagues away, but decided to march on Ayutthaya without delay and take the new king by surprise. He 'reached a town called Tilau which is on the coast of Junk Ceylon,'³ took the unidentified city of Juropião, and came within sight of Ayutthaya, near where he pitched his camp.

Chapter 186, 'The Siege of Ayutthaya,' has the city surrounded and attacked on 19 June 1548. The Turkish mercenaries in the Burmese army were about to open the city gates from within and claim the prize offered by the Burmese king, but were attacked and all killed by 3,000 Javanese *amoks* 'in less time than it takes to recite three or four Credos.' Oya Phitsanulok, in charge of the defence of the city, opens the gates and mockingly asks for the prize money from the Burmese king. Tabinshwehti ignores his taunting; Chakkraphat is attacked, and the Burmese withdraw.

Chapter 187, 'The final Burmese assault,' took place the following day. A Greek military engineer invented 'ingenious military devices' to assist the assault using reinforced wheeled fire-rams. All the Ayutthaya castles were burnt to the ground, and the Burmese withdrew for what remained of the night.

Chapter 188, 'Rebellion in Pegu,' opens with the Burmese deciding to continue the siege and build a mound from which to bombard the city with cannon. News arrives that the Xemindo (Smim Thaw or Thamindaw) of Pegu has revolted, killing 15,000 Burmese and capturing its strongholds. The Burmese king decides to lift the siege of Ayutthaya at once and march on Martaban.

Chapter 189, 'The marvellous Kingdom of Siam,' is a description what is often here called 'the empire of Sornau,'⁴ its extent, wealth, trade and its cities. These on the Indian Ocean include Junk Ceylon (Phuket) and Tenasserim, and on the China Sea Mompolocota (spelt Mompollacota in chapter 46 where it is indicated as being 'off the bar of the river of Siam'), Cuy (Kuiburi), Ligor (Ligor, Nakhon Si Thammarat), Chintabu (Chantaburi), and Berdio (possibly Phatthalung).

The capital city Ayutthaya is 'the only one which is surrounded by walls which are made of mud, brick, and adobe'. There are said to be '400,000 hearths within its walls and that 100,000 of them belong to foreigners from many different parts of the

world'. These figures are undoubtedly exaggerations, like those of the number of troops in the armies given above; supposing that each house contained only five persons, that would still give the capital a population of one million, which, given that Siam was notoriously underpopulated before the twentieth century, is most unlikely.

Sornau's lands produced an 'abundance of meat and agricultural products,' the highlands 'are densely forested with angelywood from which thousands of all kinds of ships can be built'. Its mines produced 'silver, iron, steel, lead, saltpetre, and sulphur.' Also available were 'a great deal of silk, eaglewood, benzoin, lacquer, indigo, cotton cloth, rubies, sapphires, ivory, and gold—all available in huge quantities.' Brazilwood and rosewood are exported in 'more than a hundred junks every year to China, Hainan, the Ryukyus, Cambodia and Champa' (though it seems unlikely that Cambodia and Champa would import wood from Siam). There are also 'large supplies of wax, honey, and sugar' and also (much sought after by Europeans) 'pepper, ginger, cinnamon, camphor, alum, cassia fistula, tamarind, and cardamom.' All these, with the exception of cotton cloth and probably silk, are raw primary products, and the agricultural items are forest products as much as cultivated ones.

This produce causes the country to be 'very rich,' and it carries on 'an enormous amount of trade with all the provinces and islands of Java, Bali, Madura, Kangean [an island group east of Madura], Borneo, and Solor.' Each year more than 'a thousand junks' leave from the country to trade.

Import duties levied throughout the country are 'set aside for certain pagodas as charity.' Since the temples are not allowed to accumulate wealth, duties are consequently low: 'the merchants are only asked to pay what they wish, by way of charity, of their own free will.'

Politically, the country is divided into 2,600 communities known as *produm [prae don?]*, 'which are like cities and towns among us,' and do not include villages. The king,

who 'is by no means a tyrant,' goes by the name of *Prechau [Phra Chao] Saleu* (Mendes Pinto translates this as 'holy limb of God'), only 'appears in public twice a year, surrounded on both occasions with a splendid show of majesty.' In spite of the king's wealth and grandeur, 'he acknowledged the superiority of the emperor of China.' This payment of tribute is explained, probably correctly, as a means of obtaining the right to send his junks to the port of 'Comhay' [Kwanghai in Kwantung province].

Other references to the country and its cities

Scattered throughout the text are references to the country, its people, and its other cities. The first extensive reference to the power of the King of Siam occurs in Chapter 36:

There is a great king who rules over the entire coastal region and interior of Malaysia. Of all his titles, the one by which he is best known is *Preechau Saleu*, emperor of all the Sornau, which is a province comprising thirteen separate kingdoms, otherwise known as Siam. Subject to him are fourteen lesser kings who are required to pay him tribute every year. According to ancient custom, they were forced to make an annual journey to the city of Ayutthaya, capital of the Sornau empire and kingdom of Siam, in order to deliver the required tribute personally and perform the *zumbaia*, a ceremony that consists of kissing the sword at his side.

There is another important section in Chapter 124, when Mendes Pinto and his companions are at the Tartar court, not then in Beijing but in the unidentified Tuymicão, where the king,

... was greeted in person by some princes from neighbouring states, as well as by the ambassadors of other

kings and lords of remote areas ... [including]... the Sornau of Ayutthaya, known as the King of Siam, whose domain extends for seven hundred leagues from Tenasserim to Champa, bordering, along the coast, on the lands of the Malays, Berdios, and Pathans, and in the interior of Phitsanulok, Kamphaengphet, Chiangmai, Laos, and the lands of the Gueos. Thus he has a total of seventeen kingdoms in his domain alone where he goes by the supreme title among all these heathens of 'lord of the white elephant'.

As Ayutthaya was a long way away from many places in the kingdom, 'it was not unusual for these petty kings to be left stranded for the entire winter, entailing vast expenditures to them.' So they petitioned the King of Siam to 'find a less costly method of paying the tribute'. A viceroy ('called *poyho*'; perhaps *pu-phra*) was appointed to represent the king, to whom the minor kings paid homage every three years, and the tribute should be sent as one lump sum every three years to the capital.

Chapter 41 reports that a Portuguese party explores Champa and the author comments that these Portuguese were from the kingdom of Siam where they lived and traded. The leader, António de Faria, lived 'in the foreign quarter of Tenasserim.' This claim is repeated in nine subsequent chapters when the party was in China, but a variant occurs in Chapter 86, where the Portuguese specify they were 'natives of the kingdom of Siam, from a land called Malacca.' But Chapter 48 makes clear that the Chinese were familiar with people from Southeast Asia and 'could tell from our features and clothes that we were neither Siamese, nor Javanese, nor Malaysians'.

Chapter 200 refers back to the events described in the main chapters on Siam (Chapters 182–184), to 'the death of the good king of Siam and the adultery of his wife, the evil queen' and the 'dissensions and cruel wars that took place in the two

kingdoms of Pegu and Siam, which lasted for three and a half years.' Mendes Pinto details how the King of Burma became absolute lord of Pegu, and speaks of a second Burmese invasion of Siam (possibly in 1563–4) by an improbably large force of 1,700,000 men and 16,000 elephants.

The Mon ruler of Martaban, under siege from the Burmese, in Chapter 148, sought permission to leave with his family (and his treasure) for Siam, which was refused. In the following chapter, Siamese troops are noted as being among the mercenaries of forty-two different countries in the King of Burma's army attacking Martaban; the Siamese mercenaries alone are said (in Chapter 151) to number 3,000 armed with muskets and lances. The region of Martaban, according to Chapter 167, apparently shipped benzoin to Siam. When Mendes Pinto visits the court of the Tartar king (Chapter 122) among the attendant noblemen were 'Burmese from the Sornau, King of Siam'; the presence of Burmese rather than Siamese may perhaps be attributed to a slip of the pen.

Four other incidental references to the Siamese should be noted. Chapter 39 finds Mendes Pinto, António de Faria and his companions at Pulo Condore, off the southern coast of Vietnam, where he meets a junk from the Ryukyu islands bound for Siam, and carrying an ambassador from the 'prince of Tosa,' the Japanese island of Shikoku.

In Chapter 55 we are told of the presence of Siamese junks in the Chinese port of Comhay (near Macao). In Chapter 165 a letter is sent to the ruler of Luang Prabang indicating he could travel to Pegu 'without fear of the Siamese'; the reference is obscure, but clearly the Siamese were on the offensive. And in Chapter 68 there is an unflattering reference to the local music, as 'a deafening racket of trumpets, shawms, timbals, fifes and drums and many other instruments used by the Chinese, Malays, Chams, Siamese, Borneans, Ryukyu Islanders, and other nations'.

The last general reference to Siam is in Chapter 220, relating another journey from

Pattani to China, running 'for two days under favourable south-easterly winds along the coast of Ligor and Siam'; however Siam here may mean the capital rather than the country. Mendes Pinto and his companions crossed over from the 'bar of Cuy' going in the direction of Annam when they met with a storm which carried them back to the Malay peninsula and Pulau Tioman.

Ayutthaya, the capital of Siam

Europeans frequently used the term 'Siam' for the capital Ayutthaya³. But in Chapter 36 Mendes Pinto mentions by name the 'city of Ayutthaya, capital of the Sornau empire and kingdom of Siam', adding that the 'city is fifty leagues inland and accessible only by a rapidly flowing river'. The very large population of Ayutthaya, as given by Mendes Pinto in Chapter 189, has already been commented upon.

Chapter 46 details an attack by a Chinese pirate with a Portuguese hostage who 'was afraid to show himself in Pattani on account of the Portuguese who lived there' and so 'laid over for the winter in Siam'. Siam here means Ayutthaya, and there are several other references to ships wintering in 'Siam' in the text. With small ships at the mercy of the monsoon, many spent several months there, or in Chinese ports, waiting for favourable winds.

In Chapter 53, António de Faria, hunting for Ligor, met pirate Khoja Hassim, decided to hove to in Siam for winter although another shipwreck changed his mind. Still chasing Khoja Hassim, de Faria then learns (in Chapter 58) that he is preparing to depart China for Siam. He finally tracked him down and successfully attacked.

In Chapter 66 we learn of a robber Premata Gundel who had done the Portuguese much harm in Pattani, Sunda, and Siam; he too is attacked and his ship taken as a prize.

Tenasserim

In Chapter 17, there is a reference to a war between Siam and Aceh, the king of which sent a fleet to Tenasserim (then Siamese territory). The ruler of Kedah says that he was offered a noble lady as a wife from Tenasserim (among other places) in Chapter 19, and in Chapter 20 Mendes Pinto writes that a Portuguese, Jerónimo de Figueiredo, 'crossed over to the coast of Tenasserim, where he seized some vessels coming from the Straits on Mecca, from Aden... and other parts of the Persian Gulf'. The statement in Chapter 41 that Mendes Pinto and his companions lived 'in the foreign quarter of Tenasserim' has already been noted.

Tenasserim is listed in Chapter 124 giving the extent of the kingdom of Siam (700 leagues from Tenasserim to Champa), and incidentally as a port of destination of a fleet from Aceh in Chapters 144, 145, and 148.

The Portuguese were not necessarily innocent merchants in unknown lands. They were also sometimes pirates. This activity, noted in Chapter 146,

...led to a sharp decline in the customs revenues of the ports of Tenasserim, Junk Ceylon, Mergui, Vagura [between the Sittang and Martaban], and Tavoy, so that the people in those places were forced to report it to the emperor of the Sornau who is the supreme lord of all this territory, and to ask him to take steps to remedy this evil'.

The king 'who was then residing in the city of Ayutthaya,' decided to send to Tenasserim a Turk, Heredim Mohammed, who entered royal service after his galley accidentally arrived in Siam. Heredim Mohammed had been stationed on the Lao frontier and was considered invincible. The Turk was promised the duchy of 'Banchá [Bang Saphan] which is a very large state, if he would bring back the heads of the four Portuguese captains'. He arrived in

Tenasserim with a fleet of fifteen ships. The local ruler of the unidentified Pulo Hinhor, a Christian convert who was selling some dried fish in Tenasserim, heard of this armada and rushed to warn the Portuguese. Forewarned, they achieved total victory, on 28 - 29 September 1544.

Mendes Pinto sailed for Tenasserim once more in Chapter 147 in search of Portuguese needed for the defence of Malacca, but found none. Finally, Tenasserim in Chapter 205 is mentioned, along with Junk Ceylon, as a place in which to obtain victuals on the west coast.

Mergui

Mergui, the seaport of Tenasserim, has already been noted in Chapter 146 as experiencing 'a sharp decline in the customs revenues', and its population appealed to the King of Siam to rid them of Portuguese pirates.

Mendes Pinto notes in Chapter 147 that he passed by Mergui on 26 March 1545, and in Chapter 150 the lord of Mergui, called Dambamluu by Mendes Pinto, is noted as attending the surrender ceremony of the Mon ruler of Martaban to the Burmese king.

Phuket (Junk Ceylon)

Junk Ceylon is mentioned seven times in Mendes Pinto's work. Many of these references are to it simply as a port of destination – and sometimes not reached, on account of storms and pirates – as in Chapters 19, 144, and 153. The King of Burma went via 'Tilau which is on the coast of Junk Ceylon' in Chapter 185 to attack Ayutthaya by surprise. Like Tenasserim it is mentioned in the general description of the kingdom in Chapter 189; it is also listed in Chapter 146 as a place, like Tenasserim and Mergui, where customs duties were in decline on account of Portuguese piracy, and again, also paired with Tenasserim, in Chapter 205 as a place in which to obtain victuals on the west coast.

Chapter 147 has a reference to Juncay,

which is clearly shorthand for Junk Ceylon, but it again provides no description of the place: Mendes Pinto 'passed by Tenasserim, Tavoy, Mergui, Juncay ... without finding any trace of the one hundred Portuguese I was looking for in those ports...'

Pattani

Pattani was clearly an important trading port, with a substantial Portuguese merchant colony, and there are many references to it in Mendes Pinto's text, but most of them are incidental mentions to the city as a port of departure or destination (Chapters 32, 34, 36, 39, 42, 50, 51, 57, 132, 204, and 207).

In Chapter 35, the King of Pattani, under pressure from 'the Moors', refused to expel the Portuguese, 'insisting that under no circumstances would he do anything to mar the peaceful relations that his ancestors had always maintained with Malacca'.

We learn in Chapter 46 of a Chinese pirate, Nakhodá Xicaulém, who 'refused to show himself in Pattani on account of the Portuguese who lived there' whom he had wronged. Another pirate in Chapter 56 is cited as being fearful of returning to Pattani, for different reasons: the pirate Panjão is 'afraid to go back to Pattani, where my wife and children reside, because I know for certain that the king will confiscate all my possessions on the pretext that I have left without permission'. Many Portuguese from Malacca, Sunda, Siam, and Pattani went to Ning-po in China for the winter, we are told in Chapters 55 and 57.

Pattani is also a reference point for the location of Cuy (Kuiburi) in Chapter 88. The city was the destination of the ruler of Kedah fleeing from an attack from Aceh in Chapter 205.

The importance of Pattani as a staging post can be judged from the reference in Chapter 71 to the two ships led by Antónia de Faria to China with fifty-six Portuguese, complete with a priest to say mass, as well as forty-eight seamen to handle the oars and sails, 'all natives of Pattani who had

been offered good terms because they were a loyal and trustworthy crew'. This position as an entrepôt is confirmed in Chapter 220, where the Portuguese, en route to Japan to convert the natives and build on the missionary work of Francis Xavier, stayed eight days, during which time Mendes Pinto went to see the king with a letter from the captain of Malacca. The king ordered the *shahbandar* to help supply the Portuguese with all that they needed and for which they paid. But the king, presumably a practical trade-oriented Muslim, thought that going to preach Christianity in Japan was 'nonsense', and stated in a down-to-earth fashion that it would be better to go to China and get rich.

Nakhon Si Thammarat (Ligor)

The ancient city of Ligor, also known as Lugor, Lakhon, and now Nakhon Si Thammarat, is mentioned by Mendes Pinto in several chapters. The first reference, in Chapter 36, has the most extensive piece on the city, where Mendes Pinto, under the leadership of António de Faria e Sousa, went trading with a cargo of Indian calicoes. It was 'a rich, heavily-trafficked seaport in Siam ... always crowded with junks from the island of Java and from the ports of Laué, Tanjapura, Japara, Demak, Panaruca, Sidayo, Pasuruan, Solor, and Borneo, because they usually paid well there, in gold and precious stones, for that kind of merchandise'. The party on arrival at the bar of Ligor made enquiries about trading possibilities and their own safety, and were assured on both counts, particularly the latter, as the month when they were there, September, had been decreed the month of reverence of the king. This was when the homage was paid every three years to the viceroy, referred to above, and during that month 'they were to be granted customs exemptions on all their goods, the same privilege being extended to all other merchants entering or leaving the harbour, whether native or foreign.'

The anticipation of good sales was not to be; a huge junk manned by Muslims led by

Khoja Hassim, and some Turks, came alongside the small Portuguese ship, attacked it, relieved it of its cargo, and sent it to the bottom.

In the following chapter, the three surviving Portuguese travel inland and meet by chance an old woman who tells them to accept fate, as she, who had seen her husband, 'and my whole family, father and sons, two brothers, and son-in-law all torn to pieces in front of my eyes by the trunks of the elephants of the king of Siam'. No reason for this is given.

The other references to Ligor are of no great consequence; Chapter 38 contains a casual reference to this same lady leaving for Ligor; in Chapter 132 off the China coast the Portuguese meet 'Two junks from the Malay coast, one from Pattani and the other from Lakhon'. Chapter 183 mentions a port called Chatir five leagues below Ligor and Chapter 189, as already noted, mentioned Ligor as one of the cities of Siam on the China Sea. The last reference to Ligor is again incidental; in Chapter 220 Mendes Pinto notes 'we ran for two days under favourable south-east winds along the coast of Ligor and Siam'.

Bang Saphan (Banchá)

In Chapter 33, Mendes Pinto indicates he was sent by Pero de Faria, captain of Malacca, to 'Pattani ... with a letter and a gift for the king, to negotiate for the release of some five Portuguese imprisoned by his brother-in-law, the *monteu*, [councillor] of Banchá, in the kingdom of Siam'. Banchá is identified by Armando Cortesão in his edition of Tomé Pires' *Suma Oriental* as Bang Saphan (sometimes Bang Taphan) at latitude 11° 12' north; but the reference here by Mendes Pinto is confusing, since the ruler of Pattani was virtually independent.

Bang Saphan clearly was not independent, for in chapter 146 (as noted above under Tenasserim) its dukedom is offered by the King of Siam to the Turk Heredim Mohammed. A reference in Chapter 38 speaks of the murder in Banchá of the

harbour master of Prevedim (unidentified) in 1538, and a reference to Banchá in Chapter 141 as an island south of the Ryukyus must be erroneous.

There is a long section in Chapter 183, already mentioned above, about the wealth of the people of Banchá, 'generally given over to the pleasures and delights of the flesh,' who managed to wriggle out of a recruitment drive by bribing the recruiting officer who only enlisted the old, the poor and the sick. The recruiting colonel, on the discovery of his treachery, had melted silver poured down his throat, from which he unsurprisingly died on the spot; all his effects were seized and given to the poor conscripts from Banchá. Those who escaped the recruitment by bribery were banished to an island 'called Pulao Catão'⁵ and had to dress as women.

From these five scattered references, it is clear that Bang Saphan in the sixteenth century was more important than it is now. The fact that gold was found in the river there may have been a factor in its relative importance.

Kuiburi (Cuy)

The bar harbour of Cuy or Cui (the name formerly given to modern Kuiburi, close to the coast between Hua Hin and Prachuap Khirikhan) is mentioned in Chapter 88 as being at the mouth of the Tauquiday River and about 130 leagues 'below' (above) Pattani. Chapter 95 again refers to a river going into the sea 'at the bar harbour of Cuy'. As noted in Chapter 189 Cuy is listed among the cities on the China Sea coast of Siam and clearly served as a directional point (perhaps because of the nearby peaks of Sam Roi Yod), for in Chapter 200 Mendes Pinto and his party, en route from Pattani to Japan, hit a storm 'as we were crossing over from the bar of Cuy'. The final mention of Cuy, in Chapter 222, seems to be more an example of Mendes Pinto's multiple use of place-names. The people of Canton (Guangzhou) were mourning after a severe earthquake in Shaanxi (Sansay), saying

'Know ye, that because of all our sins, God had brandished the sword of his divine justice over the people of Cuy and Sansay, bringing destruction down on the entire province...' This does not refer to Cuy (Kuiburi) in Siam.

The importance of Kuiburi lies in its position on the coast, as the point of departure across the mountains for Tenasserim and Mergui, a trading route of increased significance in the following century.

Berdio

The location of Berdio is not known exactly; in Chapter 189 it occurs at the end of a listing of Siamese towns on the China Sea which comprise 'Mompolocota, Cuy, Lugor, Chintabu, and Berdio.' The order in which they appear is either random, or follows a listing first on one side of the gulf, then another; but Chantaburi is generally held to be the furthest extension of the King of Siam's domains eastward, and it seems unlikely that Berdio was found on the coast beyond it.

It was sufficiently important for it to offer one of its nobles in marriage to the incestuous ruler of Kedah: 'I had to refuse many other good offers of marriage I had been considering, to women in Pattani, Berdio, Tenasserim, Siak, Jambi, and Indragiri, all of them sisters and daughters of kings' (Chapter 19). Mendes Pinto again credits it with a king as ruler in Chapter 150, when a brother of the 'king of Berdio,' who may have been the ruler of Sandoway in Arakan, attended the surrender ceremony of the Mon ruler of Martaban. It is, as has been noted above, also mentioned in Chapter 124 as being on the borders of Siam. It may be the ancient city of Phatthalung, called Bordelong by Schouten (c. 1638), Bordelongh by Van Vliet (c. 1641), marked Bordelong in Placide's 1686 map, and referred to as 'Petelong or Bordelong' by La Loubère in 1691.

Mompolocota

As noted above, this unidentified city is given in Chapter 46 as a place 'off the bar of Siam,' and is listed in Chapter 189 as a town on the China Sea side of the peninsula.

Chantaburi (Chiamtabuu, Chintabu)

The first mention of Chiamtabuu occurs in Chapter 128, as being at 26 degrees latitude at the bar of the mouth of the river Ventrau flowing through Siam. Chantaburi is mentioned in Chapter 189 in the listing of towns on the China Sea which comprise 'Mompolocota, Cuy, Lugor, Chintabu, and Berdio'.

Kamphaengphet

In Chapter 122 Mendes Pinto notes that the Tartar king was accompanied by many princes, lords, and captains, among whom was the King of Kamphaengphet. From his description of the extent of the kingdom, given in Chapter 124 and cited above, it would seem that this ruler might be semi-independent of Siam. In Chapter 128 Kamphaengphet is mentioned in relation to the supposed River Pumfileu that cuts across it and Sukhothai. The reference in Chapter 181 simply indicates that it was below Chiangmai and the Oya of Kamphaengphet was 'general of the armies of the frontier'. Above Kamphaengphet, Mendes Pinto tells us in Chapter 181, were the Laotians, the Gueos, and the Timocouhos, in alliance with the King of Chiangmai and in Chapter 182 (see above) we are told how Oya Kamphaengphet and 30,000 of his men had been killed. The reference in Chapter 185 indicates that Kamphaengphet had seventeen kings; by 'king' one presumes Mendes Pinto here means lord or governor.

Sukhothai

Sukhothai receives only two mentions; in Chapter 128 the River Pumfileu (called the

Leibrau River in Chapter 185) is said to cut across it and Kamphaengphet, and in Chapter 185 as the object of an attack by the Burmese king. Sukhothai would appear to be a place of little consequence in the sixteenth century.

Phitsanulok (Passiloco)

Passiloco is mentioned in Chapter 41 as the destination of the product of the mines around Lake Chiangmai. Chapter 124 cites Phitsanulok on the borders of the interior of Siam. Above Phitsanulok and Kamphaengphet, Chapter 181 refers to the Laotians, the Gueos, and Timocouhos, in alliance with the King of Chiangmai. In Chapters 182-5 (see above) there are many references to the Oya Phitsanulok and the usurping Queen of Siam. The position of Phitsanulok as a border town is again emphasised in Chapter 183, for 'in this same year of 1545 it became urgent for this King of Siam to defend his borders in the area of Phitsanulok against an invading army led by the king of the Tuparahós who were destroying and plundering some of the weaker towns around there'.

Chiangmai

There is an incidental mention of Chiangmai in Chapter 70 to a local lord waging war against its king as well as the Pafuas and Champa. Chiangmai is cited in Chapter 124 as being on the borders of Siam, and seems to be counted among 'the seventeen kingdoms' in the domain of the Sornau of Ayutthaya (Chapter 124). If so, it was clearly rebellious, given that the King of Siam waged war on Chiangmai in Chapter 181. The Queen of Guibem, as noted in Chapter 182 above, was in association with the King of Chiangmai, and Chapter 184 contains another incidental reference to Chiangmai: the concubine who had murdered King Chairatcha accused two of the 'deputies of the government' of corresponding with the King of Chiangmai and of 'plotting to give him access to the kingdom through their

lands'; they lost both their heads and their estates.

The river Janeguma is mentioned in Chapter 28, as flowing through the kingdom of Chiangmai and the Laotians, and having its 'outlet to the sea at the bar of Martaban'. This is apparently an inaccurate reference to the Salween.

Other names

Mendes Pinto uses, as has been seen, several often unidentifiable place-names and peoples in connection with Siam. To the north are the Timocoulhos, Gueos, Tuparahós (Chapter 183) on the borders of Phitsanulok, and elsewhere the Chaleus. de Campos (1940: 10) thinks that the Gueos were the Wa and the Lawa. The kingdom of the Chaleu is marked on early maps on the Irrawaddy, between Ava and Prome. The Tuparahaós remain elusive. The unidentified cities of Suropisem, twelve leagues from Quitirvão, the valley of Siputay, Guitor the capital of Guibem, the city of Lantor, Juaroposão city near Kedah, Tilau near Junk Ceylon, and the fortress Tapurau all occur in the chapters on Siam.

Mendes Pinto frequently uses Quiay to mean temple, and specifically names in Ayutthaya temples called Quiay Fanarel (given the meaning 'god of the joyous'), Quiay Pontar, Quiay Figrau (mentioned twice), and given the meaning 'god of the motes of the sun', and Quiay Mitreu; but he makes multiple use of proper names in other parts of his work, and Quiay is no exception. It appears as a title of dignity in Quiay Raudivá, the dishonest recruiting colonel of Banchá (Chapter 183), and elsewhere.

Mendes Pinto also cites phrases which are supposed to be Siamese. He gives *xamxaimpoum* meaning 'amen,' and *maxinau* to mean 'I promise' when the young King Yot Fa is being sworn in as his father lays dying from poisoning, and writes of a solemn holiday 'that is known as *Oniday Pileu* meaning 'joy of good people'. One suspects many of these, as with his supposed phrases

in Chinese elsewhere in the text, are probably invented gibberish.

Catz lists a glossary of foreign and uncommon words, of which seven are said to be from Siamese, and one, *bico*, from *bhikku*, has current acceptance in Siam in its original form. *Grepo* is thought possibly to derive from *kru* (*guru*) and is found passim. *Oya* is given as coming from Siamese *hua*, but this, and the extended form *Ok-ia* (*Ok-Phra*), were extensively used in the following century as Siamese titles of rank. *Prechau* (from *phra chau*), a royal title, appears in eight chapters. Of the others, the most frequently employed is *nhay*, from Siamese *nai*, meaning, in Mendes Pinto's text, 'sir' or 'madam'.

Bracalão, said to derive from *boromo kromo*, and used as meaning 'royal minister' in four chapters, seems more likely to come from *phrakhlang* or even *phra kalahom*. *Poyho* used once to mean 'viceroy' is said to derive from *pu-phra*, but a more likely source would seem to be *phyra*. The term *produm*, used once to mean town, is said by Catz to derive from *prae-don*, but Thai scholars consulted doubt this, though no plausible alternative sources come to mind.

Lakes and rivers

Chapter 41 also has the first reference to the mythical lake of Chiangmai which is given as the source of four great rivers flowing through the region and around which are

... many mines of silver, copper, tin, and lead, which are in constant production and yield huge quantities of these metals which are then carried by merchants in elephant and yak caravans to the kingdoms of Sornau or Siam, Passiloco [Phitsanulok], ... and other provinces in the interior.

Chapter 88 has a reference to the River Tauquiday meaning 'mother of the waters' which rises in an unnamed lake and 'enters the sea through the empire of the Sornau, commonly known as Siam, at the bar

harbour of Cuy [Kuiburi], about 130 leagues below [above] Pattani'.

The river themes of Chapters 88 and 95 are picked up again in Chapter 128, where there is mention of the lake of Singapamor (which in Chapter 182 Mendes Pinto tells us is called Chiangmai by the local people), the source of four great rivers. Joaquim de Campos points out that 'The Lake of Chiangmai is not an invention of Pinto, for it existed in legend and in popular belief centuries before.' He adds that João de Barros in 1552, before Pinto started writing his *Peregrinação*, placed the lake not in Chiangmai but 30 degrees north, in the plateau of Tibet (de Campos 1940: 19). Mendes Pinto does not claim to have seen the lake in Chiangmai, and when he states the King of Siam stayed twenty-six days there, he may, thinks de Campos, be referring to a local lake.

Mendes Pinto then proceeds to allocate different names to the rivers. The Ventrau 'flows straight west across all the land of the Sornau of Siam and empties into the sea at the bar of Chiamtabuu [Chantaburi] at twenty-six degrees latitude'. Another is called the Janguma, which goes through the kingdom of Chiangmai and enters the sea at Martaban. 'The third river, called Pumfileu, cuts across all of Kamphaengphet and Sukhothai ... emptying into the sea ... near Arakan'. As noted under Sukhothai, this river is renamed Leibrau in Chapter 185, and it appears to be the same as the Batobasoy mentioned in Chapter 88. The fourth was thought to be the 'Ganges of Chittagong'.

Mendes Pinto was rather arbitrary in his assignment of names of rivers and their courses. He clearly had some concept of the importance of the Salween, the Ping, and the Mekong, referred to under different names at different times, but their source is given in the long-established mythical Lake Chiangmai.

Religion

Chapter 92 talks of a sect and a monastery called Gizom, from the Japanese word mean-

ing a *bodhisattva*, found in China, Japan, Cochinchina, Cambodia, and Siam. Mendes Pinto's references to eastern religions are to say the least confusing, but he does seem to have grasped the fact that the same creed, without realizing what it was, flourished in these countries. He also has some concept of the origins and spread of Buddhism, saying in Chapter 112:

This religious sect, as well as all the other barbaric sects of China ... reached Siam from the kingdom of Pegu and (was) spread from there by priests and *cabizondos* throughout all the mainland countries of Cambodia, Champa, Laos ... Cochinchina, and over to the archipelago of the islands of Hainan, the Ryukyus, and Japan ... infecting with the poison of their herpes as great a part of the world as did the cursed sect of Mohammed.

Mendes Pinto makes a very curious reference in Chapter 57 to the existence of a 'Siamese pagoda' at the mouth of a river near Amoy but since he appears to have difficulty in distinguishing the two great divisions of Buddhism, one wonders if he is correct in identifying a pagoda in China as being Siamese.

Tenasserim is surprisingly mentioned on two occasions in relation to Christianity; the one to a local ruler converted, the other in providing a martyr, originally a Hungarian, who went to his death in China around 1400.

Associated with religion in Mendes Pinto's mind is the festival called (Chapter 159) *Sansaporau* by the Siamese; he uses the word as a god's name and says it meant 'remembrance of the dead'. This marked the new moon in December. It was also celebrated by the Burmese, Chinese, Japanese, Ryukyuan and Cochinchinese. Chapter 183 also has a reference to the 'Day of the White Elephant,' when the King of Siam goes about his capital distributing charity.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this article is not to examine Mendes Pinto's historical accuracy, but simply to detail his references to Siam and its dependencies, and the presence of Siamese in the region.

Thus Mendes Pinto's exactitude in his records of the funeral of the chief monk of Pegu in Chapter 167 and of the King of Siam in Chapter 184 is not questioned, though they have been criticized as invention, particularly in the matter of the animal figures which were burnt after the cremation; but which may well have been true. de Coultre (1991) gives a similar description of the funeral of a white elephant in Siam in the sixteenth century, and the American envoy Roberts, of the funeral of the second king in the early nineteenth century.

Independent kingdoms include Chiang-mai, with its mythical lake, believed to be the source of the great rivers of East Asia, and also Pattani, clearly already an important trading place on the run from Malacca to China. Banchá, identified as Bang Saphan, with its five references, appears to have been important. Mergui and Tenasserim are clearly within the realm. The Laotians are mentioned by name, and so are, in the north, the mysterious Gueos and Timocouhos. The northeast does not enter into the picture at all and appears to have formed part of Laos (Calaminhan), howsoever ill-defined. Cambodia, though mentioned several times in the text, is seen as no real threat to Siam.

That Siam's fortunes were bound up with those of Pegu and Pegu's conquerors, the Burmese, comes out clearly, and the second half of the sixteenth century was one of instability in Ayutthaya on this account.

Mendes Pinto's understanding of oriental religions is nil; but the generosity accorded by the monks of China to him and his fellow Portuguese make up for his – necessarily, given the Inquisition – sometimes harsh judgement of Muslims.

The picture of a comparatively substantial Portuguese presence in Siam and Pattani

in the 1540s and 1550s is perhaps surprising, given that Malacca was only captured in 1511, the year in which the first Portuguese embassy reached Siam, and that Portugal was a small country in any case.

Incidentally, almost nowhere in this summary of references to things Siamese does the humour with which much of the book is permeated appear, though a hint has been given in relation to Si Sudachan's misdoings, in Chapter 182

Mendes Pinto's account remains disordered, that of a swashbuckling opportunistic merchant sometimes turned pirate and, for a time, a devout lay Jesuit under the influence of Francis Xavier. He does not present neat descriptions of the different lands he visited. His text has all the enthusiasm and energy of the Renaissance, and none of the ordered neo-Classicism of later texts dealing with Siam which carefully describe its geography, government, peoples, buildings, religion, fruits, etc., in self-contained sections. The form of Mendes Pinto's work is different: it describes his personal travels, which were as chaotic and accident-prone as his text.

Siam may not have been central to Mendes Pinto's wanderings in the east. His base, such as it was, was Malacca, but the country clearly held a dominant position in Southeast Asia and was extremely important in East Asian trade. It was cosmopolitan thanks to the ships which passed the winter there and to the merchant traders more or less permanently based in its capital and the maritime city of Ligor. It unsuccessfully attempted expansion and control of the kingdom of Chiangmai to the north, while at the same time was subject to constant Burmese attacks, made the more dangerous by the recent subjection of the formerly independent kingdom of Pegu to Burma. While Ligor was clearly within the domain of Siam, Pattani, given its conversion in the fifteenth century to Islam under the influence of Malacca, seems more likely to have been a completely independent trading state, possibly sending token *bunga mas* to Ayutthaya. Siam's wealth made it a de-

sirable conquest, and Mendes Pinto is one of the first of many to comment on its attractiveness as a potential European colony.

Notes

1. See Flores, M. C. (1995) for an argument for the veracity of those parts of Pinto's work that deal with Siam, as well as admitting his '*exageros, erros e confusões*'.
2. Fr Cardim, in the *Batalhas da Companhia de Jesus*, 1894: 286, comments, 'I say he [Mendes Pinto] does not depart from the truth, because a Mandarin ... told me that what the history and records of the country recorded about the coming of the Portuguese to that kingdom and about the heroic deeds in which they helped the king to conquer many kingdoms ... telling me that it was true and whoever is interested in it can look it up in Pinto's book.'
3. For the sake of uniformity, the spellings of the cities of Ayutthaya, Kamphaengphet, Sukhothai, Phitsanulok, Chiangmai, Junk Ceylon, Pattani, and Ligor appear thus and not as in the quotations taken from Catz's 1989 edition.
4. According to Yule & Burnell (1968), Sornau derives from the Persian *Shar-i-nao*, meaning 'new city', referring to Ayutthaya, founded in 1350. de Campos (1940) thinks it comes from *swarna* or *suvarnabhumi*, meaning 'land' or 'land of gold'. Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim (1972) gives the Persian *Shahr Nav* for Ayutthaya, indirectly confirming Yule & Burnell. Brown (1970:35) also gives *Shahr u'nnuwi* for Siam.
5. Pulo Catão is said by Catz (1989) to be the Pulo Canton off Annam. As this was not within the King of Siam's domains it seems more likely to be a reference to Pulo Cara (modern Ko Kra) east of Ligor (Nakhon Si Thammarat).

References

- Campos, J. de 1940. Early Portuguese Accounts of Thailand, *Journal of the Thailand Research Society* [The Siam Society] XXXII (1): 1-27.
- Catz, R. 1983. *Cartas de Fernão Mendes Pinto e outros documentos*, Lisbon: Biblioteca Nacional/ Editorial Presença.
- Catz, R. D. (ed.) 1989. *The Travels of Mendes Pinto*,

- (trans. by the editor), Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Cortese, A. 1944. The 'Suma Oriental' of Tomé Pires, London: Hakluyt Society.
- Coutre, Jacques de 1991. *Vida de Jacques de Coutre, Madrid 1640*, republished as *Andanzas Asiáticas*, Madrid, Historia 16.
- Flores, Maria da Conceição 1995. *Os Portugueses e o Sião no século XVI*. Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, Imprensa Nacional.
- Ibrahim, Ibn Muhammad 1970. *The Malay Annals*, translated by C. Brown, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press.
- Ibrahim, Ibn Muhammad 1972. *The Ship of Sulaiman*, (trans. J. O'Kane), London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Roberts, E. 1972. *Embassy to the Eastern Court of Cochín-China, Siam and Muscat...*, New York, 1837, (reprint) Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources.
- Wood, W.A.R. 1926. Fernão Mendes Pinto's account of events in Siam, *Journal of the Siam Society* XX (1): 25-39.
- Wyatt, D. K. 1984. *Thailand, a Short History*, London: Yale University Press.
- Yule, H., and Burnell, A. C. 1968. *Hobson-Jobson: a Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases...*, (2nd ed.) Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

KEYWORDS – SIAM, THAILAND, TRAVEL, PORTUGAL, HISTORY, 16th CENTURY EXPLORATION

